



MISSISQUOI MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF
MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Spring, 2022



Spring Activities Schedule at Missisquoi NWR

29 Tabor Road, Swanton, VT 05488

Wild Bees of Vermont

Thursday, March 24th, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Did you know that there are over 300 species of wild bees that make their home in Vermont? Join the Friends of Missisquoi NWR as they welcome Spencer Hardy, a biologist with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, as he introduces us to some of these important pollinators. Learn what they are discovering through their Wild Bee Survey, what surprises they have found, and what you can do to help the native bee population right in your own yard. This will be a free online Zoom presentation and you can register at the Friends website at: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar/>

“Timberdoodles”

Thursday, April 21st, 7:00 pm via Zoom

How well do you know the Timberdoodle? Please join the Friends of Missisquoi and Green Mountain Audubon as they welcome University of Maine PhD student, Liam Berigan, to share the important work he has been doing tracking the American Woodcock. In this informative presentation Liam will cover the ecology of this forest-dwelling shorebird and then delve into the evolving understanding of woodcock migration. We will take a look at the migration patterns of some of Vermont’s tagged birds. Please register for this virtual presentation at the Friends website:

<http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar/>

Green Up Day at the Refuge

Friday, May 6th, 9:00 am to noon

Living in Vermont, we all know about the annual Green Up Day: the first Saturday In May. It’s a great way to give back to your community. At Missisquoi we hold an annual Green Up Day each year as well, however we hold it on the first Friday of May. This way we can encourage community members to help clean up the refuge and also participate in their local town or city Green Up Day event. Where we clean up this year will be dependent upon river levels at the time: it could be by boat along the river, or we may work on cleaning up parking lots and road ways. This year I hope you consider helping Green Up the refuge! **We will meet at 9 am at the Louie’s Landing boat launch.**

PLEASE CALL to register for this activity: 802-868-4781 ext. 3236

World Migratory Bird Day

Sing, Fly, Soar – Like a Bird!

World Migratory Bird Day is again a multi-day event on the refuge!

Kick-off WMBD with these Zoom events on Thursday and Friday

Thursday, May 19th, 7:00 pm - Join the Friends of Missisquoi NWR as they welcome, naturalist, author, ornithologist, and researcher, Scott Weidensaul, to educate us on the **Motus Wildlife Tracking System** and how this global system of radio telemetry is revolutionizing the knowledge of bird migration across the world. This presentation will be a free Zoom event as part of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge's World Migratory Bird Weekend celebrations. Register at: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/birdweekend/>

Friday, May 20th, 7:00 pm - Spend an evening with bobolinks, meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows, and many more grassland birds. Join the Friends of Missisquoi NWR as they welcome Maeve Kim to share the **importance of grasslands** worldwide and here at home, and learn about what's being done to conserve and protect them. This presentation will be a free Zoom event as part of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge's World Migratory Bird Weekend celebrations. Register at: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/birdweekend/>

Continue your WMBD fun with these in-person week-end events

Saturday, May 21st – Please join Friends of Missisquoi NWR members Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti for a **monthly bird-monitoring walk** on the Stephen J. Young Marsh Trail. The purpose of these monitoring walks is to gather long-term data on the presence of birds, their abundance, and changes in populations. This walk is appropriate for birders of all skill levels. Meet at the parking area on Tabor Road at 8:00 am.

Saturday, May 21st – The Friends of Missisquoi NWR will be holding a **group birding paddle** at 1:00 pm. You must bring your own canoe or kayak, paddles, and life jackets. Meet at Mac's Bend boat launch. Please register in advance at the Friends website at: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/birdweekend/>

Sunday, May 22nd – The Friends of Missisquoi NWR will be hosting two **beginners guided bird walks** on the Mac's Bend Road at 8:00 am and at 10:00 am. If you are a beginning birder and would like to join one of these events, Please register in advance at the Friends website at: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/birdweekend/>

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All day Saturday and Sunday, May 21st and 2nd - Missisquoi's World Migratory Bird Day "Big Weekend Challenge"

Because last year was such a success, we are bringing back our Big Weekend Challenge. We invite you to come and independently help us document the birds present on the refuge. Here's how to participate:

1. Register for our weekend of birding here so we know you are coming- <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/birdweekend/>
2. Visit the refuge trails and/or waterways anytime from sunrise to sunset on Saturday and Sunday. For a map of trails and water access points please use the link at - <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/birdweekend/>
***Please note the Jeep Trail will be closed at this time of year, but Mac's Bend Road will be open for walking.
3. Record all your bird sightings via eBird to any of the refuge's hotspots and share your lists with our eBird account (MNWRBirdDay) which allows us to have a record of your data.

