

# 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*

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## To Be Seen or Not to Be Seen

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## To Be Seen or Not to Be Seen

To be seen or not to be seen, that truly is the question. But is there an answer? In our May 2017 edition of *The Merganser*, the cover bird could not have been more eye-catching. So much so that a cam operator on another continent spotted this tiny dot of vermillion in the corner of the screen, zoomed in and lo and behold a flashy Vermilion Flycatcher. Definitely not camouflaged!



Vermilion Flycatcher at Hog Island - no matter how small the photo you still can't help but see the red!

Other birds that are a breeze to spot are red birds, white birds, and yellow birds, as long as they are against a backdrop of verdant green or some other opposing color. As we know, brightly colored birds are usually male; but sometimes sexes are the same color and difficult to identify.

Why do birds need camouflage? They need it to survive. They camouflage themselves, their eggs

and their nest. Their three main ways to do so are by *color*, *pattern*, and *behavior*.

Two bird species that use *color* to blend in are the Ptarmigan and Painted Bunting. The three species of Ptarmigan (Rock, Willow and White-tailed) all molt their feathers in winter to match their northern tundra habitat – snow. They do not migrate. Instead they change their “clothes” both summer and winter much like us. Unfortunately, this adapted camouflage may be their undoing as the Arctic snow where they burrow into warm snow caves is melting and disappearing.



Rock Ptarmigan in winter plumage.



Can you spot the bird in photo? Turn to page 3 for answer.



Rock Ptarmigan in summer plumage.

The Painted Bunting, unlike the Ptarmigan, migrates south for the winter. When breeding season is over, the male no longer flaunts his seven colors but retreats to the deep underbrush. The female and juvenile male are nowhere near

*Continued on page 3*



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

## Moving, and Being Moved

*Oh, The seasons, they go round and round  
And the painting buntings go up and down...*

Fall and Spring are times of movement - as the travelers who migrate head out on their journeys. Birds of course, but also butterflies, whales, antelopes and aphids. They may go far, or not so far. Moving in latitude or altitude. Generally, it is a "foodie" mission, and we often think of it upside down because we, of course, are the center of our world.

The neotropical migrants visit us up north, when there is food here and nice nesting spots, and then go home to where there is always food, but where it is more crowded. Truly remarkable are the multi-generation migrations, such as the Monarch butterflies and aphids. These "simpler beings" travel from Mexico to Maine and back each year as a species, using all four generations in a relay of sorts.

The benefits outweigh the costs, despite the many risks on these dangerous journeys. In addition to the usual cats,



Monarch supping on Joe Pye Weed at Hog Island

cars, windows, and lack of resting places, three powerful hurricanes roared through the Eastern and Central flyways during this migration season. Birds are sensitive to atmospheric pressure and often hunker down to wait for a storm to pass by. Strong winds and rain make it impossible or too energy intensive to fly. A rare radio-tagged Whimbrel was recorded entering a hurricane - beating hard into headwinds, but slingshot out the other side to rapid tailwinds. Usually hurricanes are hard on birds, both on the journey and by destroying the habitat they hope to reach.

Viewing photos of Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands with plants stripped of leaves shows that it is not just people who will be homeless. Some birds blown far from their intended destinations end up in surprising places.

These birds, or others, who end up somewhere new... can they communicate with the locals? Do they? What do they talk about? A Red-billed Tropicbird, who ended up in Penobscot Bay in 2005, far from its kind, has returned each year since, to its time-share

under a boulder, screeching at the sea of terns. People pride themselves on having "language" with which to communicate history and future. Some say this is a major difference between humans and other animals. It seems like the more we learn, the less this holds. *Continued on page 7.*

## CRITTER CORNER - DON REIMER

## Something to Crow About

We Mainers can find crows nearly everywhere. As successful "generalists," crows have adapted to a broad variety of habitats. Possessing omnivorous appetites, these wily corvids consume practically any food type that presents itself. These are American Crows. But did you know that Maine has a second species of crow?

Pioneering groups of Fish Crows, a smaller more compact crow with shorter legs, thinner bill and more pointed wings, now occupy parts of mid-coastal and southern Maine. Except for the Fish Crow's purplish feather tones (visible only at close range), the two species are virtually identical in plumage.

A bird of the Southeastern coastlines and tidewater regions, the Fish Crow has greatly extended its range northward

and pushed further into inland locations. As its name implies, this species favors coastal and brackish habitats, including wooded shorelines, marshes, beaches and tidal rivers. Fish Crows are also inhabitants of fast-food parking lots and city dumpsters.

About a decade ago, four Fish Crows showed in Rockland where they spent the summer months and were eventually recorded on a Christmas Bird Count. A year later, one pair nested within the city. With separate nesting periods about a month apart, the two species do not interbreed.

