



# 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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**Guest author**

*Nature is about life*  
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Above photo:  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird having a bad feather day — molting!  
by Don Reimer

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## The Great Twisted Outdoors

Nature, the great outdoors, is about life. Though the seasons change and some think that nature dies each fall and winter or that birds and creatures abandon us, that is not true. They simply transform themselves or move to another location.

In Maine, we have magnificent forests and woodlands carpeted in moss and rich soil built up over centuries from decaying trees and other flora and fauna. We have mountains, a spectacular coastline, hundreds of ponds across the state carved by glaciers, and rivers and streams wending their way to the ocean. In all of these habitats, life teems.

In fall, wherever trees or shrubs grow, autumn heralds itself with a rainbow of color across the landscape, then as the cold sets in, the winds blow, the rainbow flutters in each leaf and seed pod and settles to the forest floor or our own home landscapes. Leaves that once were the life force for their host

through photosynthesis now provide life and sustenance for the woodland floor. Insects lay eggs to shelter from the

winter and provide food for winter wildlife; woodland creatures, reptilian and mammalian, shelter from the winter in the mass of leaves; then leaves slowly metamorphose into nutrients that will become the soil of the woods they call home. All the while life is teeming in different forms. A constant life-giving circle.

Rather than signaling the end of something, autumn signals the continuation and beginning of bird migration. Although we are sad to see our feathered friends of summer and their young depart, we are soon greeted by

an old group of friends, seabirds and our winter birds. How we jump with joy at seeing our first pine siskin or Common Redpoll or our first Razorbill or Murre. Equally, we are

*Continued on page 3*



Male Wild Turkeys getting into a twist over territory or a female - that's how many of us have felt during this past summer - all in a twist!



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

### JUST A TRICKLE

It's been so dry. A few weeks ago we were watering withering gardens and commenting on reduced mosquito populations. Elsewhere forest fires rage.

So dry. Happy hours with friends are less frequent, with rigorous rules for adequate spacing between participants. Spacing out is easy these days as one's brain overloads with politics and pandemic.

So dry. The milk of human kindness seems to have ebbed. Tempers flare. Smiles are hidden by masks.

So dry, (with bouts of monsoon) as the world seems lacking in humor, and then insanely hilarious. We thirst for companionship and civility, and some order to the chaos. As always, nature consoles us, gets us out of our human-focused heads to become part of the bigger whole.

Into this drought I took a weekend to build a bird pool in my yard — nothing fancy, just a PVC-lined hole in the ground. A small pump lifts the water and lets it tumble down the rocks back into the pool. Situated so that the comfy chairs on the deck and in the book nook have a clear



Sue Schubel



view, the pool brings delight to wildlife and watcher. Without a doubt, the most satisfying property project ever! As soon as I stepped away from rearranging the rocks at dusk — IN came the birds. Curious chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, Brown Creepers and goldfinches. Over the next days, thrushes and warblers, vireos, flickers and more arrived. Such a treat to see birds so close, their enjoyment of the water. They came for a drink, a bath, or just a look. So much more diversity in the yard now, than just the feeders brought.

"Trickle it and they will come," I've heard say. So true. And perhaps the same with these other dried up flows. A few more trickles of kindness and consideration certainly can't hurt.

\*\* A bird pool can be simple, but moving water makes a big difference. An electric pump needs a few inches of water to draw from, but birds prefer a shallow space to bathe — less than an inch is good! Set up areas of varying depth by digging into the ground or using containers. Solar-powered

fountains can float in 1 inch of water. Suspend a bucket with a tiny hole in the bottom dripping into a shallow dish as a low-tech way to provide the sight and sound of water movement. Good luck and enjoy! Post pictures of your water feature on our Mid-Coast Audubon Facebook page.

## CRITTER CORNER DON REIMER

### HAIL TO THE MONARCH!

Following the sharp declines of monarch butterfly populations in recent years, there appears to be some hopeful hints of recovery. In mid-September 2019, we observed impressive numbers of migrant monarchs on Monhegan Island. Other species of butterflies, painted and American ladies, fritillaries, swallowtails and question marks, were also seen in great abundance there.

An intentional planted garden of milkweed outside the Trailing Yew's kitchen door caters to the hordes of striped monarch caterpillars attracted there. This particular patch is a favored observation post for human seekers of wondrous natural happenings.

