



## 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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(802) 868-4781 ext 121

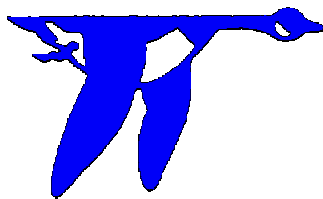
[www.friendsofmissisquoi.org](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org)

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Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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Judy Edwards	<i>Wildlife Biologist</i>
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Joe Bertrand	<i>Maintenance Mechanic</i>

MNWR Visitor Center hours  
are Monday thru Friday  
8:00am – 4:30pm  
and weekends seasonally

## Trail Cards Coming Soon!

*By Jason Crooks*

The Friends of Missisquoi NWR will institute an exciting new program: Trail Cards! These free Trail Cards will help you (or your kids or your students, etc.) track your progress toward hiking all 5 trails on the Refuge. (Note that the Jeep Trail is closed from April to the end of July).

Trail cards are available at the Friends Gift Shop at the Refuge Visitor Center on Tabor Rd. While exploring each trail, be on the lookout for a small wooden box. Inside this box is a unique hole punch. Locate the box and punch out the trail's respective space on your card. Once you've hiked all 5 trails and acquired all 5 unique punches on your card, return to the Gift Shop during operating hours to claim your prize – a unique sew-on patch (pictured at right), created specifically for the Trail Card Program, and only available to those intrepid individuals who have conquered all 5 trails!

Good luck on your Trail Card quest!



**Bags 4 My Cause** - The Friends of MNWR have been chosen again by Hannaford Store as the next beneficiary for the **Hannaford Helps Reusable Bag** program. For the month of June, the Friends will receive a \$1 direct donation from each purchase of a reusable bag at the Hannaford store located at 277 Swanton Road, Highgate Shopping Center in St. Albans. So, support the Friends -- **Buy a few bags ... we get a few bucks!**



**Water Chestnut Grant** – The Friends have again applied for and received a grant from the State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources for the control of water chestnut on the refuge. Water chestnut is a wetlands invasive species that the refuge has been working hard to control over the past several years. The grant will be used to hire two contract employees again this summer to continue the battle against water chestnut. The good news is that past control efforts have greatly reduced water chestnut numbers.

## **Refuge Manager's Update – May 2018**

*by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR*

It seems that when I look back on previous spring entries for the newsletter, my sentiments are just about always the same. It's FINALLY spring! This year seems to me to have been a much delayed spring in many ways. My personal records of wildflower blooms show that our typical woodland wildflowers were about two weeks later to open up than last year. This is a big deal for me as we creep our way out of the cold and bounce from days in the 60's back down to freezing temperatures; I always count the days until I can see the first spring wildflowers. A signal that change has come.

Of course for us at the Missisquoi NWR one of the most anticipated changes is the arrival of all the migratory birds. Each week new species appear. This year we saw huge numbers of Canada Geese congregate in the small pockets of open water in the Cabot Clark Marsh north of route 78. Many of you made a pilgrimage to see the Trumpeter Swan that was mixed into the flock. Warblers started showing up in fits and starts in early May. I saw my first Yellow Warbler, probably Missisquoi's "flagship" warbler, singing outside the office on May 4<sup>th</sup> this year. Shortly thereafter Warbling Vireos, Yellow-rumps, and Common Yellowthroats appeared everywhere!

Missisquoi River had some changes this year as well. Flooding twice devastated our neighbors along route 78 and also created some problems for the refuge. Significant erosion of our parking lots and Mac's Bend road occurred requiring our equipment operator Joe Bertrand to spend considerable time this spring making emergency repairs. More work is planned to finish these sites to get them ready for summer traffic. Other infrastructure and equipment were damaged or destroyed in the flood which will have to be repaired and replaced. However, we feel lucky in comparison to the families who had to endure much more during the two flood events.

It is events like the flood that make me even more appreciative of our volunteers at the refuge. One person in particular who has been helping out consistently is Hal Bill. Hal has become a regular part of our staff it seems and has been invaluable in helping the staff pick up the loose ends of refuge management. He and other volunteers from Global Foundries and Keurig Green Mountain spent several hours around the Black/Maquam Trail picking up trash and debris which piled up on the refuge from the two flood events. A dumpster was filled in a matter of hours and over 30 tires were picked up on the refuge's annual Green Up day. A big thanks to all who helped out!

