

**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.

29 Tabor Road, Swanton, VT 05488
(802) 868-4781 ext 121

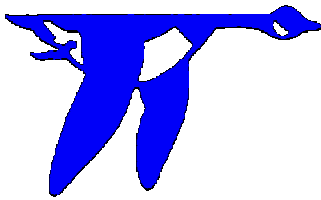
www.friendsofmissisquoi.org

E-mail: info@friendsofmissisquoi.org

Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

Board of Directors

Rich Kelley	<i>Vice President</i>
Cathie Waltz	<i>Treasurer</i>
Carol Yarnell	<i>Secretary</i>
Paul Madden	
Ken Copenhaver	
Paul Hansen	
Russ Ford	
Mark Batchelder	
Bob Chaperon	
Sue Farrar	
Julie Filiberti	

**Refuge Staff**

Ken Sturm	<i>Refuge Manager</i>
Dave Frisque	<i>Park Ranger</i>
Judy Edwards	<i>Wildlife Biologist</i>
Eddie Edwards	
	<i>Zone Enforcement Officer</i>
Lisa Swainbank	
	<i>Office Administrative Assistant</i>
Joe Bertrand	
	<i>Maintenance Mechanic</i>

MNWR HQ hours are
Monday thru Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm
Saturdays
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Manager's Update – Summer 2015

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

Looking around the refuge I can see the signs of late summer upon us: goldenrod starting to flower in our grasslands, Great Egrets arriving to forage in refuge wetlands, and lots of begging Osprey chicks ready to take wing by themselves. It's been a very busy field season this year and the fact that it's also been a rainy season hasn't made it any easier!

To begin with, we had hoped to have the new boat ramp at Mac's Bend complete by July. However, the rainy June raised the lake level enough to delay the second half of the project. Hopefully by the time this newsletter is published the contractors will have had the opportunity to complete the project (wish for some dry days ahead!).

We are fortunate again to have some great refuge volunteers working with us this summer. Margaret and Morey Zuber have returned for their second stay as refuge resident volunteers. The Zubers are enthusiastic volunteers who have spent time at a variety of National Wildlife Refuges across the country. Margaret has been a huge help in the Visitor's Center and Morey can often be found performing a variety of tasks around the refuge.

Additionally we have Stephanie Frank volunteering this summer. Stephanie is a Student Conservation Association and AmeriCorps volunteer and native of Vermont. Graduating from Saint Michaels College with a major in Environmental Studies, Stephanie has greatly increased our productivity this summer. She has completed many different projects to date including a survey of the refuge river corridor and floodplain forest for two invasive plants, Japanese knotweed and Phragmites (common reed), has monitored tree planting sites, entered and analyzed a variety of biological data, and worked with school groups on environmental education and interpretation programs.

In our maintenance program we are lucky to also welcome back Jeff Harvey as a seasonal laborer. Jeff has a wealth of experience working on public lands and managing trail crews and trail infrastructure. He has been a great help to both the maintenance program and the biological program as well. Jeff will be with us until the end of October.

A crew from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) spent five weeks working on the refuge this year. We again had an incredible group of young people who persevered through many wet and rainy work days. They worked on a variety of projects, including spreading stone on trails, constructing a small wetland crossing at Stephen J. Young Marsh trail, and controlling invasive plants. We look forward to having the VYCC back again next year.

(Continued on next page)

Park Ranger Dave Frisque has been busy hosting schools and other youth groups on the refuge as always. This summer we have had over 250 children from 7 area schools and camps visit the refuge! The wet weather has delayed the annual Kids Fishing Clinic this summer, but Dave rescheduled twice and the event was finally held on August 1st with over 100 children attending. We thank Dave for sticking with it and making the effort to have the event despite the first two cancelations!



We are also happy to have had to the opportunity to work again with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Montgomery Adventures, and the Friends group to sponsor a Family Paddling Day on the refuge. The goal was to get novice families on the water and encourage them to add canoeing onto their list of outdoor experiences. I believe that providing focused and personal opportunities for families to experience nature can help perpetuate the interest and desire to maintain that connection. Parents, older siblings, and friends play a critical role in developing a young person's appreciation of nature. Through this Family Paddling Day, the refuge's hope is to encourage families to get out and enjoy nature together. We thank the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Montgomery Adventures, and of course the Friends group for supporting this activity once again.

