

# 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 46, No. 1 - February 2022



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Photos: Eastern Bluebird/Sherrie York;  
Cedar Waxwing/Don Reimer;  
Red-bellied Woodpecker/  
Sherrie York

*Harnessing the power of Ornithotherapy in the New Year:*

## Making birds part of your wellness plan for 2022

Research shows that when we step outside and into nature, chemical responses explode inside our bodies. Cortisol, the potentially damaging hormone that flips into overdrive when we are stressed, starts to lower with just 20-30 minutes of connecting to the natural world. This is important to know, because the impact of prolonged elevated cortisol levels can make us feel bad, look bad, and even shave years off our lives. If we can mitigate the effects of stress and spiked cortisol, the lasting impact on our overall wellbeing is positive.

Using birdwatching to do it? How can we refuse?

The value of having outdoor experiences in biodiverse environments is gaining traction in approaches to health care and preventative medicine across the globe. In Japan, Forest Bathing or *Shinrin Yoku* is widely practiced as part of preventative medicine. In Scotland, and other areas of the UK, doctors are prescribing nature as a drug-free plan for improving

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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

# President's Corner

Have you seen the Steller's Sea Eagle?! I hope so! It has been a very cooperative visitor to midcoast Maine, thrilling birders from its arrival in late 2021 to the time of this writing in early 2022. You could get it on both year lists! The largest sea eagle in the world, with a 6-8 foot wingspan, it is impressive with dark body, white shoulders, and white wedge-shaped tail. And what a schnoz! The massive yellow beak is a show-stopper. The species of bird is obvious, but a million questions are swirling around. Is it lost? Is it exploring? Male or female? Will it be ok? Luckily Steller's Sea Eagles are from cold northern climes, though far away, and the beauty of convergent evolution has graced them with adaptations to fit this similar environment halfway around the world. We don't know if it is a he or she, though some suggest a female would have stopped to ask for directions. Some birds do get lost or blown off course, but some birds go to new places just because they can.

Imagine becoming such a phenom just because of where you are. Simply showing up in the wrong place grants you star status. This bird is obvious – big and taking an unusual track, but birds of many species make epic journeys as they migrate twice a year. I can see a Blackpoll Warbler might feel outraged at being overlooked.

It's been a long pandemic and this visitor from the Far East at the turn of the year seems a good omen. What a party atmosphere has ensued for the birders as old and new friends gather to enjoy the rarity! In Shamanic traditions the East symbolizes new beginnings. This bird has been flying east into the rising sun for most of its journey. Native Americans see eagles as the spirit animal associated with the east. Many cultures revere eagles for their strength and vision –as such high flyers they achieve a vantage point which gives them greater perspective. Is this bird a messenger sent to wake us up?

"As the day begins with the rising sun, I ask, Spirit keeper of the East, Brother Eagle, be with me. Fly high as you carry my prayers to the Creator. May I have eyes as sharp as yours, so I am able to see truth and hope on the path I have chosen. Guide my step and give me courage to walk the circle of my life with honesty and dignity."

– Lakota Four Directions Prayer.

Or perhaps - the Bald Eagle that strayed from its North American range last February, seen in Hokkaido, Japan, spoke so glowingly of its homeland across the Pacific that a resident Sea Eagle there could not resist the invitation. Is the Sea Eagle roaming this continent seeking a special Bald Eagle s/he met by chance on the Nemuro peninsula?

*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.*

## Ornithery- from page 1

health. And to endorse the use of birds as the conduit into rich experiences with nature, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is partnering in this campaign. Provinces in Canada have followed-on, embracing nature as a link to human wellness. Here in the US, initiatives like Parks Rx are emerging as conduits in facilitating prescriptive nature and are starting to gain interest from some progressive groups in mainstream medicine.

Realization that taking time out from life's pressures and struggles by observing birds and other nature, is a no brainer for those of us already fond of feathered wonders. If we think about our own experiences, we can see where birdwatching provides us similar benefits of mental restoration akin to taking a mini vacation. The fact is, when we explore surrounding ecological communities and birds, nature's energy pours into us, filling us up with a natural healing recharge and resiliency. Spending time in bird-rich environments, whether that be at Pemaquid Point, the Great Salt Bay Farm, or even your own neighborhood, has proven benefits to your wellness. Just a short break to take a walk using birds as gateways to a deeper experience with nature can turn a stress-filled day into one with increased productivity and focus.

