



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

Published three times a year

Volume 43, No. 2 - May 2019

Guest author
The Wonder of
Feathers
Page 1



President's Corner
Important Places to
think about
Page 2

Critter Corner
Gull-iver's Travels
Page 2

Calendar
Field trips and
programs
Page 4

Bird Festivals
Spring birding in
Maine
Page 4

**Who Am I and
Warbler Song Quiz**
Test your warbler id
and song skills
Page 5

Hog Island
Spaces still left at
Hog Island Audubon
Camp
Page 6

**New & Rejoining
Members**
Page 6

**How Can I Become
Involved?**
Some citizen science
suggestions
Page 6

New Bobolink Trail
Georges River Land
Trust to open new trail
in South Thomaston
Page 7



The Wonder of Feathers

How many of us have wandered in the forest, dawdled on the beach, or worked in our own backyards and come across a feather, perhaps blue, maybe yellow, or striped — a discovered treasure. This is the closest many will come to touching a bird. The joy experienced makes us forget worldly problems and look skyward for the owner.

Spring is the time when we can't wait to catch the first burst of color in our yards. From South and Central America, these feathered creatures arrive to find a mate, raise young, fatten up then go back south again. We see them in all their feathered glory.

Did you know that birds are the only creature that has feathers!

Depending on the size of the bird, they can have as many as 25,000 feathers or as little as 1,500. Just looking at the Fiery-throated



Fiery-throated Hummingbird by Joseph F. Pescatore

Hummingbird shown and trying to count the feathers seems a formidable task considering the tiny size of both bird and feather.



Maude White, paper cutter artist



Archaeopteryx lithographica - Google Images

The sheer beauty and complexity of feathers have captured the imagination of artist, scientist, writer, poet, mystic, all of us.

In 1861, *Archaeopteryx lithographica* was

discovered in a limestone quarry in Germany. This was the first discovery of what seemed to be a feathered creature, part reptile and part bird. Given the name *Archaeopteryx* meaning "ancient wing written in stone," the fossil was found to be the earliest known example of a fully formed bird; it existed 150 million years ago.

Continued on page 3



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

Important Places

"I think you're just a big 'phibber," she said, after hearing of the night's escapades. It really did happen — the amazing congress of swirling salamanders and their fellow amphibians in the vernal pool, but I hadn't seen it this year.

It seemed like spring was slow in coming. First we had longer days spring, then mud spring, then a bit warm spring, then SNOW spring, and back to rain and mud spring. In the cold holler where I live, ice was still in the vernal pool every time I checked, then it was gone and the pool was full of gelatinous eggs! Somehow in that April night enough rain fell for the Spotted Salamanders to emerge from beneath the leaves and make their perilous way to the pool in company with the noisy Wood Frogs. There they meet a mate, court and lay eggs. Then back to their places under the leaves. These salamanders usually live within 100 meters of their specific ephemeral pools, laying eggs there religiously even if moved further away, finding a way back by a traditional path. They can live up to 20 years! Sensitive creatures of habit with specific needs.



Digital fingerpainting of forest with vernal pool by Sue Schubel

Sudden and dramatic losses get the attention. We have just seen parts of Notre Dame Cathedral on fire. It was a dramatic scene in downtown Paris — fortunately no human lives were lost, and even most of the resident bees survived. But the iconic, historic, and well-crafted spire came crashing down. An interesting response resulted, in which everyone felt the need to post pictures of themselves before the intact

building. "I knew her when . . ." We all connected through this building made by people, a symbol of a city, a nation, and something larger. A great outpouring of sympathy and cash followed.

Then came the cry to notice great losses *not* made by people — habitats being destroyed and species actually going extinct, with no hope of a rebuild. Wounds not bathed, hurts not tended. If these hidden habitats were in the middle of Paris, we would notice. If the lives lost were human, we would pay attention. The forest cathedrals taken down bit by bit are outside of the public view.

As the little salamanders creep out from under their leaves, heading to the place where they need to meet, will they find it? Will the water be of the right pH level? Will they take little selfies in front of a parking lot where once they came to continue their very existence?

CRITTER CORNER DON REIMER

Gull-iver's Travels

Have you ever encountered an individual bird and wondered about its provenance? Where did it come from? How old is it? Where has it wandered during its lifetime? These types of questions usually go unanswered, unless a bird is somehow marked or tagged to give some clues to its origin.