We observed over several days, as nearly two hundred monarchs were carefully netted and tagged by birder and butterfly expert Brian



Don Reimer



Don Reimer

Pfeiffer, ably assisted by Kristen Lindquist. Data was recorded of the date, tagging location, and sex of each individual, as each tiny, round tag was applied to the left hindwing. A day-tripping hiker to the island mentioned seeing a tagged monarch at Pemaquid Point on the previous day. From my youth, I recall fall mornings at the Point when the green spruce branches were entirely draped in the orange hues of resting butterflies.

Fall butterfly migration extends from August to November. The current butterflies are the great-great-grandchildren of monarchs that left Mexico last spring. These Maine individuals will migrate toward Mexico, and, if they survive, will begin a return trip to launch the new breeding season next spring. Monarchs produce four generations during the typical breeding season, with each new generation relying on the success of the previous one.

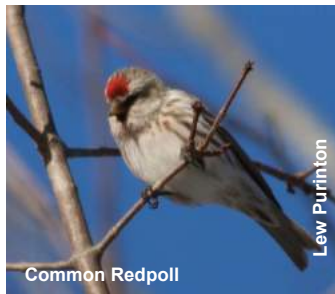


# The Great Twisted Outdoors . . . cont'd

delighted when we see new arrivals at the feeder, American Tree Sparrow.

Having found ourselves “locked and isolated” in our houses, apartments, or rooms and our lives slowed to a snail’s pace, many of us have found a new world as we look out the window more often and for longer periods.

Resting bloodshot, screen-glazed eyes from zoom or work, we look up momentarily and see activity in the trees or sky — two tiny birds seem to be fighting on a tree limb. Watching a little longer, we discover it’s a besieged parent feeding its frantically flapping chick begging for even more food. Many a parent identifies with that scenario. So many “nature” moments come into our lives when we slow down and look. Even in a window box, life can begin or end when a Robin or wren chooses it as home for her nest. Some have been lucky to have a Peregrine Falcon nest on a ledge outside



Common Redpoll

Lew Purinton



Horned Grebe

Don Reimer



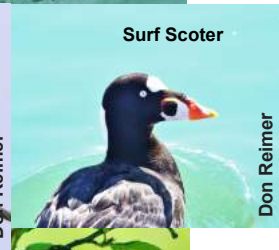
Thick-billed Murre

Don Reimer



Great-crested Flycatcher feeding chick

Don Reimer



Surf Scoter

Don Reimer



Yellow warbler and babies

Don Reimer

their New York apartment.

Despite our science and erudition, nature has so many secrets and interactions that we have yet to discover and understand, both individually and collectively. The longer we watch, the more we learn and see patterns, the more we understand, the more our senses become aware — sight, sound, smell, touch are reawakened.

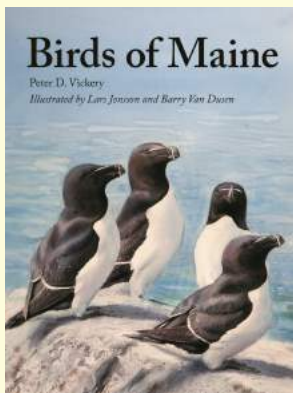
Did you know that when you see a caterpillar, it is only one stage in many stages of its life as a caterpillar? Did you know that the flash of red that brightens your backyard in winter, the Northern Cardinal, mates for life? Did you know that there are over 45,000 spider species in the world? Did you know that Maine has no venomous snakes? Did you know that Double-crested Cormorants have to dry their feathers by sitting on a rock and holding them out? Did you know the list is endless?

*Juanita Roushdy, an avid birder, lives in Bremen and keeps busy observing nature around her house and in the neighborhood at large.*

## Your Winter Reading List

Four terrific books that are sure to give you hours of great reading and transport you to near and far places.

Take a comfy chair, sit by the window, a cup of shade-grown coffee on the side table, and perhaps a few nibbles. Enjoy.



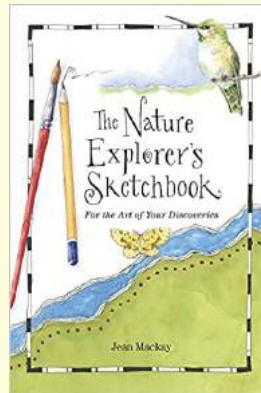
**By Peter Vickery**

The first comprehensive overview of Maine’s incredibly rich birdlife in more than seven decades, *Birds of Maine* is a detailed account of all 464 species recorded in the Pine Tree State.



