

# Upcoming Events

AT THE VINS NATURE CENTER

JUN 13

Remarkable Reptile Day

SEP 5

Hawkwarts School

JUL 11

Incredible Insect Festival

SEP 26

Magnificent Mammal Day

JUL 18

Moth Ball

OCT 24

Hoots & Howls

AUG 1

Outdoor Survivors

NOV 21

Dinosaur Discoveries

AUG 22

Fairy Festival

NOV DEC JAN

A Forest of Lights



## A Snow Covered Field Trip

On a snowy January morning, a small group of third- and fourth-grade students made the hour-long trip from Barnet Elementary for a field trip, arriving at VINS in full snow gear, snow crunching under their boots. They settled into our indoor classroom for a lesson about how animals survive the winter and compared the animals' adaptations to their own winter gear: a fluffy fox pelt and thick beaver fur were like their winter coats, and the feathered talons of a Snowy Owl were like gloves.

At the Raptors Up Close program, students giggled at our American Kestrel Ferrisburgh's many little peeps, and gasped and ducked as our Harris's Hawk Chesterland swooped back and forth over their heads.

Before the trip back to Barnet, the students explored the rest of our snow-covered campus, rolling around the spiderweb of the Forest Canopy Walk and searching the snow for signs of wildlife. This school's visit was funded entirely by our Winter Field Trip Scholarship Fund. Their teacher was deeply grateful, and – judging by the giggles and gasps – so were the students.

**COREY BROWN | Educator**

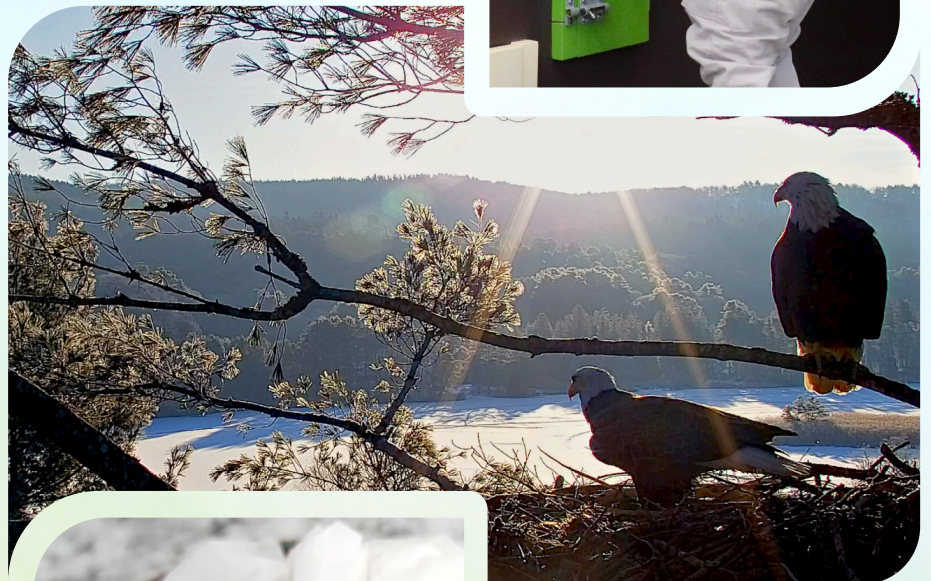
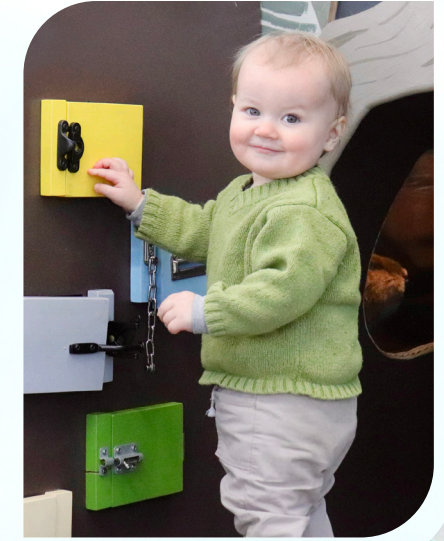
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From Eagle Cam updates to Patient of the Month series to our latest events!



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**Bald Eagle Cam** Getting the Eagle Cam project off the ground this winter felt like a magic trick. It was not just installing cameras 100 feet high in two different white pines. It was also setting up power and internet in such a remote place, learning the software, building a website – all while prioritizing the eagles’ safety and hoping for their return. Launching this project became an obsession, and I’d often find myself saying, “I need to get back to work.”

The daily work of VINS proceeded through the winter and early spring, even if fewer people visited the Nature Center. As you can see in the following articles, we had field trips, avian outreaches, exhibit birds to take care of (thank you, Willa!), and new patients coming in. There was even some poetry going on.

My central work this winter and spring involved building next year’s budget, leading the Board in strategic planning, and engaging stakeholders toward a bright future for VINS. So as the spring unfolded and the eagles settled into the nest, I did my best to step back from the eagle project and tend to my “real” work.

Seeing the delight and wonder that this magnificent pair of Bald Eagles has brought to our community – and how many more people have learned about VINS because of the cameras – has been a great reminder this pair is central to our work.

**ALDEN SMITH | Executive Director**

**An Unforgettable Outreach**

This past February, we were excited to return to the Paramount Theatre in Rutland, where we introduced some of our Raptor Ambassadors to nearly 450 elementary-school students from the local area. Bloomfield the Red-tailed Hawk and Decatur the Eastern Screech-Owl sat calmly in the “limelight” of the theater’s gorgeous old hall, while Westford the American Kestrel, demonstrated his falcon flight abilities to the adoring crowd.

