



Bulletin



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 37, No. 4 - November 2013

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Who Knew the Mew, or Maine Rarities in 2013

"Birds have wings and they use them." Guy McCaskie, a Scottish expatriate who brought vagrant chasing to California, would dryly offer that truism when asked why some birds show up far out-of-range. It may be obvious, but we tend to discount how far birds can travel. Thanks to tracking data we now know some birds are capable of covering astounding distances. Combine such ability with a tendency for exploration, range expansion, or increasing population and you have the source of vagrant birds, the gems sought by birders everywhere.

Vagrant birds are fun to find and fun to see. Their appeal as something rare is only one side of the story. A great deal can be learned from them. What are the underlying reasons for their dispersal? What are the conservation issues at the places they visit and at the habitats where they breed? One recent study correlated the change in Siberian vagrants to western Europe with predicted range changes under global warming scenarios. Changes in both home range and population were directly reflected in the number of vagrants reaching Europe.

Range expansions and population increases underlie several of the rarities seen in Maine this year: Black-bellied

Whistling Duck, Pink-footed Goose, Ross's Goose, Brown Booby, American White Pelican, White-faced Ibis, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. These are the advancing pioneers bursting far beyond the established breeding range. Some vagrants, though, are misoriented; individuals prone to fly in the wrong direction. A pattern common across many



Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) Levant, ME 31 May - 12 June

species is for the misdirection to be a mirror image of the normal migratory pathway. In others, dispersal is in the opposite direction from normal, for example a Fork-tailed Flycatcher from South America flying north instead of south for the winter. Birds that breed in

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

It's Fall. John Burroughs said, "How beautifully leaves grow old. How full of light and color are their last days."

One tends to think about these things in the Fall, living in a beautiful state with deciduous trees and an aging population. Some don't like to think of endings, or see Fall simply as a portal to Winter - with slush and snow tires and cold fingers tickling through a drafty house - and so they don't revel in it. Personally I love winter, but have always thought of Fall as a beginning in the circle of life. Perhaps because school starts then, with new shoes and new people, new learning quests for the year.

But looking to the birds, I see beginnings there also, as they start their journeys south. For some it will be a return to distant old haunts (which we hope still endure) but for the young of the year, such adventure! Dangers galore, but new places and unknowns await. Feeling this energy on the wind is contagious and invigorating - even if we experience it vicariously, or in small quests as we stay put to stock up on our acorns here. Our friend Eric (Hog Island manager) sailed south to points unknown recently. It's exciting to think of him winging over the water like a pelagic bird, with no agenda but a return to his home again in the spring.

Ah, endings and beginnings. We finally put Hog Island to

bed at the beginning of October, finishing up a spectacular season. Part of closing-up is to power-wash the boats - removing the season's growth from below the waterline. Horton and his Whos would NOT be happy about that - as many tunicates, algae and amphipods met their end in a spray of fresh water. The beginning is that we learned about an abundant and fascinating creature called a Caprellid Amphipod (aka Skeleton or Ghost Shrimp) easily found on mooring ropes, boat bottoms and the edges of docks. They look like little space aliens crossed with stick insects, gripping on with hind appendages called pereopods and snatching prey with gnathopods that look like praying mantis hands. Some of those gnathopods have venomous spurs for killing prey or a mate. In some species the family bond is tight and after juveniles hatch from a brood pouch on the female, they spend up to 17 days clinging to her or living nearby where she can protect them.



Caprellid amphipod
(Skeleton or Ghost Shrimp)

The big wide world is waiting to be explored - up close, or on a grand scale. Autumn is a great time to learn something new, or see a new place. Here's to flights or flights of fancy in your Fall!

Sue Schubel

CRITTER CORNER

Last July I discovered several snowshoe hares nibbling wild flowers near the summit of Cadillac Mountain. The animals looked otherwise fit and well fed despite the presence of numerous ticks around their faces and ears. Snowshoe hares occur from Newfoundland to western Alaska and down the spines of the Sierras, Rockies, and Appalachian mountain ranges.

Regardless of the calendar date, the snowshoe hare is a master of camouflage at any season of the year. The brown summer coat is molted in late fall and turns almost entirely white with black eyelids and blackened tips on the ears. The summer diet of greens, flowers and grasses also shifts to bark and twigs in winter.

