

# The Merganser

Mid-Coast  
  
Audubon

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

Mid-Coast Audubon, a chapter of...

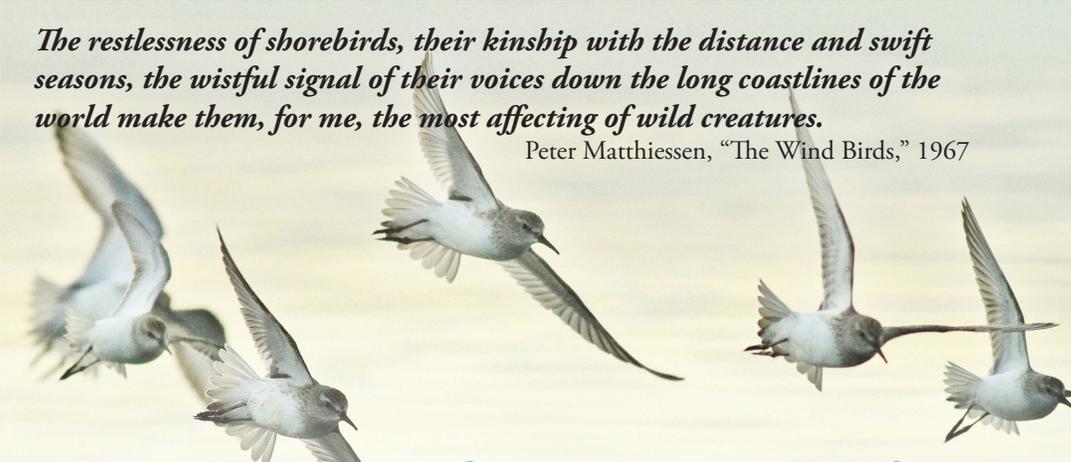


MAINE AUDUBON

Volume 45, No. 3 - November 2021

*The restlessness of shorebirds, their kinship with the distance and swift seasons, the wistful signal of their voices down the long coastlines of the world make them, for me, the most affecting of wild creatures.*

Peter Matthiessen, "The Wind Birds," 1967



## Wind Birds

One July day, a male Hudsonian Godwit wearing a satellite transmitter left the Mackenzie Delta in Canada's Northwest Territories. After a two-day, non-stop, flight of 1500 miles, he rested and fed for two weeks in Churchill, Manitoba, before going on to Hudson Bay to stage for another four weeks. His next flight, in early September, was an astonishing 5-day-and-night journey of almost 4,000 miles to northern Venezuela. The satellite track shows he flew right over us in Maine.

A Red Knot, wearing a tag that read "B95," lived to well over 20. He was caught several times over the years by researchers in Argentina. In the more recent photos, their faces show the passing years. B95, by contrast, looks exactly the same as he did the first time.

When Whimbrels leave the Arctic, fully half of the population makes a stopover along the Atlantic coast of the southern United States. But no one knew where. It's as if these big shorebirds simply hid. This past June, researchers from the South Carolina DNR announced a staggering discovery. Almost 20,000 Whimbrels pause for a month on Deveaux Bank, a mile-long sand-spit, elevation 3 feet, just 20 miles from Charleston.

These three stories exemplify for me what Matthiessen so beautifully described in a single sentence. These are birds that inspire awe and wonder. How can a bird fly for 5 days and nights without feeding or drinking? How do they not show senescence? What other places across the globe need our attention and protection?

