



NORTHEAST KINGDOM AUDUBON

A Chapter Of The National Audubon Society

Fall 2007

The mission of Northeast Kingdom Audubon is to foster the stewardship and enjoyment of birds, other wildlife and natural habitats.

Notes from the President

Thanks to the people who contributed to this year's BIRDATHON and an Audubon Vermont's grant of \$1,000, NEK Audubon raised \$4,979.60 in support of our camp scholarship program. Monies from these sources allowed NEK Audubon to send Dylan Gate-Sholan and Kiley Sullivan to the youth camp on Hog Island this summer. The boys will give presentations on their camp experiences at our annual Campers' Potluck Supper from 5 to 7 p.m. on Sunday, November 4 at the Knights of Pythias Hall in Danville. This is a great opportunity to get a first-hand account of life at an Audubon summer camp! All are welcome.

This past summer marked the fifth and final year to collect data for the upcoming second edition of the *Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas*. More than 350 people from around the state, including several NEK Audubon members, devoted scores of hours monitoring one or more atlas blocks to determine what bird species breed or probably breed in Vermont. We succeeded in covering all of the designated survey areas in the state. When the information is compiled, we will compare the current distribution of species with their distribution 25 years ago. These statistics are vitally important in the face of global warming and habitat loss.

Vermont's nesting loon population has dramatically increased, largely due to 30 years of work by the Vermont Loon Recovery Project. According to project biologist, Eric Hanson, we now have about 60 nesting pairs in the state – up from just seven in 1983. To maintain this recovery, people must continue to protect nesting areas and keep boats (including kayaks!) at least 200 to 300 feet away

from nest sites and loons. Anglers must never use lead sinkers weighing a half ounce or less and should always reel in when loons are near by. Loons often get hooked or tangled when they go after live bait and lures. To learn more or become a volunteer, contact Eric Hanson (802) 586-8064, or e-mail ehanson@vtlink.net.

And lastly, we are sorry to report that Howard's Home and Garden closed its doors last spring. Ernie Howard consistently supported NEK Audubon by allowing space for our flyers and photos and giving us 10 percent of his bird seed sale profits once a year. We at NEK Audubon thank you, Ernie, and wish you the very best!



Bird Chatter: Confirmation

I, generally, think of myself as an alert, cautious driver with reflexes still above average. But, do I really know what is above average? Do I compare it to when I was 20? Hey, I'm 56 and that's a long way from 20 when I was at the top of my game. Too often, I piss-off my wife with the swerving, jerky ride she must endure as I dodge yet another leaf blown across the road in front of us. Not unlike that movie titled "I See Dead People," for me, it's "I See Dead Animals!" Most times, they are imaginary; the shadow from a maple tree morphs into a beaver or a snakelike branch slithers across my lane. And those leaves scampering onto the shoulder from the tall grasses sure look like goslings. Sometimes they are real: the white-tailed deer about to sprint across the blacktop or the turkey feeding along the road edge as it squats just before liftoff into my path.

continued on next page ...

And that is what makes me most uneasy: my path or, if you will, our paths.

Our paths or roads are a kill-zone opened up in only the last 100 years. The sparrow or loon probably had no trouble dodging the horse-drawn wagon or the birch-bark canoe.

Today, with 4 million miles of paved roads in this country alone, one wonders how any of the other species survive at all. How do they adapt to man's inventions of planes, trains, semis, powerboats, jet skis and, most of all, automobiles?

I once read that if all the road departments in the U.S. stopped picking up dead carcasses along America's roadways for just a two-week span that the Interstate freeway system would be impassable. It would be blocked with the remains of thousands of dead animals. That may seem a little hard to believe for some, but I've driven many places in this country where I find it could easily become a reality. Picture dead armadillos and jack rabbits every couple hundred feet in the Southwest.

Heck, I don't need to hunt; I don't even have to eat meat. I figure I do my share of killing just driving into town or to the local store.

I can see the bird fly up and out from the road edge too low to make it over the hood of my car. A rush of adrenaline as I foot jab the brake though not quick enough. In the side view mirror (I always for some reason have to look) the Hermit Thrush rolls to the middle of the road, lifeless. My birding skills have improved enough to catch its spotted breast and reddish tail, such small reward, but, at least, I know what I'm killing: Vermont's state bird this time. It doesn't help that I'm on my way to go birding!

Or how about what I refer to as the massacre at San Juan, New Mexico:

It is getting late and it will be dark soon. I have 10 miles to go to a remote campground on a two-lane country road. Hundreds and hundreds of passerines feed along both shoulders of the road. As I speed by at 50 mph, they fly in an insect-like cloud in front of the car. Those on the right, head left ... and those on the left, head right ... and we all meet on my path in the middle. I am so new to birding I don't even know what I'm killing. Spar-

rows? No, not this many. I still don't know today. Maybe that's just me in denial.

I know many people like to think in terms of "the higher order of species." It's hard not to ... but I like to humor myself thinking that I place an equal value of life for all the species. That is just folly. When I play out the scenario of killing various species with my automobile, there is an order to the amount and length of misery I feel. We all know where that order begins and ends – from the three-year-old child down to the mosquito – but there is some disagreement among us with the 1000 species in between. Would I feel equally as horrible if I ran over a raccoon or a bird as I would if I ran over the neighbor's dog? I probably would not feel as bad or for as long.

