

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Winter 2019

A New Outlook in Our State

By Bill Grabin

This month's inauguration of Governor Janet Mills and the swearing in of the 129th Maine Legislature brought new optimism to voters in Maine (including myself!) who are supportive of strengthening environmental protection, renewable energy production and similar concerns.

Throughout her 2018 campaign, Gov. Mills made clear her views on the importance of renewing environmental protections while building the state's economy. She noted that we need "to reject the false idea that ecological protection and economic growth are incompatible. With the right investments and leadership, we have the natural assets to make us a worldwide leader in clean energy, creating thousands of good jobs."

On climate change, she stated that "I believe the science and I believe the scientists and I believe that it was significantly contributed to by human activity, if not caused by human activity. We have opportunities to reverse this phenomenon. It is a real threat to Maine's economy, including everything from the \$1.6 billion lobster industry to our tourism industry to our forest economy and agriculture."

While the new Governor has nominated very qualified candidates for all branches of the state government, a couple of her nominees will play key roles in addressing these concerns. **Judy Camuso was nominated to serve as Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW).** Camuso has worked for IFW for over a decade, and for the last 5 years has overseen



Judy Camuso, nominee for IFW Commissioner

the Department's Wildlife Division. "I have dedicated my career to the preservation and enhancement of our outdoors, the wildlife that inhabits it, and the people who enjoy it," Camuso said. Her nomination drew praise from a wide variety of sources. "We are very pleased that Gov. Mills has put Judy's name forward. We think she is very competent and a very skilled professional," said David Trahan, executive director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine. Jeremy Payne, executive director of the Maine Renewable Energy Association, called Camuso "a true leader." Years back, Judy Camuso worked for Maine Audubon. She's also a licensed bird bander and an avid birder, as well as a hunter who likes to hike, bike and canoe.

Governor Mills nominated Jerry Reid to be the next Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Reid is currently chief of the Natural Resources Division in the Maine Attorney General's Office. Pete Didisheim, advocacy director for the Natural



Jerry Reid, nominee for DEP Commissioner

Resources Council of Maine, called Reid an “outstanding choice. Through his years of public service in the AG’s office, Jerry has earned the trust and confidence of lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, and leaders from businesses, municipalities and conservation organizations. Without question, he is one of Maine’s top experts on the policies and protections for Maine’s clean air, clean water and natural resources.” Maureen Drouin, executive director of Maine Conservation Voters, also praised the choice of Reid, saying his selection shows “that the Mills administration is serious about tackling climate change, protecting human health, and ensuring our air, land and waters are protected.”

Many of our new and returning legislators share these concerns. As always, we very much encourage Audubon members and all Mainers to stay in touch with their legislators as well as the various state agencies. Let them know what you care about! The comments they get from you really make a difference! Now, more than ever, what happens in our state is up to us.



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

YCA welcomes its New and Returning Members!

August – November

Jennifer L. Bodinizzo	Kennebunk
Annette Brennan	York
Patrick R. and Lori M. Dennis	York
Brad and Rebecca Fuller	Brownfield
Kristen L. Holmberg	Kennebunk
Julie F. and Christopher A. Perrin	Gorham
Barbara A. Rachel	Portland
Beryl Reid and Paul Katler	Old Orchard Beach
Lynda Stofan	Buxton
Joanne Tomao	Ogunquit
Carole W. Troy	South Portland
Diana Whitaker and Elizabeth Hernandez	Saco
Margo Stever	Sleepy Hollow, NY
Phyllis Benson	Moody
Hilary P. Clark	York
Marnie L. Rollerson	Parsonsfield
Marvin Rubin	Sarasota, FL
Aaron Parkening	Buxton
Pat Ring	Hollis Center
Ross Whitaker	Belfast
Harmon Woodman	Old Orchard Beach
Susan Bloomfield	West Kennebunk
Stacie Grove	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, Membership	967-2955
Marian Zimmerman, Birding Trail	710-3015
Marion Sprague, Maine Young Birders Club Coordinator	749-2520
Mary Bateman, Publicity	646-8589
Seth Davis, Maine Young Birders Club Coordinator	509-339-3154

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

The 119th Annual Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and has been held each year since 1900. Its original intent was to counter an annual hunt in which people competed to see how many birds and other animals they could kill on Christmas day. Times have changed. Now there are more than 2,500 official CBC's, held from December 14th through January 5th, and over 70,000 people, from Alaska to South America, participate each year.