### Inside...

- 2 President's Corner**  
*Doing What We Can with Sue Schubel*
- 3 Wind Birds, continued**  
*Shorebirds with guest writer Charles Duncan*
- 4 Fall Warblers**  
*Maine Warbler Q&A*
- 5 Critter Corner**  
*Birding by Moonlight with Don Reimer*
- 6 Calendar**  
*Winter field trips*
- 7 Calendar**  
*Online nature programs in collaboration with the Camden Library*

Photos: Canada Goose/Don Reimer; White-rumped and Semi-palmated Sandpipers in flight/Don Reimer; Piping Plover/Sherrie York



*Continued on page 3*

## Mid-Coast



## Audubon

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

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

### OFFICERS

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

### DIRECTORS

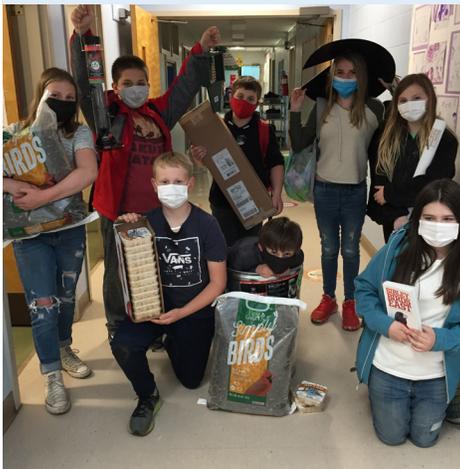
Will Broussard, Brunswick  
Kathy Cartwright, Waldoboro  
Bill Goodwill, Friendship  
Keegan Kennedy, Bristol  
Dennis McKenna, Damariscotta  
Kristin Pennock, Whitefield  
Don Reimer, Warren  
Juanita Roushdy, Bremen

### COMMITTEES

**Field Trips:** Dennis McKenna, 563-8439  
**Nest boxes:** Lew Purinton, 215-1913  
**Membership:** Sherrie York, 677-2061  
**Preserves:** Keegan Kennedy, 850-375-9309  
**Programs:** Will Broussard, 837-9520  
**Scholarships:** Sue Schubel, 380-1370  
**Special Events:** Sue Schubel, 380-1370  
**The Merganser editor:** Sherrie York, 677-2061

*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 January 15!  
Send submissions to sy@sherrieyork.com



# President's Corner

"How did the puffins do?" people ask me, if they can tell it's me behind my still oft-worn-in-public covid mask. Sadly I must say, "not good." Usually when reporting on the seabird summer we can highlight ups and downs – one year the birds downeast do better, or the southern islands flourish, or we have a season with few predator disruptions. This year was striking in that seabird colonies across the whole Gulf of Maine, Massachusetts to Canada, suffered in a big way. Why? There wasn't enough food. Terns, sampling the top foot of the water column, came up short. And puffins, able to dive as deep as 100 feet, caught fewer and less ingestible fish. Weak tern chicks then died of exposure in the heavy rains, and puffins slowed their growth to fledge smaller if at all. It was hard to watch, but essential to document, as these birds are monitoring the ocean in a way that we as people cannot.

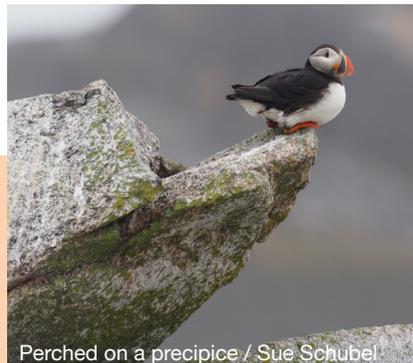


One of the few tern fledgers / Sue Schubel

Long-lived seabirds are designed to weather good and bad years and ultimately survive as a group. The ocean is changing, fish are on the move, and islands are getting smaller as the sea levels rise. There are already so few places put aside for them that we must make the most of the protected fragments they have.

What can we do? We can't fill the sea with fish. But we *can* work to make their island sites as good as possible. We *can* reduce predator pressure and disturbance. We *can* remove invasive plants to enhance nesting habitat. We *can* take away the marine debris which poses a risk of entanglement to nesting and fledging birds. We do what we can, because we must do *something*. This fall we filled two 40-yard dumpsters with battered lobster trap debris washed up on Stratton and Bluff Islands. A lot of rusty tangly bits to wrestle from the stinging nettles by a handful of volunteers. We also expanded tern habitat by removing thick tall vegetation with a tractor – terns must fly in with fish for their young and need an open area near their nests.

