

River Byway News

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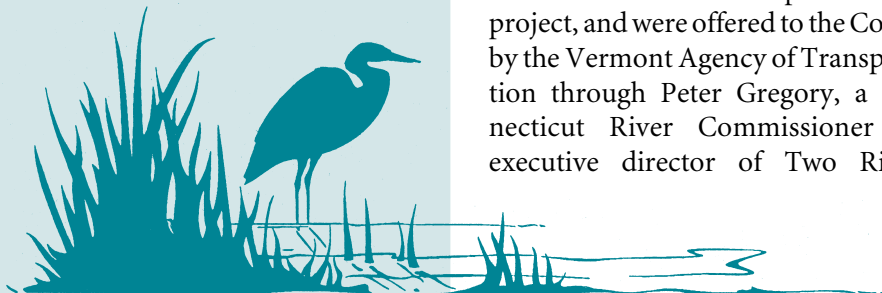
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CONNECTICUT
RIVER
BYWAY



Governors Talk Teamwork for Tourism

GOVERNOR Jim Douglas of Vermont and Governor Craig Benson of New Hampshire shared the podium in Claremont on October 7 to encourage economic development through tourism in the Connecticut River Valley. The event was sponsored by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions and the Connecticut River Byway Council, in cooperation with the Claremont Economic Development Office. New

Hampshire Executive Councilor Raymond Burton stimulated the conference.

Richard Ewald, Rockingham Development Director, presented a visual tour of the valley to an audience of nearly 60 representatives of valley chambers of commerce, main street programs, regional planning commissions, economic development organizations, Claremont city councilors, state tourism and economic develop-

ment agencies, the National Park Service, Sullivan County commissioners, the Windsor Improvement Corporation, and the Connecticut River Joint Commissions and Scenic Byway Council.

Introducing the Governors, Claremont Mayor Guy Santagate acknowledged that while
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Governors Jim Douglas and Craig Benson meet to talk about tourism in the Connecticut River Valley, as CRJC executive director Sharon Francis looks on.

Coming Soon! The Connecticut River... The Video

HOVERING over town greens and flying up the blue ribbon of water, a camera is capturing the many faces of the Connecticut River Byway. The talented woman behind the lens is Caro Thompson, who produced the hour-long documentary, "Great River," for Vermont Public Television that aired last February.

Funds for the project were left over from the Wells River interpretive center project, and were offered to the Council by the Vermont Agency of Transportation through Peter Gregory, a Connecticut River Commissioner and executive director of Two Rivers/

Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission. The Connecticut River Byway Council selected the video as its highest priority for use of those funds, and seized the opportunity to work with Caro, who is now producing a ten-to-twelve-minute film for use by all of the waypoint centers. Her extensive research for the previous film prepared her well for a focused piece on the New Hampshire/Vermont portion of the river.

One day of helicopter shooting has already taken place, and Caro is now visiting farms, fairs, festivals, and other events and sites along the Byway. Nat Tripp, himself a former professional video producer, is the project liaison for

Continued page 3

Teamwork, continued

geographic fiefdoms are a part of the landscape, “what is good for Windsor is also good for Claremont and Charlestown.”

Governor Craig Benson greeted the gathering, saying that he had been talking with Governor Douglas about ways to help with economic development and tourism in the region. Recognizing that communities on both sides of the river are closely intertwined, they are exploring ways to cooperate even in the area of homeland security.

Governor Jim Douglas agreed that the two should work together to grow the economy of the region. “The landscape, beauty, and natural environment of our two states,” he observed, “are unsurpassed.” Expressing approval of the scenic byway program which is opening up waypoint centers, he described the new St. Johnsbury welcome center as a wonderful facility.

New Hampshire River Commissioner John Tucker, who sponsored the legislation that originally established the Connecticut River Commission in his state, observed that the idea of co-promotion of the region “has been picked up with great refreshing spirit by the two governors” and that they recognize that the Connecticut River Valley is a unique and singular entity.

Sharon Francis, CRJC Executive Director, moderated a panel discussion with tourism leaders and legislators from both states. She reminded that our first priority must always be to preserve what we have. “If we don’t safeguard our heritage closely,” she cautioned, “it won’t be there for visitors to enjoy.” She pointed out that because the byway runs the entire length of the river in the two states, it represents well over 500 miles of roadway.

