



VCE staff birding at Windsor Grasslands © Fiona Lee MacLean

Birds, Butterflies, Beetles, and Bonding for Birdathon+ 2025: A Letter from Executive Director Susan Hindinger

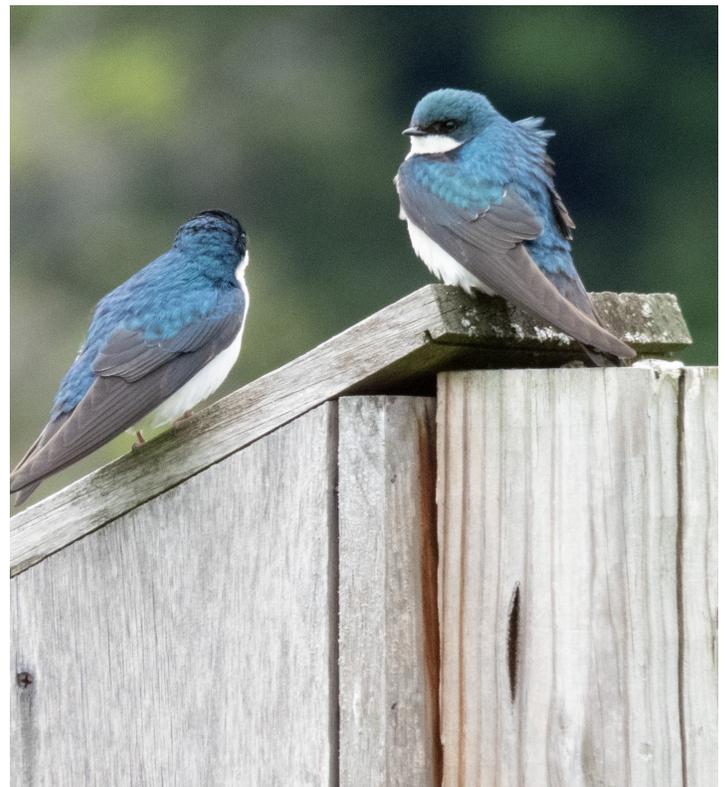


Dear Friends,

On the heels of the rainiest May in recent memory and with more rain in the forecast, VCE staff spent the week before Birdathon+ anxious for a surprise sunny day. Alas, on May 20th, the weather was not on our side. We had set a lofty goal of observing 200 winged species, a target we might easily reach with favorable conditions for nighttime mothing or daytime butterflying to augment a busy day of birding. Instead, the earliest-rising Green Mountain Goatsuckers awoke to grey skies and breezy temperatures in the upper 30s. No passionate birder or naturalist is deterred by inclement weather on a Big Day, and the Goatsuckers were no exception. We added some layers and counted ourselves grateful that black flies would likely not appear on this year's list.

While goatsuckers in the wild are in steep decline, our Green Mountain Goatsuckers team has grown dramatically in recent years, and now numbers over 20 people. It includes experienced birders and others new to the activity, so this year's Birdathon was a twist on the traditional fast-as-you-can checklist craze. Learning to bird during a birdathon can be like learning to jog during a marathon—but it doesn't have to be! We set out to initiate our newest VCE birder-naturalists with an

experience that would keep them coming back for more: working in smaller groups to pursue and celebrate individual goals as well as collective ones. Each group's plan and species list developed independently throughout the day, and we used iNaturalist and Slack to track our collective checklist and try to cover all the bases. The early risers concentrated on birds at the start, and those targeting insects and other winged creatures slept in and waited for the sun.



Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) at Lake Runnemede
© Fiona Lee MacLean

Our Birdathon+ largely focused on the habitats of central Windsor County. From the Connecticut River shoreline, we birded hotspots like Lake Runnemedede and the Windsor Grasslands, Little Ascutney Wildlife Management Area, Hartness State Airport, Springweather Nature Area, the North Springfield Dam, Okemo Mountain, Colby Pond, and many nooks and crannies in between. Staff whose activities on Birdathon day called them to other parts of the state added significantly to our species count by visiting habitats not found in Windsor County: Spencer Hardy and Emily Anderson walked the lakeshore in Burlington observing ducks and other waterbirds, Spencer birded as he worked the land on his farm in Jericho, and Kevin Tolan logged some Rutland County specialties during a vernal pool field visit there.

