

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

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Science Engagement Produces Results

When I was a young student, science classes always began with a daily ten-question quiz. It made going to class intimidating, even dreadful at times. Thankfully, the potential of developing a lifelong fear of science was turned on its head when a 7th grade science unit focused on the study of birds!

A class day trip to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (Kempton, PA) rendered the subsequent science quiz a breeze. *Make a list of 10 birds of prey that migrate along the Kittatinny Ridge. Aced it! Can you name 30 bird species that nest in Pennsylvania?* Another ace.

Little did I know how much the influence of that science class, particularly that unit on birds, would become a guiding force for me. Birds became a gateway to understanding and appreciating science. And they still are. Today, more than 5 decades later, I am privileged to be on a team of researchers and educators at Schoodic Institute in Acadia

National Park. We monitor the presence, abundance, and distribution of a variety of organisms, including birds. Our focus is on ecosystem health and adaptation in a time of rapid environmental change. All of the work is collaborative and its reach goes well beyond the park's boundaries. Much of the work engages volunteer citizen scientists to collect data and contribute knowledge of the changing world.

Three ongoing Schoodic Institute long-term bird monitoring projects are sustained by dedicated volunteers. Hawk Watch on Cadillac Mountain just completed its 28th fall migration season. Sea Watch, also a fall migration point count effort, completed its 7th season. For each project skilled observers, adept at identifying and counting passage birds in flight, are essential. Coordinating these projects is a labor of love and an opportunity to share what we are learning.

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Photos: Hooded Mergansers, Common Eiders, Evening Grosbeak/Sherrie York



Mid-Coast



Audubon

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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

President's Corner

The mega-millions lottery recently went to a new high of \$1.35 billion in mid-January! Mind-boggling! Of course, we had to buy a few tickets just because. For a few days, we engaged in the fun of pondering our impending wealth, and considering what we would do with it – fun for ourselves, doing good for friends, family, environment... our minds were aflutter.

Like the feeder stations on my porch! We finally struck it rich with a nice fall of snow and the woodland birds all showed up to seek some easy treats. Such engaging characters – the woodpeckers (Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied), the Nuthatches (Red-breasted and White-breasted), Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and American Goldfinch. Occasionally a Brown-creeper puts in an appearance, while Juncos, Mourning Doves, Crows and a few Bluejays scout the perimeter.

I'm feeling quite attached to the spunky little RBNU right now. So bouncy and vocal. *Zip zip zip* they move from feeder to tree, wedging seeds into the bark to hack them open, to hatch those seeds. The origin of their name. I'm trying to observe interactions between the individuals to see if the brighter colored males are pushing the

paler females out of the way as studies have shown. The tiny tin horn sounds through the boreal forest like a celebration.

Looking at the status of the species I share space with, it was a relief that their populations are increasing or are at least stable for the moment. The Woodpeckers, Titmice, Chickadees and Nuthatches are all increasing in number, though climate change may move them out of our range. Brown Creepers and Goldfinches are stable, but Blue Jays are in decline, and alarmingly the Dark-eyed Junco is down by more than 40%. Providing food at our homes can give them a bit of relief on a snowy day, but they need more than that to survive in the long run. Did you know the call of the extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker was similar to the sound of the Red-breasted Nuthatch?!



Red-breasted Nuthatch / Sue Schubel photo

It turned out the winner of the big bucks was in Maine. I was visiting family in CA where we bought the tickets, and I think my mother was relieved to avoid the complications of being billionaires, though I was willing to give it a try. Alas, No mega-millions here, but I do have dozens of birds and we all feel like winners when I keep those feeders full of sunflower seed! Our next seed sale is coming right up – order by March 11th for pickup on March 18th. You can't win if you don't play!

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.

Feed the Birds! Spring Seed Sale coming up...

It's time to prepare for your spring and summer bird-feeding as we eagerly anticipate the arrival of our colorful migrants! Proceeds from the bird seed sale help Mid-Coast Audubon provide free educational programs and feeder stations to schools and libraries.

