

Uniting People and Science for Conservation



ANNUAL REPORT | 2015

MISSION

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



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Cover photo:
Cedar Waxwing
© Kent McFarland



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DEAR VCE FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

On a beautiful mid-July afternoon, my daughter Alex and I joined Chris Rimmer on Mt. Mansfield to participate in VCE's long-term study of the ridgeline's breeding birds. A wonderful group of people joined us—staff, partners, and friends, ranging in age from 8 to 60 years. The mist nets were unfurled, the sun set, and the full moon rose, as we shuttled back and forth between the nets and the “Prius Lab” with birds in hand to be tagged, measured, and released. The project on Mt. Mansfield has been a VCE flagship study for 25 years. Over that time, several thousand birds have been netted, and some even recaptured years later. Apart from its enduring scientific value, this long-term study has allowed for an easy camaraderie to develop. While working, camping, listening to Red Sox games, and sharing laughs and observations, unique relationships and deep personal bonds have formed between VCE's staff, board, and constituents. Lifelong friendships have been made.

Recently, the board and staff at VCE have been updating a thoughtful and progressive five-year plan, intended to map out critical programmatic, operational, and organizational goals for our future. In so doing, staff and board alike addressed the so-called “DNA of VCE.” Spending 24 hours on Mt. Mansfield with the VCE crew made it plain to see that every underlying value articulated at our meeting was in play there, key among them curiosity, collegiality, and commitment to conservation. Along with these, two primary tenets that define VCE emerged. First, VCE is committed to unbiased science and science-based conservation. Second, citizen science remains integral to our work. Along with the Mansfield study, VCE's projects on butterflies, bees, vernal pools, grasslands, forests, and loons reflect these values that underpin our success. And they were on full display on Mt. Mansfield, in the sparkling eyes of everyone who held and then released delicate songbirds into the depths of the surrounding firs. After such an experience we were left breathless, contemplating the varied paths those birds will follow in their lifetimes. Thankfully, we can be sure that VCE will continue to play a consistent role in monitoring their populations and seasonal migrations, all the while upholding our commitment to “Unite People and Science for Conservation.”

PETER BROOKE

A stimulating exercise to consider the ‘DNA of VCE’ confirmed that the core values of VCE’s founders continue to thrive, among them curiosity, collegiality, and commitment to science-based conservation.

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a large, mature tree. The tree's trunk is thick and textured, with some moss or lichen visible. Its branches spread out, filled with bright yellow leaves, contrasting sharply with the clear blue sky. The perspective makes the tree appear to be reaching towards the top of the frame.

**“Congratulations
on all the fabulous
things you have
done and are doing.
VCE is well on its
way to becoming
a top player
in the wildlife
conservation effort.”**

— CAROLYN JACKSON



© CHARLES GANGAS

CONSERVATION SUCCESSES, CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

Those of us at VCE who have been immersed in Bicknell's Thrush work — some for 25 years — lightheartedly refer to our brand of conservation science as “Brute Force Biology.” Whether nest-searching among thick balsam fir or translating scientific results for use by decision-makers, applying rigorous science to solve complex conservation issues is no easy task. As VCE strives toward that end, we celebrate our successes and embrace our challenges. We experienced a good measure of both in 2015.

We have been considering the ways we measure our success. In wildlife biology, positive outcomes at the population or ecosystem level are rarely readily apparent — often, years or even decades must elapse before measurable conservation can be detected or quantified. Impacts on policy and management are one measure we apply, recovery of at-risk wildlife another, restoration of degraded habitats a third. As this annual report attests, VCE achieved tangible successes on these and other fronts during 2015.

In the policy arena, hard work by VCE staff and citizen scientists led directly to the addition of three bumble bee species to the Vermont Endangered and Threatened Species lists. This first, but critical, step will ensure stronger protection for these and other vulnerable pollinators. In the wildlife recovery arena, Vermont's Common Loon population established a new benchmark of 87 nesting pairs, thanks to active management and concerted outreach by VCE staff and our state partners, combined with vigilant monitoring by citizen scientists. On the habitat front, VCE helped pave the way for an historic, collaborative strategic planning process for the Dominican Republic's beleaguered Sierra de Bahoruco National Park.

