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Mid-Coast Audubon, a chapter of...



MAINE AUDUBON

Volume 50, No. 2 - May 2026

Kestrel Project Update



MCA board member Alan Phipps and project leader Logan Parker are happy to have finished installing the support pole at the Salt Bay Farm box. (Jeff Cherry photo)

by Jeff Cherry

Spring has arrived in the midcoast, and with it the welcome return of our American Kestrels. Birds began reappearing in early April, right on cue, and volunteers have been busy working to have nest boxes installed by mid-April to support this year's breeding season.

Mid-Coast Audubon is partnering with Maine Natural History Observatory to expand kestrel monitoring efforts in the mid-coast as part of the Maine Kestrel Project. This year's MCA-sponsored box locations include Salt Bay Farm Preserve in Nobleboro, Dyer River Marsh at Cloudmarch in Newcastle, Zak Preserve in Boothbay, Sheepscot General Farm in Whitefield, Riverview Hayfields Preserve in South Thomaston, and a private blueberry barrens site in Union. These diverse habitats provide important opportunities for kestrels to successfully raise young.

We extend our sincere thanks to this year's nest box sponsors: Lee Anne Beausang, Phyllis Coelho, Chris Duffy, Noelle Houben, and David Wiggins. Their support plays

Landowner and volunteer box monitor Kathleen Thornton and MCA board member Justin Guider pose with a freshly installed kestrel box on a blueberry barren in Union, Maine. This is ideal kestrel breeding habitat, and we saw a female in the area shortly after we finished the installation. (Jeff Cherry photo)

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Banner photo: Yellow Warbler / Sherrie York

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 October 15!
Send submissions to sy@sherrieyork.com



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President's Corner: *The View from Cloudmarch*

The Outdoors Beckons

by Jeff Cherry

It's not news to any of you who overwintered in the midcoast, but we experienced a real winter with prolonged periods of below freezing temperatures and snow that remained on the ground until April. One upside this winter was that we were treated to more overwintering Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches than we've seen in years.

The good news is that winter is now behind us, breeding birds are returning, and the snow and ice have melted so that we can start on outdoor projects. At Mid-Coast Audubon (MCA) we've been waiting for the ground to thaw enough to start installing kestrel boxes for the Maine Kestrel Project (see the update elsewhere in this issue).

We are also assessing the trail condition at our preserves (see preserves article elsewhere in this issue). Recently, I spent a pleasant early spring

day with the MCA preserves committee and Member/Volunteer Tim Shortell visiting the Guy Van Duyn and Nelson Nature Preserves. Our main purpose at the Van Duyn was to



Dyer River Marsh at Cloudmarch February 2026. In recent past winters, this is often open enough for wintering ducks. (Jeff Cherry photo)

re-install the sign that had been damaged in a previous winter. We also did some trail clearing and took the time to do an eBird checklist and add a few observations to iNaturalist.

We then moved on to the Nelson Nature Preserve to do some trail assessment and maintenance.

About half of the Nelson preserve is a mature spruce/fir forest with a beautiful mossy forest floor and there are several trails that traverse this habitat. The other half is a wetland in the Goose River riparian plain that features a red maple/winterberry swamp, sphagnum bog and wet grassland.

There is a seldom used and somewhat neglected trail to the river that Tim has explored extensively. One of our goals was to visit this wetland trail and assess it for future maintenance. Guided by Tim, we made it through the loop discovering emerging skunk cabbage and purple pitcher plant. We intend to do some minor clearing and blazing so that you, too, can have this adventure. If you choose to try this trail, tall rubber boots are recommended!

One of our goals is to survey and document the birds, other fauna and flora of our preserves. We have established the MCA preserves as eBird hotspots and have also set up an iNaturalist project to collect all observations of plants and animals within our preserves. We invite you to visit and we encourage you to keep an eBird



Beaver dam helping to keep the wetlands wet by the Goose River. (Jeff Cherry photo)

checklist or take some photos of plants and animals that you encounter and submit those photos to iNaturalist.

We have the first guided field trips to our preserves scheduled in June; details are listed on Page 6 of this newsletter.