York County Audubon members have been leaders and participants in this effort for many years. There are two local counts. One covers Southern York County from Kittery to Ogunquit and is organized by Monica Grabin, and Kathy Donahue leads a count covering Kennebunkport up to Saco. Each count is held within a circle with a 15-mile radius, for 24 hours. The circle is divided up into sections, each with its own leader, and each section tries to get an accurate count of the birds present on count day. You never know what the weather will be, but barring an ice storm, the counts go on! It's always fun and challenging.

The 46th Southern York County (MEYC) CBC was held on Monday, December 19th, with 29 birders in 6 teams. The weather was mostly cloudy with either light rain or snow and temps from 33-38 degrees. There was one short stretch of sunshine. We tallied 81 species, and 9,838 individual birds. This is low for this count, which usually averages at least 85 species. We had a high count for Gray Catbird with 4. While a common bird here in summer, it had been seen in only 3 of the 45 years of this count, and never more than one bird. Our compilation dinner of chili and cornbread was held at Mather Auditorium at the Wells Reserve, where everyone records their numbers and shares highlights of the day. It was wonderful, as always.

The 59th Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC took place on Saturday, December 29th. We had 49 birders in 9 teams. It was mostly cloudy with fog early, with temperatures from the mid-30s to mid-40s. The wind started gusting up to 30mph from late



Gray Catbird – Illustration © David Allen Sibley
Rather plain but with lots of personality, the Gray Catbird often hides in the shrubbery, making an odd variety of musical and harsh sounds -- including the catlike mewling responsible for its name. At least in the eastern U.S., populations seem to have been increasing in recent years. (source: www.audubon.org/field-guide)

morning on, which severely impacted the bird totals. There were 80 total species, and 9096 total birds. We had the lowest total birds in ten years and no new high counts for any species. On the bright side, we had a rare Eurasian Wigeon, a new bird in the MEBK count! The highlight for many of us was that, for the first time, the Maine Young Birders Club had their own team. Some young birders started owling at 3:00am and still came to the compilation at 5:00pm.

Monica and Kathy are so grateful to everyone who participates, and helps with the compilation dinners.



Bufflehead – *one of our favorite winter ducks, and one of the smallest. Forages mostly underwater. All the birds in a small flock may dive at same time.*

Birding by App *By Seth Davis*

Imagine, you're out in the field and you spot a bird you've never seen. You pull out your field guide and begin flipping through, but here's the problem: you're fairly new to birding, and so determining a sparrow from a finch from a bunting is not as easy as it sounds. You think you've found something that looks similar, but you're too late, the bird is gone before you had time to view key field marks. Another missed opportunity. If only there was a faster way to make an ID.

Well you are in luck! Thanks to the digital age, there are numerous apps available from full digital field guides, to bird song ID apps. My goal is to break down these options to help you determine which apps may be a useful tool and the best features of each. That said, I would still encourage folks to keep an analog field guide (book) hand; they have one advantage over digital versions in that they don't run out of batteries. Note: this is a part of an on-going series (simply because there are too many apps for one article) so I will cover 1-2 apps and give my recommendation out of a maximum of 5 🦋s.

Full Field Guide Apps – These are often reproductions of the books you can buy. There are various features of each. I will cover other field guide app options in future segments.

Audubon Bird Guide - This app had a lot of promise considering it carries the “Audubon” name. Like the prolific Audubon field guide books, they are a good introductory option but have their fair share of problems. Mostly that Audubon relies on photos over illustrations for their reference images (which I find funny since John James Audubon was an excellent illustrator). Many folks like photos, but their biggest problem is that you are limited by the lighting in the photo, while an illustrator can pick key field marks making a positive ID much more likely. The Audubon app has an OK search interface, but like paper guides, really relies on you knowing what you're looking at to make an ID. The app allows you to keep a personal list(s) and has two redeeming factors. First, it's free. I see the

appeal for a free app, but the downside is there often isn't a lot of development of an app as a result. Second, and most important, it has eBird integration (though limited). You can see recent sightings near you via eBird, but you have to create an Audubon account in order to post them. Even then, it's through Audubon's server not eBird. Lastly, I find the app a bit sluggish and the user interface somewhat cumbersome. - 🦋🦋