Before we can truly declare “success” for any of these initiatives, there remains much to do. Certain agricultural practices and neonicotinoid pesticide use continue to threaten bumble bees. Loons face unrelenting pressure from lakeshore development, increased recreational use, and contaminants. Sierra de Bahoruco National Park is fast losing ground to unchecked, illegal deforestation, and the strategic planning process there will succeed only through a coordinated, international commitment that at times seems improbable.

As we celebrate and build on our 2015 successes, VCE will redouble its commitment to tackle the toughest challenges and bring about conservation outcomes, with citizen scientists as our backbone. The need has never been greater.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Rimmer".

CHRIS RIMMER

These and other VCE accomplishments are but stepping stones towards solving incalculably complex conservation problems that extend across divides of geography, habitat, politics, and culture.

Blackpoll Warblers Put Jumbo Jets to Shame

by Chris Rimmer

No one with even a passing interest in birds can help being astounded by the spectacular migratory feat of Blackpoll Warblers. The species' non-stop transatlantic fall flight to its South American wintering grounds was confirmed in a 2015 paper published by VCE and our colleagues, via the use of light-level geolocators attached to male Blackpolls on Mt. Mansfield and in Nova Scotia. Our paper confirmed that this diminutive, half-ounce songbird routinely undertakes one of the most amazing migratory journeys on the planet, striking out in autumn from the Northeast coast of North America, winging over the open Atlantic to the Caribbean, then continuing on to Colombia or Venezuela. Of five birds tracked along their complete southward migration, non-stop flight times ranged from 49-73 hours over distances that averaged 2,540 km, or 1,580 miles!

On 7 July 2015, our champion globe-trotter Blackpoll—male band number #2540-59026—was recaptured on Mt. Mansfield. Its 2014 “flight log” indicated that the bird had left Mt. Mansfield and headed east to the Maine or New Brunswick coast, then struck out over the Atlantic on 13 October, making landfall on Hispaniola a mere two-plus days later, resting and refueling on the island two additional days, then arriving in either northern Colombia or Venezuela on the 18th. Its non-stop flight covered an estimated 2,750 km, or 1,709 miles, in a scant 64 hours. And, we now know, this represents an annual, successful undertaking!



DECIPHERING THE MIGRATION ECOLOGY OF GRASSLAND BIRDS

by Jason Hill

VCE is deploying cutting-edge technology to elucidate the migratory movements and over-wintering areas of three grassland bird species from populations across their breeding range. In 2015, we attached light-level tracking devices to 180 Grasshopper Sparrows in six states, and we will scour those study sites in 2016 to recover the tiny backpacks from any returning birds. In 2016 we will also deploy dozens of sophisticated miniature GPS tags on Eastern Meadowlarks and Upland Sandpipers. Our research on these three species has the potential to fundamentally change grassland bird conservation efforts by revealing details of their migration pathways and overwintering habitats, and by paving the way for coordinated management actions on their migration and wintering grounds to benefit specific breeding populations.



© CHRIS RIMMER

“I got chills when I read about your Blackpoll Warbler long-distance flights. It had been speculated, but to get real data is so amazing! Kudos.”— LIZ LACKEY

© SUSAN HINDINGER



© ROSALIND RENFREW



© NOAH PERLUT

BOBOLINKS IMPLICATED IN BLOODY MYSTERY

by Rosalind Renfrew

The Galapagos Islands are famous for their role in Darwin’s unifying theory of natural selection, but for birds, they have an underbelly. On these isolated islands lurks a disease that has contributed to extinctions on Hawaiian Islands, and is now a concern for Galapagos endemics: avian malaria.

Some malarial lineages are known to originate off-island, and regular visits to the Galapagos each fall by a few Bobolinks make them a suspect vector. VCE and collaborators collected Bobolink blood from across the species’ breeding range and found that they indeed carry the parasite. There was, however, only one way to definitively prove they were the Galapagos carriers: catch them in the act.

Undertaking a quintessential “needle in a haystack” mission, VCE’s Roz Renfrew joined Noah Perlut (University of New England) to track down Bobolinks in the Galapagos. To our knowledge, Roz and Noah were second only to Darwin to have a Bobolink in the hand in the Galapagos, and first to hold a live individual. They worked hard to earn their nine mist-netted birds. Preliminary results from Patricia Parker’s lab (Mississippi State University) show that Bobolinks are indeed connected to Galapagos birds by more than geography. Look for final results of this intriguing study in early 2017.