Looking forward to the summer, the refuge staff will face more challenges – we are contemplating the real possibility of having a significant spike in invasive species on the refuge resulting from flood waters and ice jams. New populations of Japanese knotweed have already been found in two locations. However, knowing the refuge staff and our dedicated volunteers I'm sure that these (not so great) changes can be dealt with. Changes are what we can expect year to year. Focusing on the exciting changes on the refuge, the incoming migration of birds, the new wildflowers blooming, the increased participation, and help from volunteers will certainly carry us through the difficult changes we need to address. As always I hope and encourage everyone to get out on the refuge trails this spring and early summer and enjoy the most spectacular wetland in Vermont, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge!



## **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.**

### **2018 "Art On the Refuge" Exhibit**

**May 19 through July 20**

The Friends of MNWR is hosting an Art Exhibit again this year at the Refuge Visitor Center. Works will be focused on birds and nature found on the refuge. Media may include oil, acrylics, watercolor, pen and ink, pastels, and photographs. Most works will be for sale. Artwork can be viewed and purchased during normal refuge office hours through July 20, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

### **Kids Fishing Clinic**

**Saturday, June 2, 8:00 AM to approx 1:00 PM**

The annual Kids Fishing Clinic will take place along the Mac's Bend Road from Louie's Landing parking lot down to the Mac's Bend boat launch site, a distance of about 1 mile. Fishing will take place along the banks of the Missisquoi River. Numerous educational and informational venues will be operating near the Mac's Bend Building while the fishing is on-going. Activities include fly casting, fly tying, spincasting, watershed models and demonstrations, a fish ID aquarium, lure making, and an aquatic invasive species display. Children are encouraged to participate in these activities at some time while they are fishing. A light lunch will be served, and a limited number of random drawing prizes will be given away at the end of the event.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this popular annual event.

### **Eagle Point WMA Bird Walk**

**Saturday, June 9, 8:00 to 10:00 AM**

The Friends, in partnership with the Memphremagog Watershed Association, will be holding the 3rd annual Bird Walk at the Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area. The walk will be from 8:00 to 10:00 AM on June 9, 2018.

Located along the Canadian border just north of Newport City, Eagle Point WMA is owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and is officially part of the Missisquoi NWR. It is managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department in partnership with the refuge. Eagle Point is a 420 acre parcel consisting of nearly a mile of lakeshore habitat, numerous wetlands, large meadows, hemlock, and mixed forest. It supports a great diversity of wildlife including aquatic mammals, waterfowl, grassland birds, and many other wetland and terrestrial species.

Please email Ken Copenhaver at [copenhvr@gmail.com](mailto:copenhvr@gmail.com) if you plan to attend the walk or need more information. Thank you. Hope to see you there!

Optionally, for anyone who wants to make a day of it, some of us are planning to bird a few more Northeast Kingdom spots after the walk, possibly Moose Bog or Silvio Conte NWR. All are welcome to join us!

### **Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Program**

**Saturday, August 18, 8:00am to 4:30pm**

The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Program is being offered to young hunters who want to learn more about the sport of waterfowl hunting and experience a high quality waterfowl hunt. The program is offered to youngsters 12 to 17 years of age who have an adult waterfowl hunter to serve as a mentor.

The Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Program is a joint educational effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, the Vermont Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, the Sportsman's Club of Franklin County and volunteers to teach young hunters about waterfowl hunting. The program instructs beginning hunters in the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible, respected individuals who strive to learn all they can about the species being hunted and to become knowledgeable in firearms safety, hunter ethics, and wildlife conservation.

All mentors and young hunters must attend the one-day training session on Saturday, August 18, with instruction beginning at 8:00 AM at the Franklin County Sportsman's Club on Route 36 (Maquam Shore Road) in St. Albans. The training session will be held rain or shine, so participants should dress appropriately. Junior hunters should bring the shotgun they intend to hunt with and 3-4 shotgun shells for patterning.

Junior Hunters and their mentors, once they complete the training, are awarded exclusive use of several premier hunting areas at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge for the first four weekends of the waterfowl hunting season. Blind sites and hunting dates for the Jr. Hunters are determined by a lottery conducted at the annual training session.

To register for this year's program, call refuge headquarters at 802-868-4781 by Friday, August 17. Participation in the program will be limited to 40 enrollees. Please include the mentor's and youth's name, address and telephone number.

### **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 97 months of walks we have recorded 151 species of birds.** Registration for the walks is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

**June 16: Railroad Trail.** Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge Visitor Center and across the road from the marsh.

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

**August 19: Jeep Trail.** Meet at the Louie's Landing parking lot located on Rte 78, approx 3 ½ miles west of Swanton village. From there we will drive to the trail head at Mac's Landing.

**Other Spring events 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 at**

**[www.friendsofmissisquoi.org](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org) and click on "Calendar."**

**For more information about the refuge, visit [www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/)**

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.

