

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Autumn 2018

Vote! *by Monica Grabin*

It's hard to believe that we've already seen the end of summer, and a hot and humid one it was. I'm sure that many of you, like me, wonder if this is to be the new normal here in Maine. If so, I may need an air conditioner!

As you know, the current climate (pun intended) in Washington and in many State legislatures is one of refusal to acknowledge or deal with the fact of global warming and what it may mean to us and all species on earth. Those of us who care deeply about our environment and the creatures with whom we share our world must make every effort to educate ourselves and others to the dangers we face. In this climate of denial, we need to be loud and clear in our belief in science and our role as stewards for the future. When we recycle and try to limit our use of plastics, when we do our best to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, whenever we try to make green choices, we are doing our part. But perhaps the most important part we can play is to make sure we know where our representatives stand on environmental issues and to vote accordingly.

Things that many conservationists long took for granted as settled policy are under threat right now. These include the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and closer to home, the Land for Maine's Future Act. Support for alternatives such as solar and wind energy, if done correctly, are vital to reduce our carbon pollution on a statewide and national level.

Please take the time to find out where your candidates stand on the issues, and then get out and VOTE!! And spread the word to friends, family, and neighbors of all voting ages. Our

birds, woods, waters, and our children depend on us.

Our 20th Annual Bird Seed Sale is coming! *Early Bird Pricing through 10/26*

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. Proceeds 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 26th. Order pick-up will be at the Wells Reserve November 8th – 10th, with easy access and volunteers on hand to help load your car. ***Please refer to the enclosed blue order form for more information.***



A male Rose-Breasted Grosbeak appreciating some quality seed in Kennebunk.

Reflections from Hog Island: A Control Freak Workaholic's Rendition

by Leia Lowery

Leia was awarded YCA's June Ficker Scholarship this year to attend the Educator's Week program on Hog Island. She is the Director of Education for the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust.

I struggled to write this reflection. In fact I am supposed to hand this in tomorrow morning, and here I am riding through upstate NY on college visits typing it out. Not that I haven't written plenty of versions of this, but it is an experience that is so hard to capture in 300 words or less. Somehow all of my words, explanations and descriptions seem to fall short of the real experience.



A smile on the face of the "workaholic"

Unlike my predecessors who seemed to embark on this adventure with unabashed enthusiasm, I was stressed and worried. I am a bit of a workaholic and I felt that summer was not an easy time to get away. So the prospect of leaving for a week with little to no cell service to answer emails and phone calls seemed daunting and stressful. I can tell you now, it was a blessing.

There are many who come off this island saying it is magical. Believe. Every. Word. Educators Week



Another Hog Island visitor. Leia Lowery photo

hosts educators from all different backgrounds, specialties and states near and far. The sessions covered everything from art, to science, to getting muddy and daring to eat strange things. I found myself continually inspired, whether by the new teachers who were trying so hard to bring environmental education to their schools, or the veteran educators who had devoted their lives to inspiring people to look and interact with the natural world in a new way.

One of the most impactful things for me came from the talk by Steve Kress. His observation that while he was focused solely on the puffin, others were bringing back the bald eagle and the osprey... no one thought about the fish population, or the changes in the Gulf. Now he says they cannot leave the puffins because the eagles and the osprey will attack them. When there was a higher fish population this wasn't as much of an issue. It is a keen reminder that our earth is all systems, everything is interdependent and intricately related. To alter one thing is not as simple as it may appear at the outset, and looking at the whole system is important.

I am so thankful for the week and was reinvigorated. I had to unplug, and **stop working** to actually remember the passion that brought me to my job in the first place. Walking through a moss cathedral forest, or listening for birds I hadn't heard before, spotlighting lobster, wading in the

bioluminescence or staying up WAY too late laying on our backs staring at the stars, talking with like-minded people refilled my cup. Letting myself be the student, filled with wonder at this amazing place I call home, making new friends, and reigniting the passion of why I do what I do, was an amazing gift. I am very grateful for the scholarship that made it all possible. Definitely not under 300 words, and definitely not even close to describing the life changing experience I had, but thank you!



Searching the Tidal Zones for life. Teachers at Hog Island use a seine net to get a picture of what's living just beyond the high-tide zone.