That's the case with a leg-banded Ring-billed Gull that has wintered in Rockland since 2012. Gull # BF2Z was first banded as an adult bird at his island nesting colony outside Montreal Canada in the summer of 2012. At the conclusion of the 2012 nesting season, he ventured toward Rockland where he winters each year. Since it takes 3 years for Ring-billed Gulls to reach adult status, this gull is now a minimum of at least 10 years old. Gulls are well known for site fidelity, meaning that they will return to particular locations at certain times of year.



Don Reimer



Don Reimer

In these intervening years, this gull and I have come to acknowledge each other. By mid-July I've come to anticipate his annual arrivals as I check the parking lots at the Rockland Hannaford. Last summer, he sat perched atop the plaza flagpole as my vehicle eased into place below. He leaned forward, peering to study my now familiar red car. Down he sailed, landing 20 feet away. I tossed a few pieces of dry breakfast cereal to consummate the greeting process.

The wandering gull has fostered some human connections as well as I send periodic sighting reports to the Canadian biology professor who oversees this international gull study from Montreal. In spring 2017, BF2Z was miraculously found among the 45,000 nesting gull pairs at the northern colony. My final 2019 Rockland sighting was April 11. Clad in his impeccably crisp breeding plumage, my gull cohort bristled with expectant energy. His tubular blue leg band is now badly chipped and will likely fall off during the spring season. Despite this probability, I suspect that a certain ring-billed gull and I will recognize each other again in July.

The Wonder of Feathers . . . *cont'd*

Birds have seven types of feathers: wing, down, tail, contour, semiplume, filoplume and bristle. Each has a special purpose. Wing feathers allow flight, giving lift and drag and have windproof surfaces. Tail feathers provide precision steering, except for those birds that have additional tail feathers with no aerodynamic need except to attract mates, for example, the King Bird of Paradise.

Contour feathers cover the bird's body and streamline its shape. Like overlapping roof shingles, the feathers' waterproof tips are exposed to the elements while the fluffy bases are tucked close to the body.

Down and semiplume feathers are close to the body to trap body heat.

Filoplumes are short simple feathers that sense the position of the contour feathers. Bristles are the simplest, commonly



found on the head, possibly protecting the bird's eyes and face.

Other uses of feathers that allow birds to survive and procreate are display and camouflage. The head feathers in the Wood Duck allow him to flare them when a promising female swims by. Hooded Mergansers have a

similar display raising their crown feathers to display a huge white patch. These displays and colors are what make us stop and stare in disbelief and wonder.

At the other end of the display spectrum is the ability to blend

into surroundings. For example, in the photo of what appears to be a tree stump is a Common Potoo sitting atop the stump! Females of a species are usually drab compared with the males, because they need to blend into their surroundings while on the nest.

Go down the rabbit hole and explore the

world of feathers. You will be surprised and emerge grinning.

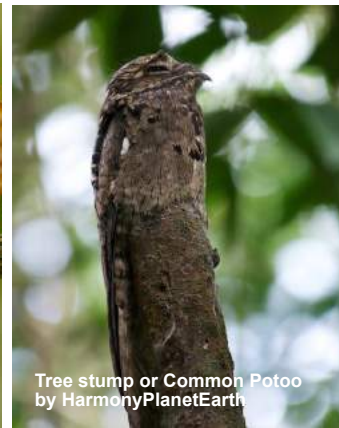
Juanita Roushdy lives in Bremen and is an avid birder. She constantly finds herself going down a rabbit hole and coming up with a new appreciation of the winged visitors to her yard.



Wood Duck by Melissa Groo



King Bird of Paradise by Tim Laman



Tree stump or Common Potoo by HarmonyPlanetEarth

New Candidate for World's First Bird?

This bird predates *Archaeopteryx* by 10 million years and was discovered in China, according to National Geographic.



An artist's conception of *Aurornis xui*, a new early avian theropod from the Middle/Late Jurassic of China. ILLUSTRATION COURTESY MASATO HATTORI

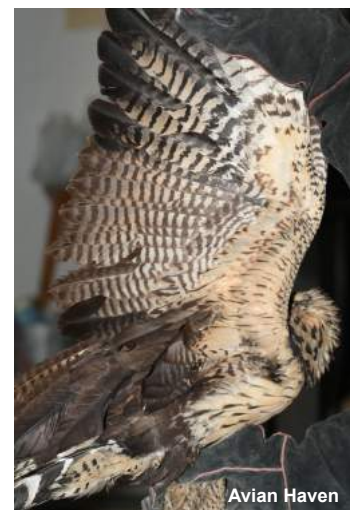
Learn more about feathers

Welcome to the rabbit hole!
Enjoy the journey.

