

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

A Chapter of Maine Audubon

Spring 2022

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

The Spectacular Steller's Sea-Eagle

by Bill Grabin

Most of you have no doubt heard of our recent visitor to the State of Maine, but we couldn't resist taking another look. An adult Steller's Sea-Eagle's is striking, even from a great distance: rich brown overall, with snow-white tail, belly, and shoulder patches. It has a large head and a massive orange bill to match. Its wingspan can exceed 8 feet and it can weigh up to 20 pounds.

Its home range is coastal northeastern Asia, from the Kamchatka Peninsula at the eastern edge of Russia down to Japan and Korea. The largest population, about 4,000, is found in Kamchatka. As wonderful Maine birders Jeff and Allison Wells wrote recently in the Boothbay Register, "Maine has hosted some

amazing rare birds over the years. The Great Black Hawk, of course, was certainly among the most memorable. But one thing virtually all of these rarities have in common is that they are not globally rare birds." They are mostly species that have relatively large and healthy populations; they are just exceedingly rare in these parts. The Steller's Sea Eagle is the exception: a bird that's rare not just in



A Steller's Sea-Eagle in Hokkaido, Japan. Photo by Leslie Clapp

Maine but anywhere other than its limited home range. The closest previous appearances of a Steller's Sea-Eagle were in Alaska, mostly in the Aleutian Islands. That's correct: a Steller's Sea Eagle had never before been reported in the Lower 48!

The species was named for Georg Wilhelm Steller, a German botanist, zoologist, physician and explorer, who joined the Bering expedition to explore the Kamchatka Peninsula in 1740 and crossed it by dog sled. The individual bird that has graced our shores departed from its home for distant lands, somewhat like Steller himself. It flew to Alaska, was seen briefly in Texas of all places, then in various spots in



The Steller's Sea-Eagle in Georgetown, Maine. Photo by Zach Holderby

New Brunswick, Quebec and Nova Scotia. It popped up along the Taunton River in southeast Massachusetts on December 20th, before appearing in mid-coast Maine on December 30th. As I write this, it has been observed in the area of Georgetown and Boothbay Harbor on most days from then through early March.

If you'd like to hear and see an account of this bird's travels, check out the great Zoom program by Maine Audubon's Nick Lund and Doug Hitchcox at <https://tinyurl.com/STSEagle>. And updates on the latest sightings can be found here: <https://maineaudubon.org/news/rare-bird-alert-stellers-sea-eagle/>.



*The Steller's Sea-Eagle in Georgetown, Maine.
Photo by Zach Holderby*

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Piping Plovers are back! 2021 was yet another record-breaking year for Piping Plovers in Maine. An incredible 125 pairs nested on Maine beaches and fledged 213 chicks—both numbers easily surpassing 2020's record 98 pairs fledging 199 chicks. These great results are thanks to the hard work of countless biologists, landowners, volunteers, town employees, and beachgoers. While the results varied across the various nesting sites from Ogunquit up to Georgetown, the overall trend was excellent. **FMI:** maineaudubon.org/projects/plovers-terns/



Remember:

1. If signs indicate a Piping Plover or Least Tern nesting area, stay away! Don't cross fenced areas!
2. **Do not let pets roam free on any beach where nests are located, at any time, for any reason.** Dogs and cats are known predators of Piping Plover chicks. **If you encounter unleashed dogs, please ask their owners to leash them.**
3. Don't leave holes in the sand that could trap a chick, leaving it open to predation or starvation.
4. Don't leave food on the beach, which attracts animals and birds which will feed on chicks.
5. Don't fly a kite near nesting areas. Shorebirds see it as a predator and will abandon their nest.
6. Notify Maine Audubon if you observe any disturbance of nesting areas.