iBird – I won't beat around the bush, this is the app I use almost daily. iBird was the first field guide app available on Apple smartphones and led the way for bird ID apps, and is also now available for Android and other platforms. Admittedly it was pretty limited when first introduced, but the developers (Mitch Waite Group) have come a long way. There are several options available from regional (East/West) versions, to iBird Pro, to the best, iBird Ultimate. Price varies depending on which version you choose, but for the functionality (and the fact that most folks would pay \$20 or more for a paper field guide) I'd recommend paying the \$19.99 for the Ultimate version. The app relies on illustrations with optional field marks as well as photographs. I will say, the original illustrations left something to be desired, but they have been slowly updating them over time and they've gotten a lot better. It also has Flickr integration, so if you want even more photos you can see them. The app has songs/calls for most birds along with range maps (which are updated regularly). If you are a hardcore birder you can add additional options like “Mexican Owls” or a “Time of Day” search feature. The best feature, in my opinion, is the “Birds around me” search option. Here the app pinpoints your location and you add time of year, and it limits the search to birds likely to be in your area at that time. You can then put in certain parameters (feather color, leg color, size, shape etc.) and have a narrowed down selection of what the bird you are

looking at may be. This has been extremely useful in picking out birds one is unsure of or where it lies in the taxonomic order. The app has other options to keep your own personal lists (and can put the exact time and coordinate location of the sighting) as well as connect you to the online “Whatbird” forum, where experts from around the globe can quickly help you ID any bird you have questions with. A few downsides that I hope to see remedied in future updates include a lack of eBird integration. It is mildly annoying having to switch between iBird and eBird for logging sightings. The second is that it is a BIG app and requires a lot of processing power. It runs well on my iPhone 8, but anything older you’re going to be a skeleton before the app actually opens. - 🐦🐦🐦🐦

The House Finch comes to Maine!

This very interesting article on the House Finch appeared in the December 1980 issue of the Harlequin!

The House Finch is a relative newcomer to our state. It appeared on the Kennebunk-Biddeford Christmas Count for the first time in 1973. Many people still confuse it with the Purple Finch.

Like the Starling, House Sparrow and Pigeon, the House Finch’s presence in our area was inadvertently caused by man. The House Finch is a native of the Southwestern U.S, where it is common in many habitats but seems to avoid extensive woodlands. In 1940, strict enforcement of the law preventing the sale of House Finches as cage birds prompted a wholesale release of captive birds by dealers in the New York City area to avoid prosecution. It was eventually determined that about 100,000 House Finches had been captured in California and shipped east. Males made up more than 90 percent of that total. The first field report by a New York birder was in the spring of 1941.

The survivors of the released birds established a small colony on western Long Island, and nesting was first recorded in 1943. For the next ten years,

the colony grew slowly, but was confined to Long Island. In the early 1950s, they began to spread along the New York and Connecticut coast. The first record in Massachusetts was in 1955. By 1970 they were established along the coast south of Boston. They were slow to move elsewhere in any numbers until 1978 when they suddenly became widespread and numerous.

Plenty of birds escape pet stores and colonize new areas, but few have thrived and expanded the way House Finches have. Within 20 years of their New York release they were in Boston and Philadelphia. Twenty years later, they were breeding from Maine to Georgia.



Male and female House Finch

The House Finch is an easy bird for the public to become acquainted with. It prefers urban and residential areas, and nests in evergreens and such unlikely places as flower pots. During the March-July nesting season, the male perches conspicuously on telephone wires and other spots from which he continuously sings his high-pitched warbling song.

The House Finch can be confused only with the Purple Finch (which is present year round) or the Common Redpoll (an infrequent winter visitor). A good summary of their differences can be found here: www.audubon.org/news/house-finch-or-purple-finch-heres-how-tell-them-apart

Maine Young Birders Club Announces Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens Scholarships

The Maine Young Birders Club is seeking 2 young birders to participate in a one week birding program for teens on Hog Island in June. Scholarships for these programs are sponsored by MYBC, in conjunction with York County Audubon and Friends of Hog Island. For applications (which are due by March 15th), please go to www.yorkcountyaudubon.org/in-the-community/scholarships.