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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

YCA is pleased to welcome Marion Sprague to its Board of Directors



Marion Sprague grew up with the boreal forests of Downeast Maine as her backyard, and has loved birds as long as she can remember. Her passion for nature was influenced heavily by her grandparents who taught her to appreciate the birds, trees and wildflowers of Maine.

Initially a casual birdwatcher, this changed when Marion bought a home in 2014. As she began to carefully study the diversity of birds visiting her feeders, a true birder was born! Marion is currently undertaking in-depth natural history training through the renowned Maine Master Naturalist Program.

Marion has also taken over Lena Moser's spot as co-coordinator (with Seth Davis) of the Maine Young Birders Club. The mentors in Marion's life have helped deepen her appreciation, knowledge and love of birds and nature, and she is excited to help ignite this same spark in Maine's young birders. YCA and MYBC are both delighted to have Marion on board!

Screech-Owls in Maine? *You can help!*

By Doug Hitchcox

With more birders on the landscape and systems like eBird in place for tracking sightings, we have a better understanding of bird distribution now than ever. Not all species are equally represented as a result of certain families having low rates of detectability. For example, a Northern Cardinal is going to be much more detectable as it visits your bird feeder since it is a seedeater. Another red bird, the Scarlet Tanager, is encountered less frequently as they forage high in trees, primarily on insects and some fruit. Owls tend to be one of the most under reported families, thanks to their nocturnal habits and cryptic plumage.

Of these seldom-seen owls, the Eastern Screech-Owl is casually encountered in southern Maine, with random reports of “winnies” or “trills” heard along the coast further north. These diminutive owls come in to several color morphs, rufous, brown, and gray, with gray being the most common in the northern population. At 8.5 inches tall, they are barely larger than our more abundant other pint-sized owl, the Northern Saw-whet Owl and easily told apart by their plumage and the screech-owls’ ear tufts.

We are at the northern edge of their range and, though seldom encountered here, they are quite abundant just across our border in New Hampshire. We still have a lot to learn about their range in Maine and we need your help to find them! One thing Screech-Owls need is cavities for nesting and roosting, which is usually provided by now scarce old dead trees. This is where you can help: We’ve got 40 screech-owl nest boxes made that we want volunteers to monitor.

The goal is to get these boxes spread across York County in backyards with favorable habitat for Eastern Screech-Owls and for the landowners to periodically check on them to see if anyone has moved in. We are especially looking for yards in suburban areas near streams or ponds with limited (close to 10%) forest cover that is oak dominated. We’d love to get these in a variety of habitat though, so don’t worry if your yard doesn’t fit this



description. Your involvement can be as easy as setting one out across your yard from your kitchen window and seeing if an owl is sitting up sunning itself on a cold winter day.

We are especially hoping to find areas that Eastern Screech-Owls are nesting for the Maine Bird Atlas. This project aims to identify what species are breeding in Maine and map out the ranges in 3x3 mile blocks between 2018 and 2022. York County alone has 135 blocks! Screech-owls were confirmed breeding in Maine as recently as August 2015 when a nestling was discovered after a tree had limbs removed.

This is a great opportunity for anyone in York County to provide nesting habitat for one of Maine’s least understood breeding species and contribute much-needed data to one of the state’s largest citizen-science projects! If you are interested, please contact Doug Hitchcox, Maine Audubon’s Staff Naturalist, at dhitchcox@maineaudubon.org and please put “Screech-Owl Nest Box Project” in the subject line. You can also learn more about the Maine Bird Atlas at maine.gov/birdatlas.

Doug Hitchcox is Maine Audubon’s Staff Naturalist. In his spare time, he also runs the Maine-birds listserv, serves on the Maine Bird Records Committee and is one of Maine’s eBird reviewers.

Consider Participating in FeederWatch this Winter

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.



Anyone interested in birds can participate. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. You can count birds as often as every week, or as infrequently as you like: the schedule is completely flexible. All you need is a bird feeder, bird bath, or plantings that attract birds.

