

The Merganser



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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How a Shifting Climate Will Affect Birds, Wildlife

As 2020 gets underway and decennial reflections of the last ten years slow to a quiet hum, there are some facts that should not be overlooked. In the 2010s, the planet was at its hottest recorded since large-scale fossil fuel burning began about 150 years ago. Currently, global average temperatures are 1.1 degree Celsius above average, nearing the 1.5C warning issued by scientists as the threshold between climate change and climate catastrophe.

While temperatures hover above average, it's important to keep in mind that climate change is not a blanket distributed evenly across the globe. The planet is broadly getting hotter because of the way heat is being trapped and then absorbed. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), our oceans are absorbing 90% of excess heat, which is defined as "anthropogenic heat" or human-caused. In the relationship between our oceans and jet streams, this excess heat is being



Rainbow Lorikeet in Australia



Gouldian Finch in Australia

pushed through normal wind currents, to places like the Arctic or Gulf of Maine that aren't used to such warmth. As these currents interact with one another, it causes more extreme weather events, like stronger storms, polar vortexes, prolonged droughts, and mass flooding. Such increasingly severe events cost the US over \$650 billion between 2015-18. These costs are likely to increase, causing disruptions to the American economy in several sectors; so, while debate on how to best mitigate and adapt continues, one invaluable group that has had no say in the debate is wildlife.

In May 2019, the United Nation's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a report that painted a stark picture of the future of wildlife in the wake of climate change: at the current rate of change, one million species are at risk of extinction. The importance of biodiversity cannot be overstated. As it underpins the stability of the planet, biodiversity is responsible for supporting healthy ecosystems and economies, and can hold answers to climate change itself. Mangrove habitats, for example, are renowned for their ability to store carbon. Forest and wetlands like

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

It's 2020! A date that still seems like it should be in the future, and somehow more metallic. I

was ready to embrace the year with clarity and action. 20/20 Vision! How disappointing to find out that 20/20 vision is actually not super-duper—it is what an average person *should* be able to see from 20 feet away—a condition only 35% of ungoggled people actually meet.

If we want to consider visual superstars we can look to the birds! Birds (and reptiles) have large eyes that can focus quickly with ciliary muscles. Flatter than mammal eyes, and generally locked in a bony orbit, they are packed with photoreceptors. A House Sparrow has twice as many receptors per square millimeter as a person. Rods are the receptors used in low light, abundant in owls and other nocturnal birds. Cones can detect different wavelengths of color and birds have 4 types, rather than the 3 we humans possess. They can see ultraviolet light, and perhaps magnetic fields. Cones in bird



Jean Hall



Jean Hall

Beautiful turquoise eyes of Double-crested Cormorant

eyes contain colored drops of oil to filter out some wavelengths of light before processing.

Some bird stand-outs in the visual field are the Woodcock, who can see 360 degrees horizontally and 180 degrees vertically, the Ostrich with the largest eye of any land vertebrate, and the Kingfisher, with the best all-around air and water vision. A Kestrel can spot an insect from 50 feet away. The Wedge-tailed Eagle of Australia has the largest eyes compared to body size and best visual acuity.

Clarity *and* action—I heard a fascinating podcast of “The Hidden Brain,” in which scientist and author Wendy Wood explains how we make and break habits. Taking action once isn't so hard, but habits are essential to long-term success in changing behaviors. It is too hard for the brain to go through the arduous decision-making process again and again. Adding or removing friction helps steer one to the desired path. Inspired by the “Create Your Personal Conservation Plan” story in the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon newsletter, I have firmly decided to reduce plastic consumption this year, and give up drinks in plastic bottles completely. Even armed with all the bee's wax wrappers,

Continued on page 3

CRITTER CORNER DON REIMER

Of the several bird feeders in my yard, a hanging peanut feeder attracts steady lines of customers. The flitting parade of chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers take turns, maneuvering their bills through the caged metal wire to retrieve nut fragments. A pack of Blue Jays make extraordinary efforts to cull out whole peanuts through a frayed hole created by gray squirrels near the base of the feeder. Since their wild diet includes acorns, beechnuts and hazelnuts, the jays love the fat-rich peanuts!

My photo jay had managed to stuff a dozen peanuts into his gradually expanding crop. I figured he wouldn't eat them all onsite. Instead, like the chickadees and other pint-sized nut harvesters, he would cache some nuts at hidden locations for future use—most being buried on the ground at distances up to two miles away. Once food is cached, birds may revisit the site periodically to adjust or rearrange its placement or possibly to refresh their memory.