Citizen Engagement



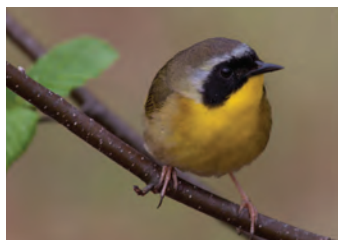
VCE'S CITIZEN SCIENCE AT A GLANCE



© STEVE FACCIO

Forest Bird Monitoring

Volunteers monitor breeding birds on 31 sites across Vermont in one of the continent's longest-running studies of forest bird population trends.



© KENT MCFARLAND

eBird

In addition to the 1,880 data contributors, behind-the-scenes of eBird experts called County Coordinators vet submitted data and educate users.



© SUSAN HINDINGER

eButterfly

Volunteers report and explore sightings and photos of butterflies across North America.



© KENT MCFARLAND

iNaturalist

Volunteers share observations of all Vermont biodiversity in this digital project of the Vermont Atlas of Life.



Floating nest-warning signs have been critical to the recovery and maintenance of Vermont's loon population.

© ERIC HANSON

LOON NESTING SIGNS RECEIVE AN OVERHAUL

by Eric Hanson and Susan Hindinger

The Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) was initiated in 1978 in partnership with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) to evaluate the status of Common Loons in Vermont, following the species' precipitous population decline. The program has worked since then to restore loon populations and seen tremendous success. With fewer than 10 nesting pairs statewide in the early to mid-1980s, the loon was designated a state Endangered species in 1987. Through focused conservation action and public outreach, loon populations recovered enough that they were removed from the Endangered species list in 2005. However, loons are susceptible to a number of persistent threats; over 50% of loons currently nesting in Vermont might not be successful without the VLCP's management and outreach programs. Threats include shoreline habitat loss, nest site disturbance, water fluctuation, heavy metal poisoning from ingested lead sinkers, ingestion of fishing gear, and atmospherically deposited mercury.

Floating nest-warning signs have been critical to the recovery and maintenance of Vermont's loon population. More than 50% of nests are at high risk of disturbance by humans, leading to possible nest failure. Warning signs placed around loon nest sites reduce human disturbance and increase the likelihood of nest success. With 2015 grants from the Canaday Family Charitable Trust and the Vermont Watershed Grants program, as well as support from lakeshore landowner associations and individual donors, and ongoing support from VFWD and the TransCanada Corporation, VCE is replacing over 270 Common Loon nest warning signs over three years. The updated signs are expected to last 20 years and will help ensure continued protection of Vermont's nesting loons.

More than 280 volunteers helped monitor and protect Vermont's loons in 2015, with significant assistance from VFWD game wardens. Loons established another modern-day nesting record, with 87 pairs attempting to nest statewide, 65 pairs successfully hatching chicks, and 69 chicks surviving through August—more than a twofold increase in Vermont's breeding loon population over 15 years!



© CHARLES GANGAS

Mountain Birdwatch

Each June, volunteers complete bird survey routes on 123 mountaintops across the Northeast.



© SEAN MCREADY

Loon Watch

Each July, volunteers conduct a one-day census of Vermont's breeding loons.

Outreach



Outdoor Radio

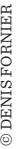
VCE and Vermont Public Radio team up to unite the sounds and science of nature in our monthly audio feature called Outdoor Radio. Venturing outdoors with VPR's production engineer, Chris Albertine, Kent and Sara explore the wild—and not so wild—places of Vermont, discovering natural curiosities and fascinating landscapes, and meeting the people who study or conserve them. Outdoor Radio is broadcast twice monthly on the third Thursday at 7:50am and the following Friday at 6:20pm, and is available anytime on vtecostudies.org/outdoor-radio/

“I felt like I was tromping through the fields and riding along in the backseat. Great edition, Kent and Sara!”

— CLINT PARRISH



A man wearing a green puffer jacket, a striped beanie, and khaki pants is crouching in a snowy forest. He is smiling and looking down at the snow. The background shows a dense forest of bare trees covered in snow.

[illegible]

All issues of *Field Notes*, eNews, and our other publications are available on our website, vtecostudies.org.



— HAROLD BREWER

Innovation



Laura Gaudette reported this Banded Pennant (*Celithemis fasciata*) dragonfly on iNaturalist Vermont. It turned out to be the first state record of this species.