## Life in a Floodplain Forest

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

Spring is here, or is it? Only Mother Nature knows for sure! Let's see...it's May, the sun is out (3 days in a row now, but who's counting), vegetation is greener than it was, and birds are whizzing by the Refuge Headquarters. Yeah, spring is here! Err, not so fast. A view of the floodplain forest seems to contradict that conclusion. The mud, dirty chunks of ice, and still-dormant trees suggest that Old Man Winter is still lurking about. The truth is that spring comes gradually in Missisquoi's floodplain forest, with *subtle* and *not-so-subtle* ways of showing its arrival!

For those of you who don't know, Missisquoi NWR's silver maple-sensitive fern floodplain forest is a BIG deal. Spanning more than a thousand contiguous acres along the Missisquoi River, it's the largest intact, highest-quality, floodplain forest in the state! Why? The floodplain forests of Vermont were too good for their own good. Fertile soils and lack of stones led to forest clearing for agriculture. Now, only remnants of this (now uncommon) natural community remain.

So, what are the telltale signs of springtime? As the name implies, a floodplain forest, well...

**floods**...usually in the spring, sometimes in the fall, and shockingly, even in the depth of winter this year! More wetland than forest, it's composed of 90% silver maples, with other trees (green ash, swamp white oak) that love to be up to their knees in water. Make no mistake, the wet and dry cycles of the floodplain forest are its lifeblood. As the flood waters recede, woody debris, fertile soil, and seeds get deposited, to nourish and replenish the habitat. *Subtle*, or not, here it comes!

Unfortunately, with the 767,000-acre Missisquoi River Watershed, there's plenty of *not-so-subtle*

trash brought to the floodplain forest as well. There's the usual (Styrofoam and plastic everything, drink cans, bottles, diapers, fast food wrappings, etc.) and the unusual (one water ski, a plethora of tires, 3 Ski-doo seats, the hood of a Husqvarna riding mower, etc.), with my personal favorite this year being a set of TIKI torches. Thank goodness for Refuge Green-Up Day and the merry crew of hard-working volunteers (Global Foundries, Keurig) that came to help!

What else signifies spring? A fleeting glimpse of crimson on the floodplain forest floor causes a double-take, and makes me awake to another symbol of spring. It's red trillium (a.k.a. Wake Robin) in an otherwise seemingly lifeless place. Be forewarned: although the flower is *subtle* and beautiful, the smell is anything but! One sniff will let you know why this plant is also called Stinking Benjamin. Needing to attract carrion flies for pollination is one foul endeavor!

Then there are ducks—a *subtle* but sure mark of spring—that appear with the first open water. While some continue their migration north, others can't wait to mate and nest in the fabulous floodplain forest. Rumor has it that the glut of natural cavities (formed by broken-off branches of mature silver maples), with a few artificial nesting boxes thrown in, make Missisquoi's floodplain forest a cavity-nesting duck destination! Don't worry if you hear whistling, or see a duck in a tree—it's probably a Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Or Hooded Merganser just checking out the real estate. In addition, neotropical migrants, tree bats, tree-nesting colonial water birds, and many, many other species benefit from this unique habitat and all it has to offer. That's life in a floodplain forest—where springtime arrives slowly, but is well worth the wait!

## FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### Bi-monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, July 11, 2018 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, September 12, 2018 at 6:30 pm

## **The Friends bid a fond farewell to Eddy Edwards, Wildlife Officer**

*by Catherine Waltz*

Some years back my husband and I happened to meet Eddy at the annual Refuge Volunteer dinner. Although I knew he was the regional wildlife officer serving refuges in several states, I didn't know that he was an avid birder as well. He regaled us with stories about his world travels pursuing elusive species and helped to kindle my interest in birding.

The following fall we began volunteering during duck banding season and the quality time with Eddy really began. Sitting under the trees waiting for ducks to come within range of the netting, he entertained us with more birding stories. Occasionally he would stop and call out the ID of a passing species.

This past week I managed to catch up with Eddy for a brief interview. But between packing and warbler migration we decided an online exchange would be best:

### **What duties did you generally have on our Refuge?**

For the past 10 ½ years I served as the Zone Federal Wildlife Officer for the Refuges in Vermont and New Hampshire. At Missisquoi I was involved in enforcing federal wildlife laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Refuge Administration Act.

### **What is your favorite time of year on the Refuge?**

May and October during the bird migration. Sorry, I can't pick one over the other.

### **Any good stories involving your hunting enforcement?**

There are many humorous stories but often times it has to do with duck hunters and the things they do to try to outwit a duck! Sometimes while conducting surveillance I catch myself laughing out loud at some of the crazy stuff hunters do. Often blowing my cover.

