

# The Merganser

Mid-Coast  
  
Audubon

Promoting long-term responsible use of natural resources through an informed membership, education, and community awareness

Mid-Coast Audubon

Volume 45, No. 1 - February 2021

Watching and Learning with  
Mid-Coast Audubon's

## Feeder Station Project

Learning to observe birds can open the door to a lifetime of nature exploration and discovery. A young enthusiast's curiosity about bird behaviors might lead to a career in science; a fascination with bird plumages might inspire a work of art.

Watching birds at a feeder not only provides a closer look at their marvelous details, but it can also help us develop deeper relationships with both our surroundings and our fellow observers!

To support wild learning and discovery, Mid-Coast Audubon's Feeder Station Project provides starter equipment and resources, including feeders, seed, and binoculars, to local schools and community libraries.

The project was launched in 2018 at the Jackson Memorial Library in Tenants Harbor. Since then, station kits have been awarded to the Camden-Rockport Elementary School Library, Searsmont Town Library, Hope Elementary School, and the Sweetland School/Sweet Tree Arts.

Above: A chickadee checks out the new snack bar at Searsmont Town Library.

Right: Young birders at Hope Elementary School.



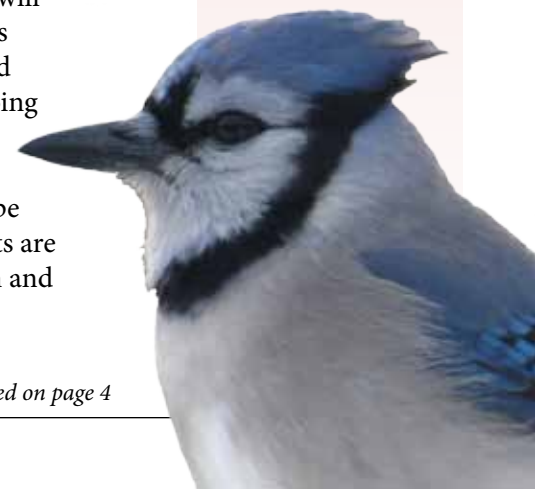
School or library bird feeder station "hosts" are chosen through an online application process. Applicants are asked to describe how a bird feeding station will enhance or support their organization's curriculum or programming needs and how the organization will handle ongoing maintenance.

Mary Beth Pride, Pre-K teacher at Hope Elementary School reports her students are delighted with their new feeder station and learning about more than just birds.

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## Mid-Coast



## Audubon

Organized December 6, 1969  
a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

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**The Merganser is published  
three times a year in February,  
May, and November.**

News items and photos are welcome.  
Deadline for the next issue is April 15!  
Send submissions to [sy@sherrieyork.com](mailto:sy@sherrieyork.com)

**Welcome  
new and  
rejoining  
members!**

Michael B. Jordan, Spruce Head  
Slade Moore, Bristol

Belted kingfisher, Don Reimer

## President's Corner

- Sue Schubel

“Stay safe” is the mantra of the times. Smart behavior and a sprinkle of luck will hopefully get us through these days. It’s unsettling to feel vulnerable. As top of the food chain, and the bossy species with thumbs, we aren’t used to that! Unsettling, and yet it provides an opportunity for greater empathy.



Sue Schubel

Based on science, we are guided to hunker down and give each other more breathing room. Needing space is something we share with other species. All animals need safe places where they can get things done. For people – homes and workplaces where we can conduct business, live, raise our young. For other animals, it is the same. Home ranges of mammals in Maine vary in size according to species, season, and the availability of resources. The MDIFW website notes that coyote territories can range from 3-25 square miles (average 10), bobcats need 18 (females) to 36 (males) square miles, and fishers an average of 10 square miles. Deer can range across hundreds of acres.

Mid-Coast Maine has quite a bit of wild habitat, and many preserves, providing corridors for animals to move around and overlap their territories with ours. It can be surprising how much wildlife is out wandering through your property! Setting up a trail cam behind my house, as well as identifying tracks and scat, helped to document coyotes, deer, fisher, porcupine, snowshoe hare, fox, short-tailed weasel, turkeys, owls, and raccoons. The squirrels, mice, and forest birds come right to the house of course for snacks. They wouldn’t be here if they did not have enough space. Luckily, folks around me value sharing the earth, too. A bright spot came at the end of 2020, when the wild woods abutting mine were donated by a generous neighbor to the Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust as a wildlife preserve. This small patch of land allows for unbroken habitat to stretch across a number of property lines and provide room for a diversity of wildlife.

