

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Autumn 2017

Are You Exhausted Yet?

by Monica Grabin

Summer is almost officially over, and our schedules will return to whatever is our personal normal. Hopefully, we've had some adventures, some relaxing times in nature and a refreshment of our spirits. Perhaps you've also taken a break from the news, and who could blame you? There seems to be a never-ending string of infuriating or demoralizing stories. There haven't been any slow news days, normally a summer staple. It's exhausting.

In particular, for those of us concerned about our natural environment, there has been a steady erosion of protections and programs which we have come to count on to keep hazards in check. The appointees to lead federal environmental agencies appear determined to undermine those agencies and the protections they provide. There has even been a review of our National Monuments with the intent of getting rid of some, an unprecedented move.

It can feel like we're drowning in bad news. It's exhausting to fight all the time, and the tendency is to just give up, or at the very least to let up. It's hard not to think that this is exactly the intent of so much happening at once, to keep our heads spinning to the extent that it's almost impossible to act.

So here are some simple ideas that might help. First, it is still vitally important that we continue to resist changes to laws and regulations that protect our environment and the species we share it with. But luckily, you're not alone, and you don't have to do it all yourself. Perhaps you might think about what really matters to you personally,

and decide you will respond to just that. For example, all of us in the Audubon Society are interested in protecting birds but there are many elements to that. There is protecting valuable habitat from development, maintaining clean air and water regulations, decreasing carbon emissions, promoting the planting of native species, monitoring beaches for nesting shorebirds, and many others.

Pick one aspect of advocacy, and make a point to speak up when that area is threatened. Call or write to your representatives at the state and the federal level and let them know how you feel. Read those articles that pertain to your issue. And know that others are doing the same in regard to other issues. Know that you're not alone and that your voice does count. In fact, it's invaluable.

Our 19th Annual Bird Seed Sale is coming! *Early Bird Pricing through 10/30*

Keep your feathered friends happy this winter by treating them to tasty and fresh, premium quality bird food and help support two of your favorite environmental organizations at the same time. Profits from our annual sale support the educational programs of both York County Audubon and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. A wide variety of types of seed and suet is available, with great pricing, especially if you order early.

Early bird pricing is available if you place your order by 4 p.m. on October 30th. Order pick up will be at the Wells Reserve November 9th – 11th, with easy access and volunteers on hand to help load your car. ***Please refer to the enclosed blue order form for more information.***

Reflections from Hog Island

by Noel Leigh, First Grade Teacher, Margaret Chase Smith School in Sanford

July 16th was the day I had been waiting for, ever since I was informed that I was the recipient of York County Audubon's June Ficker scholarship to "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" on Hog Island. I was excited and nervous, and didn't know what to expect. As boat after boat arrived on this beautiful island, I found myself looking around at a very diverse group of strangers, diverse in age, gender, color, and ethnicity. We came from all over the country. From the instructors and staff, to the campers themselves, no one looked familiar, no one looked quite like me. Little did I know at that moment, that I was gathering with a group of people who would turn out to be kindred spirits, passionate about science, nature and their students, just like me.

In the days that followed, through a variety of programs, workshops, and explorations with the most genuine and knowledgeable staff, I received not only activities to do with students outside, but strategies to bring natural environments into the classroom. I found myself thoroughly motivated and heavily armed with resources and lessons that would be fun and appropriate for my first graders. However, even more valuable was the personal experience gained on this awe-inspiring island. From the people I came to know, to the beauty that was revealed on a daily basis, Hog Island filled me with hope. Hope that a small community of passionate and committed people can have a significant impact on the students they teach, sending out into this world a sense of respect, appreciation, and connection, ripple after ripple. Hope that nature will prevail regardless of the decisions we humans make. Hope that one day, more people will have the opportunity to see past our exterior differences to the common thread that runs within us all.

I came to the island with years of outdoor experience, from my time spent working for the US Forest Service in Montana, to volunteering as a Docent at the Wells Reserve. I was knowledgeable about the flora and fauna of Maine, because I have always had a desire to observe and identify the world around me. I was not prepared, however, for the sense of community that I found on Hog Island. On my final evening, it occurred to me that we had more in common than any community I had ever been a part of before. I am grateful for the opportunities to



Noel Leigh with Hog Island instructor, Dr. Jerry Skinner

collaborate with other educators, the ideas provided for sharing nature with my students, and finally, the life lessons learned at camp.