A little secret, though, is that we had intended to also fly Chesterland, the Harris’s Hawk, typically our star-performer. But after one look at the balcony seating, big hanging lights, and unfamiliar space, he decided otherwise. He perched on the brass balcony railing for about 10 minutes, taking in the strange sights.

Eventually, one of us climbed over, asked him to step up, and carried him back down to his crate. Chesterland turns 25 years old this year, and we couldn’t help but wonder if he no longer has the patience for us humans changing his routine. Then again, Bloomfield is 30 years old and still takes the stage in stride, proving she’s as resilient an Ambassador as ever!

**ANNA MORRIS | Director, Wildlife Ambassador Programs**



**Adopting Ambassadors**

VINS is a great place to go and learn about birds. I’ve learned what they eat, how they catch it, about migration and how to help protect birds by taking care of our environment. Over the past two years I’ve adopted 12 VINS Ambassadors! I raise all the money to adopt by selling notecards I make using nature photos that I take. I sell the cards at Farmers Markets when we sell our maple syrup. I keep all of my adoption paperwork in a binder and the photos I receive in a photo album.

VINS is awesome! Being so close to the birds at VINS makes me feel closer to nature, and I like to know I’m helping out.

**WILLA | VINS Volunteer**



**Poetry Walk**

Sitting together in the Outdoor Classroom on a warm, spring day, we began with the poem *The Ovenbird* by Robert Frost. I was joining a poetry class with VINS Director Alden Smith, a long-time student of Frost’s poetry and an even longer-time student of nature.

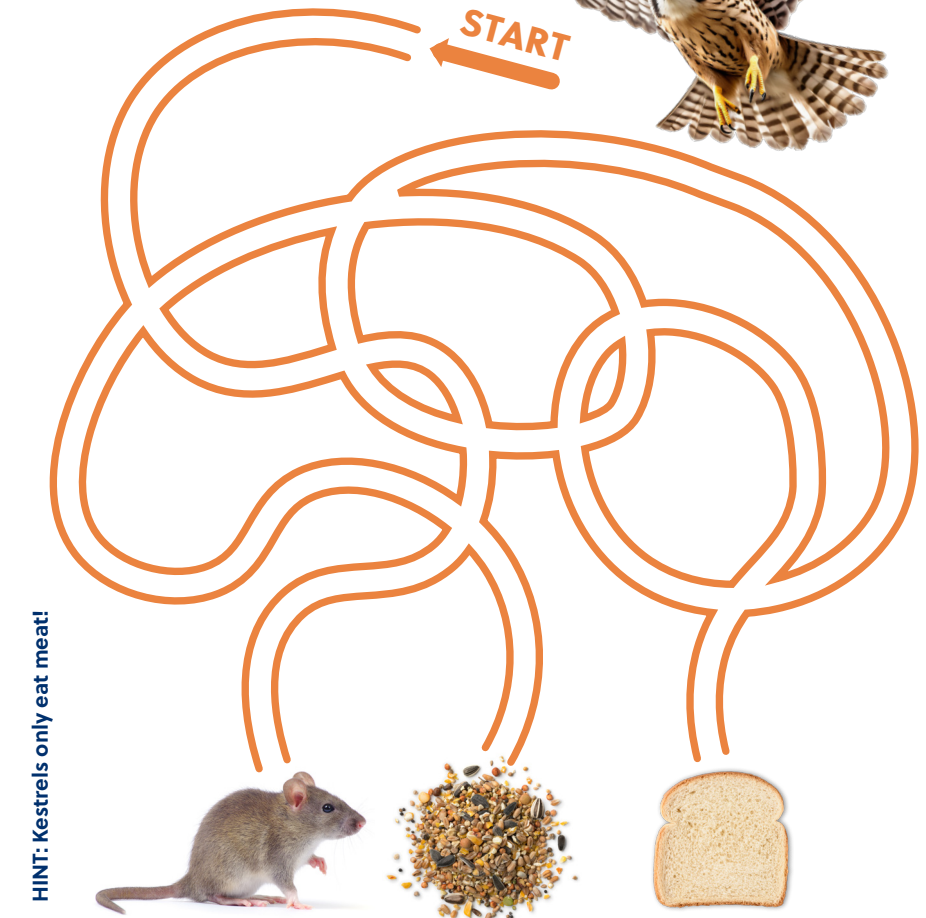
As Alden recited the poem aloud, an Ovenbird began to sing in the woods nearby! We were struck by the magic and immersed more deeply into Frost’s words. Slowly, we walked the VINS trails, stopping by the stone wall and considering *Mending Wall* with all its enigmatic meaning. Alden prompted us with several intriguing questions – *How is it that good fences make good neighbors?* – and the wall, silent, witnessed our conversation.

Curving up the trail toward the campus, we paused at the vernal pool. Frost’s *Spring Pools* spilled out over the landscape, asking us to pause and contemplate the fragile inevitability of change.

**JUDITH RANDALL | Visitor Services**

**American Kestrel Maze**

Help the Kestrel find its dinner!



HINT: Kestrels only eat meat!

**FUN FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN KESTRELS**

- Smallest Falcons in North America**
- Can dive as fast as 70 miles per hour**
- Live in holes in trees and nest boxes**