CITIZEN SCIENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

by Kent McFarland

Science, once known as natural philosophy and practiced by all manner of educated citizens, became the domain of experts in the 20th century. Now digital technology is creating new opportunities for interested individuals from all walks of life to contribute to conservation science and biodiversity research. Citizen science has gone binary, attracting a whole new group of people. VCE is at the forefront as matchmaker.

Citizen science projects like ours, that are readily available on the internet, truly empower people to share their bit of the world, their observations and discoveries, to help us all understand and conserve nature. And folks are finding out that there is a lot to discover here, even in our own backyards.

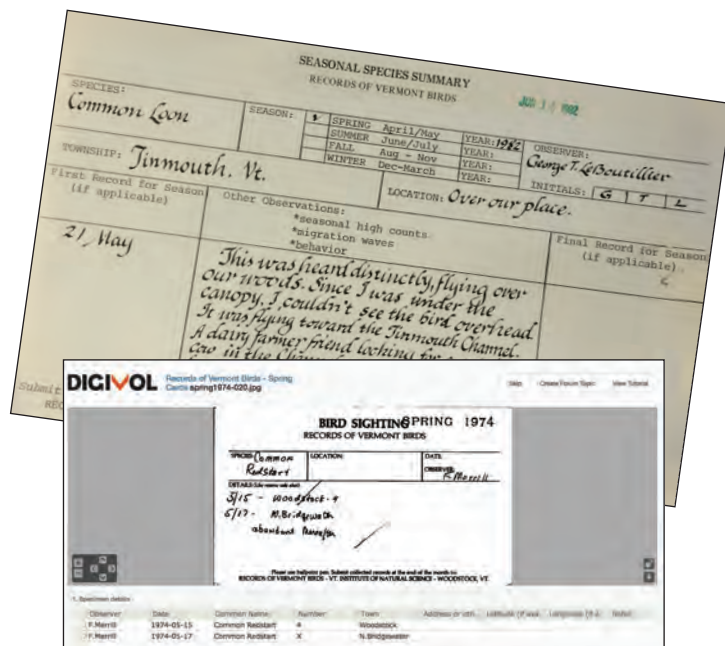
Citizen scientist Laura Gaudette posted a photograph of a Banded Pennant dragonfly on iNaturalist Vermont, a biodiversity crowd-source project that is part of our Vermont Atlas of Life. Mike Blust, biologist and dragonfly expert, was reviewing records on the site and immediately posted a note saying, "Congratulations, Laura! You just got yourself a state record! Another southern species moving north."

A whopping 68 new moth species have been discovered in Vermont by citizen scientists photographing them at night in their backyards and sharing them with iNaturalist Vermont. Perhaps even more amazing is that these citizen scientists have recorded over 12,000 individual moth observations, helping us to understand the phenology, habitat use, and range of moths in Vermont like never before.

Over the last few decades there has been concern that the next generation of biology students lacks the skills and inclinations of the naturalist. But with new sites like eBird, e-Butterfly, iNaturalist, and others melding technology with nature, many young people are stepping up and finding joy in discovering and sharing biodiversity observations.

Vermont eBird, established in 2003, is the largest avian database ever assembled for the state. Thanks to the growing birding community, 385 bird species are represented in Vermont eBird (all the species known to occur here), submitted by 1,880 users from nearly 18,000 locations across the state, totaling almost 203,000 checklists and comprising about 1.2 million bird observations. Our new platform, e-Butterfly, is poised to do the same for butterflies. After just two years, iNaturalist Vermont has grown exponentially. With nearly 80,000 observations shared by 675 users and representing over 4,000 species of plants and animals, it is quickly becoming the largest biodiversity database ever assembled for Vermont.

With our growing community of citizen scientists and big biodiversity data, together we're poised to understand and conserve our natural heritage in ways never imagined possible.



The Phoenix Project Breathes Life into Historic Data

by Sara Zahendra

In May 2015, VCE launched the Phoenix Project, and with the help of citizen scientists from around the world, has succeeded in digitizing thousands of invaluable historic bird observations.

