

# 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 40, No. 2 - May 2016

## Guest Author

Scott W. Gillihan  
explores the world of  
the tiny, often-hard-  
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Creeper  
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## Little Bird, Big Trees

If I close my eyes, I can still see my very first Brown Creeper. It was the middle of winter and I was driving through the older part of a small northern Colorado town, where large old cottonwood trees lined the wide snow-covered street. The movement of a tiny brown sprite caught my eye as it flew from partway up one tree down to the base of its neighbor. If it hadn't flown with such deliberate intention, I might have mistaken it for a small leaf blowing in the wind, but I saw it clearly enough to identify it as a creeper.

From the base of the second tree, the creeper jerkily worked its way around the tree, probing for insects while gradually spiraling up the trunk, using its stiff tail as a brace in the manner of a woodpecker. Upon reaching the lowest branches, which were about 10 feet above ground, the creeper flew down to the base of the next tree in line, and started its spiraling upward hunt again.

The Brown Creeper is one of the smallest

birds in North America, weighing in at a mere 7–10 grams — about the same as half a dozen paper clips. Yet this tiny forest dweller is found only where the trees are big and old. Why does such a small bird need the largest trees? The answer, not surprisingly, is related to its lifestyle—its feeding and nesting.



Louis Bevier

Brown Creeper - note decurved bill.

Large old trees have bark that is deeply furrowed. Spiders and insects find a home within those complex furrows, and Brown Creepers feed on those spiders and insects. This abundant food supply is especially critical in winter, when the creeper is one of the smallest birds to brave northern winters — in fact, it's one of the smallest vertebrates to do so. Smaller even than the diminutive, seed-eating chickadee, the creeper must find enough insect prey to keep its internal furnace stoked. Like all small animals, creepers are at a distinct disadvantage in cold weather, as they have a relatively greater surface area through which to lose heat. Creepers cope by spending most of their day gorging on bugs, then

*Continued on page 3*



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

Oh to be Mowgli, living in the jungle in concert with snakes, bears and panthers. In Kipling's classic tale, *The Jungle Book*, a young child is left alone in the forest after Shere Khan the tiger kills his father. A family of wolves adopts him. After seeing the recent Disney remake of this story, we discussed the intriguing concept of being raised in the wild by other species.

There are at least six documented cases of children being "raised" by monkeys, goats, cats, dogs and wolves. It turns out this care sometimes just consists of companionship through forced co-housing or providing warmth because they seek it too.

The desire to be accepted, or recognized by other species is powerful for many people - one reason we fill our houses with pets! Not everyone who taps on a zoo window is trying to harass - some just want to be acknowledged and see a glint of kinship in another's eyes. We'd love to fit in with those athletic animals so savvy at fishing or weaving nests or

tracking a scent.

We at Project Puffin have just started our spring visits to the seabird islands, prepping the field camps for our research season. On the islands, we live in the midst of thousands of birds. We try to understand them. They tolerate us - but the warm feelings are mainly shots of tern guano aimed at us from above. We are not accepted as part of the flock. Although the occasional fish gets dropped, it's not because we look hungry.

Despite their antagonism, we can learn a lot about how and what they forage, how they interact and raise their young. They recognize us as individuals, more easily than we recognize them; we rely on numbered bands applied to their legs. Since they live more than 25 years, we have a history together. We share a place and time.



## CRITTER CORNER - DON REIMER

The largest and most widespread of the true foxes, the ruddy Red Fox spans the entire Northern Hemisphere from North America to North Africa and Eurasia.

Despite living in harsh winter climates, foxes do not hibernate. They hunt year round and den up after mating in late winter. Apart from the mating season, adult foxes are solitary creatures. Foxes are omnivorous and will consume a wide variety of foods. Their main diet consists of small mammals such as mice, moles and squirrels but larger prey items can include woodchucks, young skunks and raccoons, birds, turtles and snakes. In season, insects and vegetable matter such as berries, fruits and nuts are chosen. Carrion is always a potential menu option.

