

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

Autumn 2011

THE STRAW THAT BROKE THE PLOVER SIT

Marian Zimmerman & Pat Moynahan

Photos by Marian Zimmerman

The first egg was found during Memorial Day weekend. A Piping Plover egg on Hills Beach! What a treat for some of us that live on this sand spit in Saco Bay. We have waited for years.

The young man who found the egg was very excited and shared the news with his mom who called Maine Audubon. We passed out pamphlets titled "How to Live with Endangered Species." The stake and twine went up the next day and the enclosure followed very shortly. Mother Plover stayed around laying another three eggs for a total of four camouflaged spotted sand-colored containers of life. She stayed through tides that came all the way to the enclosure's edge. She stayed with dogs walking close to her home. She stayed through rainy cold May and windy June.

And then on the 3rd of July chicks began to hatch. Neighbors spread the word with morning "Hello's." "Oh! they are so cute." Mother Plover spent the day on the nest with two chicks and two eggs.

The Fourth of July is celebrated enthusiastically on Hills Beach. Folks who don't show up often come on this holiday to celebrate our nation's Declaration of Independence. And as it was a long weekend this year, there was plenty of celebrating.

A home owner whose house abutted the plover enclosure had complained about beach access so Maine Audubon took down the stake and twine but left the enclosure. The owner placed his beach chairs near the edge of the enclosure and used them throughout the day. Mother Plover sat on her eggs with the head of a newly hatched chick gazing out from under her wing.

A group of teens played football for a couple of hours on the beach immediately in front of the enclosure and Mother Plover stayed. We went to rake the beach after

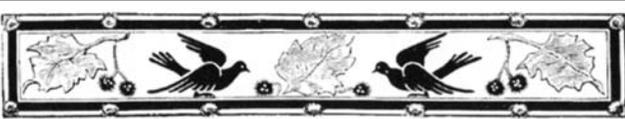
the football game so that the chicks would not fall into the deep impressions of footprints and drown with an incoming tide. Mother Plover patiently stayed on her nest. She was there at 8:30pm as evening settled in.



At about 9:00pm the fireworks started all along the beach and went on for hours, well past midnight. Each set seemed determined to outdo the next just a bit down the beach. They have never seemed so loud or continued uninterrupted for so long. It was impossible to walk the beach because of the "rocket's red glare." Our neighbor said "My dog peed on the floor because of the noise." Police were called because of the din, but no action was taken despite the fact that fireworks are currently illegal in Maine. Well, not only were we driven to near distraction but Mother Plover could not tolerate the firestorm either. She must have felt threatened for her life and left.



When we returned to the beach at 6:30am the morning of July 4th Mother Plover was nowhere to be found. There in the sand nest were two chicks covered in moist dew, dead, probably from exposure.



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The Harlequin is printed on 50% post-consumer recycled paper.

The Piping Plover is an endangered species in Maine. The Endangered Species Act, written in 1970, requires us to take protective action when such species are present. While people have a generally positive attitude about Piping Plovers, their occurrence necessitates more than just adoring observation. Their presence means that the human community needs to accommodate the birds with changes in our own behavior. Simple modifications in our activities and use of beach properties, such as keeping activity a few hundred yards away and not making the beach a virtual war zone with fireworks, can make all the difference in the success of Piping Plover breeding and raising of young.

Presently Maine Audubon has been running a beach monitoring program with the establishment of nest enclosures and restricted use of some beach areas. Some beaches have been designated as essential habitat. Further, beach agreements with landowners are being

considered. Meanwhile fireworks, which seemed to be the straw that broke our plover's sit, are being legalized in Maine with local communities being given the final decision in their use. As fireworks use is often concentrated in beach areas, we need to work with local communities as they develop their fireworks ordinances.

It is too late for the Piping Plovers on Hills Beach this year. Their nesting efforts came to a heartbreaking premature end, just as the life of a new generation was beginning. But their story provides an opportunity to make decisions for, hopefully, another nesting effort. So each of us needs to answer the questions, "Do we really value Piping Plovers?" "What can we do to share the beach with Piping Plovers?" "Are we willing to make the necessary changes in our behavior in order to have Piping Plovers on our beaches as a part of our lives?"