Online orders can be placed through midcoast.maineaudubon.org, and must be received no later than March 11 by 5 pm. Pre-ordered seed will be available for **pick up on Saturday, March 18**, 10 a.m. to noon at one of two locations – you must specify on your order where you will pick it up: either Plants Unlimited, 629 Commercial St (Route 1) in Rockport, OR Lincoln County Publishing, 116 Mills Rd., Newcastle.
<https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/event/bird-seed-sale/>

Engagement - from page 1

Our third long term project is one that may be familiar– the annual Christmas Bird Count. The purpose is to gain an understanding of the birds that live in an area during the winter. Nationally, the 123rd CBC has just been completed. Two CBC circles combined cover most of Acadia National Park. We completed an analysis of data from 50 consecutive years, 1971 through 2021. But before I reveal a few key findings, and because some readers may have participated in a local CBC, let's engage in a little more science class nostalgia and take a pop quiz:

How many bird species in your local circle are increasing? Decreasing? Remain stable? What is the total number of species that have been identified over the length of time your CBC has been conducted?

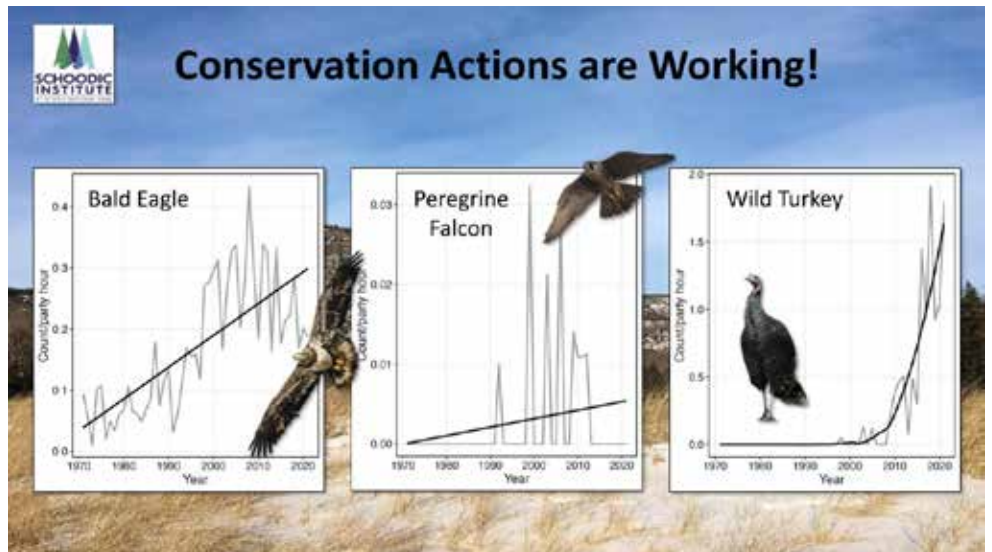
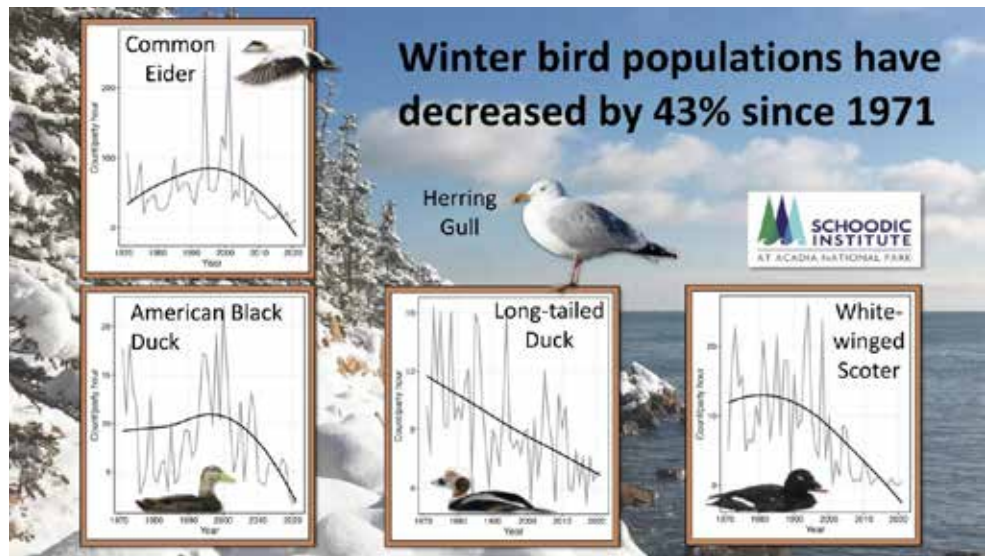
No worries. You won't be graded. The questions are meant to stimulate your curiosity.

The Schoodic Institute's CBC data analysis reveals trends

Acadia National Park's winter bird populations have declined by nearly half since 1971, according to a study published in the journal *Northeastern Naturalist*. Both resident and migratory species have declined, including some of the most common birds, such as Common Eiders and Long-tailed Ducks. Of 162 species recorded during these winter counts, 42 species *decreased* in abundance and 33 species showed *increasing* abundance.

