

Bulletin



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 36, No. 3 - August 2012

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Olympians of Flight

The modern Olympic games commencing this July bring together the world's greatest athletes. Or do they? Imagine a race lasting nine days *without stopping*. As an added challenge of endurance, the rules forbid contestants from eating or drinking until the finish line. Lastly, to test their skills competitors must *find* the finish line by navigating over a vast, trackless ocean up to 7,000 miles from the starting point. Such athletes are shorebirds. They perform this event every year.

These annual marathons, only recently documented with satellite transmitters, challenge our understanding of physiological extremes in vertebrates. How do birds avoid dehydration flying for days without a sip of water? What energy stores fuel their locomotion and how long can they last? How do birds find their way, and why do they follow the routes they fly? These

questions and others make shorebirds fascinating subjects of study.

We know now that American Golden Plovers fly 4,000 km between Nova Scotia and South America, Ruddy Turnstones 4,000 km between the Pribilof Islands and Hawaii, and Red

Knots 4,800 km between the Wadden Sea and their breeding area on Taymyr. Alaskan Bar-tailed Godwits, however, have set the bar high. On their fall migration, they fly over the central Pacific covering up to 11,000 km in eight days nonstop!

To accomplish this, Bar-tailed Godwits initiate flight on favorable winds, launching on strong southerly flows behind autumn cold fronts that sweep across the Bering Sea. (This first step is critical, and climate change could

threaten it.) Once in flight, the godwits rely on their aerodynamic shape to lower drag *Continued on page 3*



Southbound fall migrants: juvenile Buff-breasted Sandpiper (right) headed to Argentina. The two Least Sandpipers may go as far as northern South America.

Louis Bevier



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Summer! I am certainly lucky to be sitting out on Matinicus Rock as I write this, where my favorite kind of life happens. Birds are everywhere

and we have the fun of puzzling out their nesting and feeding habits. This year the terns are having a hard time, struggling to find appropriate fish for their chicks. The puffins in contrast are bringing in huge beak loads. In mid-July it is the season to band puffin chicks, which is a messy and challenging task involving extreme yoga postures while playing twister in the granite boulders - all for the reward of finding and gently extracting a puffling from its nest underground.

Over the years many chicks have been banded here, and this year I'm enjoying the band-reading of birds who are arriving back after their two or more years at sea as youngsters. Looking back in the records, one can find out

what burrow the bird is from, how old it is, and what name the lucky researcher bestowed upon it at banding. Some of the puffins seen this year include Poppy Seed, Fraggie, Moe, Cyrano, and Nibbler. I'm still waiting for Boomerang Canteloupe.

This is an amazing place - this rock where such an abundance of life is concentrated, coming together on the limited landscape of the sea. Our own home habitats will never be quite this abundant with birds, but there are many things we can do to enhance our properties in terms of food or shelter. Our Chickadee spokesperson will be taking up this topic starting in the next issue of the newsletter. If you'd like to be a resource for great habitat enhancement ideas, please get in touch. I look forward to seeing some of you at our fundraising Lobster Bake on Hog Island on Friday, August 17th. Bring your guests from away for a very special experience!

Sue Schubel

CRITTER CORNER

Of Maine's eight species of fresh-water turtles, the Common Snapper is the largest. They are generally regarded as being somewhat dangerous, but spend the bulk of their time in the water where they avoid contact with humans. Unlike other turtle species, snappers prefer to sun bask on the water surface rather than on land. Their lungs cannot function in water, but they can hold their breaths for up to three to four hours continuously under the water. The snapper's body is disproportionately large in relation to its shell, so they appear very long-legged and long-necked.



Snapping Turtle. Photo by Don Reimer.

Snapping turtles are most frequently encountered during June as females travel across land in search of egg-laying sites, where they typically deposit 20 to 40 eggs. Nest holes are dug along gravel or sandy bankings or occasionally in a sawdust pile. After egg-laying is completed, the female

covers the eggs and returns to the water. Sexual maturity in snapping turtles has more to do with size than age. Turtles are ready to mate when their carapace measures about 8 inches. As many as 90% or more of the nests are annually destroyed by predators, such as raccoons.

The soil temperature within the nest plays a dominant role in determining the sexes of the hatchlings. Eggs maintained at 68°F produce only females; eggs maintained at 70-72°F produce both male and female turtles; and those incubated at 73-75°F produce only males. Hatching takes approximately 80 to 90 days.

