# Merganser





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

#### **Published three times a year**

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# The Year of the Bird

If you take care of the birds, you take care of most of the big environmental problems in the world. Thomas E. Lovejoy, Tropical Conservation Biologist and National Geographic Fellow

This year, 2018, marks the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the most powerful and important bird-protection

law ever passed. National Geographic, National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and BirdLife International are joining with 100 other organizations and millions of individuals worldwide to celebrate 2018 as the Year of the Bird and to assure the protection of birds in the future.

**Painted Bunting** 

Why do birds matter? For those of us living in the frozen north, to look out the window on a winter's day and perchance see a Painted Bunting, as they did in Blue Hill a few years back, can stir the heart and never be forgotten.

Like us, birds need three things to survive: food water, and shelter. Their needs have not changed since the first known bird Archaeopteryx to today's chickadee at our

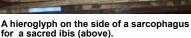
feeder or prehistoric man taking his first upright step to today's tech hominid.

> Birds predate humans by millions of years. As such, they have always been with us. They have become part of our being, our mythology, our history, and our lives. They have become teacher, muse, and companion. They have one skill that we do not: they can fly under their own power. That they could slip "the surly bonds of earth" is part of our fascination with and adulation of them through the ages.

> > In ancient Egypt, hieroglyphs in tombs show ibis, falcons, owls, vultures, geese, hoopoe, and other

birds. Mummified birds found in tombs, which had a vent to the outside, are thought to have allowed the soul of the deceased to fly out on the wings of

Continued on page 3



The god Horus, protector of the ruler of Egypt, was in the form of a falcon; the right eye symbolized the sun; the left,



#### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

It's January, and I am exhilarated by the subtle but sublime winter colors.

Monochromatic from afar, up close there is an array of pale and deep greens, blues, whites, grays, blacks and browns. A birch tree in the snow with green lichens, an icy cove beside a stand of spruce. Small notes of red and orange occasionally make a splash through the winterberries and kinglets. In the pared down winter palette, I find great beauty.

This time of year, bird-built structures are more easily visible in the spare landscape. Not really homes, but more than cradles, nests exhibit an array of architectural styles. Some a loose slap-dash of sticks – others intricate woven pouches, or tiny lichencrusted, moss and spider silk cups. Many appear beautiful to my eye, and I daresay to a bird's eye as well.

On my New Year's lists is often written -

"Finish house projects," or "organize everything." I looked at my list and couldn't bear to put these unending and unsatisfying quests down again. How to reframe it, to make tackling the same old thing more compelling? Yes! *Beauty!* 

Not cleaning the house, but making a beautiful space; not stacking the wood, but enjoying the beautiful pattern of the log ends playing off one another. Noticing beauty, appreciating it, and creating it. I agree with those that argue that humans have an inherent need for beauty. In a TED talk, Denis Dutton put forth his observations of a shared aesthetic among people worldwide – of certain landscapes, nature, and shapes handed

down from the first stone tool making. Theaster Gates, an artist and activist, pointed out that beautifying an environment changed how the people there acted and led to more

beauty being created.

In 2018, Year of the Bird, there is much to appreciate. As we consider the beauty of birds as individuals, we should let that energy expand so that we can change our behaviors, our attitudes and create more

beautiful habitats. It will sustain the birds and us.





#### CRITTER CORNER - DON REIMER

#### Mola, Mola

Imagine the great surprise when a giant ocean sunfish surfaced directly beside our vessel off Monhegan Island last

September! Elevated just a few feet above the side-idling fish, we could peer straight into his sky-pointed eye! As the heaviest known bony fish in the world, sunfish can weigh up to 2.5 tons and equal the relative size of a 6 foot person. Skeletons of other large fishes, such as sharks and rays, are formed of cartilage. The

Don Reimer

Mola, Mola eye

scientific Latin name Mola, Mola means "millstone," a reference to the fish's grey color and basically rounded body shape. Its European common names include "moon fish" and "swimming head."

As members of the puffer fish family, the sunfish's upper and lower teeth are fused into a parrot-shaped bill that is perpetually in the open position. The beaked mouth is perfect for ingesting jelly fish and zooplankton, their

primary foods. Squid, sponges and crustaceans are also consumed down to depths of 650 feet.