Scott Weidensaul photo

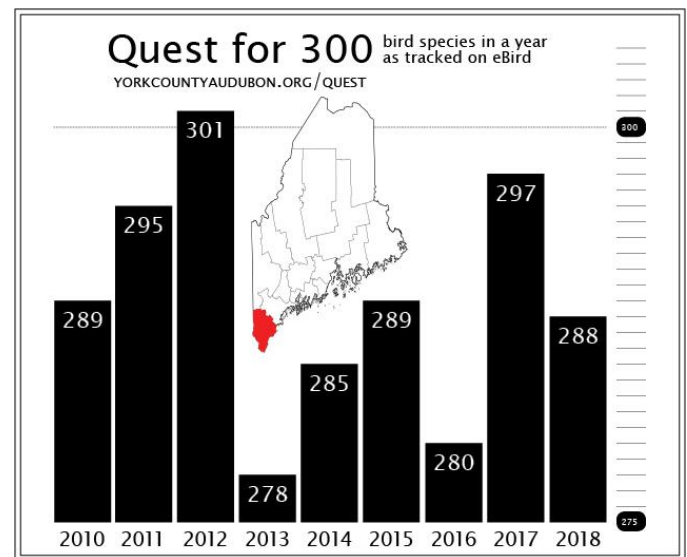
This intensive 6-day, 5-night program will run from June 16th-21st, and allow young birders to work with some of the country's best-known birders on field identification, bird ecology and conservation. This program includes the unique opportunity to see

Audubon's seabird restoration work in action, and visit Eastern Egg Rock during the puffin breeding season (weather and sea conditions permitting). Program details and descriptions are available at <http://hogisland.audubon.org/bird-studies-teens>. The scholarships will pay 80% of the recipient's cost for program tuition, room and board. Additional funds may be available if an applicant demonstrates financial need. Applicants must be 14-17 years old to attend.

The Maine Young Birders Club's mission is 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 and to promote engagement with our natural world by empowering young Maine residents to study and enjoy birds and birding. FMI: www.maineyoungbirders.org

The Quest for 300

How many bird species can be seen in York County in a single year? We do our best to answer that question each year with our "Quest for 300." Our 2018 tally was 288 species.



We're now using eBird's "up to the minute" tracking. You can access that tally via our website at yorkcountyaudubon.org/quest, or directly: <https://ebird.org/me/subnational2/US-ME-031?yr=cur>

YCA announces June Ficker Hog Island Scholarship for July, 2019 Program



YCA is seeking an educator or community leader to participate in a one-week program on famed Hog Island off mid-coast Maine in July 2019. YCA will sponsor one participant who can benefit from the Hog Island experience and use it to teach others. **Complete info is available on our website and applications are due by March 15th.**

The program is entitled “Sharing Nature: An Educator’s Week” and will run from July 14th to July 19th. The scholarship will pay 70% of the recipient's cost for program tuition, room and board.

YCAS’s 2018 Hog Island scholarship winner was Leia Lowery, Director of Education for the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust. She described her program experience in an article for the Autumn 2018 issue of The Harlequin, which can be accessed through the YCAS website. And reports from prior years’ winners can be found in previous Autumn issues of The Harlequin on our website.

Since 1936, some of the world’s most highly respected naturalists have come to Hog Island and inspired thousands to learn about and protect birds and the environment. Roger Tory Peterson was among the first teachers. Rachel Carson described her visit to Hog Island in her landmark book, *Silent Spring*. Kenn Kaufman, only nine years old when he read Peterson’s account of Hog Island, is now an international authority on birds and nature.

Winter Wildlife Day Returns to the Wells Reserve at Laudholm Thursday, Feb 21st



For the 9th year, the Wells Reserve, the Center for Wildlife, and York County Audubon team up to celebrate the wildlife of southern Maine. Join us for lots of family fun with live animal presentations, guided walks, and crafts. If the ground is white, bring skis, sleds, and snowshoes (we have some snowshoes to share — mostly kid’s size — if you don't have your own). 10-11am: CFW presentation; 11-12:30: storybook reading, wildlife crafts, sledding, snowshoeing and family fun - plus cocoa!

YCA’s Next Evening Program at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm will be Tuesday, March 19th at 7 p.m. For the latest program news, visit us on Facebook or our Website: YorkCountyAudubon.org

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 to see the photos in this newsletter magically transformed from Black & White into Color!

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Our community of members is integral to our success on behalf of Maine's diverse wildlife and habitat. When you join or renew your Maine Audubon membership, you ensure that work can continue.

Thank you!

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