

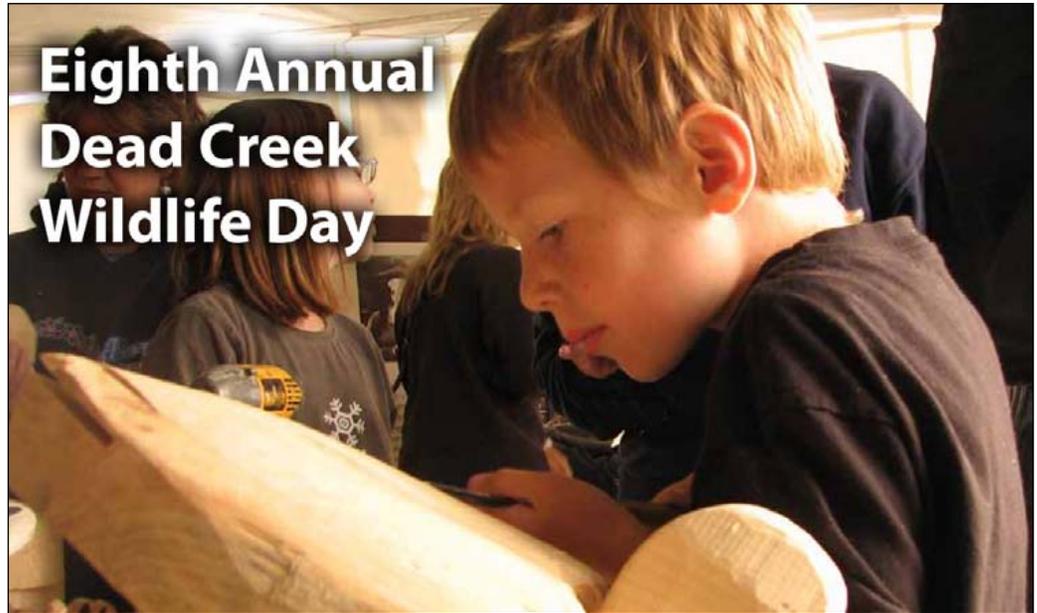


Otter Tracks

Inside

- The Natural Turnpike
- Northern Pintail
- The World Without Us
- Migration Speed
- Invasive Insects
- Birding in the U.S.
- Birdseed Sale
- OCAS Calendar
- iPod Applications for Birding

Saturday, October 3rd Celebrate Wildlife at the



The eighth annual Dead Creek Wildlife Day will take place on Saturday, October 3rd. Events start at 9:30 and continue until 4 at the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area headquarters on Route 17, one mile west of Route 22A in Addison. Bring the whole family for free wildlife-related events, presentations and field trips designed to intrigue all ages and levels of interest in the natural world.

Start the day with the bird banding demonstration at the Dead Creek boat launch and parking area on Route 17, and The Big Sit, trying to find a record 50 or more bird species from a 17-foot circle at West Brilyea Reservoir. Or take part in a morning or after-

noon nature walk, decoy or soap carving, mark butterflies, try fly-fishing, watch retrievers in action, learn about honeybee problems, see live turtles, kestrel and porcupine up close, help your child build a bluebird nest box, learn about invasive plants, and other events.

The Addison Central School PTA provides healthy, reasonably priced lunches and snacks. Two large tents house exhibits and nature-related items for sale. Admission and parking are free. A free shuttle bus connects the headquarters area with the boat launch, West Brilyea reservoir, and the Route 17 Goose Viewing Area. Plan ahead so you don't miss the events that interest you most. 🐾

OCAS Mission:

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



Otter Creek Audubon Society
PO Box 938
Middlebury, VT 05753

Barbara Otsuka, President
Warren King, Editor
388-4082

Winslow Colwell, Design and Layout
www.wcolwell.com

Vol 35, No. 3

www.audubon.org/chapter/ottercreek

♻️ Printed on 100% recycled paper

Vermont Passes Feed-In Tariff Legislation

The Vermont legislature passed H.R. 446, the Vermont Energy Act of 2009, on May 7th. It passed into law on May 27th when Governor Douglas decided neither to sign nor veto the bill. The Act provides strong encourage-

ment for renewable energy producers, both businesses and individuals, by setting "standard offer" prices on 10-to-20 year contracts on up to 2.2 megawatts of renewable energy for newly installed generating equipment start-

ing on 30 September 2009. The Act requires CVPS and other Vermont utilities to pay producers 12 cents per kilowatt hour for power fueled by methane from a landfill or a farm operation, 20 cents per

cont. on page 3

Otter Creek
Audubon Society

Board of Directors
2008-2009

Officers

- Barbara Otsuka **President**
388-6829
- Marcia Parker **Vice-President**
897-7222
- Warren King **Secretary**
388-4082
- John Chamberlain **Treasurer**
545-2584

