

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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John Weinrich

Migration — 100 Years and Counting

Here in Maine, spring seems like it has been having a hard time getting started this year. Although I have seen some Palm Warblers already, they were in Florida, not here. The same goes for Red-eyed Vireos and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Gray Catbirds—all species that I saw in Florida in mid-April but as of this writing, I had not yet seen here in Maine.

But all of these birds had been spotted somewhere in the state even before I saw them during our April family vacation down in the Sunshine State. Soon enough there will be a series of warm days with southerly winds and the trickle of returning migrant birds will turn into a flood.

Birders await that flood of colorful, singing birds with great anticipation.



Don Reimer

Black-billed Cuckoo with lunch.

The numbers involved in the shift of biomass from South and Central America, the Caribbean, Mexico and the southern U.S.

northwards to the northern U.S. and Canada—a phenomenon we call spring bird migration—is mind boggling. The Boreal Forest of Canada and Alaska alone is estimated to support at least *a billion* nesting birds. Almost all of them migrate south every



Don Reimer

Yellow-rumped Warbler

fall to spend winter in warmer climes. The Palm Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers may go only as far south as Florida and other southeastern U.S. states.

Black-throated Green Warblers can be found in mixed species wintering flocks in the cool mountain forests of Mexico. Others like the Cape May Warbler become the common winter birds of Cuba,

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

There are the indicators – crocus and snowdrops pushing up through the

leaves, the “peent” of woodcock and the strut of turkey. The slither of salamander as it makes its way to a still icy vernal pool. Ticks on the dog and on me. Colors coming to the Goldfinch. Mud. But not much soft warmth yet – spring is like maple syrup on ice cream – sweet but cold. Don't try to take it in too quickly or a headache will ensue. Avoid the temptation to fling off the warm clothes all at once!



Spotted salamander

Alas, we poor thinking beasts. Part of us just wants to feel the spring sunshine coming, see the buds unfurl, and hear

the birds sing. But at least some of us also fret about the fate of our fellow life-forms. What's this about the Migratory Bird Treaty Act now? For 100 years it has helped to protect and restore the bird populations that had been needlessly and heedlessly decimated. Now, business again trumps nature, and the Act has been stealthily gutted – so

now an action that kills birds can only be punished if its stated intention was to kill them. An oil spill that kills 9,000 murrelets? Well, they didn't mean it. Ouch, my head.

Go slow when you eat your maple sundae with your mittened paws this season? Or perhaps not. Perhaps go for it with gusto like a spring thing singing its heart out. Risk it all for love and progeny. As Yoda said to the wishy-washy Skywalker, “Do. Or do not. There is no try.” I think we

must do all we can. And do it soon.

CRITTER CORNER - DON REIMER

All for Science

Nature lovers are quite curious folks who seek “the inside scoop” on things related to creatures and critters of all kinds. Case in point: while birding in late February, John Weinrich and I encountered a large alder thicket blanketed by grayish-white insect cocoons. This interesting spectacle enlivened our citizen-scientific instinct, so we each brought home a cocoon sample for further observation. John fastened his sample to a bush outside his home. I placed mine in a mug that housed a dozen or so ballpoint pens next to my computer.

On March 11, I noticed some wriggling motion amid the pens where a troop of fuzzy caterpillars now freely roamed. Yikes, my science investigation had hatched! Double yikes, they appeared to me brown-tailed moth caterpillars that can produce toxic itchy effects on human skin! For the record, John's outdoor subjects remained latent into late April. Despite our misguided science adventure, what did we learn from our comparative studies? Possible implications for progressive climate warming conditions on future insect hatching dates?

Spring 2018 offers a new (and safer) opportunity to

participate in meaningful citizen-science as birds approach for the breeding season across Maine. The Maine Bird Atlas project is a 5-year study designed to identify all bird species that breed within the state and learn more about their population numbers and distribution.

Maine conducted its first breeding bird atlas between 1978 and 1983. With the conclusion of the first atlas 33 years ago and the lack of any state-wide assessment of wintering birds, our comprehensive understanding of bird diversity and distribution in the state is now dated.

The ultimate success of the Bird Atlas project depends on hundreds of citizen volunteers willing to adopt a survey block or make simple incidental observations near their home, camp or during travels.

You don't need to be an expert. Just go online to: <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/maine-bird-atlas/index.html> to learn more about the project and how to participate through eBird. The website provides a volunteer

handbook, data forms, field protocols and interactive maps that show the atlas blocks in each section of the state. I will serve as Regional Coordinator for the St. George region and can be reached through the website for questions or online advice. Maybe you'd like to become a citizen-scientist this spring.



