

2011 Annual Report



Fiscal Year Ending 12/31/2011

Uniting People and Science for Conservation



The Vermont Center for Ecostudies envisions
a society that sustains healthy ecosystems
through informed decision-making.

We seek to guide conservation with sound science,
inspire ecological responsibility, and foster
local and international collaboration to effect change.

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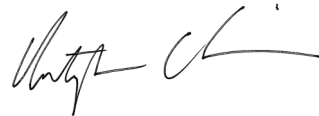
The Vermont Center for Ecostudies advances the conservation of wildlife across the Americas through research, monitoring and citizen engagement.

Director's Message

Dear Friends:

It's not often that VCE staff take time to collectively reflect on, let alone celebrate, the trajectory of our brief existence. Crafting a five-year strategic plan, which we released in December (see the VCE website or contact me for a hard copy), provided ample opportunities throughout 2011 to do just that. The challenges we face, both day-to-day and broader, often overshadow what we can legitimately claim as accomplishments. The pages that follow highlight some of VCE's key 2011 successes. Programmatically, we enjoyed a banner year, as we continued to apply solid science to achieve tangible conservation and to communicate widely to our diverse stakeholders, including you. We are fiscally healthy, no small feat in the recent economic climate. We have an engaged Board of Directors and a growing Advisory Council, all of whom provide invaluable guidance and support.

To me, VCE always comes down to people, and fully half of this 2011 annual report underscores that vital fact. From our internal team of staff, Board and Advisors to our many external constituents — citizen scientists, scientific colleagues, conservation partners, trainees, donors, and just plain friends — VCE's success over the past four-plus years reflects a true and deep collaboration. We look forward to expanding our reach and strengthening our connections with all of you in the months and years ahead. Your support, in all its many forms, is by far VCE's most valued asset.



Sound Science



Hispaniolan Bird Conservation took a quantum leap with the hiring of Juan Carlos Martínez-Sánchez as VCE's Caribbean Bird Conservation Coordinator, under the aegis of the International Bicknell's Thrush Conservation Group. With a dual base in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Juan Carlos brings seasoned leadership and a locally-based perspective to the immense conservation challenges facing Hispaniola and other Greater Antillean islands.

VCE completed its U.S. launch of **Mountain Birdwatch 2.0 (MBW2)** in 2011, as our Canadian partners initiated complementary MBW2 surveys in Québec and the Maritimes. In total, volunteers and staff surveyed 1062 points along 189 routes across the breeding range of Bicknell's Thrush. The challenges of this model avian monitoring program were aptly articulated by citizen scientist Eric Teed, who noted of Dix Mountain in the Adirondacks: "Wow, this route is a slog! A long gnarly and wet hike in and 1,145 feet of elevation between points. Love it!"



2011 brought culmination of 30,000 records that comprise the second-generation **Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas**. Results have been painstakingly compiled, analyzed, summarized, and interpreted to document changes in Vermont's avian distributions over the past 25 years. A detailed Atlas website is up and running, and we submitted a 1000+-page manuscript to University of New England Press for production as a hard cover book. Publication is slated for early 2013, and a celebration of this milestone achievement will ensue!

In 2011, VCE completed its 3-year study of **population sizes and productivity of vernal pool-breeding amphibians** at the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Careful egg mass counts yielded population estimates of 1,206 breeding Wood Frogs, 891 Spotted Salamanders, and 751 Jefferson Salamanders. A cluster of four vernal pools near the Park's center supported 90% of the area's Wood Frog population, 81% of its Spotted Salamanders, and 58% of Jefferson Salamanders. As the Park moves to implement its forest management plan, VCE's results provide critical baseline data to assess the effects of forestry on these three amphibian species.



With our recovery in 2011 of an additional 12 **Bobolink geolocators** from Oregon, Nebraska, and Vermont, VCE gained groundbreaking insights into this songbird's astounding 12,000-mile roundtrip migration. Data reveal breeding populations converging in space and time in 3 sequential wintering areas, a rapid spring migration with speeds of up to 79 km/hour, and newly-established western populations flying east in the fall to then follow traditional migration routes southward.

If you would like to volunteer as a citizen scientist, please contact Sara Zahendra: szahendra@vtecostudies.org or 802-649-1431

Tangible Outcomes

The **2011 Julie Nicholson Citizen Scientist Award** was presented to Ed Hack in recognition of his extraordinary passion and commitment to birds and wildlife conservation. Ed has been a VCE citizen scientist volunteer for the Vermont Butterfly Survey and the first and second Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas. He has also volunteered to enter historic VT eBird data, to organize the VT County Birding Quest, and to co-lead birding trips. VCE is deeply grateful for Ed's ongoing conservation efforts and commitment to VCE.

The recovery of eastern **Peregrine Falcons** is among North America's great conservation success stories. During 2011, VCE completed an analysis of Peregrine Falcon natal dispersal and survivorship in New England using data from nearly 1,000 peregrines banded as nestlings over the last 20 years. Results (now in review for publication) show that the majority of Peregrine Falcons hatched in New England returned to breed as adults. Site fidelity of breeding birds was strong, with banded adults returning to the same nest for an average of four consecutive years, some for as many as 11 years.

After countless hours scanning >1,600 color-infrared aerial photographs through a stereo-scope, the **Vermont Vernal Pool Mapping Project** has mapped no fewer than 4,869 potential vernal pools statewide. Of these, a hardy corps of volunteers has braved black flies, thunderstorms, and failing GPS batteries to field verify more than 500.

