

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

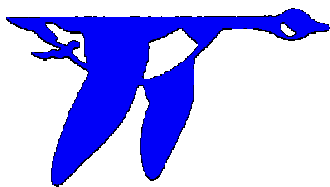
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Newsletter edited by Al Crist

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



2019 is the "International Year of the Salmon". It's a year dedicated to the amazing life cycle, history, and conservation of salmon species, worldwide. The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge will be helping to celebrate the "Year of the Salmon" thanks to a grant from the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership and the Swanton Arts Council. The Swanton Arts Council and the refuge met early on to discuss the development of a film highlighting the spirit of the International Year of the Salmon. Filming took place mostly on the refuge with a cast from the local community.

Landlocked Atlantic Salmon historically swam up the Missisquoi River to spawn and are found in the river today. Before the 1800's, salmon occurred in Lake Champlain in huge, nearly unbelievable numbers. But in the 1800s a lot of things started to go wrong: overfishing, agricultural runoff, development, and worst of all for a migratory fish species, the construction of dams along rivers. If salmon can't reach the shallow, gravelly stream beds, with steadily flowing cold water that provide the right conditions for them to spawn, they can't spawn. By the end of the 1800s, the native Atlantic Salmon population was gone from Lake Champlain.

In 1972, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service along with the states of Vermont and New York began a coordinated effort to restore Lake Champlain's Atlantic Salmon population. In 2016 and 2017, naturally reproduced salmon fry were found in the Boquet River in New York and the Winooski River in Vermont for the first time in 150 years. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, still stock landlocked Atlantic Salmon in the Missisquoi River as well as other locations in the Champlain basin.

"The Year of the Salmon", an original local film, will premier at the Weldon Theater in St. Albans on September 16, beginning at 5:30 pm. If you want to learn more about salmon populations and the work to restore salmon to Vermont, visit the refuge Visitor's Center on September 20th at 6:00pm for a reception and a talk by USFWS Fisheries Biologist Bill Ardren. Dr. Ardren was awarded the prestigious Rachel Carson Award for Exemplary Scientific Accomplishment for his work coordinating salmon restoration efforts in the basin. This will be followed by a screening of the "The Year of the Salmon". We hope to see you at one or both of these events to celebrate salmon!

## Refuge Manager's Update - August, 2019

*by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR*

A dumpster of trash picked up. Acres of invasive species surveyed and treated. Dozens of hours on a tractor cutting grass. Hours upon hours of bird walks and special programs. Consistent Visitor Center coverage. What do all these things have in common one may ask? It is simple. Volunteers. The refuge does a whole lot for the conservation and management of wildlife and its habitats, but we would do a whole lot less if it was not for the dedicated group of volunteers who support us.

When I sit back and think of the last year and all of the activities and work which volunteers have helped us with, it is truly remarkable. Several folks have been long term consistent volunteers; others have become increasingly engaged over the last year. Some are brand new and have been brought into the refuge family by other volunteers. This year we calculate that the refuge benefitted from over 1,000 hours of volunteer support – support for habitat management, maintenance and visitor services.

Our Friends Group, who account for many volunteer hours, also support the refuge through managing grants. As in previous years, the Friends of Missisquoi funded invasive species control projects, focusing on

water chestnut, with a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program and another from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. This was the seventh year the Friends of Missisquoi have funded invasive species projects on the refuge. These funds increase the refuge's ability to stay consistent with critical control operations and in the case of water chestnut, continue the success of infestation reduction.

All I can say is... Thank you. Thank you all for being so supportive of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. The dedication our staff sees in our refuge volunteers year in and year out is amazing. Thank you to those volunteers who have been with us for a long time and those who have recently found a reason to begin helping the refuge with its important work. With a small staff (and a staff which got smaller last year) the help volunteers is critical and much appreciated.