Birds are shifting their home ranges and chasing their suitable habitat as conditions change, according to Schoodic Institute data analyst Kyle Lima, who led the study. Species that have historically been common south of our region are becoming more common here. American Tree Sparrows, once fairly abundant, have been on the decline, while Northern Cardinals and Wild Turkeys, two species not normally linked to the park, have been on the rise lately.

This study shows us that regional and continental changes are happening at a local level at Acadia. People are the cause of rapid environmental changes we are seeing today. People are also part of the solution. We



need to identify causes for these declines and pursue opportunities for stewardship, because there is good news here, too. Bird stewardship works, and we can turn population trends around. For example, the Peregrine Falcon was once eliminated from the park and now Acadia is home to a productive population. Peregrine Falcons, though not typically winter residents, are one of the species exhibiting an increasing trend in the study, first appearing on the 1992 Christmas Bird Count.

Birds are bellwethers of rapid environmental change. We must pay attention to these changes. Can we work intentionally with nature to adapt? The changes documented in this study align with other research showing shifts in plant and animal populations in the Acadia region, such as the *Landscape of Change* project, which found a changing diversity of birds and insects over the last 140 years. Citizen science projects locally

and worldwide are contributing to an extremely valuable knowledge library that can be referenced in the future, when today becomes the past.

Seth Benz is the Bird Ecology Program Director for the Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park.



Critter Corner: *Smaller Than a Chickadee*



Golden-crowned Kinglet / Don Reimer photo

Strolling on a spruce woods trail, I detected faint, high-pitched tsee, tsee, tsee call notes among the dense branches overhead. Constant flittering and hovering actions helped to confirm the singers' identity – several hyperkinetic Golden-crowned Kinglets were out and about. No bigger than your thumb, and weighing about as much as two pennies, Golden-crowned Kinglets are the smallest birds to winter in the New England woods. Amazingly, they winter as far north as Alaska and Nova Scotia.

How do kinglets stay alive during frigid winter nights, with limited fuel to sustain them? Their feathers make up 8% of body weight, equivalent to the weight of clothing of an arctic explorer. They also lower their body temperature on cold overnights to conserve heat and energy, and routinely huddle together in small overnight groups.

Golden-crowned Kinglets live mainly in coniferous forests, where they subsist on a varied diet of insects during the nesting season. Their short, thin bills are perfect for gleaning small prey

items. In winter, they feed on tiny frozen caterpillars and egg larvae found on branch tips and beneath bark. On occasion, they may also forage in brush piles and understory trees. Kinglets frequently join other insectivorous birds, such as chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Downy Woodpeckers. Reportedly, they may shift feeding branches to avoid direct competition with other songbirds.

If you're fortunate enough to get a brief

close look, the patterns on the golden-crowned's face and head are distinctive. Its namesake yellow crown may be partially obscured much of the time, but the black-and-white facial design is noticeable. In spring, and sometimes winter, male kinglets add a prominent stripe of deep orange color to their central crown. This eye-catching feature is significant during spring courtship, as males flash and pulse their vivid crowns to impress potential mates!

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.



Canvasback spotted in Warren in early January (larger than a chickadee) / Lew Purinton photo

2022 Christmas Bird Count results

The annual Christmas Bird Count was established on Christmas Day 1900, when ornithologist Frank M. Chapman proposed an alternative to the traditional “Christmas Side-Hunts,” which focused on shooting as many birds and mammals as possible in a single day. Today, thousands of counts are conducted across the Americas from December 14 through January 5 each year. For purposes of consistency and continuity, bird data are gathered within defined 15-mile count circles.

The Mid-Coast Audubon region includes three annual circles:

Pemaquid/Damariscotta (Dennis McKenna, compiler)

On CBC day, weather conditions were less than ideal and the forecast for rain at 1:00 PM might have rushed the efforts of our already skeleton crew, but the teams still managed to end the shortened day with a respectable tally of 69 species (plus another 5 species during Count Week). The Count Week birds were culled from ebird reports from within the count circle.

Highlights included Greater Scaup (3), Barrows Goldeneye (2,) and Pine Warblers (2), as well as solitary representatives of Iceland Gull, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Fox Sparrow and Orange-crowned Warbler.

As far as this circle is concerned, the experts on winter finch movements were correct in their projections on some species and incorrect on others. Our observers found 180 Pine Siskins (by far the all time high) and 95 Red Crossbills but no White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, Evening Grosbeaks or Pine Grosbeaks.