We do what we can. What can you do? Plant a native plant, leave a leaf, modify your outdoor lights to shine down and not up? There are plenty of ways to take small impactful actions while still fighting for big change. A bird, a bug, or a stargazer may thank you.



Perched on a precipice / Sue Schubel

*Seabird Sue Schubel wears a variety of seasonal plumages, using her skills as scientist, artist, and educator with Audubon's Seabird Institute. A unique taxonomic species, Sue's common names include Seabird Researcher, Assistant Sanctuary Manager, Conservation Decoy Painter, and Outreach Educator.*

Students at Thomaston Elementary (at left) enthusiastically embrace their role as stewards of their new bird feeder station. Fifth-grade and lead garden teacher Lynn Snow applied to **Mid-Coast Audubon's Feeder Station Project** and was awarded supplies this past spring. Want to get your school involved? New applications will be accepted in Spring 2022. Stay tuned to this newsletter, our website, and/or social media for details.



So many shorebirds! / Don Reimer

## Wind Birds—*from page 1*

This individual I see in my scope—where was it a week—or 10 years—ago? Where will it go next?

We ask ourselves, what has been going on with shorebird populations? There are sparks of good news: in 1983, there were only 6 breeding pairs of Piping Plovers in Maine. Active management, including public outreach, by USFWS and Maine Audubon has had results. This year, there were 125 pairs and, while some areas had poor success, overall there were a record 213 chicks hatched! My own happy story happened while heading out, scope on my shoulder, on a southern Maine beach. I was stopped by a town councilor who wanted to make me aware that there were plovers nearby—and she asked me to speak to anyone whose dog wasn't leashed. That she and so many others take protection of these birds personally is why we're seeing this recovery.

American Oystercatchers disappeared from Maine, the northern edge of their breeding range, in the mid-1800s. They are back now, albeit in small numbers, breeding along the entire length of the Maine coast. Nationally, the American Oystercatcher Working Group has reduced human disturbance and predation at nests to achieve a 28% population increase over the decade ending in 2018.

Willetts, among others, have recovered in Maine from extirpation in the 19th century after market hunting and eggging were stopped. They are now common—and highly vocal—breeders in saltmarshes across the coast.

For many other species, though, the news is much sadder. In the 1970s and '80s, some 2 million Red-necked Phalaropes

staged during their southbound migration in Passamaquoddy Bay off Eastport and Campobello. Today, not one is seen there. Cause: perhaps local decline of the zooplankton food base they require. Cause of that collapse: dunno. Effect on global population: dunno that, either.

We've lost 80% of our hemisphere's Ruddy Turnstones since the 1970s. Ditto Sanderlings and Semipalmated Sandpipers. In 1967, when Matthiessen wrote about "the wind birds," some 90,000 Red Knots could be found on a single May day in Delaware Bay, their greatest northbound stopover site.

This year's aerial census found just 6,800. In other words, for every 100 knots that inspired Matthiessen, today there are but seven.



American Oystercatcher / USFWS

What can you—what can we all—do? Some things are obvious and I hope most of us already do them: support our local and national bird conservation groups. Avoid disturbing breeding or migratory shorebirds with our birding, our photography, our dogs (and our kids). These birds' "kinship with the swift seasons" means they have no time to waste

while feeding at stopover sites. If you've flushed shorebirds—and who hasn't—you're stealing time from them.

Let's continue to find ways to keep vehicles off the beaches and intertidal areas. Our trash attracts raccoons and other predators to nesting sites—let's do better! And of course, we need to keep our cats indoors.

One important step may require a bit more explanation. Many northbound shorebirds rely on ample supplies of horseshoe crab eggs, particularly at Delaware Bay, but elsewhere, too. The population of these prehistoric creatures has been whammed by direct harvest as bait, and also as the source of *Limulus Amoebocyte Lysate (LAL)*, used to detect bacterial impurities in medical devices and injectable drugs.