For anyone out there reading this who would like to become more involved in the refuge, please give me call or stop in to chat. As the summer winds down, we at the refuge look forward to a productive fall and winter and especially continuing to collaborate with our volunteers on the important work of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

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## National Wildlife Refuge Association Visits Missisquoi

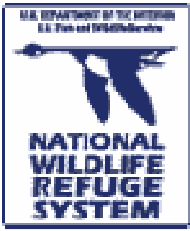
*by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR*

In June we had the pleasure of hosting the annual board meeting of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA). This non-profit organization supports the 566 National Wildlife Refuges across the country including the multitude of associated refuge Friends Groups. The NWRA does this in many important ways including having a significant presence on Capitol Hill to lobby for the interests of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The annual meeting is a time for the refuge and its key partners to provide site-specific information to the NWRA board members. During their visit to Missisquoi NWR we were lucky to have presentations from our Congressional and Senate staffers, Friends of Missisquoi NWR, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department,

The Vermont Department of Historic Preservation and the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement. These presentations helped the NWRA board understand the significance of Missisquoi NWR as well as the broad local and legislative support we have in Vermont.

Although an afternoon refuge tour was shortened due to drenching rain, an evening social sponsored by the Friends of Missisquoi NWR was a great success. On the last day of their visit NWRA board members joined Friends President Rich Kelley on a guided walk on refuge trails while others paddled the Missisquoi River. Through this visit, the NWRA board surely was able to understand the importance of the Missisquoi NWR and the great support we have from our partners, especially the Friends of Missisquoi NWR.



## Fall 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.

### “The Year of the Salmon”

Friday, September 20, 6pm

A reception and talk by USFWS Fisheries Biologist Bill Ardren on salmon restoration efforts in Vermont will be followed by a screening of the new, locally produced movie “The Year of the Salmon”. At the Visitor’s Center. See page 1 for complete details.

### “The Big Sit!”

Saturday, October 12, dawn to dusk

The Friends of Missisquoi NWR will be holding their third annual “Big Sit!” at the Stephen J. Young Marsh observation platform. We plan to have observers present from dawn until dusk on Saturday, October 12.

You may wonder, what exactly is a Big Sit!? Some call it a “tailgate party for birders”. It’s an annual, international, noncompetitive, extremely sedentary birding event organized by Bird Watcher’s Digest magazine. It’s like a Big Day or a bird-a-thon in that the goal is to count as many bird species as possible within a 24-hour period, but with the major restriction that observations must be made from within a 17-foot diameter circle! There are Big Sit! circles all over the world, including Guatemala, India, the Netherlands, England, Vietnam, and New Zealand. Participants can come and go as they please during the day, and the circle need not be occupied for the entire 24 hours. The platform at Stephen Young Marsh is well within the 17-foot limit. In 2018 we watched from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM and observed 46 species—not bad for October.



Come join us for the whole day, for an hour or two, or just stop in and say hello. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun. Located on Tabor Rd, about 1 mile south of the refuge Visitor Center.

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!



**Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks****3rd Saturday of each month, 8:00 to 10:00 AM**

Friends of MNWR members Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti 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 113 months of walks we have recorded 158 species of birds. Registration for the walks is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

**September 21 :**    **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.

**October 19 :**    **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.

**November 16 :**    **Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton village.

All 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”.





## A Beautiful Competition

by Judy Sefchick, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

Another summer flies by, both *literally* and figuratively, at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. While some refuge critters fly south or dive deep, other organisms stay strong to compete in a little-known refuge event: Missisquoi's annual beauty pageant. If you knew nothing about this event, you are not alone. With little advertisement or fanfare, this pageant remains a quiet and low-key affair. After all, who needs traffic jams, a media blitz, or masses of paparazzi? Featuring beautiful, back-to-nature contestants, who are true to their native Vermont roots, this pageant is a success regardless of how many come to see it. With contestants sharing a common goal to 'live and breathe for wildlife' what could be better for the refuge? What's more, for the swimsuit competition, they all scored a perfect 10! Start paddling your kayaks and rowing your boats—this beauty pageant is well worth the effort.