Blue Jay with full crop of peanut bits.

Don Reimer

Caching helps birds survive bad weather and general food scarcities. Most species show preferences for certain cached food items and hiding sites. Chickadees prefer black-oil sunflower, often eating a small portion prior to caching the seeds under shingles, bark, knotholes, dead leaves or

clusters of pine needles. Chickadees are more likely to cache during midday. Titmice choose the largest sunflower seeds to eat and cache, often stashing them within 130 feet of bird feeders. Nuthatches also prefer the larger seeds, hiding them in deep furrows of tree trunks and the underside of branches. Feeder studies indicate that birds are 25% more likely to select shelled-out sunflower chips, such as “Meaties.”

In addition to nutritional support for wintering species, caching is an important seed dispersal tool across forested regions. In the western U.S., for example, Clark's Nutcrackers may store 100,000 white bark pine seeds a year. Since not all seeds are recovered, caching behavior creates some mutualized benefits—sustainable nutrition for birds and natural opportunities for renewal of forest tree resources.

A Shifting Climate, Birds, Wildlife . . . *cont'd*

those found in Maine play an integral role as buffers to storms and flooding. For complex ecosystems to serve these functions, their biodiversity must be intact.

Climate change threatens the stability of ecosystems because most wildlife cannot adapt quickly enough to the changing environments. For example, season changes are happening more abruptly in parts of the world, causing birds to shift their migrations earlier or later. With these changes so too will the consistent availability of food change. When migration timing affects the productivity and success rate of a nest—by a matter of days—many birds struggle to survive.

In the US, it is projected that a quarter of bird species in certain regions could be entirely different by the middle of the century. Specifically, in Acadia National Park, by 2050 approximately 60 bird species will have disappeared from their historical spring and summer nesting grounds, among them the Boreal Chickadee and Bay-breasted Warbler. And as Maine winters grow milder, it's possible that waterbirds like the American Bittern and Pied-billed Grebe will overwinter instead of migrating south, possibly increasing competition for resources amongst other species more adept at tolerating the changing temperatures.

If Maine's birds cannot adjust their migrations or adapt to shifting environments, they could be among the one million animal species to go extinct by the end of the century. According to the National Audubon Society, nearly two-thirds of North American birds are at risk—including 50 percent of Maine's 230 species—without rapid action to prevent catastrophic global warming (an increase of 3C above average).

The threats of climate change extend far beyond the borders of Maine, as evidenced in recent news that Chinstrap

Penguin populations have plunged nearly 70% in parts of Antarctica and that Australian bushfires have killed over one billion animals. Of these reports, one represents a gradual decrease in species population and the other a sharp decline, both have been attributed to climate change. The Antarctic Peninsula has been warming six times faster than the rest of planet. With increased warming has come decreased sea ice extent, which is the breeding ground for phytoplankton, an organism that fuels the food chain. From penguins to seals to whales, all wildlife are affected in the region. In Australia, prolonged hot and dry conditions have exacerbated natural bushfires. These conditions are building a trend of devastating summer seasons.



Chinstrap Penguin in Antarctica



Common Tern—a familiar sight in Maine

Though forecasts of the implications of climate change are daunting and demoralizing, it is imperative to take them seriously for the sake of the future—for humans and wildlife. In January, the United Nations issued a galvanizing report laying out a plan that would mitigate the effects of climate change by protecting nearly one-third of the planet's biodiversity hotspots and cutting pollution in half (this includes both carbon emissions and plastics). Global leaders will have the opportunity to adopt this plan later this year at a biodiversity summit in China.

While great responsibility falls on the shoulders of governments and private companies, the collective action of individuals is equally important. Every person can make a change by taking that first step. Everyone should feel inspired to do so. We are all in this together.

Maggie Dewane is a camp director of the Saving Seabirds program at Hog Island Audubon Camp and a freelance writer covering environmental and climate issue. She lives in Maine year round.

President's Corner, *cont'd.*

mesh produce bags, and metal water bottles one can muster, the world seems intent on vexing our progress. Kindly, persistently, we must preemptively refuse the straws and the plastic bags. A little friction for the people whose habit it is to hand them out. Most important—Vote Vote Vote, so the system can help rather than hinder our good behaviors.