Sunfish inhabit tropical and temperate oceans around the world where they frequently bask on the sea surface; it is reputed that passing seabirds strip away parasites from

their skin. From such close range, I noticed two pinkish fleshy contusions that may have resulted from these avian encounters.

Surface locomotion is an awkward affair as the doddling sunfish flaps its long dorsal and anal fins like a pair of wings. A lumpy pseudo-tail located at the fish's posterior serves as its sea rudder.

Female sunfish are extremely prolific egg layers, laying more eggs (up to 300 million in one season) than any other vertebrate. Each minuscule Mola fry is protected within a starshaped transparent covering and the resulting hatchlings are the mere size of a pinhead.

When we reached Monhegan village, we learned that some on the island shoreline had mistaken the flailing sunfish for an injured whale.

# Year of the Bird ... cont'd

the bird. Petroglyphs in Australia from 50,000 years ago show an Emu-like bird now extinct. In North America, bird petroglyphs dating back to 2,500 BC have been found in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Dieties, rulers, and healers in many ancient cultures wore headdresses imitating bird heads and beaks; it was believed to imbue them with unparalleled power.

Birds have inspired us with their beauty and song - peacock, nightingale, lark, cuckoo, dove, and many more. They know no geographic boundaries so artifacts, drawings, songs, poems and more can be found in any culture's history or folklore. In the Shinto religion of Japan, birds figure prominently - cormorants, cranes, roosters, ravens.

In music, too, they have been immortalized. Two better-known pieces are Ralph Vaughan William's *Lark Ascending*, and Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, 2nd Movement, imitating a nightingale, a quail and cuckoo.

In literature, they have inspired us in joy and despair. An Anglo-Saxon poem (410-1066), *The* 

Seafarer, finds a sailor caught in a bitter winter ice storm at sea; he is in the depths of despair yet in birds finds comfort and escape:

. . .

At times I took to myself as pleasure, the gannet's noise and the voice of the curlew instead of the laughter of men, the singing gull instead of the drinking of mead. . .



Northern Gannet

Chaucer's (1342-1400) witty poem *A Parliament of Fowl* (*Fouls*) is about a flock of birds, which included ravens, eagles, ducks, swans, quail, sparrow, stork, geese and more, gathering on St. Valentines Day for a parliamentary debate to choose a mate for a female eagle.

John Keats (1821) in despair finds solace in the nightingale's song in his *Ode to a Nightingale* ...

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

No hungry generations tread thee down;

The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown...



**Common Nightingale** 

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1877) in *The Windhover* (kestrel) perhaps sums up what we all feel upon seeing a bird demonstrate its flying prowess:

... My heart in hiding Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Paul Farley's For the House Sparrow, in Decline (2002) imagines "a roofless world where no



Hovering kestrel

one hears your cheeps / only a starling's modem mimicry / will remind you how you once supplied / the incidental music of our lives." Birds provide a metaphor for the crisis of our time.

Birds have inspired us in other ways with their flying ability. The longest known *nonstop* flight was by a Bar-tailed Godwit, 7,145 miles in nine days. They make this migration annually.



Bar-tailed Godwit

Birds moved Leonardo da Vinci in 1505 to write

Codex on the Flight of Birds which was centuries before the Wright Brothers flight; it was used as a basis for their flight experiments. Birds are the reason that a lucky few can break "the surly bonds of earth" in a plane or rocket!!

Birds feed our soul and our bellies. Their beauty and song since time immemorial are constant - as is their ability to pollinate flowers, sow seeds, and control insects. Emily Dickinson opines in her poem "Hope" is the thing with feathers that birds have asked nothing of us. Let us do all we can to keep them flourishing.

'Hope' is the thing with

feathers –

That perches in the soul – And sings the tune without the words – And never stops – at all –

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard – And sore must be the storm – That could abash the little Bird That kept so many warm –

I've heard it in the chillest land – And on the strangest Sea – Yet – never – in Extremity, It asked a crumb – of me.

**Emily Dickinson** 

Juanita Roushdy is an avid birder living in Bremen. She never ceases to be awe struck by birds - their journeys, their stamina, their beauty, their tenaciousness, their song.

Molecular studies show birds originated over 100 million years ago!