New participants are sent a Research Kit with complete instructions for participating, as well as a bird identification poster and more. You provide the feeder(s) and seed. Then each fall, participants receive a 16-page, year-end report, [Winter Bird Highlights](#). Participants also receive access to the digital version of *Living Bird*, the Cornell Lab's award-winning, quarterly magazine. There is a \$18 annual participation fee for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members).

All kinds of interesting information is available at the website: feederwatch.org. You can review the results of past years, either nationally or by region or state. You can see where the feeder watchers are located. There were only about 135 participants spread across the state of Maine last year, so your observations can definitely be a valuable contribution.

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 17th, while the Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC will be on Saturday, December 29th. 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.



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 the Harlequin magically transformed from Black & White into Color!

Guillemot’s Bazaar is the corner of the Harlequin contributed by the Maine Young Birders Club. Their early July trip explored Kennebunk’s Blueberry Plains. MYBC member Weston Barker captured this shot of a Grasshopper Sparrow. FMI: www.maineyoungbirders.org.



Grasshopper Sparrow – photo by Weston Barker

YCA welcomes its New and Returning Members!

May - July

Jeff Pride
David K. Robinson
Robert Randall
Rejeanne and Mark Simoneau
Judy and Rob Yandow
Carolyn J. Findeisen
Dan M. Gardoqui
Samuel M. Johnson
Gary Mitchell
Ronald J. Patten
Nancy Schwarzel
Hannah F. Page
Cassandra Sprague
Audrey A. Morgan
Louise P. Seidel
Jennifer E. Shack

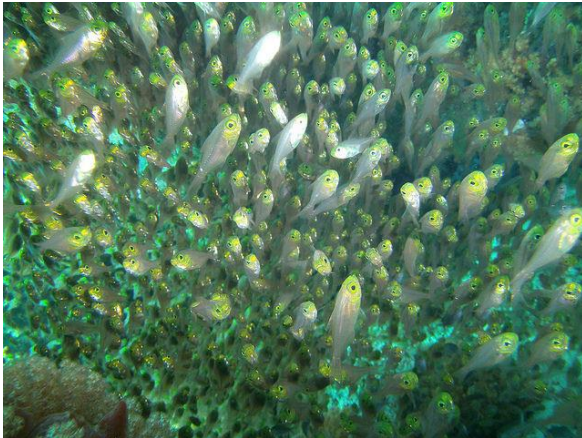
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Springvale
Biddeford
York
Denmark
Cape Neddick
Wells
Kittery
Newfield
South Portland
Kennebunk
Hollis Center
Waterboro
Ocean Park
Kennebunk

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

Tuesday, October 16 at 7:00 pm

Diving and Birding in Raja Ampat with Monica and Bill Grabin

On their fifth trip to Indonesia, YCA Board members Monica and Bill Grabin visited a remote region off the coast of the island of New Guinea called Raja Ampat. Besides being one of the top dive destinations in the world, this area is home to many wonderful birds, including the Wilson's Bird of Paradise. Monica and Bill will share some of their adventures in this amazing place.



Tuesday, November 13th at 7:00 pm

The Outlook in Augusta: a Legislative Update with Eliza Donoghue

What will be happening in the Maine Legislature after the November election? How will environmental concerns fare in Augusta next year with a new governor and new legislature? What's the outlook for advancing solar and other alternative energy sources in Maine, and for protecting Maine's forests, waterways and wildlife?

Eliza Donoghue is Maine Audubon's Senior Policy and Advocacy Specialist, and spends much of her time advocating for these concerns in Augusta. She joined Maine Audubon in July, 2017, bringing with her extensive experience and familiarity with the Maine State House, the Land Use Planning Commission, the Land for Maine's Future program, and the extended network of legislators and stakeholders involved with environmental policy in Maine.

A graduate of Vermont Law School, Eliza has also worked with the Conservation Law Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and the Office of the Maine Attorney General. She is a native Mainer and lives in Brunswick with her family.



Remember, the best way to protect birds is to keep cats indoors!

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Maine Audubon

MEMBERSHIP FORM

York County Chapter

YES! I would like to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in my community and
☐ **join** ☐ **renew my membership** with Maine Audubon and the York County Chapter.

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Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

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City/State/Zip: _____

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Membership Level

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- ☐ \$65 Contributing
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