

# The Merganser

Mid-Coast  
Audubon



*Mid-Coast Audubon's mission is to promote long-term responsible use of natural resources through an informed membership, education, and community awareness*

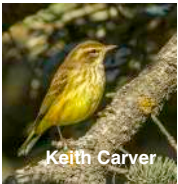
A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 39, No. 2 - May 2015

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Keith Carver

## Shh, Hear the Thrum

I put out my two hummingbird feeders on April 16, optimistic that the first Ruby-throated males will be arriving any day. To see these tiny jewels – the smallest bird species – arrive never fails to fill me with awe and humility. The females will arrive a little later. Often, my first awareness that they are here is a rapid low thrum as one darts by to rest on a perch.

We humans think we are so clever and independent, yet these 0.1 to 0.3 ounce fluffs of feather and bone manage to fly and navigate their way from Central and South America across the Gulf of Mexico to my and your feeder, the same one they used last year.

Think of it, something no bigger than your little finger, buffeted by weather and faced with declining habitat both on summer and winter grounds does this 500 – 1,500 mile round-trip journey twice a year across the Gulf of Mexico and beyond.



Mark Szantyr

**A male Ruby-throated Hummingbird stretching on its perch. The males mate with several females and then head back! No feeding of the young for them.**

The crossing of the Gulf alone is Herculean, the equivalent of a human running a 4-minute mile for 80 hours nonstop; it takes a hummingbird 18-20 hours to cross the Gulf. Imagine yourself perhaps getting ready for a 5k run or maybe a marathon. You practice a lot, drink a lot, eat the right foods and just before the event bulk up on carbs.

Our little featherweight bulks up to twice its body mass about 10 days before taking the big overwater flight. For us that would be like eating 220 lbs of food a day! *They* don't get any practice before *their* first migration flight – it's survive or die. Subsequent migration flights are similar - subject to weather and changes in habitat, which are rest stops to refuel.

If we get cold we put on a coat, hat, and gloves or turn up the heat in the house. If we are hungry, we go to the fridge or store. A hummingbird instead goes into torpor during cold or food deprivation. Doing so drops its heartbeat to 50 beats a minute and body temperature to 55 degrees Fahrenheit to conserve energy. Their normal resting heartbeat is 250 beats per minute or while

*Continued on page 3*



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

Ah the challenges of being a kid in spring, locked in a classroom! The very earth speaks to us of

renewal and growth. There is movement and color and sunshine outside. Birds return to their traditional territories right on time, singing up a storm. Almost as good as a virtual reality video game! The flowers are up. "How?" asked a friend, "How do they know when to come up?"

Length of day I thought quite certainly, but of course some plants are under the dirt. And some under the snow too. Some of the crocuses in bare earth had come up in her yard, but nearby ones under the snow seemed to keep pace with them! Are they communicating underground with their roots? Sending messages via earthworm perhaps?

It turns out it is not so much the amount of sunshine that bulbs respond to, but the amount of cold they endured in their dormant phase. The cold degrades a dormancy hormone (Absciscic acid) and stimulates the growth hormone (Gibberellic acid) which allows them to wake and begin growing. It's not clear that people and other animals need such chilling to respond to spring, but respond we do, with increased activity and vocalizations. This is particularly apparent in the classroom of trapped children.

I went birding with the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes from Warren Community School. We didn't see a lot of birds, but a few good ones (Tree Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, many

Herring Gulls that they had studied about the week before), and it was a *glorious* day. We noted the girdled tree trunks where the voles under the snow had nibbled. We thought we might have seen a fox running off through the brush.

The stories became embellished immediately, with certainty and conviction. Definitely a fox. And it had a bird. It had a Cardinal. Maybe a Blue Jay too. Remember this when calling an 8 year old as a witness... It was wonderful though – to be out with the kids. In a time when it really is hard to put down an addictive device and walk out the door to explore, they do appreciate it. "That was the best!" they said. "Can we keep the binoculars?"

Rachel Carson was right

*If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder . . . he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.*

It's lucky there are some teachers who still have the freedom to schedule such programs, and the desire to get out there themselves!

Find yourself a kid this spring, put down the cell phone, and let them take you outside. You will be amazed at the wonders that await you...



## CRITTER CORNER - DON REIMER

Anyone that has ever lifted a hand up to remove a speck of dirt from their eye knows a strong sense of pure physical relief.

Unlike humans, birds, reptiles and mammals lack the physical ability to perform this necessary task in a similar fashion.

