



Chimney Swift

Photo Credit: Stan Deutsch

## Towers for Chimney Swifts

By Bren Lundborg, Lead Wildlife Keeper

While many birds use buildings or other artificial structures for nesting, one species in particular has so thoroughly assumed this adaptation that its very name reflects this behavior. Known among birders as “flying cigars” for their unique, aerodynamic bodies, chimney swifts once nested in hollow trees and caves across North America. The arrival of European settlers, combined with the loss of old-growth forests, caused these birds to seek new nesting sites, and they found the perfect fit inside chimneys. Over time, chimney designs have changed, and modern chimneys are not suitable for nesting swifts. This change is correlated with sharp declines in chimney swift populations, a problem exacerbated by climate shifts, increasingly severe weather events, and altered prey availability. Built in 1932, the first chimney swift tower, a structure dedicated for nesting swifts, inspired a conservation effort that spread across the eastern United States. This spring, VINS will build a chimney swift tower, among the first in the state, to support the preservation of this native species. It will be one of many such structures that will be constructed in Vermont, a first step and a symbol of conservation and, with luck, a home for a family of “flying cigars.”

For more information about birds and nature, visit:  
[vinsweb.org/nature-blog](http://vinsweb.org/nature-blog).

## VINS Upcoming Events

**MAY 8**

World Migratory Bird Day

**JUN 5**

National Trails Day

**JUN 12**

National Get Outdoors Day

**AUG 7**

Incredible Insect Festival

**SEP 18**

Owl Festival

**OCT 17**

Bird Photography Workshop

**OCT 30**

Hoots & Howls

**DEC 18**

VINS After Dark

View our full event schedule at [vinsweb.org/events](http://vinsweb.org/events).



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Hermit Thrush



Forest Canopy Walk



Goldfinch



Great Blue Heron



Anne M. August Pavilion



Wood Duck

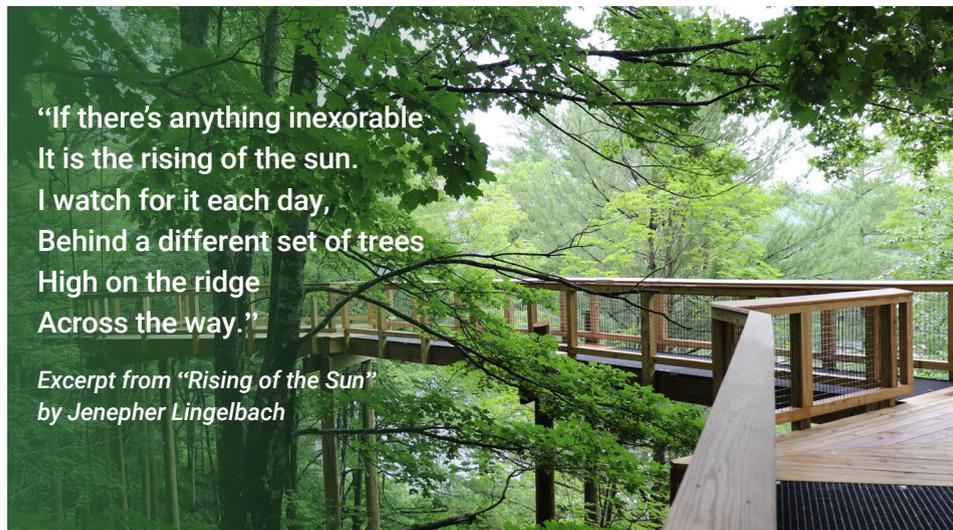
# Spring Moments

By Kim Holland, Seasonal Environmental Educator

Here at VINS, we are looking forward to this spring and to future opportunities to spend moments with friends and family. In a world still full of uncertainty, we can always rely on the sun to start each day.