An artificial equivalent to LAL has recently become available and conversion to its use would lift enormous pressure off the crabs, allowing them, and the shorebirds that depend on their eggs, to recover. I urge you all, dear readers, to learn about and join the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition, (<https://hscrabrecovery.org/the-coalition/>), comprising everything from a national physicians' group and a pharmaceutical company to local bird clubs and, yes, individuals. Let's get shorebirds back to the healthy levels that so inspired Peter Matthiessen.

*Charles Duncan was a chemistry professor until his passion for birds got so out of control that he changed professions. The last 15 years of his career were dedicated to the conservation of migratory birds, especially shorebirds. Charles is a co-author of the new Birds of Maine.*

# Q&A



*They're high in the trees or skulking in the bushes; they blend in with the leaves. They move quickly AND they look different in September than they did in May!*

*There's always something new to learn about...*

## Fall Warblers

- 1: Which Maine-breeding warbler makes the longest fall migration?
- 2: What single field mark best distinguishes basic (fall-plumaged) adult Blackpoll Warbler from Bay-breasted Warbler?
- 3: Which does not have an eye ring?  
Ovenbird, Canada Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Northern Parula, Nashville Warbler
- 4: Which of the following warblers does not have double white wing bars in all plumages?  
Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Pine, Nashville, Chestnut-sided
- 5: Which warbler does not have a yellow rump?  
Cape May, Magnolia, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped
- 6: Which warbler does not have a yellow vent?  
Palm, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, Tennessee, Orange-crowned
- 7: Which of the following is more likely to be seen in Maine in fall vs spring?  
Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, American Redstart, Canada Warbler
- 8: Which does not nest on the ground? Ovenbird, Black-and-White Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush
- 9: Match these Maine breeding migrant warblers with their wintering grounds:  

Pine Warbler	Greater Antilles+Bahamas
Black-throated Green Warbler	Southern US
Cape May Warbler	Central America
Blackpoll Warbler	NW South America
- 10: Identify the partially-obscured fall warblers in the left column!

- Answers:
- 1) Blackpoll Warbler
  - 2) Blackpoll Warblers have yellow-orange coloration on some part of their feet and legs, while Bay-breasted Warblers have dark feet and legs throughout
  - 3) Northern Parula
  - 4) Nashville Warbler
  - 5) Common Yellowthroat
  - 6) Tennessee Warbler
  - 7) Orange-crowned Warbler
  - 8) Black-throated Blue Warbler
  - 9) Pine Warbler/Southern US, Black-throated Green Warbler/Central America, Cape May Warbler/Greater Antilles+Bahamas, Blackpoll Warbler/NW South America
  - 10) Top to bottom: Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Magnolia, Tennessee

Q&A and photos by Will Broussard

# Critter Corner : *Birding by Moonlight*

Success in birding often hinges on being in the right place at the right time. In the pre-dawn dark of September 21, I sat alone at Fish Beach on Monhegan Island. A full Harvest Moon illuminated the harbor and outlined a small fleet of tuna boats anchored to the south. What was my intended purpose there? With clear skies throughout the night, I hoped to spot some birds flying across the glowing orange surface of the moon. Occasional “chip” notes overhead confirmed my suspicions of lofty movements. Around 5:30 a.m., night-roosting herring gulls began their piercing, clamoring calls from the nearby Nigh Duck ledges. Individual gulls filtered into the rising columns of air, creating smudgy silhouettes against the brightening skyline over Manana Island. And guess what? The flight courses of some gulls transected the face of the setting moon!

Beyond my meager efforts at migration monitoring, there are more convenient and reliable ways to visualize seasonal bird movements



Don Reimer

at your home on a real-time basis. BirdCast real-time analysis maps show intensities of actual nocturnal bird migration as detected by the US weather surveillance radar network between local sunset and sunrise hours. BirdCast surveillance radar gathers information on the numbers, flight directions, speeds and altitudes of birds aloft in order to expand the understanding of migratory bird movement. And, under

favorable travel conditions on certain nights, the skyways transport millions of individual birds to destinations further south. Updated every 6 hours by Colorado State University and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the site delivers colorful, daily forecasts of continental bird movements. The fall migration tracking will end on November 15. Give it a look. <https://birdcast.info/>

*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.*

## Lights Out for Birds!

Speaking of birding by moonlight, every year billions of birds migrate at night, navigating with the night sky. However, as they pass over cities, they can become disoriented by bright artificial lights and skyglow, which can cause them to collide with buildings or windows.