Instead, these creatures possess a transparent or translucent third eyelid called the nictitating membrane that protects, cleanses and moisturizes the eye surfaces. Anchored in the nasal corner of the eye beneath the eyelids, this membrane sweeps across the eye in a somewhat horizontal fashion without shutting out the light. You may have noticed this feature in

the eyes of your pet dog or cat. Ranging from clear to opaque, there is variability among species in the membrane's actual appearance. When fully opened, it sometimes lends an other-worldly countenance to its owner.

In addition to these functions, the nictitating membrane serves other purposes. In the case of a 200 mile per hour descent, the Peregrine Falcon uses the membrane as safety goggles to prevent the eye surfaces from drying out. It also provides added eye protection as their hungry chicks lunge forward when the parents bring food to the nest.



American Crow showing nictitating membrane over eyes

# Listen to the Thrum . . . cont'd

flying and foraging, 1,250 per minute! Their normal body temperature is 104-111 degrees Fahrenheit. If only we could go into torpor. How we would save!

While they are here in the Northeast, we get to watch their aeronautical feats. Not only in the blink of an eye do they fly forward and backward but upward, downward, sideways and hover – much like a Harrier jet or Cobra helicopter. Their courtship display involves a dizzying climb of 40-50 feet then a J-shaped dive; this display serves as aggression for a rival and courtship. While hovering and reversing, their wings flap in a figure 8 motion.

Hummingbirds belong to the Apodiformes order along with swifts. Apodiformes means without feet, which sometimes seems the case when we see them perching. They have small weak feet and legs.

Of the over 320 species of hummingbird recorded in the world, only one is a regular in Maine: the Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilocus colubris*); although rare visits by Green Violetear, Rufous, and Calliope Hummingbirds have been confirmed by the Maine Birds Record Committee.

We're lucky that the Ruby-throated stays with us during

breeding season. The female builds its nest of soft, silky materials such as thistle and dandelion down, bound together by spider webs or caterpillar silk and then often camouflaged by lichen.

You could be looking at lichen on a branch and not know it was a hummingbird nest until a bird flew in. Their nest, about the size of a thimble, stretches sideways as the babies grow. That's ingenuity! The male is a flash in the pan and does not help with the rearing of young!

Hummingbirds like bright colors so a colorful flower bed or bright red feeder will bring them in. For the nectar in your feeder use a ratio of 1:4 of water and sugar. Do not use red dye.

Either boil the mixture and let it cool, then store in the fridge, or mix it without boiling. Change it every few days to prevent mold and fermentation; clean it each time. Use hot water, bottle brush and a diluted bleach-water solution.

Thoroughly rinse and air dry. Do not use soap or detergent.

Enjoy your awe-inspiring winged jewel.

*Juanita Roushdy*



Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) sighted in Blue Hill in October 2008. The first recorded sighting of a Calliope in Maine was in October 2005 on Monhegan Island.



Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*) at Mount Desert in August 2007 - blurred but discernible.



Male Ruby-throated enjoying nectar from Beebalm



A female Ruby-throated feeds her babies.



A Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest on an evergreen twig.



A male Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) enjoying sugar water from a feeder.

For information on hummingbirds visit the websites of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) or Hummingbird Research, [www.hummingbirdresearch.net](http://www.hummingbirdresearch.net) or read Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior.

# 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**

## MAY

### Saturday, May 9

#### Sears Island, Searsport

This site usually provides spring habitat for many warblers and other land birds. The island is also a good opportunity to see raptors and gulls. The terrain is easy and one need not leave the paved roadway.

*Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 6 a.m. or Moody's Diner at 6:20 a.m.*

### Tuesday, May 12

#### Everygreen Cemetery and Capisic Park, Portland

This annual field trip to these two locations is an iconic destination for warblers, orioles, thrushes, and other unusual land bird species.

*Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00 a.m.*

### Tuesday, May 19

#### Viles Arboretum, Augusta

Bluebirds, wrens, warblers, Eastern Meadowlarks, flycatchers and more are expected species at Viles. This trip will also include a stop at Vaughan Woods to check on the Louisiana Waterthrush often seen there.