If switching to shade-grown coffee is on your to-do list, let us remove some friction. We are offering a coffee-tasting in March of several brands and many roasts of shade-grown coffee, making it easy for you to find the one you like best. We'll provide you with a list of where to buy or order. We'll provide you with information so that as you sip, you'll hear the birds singing in the coffee plantation forests. We'll help your brain justify what your heart knows – that birds matter and we can make a difference!

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

MARCH

Program: Thursday, March 19, 7-8:30 p.m.

Camden Library, 55 Main Street

Camera Trapping Your Wildlife Neighbors Join us for a presentation by Janet Pesaturo on camera trapping and wildlife tracking using cameras to capture images of your wildlife neighbors. Janet is a nature guide, author, and founder of Winterberry Wildlife, where she teaches indoor and outdoor classes on wildlife tracking and camera trapping. Her first book, *Camera Trapping Guide*, is the book she wishes had existed years ago. This one-hour talk, followed by book sale and signing, will introduce trail cameras—how they work and how to set them up—and then discuss smart camera placement. Signed books will be available for \$20 cash.

MARCH

Saturday, March 7

Biddeford Pool and environs

Join us in seeking seabirds and early migrants at this historic Maine setting. Depart from Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00 a.m.

APRIL

Thursday, April 9

Great Salt Bay and Pemaquid Point

Join us as we seek early migrants around Great Salt Bay and Pemaquid Point. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust parking lot on Belvedere Road.

Saturday, April 25

Reid State Park in Georgetown

Join us as we look for early migrants at this beautiful location. Previous trips to this beach have found newly arrived Piping Plovers, Purple Sandpipers, Red-necked Grebes and all three Scoters. Depart from Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00 a.m.

MAY

Saturday, May 9

Sears Island, Searsport

Join Mid-Coast Audubon as we seek spring migrants at this Mid-Coast hotspot. The site is easy to navigate as the trails

are mostly paved. Depart Damariscotta Hannaford at 6:30 a.m. sharp or Belfast Reny's at 7:45 a.m..

Tuesday, May 12

Viles Arboretum, Augusta

Mid-Coast Audubon continues to pursue spring migrants at this noted hotspot. Depending on reports we may initially look for Louisiana Waterthrushes at nearby Vaughn Woods. Meet at Viles Arboretum at 7:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 16

Evergreen Cemetery and Capisic Park, Portland

We will continue the spring migrants search at this, historically, most successful field trip. Last year we found an excellent variety of warblers including a Kentucky. Thrushes are vocal and common at this time. Depart from Damariscotta Hannaford at 7:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 23

Monhegan Island

We will venture to this classic spring migrant trap off of Port Clyde. Anything is possible at this renowned site. We catch the Monhegan Ferry from Port Clyde at 7:00 a.m. Participants make their own arrangements for transportation with the Monhegan Boat Line. For more information contact Dennis McKenna at 207-563-8439.

JUNE

Monday, June 1

South Thomaston

Mid-Coast Audubon will hold a joint walk with Georges River Land Trust, led by noted nature writer Scott Weidensaul, at the land trust's newly protected property in South Thomaston. The walk will begin at 10:00 a.m. at the property. Please call 207-594-5166 to register.

For updates and detailed information about our events, visit our website:

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

e-mail midcoast@maineaudubon.org or

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MidCoastAudubon/>

Mid-Coast Audubon Turns 50!

Help us celebrate by completing 50 Tiny Quests. Each Friday, we post a quest on our Facebook page.

Were the Numbers Up for the Christmas Bird Count?

With field support from 26 observers and 10 feeder watchers, the **Rockland/Thomaston count** occurred on December 21. Early morning temperatures of 9 degrees F rose into the high 20s later on, with little wind.

By day's end, 6,815 individual birds were tallied, comprising 71 separate species. Despite broad species diversity, numbers were low for certain species. The meager winter finch highlights were 9 Red Crossbills, 3 White-winged Crossbills and 3 Purple Finches; American Goldfinch numbers totaled 103.

As many folks have noted, song birds are scarce at feeding stations this winter. Two lingering Gray Catbirds, a Pine Warbler and three Ruby-crowned Kinglets were good finds, and a late Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was a bonus. A group of Fish Crows (a smaller and more southerly species than the familiar American Crows) now nests and winters in Rockland.

Waterfowl numbers were slightly lower. Mallard populations continue to rise (1,006) and outpace declining numbers of Black Ducks (89). Common Eider numbers have dropped markedly within the recent decade.