With spring arriving, we're finding more activities sprouting as we continue this stuck-at-home "normal." It's hard breaking from the monotony of Zoom and feeling inspired for new activities. Creating a small, easily attainable goal helps...such as discovering a new local trail and learning about its ecosystem! You will find amazing trails at the VINS Nature Center, and the Forest Canopy Walk takes you on a journey among the trees. As the days get longer and warmer, new energy inspires us to begin new adventures.

This spring offers moments of reflection and yearning, but brings hope, optimism and rejuvenation. It's a chance to start anew, to reach those attainable goals, and to find your new "normal." Just like the ephemerals, we will reach towards sunlight while the forests, streams and meadows slowly awaken.



"If there's anything inexorable  
It is the rising of the sun.  
I watch for it each day,  
Behind a different set of trees  
High on the ridge  
Across the way."

Excerpt from "Rising of the Sun"  
by Jenepher Lingelbach

## VINS Staff favorite spring activities:

### Michelle Amato, Lead, Science Educator

In the spring, I look forward to taking hikes to explore the new growth that emerges after a long winter's rest. Seeing pops of color along winding forest trails as ephemeral flowers show off the glorious signs of spring is a treat for any passerby.

Check out the [National Audubon Society Field Guide to Wildflowers](#) to discover and identify ephemeral flowers.

### Anastasia Mickiewicz, AmeriCorps Member

Canoeing and kayaking offer a great way to observe nature. I love seeing what waterfowl I'll come across or if I'll see a bald eagle's nest. It's also a fun activity to do with a friend in another boat!

Sibley's waterproof *Ducks, Geese, & Swans of Eastern North America* is a great foldable resource for any water adventure.

### Jim Armbruster, Research Coordinator

I'm looking forward to watching and listening for the return of migrant bird species, like indigo buntings and broad-winged hawks.

Sibley's folding guide *Backyard Birds of the Northeast* offers identification tips for local songbirds and raptors.

### Sarah Strew, Lead, Nature Camp & Adult Programs

Planting seeds in my garden to help native birds and pollinators is my favorite spring activity! Having many different species of plants helps create biodiversity and a food source from early spring to late fall. Seeing the changing of species in my garden is always interesting.

Sharon Sorenson's book *Planting Native to Attract Birds to Your Yard* is a great resource when adding native species to your garden.

Books and guides are available at the VINS Nature Store: [store.vinsweb.org](#).

# Yoga in the Trees

By Sarah Strew, Lead, Nature Camp & Adult Programs

Seated on yoga mats 40 feet in the air, participants in VINS' Yoga Workshop could view and observe the bustling activity of this treetop world, now eyelevel before them. As the practice began, they turned their awareness inward to their bodies' sensations: a puff of warm breeze on bare arms, the plink, plink, plink of an acorn bouncing nearby on the platform, the gentle sway of the platform underfoot as they positioned themselves in Warrior or Mountain pose. Yoga on the Forest Canopy Walk combines the exercise and relaxation, with the sensations of a truly unique natural environment to create a one-of-a-kind experience for yogis of all ability levels. Introduced last fall and met with great enthusiasm, VINS' Yoga in the Trees is a yoga class like you have never had before.

For more information on our yoga classes, visit: [vinsweb.org/special-events](#).

# Waterfowl Enclosure

By Grae O'Toole, Director, Center for Wild Bird Rehabilitation

Over the past couple of years, the number of waterfowl and other aquatic birds that the Center for Wild Bird Rehabilitation has cared for has more than doubled from just 35 patients in 2018 to 91 patients in 2020. With this increase, we find ourselves in need of an enclosure that specifically meets the distinct needs of these species. Plans have been made for a water bird enclosure that include a large freshwater pool for swimming, bathing and diving, appropriate substrate suited to the unique anatomies and behaviors of these birds, and an overall larger space to stretch their wings. The rehab center plans to have the waterfowl enclosure ready this summer.

To support the Center for Wild Bird Rehabilitation, visit: [vinsweb.org/donate](#).