Although nesting season is just about finished on the refuge, the biological program is still in full swing. Our biologist Judy Sefchick-Edwards has been busy conducting the annual wildlife surveys including nesting great blue herons, black terns, and grassland

birds. It seems to be a very good year overall with initial counts of 167 pairs of great blue herons, 47 osprey nests, and 157 pairs of black terns (tied with 2010 for the highest pair count in recent years).

Missisquoi was also once again home to two nesting bald eagle pairs who have successfully raised a total of four young. This makes the 5th year that bald eagles have nested on the refuge. Interestingly, one of the eagle nests was again close to the main heron rookery, but this year it did not

cause any noticeable disruption or nest abandonment, as was the case in previous years.

Judy has also been supervising a research project through SUNY Plattsburg to evaluate the refuge's floodplain forest habitat for cavity nesting waterfowl species. This is the first year of a two-year master's thesis which will shed light on the quality of the refuge's nesting habitat and evaluate natural cavities for productivity and species use.

The refuge is lucky to once again have the support of the Friends of Missisquoi NWR and the State of Vermont to fund the removal of water chestnut on refuge wetlands. This is the third year in a row of grant funded work to control this highly-invasive species in sensitive refuge wetlands. Results so far indicate that the work done during the previous two seasons has greatly reduced the abundance of water chestnut on the refuge – so it's working!

There is so much more to tell. The refuge is a wonderful place to be and I encourage everyone to come visit the refuge trails, say hello to the refuge volunteers and staff, and enjoy this exceptional slice of nature in our backyards! Summer is short—get out and enjoy it!



Summer Activities Schedule at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

29 Tabor Rd.

Swanton, VT 05488

All programs and tours are free, but registration is required where noted.

Youth Waterfowl Hunter Training Program Saturday August 22, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Youth hunters 12-15 years of age are encouraged to participate in this one day training at the Franklin County Sportsman's Club.. Please contact the refuge to register for the training event. The youth hunter must have an adult mentor with them at the training activity who is also willing to mentor the youth as they hunt on the refuge. The Missisquoi Refuge has waterfowl hunting areas available for youth hunters in the early part of the waterfowl season.

Call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity.

Missisquoi NWR Indigenous Film Festival

Saturday, September 12; 1:00 PM to 7:45 PM

The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge has been used as a location in many Indian-themed movies over the last ten years. This film festival will feature three of these films and includes a discussion by Frederick M. Wiseman. Wiseman has served as producer, co-producer, and historical consultant for over twenty historical documentaries and docu-dramas dealing with the Wabanaki experience. These five films are among those that used the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge as a film location. As part of Vermont Archaeology Month, each film will be screened and followed by a discussion of the movie and its message about the history and culture of the Indigenous People of the Missisquoi region. The schedule is:

- 1:00 PM** *Before the Lake was Champlain* (2009). This movie deals with deep time prehistory of the original discovery and settlement of the Lake Champlain area. It discusses the fact that the settlers of the Champlain Basin were seafaring people who had the longest sea voyage recorded for the Ice Age. Louie's Landing and the Maquam Creek trails are featured.
- 2:00 PM** *1609: the other side of history* (2009). Explores the possible role that the Missisquoi Abenakis had in the European discovery of Lake Champlain. Missisquoi Abenaki actors portray their ancestors, using original and replica artifacts created especially for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Champlain's arrival in the Lake. Louie's Landing and Maquam Creek trails are featured.
- 3:00 PM** *The Changeling* (2008). Focuses on the story of a young 18th century English girl and an Abenaki warrior; and how they manage to make peace with each other. It shows a genuine antique birch bark canoe, which was filmed near Louie's Landing from a Wildlife Refuge boat.
- 4:00 PM** *Against the Darkness* (2006). Shows seven Abenaki generations from the Missisquoi Region, illustrating original ancient images, maps, tools, clothing and accessories. The Black Creek Trail and Louie's Landing are featured.
- 5:00 PM** **Dinner.** A light dinner will be hosted by the Friends of the Missisquoi NWR. Recorded Wabanaki music by regional artists will be featured.

