

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Autumn 2014

The *June Ficker* Hog Island Scholarship

From its earliest days, support for conservation-related education has been a key part of York County Audubon's mission. One focus within that has been support for the education programs on Maine's famed Hog Island. Since those early days, YCA has offered a scholarship each summer for a teacher to participate in a week long nature workshop there.

June Ficker, well known to many of you, has been a dynamic, engaging and tireless champion for birding related education and activities for over 40 years. She served as chair of YCA's Education Committee from 1979 until stepping down from YCA's Board this past year.

In recognition of her wealth of contributions that have touched and benefitted thousands of people over the last four decades, we are very pleased to rename our annual scholarship the June Ficker Hog Island Scholarship in her honor.

Though you'd NEVER know it from a present-day encounter, June Morton was born 90 years ago, in 1924, in Winchester, Mass. A year later, her father bought a house at Kennebunk Beach, and she began to spend her summers there. She moved here full time in 1955, and in 1979, built a house on what is now Dutcher Lane, across the street from her parents' house. Nearby was the Atlantis Hotel, of which June was, for a number of years in the 50's and 60's, the co-owner.

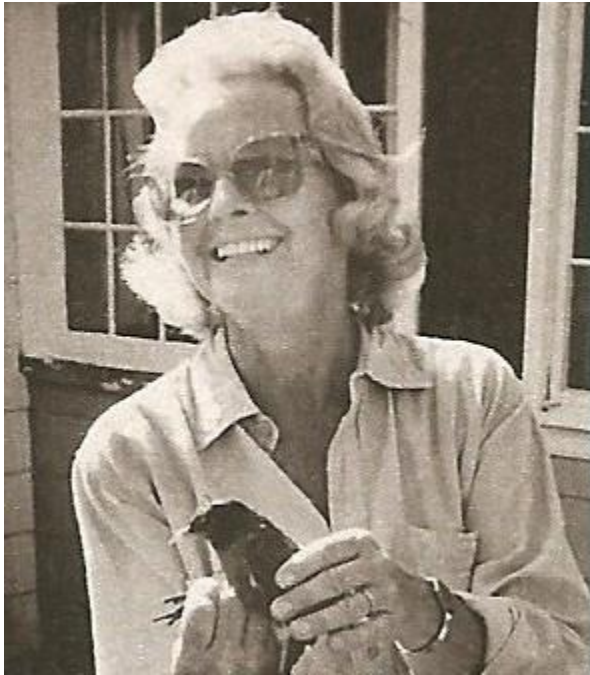
June has childhood memories of birds. When she was 8, her father had handed her a salt shaker,



telling her that if she sprinkled salt on a bird's tail, you'd be able to catch it. She fell for this advice "hook, line and sinker" and proceeded to spend hours trying to catch up with the tails of the Red-Headed Woodpeckers that were common in her yard in Winchester. Finally, her dad got her a pet canary, a male with a gorgeous voice. When June was afflicted with chronic appendicitis, the bird moved into her room and soon was freed from its cage to spend time with June under her covers and help cheer her toward recovery.

Her adult interest in birds dates to 1964. She came across a Press Herald article that someone had left at the Atlantis Hotel that mentioned the Natural History Society in Portland. Since she needed to have her Nash Rambler serviced nearby, she thought she'd drop in to take a look. She met the Director, Chris Packard, who was signing people up

for a Labor Day trip to Monhegan. She had just been “birding” for the first time and it was all new to her, but she jumped right in, had a memorable trip to Monhegan and hasn’t stopped since. It was the same Chris Packard who, just a few years later, worked with several York County birders to establish YCA.



June in *Woman's Day*, May 13, 1997

On April 23rd, 1968, a group met at the Kuhn House in Cape Neddick to establish the York County Branch of Maine Audubon. The parent organization was then, more formally, the “Portland Society of Natural History and Maine Audubon Society,” located at 22 Elm Street in Portland, a spot now occupied by the rear portion of the Portland Public Library. The Portland Society of Natural History had been founded in 1843. Within a few years, the Branch was restructured as the York County Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Ten years ago, in June, 2004, YCA became a chapter of Maine Audubon, while retaining an affiliation with National Audubon. June married Dr. Robert Ficker in 1968 and they both were involved in York County Audubon from its early years, serving at different times as its President. Dr. Ficker passed away in 1999.