High counts were found for Pine Warblers, House Finches and the aforementioned Pine Siskins.

The Count Week species included an elusive Grasshopper Sparrow in downtown Damariscotta (which the Vickery tome indicates has only been found eight times in Maine in winter) and an Eastern Towhee in South Bristol. Ebird observers contributed, in addition, a Cooper’s Hawk, six Horned Larks and a Dovekie.

Thomaston/Rockland (Don Reimer and Delia Mohlie, compilers)

The 2022 Thomaston-Rockland CBC was held on December 18 under nearly ideal weather conditions. Eighty species were tallied, and a total of 6,672 individual birds were found. A Common Grackle and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were recorded during the Count Week period.



Dickcissel / Don Reimer photo



Hermit Thrush / Don Reimer photo

Highlights included: 1 Wood Duck, 1 Northern Pintail, 1 Green-winged Teal, and 17 Lesser Scaup. With the exceptions of 123 Red Crossbills, 14 Purple Finches, and 14 Evening Grosbeaks, winter finches were scarce. A lingering Hermit Thrush and a vagrant Dickcissel were notable finds. Eastern Bluebirds (41) and Red-bellied Woodpeckers (17) continue to do well.

Bunker Hill (Jeff Cherry, compiler)

The Bunker Hill CBC took place on December 19, 2022 under pleasant sunny conditions, with temperatures ranging from 28 F to 38 F. Nineteen

observers in the field and two feeder watchers counted a total of 4,868 individual birds of 56 species. Wood Duck, Red Crossbill, and Eastern Towhee were new species for the count. Eight species set high count records: Hooded Merganser (158), Red-tailed Hawk (18), Red-bellied Woodpecker (28), Northern Flicker (3), Brown Creeper (8), Eastern Bluebird (146), Pine Siskin (185), and Evening Grosbeak (27). Ring-billed Gull had a record low count of two birds. The less common species observed were: Wood Duck, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Red-shouldered Hawk, Pine Warbler, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, and Red Crossbill.

Live and Online Events with Mid-Coast Audubon!

Full event descriptions and current information on our website: 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.

February 11, 2023

(Saturday, 8:30-3:00)

South Coastal Area of Maine

Join us as we focus on the Ogunquit area and north including the Cliff Walk at Marginal Way and the Cliff House resort. The Cliff House offers sweeping ocean views that make for wonderful sea birding. A footpath along the rocky shoreline near Perkins Cove offers extensive views where ducks and seabirds can be readily observed. We typically see Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers and a variety of vociferous scoters. Dress warmly!

We will meet at the Perkins Cove parking lot (on Perkins Cove Road across from Barnacle Billy's Seafood) at 8:30 am. For more information, or in the event of inclement weather, please contact the Trip Leader, Dennis McKenna: dennismckenna@gmail.com.

March 11, 2023 *(Saturday, 8:30-3:00)*

Biddeford Pool and Vicinity

This trip will bring fine viewing of sea birds, raptors, and early migrants. Historically, this area has had wintering Snowy Owls. Biddeford Pool is a big, sandy tidal area accessed through Hill's Beach. Additional nearby location options include Pine Point where the Scarborough River empties into the Atlantic Ocean, and Scarborough Marsh, Maine's largest expanse of salt marsh.

For those coming from the north who are interested in carpooling, we will meet at the Damariscotta Hannaford parking lot at 6:30 am. Otherwise, we will meet at the East Point Sanctuary at 8:30 am at the end of Lester B. Orcutt Blvd. in Biddeford. For more

information, or in the event of inclement weather, please contact the Trip Leader, Dennis McKenna: dennismckenna@gmail.com.

April 8, 2023 *(Saturday, 8:00-12:00)*

Salt Bay Farm (Damariscotta)

Join us as we seek early migrants at the Great Salt Bay Farm in Damariscotta. We'll walk the meadow looking for Savannah Sparrows and Bobolinks, scan the pond for ducks and geese, investigate the forest edges for early migrating warblers and songbirds, and then scan the Great Salt Bay for gulls, ducks, Osprey and Belted Kingfishers.

We'll start the day at 8:00 am at the Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust parking lot, 110 Belvedere Road. For more information, or in the event of inclement weather, please contact the Trip Leader, Jeff Cherry: jeff@cherrygallery.com



Male Bobolink / Don Reimer photo

LOBSTER BAKE!