I hope that you'll visit and enjoy some of our preserves.
Happy Spring!

Welcome, new and rejoining Mid-Coast Audubon members!

JANUARY

Catherine Adams
Karen Brace
Sheila Cochrane
Leila Corcoran & Tim Ahmann
Petra Hall
Leesa H. Mann
Tim Shortell
Carl Small

FEBRUARY

Stephanie & David Burrows
Richard Chalmers & Martha Kempe
Kenneth Maxim
Monique D. Mitchell
Rosa Palarino
Margaret Watson

MARCH

Lori Bedell
Dave W. Findlay
Jan Kearce
Marisol Maddox
Donna & Larry McGurk
Elizabeth Vonfelten



MCA Board members Alan Phipps, Jeff Cherry, Justin Guider and member/volunteer Tim Shortell after successful re-installation of the sign. (Alan Phipps photo)

Kestrel project

from Page 1

a vital role in helping sustain local kestrel populations and advancing our broader conservation goals.

While not every box is expected to be occupied, we are hopeful that several will host nesting pairs. With luck, we'll be able to share photographs and updates of kestrel chicks in a future newsletter.

MCA board president Jeff Cherry adding wood shavings for nesting material to the Salt Bay Farm box. Kestrels are regularly seen at Salt Bay Farm during spring migration, and we saw a female bird hunting nearby while we were installing the box. (Logan Parker photo)



Visit Mid-Coast Audubon Preserves



On the trail into Davis Bog Preserve, fall 2025. (Alan Phipps photo)

Mid-Coast Audubon (MCA) owns and manages four preserves that are open to the public for quiet recreation and nature study. Below are brief descriptions (and a few photos) that we hope will inspire you to visit and enjoy them.

Nelson Nature Preserve (Friendship) is a 95-acre property located on the west side of the road at 255 Cushing Road (Route 97). A steep driveway leads to a small parking area that can accommodate about five cars. Several miles of interconnected trails wind through mature spruce-fir forest and bog/wetland habitat to the Goose River. The property was donated to MCA by Raymond and Linda Nelson in 1985.



Early autumn at the Weskeag Preserve. (Justin Guider photo)



Mossy resting spot on one of the cross trails at the Nelson Preserve. (Tim Shortell photo)



Male Black-throated Green Warbler, an abundant breeding bird at the Nelson Preserve. (Alan Phipps photo)



Banded Hairstreak butterfly in a sunny glade at the Van Duyn Preserve, July 2025. (Jeff Cherry photo)

Guy Van Duyn Preserve (Waldoboro) is a 32-acre woodland parcel located on the southwest side of the road at 800 Friendship Road. Limited parking (about three cars) is available on the road shoulder near the preserve sign. A wide trail begins at the sign and descends about 0.4 miles through mixed forest to the edge of a tidal salt marsh along the Medomak River. The property was donated to MCA by Hope Branch in 1974, with the stipulation that the preserve be named after her brother, Guy Van Duyn.

Weskeag River Wildlife Preserve (South Thomaston) is a 3-acre strip of wooded land located at 44 Waterman Beach Road. The preserve is marked by a small sign on the north side of the road, with space for about two cars to park. A short trail through mostly coniferous woods leads to the edge of a tidal bay on the Weskeag River. The property was donated to MCA by Karen Wagley in 1999.

Davis Bog Preserve (Morrill) is a landlocked, 98-acre northern white cedar wetland. Access is via a 0.7-mile walk along a right-of-way that begins at 129 Higgins Hill Road; roadside parking is available for about three cars. The trail ends at the preserve property line, and we are not planning to develop trails within the preserve itself. The property was donated to MCA by Ralph and Betty Hamm in 2002.

To help us better understand the biodiversity found at our preserves, we created an iNaturalist Project to compile visitor observations. We would love your help—please consider uploading observations of plants, fungi, insects, birds, and any other living things you encounter. Observations made within our preserves' boundaries will automatically be added to the Project, and we encourage all visitors to join and explore what others have reported.

