The Shrimpy Effect

We recently read a short essay in the Birding Community E-Bulletin about what the authors called “The Shrimpy Effect.” It turns out that “Shrimpy” was the affectionate name bestowed on a particular bird, a gull, that was fed shrimp by the staff of a seafood restaurant along the Maryland shore. What made this gull different was that it was not supposed to be there. It was a Kelp Gull—a species that is a fairly common resident in the Southern Hemisphere—but on a few rare occasions has made it up to North American shores.

Rather predictably, birders came from all over the U.S. to see Shrimpy and many enjoyed a wonderful meal at the Sea Breeze Crab House and Restaurant where the staff fed the bird its favorite shrimp snacks. The bird knew a good thing when it saw it and came back for seven winters in a row before disappearing after 2005. Of course, the owners of the Sea Breeze also knew a good thing and made thousands of dollars off of the visiting birders who came to see Shrimpy. Thus, “The Shrimpy Effect” is the revenue generated by local businesses by visiting birders who come to see a particularly special bird.

Some of the many Snowy Owls that were so easy to see last winter must have provided some “Shrimpy Effect” to local communities when visiting birders stopped by for meals, snacks, and fuel. A rare Townsend’s Solitaire that was in residence in Freeport this past early winter and the Pink-footed Goose in Damariscotta probably added some birder-generated revenue to some businesses in those areas. Our friend and colleague Derek Lovitch compiled a report to estimate the possible economic impact of birders to the southern Maine and coastal New Hampshire.
PRESIDENT’S CORNER
SUE SCHUBEL

I love birds. And birders! Some of my best friends are birders. The darting eyes and preoccupied gaze, the fact that they aren’t really listening to you, but straining to catch a chip note from the bushes, the knowledge that you would be run over without hesitation if someone says “Quetzal at Pemaquid Point” – these are the charming aspects of friendship with birders. Somehow though, I missed feeling the single-minded, rabid passion invoked in the phrase “I NEED that bird!” Until now.

If you want to nurture a little of that crazy-making feeling, I suggest that you take the Bird-A-Day challenge! A new staff member at Hog Island mentioned it and I have latched on – questing to see a different bird species each day for as long as possible, while still holding down a couple of jobs and caring for dependents. It really is good for paying attention, not only to any creature flapping or paddling by, but to good roosting spots, winter water sources, bushes full of fruit, diurnal patterns of attendance, and nighttime owl calling! It will get you involved in ebird and watching the local birding listservs.

It’s good to be involved. Once a month there is a meeting of the Rockweed working group, a body tasked to recommend areas for closure to Rockweed harvest due to sensitive wildlife. The birds do not generally attend, but thankfully, some who can speak for birds and seals do. It’s a sadly recurring theme that wildlife must defend its right to any habitat and food when there is a business opportunity present. One would think, with 4,600 islands off our rich coastline, there could be room for commerce and intact habitat, especially when much of the commerce depends on a healthy ecosystem.

Be aware. Get involved. And if you see a Lapland Longspur, call me – I NEED THAT BIRD!

For more information, visit http://www.maine.gov/dmr/rm/rockweed/Workgroup/RockweedWorkingGroup.htm

CRITTER CORNER – DON REIMER

One fall day, I watched a gray-brown animal crossing the back edge of Weskeag Marsh. It was the animal’s undulating, rocking gait that drew my attention. This handsome three-legged Eastern Coyote was missing its entire right front leg, but appeared robust, healthy and active as it snatched up a small rodent from foot-tall grasses. For the record, coyotes are intelligent and extremely adaptable.

With their long legs, pointy snout, and drooping bushy black-tipped tail, Eastern Coyotes are bigger and heavier than their western counterparts. Maine coyotes weigh between 30 and 50 pounds, with an average life span of about four years.

There is no historical evidence that coyotes were present in New England through the 1800s. By the mid-1900s, the animals had moved eastward from the Midwest and Canada to establish populations in the Northeast and eventually down the mid-Atlantic corridor. Interbreeding with Gray Wolves in some instances, Eastern Coyotes arrived to occupy a vacant ecological niche as the last wolves were systematically extirpated.

