



# Otter Tracks

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### OCAS Mission:

To protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats by encouraging a culture of conservation within Addison County.



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## Great Backyard Bird Count: February 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Great Backyard Bird Count is coming to a feeder, a park or a lake near you! Join tens of thousands of backyard birders to create a clear picture of bird distribution and abundance across the continent on any or all of the four days of Friday through Monday, February 12–15.

Here's what you do:

- Count the highest total of each bird species for at least 15 minutes in your yard, in a local park, on vacation, or wherever you choose to do your counts. Taking the highest total avoids duplicate counting.
- Send your totals for one or more days during the GBBC period to [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). Use a separate checklist for each day. The on-line checklist is user-friendly.
- or, you can mail in the form enclosed in this Otter Tracks, using a new form for each day you count. Don't forget to make extra copies of the form before you enter your first day's data. Mail to GBBC, Audubon Science, 545 Almshouse Rd., Ivyland PA 18974 by Friday, February 20.



Barred Owl: aerodynamic perfection!

Continentwide in 2009, observers submitted 93,629 checklists documenting 11,550,200 birds of 619 species. Northern Cardinal was reported on the most checklists (47,747), while Snow Goose was the most numerous bird (1,337,300).

Vermonters recorded 44,619 birds of 80 species in 2009, compared with 31,587 birds of 77 species in 2008. Among Vermont towns, Bristol reported the most species (37) and the second most checklists, one behind Rutland. Pine Siskin was Vermont's most abundant species, followed by Black-capped Chickadee, American Goldfinch and Blue Jay. Black-capped Chickadees appeared on the most Vermont checklists, 686 out of 781.

Participants who want to hone their bird identification skills can learn more from the GBBC web site, which offers identification tips and photos, sounds, maps, and natural history information for more than 500 bird species. People can also submit photos to an online gallery showcasing a dazzling array of winter birds found during the GBBC. Competitions add another element of fun, including a photo contest, rankings for the most numerous birds, and the "checklist champ" total for towns, states, and provinces with the highest participation. 🐾



Warren and Barry King and Ron Payne lead the way on a monthly Otter View Park walk. Photo by Barb Otsuka

## Otter Creek Audubon Society

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## Carbon Legacy

Copenhagen did not deal with an essential aspect of carbon production: carbon legacy, the role of reproductive decisions on lifetime carbon production. The journal *Global Climate Change* (Vol. 19(1)) addresses this issue. China has surpassed the U.S. as the largest carbon emitter, yet the U.S. continues as the largest *per capita* carbon emitter. Each child in the U.S. adds 9,441 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> to a woman's average carbon legacy, 5.7 times her lifetime emissions. The U.S. has the highest population growth rate of the developed countries. The global population growth that is projected this century, a rise from 6 to 9 billion people, works strongly against a solution to the climate problem. 🐾

## Reflections on Copenhagen

Editorial by  
Warren King



# VIEWPOINT

News on action to reduce climate change has been a mixed bag. First, political concerns: The organizing of the Copenhagen conference was wanting, the 190 parties failed to pass any comprehensive document, business leaders had ready access to all proceedings and players, nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives were locked out during the second week, and the sense of urgency and opportunity was lost amid the chaos of major disagreement on priorities. President Obama's "accord" lacked any teeth or specificity and excluded most countries, especially the world's smallest countries that have the most to lose. The parties "took notice of" the accord but did not approve it. The 500 NGO members of the Climate Action Network awarded the Colossal Fossil award to Canada for its unacceptably weak position and refusal to improve it in negotiations.

Second: the global movement: Fifty thousand members of the press, NGO representatives, and just plain individuals attended. Their pressure brought consideration of 350 ppm, the focus of Middlebury-based 350.org, to the agenda. It was clear to all that there is a grassroots global movement in existence that is gaining strength fast. President Obama noted that in dealing with climate change success will have to come "from the bottom up." 350.org and Tck Tck Tck, a coalition of 200 NGO partners and 15 million Global Citizens for Climate Action, have created self-awareness in this broad-based global popular movement.