Thank you York County Audubon for providing me with the experience of a lifetime. I can promise you that I will continue to share nature, and to champion diversity, in an effort to make this world a better place for all its inhabitants.

YCAS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Bill Grabin, President	985-3342
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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

Busy Young Birders

Ever since Lena Moser and Nathan Hall launched the Maine Young Birders Club in March, they have been busy coordinating lots of exciting outings.

In April, we headed to Scarborough Marsh, and enjoyed watching many Glossy Ibis, Green-winged Teal, and Greater Yellowlegs. Raptors put on a show, too: an adult Bald Eagle flew directly overhead twice, a close Osprey hovered in mid-air, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk lazily drifted in a thermal. We were amazed by the large rafts of hundreds of Long-tailed Ducks at Pine Point, along with a couple of showy American Oystercatchers.

With migration in full swing, May found us at Florida Lake in Freeport. We were rewarded at the renowned migrant trap, with good looks at several warbler species: Wilson's, Black-throated Blue, Canada, Black-throated Green, Nashville, and Northern Parula. Seeing a singing Ovenbird through the scope was quite the highlight, too. Some species were already busy constructing nests; we watched a Red-breasted Nuthatch and Black-capped Chickadee flying back and forth from their nest holes, bills full of nesting material. Aside from birds, we found many Spotted Salamander egg masses, which were fun to handle. Then we headed to the Capt Wm Fitzgerald Recreation and Conservation Area in Brunswick for our target species: Prairie Warbler. We lucked out and saw a couple of gorgeous Prairies, as well as Field Sparrows, Ospreys, and a close Broad-winged Hawk.

June was a special month because the MYBC got its official logo! Lena Moser designed the logo, while her sister Nika Romanova, a talented digital artist, brought it to life. Young birder Fyn Kynd suggested the Black Guillemot to be our mascot. He observantly pointed out that Maine is the Black Guillemot's southernmost breeding range. Approximately 3,000 pairs nest on Maine's coastal islands every year, while 6,500 more pairs nest throughout the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy. The Black Guillemot certainly stands out in its black-and-white simplicity and symbolizes Maine's richness and diversity of seabirds. We are now proud to call ourselves The Guillies!

July was all about puffins. Seven young birders and their families set out on the Maine Audubon sunset puffin cruise to Eastern Egg Rock. This tiny, 7-acre island is famous for being the most easily-accessible Maine island for observing Atlantic Puffins. We were rewarded with fabulous views, including a couple that flew right over the boat! Laughing Gulls and Common Terns were abundant, and we picked out a few Roseate



Terns, too. Other highlights were a Bonaparte's Gull, Bald Eagles, a young Northern Gannet, and some cool mammals like Harbor Porpoise and Harbor Seals (more than 100 lounging on a rocky outcropping!). Everyone left the trip happy, especially since the puffin was a "lifer" (a first-time-seen) bird for many.

We feel fortunate to be organizing these trips for young birders. Their keen eyes and enthusiastic interest in the natural world inspire us to no end. So far, we have had 15 young birder participants, mostly from York County, but others traveling from much further. We look forward to a wonderful fall and winter birding season ahead! If you are 11-18 years old (or know someone who is) and are interested in learning more about the natural world around you, we'd love for you to join us! Simply click the "Join" tab on our website: www.maineyoungbirders.org.



For more info, visit www.maineyoungbirders.org and click on "News." If you wish to donate to the club or become a partner, click on the "Support" tab. You can also "like" us on Facebook by visiting www.facebook.com/maineyoungbirders.