Board Members

- Alan Coulter 545-2213
- Amy Douglas 897-2169
- Seth Gibson 388-2556
- Lewis Holmes 388-4375
- Margaret Lowe 877-3783
- Sonya Sapir 877-6266
- Joanna Shipley 443-5438
- Gary Starr 388-6552
- Rhonda Williams 877-3681
- Mike Winslow 897-6586

Director Emeritus

Abbott Fenn 388-0321

Audubon Vermont

Doug Parker, Director
434-3068

The Natural Turnpike

Editorial by
Warren King



The Natural Turnpike, known to the U.S. Forest Service as Forest Road 54, runs three miles from Ripton through a dramatic, heavily wooded landscape to South Lincoln. The Forest Service owns much of the surrounding land. For much of its length the Natural Turnpike perches on the western side of a deep north-south running valley. The flat valley bottom gradually traverses a height of land and narrows to 20-30 yards wide. No perennial stream flows through the narrowest part; flow begins a mile or more north and south of the narrows. If I were to walk from Ripton to South Lincoln and FR 54 didn't exist, I would use that valley bottom without question. Hence the origin of the name "Natural Turnpike."

The Natural Turnpike is the scene of a silent conflict that plays out on thousands of roads across Vermont and the country. The conflict is between plants that are native to an area and exotics, those brought into an area from elsewhere, sometimes intentionally, more often inadvertently. On most highways invasive plants have long since won the conflict; the current struggle is usually between established exotics and exotics introduced more recently. On the Natural Turnpike the conflict is all the more dramatic because few invasives are established there yet.

One invasive, wild chervil, is spreading along the shoulders of the Natural Turnpike. Cars and trucks brought chervil seeds in from Route 100 and 125. These seeds and seeds produced by successful plants in successive years were spread widely by graders, plows and mowers. Chervil forms dense roadside stands that overrun any other roadside plants. A plant that is likely to be overtaken by chervil is Appalachian Jacob's Ladder. It is threatened in Vermont and has a very restricted range. It occurs in a roadside seep toward the northern end of the Natural Turnpike. The northern movement of chervil on the Natural Turnpike threatens this site directly, and has motivated a collaborative control program.

Control of chervil began in the summer of 2008 on the Natural Turnpike. The Forest Service, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, New England Wildflower Society staff and volunteers, and members of the Ripton Conservation Commission spent dozens of hours pulling this plant, filling over 100 plastic bags in the process. All three miles were treated. Virtually all large plants, especially those that were flowering, were pulled. 2008's seedlings, difficult to spot and pull in thick roadside vegetation, have grown into a new crop some of which may have flowered this year, and certainly will do so in subsequent years unless controlled. The lack of mature plants this year suggests that last year's work had some effect.

Control of invasive exotic plants is expensive, time-consuming and frustrating to those who engage in it. The U.S. National Park Service has identified invasive exotics as the most serious threat to the ecological integrity of our national parks. If exotics are identified early they can be treated successfully. The longer the span between establishment and control, the less likely it is that control will be successful.

The Forest Service would be well advised to add invasive species management to the costs of maintaining the roads on our national forests. Revised cost figures should include not only the cost of control but also the cost of the loss of species to ecosystems. We don't always stop and reflect on the question "Is this trip necessary?" or even "Is this road necessary?" We may find we aren't willing to pay the full cost of keeping some of our roads. 🐾



Chervil along Route 125 in Ripton
Photo by Warren King



Northern Pintail

by Mike Winslow

It was May 16th, early afternoon. Tyler Pockette and I were seven hours into our bird-a-thon and our tally stood at 99 species. We were at Button Bay State Park and had just added Great Black-backed Gull and Red-breasted Merganser to our list, but species number 100 provided a real treat. As we walked north-west along the shore three ducks drifted calmly from the cattails along the lake's edge. The first was a male Mallard; the second, a plain-looking brown bird that at first we took for a female Mallard; and the third was a handsome male Northern Pintail.