Bruce Hyde, Vermont Commissioner of Tourism and Marketing, said he is trying to erase boundary lines to allow co-promotion with neighboring states for more return on marketing dollar investment. He described Discover New England, a group of six high level state tourism officials who meet

regularly and promote New England in the UK and Germany, among other locations. Hyde’s agency is preparing a low power FM station for interstate travelers which will broadcast weather and local events, and he encouraged his New Hampshire colleagues to participate. A new 511 calling system will also provide road conditions and traveler information.

George Bald, New Hampshire Commissioner of Resources and Economic Development, expressed his delight with a previous visit to the Fort at No. 4 and hopes to return “to spend the night!” He recalled a statement by Steven Barba of The Balsams, that people come to New Hampshire and Vermont because they wish they had what we have, and if we don’t take care of it, they will no longer want to come, and we will no longer be happy with where we live.

Lauri Klefos, New Hampshire Director of Travel and Tourism, explained that her office does not attempt to bring in a million more people to the state, but instead tries to get those who come here to spend a million more dollars while they are visiting. Now that the Connecticut River Byway infrastructure has been built, she said it’s time to promote it, and offered to help. She especially encouraged valley attractions and waypoint communities to call her office with a calendar of events, and advised taking advantage of the hospitality training program now active in 19 communities in her state.

New Hampshire state senator Bob Odell said that it is his top priority to talk about economic development in stressed places, and agreed with other speakers that signage is very important. He advised celebrating next year’s 250th anniversary of the French & Indian War, whose outcome determined the future of the upper Connecticut River Valley.

Vermont Representative Michael Obuchowski agreed that the valley has much potential as a tourism destination, and suggested that the marketing solution lies in a partnership which is either public/private or completely



NH Executive Councilor Raymond Burton encourages regional cooperation in tourism marketing. Sitting next to him are David Raphael of LandWorks, VT Rep. Michael Obuchowski, and NH Senator Bob Odell.

private, such as the map published by the Vermont Attractions Association. He suggested a similar publication for the Connecticut River Valley.

David Raphael of LandWorks described his work of preparing signage plans for the waypoint communities on behalf of the Connecticut River Byway Council. He discovered duplicate and unnecessary signs, and his plan will make signs clear, accessible, and less cluttered.

Claremont Development Director Mark Aldrich explained why Claremont stepped forward to become a waypoint community, noting that it has historic mills with a gorgeous view of the Sugar River, and that a welcome center is a good way to greet potential business investors. He is intently pursuing ways to restore the mills for new uses.

New Hampshire Executive Councilor Ray Burton described CRJC as a prime example of regional cooperation and suggested that CRJC could be an applicant for joint promotional funds. Members of the audience advised pursuing oral histories, working with schools, and using local TV programming.

Participants pursued the thorny question of presenting brochures in one

state's visitor centers for the other state's attractions. Lauri Klefos pointed out that each state's policies on such brochures are different, and difficult to overcome. She and her Vermont counterpart agreed that they could both offer those maps, itineraries, and guides that are *bi-state in nature*. To date, the three publications that fit this definition are the Connecticut River Scenic Byway map and guide, and two booklets published by CRJC: the Heritage Trail guide (covering Claremont, Cornish, and Plainfield, New Hampshire, and Windsor and Hartland, Vermont) and "Boating on the Connecticut River in New Hampshire and Vermont."

An interesting sidelight of the meeting was Rep. Obuchowski's suggestion that the two states consider looking into buying and operating the Connecticut River dams together, to provide cheap energy for their residents and businesses. He added that the hydro stations themselves could be tourist attractions, something that CRJC had once discussed with the power company and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Vermont has been exploring this option alone, and while George Bald said that it has not been a New Hampshire tradition to acquire such facilities, it made sense to look at the opportunity.

The event was filmed for public access television, and will be available throughout the valley. Call your local public access TV station to request a broadcast. ☒

The Video, continued

the Byway Council and CRJC. The film, which should be ready this winter, will be provided to the waypoint communities for showing in their byway centers, and can also be distributed for byway promotion.