### **Where is your favorite place on the Refuge?**

My favorite place is what we commonly refer to as the end of the middle branch (north of the heron rookery) that dumps into Missisquoi Bay. I have probably seen more species of birds at that location than any other spot on the refuge.

### **What about hunting?**

It's hard to hunt when your job expects you to be out on the refuge checking hunters. So I don't get out as much as I would like. I have two field springer spaniels (Gypsy and Jasper) who love to hunt and with my new job I am hoping to spend more time in the woods with them chasing grouse and woodcock.

### **What's next for you?**

My new position will be the Assistant Refuge Manager at Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. I will work on day to day issues with the biological, law enforcement, and maintenance programs at the refuge. The refuge manages more than 70 islands off the coast of Maine for a variety of nesting seabirds such as Atlantic puffins, Razorbills, and Arctic, Common, and Roseate terns, as well as other migratory birds. My new duty station will be in the town of Rockland, Maine.

Best wishes, Eddy, in your new position and thank you for your service!

And now, some accolades from Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager:

Eddy was a Swiss army knife kind of employee. His primary job was to supervise Law Enforcement Officers at several refuges. Being stationed at Missisquoi, he helped our refuge tremendously by patrolling and checking hunters and performing other law enforcement tasks. But he was much more than a Law Enforcement Officer. He was a skilled biologist with a passion for birds and helped refuge staff conduct a host of wildlife surveys and was always available and enthusiastic for waterfowl banding projects. He also complemented the staff by serving as a boat operator for both routine work projects and special public use events like our annual Migratory Bird Day celebration. Eddy had a good head for refuge management and I would frequently bounce ideas off of him before making decisions. His passion for Missisquoi NWR was evident in everything he did here. We wish him well on his new adventures in Maine and for sure the eBird checklists for the refuge will reflect his absence!



# The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS

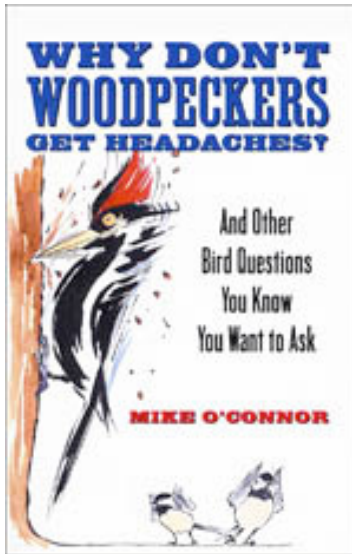
GAMES

GIFTS

TEE SHIRTS

HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



## Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches?

And Other Bird Questions You Know You Want to Ask

Mike O'Connor

\$ 15.95, paper, 224 pages, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, b&w illustrations

**A beginner's guide filled with wisdom and humor, based on Mike O'Connor's beloved "Ask the Bird Folks" columns**

In 1983, Mike O'Connor opened the Bird Watcher's General Store on Cape Cod, which might well have been the first store devoted solely to birding in the United States. Since that time he has answered thousands of questions about birds, both at his store and while walking down the aisles of the supermarket. The questions have ranged from inquiries about individual species ("Are flamingos really real?") to what and when to feed birds ("Should I bring in my feeders for the summer?") to the down-and-dirty specifics of backyard birding ("Why are the birds dropping poop in my pool?"). Answering the questions has been easy; keeping a straight face has been hard.

## The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America, Second Edition

David Allen Sibley

\$ 19.95, flexibound with flaps, 440 pages, 4 7/8 x 7 3/4 full-color illustrations, maps

**Now completely revised and updated—the indispensable resource for all birders seeking an authoritative guide to the birds of the East, in a portable format they will want to carry into the field.**

Compact and comprehensive, this guide features 650 bird species, plus regional populations, found east of the Rocky Mountains. Entries include stunningly accurate illustrations—more than 4,601 in total—with descriptive captions pointing out the most important field marks. Each entry has been updated to include the most current information concerning frequency, nesting, behavior, food and feeding, voice description, and key identification features. Here too are more than 601 updated maps drawn from information contributed by 110 regional experts across the continent, and showing winter, summer, year-round, migration, and rare ranges.

- Updated habitat, description, behavior, and conservation text for each species account and all family pages.
- All illustrations, including new and revised illustrations of species and regional forms, are taken from the rescanned and meticulously color-corrected 2nd printing of the 2nd edition of the *Sibley Guide*.
- All species accounts are now presented in columns, rather than stacked, allowing for better comparison and more illustrations and text for each species.
- Current taxonomic order and up-to-date common names.
- All maps revised to reflect the most current range information.
- More species and rarities included.