Third: corporate actions: While much of the corporate world continues to function as a roadblock to climate change action, a growing number of businesses are recognizing the inevitability of carbon constraints, and are profiting from foresight. BP invested \$20 million to make the company more energy efficient. This investment resulted in \$460 million of cost savings three years later. And for some time now, insurance companies have been believers for some time in climate change and the disruption it will bring.

The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. We have two years to craft a replacement framework and to demonstrate once again that if the people lead, the politicians have no choice but to follow. 🐾

## Climate Science Update

**J**ust before the Copenhagen Climate Conference an important review, called the *Copenhagen Diagnosis* was released by 26 globally prominent climate scientists, most of whom were lead authors of the 4<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, published in 2007. The *Copenhagen Diagnosis* summarizes peer-reviewed data published since the 4<sup>th</sup> Report as follows:

- Twenty more years of carbon emissions, even at present levels, give a 25 percent chance that warming will exceed 2 degrees C, the level above which events will likely go beyond our control. To

prevent more than a 2 degree C increase, global emissions must peak between 2015 and 2020 and then drop fast.

- Temperatures have increased 0.19 degrees C/decade over the last 25 years, in agreement with predictions. Over the past decade solar input has declined, consistent with a human-induced rise.
- Ice sheet melt on Greenland and West Antarctica is accelerating. The 4<sup>th</sup> IPCC Report did not consider ice sheet melt.
- Summer melt of Arctic sea ice is accelerating. In 2007-2009 ice covered 40 percent less area than predicted by

the 4<sup>th</sup> IPCC Report.

- Sea level rise exceeds the most recent IPCC report prediction by 80 percent. By 2100 the rise will be one to two meters.
- The risk of passing tipping points resulting in abrupt or irreversible change increases strongly with a business-as-usual approach.
- Average annual per capita emissions will have to drop below 1 metric ton of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2050, 80-90 percent below current developed country per capita emissions, if we hope to stabilize climate change. 🐾

# Salamander Escorts 2010

**O**CAS will provide limited salamander escort coverage this spring at two sites, Morgan Road in Salisbury and North Street in New Haven. On an ideal evening, wet and warm, these sites can experience a thousand or more amphibians of seven species crossing from their wooded wintering sites to vernal pools where they breed. Although traffic at these sites averages only a few vehicles per hour, moving amphibians to the road shoulder ensures them a safe journey. It also provides a less dangerous environment for you to experience the spectacle of spring amphibian migration than at crossings with greater, higher speed traffic.

The window for our program is from Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. Unlike last year, Otter Creek Audubon will only alert our email telephone tree and have an organizer present at the Salisbury site on two nights that we consider, based

on the meteorological evidence, to be "sure things." At the New Haven site we will have an organizer present on the first night only. However, we will provide an information box on the roadside in New Haven on other evenings that present a likelihood of amphibian movement. The box contains report

forms and identification information if you wish to contribute movement data when no organizer is present. Use the form as you move salamanders and frogs to the road shoulder and return it to the box with your data as you leave. We'll make sure it gets to herpetologist Jim Andrews for use in his research.

M o v e m e n t starts about 8:30 PM and can go to

1 AM. Volunteers gather data for at least an hour, possibly two. Remember, you will be on a public road. Although traffic is light and slow, we cannot be responsible for drivers' attitudes or actions. You must be responsible for your safety and the safety of children you bring with you. Arrive or leave when you wish.

Please contact Warren or Barry King at 388-4082 or [Kinglet@together.net](mailto:Kinglet@together.net) to sign up for the 2010 volunteer list. We will give you as much lead time as possible, but it may be only two or three hours. Email is the preferred mode of contact, so please provide an email address that you will see around suppertime. If you have no email, or if telephone is the only way you would receive a timely message, provide your phone number. 🐾



## Audubon Vermont Earns National Audubon Award

**J**im Shallow and the staff of the Audubon Vermont Forest Bird Initiative have won the National Audubon ACE (Audubon Cares about Excellence) Award for 2009 in the category "Team Achievement Winners." Awarded by a nationwide committee of Audubon staff, the citation notes, "The program brings together Audubon's strengths in education, science and policy to achieve widespread wildlife and habitat conservation."