Coyotes are social animals that usually select a lifelong mate. Both parents care for their four to eight pups born in May, occasionally with some help from older offspring. Coyotes mark and defend their 5-25 square mile territories against other unrelated coyotes and other canids.

Several distinct vocalizations facilitate social communication within the pack structure. Adult coyotes bark to indicate a threat; long howls are used to assemble pack members, and group yip-howls are issued when pack members reunite. Vocal activity is quite high during the January to March breeding season. I have heard coyotes respond vocally to passing train whistles and wailing ambulance sirens.

Being generalists, coyotes eat whatever foods are seasonally abundant. This can include mice, squirrels, woodchucks, snowshoe hare, house cats, carrion, amphibians, garbage, insects and fruit.

To some extent, coyotes undoubtedly play a role in deer predation. Currently there is a year-round open hunting season on coyotes in Maine, with night-time hunting privileges extending from December to August. Despite the mounting kill tallies, these predator control measures are largely ineffective. Preservation and/or expansion of the white-tailed deer’s wintering habitat is perhaps the best solution to the long-term management issue.
area who came to see the exceedingly rare Western Reef-Heron that spent six days in Kittery before relocating to New Hampshire. Derek estimated that at least $9,000 was spent in Kittery alone, and that tens of thousands of dollars were spent in southern Maine and New Hampshire combined, by birders who came to see the bird—revenue that would not have occurred without the presence of the bird.

Maine’s Midcoast area has its own more long-term version of “The Shrimpy Effect” in its natural beauties and particularly in its publicly accessible open spaces like those protected by such land trusts as the Damariscotta River Association and Pemaquid Watershed Association. For example, The Boothbay Regional Land Trust’s preserves and trails were found in a 2013 study by researchers at the University of Maine to contribute $3.9 million annually to the local economy and have a worth to the community of $32 million.

Audubon’s Hog Island is another natural attraction that brings many people to the Midcoast region. Not to get too much into accounting here but those Black-throated Green Warblers and Hermit Thrushes whose songs echo from special places in our area throughout the spring and summer are doing their part to help the economy! And of course we can’t forget that ultimate “Shrimpy Effect” bird, the Atlantic Puffin that brings many thousands of people to our area every summer to take boat trips out to see them at Eastern Egg Rock from both New Harbor (Hardy Boat) and Boothbay Harbor (Cap’n Fish). That’s a bird worth its weight in gold, or better yet, shrimp.

Jeffrey V. Wells, Ph.D., is a Fellow of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Dr. Wells is one of the nation’s leading bird experts and conservation biologists. Allison Childs Wells, formerly of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a senior director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine. Both are widely published natural history writers and are the authors of the book, Maine’s Favorite Birds.

The Shrimpy Effect. . . continued

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a partnership between Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with Bird Studies Canada as the official Canadian partner. The GBBC is a four-day international bird count open to birders of all ages and abilities. The citizen science data collected gives researchers information about the location and size of bird populations each February.

With 34.5 million bird observations on more than 144,000 checklists, The 2014 count was the most detailed four-day snapshot of global bird populations ever undertaken. Between Friday, February 14, and Monday, February 17, 2014, participants reported 4,296 species, including a record 644 species in the United States.

This was also the second year that participants were encouraged to submit their bird sightings from outside the U.S. and Canada. We received checklists from 135 different countries and independent territories, representing all seven continents!

Mark the dates on your calendar, February 13-16, 2015, choose your location – your backyard, local park, school yard, preserve – then start counting. For more information visit: http://gbbc.birdcount.org/
Calendar of Events

Bird walks and programs are free; donations are welcome to help defray costs.

Program chair: Kathy Cartwright 832-5584. Field trip chair: John Weinrich 563-2930

FEBRUARY
Saturday and Sunday, February 14 and 15
Plum Island and Coastal Cape Ann
Join Mid-Coast Audubon and Massachusetts native Dennis McKenna for two days of birding through Plum Island, Ipswich, Rockport and Gloucester. Last year’s trip had Snowy Owls, Snow Buntings, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, Cedar Waxwings, Purple Sandpipers, raptors, many ducks and scoters and other land birds. Overnight arrangements can be made by contacting Dennis McKenna at 563-8439.
Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00am

Thursday, February 19 at 7:00 p.m.
Camden Public Library
Don Reimer presents Winter Birds of Maine - a colorful slide program featuring an overview of birds wintering in the mid-coast region. Beyond the basic identification piece, the presentation will focus on the social habits and changing distribution of various species. Since about 75% of our summer birds migrate southward, these are the hardy birds of Maine winter.