Small cash contributions will be most welcomed to help defray the match required for this project. The Hartford Chamber of Commerce has already made a contribution, and encourages other valley chambers to follow suit. Contact CRJC for more information. ☒

SAVE THE DATE!

Connecticut River Scenic Byway Council Annual Harvest Supper

At the historic and newly restored Blow-Me-Down Grange
in the village of Plainfield, New Hampshire
(featured success story in Spring, 2003 issue of *River Byway News*)

Monday, November 24, 2003

5:00–8:30 pm

Program to include:

- We will be treated to the experience of Bob Billington, chairman of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, and the energizer of interpretive volunteers, Suzanne Buchanan, Park Ranger for the Heritage Corridor
- Caro Thompson will share scenes from her Connecticut River videos, past and future
- Election of 2003–2004 Steering Committee
- Updates from the waypoint communities

Harvest supper provided by the Friends of the Blow-Me-Down Grange
\$15/person

Contact CRJC for more information: 603-826-4800

Major Grant Sought for Byway Signage

IF a major proposal by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions is funded, byway visitors will soon be able to find the waypoint interpretive centers that are opening up to greet them.

David Raphael of LandWorks has completed his plans for the ten waypoint communities' signage, developed after a year's worth of meetings with local officials and some energetic and creative map work. Based on David's designs, CRJC has submitted a proposal for 228 signs for both sides of the river, requesting \$342,000 from the Federal Highway Administration through the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

The proposal has won the support of the Vermont Scenery Preservation Council. News on a decision in Wash-

ington is expected early in 2004. The funds would provide the signs without charge to the communities, which, for their part, will erect and maintain them.

David and Sharon Francis, CRJC Executive Director, have also met with NH DOT, whose staff was very receptive. She expects top level support in the agency. "Our request is garnering respect and support, based on the excellence of David's work," she observes.

Besides helping to improve wayfinding within the ten communities, the goal is to reduce "sign clutter." Raphael's attention to this problem has been a great asset. To prepare the signage plan, Raphael met with groups in each community, including town government, chambers of commerce, and the regional planning commissions. ☒

St. Johnsbury Welcome Center Opens

A Downtown Centerpiece

GOVERNOR Jim Douglas cut the ribbon opening the new welcome center in St. Johnsbury on September 27, to the applause of more than 100 people. The handsome building's first floor space is now home to exhibits about this colorful and historic cultural center of the Northeast Kingdom. A large mounted moose head, donated by a local merchant, peacefully surveys the large and comfortable display space, looking over the shoulder of a volunteer who stands ready to offer visitors directions, advice, and, as the sign out front promises, "Local Knowledge." The space also encloses offices for the non-profit organization St. Johnsbury WORKS!

"It started pulling people off the interstate the minute the signs went up!"
—Nat Tripp

The large, centrally located building offers the promise of space for meetings, events, and gatherings.

After nearly two years of effort, the revitalization of downtown St. Johnsbury got a big boost in early April when Burlington real estate developer Anthony Pomerleau donated the 1883 railroad station to the town. Town officials had met with Mr. Pomerleau over a year previously and obtained an option on the building. Then "BJ" Murphy, a former associate, took over and negotiated the gift. Meanwhile, Joel Schwartz, St. Johnsbury's economic development director, began his successful process of grant application for the restoration of the station. Everyone

recognized this as an outstanding opportunity to create a centerpiece for the downtown with many lasting economic benefits.

As an architectural assessment is completed, townspeople will discuss whether to move town offices into the appealing building. Redolent of the region's rail history, the welcome center will become an integral part of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway, linking with nine other Visitor Centers presently being developed along the Byway from Brattleboro, Vermont, to Colebrook, New Hampshire. Each center provides a hub, identified by distinctive signage, where visitors can find rest rooms and regional information.

The bi-state Scenic Byway initiative, an effort to get travelers off the interstate and back into our downtowns, uses state and federal funds to combine tourism with historic preservation and downtown renovation. The station in St. Johnsbury is ideal for this purpose; it is both centrally located and has a rich heritage of its own.