SHARING NATURE: AN EDUCATOR'S WEEK ON HOG ISLAND

Henry Ingwersen

This summer, I was the fortunate recipient of a grant from York County Audubon to attend "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" at Audubon Camp on Hog Island, Maine from July 14 – 19. I joined more than 60 environmental educators, naturalists, photographers, authors, and Audubon staff from around the nation for five days of very inspiring workshops, presentations, and field trips. The instructors included accomplished naturalists, ornithologists, nature photographers, and authors who used art, journaling, field experiences, and music to enhance and inspire our science teaching. There were many highlights of this experience for me, including:

- A "Joy of Birding" workshop by Ted Gillman of the National Audubon Society. Ted's workshop enhanced my understanding of effective teaching about birds to elementary students and taught me how to move students from asking "What is that bird?" to "What is that bird doing in that habitat?"
- A presentation by Steve Kress, director of Project Puffin, on the nearly four decades of work he has been doing to restore an Atlantic Puffin population to Eastern Egg Rock in Muscongus Bay. The presentation was followed by a trip to Eastern Egg the following day,

where we saw some of the 123 nesting pairs of puffins feed, splash, roll, flip, and dive. It was an incredibly active day for these comical birds.

I left the island determined to carry out the vision statement of Audubon Camp at Hog Island:

“To inspire and enable every Hog Island participant to be a conservation leader and educator, inspiring their friends, families, and communities. The Audubon Camp at Hog Island is a local and national source of outstanding environmental education.”

I have a boatload of ideas to bring back to my multi-age grades 3-4 classroom at Wells Elementary School. My students and I thank you, York County Audubon!



HOG ISLAND SCHOLARSHIP

Believe it or not it is time to start getting ready for next summer! YCAS offers an annual scholarship to a Hog Island program for a teacher or adult leader of a York County youth group that is engaged in environmental education and conservation. If you work with young people, seeking to foster a love of nature and the outdoors, we want to encourage you to learn more about the wonders of Maine so that you will have more to share. Consider spending a week next summer at Hog Island with top notch scientific educators who will lead you in workshops and field trips that will deepen your knowledge and peak your curiosity about the world we live in.

YCAS will pay 70% of the cost of program expenses up to \$700. In return, we ask that the scholarship recipient shares what he or she learns by 1) making a brief (10-15 minute) presentation at a fall program meeting, 2) writing a short (one page) article for our newsletter *The Harlequin*, and 3) creating an environmental education program and sharing it in the community at large. The latter can be done at any of a variety of ways and places

such as Wells Reserve/Laudholm Farm, a local library, or a local recreation department. YCAS members are willing to act in a supportive capacity to facilitate the implementation of the program.

For an application, check our web site at www.yorkcountyaudubon.org Application deadline: November 10, 2011.

BIRDING PATCH: EAST POINT SANCTUARY *Marian Zimmerman*

East Point Sanctuary, a 30 acre prominence located at the south end of Saco Bay, was donated to Maine Audubon in 1976 by landowners in Biddeford Pool. With its mix of shrub and open field habitat bordered by rocky shores and unobstructed views into the channel toward Wood Island to the northeast and open ocean to the south and east, East Point can provide excellent birding throughout the year.

Warblers, sparrows, and other passerines, including Orange-crowned Warblers in the fall, can be abundant during migration as well as raptors such as Northern Harriers, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcons. In late fall and winter, Rough-legged Hawks, Snowy and Short-eared Owls, Northern Shrike, Horned Lark, Snow Buntings, and Lapland Longspurs can be found there.

East Point is a prime location to find sea birds, particularly from October to April. Sightings have included Northern Gannets, Brant, Great Cormorants, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Black Guillemots, and occasional Dovekies, Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Common and Thick-billed Murres, and even King Eiders. After storms shearwaters, Wilson's Storm-petrels and jaegers may be seen.

East Point can be accessed from Route 9 turning onto Route 208 (Bridge Avenue) into Biddeford Pool. At the end of Bridge Avenue, turn left onto Mile Stretch Road and continue to the end. The sanctuary entrance is located on the left just before Ocean Avenue and is open year round, free of charge. Be sure to park with the flow of traffic on First Street. (You will be ticketed on Ocean Avenue or if parked facing opposite traffic.) There are no facilities and dogs are not allowed.

Now it is your turn! Share a favorite spot. If you have a Birding Patch, please send a brief description of it with directions and an indication of best times to bird it.

