



THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Spring 2017

The Wells Reserve at Laudholm: One of York County Audubon's Very Best Friends - by *Monica Grabin*

Seven months of the year, on the evening of the third Tuesday, I make my way from to the Wells Reserve at Laudholm for the meetings of the YCA Board of Directors and the programs which follow. For most of the year, many times a month (and during warbler season, many times a week!), I walk the trails there, looking for birds and enjoying the beauty of a unique place as it passes through the seasons. It's my very big backyard.

My husband and I have been members of the Wells Reserve at Laudholm for about 30 years, and we attend many of its events. Yet even I can be a little shaky on what exactly happens at the Reserve, and the special relationship between it and YCA. Still, it's tremendously important that YCA members understand the Reserve and its contributions because it is facing serious, potentially devastating threats. So I'm going to use this space to share some information and to encourage you to make your voice heard to protect this jewel in York County.

The Wells Reserve is one of the 29 critical sites across the country which comprise the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

As noted on its website, the work of the Wells Reserve is made possible by Laudholm Trust. The Wells Reserve focuses on research, education and stewardship, while Laudholm Trust is responsible for building a supportive community and raising the funds needed for the Reserve to continue its work.

In some ways, that's all you need to know, but there's a whole lot more. Reserve Director Paul Dest recently noted that "Each year: over 30,000 people visit the Wells Reserve; 9,500 people (of all ages) participate in our education and training programs; we mentor and provide field based experiences to over 10 undergraduate and graduate students; mentor PhD candidates in the earth and biological sciences; assist communities and organizations with conservation and restoration projects; provide volunteer opportunities to over 400 area residents (year round and seasonal); maintain beautiful buildings on the National Register of Historic Places; protect and manage sensitive habitats and threatened wildlife species over our 2250 acres; maintain 7 miles of trails; conduct 5 to 10 research projects, often in tandem with other research institutions; and monitor water quality, weather, and changes to habitats as part of NOAA's earth monitoring system."

While YCA doesn't have a headquarters building, we do have a very close connection to the Wells Reserve. We hold meetings and programs there, we lead summer bird walks and do a quarterly bird census there, we work together with the Reserve on projects like the annual Bird Seed Sale and Winter Wildlife Day, and we count on each other's expertise and cooperation.

From Paul Dest again: "In addition to the projects and programs we offer, we have many partnerships. One of the most prominent partnerships – and one of which I am very proud – is with York County Audubon. Almost since our founding, we have been a partner with York County Audubon, supporting a mutual bird-banding program, delivering education programs together, and making our facilities and trails available for Audubon programs. This great

partnership has grown over the years, and we hope it will continue to be part of the Wells Reserve well into the future.”

YCA hopes the partnership continues for many years, too. But without your help, the Reserve is under a grave threat. Many of you are probably aware that the initial budget recommendation by the Trump administration would totally defund the Natural Estuarine Research Reserve System. We need to let Congress know that this is unacceptable. Our representatives in Maine have been outspoken in their support for the Wells Reserve. But Nik Charov, the President of Laudholm Trust, knows that we need to keep up the pressure. He asks you to contact your federal representatives, to contribute to Laudholm Trust, and to support science and conservation generally. His blog, “The Wrack,” is an excellent source of information and inspiration. On April first, he wrote:

“Over the past 400 years, science has regularly run up against the walls of dogma and ignorance, and for the most part, science has worn down those walls and made our lives better.

“Science has also made Maine better...The research we conduct at the Wells Reserve on coastal ecology and biology contributes to the larger body of knowledge our country will need in the years ahead, as our coasts change faster than ever. *Two-thirds of the funding for the Wells Reserve’s research, education, and conservation work comes from the federal government.* Without it, we would quickly fade away as a community resource and center for science and solutions on the coast of Southern Maine.”

Please, if you haven’t yet contacted your representatives to support the Wells Reserve, do so. It’s easy and effective. If you aren’t already a Wells Reserve member, become one. If you can make a contribution, please do so. We need to stand by our friend in a time of great need. We need to make sure this jewel continues to shine far into the future.

I encourage you to browse around the Wells Reserve website for much more detailed information on all their projects, and to find articles and links about them and their mission, and, of course, to visit the Reserve and experience its magic, anytime you can.

YCA welcomes its New Members!