The more you bird and contribute, the better our data will be. To get you motivated, the Friends of Missisquoi NWR will be awarding a number of prizes for different categories of participation, so the more time you spend looking and recording (and the more data you collect for WMBD), the more chances you have to win. Don't forget to bring your camera along to qualify you for some of the photography prizes! Our goal will be to see if we can beat our record of 113 species for WMBD.

If you are unfamiliar with eBird, please visit this video for a great tutorial on how to submit your sightings right from your smartphone: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvYYeDd05TQ>

Come out and enjoy Missisquoi NWR as the birds return to the refuge and help make this a successful weekend of data collection. As you participate as a citizen scientist for the refuge, please be sure to follow any current COVID-19 guidelines, stay on the open trails and waterways, and be careful not to venture into any of the restricted areas.

Art at the Refuge

May 21st through July 22nd

The Friends of Missisquoi will again be hosting an ON SITE art show at the Visitors' Center beginning May 21st, World Migratory Bird Day at the Refuge. The show will be exhibited through July 22nd.

As usual, the focus will be birds and their habitats, and will include birds that spend some time on the Refuge, including birds that migrate through or irrupt into the area. Entry fee is the price of a Friends membership (\$15), and there are no commissions on sales, though donations from sales are appreciated.

For more information on participation contact Carol Yarnell at artshow@friendsofmissisquoi.org. Expect the application and art specifications on the Friends website- (<https://friendsofmissisquoi.org/artshow/>) by March. Please pass this invitation on to your artist friends. We are excited that exhibits will be at the Visitor Center again!

spring events, continued >> p. 4

Also, visit <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofmissisquoi> to learn more about the refuge and coming events. You can also look at, comment on, and share your own photos.

You do not need to have a Facebook account to view the page. Please stop by and let us know what you think!





Missisquoi Matters

is the quarterly newsletter of the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to promoting a better awareness, appreciation, conservation, and responsible utilization of the

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

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E-mail: info@friendsofmissisquoi.org

Newsletter edited by Al Crist

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Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks- 3rd Saturday of each month, 8 to 10 am

Friends board members and birders extraordinaire Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti lead the walks on various refuge trails on the third Saturday of each month. The purpose of the walks is to gather long-term data on the presence of birds, their abundance, and changes in populations. Observations are entered into the Vermont eBird database, where data is stored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. These walks are appropriate for birders of all skill levels and provide a wonderful opportunity to learn about birds throughout the seasons. After 142 months of walks, we have recorded 160 species of birds. Registration for the walks is not required.

COVID Notice: We will be following Vermont state COVID-19 protocols for outdoor activities. We ask that you stay home if you are feeling ill and wear a mask if you are unvaccinated and when you can't maintain a safe social distance.

The schedule for the next three months is:

March 19: Jeep Trail. Meet at the Louie's Landing parking lot located on Rte. 78, approx 3½ miles west of Swanton village. From there we will drive to the trail head at Mac's Landing.

April 16: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge Visitor Center and across the road from the marsh.

May 21: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. See World Migratory Bird Day information on page 2.

If and when new Refuge events are scheduled, they will be posted on the Friends website as soon as dates are known. To check for any schedule changes or additions, visit the Friends website www.friendsofmissisquoi.org and click on "Calendar". For more information about the refuge, visit www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, March 9th, 2022 at 6:30 pm by Zoom

email info@friendsofmissisquoi.org if you'd like to attend via Zoom

Members are always welcome & encouraged to attend. Next board meeting is May 11th at 6:30 pm

Refuge Manager's Update - February, 2022

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR



It has been one heck of a cold winter so far, but these last few days in February have been a wonderful reprieve. During the depths of January's freeze we noticed a big dip in the number of folks walking refuge trails –

and I don't blame anyone for not venturing out on those sub-zero days! However there are some intrepid souls who did walk our trails and our trail counters have documented all of that use! Kudos for those of you who still felt the need to connect with nature even in the deepest of freezes!

In my last update I discussed climate change and possible impacts to refuge wildlife and habitats. As a government agency, I feel that we need to move more and more towards energy conservation and reducing carbon emissions where possible. You surely know that the refuge headquarters and visitor's center have been lauded for energy efficient design and incorporating both solar and wind to offset our need to draw from the electric grid. However, technology has progressed since the building was constructed, and we have begun a review of what we can do to further "green up" the facility.

I contracted with Efficiency Vermont this past year to perform an energy audit and "blow test" of the headquarters and visitor's center. I also consulted with a solar company on the cost of outfitting the shop and visitor's center with enough solar to zero our electricity needs. We have been communicating our needs to the USFWS Regional Office in hopes that funding to support alternative energy infrastructure will be coming in our budget via the recently passed Infrastructure Bill and the proposed "Build Back Better Act".