Architect R.C. Glancy was hired to build the three-story Queen Anne Victorian in the spring of 1883 by the Connecticut and Passumpsic Railroad, which was founded by Erastus Fairbanks. Covered train sheds and



Above, the historic St. Johnsbury rail station sports a handsome new sign and Byway logo, identifying it as a Connecticut River Byway center. Below, Connecticut River Commissioner Cheston Newbold of Cornish admires the Byway exhibit panels in the newly restored space.



additional facilities were added under Boston and Maine ownership in 1900. By then, there were twenty-four passenger trains a day, and the downtown district we recognize today had grown up beside the thriving railroad.

Imagine yourself near the station in May of 1938, which was about the time young Anthony Pomerleau himself first arrived in St. Johnsbury by train. It is

SUCCESS STORY



just after the noon hour, and #52, the west bound local has just left for Cambridge Junction. As passengers purchase tickets and make arrangements for luggage, #162 from Portland arrives, followed a few minutes later by the big train of the day, CP #212, the northbound Boston to Montreal "Alouette."

It is but a short stroll from the station to the hotels, restaurants and stores of Railroad Street, and surrounding all are the Vermont hills. This is a scene which exists almost entirely today, and the same vitality which the station brought then can be brought again, as it functions as a nucleus for both residents and visitors alike.

While rail service has dwindled, the station will still serve well as an "intermodal" connection for bus service, recreation trails and passenger train excursions. Collaboration with institutions such as the Fairbanks Museum will assure that the cultural and historic values of the past are not lost. Thanks to generosity, foresight and hard work, the railroad station may well be the crown jewel of a rejuvenated downtown. ☒ —NAT TRIPP

Editor's note: Connecticut River Commissioner Nat Tripp has been a driving force in this present and future success story.



Connecticut River Commissioner Nat Tripp, left, talks with a Byway center volunteer and CRJC Executive Director Sharon Francis.

Birding Trail Heads North

GOOD news for birders and their would-be byway hosts: the Connecticut River Birding Trail is heading north.

The concept of a Birding Trail is right in line with the goal of the Byway to focus attention on the river valley's extraordinary natural resources, in a low-impact way. In 2002, birder and educator extraordinaire Bill Shepard, working with a well-rounded steering committee and the George D. Aiken Resource Conservation and Development Council, published a beautifully designed, full-color fold-out bird-watching itinerary spanning both sides of the river between Springfield, Vermont, and Haverhill, New Hampshire. The guide locates 46 prime birding sites on an easy-to-read map and gives a brief sketch of each, including habitat types and bird species to expect, a recommended season, and traveling directions.

The Connecticut River Joint Commissions have provided three Partner-

ship grants to support the project, including assistance for its development, the initial printing, and now a grant to help extend the "trail" to the Canadian border. A group of agencies and organizations has also gathered to explore taking the trail south to the sea.

For more information, get in touch with Bill at birdvermont@valley.net or (802) 291-9100, ext. 107, or visit www.birdtrail.org. Donations to help with the costs of printing the next edition will not be refused. ☒



On a recent autumn morning, fifteen wood ducks like this one gathered at the Chaffee Wildlife Sanctuary in Lyme, a stop on the Connecticut River Birding Trail.

CALENDAR

The Connecticut River Scenic Byway Council Steering Committee meets on the third Thursday of every other month, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Hartford, Vermont, Municipal Building. All members of the Scenic Byway Council are encouraged to attend and participate.

2004

January 15

March 18

May 20

July 15

Sept. 16

Nov. 18

**CONNECTICUT
RIVER
BYWAY**

River Byway News

is published on behalf of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway Council by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions. Unless otherwise credited, text and photographs by the Editor.

Adair Mulligan, Editor
Sharon Francis, Executive Director

PO Box 1182 Charlestown, NH 03603
603-826-4800 • Fax 603-826-3065
www.ctrivertravel.net



LANCASTER

Profile of a Waypoint

We continue our tour of the Connecticut River Byway's Waypoint Communities.

RUMOR HAS IT that Emmons Stockwell, of the famed Roger's Rangers, was the first European settler to discover the fertile meadows of the Upper Cohos on his return from the ill-fated expedition against the St. Francis Indians in 1759. Five years later, Lancaster became the first settlement on the Connecticut River upstream from Haverhill, fifty miles to the south, when Stockwell's employer, David Page of Massachusetts, secured a grant from Governor Benning Wentworth. Wentworth had a habit of reaching across the Connecticut River and granting townships in what is now Vermont, and Page's grant was no exception. The place included the promise of water power on Israel's River, which meets the Connecticut here. Stockwell married Page's daughter Ruth, the first white woman to settle here, and their descendants still live in Lancaster.