Anyway, I was driving down I-91 doing what I do, 65 mph. When the warbler hit the windshield and disintegrated into yellow-brown-gray feathers on not so much of a diagonal ricochet as a solid, direct, lower center windshield thud, it had me immediately thinking, "Yellow-rumped Warbler, female." It was only after the use of windshield wiper fluid failed to remove one last single feather from the point of impact and only because I've been surveying for the Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas for 5 years that I knew more correctly: Yellow-rumped Warbler, female, carrying food, a breeding confirmation, and that there were 3 or 4 fledglings who would probably be dead, also.

by Tom Berriman



The On-Going Vermont Peregrine Falcon Survey

Territorial Pairs: 35 (This is a new record.)

Nesting Pairs: 31 (This is a new record.)

Successful Pairs: 23 (74%)

Fledglings: 56 (This is up from last year's 45. Slightly below 2005 record of 61)

(Information provided by Peregrine Falcon survey coordinator Margaret Fowle)

Upcoming Events • September 2007 - February 2008

All activities and Board Meetings are open to the public. Events are listed in our newsletter and in local newspapers, but may be updated or changed. We appreciate a \$3/member or \$5/non-member donation, collected at the beginning of the trip, as well as pre-registration for trips and programs. To learn more about the NEK Audubon Chapter, how to join, camp scholarships or trips, visit our website, www.nekaudubon.org. For trip information and pre-registration contact: Tom Berriman at (802) 626-9071 or email Tom at thomas.berriman@verizon.net.

Monday, September 10: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

Sunday, September 16: NEK Audubon bird walk in the Victory Basin Refuge. Meet at Damon's Crossing at 8 a.m.

Monday, October 1: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

Sunday, October 20: NEK trip to Dead Creek Wildlife Mgt. Area to see Snow Geese and to the **Shelburne Museum** to see the John James Audubon illustrations. Meet in West Danville park and ride at intersection of Rtes. 2 and 15 at 7 a.m.

Sunday, November 4: NEK Camp Scholarship Winner's presentation and potluck. Join us at the Knights of Pythais Hall in Danville from 5 - 7 p.m. as **Dylan Gates-Sholan and Sullivan Kiley** report on their camp experiences. Call Airie at 748-8515 for more information.

Monday, November 5: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30- 6 p.m. at Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

Sunday, November 18: NEK trip to the Maine Coast. Meet at rest area exit 44, I-93 in N.H. at 6 a.m.

Monday, December 3: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

Tuesday, January 1: NEK Audubon Christmas Bird Count: Call Charlie Browne at 748-2372 or email cbrowne@fairbanksmuseum.org for information.

Monday, January 7: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

Sunday, January 20: NEK Audubon field trip to Champlain Valley north of Burlington. Meet at West Danville park and ride at intersection of Rtes. 2 and 15 at 7 a.m.

Monday, February 4: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

Saturday, February 10: NEK Audubon snow-shoe bird walk at Moose Bog. Meet at White's/Agway parking lot, exit 23, I-91 at 7 a.m.

Monday, March 4: Informational and planning meeting, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum classroom. Open to all.

A note about our field trips: We go regardless of the weather (unless the weather would in some way pose a danger); so, dress appropriately! If you have any doubt about the trip being cancelled call Tom at 626-9071. Sometimes the bad weather brings out the best birds. Proceeds go to our Camp Scholarship Fund. We report all our bird sightings to: www.ebird.org/VINS

NORTHEAST KINGDOM AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2006-2007

Officers

Airie Lindsay, President
Howard Pires, Vice President
Robin Rothman, Secretary
Charlie Browne, Treasurer

Board Members

Thelma White, Jim Ashley, Tom Berriman,
Virginia Elliott, Bill Marshall, Ken Rower,
Michael Sabourin, Carolyn Boardman,
John Pinkham, Shelly Guy

Audubon Vermont: Douglas Parker, Executive Director (802) 434-3068; dparker@audubon.org



NORTHEAST KINGDOM AUDUBON

1302 Main Street
St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID St. Johnsbury, VT Permit No. 5

How to join Northeast Kingdom Audubon

There are two ways to become a member:

1. To join the National Audubon Society (first time): send \$20 (or more) payable to the National Audubon Society to: Audubon Vermont, 255 Sherman Hollow Road, Huntington, VT 05462.
phone: 802-434-3068 email: vermont@audubon.org; website: www.audubon.org

When you join the National Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of our NEK Audubon Chapter member and we receive the entire first year's membership money for our chapter's use. You may opt for: a) No Audubon magazine; b) No telemarketing calls; c) No national solicitations; d) Local (VT) appeals only; e) Anonymity ... by so indicating on your application.

2. To join Northeast Kingdom Audubon only: Send \$10 or more yearly (honor system!) to: NEK Audubon, Charlie Browne, Treasurer, 1302 Main Street, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

No matter how you become a member, you will receive a newsletter three times a year and may attend our Board Meetings, which are usually held on the first Monday of each month from 4:30-6:00 p.m. at the Fairbanks Museum. Whether or not you are a member, if you send your email address to airie@kingcon.com you will receive our Updated Events Calendars and local notices. Remember to keep us informed of changes in your email address. You can expect about one email per month.

Visit the NEK Audubon chapter website, www.nekaudubon.org for lots more information!