PIPING PLOVER PROGRAM AT THE BIDDEFORD YMCA

Pat Moynahan

Photos by Pat Moynahan



York County Audubon members in cooperation with the Maine Audubon Piping Plover Program personnel offered this year's Piping Plover Program at the Biddeford YMCA. On August 4th we worked with 18 "Wild Wawenocs" discussing endangered species generally, Piping Plover specifically, and our responsibility to our beaches and our birds. We also learned what plovers eat, where they mate and make their homes, and who predares the birds. The young enthusiastic participants scooped out nests in our sand boxes, played a survival game, and created their own Piping Plovers with index cards, cotton balls, and spaghetti stick legs. A great hit of the day was Monica Grabin's song written for the event, "Piping Plover Small and Frail." Thank you, Monica! With your antiphonal verse we celebrated the 32 pairs of birds in Maine.



On August 5th we traveled to Goose Rocks to watch the Piping Plover and their young feed and hide in the beach grass. The kids sang "YMCA" both coming and going to the beach, enjoying every moment of the experience. Bob and Ann Watson lined up the telescopes and binoculars on both adult and newly hatched birds while YMCA Counselors celebrated new learnings. I most enjoyed the oohs and aahs when all saw the birds especially for the first time. It was also wonderful to be invited to offer the program again next year at the Biddeford YMCA.



Piping Plovers are such a special part of Maine's beaches that we, at York County Audubon, need to spread this word. Would you consider coordinating a program for your local Recreation Department next summer? We will do the program if you can help line it up. I guarantee you great support.

KENNEBUNK SAVINGS BANK CONTRIBUTION TO YCAS

Pat Moynahan

Kennebunk Savings donated \$100,000 to nonprofit organizations through its Customer Ballot this year. York County Audubon received \$170.00. Thank you, Kennebunk Savings.

Customers are asked to help direct a percentage of the bank's charitable giving and, based on their votes, distributes checks to the top 125 organizations. York County Audubon was designated by 10 individuals. We appreciate all who took the time to vote and ask that, if you have an account with Kennebunk Savings Bank, you will join them next year. The money we received will be used to further conservation and environmental education.

BOOK REVIEWS:

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO CLIMATE CHANGE
 by **ROBERT HENSON**
Pat Sanborn

I suppose that the first question should be, "Why?!" It is thorough, well researched, and almost encyclopedic. Also, I have to admit, it is a bit dry. But I am struggling with it for a pressing reason. A significant part of our population in this country denies that there is human-caused climate change. These people are wrong, and it is important to know why.

This book provides the facts and figures. While I am in fact plowing through the whole book, one wouldn't need to. A reader could just pick out one of the important chapters or sections. Or one could just read the boxes, which enclose fascinating small essays. One such essay is on the Little Ice Age. Another asks, "Who Owns the Arctic?"

Or as an alternative, one could use the Life Magazine approach, and simply look at the pictures. The graphs and photos are an education in themselves. One feature that I particularly like about this book is that the author is not afraid to say when our information is incomplete or ambiguous. For example, research on ocean warming is not conclusive yet. The Rough Guide gets updated periodically, so if you decide to dive in, try to get the latest edition.



KID'S BOOK CORNER:
SOUNDS OF THE WILD
 by **MAURICE PLEDGER**
Pat Moynahan

Sounds of the Wild by Maurice Pledger comes as a series of pop-up books with nature sounds that will fascinate and engage children and delight the heart of every nature lover. Among them are *Birds*, *Oceans*, *Night Sounds*, and *The Jungle*. Each is beautifully illustrated and comes with background information describing the creatures represented. What a wonderful way to introduce young ones to the wonder and beauty of nature.

**BEAUTIFUL
 PLUMAGE &
 STRANGE
 CALLS**

Anne Gamble
 Photo by Marie Jordan



Hikers on Berwick's soon-to-be first public trail may spot America's best-looking duck -- the Wood Duck -- its distinctive head has iridescent green and purple plumage. And if the trail blazers are quiet, they might hear the strange throaty call of the American Bittern, an illusive stout heron.

These marvels, along with rare Spotted Turtles, endangered Blanding's Turtles and rare Atlantic White Cedars, may inhabit Grants Meadow III, a 28-acre preserve that Great Works Regional Land Trust is purchasing this fall with the help of the town of Berwick and sellers Wilfred and Carolyn Bryan whose family held the land historically.

