

Bulletin

Mid-Coast
Audubon



Mid-Coast Audubon's mission is to promote long-term responsible use of natural resources through an informed membership, education, and community awareness

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 38, No. 2- May 2014

Guest Author

Jody Telfair, Master Naturalist, tells about creating a bird-friendly habitat in her yard
Page 1

President's Corner

Spring inspires Sue to some haiku.
Page 2

Critter's Corner

Don knows all about "quill pigs"!
Page 2

Calendar

Stay tuned for a proposed trip up north with Bill Sheehan
Page 4

Visit our website for updates on our monthly programs.

Hawaii Birding

John Tobin recounts his birding trip and lifer.
Page 5

Feathery Fun Quiz

Miscellaneous trivia.
Page 6

Letter to the Editor

Page 6

Pete Dunne at Hog Island

Page 7

Hog Island Sessions

Page 7

Scholarships

Page 7



A Backyard Oasis!

Early last spring I heard a Purple Finch singing loudly nearby as I was weeding my vegetable garden. I discovered that a pair of these lovely birds were building a nest in some thick shrubs near the stone wall by my garden. This would have pleased me in any case, but these particular shrubs happened to be Grey Dogwoods which I had planted five years earlier, specifically with birds in mind.



Purple Finch enjoying berry.

I am a self-taught "bird friendly gardener" on my 12 acres in Bristol, where I have been experimenting with planting for wildlife and especially bird habitat for the past 10 years. I began by wandering the property and observing the habitats on the land and the plants that were already growing there: a 5-acre field with wildflowers and grasses, a small yard and 6 plus

acres of woods – mainly deciduous with quantities of ash and oak.

I have a lot of edge around the field and yard, as well as a boggy area, both a briar and an elderberry patch, some sizeable mature trees in the woods near the road and behind the house, and younger trees along the edge of the field. I also noticed great quantities of invasive Asian Honeysuckle and Oriental Bittersweet.

In 2004, my first project was to create a small pond in the yard, The second project was to create 2 "islands" of shrubs and small trees in the meadow to give birds some stopover places when crossing the field (viburnums, northern

bayberry, highbush blueberry and crabapples). I put up 2 pairs of bluebird houses in the field, and also created a brush pile near a small grove of apple and wild cherry trees. I researched which shrubs could provide nesting areas, shelter, and food for birds. I learned that



Grey Dogwood bushes

the majority of birds nest on or within 10 ft of the ground.

Continued on page 3



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUE SCHUBEL

A busy spring hits us again, after a

loooooong winter. Having just cleaned the windows, I am inspired by the nature without - and offer up some haiku to you. Post YOURS on the MCAS Facebook page!

Just past winter's end,
April sleet seemed an affront.
Crocus saves the heart.

Between lush tussocks of moss,
The old oak leaves move.
Foliage is doves!

Salamanders love wet night,
Kissing in a vernal pool.
Snow tires can go now.



CRITTER CORNER - DON REIMER

It has been jokingly stated that if you're ever lost in the woods, follow a porcupine, since they eventually find their way to a busy roadway. Indeed, these slow-moving, chiefly nocturnal rodents are frequent road-kill victims.

The porcupine's most prominent feature is the 30,000 barb-tipped quills that cover all body areas except for the stomach. The quills are modified body hairs with a solid tip and hollow shaft that also increases buoyancy while swimming.

The vocal adults emit a wide variety of moans, grunts, whines, shrieks and tooth clicking sounds. In addition to vocalizing, the male performs an elaborate courtship dance where he sprays urine over the head of the female. Seven months after these sentimental romantic endeavors, the female gives birth to a single baby. The quills of baby "porcupettes" are soft at birth, but harden in about an hour.

The porcupine or "quill pig" uses its quills strictly for defense, turning its backside toward approaching danger, raising the quills and lashing the muscular tail back and

forth. The animal cannot shoot its quills.

As an herbivore, porcupines eat leaves, twigs and green plants such as skunk cabbage and clover in summer, while tree bark is the main winter staple. They are attracted to salt and human sweat, and may gnaw tool handles or canoe paddles or chew on buildings constructed of plywood.

Back in 1904, the Maine legislature placed a bounty on porcupines, hoping to limit the extent of tree damage by browsing porcupines. A set of four porcupine feet fetched 50 cents, but the bounty was largely ineffective and repealed in 1964. As a teenager, I found a way to reap the financial benefits of the bounty program by salvaging the feet of road-killed animals. Removing the four feet with my Dad's hacksaw, I stored the clawed feet in two large paper bags, awaiting a hefty payday.