Brown-tailed moth larva and caterpillar

Migration — 100 Years and Counting... *cont'd*

the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Some like the Swainson's Thrush and the Canada Warbler go to northern South America. A few, including Hudsonian Godwits and Common Terns, wing their way to the southernmost coastal parts of Argentina and Chile.

All of these birds and, in fact, almost all migratory birds that we enjoy here in Maine, have something in common that happened 100 hundred years ago.

That something—the Migratory Bird Treaty Act—is a big part of the reason that many of these birds that we so love are still around today. The Act enacted the obligations of a treaty signed with Canada two years before called the Migratory Bird Convention. It was the first major treaty (and still one of very few in the world) to commit two large nations to protecting a shared migratory biodiversity resource.

Leaders at the time realized that efforts in only one country alone could not protect birds that migrated across national borders. The treaty and the enacting legislation in Canada and the U.S. (and eventually Mexico) effectively put a stop to large-scale market hunting of birds and began a new era of bird conservation that prevented many species from disappearing.

In celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty

Act becoming law, this year has been designated The Year of the Bird by a coalition including National Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Geographic and others.

But while we celebrate this most historic, important, and groundbreaking of bird conservation laws, the current federal government administration is actively spearheading efforts to weaken the enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In effect, they want to turn their backs on the one hundred years of success in protecting birds that is embodied in the Act and turn their backs on the wishes of the tens of millions of bird lovers here in the U.S.

As your personal commemorative act for The Year of the Bird, I hope you will speak for the returning spring migrant birds and work to prevent the weakening of one of the world's most historic and important migratory bird protection laws (see the Audubon website for more on

how to weigh in: <http://www.audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act>).

Jeff Wells lives in Gardiner and is Science and Policy Director of the Boreal Songbird Initiative. He speaks at local Audubon chapters. He and his wife Allison are authors of *Maine's Favorite Birds*.



Canada Warbler showing necklace



Hudsonian Godwit



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Laysan Albatross

Permanently lives at sea on the wing and sleeps on the wing. Average life span up to 50 years The oldest Laysan, Wisdom, in 2016 was 65 years old and returns to Midway to lay her one egg. In her life time, she's flown the equivalent of 6 round trips to the moon!

Wing span 6-11 feet. See graphic for size in relation to human.

Reaches sexual maturity at 8 to 9 years, then returns to land for nearly 10 months to breed and raise a *single* chick.

Feeds at the surface of the ocean and by shallow diving. Threats: longline fishing and plastics.

National Geographic and All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology See page 6 for more information.



Thick-billed Murre



Migrating Snow Geese Over Warren

Calendar of Events

FREE bird walks (no pets please) 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: 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, June 14

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

We
have
no
programs or
field trips during
July and August.
For updates on the
calendar, check our website
[https://
midcoast.maineaudubon.org/](https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/)
Thank you.

SEPTEMBER

Lobster Bake, Saturday, September 1

Hog Island Audubon Camp, Bremen

Boat shuttle 10 a.m. and noon; return shuttle 3 p.m. from Hog Island boat dock on main land. Contact sschubel@tidewater.net, put "lobster" in subject line.

OCTOBER

Program: Thursday, October 18, 7 p.m.

Camden Library

Carla Skinder will give a presentation on "Birds, Birds, and More Birds." She is a global warrior working on behalf of all animals. Volunteering worldwide, she's photographed many birds.

NOVEMBER

Program: Thursday, November 15, 7 p.m.

Camden Library

Seth Benz, former director of Hog Island Audubon Camp and current director of Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park's Bird Ecology Program, coordinates citizen scientist's efforts to monitor bird migrations, pelagic seabird concentrations, and biodiversity observations in the Acadia Region. He also leads history tours for the Maine Birding Trail.

Bird Quiz—Are you Gullible?

1. How many kinds of gulls are there?
2. There is no such thing as a "seagull." Which gull actually lives at sea?
3. What is the largest gull in the world? The smallest?
4. Why are there so many confusing brown, spotty or streaky gray gulls?
5. Nearly all gulls are in genus *Larus*. What are the two types within that?
6. How and where do gulls nest?
7. Which unusual gulls nest in trees?
8. Herring and Ring-billed Gulls look similar. How are they different?
9. What pale gulls from the Arctic might we find here in the winter?
10. Why do most gulls have black wingtips?



Rare view of Ruby-crowned Kinglet with crown flared.



Least tern with mating gift

Great Blue Heron



A
Birder's
Eye
Candy!



Chestnut-sided Warbler in breeding plumage.

