



Vermont Coverts Woodlands for Wildlife

A newsletter of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc.

Volume 59 Summer 2022

NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Rich Chalmers, *Class of 2005 Spring*



I have to admit, I was never much of a book group person. Don't get me wrong, I love books and reading, I just wasn't interested in getting together to talk about them.

That is why it was surprising for me to join the Coverts Book Group and even more so to find it such a great experience. Add

this to the long list of pandemic silver linings and the value of community.

We started with Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, which is a foundational piece in our conservation orbit and given to every Cooperator at the Training. Our slow read over a number of months was a great way to digest Leopold's thoughts.

I grew to appreciate the evolution of his land ethic as his understanding and perspective matured. It gave me a chance to reflect on my own land ethic and how it has evolved, largely as a result of my connection with Coverts.

Hearing the thoughts of other people in this book club medium added depth and resonance to this seminal work. It was also a great way to get to know people I had not had the chance to spend enough time with.

Our second book, *Finding the Mother Tree* by Suzanne Simard, was an equally eye-opening experience. She did an excellent job of helping us understand the role of fungal networks in the interconnectedness of our forests and, by extension, our entire ecosystem.

The diversity of our group's opinions added value and weight to that idea. I finished the discussion with an even more keen appreciation for my role as a woodland owner and the importance of diversity and complexity, the mess in all stages of life and decay.

We jumped at the chance to take our group on a field trip to book club member Doreen Jones' property in Rochester in June. Photographer and mycology educator Meg Madden and Orange/Windsor County Forester A.J. Follensbee led our walk, translating many of the concepts we had talked about in our group into real life in the woods. It was so nice to ask questions and discuss concepts with examples within reach.

We gathered for lunch and conversation after the walk and it struck me (yet again) how rewarding, motivating and important (not to mention fun) these Coverts-inspired connections are.

As I write this, our next meeting online is in a few days. The book is *The Trees in My Forest* by Bernd Heinrich, something I have been meaning to read for ages but never got the chance. This book is an excellent continuation of our conversation. I am loving it and have been scribbling notes to share with the group.

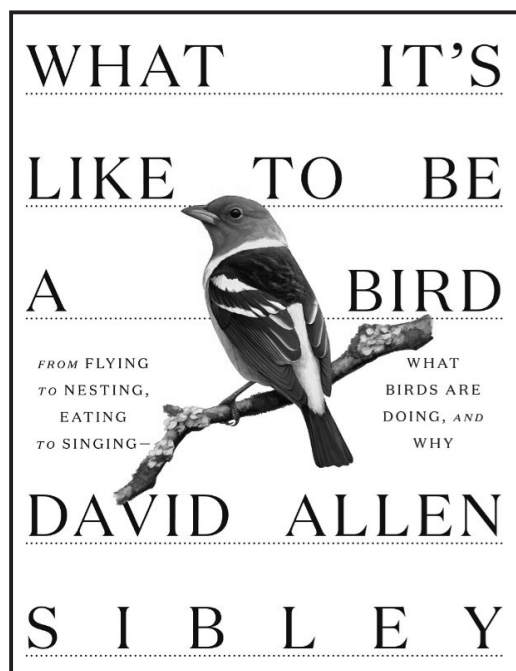
This feels like an evolution to me. The whole experience has turned out to be another example of how Coverts has led to my personal growth and a better understanding of our woods.

I look forward to another chance to connect at our annual meeting on September 10th. Details to register are on page 3 of this newsletter. Hope to see you there!

Rich Chalmers
President

MISSION Enlist Vermont landowners in a long-term commitment to maintain and enhance diverse wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems.





BOOK REVIEW: WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A BIRD

By: Alicia Carlson, VT Coverts Program and Outreach Technician

I'm generally a fan of coffee table books—I think it started after watching the Seinfeld episode with Kramer's coffee table book about coffee tables. We have a few good ones—*Chainsaws: A History*, *Backyard Ballistics*, and *The Simpsons: A Complete Guide to Our Favorite Family*, to name a few. I was recently gifted a truly exceptional coffee table book. Have you seen *What It's Like to Be a Bird* by David Allen Sibley? If you haven't, and you're looking for a fun book that doubles as unique reference material on the science of birds, I'd suggest you go pick it up, whether or not you have a coffee table.

My copy resides on the kitchen table, as a matter of fact. After dinner most nights since we got the book (a gift from his mom), my husband and I learn about a bird. I'm a fairly new birder and have a lot to learn. This book covers many topics. The subtitle is "From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds are Doing and Why" and it was written and illustrated by Sibley.