Mr. Poland, a reserved Bristol Town Official, was responsible for issuing the bounty money from his home. Knocking on his door, I proceeded directly into the office and enthusiastically emptied the putrid contents onto a tabletop. With quivering chin, Mr. Poland decided not to tally the valuable mound of feet. "I'll take your word for it," he declared and "No, you don't need to leave them here."



Porcupine crosses a snowy field!

Don Reimer

Did you know . . .

That the fuzzy Woolly Bear caterpillar that we often find in our garages, barns or woodpiles in the winter, all curled up, are awash in *cryoprotectant* chemicals that act as antifreeze to protect their tissues. Next time you see them curled up, they are not dead but just frozen waiting to thaw and mate! Watch the fascinating video *Woolly Worm Walk* at Lang Elliot's website, www.miracleofnature.org.

There are lots of other fascinating videos that Lang shares with us. Lang is also an instructor at the Hog Island Audubon Camp.



Caterpillars are a favorite food of songbirds. So, if you have lots of leaves that show signs of being eaten, that's good news! You'll have lots of birds. It's protein!

A Backyard Oasis - *continued*

This made shrubs and small trees seem very important. Over the next few years I planted service berry and spice bush, grey dogwood, pagoda dogwood, red osier dogwood, black chokecherry, inkberry, more highbush blueberry and crabapples, as well as hawthorne and hazelnut in various places. I realized I had very few evergreens, so I planted 20 white spruce in a clearing behind the house, along with a few hemlocks and Eastern White Cedars I transplanted from the roadside to create a future conifer grove. I have planted winterberry bushes, swamp azalea and Joe-Pye Weed in the boggy area. I have dug up a number of volunteer grey dogwoods and planted them in areas where I am clearing out the Asian Honeysuckle.

In 2005, a pair of Tree Swallows moved into one of the Bluebird boxes and raised five young. The following year they were back, along with a pair of Eastern Bluebirds who moved in next door and raised one brood. I noticed that the Bluebirds in particular used those "islands" I had created – the tallest

crabapple tree was a favorite perch for searching out insects or grubs, then they made the short flight back to the nesting box with a meal for the chicks.

Meanwhile a pair of Song Sparrows and also Common Yellowthroats had taken a liking to my brush pile, scolding me soundly whenever I walked by. I've delighted in watching Hermit Thrushes and upside-down Flickers snatching every last berry from my pagoda dogwoods near the house.

When I observe birds drinking from the pond, breeding and eating in the shrubs I planted, or singing from a perch in my field "island," I feel deep gratification.

Bird populations are in decline. Habitat loss is one major cause, and public lands and parks are not nearly enough to sustain present populations. Whether we have a tiny back yard or large acreage of

private property, we can help by planting with the need of birds in mind and garner great pleasure at the same time.

Jody Telfair-Richards, PhD, a Maine Master Naturalist and a Certified Wildlife Habitat Steward, has been gardening for bird shelter and food on her 12 acres in Bristol for the past 10 years. She is also a Mid-Coast Audubon scholarship recipient to the Hog Island Audubon Camp.

Photo credits: Jody-Telfair Richards



Wildflowers in the meadow attract butterflies, bees, and insects.



Pagoda dogwood makes great edge habitat.



The pond attracts birds and other wildlife.



Crab Apple - favorite of my Bluebirds.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Don Reimer



Spicebush Swallowtail on spicebush

Google images



Eastern Kingbird and viburnum

Google images



Hermit Thrush with berry

Google images

Calendar of Events

Bird walks and programs are free; donations are welcome to help defray costs.

Program chair: Kathy Cartwright 832-5584. Field trip chair: John Weinrich 563-2930

MAY

Saturday, May 3

Joint Walk with SVCA

Meet at SVCA parking area 7:30 a.m.

Tuesday May 13

Evergreen Cemetery / Capisic Pond – Portland

Meet at Hannaford's at 7:30 a.m.

Monday, May 19

Beech Hill/Duck Trap

Meet at Moody's Diner 7:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 24

Monhegan Island

Meet at Monhegan Ferry Boat Line Dock in Port Clyde at 7:00 a.m.

JUNE

Saturday, June 7

Vaughn Woods/airport/Belgrade Lake/ Augusta Airport

Meet at Hannaford's Damariscotta 7:30 a.m.