Hunting mostly at night, sunset and dawn, foxes have an exceptional sense of smell, with hearing sensitive enough to detect underground digging, gnawing and

movement sounds of small prey. Once prey is pinpointed down below, the fox will excavate the earthen hideout.

I watched a fascinating encounter as a neighborhood house cat was chased by a stalking fox that had crept up close to the unsuspecting feline before making a headlong pursuit.



Red Fox - *Vulpes vulpes*

The fleeing cat narrowly evaded the fox by scrambling onto an elevated porch railing. In their own right, foxes have few natural predators - only man and possibly some hawks and owls.

Dens are often located in elevated sections of

field with a commanding view of surrounding terrain. Sometimes woodchuck holes, hollow logs and rock piles are used. The main den entrance is approximately three feet wide, with several escape holes. The den is lined with grass and dry leaves.

Fox litters can contain anywhere from one to ten pups. Upon reaching about seven months of age, the pups will leave the den to pursue an independent lifestyle.



# Little Bird, Big Trees. . . cont'd.

roosting communally at night in cracks or scars of trees or other protected sites, huddled together in groups to conserve heat.

The creeper nest is another clue to its need for large trees. Not a true cavity nest, nor a true open-cup nest, the creeper cradle is a delicate affair built behind a piece of loose bark



Don Reimer

**An unusual photo of a Brown Creeper in sunlight and on a snag. The white belly is prominent.**

— a cozy hammock of moss, conifer needles, and spider silk, lined with feathers and supported between the loose bark and the trunk. It is only the largest, oldest trees — often dead or dying — that have these sloughing slabs of bark needed by creepers for nest sites.

The Brown Creeper not only needs large trees, it also needs *large stands* of large trees. Like other birds that are adapted to continuous forests, creepers are sensitive to forest

fragmentation. Stands that are smaller and more isolated, due to removal of trees, support fewer creepers. The smaller



Louis Bevier

the stand, the smaller the creeper population.

Once a critical stand size threshold is crossed, the creeper population disappears entirely, even if the stand is dense with mature trees and snags. That size threshold varies with the forest type, but to give an example it has been found to be 27 acres in hardwood forests of New Brunswick. The reasons are not clear, but some evidence suggests that creepers need a moist habitat (perhaps because their insect prey thrive in moist conditions), but small, isolated stands are more susceptible to drying winds, eliminating the moist conditions. This may also explain why creeper nests are more successful when placed at least 100 meters from the stand's edge.

Although Brown Creeper populations are stable overall, their narrow habitat needs leave them vulnerable to habitat loss. The key to creeper conservation is protecting large, continuous stands of mature and old-growth forest, including dead and dying trees. This will ensure that future generations will be able to marvel at this easily overlooked little bird in the big trees.



Louis Bevier

**A Brown Creeper on a more usual location - a big tree with scaly bark. Note the stiff tail feathers.**

*Scott Gillihan is the Managing Editor of the North American Bluebird Society's Bluebird. He has done a lot of work with Brown Creepers in the Rocky Mountains.*

## How to Spot a Tiny Brown Creeper in a Big Tree Stand

Have you had a hard time spotting a Brown Creeper? Take heart. As you see in the photo at left, they blend into the tree bark. They move rapidly around the tree, up and down and from tree to tree. Look for movement and a little white, as in the photo above. Listen for high-pitched thin notes lasting a second or so. Remember you are looking for movement, something clinging to the bark, and a slender, camouflaged body around 5 inches long - tail tip to beak. Be patient and good luck. In winter, they can often be found with flocks of Golden-crowned Kinglets gleaning insects. To hear the song, visit [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown\\_Creeper/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown_Creeper/sounds)

*Editor's note*

# Calendar of Events

*Free bird walks and programs; donations are welcome to help defray costs.*

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

## MAY

### Field trip: Friday, May 13

#### *Sears Island, Searsport*

This site provides spring habitat for many warblers and other land birds. It is also a good spot to see raptors and gulls. Easy terrain and paved roadway.