In collaboration with the Australian Museum, the Atlas of Living Australia developed DigiVol, a crowd-sourcing platform that allows volunteers to view scanned paper documents, then convert them to digital form. Here at home, VCE's dedicated volunteers launched the effort, spending hours scanning one bird record after another, 5,193 to be exact. Each record was then uploaded to VCE's home page on the DigiVol system, and with lightning speed, volunteers from Vermont to Australia digitized each and every scan. When the project is completed, VCE will add these digital records to Vermont eBird for use, free of charge, to anyone.

Though the first set of scans has been completed, there's still plenty of work to be done. Another 7,000 scans have recently been uploaded for the next round of digitizing, and error checking has begun in earnest. With the help of volunteers distributed around the world, thousands of Vermont's historic bird records will be available for use. Thank you to those who have helped us with this massive task.



© KENT MCFARLAND

eBird Vermont

Year initiated: 2003
Species: 385
Observers: 1,880
Observations: 1,200,000

iNaturalist Vermont

Year initiated: 2013
Species: 4,000
Observers: 675
Observations: 80,000

e-Butterfly Continental

Year initiated: 2014
Species: 695
Observers: 4,621
Observations: 196,130

e-Butterfly Vermont

Year initiated: 2014
Species: 92
Observers: 80
Observations: 9,499

Collaboration

The cardinal threats to biological diversity—climate change, over-exploitation, invasive species, pollution, and habitat destruction—are too big and too complex for any single organization to tackle alone.

Effective biodiversity conservation requires effective partnerships.

That's why VCE takes seriously our role as a connector, uniting diverse stakeholders to solve pressing problems in wildlife conservation.



Regional Vernal Pool Conservation

Delaware
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New York
Pennsylvania
Vermont
Virginia
Nova Scotia
Quebec

Bobolinks

Canada
United States
Argentina
Colombia
Bolivia
Venezuela

International Bicknell's Thrush Conservation Group

Canada
Dominican Republic
Haiti
Puerto Rico
United States
Jamaica
Cuba

"Thank you for your tireless work on local and international ecology. You make a difference!"

— LI SHEN



VCE Marshals Twelve Jurisdictions to Guide Regional Vernal Pool Conservation

by Steve Faccio

The challenges of landscape-scale conservation require us to look beyond state boundaries and consider regional distribution patterns of species and habitat types. Issues such as climate change call for conservation strategies coordinated across jurisdictions—counties, states, even countries.

Vernal pools provide critical habitat for a variety of wildlife, including pool-breeding amphibians, turtles, and invertebrates, but their seasonal nature can make them difficult to find—and to protect. Until recently, each state's database of vernal pool locations—if one existed at all—was housed completely apart from every other state's. That is, until VCE stepped in to connect them together.

Funded by a grant from the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC), VCE developed the Vernal Pool Data Cooperative (VPDC) in order to advance vernal pool conservation in the North Atlantic region. By compiling spatially-explicit information about vernal pool locations, the VPDC fulfills an urgent need for a comprehensive information source that can be used by a variety of conservation professionals, from ecological modelers and field researchers to conservation planners.

The VPDC consists of more than 60,000 vernal pool locations in ten states and two Canadian provinces, from Virginia to Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula.



INTERNATIONAL BICKNELL'S THRUSH CONSERVATION GROUP

by John Lloyd

Conservation of Bicknell's Thrush, a priority for VCE since its founding, is guided by a collaborative effort involving many partners in five countries. The International Bicknell's Thrush Conservation Group, founded by VCE in 2007, includes representatives from government, non-governmental organizations, industry, and academia, and is tasked with developing science-based solutions for conservation. The first Conservation Action Plan for Bicknell's Thrush was released by the group in 2010 and catalyzed numerous successful conservation activities. Last year, an update was due. In November 2015, twenty-one conservation biologists from three countries convened in Woodstock, VT and, after two days of hard work, emerged with a roadmap to a revised Conservation Action Plan. The plan will outline our collective response to big challenges like deforestation on Hispaniola and changing land uses on the breeding grounds. Large-scale collaborations like this aren't easy, but unified action, facilitated by connectors like VCE, offers the only hope for success.



© KENT MCFARLAND

PLANNING ACROSS HEMISPHERES FOR BOBOLINKS

by Rosalind Renfrew

"Full life cycle" conservation, a concept whose time has come, means responding to the threats that migratory birds face throughout the year—during winter, the migration periods, and the nesting season. It takes us to new places, conceptually and literally. For a master of migratory movement like the Bobolink, full life cycle conservation requires following a path from the prairies of Canada to the ranchlands of Argentina. The grasslands and agricultural fields of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina, Canada, and the United States present distinct conservation opportunities and challenges, and the Bobolink connects them all. Conservation of this globe-trotting species is by necessity a hemispheric endeavor.

