

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Winter 2020

Science ... and Citizen Science

By *Monica Grabin*

In our last issue of the Harlequin, the lead article, “Great Progress in Maine,” described some of the many positive changes taking place in Maine related to environmental stewardship. We really do have a lot to be thankful for. Unfortunately, the country as a whole is not so well served. In particular, I have seen article after article lately bemoaning the decline of science and research funding, as well as the dismantling of commissions, rules, and the EPA. This is not something to be taken lightly, as we enter a decade facing the ever more urgent need to confront climate change. I once wrote a piece asking if you were exhausted yet? I am exhausted, I must admit, and yet the threats keep getting worse.

So, how to react? Where to turn? Science is the answer, and anything that we can do to protect and promote research and fact-based policies is vitally important. That means educating ourselves, writing to our elected officials or local newspapers, speaking to our friends and neighbors about the importance of science to our country and our world, and, of course, supporting and voting for representatives who share these views.

You can contribute directly, too. It’s called Citizen Science. One example is the annual Christmas Bird Count described in this issue. The data we collect is sent to National Audubon, where it is used by researchers to study the state of birds in the US and the world. National Audubon is one of two organizations who offer a wealth of resources and opportunities for bird related projects, the other being the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which

sponsors Project Feeder Watch (feederwatch.org), and eBird, a phenomenal resource (eBird.org). The Great Backyard Bird Count, launched in 1998 by National Audubon and Cornell, was the first citizen science project to collect data on wild birds and display results in near real time. This year’s GBBC is coming right up, running from February 14th-17th (birdcount.org).

Maine Audubon manages a variety of programs that are dependent on volunteers, including its annual Loon Count, and tracking programs for native Brook Trout and wildlife crossings. Maine Audubon and the Maine Department of IF&W are in the third year of a five-year project, the Maine Breeding Bird Atlas, an effort to identify the breeding birds in every part of the state.



The number of adult Loons in Maine has more than doubled since Maine Audubon began its Loon Count in the mid-1980’s; the number of chicks has also increased.

Speaking of science, we should also recognize and be grateful for the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (aka the Wells Reserve at Laudholm). It’s a long name, and many times we forget the “Research” in the title. While many of us go birding or walking there, and YCA holds its

meetings there, an incredible amount of science is going on behind the scenes. Funding for the National Estuarine Reserve program has been threatened, but Congress has realized its importance and refused to make the cuts. If only all such programs were so well-respected and protected.

Another incredible resource is the SciStarter website (scistarter.org). It lists over 3,000 projects and events that are searchable by location, scientific topic, and age level. By joining SciStarter, members can track their contributions and provide valuable feedback.



We can't single-handedly replace scientists whose jobs are cut or whose mandates are watered down or obstructed. But we can do things to make ourselves and others aware of the importance of science to all of us. It really is the most important thing in the world.

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

YCA welcomes its New and Returning Members!

August – November

- Linda and Erik Anderson, Eliot
- Ursula Morin, Moody
- Peter and Mary Nasse, Saco
- Adair K. O'Reilly, Arundel
- Jennifer Comeau, Kennebunkport
- Amy and Jon Safford, Saco
- Dorcas Smyth-Morgan, Saco
- James E. Thompson, Kennebunk
- James R. Brown, Boxford, MA
- Claudette Midgley, Kennebunk
- Caryn Beiter, Wells
- Roberta and Louis Farina, York
- Jennifer Szulinski, Moody
- Virginia Almeder, Kennebunkport
- Leo Charette, Southington, CT
- Kathryn S. B. Davis, Kennebunk
- Lawrence K. Furbish, Sanford
- Tamara Gallagher, Westbrook
- John L. Middleton, Kennebunkport
- Richard Swails, Kennebunk
- Lynn H. Zimmerman, West Newfield
- Allison Bean and Ted Poirier, Biddeford
- Barbara and Paul Berry, Kennebunk
- Allison Donohue, South Berwick
- Jamie Farfone, Wells
- Pat Finnigan and Barry Jackson, Saco
- Rich and Gloria Pasquini, Alfred
- Nancy and Richard Welch, Wells
- David L. Anderson, Biddeford
- Jonathan Bangs, Kennebunk
- Harold Brewer, Key Largo, FL
- Bruce Chandler, Kennebunk
- Susan Gray, Kennebunkport
- Judith King, Kennebunkport
- George Perkinson, Kennebunk
- Harold Rosenberg, Biddeford Pool
- Nancy Schwarzel, South Portland
- John S. White, Kennebunk



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

The 120th 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, while Kathy Donahue leads the 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 47th Southern York County (MEYC) CBC was held on Monday, December 16th, with 36 birders in 6 teams covering an area from Moody Beach to Fort Foster. Although it was cold and winds were in the 10-15 mph range, we felt we lucked out on the weather, with no snow and no gales. We tallied 89 species, and 9,178 individual birds. Sadly, we found no Red-breasted Nuthatch, the first time in the count's 47 years. We did have some new high counts: 16 Common Ravens, 2 White-crowned Sparrows, and 2 Baltimore Orioles. Our compilation dinner 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. For one additional highlight, see the last paragraph below.

