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To Whom It May Concern:

In 2015, Sterling College had its sugarbush recognized by Audubon Vermont for participating in the Bird-Friendly Maple Project. The Bird-Friendly Maple Project is a partnership among Audubon Vermont, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and the Vermont Maple Sugar Maker's Association. It seeks to promote bird conservation and maple syrup production.

More than 30 bird species of birds are known to use maple sugarbushes as nesting habitats, including the wood thrush, the scarlet tanager, and the black-throated blue warbler. Bird-friendly sugarbushes have features that allow birds to successfully raise the next generation, including a diversity of tree species, layers of vegetation, and a plan for invasive plant control.

The Virginia Russell Maple Sugarbush, abutting Sterling College's campus and managed by its students and faculty, is home to over 200 maple taps and numerous species of birds. Both trees and birds will be able to coexist and thrive. Sterling College, in partnership with the Russell family, is currently one of only six maple producers in Vermont recognized for managing its sugarbush in bird-friendly ways. It is the first college to be so recognized.

At a time when the maple sugaring industry is rapidly expanding, Audubon Vermont is excited that Sterling College and the Russell family are participating in the Bird-Friendly Maple Project. Not only is Sterling the first educational institution to get involved with the project, it is also critical to the long-term health and sustainability of the forest and all its wild inhabitants to think about managing the sugarbush as a natural ecosystem rather than a row crop.

By engaging Sterling students in this process, we are educating tomorrow's maple producers about the importance of diverse structure and composition in the sugarbush. It's a win-win-win solution for the students, the forest—including birds and other wildlife—and Vermont's maple industry.

For a full overview of the Bird-Friendly Maple Project, visit <http://vt.audubon.org/bird-friendly-maple-project>.

Sincerely,

Steve Hagenbuch
Conservation Biologist
Audubon Vermont