



THE HARBINGER
Ascutney Mountain Audubon Society

VOLUME #46

JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER

NUMBER #3

Bald Eagle Release in Windsor



On May 11, VINS released an eagle at Windsor Meadows Management Area. The following is a report by Ken Cox, a retired state biologist, "Even though, I had been given a heads-up notice of VIN's plans to release a rehabilitated Bald Eagle at Windsor Meadows WMA sometime in the very near future, I had no idea when this would happen. Luckily I was there last Thursday on one of my regular morning birding outings when large numbers of vehicles and people showed up at the pump house. I inquired

what was up and was told this was the day of the release. Warden Gallant, who originally found the bird, was invited but had a schedule conflict.

The crated bird was unloaded and after a few words from one of the rehabilitators, the gate was opened and the bird stuck its head out and took to wing. It flew low, circling half way around the field before landing on the ground. There it stayed for some time looking around scoping out the situation. It then gave its attention to the sky above and to everyone's surprise, a mature Bald Eagle (possibly one of the Windsor nesting birds) was soaring overhead. The situation couldn't have been planned better.

The released bird continued to just sit, so one of the VINS staff walked toward it to make sure it was fully capable of sustained flight. The eagle lifted off, flew over the wetland and gained altitude soaring on a thermal higher and higher. It was briefly joined by the full adult eagle before each going its separate way. The eagle rose to such a great height that it was visible as a dark speck (even with binoculars) against the white clouds and was last seen drifting off to the south. Needless to say, the whole experience was amazing and frankly breathtaking. Glad to have been there to witness it".



This 4-year old female was fledged in Quebec where she was banded. She was found in Brownsville lying in a puddle and in extremely poor health. It was suspected that she had eaten some tainted meat. She was reported to Fish & Wildlife and picked up by Warden Gallant who delivered her to VINS.

Permits are required to keep bald eagles in captivity in the United States. Public educational institutions, such as the Vermont Institute of Natural Science in



Woodstock and the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum in Marlboro, are issued permits. Some of the eagles are permanently injured and cannot be returned to the wild while others can be released after their injuries heal. Both institutions house non-releasable eagles and are well worth a visit to see these majestic birds up close.

We all know that eagles are large. The females are 25% larger than the males. Their body length is typically 28 to 40 inches with a wingspan of about 7 feet. They normally weigh 6 to 14 pounds. Their beak, feet and eyes are bright yellow. The beak is large and hooked. Their toes are short and powerful with large talons. The talons of the hind toes pierce the prey while the front toes hold the prey. The legs do not have feathers.

Eagles build the largest nest of any North American bird. They use the same nest each year adding more material until the nest gets so heavy, the branches break or a storm blows it down. Most eagles lay 2 eggs. If they have more than 2 fledglings, many times the smaller eaglets don't survive. Both the male and female take turns incubating the eggs but the female does most of the sitting. For the first couple weeks, one adult is in the nest at all times. By 5 or 6 weeks, the adults are more apt to perch in a nearby tree. By 8 weeks, the eaglets can flap their wings and lift their feet off the nest. The young fledge at 8-14 weeks but will stay close to the nest and the parents will feed them. In another 6 weeks, they will leave their parents. It will take the immature birds 4 years before they get their adult plumage and are ready to mate and reproduce.

By Alma Beals, Vermont Master Gardener and Naturalist



Conserving Nature – Educating Communities

Ascutney Mountain Audubon
is a Chapter of
Audubon Vermont and
the National Audubon Society
AMAS Serves the
Precision Valley Region of
Vermont and New Hampshire

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The Harbinger is published by AMAS
four times a year.

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NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Elections at Annual Meeting July 9, 2017

Our current board is comprised of Ellen Allman - president, Marie Caduto vice president, Alma Beals - secretary, Marianne Walsh - Treasurer, Michael Walsh - director, Jan Lambert - director, Lynn Morgan - Harbinger editor and Mike Jenzen - liaison to Springweather.

Ken Cox has agreed to come on the board as the liaison for Windsor Meadows.

Mike J. is moving so will no longer be overseeing what happens at Springweather.