Meet at Reny's in Belfast at 7:30 a.m.

### Field trip: Tuesday, May 17

#### *Evergreen Cemetery and Capisic Park, Portland*

Both locations are iconic destinations for warblers, orioles, thrushes, and other unusual land bird species.

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

### Field trip: Tuesday, May 24

#### *Viles Arboretum, Augusta*

Bluebirds, Wrens, Warblers, Eastern Meadowlarks, flycatchers and more are expected species. We may stop at Vaughn Woods to check on the Louisiana Waterthrush which is often seen there.

Meet at Viles Arboretum at 7:00 a.m.

### Field trip: Saturday, May 28

#### *Monhegan Island*

Expect up to 60 species of spring migrating birds. Bring a lunch; food is available on the Island. The Monhegan Boat Line ferry leaves Port Clyde at 7:00 a.m. and leaves Monhegan at 4:30 p.m. Contact the boat line for ferry reservations.

Contact John Weinrich at 563-2930 for further details.

## JUNE

### Field trip: Thursday, June 2

#### *Belgrade Lakes and Augusta Airport*

Belgrade Lakes is a Sandhill Crane nesting site and one of the few breeding sites of the Black Tern. Purple Martin, Bank Swallow, and Bluebirds will cap the day.

The Augusta Airport is usually a wonderful opportunity to observe Prairie Warbler, Indigo Bunting and Brown Thrasher.

Meet at Damariscotta River Association at 7:00 a.m.

### Field trip: Thursday, June 9

#### *Kennebunkport Plains/Sanford Sewage Treatment Plant*

Kennebunk Plains is a unique geological feature of Maine and summer home of Eastern Meadowlark, Upland Sandpiper,

Grasshopper Sparrow, Prairie Warbler and many more field birds. The Black Racer snake also resides at this location.

The Sanford Sewage Treatment plant settlement ponds attract a long list of birds including Ruddy Ducks, Horned Grebes, swallows, nesting Killdeer, and sandpipers.

Meet at Damariscotta River Association at 7:00 a.m.

**NOTE:** A possible pelagic trip may be scheduled for the month of June – stay tuned.

## AUGUST

### Field trip: Tuesday, August 16

#### *Plum Island/ Parker River National Wildlife Refuge*

Join Marblehead native Dennis McKenna for a day of birding one of the east coast's premier birding sites.

Meet at Damariscotta River Association at 6:00 a.m.

### Field trip: Thursday, August 25

#### *Pine Point*

Meet at Damariscotta River Association at 7:00 a.m.

## SEPTEMBER

### Program: Thursday, September 15, 7 p.m.

#### *Camden Public Library*

Jack Boak will present *History of Ocean Garbage Dumping Practices and Relevant Regulations* and how it impacts various ecosystems. Jack is a retired Master Mariner who served 35 years on various US-flag merchant ships and a Nautical Science Specialist. He volunteers for Courtesy Boat Inspections, Lake Smart, the Planning Board and Fire Department in Bremen.

### Field trip: Saturday, September 24

#### *Monhegan Island*

Join Mid-Coast Audubon for a day on the island seeking fall migrants and occasional vagrants. The Monhegan Boat Line ferry leaves Port Clyde at 7:00 a.m. and returns leaving Monhegan at 4:30 p.m. Contact the boat line for ferry reservations.

Contact John Weinrich at 563-2930

### Join Us

*Mid-Coast Audubon Board meets the first Thursday of each month, 6-7 p.m. at Waldoboro Library.*

*Public welcome.*

## Hummingbird Quiz

1. In the eastern U.S., the only breeding hummingbird is the Ruby-throated. Are other hummingbirds found all over the world?
2. How many species of hummingbird are there?
3. How far do Ruby-throats migrate?
4. How does a hummingbird hover?
5. What do Ruby-throats eat besides nectar?