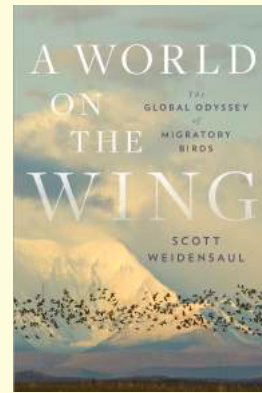
**By Don Reimer**

A collection of short stories that will enlighten you, make you laugh and just want to turn the page for another terrific bird tale. Check out the Goshawk story!



**By Jean MacKay**

An art instructor at Hog Island Audubon Camp, Jean’s book inspires and gives children plenty of space and tips to learn how to capture nature on paper.



**By Scott Weidensaul**

A global odyssey of migratory birds that will take you on an unforgettable journey following birds in person and with technology across the globe.

# Calendar of Events

*FREE bird walks (no pets please) and programs; donations are welcome to help defray costs.*

**Interim program chair: Kit Pfeiffer 446-9768. Field trip contact: Dennis McKenna 563-8439**

*Because of COVID-19, all field trips and programs have been cancelled. Check our website for up-to-the-minute information on programs (online presentations) and ad hoc field trips. <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org>*

*Thank you for understanding.*

## Mid-Coast Audubon Online Programs

In partnership with the [Camden Public Library](#), we offer a nature education program free to the public each month on the third Thursday at 6 pm. During the pandemic, events are offered online via Zoom. To watch live and ask questions, pre-register through the library. Presentations are recorded so you can [watch at your leisure](#). Enjoy!

### Thursday, January 21, 2021, 6-7 PM.

Editors' Talk on *Birds Of Maine* by Peter Vickery, via Zoom. Co-editors Barbara Vickery and Scott Weidensaul will discuss what the book found in terms of changes in Maine's birdlife over the past 70 years. To sign up, send email to Julia Pierce at Camden Public Library, [jpierce@librarycamden.org](mailto:jpierce@librarycamden.org)

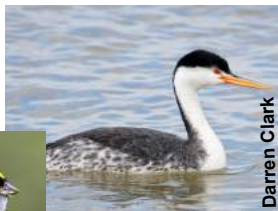
## Christmas Bird Counts

As we end the 2020 field trip year, we can only lament the good times lost to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of us did get out in the field, but carefully, masked and practicing social distancing as recommended by public health experts.

Mid-Coast Audubon will tentatively conduct three counts. Only essential observers will cover areas and there will be no compilation meeting. Details and dates will be on the Mid-Coast Audubon web site. Backyard bird-feeder watchers are welcome on the day of the CBC to e-mail their observations to the respective compiler. The three CBC counts and compilers are Thomaston Rockland, Don Reimer; Bunker Hill, John Weinrich; and Damariscotta/Pemaquid, Dennis McKenna. Thanks for understanding.



Lukasz Pulawski



Darren Clark

What do these three birds have in common?



George Pagos

Answer on page 6.

## Watching the Bird Feeders Quiz

1. What is the term for the hoarding and hiding of seeds, as Blue Jays do?
2. What might lure squirrels away from feeders?
3. Red-breasted and white-breasted are types of what?
4. The two hawks who chase feeder birds are what type?
5. An influx of unusual birds from another area is called what?
6. What causes birds to travel in some winters?
7. What uncommon birds might be seen at feeders this season?
8. What are mealworms?
9. What do birds need besides food and shelter?
10. Do you have a recipe for suet dough? *Answers on page 6.*

## Help me through the winter with...





## Two Tiny Birds, Land and a Pledge

Here in Maine, on the northeastern edge of our great nation, we can sometimes feel pretty distant from the rest of the world. But you only have to step outside and spend some time looking and listening for birds to be quickly reminded of the many ways we are indeed connected.

Take the Blackpoll warblers that have been passing through Maine in recent weeks. After a summer of singing across their cool Boreal Forest breeding range, they fly southeasterly to the northeastern U.S. and Maritimes of Canada. Considering their breeding range extends from Alaska across Canada to Newfoundland (and with scattered pockets on mountaintops here in Maine and south to the Catskill Mountains of New York), their autumnal migration is especially remarkable. Once they reach the northeastern U.S. and Canadian Maritimes, these tiny birds, smaller than your fist, strike out across the ocean in the dark of night. They fly nonstop for many days, some eventually resting on islands in the Caribbean, others making a direct flight all the way to the South American continent. Quite a few stop just off the shores of Venezuela on the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, or Curaçao to rest and feed. Most spend the winter in northern South America.

How about the Black-throated Blue warbler? Maine supports more of them than any other state. Black-throated Blue warblers love the beech forests of Maine. Their buzzy “Zur-Zur-Zreee” or “I’m so lazeee” songs emanate from those grey-trunked and bright green-leaved forests throughout the early summer. Most of the world’s Black-throated Blue warblers spend winter in the big islands of the Caribbean — the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Puerto Rico).

