



VOLUME 35

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Feeding Birds



Photo by Julie Waters

Although it is only fall, our summer visitors are gone and our faithful resident birds are flocking up and starting to check out our feeders. Many people ask us at AMAS what is best to feed the birds in the fall and winter. Here are a few tips.

Black oil sunflower seed is the highest seed for oil content. High oil content translates into high calorie, which is what our birds need to survive the cold winter nights. Somehow, the birds know this, as you will find that almost all of our resident birds, even woodpeckers, enjoy sunflower seed. For less mess feed black oil hearts or

chips. These are covered with only a thin, translucent skin. We have a small feeder next to our dining room window that the goldfinches frequent, and they deftly strip the skins while on the feeder. If you are feeding ground birds, sunflower seed is still your best bet, as most mixed seed will contain ingredients the birds are not wild about.

Another high fat content food is suet. Tree-clinging birds, such as woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice, love this stuff. Be sure to mount your suet feeder to the bottom of a board and hang it from the top so it lies beneath the board. This keeps the jays, crows, and squirrels out of it. To attract Brown Creepers smear a little suet in the rough furrows of a maple tree. This has attracted up to five creepers in our yard. An alternative to suet is an equal mix of cornmeal and peanut butter. We tuck it into holes we drill in 2x4s and hang like the suet feeders. A small section of 1/2" screening keeps the mix in. Birds love this in tree bark as well.

A note on feeder placement: Birds need cover. If your feeder is out in the open, the birds will be reluctant to use it. The reason is predators, namely Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Increased bird activity in your yard will attract these accipiters and maybe even a Northern Shrike. Cover is essential for the birds to avoid these guys. Providing water is also a very good thing, especially in winter. Don't worry about the feeder being too close to your window. This is actually safer for your birds, as they are less likely to fly into your window at high speed. Speaking of bird safety, one of the most harmful predators of birds is the feral cat. Yes, your kitty. Cats kill over 60 million birds a year, not out of necessity but out of instinct. They rarely eat their kill, and will torture any bird unfortunate enough to survive the first attack. If you allow your cat to roam outdoors, please do not feed the birds. You are creating what biologists call a sink, which is a location where mortality outweighs replacement. If your neighbor allows their cat to roam in your yard, ask them to keep it inside (where a house cat belongs) or stop feeding your birds. Cats quickly adapt to a pampered life indoors. Our fat cat lived to the ripe old age of 16, avoiding the wrath of nature and allowing us to enjoy our birds responsibly.

----- Michael Walsh



**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

Visit our Website at:
audubon.org/chapter/vt

Established 1972

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The Harbinger is published by AMAS four times
a year.

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Note from the Editor

You will notice that the *Harbinger* has taken on a slightly new look. Besides a new editor, the board voted to cut the number of pages from six to four and the number of issues from five to four to save money. Like many organizations, the Ascutney Mountain Audubon Society is also feeling the financial crunch.

If you would rather read the *Harbinger* on-line instead of receiving a paper copy, please contact Bunni Putnam at putnams@vermontel.net. She will remove your name from the *Harbinger* mailing list (you will remain on the Membership list) and you can go to our website at audubon.org/chapter/vt or to your favorite search engine and type in “Ascutney Mountain Audubon Society” and bring up the newsletter at your convenience.

The organization also has an **E-mail Reminder List**. Because we are all so busy, this service was developed to remind everyone of upcoming events. If you are not on this list and would like to be added to it, please contact Wally Elton at wme@vermontel.net. This list is used strictly for communication within our organization and is not given, sold or used for any other purpose.

AMAS ANNUAL DINNER RESERVATION FORM (Use a separate piece of paper if you prefer)

Name: _____

Tel. #: _____

AMAS Member? Y N

Please reserve space for _____ adults (@\$11.00 members, \$13.00 others), _____ children 6-12 years (@ \$6.00), and _____ children under 6 (free). Total

enclosed: _____ # of vegetarian meals: _____
Mail with check payable to “AMAS” by Oct. 16 to AMAS, PO Box 191, Springfield, VT 05156

SEPTEMBER

➤ **Hawks Overhead**

Join the Putney Mtn. Hawk watchers any time **between August 28th and Oct 18** on Putney Mtn. Putney, VT if it is not raining. However, it is said that the best day this year to view Hawks will be Wednesday September 16th. Check the web site for directions or call Phil Morgan 802-869-2227.

- **Rockingham Public Library Program ~SOAP STONE IN VERMONT~ September 16 at 7 PM.** Sue Hadden, director of the Vermont Museum of Mining and Minerals in Grafton, will explain the formation and mining of soap stone using slides, specimens and humor.