6:00 PM *Waban-aki: People from where the sun rises* (2006). This movie was produced by the National Film Board of Canada's award winning Alanis Obomsawin. It focuses on the Abenaki people of Quebec and to a lesser extent, Vermont, but has as a main theme, canoes being built in Vermont and launched at Louie's Landing in the Refuge.

Tree Planting Day

Saturday September 26, 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Celebrate National Public Lands Day by coming to the refuge and planting trees! The goal of the tree planting is to stabilize an eroding river bank and begin the reforestation of the riverbank across the river from the Black/Maquam Trail parking lot. More information will be available as the time approaches.

Call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity.

Monthly Nature/Photography Walks

1st Saturday of each month, 9:00 to 11:00 AM

Join Friends of Missisquoi NWR members Joe Belanger, Mark Batchelder, and Bob Chaperon for nature/photography walks on various refuge trails, held the first Saturday of each month. Registration is not required. **Come have fun with us!**

September 5: Jeep Trail. Meet at the Louies Landing boat access area. We will drive in to the trail head at Macs Bend.

October 3: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across the road from the marsh.

November 7: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.

Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks

3rd Saturday of each month, 8:00 to 10:00 AM

Friends of MNWR members Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti will lead bird monitoring walks year-round 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 64 months of walks we have recorded 137 species of birds.** Registration is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

September 19: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across the road from the marsh.

October 17: Railroad Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across the road from the marsh.

November 21: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.

To check for any schedule changes or additions, visit the Friends website at www.friendsofmissisquoi.org and click on "Calendar."

For more information about the refuge, visit www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/

Vermont: A Tale of Two Habitats

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

You just never know who you're going to bump into out on the refuge. This June, I was more than a little startled when a tall, dark, and handsome stranger almost ran into me (literally!) while I was doing grassland bird surveys along Tabor Road. When he finally came to a halt (a little too close for comfort, I might add), he seemed as genuinely surprised to see me, as I was to see him. We nervously glanced at each other for a while without speaking, before he nonchalantly strode onto the Old Railroad Passage Trail. Really, if he wanted to help with grassland bird surveys, all he needed to do was ask! A few moments later, he hesitated, stared politely back at me, and then headed off to the refuge bog, apparently deciding that bird surveys weren't really his thing after all.



This serendipitous situation left me scratching my head and wondering, "Did that really just happen? Was I almost the victim of a moose hit-and-run at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge?" And then it got me thinking....

With all of the refuge's wetland, floodplain forest, and bog habitat, it's ironic that I would meet up with a moose in refuge grasslands. After all, it was the conversion of forests to open land that led to their decline. Historically, 95% of Vermont was densely forested and moose were on-the-loose and plentiful, but European settlement, logging, and agriculture changed all of that. By the mid-1800s, 75% of Vermont's forests were cleared, and moose were found only in Essex County; and by the late-1800s,

moose were a rare sight in Vermont, even in the Northeast Kingdom.

There's a saying, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction," and the wildlife of Vermont during this time sure did show it. As our long-legged furry friend and other forest creatures woefully declined, some open-habitat creatures and small, feathered friends, like the bobolinks, savannah sparrows, and Eastern meadowlarks (that I

was trying to survey before I was so rudely interrupted), jumped for joy at the change in habitat. During the 1800s in Vermont, grassland birds were in their heyday, with populations reaching all-time historic highs.

Change is inevitable, and so it goes. With western expansion during the late 1800's and 1900's, Vermont's population declined and large-scale farm abandonment occurred, drastically changing the landscape again. The once-abundant pastures and fields slowly reverted to woodlands, and today, more than 80% of Vermont is once again forested.

As the Vermont landscape changed from open agricultural land to reforested land and urban areas, the habitat for grassland birds disappeared and grassland bird populations declined. Today, most of Vermont's grasslands occur in the Champlain Valley, with Missisquoi NWR being an especially important place, since late mowing and haying of fields allows the birds to successfully raise and fledge their young.

What can I say—I have an affection and respect for both sets of species, and would never want to choose between the two. With only around 3,000 moose in the state of Vermont, and the majority of them being in Orleans, Essex, and Caledonia Counties, I consider myself more than fortunate to have “run into” this one! As for the grassland birds—if they minded a strikingly sizeable stranger galloping

through their habitat, they sure didn’t show it! Grassland bird surveys this year revealed at least 34 pairs of bobolinks, 12 pairs of savannah sparrows, one pair of meadowlarks, and a northern harrier using refuge grasslands on the east side of Tabor Road. Vermont—it’s a state having a tale of two habitats. How lucky we are to have some of each at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge!