Book Review: *Birdwatching in Maine a Site Guide* Ed. by Derek Lovitch

by Seth M. Davis

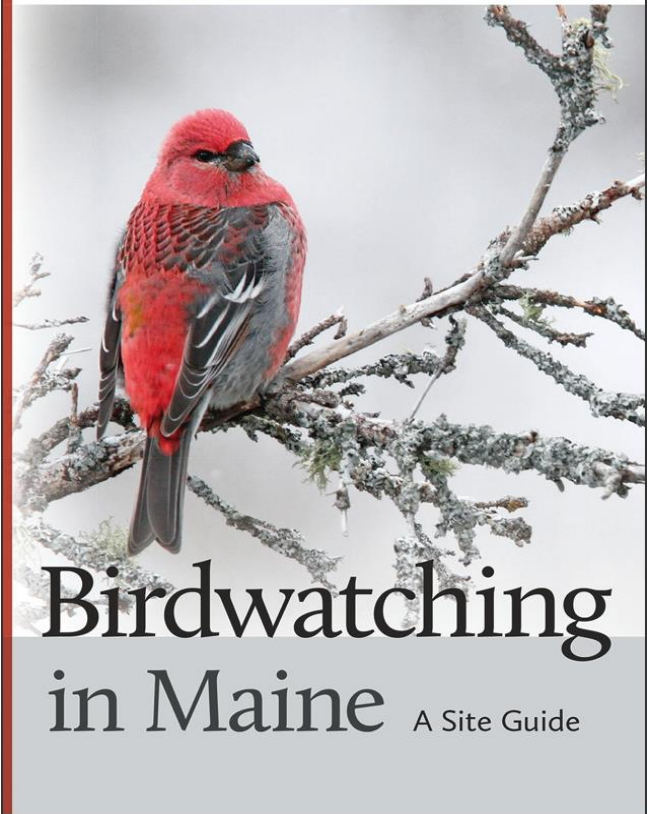
Full disclosure, I am a bird book and field guide addict. On the surface that may not seem like a bad thing, however when asked to write a review, I thought it would be easy. Since I had bought the book a couple months ago and read the first few pages, I obviously had enough information to do an honest review, right? The problem with people with my condition is that far too often, we get a new book, swear we're going to digest every bit of information, and 5 years later, the book is still on our shelf without so much as a crease in its spine. I'm going to go out on a limb here, and try to use this book for the intended purpose of finding more birds/birding locales and then give you my full impression below. We'll see if *Birdwatching in Maine a Site Guide* is doomed to live out its life on my bookshelf, or if it's truly an invaluable tool for birders in Maine.

Derek Lovitch is one of the leading birders in Maine, and he put a lot of time and energy into editing/writing this book, which is made clear by the wealth of information it provides. Additionally, he recruited a dozen other leading birding experts in Maine to write several of the chapters to give excellent local expertise, and really provide insider knowledge about where and when to find target species. The book details 201 prime birding sites throughout Maine, and is cleverly organized with 16 chapters for each of the state's 16 counties

For each county, there is a brief overview, and then specific "site entries" for birding hotspots. I like that not only are there maps and directions, but it also has map numbers that match your Delorme *Atlas and Gazetteer*. There are author-recommended "seasons" to view each site as well as highlights and notable rarities. All-in-all, it has a very intuitive layout.

Let's get to the good part, how does this book perform when used for its intended purpose? I am going to pick one of the site entries in York County that I've never been to. I don't want to give too much away, but the site I chose is productive in July, and has highlights including breeding Grasshopper, and Vesper Sparrows, Prairie Warblers, and Eastern Meadowlarks. Let's see how this goes!

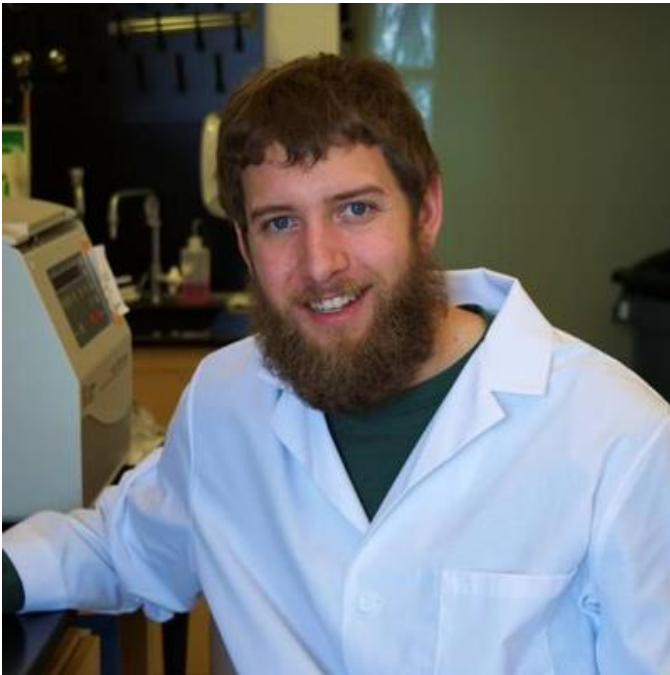
EDITED BY Derek J. Lovitch



I'm back and I had a blast! The site entry I picked was awesome. I saw some recently fledged Bald Eagles, a Scarlet Tanager, 4 species of warbler, Eastern Phoebes and Wood-pewees among 25 other species in 1 hour. I feel the book exceeded my expectations