OCTOBER

- **Bird Seed Sale: Saturday, 10/3, 10 am to 3 pm**, at Woodbury Florist, on Route 10/106, in North Springfield--follow the signs. Come early to be sure to get your seed--we have been known to sell out. Contact: Bunni Putnam, 802-886-8430 for info and/or if you can help.
- **Rockingham Public Library Program ~ANIMALS IN ARCHEOLOGY~ October 14 at 7 PM.** Gail Golec will show displays of skeletal remains of local animals, both historical and prehistorical, and talk on how wildlife shaped the prehistory of Vermont.
- **Annual Dinner: Friday, 10/23, dinner at 6 pm, program at 7 pm**, The Springfield Methodist Church (stone church at the head of the square). Contact: Bunni Putnam. Dinner will be the Methodist Ladies' famous turkey dinner with all the trimmings. **Prepaid reservations are required by 10/16--see reservation form.** Program: Owls, Hawks and Falcons with Mike Clough

NOVEMBER

- **Rockingham Public Library Program ~ART FROM THE WILD~** November 18 at 7 PM. Sue Brearey, an accomplished Putney artist, will exhibit and talk about her beautiful renderings of wildlife and the wilderness that they live in.

DECEMBER

- **Bird Seed Sale** Saturday, Dec. 5 10 am to 3 pm, at Woodbury Florist, on Route 10/106, in North Springfield--follow the signs. Come early to be sure to get your seed--we have been known to sell out. Contact: Bunni Putnam, 802-886-8430 for info and/or if you can help. Futures sales will be 1/16 & 2/27.
- **110th Annual Christmas Bird Count** – December 19th and 20th
- **Saxton's River Count – Saturday, December 19:** Contact **Don Clark** at 802-843-2347; email: sapsbks@sover.net. Meet at Allen Bro's, on Route 5 south of Bellows Falls, in Westminster at 6:45 AM for route assignments and to join your team. For feeder watchers, please contact Don prior to the count to ensure we don't double count your birds. Meeting place for the Tally Party to be determined.
 - **Springfield Count – Sunday December 20th:** Contact **Hugh Putnam** at 802-886-8430; email: putnams@vermontel.net. Meet at McDonalds in Springfield at 7 AM for route assignments and to join your team. For feeder watchers please contact Hugh or Bunni Putnam so we will not double count your birds. Call in your feeder counts to Hugh or Bunni after 5 PM on the 20th. Tally Party will be at the Putnam's, 29 Meadow Drive, Springfield, VT (Peddan Acres) starting around 5:00.

Eleanor Ellis Award Nomination (Award given out at the Annual Dinner, submit by Oct. 5)

Nominee's name: _____

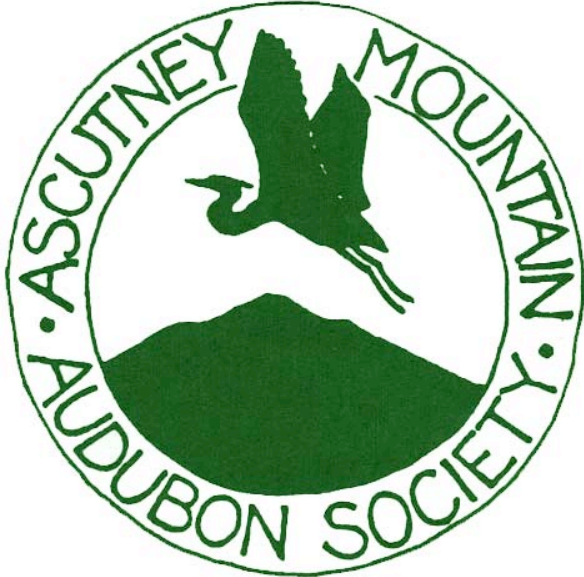
The above person deserves this award because:

Use a separate piece of paper if you prefer. Mail nomination to: AMAS, PO Box 191, Springfield, VT 05156. A Chapter Affiliate of the National Audubon Society

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**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**



Snow Geese Adventure At Dead Creek Wildlife Refuge



Are you looking for a destination for a days outing? Look for Snow Geese at the Dead Creek Wildlife Refuge. The best time to view these migrating geese is around Oct. 20th. If you haven't seen this sight it is worth the drive.

Happy Birding!

Directions: From Rutland take Route 7 N to Middlebury. In Middlebury take route 23 to route 17 W. After Addison look for the Dead Creek Wildlife Refuge viewing pull-out on your left.