Thursday June 12

Kennebunk Plains/Sanford Sewage Treatment Plant

Meet at Hannaford's at 7:30 a.m.

AUGUST

Saturday August 2

Weskeag Marsh

With Bill Goodwill

Meet at Marsh parking lot (time to be determined)

Thursday August 14

Plum Island – Dennis McKenna

Meet at Hannaford's at 7:00 a.m.

Saturday September 27

Monhegan Island

Meet at the Monhegan Boat Lines dock in Port Clyde at 7:00 a.m.

Check our website, www.midcoastaudubon.org for updates on trips and programs. Thank you.

*Have you
purchased my
new home yet?*



For Sale

Mid-Coast Audubon knows all about homes for Eastern Bluebirds. We hand-build and cut our

bluebird boxes according to the North American Bluebird Society, of which we are an affiliate.

Nest Boxes: Eastern Bluebird, Flicker - \$20; Saw-whet Owl, and American Kestrel - \$25. Hardwood hole replacement kit -\$1.

Bat Box with Maine's Bats booklet - \$15; booklet only - \$5

Feeders: suet log - \$10; simple platform - \$20; platform with roof - \$40; Oriole fruit - \$10

Unassembled nest box kits - \$18; paint - \$4

Stop by Louis Doe Home Center in Newcastle or call John Weinrich at 563-2930 to order.



Winter Birding at Plum Island

On February 22, eight hardy observers traveled to Plum Island in Massachusetts for Mid-Coast Audubon's annual overnight winter birding trip. Saturday was spent in southern New Hampshire, Salisbury and Plum Island, MA. We birded on Cape Ann, MA on Sunday. We listed 52 species for the weekend including four of this winter's specialty, Snowy Owls: an Eastern Screech Owl in a drain pipe under a bridge in Ipswich, MA; a small flock of Snow Buntings; excellent comparison views of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls and two Carolina Wrens. We narrowly missed the Spotted Towhee seen in Rye, NH. Despite that omission participants enjoyed comfortable lodgings, an excellent meal at the Plum Island Grill and the camaraderie of like-minded comrades.



Snow Buntings bathing.

Dennis McKenna

Hawaii Birding and a Lifer!

This is the first in an occasional series of articles about members' birding adventures.

This winter I had the opportunity to visit my sister in Hawaii. She lives on Molokai - the fifth largest of the Hawaiian Islands. Of course, I brought my binoculars along. The likelihood of encountering new life birds along the way is just too tempting.

My itinerary took me through Phoenix, so I allowed an extra day's layover. My friend, Linda Small, was staying in Tucson and was kind enough to guide me to some well-documented rarities in southeastern Arizona. We spent the morning seeking out Montezuma Quail in Madera Canyon. We had them calling up close but never got a look. Then we moved down to Florida Wash and found a pair of Rufous-capped Warblers after 2 1/2 hours of hard searching. Next, we made our way down to Sierra Vista where we waited out a Sinaloa Wren late in the day in Huachuca Canyon. As the sun was going down, we visited a Spotted Owl in nearby Garden Canyon. Quite a day!

An early morning flight the next day made for a short night in Tucson. And then I was off to San Francisco and on to Honolulu. After landing on Oahu, I caught my short (30-minute) hop over to Molokai - seeing "new birds" along the way such as Common Myna, Pacific Golden Plover, and Red-crested Cardinal. I enjoyed a lovely stay with my sister, Mary, for 9 days. We made an adventure out of travels around the island. Molokai is largely undeveloped and includes a good deal of ranch land, forest slopes, mountains, and waterfalls.

It took some persistence to finally find some Nene, Hawaii's iconic goose. We had another fabulous day seeking out a couple of new-to-me species of Tropicbird - the White-tailed

and the rarer Red-tailed. This was in a remote area on the north side of the island where the viewing over 1,000 foot cliffs was breathtaking. I had previously seen our own coast-of-Maine rarity, the Red-billed Tropicbird on Seal Island, a little more than 20 miles off our mid-coast.

Other incidental birds during my visit included Bristle-thighed Curlew, Wandering Tattler, Brown Boobies, Great Frigatebird, Skylark, and many others. For me, birding amounts to a first-class treasure hunt whether I'm looking at well-known species, or seeking out lifers.