## **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

#### **FEBRUARY**

#### Program: Tuesday, February 13 at 7 p.m.

Camden Public Library

Kirk Gentalen presents **Owls Are Easy**. For the past 25 years Kirk has been an active owl watcher. Join Mid-Coast Audubon, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Kirk for a night of information, photos and stories about owls in general and along the coast of Maine. Kirk is a regional steward and naturalist for the Maine Coast Heritage Trust out on Vinalhaven Island, edits the popular "Vinalhaven Sightings Report" blog (vinalhavensightings.blogspot.com), and writes the "'Nature Bummin' with Kirk Gentalen" column for the St. George Dragon.

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

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



#### Field trip: Saturday, February 24

Pemaquid Point with Don Reimer. *Meet at the Point Lighthouse at 8 a.m.* 

#### **MARCH**

#### Program: Thursday, March 8 at 7 p.m.

Camden Public Library

Seth Benz presents **Tracking Biodiversity in Acadia's Coastal Refuge**. Efforts to track biodiversity along Maine Coast's Acadia Region go back hundreds of years. He provides an overview of some exciting projects and what is being learned, with emphasis on the interactions of plants, insects, and birds - and how people from around the world are working with and learning from local land trusts. Seth is former director of Hog Island Audubon Camp, and current director of Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park's Bird Ecology Program.

#### Field trip: Thursday, March 15

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

#### **APRIL**

#### Field trip: Saturday, April 14

Damariscotta River Association farm and Great Salt Bay with Dennis McKenna. *Meet at DRA at 7 a.m.* 

Program: Thursday, April 19 at 7 p.m.

Camden Public Library

Sherrie York presents From Battleship to Birds. How did a material created for battleship flooring become a medium for bird art? She will share her own linocut process, inspiration, and frequently bird-focused work. Her linocuts have been presented in national and international exhibitions, including the Woodson Art Museum's prestigious "Birds in Art." and the Society of Animal Artists' "Art & the Animal" She is on the board of the Society of Animal Artists and is Coordinator of the Audubon Artist Residency at Hog Island Audubon Camp.

#### Field trip: Saturday, April 28

Popham Beach and Reid State Park. *Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.* 

#### **MAY**

#### Field trip: Saturday, May 12

International Migratory Bird Day. *Meet at Damariscotta River Association at 7 a.m. or bird alone.* 

#### Field trip: Thursday, May 17

Evergreen Cemetery and Capisic Park, Portland. *Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.* 

#### Field trip: Thursday, May 24

Viles Arboretum, Augusta. *Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.* 

#### Field trip: Saturday, May 26

Monhegan Island

Meet Monhegan ferry at Port Clyde for 7 a.m. departure

#### **JUNE**

#### Field trip: Thursday, June 7

Kennebunk Plains/Sanford Wastewater Lagoons. *Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.* 

#### Field trip: Thursday, June14

Augusta Airport and Belgrade Lake. *Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.* 

February 16-19

#### 21st Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

http://gbbc.birdcount.org/

Gather friends and family to count birds at home, school, or your favorite spot!

For updates on trips and programs, check our website https://midcoast.mainea udubon.org/Thank you.



# The 118th Christmas Bird Count 2017



On December 14th, the Pemaquid/Damariscotta Count

was held. Twenty-one hardy souls fanned out through the count circle to census its avian population - 6,334 individuals were found of 63 species. Another four species (Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush and Pine Warbler) were found during Count Week. Highlights were a count-first Gadwall in Friendship found by Delia Mohlies' crew; seven Double-crested Cormorants found by Juanita Roushdy and Nancy Dickinson on Pemaquid; one Rough-legged Hawk found by Don Reimer; and one Snow Bunting found by Juanita and Nancy on Pemaquid.

There were seven all-time high species: Canada Goose 619; Double-crested Cormorants 7; Sharp-shinned Hawk 2; Redbellied Woodpecker 7; Common Raven 17; Eastern Bluebird 23; and Dark-eyed Junco 317.

With temperatures between teens to midtwenties, the chilly December 16 **Thomaston-Rockland Count** featured clear skies and unrestricted travel conditions. Despite a virtual lack of winter finches, a record-breaking 83 species and 6,552 individual birds were recorded. Two White-winged Crossbills seen on spruce-laden Clark Island were the only boreal finches to be found, and a total of three Cedar Waxwings constituted the entire waxwing count.

Highlights included small groups of American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds feasting on fruits and berries. A young Baltimore Oriole visiting feeders for seeds and grape jelly in Warren was a bonus bird. Rarely seen here in winter time, a single Chipping Sparrow and Vesper Sparrow were unanticipated seasonal finds.

