



NEW!

VINS Afterschool Program

Providing a valuable service to school-aged children in the Upper Valley along with outdoor learning and fun!

Children spend approximately 20% of their waking hours in school, which begs the question, what are they doing for the remaining 80% of their time? VINS is working to expand how, when, and where children in our community learn.

In the new VINS Afterschool Program, the great outdoors is our teacher. Whether tracking an animal through the forest, collecting data for a community science project, or creating a nature-inspired art project, students learn from the animals and habitats they encounter and develop a deeper understanding of, and connection to, the natural world.

According to the 2020 *America After 3PM* report, 39% of Vermont's children in grades K – 12 would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them. The Upper Valley is no exception; there are significant gaps in afterschool and out-of-school time activities, leading to a shortage of options for families.

The VINS Afterschool Program serves children and families in our community by providing enriching learning opportunities and consistent supervision at the end of the school day. Through fresh air and outdoor adventure our program aims to cultivate scientific thinking and ecological awareness in order to empower the next generation of environmental stewards.

— Sarah Strew & Megan Widli, Nature Camp & Adult Programs

For more information about VINS Afterschool Program, visit: vinsweb.org/afterschool-program.

VINS Upcoming Events

MAY 15

Introduction to Birding Workshop

MAY 15

Raptors in Focus: Photography Workshop

MAY 21

Spring Foraging Workshop

MAY 22

Member Appreciation Event

JUN 4

National Trails Day

JUN 11

Reptile Celebration on Get Outdoors Day

JUL 23

Incredible Insect Festival

AUG 13

Magnificent Mammal Day

View our full event schedule at vinsweb.org/calendar.



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Celebrating 50 Years!

1972 The Vermont Institute of Natural Science is founded as an environmental education and research organization in Woodstock, VT.

1973 ELF (Environmental Learning for the Future) begins and transforms environmental education in Vermont. VINS starts its “Summer Discovery” Camps.



ELF Begins at VINS

1976 The ELF project receives the Governor’s Award for Distinguished Service to Children and Youth.

1981 VINS publishes the first birding guide for Vermont, *A Guide to Birding in Vermont* by Walter G. Ellison and Nancy L. Martin.



VINS Summer Discovery Camp

1986 VINS publishes *Hands-On Nature* to provide information and activities to assist educators and parents in exploring the local environment with children. The VINS Raptor Center is opened in Woodstock, VT, and the wild bird rehabilitation hospital is completed.

1990 VINS is accepted to the National Network of the Alliance for Environmental Education, the first from Vermont.



VINS Bragdon Nature Preserve

1992 Governor Dean proclaims July 30, 1992 as Vermont Institute of Natural Science Day, stating that “VINS has reached 591,000 people since 1972 and has become an important force in the future of Vermont.”

2003 Ground Breaking at the new location in Quechee, Vermont led by Elizabeth Daley, wife of Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords.



VINS Nature Center



OPP Nature Reserve

2010 VINS launches its In-School Program bringing place-based STEM and environmental education to area schools.

2013 VINS assumes ownership of the Old Pepper Place Nature Reserve in Washington, VT, an “off the grid,” self-sustaining, 327-acre property, bequeathed to VINS by good friends.

2019 The VINS Forest Canopy Walk opens in October.

2022 VINS Welcomes a record 69,800 Visitors to the Nature Center. VINS will open a walk-in songbird aviary in the summer. VINS celebrates its 50 Year Anniversary.



Forest Canopy Walk



L to R: Linda Conrad, Lead, VINS Experience Navigator; Chris Collier, Director, On-Site Programs & Exhibits; Hannah Gelroth, Director, School Programs & Teacher Professional Development

Remembering VINS’ Recent Past

What do you like about working at VINS that has kept you here for so many years?

Chris Collier: I appreciate the diversity of experiences that our staff brings together. We have built a culture of openness here and an interest in change and flexibility to make those changes for the better. I also enjoy connecting with staff and visitors who share the love of the outdoors.

Do you have any memorable moments with our ambassador birds?

Hannah Gelroth: I have a lot of fond memories of our education birds, like Bloomfield the Red-tailed Hawk. Some of my favorite memories were flying her, and the sun coming through the red of her tail. I still remember feeling mesmerized watching her come to my glove and showing off her beauty.

What has changed over time at VINS?

Linda Conrad: I remember when we first opened the Nature Center in Quechee, we thought 100 visitors was a good day, but last summer we were up to 600 visitors on any given day! We have reached new heights with our attendance thanks to our new exhibits and programs, so many people are learning more and more about us. VINS has touched a lot of lives, humans and birds alike!

See more answers to these questions from our staff in our blog post at: vinsweb.org/interview.