



## 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)

E-mail: [info@friendsofmissisquoi.org](mailto:info@friendsofmissisquoi.org)

Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

## Board of Directors

Joe Belanger

*President*

Anne Bataille

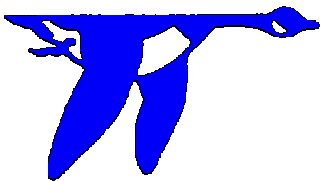
*Vice President*

Steve Riley

Rich Kelley

Paul Madden

Ken Copenhaver



## Refuge Staff

Mark Sweeny

*Refuge Manager*

Dave Frisque

*Assistant Refuge Manager*

Eddie Edwards

*Zone Enforcement Officer*

Judy Edwards

*Wildlife Biologist*

Lisa Swainbank

*Office Administrative Assistant*

Joe Bertrand

*Maintenance Mechanic*

MNWR hours are  
Monday thru Friday  
8:00am – 4:30pm, and  
Saturdays 10:00am – 2:00pm  
beginning May 23.

## President's Message

The year for the Friends of Missisquoi starts, and ends, with International Migratory Bird Day, which will be held on May 23<sup>rd</sup> this year. On this day the refuge staff will host our organization and members of the public at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, and the Friends of MNWR will host our annual meeting. So first I would like to invite all of our members, and their friends, to save this day on your calendars to join me and the Friends Board of Directors at the Refuge headquarters to enjoy the activities of International Migratory Bird Day. You can find times and other details elsewhere in this newsletter.

I would like to remind you that the mission of the Friends organization is to support the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and its manager and staff both financially and as volunteers. Currently the Friends of MNWR has about 100 active members and a governing board of six. Our members support activities like International Migratory Bird Day and the Kids Fishing Derby. This year in September and October the refuge will host the St Albans Artist Guild with an art show of works depicting scenes of the refuge. And volunteers are doing bird counts, maintaining walking trails, and leading guided tours. The Friends organization currently has some specific needs, and I would like to ask all of you who are interested in the refuge to consider donating your time and expertise.

The by laws of the Friends requires that the board of directors be made up of six to twelve members in good standing to guide the organization and represent the members to the refuge. Currently we are operating with six directors. After serving multiple terms we have founding directors who are required by the bylaws to step down. I would like to ask active members to seriously consider joining our board. It is an opportune time to support this incredible resource that we have here in northwest Vermont. The time commitment would be to attend quarterly board meetings, along with the possibility of being the leader for a project or activity. If you are interested in further details about joining our board, please contact me or any of the other board members. We will provide you with the bylaws and answer any questions you might have.

The board is also looking for a person who has the expertise to manage our membership database. This would require a working knowledge of Microsoft Access and time to process memberships, assist with mailings, and update the database once per month. This is a very important activity as our members are the lifeblood of the organization. If you are interested in supporting the Friends in this capacity, please contact me directly.

And lastly, our newsletter editor would be most appreciative of articles that would be of interest to the members. If you have had a notable visit to the refuge and would like to share your experience through the newsletter, please submit your articles to board director Ken Copenhaver.

Thank you for being a member in good standing of the Friends of the Missisquoi National Wildlife refuge. It is your support that makes it work. Please take advantage of the activities we have around the refuge or just come and take a walk on one of the trails.

*Respectfully,*  
*Joe Belanger, President, FMNWR*

Manager's Musings - April 2009

by Mark Sweeney, Manager, Missisquoi NWR

Well, ready or not, spring is approaching. We saw some outstandingly nice days in March, nice enough that we were starting to think Spring really had arrived, and not just because the calendar said so. Here at the refuge, and undoubtedly in your back yard, we are seeing other signs that we too are on the doorstep of Spring.

The ice left the Missisquoi River, in our stretch anyway, a couple of weeks ago. The ice left Missisquoi Bay last weekend (April 4-5). Many birds, gone since last fall, are returning – an osprey at a nest beside Patrick Marsh and Route 78 this morning, killdeer in the parking lot, and ducks, geese, robins, and starlings galore! Wood frogs and salamanders are active and I've heard spring peepers for several nights now when the wind was calm.