MARCH
Thursday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m.
Camden Public Library
Seth Benz of MCAS will present: Pulse Point: Monitoring Winged Migrations in Acadia National Park.
This presentation looks at research and education efforts at Acadia National Park, the U.S. gateway to the Atlantic Flyway, with special emphasis on the migrations of birds and their interactions with plants and insects. Seth Benz is the director of the Schoodic Institute Bird Ecology Program.

Saturday, March 21
Biddeford Pool
A day trip to Biddeford Pool, Biddeford Pool Beach, East Point, Pine Point and Scarborough Marsh looking for Brant and other migrating waterfowl.
Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00 am

APRIL
Thursday, April 16 at 7:00 p.m.
Camden Public Library
Paty Matrai will present her work in the arctic: Climate Change & the Biology of the Arctic. Dr. Paty Matrai is involved with a project called “OASIS” (Ocean-Atmosphere-Sea Ice-Snowpack). She is a Senior Research Scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Maine. Her group focuses on biological production of gases and aerosols that are exchanged with the overlying atmosphere, both in the lab and in the field.
Meet at Damariscotta River Association parking lot at 7:00 am

Saturday, April 18
Local Bird Walk - Damariscotta Area
Meet a Mid-Coast Audubon leader for a morning of birding spring birds and waterfowl.
Meet at Damariscotta River Association parking lot at 7:00 a.m

Saturday, April 25, 2015
Reid State Park
Any time of the season this special site with beaches, marshes and mixed growth forests is an unusual trip. Follow Dennis McKenna seeking waterfowl, Loons, Grebes, Sanderlings, Purple Sandpipers, songbirds and more.
Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00 a.m.

MAY
Thursday, May 21 at 7:00 p.m.
Camden Public Library
Hope Douglas, founder and president of Wind Over Wings will present: Birds of Prey and a Raven Who Thinks He’s a Bird of Prey! Experience the wonder of being a few feet away from a magnificent Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, rambunctious Raven, or tiny Saw-whet Owl. Each bird has a story and is unable to survive in the wild. Each inspires us with their stories — stories of courage, adaptability, and resilience.
Check our website, www.midcoastaudubon.org for updates on trips and programs. Thank you.

Feathery Fun Quiz

1. What do Common Eiders eat?
2. Do Winter Wrens spend winter in Maine?
3. What do Ruffed Grouse eat when the ground is snow-covered?
4. What color is a Black Guillemot in winter?
5. Where do Snow Buntings come from?
6. What birds take birdseed and hide it away for later?
7. What food do Pileated Woodpeckers live on, year-round?
8. What Arctic Buteo might we see in the winter?
9. Are American Tree Sparrows fond of trees?
10. How many people participate in Project FeederWatch?

Answers on page 6.
Would You Like to Go to Hog Island?

Despite the vagaries of the weather, one thing is sure Mid-Coast Audubon will be sending at least one student, rain or shine, to Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen, Fyn Kynd of Searsmont. Fyn, not one to let grass grow under his feet, applied early for a scholarship. He is an avid birder and photographer and looks forward to learning from the experts at Hog Island.

Hog Island is gearing up for its 2015 season which promises to be a blockbuster. Not only does it have the tried-and-true sessions but it also has several new ones: “Hands-on Bird Science” with Scott Weidensaul and “Breaking into Birding” with Pete Dunne. Its stellar lineup of instructors is waiting to share all their collective knowledge with you. Sign up and see if doing so will change your life, like it has for so many others. You’ll never look at the natural world in the same way again. You don’t have to be a birder to attend – just like the outdoors.

Mid-Coast Audubon still has funds to send an educator to Educator Camp. If you are a teacher or you know of a teacher who would like to reenergize their environmental curriculum, then have them send an e-mail to sschubel@tidewater.net with SCHOLARSHIP in the subject line. Don’t wait too long!