Although we routinely call hares "rabbits," there are physical distinctions. Hares are generally larger with longer ears and live above ground; rabbits live in underground burrows or warrens. Hares rely on running rather than burrowing for protection and are mainly active at night.



Don Reimer

The snowshoe hare gets its name from its over-sized hind feet, with soles of dense stiff fur (forming the snowshoe) that permit unfettered travel over deep snow. Most communication between hares also involves thumping the ground with their rear legs.

Snowshoe hares are quick and agile, and can run as fast as 27 mph. They can leap 10 feet in one jump and change direction quickly to escape predators. They are good swimmers. Large eyes located on the sides of the head provide a wide field of peripheral vision and excellent predator detection. Their predators include owls, hawks, lynx, coyotes, wolves, foxes, martens, mountain lions, bobcats, weasels and humans. Maine's small population of endangered Canada lynx relies heavily on hares as a food source.

Research biologists have confirmed a roughly 10-year population cycle for this species that is tied to synchronous fluctuations in predator numbers, especially the lynx. This is nature's way of maintaining a biological balance of healthy animals.

Don Reimer

Rare Birds - continued from page 1

ephemeral habitats often exhibit greater proclivity for dispersal, and this is likely an evolutionary adaptation. Rails and gallinules, birds that we think of as poor fliers hiding in swamps, have colonized many remote islands around the globe. Something in these birds urges them to boldly go where no rail has gone before. A famous example of this is the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail found in New Mexico this year, a first for the United States and far from its native mangrove swamps in Mexico.

Here is a very select group of highlights for 2013 so far. I have written a short background on a few species and provided photos for a few others. Enjoy!

The rarest find in terms of records was Maine's first **Eurasian Collared-Dove** that visited a Falmouth feeder on May 28. This species has been spreading from introductions in the Bahamas since the late 1970s and now occupies much of North America.

The main thrust of vagrants has been to the west-northwest; hence Maine has been slow to get its first. Interestingly, this direction of dispersal is the same that the species took as it



Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) 28 May 2013, Falmouth, ME. Differs from similar domesticated Ringed Turtle-Dove by black outer web at tail base and darker primaries.

spread across Europe from southwestern Asia during the mid-1900s. Perhaps the introduced birds carried the same genetic control for this direction.

Last fall, prolonged winds blew westward across the North Atlantic around a broad and intense low pressure system. This was the precursor to Maine's next outstanding rarity of 2013, a **Northern Lapwing**. In the 1960s, Aaron Bagg suggested that these recurring meteorological conditions could be the force behind previous lapwing invasions to North America. Maine got its second record when Andy Aldrich and Ken Janes found one in Berwick on

November 3, 2012. There were other lapwings around, most wintering to our south. Many reasoned that they had to



Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) 6 May 2013, Poland, ME

migrate north again. So, birders fanned out when the wintering birds began to leave, and Iain Stenhouse found a male in Poland on May 6, Maine's third (we learned later that the bird was present since May 3).

Another third record for Maine came in early August when Don Reimer found a **Mew Gull** in Thomaston. Essentially all records east of Ontario are of the European races that stray to our continent in winter. So this was a very odd time for one. The bird's wing pattern with a long tongue of gray



Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) 3-29 (here 19); August 2013, Thomaston, ME

on the 2nd and 3rd primaries from the outside suggests the bird might be from the North American breeding race, which would be a highly significant record. Another Mew Gull was reported from Harbor Island in Muscongus Bay by Peter Vickery September 24. **See page 5 for more rarities.**

Louis Bevier chairs the Maine Bird Records Committee. To report rare birds visit <https://sites.google.com/site/mainebirdrecordscommittee/>

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

NOVEMBER

Saturday, November 9

Sabattus Pond

Meet at Hannaford's in Damariscotta at 7:30 a.m.

Thursday, November 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Camden Library

Michael Goode speaks on *Birds of the Gulf of Maine: Maine to Cuba and Back Again*.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 14

Damariscotta/Pemaquid Christmas Bird Count

Contact Compiler Dennis McKenna at 563-8439 for details and assignments.

Monday, December 16

Bunker Hill Christmas Bird Count

Contact Compiler John Weinrich at 563-2930 for details and assignments.

Saturday, December 21

Thomaston-Rockland Christmas Bird Count

Contact Compiler Don Reimer at 273-3146 for details and assignments.