June is probably best known for her years of public

bird banding. She started in 1979. Through Chris Packard, she met licensed bird bander Jonnie Fisk and “just fell in love with her right away.” Jonnie referred her to a scientific research station in Manomet, Mass. (now the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences), and she ended up spending the next 3 fall seasons banding birds there and earning her Federal banding license. June established a banding station at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm and, with a great group of volunteers, has kept it running for over 25 years. Holding court under the great Copper Beech tree, June and her team have given visitors an up-close look at thousands of birds.

June is also known for the exceptional collection of bird “study skins” that she’s assembled over the last 33 years. The first skin collected was a Grackle, but she has since added countless other species both from Maine and further afield. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has expressed strong interest in the collection, and June is working to catalog and then donate it to them.

June continues to contribute her special expertise and wonderful, bright personality to all York County birders. If you’ve never met her, you owe it to yourself to stop by her bird banding station and watch a master at work.

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Bob Watson, Publicity	251-1135
Eileen Willard, Director	967-5118
Marian Zimmerman, Birding Trail	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

Another Successful Teacher's Week at Hog Island

As mentioned in the feature article on June Ficker, we've been sponsoring educators to spend a week on famed Hog Island since we began as an Audubon chapter in 1968. This past July, we provided scholarships for two educators to participate. Here are a few excerpts from their accounts of their adventures.

From Emily Calhoun:

"Whether they're squealing with joy or completely grossed out, they're engaged and you've helped them make a connection". These wise words, shared with me by education specialist and Educator's Week instructor Ted Gilman, drove my experiences at Hog Island's "Sharing in Nature: An Educator's Week" camp. As a blooming environmental education professional, I sometimes encounter negative attitudes towards the natural world and struggle with ways to dispel fears and foster appreciation. As I hoped, Hog Island gave me the opportunity to reflect, rejuvenate, and revamp my approach to environmental education.

As I look back over my time on Hog Island, memories of each and every instructor, volunteer, and camper flood my mind. The "bird nerd" from Texas worked with me to improve my ability to bird by ear. The "bug girl" from Maryland advised the development of my bug collection and shared tips for display and education. Trudy, an instructor, inspired my newest project aimed to respect and cultivate the way kids of all ages play with the natural world. The skills, knowledge, understanding, confidence, and patience gained on this 5-day immersion will stay with me as I continue to explore my own special places and grow as an environmental educator.

From Susan Williams:

My first afternoon, as campers gathered from as far away as California, I set off to explore this rugged island, its forests, mossy glades, salt marshes, and beaches. That first solitary excursion set the tone for experiencing this relatively untouched sanctuary.

Only 30 of the island's 330 acres are developed. As the group of sixty or more educators gathered later that afternoon, I came to realize the range of roles and connections we all felt to both "mother nature" and human nature. Campers ran the gamut from kindergarten to college teachers, from urban to rural schools, from public/private schools to government agencies, non-profit organizations, and even a business person who led whale watches! The Hog Island experience, as we had read about, struck a common chord and there was an adventurous spirit among all the campers.

One evening we enjoyed a presentation by David Sobel. Hearing his descriptions of ways in which children connect to their environment was wonderful. But his comments about the reduction in the range that today's children have truly frightened me. In 1940, an eight year old child might walk with companions to a fishing spot six miles from home regularly. With the rise in worry about stranger-danger and risk, many parents have limited children's freedom to roam and explore the outdoors.



The "end result:" The inspiration of Hog Island being passed along to students – as submitted by Kate Grant, Visual Arts Educator at Biddeford Intermediate School



Semi-Palmated Plover in Scarborough with tasty treat – *photo by Marie Jordan*

New Members:

Val Banks	Portland
Heather Eukitis	Dayton
Joyce Toth	Wells
Josh Fecteau and Jenny Brown	Kennebunkport
Deborah Field	York
Charlotte Garand	Sanford
Deborah Kinney	Kennebunkport
Cynthia Nye	Old Orchard Beach
Wayne Perks	Acton
Deborah Wright	Saco
Leo Dattlio	Limerick
Kathryn Driscoll	Kittery
Richard Eaton, Sr.	Wells
Nancy Eckfeldt	Kennebunkport
Terry Fralich	Saco
Mary Love	Cornish
A, Raymond Rutan	Harpwell
Alalia K. Thaler	York
Charles Doane	Kennebunk
Donald Gladden	Lyman
Dennis and Susan Kepner	York
Kathleen Taggersell	Kennebunk
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bazylnski	South Berwick
Teegan W.French & Clifford Berg	South Berwick
Robert Goehrig	York
Marc Guimont	Old Orchard Beach
Cheryl MB Higgins	South Berwick
Kate Kiggins	Old Orchard Beach

