



THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Autumn 2020

John James Audubon – Revisited

by The Board of York County Audubon

Recently an incident occurred in New York City's Central Park which raised important concerns in the birding community. Christian Cooper, a Black birder and member of New York City Audubon's Board, was confronted by a woman when he asked her to adhere to local regulations and leash her dog. For his own safety, he filmed the encounter, in which she called police and claimed that he was attacking her. The incident became a flashpoint for Black nature enthusiasts to let the rest of us know that this is not an isolated incident, and that People of Color often face hostility and racism doing what the rest of us do without a second thought. The National Audubon Society took this seriously, and began looking for ways to address ways in which it enables racial inequity. Among other things, they established Black Birders Week in June, and more recently, took a look at our namesake, John James Audubon.

What do you know about John James Audubon? Most likely, you know that he was an artist who painted the birds of North America in the early nineteenth century. Perhaps you know that he made a point to paint them life-sized, and then published them in a huge folio. Maybe you even have a print or two of his on your wall. You probably know that his paintings and writings about birds here in America led conservationists to choose his name for their organization when it was founded in the late 1800s. It was a time when many bird species were severely threatened due to habitat loss and collection of their feathers for ladies' hats.

For millions of people, the name Audubon is almost synonymous with birds. But like so many things, there's more to the story. John James Audubon was born Jean-Jacques in 1795, on the island which is now Haiti, to a white slaveholding planter and



"Audubon the Naturalist" Portrait of John James Audubon by his sons, John Woodhouse Audubon and Victor Gifford Audubon, 1848

ship captain and his mistress, a woman whose race is uncertain. He was raised in France for most of his early life, and emigrated to the United States in 1803, mainly to avoid conscription for the Napoleonic wars. He changed his name to John James and was involved in a number of business ventures. And for all his life, he studied and painted birds.

Audubon married young, and eventually settled in Kentucky, purchasing a farm and nine enslaved people. He was well-acquainted with the realities of slavery, often staying on large plantations during his travels to collect birds. Driven by his financial

needs, he more than once sold people he had enslaved, and when times got better, bought more. He never expressed any concerns about slavery's inherent evils and fully supported the institution, although there were many in those days who were speaking out against it. If a conservation organization were being formed today, it's unlikely they would choose John James Audubon as their hero.

All that happened a long time ago. Why should we care about it now? We need to care because as a Board of all-white men and women, in a county and state with little racial diversity, it may be very difficult for us to understand how we and our organization might be seen by those who are Black, Indigenous or People of Color. We should care because we need to acknowledge that slavery and racism are deeply entwined in our history, our institutions and our sense of self. We need to care about and honor the fact that we go birding on what were once Wabanaki lands. We should care because we might not comprehend how difficult it can be for others to have the same experience of nature that we take for granted. We need to care because it's the right thing to do.

Because of Audubon's racist worldview, there are some suggesting that all Audubon Societies should consider changing their name. While there is debate as to whether this is likely or necessary, it is important that we have these discussions and accept the realities of our history, and our heroes. Moreover, while history can't be changed, the future can. Our goal has always been to make York County Audubon a safe and welcoming place for anyone who wishes to join us. We move forward with a strong commitment to make that very clear to all people, in the words of the Maine Civil Rights Act: regardless of race, color, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation. We also encourage anyone who would like to offer guidance on overcoming inequity to please get in touch.

For further information, please feel free to read an article by National Audubon's President, David Yarnold: <https://www.audubon.org/news/revealing-past-create-future>, and one by Maine Audubon Executive Director, Andy Beahm: <https://maineaudubon.org/news/reflections-on-john-james-audubon/>

Fall Migration is Under Way!

Keep an eye for the expected and unexpected.



Common Nighthawk in flight. Seth Davis photo

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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 Laurie Pocher to its Board of Directors



A knowledgeable birder and talented photographer, YCA is pleased to welcome Laurie Pocher to our Board of Directors.

As Laurie relates, “My parents bought me my first real camera as a college graduation present. A few years later, a friend introduced me to birding. Worlds collided, an obsession was born... and I’ve been photographing birds, nature and wildlife ever since.

“Moving to Southern Maine from Boston in 2013 opened up a whole new habitat for me to explore. My ‘day job’ keeps me sitting at a desk, collecting and analyzing information to help my clients make better marketing decisions. It’s challenging and rewarding work, but on any given day I’d much rather be outside with my camera and my dogs.”