Check our website, www.midcoastaudubon.org for updates on trips and programs. Thank you.



Christmas Bird Counters Take Note . . .

There is no \$5 contribution. Audubon has done away with the printed compilation of the Christmas Bird Count. Results are now available on-line.

Need a Gift . . . Bird Houses, Hats,

Our board members donate time and materials to make our Eastern Bluebird and American Tree Swallow nest boxes with a reinforced entrance to raise money for the chapter.

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

Hats: \$15 - you'll bedazzle your friends!

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



Annual Birdseed Sale

Help us continue our free programs and field trips and our scholarships by buying our birdseed.

Sunflower Meaties: 25 lbs - \$24 and 50 lbs - \$44

Black Oil Sunflower Seed,: 25 lbs -\$17 and 50 lbs - \$31

Melody Mix: 20 lbs - \$14 and 40 lbs - \$23

Thistle: 5 lbs - \$10

Suet blocks: \$2 each.

Orders are due by November 10.

Pickup is November 16 from 9 a.m. to noon at Plants Unlimited, Rte 1, Rockport

E-mail "Seedsale Sue" at sschubel@tidewater.net and put BIRDSEED in the subject line or phone 207-380-1370

Rarest (Review) Species Seen in 2013

Black-bellied Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

May, Steve Dugay, Rich MacDonald, Bar Harbor 27-30 May

Black-Bellied Whistling Duck



Louis Bevier

Pink-footed

Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Great Salt Bay Preserve,
Damariscotta, 25 May Mike Fahay; Collins Pond, Caribou, 19 Oct Bill Sheehan

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) Samoset, Rockland & Rockport, 31 Jan - 4 Feb Don Reimer; Limestone 29 Sep-5 Oct Bill Sheehan

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) Seal Island NWR 14 May - mid August, John Drury

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) Eastern Egg 16 Jul Kate MacNamee (2nd for Maine)

Brown Booby



Kate MacNamee

American White Pelican

(*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) Long Lake St.

American White Pelican



Margaret V lens



Ash-Throated Flycatcher

Travis Mazerall

Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) Bailey's Island 22 Oct Derek Lovitch (4th record for Maine)

Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) Winterport feeder 28 Nov 2012 - 19 Jan 2013 (4th record for Maine)

Townsend's Warbler



Doug Hitchcox

Agatha 10-12 July Christina Reservoir and Lake Josephine 29 Jul- 23 Aug; Wheeler Bay, St. George, 9-14 Sep; Benton/Fairfield 18 Sep over Kennebec River, Marianne Taylor

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) up to three at Scarborough Marsh 17 April-19 August

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) Harpswell, Basin Point hawk-watch, 23 Sep Paul Donahue and Teresa Wood

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) Poland 3-6 May, Iain Stenhouse

South Polar Skua (*Stercorarius macconnicki*) several (or at least 1-2) repeatedly over summer off Bar Harbor

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) Thomaston 3-29 August - Don Reimer (3rd record for Maine); Harbor Is. 24 Sep - Peter Vickery and Geoff LeBaron (same bird?)

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) Falmouth 28 May; (another reported 7 Jun at Searsport)

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) Monhegan 21 Oct Travis Mazerall (9th record for Maine)

Feathery Fun Quiz

November's bird



- Aside from the turkey, what other animal did Benjamin Franklin prefer to the Bald Eagle (bad moral character) for our nation's seal?
- Name our Wild Turkey's one other relative in the new world.
- What is the fleshy protuberance on a male turkey's face called?
- Known as a water turkey, this bird is not even related to our gobbler.
- Name for a baby turkey.

- This Wild Turkey might be nice company by the fire after a chilly birding trip.
- The only state where Wild Turkeys are absent.
- Their favorite foods.
- Kids early on get a "handle" on turkey ID through this activity.
- They're not cowboys, but the Toms sport these identifying characteristics.
- These bumps on a male turkey's head may remind one of a suspect in an odd game of "Clue".
- The turkey has made a remarkable comeback since critically low numbers in what decade?

Answers on page 7

Welcome New Members!