One of my main interests on this trip was to finally see an

albatross. Without an offshore trip, I knew my best chance was to visit a nesting colony. Since I was flying back to the continental U.S. through Oahu, I knew that was going to be my opportunity. We drove up to the Northwest corner of this bigger island and hiked a couple of miles out to Ka'ena Point to see a sight I've waited a long time to see - DOZENS of Laysan Albatross on nests and in the air. Nice memories, all.

It was good to know that my friend, Skip Small, was filling my feeders and looking after my house during some frigid weather back in Maine.

So remember: Life is short, bird often!

John Tobin lives in Rockland and is a Mid-Coast Audubon board member. He's an avid birder.

Editor's note

The Nene (*Branta sandvicensis*) is Hawaii's state bird and on the Endangered Species List. A nesting pair has recently been found on Oahu after an absence of 100 years. The Nene is a terrestrial bird and flies no further than between the islands. They are sedentary and remain isolated.

Do you want to share your birding adventure with Mid-Coast members. Send it to the editor at juanitar@tidewater.net and put MCAS in the subject line.



Rufous-capped Warbler in Arizona



Nene on Oahu



Laysan Albatross on its nest



John Tobin

guardianlv

John Tobin



Letter to the Editor . . .

Wind Turbines off Monhegan

The University of Maine, in conjunction with several for-profit corporations, is attempting to launch a wind energy research project off the coast of Bristol, Maine near Monhegan Island. The current plan is to install two 328-foot-tall floating wind turbines, with a maximum blade height of approximately 576 feet above the water, with a combined 12-megawatt capacity that will be tethered to the ocean floor. A 15-mile, 6-7 inch diameter cable will run from the offshore turbines across Muscongus Bay.

Active fishing grounds will be placed off limits. Migratory bird paths will be affected. While we fully support scientific research surrounding renewable energy, we do not support the location of this project due to the overwhelmingly negative impact on our local environment and economy.

We are a group of concerned citizens fighting to protect the people and wildlife that make this an amazing place to live. Find out how you can help by visiting <http://www.fomb.me/>

Andrew Fenniman
Friends of Muscongus Bay

Editor's note: The Town of Bristol has a section on its website called Bristol Matters. It has facts, documents, and photos of the project. <https://sites.google.com/site/bristolmatters2014/home>
The Friends of Muscongus Bay meets Mondays at 7 p.m. at the New Harbor Methodist Church, New Harbor.

Feathery Fun Quiz

1. In European folklore, crows are believed to (a) harrass children, (b) steal souls, or (c) tell the future.
2. Birdbaths should contain two and half inches of water. Why? (a) any deeper and the birds would drown, (b) any less water and birds couldn't bathe, (c) deep water frightens some birds.
3. How does the owl's eye wink? (a) an owl cannot wink; both eyes close at same time, (b) it drops its upper eyelid to wink, (c) it can keep its eyes open indefinitely.
4. Which of these birds hunts by smell? (a) Peregrine Falcon, (b) Kiwi, (c) American Kestrel.
5. How long can an Albatross glide without moving its wings? (a) 8 hours, (b) 6 days, (c) 12 days, (d) 100 days.

Answers below.

1. c. In some European folktales, the crow is believed to tell the future.
2. c. The best birdbaths resemble rain puddles and slope slightly toward the center.
3. b. The owl is only bird to drop its upper lid to wink; all other birds raise their lower eyelids. Owls and birds of prey have three eyelids.
4. b. New Zealand's kiwi is one of the only birds that hunts by smell.
5. b. An Albatross can glide without moving for up to six days without naps while on the wing.

Answers

Mid-Coast Audubon

Organized December 6, 1969

a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

P.O. Box 458, Damariscotta, ME 04543-0458

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Special Events: Sue Schubel, 380-1370

Bulletin editor: Juanita Roushdy, 529-2355

The *Bulletin* is published quarterly in February, May, August, November. News items or photos are welcome. **The deadline for the next issue is July 15!**

Send to juanitar@tidewater.net

Welcome New Members!

Dan Daly, Camden
Duncan Evrard, Camden
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Margo Maloney, D.V.M., Thomaston
J. Smith, Nobleboro
Nancy Smith, Rockland
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Pete Dunne is Happy to be Back at Hog Island Audubon Camp in 2014

Yes, Pete Dunne, Director of the Cape May Observatory, founder of the World Series of Birding, well-known author of natural history and birding will be at Hog Island from June 8-13, 2014.