Everything you Need to Know About Feathers, AllAboutBirds, <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/feathers-article/>

Evolution of Feathers, National Geographic, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2011/02/feather-evolution/>

Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle, by Thor Hanson, Basic Books, 2011 — a fascinating read.



Feathers as identifiers.

The underside markings of the Great Black Hawk that visited Portland was used to identify it as the same bird seen in Texas.

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 contact: Dennis McKenna 563-8439

MAY

Field Trip: Saturday, May 11

Migrating seabirds and passerines.

Meet at Pemaquid Point Lighthouse parking lot at 7:00 a.m.

Field Trip: Thursday, May 16

Evergreen Cemetery and Capisic Pond

Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.

Field Trip: Saturday, May 25

Monhegan Island day trip to see spring migrants,

Make a reservation through Monhegan Boat Line prior to trip.

Meet at Ferry Dock, Port Clyde at 6:45 a.m.

JUNE

Field Trip: Thursday, Saturday, June 6

Belgrade Lakes and Augusta Airport

Meet at Damariscotta Hannaford at 7 a.m.

Field Trip: Thursday, Saturday, June 13

Kennebunk Plains and Sanford Wastewater Lagoons

Sea ducks, raptors, and early migrants.

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

AUGUST

Field Trip: Thursday, August 8

Scarborough Marsh

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

Field Trip: Thursday, August 22

Pine Point and Biddeford Pool

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

*International
Migratory Bird Day!*

*For
updates
and
detailed
information
about our events,
visit our website
[https://](https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/)*

*midcoast.maineaudubon.org/
or
e-mail midcoast@maineaudubon.org,
or
Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/MidCoastAudubon/)
[MidCoastAudubon/](https://www.facebook.com/MidCoastAudubon/)*

SEPTEMBER

Annual Lobster Bake, Saturday, September 7

Hog Island Audubon Camp - \$50 per person, BYOB

Boat shuttle 10 a.m. and noon; return shuttle 3 p.m. from Hog Island boat dock on mainland. For reservations and information e-mail sschubel@tidewater.net and put "lobster" in subject line.

Field Trip: Saturday, September 21

Monhegan Island day trip seeking fall migrants and occasional vagrants. The Monhegan Boat Line ferry leaves Port Clyde at 7:00am and returns from Monhegan at 4:30pm. Contact the boat line (207-372-8848) for ferry reservations.

Contact Dennis McKenna at 563-8438 for further details.

OCTOBER

Field Trip: Thursday, October 3

Popham Beach.

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

Field Trip: Thursday, October 17

Green Point Preserve, Dresden

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

Field Trip: Thursday, October 31

Sabattus Pond, Sabattus

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

Christmas Bird Count — dates to be determined

Upcoming Maine Birding Festivals

May 17-19, Wings, Waves, and Woods, Deer Isle and Stonington

May 24-26, L.L. Bean and Maine Audubon Birding Festival, Freeport

May 24-27, Down East Spring Birding Festival, Cobscook Bay, Whiting

May 30-June 2, Acadia Birding Festival, Bar Harbor

For more information, visit: www.maineaudubon.org



Spring Cleaning!

It's time to spring clean all your feeders, nest boxes, bird baths, and fountains.

Use vinegar and hot water or diluted bleach solution — 1/2 capful of bleach to a gallon of hot water. Soak and scrub. For bird baths and hummingbird feeders use hot water and vinegar solution.

During the warm, humid summers, feeders need to be cleaned about every two weeks to prevent mold and the spread of disease.

Fresh food, clean feeders and baths, and native plants makes for happy birds!