Learn more about the issue and discover ways you can help with Audubon's Lights Out program, <https://www.audubon.org/lights-out-program>



## Leave Your Leaves for Wildlife

We hereby give you permission to take it easy when you tidy up your yard and garden this fall! Many species of insects (aka pollinators and bird food!) rely on leaf litter and cover vegetation to help them survive the winter. There are lots of ways to balance the needs of your yard with those of wild creatures. Check out some great tips from the Xerces Society on their blog: <https://xerces.org/blog/leave-leaves-to-benefit-wildlife>

# Live and Online Events with Mid-Coast Audubon!

Full trip descriptions and current information on our website: [midcoast.maineaudubon.org](http://midcoast.maineaudubon.org)

Program Coordinator: Will Broussard 837-9520 / Field Trip Coordinator: Dennis McKenna 563-8439

## Field Trips

**ALL ARE WELCOME!** You don't need to be an Audubon member or have advanced birding skills to join us! We simply hope to instill interest in the natural world through an understanding of how birds live and what birds live and thrive in our area.

At this time we do require that participants over the age of twelve be fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Participants are welcome to arrange carpooling among themselves, but we will not meet at a central location beforehand. The trip leader will meet participants at the actual trip site.

### January 22, 2022 (Saturday) Pemaquid Point

Join Don Reimer as he searches the reaches of the Atlantic for seabirds from this iconic spot. Expect to see Great Cormorants, Black Guillemots, Common Eiders and Long-tailed Ducks. Previous trips have yielded Razorbills, Purple Sandpipers, Rough-legged Hawks, Black-legged Kittiwakes and Iceland Gulls. Participants should dress for cold and windy weather. Meet at the Pemaquid Point parking lot at 8:00 AM. Winter precipitation will result in cancellation.

### February 12, 2022 (Saturday) South Coastal Area of Maine

We will focus on the Ogunquit area including Marginal Way and the Cliff House resort. We always observe Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers and a variety of vociferous Scoters. Again, dress warmly and precipitation will result in cancellation. Meet the leader at Perkin's Cove, Ogunquit at 8:30 AM.

### March 12, 2022 (Saturday) Biddeford Pool and Vicinity

Join Dennis McKenna in seeking seabirds and early migrants at this south of Portland setting. Historically this area has had a winter population of Snowy Owls. Meet at the East Point Sanctuary at 8:30 AM.

### April 9, 2022 (Saturday) Salt Bay Farm

Join Dennis McKenna as we seek early migrants around the Great Salt Bay. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust parking lot at Belvedere Road in Damariscotta.



Harlequin Ducks / Sherrie York

## Injured Bird?

Contact *Avian Haven*

Avian Haven accepts  
all bird species year-round.  
207-382-6761

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

## Visit your Mid-Coast Audubon Preserves!

Mid-Coast Audubon owns and manages four refuges open to the public for quiet recreation on trails. These refuges are natural areas and we allow nature to take its course except for the trail system. Birders are encouraged to use the refuges and the trail system in all seasons.

Davis Bog Preserve (Morrill)  
Nelson Preserve (Friendship)

Guy Van Duyn Preserve (Waldoboro)  
Weskeag River Wildlife Preserve (Thomaston, no trails)

Information about and directions to MCA preserves is available on our website.

