

## **Calling all Northeast Kingdom birders! 2011 Vermont County Bird Quest Has Begun**

The gauntlet has been laid down, the clock is ticking, and your eyes and ears are needed!

January 1<sup>st</sup> marked the beginning of the year-long 2011 Vermont County Bird Quest, organized by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE). The Quest is a challenge to Vermont birders to find and document as many bird species as possible in their county during the calendar year.

According to VCE, "The main idea behind the Quest is to get people out birding, promote camaraderie, and better document Vermont's bird life". By enlisting participation from across Vermont, it is hoped that a more complete picture will be provided of bird distribution throughout the State.

The Quest also includes an element of fun competition, and prizes will be awarded to counties based on a variety of categories (most species, most youth involvement, etc). Each county has one or more sponsoring organizations and team leaders to assist participating birders.



*A red-breasted woodpecker photographed in Island Pond. Photo by Ronda Bohovich, January 2011.*

Orleans and Essex counties are being co-sponsored in 2011 by Northeast Kingdom Audubon (<http://www.nekaudubon.org/>) and the NorthWoods Stewardship Center.

### **How to Get Involved:**

If you are a birder (or would like to be) participating is easy. Simply record the birds you encounter and submit your observations on Vermont's on-line "e-bird" database (<http://ebird.org/content/vt>). If you'd like to participate, but aren't so keen on data entry, help may be available. Depending on interest, an e-bird tutorial, or assistance with entering your birding checklist may be options in your county. Contact one of the captains listed below for details or clarification.

While Vermont's Northeast Kingdom may not be one of North America's birding hotspots, it does offer a wide diversity of habitats, and ample opportunities to enjoy birding under your own power (carbon-free). Options include paddling the many lakes, rivers, or wetlands; hiking the Long Trail; bicycling back roads; scanning agricultural fields; or even exploring your own property or town forest.

### **Resources for Birders:**

If you don't know where to start, Bryan Pfeiffer and Ted Murin's book [Birdwatching in Vermont](#) offers many suggestions in the Northeast Kingdom and beyond. In the coming months, there will also be several organized birding trips offered by NEK Audubon and the NorthWoods Stewardship Center.

So, if wildlife of the feathered variety interests you, then we invite you to join us birding the lowlands to mountain tops of this unique and beautiful region. If you'd like to be a part of our birding team, we'd love to have you - we need you. Birders of all ages and all experience levels are encouraged to participate. Interested? Contact Heidi Rich ( [hrcassiope@pshift.com](mailto:hrcassiope@pshift.com) ), Tom Berriman ( [blackpoll@myfairpoint.net](mailto:blackpoll@myfairpoint.net) ), or Jayson Benoit ( [jayson@northwoodscenter.org](mailto:jayson@northwoodscenter.org) ) for more details.