The good news is that we don't need to go far to reap the benefits of Ornithery – that is the mindful observation of birds – because birds are charismatic and accessible to all people. Cityscapes offer green patches or parks which can be optimal places to spend time observing. Birds in these habitats are more adapted to living around people, and often allow for closer observation. Bird feeding or watering stations we establish at home can set the stage for a front-row view into the dramatic lives of the birds around us, providing us respite and mental recharge. When birds show up to dine at our offerings, their visits are enjoyable to watch and provide us satisfaction in acceptance of our invitation. In an era when social distancing challenges in-home visits from



A Yellow-breasted Chat visited Rockland in December / Don Reimer photo

human friends, why not invite the birds into our spaces to keep us company? By doing this, we are not only nourishing the birds, but also our souls. And during the pandemic, backyard birds brought calm and comfort to many who took time out to notice. Some for the first time.

Boundless opportunities for discovery lie in a closer understanding of the birds around us. This offers excitement and endless positive distraction. When we take time to mindfully observe, we learn more not only about birds but also about ourselves.

**Here's an Ornithery challenge for you in 2022:** Get to know the birds around you on a deeper level in order to magnify the wellness benefits. I suggest 22 minutes a day, in keeping with the theme of 2022!

Look for a type of bird that is common around you...One you think you know fairly well, or one you want to know better. You do not need to have any prior knowledge about birds for this challenge. Even expert birders continue to learn something new the more they look. Those who say they don't aren't looking close enough.

Through mindful observation, challenge yourself to find one new thing about the bird every day for one week:

- a pattern of feathers and color
- its shape – overall or pick the bill, tail, or feet to focus on
- a behavior or the way it moves
- or vocalization

Consider a new approach of observation:

- closing your eyes and only listening
- a deliberate focus on its flight patterns
- Envisioning it as only a silhouette – absent of color

If you commit to this challenge with one species, it's not hard to start this practice with others. If you are ambitious and finding joy in this scavenger hunt, set goals to find a new species each week to focus on. Note your observations in a journal or diary, with words or sketches. As you train yourself into the habit of more mindful observation, you will soon notice more in every aspect of your life. This is Ornithery.

*Holly Merker is an author of Ornithery: For Your Mind, Body, and Soul (Crossley Books 2021). A busy migrant, she feels fortunate to spend several weeks a year as an instructor at Hog Island Audubon Camp, where she gets to help others make healthy connections to the birds and beautiful landscapes of midcoast Maine!*

## Scholarships Available to Hog Island Audubon Camp!



Friends of Hog Island is offering two scholarships for summer 2022 at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen, Maine: one for a teacher and one for a teen.

- Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week, for K-12 teachers, July 17-22
- Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens ages 14-17, June 19-24

**Send an e-mail to [info@fobi.org](mailto:info@fobi.org) to apply!**



# Critter Corner : *Joining the Mob*



Young Bald Eagle harrassed by American Crow / Don Reimer photo

One frigid mid-January morning, we stood huddled on a Boothbay shoreline, hoping to spot the super-rare Steller's Sea Eagle that had occupied a slot there over several days. Normally found in eastern Russia and parts of Asia, the celebrated raptor had drawn hundreds of Maine onlookers in recent weeks. Once it launched skyward, the giant raptor was accompanied by three mobbing Common Ravens that encircled and harassed it for several minutes.

Mobbing is an anti-predator adaptation, where prey species

cooperatively mob a predator by attacking or harassing it. In addition to dive bombing actions, mobbing behavior can include loud squawking, and even defecating on a predator. Mobbing calls are used to recruit or summon other attackers to join in the fray. Occasionally mobbing is used to steal food, by distracting or harassing a larger bird away from a food source. I once observed a group of seven American Crows drive a scrambling adult Bald Eagle off a riverside carcass.

*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.*

It is notable that mobbers typically stay above and behind their target species, and basically out of its range of sight. Such strategic positioning diminishes possible retribution by a powerful, lethal predator. Smaller birds are generally quicker and more agile than the larger predators, as well. In most cases, the energy expenditure of pursuing and attempting to catch a small attacker may not be worth the costs. Often it is far easier for the target bird to simply leave the area.

## Come from away...

The largest of all sea eagles and one of the rarest raptors in the world, the Steller's Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*) can have a wingspan up to 8 feet and weigh up to 20 pounds.

Native to Russia and parts of Asia, only 4,000 Steller's Sea Eagles are known to exist worldwide.

This wandering individual was first spotted in Alaska in August 2020, and has had an amazing journey enroute to its arrival in Maine in late December 2021.

Check out a timeline and map of the eagle's adventures thus far at <https://www.audubon.org/news/inside-amazing-cross-continent-saga-stellers-sea-eagle>



Steller's Sea Eagle / Lew Purinton photo

## 2021 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 the 18th of December, 16 hardy observers fanned out over the area centered on the junction of Rt. 32 and Upper Round Pond Road to count birds. 72 species were found which is the third highest total in recent years, trailing only the 77 species found in 2014 and 73 species found in 2012.

No new species for the count were found. The only high species count was Eastern Bluebird with 95 individuals counted, which may reflect the species' continued adjustment to life in a northern climate.