A globally warming climate system could become a significant concern in future decades, since only a couple of degrees difference could drastically change a whole generation of turtles.

Don Reimer

Olympians of Flight - cont'd

and consequently energy use, which is far more efficient than previously hypothesized. To further prepare, these athletes alter their internal organs, jettisoning unused machinery such as their digestive tract, which they allow to atrophy. (This has important consequences for stopovers, because refueling requires days to rebuild the gut.) Lastly, to stave off dehydration these birds burn fat, producing metabolic water. Olympic athletes of the human kind cannot compete at this level.

Any creature that can travel as far as shorebirds--from one pole of the earth to the other--is capable of showing up anywhere. Finding a rarity is an exciting part of looking for shorebirds. Sometimes, one encounters a bird that is awe-inspiring simply for what it does normally. While birding Popham Beach this past June, Don Mairs, Bob Lewis, and I found a Red Knot with a red flag on its left leg, and I managed to get a photograph. The unique alpha code had become worn and was barely legible. Nevertheless, we hoped to narrow down the origin.



Red Knot "HTA". The dull breeding plumage of this, at least 5-year-old, bird may indicate poor health or another condition that caused it to not molt into typical bright alternate (breeding) plumage.

Researchers band Red Knots with unique colors depending on the country where captured. Red flags, like ours, are placed on birds banded in Chile. Jeannine Parvin, who bands Red Knots in New Jersey knew the possible codes for Chilean birds and figured ours read HTA. The middle and last characters are obscure, but the "H" seems clear. All Chilean banded knots beginning with an initial 'H' were caught December 1, 2008, at Bahía Lomas in Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. That is about 11,000 kilometers south of Popham Beach. Our bird had flown a very, very long way. Not once, but many times. At a minimum, this bird had flown 112,000 kilometers (about 70,000 miles) between its natal site in the Arctic, its wintering grounds in South America, and breeding grounds in the Arctic before we saw it here in Maine. Our bird, HTA, could have made these treks for many years before being banded, however.



Solitary Sandpiper. Here a spring migrant headed to the boreal forest where it nests in old robin and jay nests in trees.

An orange-flagged bird, B95, first banded in 1995 in Argentina exemplifies the remarkable longevity and endurance of these birds. This male knot, sighted again this year and now at least 18 years old, has flown a distance farther than that from the earth to the moon. Its astonishing story is described in the book *Moonbird* written by Maine's own Phillip Hoose. Critical to the survival of these migrants are places to stop and feed with reliable resources. The Red Knot population has declined with the crash of horseshoe crabs, the eggs of which they depend upon for their final push north to the Arctic.

Maine has several important shorebird stopover sites. The largest concentrations, at least historically, occurred on the extensive flats near Lubec. Elsewhere, Scarborough Marsh, Popham Beach (area), Weskeag Marsh, Addison, and Biddeford Pool and Hills Beach are also important sites. Often overlooked, are inland sites--for example lake margins and manure pits associated with dairies.

The grace and beauty of shorebirds is undeniable. Their feats of migration are among the most extraordinary. Let's all do what we can to protect these birds and their precious feeding sites on migration as well as in their wintering and breeding ranges. See box on page 6 for more information on shorebirds.

Louis Bevier has lived in Maine since 1999 and is currently an associate editor of the journal North American Birds.



Dunlin, a northbound migrant breeding in the Arctic and wintering mostly along coastal North America.

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

AUGUST

Thursday, August 23, 2012

Plum Island Day Trip with Dennis McKenna

Meet at Hannaford's in Damariscotta at 6:30 a.m. Call

Dennis McKenna at 207-563-8439.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, September 15, 2012

Hawk Watch with Don Reimer

Basin Point, Harpswell. Meet at Moody's at 7:30 a.m.

Thursday, September 20, 2012, 6:30 p.m.

Camden Public Library in Camden

Mike Shannon will give a presentation "Habitats . . . Linkages to Life!"

Friday and Saturday, September 28 and 29, 2012

Monhegan Island

Overnight or single day trip. Call Monhegan Boat Lines for reservations, 207-372-8848. Boat leaves at 7 a.m. sharp.

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 13, 2012

Green Point Preserve, Dresden

Meet at Hannaford's, Damariscotta at 7 a.m.

Thursday, October 18, 2012, 6:30 p.m.

Camden Public Library in Camden.