An undersung but remarkably dedicated cadre of VCE citizen scientists devoted countless hours in 2011 to help organize and enter years of priceless data into **Vermont eBird**. Twenty-five boxes, hundreds of files, and thousands of paper records await digitizing, and steadfastly, these volunteers are chipping away at 26 years of historical Vermont bird records. Once analyzed, these data will help us recognize population declines and increases, evaluate changes in phenology, and identify how the changes in our landscape affect bird populations across the state. So far, these spirited volunteers have entered over 5,000 historic sightings into eBird — a treasure trove of information on the conservation status of Vermont's birds.

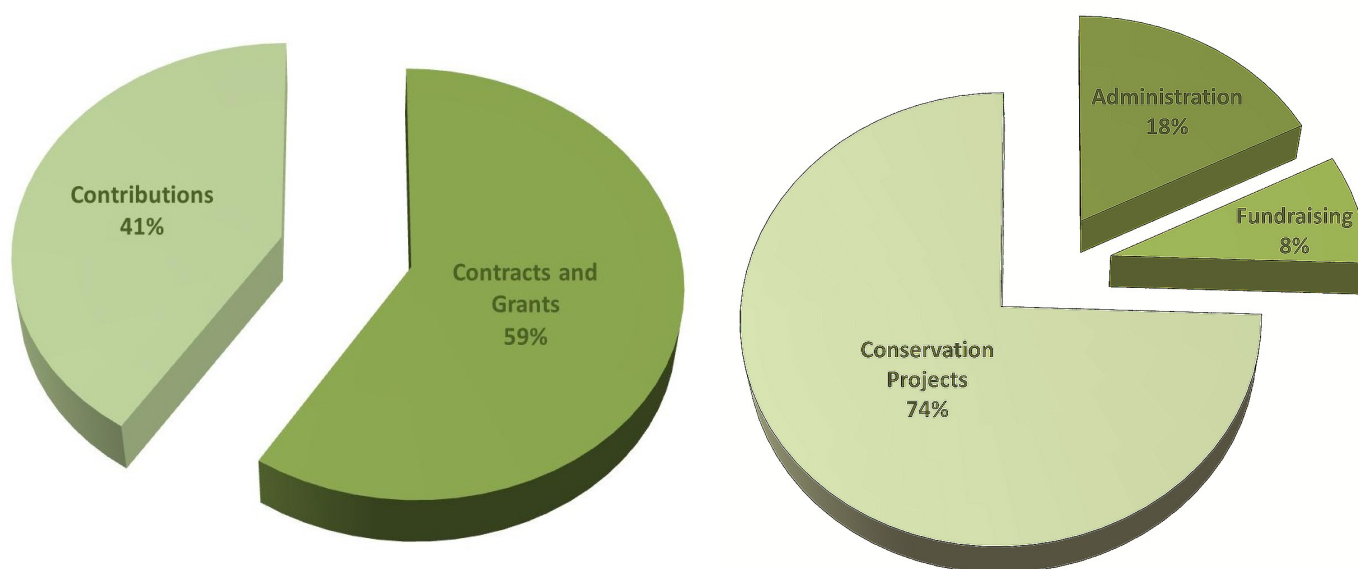
The **Vermont Loon Recovery Project** continued its strong upward trajectory in 2011, involving >250 volunteers who monitored loon pairs, put out nest warning signs and nesting rafts, and assisted with rescues of loons in distress. Vermont's breeding loon population reflects these citizen scientists' remarkable dedication — 72 pairs attempted to nest, 51 of which successfully raised 60 chicks that survived through August. This is one of Vermont's great wildlife success stories!

"Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ~Margaret Mead



Accountability

2011 Revenue Sources and Uses



2011 Profit/Loss and Balance Sheet

Income

Restricted Project Income	\$388,392
Program Income	\$3,109
Donations	\$269,002
Investments	\$956
Other	\$1,919

Total Income \$663,378

Expense

Personnel	\$460,130
Business	\$27,334
Contract Services	\$55,550
General Office	\$25,760
Mailing	\$5,772
Travel	\$29,597
Meeting & Entertainment	\$1,032
Equipment	\$3,401
Facilities	\$18,600
Insurance	\$7,754
Bank Fees	\$774
Miscellaneous	\$1,735

Total Expense \$637,438

Net Income \$25,939

Assets

Current Assets

Operating Accounts	\$268,116
Accounts Receivable	\$193,576
Prepays	\$5,461

Total Current Assets \$467,153

Fixed Assets

Furniture and Equipment	\$6,001
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Total Fixed Assets \$6,001

Total Assets \$473,154

Liabilities & Equity

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$9,392
Credit Cards	\$723
Accruals	\$37,675
Deferred Revenue	\$39,528
Payroll Liabilities	\$236

Total Current Liabilities \$87,554

Total Liabilities \$87,554

Equity

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$359,660
Net Income	\$25,940

Total Equity \$385,600

Total Liability & Equity \$473,154

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Gifts Given in Memory

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Remembering Pat Nye



Pat Nye, a passionate lover of loons and longtime VCE friend, passed away in August after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Among Vermont's legion of committed loon conservationists, no one exuded more fervor and dedication to loons than Pat. The breeding pair on Mt. Holly's Lake Ninevah could have had no greater champion, and in many respects the Ninevah loons were truly "hers". Almost single-handedly responsible for their long track record of successful nesting, Pat's zeal was in fact fundamentally about giving back. She'd be the

first to admit that she gained far more from the loons than she gave. The birds connected her to the landscape that was so much at the fabric of her being – from Ninevah's waters, to the forests, mountains and even oceans beyond.

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home."
~ Gary Snyder

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"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." - Helen Keller