Project link: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mid-coast-audubon-preserves>

Critter Corner: Bills and Feet

By Don Reimer

Photographing birds can be fun, and occasionally, quite informative. Spotting a flying bald eagle and common raven together in the same photo frame, I snapped the shutter. The comparative size differences and relative wing-lengths between these two large birds were notable (6 foot for the eagle; 4 foot for the raven.) But my chance photo illustrated something more significant: how each species uses its feet and bill for different purposes. The bald eagle is Maine's largest raptor, while northern raven is our largest species of "songbird." That's right, ravens technically qualify as songbirds.

What physiological characteristics distinguished these two regal species? Eagles use their feet to capture prey, and to transport food and heavy nesting materials. Bald eagles possess a large, powerful, and hooked yellow beak designed for tearing flesh, measuring roughly 2.5 to over 3 inches from tip to gape. The bill is deep and bright yellow in adults, while juveniles have a dark brownish bill that lightens with age. The heavier-built females tend to have larger, deeper bills than males.



(Above) Adult Bald Eagle and Common Raven, (Below) Common Raven with Bullfrog (Don Reimer photos)

Ravens use their feet for locomotion, gathering nesting materials, and essential life functions, such as nest building, preparing their food, daily grooming, or perching on a branch. The common raven's black bill is long, very thick and heavy, with a prominent, slightly hooked, and curved upper mandible. It is further characterized by dense, bristle-like feathers extending partway down the nostril area, helping to distinguish it from a crow's slimmer bill. Ravens carry everything with their sturdy bill, similar to our

use of human hands. One day, I was fortunate enough to photograph an adult raven ferrying a bullfrog to its downriver nest.



Mid-Coast Audubon Scholarships



Mid-Coast Audubon's scholarship program is off to a great start this year. We are pleased to announce scholarships awarded to four young nature enthusiasts for Camp Mumimchog and Camp Forest, as well as a research grant for a master's student at the University of Maine.

Mid-Coast Audubon offers scholarships for programs that help people learn about and experience the natural world. While anyone may apply, priority is given to students and teachers who reside in Knox, Lincoln, and Waldo counties.

Scholarship funds are made possible through the generosity of the Jean Hamlin Fund and other donors, with additional support from the Mid-Coast Audubon general fund. Awards for camps and other educational programs range from \$250 to \$1,000.

Learn more and apply at: <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/scholarships/>

Join Us!

Full event descriptions and current information on our website: midcoast.maineaudubon.org

Program Coordinator:
Will Broussard

Field Trip Coordinator:
Mael Glon
midcoastfieldtrips@maineaudubon.org

Field Trips

From the Field Trip Coordinator

Spring is here, and with it, a fresh batch of field trips. We're doing things a little bit differently this year, with an increased emphasis on documenting birds and wildlife at Mid-Coast Audubon's preserves using eBird and iNaturalist. We'll continue regular visits to Salt Bay Farm, of course, keeping an eye on the feeders, the marsh, and the new American Kestrel nest box. One notable change this May is that we are not offering a field trip to Monhegan Island. The Monhegan field trips, while popular, are tricky to pull off especially in spring when the ferry schedule limits amount of time that we can spend on the island. We're not shutting the door entirely on Monhegan, just taking a break to think through our approach. Any feedback or suggestions are welcome! Happy birding!

- Mael Glon

All are welcome! You don't need to be an Audubon member to join a field trip (but we hope you are!) or experienced birder. For questions, or to sign up, please send an email to Mael Glon (midcoastfieldtrips@maineaudubon.org) with your name and phone number.

JUNE

Salt Bay Farm (Nobleboro) Sunday, June 7, 7:00–10:00am

June is a wonderful time to visit Salt Bay Farm, with breeding birds in full swing. Join us as we walk the preserve in search of displaying Bobolinks, scan the pond for marsh birds and nesting waterfowl, and explore the forest edges for warblers and other songbirds. We'll also scan the bay for Ospreys, herons, and whatever else turns up.