You may have watched the great Zoom program she did for us in July: “Improving Your Bird Photography.” If you missed it, the video is available via our website, as are several other recent programs. See page 6 of this newsletter FMI.

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



## Mewing and Loafing at the Rachel Carson Estuary by Sue Morin

Because the tide is low  
those gulls are out there again  
mewing and loafing  
straddling the two big pannes  
on a narrow strip of marsh grass  
just there — five and twenty of them  
dunking and pecking  
in their private pools  
at their something delicious  
and seasonal,  
the limpets and winkles  
the sea provides  
this week each year  
so gulls can gather  
lift themselves up  
and with hanging feet  
scold whomever is where  
each wants to be  
one sated flies off heading west  
another rises cawing, and a swirl  
of imitators goes aloft  
a smaller group  
stays to waddle and rest  
tucking their quiet wings  
along their sides  
on the mounds between the pannes.



*Lesser Black-backed Gull - photo by Marie Jordan*



## Welcome New and Returning Members!

|                                     |                   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Chip and Nancy Mead                 | Hollis Center     |
| Jack Elliott and Alden Hudson       | Ocean Park        |
| Robert Goeken                       | Saco              |
| Priscilla Harlan                    | Kennebunkport     |
| Susan Hess                          | Eliot             |
| Roger and Elizabeth Mervis          | Saco              |
| Jeff Volk                           | Eliot             |
| Amy and Todd Welch                  | Arundel           |
| Peter Bailey                        | Newfield          |
| Harold J. Carroll                   | Boston, MA        |
| John Cavaretta                      | Ogunquit          |
| Martha A. Fishback                  | Lyman             |
| Barbara P. Herrgesell               | Sanford           |
| Suzanne M. Olbricht                 | Kittery           |
| Susan Pike                          | North Berwick     |
| Carol R. Sadler                     | Buxton            |
| George Smith                        | Manchester, MA    |
| Peter and Holly Trottier            | Kennebunk         |
| Deborah Bloomer and David Cate      | Arundel           |
| Veronica Davis                      | Buxton            |
| Christine Zukas                     | Brownfield        |
| James Chandler                      | Saco              |
| Devon Pearse-Theroux & Kacy Harnedy | Wells             |
| Sam and Catherine Rush              | Arundel           |
| Hope C. Ryan                        | Kittery           |
| Gary and Cheryl Sheehan             | Wells             |
| Susan Stoner and Juan Salazar       | Biddeford         |
| Marcia Hansen                       | South Berwick     |
| Kevin Hovey                         | Hollis, NH        |
| Paul Miliotis                       | Epping, NH        |
| Cheryl D. Mills                     | Wells             |
| Phil Gatchell & Marilyn Rivenburg   | Ocean Park        |
| Susan Lafond                        | Ogunquit          |
| Denise Benedict                     | Saco              |
| Hilary P. Clark                     | York              |
| Gene Gillin                         | Old Orchard Beach |
| Vladimir J. and Kate Wormwood       | Kennebunk         |
| Nicki Bean                          | Arundel           |
| Maryjane Black                      | Saco              |
| John and Alice DeRoche              | Wells             |
| Beverly Rodiger                     | Kennebunkport     |
| Kathryn Sewall                      | Ogunquit          |
| Miriam Stevens                      | Cape Neddick      |
| Tia and Rich Streeter               | Buxton            |
| Thomas J. Craven                    | Biddeford Pool    |
| Ruth Lantigua                       | Arundel           |
| Sandra Sherry                       | Buxton            |

## Our 22nd 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. Proceeds from our annual sale support 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 30<sup>th</sup>.