The best way to distinguish these two crows is by voice: American crows give the quintessential crow-like "Caw!" note, while the Fish Crow's call is softer and more nasal; a repetitive sounding "uh, uh; uh, uh" vocalization is quite distinctive.

One birder suggested that Fish Crows sound like American crows with Boston accents.



Fish Crow



# To Be Seen or Not to Be Seen... cont'd

as resplendent as they must both be sure to survive; they are a yellowy-green and blend into their coastal bush habitat. But with coastal development, their habitat is disappearing.



Painted Bunting - female

Painted Bunting - male.

Closer to home, here in Maine, we have our shape shifters, too. Everyone has been with friends at a wetland area and someone calls, "a Bittern. Over there!" Some are on the bird immediately; others not so quickly. The American Bittern and Least Bittern are masters of disguise. Not only do they use color, and pattern, but they also use behavior.

By standing motionless and ramrod straight in the wetland grasses, they dissolve into the scene. Even when they move and their long necks are perpendicular to the grasses, they blend in so well with the colors of the grass and water, it can be difficult to spot them. Woodcocks use the same tactics as the Bittern to blend in but in the forests or in fields near streams.



American Bittern. Note the heavy streaking that allows the Bittern when standing erect in the marsh grass to blend right in.

Least Bittern stalking food. Note how even positioned perpendicular to the marsh grass, it still blends in.



American Woodcock



Did you find the hidden Screech Owl?

Beside camouflaging themselves, birds also use the surrounding habitat to hide their nests, even in an open space. Our long coastline is host to two nesting bird species: the endangered Piping Plover and Least Terns.

Their nests are just scrapes in the sand; their eggs match the surrounding sand, pebbles and broken shells. The photos above show eggs and in the right photo a baby chick as well as eggs. Can you spot them?

The two photos at the bottom each show a bird. One is of an



Ovenbird, who makes her tiny nest on the forest floor; the other is of a baby Spotted Sandpiper blending into its surrounding rocky vegetation.

*Juanita Roushdy is an avid birder living in Bremen. She never misses the Christmas Bird Count.*



# 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**

## NOVEMBER

**Field Trip: Saturday, November 4**

*Sabbatus Pond*

*Leave Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.*

**Program: Thursday, November 16 at 7 p.m.**

*Camden Public Library*

"The Art of Science: Building a Field Guide," presented by Jonathan Alderfer, art instructor at Hog Island. For ten years he was National Geographic's resident birding expert at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. Join co-author and co-illustrator of National Geographic's newest edition of *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

## DECEMBER

**Thursday, December 14**

Damariscotta/Pemaquid Christmas Bird Count. Contact compiler Dennis McKenna at 563-8439 for more information.

**Saturday, December 16**

Thomaston/Rockland Christmas Bird Count. Contact compiler Don Reimer at 273-3146 for more information.

**Monday, December 18**

Bunker Hill Christmas Bird Count. Contact compiler John Weinrich at 563-8439 for more information.

## JANUARY

**Field trip: Saturday, January 13**

Pemaquid Point with Don Reimer. Meet at lighthouse at 8:30 a.m.

**Field trip: Saturday, January 27**

Cliff House and Perkins Cove, Ogunquit.  
*Leave Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.*

## FEBRUARY

**Field trip: Saturday-Sunday, February 17-18**

Plum Island and Cape Ann with Dennis McKenna *overnight*. Contact Dennis at 563-8439 for details.



## MARCH

**Field trip: Thursday, March 15**

Biddeford Pool, Pine Point and Scarborough March. *Leave Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.*

*For updates on trips and programs, check our website,  
<https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/>  
Thank you.*

## Woodpecker Quiz



1. What is North America's smallest woodpecker?
2. Most woodpeckers have "zygodactyl" feet. What does this mean?
3. What is the favorite food of the Pileated Woodpecker?
4. Do woodpeckers hurt trees?
5. Most Maine woodpeckers are year-round residents. Which two migrate?
6. Apart from the body size, what is the difference between Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers?
7. Which woodpecker prefers to eat insects from the ground?
8. Which bird is expanding its range from the Southeast to the Northeast?
9. Which rare woodpeckers may be found in forests of northern Maine?
10. What enables woodpeckers to retrieve grubs from within a tree?

round residents. Which two migrate?

## Audubon's 118th Annual Christmas Bird Count December 14 - January 5

Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count is the nation's longest-running citizen-science project. Everyone gets out to count birds: schools, families, friends, clubs, neighbors, and more. You can do it from the comfort of your armchair, counting the birds that visit your feeder on count day or you can sign up with the compiler in your area and be assigned to a birder familiar with the count circle.