Amy March	Denmark
Sally Williams	Hiram
Amy J. Dame	Berwick
Eric Ridler	Charlotte, NC
William D. Selim	Moody
Laura Slap-Shelton & Stephen Doane	Kennebunk
Sue Strommer	Old Orchard Beach

New Board Member

Eileen Willard, a resident of Kennebunk, has been a Teaching Assistant in Dendrology (the study of trees) at the University of New Hampshire for the past eight years. She has also taught Environmental Science at Heartwood College of Art. As a docent at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Willard has led tree walks and lectured on conifers for local conservation organizations and garden clubs. We're delighted to welcome Eileen to our Board.



For many years, YCA has offered Audubon Adventures educational materials to teachers throughout York County. This is a well-researched, standards-based program, prepared by the National Audubon Society, **geared toward grades 3-5**. It is presented in colorful, interesting newsletters with teacher's guides included. If you are an educator, home-schooling parent, recreation director, or camp counselor working with this age group, YCA would be happy to provide these materials free of charge. All we ask is that you use them! For more information, visit audubonadventures.org and then contact Monica Grabin at grabin@roadrunner.com to let us know that you would like to participate. You'll be glad you did!

Birding Challenge 2014

This year's Birding Challenge was another great success. Our participants faced quite a weather trial. The rain on Friday afternoon and evening, May 16, continued to fall early on Saturday morning, as well. Fortunately, we birders are an intrepid lot, *and* the skies began to clear by mid-morning as the storm exited York County.

Seven teams comprising seventeen people took part in tracking down as many species as possible in the 24-hour period. Despite such a soggy start, our efforts yielded 144 species at our Mather Auditorium compilation, and we were treated to pizza generously donated by Alfredo's Pizza in Wells.

Good catches included: Northern Shoveler, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Gannet, American Bittern, Sora, American Woodcock, Caspian and Roseate Terns, Whippoorwill, Bank Swallow, Pipit, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet and Western(!) Tanagers, and Blackpoll and Blue-Winged Warblers.

We're tremendously grateful to all who contributed their time, expertise and financial pledges, including our generous business donors:

Alfredo's Pizza	Wells
Arthur Gager, DDS	Biddeford
Bergen & Parkinson, LLC	Kennebunk
Bob & Mike's Mini Mart	Saco
Bufflehead's Restaurant	Biddeford
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Shady Brook Farm	Biddeford

Birding Patch: Cliff House

From Marian Zimmerman



Harlequin Ducks – photo by Doug Hitchcox

Located on top of Bald Head just south of Ogunquit, the Cliff House offers sweeping ocean views that make for wonderful sea birding, especially from November through March. Though private property, the owner welcomes birders. Regular winter sightings include Common and Red-throated Loon, Horned and Red-necked Grebe, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Black Guillemot, Red-breasted Merganser, and all three species of Scoter. It is one of the most reliable sites in southern Maine for finding Harlequin Duck, King Eider, and alcids including Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, and Dovekie. Northern Gannet sometimes approach close to shore and Purple Sandpiper can be seen along the rocks. On rare occasions Pacific Loon may also be encountered here.

Situated high over the water, the Cliff House is exposed to the full force of the wind so dress warmly. Good footwear is also advised as ice often accumulates where birders gather. A spotting scope helps to take full advantage of the long views afforded by the site. And please remember birding etiquette so that birders will continue to be welcomed. (Directions on next page.)

Sparrow Workshop with Louis Bevier



American Tree Sparrow – photo by Louis Bevier

Want to learn more about the many sparrow species that breed in and migrate through Maine? Want to know the difference between a sparrow and a finch? How can one bird be both a bunting and a sparrow? Why are longspurs no longer sparrows? Often skulking, elusive, and confusingly similar, sparrows can make any birder prefer fall wood-warblers. As part of this workshop, you will learn how to find and observe sparrows in their preferred habitat. We will learn through classroom and field time useful foraging behaviors, flight characteristics, and vocalizations helpful for identification and appreciation of Maine's sparrows. The workshop will feature some of the rare species that have turned up in Maine, and some that might yet so you'll be prepared! The marsh sparrows, Le Conte's versus Grasshopper, who was Henslow, and the tricky Spizella are some of the featured sparrows.