Beth Settlemyer and Cindy Mackie will give a presentation on wildlife rehabilitation, with emphasis on their facility that specializes in sea birds, On the Rush of Wings Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. For more information call 832-5044 or visit the web site at www.ontherushofwings.org

Check our website, www.midcoastaudubon.org for more information and recently added trips.

Christmas Bird Count Dates

December 15, 2012 - Damariscotta/Pemaquid.

Contact Compiler Dennis McKenna at 563-8439

December 18, 2012 - Bunker Hill. Contact

Compiler John Weinrich at 563-2930

December 22, 2012 - Thomaston/Rockland.

Contact Compiler Don Reimer 273-3146

Sign up now for our Monhegan Island trip on September 28 and 29, 2012



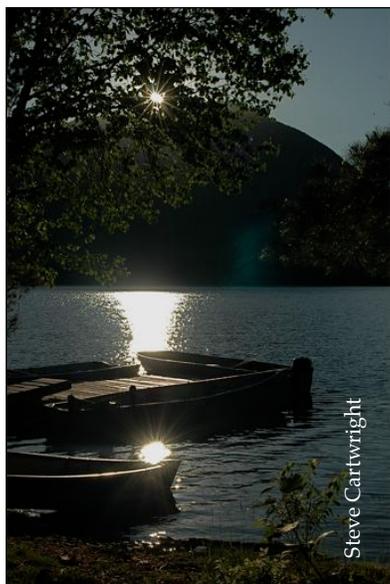
Warbler watching on Monhegan Island



Birding on Monhegan

Oh to Be Back on Spencer Pond!

On a gloriously sunny spring weekend a small band of chapter birders from the Belfast-Friendship area headed into the wilderness to see what they could see. . .well, not the wilderness exactly and we didn't have to rough it, but after several hours of driving and 14 dusty miles beyond the paved road, we reached Sabotowan mountain-shadowed Spencer Pond, a remote sporting camp and the



Steve Cartwright

Early morning at Spencer Pond

only development on a 900-acre pond teeming with wildlife.

Spencer Pond Camps, a cluster of aged log cabins, is now run by a welcoming young couple, wildlife biologist Christy Howe and fisherman Dana Black. They work hard to make the place cozy and appealing, and to make ends meet.

Mid-Coast Audubon Society was given a huge discount on the already reasonable



Steve Cartwright

Spencer Pond's oldest cabin

price for staying in these "housekeeping" cabins, where we cooked our own food and made ourselves quite at home. For Kathy and me, it was our first time at Spencer, although we've traveled to Moosehead Lake in the distant past. Spencer Pond has a stream that feeds into the vastness of Moosehead.

From terns to eagles to all sorts of songbirds, from chipmunks to moose and bear, we were treated to some spectacular sightings and listenings. Even listening to the silence is a joy; something to be savored.

Our hosts, who have won recognition for their environmental responsibility, emphasize the camps are "unplugged and off the grid,"

although in this modern era, Christy has a computer connection so she can work for a bank. Dana commutes to Orland weekly to fish, bringing lobsters to Spencer Pond guests.



Steve Cartwright

Christy and Dana with their homemade bread.

There are canoes and kayaks to paddle (no extra cost) and an old Sunfish to sail, and swings from the trees for just passing the time. The time passed quickly, enjoyably, in the company of friends in the great Maine woods.

Steve Cartwright

Feathery Fun Quiz

Arrange these birds in order of longevity records – shortest to longest lives:

Common Tern, Laysan Albatross, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Ovenbird, Blue Jay, Eastern Bluebird, Black Guillemot, Barred Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird. **Answers on page 6.**

October 20th - Birdseed Sale!

October 20, 2012 is the pickup date for MCAS' annual Birdseed Sale. Good prices to benefit you and the birds.

This fundraiser supports programming, scholarships, and maintenance of our four beautiful wild preserves, Nelson, etc.

Stay tuned - we'll post pricing and details on our website and in the papers.

Olympians of Flight - information

To learn more about Red Knots watch this video documentary on the population crash of Red Knots and horseshoe crabs <http://video.pbs.org/video/1200406235/> (a significant section on Bahía Lomas is shown). For reporting banded shorebirds, see: www.bandedbirds.org and <http://www.whsrn.org/news/article/birding-banded-shorebirds-basics-updated>.



Louis Bevier

Horseshoe Crabs are a vital food for Red Knots in migration.



Bill Goodwill

Kayaks at Spencer Pond

Welcome New and Renewing Members!