*Meet at Damariscotta River Association, Belvedere Road at 7 a.m.*

### Thursday, May 21 at 7:00 p.m.

#### Camden Public Library

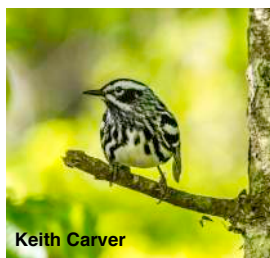
Hope Douglas, founder and president of Wind Over Wings will present: *Birds of Prey and a Raven Who Thinks He's a Bird of Prey!* Experience the wonder of being a few feet away from a magnificent Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, rambunctious Raven, or tiny Saw-whet Owl. Each bird has a story and is unable to survive in the wild. Each inspires us with their stories — stories of courage, adaptability, and resilience.

### Saturday, May 23

#### Monhegan Island

Mid-Coast Audubon invites anyone interest in spring migrants to join them on this regular spring trip. Most trips include up to 60 species of migrating spring birds. Bring a lunch or there is food available on the island.

*The Monhegan Boat Line ferry leaves Port Clyde at 7:00 a.m. and leaves Monhegan at 4:00 p.m. For reservations contact the ferry line. For more details contact John Weinrich at 563-2930.*



Keith Carver

### Wednesday, May 27

#### Beech Hill, Rockport and Duck Trap River Preserve, Lincolnville

Come and explore the birds and views from Beech Hill where one can expect Fields Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, raptors, warblers and more. The Duck Trap Preserve is a spectacular walk along the famous Duck Trap River through a forest of hard and softwood species.

*Meet at Moody's Diner at 7:00 a.m.*

### Tuesday, June 2

#### Belgrade Lakes and Augusta Airport

Belgrade Lakes, a Maine nesting site of the Sandhill Cranes also offers one of the few breeding sites of the Black Tern. Finally one can cap this site off with the Purple Martin, Bank Swallow and Bluebirds. The Augusta Airport is usually a wonderful opportunity to observe Prairie Warbler, Indigo Bunting, and Brown Thrasher.

*Meet at Damariscotta River Association, Belvedere Rd., 7:00 a.m.*

### Thursday, June 11

#### Kennebunk Plains/Sanford Sewage Treatment Plant

Kennebunk Plains is a unique geological feature of Maine and the summer home of the Eastern Meadowlark, Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, Prairie Warbler and many more field birds. The Black Racer snake also lives at this location.

The Sanford Sewage Treatment plant settlement ponds is a place to see up close Ruddy Ducks, Horned Grebes, swallows, nesting Killdeer, and sandpipers.

*Meet at Damariscotta River Association, Belvedere Rd. at 7:00 a.m.*

### Saturday, June 27

#### Davidson Preserve, Vassalboro

This is a Great Blue Heron Rookery where dozens of nesting Great Blues and their nestlings can be easily seen very close.

The marsh is also an excellent opportunity to see flycatchers and warblers.

*Meet at Damariscotta River Association, Belvedere Rd., at 7:00 a.m.*

*We have no field trips or programs during July and August.*

*Check our website, [www.midcoastaudubon.org](http://www.midcoastaudubon.org) for updates on trips and programs. Thank you.*

## Avian First-Time Homes for Sale



New avian arrivals are looking for that perfect home that provides shelter from weather and predators, close to a water source and plenty of food. Mid-Coast Audubon has an inventory of homes ready to go. All are hand built with loving care by our board members.

The Bluebird nest boxes are built to North American Bluebird Society standards, of which Mid-Coast Audubon is an affiliate.

### Nest Boxes

Eastern Bluebird, Flicker - \$20; Saw-whet Owl, and American Kestrel - \$25.  
Hardwood hole replacement kit - \$1.

### Bat Box

with Maine's Bats booklet - \$15; booklet only - \$5

### Feeders

Suet log - \$10; simple platform - \$20; platform with roof - \$40;  
Oriole fruit - \$10

Unassembled nest box kits - \$18; paint - \$4

Stop by Louis Doe Home Center in Newcastle or call John Weinrich at 563-2930 to order.

This is  
perfect for the  
happy pair  
above.



## A Warbler Quiz

1. Which warbler builds its nest in Usnea lichens?
2. Which warbler walks on the ground, pumping its tail up and down?

3. Which warbler creeps along branches and trunks, often upside-down?
4. Which warbler is known for fanning its wings and tail while foraging?
5. Which warbler is usually found near still or slow-moving water?

6. Which is the only warbler that nests in open marshes?
7. Which warbler wears a black necklace on its yellow breast?
8. Which warbler can be recognized by its "white pocket-handkerchief"?

Answers on page 6

## Be a Better Birder . . .

Birding is all about watching, listening, and patience. You don't have to go to distant places or recognize every bird you see. Start in your own backyard or deck.