Megan Massa, one of the six new staff members to join VCE since last year and perhaps the current staff's most enthusiastic daily eBirder, along with myself and VCE's newest staffer Franni Hoag, started the day at my house near the base of Hawk's Mountain in Weathersfield, the site of a reliable Peregrine Falcon nest. (The nest had not yet been confirmed as of May 20th but has been since and, we are happy to report, has hatched one chick.) Rising at 4 a.m. to the songs of Veeries, Wood Thrushes, and Scarlet Tanagers, we birded the mixed northern hardwoods, streams, and fields along the dirt road, tallying warblers, woodpeckers, vireos, jays, and thrushes, as well as the Common Ravens recently fledged from a nest on the cliffs above. Making our way up the road, accompanied by my dog Bravo, we heard a strange and persistent call. An adult Barred Owl glared at us from a low branch overhead, flew across the road keeping an eye on the dog (who remained oblivious to it), and eventually moved off into the woods.



Jason Hill and Juno Stahl in Reading, VT © Kent McFarland



Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) © Franni Hoag

We made our way south and east around the North Springfield Reservoir, stopping to hear the high, shrill song of the Prairie Warbler at the Hartness State Airport (while scanning fruitlessly for the Grasshopper Sparrows last reported there 24 years ago) and to laugh at a family of young raven siblings guffawing amongst themselves on the dam. The wind whipped as we scoped the debris at the foot of the dam where Spotted Sandpipers bobbed their tails, Double-crested Cormorants balanced on the driftwood, and Canada Geese and goslings worked the reeds at the water's edge. Further east at Skyline Nursery, freshly turned soil prompted Megan to remark, "This is where I'd be if I were a Killdeer," mere moments before a Killdeer popped over a muddy furrow.

Another group greeted the dawn atop Okemo Mountain, hoping to start their day with a Bicknell's Thrush and other high-elevation species. Instead of the thrush, however, through the resonant songs of Winter Wrens, they heard mysterious non-avian sounds weaving in and out of the fog. Sharp-eyed Dana Williams spotted a silent hare pausing for a moment amidst the spruce for a quick look before darting off again, just ahead of three very excited beagles. The chase



Megan Massa, Emily Anderson, and Laura Prothero at Windsor Grasslands © Franni Hoag

continued to weave around the peak—the dogs’ continuous baying always betraying their location.

Bicknell’s Thrush remained elusive. (In fact, the Bicknells’ arrival in Vermont appears to have been on the late side this year. Our first tagged Bicknell’s was detected in Vermont this year on May 16, but most of our tagged birds started arriving the week after Birdathon+.) Dan Lambert and Dana helped Laura Prothero achieve her personal goal of seeing five warblers: Common Yellowthroat, Blackburnian, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, and Black-and-white Warblers. Much later in the day, the team added a Golden-winged Warbler to the list.

By 7 a.m., Kevin was on the opposite side of the state cruising the back roads of western Rutland County, where a shrubby blowdown area produced the day’s only Mourning Warbler. He followed the path of the Poultney River and encountered an Orchard Oriole at the river’s edge. At the West Rutland Marsh, the call of a Virginia Rail revealed this elusive wader. After spending the day visiting vernal pools with Otter Creek High School students, Kevin searched out Vermont’s only reliable Cerulean Warbler, an annual breeder on Snake Mountain. He ended the day by visiting the hayfield of one of VCE’s participating Grassland Ambassadors to observe a singing Eastern Meadowlark. This was a very respectable Birdathon+ list for a regular workday!

Desirée Narango got an early start at Lake Runnemedede, clocking four and a half hours of birding and 54 species before her teammates Mike Hallworth, Toni Luff, Amber Jones, and Fiona MacLean joined her. Desirée’s Lake Runnemedede list included some highlights, including a singing male Wilson’s Warbler and a shrub

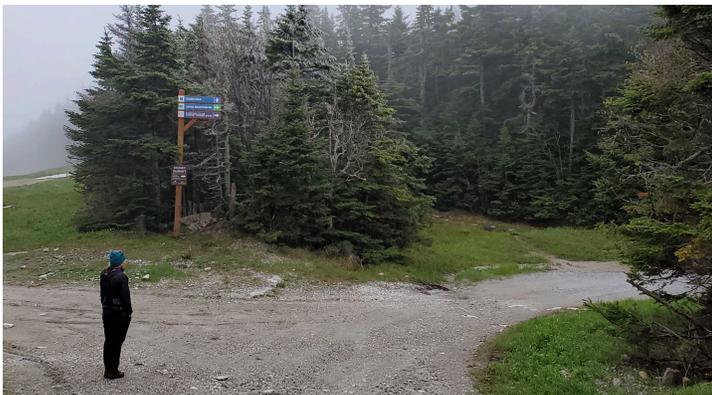


White Spring Moth (*Lomographa vestaliata*) © Fiona Lee MacLean

that contained both a Canada Warbler and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher! This group enjoyed well-earned lattes at the Boston Dreams coffee shop in Windsor.