Did You Know that Maine Has *Native* Bees?

There is a link between birds and bees other than the common use of those words together! In their search for food to feed themselves and provision their nests, bees pollinate flowers. Most people know that, and are aware of the importance of honey bees. But plants and ecosystems don't and can't live by honey bee pollination alone. Maine has at least 270 species of native bees (and 8 non-native, including the European honey bee).

A newly published checklist names them all (see note below), but for most people, it's even news that there are more than one species of bumble bee. Maine has 17. Birds and other wildlife rely on the fruits and seeds that result from insect pollination. Bees are the experts, and all species are important.

Make a point of looking closely at flowers this season and noticing the different kinds of visitors on those flowers! Bees come in all shapes and sizes and many are colorful, just like birds! Most live solitary lives, unlike the huge hives of honey bees, or even the much smaller colonies of bumble

bees. You can help both birds and bees by planting trees and shrubs such as crabapples, shadbush, and elderberries. Plant blueberries too - 120 Species of native bees have been documented in blueberry fields!

The bees will come for the flowers and in good time, the birds will enjoy the resulting feast! Take time to learn about native bees and how to help them. It's not just for the birds!

Note: the checklist, published in the spring bulletin of the Northeastern Naturalist, was authored by entomologists and other scientists from Maine and elsewhere. You can read a summary here: <https://nsfa.umaine.edu/blog/2018/03/15/new-checklist-features-270-species-native-bees-maine/>

Rockport resident Amy Campbell is a life-long gardener, a Maine volunteer master gardener, and an advocate for native bees. She also has a long history of interest in all kinds of birds.



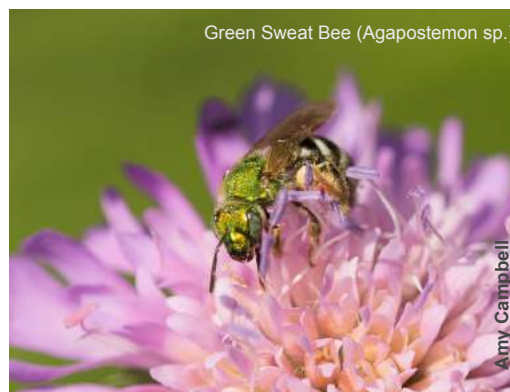
Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*)

Amy Campbell



Northern Amber Bumble Bee (*Bombus borealis*)

Amy Campbell



Green Sweat Bee (*Agapostemon* sp.)

Amy Campbell



Orange-belted Bumble Bee (*Bombus ternarius*)

Amy Campbell

If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.

E.O. Wilson author of *Half Earth*



Long-horned Bee (*Mellissodes* sp.)

Amy Campbell

Possibly a Cellophane Bee (*Colletes* sp.)



Amy Campbell

Editor's note - Shorebird Migration

The global collapse of migratory shorebird populations is much more than a calamity facing a group of exquisitely evolved birds. It also tells us that our global network of aquatic systems is fraying. John W.

Fitzpatrick, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The U.S. and Canada have led the way in protecting migrating birds through the Migratory Bird Act. But migratory paths are worldwide, crossing continents, especially shorebird migrants. Losing habitat, forage areas, rest areas and shelter costs millions of lives. For over 150 million years, birds have followed the same

migratory paths. All of us living in industrial and developing countries have changed that. In our quest for a better life we are unwittingly destroying other species. *But all is not lost.* See an interactive article in the New York Times by Dr. Fitzpatrick at this link:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/27/opinion/shorebirds-extinction-climate-change.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region>

From Majestic Marathon Flyer to Plastic-Laden Mortality: the Laysan Albatross and Midway Atoll

I hear this everywhere I go, this sense of 'I'm too small to make a difference,' and yet somehow, collectively, humanity has created the problems that we have. So somehow, we all do make a difference. - Chris Jordan

Nine out of ten seabirds have ingested plastic. By 2050, virtually all seabirds will have plastic in their stomachs. The sea is acidifying, rising and warming at an alarming rate, and we humans are driving the change. People protect what they love, yet we are failing to protect our blue home. Acclaimed photographic artist, filmmaker, and cultural activist Chris Jordan believes this is because we have forgotten what we love. In his Parley Talk, he builds a powerful

case against the apathy driving the continued destruction.

To document the consequences of our collective disconnect from nature, Chris turns his lens on the plight of the albatross at Midway Atoll, more than 1,300 miles from the nearest store yet directly impacted by swirling accumulations of plastic debris in the North Pacific Gyre. Chris's work puts the incomprehensible into perspective. His images of Midway confront the true toll of our plastic addiction and growing aversion to grief, inviting the audience to consider what we stand to lose, indeed what we're already losing, should we continue to turn away from our emotions.