For more information on Hog Island Audubon Camp’s sessions visit www.hogisland.audubon.org. The camp is 72% full, so don’t let the grass grow under your feet. Volunteer opportunities are possible, visit www.fohi.org, click on “support” tab. See box on back cover for instructor list.
Welcome New Members!

Ms. and Ms. Nancy Adams, Newcastle
Stanley Allain, Owls Head
Robert Anderson, Tenants Harbor
Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Armentrout, Rockport
Susan Beebe, Rockland
Seth Benz, Belfast
Margaret M. Boyajian, Spruce Head
Leila Bright, Rockland
Kevin Brown, Belfast
Camden Garden Club, Camden
Dan and Jackie Cassiday, Topsfield, MA
Douglas Chamberlin, Belfast
Todd Mace Christensen, Camden
William Clarke, Port Clyde
Susan B. Davis, Bremen
Joshua T. Day, Lincolnville
Greg and Arine Detmer, Bremen
John Dickens, Newcastle
Ellen and Paul Durgin, Walpole
Anne L. Ertmann, Palm Desert
Jan Fish, Rockport
Sarah L. Fisher, Damariscotta
Rick and Liz Fitzsimmons, Belfast
Dr. and Mrs. Leonard Greenhalgh, Spruce Head
Rick and Liz Fitzsimmons, Belfast
Joan Gregoire, Nobleboro
Mrs. and Mrs. Thomas L. Guthrie, North Haven
Charlotte P. Gulezian, Waldoboro
Jane and Stephen Hardy, Lincolnville
Paul and Sue Hitchcox, Monhegan
Donald Howlett, South Thomaston
John P. Hurley, Belfast
Jill Ilitis, Chicago
Arlene Kellman, Appleton
Linda Knapp, Rockport
Patrick and Ariana Killoran, Camden
Margaret and Barry King, Union
Nick Leafield, Rangeley
Nancy and Bob Lipper, Waldoboro
Edith Kelley Manns, Camden
Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Maxcy, Owls Head
Mary McGee, Nobleboro
Marin McMillan, Belfast
Dr. and Mrs. Lyndon W. Morgan, Belfast
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Myer, Washington, D.C.
Andrea N. Norfleet, Lincolnville
Wayne and JoAnn Myers, Waldoboro
North American Bluebird Society
Jamie Oates, Belmont
Whitney and Tony Oppedersoff, Lincolnville
The Osgood Family, Vinalhaven
Skip and Jo Pendleton, Belfast
Marilynn Petit, Belfast
Jeff and Karen Philbrick, Aima
Antoinette Pimentel, Whitefield
Mr. and Mrs. David G. Preston, China Village
Sarah Price, Rockport
Mary B. Reynolds, Newcastle
Dr. Roger Rittmaster and Ms. Jeannie, Camden
Mrs. Ann Robbins, Searsmouth
Paul E. Robie and Karen J. Young, M.D., Northport
Nicholas Ruff, Rockland
Kristen Rupert and John H. Foote, Watertown, MA
Anita Sandefur, South Thomaston
Melody and Warren Schubert, Rockport
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Siegenthaler, Port Clyde
Lee S. Sligh and Tom Prescott, Camden
Clifton and Rosemarie Smith, South China
Noah Soto, South China
George Stadler, Camden
Pat Staneck, Windsor
Stephanie and Wendell Stephenson, Newcastle
Tamara Stock and Robin Moody, Damariscotta
Karen A. Thompson, Edgecomb
Carol N. Tichy, Union
John Tobin, Rockland
Kathleen and Allan Toubman, Rockland
Eileen Tucked, Nobleboro
Mariellen Whelan, Newcastle
Christina West, Lincolnville
Ms. Brooke Williams, Thomaston
Robert E. Worthing, Cushings
Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Sheehan, Portland

… and Renewing Members

Margaret Atwood, Newcastle
Deidre Good and Julian Sheffield, NY
Joseph and Carolyn Gray, Damariscotta
Patricia and James Jennings, Bristol
Peter Lawrence, Nobleboro
Anthony Liss, South Bristol
Hilda Livingstone and Mr. Joseph, Hope
Krista Meinersmann, Warren
Nirvana Shaw, Newcastle

Our members keep our programs, field trips, and scholarships going, as we receive 20% of your dues. Bring your friends to a program or field trip and help raise our membership.