Contracted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, VCE is working with partners in North and South America to create a full life cycle conservation plan for the Bobolink, with the goal of stabilizing long-term population declines. In the fall of 2015, we held workshops with partners from four countries in South America to gather input on the threats and conservation needs of Bobolinks and the suite of resident species that share their grassland habitats. These productive sessions not only strengthened partnerships between VCE and in-country organizations, but forged new alliances among countries in South America. The stage is set for acting on a shared vision to conserve grassland birds.

Conservation



Bumble Bees Gain State Protection

by Kent McFarland

In 2015, two bumble bee species were officially declared “Endangered” and one “Threatened” in the State of Vermont. VCE’s work was integral in leading to these designations, first through our two-year statewide bumble bee survey that documented their decline, and then via our leadership on the Scientific Advisory Group on Invertebrates

for the state’s Endangered Species Committee. The Rusty-patched and Ashton Cuckoo bumble bees were added as Endangered, while the Yellow-banded Bumble Bee was listed as Threatened.

After conducting the most extensive search for bumble bees ever undertaken in Vermont, VCE concluded that three of the state’s 19 bumble bee species appear to have been extirpated, while one more has declined precipitously.

From spring through fall of

2012 and 2013, VCE biologists and a corps of trained citizen scientists searched more than 1,500 locations across the state, amassing a database exceeding 10,000 individual bumble bee encounters. Our field surveys, when compared to historical data we gathered from specimens at the University of Vermont’s Zadock Thompson natural history collection, showed that these once-common bumble bees had crashed. Students easily found all three species until the late 1990s, when it appears

that their populations quickly plummeted. More than a decade passed before anyone fully realized they were gone.

What accounts for the declines? In Vermont, the most likely culprits are harmful parasites that may have been accidentally imported from Europe, wiping out at least two species of bumble bees along with the species of “cuckoo” bumble bee that parasitizes—and depends upon—them. Also at play are a widely available class of pesticides toxic to bees



© KENT MCFARLAND

called neonicotinoids, as well as land use and management changes that have reduced habitat for flowering plants and field thatch where some bumble bees nest.

Deb Markowitz, Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, commented that, "Adding them to the endangered species list is only one of many steps we can take to help protect them. Additional techniques, such as integrated pest management and planting more native flowering plants, are others."

PROGRESS AND HOPE IN HAITI'S LA VISITE NATIONAL PARK

by Chris Rimmer

Led by longtime colleague Jim Goetz, VCE's efforts to conserve and restore broadleaf montane forest habitat in Haiti's La Visite National Park continue to achieve promising results. In this innovative project we contract directly with local landholders to conserve forest, providing direct cash payments based on forest area and habitat quality, but conditional on their success in preventing logging, grazing, and farming on the contracted lands. To adapt, improve, and monitor their success, Jim and his local team hike over 500 km yearly on compliance checks. Since 2013, they have expanded from 20 to 33 participants, increased contracts from 40 hectares to a high of 60, and then made the difficult decision to drop three participants with unacceptably poor performance, in favor of expanding contracts with higher-performers.

While limited grazing and wood



© JUAN CARLOS MARTINEZ-SANCHEZ

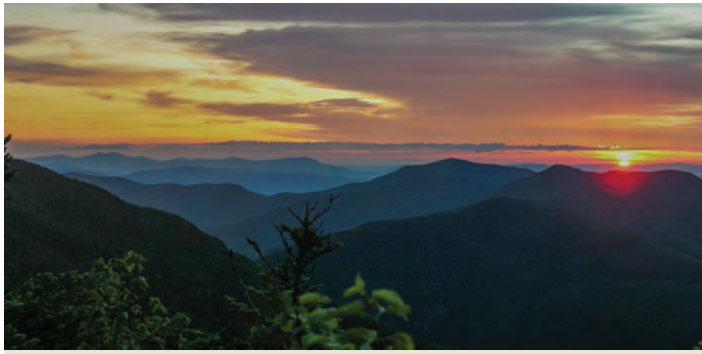
cutting persist, on balance this program has reversed forest loss on protected parcels. This system of incentives, surveillance, and sanctions will always have room for improvement, but our ambitious project has already achieved tangible success, which doesn't come easily in Haiti. Looking forward, our primary challenge is to understand more deeply the linked systems—social, economic, and ecological—and work closely with participants to adaptively manage and modify the program. Where conservation solutions are rarely obvious or simple, long-term sustainability poses a daunting challenge, but our progress in La Visite inspires us to keep pushing the envelope to create, implement, and test conservation strategies.