Order pick-up will be at the Wells Reserve November 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>, with easy access and volunteers on hand to help load your car. ***Please refer to the enclosed blue order form for more information.***

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|                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Darlene York            | Sebastian, FL     |
| Kimberly Dunham         | Kennebunk         |
| Eugene and Kate Ellison | Lynnfield, MA     |
| Kate Slocum             | Biddeford         |
| Odette Dansereau        | Saco              |
| Anne Noyes              | Old Orchard Beach |
| Joan and Paul Reilly    | South Berwick     |
| Andrew Ring             | Hollis Center     |
| Kate Sahlin             | Old Orchard Beach |
| Lewis Chamberlain       | Eliot             |
| John J. Duffy           | Kittery           |
| Dale Johnson            | Biddeford         |
| Stephanie Sanders       | Kennebunk         |
| Linda Havumaki          | York              |
| William Boucher         | The Villages, FL  |
| Kerry T. Connell        | Yarmouth          |
| Edward A. McAbee        | York              |
| Roger Stevens           | Old Orchard Beach |

## 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](http://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.

This year, we'll be following CDC guidelines to ensure everyone's safety, and may not be able to accommodate as many participants. We'll be posting updated information on our website in early December.

The Southern York County CBC will be held on Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, while the Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC will be on Saturday, January 2nd. If you might like to find out about participating, please contact Monica Grabin at 985-3342 or [grabin@roadrunner.com](mailto:grabin@roadrunner.com) for the Southern York County CBC, or Kathy Donahue at 967-4102 or [kadonall@roadrunner.com](mailto:kadonall@roadrunner.com) for the Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC.

## \*\*\* Previous YCA Zoom Programs \*\*\*

The Zoom programs that we presented earlier this year are now available to stream from our website, [www.yorkcountyaudubon.org](http://www.yorkcountyaudubon.org). They include:

### ***Seabird sentinels in the Gulf of Maine: What they can tell us about the state of our oceans – with Dr. Donald Lyons***

By the middle of the 20th century, the populations of many species of seabirds in the Gulf of Maine had been decimated. In 1973, National Audubon started a program to reintroduce these species, led by seabird visionary Steve Kress. In 2019, Steve retired and Don Lyons became the new director. The work is far from done. We can now study puffins, terns, and other species to better understand the Gulf of Maine, the looming effects of climate change, and how to manage fisheries for ecosystem health and sustainable economies.



### ***23 Reasons To Go Outside: Snapshots from a Daily Practice of Nature Observation – with Josh Fecteau***

Interested in discovering some of the birds, plants and nature that are often hiding in plain sight all around us? Local naturalist Josh Fecteau will share some of the wild treasures he's found near his home in Kennebunkport, and encourage all of us to go outside to make rewarding discoveries of our own.

### ***Improving Your Bird Photography – with Laurie Pocher***

Laurie Pocher, a member of our YCA Board, is an amateur Nature & Wildlife Photographer, who has been mildly obsessed with birds for 25+ years. In our July program, she'll offer some tips and suggestions to help you overcome some of the challenges in photographing birds. We'll discuss camera equipment and settings that can help in different situations, and review composition and editing tips to enhance your bird photos and increase your odds of capturing frame-worthy images. You don't need an advanced camera to get some great shots. Your photo skills can be improved, even for shots taken with your pho



### ***An Artist's View of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge – with Michael Boardman***

Michael Boardman is a wildlife artist and member of the Maine Master Naturalist program. In spring of 2019, he was selected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be the Artist-In-Residence at the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He was flown to the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge in June to spend two weeks at the Canning River Bird Camp, assisting the ornithologists there study all the migrating birds breeding on the tundra. In his presentation, Michael will share his unique experience in an extreme environment, with plenty of artwork and stories about how the avian life of the Arctic Refuge connects us all to that endangered landscape.



## \*\*\* Upcoming YCA Zoom Programs \*\*\*

**There's no charge for our Zoom programs, but advance registration is required. Please go to our website, [yorkcountyaudubon.org](http://yorkcountyaudubon.org) to sign up.**



### ***Conserving Reptiles and Amphibians – a Maine Focus – with Greg LeClair – Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.***

Greg LeClair is a wildlife biologist with a contagious passion for amphibians and reptiles. In our October Zoom program, he will share his enthusiasm, concerns, and insight into diverse topics including amphibian extinction, the exotic pet trade, habitat destruction, the impact of human attitudes on wildlife conservation, and more. He'll offer backyard landscaping recommendations, and offer other ways we can become involved in protecting these threatened species.

***Check our website or Facebook page for future programs.***

### **Some other birds passing though**

A perched Common Nighthawk. Compare this to the one in flight on page 2. Laurie Pocher photo



An American Avocet visited the Wells Reserve at Laudholm in July. Bill Grabin photo

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# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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[maineaudubon.org/join](http://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!

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