Although Missisquoi's beauty pageant actually started weeks ago, the competition is still going strong. The grand finale may be days, weeks, or months away, but each year is different. Nonetheless, the motto for this event seems to be a resounding, "...summer isn't over, until it's over!" Oh, how I wish we could all be that positive. Quiet now; the competition is about to start with the introduction of the first contestant.



Wearing a brilliant violet-blue spike, accessorized with heart-shaped green leaves, pickerelweed is as profoundly beautiful as it is devoted. Resembling an Easter hyacinth that blooms from the bottom up, this competitor has something more to say than, "world peace," when asked what it wants to achieve. Though its goal, 'to provide food and shelter for

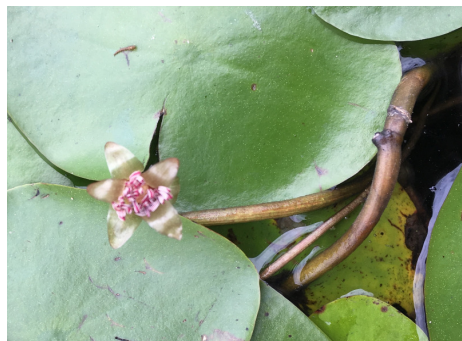
all,' is lofty, it has no trouble achieving it each year. With lush stems and leaves that naturally harbor creatures, both above and below the water surface, pickerelweed has time and energy to produce food; ducks eat its seeds, muskrats chomp its rhizomes, bumblebees ingest the nectar, and deer munch the whole, darn plant!

If skill interests you, then look no further than contestant number two. Wearing a single unrooted stem and

simple yellow blossom, common bladderwort seems inconspicuous. Appearances, however, can be deceiving. In fact, bladderwort's custom-made yellow ensemble is actually a complex feat of engineering, with every bell and whistle imaginable. With underwater stems that have numerous small bladders, bladderwort's story reads like science fiction. Each bladder contains hairs, that when touched, trigger the bladder to open. When water and tiny organisms flow into the bladder, it snaps shut, trapping everything inside. Bladderwort is a *carnivorous wetland plant*! Before you cast too many stones, think about this: bladderwort's highly specialized bladder trap is one of the most sophisticated structures in the entire plant kingdom. Wow!



The final contestant wears a subtle shade of maroon and has long loosely branching sleeves, adorned with floating oval leaves. Watershield is a multi-talented contestant that provides shade with its leaves, high-quality food with its seeds, and is a master of self-defense. Not taking any chances, this clever contestant coats itself in gelatinous slime to prevent drying if the water levels drop, or to thwart consumption, if a wayward mammal stops. In addition, this competitor skillfully plays the game of hide-and-seek; its flowers emerge and bloom by day, but go back underwater at night.



Who knew a wetland plant could have so much fun?

Enjoy the last days of summer, and try to see the finale of this spectacular summer show. It's here for all to see, at this unique, protected place, called Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

## Sharing Missisquoi

*by Jennifer Thelen, Visitor Services Ranger*

After a chilly winter spent mostly indoors I couldn't wait to get back to Missisquoi this spring! More than getting outdoors myself, I love sharing the refuge with visitors. This is my second season at Missisquoi so I came ready to jump right into giving education programs for school groups and summer camps.

This summer I worked with groups from pre-Kindergartners, who were just learning what is a bird, to Hinesburg high school students, who were taking a class on wetland bird habitats. I visited students in Bakersfield as they released trout into a tributary of the Missisquoi River and we discovered the animals that live in and around the river. I took elementary students from a summer bug camp on a hike searching for insects along the Discovery Trail. The bugs got overshadowed by a garter snake who was trying to eat a leopard frog. The frog, though already half into the snake's mouth, was struggling to get away. A memory these students will likely never forget.