© JIM GOETZ

FINANCIALS

© KENT MCFARLAND



PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT 2015 2014*

REVENUE

CONTRACTS/GRANTS	\$638,509	\$491,094
PROGRAM INCOME	\$7,644	\$13,459
DONATIONS	\$660,131	\$608,003
INTEREST	\$790	\$628
OTHER	\$8,015	\$7,960
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,315,089	\$1,121,144

EXPENSE

PERSONNEL	\$861,072	\$677,247
BUSINESS FEES	\$9,647	\$2,780
CONTRACT SERVICES	\$114,609	\$135,444
GENERAL OFFICE	\$30,415	\$31,032
MAILING	\$6,236	\$6,932
TRAVEL	\$87,995	\$33,771
MEETING	\$6,796	\$10,766
PROJECT EQUIPMENT	\$62,701	\$12,437
DEPRECIATION	\$9,896	\$6,293
FACILITIES	\$34,993	\$34,075
INSURANCE	\$11,703	\$10,865
BANK FEES	\$2,474	\$2,339
SUB GRANTS	\$50,655	\$46,370
OTHER	\$4,015	\$3,988
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$1,293,207	\$1,014,339
NET INCOME	\$21,882	\$106,805

BALANCE SHEET 2015 2014*

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS	\$664,086	\$644,878
EQUIPMENT	\$16,472	\$24,292
TOTAL ASSETS	\$680,558	\$669,170

LIABILITIES

CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$119,052	\$127,956
CAPITAL LEASE	\$3,242	\$4,831
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$122,294	\$132,787

NET ASSETS

UNRESTRICTED	\$419,966	\$368,539
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	\$138,298	\$167,844
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$558,264	\$536,383
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$680,558	\$669,170

* The figures that appear in the financial summary shown are derived from the 2014 consolidated financial statements that have been audited and have received an unqualified opinion. The 2015 figures have not been audited.

DONORS

LEADERS

\$10,000+

Anonymous (4)
The Bobolink Foundation
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\$5,000 to \$9,999

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“We cannot begin to thank you enough for the extraordinary experience with you and your wonderful colleagues the past 24 hours! For me, it was a life-changing event; I have a whole new level of appreciation for birds in general and Bicknell’s Thrushes in particular. Your enthusiasm and concern for these birds is infectious—everyone involved in your efforts deserves our gratitude.”

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VCE formally launched its legacy giving program in 2015 and welcomed 36 charter members to the Bicknell's Legacy Society. The types and scales of their planned gifts run the gamut, but all of these donors share an abiding commitment to seeing VCE's work to advance wildlife conservation continue long into the future.

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When Abbott Fenn passed away in April 2015, he left a generous estate gift to VCE. His legacy at VCE goes far beyond his exceptional financial support, however. Abbott taught VCE's Executive Director Chris Rimmer's middle school math classes, coached him in baseball and hockey, and led him on a 5-week wilderness canoe trip through northern Quebec. "I didn't know it then, but the experience propelled me on a path towards natural history studies and conservation. With a caring, generous, adventurous, and deeply committed spirit, Abbott was a 'warrior for the natural world.'" We will be forever grateful for his well-lived life.



In 2015, retired teacher and VCE's first-ever (2009) Citizen Scientist of the Year, Roy Pilcher established a Charitable Remainder Trust for VCE through the Vermont Community Foundation. Reflecting on the planning meetings that led to this tremendous gift, Roy said, "Driving together to the meeting with the Vermont Community Foundation allowed me to give you a glimpse into my life as a potential donor beyond the dollars and cents. The meeting that followed with VCF greatly helped to clarify my intentions. It was a good afternoon!"

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North Branch Nature Center

Northeast Kingdom Audubon Society

Northern Woodlands

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Otter Creek Audubon Society

Platte River Whooping Crane

Maintenance Trust

Regroupement Quebec Oiseaux

Rutland County Audubon Society

Sociedad Ornitologica de la

Hispaniola

Sociedad Ornitologica

Puertorriquena Inc.