The 60th Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC took place on Saturday, December 28th. We had 45 birders in 9 teams, plus 13 feeder watchers. We found 84 species and 11,216 total birds (plus four

more "count week" species). There were new record High Counts for Canada Goose (1186), Northern Pintail (10), Harlequin Duck (13), Ring-billed Gull (404), Eastern Bluebird (150), and Gray Catbird (2). There was a Low Count for American Tree Sparrow (11). Lack of snow cover provides more habitat for birds to forage, leaving them more spread out in the woods and making them harder (for birders) to find.

Food abundance to our north delayed the arrival of some winter migrants this year. Snowy Owls, Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, Snow Buntings, Purple Finches, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Pine Siskins were low or absent from both counts.

The compilation dinner this year was highlighted by an introduction by Dave Doubleday whose father-in-law started the MEBK count in 1959. Dave has participated in almost every count since then!



Here's the Eastern Phoebe found in York. (Laurie Pocher photo)

We had one surprise this year that was, even more surprisingly, shared by both of these CBC's. An Eastern Phoebe was found on each of the counts, one at the pond next to the York Library, and one near the north end of Kings Highway in Goose Rocks Beach. While it's a familiar bird in these parts in summer, one had never before been encountered on either of these counts!

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

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

The Maine Young Birders Club is seeking a young birder to participate in a one-week birding program for teens on Hog Island in June, 2020. The Scholarship for this program is 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.**

This intensive 6-day, 5-night program will run from June 21st -26th, 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. Program details and descriptions are available at <http://hogisland.audubon.org/bird-studies-teens>. The scholarship covers 100% of the recipient's cost for program tuition, room and board. 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

A Teen's Week on Hog Island

Hi, my name is Elise Creagan and I am from York, Maine. I am a freshman at YHS and participate in many sports and extracurriculars such as XC skiing, ballet, lacrosse, and currently XC running. I love to be outside in nature whether it is running by the ocean or hiking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. I was the 2019 Hog Island Scholarship recipient to the teen birding camp held in June. I



Elise Creagan on Hog Island

attended the one week camp to learn about and study birds.

Before participating in this camp, I was able to identify common, recognizable birds such as a red tailed hawk, loon, cormorant, or eagle, but had little knowledge about birds. So I attended some of the Maine Young Birder's club field trips to see what it would be like to learn about birds. During one birding excursion we spent a few hours nighttime bird-watching for the woodcock and learned how to draw them. This experience was helpful as it prepared me for the camp so that I would understand and appreciate all aspects of it.

When I arrived on Hog Island however, I could already tell it was going to be completely new and "out-of-my-comfort", as I had never done anything like this before. Dr. Steven Kress presented on the first night of camp, and I was amazed by how much knowledge and experiences one person could share about the puffin. I made sure to take in as much as I could, as it was interesting to spend so much time learning about this species.

Throughout the week I spent on Hog Island, one of my favorite experiences was when our group went on an individual hike on the Island's many various trails. Each student was spaced out on the trail 1 minute apart. Our objective was to record on paper what we saw, heard, smelled, etc. For me, this experience was truly so surreal and perfect because I was able to observe and peacefully surround myself with nature and the wildlife on Hog Island.

This hike was important to me because I was able to take the time to appreciate the surrounding ecosystem, and how just stopping and taking a moment to listen and look around can be important sometimes.



Red-tailed Hawk in flight

On one of the other days we visited the mainland to go for a walk. The Audubon counselors set up a birding scope to show us an amazing hummingbird nest wedged in a little branch nook. Some other experiences that were important to me from this camp were when our group did a morning of bird-banding. That was truly spectacular because we got to see the birds up-close and work with professional bird-banders. This was interesting because we learned how scientists or ornithologists use this information to record and study migration, mating, gender, size, and other patterns that are able to be seen from this process.

This experience has overall given me more knowledge of the different birds that help to make up Maine's ecosystem, it has helped me have more patience as we spent many hours waiting and observing birds while getting attacked by mosquitos, and lastly, it has shown me the passion my counselors, friends, and I need to pursue and be dedicated to observe and study birds.