This workshop will be led by well known Maine birder Louis Bevier. Since the 1960s, birds have drawn him to explore most of North and South America, leading to months at sea off Alaska and California, backcountry surveys in the high Sierra, plant and bird expeditions to several countries, and many other adventures. He has worked as a tour guide for Field Guides, as an editor for The Birds of North America series, as Associate Editor for the journal North American Birds, and is Chair of the Maine Bird Records Committee.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, October 25th at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm from 8

a.m. till 3 p.m. The cost is \$10/person, payable by check or cash at the workshop. But *space is limited and advance reservations are required at our website: yorkcountyaudubon.org.*

We'll meet at 8 a.m. and take a short walk. Then we'll move to the Mather Auditorium for a talk on "all things sparrow." We'll break for lunch (you'll need to bring your own), after which we'll head to Mile Rd. to try for Saltmarsh or Nelson's Sparrows, or anything else, at high tide, and then continue on to Beach Plum Farm and possibly Ogunquit Beach. At least that's the plan!

This workshop is proudly sponsored by York County Audubon. We hope you can join us.

Annual Bird Seed Sale Coming Up *Early Bird Pricing through 10/31*

Keep your feathered friends happy this winter by treating them to high quality bird food *and* help support two of your favorite environmental organizations at the same time. Each fall, York County Audubon joins forces with the Wells Reserve at Laudholm to offer this sale.

The seed from Blue Seal is fresh from the 2014 crop. There's a broad selection of seed and suet, and great prices, especially if you order by 10/31. There's easy access pickup at the Wells Reserve November 13-15th.

Please use the order form enclosed with this newsletter. It's also available on the York County Audubon and Wells Reserve websites.

Order today, and thanks for your support. Your birds will thank you too!

Directions to Cliff House: From the north, at the intersection of Route 1 and Shore Road in Ogunquit, drive 2.5 mile south on Shore Road. Turn left into the Cliff House. From the south, at the intersection of Route 1 and 1A in Cape Neddick, follow Route 1A south for .9 miles. Turn left onto Shore Road and continue for 2.9 miles. Turn right into the entrance of the Cliff House.

***** Upcoming YCAS Events at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm Farm *****

Programs are free and open to the public.



Tuesday, October 21st, 7 pm *Flavor of Australia: Birds and More*

Experience Australia as Marie Jordan shares her Australian travel and birding experiences in the areas around Cairns, Queensland, and the Northern Territory. Her piquant presentation will fuel our minds as she takes us down under to see beautiful unique birds - Honeyeaters and Parrots as well as Kingfishers and Kookaburras. We will also view the unique scenery and Aborigine rock paintings in Kakadu National Park and hear the haunting sound of the didgeridoo.

Saturday, October 25 - Sparrow Workshop with Louis Bevier – see description on opposite page



Tuesday, November 18th, 7 pm *The Ordinary Extraordinary Junco*

This film was screened recently, at the joint meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union and the Cooper Ornithological Society. It has received outstanding reviews and won first place in the non-commercial film division at the 30th annual Animal Behavior Film Festival in Boulder, Colorado. This amazing film captures the beauty of the bird while offering fascinating details on biology and natural history. If you think the Junco is a common bird and you don't give it a second thought - well you won't make that mistake again!

The 115th Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count Every year, from mid-December to early January, thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave inclement weather and pre-dawn jaunts to gather data for the CBC, the largest and longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations. YCA sponsors two local counts. If you're interested in participating or finding out more, please contact:

- Pat Moynahan (284-5487) for the Southern York County on Monday, December 15th
- Marie Jordan (799-1408) for the Biddeford/Kennebunkport Count on Saturday, December 28th

Our ***Wednesday morning bird walks*** are continuing most weeks through the winter. If you'd like to receive a weekly email for these, please send a request to Dave Doubleday at davidd@roadrunner.com.



Visit us on
Facebook

Our Facebook page has been the happy recipient of many new posts and has experienced a steady increase in page visits. Visitors to the page have been rewarded 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 to Color!*

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Maine Audubon Membership Form

Yes, I would like to join the Maine Audubon and the York County 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 membership benefits include *Maine Audubon 's Habitat: The Journal of Maine Audubon*, *The Harlequin* newsletter, and discounts on field trips and tours, children's programs, and at Maine Audubon nature stores and Audubon sanctuaries nationwide. For a subscription to Audubon, the magazine of the National Audubon Society, please add \$10.

☐ Senior/Volunteer \$25 ☐ Individual \$35 ☐ Household \$45 ☐ Contributing \$65
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