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Southeastern Vermont Audubon Society

Southern Vermont Natural History

Museum

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Vital Communities

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Illinois Department of Natural Resources

STATE - MAINE

Baxter State Park

Maine Dept of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

STATE - MARYLAND

Maryland Division of Natural Resources

STATE - NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Fish & Game

STATE - NEW JERSEY

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife

STATE - NEW YORK

NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation

STATE - VERMONT

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation

Department

Vermont Monitoring Cooperative

STATE - WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources

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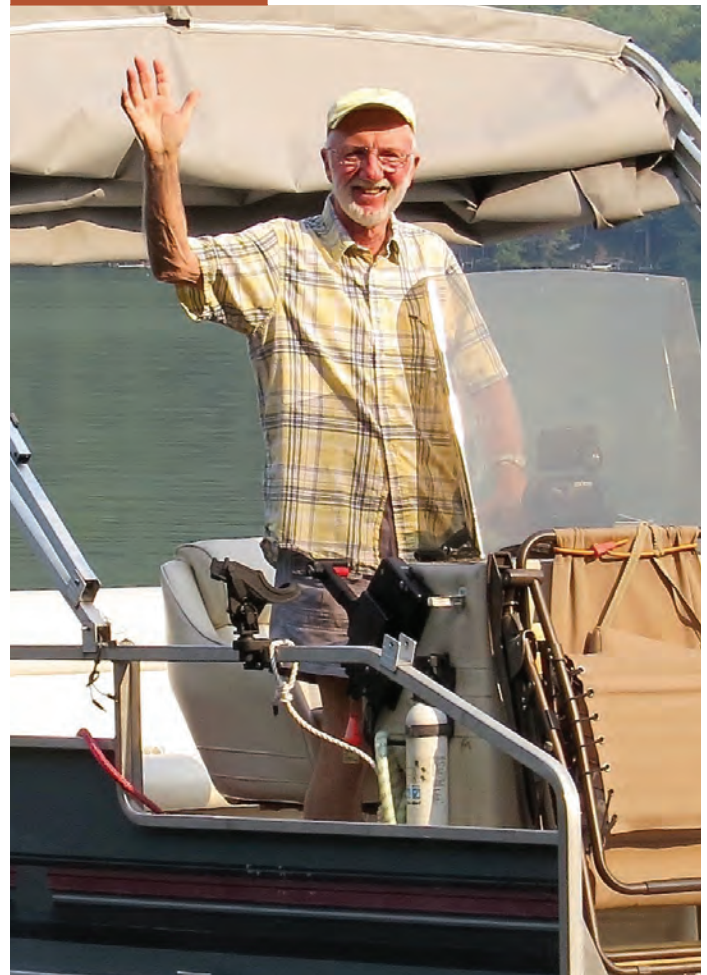
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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



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THE 2015 JULIE NICHOLSON CITIZEN SCIENTIST IS A LOONATIC!

This year VCE honors Mike Korkuc with the Julie Nicholson Citizen Science Award for his years of dedication to loon conservation. The Julie Nicholson Citizen Scientist Award honors Julie's extraordinary passion and commitment to birds and wildlife conservation through her many years of tireless work as a citizen scientist. It is given annually to an individual who exemplifies Julie's dedication to the cause of citizen science and conservation.

Mike watched loons from his vacation home on Lake Dunmore for 20 years before realizing in 2007 that boat traffic imperiled their survival. He and some neighbors intervened and began educating lake users about the loons. An email list he began that year has since grown to 275 who receive regular—sometimes daily—updates and photos from Mike. He coordinates the deployment and monitoring of nest rafts and warning signs, LoonWatch day each July, and makes and receives many email and phone updates about loons on both Lake Dunmore and Silver Lake during the nesting season. With "The Loonatic" (the name of Mike's boat) at the helm of a vigilant group of stewards, for over eight years Lake Dunmore has supported seven loon nests, six of them successful, and eight chicks that have survived to migrate in late fall. Silver Lake, first hosting nesting loons in 2014, successfully hatched chicks for the first two years in a row.

The Vermont Center for Ecostudies
envision[s] a society that sustains healthy ecosystems
through informed decision-making.



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