

AUDUBON VERMONT

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY BIRD INITIATIVE

PROGRAM REPORT

JANUARY 2015



With 40 acres of fields and forests in Charlotte, Curt Alpeter was looking for ways to improve his land for wildlife, especially birds. So began a partnership with Curt and Audubon Vermont. Curt was one of the first landowners to work with Audubon on its newly initiated Champlain Valley Bird Initiative (CVBI). Having two of the project's focal habitats, haylands and old fields, Curt was the perfect candidate for an Audubon habitat assessment. He had already contacted the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) about financial incentives for habitat improvement; Audubon VT was able to work with NRCS to manage Curt's property for priority birds, including the Golden-winged Warbler. The management actions completed that year, and again two years later, resulted in at least two pairs of Golden-winged Warblers along with a number of other priority species.

Curt is one of more than 100 landowners who has participated in CVBI since its inception in 2009. With more than 16,000 acres assessed on both private and public lands and with ongoing partnerships with NRCS, the University of Vermont, the Nature Conservancy and local conservation commissions, the CVBI continues to work to protect and manage habitat that is critical to the birds of the Champlain Valley.

"Participating in the CVBI has not only improved the habitat for priority birds on my property, it has created a passionate birder in myself and has opened my eyes to the importance of managing our open lands for these amazing birds. Education is often the key with any conservation program and Mark has provided that in spades.

"I am really happy with the way both projects have gone and the progress we have made."

-Curt Alpeter, Charlotte, VT
2014

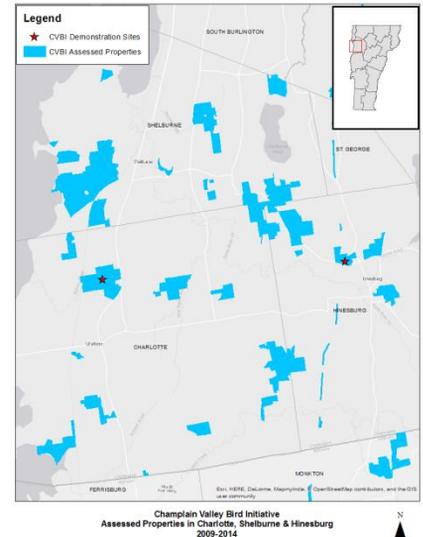
Above: A Golden-winged Warbler caught at Curt Alpeter's house in June 2014.

Champlain Valley: Working lands for people and birds

Vermont's Champlain Valley is home to some of the most important grassland and shrubland bird habitats in the Atlantic Flyway. Audubon Vermont's Champlain Valley Bird Initiative (CVBI) integrates science, education, and land management expertise to ensure that abundant, high-quality breeding habitat for early successional (ESH) songbirds exists in our region for now and the future. To-date, Audubon Vermont has worked directly with landowners, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) biologists, Vermont communities, and other Audubon chapters to:

- Conduct habitat assessments and develop management recommendations for over **100** landowners who own and/or manage over **16,000** acres.
- Promote grassland and shrubland bird habitat management to 500 landowners.
- Work with VT Electric Power Company (VELCO) to survey **1,000** acres of shrubland habitat and develop bird friendly management recommendations for the right-of-way.
- Survey over **40** VT properties for Golden-winged Warblers, more than doubling the known population in Vermont.
- Enroll **20** landowners in NRCS financial incentive programs and improve early successional habitat in the Champlain Valley.
- Partner with Audubon New York and Audubon North Carolina on Golden-winged Warbler conservation efforts.
- Enlist more than **40** Audubon chapter volunteers who have dedicated approximately **1,000** hours in survey efforts.

Audubon Vermont's Champlain Valley Bird Initiative is working with over **100** private landowners owners, **3** town parks, **5** public and private partner organizations, **10** state Audubon societies and chapters and **you** to promote bird friendly habitat management and conservation actions on **over 16,000 acres** for the benefit of early successional birds like the Bobolink and Eastern Towhee and the people that share work and live in their habitats. With your on-going support, we will keep our grasslands and shrublands healthy and full of birds and their songs.



"By the way, not sure if we let you know, but this past summer the haying went perfectly. First cut before June 1, several bobolinks and meadow larks nested. Second cut late July, even a third cut in October! We sent the farmer thank you cards and he seems to be on board with the program. Your help was greatly appreciated!"

"Thank you so much for the Assessment you sent to us regarding our property. It was very interesting and very complete. We particularly appreciated the suggestions for making our fields more bird friendly. We will keep it at hand so that we can refer to it throughout the year."

- CVBI Landowners, 2013