- Ben Brown, Searsport
- Susan B. Davis, Bremen
- Peter Lawrence, Nobleboro
- Diana Sommers, Jefferson
- Master Leon Vanella, Newcastle
- Sarah Wendel, Easton, MD

Mid-Coast Audubon

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

Organized December 6, 1969

a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization

OFFICERS

- Sue Schubel, President
- John Weinrich, Vice President
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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 October 15!** Send to juanitar@tidewater.net

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<http://www.pwc.usgs.gov/>
 Data from the Bird Banding Laboratory website:

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (9 years), Eastern Bluebird (10 1/2 years), Ovenbird (11 years), Blue Jay (17 1/2 years), Bared Owl (24 years), Common Tern (25 years), Black guillemot (26 years), Laysan Albatross (60 years).

Answers

Hog Island Camp at Last!

Every year MCAS gives scholarships to community members to attend Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen. The chapter also has scholarships for other camps for young people. Jane Schroeder was a 2012 recipient for Joy of Birding.

My interest in birds began many, many years ago when I discovered that the French composer, Olivier Messiaen, was fascinated by bird song and spent many hours listening to and transcribing their songs and eventually incorporating



Jane Schroeder at the orientation on Hog Island.

those songs into some of his compositions. I learned one of those compositions for organ, called *Chants d'Oiseaux*.

Fast forward many years later, to 2005 when I was finally able to fulfill a long-held (thirty three years) desire to live here in Maine, close to water. Three years ago I was able to find a home to rent right on Beauchamp Point in Rockport. I have spent hundreds of hours down by the water (Penobscot Bay) soaking in the rhythm of the tides, the changes in the colors of the water, the sky, the clouds and the birds!

I would come back to my little house and look up the shorebirds I had seen -- delighted in being able to identify them! Then I started putting out bird feeders and discovered the backyard birds. Occasionally on my daily walks around the Point I'd see Pileated Woodpeckers and the ones I think of as such clowns, the Turkey Vultures (and Wild Turkeys). An astounding moment for me this Spring was seeing in a tree before the leaves had unfurled, 24 Cedar Waxwings!

A few years ago I attended a fascinating presentation at the Camden Public Library by John Weinrich and Joe Gray. I was hooked! I immediately joined The Audubon Society, with Mid-Coast Audubon being my chapter. Then I attended a critical chapter event last summer - an all-day tour of members' gardens that attracted and supported birds. That's

when I heard about Hog island, and that's when I heard about applying for a scholarship, which I did. Carolyn Gray called with the wonderful news that I would attend *The Joy of Birding* Session this past June 10-15, 2012. It far surpassed my expectations!

I was greatly relieved to discover that among the 34 participants I was not the only beginner! Birders, I am discovering, are similar to gardeners - they love sharing their knowledge and experience. For me, it was the extra pair of binoculars that I a camper was loaned me for the week that made a big difference. It wasn't me that was defective but my old binoculars. Each time we were on the boat, or on a bird walk, the instructors would always make sure that each of us had seen the specific bird that had been identified. Folks who had their own scopes, carried them, repeatedly set them up, moved them, re-set them, over and over again, made sure to share the views with all of us. It was wonderful.

Since I am a beginning birder, so many of the birds we saw and heard were "life birds" for me: Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Pied-billed Grebe, Virginia Rail, Sora, Killdeer, Roseate Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Razorbill, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-



Time to say goodbye and head on home.

eyed Vireo, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Vesper Sparrow, Bobolink, and all the numerous warblers!

And dare I mention the delicious, nutritious, scrumptious food? I loved dining family style and the encouragement we received to sit at different tables with different instructors and different folks for each meal.

The week flew by and was over much too fast. I hope to sign up to return next summer as a volunteer. So, if you have not yet been to Hog Island for camp.....Go!

Jane Schroeder

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

Maine Audubon Society Mid-Coast Chapter Membership Form



Yes, I would like to join Maine Audubon and the Mid-Coast Chapter of Maine Audubon (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 understand that the membership benefits include Maine Audubon's *Habitat: The Journal of Maine Audubon*, The Mid-Coast Chapter *Bulletin*, and ffdiscounts on field trips and tours, children's programs and at Audubon sanctuaries and nature stores nationwide.

\$25 Volunteer /Senior \$35 Individual \$45 Household \$65 Contributor \$100 Patron

\$250 Sustaining \$500 Benefactor

National Audubon Magazine is available for an additional \$10

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