I do have a couple criticisms of the book. First, and least important, it is a touch heavy (2.05 lbs), so I can't really decide if I should use it as a field guide or desk reference. This could just be me splitting hairs, and likely for most people it won't be bothersome. Second, I would like to see GPS coordinates listed for the sites. I am aware good birders plan ahead and map out their trips, but part of my aforementioned condition is a lack of impulse control, and some days I just want to put coordinates in my phone and get out birding as soon as possible. But don't let these criticisms deter you from getting this book. It is well worth the cost (\$25-\$30 depending on where you look). There's even a Kindle version for ~\$15 that eliminates weight issue!. There is a ton of great information and I fully expect to get many creases in this book's spine! Good birding!

York County Audubon is pleased to welcome Seth Davis to its Board of Directors



Seth is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of New England where he studies how early-life pain exposure may produce negative behavioral outcomes later in life. Seth grew up in Eastern Oregon and has always been fascinated with nature, which was a big reason he was drawn to science. He received his Ph.D. at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington where he studied how and why morphine has different effects in males vs. females and after completing his degree, moved to Colorado where his interest in birds and birding began to take off. Since moving to Maine in 2015, Seth has been active in the birding community, and his desire to be more involved led him to joining the YCA Board in June. You'll often see Seth riding his bicycle to a favorite birding spot (it's hard to miss with the spotting scope hanging off the front) as he's convinced "birding-by-bike" is going to be the hip new trend.

The Christmas Bird Counts are Coming!

Beginning on Christmas Day in 1900, the Audubon Society has been sponsoring Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) to help monitor the health and status of bird populations throughout North America. In that first year, there were 25 count circles with a total of 27 birders. Now, there are over 2,300 count circles each year with over 70,000 birders participating in locations stretching from Alaska to South America.

Each year, York County Audubon sponsors two counts. The Southern York County circle extends from Kittery to Ogunquit, while the Biddeford - Kennebunkport count circle reaches from Kennebunk to Saco. Each circle is carved into six or more territories. Each territory has a team that scours it during "count day" looking for all bird species, and recording the numbers seen of each. It can, at times, be a bit more art than science, as we attempt to count - but not double count - the birds we find. We also have supporters who monitor their home feeders during the day and contribute their totals. To avoid double counting, we ask them only to report the greatest number of each species that they see at any one time during the day.

At the end of the day, we meet to compile the counts and share highlights. Once compiled, the counts are forwarded to National Audubon for the master compilation. The local and national totals are reviewed to assess trends in the populations of all species. While the totals can vary dramatically year to year due to the weather that happens to grace us on count day, the bigger picture over time can be very informative.

This year, the Southern York County CBC will be held on Monday, December 18th, while the Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC will be on Saturday, December 30th. If you might like to find out about participating, please contact Monica Grabin at 985-3342 or grabin@roadrunner.com for the Southern York County CBC, or Kathy Donahue at 967-4102 or kadonal1@roadrunner.com for the Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC.

Bird Feeders and Bird Disease by Ken Janes

If we choose to feed birds in our backyards, keeping feeders clean is an important part of feeder maintenance and disease prevention. In most cases, feeders simply need to be cleaned every two to three weeks with warm water and dried completely before refilling with fresh seed. If mold or debris has accumulated, or you have noticed sick birds at your feeder, use a ten parts water to one part bleach solution to clean the feeder. Rinse well, dry completely and refill with fresh seed.

One common avian disease often seen at feeders is House Finch eye disease. This is an infection of the soft tissues around the eye called conjunctivitis and is caused by the bacterium *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*. Birds infected with the disease have red, swollen and crusted eyes. The swelling can become severe enough to cause blindness and death from starvation, exposure, or predation. The disease has been known in domestic turkeys and chickens but rarely affects other wild birds such as American Goldfinch, Purple Finch and Evening Grosbeak.