People in safe spaces have the opportunity to create safe spaces for others. I’ve never liked the term “social distancing” as it is really “physical distancing” we need to do. Coming together to accomplish good things, like preserving wildlife habitat, can happen while we are physically distant. Connect with your neighbors to maximize the diversity in your neck of the woods!



# Opportunities — Moving On — Fork in the Road

When opportunity knocks, a quick, gut decision has to be made. A report of a western vagrant, a four-hour drive from home. Do you go now? Or think about it? Do you catch the momentum and the moment? Or does it pass you by? Do you risk failure or success? It's really all about the journey. There is no failure. Birding on the way, learning about new locations, meeting new people, seeing new habitat, seeing other birds, all are positives.



*Mid-Coast Audubon board members Kristin Pennock (L) and Juanita Roushdy at the Bunker Hill CBC in 2017*

So it is with life. I've been editor of *The Bulletin* since November 2011 (it became *The Merganser* with the February 2015 issue). Before then, Joe Gray ably edited it for a decade. At 88 years, Joe was looking for new blood to take over the rewarding but teeth-pulling task of putting together a newsletter. An opportunity? Well, yes, an opportunity to take on a new challenge. I was the new blood. The new editor. Success or failure? Only time can tell.

Like any newsletter, you need stories that speak to your audience. You need news about your organization so that people will be able to participate in the programs, field trips, and other events including those that raise funds for its work. You need to gently tend the fires of passion about birding, wildlife, climate change, habitat, advocacy. You need writers that will bring life and purpose to the articles. You need to keep the writer's voice and not impose your own. You need software to make the newsletter graphically pleasing. You need faith that it will all fall into place by the print deadline and you need passion about the subject.

After nine years of being the new blood, I recognized in November 2019, another opportunity at our chapter's board meeting. One of our newer board members, who is a talented graphic artist and with wit and humor brings our minutes to life, made a *sotto voce* offer to take over the newsletter. Being a birder with great hearing, I heard that offer and immediately said "Wonderful! It's yours." Don't mistake my eagerness at snapping up this opportunity for not wanting to do it anymore. Like Joe, advanced years (and the time to reflect during this pandemic) made me realize my abilities are waning and new blood was needed. Sherrie York is not only a fine graphic artist but a birder, a linocut artist and printmaker, has much better software and will do a terrific job.

For me, I hadn't realized how much the task had seeped into my very being. Each time I read something or see something, I think, "oh, that will be good for *The Merganser*," "geez what a great photo for *The Merganser*" and on it goes. Or meeting

someone and thinking "I wonder if they'd be willing to write an article for *The Merganser*." Gradually, I'm weaning myself away from that. I cannot thank enough some of the guest authors, Louis Bevier, Scott Weidensaul, Jeff Wells, Bob Duchesne, Rob Bierregaard, and so many more. I remember for one issue Louis accepted at short notice the guest authorship and when I sent a note about the impending deadline, he apologized that he was in South America with poor internet but would get something to me soon! He did.

As I thumb through the back issues thinking about this article and farewell, I realize that I also gradually took on the role of writer and pupil. I wrote about birds and why they move me every single time. Faces and conversations with the authors became real again and gratitude washed over me for their willingness to write for *The Merganser*. The same is true for those board members who committed to write a column for each issue: Don Reimer for Critter Corner, Sue Schubel for President's Corner; Nancy Dickinson who unwittingly became the Quiz master, and all who provided photos and were met with "could you provide a higher resolution photo for print" and willingly complied.

*The Merganser* is a team effort that reaches fulfillment by being printed through thick and thin by our community's own Lincoln County Publishing. Ever helpful, patient, customer-oriented, and cheerful, they never failed to "deliver."

To all who made *The Merganser* what it is today, a heartfelt thank you. The journey like so many was arduous and tough going but with all of you beside me, it became easier, most rewarding, and satisfying. I'll now wait for it to appear in my mailbox and read it for the first time.

Thank you, Sherrie, for taking the opportunity. Enjoy your journey. I've gone birding — wild thing you make my heart sing...!

*Juanita Roushdy is an avid birder and loves to observe nature around her home and neighborhood, often writing about it. She remains on the Mid-Coast Audubon and Maine Audubon boards.*



*Juanita's assistant ponders an edit*

## Bird feeders *from Page 1*

“Along with birdwatching we are practicing math skills by counting how many scoops of bird seed we will need to fill the feeder. We have learned about cylinders when we describe the new feeder. Fine motor and problem-solving skills were used to assemble the feeders and students persevered to get that feeding station secured in the ground and put together!”