The poster bird of the Friends of Missisquoi, the Great Blue Heron, is starting out in grand fashion. Refuge Wildlife Biologist Judy Sefchick-Edwards counted 70 birds at the rookery two weeks ago, and over 200 birds there last week.

Don't forget our national symbol. We have received more than one excited phone call or

email recently about bald eagle nests in the area, but nothing is confirmed yet. Keep your fingers crossed for that eventuality. It's going to happen up here sooner or later. I think you can count on it. Both adult and immature birds have been reported on and around the refuge lately.

Woodcock are back as well, and while I haven't been out at the right time or in the right place to see or hear the courtship flight of the males, a couple of birds fly across the road in front of me at sundown. Spend a few minutes right after sundown, on a calm evening, near an open grassy meadow bordered by a wetland and some early successional forested habitat and you may well see and hear one. If you don't know a spot like that, give us a call. Park Ranger Dave Frisque is leading a couple of woodcock walks that you may get in on. When the conditions are right, it's a lot of fun and a great experience.

I don't expect we'll see seriously frozen water again before November, but don't forget though that Mother Nature has a bit of an odd sense of humor. She may well throw us just a touch more winter weather before she let's spring really arrive. When that happens, just laugh as best you can at her little joke as you always do, then enjoy the spring. Better yet, enjoy it at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. It's good for you!

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## Celebrate the Quadricentennial at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge with the "Lake Champlain's First Navigators" Exhibit

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's 1609-era birch bark canoe replica, built by Abenaki artisan Aaron York, will be on display at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge headquarters from May 18, 2009 through May 29, 2009. The 20 foot long craft with its five accompanying interpretive panels and a DVD will show 11,000 years of native culture, the pivotal year of 1609, and the 400 years since Samuel de Champlain's visit and discovery of Lake Champlain.

Refuge Headquarters will be open Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm during this period. Additionally, an Open House is planned for Saturday, May 23 from 8am to 4pm to showcase

the exhibit, celebrate International Migratory Bird Day 2009, and to conduct the annual meeting of the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Inc. Refuge Headquarters will also be open to view the exhibit on Sunday, May 24, from 10am to 2pm.

The "First Explorers" exhibit is available to libraries, schools, museums, and other institutions and events throughout the Champlain Valley, but this may be its only stop in Franklin County this year. Here's your chance to see it!

## **National Friends Conference**

*by Paul Madden*

Friends of M NWR Director

“FRIENDS” from National Wildlife Refuges from all across the country came together for the 5<sup>th</sup> National Friends Conference, held in Washington, DC in late February. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association sponsored the conference, with 300 Friends and about 150 US Fish and Wildlife staff coming from 49 states.

Three representative from Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge attended the conference this year: Vanessa Madden, a Friends member, Dave Frisque, assistant manager of the Refuge, and myself.

The conference offered 46 different workshops, giving us plenty of choices, as the many different refuges have a wide variety of situations, problems, and opportunities. Dave, Vanessa, and I attended workshops that focused on Refuge bird-watching, board development, volunteer development, working with conservation partners, grant writing, and so on. Various exhibits and panel discussions were also

available. All in all, we found plenty of good information and had the opportunity to talk with people associated with wildlife refuges in all parts of the country.

Based on these discussions, we concluded that we have relatively good conditions here at Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge -- no violent drug runners crossing the border, no invasive alligators, no droughts or wildfires, no gross amounts of trash dumping, etc. It is always nice to go away with an increased appreciation for what we have here at home.

The National Wildlife Refuge System was started in 1903 by President Teddy Roosevelt and now has 150 million acres in 550 wildlife refuges. Vermont has two wildlife refuges, with the Missisquoi refuge having been established in 1943 and the Nulhegan Basin established in the Northeast Kingdom in 1999 as part of the Silvio Conte Refuge, parts of which are in four New England states.