Open water was the rule of the day and this writer thinks that this puts the river observers at a disadvantage. Ice forming along the shores of the river typically forces the waterfowl out of the coves and into areas where they can be more readily counted. That said, 17 species of duck were observed, highlighted by the King Eider/ Harlequin Duck daily-double found by Don Reimer in Chamberlain/Long Cove. These two species have rarely been found in this region in the past decade.

Other highlights were a Pied-billed Grebe, a Hermit Thrush, not one but two Pine Warblers, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker found in South Bristol. A hybrid, Common X Barrow's Goldeneye, did not help the species count total but is worthy of note.

### Thomaston/Rockland (Don Reimer, compiler)

The Thomason/Rockland Count, centered at 2.8 miles south of the Knox Mansion, began in 1970.

Local temperatures ranged from 27 to 33 degrees F for the December 19th count. As always, ambient factors affect yearly outcomes to varying extents. This year, participants received a bonus situation – ice free ponds and lakes! These conditions proved significant at Chickawaukie Lake, providing 10 separate species of puddle-

and diving-ducks and a tardy group of 38 American Coots. A rare Barnacle Goose on the lake's shoreline was a complete surprise! First observed on November 5 at Rockland's South School athletic fields, the vagrant goose had vanished after a three-week stint. The handsome resurgent goose was easily a new record for this count territory.

Winter finch species were no-shows this time around, perhaps reflecting a general scarcity of wild berries and multiflora rose hips. A mere five Purple Finches, 35 House Finches and 144 American Goldfinches represented the category; a single Cedar Waxwing was found. Sparrow numbers were lower than average, with fewer wintering Song Sparrows and White-throated Sparrows recorded.

Warblers are quite unusual at this season, however, a hot spot in Rockland produced three species. An Orange-crowned Warbler and

Yellow-breasted Chat were observed on count day. The third species, a MacGillivray's Warbler from the western reaches of the US, was spotted the previous day and noted as a "count week" species. All told, the final tally comprised 74 species and 4,805 individual birds.

### Bunker Hill (John Weinrich, compiler)

The Bunker Hill CBC was conducted on a frosty December 20th by 16 hardy counters in the field and several at-home feeder stations. This group of experienced birders accounted for 54 separate species and 4,591 individual birds. The number of species and individual birds in this count fell well within the average range of birds counted on the Christmas Bird Count over the past 14 years.

Of interest and a boost to the species count for the day was a Lincoln's Sparrow and a Savannah Sparrow as well as a Baltimore Oriole and a Bullock's Oriole paired up at a feeder

watcher's feeding station near Damariscotta Mills. Another feeder watcher in Whitefield reported 14 Evening Grosbeaks. A Pine Warbler, Common Redpolls and a Great Horned Owl were noted during the count week.

Winter finches were rare in this count as predicted in the 2021-22 Winter Finch Report out of Canada. The food supply for winter finches was ample in the boreal forest and across the Canadian/US border, keeping these birds from erupting South.



American Coot / Don Reimer photo

## 2022 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Want to help create a real-time snapshot of bird populations? You can join the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)! Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of

Ornithology and Birds Canada learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Recently, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

**The 25th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21, 2022.** Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information.



# Live and Online Events with Mid-Coast Audubon!

Full event descriptions and current information on our website: [midcoast.maineaudubon.org](https://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.

**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 (Damariscotta)

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.

**April 23, 2022** *(Saturday)*

### Reid State Park (Georgetown)

Join Will Broussard as we look for early migrants at this beautiful location. Previous trips to this beach have yielded newly arrived Piping Plovers, lingering Purple Sandpipers, Red-necked Grebes and all three scoters. Meet at Reid State Park at 9:00AM.

**May 12, 2022** *(Thursday)*

### Sears Island (Searsport)

Join Mid-Coast Audubon as we seek spring migrants at this coastal hotspot. The site is easy to navigate as the trails are mostly paved. Meet at the site at 7:30AM.

**May 21, 2022** *(Saturday)*

### Evergreen Cemetery in Portland

We will continue to seek spring migrants at this, historically one of our most successful field trips. Warblers and thrushes frequently abound in this green oasis in the heart of Maine's largest city. Meet at the cemetery pond at 7:30AM.

**May 24, 2022** *(Tuesday)*

### Florida Lake (Freeport)

We will continue our search for spring migrants at this usually productive spot. Meet at the site at 7:00AM.

**May 28, 2022** *(Saturday)*

### Vile's Arboretum (Augusta)

Join Will Broussard in a continuing quest for spring migrants. This trip will begin at the Arboretum parking lot at 7:30 AM.

**June 4, 2022** *(Saturday)*

### Belgrade Lakes and Bond Brook

We will seek regional specialties such as Sandhill Cranes, Black Terns, Purple Martins and Bank Swallows on this trip. Meet at the Messalonskee Lake boat launch at 8:00 AM.