Count circles are 15-miles in diameter and usually divided into pie-shaped areas with a group and leader assigned to each wedge. Join in for an hour or two or the whole day and stay for the tally at the end of the day. You never know what bird will turn up!

See you on the count!





# An Unexpected Visitor Attends Lobster Bake

You guessed it, not only did we have 50 guests at our annual lobster bake on Hog Island on September 2, but we also had an inquisitive mink visit several times on its way to the bird pool! Photo ops were plenty.

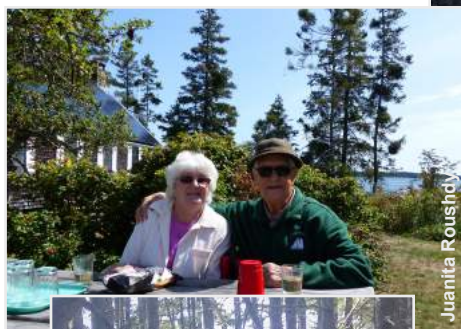
The lobster bake is our major fundraiser for the year, so we were delighted to learn that you helped us raise \$1,800 to fund our scholarship programs. Thank you for coming.

What are you guys cooking down there?



John Weinrich

A happy couple celebrate their anniversary at the lobster bake.



Juanita Roushdy



Chapter board members Dennis, John, and Don getting ready for the lobster bake.



John Weinrich

Dennis checks to see if lobsters are cooked!



John Weinrich

Sherry, Donna, and Sandra explore Hog Island.



Juanita Roushdy

Mmmm, delicious!

## Camp Scholarships for Teachers and Students for 2018



Hog Island Audubon Camp, Bremen, ME



Tanglewood 4-H Camp at Lincolnville

### Looking for that perfect gift box for your favorite yard bird?

Mid-coast Audubon board members handcraft their bird boxes and suet logs. We have the right one for your favorite yard bird.

Houses - \$25

Suet logs - \$10

Contact John Weinrich at 563-8439



Mid-Coast Audubon each year gives scholarships to students and teachers wanting to attend Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen for a one-week session.

A Joe Gray Scholarship is also available for the Tanglewood 4-H summer camp in Lincolnville. **Don't hesitate**, check out the websites below and contact Sue Schubel at [sschubel@tidewater.net](mailto:sschubel@tidewater.net) for a scholarship application.

Hog Island: <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>

Tanglewood: <https://extension.umaine.edu/tanglewood/tanglewood-lincolnville/>



## New, Renewing, and Rejoining Members!

Chris and Helen Bass, Camden  
Joanne E. Boynton, Belfast  
Dennis B. Calderwood, Lincolnville  
Caren M. Clark, Waldoboro  
Kate D. Cole, Lincolnville  
Joseph Devenney, Jefferson  
Melinda Doane-Jumbo, Nobleboro  
Karen Doran, Rockport

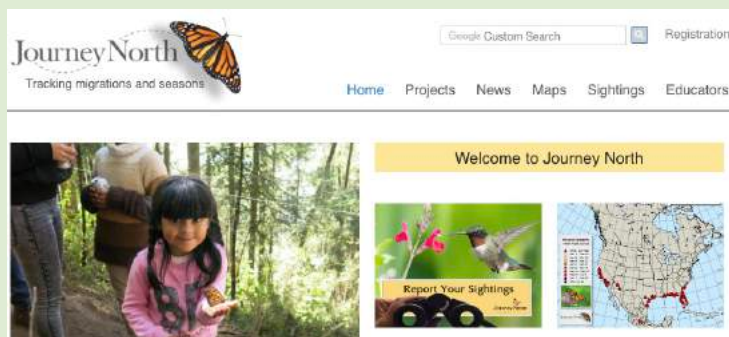
Diane P. Eacobacci, Edgecomb  
Deidre Good, Northport  
Steven F. Horton, Warren  
Donald Howlett, South Thomaston  
Jason Jones, Camden  
Karen and Michael Jordan, Spruce Head  
Edward F. Kenney, Owls Head  
Nancy Lipper, Waldoboro  
Dennis McKenna, Damariscotta  
Dale McKenney, Palermo  
Mary Moroney, St. John, VI  
Patrick Powell, Hope  
Betty Lou Richards, Union  
Deborah Shappelle, Rockland  
Jamie and Philip Smith, Damariscotta  
Haas Tobey and Ursula Leonore, Damariscotta  
Ingrid Warren, Camden

### Quiz Answers

1. Downy
2. Two toes forward, two toes backward, which helps in gripping a tree.
3. Carpenter ants
4. No! They help remove forest pests, and make cavities only in dead or dying trees.
5. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Northern Flicker

6. The Downy has a stubby bill, but the Hairy's is as long as its head is wide. They are the only two woodpeckers with a white back.
7. Northern Flicker
8. Red-bellied Woodpecker
9. Three-toed and Black-backed
10. The tip of the tongue is horny, pointed, barbed, and can extend well beyond the end of the bill.

