



Otter Creek Audubon Society

November 2022

Otter Tracks

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Sharing Nature: An Educator’s Week

By Addison Tate

Mid-July found me on Hog Island off coastal Maine, alongside a few dozen educators from across the country attending “Sharing Nature: An Educator’s Week.” Essentially an adult summer camp, we embarked on experiential workshops about local ecology, naturalist skills, and community practices. Sensory activities had us soaking in the sun and salt while tidepooling and pressing seaweed; meandering through mossy conifers searching for mushrooms; and gasping as we shone blacklights onto flowers and insects at night. Our biggest adventure took us to Eastern Egg Rock to ogle at puffins, who have a successful nesting colony on a handful of islands after successful restoration efforts.

The staff and programming held a level of accessibility that allowed choice between mellower and more intense endeavors to fit a range of abilities and comfort levels in nature. We were never at a loss for interesting things to do, yet the schedule was spacious to allow for rest, mental health, and emergent socialization. I left the island feeling refreshed and inspired to apply my experience to my work at the Willowell Foundation in Monkton. I am deeply grateful for scholarships from the Otter Creek and National Audubon Societies, which made my experience possible. 🐾

[Above] A foray through fields of ferns on Hog Island photo by Addison Tate



OCAS Mission:

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

OTTER CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Otter Creek Audubon Society

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Hemisphere. Audubon has been collaborating with eight partner organizations – in science, conservation, and technology - to bring this information to the general public at no cost and with no requirements. The partnership is an amazing effort and has resulted in an amazing resource for all of us.

The website provides access to an unprecedented amount of

Telephone Gap

Editorial by
Warren King



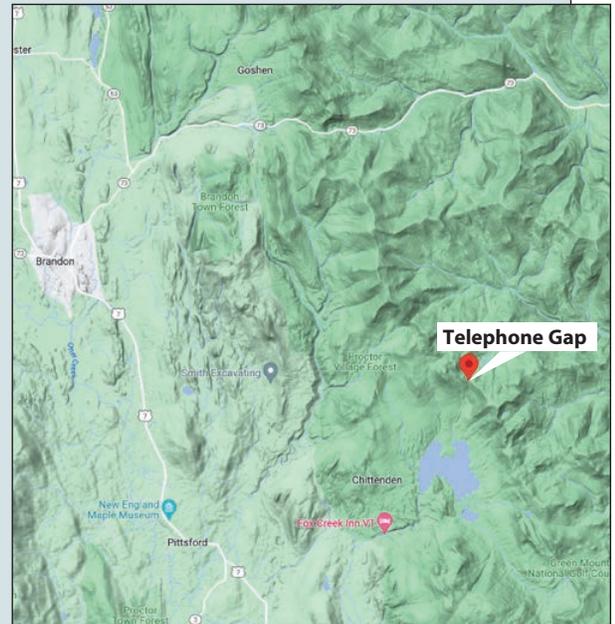
VIEWPOINT

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) owns and manages the 400,000-acre Green Mountain National Forest. In its northern half, east of Rutland, stands a 10,000-acre forest called Telephone Gap which has not been intensively managed for 80 years. The USFS is about to start doing so now in the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project. Because of the land's history, eighty-five percent of the trees are 80 years old or older and fifty-five percent are 100 years or older. This mature forest is home to populations of pine marten and long-eared bats, both of which are endangered in Vermont. More importantly, as a mature forest Telephone Gap is a significant carbon sink, a major consideration in managing forests in a period of climate crisis.

In 2006, when the Green Mountain Forest Plan was last revised, it placed emphasis on cutting old forest to make room for young trees and the wildlife that benefit from new growth.

Although the plan remains unchanged, the world has changed. Climate change and increasing levels of carbon dioxide have changed our priorities. On Earth Day, 22 April 2022, President Biden signed an executive order addressing efforts to avoid the impending climate crisis, referring specifically to the crucial role the national forests play in sequestering carbon. Leaving mature trees uncut means they will continue to capture new carbon while retaining the carbon they have already sequestered. Cutting mature trees to be replaced by new plantings no longer makes sense if the total carbon in the atmosphere exceeds the amount that humans and all other organisms can tolerate. We have eight years to get our house in order.

Standing Trees VT is leading the campaign to oppose the logging of Telephone Gap so this mature forest can keep fulfilling its crucial role. Join their effort at <https://www.standingtrees.org>



Bird Migration Explorer

Earlier this fall, National Audubon announced the creation of the Bird Migration Explorer, a series of interactive maps that present detailed information on current bird migration activity in the Western

data generated by the annual migratory movements of 458 species of Western Hemisphere migratory birds. You can follow the movement of individual birds, birds of one or more areas, or entire species or groups of species in their high-risk seasonal movements. The information the partners contribute covers the migrant species presently under observation, the locations where they occur at various times in their life cycle, and the significant challenges they face as they migrate. Initially, tracking data are presented for 184 species, covering 9,000 individual migrants. Coverage will increase significantly from year to year. Go to Bird Migration Explorer, <https://explorer.audubon.org/about>, to get started. Be prepared to get consumed by it; you'll be fascinated by all you will learn.

OCAS Calendar of Events November 2022 – January 2023

ADDISON COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

SAT, DECEMBER 17 **FERRISBURGH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** Call Mike Winslow at 877-6586 for details and possible status change due to coronavirus.

SUN, DECEMBER 18 **MIDDLEBURY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** 6 AM pre-count breakfast at Halfway House, 450 Rt 22A in Shoreham, and post-count potluck at the Andrews' are on. Call Jim or Kris Andrews at 352-4734 for details and possible status change due to coronavirus.