Eight species of raptors were found on count day or within the count week period. An adult Peregrine Falcon perched atop the Dragon Cement Plant towers was a treat. In the pre-dawn hours, three Barred Owls were tallied. A more unusual species, a hunting Short-eared Owl, was found cruising like a giant moth over the expansive hayfields of South Thomaston. (Don Reimer, compiler)

Pemaquid/Damariscotta The day dawned very windy. A far cry from the driving rain of December 14, the originally scheduled day for our count. Land birds would be skulking and hard to find, but we pressed on.



Pemaquid sunrise on 120th CBC.

Juanita Roushdy

We began by the river behind the bank searching for the drake Barrow's Goldeneye that we knew to be there. We quickly found it. Scanning the river we found a variety of expected species: Common Loons, five Bald Eagles, the first flock of Common Eiders our counters had seen so far down the river (clustered around an

oyster farm), Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads and the only Hooded Mergansers seen on the count.

At a residential enclave close to downtown, we found the usual feeder birds enjoying the largesse of the home owners, but in a sheltered area behind one house we found a lingering Gray Catbird. In this same area, during the count week, both Carolina and Winter Wrens were found.

At the Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust property of off Business Route 1, we spotted a solitary gray, black and white robin-sized bird scanning the surroundings looking for prey, a Northern Shrike, another bird frequently missed in this count.

The wind never let up; more exposed areas yielded little contribution to count totals.

We joined our fellow counters for the compilation. We were one of six teams to cover a rather extensive area, basically from East Boothbay to Friendship. Some good finds were: a Green-winged Teal found among resident Mallards in New Harbor; peering through scopes in the teeth of the wind at Pemaquid Point observers found 21 Razorbills and a lone Iceland Gull. A feeder watcher saw our only blackbird, a Red-winged Blackbird.

Our final count was 65 species, about average for this count. An additional four species were

found during count-week. Conditions were less than ideal; fierce winds kept the numbers of land birds down. Nonetheless, the numbers seemed average; we counted 4,648 individuals. (Dennis McKenna, compiler)



Juvenile Red-headed Woodpecker

Sherrie York



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Don Reimer



Northern Shrike

Don Reimer

Welcome to Our Newest Board Member!

The board of Mid-Coast Audubon welcomes Meghan Kennedy as our newest member. We're excited to have you as part of our team.

In Meghan's words:

I feel honored and thrilled to be asked to be on the board of Mid-coast Audubon and am looking forward to helping out with trail work and any other tasks I can assist with. I work for Kieve-Wavus Education, Inc. on their passenger vessel, Snowgoose III (that does transport for Hog Island Audubon camp in the spring and fall, and Kieve-Wavus campers the rest of the time). I'm thrilled to be a part of Hog Island and its mission... I never get tired of seeing people spotting Puffins and other awesome birds for the first time. This past spring, I received my 100-ton boat captain's license and am a



Meghan with Sadie and Cooper at Nelson Preserve

registered Recreational Maine Guide. I live in Bristol (and grew up in Waldoboro). I completed the Midcoast Stewards program in 2019 through the Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust. My hobbies include: hiking with two amazing dogs (working on hiking the "4,000 Footers"), camping, monthly polar bear dips in the ocean, whitewater canoe racing, nature photography, and sustainable livestock farming (especially with sheep in Ireland). My favorite bird is the Black-capped Chickadee, because of its stunning colors against the snow, their tenacity, and their lovely song.

New and Rejoining Members

Stanley Allain, *Owls Head*
Andrew Barstow, *Port Clyde*
Laura Beckering, *Lincoln Center*
Clara Buescher, *Falmouth*
Cloe Chunn, *Swanville*
Hilary Creighton, *Manchester, MA*
Judith Falk, *Washington, DC*
Deidre Good, *Northport*

Mary and Bruce Hasnas, *Belfast*
Stephen Hirshberg, *Union*
Susan Hitchcox, *Monhegan*
James D. Jenkins, *Owls Head*
Peter Jenkins, *Prospect*
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Noel Jost-Coq, *Friendship*
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Barbara Mogel, *Rockland*

North American Bluebird Society, *Miamiville, OH*
John Parks, *Whitefield*
Kristin Pennock, *Whitefield*
Gene Randall and Marianne McKinney, *Belfast*
Cathleen Ronan, *Walpole*
Deidre Sousa, *Belfast*
A. H. Stockly, *Falmouth*
Kathleen Thornton, *Union*
Lisa Tichy, *Rockland*
George Wheelwright, *Rockport*

Looking Forward Quiz

Even as we huddle indoors and watch the winter birds at our feeders, we can anticipate the arrival of springtime migrants beginning as early as the end of February. What are you looking forward to? Snuggle up with a good bird book, and dream on.