December - February

Ruth Brooks	Buxton
Scott Evans & Rebekah Lowell Evans	Biddeford
Barbara Fenton	Brownfield
Amy and Joe Francoeur	Saco
Stacie Grove	Saco
Ronald Jacobsen	Waterboro
Dave Johnson	York
Irene Oldfield	Buxton
Valerie Romoser Manchester	Eliot
Helen Rousseau	Kennebunk
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Umphrey	Concord, Mass.
Michelle Goulet	Saco
Barbara Wentworth	Sanford
Beth Yvonne and Katherine Yvonne	Saco
Kate and Dan Armstrong	Buxton
Sorren Arneson	Saco
Kristen and Deirdre Bissell	Wells
Laura Murphy	Kennebunk
Suzanne Normand	Biddeford
Jeffrey Toffic and Karen Ruel	Saco

YCAS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Bill Grabin, President	985-3342
Joyce Toth, Vice President	216-4756
Kathy Donahue, Treasurer	967-4102
Monica Grabin, Secretary	985-3342
David Doubleday, Programs	967-4486
Doug Hitchcox, Field Trips	671-0185
Eileen Willard, Director	967-5118
Ken Janes, Email	967-2955
Lena Moser, Young Birders Club	205-9915
Marian Zimmerman, Birding Trail	710-3015
Mary Bateman, Publicity	646-8589
Pat Moynahan, Workshops	284-5487

For all upcoming events and general information, please visit our website:

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

And for the latest news, photos and updates, please visit us on Facebook at:

www.facebook.com/yorkcountyaudubon

Introducing...the Maine Young Birders Club!

The young bird-watcher is a rare sight. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the average age of American birders is 53, and more than fifty percent are over the age of 45. York County Audubon members Lena Moser and Nathan Hall, who grew up birding as kids, are convinced that these statistics could be different. “If more kids were exposed to this activity and had birding opportunities offered just for them, we would be seeing greater numbers of teens in the field.”

Knowing firsthand the value of spending time outdoors with experienced birding mentors, Moser and Hall are determined to make a difference for nature-enthused kids and teens in Maine. After about a year of research and work to get it started, they are proud to announce the official launch of the Maine Young Birders Club (MYBC). The mission of this organization is to connect youth who are interested in the natural world to one another, as well as to the people and the wild places around the state that will help them enjoy, appreciate, and conserve Maine’s natural resources and the flora and fauna that depend on them. In other words, the MYBC aims to create a youth-based community that focuses on exploring and learning about local habitats, birds, and other wildlife, while also educating youth about conservation issues and opportunities.

More than anything, Hall and Moser wish to provide opportunities for kids to get outside and be active. They hope to accomplish this through bird walks, “naturalist ramblings,” workshops, presentations, and other activities. “We want youth to get outside in a fun and safe way...to promote their learning of natural history with others in their age group. This way, they’ll know that they are not alone in their unique interests and can find camaraderie.”

Right now, the MYBC organizes a birding event once a month to local hotspots such as Scarborough Marsh, Kennebunk Plains, and Florida Lake. As it develops, the Club hopes to offer boat trips to nesting seabird colonies, bio blitz events, moth nights and owl prowls, scholarships to young birder camps, and more. The MYBC recently hosted a walk on March 15th at Timber Point in Biddeford, which was a great success and has kids excited to return for more. Everyone was delighted to see a rare drake Canvasback at Fortunes Rocks, as well as colorful Surf Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, and plenty more. Moser and Hall stated, “We are thrilled about the club, and we simply couldn’t have done this



without York County Audubon, which serves as our supporting organization and provides a great deal of encouragement and enthusiasm. We look forward to watching MYBC grow as the years unfold.” Here are a few other details about MYBC:

Mission: to provide a safe environment for youth in Maine to experience the wonder of birds and nature with other teens through birding-related events and activities; to promote engagement with our natural world by empowering young Maine residents to study and enjoy birds and birding.

Membership: youth ages 11-18; adults can drop kids off but are discouraged from attending walks, as they are meant to be just for young birders.

The Coordinators: Lena Moser works at UNE and serves on the Board of Directors at York County Audubon; Nathan Hall is an English teacher at the Middle School of the Kennebunks and winner of the Hog Island Educator’s scholarship.

Costs: the annual membership fee for a youth member is \$10; for a family or supporting adult \$20; for a supporting organization \$50.

To learn more about the Maine Young Birders Club and see photographs of young birders in action, visit www.maineyoungbirders.org. If you are interested in making a donation to support the cause, please contact Lena or Nathan at info@maineyoungbirders.org.