Credits: Photo: Hob Osterlund. Text www.parley.tv/



See Chris Jordan's film,
"Albatross"

Hob Osterlund



Plastic-filled stomach
of juvenile albatross
that starved to death.



**Rejoining
Members!**

Andrew Barstow, Port Clyde
Kimber Lee Clark, Lincolnville
Karen S. Olson, Camden

From the Editor Air, Earth, and Water

In today's world, all the hard work that has gone before to clean and protect our waters, save and protect our wildlife, flora, and biodiversity, and save our land, is in imminent danger of being undone. Economics clashes with the natural order.

Nature has a way of renewing itself; it never takes more than it needs. Now we, rapacious in our appetite, take faster than Nature can renew. We dump, slash, dig, destroy, kill with ever-increasing speed and abandon—like voracious B-movie monsters.

We must move and act to protect the things we love. In Maine, we have a passion for the outdoors. Can you imagine when the seeming infinite swaths of forests are reduced to plots; when pristine waters no longer have fish, when birds no longer sing because they are so few, when the air we breathe burns our throat.

We must *never* take Nature for granted. We must protect the things we love whether it be ourselves or our environment. How lucky we are in Maine to take a deep breathe of clean, fresh air, drink and fish clean water, walk in forests laden in moss, live with wildlife, look up at a crystalline night sky filled with stars, and hear the plaintive cry of the loon.

Mid-Coast Audubon

Organized December 6, 1969

a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

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

OFFICERS

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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!

Injured Bird!

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Only seabirds and shorebirds
**On the Rush of Wings
has closed.**



Mid-Coast Audubon Starts New Program at Jackson Memorial Library



Sue shows coloring book to attendees

This is the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, passed in 1918. Part of Mid-Coast Audubon's mission is education and in celebration of this anniversary we have made a gift to the Jackson Memorial Library in Tenants Harbor of 5 bird feeders and 2 pairs of binoculars in hopes of drawing the attention of the kids of St. George away from

the virtual world of their electronic devices to the real world and what it holds just outside the window.

Two board members, Lew Purinton and Steve Barnes, got the feeders set up on April 11. Another board member, John Weinrich, was instrumental in organizing the purchase of these gifts. The opening reception at the library on April 24 from 3-5 for the bird observatory was well attended. We hope it will encourage the formation of a Young Birders Club.

Sue Schubel describes the opening: A beautiful day! We had a binocular station, a field guide making station, a bird-feeder making station, and a snack station. Plus a musical backdrop!

Purple finches and goldfinches on the feeder. Time and weather allowed us to walk down to the marsh where Canada Geese were nesting on a rocky islet and Osprey and Tree Swallows flew about. We even had coloring book created by Sherrie York, our newest board member. We now have the framework for other observatories. Thanks to all who made it possible.

Steve Barnes and Sue Schubel



Board members Steve and Lew smile at the new bird-feeding station!



Board member Dennis shows young participants how to use binoculars



Board member Kathy helps a young birder "get on the bird."



Ted helps young birders identify birds coming to the feeders.



Kathy and more eager young birders.

Quiz Answers

1. 50 species worldwide, 27 in North America
2. Black-legged Kittiwake
3. Great Black-backed Gull, Little Gull
4. It can take up to four years and eight plumage stages for a gull to reach maturity.

5. They are either black-headed or white-headed
6. Most gulls nest in colonies on islands, shores, or cliffs, in a scraped nest on the ground. Both parents help in nest building, incubation, and feeding.
7. Bonaparte's Gulls nest in trees, usually cypresses

8. Herring prefer coastlines; Ring-billed are more commonly found inland. They also differ in size, leg color, and bill color.
9. Glaucous Gull (larger) and Iceland Gull (smaller)
10. The black feathers contain melanin, which makes them stronger.



Mid-Coast Audubon

P.O. Box 458

Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458

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

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

Join us
for our star
fundraising
event, our

Annual Lobster Bake

Hog Island Audubon Camp

September 1, 2018

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Watch as the lobster, clams, potatoes, corn, and
onions steam under layers of seaweed on the beach,
and puffin dessert tops off the meal.

Hike, relax in the sun, BYOB

\$50 per person

See page 4 for
details!

Support habitat conservation — buy a Duck Stamp.



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Our community of members is integral to our success on behalf of Maine's diverse wildlife and habitat. When you join or renew your Maine Audubon membership, you ensure that work can continue.

Thank you!