I have also requested to upgrade the refuge's wind turbine. Why you may ask? Well most importantly, and for those who have not visited the refuge visitor's center for a month or so, our turbine

blew off the tower in January during a particularly strong wind storm! Consultation with the company who makes that turbine confirmed that a slightly larger, but much more efficient, turbine has been developed in recent years and would be a great improvement and complement to our solar array.



We know right now that we've been funded to help air seal the building, addressing the results from the Efficiency Vermont test. We can only hope that future funding will support all of the energy efficiency projects we are putting forth so that Missisquoi NWR can continue to lead in responsible management of its infrastructure and provide an example for others to move towards renewable energy production. These are really small, but I believe important, steps in supporting our role in the conservation of our wildlife and natural resources for the future.

Mother Nature's Valentines

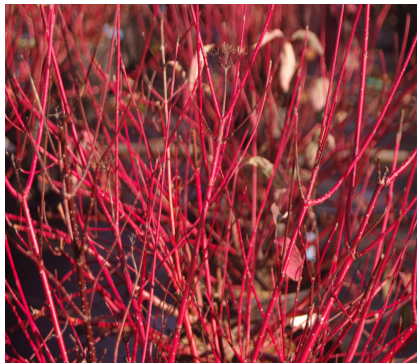
by Judy Sefchick, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR



February 14th, a “day of love”, is here again. But, every day is Valentine’s Day for Mother Nature. Why not? She’s clever, has a wonderful sense of humor, and rarely follows the rules. Besides that, she embodies a never-ending, unconditional love towards the natural world. The next time

you walk a refuge trail, try looking at nature from her perspective. Momentarily forget the scientific facts and figures, and view nature through her lens; you may be surprised to see colors, signs, and symbols of love all around.

Though there are no long-stemmed, red roses growing on Missisquoi NWR, the bright red stems of red-osier dogwoods are equally stunning. Found in floodplains, forests, bogs, and thickets, this dogwood bears gifts of love in every season. Flowering in both spring *and* late summer means its nectar and pollen are twice-as-nice for native bumble bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Leaves and twigs provide food and cover for creatures great (white-tailed deer) and small (white-footed mouse). Its remarkable high-fat fruit sustains, and fuels migration for, around 95 species of birds. The contribution of its stems, however, is truly mind-boggling. Not only are the stems eaten by beavers, but they’re used as dam construction materials as well (ouch, my teeth hurt just thinking about it)! With the year-round gift giving of red-osier dogwood, who needs a box of chocolates?



Hearts are ubiquitous in nature, whether they’re beating or not. Closely observe and you’ll see heart-shaped leaf scars on trees (shagbark hickory, smooth sumac), heart-shaped wildflower leaves (wild ginger, yellow wood sorrel) and even heart-shaped faces of bees (cellophane bees)! Trees have heartwood: the older, non-living, center wood, that provides

strength. In-tandem damselflies resemble flying heart-wheels when mating. With heart-shaped rocks, heart-shaped bird spots (northern flicker), and a mostly red bug with a black, heart-shaped mark (small eastern milkweed bug), the possibilities of seeing hearts in nature are endless! Don’t forget to look for the aptly named heart-leaved aster in fall.

Though not all hearts are created equal, the beat still goes on. Humans have an efficient four-chambered heart, like all mammals and birds. A bird’s heart (approximately 4% of its body weight), is a large powerhouse when compared to the paltry heart of a mammal (the human heart is approximately 0.4% of its body weight). While a healthy human heart pulses at 72 beats per minute (bpm) during rest, a northern cardinal has around 391 bpm, a black-capped chickadee around 522 bpm, and a ruby-throated hummingbird has approximately 614 bpm (or 1,260 bpm when flying)! At the other end of the spectrum, the heart rate of a hibernating groundhog is a whopping five bpm!

Amphibians, and most reptiles, have less efficient three-chambered hearts, but they shouldn’t be underestimated. Large snakes that eat infrequently have hearts much like the *Grinch* who Stole Christmas. While the Grinch’s heart grew three times its size with love, the incredible inflating heart of the python expands 40% after a large meal! Who can forget the amazing heart of the wily wood frog? It can freeze and stop beating in winter, then thaw and resume beating in spring.

A real-life Cupid’s bow and arrow story shouldn’t surprise anyone. The love story of hermaphroditic land snails shows without a doubt, that truth really is stranger than fiction! While mating, the male part of each snail applies a “love dart” to the other snail’s foot. Though not directly involved in the act, the dart transfers a secretion of hormones, doubling the chance of fertilization. Who could possibly think that nature is boring?