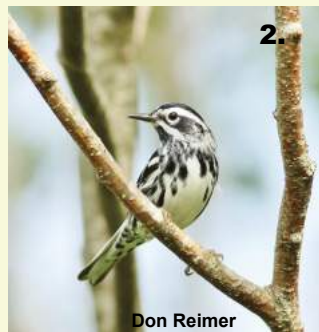


Janet via Birdshare



BirdsandBlooms

Who Am I and Warbler Song Quiz



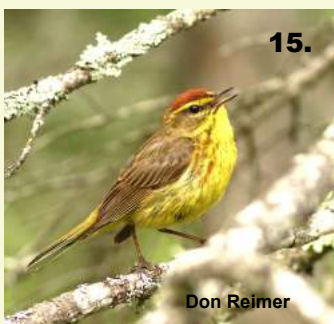
Bird Quiz – Warbler Songs

Warbler songs can be remembered with a descriptive mnemonic. Can you name which warbler sings what?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. sweet sweet sweet I'm so sweet | 6. zeeeeee-up |
| 2. seebit seebit seebit titititi | 7. witchity witchity witchity witch |
| 3. please please pleased to meet ya | 8. teacher teacher teacher teacher |
| 4. beer beer beer bee | 9. weeta weeta weetsee |
| 5. zee zee zee zoo zee | 10. tsee tsee tsee-o |



Answers on page 6



New and Welcome Rejoining Members!

Bradley Arnall and Tina Casteris, *Appleton*
 Claire Brunner, *Rockland*
 Helen Burlingame, *Belfast*
 Donald Cameron, *Newcastle*
 Leslie and Benjamin Fuller, *Cushing*
 Dede Heath, *Damariscotta*
 Susan Keefer, *Union*
 Cindy Lang, *Thomaston*
 Susan G. Lott, *Friendship*
 Gary Roberts, *Appleton*
 Lynn Rohr, *Edgecomb*
 Daniel B. Rowland, *Lexington, KY*
 Ann and David Somers, *Belfast*
 Susan St. John, *Owls Head*

Warbler Song Quiz - Answers

1. Yellow
2. Nashville
3. Chestnut-sided
4. Black-throated Blue
5. Black-throated Green
6. Northern Parula
7. Common Yellowthroat
8. Ovenbird
9. Magnolia
10. American Redstart

Who Am I? - Answers

1. Common Yellowthroat
2. Black and white
3. Chestnut-sided
4. Black-throated Green
5. Wilson's
6. Pine
7. Canada
8. Yellow
9. Ovenbird
10. Black-throated Blue
11. Blue-winged
12. American Redstart
13. Yellow-rumped
14. Nashville
15. Palm
16. Blackburnian - female
17. Magnolia
18. Northern Parula

How Can I Become Involved?

So much is being learned about migration, behavior, food sources, roads hazardous to wildlife, water quality, trout numbers, and more — all through citizen science projects.

In Maine, we're lucky to have a number of groups that conduct these kinds of projects, ranging from loon and turtle surveys, to invasives and signs of the season, to national projects. Below are a few to explore and see if they work for you. You can do them by yourself, with friends, with family, or a class. The possibilities are endless.

Each observable event adds to the body of knowledge for that species. Sign up for one today.

JourneyNorth is a project that tracks the migration of Monarch butterflies and hummingbirds.

<https://journeynorth.org/hummingbirds> and <https://journeynorth.org/monarchs>

Signs of the Seasons is a UMaine project that records seasonal changes in plants and animals, e.g., growth of milkweed, nesting birds, i.e., phenology! <https://extension.umaine.edu/signs-of-the-seasons/>

Annual Loon Count. For 35 years Maine Audubon has been monitoring Maine's summer population of loons. <https://www.maineaudubon.org/projects/loons/annual-loon-count/>

Maine Turtle Roadkill Survey. <https://www.maineaudubon.org/projects/road-watch/maine-turtle-roadkill-survey/>

eBird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon monitor bird movement across the nation and world. <https://ebird.org/home>

Maine Breeding Bird Atlas tracks and records the breeding behavior of birds. Sightings can be made through the eBird portal. <https://ebird.org/atlasme/home>

Don't see anything you like, then check with your local land trust or Audubon chapter. Many have water-quality surveys, marine invasives on boats, etc.

Participating helps you become more aware of the rhythms of the natural world around you. See you on a survey or start out by exploring the maps and sightings.