Bring your friends and family for an unforgettable day on a Maine coastal island! Join us at Hog Island Audubon Camp for our traditional lobster bake fundraiser on **September 2, 2023**. Members of the Mid-Coast Audubon board will display their cooking talents and be available to answer bird questions, too. (Talk about multi-tasking!)

Your ticket covers boat transportation from the Audubon dock in Bremen and your meal, which includes fish chowder and fire-baked lobster, clams, potato, corn, and onion. Lemonade, coffee, and a special bird-themed dessert, too! (You'll have a little time to explore the island and walk off some of that meal, too.)

Full details and reservations will be available in summer 2023, so keep an eye on our website and social media channels for more details.



Monthly Nature Programs

Our third-Thursday monthly programs are presented in partnership with the Camden Public Library. **Programs may be online or in-person.** Contact Camden Library or **visit the Mid-Coast Audubon Events page to register:** <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/events/>

ACCESS BIRDING with Freya McGregor February 16, 6:00-7:00 pm **ONLINE VIA ZOOM**

We can get so much out of birding: a fun activity to enjoy, a sense of community, the therapeutic benefits from time spent in nature... Unfortunately, there are barriers to birding and the outdoors that many people with various access challenges experience. The good news is, we can often do something about it! Learn basic disability etiquette for birders, broaden your idea of what birding is, and learn practical, replicable strategies to make birding locations more accessible and bird-related programming more inclusive for disabled birders.

Presenter Freya McGregor (she/her), OTR/L, CIG is a disabled birder and an occupational therapist. Freya co-founded the nonprofit Birdability, and now provides consulting and training through her business Access Birding to empower birders and nature organizations to be confident agents of change in improving access and inclusion for disabled birders.

Her clinical background is in blindness and low vision services, and her 'dodgy' knee creates an access challenge for her. Freya has written about access, inclusion, disability and birding for Audubon magazine, Birding magazine, and the LA Times, and is currently writing *A Field Guide to Accessible Birding in North America*, to be published by Princeton University Press.



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THE HER-STORY OF BIRDING with Bridget Butler March 16, 6:00-7:00 pm **ONLINE VIA ZOOM**

Join us to learn about the lost legacy of women in ornithology, and a celebration of noticing female birds. Let's face it, there's a bit of bias in the birding world when it comes to females. Bridget Butler, the Bird Diva, breaks down why by looking at current research on gender and birding, retelling the stories of the Mothers of Ornithology, and making the connection to the current science on female birds.

Bridget Butler, AKA The Bird Diva, has been working in conservation and environmental education for more than 20 years. She owns her own small business, Bird Diva Consulting, which provides presentations, outings, and online courses for folks interested in exploring their connection with birds. Bridget is a certified Kripalu Mindfulness Outdoor Guide, and has worked for the Audubon Society in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. Her Slow Birding work has been featured on numerous podcasts including the American Birding Podcast, Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds Podcast, and the South Africa podcast The Birding Life. As the Bird Diva, she feels that birding is for anyone who enjoys and is curious about birds – if you take delight in noticing birds, you are a birder. Bridget lives in St. Albans, Vermont with her husband and three young children.



In 2017 a Vermillion Flycatcher was spotted in Bremen via a webcam on Hog Island.

RARE BIRDS OF MAINE with Louis Bevier April 20, 6:00-7:00pm **IN PERSON AT CAMDEN LIBRARY**

Maine ornithologist and advanced bird identifier, Louis Bevier, will join us in person at the Camden Public Library on Thursday, April 20 at 6:30 pm. Louis will talk about some of the exciting rarities that have occurred in Maine, how to identify them, and how to document them by learning to improve observational skills and describing birds.

Bevier was the subspecies editor in the "Birds of North America" series produced out of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. He does environmental consulting work and has led several bird tours for Field Guides Inc. over the years. He is past chair, and still current member, of the Maine Bird Records Committee.

Welcome, new and rejoining Mid-Coast Audubon members!

OCTOBER

Sara Eastler
Danielle Molloy
Andrea Williams

NOVEMBER

Jane Bernier
Michelle Gharst and Laura Hepner
Dennis Payeur

DECEMBER

Catherine Burke
Bruce Craven
Evelyn DeFrees
Caleb and Brittany Elwell
Cynthia Freese
Wendy Kasten
Rusty Kent

Ellie Libby
Steven Linnell
Karen Olson
James Pitney
Paul Rogers
Jerry Sawyer
Jeff Wilber



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Avian Haven accepts
all bird species
year-round.
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avianhaven.org



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

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!