That’s just two of hundreds of examples of birds that connect Maine to the world, and we haven’t even started on migratory fish and whales and ocean currents. Or wind currents like the ones that brought smoke from massive forest fires on the opposite side of the continent to turn our skies milky white just a few weeks ago.

Maine is connected to the world. That’s why world events going on in September at the United Nations are important

to us. To kick off the week leading up to the United Nations Biodiversity Summit, 64 world leaders signed a pledge (the [Pledge for Nature](#)) to dedicate their countries to a new higher level of support for nature conservation. Some of these leaders took an even bolder step. Canada, the U.K., the European Union, and a number of other countries committed to protecting 30% of their lands and waters by the year 2030 and urged the other nations to follow suit.

These are the kinds of higher-level goals that science tells us are necessary if we are to stop the massive losses of birds and other wildlife that we are seeing around the globe.

Our own state of Maine has had a history of significant land conservation initiatives. Thirty years ago the Maine Wilderness Act was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush after much work by Maine people and Maine’s congressional delegation. The Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) worked hard on this issue and celebrates this important success in environmental history [in a blog](#) by NRCM Forest & Wildlife Director Melanie Sturm. That law established the 12,000-acre Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness along the New Hampshire border just south of Bethel. Maine also took important steps that resulted in 90,000 acres of permanently protected Ecological Reserves within the more than a half-million acres of [Public Reserved Lands](#).

And the 30 years Maine people have been supporting the Land for Maine’s Future program has resulted in more than 600,000 acres of protected lands, the largest parcels in northern and eastern Maine. Land trusts across the state have worked tirelessly for decades to bring private donations together to protect natural landscapes that make our communities healthy and livable. These lands also ensure that birds and other wildlife have the habitat they need to survive.

But many parts of Maine continue to see rapid loss of habitat, often the result of increased demand for second-houses and poorly planned development. We have seen more special places lost across the state over the years than we’d like to remember. Maine needs a renewed commitment



Blackpoll warbler, Little Bigelow Mountain, Maine



Black-throated Blue warbler, Lisbon, Maine

Louis Bevier

Louis Bevier

## Hog Island Audubon Camp



Registration for the summer camp 2021 has been postponed until early 2021. In the meantime, here is a tentative schedule. In 2020, many of the scheduled programs were revamped and campers participated online with a resounding affirmative experience. Let's hope we'll be back to normal next year.

- Spring Monhegan and Hog Island: *May 30-June 4, 2021*
- Building Better Birding Skills: *June 6-11, 2021*
- Puffin Islands: *June 13-18, 2021*
- Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens I: *June 13-18, 2021*
- Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens II: *June 20-25, 2021*
- Field Ornithology: *June 20-25, 2021*
- Mountains to Sea Birding for Teens: *June 27-July 2, 2021*
- Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week: *July 11-16, 2021*
- Family Camp I: *July 18-23, 2021*
- Costa Rica Teen Camp: *July 30-August 4, 2021*
- Family Camp II: *August 8-13, 2021*
- Creating Bird-friendly Habitats: *August 16-17, 2021*
- Arts & Birding - Sketching & Painting: *August 15-20, 2021*
- Arts & Birding - Photography: *August 15-20, 2021*
- Road Scholar: Saving Seabirds: *September 5-10, 2021*
- Fall Migration & Monhegan: *September 5-10, 2021*
- Raptor Migration and Monhegan Island: *September 12-17, 2021*

## 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](http://midcoast@maineaudubon.org)

### OFFICERS

Sue Schubel, President  
Gail Presley, Vice President  
Sherrie York, Secretary  
Lew Purinton, Treasurer

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Stephen Barnes, Tenants Harbor  
Kathy Cartwright, Waldoboro  
Bill Goodwill, Friendship  
Meghan Kennedy, Bristol  
Dennis McKenna, Damariscotta  
Kristin Pennock, Whitefield  
Don Reimer, Warren  
Juanita Roushdy, Bremen

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**Membership:** Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355  
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**The Merganser editor:** Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355

*The Merganser* is published three times a year in February, May, and November.  
News items and photos are welcome.

**Deadline for next issue is January 15!**  
Send to [juanitar@tidewater.net](mailto:juanitar@tidewater.net)

### Answer

The three birds are all rare birds seen in Maine since August 2020.

Northern Wheatear at Parson's Beach,  
Clark's Grebe at Togus Pond, and Golden-crowned Sparrow in Abbot.