Hope Elementary students also participate in citizen science programs and draw the birds they observe in their science journals.

Steven Brown, the Director of the Searsmont Town Library, tells us that although Covid-19 precautions have

kept human visitors to a minimum this year, the birds have been taking good advantage of their new feeders. When library patrons are able to return, they will find a sunny observation spot in the children’s section, with binoculars and other resources close at hand to aid their discoveries.

If your school or library would like to host a bird feeding station, the 2021 application period is now underway.

Interested organizations can apply through the Mid-Coast Audubon website ([midcoast.maineaudubon.org/projects](http://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/projects)). The deadline is March 30.



Mary Beth Pride

*Students and teacher at Hope Elementary assemble their feeder station.*

## Winter Bird Seed Sale

And speaking of bird feeders... Now is a great time to stock up on seed to keep your neighborhood birds healthy and happy through the spring. Place your order no later than February 20 for curbside pickup on February 27. Proceeds of your purchase support bird conservation and education programming.

Orders can be placed by mail-in form available at Mid-Coast Audubon’s website, [midcoast.maineaudubon.org/event/spring-bird-seed-sale/](http://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/event/spring-bird-seed-sale/). Seed must be picked up on Saturday, February 27th from 10:00am to noon **at one of two locations:** Plants Unlimited, 629 Commercial St (Route 1) in Rockport, **OR** Lincoln County Publishing, 116 Mills Rd., Newcastle. Please specify on your order form where you will pick up your seed.

*Five varieties will be offered:*



Sherrie York

### **Black oil sunflower seed**

20 pounds for \$18

40 pounds for \$32

### **Sunflower meaties (hulled)**

25 pounds for \$29

50 pounds for \$48

### **Melody Mix**

20 pounds for \$14

40 pounds for \$23

### **Thistle (Nyger)**

5 pounds for \$12

**Suet blocks, \$2 each**



*New binoculars await observers in the children’s section of the Searsmont Town Library.*

## **New to Birding?**

Mid-Coast Audubon member Stan LeQuire will present an online **Basic Birdwatching** course through Central Lincoln County Adult Education. Participants will learn how to find, identify, attract and enjoy birds of the Midcoast region.

The course will take place 6 consecutive Thursday evenings, April 29 to June 3, from 7:00 to 8:00pm. A registration fee is charged. For more information and to register visit [clc.maineadulted.org/](http://clc.maineadulted.org/) classes or call 207-563-2811.

# Critter Corner

- Don Reimer

Some weeks ago, I received an inquiry about a white crow being seen around Owls Head harbor. When the person also specified "it's ALL white," my interest was piqued to follow up on the report. And, sure enough, I spotted the gleaming-white American crow, in company with several of its black, cawing comrades. The ivory-colored bird contrasted vividly with its background of brownish rocks and seaweed.

Closer views confirmed its pink legs, bill and pinkish-red eyes. A true albino individual indeed, this crow's immaculate feathering created a perception of near-ghostly qualities. Albinism is a rare condition determined by a genetic mix, in which both parents carry an uncommon combination of recessive genes. It is estimated that 0.5% to 1.0% of birds display an expression of albinism, which can be complete, as with this particular individual, or partially white in various degrees.

A lesser-known genetic variant, known as leucism, produces birds that are often lighter colored than normal, exhibiting piebald patches of white feathers along the body. Unlike albino birds, lacking in dark melanin pigments, leucistic birds do produce melanin, but can't effectively deposit it into their feathers. Otherwise, leucistic birds have normal-colored eyes, bills and legs.



Albino birds live with inevitable disadvantage, leaving them as obvious targets of natural predators. Given that line of logic, albinos might be safest during snow-covered conditions. And, adding to their existential challenges, albino birds contend with relatively impaired vision.

Through the years, I've observed a number of crows, chickadees, robins, house finches, juncos and other small birds with variable amounts of white feathering. Crows with bold white wing-patches are occasionally sighted around lawns and streets of Rockland, and are most readily observed when they take flight. Be on the lookout for birds wearing traces of white at your feeders, too.