Start by just sitting or standing and not making a sound. *Listen*. As your ears become attuned, you'll start to filter and notice more and more sounds as they are repeated. Try to isolate one and see from where it is coming.

At the same time watch for movement, the flutter of a leaf, a branch bobbing up and down - any movement that looks out of place.



Within a short time, you'll see more birds and hear more birdsong. Or look for anomalies, that brown blob, that misshapen snag, that perpendicular blob.

Once you become *aware*, then you can hone your identification skills. You won't recognize all the birds at once. They change their clothes constantly and the light changes their color - backlit, full sunlight, shaded. For example, yellow can look black in the right light. Each time you look at a bird, you'll notice another detail that you hadn't seen before.

Be happy with identifying four or five birds in the beginning. Know them well. Color. Beak shape. Size. Do they perch upright? Does their tail bob? These are just a few things that will get you started. Don't be afraid to watch a bird. Watch its behavior, its stance, how it preens, how it flies. You'll learn something to help you with the next identification.

Don't be frustrated because you can't identify sparrows or gulls - even experts who have been birding for many years will often discuss the identity of these species, again because of age, molt, and light, among other things.

Be confident when you identify birds you know. Go birding with a friend or a bird club. Most experienced birders are more than happy to share their knowledge. Have a clean lens on your binoculars - all will be brighter!

Above all respect the birds; respect other birders; respect the environment.

Becoming a better birder is a lifelong journey that is full of wonder, camaraderie, knowledge and awe.

Be patient.



## Welcome New Members!

Mary and David Ahlgren, Glastonbury, CT  
 Shirley Barlow, Thomaston  
 Gail Boukary, Rockland  
 Jean Burrage, Damariscotta  
 Ann and Normand Bosse, East Boothbay  
 Gretchen Daly, Belfast  
 Lindsay Deboer, Belfast  
 Sam Graves, Walpole  
 John Guarnaccia, Waldoboro  
 Mr. and Mrs. Fred Glidden, Damariscotta  
 Robert Hardina, Damariscotta  
 Patricia Hutchins, Swanville  
 Tom Kostas, Rockland  
 Jeff Lake, Rockland  
 Betsy Mahan, Damariscotta  
 Aya Mares, Vinalhaven  
 Cheryl Morin, Belfast  
 Karl and Sharon Rau, South China  
 Richard and Lee Schneller, South Thomaston  
 Nadine Stedford, Belfast  
 Erleen Tucker, Nobleboro  
 Katherin Wheaton, Thomaston  
 Anne and John Winchester, New Harbor

## ... and Renewing Members

Susan Bartovics, North Haven  
 Gordon Bowman, Damariscotta  
 Marian Crossman, Pittsburgh, PA  
 Susan B. Davis, Bremen  
 Hildy Ellis, Rockport  
 Thomas L. Guthrie, North Haven  
 Peter Hannah, Bristol  
 Jennifer Harrell, Camden  
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 Judith Imm, Waldoboro  
 Janice Kasper, Belfast  
 Marietta Ramsdell, Searsport  
 Caire Riser, Waldoboro  
 Melody Schubert, Rockport  
 Martha Sholes, West Rockport  
 Morton A. Strom, Camden  
 Helen Walsh, West Newbury, MA  
 Kyra West, Friendship  
 Gratian M. Yatsevitch, Camden

*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.*

## Mid-Coast Audubon

Organized December 6, 1969

a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

P.O. Box 458, Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458

### OFFICERS

Sue Schubel, President  
 John Weinrich, Vice President  
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**Field Trips:** John Weinrich, 563-2930  
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**Membership:** Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355  
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**Scholarship:** Sue Schubel, 380-1370  
**Speaker Bureau:** Joe Gray, 563-3578  
**Special Events:** Sue Schubel, 380-1370

*The Merganser* editor: Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355

*The Merganser* is published quarterly in February, May, August, November. News items or photos are welcome. **The deadline for the next issue is August 15!**

Send to [juanitar@tidewater.net](mailto:juanitar@tidewater.net)



### Answers

1. Northern Parula
2. Palm Warbler
3. Black and White Warbler

4. American Redstart
5. Northern Waterthrush
6. Common Yellowthroat
7. Canada Warbler
8. Black-Throated Blue



American Goldfinch enjoys thistle seed.



Honeysuckle is a favorite of hummingbirds. Be sure your honeysuckle is native and not the invasive kind.