SAT, JANUARY 1 **MT. ABE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** Call Randy or Cathy Durand at 453-4370 for details and possible status change due to coronavirus.

SAT, JANUARY 1 **HINESBURG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** Call Paul Wiczorek at 434-4216 for details and possible status change due to coronavirus.

Hog Island Audubon Camp... Summer 2023!

By Carol Ramsayer

OCAS is pleased to announce our annual \$800 scholarship to the renowned Hog Island Audubon Camp, available to an Addison County educator or teen. Located off the scenic coast of Maine, the camp is run by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Every summer they offer sessions for adults and teens, each lasting about 5 days. The spectacular surroundings and excellent instructors offer a truly enriching experience!

Educators can apply for the session entitled "Sharing Nature: an Educator's Week." (<https://hogisland.audubon.org/sharing-nature-educators-week>) This unique week is especially designed for educators committed to engaging their students with nature.

For a teen (age 14-17) who is especially keen on birding, the session to apply for is the "Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens, Session 2." (<https://hogisland.audubon.org/bird-studies-teens>)

For an application contact Carol at cgramsmac@mac.com. The application is due **December 31, 2022**. The scholarship recipient will be notified by January 6, 2023. Most importantly, we urge OCAS members to share this scholarship information with any students or educators passionate about birds and the natural world. It is an exceptionally unique and inspiring opportunity! 🐾

Purple Martin Status and Migration



Purple Martins at their apartments. Photo by Gary Starr

Driving along the eastern shore of Lake Champlain in the spring or summer between the Champlain Bridge and Addison, one cannot help but be impressed by the abundance of sleek black and dark gray Purple Martins occupying the myriad nest boxes put out for them by the many martin enthusiasts who live nearby. In general, their fans. Purple Martins used to be more widespread than they are today; they have undergone a steady and continuing decline since the 1900's. Although not yet endangered or threatened in Vermont, the species is presently considered a Vermont Species of Special Concern. The widespread use of pesticides is considered one of the reasons' decline.

A few Purple Martin specimen records from the Amazon Basin suggested to ornithologists that Purple Martins might be overwintering there. Using geolocators available in 2007 they determined that Purple Martins were indeed present in a 200 square mile area in the Amazon Basin. In 2014 more sophisticated trackers able to locate a bird to within 30 feet revealed that 14 out of 105 Purple Martins turned up at the same site. Further research revealed the site to be 12-acre Ilha de Comaru on the Rio Negro, a major tributary of the Amazon about 20 miles from Manaus. The first visit to Comaru showed it to be flooded, with only the tops of the trees on the island above floodwater. But subsequent visits showed that Purple Martins were in fact roosting in the treetops. The island appears to be a staging area just prior to migration for up to a quarter million birds, a modest but significant percentage of the 9.3 million Purple Martins believed to exist presently. This discovery is one of many such revelations made possible by the new generation of geolocators now available to ornithologists. Further information on this subject is available from *Audubon Magazine*, Fall 2022. 🐾

Chapter Report

continued from page 4

- 🐾 Quarry Hill School: \$550 for materials for an expanded natural-ist curriculum
- 🐾 Shoreham Elementary: \$250 for subscriptions to nature magazines
- 🐾 Willowell Foundation: \$800 for two tracking days for interested Vergennes High School students

And...

- 🐾 Acquired three digital microscopes to be used in classroom programs with money from an National Audubon Collaborative Grant
- 🐾 Awarded scholarships to local educators Jen Grille and Addison Tate, to attend Hog Island Audubon Camp last summer 🐾

Chapter Report November 2021-2022

By Ron Payne

(Editor's note: Since the 2022 Annual meeting was held virtually, we attach the president's annual report here)

Events:

- Continued our Monthly Wildlife Walks at Otter View Park and the Hurd Grassland. We now stand at a cumulative 1139 attendees over 13 years, tallying 121 bird species at Otter View Park, and 126 at the Hurd Grassland.
- Participated in and promoted the four Christmas Bird Counts that occur at least partially in Addison County: Ferrisburgh, Middlebury, Mt. Abraham and Hinesberg.
- Held two Salamander Crossing events in conjunction with the Salisbury Conservation Commission on Morgan Rd. On March 31 we had 57 volunteers and 919 amphibians, and on April 7 we had 61 volunteers and 477 amphibians.
- In June we held a bird banding session in partnership with MALT & Audubon Vermont at the Hurd Grassland. Mark LaBarr banded birds including a Blue-winged Warbler.
- In June we held a Beginning Birder's Walk in partnership with MALT at Wright Park with about 30 people in attendance.
- In September we held a hike to Silver Lake in partnership with the Moosalamoo Association.
- In October we put on Dead Creek Day with Vermont Fish & Wildlife at Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison.

About 350 people took part in the many activities and presentations. Special thanks to Mike Winslow for volunteering to be the coordinator between OCAS and VTF&W, and to all other volunteers who helped out.

Education:

Our Environmental Education Grants program awarded \$4742 to eight schools/educational organizations for classroom programs, projects or field trips.

- Bridge School: \$800 for the creation of a snowshoe trail and related materials
- Bristol Elementary School: 1st grade proposal for \$627 to cover the cost of a trip to Audubon Vermont and the Birds of VT Museum
- Bristol Elementary School: 3rd grade proposal for \$800 to cover the cost of a trip to Audubon Vermont and the Birds of VT Museum
- Mary Hogan Preschool: \$315 for the creation of "adventure bags" for twice weekly walks
- Otter Creek Child Center: \$600 for a Certified "Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom"

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