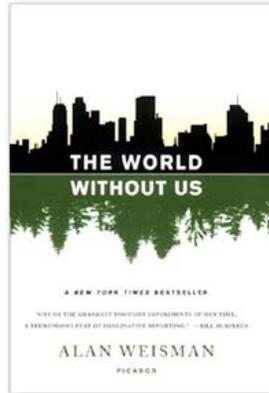
Male pintails (*Anas acuta*) in breeding plumage sport distinct contrasts between their gray body, white neck, and brown head. A white crescent arcs gracefully along the back of their neck. Females, like the second bird at Button Bay, are all-over a warm brown. In flight, the long neck and tail exaggerate their size, making them appear larger than more common Mallards, though lighter in weight.

Northern Pintails breed throughout northern areas of Europe, Asia, and North America. They winter far south of their breeding range to the equator. They most often associate with large open wetlands. They nest up to a mile from the water in open areas with low or sparse vegetation. Nests are located on the ground in scrapes with a bit of vegetation added. They lay on average eight eggs per clutch, though nests with as many as fourteen eggs have been observed.

Vermont is at the southern edge of the bird's breeding range. Pintails are most often seen here during migration. They breed in greater numbers to the north and in the prairie potholes of the northern Great Plains. The species was observed in only two blocks during the 2003-2007 Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas with no confirmations of breeding. By contrast it was seen in 11 blocks during the 1976-1981 Atlas with multiple breeding confirmations.

The closest relatives of our Northern Pintail are the Yellow-billed Pintail of South America and Eaton's Pintail from the southern Indian Ocean. Some taxonomies have considered Eaton's Pintail a subspecies of the Northern Pintail, however, there is much less variation between males and females in the southern species.

As Tyler and I observed, the duck swam placidly about before returning to the cattails. It offered the visual highlight of the day.



Book Review:

The World Without Us

by Alan Weisman
Picador, 2007
416 pp.

Review by Mike Winslow

If humans disappeared from the face of the earth, how long would it take for the evidence of civilization to disappear? This is the question Alan Weisman poses and answers in *The World Without Us*. Weisman covers a broad swath of impacts. He discusses how long it would take wind, water and plants to destroy our cities; how long the impacts from mining sites, industrial facilities, and nuclear power plants will be measurable; how long it would take for species to colonize areas they have abandoned in the face of spreading human population. He considers which of our domesticated animals and plants can survive without us (cows won't do well; cats will get along just fine), and what it might take for the oceans' fish and coral reefs to recover. Weisman contrasts the impacts of modern society with those of humans from an earlier age. This wide-ranging thought experiment was declared #1 nonfiction book for 2007 by *Time* magazine and *Entertainment Weekly*. 🐾



Spotting an oriole at the Waterworks on the Warbler Warm-up
Photo by Gary Starr

Feed-In Tariff Legislation

continued from page 1

kilowatt hour for wind turbines of 15 kilowatts or less, 30 cents per kilowatt hour for solar power, and the retail rate of 12.2 cents for wind turbines larger than 15 kwh and for hydro sites. These payments provide a financial incentive for small scale prospective energy producers to invest in alternative energy production. Several European countries, notably Spain and Germany, have generated considerable private investment in renewable energy by providing similar long-term "standard offer" contracts. 🐾

Migration Speed

Geolocators, developed by the British Antarctic Survey, can determine sunrise and sunset times. Researcher Bridget Stutchbury adapted miniaturized solar geolocators, smaller than a dime, for songbirds. They can be made significantly smaller than radio transmitters and can be used for most bird species. When outfitted in a harness on the backs of Wood Thrushes and Purple Martins, geolocators revealed the daily latitudes and longitudes of the birds over the course of their south and north migrations.

The geolocators provided useful and surprising data. Stutchbury found that the birds flew more than 300 miles per day, well beyond the 100-mile figure normally attributed to songbirds on migration. Purple Martins being tracked south stopped off along the way in the Yucatan for two to four weeks before they continued to Brazil. Wood Thrushes stopped for up to two weeks in the southeastern U.S. or the Yucatan before flying to Honduras or Nicaragua. The return trip to the breeding grounds took place with greater urgency. Martins flew from Brazil

to Pennsylvania in just 13 days, a trip that was previously thought to last a month.