Keep looking!



## New and Rejoining Members

Mary Bourke, *Lincolntonville*  
Alison Briggs, *Tenants Harbor*  
Margaret R. Davis, *Camden*  
Ivan and Linda Garat, *South Thomaston*  
Jane and Lawrence McDonnell, *Cushing*  
Susan Gibbs and Ted Piccone, *Washington, DC*  
Meghan Kennedy, *Waldoboro*  
John Lowe, *Damariscotta*  
Nadine Micoeau, *Belfast*  
Cyrene Slegona, *Belfast*  
Kathi Sutton and Steve Pellechia, *Whitefield*

### Quiz Answers:

1. Caching
2. Whole corn
3. Nuthatches
4. Accipiters
5. Irruption
6. Failure of their preferred food crop
7. Pine siskins, redpolls, evening grosbeaks
8. Larvae of a harmless beetle, tenebrio molitor
9. Water to drink
10. 1 cup peanut butter, 1 cup lard, 2 cups cornmeal, 2 cups quick oats, 1 cup flour, 2 cups chick starter; mix well and crumble to serve birds (per Julie Zickefoose)

## Injured Bird!

### Avian Haven

Accepts all bird species year-round

207-382-6761

[www.avianhaven.org](http://www.avianhaven.org)





# Have You Wandered in Our Preserves Lately?

Mid-Coast Audubon owns and maintains four preserves: the 95-acre Nelson Preserve in Friendship, the 3-acre Weskeag River Wildlife Preserve in South Thomaston, the 30-acre Guy Van Dyne Preserve in Waldoboro, and the 40-acre Davis Bog Preserve in Belfast. All are open to the public.

The leaves are changing colors and the woods are filled with warblers and other birds. These woods provide respite and nourishment to so many species including human. This year, more than ever, I'm grateful for these pieces of land rich in habitat and life.

This year, I'm also very aware when I do walk maintained trails, how much time and effort gets put into it. In February, we had a fantastic crew of about 25 people that came together to do trail work at the Nelson Preserve. A lot of fallen trees were cut and the trails re-marked. The road frontage was also weed-whacked back around the sign. A new kiosk is in the works with a trail map and info.

Guy Van Dyne Preserve has had a Good Samaritan maintaining the trail... a blessing to us! A new sign in in the works there as well.

This past Spring, the South Thomaston Conservation Commission approached Mid-coast Audubon



Pre-Covid volunteers at Nelson Preserve.



Volunteers during Covid at Weskeag River preserve.



A reflective moment amid the moss-laden terrain at Nelson Preserve.

hoping to partner with us with the maintenance of the Weskeag River Wildlife Preserve. Their ambitious group of volunteers are working on a new sign and bench, as well as a bridge.

This work enables more people to enjoy the outdoors and see bird habitat firsthand, and thus developing a love of nature and the preservation of it. While not officially having any work parties at the current time, we are still looking for volunteers for the present as well as for the future. Please let us know if you're interested in volunteering.

*Meghan Kennedy is our newest board member and our preserve manager. She's also a licensed 100-ton boat captain. She loves being out in nature and taking long hikes with her dogs. To volunteer contact Meghan at [nutmeg1050@gmail.com](mailto:nutmeg1050@gmail.com)*

*Continued from page 5. . . to protecting nature by all of our government leaders, not only around the world, but right here in Maine, too. One important way to move that forward is by ensuring that we get a new bond to bring the necessary funding to renew the Land for Maine's Future program's work to protect Maine's special places.*

*To achieve this, we must care about making sure we have a healthy world for our birds, wildlife, forests, and for our kids and grandkids. Join the leaders of the world in showing your support for nature.*

*Jeffrey V. Wells, Ph.D., is a Fellow of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Vice President of Boreal Conservation for National Audubon. Dr. Wells is one of the nation's leading bird experts and conservation biologists and author of the Birder's Conservation Handbook. Allison Childs Wells, formerly of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a senior director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine, a nonprofit organization working statewide to protect the nature of Maine. Both are widely published natural history writers and are the authors of the popular book, Maine's Favorite Birds (Tilbury House) and Birds of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao: A Site and Field Guide (Cornell University Press).*

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



Visit one of our four preserves. See page 7.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo, October 4, 2020

Thank you for all your support during this tough year. You make us happy and keep us safe.

Check out Maine Audubon's "Connections" web page for all kinds of daily activities.

<https://www.maineaudubon.org/education/connections/>

Nonprofit org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
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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](http://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](http://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!