

# The Merganser

*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 47, No. 3 - November 2023

## Lobster (and clams...and chowdah!) for the Birds

Almost one hundred people turned out on Saturday, September 2, to help Mid-Coast Audubon celebrate the return of our popular fundraising event.

Our intrepid team of Fire Boys were up early to get the coals just right, and when everything was ready on the beach they nestled lobsters and corn in a bed of steaming and smoking rockweed.

In the kitchen, Seabird Sue Schubel's famous fish chowder simmered away, and vegetables were prepped and roasted. (No, we can't tell you the chowder's secret ingredient, because then it wouldn't be secret!) A midden-worth

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Photos: Bluejay, Herring Gull, Seabird Sue's famous fish chowder, and the Mid-Coast Audubon Board's "Fire Boys" / Sherrie York



## Mid-Coast



## Audubon

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

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### OFFICERS

Sue Schubel, President  
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Sherrie York, Secretary  
Lew Purinton, Treasurer

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Kathy Cartwright, Waldoboro  
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Don Reimer, Warren  
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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 January 15!  
Send submissions to [sy@sherrieyork.com](mailto:sy@sherrieyork.com)



### Style that's for the birds!

Grab your binoculars and your field guide, put on your boots and your new Mid-Coast Audubon hat – and go celebrate the changing season in style. Khaki hat sports our Mid-Coast Audubon merganser logo and comes in your choice of three brim colors. More information available on our website: <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/shop/>

# President's Corner

## *More is within our reach*

This fall I joined other migratory species in taking a trek. Just for a visit, but still a longish movement spring or fall feels so right as one succumbs to their zugunruhe. A mother-daughter drive across the country from Maine to SoCal! Like the birds and insects moving to wintering grounds, we searched for food and avoided danger. Cats and windows weren't such a problem for us, but we did need to watch out for traffic, other humans, and cranky elk.

We picked up pebbles on the shores of Lake Erie. We camped beside the Mississippi River in Wisconsin, eating cheese and keeping company with owls, herons, and ducks. We were pelted by rain in the Badlands and admired a Jackalope at Wall Drug. Yellowstone was epic in landscape and wildlife – and we fell in love with Bison.

The Idaho Potato Museum is not to be missed. American Dippers entertained us while we breakfasted under golden leaves by a rippling Utah river. In the home stretch we felt very small in the huge Zion NP rock formations. I came away thinking, "The world is a big and wondrous place." My fellow traveler came away with "It's a small world after all." Perhaps for both of us it can be summed up as "More is within our reach."

Our friend Andre Breton is riding his bicycle from 54 N to 54 S for a challenge he named "Climate Zero." He will plant 5,000 trees on his journey to offset his lifetime carbon footprint, stretching himself physically and mentally. Now, I'm not sure that is within my reach, but I do like to think of someone taking on such a challenge. We usually can do more than we think possible, so stretch your wings a little and give it a try. I'll keep the feeders full.\*



American Dipper / Sue Schubel photo

*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.*

\*Look for information about our upcoming Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser on our social media channels, website, and local newspapers. (And Page 7 of this newsletter!)



## Lobster Bake - *from page 1*

of clams was steamed, and of course we can't forget the creation of our signature dessert, the delicious (and too cute!) cream puffins.

Visitors came from as far away as Pennsylvania to explore, socialize, and enjoy a fine meal on Hog Island. We were delighted by the turnout *and* the weather, which couldn't have been more perfect.

Our thanks to everyone who came out to support Mid-Coast Audubon's programs and projects. We hope you will join us again next September!



Cream puffins in process, lobsters and corn coming off the fire / Sherrie York photos

## Clarry Hill Preservation Success!

Last December it was announced that 263 acres of blueberry barrens and woodland on Clarry Hill in Union were for sale.

Clarry Hill provides important habitat and has long been a popular destination for birders, but its grand vistas made it a coveted location for development.