In February, remember to view nature’s gifts, like a pair of northern cardinals, a steadfast shrub of winterberries, or woodpeckers eating staghorn sumac. Not only do they brighten the winter landscape, but they lift the spirit as well. Every day is Valentine’s Day for Mother Nature. Why not explore her gifts all year long?

Discovery Trail Assessed for “Birdability”

On a brisk early December morning, the Bird Diva, Bridget Butler, donated a few hours of her time to guide a group of Friends and refuge manager, Ken Sturm, through the process of assessing the Discovery Trail for its accessibility to those with physical disabilities. This process was part of the Birdability project. Birdability’s vision is that birding truly is for everybody and every body, regardless of ability or health concerns. They are working to ensure that the birding community and the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe, and accessible for everybody. Bridget has committed herself to the Birdability project (<https://www.birdability.org>) by encouraging Vermonters to assess and add accessible sites to the crowd-sourced Birdability map. Birders can then view the details of these accessible sites and decide if the area is truly accessible enough for them.

Bridget felt the refuge’s Discovery Trail was suitable for an assessment. This assessment looked at and measured many things, including trail surfaces, width, trail slopes, parking, railings, bathrooms, and safety. This comprehensive process led to an awareness of many areas in need of improvement to make the trail completely accessible, safe, and enjoyable for all.

If you would like to see the details of this

assessment, you can visit the Birdability map (<https://gis.audubon.org/birdability/>) and find the diamond located in the northwest corner of Vermont.



Bird Tales Once Again a Huge Success !

The 6th annual Evening of Bird Tales was our 6th annual success! The snowstorm raging outside allowed this year's audience to cozy in at home and enjoy the stories of Bird Tales over Zoom.

This year’s event featured amazing photos and stories from some of northern Vermont’s talented amateur photographers. An audience of close to 90 engaged individuals heard delightful tales ranging from observing a family of Barred Owls to the tricks of taking the best shorebird shots. These photographers’ connection to birds and wildlife was on full display and their stunning photos relating to their stories can best be described as candy to the eye.

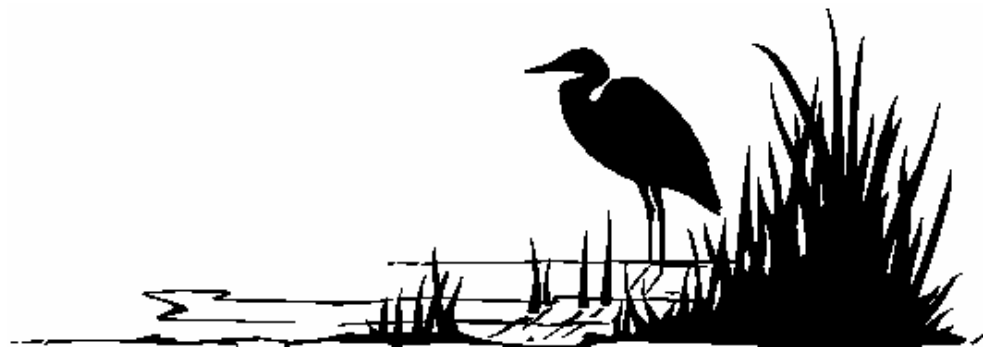
Many thanks to Angie Myers, Sharon Radtke, Sandy Cutting, Claire Payne, and Matthew Bode for being willing to tell their stories and share their talents and labor with our Bird Tales audience. If you missed it this year, you can find the link to the video posted on our website. Be sure to attend our 7th annual Evening of

Bird Tales next February. You won’t be disappointed.



Barred Owl by Sharon Radtke

Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Inc.
29 Tabor Road
Swanton, VT 05488



Please tell us how to serve you better - The Friends of Missisquoi NWR Board is eager to know more about the kind of programs, outings, or activities you would like to have offered on or about the refuge. Please email your suggestions and comments to info@friendsofmissisquoi.org. Thanks!

Yes! I want to support the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and its programs with my membership. My dues include a subscription to Missisquoi Matters and a 10% discount on items at the Friends Gift Shop. Enclosed is my contribution of:

Membership Level

- \$10 Student
- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family / Classroom
- \$50 Supporting
- \$100 Steward
- \$250 Life / Business
- \$1000 Patron

Would you like to receive your newsletter by postal mail or by email? Please circle one:

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Date: _____ (membership begins the month you join)
Name: _____
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(Your email address will not be shared with any other organization. We would like to be able to contact members regarding last minute changes to Friends activities and events.)