Two species of warblers were discovered.
While Yellow-rumped Warblers are somewhat regular in winter, a Yellow-throated Warbler found in Tenants Harbor was a different story. This southern U.S. nester is totally out of place in Maine. All three members of the accipiter hawk family were recorded: Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Northern Goshawk.

Flocks of wintering sea duck numbers were at typical levels this year. Eider Ducks were slightly



**Snow Bunting** 



Pied-billed Grebe



Yellow-throated Warbler



Rusty Blackbird



**Baltimore Oriole** 

below average, but two immature King Eider ducks near Owls Head Light were a special treat.

An unfrozen lower section of Chickawaukee Lake held several surprises, including a group of Ring-necked Ducks and a single Ruddy Duck. A late season Pied-billed Grebe and an assemblage of 25 migrating American Coots were also welcome sights.

The **Bunker Hill Count** on December 18 was close to a carbon copy of last year's count in number of species and total number of individual birds counted. More specifically, the number of species increased from 54 to 55 and the total number of individuals counted was 4,728, only 23 less than last year.

We have discovered through the years that weather affects counting birds. Frozen water snow cover, temperatures, wind and precipitation amounts mean a great deal. For example, the bitter cold this winter meant searching for waterfowl in small areas of open water - no minor task!

Many ask how many birds of a certain species were seen and which species was seen the most. Once again, European Starling took top spot followed by Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco and Goldfinch. For waterfowl, Canada Goose took first place and for raptors, the American Bald Eagle.

Several birds not commonly seen during this period were 2 Mockingbirds, a Red-winged Blackbird, a Rusty Blackbird and 2 American Wigeon. Four Red-shouldered Hawks were recorded, which was a first for this species going back to the beginning of the circle in 2006. Red-bellied Woodpeckers continue to remain steady in the area.

Information gathered on the birds each year during the Christmas Bird Count across North America by teams of citizen scientists provides invaluable data to professional scientists at

invaluable data to professional scientists at Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Without such participation this information would be impossible to gather. Thanks to all our counters!

Reports by compilers: Dennis McKenna, Pemaquid/ Damariscotta; Don Reimer, Thomaston/Rockland; John Weinrich, Bunker Hill.

#### A Quiz to CROW about

- 1. Why are American Crows so interesting?
- 2. Why do you seldom see a lone crow?
- 3. Why do crows form large roosts on winter nights, often in urban areas?
- 4. How can you tell a young crow from an adult?
- 5. What do crows eat?

- 6. What predator, besides man, poses the greatest threat to crows?
- 7. Do crows make sounds other than "caw caw"?
- 8. What is their preferred nest site? Who builds the nest, and how?
- 9. How can you tell a crow from a raven in flight?
- 10. What should you call a group of crows?



#### New, Renewing, and Rejoining Members!

Chris and Helen Bass, *Camden* Walter Barnard, *Northport* Joanne E. Boynton, *Belfast* Dennis B. Calderwood, *Lincolnville* 

Caren M. Clark, Waldoboro

Kate D. Cole, Lincolnville Deborah Cook, Portland Luci Craib, Walpole Joseph Devenney, Jefferson Melinda Doane-Jumbo, Nobleboro

Nobleboro
Karen Doran, Rockport
Diane P. Eacobacci, Edgecomb
Deidre Good, Northport

Diane C. Haskell, *Palermo* Steven F. Horton, *Warren* Donald Howlett, *South* 

Jason Jones, *Camden*Karen and Michael Jordan, *Spruce Head* 

Edward F. Kenney, Owls Head

Nancy Lipper, Waldoboro
Dennis McKenna, Damariscotta
Dale McKenney, Palermo
Marie McMonagle, Searsport
Mary Moroney, St. John, VI
Patrick Powell, Hope
Betty Lou Richards, Union
Helene Rondeau, Warren
Deborah Shappelle, Rockland
Jamie and Philip Smith,
Damariscotta
Haas Tobey and Ursula
Leonore, Damariscotta
Ingrid Warren, Camden
George and Jackie



# Workday for Wildlife

Thomaston

Over Earth Day Weekend (April 21-22, 2018), Maine

Audubon and Maine Audubon chapters will organize and lead a series of volunteer opportunities designed to benefit our communities and the environment. This also coincides with the end of National Volunteer Week.

