

Mountain Views

News from Stowe Land Trust

Spring/Summer 2018

In This Issue
The Year of the Bird
Annual Report
Outings Calendar



The Year of the Bird

Stowe's mountains and forests are a globally-important habitat for breeding birds, including the Bicknell's Thrush that nests on Mount Mansfield. Photo by Charles Gangas

Did you know that 2018 is the "Year of the Bird?"

by Kristen Sharpless, Conservation Program Manager

Not according to the Chinese calendar, but in commemoration of the centennial of landmark legislation that changed the course of conservation history in North America. In 1918, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was passed by the US Congress making it illegal to "pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, possess, sell, purchase, barter, import, export, or transport any migratory bird, or any part, nest, or egg of any such bird, unless authorized under a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior." At a time when numerous bird species had been driven to extinction or its brink by overhunting for their feathers or sport, this law made a significant difference in protecting birds from human harm.

Although more than 1000 species are now protected under the MBTA, birds and other wildlife face no less serious and much more complex threats to their survival than they did a hundred years ago.

Today, habitat loss and degradation along with climate change are among the top global challenges to birds and other wildlife. Here in Vermont and Stowe, these threats are very real, making conservation work more complicated than it was in the early 1900s, but no less critical.

Landscapes for Birds

Loss and degradation of habitat on wintering grounds and along migration routes makes Vermont's forests, mountains, and lakeshores a relative refuge for more than 200 species of breeding birds. However, the Vermont Center for Ecostudies recently documented a 14 percent overall population decline in Vermont's forest birds over a 25 year period. These declines are likely due in part to a combination of threats at play here in the northeast including forest fragmentation, invasive species, and climate change. Together, these challenges and others cause a

continued on page 3