The Merganser answer: Juanita Roushdy, 529-2335

The Merganser is published quarterly in February, May, August, November. News items or photos are welcome. The deadline for the next issue is April 15! Send to juanita@tidewater.net

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a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization
P.O. Box 458, Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458

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Phyllis Coelho, Secretary
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Nest boxes: John Weinrich, 563-2930
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Christmas Bird Count - What Was Here?

Mid-Coast Audubon sponsors three Christmas Bird counts each year: Pemaquid/Damariscotta, Bunker Hill, and Thomaston/Rockland. Each count circle is 15 miles in diameter divided into segments. The 2014-15 CBC had 55 participants counting 16,239 individual birds. Circle highlights are below.

**Pemaquid-Damariscotta, December 14 - 78 species and 6,041 individual birds.** A Merlin was new for the count, but 13 species recorded all time highs for the circle. Mild weather and little or no ice on the river and other water bodies favored the best result ever for the circle. Highlights include four Cooper’s Hawks, three Great Blue Herons and six Belted Kingfishers. A Pied-billed Grebe on McCurdy Pond was the third such occurrence on the count. Surf Scoter was the all-time count high duck species with 107 individuals. Other historically rare or uncommon species found included two Barrow’s Goldeneyes, four Northern Pintails, and that most beautiful of sea ducks, one Harlequin Duck. Common Loons set a new record of 145. Passerines of note were two Carolina Wrens, two Yellow-rumped Warblers, and one Bohemian Waxwing. Not all thrushes go south for the winter, 23 Robins, 12 Eastern Bluebirds and 4 Hermit Thrushes were located. Two of the three mimic thrushes were represented: one Gray Catbird and one Northern Mockingbird.

“Little brown jobs” were represented by 7 species including an all-time high count of 53 White-throated Sparrows, one Fox Sparrow, one White-crowned Sparrow and one Chipping Sparrow, 15 Common Redpolls, and an all-time high of 60 Pine Siskins. Dennis McKenna, Compiler.

**Bunker Hill, December 15 - 58 species and 3,887 individual birds** - the second highest count in this circle where 4,151 birds were counted in 2013. Most feeder stations observed by circle counters and home feeder counters report reported low numbers of birds. An abundant seed crop and no snow cover in the area likely kept the feeder numbers low.

The European Starling, an introduced bird released in New York’s Central Park in 1890 bumped the Black-capped Chickadee from first place into second for total numbers of a single species counted. The Blue Jay, American Crow and Mourning Dove filling out the top five.

**Thomaston/Rockland, December 20 - 79 species and 6,311 individual birds** within the circle geographically centered at the Knox Mansion in Thomaston. Count highlights include a flock of 148 American Coots at Chickawaukee Lake. Except for a few Common Redpolls, 10 Bohemian Waxwings and three colorful Evening Grosbeaks, the northern finch contingent was virtually absent. Not a single Cedar Waxwing was recorded this year in our circles.

A Clay-colored Sparrow found at the Samoset Resort was a new species for this count and was an exceptional find at this season of year. A lingering Gray Catbird, two Red-winged Blackbirds and a Double-crested Cormorant loafing in a Rockland quarry added a hint of summer past to the results. Don Reimer, Compiler.

Mid-Coast Audubon wishes to recognize the efforts of the observers who “braved” the elements to contribute to this annual citizen science event; the weather couldn’t have been better. It should be known, however, that these dedicated watchers would have been out counting birds even in inclement weather. Additionally, those who watched and counted birds at their bird-feeders were of key import to the end result.
Brrrr - it's cold outside. Stock up on your winter supply of birdseed to keep the birds warm!

**Winter Birdseed Sale**

*Orders due Friday, February 21*

**PICKUP** is Saturday, February 28, 10 a.m. to noon at Plants Unlimited, Rte. 1, Rockport.

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**Hog Island Audubon Camp Instructors for 2015**


http://hogisland.audubon.org/instructors-and-guest-speakers

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**Gather family and friends and join in the Great Backyard Bird Count**

*February 13-16, 2015*