Specific strengths of the Vermont program include good conservation planning at the regional and large forest block scales, active partners in Vermont, New York, New Hampshire, Maine and Quebec, creation of an innovative set of forest management practices for priority bird species, doubling the acreage monitored in each of the last four years to just shy of 80,000 acres today, providing training to numerous Vermont foresters, helping pass new current use legislation, and enlisting a wide and growing group of government, not-for profit and individual funders.

We congratulate Audubon Vermont and Jim Shallow, Steve Hagenbuch, Katie Manaras and Kristin Sharpless for their outstanding work. 🐾

## Renewable Energy Gains

**I**n the last four years global investment in renewable energy increased fourfold to \$120 billion, according to a 2009 status report of the Renewable Energy Policy Network. Photovoltaic capacity increased sixfold in that same period while wind power capacity rose by a factor of 2.5. Small hydro, geothermal and biomass power generation also showed significant gains. Solar heating capacity and ethanol production doubled and biodiesel increased sixfold. Increases in 2008 compared with the preceding three years indicate that the rise is accelerating.

The United States took the global lead in global renewable energy investment, committing \$24 billion or twenty percent of the total. The U.S. regained leadership in wind power generation from Germany. Spain led in photovoltaic installation: half of the world's grid-tied photovoltaic installation in 2008 was in Spain, a fivefold increase from 2007. As of 2008 China was the fourth largest manufacturer of wind turbines, having doubled its capacity in each of the last five years. In 2008 China replaced Japan as the world leader in production of photovoltaic cells. Gratifyingly, in 2008 both the U.S. and Europe added more renewable power capacity than capacity from conventional sources, including all fossil fuels and nuclear power. 🐾





# OCAS Calendar of Events

## February – May 2010

### MARSH, MEADOW AND GRASSLAND WILDLIFE WALKS

A monthly joint OCAS-MALT event. Meet at Otter View Park parking area, Weybridge Street and Pulp Mill Bridge Road, Middlebury. Park along Weybridge Street if the parking area is not plowed.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 8 – 11 AM**  
Leader: Alcott Smith and Ron Payne

**THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 8 – 11 AM**  
Leader: Gary Starr and Josh Phillips

**SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 8 – 11 AM**  
Leader to be announced.

**THURSDAY, MAY 13, 8 – 11 AM**  
Leader: Josh Phillips

**FRIDAY-MONDAY**                      **Great Backyard Bird Count.**  
**FEBRUARY 12-15**                      See article in this issue of  
*Otter Tracks*.

**MONDAY, MARCH 22**                      **Salamander Escorts.**  
*through*                                      See article this issue for  
**SUNDAY, APRIL 25**                      information and how to  
sign up for notification.

**SATURDAY, MAY 1**                      **Forest Bird Quest at Wright Park.**  
*through*                                      Self- guided walking adventure  
**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31**                      focusing on the birds and habitats  
of Wright Park that ends with  
the discovery of a treasure box. Particularly appropriate for  
families. A set of clues to follow and a site map are available  
at the trailhead from May to November. Parking for Wright  
Park at end of Seymour Street Extension, turn north just  
before the covered bridge in Middlebury.

**SUNDAY, MAY 9**                      **Warbler Warm-Up.** Mike  
**7:30-10:30 AM**                      Winslow and Warren King will  
lead a search for newly arrived  
spring migrants. Hone your birding identification skills  
before leaf-out. Co-sponsored by the Watershed Center.  
Meet at the Bristol Waterworks, Plank Road east of North  
Street, Bristol. Call Warren at 388-4082 if in doubt about the  
weather.

**SATURDAY, MAY 15**                      **Otter Creek Audubon Birdathon.**  
**or SUNDAY, MAY 16**                      Help support our activities  
through the year by contributing  
to our major annual fundraiser. Call Barb Otsuka at  
388-6829 to make a contribution or to participate.