1. What raptor's return is an early sign of spring?
2. Which passerines are usually the first to arrive in noisy flocks?
3. Robins and bluebirds will do what when the sun shines and melts the snow?

4. What birds will migrate from Maine for breeding season?
5. Why do male birds usually arrive earlier than females?
6. Why are some birds nocturnal migrants, and some diurnal migrants?
7. Why do passerines generally move northward along with the opening of leaves?
8. Which vireo can we expect to hear earliest?
9. What does "neotropical migrant" mean?
10. What might a Phoebe eat if it arrives before the bugs are flying?

Mid-Coast Audubon

Organized December 6, 1969

a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization
P.O. Box 458, Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458
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The Merganser is published three times a year in February, May, November. **News items and photos are welcome.**

Deadline for next issue is April 15!
Send to juanitar@tidewater.net

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It's Not Too Late for Hog Island

In today's fast-paced world, we need to stop and take time to connect with nature.

At Hog Island, a short boat ride off mid-coast Maine in Bremen, you'll find yourself immersed not only in nature in all its glory but sharing that space with renowned instructors eager to give you all their years of experience, with staff and FOHI volunteers wanting to make your experience last a lifetime, with nature infusing every fiber of your being.

For 83 years, Hog Island Audubon Camp has been a beacon in conservation education. Come and see what it is all about. Come see why it stays with campers throughout their life. Come be a part of the Hog Island family.

Hog Island has week-long residential programs for adults, teens, and families.

Scholarships available from Mid-Coast Audubon. Contact sschubel@tidewater.net



Visit <https://hogisland.audubon.org/> to learn about the sessions offered—Becoming a Better Birder, Puffin Islands, Bird Friendly Habitats, Monhegan Raptors, and so much more.

CBC cont'd from page 5

Bunker Hill circle, approximately 176 square miles, is wooded with agriculture fields and bisected North to South by Damariscotta Lake. The 18 field counters, working from daylight to dusk, tallied almost a carbon copy of last year's results for total species and total individuals. So, let's compare some of the tallies' discrepancies and statistics over the past two years and for the 12-year life of the circle.

This year's total species was 51 compared with 53 for the year before. The 12-year average for species counted is 53.6. Total individual birds counted was 3,255 compared with 3,288 for the previous year. Only a 33 bird difference and the 12-year average for total individuals is 3,637.

Given there was only a difference of 33 birds counted from 2018 to 2019 and a difference of 3 species, the total number of wild turkeys decreased from a substantial 708 in 2018 to 27 this year—a 12-year low.

Nine species of ducks were counted on mostly open, still, and running water with Mallards leading at 242—a 12-year high. Also setting a 12-year high were Rock Pigeon at 247 and Purple Finch at 26. Feeder birds were, in general, lower in numbers than years when the ground is covered in snow pushing birds to feeders.

Woodpecker and sparrow species were represented in average numbers. Raptor numbers were for the most part average, led by the American Bald Eagle at 11. Winter finches, except for the Purple Finch, did not erupt into this area as predicted by "Winter Finch Forecast." (John Weinrich, compiler)

Quiz Answers

1. Turkey Vulture
2. Red-winged Blackbird
3. Sing to establish territory and attract mates.
4. Geese, ducks, Tree Sparrows, Snow Buntings, Horned Larks
5. To establish territories

Feeder Stations for Schools and Libraries



Mid-Coast Audubon is launching a bird-feeding station give-away program for schools and libraries, including a volunteer to help setup and launch it! Any school or library in Knox, Lincoln, and Waldo counties can apply at <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/> and click on "Projects." The deadline is March 15!

6. Night is safer and cooler for small birds, but in daylight raptors can use wind and thermals to carry them along.
7. The new leaves are accompanied by hatching larvae, which are perfect bird food.
8. Blue-headed Vireo is heard early in the season.
9. Neotropical refers to those wintering in the tropics of Central and South America.
10. Berries and suet.

Mid-Coast Audubon
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<https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/>

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Winter Birdseed Sale!

Orders with checks must be received by February 22nd.

Pickup will be February 29th, at Plants Unlimited in Rockport **or** Lincoln County Publishing in Newcastle.

FMI check our website or FB page!

Don't Miss the Feast of Summer 2020

September 5, 2020

Annual Lobster Bake at Hog Island
\$50 per person

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



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!