The proposed board for 2017-2018 is Ellen Allman - president, Marie Caduto - vice president, Alma Beals - secretary, Marianne Walsh - Treasurer, Michael Walsh - director, Jan Lambert - director, Lynn Morgan - Harbinger editor and Ken Cox - liaison to Windsor Meadows.

If you are interested in taking over for Mike at Springweather please let me know.

Ellen Allman

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CHAPTER ASSEMBLE REPORT

Twice a year, members of the AMAS Board participate in statewide Audubon meetings to exchange ideas, get informed of state issues and connect with each other.

Our April meeting was hosted by Otter Creek Audubon Society and was held at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. OCAS and MNWR staff offered a set of interesting and informative talks on the Refuge's history and how it has evolved over the years since being established in 1943.

The Refuge was developed specifically for migratory bird habitat and provides 6,729 acres of protected land. Extensive wetlands, including a 900-acre bog, have seen over 200 bird species over the years and tens of thousands of migrating waterfowl each autumn. Famous for the Snow Goose migration and stop-over, the Refuge also has nesting Eagles, Osprey and a large Great Blue Heron rookery. On an excursion last fall AMAS folks got to watch a family of otters cavorting and catching fish!

To be continued on page 5 - "Assemble"

In Memory of Our Friend Sam Gurney

On June 3rd Alma Beals emailed the board with the following information. "I'm not sure how many of you knew Sam Gurney but he passed away recently. He was a big part of the AMAS bird seed sales. He and a couple others went to Claremont for bags of bird seed which were then broken down into smaller bags. He was always there when needed for a big project (Gurney Brothers of North Springfield)".

Shortly after Alma's email went out the following remembrances were compiled by Hugh and Bunni Putnam, also long standing members of AMAS.

November 1976, first bird seed sale at Peavey's. Between John Peavey with the Wiggins truck and Sam Gurney's horse trailer, over 3 tons (6,000 lbs) of seed were loaded and unloaded. John and May, Oliver and Kaye, and Hugh all played a part in those early bird seed sales.

1977-78 Board of Directors

1978 was the first work day for the nature area, he designed and built (with help) basically all the benches.

1979 Sam was among the four volunteers to introduce the Springweather Nature Area to 12 area teachers. Also elected Vice President of AMAS.

1989 Participated in the planning for the North Springfield Bog boardwalk, also helped to remove debris including a 1950s car.

1996 built Weathersfield Heron Rookery nesting platforms.

1996-98 helped with Springweather Trail enhancements.

Participated in many "Atlas Breeding Bird Surveys", "Bird-a-thons" for VINS, and "Christmas Bird Counts".

Received the **Ascutney Mountain Society 2004 Eleanor Ellis Award**: "...behind the scenes for over 25 years." The write up is in the Jan/Feb 2005 Harbinger.

Mike Jenzen remembers how much Sam was involved in Springweather including building the bridge across the brook and building the benches. His winter picnics were always special with a big bonfire, sledding, food and drink, and fun for the little kids and the big kids.

Mike Walsh remembers that he designed and built the Great Blue Heron platforms and that he received the AMAS appreciation award.

Wally Elton associated Sam with the heron colony and the artificial nesting structure that he designed and improved.

Sam was a valued AMAS member and friend, he will be sorely missed.

Calendar of Events

Annual Picnic and meeting: Our annual picnic will be at Distant Hills Garden in Walpole on Sunday, July 9 from 10 to 1:30. There will be a tour of the gardens from 10 to 12, not to be missed. Picnic and business meeting will follow. Drinks will be provided. Please bring a pot luck dish, salad or desert to share.

Plum Island trip: Due to weather, our spring trip was canceled. Due to large crowds and green-head biting flies, this trip will be rescheduled in the fall. Check the next harbinger for details.

Assemble

Continued from page 3:

The Vermont Chapter assembly meetings, as these gatherings are called, offer Audubon members the opportunity to exchange our concerns for Vermont's environment and how our actions are affecting the birds and other wildlife we all care about. We share strategies on how to better communicate our concerns to others and learn which issues are coming up around the state. Audubon VT updates us on legislative and national initiatives and we all share our list of favorite speakers to offer within our regions.

The next meeting will be hosted here in AMAS territory in November. If you are interested in being involved let us know!

Marie Caduto