6. What does a male hummingbird do to help with reproduction?
7. With what does a Ruby-throat camouflage her nest?
8. Hummers are especially attracted to flowers in the red spectrum. Should the nectar in a feeder be tinted red?
9. What is the best recipe for hummingbird nectar?
10. With a high metabolism, how does a hummingbird survive night and cold weather?

*Nancy Dickinson, MCAS Quizperson*



# Calendar . . . cont'd

## OCTOBER

### Field trip: Thursday, October 6

#### Popham Beach

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. Traveling this terrain is easy and one need not leave the paved roadway.

Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 8:00 a.m.

### Field trip: Saturday, October 15

#### Green Point Preserve, Dresden

These two locations are iconic destinations for warblers, orioles, thrushes, and other unusual land bird species.

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

### Program: Thursday, October 20, 7 p.m.

#### Camden Library

Hope Douglas from Wind Over Wings will present a live bird program *Birds of Prey & a Cockatoo, Too!* Experience the wonder of being a few feet away from one of Maine's most elusive owls, the little Eastern Screech; a beautiful Red-shouldered Hawk; Maine's largest owl, the Great Horned; and for humor, an Umbrella Cockatoo.

## NOVEMBER

### Program: Thursday, November 17, 7 p.m.

#### Camden Library

Dr. Howie Nielsen will present a program on *Bird Life in the Kingdom of Cambodia*. See camera trapping new species for this area and coastal survey work for conservation of endangered species, done over the last 10 years, 8 months each year.

### Field trip: Saturday, November 5

#### Sabbatus Pond

This central Maine pond is known to attract Ring-necked Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Lesser and Greater Scaup, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes. Mergansers and raptors. Dress warm! Lunch at the Old Goat in historic Richmond.

Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:30 a.m.

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



## Join Us for Annual Lobster Bake

**Saturday, September 3, 2016**

*at Hog Island Audubon Camp*

**Boat departs Audubon dock in Bremen  
at 10:00 a.m. or 12:00 (reserve your time).**

**Return trip from island is at 3:30 p.m.**

*Fresh local lobster, clams, potato, corn, onions,  
lemonade, special Puffin dessert*

**\$40.00 per person**

*Free parking and boat transportation*

**This annual fundraiser helps us fund all the free programs and field trips we offer throughout the year.**

**RSVP by e-mail to [sschubel@tidewater.net](mailto:sschubel@tidewater.net), in subject line put LOBSTER or call 207-380-1370**



### Quiz Answers

1. No, only in the Western Hemisphere
2. Over 300
3. Some migrate between Costa Rica and southern Canada.
4. The wings beat in a figure-8 pattern.
5. Small insects and spiders
6. He attracts the female with showy colors and a "pendulum" flight display.
7. With bits of lichen and dead leaves
8. No, that is unnecessary and unhealthy.
9. 1 part white cane sugar to 4 parts water, heated to dissolve sugar
10. It goes into a state of torpor, with slowed respiration and heartbeat.

*Editor's note: Check out the Ruby-throated Hummingbird article in The Merganser, May 2015*



*In the swirling steam that rises  
from your coffee cup could be the  
ghosts of warblers flitting among  
the orchids, orioles sipping nectar  
from spectacular bouquets in the  
treetops, and thrush flipping up  
leaves on the forest floor*

*Silence of the Birds by Bridget Stutchbury*

**Are you drinking  
shade-grown coffee?**  
**Learn more at the  
Smithsonian Migratory Bird  
Center**  
[https://  
nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/  
migratorybirds/  
coffee/](https://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/)