### The Hog Island Audubon Camp

... still has a few spaces left in its Joy of Birding with Paul Winter, seven-time Grammy award winner, as well as in a few other sessions. Visit [www.hogisland.audubon.org](http://www.hogisland.audubon.org)

Hog Island is the home of Rachel and Steve, our returning ospreys. They have returned to start another family. See them at [www.explore.org](http://www.explore.org) and click on the osprey photo.



## Injured Birds!

Accepts all bird species year-round

### Avian Haven

207-382-6761  
[www.avianhaven.org](http://www.avianhaven.org)

Only seabirds and shorebirds  
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 207-832-5044  
[www.ontherushofwings.org](http://www.ontherushofwings.org)

# Does Your Property Welcome Birds?

After traveling long distances, migrating birds look for food and then a spot to stake their territorial claim for the breeding season. Does your property fit their needs?

A manicured lawn, perfectly trimmed trees and shrubs with no sign of insects, butterflies, or wildlife is not inviting. On the other hand, if your property has a tangled hedgerow or border, has a water feature whether it be a stream, creek, or clean birdbath, has trees and shrubs that are being eaten by some bug, lots of flowers, and is free of chemicals, then you have a welcome habitat for birds.

Birds need food, shelter, and water. *Food* means insects, lots of them – fat, juicy caterpillars, beetles, flying insects, grasshoppers, spiders, seeds, and more. Hummingbirds use webs for their nest building; birds sometimes steal prey from a web. For some



Cecropia moth caterpillar - fifth instar

birds food means snakes, moles, voles, mice, other small mammals, and birds. Other birds love flower nectar, as do butterflies, bees, and bats.

*Shelter* is not only a place where they can build nests but also one that will protect them from predators and weather. Thick bushes and trees, tall grasses, flower beds - somewhere they can fly to and hide when threatened, even nest boxes are a refuge. Predators include other birds, such as hawks and accipiters, other wildlife, snakes, and cats. When you think of the number of creatures that prey on birds or their eggs, it's a wonder that they ever multiply, but they do. A brush pile is an excellent bird shelter.



Flowers, shrubs, trees free of chemicals makes good bird habitat.



Hog Island's bird fountain provides shallow pools and dripping water under a birch tree.

*Water* is not only for drinking but also for bathing. Birds love to bathe. A natural water feature is perfect but if not, then a bird fountain is the next best thing. Hummingbirds and other birds love a gentle spray

or trickle of water. You'll have fun watching them fly through and then perch in tree or bush to preen. Even a shallow dish with not more than an inch of water is good. Be sure to keep it clean.

Now is the time to look around your garden or property and see if you are missing any of these. Do you have invasive plants that are killing your native plants? Do you have plants that provide food year round – nectar in the summer, berries in the winter. Even dried out plants, with their seedpods at the end of the season provide insects for birds during the winter months.



Black Cherry provides flowers and berries.

Oak, pine, spruce, red maple, birch are a few trees that birds love. You can even grow your own oak from an acorn and watch it grow. Some flowering trees include Black cherry, crabapple, and apple. Bushes include serviceberry, viburnum, winterberry, chokeberry, trumpet vine.

The University of Maine, Extension Service has an excellent list of native plants and other information, including invasive species: <http://umaine.edu/publications/2500e/>




Juanita Roushdy

**Asiatic Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)** gradually strangling native edge trees and bushes. Now is the time to cut it or before it flowers.

**Which is Invasive?**

**Left: Invasive Asiatic Bittersweet.**  
**Right: Native American bittersweet; berries cluster at end of twig.**



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 Audubon Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458  
[www.midcoastaudubon.org](http://www.midcoastaudubon.org)

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**Save the Date!**

**Saturday, September 5, 2015**

Annual Lobster Bake at Hog Island



*The Birds are Coming*

Remember to clean your feeders  
 and nest boxes


M I D - C O A S T A U D U B O N



Maine Audubon

# MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mid-Coast Chapter

Mid-Coast  
  
 Audubon

**YES!** I would like to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in my community and  
☐ **join** ☐ **renew my membership** with Maine Audubon and the Mid-Coast Chapter.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Seasonal Address: \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I'm enclosing an additional \$10 to receive *Audubon*, National Audubon's magazine  
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## Membership Level

Annual:

- ☐ \$25 Senior/Volunteer
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- ☐ \$45 Household
- ☐ \$65 Contributing
- ☐ \$100 Patron
- ☐ \$250 Sustaining
- ☐ \$500 Benefactor

Monthly:

☐ **Frequent Flyer** (\$5 min.)

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