### THIRD ANNUAL CABIN FEVER LECTURE SERIES (THE SECOND THURSDAY JAN. – MARCH)

**THURSDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2010, 7 PM**

#### **The Nature Conservancy in the Yunnan Province of China**

Jackie Tuxill, conservation consultant with the National Park Service and former Vermont Nature Conservancy board member, just returned from Yunnan for the third time in five years. Downstairs at Ilsley Library, 75 Main Street, Middlebury.

**THURSDAY MARCH 11, 2010, 7 PM**

#### **Wise on Weeds: An Introduction to Invasive Species**

Sharon Plumb directs the Wise on Weeds Program for the Vermont Nature Conservancy. Downstairs at Ilsley Library, 75 Main Street, Middlebury.

### Related Events

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20**                      **Trees, Tracks and Signs.**  
**9:30-11:30 AM**                                      A winter ecology walk on the  
Salisbury Town Forest led by  
Jim Andrews. Meet at Upper Plains Road in Salisbury  
across from the town landfill.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 13**                      **Green Energy Expo.** A full day  
event. Middlebury Union High  
School, 73 Charles Avenue,

### VT Endangered Birds

continued from page 6

Rock Island produced more offspring than Grammas or Popasquash. At least 164 chicks fledged, the highest production since study of the species on Lake Champlain began in 1986. Predation by Great Horned Owls, Ruddy Turnstones and Black-crowned Night Herons caused most nest failures. Terns that re-nested after Ruddy Turnstone nest predation were largely successful, but why this delay resulted in improved reproduction is not clear. Disruption of nesting by cormorants and gulls continues to be thwarted by wire grid enclosure systems.

**Black Terns**, all on Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, were at 121 breeding pairs, their highest level since 1990 when work began on the species. Some of the difference between numbers in the last two years and numbers in preceding years may be due to changes in monitoring. Reproductive success was not known.

**Spruce Grouse** total numbers in the triennial survey conducted in the Northeast Kingdom's Nulhegan Basin in 2009 yielded 17 birds, up slightly from 15 in 2006 but lower than 2003's 33. Heavy blowdown and beaver flooding affected three transects in 2006. Three transects were changed in 2009 to monitor areas in the same habitat more likely to contain birds. 🐾

# Current Status of Endangered Vermont Birds

**Common Loons** continued to increase in 2009. Territorial pairs rose from 86 in 2008 to a record 90. Nesting pairs increased from 62 to 66, and 74 chicks survived to August, a record high survival rate of 89 percent. Six new breeding pairs were reported. Intruder loons, high water, or lack of nest sites prevented fourteen pairs from nesting, and fifteen nests failed. The well-publicized Lake Dunmore pair opted for greater privacy. They nested on nearby Mud Pond but continued to forage regularly on Dunmore. One hundred twenty volunteers cooperated to generate the loon data for 2009.

**Peregrine Falcons** had a record-tying 38 territorial pairs, of which 35 pairs nested, fledging at least 64 young, a new record. Biologists Margaret Fowle and Kathie Wohlfort worked under the auspices of Audubon Vermont in 2009 for the first time. Funding constraints prevented the comprehensive fledgling count of past years. Although volunteers made observations at 24 previously unoccupied cliff sites, no new territories were discovered, however one site last occupied in 2007 was reoccupied.

**Ospreys** made 125 nesting attempts and 96 successful nestings in 2009, up from 119 attempts and 94 successful nestlings in

2008. Because Osprey nestlings lie deep within their nest except when being fed by a parent, nest monitors are often unable to count all nestlings. Thus, total production is an estimate, not an exact number. Between 174 and 264 Osprey chicks fledged, at least 1.8 per nest. This means that the population continues to increase, since 0.8 fledglings per nest is considered the maintenance level.

Peregrine Falcons, Ospreys and Common Loons were removed from the Vermont Endangered Species List in 2005 because they had met their recovery targets. The state-approved strategy for monitoring these species calls for continuing annual surveys for five years. 2010 will be the last year of surveys of the entire population of each species due to funding constraints. Biologists will probably need to rely on sampling in the future to provide evidence of these species' continuing recovery.

**The Common Tern** breeding population, 185 pairs in Vermont in 2009, nested on three Lake Champlain islands.



Ospreys prepare to mate on their nest.

Photo: Matt Edmonds

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