## New, Renewing, and Rejoining Members!

Robert E. Anderson, Tenants Harbor

Gigi Baas, Vinalhaven

Mary Balbo, South China

Christina Banks, Thomaston

Stephen Barnes, Tenants Harbor

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Barstow, Port Clyde

Becky Layton Bartovics, North Haven

Dorothy Blanchard, Newcastle

Ann and Normand Bosse, East Boothbay

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Sally McCumber, Newcastle

Carol McKeon, South Bristol

Dr. Margaret Malmberg, Belfast

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Dr. Alice M. Savage, Windsor

Jane Schroeder, Rockport

Maryann and Jeff Sedlack, Falmouth

Nirvana Shaw, Newcastle

Walt Silva, Newcastle

Glenice Skelton, Washington

Carolyn Small, Camden

Deb Small, Belfast

Noah Soto, South China

Pat Stanek, Windsor

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Patty Stevens, Searsport

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David West, Marco Isl., FL

Mariellen Whelan, Newcastle

Andrea Williams and Charles Dewar, Denver, CO

Charles John G. Williams, Camden

Gratian Yatsevitch, Camden

## 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

Phyllis Coelho, Secretary

Lew Purinton, Treasurer

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Bill Goodwill, Friendship

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Juanita Roushdy, Bremen

Vacant

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**Conservation:** Joe Gray, 563-3578

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**Nest boxes:** John Weinrich, 563-2930

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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 three times a year in February, May, November. News items or photos are welcome.

**Deadline for next issue is October 15!**

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



## Injured Bird!

### Avian Haven

Accepts all bird species year-round

207-382-6761

[www.avianhaven.org](http://www.avianhaven.org)

Only seabirds and shorebirds

### On the Rush of Wings

207-832-5044

[www.ontherushofwings.org](http://www.ontherushofwings.org)



# Yes! The Warblers Are Coming !

Here are some warblers to watch out for at your feeder  
or in your back yard habitat.

*Don't forget - clean your feeders and nest boxes.*




## How many did you identify?

1. Common Yellowthroat
2. Black and white warbler
3. Palm Warbler
4. Black-throated Blue Warbler
5. Chestnut-sided Warbler
6. Blue-winged Warbler
7. Pine Warbler

## Go Birding in One of Our Preserves

We have four wonderful preserves that are perfect for spring birding. Our biggest, 95-acre **Nelson Preserve** in Friendship, 1 mile from Friendship Village on Rte. 97, goes down to the Goose River. On Rte. 220 is the 30-acre **Van Dyn Preserve**, 1.5 miles from Waldoboro; it fronts the Medomak River. The 40-acre **Davis Bog Preserve** is in the Town of Morrill ; access is a 10-foot right of way on Higgins Ridge Road, 1 mile from Rte. 3 and east of the state's Ruffingham Meadow Preserve. The 3-acre **Weskeag River Preserve** is on Waterman Beach Road, just past Snowdeal Road, 0.1 mile from Rte. 73. *Tell us the birds you saw on your walk. Be part of the volunteer team that keeps these trails maintained, contact Bill Goodwill at 207-354-0669.*



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

<http://maineaudubon.org/midcoast/>

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Hog Island Audubon Camp still has a few spaces left in its summer sessions. Check it out at <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>



Save the Date

## Annual Lobster Bake

**Saturday, September 3, 2016**

**10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**See page 4 for details**

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  
 (free for Patron members and above)

☐ Check enclosed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Charge my monthly Frequent Flyer gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

☐ Charge my annual membership of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

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### Membership Level

Annual:

☐ \$25 Senior/Volunteer

☐ \$35 Individual

☐ \$45 Household

☐ \$65 Contributing

☐ \$100 Patron

☐ \$250 Sustaining

☐ \$500 Benefactor

Monthly:

☐ **Frequent Flyer** (\$5 min.)

Checks payable to Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Rd., Falmouth, ME 04105. Join/renew online at [maineaudubon.org/join](http://maineaudubon.org/join) or call 207-781-2330 ext. 232