This technique holds great promise for providing new information about critical habitat selection during migration and on the wintering grounds for many species whose habitat use is poorly known. This knowledge, in turn, will lead to strategies for protecting not just species but geographically distinct populations of species. 🐾

Invasive Insects: Don't Give Them a Lift

Asian Longhorn Beetle, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and the Emerald Ash Borer are invasive species that threaten the health of Vermont's forests. These insects are capable of completely changing our forests by devastating various native species and they are now in or near Vermont. The Woolly Adelgid has recently been found in southern Vermont; the Ash Borer has made it to the New York Finger Lakes region and the Asian Longhorn was found last summer in Worcester, MA.

One way these invasive insects spread is by people moving firewood, especially campers who bring firewood from home when they visit their favorite summer campgrounds. The Green Mountain National Forest and the State of Vermont are working on prohibiting movement of firewood from out-of-state into Vermont. The Forest is preparing a closure order that will ban the transport of out-of-state firewood onto the National Forest. The Forest and the State are sponsoring early detection surveys and public outreach efforts in the form of education, postings, and face-to-face contact with campers. Staff and campground concessionaire operators are being trained on identification, public contact, and potential closure violations.

For more information call Kristi Ponozzo at 802/747-6760. A good website is www.dontmovefirewood.org or www.vtfrp.org/protection/idfrontpage.cfm. 🐾



**Emerald
Ash Borer**

Agway/OCAS Seed Sale Stimulus Package Arrives!

Agway has brought out a great stimulus package for the annual Otter Creek Audubon Society annual bird seed sale! Prices have been slashed from last year's highs, and are below the current retail prices. In addition, Agway is offering great 25 percent discount coupons on feeders and bird baths, and on foreclosed bird houses!

Fill out the order and send it in by October 14th with a check payable to OCAS to:

Seth Gibson, OCAS
PO Box 626
Middlebury VT 05753
802/388-2556

Mark your calendar to remember to pick up the seeds on October 24th. The birds will thank you. Otter Creek Audubon thanks you too, as profits from this seed sale support our winter programs. 🐾

Birding in the United States

Forty-eight million birdwatchers, 21 percent of the U.S. population 16 or older, paid \$36 billion in direct pursuit of their hobby in 2006, according to a 2009 update of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report on the demographics and economics of birdwatching. Trip-related expenditures and purchase of birding equipment generated \$82 billion, including \$11 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues.

Vermont birders comprise 38 percent of the Vermont population, the third highest percentage in the nation following Montana's 40 percent and Maine's 39 percent. All the New England states have at least a 25 percent participation rate in birding. Birders' numbers nationwide increased by four percent between 2001 and 2006. Around-the-home birders increased by the same percentage, but away-from-home birders increased by eight percent.

The average U.S. birder is 50 years old, although those over 55 had the highest participation percentage at 27 percent. Females comprise 54 percent of U.S. birders; males 46 percent. Participation in birding increases with increasing level of education. Twenty-eight percent of college graduates are birders. The higher your income is, the more likely you are to be a birder. Residents outside metropolitan areas are six percent more likely to bird than city dwellers. 🐾



OCAS Calendar of Events

September – December 2009



THURSDAY, SEPT. 10
8–11 AM

MARSH, MEADOW AND GRASSLAND WILDLIFE WALK. A monthly joint OCAS-MALT event. Leader: Josh

Phillips, MALT Executive Director. Meet at Otter View Park parking area, Weybridge Street and Pulp Mill Bridge Road, Middlebury.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 12
11 AM–2 PM

HAWK WATCH AT BUCK MOUNTAIN, WALTHAM. Hawks should be at peak numbers. Meet at 11

AM at Jiffy Mart, junction of Routes 17 and 7, New Haven Junction. Joint outing with Green Mountain Audubon. Call Mike Winslow 877-6586 for more information or if in doubt about the weather.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3
9:30 AM–4 PM

DEAD CREEK WILDLIFE DAY.