There are two main parts to the book. It starts with a 20-plus page introduction that includes a variety of categories for areas of study, including feathers, coloration, senses, and more. Each category contains a bulleted list with references to species-specific essays in the second major part of the book—the Portfolio of Birds. This section does not include an exhaustive list of birds of North America; there are 96 species portfolios for the most common or familiar birds in the continental U.S. and Canada. Some portfolios cover broad categories, like "woodpeckers" and "finches." (By the way, the sketches on the woodpecker pages are some

of my favorites so far.)

Sections of the book are brilliantly cross-referenced, which gives the feel of a "choose your own adventure" story. Sibley says right in the preface, "It is not designed to be read straight through; it is designed to be browsed casually, so that different topics will spark connections and perhaps even a sense of discovery."

Here's an example of how we've navigated through the book during our evening readings. I ask Scott, "What bird do we want to learn about tonight?" We had an active Eastern Phoebe nest on the back of our house this summer, so he suggests we start there. In one section on the Phoebe, we read—and see an elegant drawing—about why Phoebes "wag" their tails (and how other birds exhibit similar behaviors). Then we learn about Phoebe nest preferences (they like a protected ledge, like our roof eave). We finish the page learning how different birds manage the hard parts of insects and other prey that are swallowed whole and can't be digested. We're intrigued—early this summer we watched an adult Phoebe feed a very large dragonfly to a very tiny, newly fledged youngster—and learn that Phoebes regurgitate pellets. At the end of the section, there's a cross-reference to an essay and diagram describing the digestive system of a Snow Goose. We turn to that page, and now we're off on a new adventure!

Every night is different. Some pages don't include cross-references, but we turn the page anyway. There is always something fascinating to learn or an intricate sketch to marvel at. If you're a new birder like me or if you could teach an ornithology class, I would encourage you to get a copy of this book. Keep it handy for when curiosity strikes, whether on your coffee table or any other flat surface.

Agenda Coverts Annual Meeting Saturday, September 10

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| 10:00 | Check In/Coffee |
| 10:15 | Bear Aware Vermont – Jackie Comeau, Wildlife Biologist, VT Fish and Wildlife |
| 11:10 | Forest Management with Carbon in Mind – Ali Kosiba, VT Forest, Parks and Recreation |
| 12:15 | Lunch/Annual Meeting/Awards |
| 1:30 | Wildlife Connectivity – Caitlin Drasher UVM Doctoral Student |
| 2:20 | Break |
| 2:30 | Field Tour (optional) at the Abelson Property/Discussion of NRCS Practices – Travis Hart, Habitat Biologist, VT Department of Fish and Wildlife |



VT Coverts Annual Meeting
Saturday, September 10th, 2022
10:00am to 2:30pm
Kehoe Conservation Camp
Castleton, Vermont

Join us in-person as we once again gather to connect, share and learn. Meet the newest class of Cooperators and visit with other alumni. This year we have a sensational program with speakers discussing bear populations and what you can do regarding outreach, carbon storage and habitat connectivity. Fee: \$25, lunch is included. We hope you can join us!

If you are not able to attend, please fill out and return the proxy note below so that we will have a quorum. Your proxy is important to ensure that we gather a legal quorum to conduct elections to the Council. Proxies can be e-mailed or mailed and must be received by September 6th. Send proxies via e-mail to lisa@vtcoverts.org or mail to VT Coverts, PO Box 328, Vergennes, VT 05491.

Annual Meeting Registration

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ E-mail: _____
Number Attending: _____ Amount Enclosed @ \$25/person): _____

PROXY

I, _____, a member of Vermont Coverts, hereby constitute Donna Foster or Rich Chalmers as my lawful proxy to attend and vote on my behalf at the Annual Meeting of Vermont Coverts held on Saturday, September 10, 2022 or at any adjournment thereof.

Given this _____ day of _____, 2022
(day) (month)

Signature: _____





Vermont Coverts Woodlands for Wildlife

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2022 Spring Cooperators



In picture from Left to Right

Back Row: Stan Walker (Washington), Mel Ashton (Windsor), Colin Judge (Addison), Susan Sinclair (Caledonia), Joe Cotton (Lamoille), Brian Anderson (Orange)

Front Row: Maurice Chaloux (Caledonia), Cyril Vallet (Essex), Jeff Forward (Chittenden) and Lisa Sausville (Executive Director)

Missing: Amy and Chris Matherly (Caledonia), Herrie Son (Washington)