Hog Island Audubon Camp

The camp still has a few spaces in most of its sessions, so check out the website and spend a week of fun and learning from expert instructors, eating good food, boat trips, and so much more. <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>

Can't go to camp, take the online Raptor course; the next best thing to being there. The Hog Island ospreys Rachel and Steve returned in early April to start their new family. Go to <https://explore.org/livecams/national-audubon-society/osprey-nest>

Mid-Coast Audubon

Organized December 6, 1969

a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

P.O. Box 458, Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458
midcoast@maineaudubon.org

OFFICERS

Sue Schubel, President
 John Weinrich, Vice President
 Sherrie York, Secretary
 Lew Purinton, Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Tom Arter, Newcastle
 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: Dennis McKenna, 563-8439

Nest boxes: Lew Purinton, 215-1913

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 and photos are welcome.**

Deadline for next issue is October 15!

Send to juanitar@tidewater.net

Injured Bird!

Avian Haven

Accepts all bird species
 year-round

207-382-6761

www.avianhaven.org



Don Reimer

Woodcock
 finds worm
 beneath
 snow!

New Bobolink Trail in South Thomaston

Mid-Coast Audubon is pleased to partner with the Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) to provide a public education opportunity to learn about Bobolinks and other grassland birds in South Thomaston.

What started ten years ago as an idea to conserve the exceptional natural systems and iconic landscape between the Weskeag and St. George Rivers has become 584 acres of protected wildlife habitat, traditionally farmed hayfields, and riverfront scenery. GRLT successfully protected this special place and created the Riverview Hayfields Preserve.



Louis Bevier

Perched on a grass stem or displaying in flight over a field, breeding male Bobolinks are striking. No other North American bird has a white back and black underparts (some have described this look as wearing a tuxedo backwards). Added to this are the male's rich, straw-colored patch on the head and his bubbling, virtuosic song. The male Bobolink often sings this song while flying in a peculiar helicopter-like pattern, moving slowly with his wings fluttering rapidly.

The Bobolink is one of the world's most impressive songbird migrants, traveling some 12,500 miles (20,000 kilometers) to and from southern South America every year.

Bobolinks can be found in Maine in grassy or overgrown fields and pastures, along with other grassland nesting birds such as Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark.



Courtesy GRLT



Courtesy GRLT

These grassland species begin the nesting season in late spring and typically fledge their young by mid-July often choosing fields that are managed for agricultural hay production. Unfortunately, most hayfields are cut at least once during the nesting period, resulting in total nestling mortality, a pattern that plays out across the northeast.



Louis Bevier

With the protection of more than 500 acres on the Riverview Hayfields Preserve, GRLT can assure that their hayfields will not be mowed before the July 15th target to allow these at-risk grassland species to complete their breeding cycle and fledge a new generation.

Now, GRLT is poised to invite people to enjoy this preserve through the new Bobolink Trail. The trail will be designed to foster knowledge and understanding of the

Preserve's natural and cultural heritage with an emphasis on its importance for grassland

bird species. Mid-Coast Audubon will assist GRLT to create educational panels and co-host bird walks on site.

Visitors can walk an easy mown grass trail from a parking lot on Route 131 about ¼ of a mile to the Georges River shore where a small pavilion will be the perfect spot for a late summer or fall picnic.

Join Mid-Coast Audubon and Georges River Land Trust as a partner in this project. Donations can be made at <http://www.georgesriver.org/donate-now/>. Designate your gift to the Bobolink Trail. With your help, the trail will be open for the public to enjoy right after the nesting season this year!

Gail Presley is on the boards of MCA and GRLT.



Louis Bevier



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

Nonprofit org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #862
Damariscotta, ME
04543-0458

Don't Miss the Feast of the Summer!

September 7, 2019

Annual Lobster Bake at Hog Island

\$50 per person

See calendar on page 4



Teens Head to Costa Rica for Tropical Teen Week!

Join the Hog Island and ABA team in
Costa Rica, July 21-26, 2019. Sign up
at <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>

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

MAINE 
AUDUBON

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Midcoast Chapter

YES! I want to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in Maine as a ☐ **new** ☐ **renewing** member.

Annually ☐ \$30 Senior/Volunteer/Student | ☐ \$40 Individual | ☐ \$50 Household | ☐ \$100 | ☐ \$Other _____

Monthly ☐ Enroll me in the Frequent Flyer Program and charge my credit card each month:

___ \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$15 ___ \$25 Other \$ _____

View all member benefits online by visiting maineaudubon.org/memberFAQ

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

Seasonal Address: _____ from _____ to _____

☐ Check enclosed for \$ _____ ☐ Please charge \$ _____ to my credit card (below)

Card # _____ Exp. date: _____ / _____

Join or renew online:
maineaudubon.org/join

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!