In late 2011 or early 2012, Great Works and community volunteers will create a trail and construct a parking area near Diamond Hill and Old Sanford roads, which border the property. Visitors, including school groups, can then observe wildlife, streams and vernal pools or snow while walking, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Grants Meadow is prime habitat for the Wood Duck, American Bittern and also the Black Duck, which are identified as priority trust species by US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The site will provide access into Beaver Dam Health, a significant 1,600-plus acre wetland and forestland where Great Works has already conserved over 100 acres, including a small parcel donated by the town of Berwick. Parts of the preserve lie in North Berwick as well.

Great Works Regional Land Trust provides conservation options for South Berwick, Berwick, North Berwick, Eliot, Ogunquit and Wells. Grants Meadow joins a group of five other public trails maintained by Great Works. A total of 4,397 acres, including 55 properties and 27 easements, are currently preserved. Volunteers are needed for stewardship, birding, fundraising and other work. Please call Anne Gamble, development coordinator, at (207) 646-3604 or visit www.gwrlt.org.

TRIP REPORTS:

**HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND'S
HAMILTON HOUSE**

Scott Richardson

On June 18th, five of us set out across the dewy field above South Berwick's Hamilton House. Along a path mown up the gentle rise, we stopped to inspect a singing Indigo Bunting, enjoyed a clear view of a newly fledged Bobolink, and scoped a talkative Common Yellowthroat perched for a long while up in a tree. We returned on the trails of Vaughan Woods State Park, which abuts the Historic New England property, a route that allowed us to hear a few wood warblers and see a close-up Pileated Woodpecker. We finished with a Green Heron stalking across the mud flats of the Salmon Falls River. As a surprise send-off, Historic New England's Peggy Wishart invited us to the gardener's shed for muffins, scones, and hot tea.

HORTON WOODS

Joanne Stevens

Photos by Carol Reynolds

Horton Woods is a 100 acre wildlife preserve owned by the city of Saco and located off Rt. 112. It is a diverse habitat consisting of



softwood and hardwood forests, a stream with a 10 acre marsh, bogs, vernal pools and fields. Saco Bay Trails has created over 2 ½ miles of trails highlighting each of these habitats.

On July 2nd nine participants met at the kiosk and parking lot at #464 Route 112 to explore the trails and look for nesting birds. We were immediately greeted by an Indigo Bunting. The trail winds downward through mixed forest and ravines with singing Hermit Thrushes and Ovenbirds to Stackpole Creek and marsh. Common Yellowthroats, Swamp and Song Sparrows were vocal and visible among the bushes in the marsh as were the brightly colored Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak high in the trees along the marsh edge. A calling and drumming Pileated Woodpecker prompted a discussion of the different drumming patterns of our local woodpeckers.

A sturdy footbridge constructed by the Appalachian Mountain Club leads to two loop trails, one following the meandering stream where we watched a male



Common Yellowthroat feed two young. A Winter Wren sang its big tinkling song while another scurried along a fallen tree. Blackburnian, N. Parula and Black-throated Green Warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Brown Creepers were heard but proved elusive in the tall trees. This trail then rises along a pine/hemlock ridge which runs between two wooded bogs, each of the bogs with counter-singing Veeries. The southern loop trail passes through mature pine and then hardwood forests where one of the state's largest Red Maple trees stands.

We found 32 species of birds but Horton Woods is also home to others such as ducks, herons, hawks, owls, American Woodcocks and Ruffed Grouse as well as deer, moose, beavers, minks, etc. It is an interesting property and deserves to be birded more.

HILLS BEACH

Pat Moynahan & Marian Zimmerman

Our August 20th field trip was held at Hills Beach in Biddeford. Twelve individuals, some local, some from out of state, and some who found us while returning from Hog Island Camp birded the sand bar as high tide concentrated the birds. This provided an opportunity to see shore birds at close range.

Species diversity was low this particular day but new comers to shorebirding learned to differentiate White-rumped Sandpipers from Semi-palmated Sandpipers. Kate Irish Collins of the "Sun Chronicle" joined us to learn of the good work of York County Audubon and spread the news. Thank you Kate for the nice article in the August 25th edition of the "Sun Chronicle."

After the tide pushed us off the sand bar, some of us remained to hear Peggy Maslow of the North Shore Audubon (of Long Island, NY) relate the highlights of the leadership camp at Hog Island. Peggy gave us some ideas and leads for programs that we can adapt for right here in York County. The infusion of new ideas is always welcome so we are delighted that Peggy tracked us down.