Help wanted: The MYBC is seeking volunteers for help with fundraising and grant writing. If you or someone you know is interested in the MYBC mission, has experience, and is willing to volunteer to help, please contact Lena or Nathan at the email address provided above. Thank you!

Piping Plovers are back again!

The first Piping Plover sighting in Maine this year occurred at Goose Rocks Beach in Kennebunkport on March 28th. Several others were spotted at various York County beaches by the first few days of April. We hope they made it through the subsequent squalls. York County Audubon is committed to working hard to increase the population of Piping Plovers on our beaches, partnering with UNE and Maine Audubon to provide monitors for Hills and Fortunes Rocks Beaches, where we teach beachgoers about the importance of protecting the birds' habitat.



Remember,

1. If signs indicate a Piping Plover or Least Tern nesting area, stay away! Don't cross fenced areas, ever.
2. **Do not let pets roam free on any beach where nests are located, at any time, for any reason.** Dogs and cats are known predators of Piping Plover chicks. **If you encounter unleashed dogs, please ask their owners to leash them.**
3. Don't leave holes in the sand that could trap a chick, leaving it open to predation or starvation.
4. Don't leave food on the beach, which attracts animals and birds which will feed on chicks.
5. Don't fly a kite near nesting areas. Shorebirds see it as a predator and will abandon their nest.
6. Notify Maine Audubon if you observe any disturbance of nesting areas.

With your help and awareness, and that of many others who work hard to protect these birds, YCA hopes that 2017 will be as good or better than 2016 for Piping Plovers on Maine's beaches. For more information and a complete report on the 2016 season, please visit maineaudubon.org and click on "Wildlife & Habitat," and then "The Piping Plover and Least Tern Recovery Project."



2016 was a good year for Piping Plovers in Maine. Thanks to many volunteers, agencies, and local advocates, the results were very good. 66 pairs of Piping Plovers nested on our beaches, and they fledged 101 chicks!

As a new season begins, YCA will again sponsor a UNE student, as well as a Maine Audubon intern to monitor Hills and Fortunes Rocks Beaches. Our monitors will be looking for nesting birds, and talking to people on the beach, to explain and help them understand the importance of making room for the birds.

Global Big Day – Saturday, May 13th

York County Audubon joins the Global Big Day –
And so can you!

For years, YCA has held an annual Birding Challenge in mid-May. It's been a fund-raiser for our wildlife protection efforts and a day for birders to join together and have fun. But starting last year, we changed things up a bit, joining with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in a citizen-science project called "The Global Big Day." The idea is simple: people all over the world will go birding on May 13, 2017, and record what they see. Then they'll enter that data into eBird, where it will give a global image of bird populations and locations. There's no requirement as to when, where, or how long during that day that one looks for birds.



Eagle with Common Terns – Marie Jordan

YCA is always working to increase awareness of the fantastic birding opportunities in York County, so we're adding an additional focus to our Big Day: we're going to limit our efforts to York County. In 2015, 145 species were recorded in the county on the Big Day, and last year, the total rose to 176.

You're invited to join a team, or to go out on your own; to start before dawn and go all day, or simply spend an hour or two in your backyard. Whatever suits you suits the Big Day. The count day runs for 24 hours starting Friday at midnight. Birders from all over the world will join the effort, and you can

follow the progress on the Cornell Lab's Global Big Day website at:

ebird.org/content/ebird/globalbigday/.



American Oystercatcher - Ken Janes

The Cornell Lab website also has great information on how to get started with eBird, how to use it in the field, and how to record your sightings. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with it beforehand. Although we encourage everyone to give eBird a try, if you are unable to submit your list for any reason, we'll be happy to do it for you. However, please note where and when you were birding, so that your list can be correctly logged.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology began the Global Big Day in 2015, when people from over 100 countries logged over 6150 bird species! In 2016, the total reached 6331. The hope is that each year will be even bigger. Your participation is a real contribution, and birding in York County in mid-May is a pleasure not to be missed. If you'd like to join a team of birders, or for more information, you can contact us through our website or Facebook page, or call Monica Grabin at 985-3342. All levels of experience and all ages are welcome.

There is no donation requirement to participate, but they are always very welcome. All donations help us fulfill our mission to educate the public and preserve our irreplaceable natural world.