For more information about the Refuge System and to find a refuge to visit when you journey to other states, please follow this link:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>

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## **JUNIOR DUCK STAMP WINNER**

Aubrie St.Louis from Greensboro Bend, Vermont was selected as the 2009 Junior Duck Stamp Contest winner (Best of Show) on March 26, 2009. Aubrie, a student at the Lyndon Institute, entered an oil painting of a common merganser titled “On Watch.” Judges included Michael Hansen, Karen Day-Vath, Robert Chaperon Jr., Jane Bouchard, and Robert Mulkeen. The judges selected the winning entry from a total of 138 entries from across Vermont. Age groups K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12 were represented this year.

Aubrie’s winning entry was passed on to the Washington D.C. Duck Stamp Office. Here it will be entered into the National Junior Duck Stamp Contest, which will be held on April 22, 2009 at the Smithsonian Institute. It will compete with 51 other “Best of Show” entries from the 50 states and U.S. Territories.

Each artist who submitted an art entry was also asked to provide a “Conservation Message” along with the artwork. The Conservation Message helps the young artists connect the waterfowl artwork with the need to protect and conserve habitats that waterfowl and other wildlife need. The Conservation Message is also judged at the State and National levels. The combination of an artistic expression and a conservation message meets many state educational standards and supports the mission of the Junior Duck Stamp Program to “Connect Children with Nature Through Science and Art.”

The Vermont Best of Show entry and all other Vermont first place artworks will be displayed on a freestanding display board inside the refuge headquarters building beginning in mid-April.

## **News from the National Wildlife Refuge Association**

The federal Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved more than \$26 million in grants to protect and restore more than 200,000 acres of wetland areas and wildlife habitat in the United States and Mexico. The commission awarded the grants under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). They also approved \$11.5 million in Federal Duck Stamp funds to add more than 3,500 wetland acres to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The commission, headed by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, includes Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, Representative John Dingell of Michigan, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, as well as state representatives serving as ex officio members who vote on projects located within their respective states.

More than \$24.2 million in NAWCA grant funds will support 25 projects in 21 states and Puerto Rico, with partners contributing an additional \$60.6 million in matching funds to help protect,

restore, and enhance almost 185,000 acres. Nearly \$2 million for seven projects will help protect 2,470 acres of habitat in Mexico, with partners contributing an additional \$3.5 million to the projects.

The grants were awarded under NAWCA's U.S. Standard Grants and Mexico Grants Programs administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior. They are funded by annual Congressional appropriations; fines, penalties and forfeitures levied under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; interest accrued on funds under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

The commission also approved the purchase of wetland habitat that will be added to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System to secure breeding, resting and feeding habitat. These acquisitions are funded with proceeds from sales of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, otherwise known as the Federal Duck Stamps. These acquisitions include:

- **Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, Pondicherry Divisions, Coos County, New Hampshire** – Acquisition of 80 acres to preserve and protect important migratory waterfowl habitat, and provide feeding, nesting and resting habitat.
- **Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Camden, Gates and Pasquotank Counties, North Carolina** – Acquisition of 51 acres to protect, restore and maintain habitat for breeding, migrating and wintering waterfowl.
- **Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge, Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes, Louisiana** – Acquisition of 265 acres to protect and enhance seasonally and permanently flooded wetlands for migrating and wintering waterfowl.
- **San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, Brazoria and Matagorda Counties, Texas** – Acquisition of 1,454 acres to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl species, including mallard, gadwall, and northern pintail.
- **Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Wapato Lake Unit, Washington and Yamhill Counties, Oregon** – Acquisition of 225 acres to manage as a migration and wintering area for waterfowl, especially tundra swans.
- **Grasslands Wildlife Management Area, Merced County, California** – A permanent easement of 1,077 acres protecting and enhancing a major wintering area for migratory waterfowl.
- **North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area, Colusa County, California** – Acquisition of 388 acres to protect, restore, and maintain wetlands for waterfowl and other migratory birds.