*Don Reimer is the author of "Seen Anything Good? Seasons of Birds in Midcoast Maine." He's a regular visitor to a wide variety of habitats, but can be reliably spotted on the edges of Weskeag Marsh and the pages of The Free Press.*



## ***A bucket of triangles... and thanks!***

Mid-Coast Audubon was recently contacted by a local high school student looking for a community service project. We were delighted to accept their help with cutting hundreds of metal triangles, which will be used to re-flag trails in our preserves. *Thank you!*

## ***Meet New Board Member, Will Broussard!***

*Greetings fellow birding and nature enthusiasts!*

I am excited to join the board of Mid-Coast Audubon this winter after nearly a decade away from Maine. Originally from Bowdoinham, I received my Master's degree in Environmental Studies from Antioch University New England in New Hampshire before joining the Mount Washington Observatory in 2012.

While there, in addition to visiting the Canada jays and American pipits at tree line, I travelled New England teaching alpine ecology, climate literacy, and



New England weather patterns.

My interest in the environment stems from my childhood, growing up along the shores of Merrymeeting Bay with fond memories

of colorful warblers, vocal blackbirds and geese by the thousands. As a new board member I hope to build upon my lifelong passion for birds and bird conservation through group walks and school programs (when it is safe to do so again!) along with virtual presentations.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve and I look forward to working with you!

# 121st Christmas Bird Count Results

Ongoing pandemic concerns meant Christmas Bird Count (CBC) efforts were pared back this year. Core counters were restricted to solo or household-pod birding groups, and no compilation gatherings were held. Despite the challenges, the local counts produced some interesting highlights:

## Thomaston/Rockland:

*Don Reimer, Compiler*

Sunny skies and low-30s temperatures made for a comfortable day afield on December 19, 2020. Despite calm sea conditions, seabird numbers were slightly lower than some years, but the usual list of common eiders, scoters, mergansers, long-tailed ducks, buffleheads, grebes and loons, were found in reasonable numbers. Mallard ducks continued to out-pace black ducks along the Mid-Coast, and a male gadwall duck was a nice find along the Georges River in Warren. Seven lingering American coots occupied a slit of open water at Rockland's Chickawaukie Pond.

Numbers of irruptive winter finches were limited this year, but pine siskins (1), purple finches (4), red crossbills (1), white-winged crossbills (4), and evening grosbeaks (5) were found during the day. Several groups of pine grosbeaks (56) and common redpolls (123) were notable.

Red-bellied woodpecker (11) populations continue to expand their northward range into Maine. Perhaps the most unusual find was a large colorful warbler,

a yellow-breasted chat, inhabiting a shrubby thicket of rosehips and berries in Thomaston. By day's end, a total of 2591 birds, comprising 74 different species were recorded within the 15-mile-wide count circle.

## Pemaquid:

*Dennis McKenna, Compiler*

January 3 dawned clear with calm winds for the Pemaquid count. Despite fewer participants, this year's effort produced a surprising number of historic high counts for 13 species. (Previous high in parenthesis.)

- red-throated loon: 14 (9)
- red-tailed hawk: 14 (7)
- downy woodpecker: 56 (36)
- hairy woodpecker: 48 (32)
- northern flicker: 10 (7)
- American kestrel: 2 (1)
- common raven: 21 (17)
- tufted titmouse: 80 (63)
- white-breasted nuthatch: 70 (54)
- brown creeper: 17 (10)
- eastern bluebird: 63 (26)
- American robin: 204 (158)
- snow bunting: 18 (12)

Notable highlights included the kestrels, which had only been seen on one previous count, and the two distantly-separated Barrow's goldeneye.

Count day recorded 6402 individuals of 69 species, with an additional 4 species spotted during count week, including a northern saw-whet owl and a peregrine falcon.



Yellow-breasted chat, Don Reimer

## Bunker Hill:

*John Weinrich, Compiler*

The total number of species at 59 was the highest number in the past 13 years that records have been kept. The previous high was 58 in 2014. The total number of individual birds was also a count record at 5,406.

Eleven of the 59 species seen on December 22 were represented by single birds. A white-crowned sparrow recorded by Jeff Cherry was seen only once before in this circle (2009) and a lone gadwall found by Dennis McKenna was also only seen once before in 2019.

All three species of mergansers made the checklist despite mostly frozen water. Raptors included bald eagle (18), sharp-shinned hawk (3), red-tailed hawk (18) and red-shouldered hawk (1).

Irruptive finches were a mixed bag with no purple finches or pine siskin reported but common redpolls were seen throughout the circle and pine grosbeaks and evening grosbeaks were also recorded in several locations.

## What's that bird word?

Can you define these odd words found in field guides?