As the day warmed, another group put the “plus” in Birdathon+: those focused more on winged insects than birds. Kent McFarland, Jason Hill, and Juno Stahl visited Little Ascutney Wildlife Management Area (conveniently also a priority block for the Vermont Butterfly Atlas) to record on iNaturalist as many observations of winged creatures as possible and to checklist on eButterfly as many butterflies as possible. It was slow going as they explored an old stone cellar and apple orchard, peeking beneath leaves, flowers, logs and rocks for the critters keeping warm. Their highlight was a larval Harris’s Checkerspot butterfly, after which they celebrated with a breakfast pastry at the nearby Brownsville Butcher & Pantry.

By early afternoon, the staff converged at Windsor Grasslands to seek out a Golden-winged Warbler that had been observed there in previous days. It took some sleuthing but the group was soon rewarded with a terrific view of the songster and its buzzy call from



Dana Williams on Okemo Mountain © Laura Prothero



Northern Amber Bumble Bee (*Bombus borealis*) © Franni Hoag



Desirée Narango, Amber Jones, and Toni Luff at Lake Runnemede © Fiona Lee MacLean

an apple tree. This popular birding location also produced the day's best view of an American Kestrel.

As the afternoon turned to evening, the staff gathered at my house to share dinner, recount stories of the day, and devise strategies for capturing any species we'd likely missed. In fact, before dinner we spent time with the scope at the end of the driveway, trying to spot the peregrines that had been seen all spring scouting the nesting cliff, but to no avail. Spencer sent in a late evening American Woodcock sighting from his farm, and then Desirée saved the day with a Peregrine Falcon report on her way home. Megan sat at the table musing aloud, "How are we missing Mockingbird?!" There always seems to be one common species that eludes us. Finally, our listing efforts gave way to the lure of good food and conversation, and the books closed on another year's birdathon.

We are grateful to all our VCE friends who participated this year. Whether you birded, butterflyed, supported someone else, or donated, you helped to make this year's Birdathon+ a resounding success. Here's how the day shaped up, by the numbers: The Green Mountain Goatsuckers managed to count 135 bird species in 98 eBird checklists, plus 118 winged insect species, for a total of 253 species! With your help and sponsorship, the funds we raised will fuel our biodiversity research and conservation efforts all year long.

But do these numbers sufficiently measure a day spent exploring nature with friends and colleagues? The unquantifiable signs of a day well spent—moments of joyful surprise, awe, and camaraderie—these are the true hallmarks of our yearly Birdathons. And if you

participated by spending a day birding or butterflying with friends or family, I hope you experienced the same. There is still time to contribute to our goal for this important fundraiser. If you haven't yet made a gift, please do so now!

Thank you!

Susan Hindinger

—Susan Hindinger, June 2025



Amber Jones and Ryan Rebozo looking for the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) © Fiona Lee MacLean



Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) © Franni Hoag

Species List

Birds

Waterfowl

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Green-winged Teal
Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser

Landfowl

Wild Turkey
Ruffed Grouse

Pigeons & Doves

Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove

Swifts & Hummingbirds

Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Rails

Virginia Rail

Shorebirds

Killdeer
American Woodcock
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Ring-billed Gull
American Herring Gull

Great Black-backed Gull
Caspian Tern

Loons

Common Loon

Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns

Green Heron
Great Blue Heron

New World Vultures

Turkey Vulture

Hawks, Eagles, & Other Raptors

Osprey
Northern Harrier
Bald Eagle
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk

Owls

Barred Owl

Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher

Woodpeckers

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker

Pileated Woodpecker
Northern Flicker

Falcons

American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon

Songbirds

Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Alder Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Bank Swallow
Tree Swallow
Purple Martin
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Golden-crowned Kinglet
White-breasted Nuthatch
Red-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Northern House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
European Starling
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Swainson's Thrush
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
House Sparrow
House Finch
Purple Finch
American Goldfinch
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Eastern Towhee
Bobolink
Eastern Meadowlark
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Grackle
Ovenbird
Louisiana Waterthrush
Northern Waterthrush
Golden-winged Warbler
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Mourning Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart

Cerulean Warbler
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Canada Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting

Other Winged Things

Beetles

Two-lined Leatherwing
Ground Beetle (*Carabidae*)
Ant-like Longhorn Beetle
Common Willow Calligrapher Beetle
Small Orange Tortoise Beetle
Golden Tortoise Beetle
Chrysomela mainensis
Waterlily Leaf Beetle
Three-lined Potato Beetle
Willow Leaf Beetle
Viburnum Leaf Beetle
Goldenrod Leaf Beetle
Polished Lady Beetle
Asian Lady Beetle
Fourteen-spotted Lady Beetle
Brown Leaf Weevil
Cylindrical Click Beetle
Winter Firefly

Flies

Sylvicola alternata
March Fly (*Bibio sp.*)
Bellardia vulgaris

Sheep-strike Greenbottle
Willow Pinecone Gall Midge
Pointy Mosquito (*Aedes sp.*)
Long-legged Flies (*Dolichopodidae*)
Balloon Flies (*Hilara sp.*)
Minettia lupulina
Band-winged Crane Fly
Prionolabis rufibasis
Common Tiger Fly
Lepiseodina sp.
Common Snipe Fly
Rhagio plumbeus
Downlooker Snipefly
Grass Skimmer Flies (*Paragus sp.*)
Oblique-banded Pond Fly
Tufted Globetail
Pufftails (*Sphegina sp.*)
Eastern Calligrapher
Margined Calligrapher
Early Tachinid Fly
Goldenrod Gall Fly
Ferruginous Tiger Crane Fly
Tipula trivittata

Mayflies

Prong-gilled Mayflies (*Leptophlebiidae*)

True Bugs, Hoppers, Aphids, & Allies

Acyrtosiphon sp.
Smoky Poplar Aphid
Elm Cockscomb Aphid
Woolly Elm Aphid
Mealy Plum Aphid
Diamondback Spittlebug
Striped Leafhopper
Amphigonalia gothica
Oncopsis sp.
Chionomus sp.
Stenocranus unipunctatus
Stictocephala lutea
Leptopterna sp.
North American Tarnished Plant Bug
Ensign Scales (*Ortheziidae*)
Pale Green Assassin Bug

Corythucha cydoniae
Corythucha juglandis

Ants, Bees, Wasps, & Sawflies

Hawthorn Mining Bee
Rugose Mining Bee
Neighborly Mining Bee
Western Honey Bee
Two-spotted Bumblebee
Common Eastern Bumblebee
Tricolored Bumble Bee
Yellow-banded Bumblebee
Nomad Bees (*Nomada sp.*)
Clitemnestra bipunctata
Amphibolips sp.
Dark Paper Wasp
New York Carpenter Ant
Eastern Black Carpenter Ant
Augochlora sp.
Golden Sweat Bee
Lasioglossum gemmatum
Euceros sp.
Mesostenus thoracicus
Vulgichneumon brevicinctor
Aneugmenus flavipes
Macrophya sp.
Bald-faced Hornet

Butterflies & Moths

White-spotted Sable
Arched Hooktip Moth



Common Willow Calligrapher Beetle (*Calligrapha multipunctata*) © Fiona Lee MacLean

Clover Looper Moth
Spongy Moth
Dark-banded Owlet
Ten-spotted Honeysuckle Moth
Sharp-angled Carpet Moth
False Yellow-dusted Cream
Gray Spring Moth
White Spring Moth
Horned Spanworm Moth
Half-wing Moth
Porcelain Gray Moth
Red Twin-spot Moth
Toothed Brown Carpet Moth
Caloptilia packardella
Maple Leafcutter Moth
Eastern Tent Caterpillar Moth
Silvery Blue
Pygmy Eye-capped Moths (*Nepticulidae*)

American Copper Underwing Moth
Veiled Ear Moth
Harris's Checkerspot
Common Ringlet
Eastern Comma
Ugly-nest Caterpillar Moth
Gray Leafroller Moth
Swammerdamia sp.

Scorpionflies, Hangingflies, & Allies

Forked Scorpionfly

Grasshoppers & Crickets

Greenstriped Grasshopper
Roesel's Bush-cricket

Stoneflies

Green Stoneflies (*Chloroperlidae*)



Red Twin-spot Carpet Moth (*Xanthorhoe spadicearia*) © Dana Williams



Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) at Stoughton Pond © Franni Hoag