Project opportunities will vary in different parts of the state, but some of the possibilities include:

- Planting native plants
- Removing invasive plants
- Stewardship or trail work
- Litter clean-up
- Advocacy opportunities



Project specifics will be published on Maine Audubon's website, and interested volunteers can sign up for their project of choice there.

It is going to be a great weekend of "working for wildlife." We hope you can join us!

Questions?

volunteer@maineaudubon.org

#### **Quiz Answers**

- 1. They have a complex social life, are highly intelligent, and able to use tools. They work together to find food, solve problems, and drive off predators.
- 2. They live in family groups of a breeding pair and previous years' offspring.

Wheelwright, Rockport

- 3. For safety and warmth in numbers. Urban areas are often brightly lit and safe from shooting.
- 4. Yearling birds are dull, shaggy and brownish; adults are glossy black.
- 5. Nearly anything: grains, earthworms, mice, insects, aquatic animals, eggs, carrion, garbage, etc.
- 6. The Great Horned Owl.
- 7. They make many sounds at different times, such as high-pitched whining from the female on her nest, and begging sounds from fledglings, as well as other social vocalizations.
- 8. The nest is usually near the top of an evergreen, hidden near the trunk. In early spring the extended family helps build a large cup of twigs lined with soft hair or plant material.
- 9. Crows usually fly with a steady rowing motion, but ravens tend to soar or glide. The raven has a longer neck and larger, more triangular tail.
- 10. The poetic term for bunch of crows is a "murder. Scientists would call it a flock" *Kevin J. McGowan*.

#### 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
Sherrie York, Bristol

#### **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 April 15!

Send to juanitar@tidewater.net

# **Injured Bird!**

#### **Avian Haven**

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### Mid-Coast Audubon **Welcomes New Board Member**

m We feel so sorry for Salida, Colorado. Sherrie York used to live there but in November 2017 decided to move to Maine. Who moves to Maine in November?

We are so glad she did. Sherrie is no stranger to Audubon or to Maine. Besides being a talented, self-taught, linocut artist, known nationally and internationally, she is also an art instructor at the Hog Island Audubon Camp and has many friends here.

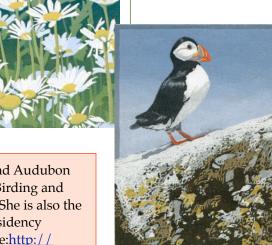
Fortunately for us, one of those friends is Sue Schubel who invited Sherrie to our December meeting; she wrote the minutes. It took no time for the board to vote unanimously for her board nomination.

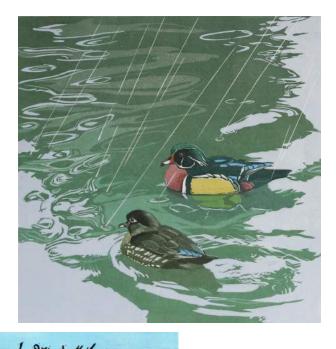
In her artwork, Sherrie has an affinity for nature and water. To pick one piece as a sample of her work is difficult, so enjoy these samples of habitat, nature, and birds in this Year of the Bird.

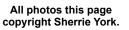
Welcome to mid-coast Maine, Sherrie, and to our chapter.









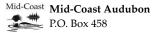




Sherrie is teaching at Hog Island Audubon Camp this summer in Arts of Birding and Sharing Nature: An Educator's week. She is also the Coordinator of the camp's Artist in Residency Program. Check out the camp's website: <a href="http://">http://</a> hogisland.audubon.org/

#### SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Mid-Coast Audubon provides scholarships to learners of all ages to attend natural history programs, including at Hog Island Audubon Camp. Preference is given to those with monetary need, and who will extend their learning by sharing that information with others in formal or informal settings. For more information and an application visit our web page: https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/scholarships/ or contact sschubel@audubon.org or our Facebook page.



Audubon Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458

https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/

An all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) chapter of Maine Audubon

#### **Don't forget February 16-19**

See page 4 for details!



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04543-0458

MIDWINTER BIRDSEED SALE - order and receive confirmation by February 16; pickup at Plants Unlimited March 3. FMI - <a href="mailto:sschubel@tidewater.net">sschubel@tidewater.net</a>, or check our Facebook page.

Maine Audubon
Mid-Coast Chapter

Mid-Coast Chapter

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