Lancaster's intriguing history is on display at the Wilder-Holton House, now the museum of the Historical Society. This, the first two-story dwelling in Coos County, was built from boards planed and nails wrought on the site in 1780.

Through the years Lancaster has remained a residential and tourist town with only a few small industries, something its people credit for preserving the



Lancaster's Byway center is handsomely housed in an historic cog mill just off Main Street.

old New England atmosphere that so captivates its visitors. Local industries included a granite quarry in the nearby Pilot Range of the White Mountains, and of course the timber trade which drove logs down the Connecticut.

Lancaster has had strong impact upon New Hampshire and the nation, contributing two governors and John Wingate Weeks. Weeks, a conservationist, U.S. congressman, and senator (and Secretary of War under Presidents Harding and Coolidge) sponsored the Weeks Act, enabling the federal government to purchase private lands for the White Mountain National Forest, and others.

Weeks's 420-acre summer estate on Mt. Prospect is one of the best preserved of many grand summer homes built in New Hampshire during this period, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Among his guests was President Warren Harding. After his death, the family gave the property to the State. Weeks State Park is open to the public and includes the main lodge and a fieldstone tower that provides a 360-degree panorama of mountain splendor. Weeks family members have long been patrons of the community, also providing its library and hospital. Another generous benefactor was Colonel Francis Town, whose estate has become a busy community center.



This fine 1837 Greek Revival style home on Lancaster's Main Street was built entirely from one granite boulder. Its connected beef farm may be the last in NH still operating within village limits.

crossroads of rivers and trails that makes it a prime recreation center. In addition to its well-known snowmobile network, Lancaster also offers bicycle routes, hiking trails, parks, camping, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, foliage drives, and covered bridges. The Lancaster Rotary Club sponsors an annual paddling trip on the Connecticut River.

The produce and spirit of agriculture in the region are celebrated in an old-fashioned country fair at the Lancaster Fairgrounds each Labor Day weekend. Lancaster growers produce beef, dairy products, and even buffalo, as well as the sweet gifts of the maple. The town is fortunate that many of its prime agricultural soils, which first attracted its sharp-eyed settlers, are still in active farm use.

Main Street features four beautiful parks, each with historical significance. Busy Routes 2 and 3 join for a mile at Lancaster's Main Street, and the town is working to protect its rich architectural and natural heritage while opening up business opportunities. Route 2 is the major artery from Maine and eastern Canada to Vermont and upstate New York. Route 3 runs the length of New Hampshire and connects Quebec and the Great North Woods with southern New England.

This summer Lancaster's Northern Gateway Visitor Center, which houses the Byway displays, received the final

Lancaster sits at a

Continued page 7

Preservation Tours Focus on Connecticut River Towns

OVER one hundred barn owners, barn enthusiasts and contractors from New Hampshire and Vermont gathered in Lebanon on September 13 to learn more about how to save and repair barns at a special day-long workshop sponsored by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance and the Preservation Education Institute. The workshop was supported in part by a grant from the Connecticut River Joint Commissions' Partnership Program.

Stephen Taylor, New Hampshire Commissioner of Agriculture, emphasized the growth of the barn preservation movement over the past four years. "We've come so far, getting beyond the mind-set that old barns are just good places for fire fighting practice," he said. Taylor stated that the commitment of individual barn owners and organizations like the Alliance and Institute are helping to both promote barns' contributions to our states' character and local economies and to overcome historic barns' enemies: deferred maintenance, fear of taxes, and dealers seeking valuable barn parts.



Barn restoration expert Arron Sturgis of Cape Neddick, Maine, points out timber framing features of a late-18th-century Lebanon barn.

Expert speakers stressed the endurance of older barns and the growing appreciation for their performance over time by contractors, architects and engineers. They encouraged regular maintenance and documenting current conditions to guide future work. Tops on their list of tips for keeping old barns standing are directing moisture away from the building, ensuring a tight roof, and removing built-up manure around supporting posts.