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1: Altricial    | 10: Passerine    |
| 2: Boreal       | 11: Pelagic      |
| 3: Crepuscular  | 12: Pied         |
| 4: Diurnal      | 13: Pileated     |
| 5: Ferruginous  | 14: Polymorphism |
| 6: Flammulated  | 15: Prothonotary |
| 7: Fulvous      | 16: Rufous       |
| 8: Gallinaceous | 17: Semipalmated |
| 9: Glaucus      | 18: Supercilium  |



Barrow's goldeneye, Lew Purinton

## ANSWERS

- |                                         |                                         |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. Having feet that can perch           | 9. Grayish green                        |
| 2. Far northern                         | 8. Chicken-like                         |
| 3. Active at twilight                   | 7. Tawny                                |
| 4. Active during the day                | 6. Flame-shaped markings                |
| 5. Rust-colored                         | 5. Occurring in several different forms |
| 6. Occurring in several different forms | 4. Crested                              |
| 7. Tawny                                | 3. Two-toned                            |
| 8. Chicken-like                         | 2. Out at sea                           |
| 9. Grayish green                        | 1. Partially webbed feet                |
|                                         | 18. Eyebrow                             |

# • Calendar of Events •

*Due to COVID-19, all field trips and live programs are currently suspended.*

Check our website for current information about online presentations  
and ad hoc field trips: [midcoast.maineaudubon.org](http://midcoast.maineaudubon.org)

Thank you for your understanding, we hope to see you in person again soon!

Interim Program Coordinator: Kit Pfeiffer 446-9768 / Field Trip contact: Dennis McKenna 563-8439

## Mid-Coast Audubon's Monthly Nature Programs: *Now Online!*

In partnership with the Camden Public Library, we offer monthly nature education programs free to the public, third Thursdays at 6:00 pm. **During the pandemic, these events are offered online via Zoom.** To watch live and ask questions, pre-register by contacting Julia Pierce ([jpierce@librarycamden.org](mailto:jpierce@librarycamden.org)) at the library. Can't attend the online event? Presentations are recorded and available on our website! Enjoy!

### **FEBRUARY 18:**

#### ***Birding in Costa Rica***

Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist, Doug Hitchcox, will give a lively visual presentation about a trip he and 10 Audubon members took to the birding paradise of Costa Rica in January 2020.

Though Costa Rica is smaller than the state of West Virginia, there are more than 850 species of birds, a reflection of two important features: the country's great variety of habitats and its location between tropical South America and temperate North America. You'll join Doug on a tour that covered the Caribbean and Pacific lowland tropical forests, pine-oak temperate forests, and an elfin forest at 11,000 feet. This travelogue will follow the group's travels day by day, highlighting the amazing birds, delicious food, and stunning vistas, as well as the conservation issues of the area and importance of ecotourism.



### **MARCH 18:**

#### ***Finch Irruptions and the Finch Research Network***

Have you been seeing lots of unusual finches this winter? Recent irruptions of these fascinating birds from the north inspired Matthew Young to launch the Finch Research Network (FiRN) in fall 2020.

Join us for his engaging presentation about redpolls, evening grosbeaks, and the distribution and ecology of different red crossbill flight calls. Matt will also introduce FiRN and its citizen science opportunities. (Read more about Matt's extensive ornithology background on our website!)



### **APRIL 15:**

#### ***Horseshoe Crabs in Great Salt Bay: Their Status and their Contribution to Estuarine Health***

The Great Salt Bay in Damariscotta hosts one of the best breeding locations for horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*) in the state of Maine. Since 2003, taking and possession of horseshoe crabs has been prohibited in the state due to our small populations.

Join Sarah Gladu, Director of Education and Citizen Science for Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, to learn about these fascinating ancient animals, their habits, their conservation status in Maine, and their importance to the overall health of our estuarine environment.

## **Injured Bird?**

Contact ***Avian Haven***

Avian Haven accepts  
all bird species year-round.

207-382-6761 [avianhaven.org](http://avianhaven.org)

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Bald eagles, Lew Purinton



# MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mid-Coast Chapter

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

Annually:  \$30 Senior/Student  \$40 Individual  \$50 Household  \$100  \$250  \$ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly:  Enroll me in the Frquent Flyer Program and charge \_\_\_ \$5 \_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_ \$15 \_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

to my credit card each month (\$5 minimum).

Name (as it appears on credit card): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Check enclosed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Please make checks payable to Maine Audubon.)

Charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my credit card # \_\_\_\_\_

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View all member benefits at [maineaudubon.org/memberFAQ](http://maineaudubon.org/memberFAQ). FMI: 207-781-2330 ext. 230.

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 wildlife and habitat. When you join or renew your Maine Audubon membership, you ensure that work can continue.

Thank you!