Celebrate wildlife in the Champlain Valley at a daylong series of events at Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area headquarters, Route 17, one mile west of Route 22A in Addison. See bird banding and butterfly marking, turtle biology, live kestrel and porcupine, morning and afternoon nature walks. Call 802-241-3700 for information. See article this issue.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
8–11 AM

MARSH, MEADOW AND GRASSLAND WILDLIFE WALK. A monthly joint OCAS-MALT event. Leader:

Warren King. Meet at Otter View Park parking area, Weybridge Street and Pulp Mill Bridge Road, Middlebury.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
9 AM–NOON

WATERFOWL ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN. Visit the waterfowl hotspots of Addison County's shoreline for

a wide range of Champlain water birds. Meet at 9 at Dead Creek WMA Goose Viewing Area on Route 17 1.5 miles west of jct. with Route 22A in Addison. Call leader Mike Winslow at 877-6586 for information.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
10 AM–2 PM

ANNUAL BIRD SEED SALE. Pick up freshly harvested bird seed at Agway, Exchange Street,

Middlebury. Order by October 14 from Seth Gibson at 388-2556, P.O. Box 626, Middlebury VT 05753, or use enclosed order form.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12
8–11 AM

MARSH, MEADOW AND GRASSLAND WILDLIFE WALK. A monthly joint OCAS-MALT event. Leader: Gary

Starr. Meet at Otter View Park parking area, Weybridge Street and Pulp Mill Bridge Road, Middlebury.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12
6–8:30 PM

OTTER CREEK AUDUBON ANNUAL DINNER & MEETING. Reservations needed for dinner at 6. Forrest

Hammond, Fish and Wildlife Dept. biologist, will speak on Bears and People. No fee for talk at 7:15. Call Seth Gibson at 388-2556 for reservations. OCAS members will receive a separate invitation by mail.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12
8–11 AM

MARSH, MEADOW AND GRASSLAND WILDLIFE WALK. A monthly joint OCAS-MALT event. Leader:

To be announced. Meet at Otter View Park parking area, Weybridge Street and Pulp Mill Bridge Road, Middlebury.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

FERRISBURGH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Call Mike Winslow at 877-6586 for details.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

MT. ABE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Call Randy or Cathy Durand at 453-4370 for details.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20
6 AM–4 PM

MIDDLEBURY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Meet at Rosie's Restaurant, Route 7 south of Middlebury for breakfast. Call Jim or Kris Andrews at 352-4734 for details.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

HINESBURG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Call Paul Wiczorek at 434-4216.



Ovenbird nestlings in Wilmarth Woods, Addison

Photo by Warren King

iPhone Birding Applications

continued from page 6

ings clearer than iBird Pro, actually. The range map is from Peterson's with no additional information. The Information is straight out of the book. One helpful feature for those of us visually challenged is that you can zoom in to a particular feature of the sketch, making it much larger than the same sketches in the field guide. This is a complement to one or multiple field guides, and at \$2.99, why not? 🐾

iPod Applications for Birding: A Review

by Barbara Otsuka

I started birding about five years ago and my constant companion has been my Peterson's Field Guide. I wondered if an iPod "app" (application) would be lighter to carry in my backpack. Indeed, I found there were two application choices for owners of an iPhone or iPod Touch.

For \$29.99 I purchased iBird Explorer Pro covering 914 bird species by the Mitch Waite Group. It has become my new constant companion when birding. This application has many features complementary to a standard field guide. I recommend that the reader go to the iTunes website and search for the application's description. For this review, I will comment on features I have found to be more or less helpful:

Each species features color drawings and descriptions on the first page you open. Expert birders may detect errors in some of the sketches. Descriptions are found on both this page and the page entitled, "Identity." Categories addressed on the "Identity" page include: Body, Head, Flight, General, Range and Habitat, Breeding and Nesting, Foraging and Feeding, Readily Eats, Vocalization, Breeding Location, Breeding Type, Egg Color, Number of Eggs, Incubation Days, Egg Incubator, Nest Material, and Migration. I miss the arrows usually found in a Peterson field guide showing visually distinguishing characteristics for each species, but a great deal of information is provided. You can flip to the range map instantaneously and there is



Sample screens from the Peterson Guide to Backyard Birds (left) and iBird Pro (above).

additional information on that page. The "Photo" page, helpful in the field, gets updated by contributors. The "Sound" page and the "Similar" page let you compare features, one species to another. The expert birder may quibble with the comparisons suggested, but it is easy to move around to search for other species. The "Ecology" page gives information from the IUCN Red List. I miss the waterfowl and raptor in-flight comparison pages from my Peterson's.

At \$2.99, the Peterson iPhone Guide to Backyard Birds with 112 species is definitely more limited. There are three pages per species: Sound, Range, and Information. I find the record-

cont. on page 5

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Middlebury, VT
Permit No. 15



Otter Tracks
Otter Creek Audubon Society
PO Box 938
Middlebury, VT 05753