Warbler Workshop with Doug Hitchcox – Saturday, May 13th



photo by M. Kathleen Kelly

Just in time for their spring arrival, Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist Doug Hitchcox will be holding a workshop to teach you various techniques for identifying the gems of our forests: warblers. We'll look at the diversity of the family, keys for identifying each species, and even spend time learning the songs and auditory cues to take your birding to the next level.

The workshop will be held at the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust. We'll meet at 6:30 a.m. for an early morning bird walk, followed by the workshop itself. A second walk will follow after lunch (please bring your lunch).

An enthusiastic birder, Doug set the Big Year record for Maine birds with 314 species in 2011. In his spare time, he also runs the Maine-birds listserv, serves on the Maine Bird Records Committee and York County Audubon Board, and is one of Maine's eBird reviewers.



Advance registration for this workshop is required. To register, please go to yorkcountyaudubon.org, click on this workshop under What's Coming Up on the right side of the webpage, and use the registration function at the bottom of the page. The fee of \$10 is payable by cash or check at the workshop.

Saturday Morning Summer Bird Walks at the Wells Reserve - starting June 10th



Join us at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm Farm every other Saturday this summer starting June 10th for a guided bird walk around the Reserve property. Beginners are welcome. Please bring binoculars if you have them; if not, you can borrow some. These walks are free and open to the public. We meet in the parking lot at 7:30 a.m. and reservations are not required. The additional dates are 6/24, 7/8 and 7/22, 8/5 and 8/19. Walks typically last about 2 hours. The photo at left shows a male Eastern Towhee, a bird regularly seen and heard at the Wells Reserve.

Our Facebook page has experienced a steady increase in activity, rewarding visitors with “hot off the digital



camera” photos of local unusual birds and other treats. Please visit the page, “like” us if you wish, and post a photo, sighting or comment of your own. *And visit our website - YorkCountyAudubon.org - to see the photos in this newsletter magically transformed from Black & White into Color!*

*** Upcoming YCA Programs at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm Farm ***

From the Arctic to Brazil by way of the coast of Maine. The Semipalmated Sandpiper's journey - with Dr. Shiloh Schulte, Tuesday May 16th at 7 pm in the Mather Auditorium.

Shorebirds are showing the most dramatic declines of any group of birds. Species that undertake hemispheric migrations rely on specific habitats and food sources to survive, but these resources are increasingly under threat from human disturbance, habitat loss and degradation, over-harvesting, increasing predation, and climate change.

York County Audubon has notched up its involvement with our shorebirds. We have paid for Piping Plover monitors who help educate the public at our beaches. We are participating in shorebird surveys. We have put on Piping Plover children's workshops, run shorebird focused field trips, and put on shorebird workshops for birders.

Kennebunk resident Dr. Shiloh Schulte has been on the forefront of the Manomet Shorebird Recovery Program. He has worked extensively with the American Oystercatcher, a distinctive shorebird which has become the poster child for conservation success. Dr. Schulte will talk about the shorebirds we see more commonly on our beach walks. Semipalmated Sandpipers were once the most widespread and abundant shorebird in the Western Hemisphere. In recent decades their numbers have declined sharply, particularly in the Eastern US and Canada. Why are they declining and how we can help?



Lost Among the Birds with Neil Hayward – Tuesday, June 20th at 7 pm in [the Mather Auditorium](#). Boston birder Neil Hayward was having a mid-life crisis. So what did he do? He went birding. This temporary insanity resulted in almost 250,000 miles of travel, taking him to the remote corners of North America. Over the course of one year he got so into birding that he ended up setting what birders refer to as the Big Year record. He spotted and identified an extraordinary 749 species of birds in one year.



Neil wrote his first book, *Lost Among the Birds: Accidentally Finding Myself in One Very Big Year*, chronicling his journey from heartbreak to triumph after he entered the 2013 Big Year birding competition - a race to find the most birds in one year. When Sandy Komito (the cheery guy played by Owen Wilson in the movie *The Big Year*) saw 748 species in 1998, many thought his North American birding record would last forever. In the end, Neil shocked the birding world by breaking that record. Along the way, Neil surprised even himself, finding a renewed sense of confidence and hope about the world and his role in it.

With just days left in 2013, he was tied with the longstanding record of 748 sightings. And then as the deadline approached it happened! Ornithologists and informed birders will be astounded by this amateur birdwatcher's achievements, but everyone will connect with Neil's journey—the desire to find oneself and one's place in the world. Join us for this outstanding program. Come early for refreshments and social time.

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