## Monarch and Hummingbird Journeys



There's nothing like seeing your first Monarch Butterfly or, in Maine, your first Ruby-throated Hummingbird of the season. Both of these creatures are Herculean journey makers, traveling thousands of miles each year to and from their winter and summer grounds.

Help keep track of these jewels by reporting your sightings - comings and goings - to Journey North, a site that tracks and maps migrations: <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/>



### New Maine Audubon Executive Director

Andy Beahm, after 34 years at L.L. Bean in a variety of executive leadership roles, the most recent as Vice President of Business Transformation, is the new Executive Director at Maine Audubon. Andy is excited to now follow his passion and believes Maine Audubon's "best days are ahead;" he's excited to be part of that.

Welcome, Andy! We look forward to working with you. [lore.org](http://lore.org)

## 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

### DIRECTORS

Stephen Barnes, Tenants Harbor  
Kathy Cartwright, Waldoboro  
Bill Goodwill, Friendship  
Dennis McKenna, Damariscotta  
Kristin Pennock, Whitefield  
Gail Presley, Rockland  
Lew Purinton, Somerville  
Don Reimer, Warren  
Juanita Roushdy, Bremen

### COMMITTEES

**Field Trips:** John Weinrich, 563-2930  
**Nest boxes:** John Weinrich, 563-2930  
**Membership:** Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355  
**Preserves:** Bill Goodwill, 354-0669  
**Programs:** Kathy Cartwright, 832-5584  
**Scholarship:** Sue Schubel, 380-1370  
**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 January 15!**

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

## Injured Bird!

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## Joe Gray Remembered

After a well-lived life of devoted service to his country and a persistent calling toward the natural world, our good friend and mentor Joe Gray passed at his Damariscotta home at Schooner Cove on June 11, 2017, at age 93.

Regardless of the task at hand, Joe did not believe in half measures. Serving in the US Army in World War II and later in the Reserves, he retired as a Captain, CE-USAR. Later, Joe used the GI Bill to earn a B.S. degree in Forestry at Penn State, before managing major commercial and public domain projects for 32 years.

Upon retiring to Maine, Joe focused his boundless energy and talents as an interpretive naturalist on his next career: volunteerism. The term "retirement" never really applied to Joe or to his wife Carolyn, another tireless and talented volunteer. Joe's volume of work and guidance at the Tanglewood 4-H Camp & Learning Center was truly impressive.

As a two-term president, director and program presenter for Mid-Coast Audubon, Joe took Audubon's mission statement "to promote long-term, responsible use of natural resources through informed membership, education and community awareness" to heart. For several years, he served as Compiler for the Pemaquid and Rockland Christmas Bird Counts. At his former Jefferson residence, Joe manufactured and marketed hundreds of bird nesting boxes in his downstairs workshop. He was also editor of the chapter newsletter, which was then called *The Bulletin*.



Joe Gray

Joe's later years were dedicated to writing, producing the weekly Nature Notes column since 1990; a book, *Nature Embraced*; a book of compiled Nature Notes titled *Nature's Mystiques*; and 25 short stories (untitled) and 100 Poems "From A Naturalist's Pen," the latter two unpublished. In addition to countless adult education programs at local schools, Joe presented numerous nature programs through the Coastal Senior College at Schooner Cove.

He received many awards for volunteerism during his life, and the three most coveted were the National Fish and Wildlife Award, Boy Scouts Central West Virginia Council's Silver Beaver Award, and the National Audubon's William F. Dutcher Award for regional volunteerism. Other awards were the DAR medal for conservation, and several Kno-Wal-Lin Home Health honors for volunteerism, to name just a few.

Well done, Joe! We miss you.

Don Reimer



### PRESIDENT'S CORNER - cont'd.

It has been proven that whales talk about other whales who aren't present using vocalizations. There is much communication in social species – sharing food resource information, or dividing territories to reduce competition. But is it all meaningful mutterings? Or are their tweets and twitters as pointless as some of ours?

I'm off to help a friend move from Colorado to Maine. Like many who have come to Maine, on purpose or by

accident, she wants to return. Unlike a butterfly, a truck will carry all her things. We humans – we have things. There are other animals who gather things, but they don't travel long distances with their things. Perhaps that is a more essential difference than language. We are the species with baggage.

Use your words for good. Take a stand for habitat and species diversity.

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

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

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See page 4 for  
details and  
dates of local  
Christmas Bird  
Counts.



*A big Thank You to our  
many supporters in 2017.  
Enjoy your holiday season.*



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.

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