YCA announces June Ficker Hog Island Educator's Scholarship for July, 2020



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 2020. 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 12th to July 17th. The scholarship will pay 70% of the recipient's cost for program tuition, room and board.

YCAS's 2019 Hog Island scholarship winner was Caryn Beiter, the School and Docents Programs Coordinator at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm. She described her program experience in an article for the Autumn 2019 issue of [The Harlequin](#), which can be accessed through the YCAS website. 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 20th



For the 10th 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 tracking, crafts, and family fun - plus cocoa!



A Common Gallinule was spotted at Fortunes Rocks Beach in Biddeford on October 21st

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.” In 2019, we *almost* got there, with a final tally of 297 species.



A Golden Eagle flew over S. Berwick on March 6th

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>



An American Avocet was spotted at Hills Beach in Biddeford on August 21st

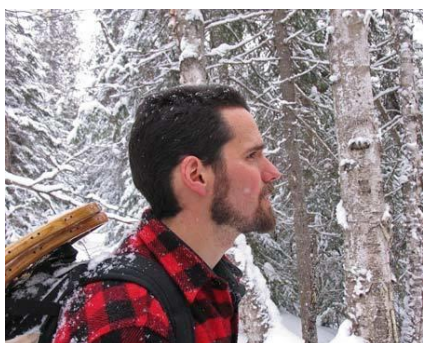
*** Upcoming YCA Programs and Workshops ***

***Winter Seabirds in Maine* – a Workshop with Ed Jenkins – Saturday morning, Jan 25th At The Cliff House in Cape Neddick**

This workshop will start with an overview of seabird ecology, from how they find food at sea to their incredible migration strategies. We'll then focus on the species that can be found in Maine in the winter, from razorbills and murrelets to gulls and sea ducks. Finally, a 'sea-watch' will be conducted from the coastal cliffs, learning to identify passing birds, including, hopefully, some passing rarities. Advance registration is required. The price is \$20/person (\$25/person for non-members), **To register and FMI, please visit our website: yorkcountyaudubon.org**



***Winter Wildlife Tracking* – a Workshop with Dan Gardoqui – Saturday morning, Feb 22nd at The Wells Reserve at Laudholm**



The winter landscape is a fabulous time to connect with the lives of our local wildlife. Mammals, birds (even winter insects) leave behind tracks, trails and signs of their presence. Spend the morning with certified wildlife tracker Dan Gardoqui learning to interpret the abundant clues of our wild neighbors. Advance registration is required. The price is \$20/person (\$25/person for non-members), This workshop is being co-hosted by YCA and the Wells Reserve at Laudholm, but reservations are being taken only through the Wells Reserve website. You can find it on their calendar or go to: www.wellsreserve.org/event/11468/winter-wildlife-tracking

***Botswana Safari: A Wildlife Lover's Dream Come True* – a Program with Suzanne Kahn – Tuesday, March 24th at the Mather Auditorium at The Wells Reserve at Laudholm**

Explore the wonders of elephants, leopards, giraffes, and more on a photographic journey through northern Botswana. In March of 2019, Wells Reserve Education Director Suzanne Kahn traveled to Botswana and visited three different regions: the Okavango Delta, the Savute Channel, and Hunda Island. Come explore this remote and wildlife-rich area of Africa with Suzanne as she shares her photos and stories from this once in a lifetime adventure. The program starts at 7 p.m., but come early for light refreshments and social time. Free and open to the public.



York County Audubon
P.O. Box 201
Kennebunkport, ME 04046-0201

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
KENNEBUNK, ME
04043
PERMIT #69

OR CURRENT RESIDENT



Frequent Flyers are a group of dedicated supporters who make monthly gifts to sustain Maine Audubon and York County Audubon. For more information, visit: maineaudubon.org/support/frequent-flyer/

MAINE 
AUDUBON

MEMBERSHIP FORM

York County Chapter

YES! I want to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in Maine as a **new** **renewing** member.

Annually \$30 Senior/Volunteer/Student | \$40 Individual | \$50 Household | \$100 | \$Other _____

Monthly Enroll me in the Frequent Flyer Program and charge my credit card *each month*:
___ \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$15 ___ \$25 Other \$ _____

View all member benefits online by visiting maineaudubon.org/memberFAQ

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

Seasonal Address: _____ from _____ to _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____ Please charge \$ _____ to my credit card (below)

Card # _____ Exp. date: _____ / _____

Join or renew online:
maineaudubon.org/join

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!

Please make checks payable to Maine Audubon | 20 Gilsland Farm Rd, Falmouth, ME 04105 | 207-781-2330 ext. 230