Meet in the preserve parking lot located at 110 Belvedere Rd, Damariscotta, ME 04543. This property has a good amount of parking available, but please consider carpooling if possible. For more information about this preserve, visit <https://www.coastalrivers.org/trail/salt-bay-farm/>

Nelson Preserve (Friendship) Saturday, June 13, 8:00–11:00am

Join us for a visit to the Nelson Nature Preserve in Friendship to look for breeding birds and survey the flora and fauna. Attendees will function as citizen scientists helping Mid-Coast Audubon document the wildlife and plant life on our preserves. We will be using apps on our smartphones to record data.

Half the group will concentrate on identifying breeding bird behavior and how to use breeding codes on eBird checklists. The other half will identify and document flora and non-bird fauna using iNaturalist. Participants should have both eBird and iNaturalist accounts (free), and the apps installed on their smartphone.

Due to limited parking, this trip is limited to ten participants.

Guy Van Duyn Preserve (Waldoboro) Sunday, June 28, 8:00–11:00am

Join us for a visit to the Guy Van Duyn Preserve in Waldoboro to help identify the breeding birds and survey the flora and fauna. Attendees will function as citizen scientists helping Mid-Coast Audubon document the wildlife and plant life on our preserves. Participants should have both eBird and iNaturalist accounts (free), and the apps installed on their smartphone. Due to limited parking, the trip is limited to five participants.

Monthly Nature Programs

Mid-Coast Audubon's Third Thursday programs are on summer hiatus! Our programs, presented in partnership with the Camden Library, will resume in September.

Visit the Mid-Coast Audubon Events page for more event details: <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/events/>

Annual Mid-Coast Audubon Membership Meeting June 26!

Join us for our annual meeting of Mid-Coast Audubon members!

We'll gather Friday, June 26, at Salt Bay Farm – 110 Belvedere Road, Damariscotta – from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Enjoy light food and refreshments, a short business meeting, silent auction, and bird-themed activities!

Attendance is limited to MCA members. If you are not yet a member, please join now to support bird conservation and education in the midcoast!

Please RSVP by June 16.

Registration form can be found online at <https://midcoast.maineaudubon.org/event/annual-membership-meeting/>.



A little American house, a big welcome

by Daniel Glon

Last September, visiting from Brittany, France, I enjoyed a sunny late summer Monday afternoon walking from Nobleboro, Maine, to the Damariscotta Mills Fish Restoration Ladder.

While walking back to Nobleboro, I noticed a small wooden birdhouse sitting on a tarp, among the leftover remnants of a yard sale. It had been set aside with a few others, offered freely now to whoever might pass and care to take it. On its front was painted a simple word: "Welcome."

That birdhouse felt less like an object left behind and more like something waiting to be found. So I picked it up, carried it with me, and eventually took it across the Atlantic to Brittany.

I fixed the birdhouse to a tree in my garden, where it stood through the winter months. When spring finally arrived, a Eurasian Blue Tit perched on the tiny porch of that American birdhouse one morning—a cobalt-and-lemon flash no bigger than my thumb. She inspected every corner, darted off, and returned with twigs and moss. Days later, a nest; weeks on, the faint chirps of chicks.



A Eurasian Blue Tit in France feeds its young in a birdhouse found in Nobleboro. (Daniel Glon photo)

That little house, discarded on a Maine lawn, had crossed an ocean to become a home. An American welcome had embraced a European tenant. No human drama—just a blue tit raising her young in a shelter made useful and loved.

It's a small thing, I know. But in the troubled times we are experiencing, watching that bird come and go, I couldn't help but think how birds can inspire joy and unite spirits across continents. A welcome but elusive sentiment indeed.

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Gifts for your favorite birders...

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).

Grab your binoculars, put on your boots and your new **Mid-Coast Audubon hat** – and come birding with us! 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/>

Still can't decide? How about a Maine Audubon **membership**? Details at maineaudubon.org



MAINE AUDUBON

Mid-Coast Audubon is a chapter of Maine Audubon.

If you live in Lincoln, Knox, or Waldo County, your Maine Audubon membership will automatically make you a member of the Mid-Coast chapter! If you live outside our catchment area and would still like to be “assigned” to the Mid-Coast, you can indicate this when you submit your Maine Audubon membership.

New membership and membership renewal information can be found online at <https://maineaudubon.org/support/donate/>