GRAND MANAN ISLAND

Pat Sanborn

Photos by Marie Jordan



On August 12th to 14th, eleven enthusiastic birders joined Bob Duchesne on a visit to Grand Manan Island in New Brunswick, Canada. From the calm, bird-rich ferry ride to the beautiful weather on the island, everything conspired to make it a memorable trip. Life birds and even life whales were acquired by some. A high point was a boat trip off of the island where people saw, among other species, many Shearwaters, Storm-Petrels, and Gannets. Three species of whales put on a show, with some of the Humpbacks fluking as pairs. Bob led us to many of his favorite birding spots, where we found some of the warblers that nest north of us, along with a good sample of flycatchers. On top of this, we were introduced one evening to Monica Grabin's new Piping Plover song--sure to hit the top forty shortly!



PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Cornell Laboratory has sponsored Project Feeder Watch for 25 years as a way to invite citizen scientist volunteers to contribute to bird distribution and density data in North America. Participation requires no extraordinary effort or expense on your part: simply record the birds that come to your feeders from the comfort of your home during the months of November to April. Add a touch of interest to our long winter days by tracking your avian visitors.

You may sign up:

on line at: www.feederwatch.org

by phone at: 800-845-2473

or by mail at: Project Feeder Watch

159 Sapsucker Woods Road

Ithaca, NY 14850

There is a \$15 subscription fee to cover the cost of the materials which should arrive in October.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Volunteers are always welcome!

Portland ~ December 17

Bill Hancock (wph@maine.rr.com)

York County ~ December 20

Pat Moynahan (254-5487)

Biddeford/Kennebunkport ~ December 31

Marie Jordan (799-1408)

NEW MEMBERS

Richard Barnes	Kennebunkport
The Hahn Family	Berwick
Deborah Cotter	South Berwick
Anna Trafton & Jessie Knap	Kittery

WELCOME BACK

Edith Belle Memorial Library	Old Orchard Beach
Tammy Cloutier	Falmouth
Beverly J. Gaudet	Wells
Annette L. Gosnell	Kennebunk
Hannah F. Marston	Kennebunk
Terry W. Moulton	Cape Porpoise
Betsy T. Stevens	Kennebunk
Crystal White	Falmouth

NEW TO CHAPTER

John G. & Thusitha Cotter	Falmouth
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Cooper's Hawk ~ *Accipiter cooperii*

ETYMOLOGY

The genus name, *Accipiter*, comes from a Latin verb meaning "to seize" or "to take." Not only is it the name for the genus of our three well-known accipiters; it is also the name of the whole family of hawks and their allies. The species name was given to this bird by Lucien Bonaparte (of Bonaparte Gull fame). He named it for his colleague William Cooper, who collected an early specimen. Cooper, a 19th century polymath, is perhaps better known for his work on shells, but he was a generous, financially independent collector, who supplied many natural historians, including Audubon, with specimens. He also was one of the founders of what is now the New York Academy of Sciences.

FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, October 16 at 7:00am: Sanford Sewage Treatment Facility. Leader: Andrew Aldrich. Meet at the parking lot at the plant office. Take Gavel Rd. east off of Rte. 4 at the blinking light, 2.7 miles south of the junction of Rtes. 4 & 111 or 0.7 miles north of the junctions of Rtes. 4 & 109. Contact Scott Richardson at 698-4461.

Sunday, November 13 at 7:30am. Rarity Roundup in Southern York County. Leader: Derek Lovitch. Meet at

the southbound Kennebunk Rest Area on I-95. Contact Pat Moynahan at 284-5487.

FIELD TRIPS are subject to change and participants should let the contact person know of their intention to join the trip so changes may be relayed.

October 18: "Birds of Monhegan Island."

Monhegan Island has become a top destination for birders because of its beauty, avian diversity and magnetism for rare birds. Local birder Doug Hitchcox will talk about how to bird the island and share pictures tied to amazing stories from his experiences on the island.

November 15: "Before Audubon: The Life & Work of Alexander Wilson."

Paul Wells of West Kennebunk will present an overview of the life of Alexander Wilson, whose comprehensive survey immediately preceded Audubon's survey of American birds. Wilson's survey has been forever overshadowed by Audubon's work. Wells will illustrate his talk with examples of Wilson's art, as well as musical excerpts of tunes -- Wilson is known to have played the flute.