Hone your birding skills during the peak of summer nesting in one of the nation's most beautiful coastal landscapes, Hog Island, Maine. During the 6-day program, *Joy of Birding*, you will elevate your birding skills, visit a restored puffin colony, and see many of the more than 200 bird species of Mid-coast Maine. Beginners and experienced birders will find many ways to build onto their existing knowledge to become better birders. *Joy of Birding* instructors include: Pete Dunne,

Stephen Kress, Chris Lewey, Angelika Nelson, Wayne Peterson and John Pumilio.

The Hog Island Audubon Camp is in our very own Maine backyard. For more than 75 years, the camp has been teaching ecology, with particular emphasis on birds. Where else can you breakfast, lunch and dinner with a nationally known ornithologist. Treat yourself to a learning vacation or tell others who may enjoy *Joy of Birding* or perhaps one of the other sessions.

Mid-Coast Audubon is a long-time supporter of the camp and has its annual lobster bake on the island. It also provides scholarships for teachers to attend the camp.

Summer Camp and Scholarships

MCAS has scholarship money available to help send an interested midcoast resident to the Hog Island Audubon Camp! Learn about birds from world-renowned naturalists on this island gem in Muscongus Bay. For information, visit www.hogisland.audubon.org. Teachers are especially encouraged to apply.

To receive an application for a Mid-Coast Audubon scholarship, email sschubel@tidewater.net with subject line HOG I. SCHOLARSHIP.



Other Hog Island Camp Offerings in 2014 -

Instructors include Pete Dunne, Scott Weidensaul, Steve Kress, Wayne Peterson. For more information, visit <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>

Field Ornithology, June 15-20

Immerse yourself in the lives of birds during an intensive session of field trips and workshops.

Arts of Birding, June 22-27

Under the guidance of some of the country's best bird artists, photographers, recordists, and writers, use words, images, and audio to enhance your birding experience.

Audubon Chapter Leadership, July 13-18

Designed for Audubon's Atlantic Flyway chapter participants to deepen expertise and share ideas on conservation, stewardship and developments

Raptor Rapture, July 13-18 Limited space remaining.

Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week, July 20-25

Learn inspiring and practical environmental activities to incorporate into your teaching while explore Maine coastal and island habitats with expert naturalists.

Family Camp, August 12-17

Explore tidal pools, pristine forest and ocean life with our expert naturalists - songs and campfire. For families with children ages 8-12.

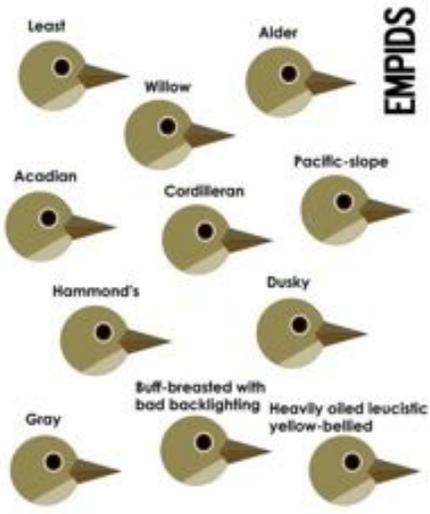
Fall Migration and Monhegan Island, September 14-19, 21-26

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**It's time to brush-up on your
 empid id skills!**



M I D - C O A S T A U D U B O N

Join Maine Audubon Today



Yes, I would like to join Maine Audubon and the **Mid-Coast Chapter** (this also includes membership in the National Audubon Society). I want to help promote environmental education and advocacy in our communities, and protect and conserve wildlife habitat. I will receive the quarterly publications *Habitat: The Journal of Maine Audubon* and the Mid-Coast Chapter *Bulletin*.

\$25 Volunteer/Senior \$35 Individual \$45 Household \$65 Contributor \$100 Patron
 \$250 Sustaining \$500 Benefactor National Audubon Magazine is an additional \$10

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Enjoy a Spring Walk in One of Our Preserves

- Davis Bog Preserve*, a 40-acre white cedar wetland in Morrill.
- Guy VanDuyyn Preserve*, 35 acres, on Route 220 in Waldoboro,, riparian hardwoods to tidal marsh.
- Nelson Nature Preserve*, 95-acres on Route 97 in Friendship, unique red maple swamp fronting Goose River.
- Weskeag River Preserve*, 3-acre off of Route 73, with 300 ft. frontage on Weskeag River..

Contact Bill Goodwill at 354-0669 or barredowl@juno.com to help with preserve maintenance or for directions.