The Midcoast Conservancy, which already held easements on the adjoining Clarry Hill Preserve property, quickly mobilized to sign a purchase agreement. Working with the Maine Farmland Trust and other partners they launched a campaign to raise

funds necessary to meet the \$1.05 million purchase price by September 15.

In late September we learned that the Midcoast Conservancy had successfully closed on the purchase of the property. At the same time, the Maine Farmland Trust was able to purchase an agricultural easement, preserving the blueberry barrens as a Forever Farm.

For more information on this exciting success, visit the Midcoast Conservancy and Maine Farmland Trust websites.  
<https://www.midcoastconservancy.org/>  
<https://www.maineFarmlandtrust.org>



*If you hang it they will come!*

While many species of birds are able to hide their nests in dense

foliage or grassy meadows, many others require holes for nesting. Although most birds prefer natural cavities, with the correct design a nesting box can serve as a good replacement.

And yes, it might seem early to be planning for nesting season, but did you know some species will use nest boxes as cozy winter roosts, too?

Mid-Coast Audubon builds nest boxes tailor-made for a variety of bird species including bluebirds, swallows, titmice, nuthatches, chickadees (\$25); Saw-whet Owl and American Kestrel (\$30); and Wood Duck (\$35). We also make bat boxes (\$20). Nest boxes can be purchased at Louis Doe Home Center on Route 1 in Newcastle, or by calling Lew Purinton at (207) 549-5257.



Clarry Hill / Don Reimer photo

# Critter Corner: *Monarch Migration*

Decades ago, I recall the thousands of fall Monarch butterflies that draped the spruce branches at Pemaquid Point. Pine, fir and cedar trees are often chosen for roosting, since their thick canopies moderate the temperature and humidity at night roosts. Attracted to the tapered tips of peninsulas, south-bound Monarchs funnel and congregate there, the shortest distances across open water. Monarchs bask in the morning sunlight to warm themselves before resuming their 3,000 mile journeys. Monarchs travel only by day.

Eastern North American monarchs fly south using several flyways, then merge into a single flyway in Central Texas. It is truly amazing that these monarchs know the way to the overwintering grounds, even though this year's generation has never before been to Mexico!

The ties between Monarchs and milkweed are well established. Not only do monarch larvae feed on milkweed plants, but the two organisms have a symbiotic relationship with each other. By eating the leaves of the milkweed, monarch caterpillars ingest toxins from the plant that make them poisonous to predators. This toxicity remains, even when the caterpillars



Mating Monarchs / Don Reimer photo

become adult butterflies and, for that reason, birds and other animals avoid eating them. In return for protection from predators, Monarchs feed on nectar from milkweed flowers, thereby helping to pollinate them, and keeping their species going. It should be noted that tropical milkweed should not be planted in our local gardens, since it disrupts normal Monarch migration behavior.

Begun in 1992, the Monarch Tagging Program is a large-scale community science project to help understand the dynamics of fall migration through tagging, and subsequent recapture, of Monarchs. Resulting data collection helps answer questions about the origins of Monarchs that reach Mexico, the timing and pace of the migration, mortality during the migration, and changes in geographic distribution. Lightweight, circular tags were designed by Monarch Watch specifically for tagging monarchs. The year 2019 was exceptional for butterflies, as hundreds of Monarchs clustered on Monhegan Island, where two volunteer butterfly taggers, marked about 120 individuals over a two-day span. Some days later, a day-tripping visitor to the island mentioned seeing a tagged Monarch at Pemaquid Point the previous day!



Tagging a Monarch / Don Reimer photo

*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.*





## The Maine Owl Pellet Project wants you!

The Maine Owl Pellet Project (MOPP) is a collaboration between the University of New England, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The project aims to better understand the diet of Maine's owls and the distribution and composition of the small

mammal community on which they prey, including the threatened northern bog lemming, to inform conservation efforts.