**June 9, 2022** *(Thursday)*

### Kennebunk Plains

Join Mid-Coast Audubon on its annual foray to this unique habitat for grassland birds in southern Maine. Previous trips have found Upland Sandpipers, Eastern Meadowlarks, and a multitude of sparrows including Grasshopper, Vesper, Field, and Clay-colored. Meet at the Kennebunk Rest Stop on Route 95 (south) at 8:30 AM.

**Injured  
Bird?**

Contact  
*Avian Haven*

Avian Haven accepts  
all bird species year-round.

207-382-6761

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

## 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 Camden Library or **visit the Mid-Coast Audubon Events page to register:** <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/events/>

### ARCTIC RESEARCH NEWS with Paty Matrai

February 17, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences Senior Research Scientist Paty Matrai will take us on a journey to the Arctic Ocean, where her decades of field research have helped shed light on global climate change. She will help us understand how changes in the Arctic Ocean can impact regions beyond the frozen north, and how climate models help us predict what changes may be in store for us going forward.

Paty Matrai is a biological oceanographer, specializing in air-sea interactions with an



emphasis in biological processes, especially in the Arctic Ocean, the cycling of biogenic gases, formation of primary organic aerosols, and the interdisciplinary role of the polar oceans in climate. She has worked for many years in field expeditions to the Arctic, Antarctic, and temperate

regions, with a sprinkling of tropical cruises. Her current research interests include the deployment of ice-tethered chemical observing buoys and Arctic floats equipped with physical and bio-optical sensors.

### MESSING AROUND WITH BIRDS (FOR FUN AND SCIENCE) with Scott Weidensaul

March 17, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Join naturalist Scott Weidensaul for a lighthearted exploration of his many avian research projects, from banding hawks and tiny Saw-whet Owls to studying the migration of western hummingbirds that aren't supposed to be in the east in December (but are), and Snowy Owls coming down from the Arctic. Best of all, learn how anyone with some enthusiasm and time can make important contributions to the science and conservation of birds, and have a great time doing it.

Scott Weidensaul is the author of more than two dozen books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist "Living on the Wind." He is a contributing editor for Audubon magazine, and writes for a variety of other publications, including Living Bird. Weidensaul is also an active field researcher, studying Saw-whet Owl migration for more than two decades, as well as western hummingbirds expanding into the northeast, bird migration in Alaska, and the winter movements of Snowy Owls through Project SNOWstorm, which he co-founded. A native of Pennsylvania, he now lives in New Hampshire, and has for more than 20 years been an instructor at National Audubon's Hog Island camp in Bremen.



### CAMERA TRAPPING YOUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS with Janet Pesaturo

April 21, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

A trail camera is a rugged, weather-proof camera that can be mounted and left in place for long periods of time. It triggers to take photos or videos when an animal passes in front of it.



Janet Pesaturo, nature guide and author, will introduce trail

cameras, how they work and how to set them up and then discuss smart camera placement so that you too can capture photos and videos that reveal the secret habits of animals. These "camera traps" are taking wildlife research by storm because they are a noninvasive way to literally shed new light on the private lives of wild creatures. But you don't need to be a scientist. Anyone with curiosity, persistence, and an inexpensive trail camera can study cutting edge animal behavior topics.

Pesaturo's first book, "Camera Trapping Guide," is the book she wishes had existed years ago when she started camera trapping. She uses trail cameras and her tracking skills to study animal behavior and to provide data to local conservation organizations. She has a masters degree in Conservation Biology and a level III CyberTracker certificate in Track & Sign. Janet travels around the country tracking and camera trapping everything from mouse to moose.

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

#### OCTOBER

Susan Beebe  
Karen D. Calcott  
Susan B. Davis  
Maureen Goss  
Carol & Ed Knapp

#### NOVEMBER

Sally E. Butler  
Sarah Caputo  
Terry R. Hackford  
Margaret L. Macleod  
Kristin Pennock  
Susan Reilly

John Rice

Susan St. John  
Johanna Stinson  
Jody Telfair-Richards  
Lewis Wheelwright &  
Jacinda Martinez

#### DECEMBER

Peter Abello  
Karen Brace  
Foy & Lydia Brown  
Jordan Cohen  
Margaret R. Davis

Judith R. Falk  
Victor Goldsmith  
Frances S. Hitchcock  
Betty Lou Richards  
Deidre E. Sousa

## Mid-Coast



## Audubon

## Mid-Coast Audubon

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

A Barnacle Goose consorts with Canada Geese / Don Reimer photo

MAINE   
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# 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!

Checks payable to Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Rd, Falmouth, ME 04105. FMI: 207.781.2330, ext. 230