# Monthly Nature Programs

Our third-Thursday monthly programs are presented in partnership with the Camden Public Library. At the present time, all programs are still online. Contact the Camden Library to register and receive the Zoom link. <https://www.librarycamden.org/>

## OWL: A YEAR IN THE LIVES OF NORTH AMERICAN OWLS

Paul Bannick, author and photographer  
November 18 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Join us for a program featuring video, sound, stories from the field, and several dozen new images from Paul Bannick's award-winning and best-selling book: *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls*. Paul uses intimate yet dramatic photography to follow owls through the course of one year in their distinct habitats. Each stage in an owl's life is chronicled through rare images: courtship, mating, and nesting in spring; fledging and feeding of young in summer; dispersal and gaining independence in fall; and, finally, winter's migrations and competitions for food. Through Paul's lens we'll see how owls use the resources available to navigate the challenges of different habitats.



## THE REAL JAMES BOND

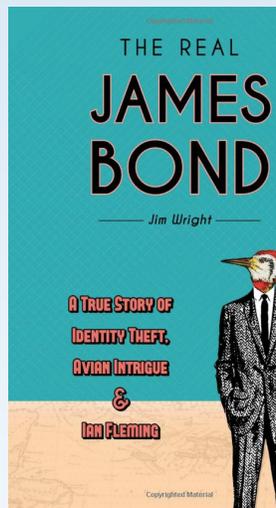
Jim Wright, author

December 16 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Jim Wright's book, *The Real James Bond*, tells the story of the Philadelphia ornithologist whose name was stolen by Ian Fleming for the dashing 007. The real James Bond spent a lifetime of summers in Maine and, with his uncle, wrote a field guide to Maine birds.

Born into a wealthy family but cut off in his early twenties, James Bond took off to the West Indies in search of adventure. Armed with arsenic and a shotgun, he took months-long excursions to the Caribbean to collect material for his book—*Birds of the West Indies*—navigating snake-infested swamps, sleeping in hammocks, and island-hopping on tramp steamers and primitive boats. When James Bond published his landmark book, he had no idea it would set in motion events that would link him to the most iconic spy in the western world and turn his life upside down.

Packed with archival photos, many never before published, and interviews with Bond's colleagues, here is the real story of the pipe-smoking, ruthless ornithologist who introduced the world to the exotic birds of the West Indies.



*Welcome, new and rejoining  
Mid-Coast Audubon members!*

### APRIL

Jeannine Boutin Lesage  
Cynthia Gerry  
Roberta Goschke  
Rudolf Graf  
David Johnson  
Judith Kildow  
Lynette Owen  
Conrad & Judith Poirier  
Rosemary Tottoroto & Raymond Mathis  
Suzanne Weller and David Heilman

### MAY

Ashley Baldwin & Kyle Markmann  
Gretchen Daly  
Patricia Lambert  
Gemma Laser  
Nicholas Ruf  
Catherine Verrillo  
Kim Watson  
Susan Wind

### JUNE

Jan Kearce  
Peter Nutting  
James Pitney  
Foster Shibles

### JULY

Seth Benz  
Ginny and George Bishop  
Karen Blatchford  
Eleanor Bowman  
Diane Goddard  
Rover Siegenthaler

### AUGUST

Anne Aldrich and Kim Whitehurst  
Richard and Sara Cowan  
Donna Cundy  
Holly Faubel  
The Hall Family  
Josephine Ireland and Chris Baker  
Patrick Powell

### SEPTEMBER

Alvena Buckingham  
Kim Clark  
Jere Davis  
Greg Detmer  
Laurie Howarth  
Lauren McReel  
Alis and Jim Ohlheiser  
Caroline and Walter Ronten  
Kathryn Wolfe

Mid-Coast



Audubon

Mid-Coast Audubon

PO Box 458

Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458

[midcoast.maineaudubon.org](http://midcoast.maineaudubon.org)

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

Nonprofit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit #11  
Newcastle, ME  
04553

Stay in Touch!



[facebook.com/MidCoastAudubon](https://facebook.com/MidCoastAudubon)



[instagram.com/midcoastaudubon](https://instagram.com/midcoastaudubon)



Western Kingbird on Monhegan/Don Feimer



# 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ CSV \_\_\_\_\_

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!**