To do so, they are collecting owl pellets! If you live, work, or adventure in Maine and find an owl pellet, please consider collecting and sending the pellet to the project for analysis. Get more information on the project website: <https://sites.une.edu/maine-owl-pellet-project/>

**GET INVOLVED!**  
Volunteer Opportunities

## Christmas Bird Count

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) enlists thousands of volunteers across the western hemisphere to count every bird they see and hear. For more than a century, the CBC has been a community science tradition, with counts taking place every year from mid-December to the beginning of January.

The 124th CBC season will take place from December 14, 2023 to January 5, 2024. This event's long history of data-keeping provides valuable insight into bird populations and the health of their habitats, helping wildlife organizations implement conservation strategies.

Here in the Mid-Coast Audubon chapter area we have three scheduled count circles. Contact the individual coordinators if you would like to participate.

**December 16, 2023: Pemaquid-Damariscotta CBC**  
Dennis McKenna (207-563-8439, [dennismckenna@gmail.com](mailto:dennismckenna@gmail.com))

**December 17, 2023: Thomaston-Rockland CBC**  
Delia Mohlie (207-701-8299, [mohlie295@yahoo.com](mailto:mohlie295@yahoo.com))

**December 19, 2023: Bunker Hill CBC**  
Jeff Cherry (914-489-7870, [jeff@cherrygallery.com](mailto:jeff@cherrygallery.com))

## Journey North: Tracking Monarchs

Learn more about butterfly migration and help monitor the movements and behaviors of these important pollinators with the *Monarch Migration and Milkweed Phenology Project*. <https://journeynorth.org/monarchs>



Hog Island Sunset / Adam Dinuovo photo

Volunteering can be such a fun and rewarding experience and there is no better volunteer opportunity in Midcoast Maine than with the Friends of Hog Island (FOHI) at Hog Island Audubon Camp. This is a residential nature-themed camp which educates people of all ages on subjects from birds to sketching to global climate change.

Friends of Hog Island is a small nonprofit whose sole mission is to support the camp and one way that is done is by providing volunteers for each camp session. Most volunteers live on the island during the camp sessions but there are also opportunities to work a few hours a week. Volunteer duties include helping with food prep, serving meals and cleaning common areas in the residential buildings. The volunteers are the life blood of Hog Island and without their contribution the camp would not be able to run.

It's not all work and no play, however! There is plenty of down time when volunteers can hike the trails, join a camp trip/program or just sit in an Adirondack chair soaking up the beautiful scenery.

If spending time on a beautiful Maine island and making great friends while helping the Hog Island Audubon Camp thrive excites you, then sign up to be a FOHI volunteer. Sign-up opens November 8 at [www.fohi.org](http://www.fohi.org). Questions? Contact [volunteer@fohi.org](mailto:volunteer@fohi.org).

We hope to see you on Hog Island next season!!



FOHI team / Jean Hall photo

# Join Us! Mid-Coast Audubon Events

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

## Monthly Nature Programs

***It's Program Season again!*** Join us for one of our third-Thursday monthly programs, presented in partnership with the Camden Public Library. **Please note that some programs will be live and others via Zoom.** Contact Camden Library or visit the Mid-Coast Audubon Events page to see what's coming up: <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/events/>



### Birding and Culture in Guatemala

**November 16**

6:30 - 7:30 pm

**IN PERSON at Camden Library**

Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist, Doug Hitchcox, will give a lively visual presentation about a trip he and 12 Audubon members took to Guatemala, a birding paradise, in March 2023. This travelogue will follow the group's travels day by day, highlighting the amazing birds, delicious food, and stunning vistas, as well as the incredible cultural experiences sprinkled throughout the trip. Join us for our monthly program on November 16 at 6:30 pm in person at the Camden Public Library.

Guatemala has a magical hold on those who visit—the land of the quetzales, where active volcanoes still shape the terrain and descendants of proud Mayans sell wares in bustling colorful markets. The group traveled from a biological reserve in the Peten region and the temples of Tikal, to the Pacific Slope with a coffee plantation and Lake Atitlan, recording 325 bird species.