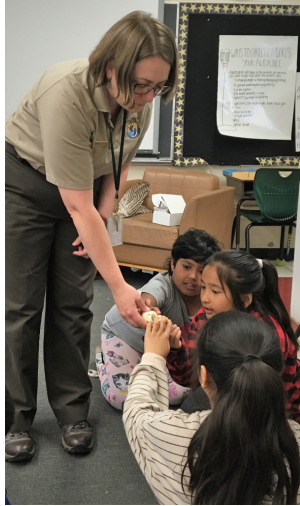
Not only did I want to work with groups this year, I also wanted to provide individual refuge visitors with a chance to get outdoors with an educator and learn a bit more about Missisquoi as they explored. Wednesday evening walks and Friday family programs drew local folks as well as those visiting from as far away as England. On one walk of the Old Railroad Passage Trail a barred owl swooped down in front of us and sat on a maple branch. A once in a lifetime sight for some visitors.

For those who wanted to independently explore, we kept the education backpacks and binoculars ready for

check out. It's fun to have a group come back after using the binoculars, bug boxes, and nature bingo to excitedly tell you about the bird or the bug they saw and ask questions to get a deeper understanding of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

I reached out to the communities surrounding Missisquoi to participate in events like the Swanton National Night Out where we had a fishing game for kids. I'll be heading to Highgate Library for story hour in September. I'll also be at the Swanton Arts Spectacular September 7<sup>th</sup> where you can make a water cycle bracelet. Come out and see me!

I'll also be back in schools soon bringing Missisquoi into classrooms in Swanton and Winooski. It's been a fun and busy summer. As we head into fall, I'm looking forward to continuing to share my love of Missisquoi with visitors from near and far.



**Jenn will be manning a Missisquoi NWR booth at the Swanton Arts Spectacular, held at the Swanton Village Green on Saturday, Sept. 7, beginning at 10am. Crafters, Artisans, Music, Food, Fireworks, & Fun!!!**

## FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETING

**Wednesday, September 11, 2019 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.

## **The Friends' Store** at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge



This summer has been a busy time in the store thanks to our resident RV visitor service workers, as well as local volunteers, who kept the store open for business.

Caps and shirt inventories have been replenished and we now have a new item - camo T-shirts - for sale.

Bird guides continue to be a staple at the store. Stop by to peruse our new bee category, including children's books as well as field guides. One interesting book, Plant for Pollinators, details planting tips to help the bees. Other new plant guides include A Handbook of Native American Herbs, Edible Wild Plants, and Good Berry Bad Berry.

And of course, with duck season just around the corner, check out our selection of waterfowl books. Thank you for continuing to support the Friends projects here on the Refuge

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## **Missisquoi NWR** **Seasonal Trail Closures & Advisories**

### **Jeep Trail**

#### **Closed:**

April 1- August 1  
Youth deer weekend: Nov. 9-10  
Muzzleloader Season: Dec. 7-15

#### **Trail Advisory:**

Waterfowl Season: Oct. 10- Dec. 8

### **Discovery Trail**

#### **Closed:**

Youth deer weekend: Nov. 9-10  
Regular deer season: Nov. 16-Dec.1  
Muzzleloader Season: Dec. 7-15

#### **Trail Advisory:**

Archery Season: Oct. 5-Nov 1 & Dec. 7- 15  
Small Game Season: Sept. 1-Dec. 31

### **Old Railroad Passage Trail**

#### **Closed:**

Youth deer weekend: Nov. 9-10  
Regular deer season: Nov. 16-Dec.1  
Muzzleloader Season: Dec. 7-15

### **Old Railroad Passage Trail**

#### **Trail Advisory:**

Archery Season: Oct. 5-Nov 1 & Dec. 7- 15  
Small Game Season: Sept. 1-Dec. 31

### **Stephen J. Young Marsh Trail**

#### **Closed:**

Youth deer weekend: Nov. 9-10  
Regular deer season: Nov. 16-Dec.1  
Muzzleloader Season: Dec. 7-15

#### **Trail Advisory**

Archery Season: Oct. 5-Nov 1 & Dec. 7- 15  
Small Game Season: Sept. 1-Dec. 31

The "Trail Advisory" is a notification that the area is currently open to hunting and visitors may proceed with caution.

The **Black Creek/Maquam Creek Trail** area is closed to hunting and is a great choice for those not wishing to hike in an area which may have hunters.