## Spring Activities Schedule At Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge 29 Tabor Rd. Swanton, VT 05488

**All programs and tours are free, but reservations are required. Contact the refuge office at 802-868-4781 for more information and to reserve your spot!**

**Woodcock Walks:** Friday April 24 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM & Thursday April 30 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Please join Park Ranger, David Frisque for an evening woodcock walk at the Steven J. Young Marsh on either of the above dates. We will discuss the habits and habitats of this unique member of the shorebird family, and hopefully be able to listen to and observe their evening aerial courtship display. We will meet at the Tabor Rd Parking Lot across from the Stephen J. Young Marsh beginning at 7:00 PM and finish between 8:30 and 9:00 PM. on both days. Please dress for the weather and bring waterproof footwear and a flashlight.

<b>Refuge Open House</b>	<i>Saturday May 23 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM</i>
<b>International Migratory Bird Day</b>	7:30 AM – 2:00 PM
<b>Friends of MNWR Annual Meeting, with Guest Speaker</b>	2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

See complete schedule on the next page.

**Kids Fishing Derby 2009:** Saturday June 6 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

*The Kids Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday, June 6 from 8:00 AM until 1:00 PM. The following schedule is approximate, but provides the foundation for this year's program. The Kids Fishing Derby invites children up to age 15 and their families to spend some outdoor time together enjoying a morning of fishing along the banks of the Missisquoi River. The Derby takes place along the Macs Bend Road, beginning at Louie's Landing, approximately 4 miles west of Swanton on Vermont Rt. 78. Bring your own fishing pole and folding chair and please dress for the weather as this is a "rain or shine" event. The Derby is free, but you must register by calling the refuge at 802-868-4781. The event is hosted by the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge with generous support from local businesses, agencies, and volunteers. More information will be provided via news release to local print media and the local cable access channel as the event date draws closer.*

Time	Activity
8:00 AM	Open Gate – begin admitting fishing public
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Conduct Fishing Derby (actual fishing)
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	Free Lunch – hot dogs, chips, punch and ice cream
11:45 AM – Noon	Presentations – Safety, Ethics, & Regulations
Noon – 1:00 PM	Awards Ceremony and Closing

## **THREE BIG EVENTS IN ONE DAY**

### **SAVE THE DATE**

On May 23, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge will be a busy place. The refuge staff, the Friends of Missisquoi, volunteers, and seasonal personnel will be presenting a number of refuge events and activities. Please review the agenda below.

Please register to participate in the bird surveys by calling the Refuge at 802-868-4781.

#### ***Refuge Open House 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM***

The Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center will be open as well as refuge trails, the gift shop, and exhibits. The featured display “First Navigators” is a traveling exhibit of the Lake Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration (see article elsewhere in this newsletter), available for viewing all day.

#### ***International Migratory Bird Day 2009 – “Celebrate Birds in Culture”***

**7:30 AM** - Welcome and Orientation – coffee and pastries

**7:45 AM - 11:00 AM** - Migratory Bird surveys, via boat, canoe/kayak, and hiking trails

**You must call by 4pm May 22 if you intend to participate in this activity, 868-4781.**

**11:30 AM** - Lunch is free, provided by the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, but donations are certainly welcome.

**12 Noon** - Tally of survey results in refuge multi-purpose room and discussion.

#### ***Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge Annual Meeting***

**2:00 PM** - Guest Speaker – Swanton historian, author, and filmmaker Fred Wiseman will provide insights into local Native American culture as it relates to the refuge, surrounding lands, Lake Champlain, and wildlife. He will present his 2008 film, **1609: the Other Side of History** (some of which was filmed on the refuge) and display cultural artifacts and replicas. This film is the second episode of the "Against the Darkness" video trilogy outlining the Vermont Abenaki's cultural continuity in the Champlain Basin. Viewers will understand more about Vermont's hidden indigenous history, as well as the ancient and continuing cultural and economic contributions of the Abenaki's and their Native Allies to the Green Mountain State.

**3:00 PM** – Short Business Meeting and Election of New Board Members