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bi-monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at 6:30 pm

At the Refuge Visitor Center

Members are always welcome to attend.

Come and see what the board is planning and contribute your ideas.

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 6:30 pm
(Note that this is a week earlier than usual due to Veterans Day.)

ACCESS MATTERS: A FREE PASS TO NWRs

Reprinted from The Birding Community E-Bulletin July 2015 from National Wildlife Refuge Association

If you want a free pass to all National Wildlife Refuges that charge for entry – Santa Ana NWR in Texas, Forsythe NWR in New Jersey, Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico, Ding Darling NWR in Florida, Bombay Hook NWR in Delaware, Parker River NWR in Massachusetts, Ridgefield NWR in Washington, and more – get yourself the latest Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, often called the “Duck Stamp.”

Carrying the stamp constitutes a free pass to all the NWRs in the US that charge for entry. The latest Stamp was released for sale at the end of June. This is the first of these stamps to cost \$25, an increase of \$10 over the previous price of the stamp. The new stamp shows a lovely pair of Ruddy Ducks, an image painted by Jennifer Miller, of Olean, New York. Miller is only the third woman ever to have her art grace a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp.

Besides being a free NWR pass through next June and a fine collection item, it is a true conservation-funding vehicle. Proceeds from the Stamp go into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) to secure habitat in the National Wildlife Refuge System, mostly grasslands and wetlands today.

If access matters, so should holding a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp.

You can find out more on the stamp and its conservation uses from the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp: <http://www.friendsofthestamp.org/> and from the Federal Duck Stamp Office: <http://www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp.php>

The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

BOOKS

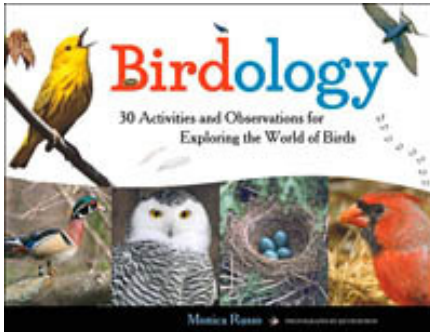
GAMES

GIFTS

TEE SHIRTS

HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



Birdology

30 Activities and Observations for Exploring the World of Birds

By Monica Russo

Photography by Kevin Byron

\$ 15.95, paper

108 pages, 11 x 8 ½, full-color photographs, full-color illustrations

An engaging book that encourages young nature enthusiasts to explore the world of birds

This generously illustrated, full-color book teaches kids that birds can be seen almost anywhere: in city parks and streets, zoos, farms, and backyards. Using "Try This," "Look For," and "Listen For" prompts, *Birdology* promotes independent observation and analysis, writing and drawing skills, and nature literacy. Kids observe the diversity of shapes, colors, patterns, and behavior of birds; listen for their songs and the clap of wings; make a juice-box feeder; plant flowers that attract hummingbirds; start a birding journal and sketchbook; and much more. Other topics that are presented in clear, kid-friendly prose include migration, nesting, food, territories, and conservation and preservation. Additional resources, such as a glossary, bird orders and scientific names, bird and wildlife organizations, and "Teacher Topics" to initiate classroom discussion and investigation, are also included.

About the author:

Monica Russo is the author and illustrator of several children's nature books, including *Amazing Insects*, *Chilly Creatures*, *Tree Almanac*, and *Watching Nature*. She wrote the "Nature Notes" column for southern Maine's *Sun Chronicle* for many years. She is an experienced birdwatcher and a founding member of the Maine Entomological Society. She lives in Kennebunk, Maine.

Kevin Byron is a photographer who specializes in nature, wildlife, and ship images and whose work has appeared in many books, magazines, and newspapers, including *BirdScope* magazine, *The Kennebunk Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Watching Nature*. He lives in Kennebunk, Maine.

When you visit the refuge, be sure to stop into the Visitor Center

and check out the store's Missisquoi logo shirts and hats,

reusable water bottles and shopping bags, and new puzzles.