Elin Elisofon, Vinalhaven
Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Lewis, Cushing
Carole Martin, Rockland
Jane Piper, Thomaston
Susan Raven, Vinalhaven
Charles Thomas, Newcastle
Suzanne Vermilya, Damariscotta
Cushing Historical Society

... and Renewing Members

Kristine Federle Camden
Beth Hartman, Portland
Mary Hayes, Thorndike
Nancy Overton, Jefferson
Karen Sulzberger, New Harbor
Ingrid Warren, Camden
Muriel Wilhelm, Bristol

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Answers
1. Rattlesnake
2. Ocellated Turkey from the Yucatan Peninsula
3. Snood
4. Anhinga
5. Poul. A young male is a jake, and young female a jenny.
6. Kentucky straight bourbon
7. Alaska
8. Nuts, berries, insects and snails
9. Making turkeys out of hand tracings
10. Spurs and beads.
11. Major caruncles
12. 1930s

Mid-Coast Audubon

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a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

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

OFFICERS

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John Weinrich, Vice President
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Special Events: Sue Schubel, 380-1370

Bulletin editor: Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355

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

Send to juanitar@tidewater.net



Rare lobster traps seen by MCAS birders on their annual fall trip to Monhegan.



Jackie Cassiday

Imagine sitting in this mossy spot at the Nelson Preserve in Friendship

A Little TLC for the Nelson Preserve in Memory of Ray and Linda Nelson

The Nelson Preserve, approximately 85 acres of moss carpeted forest bordering the Goose River, complete with trails, was granted to the Mid-Coast Audubon Society August 16, 1985, by Linda and Ray Nelson. The preserve is located one mile north of the Friendship center on Rt 97.

After a career working for the National Park Service and living in nearly every U.S. state, the Nelsons purchased property in Friendship where they retired in 1971 to "live off the land." Ray grew up in Concord, MA, was a WWII veteran, a devoted admirer of H.D.

Thoreau, and was graduated from the University of Maine, with a degree in forestry. He shared many educational slide presentations of his experiences, including information on the flora/fauna of the preserve.

Linda experienced farm life as a child in Mapleton, Iowa, and became an avid follower of Rodale organic gardening publications. Especially known for her blueberry pies that one "would crawl through snow for," Linda baked for many

local events. Living and working to support, enjoy and share the natural world throughout their lives, both placed a high priority on conserving natural resources, recycling, and community responsibility such as membership in the Audubon Society, Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association, Masonic Lodge, and the Methodist church.

Ray passed away in 2002; Linda Lou, at 95, died this August 2013. Their ashes continue to nurture local soil. In recognition of their lives, the Nelson family has initiated a

memorial fundraiser for a new sign to more visibly mark the location of the preserve---with the hope of more people enjoying the mossy wonderland of the Nelson Preserve.

If you would like to make a contribution toward the new Nelson Preserve sign, send a check in memory of Linda Lou Nelson to: Mid-Coast Audubon, PO Box 458, Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458.

Jackie Cassiday



Linda Lou and Ray Nelson in their home.

Jackie Cassiday

Jackie and Dan Cassiday are the Nelson's relatives and live next to the preserve. They always help MCAS with clean-up and trail marking. Dan has offered to build a lovely wood garden bench for contemplation and rest. MCAS has wanted a new sign for the preserve for a long time and is delighted that the Cassidays are spearheading this effort. The Nelson Preserve is a jewel and we greatly appreciate the Cassiday's tender, loving care of it.

Mid-Coast Audubon
P.O. Box 458
Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458
www.midcoastaudubon.org



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Don't Forget our
Annual Birdseed Sale

Order by November 10
See page 4 for details



A heartfelt thank you . .



. . . to all our members, our board, our
program speakers and trip leaders, and to
our authors. We look forward to being part
of your 2014 and sharing the world of
birds and nature with you.

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

Join Maine Audubon Today



Yes, I would like to join Maine Audubon and the **Mid-Coast Chapter** (this also includes membership in the National Audubon Society). I want to help promote environmental education and advocacy in our communities, and protect and conserve wildlife habitat. I will receive the quarterly publications *Habitat: The Journal of Maine Audubon* and the *Mid-Coast Chapter Bulletin*.

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Clip and send with check payable to "Maine Audubon" at 20 Gilsland Farm Road, Falmouth, ME 04015

Have you
cleaned your
feeders for the
winter?



Join us in the 114th Christmas Bird Count

December 14 - Damariscotta/Pemaquid

December 16 - Bunker Hill

December 21 - Thomaston/Rockland

See page 4, for details.



Juanita Roushdy