### Tracking Wildlife in Maine

**January 18, 2024**

6:30 - 7:30 pm

**IN PERSON at Camden Library**

Kirk Gentalen is the regional stewardship manager for mid-coast Maine for Maine Coast Heritage Trust and writes about the ecology of the area in his Nature Bummin' blog. A self-described nature observer, one of his passions is tracking wildlife especially in winter. He can read their tracks like the news and figure out what the critters have been up to.

Kirk takes care of MCHT conserved lands on Vinalhaven and North Haven islands. That means taking care of trail and forestry needs and monitoring easements. He connects with island residents through environmental education, volunteering, and outreach programs. He also compiles wildlife sightings on Vinalhaven in a most entertaining blog!



### Welcome to the Pyrocene

*Ecological Implications for a Planet on Fire*

**February 15, 2024**

6:00 - 7:00 pm

**ONLINE PROGRAM**

Pyrocene is a term used to describe the human use of fire and how it impacts our planet. Fire can be a friend or foe. Author and naturalist David Govatski will describe how humans first harnessed fire and eventually switched to burning fossil fuels. Along the way he will discuss forest fire ecology, zombie forests, prescribed fire, fire weather, and related topics to better understand the ecological implications of a planet that seems to be on fire.

David Govatski worked for the US Forest Service for over 30 years, and served as a fire management officer on a national interagency incident management team for eight years. David's first job in the Forest Service was as a fire lookout on the Devil's Head Lookout on the Pike National Forest in Colorado. He worked on numerous large forest fires, including the 1988 Yellowstone Fires. David has maintained a strong personal interest in the study of fire ecology.

## Coming up this spring...

### The Growth of Trees

**March 21**

6:00 - 7:00 pm

With Michael Wjtech

**ONLINE PROGRAM**

### Natural Sound Recording

**April 18**

6:00 - 7:00 pm

With Laura Sebastianelli

**ONLINE PROGRAM**





# AUTUMN BIRD SEED SALE!

It's time to stock up on bird seed before the cold winter winds blow, and feel good about supporting your local Audubon Chapter at the same time! You must **pre-order seeds by November 11 for pick up on November 18**; the order form is on our website: <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/event/fall-bird-seed-sale/>

We have TWO PICKUP LOCATIONS – Plants Unlimited in Rockport, or Lincoln County Publishing in Newcastle. Be sure to select your pickup location on your order form.

We said BIRD seed, not BEAR-D seed! /Lew Purinton photo

## Field Trips

*Field Trips are on hiatus until the new year.* But watch our website and this newsletter for a full spring schedule, or join an upcoming Christmas Bird Count. (See page 5.) You don't need to be an Audubon member or have advanced birding skills to join us!



What are you seeing? / Gail Presley photo



Ruby-crowned Kinglet / Don Reimer photo

### Injured Bird?

Contact  
*Avian Haven*

Avian Haven accepts all bird species year-round. 207-382-6761 [avianhaven.org](http://avianhaven.org)

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

### APRIL

Ben Borkhan and Lydia Hall  
Clorinda Chunn  
Hanna Wieggers and Fred Bower

### MAY

Marian S. Crossman  
Jerry G. Fales  
Michael B. Jordan  
Keri Kaczor  
Daniel B. Rowland

### JUNE

Alexandra and William Dailey  
Mary DeBlois  
Elizabeth Hall  
Michale Horst  
Shane J. Hunt

### JULY

Anonymous  
Danielle Filosa  
Angela Morse  
Jacqueline Nowell  
Jonathan B. Smith  
Julie Theroux

### AUGUST

Karen and Jim Carson  
Daniel Cassidy  
Charles Lipson

### SEPTEMBER

Dave W. Findlay

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Razorbill and Atlantic Puffin /Lew Purinton photo



# 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!**