New Hampshire's four-year-old barn preservation effort is receiving national recognition. An informal survey reveals that at least 35 barn owners have made successful applications for the state's new barn tax incentive program. The program allows towns to reduce tax assessments on historic agricultural structures that meet public benefit requirements and carry preservation easements.

Participants toured four Lebanon barns with exceptional stories to tell, and four more optional destinations, including two in-town barn/carriage houses. The city is fortunate to have a wealth of restored barns in active agricultural or transportation service.

The following day, two more Connecticut River towns hosted the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's annual behind-the-scenes tour. The day began at Haverhill's Alumni Hall for a look at the ambitious restoration underway in this handsome building, with a distinguished past as the Grafton County Courthouse and a future as a Byway Interpretive Center. The tour moved next to the Lyme Center Academy Building, newly reopened after a massive restoration effort and hosting town celebrations once again. The volunteer leaders of this effort shared the secrets of their success with an appreciative audience that hailed from all over the state, from the seacoast to the southern tier and the White Mountains.



Stephen Bedard of Henry Page House Restoration in Gilmanton, NH, draws attention to early hand-made nails used in barn siding.

After exploring the Academy, participants toured a nearby restored Sears, Roebuck house, explored the black locust-shaded village of Lyme Center on foot, and visited several historic barns under restoration, each with their own rich stories, before ending the day at the Moses Kent House on Lyme's River Road, a National Register Historic Site. [✎](#) *The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance contributed to this article.*

Lancaster, continued

touches with support from the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, the federal government, and many local benefactors. While the Center has been serving visitors for two years, work on restoring this historic cog factory proved more costly than originally anticipated. The continued faith and contributions of Lancaster's Renaissance Program and enthusiastic partners resulted in a glowing example of the town's efforts to revitalize its historic downtown. With another CRJC grant, the Lancaster Renaissance Program improved and added interpretive signage to the town's beautiful Riverwalk which begins downtown and winds along Israel's River. [✎](#) *Bruce Houghton contributed to this article.*

Reflections on the New Bellows Falls Waypoint Center

The *Providence (Rhode Island) Journal* had this to say about Bellows Falls' new waypoint center, in its August 8, 2003 edition.

GREAT places—and especially thriving cities—are invariably on water. And older cities that have successfully reinvented themselves have often done so by recapturing their historic waterfronts. This valuable lesson is also applicable to small cities and towns, such as Bellows Falls.

The Bellows Falls Waypoint Interpretive Center ...between train tracks and a penstock will open soon as an interpretive center for the Vermont/New Hampshire Connecticut River Scenic Byway, a 270-mile path of history. The Waypoint Center does recall a country train depot. But it is a monumental and somewhat startling 145-foot-long and 32-foot-high steel bridge arching over the building that declares that Bellows Falls is renewing itself, and with a sense of style. By capitalizing on its history—in this case a somewhat gritty but sublime landscape of mills, railroad tracks, power station, and above all, the river—the city is not trying to compete with

suburban sameness; instead, it is banking on its own special identity.

The architect decided that Bellows Falls needed its bridge back, so he created a rendition of the giant harp-like form of the old bridge that is the heart and soul of the new building. The Waypoint Center is attractive in its own right. Its dark-blue walls and yellow-stripe color scheme pay homage to a diesel locomotive parked nearby, while one end features a cowcatcher-like prow, sheathed in suitably industrial

lead-coated copper. The arch sails over the building and is an unavoidable symbol. The arch pays homage to Bellows Falls's past, while enriching the city with a striking sculptural statement.

Economic development is key to revitalizing a place like Bellows Falls, yet the development of the town's sense of place is equally important. Dan Scully's Waypoint Center is an unusual way station for tourists, but its real value is as a monument to the indomitable character of the city. ☒

—WILLIAM MORGAN

From "Monument to a city's past could save the city's future."

THE NEW CENTER is now open to the public from 10-2 on weekdays, and during some weekend hours through the foliage season. The brochure racks have been installed, an exhibit of taxidermic wildlife has been mounted by the Nature Museum at Grafton, and visitors are welcome. A grand opening is pending installation of a few exterior touches.



Photo by Richard Ewald

Betsy Bennett of the Nature Museum at Grafton created this new exhibit at the Bellows Falls Waypoint Center.



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