According to Project FeederWatch, the problem was first noted in the Washington, D.C. Area in 1994 and has spread rapidly across the Northeast. In the 1940s “Hollywood Finches” from California were brought by the caged bird trade to the east coast and then released when the practice was made illegal. Because the eastern population originated from a small number of western birds, they are highly inbred, exhibit low genetic diversity and therefore, may be more susceptible to disease.

If you notice birds with conjunctivitis, it is recommended to take down feeders for a few days to encourage birds to disperse. Feeders should be cleaned in hot, soapy water and soaked in a 10% bleach solution. Also, rake under the feeders to remove any seed and bird droppings.

It is estimated that 5-10% of the eastern population of House Finches has the disease and that the dramatic spread seen a few years ago has equilibrated. Even so, please be responsible and clean your feeders on a regular basis even when there are no signs of disease

YCA welcomes its New Members!

March - July

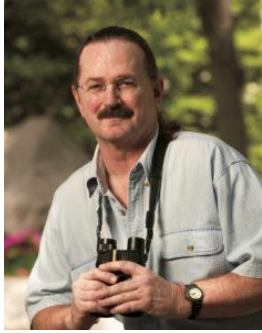
Deborah and Brian Beaulieu	Lyman
Jeffrey and Jennifer Kugler	Kennebunk
Patricia Moshimer	Kennebunk
Claudia Rundlett	Berwick
Brigitte Snaith	Hollis Center
Jeffrey Toffic and Karen Ruel	Saco
Mark Vogelzang	Scarborough
Mr. and Ms. John Wingfield	Biddeford
Larry Clow and Kari Britt	Wells
Marjorie Stevens and Rodney Byam	York Beach
Lindsey and Aaron Atkinson	Buxton
Mary Cosby	York
Missy Mans	Old Orchard Beach
Kay Peace	Saco
Rodney Thayer	Kennebunk
Bill Bayerle and Tom Newbold	Kittery Point
Catherine L. Bradford and Kerry L. Tucker	Saco
Lisa Canino	Kennebunk
Claire Doheny	Kennebunk
Vijay and Arlene Macwan	Old Orchard Beach
Gabe A. Michelson	Old Orchard Beach
Pam and John Palmitessa	Sanford
Anne Milne	South Berwick
Cricket and Jason Wise	Kennebunk

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

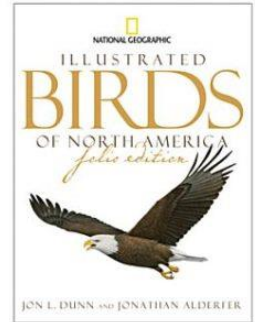
Tuesday, October 17 at 7:00 pm

The Art of Science: Building a Field Guide with Jonathan Alderfer

The National Geographic will publish the newest edition of the *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* this month. Join artist, co-author and co-illustrator Jonathan Alderfer for an inside look at how this latest edition was conceived and brought to press. He will also display a selection of his original field guide illustrations and discuss the painting process.



Jonathan Alderfer has specialized in painting birds and natural history subjects for more than thirty years. For ten years he was National Geographic's resident birding expert at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. While there, he authored, edited, or illustrated more than twenty books for the National Geographic Society, including the best-selling *Complete Birds of North America*. You'll be amazed to learn the details of how field guides are actually made and awestruck by Jonathan's fine art paintings. Come early for social time and refreshments.



Tuesday, November 15th at 7:00 pm

Feral Newfoundland with Deborah Gordon

Join artist, musician, and photographer Deborah Gordon as she reveals secrets and hidden natural wonders of Newfoundland and Labrador. Learn about the less frequented outposts, national and provincial parks, World Heritage Sites, and the infectious humor and uplifting spirit that comprises the culture and people of Canada's most eastern province.



Newfoundland and Labrador are surprisingly accessible, and you will learn the options and necessary preparations for travel and accommodations, seasonal activities, literature and history resources as Deborah is excited to share her expertise on this region. Her captivating, in-depth slide show of the wildlife, landscape, architecture, and mystery of this dauntingly exquisite, un-pretentious place will interest all.

Deborah Gordon spends her summers on the Great Northern Peninsula, where she immerses herself in the color, light, and space that is quintessentially Newfoundland. Deborah loves capturing on camera all that leaves her breathless. Join us for this fascinating and poignant program which is free and open to the public.



Visit us on
Facebook

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!

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