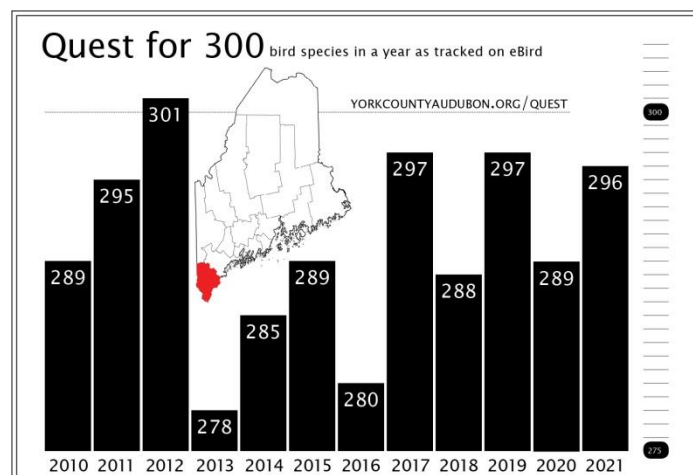
YCA welcomes its New Members!

September – February

Lydia Carlson	Kittery Point
Emma Eukitis	Dayton
Jennifer Allain and Jeremiah Cyr	Lebanon
Holly Giles	Kennebunk
Deborah Lovewell	Limerick
Jennifer Tafe	Kennebunkport
Steve Berg	Biddeford
Harvey Berig	Wells
Rachel Gailitis	Biddeford
David Nelson	North Berwick
Barbara Thornton and Ron Alex	Eliot
Fred Dunn	York
Daniel Iannello and Amanda Le Barron	Saco
Patti Parrott	North Berwick
Susan Teel	Springvale
Kara Day	Biddeford
Katie Day and Emily Dixon	Biddeford
Lorie S. Faubert	Saco
Kathleen and Daniel Greene	Brownfield
Sue Hall	Kennebunkport
Allicia Jones	Cape Neddick
Katherine Placey	North Berwick
Nan and James Roberts	York
Izador Samprimo	South Berwick
Raymond Brown	Ocean Park
Lynne Dacy	Kittery Point
Kelly and Ray Dolin	Kennebunkport
Marian Howe	Eliot
Michael Lee & Wanda McDonough	Kittery Point
Judith McKenna	Kittery Point
Susan Pendleton and Ron Housley	Buxton
Marjorie and Joe Rogers	Berwick
Julie Stearns	Biddeford Pool
Melanie and Bryan Stinehour	Berwick
Rebecca Triglianios	Kennebunk
Peter Zack	Parsonfield
Judith and William Castle	Portsmouth, NH
Deborah and Thomas Courtney	Saco
Julia Gottlieb	Kennebunk
Kathy Kowler	Kittery Point
Michele Landry	Saco
James McMahon	Kennebunkport
Rolfe and Jane Petschek	Kennebunkport

York County's 2021 Quest for 300

– by Scott Richardson



York County birders almost achieved the quest goal in 2021, but the collective tally fell a little shy at 296. That's the third highest count during the dozen years we've been tracking, with 2012 the only one so far to actually reach 300.

First on the year list was Barred Owl, heard before dawn by Marian Zimmerman. The masses added 90 more species by the end of New Year's Day. Number 100 was Will Sweet's Dunlin on January 5. Four months later, Donald Thompson logged a Solitary Sandpiper for species 200. Through May 31, York County eBirders had 261 species on their joint list, but with spring migration winding down the pace had seriously slowed. June wrapped at 269 and July at 271, but August jumped to 283 with a lift from pelagics and southbound shorebirds.

From September onward it was mainly a rarity race; what wild ones would wing into our part of the world? Although a Steller's Sea-eagle undoubtedly transited our air space at the end of December, it escaped notice while here. So the final five were Little Gull in Wells, Tundra Swan in Waterboro, Black-headed Gull in Cape Neddick, Gray Kingbird at Fortunes Rocks, and Pacific Loon from the Cliff House.

eBird reports that a total of 377 species have been observed in York County. How many of these, and what all-time new ones, will get picked up in 2022?

A Tribute to Pat Moynahan – A Force of Nature – by Bill Grabin

This past December, we lost one of our dearest friends and colleagues, Pat Moynahan. She was a treasure of the Maine birding community and so much more, as rare a bird as any she ever found in the field. She served on the York County Audubon Board of Directors for 25 years, and was certainly never a passive Board member!

One of her many passions was protecting breeding birds including the Piping Plovers on her beloved Hills Beach in Biddeford and throughout Maine. She advocated for YCA to strongly support the efforts to protect the breeding bird habitat that the National Audubon Society works to protect on Stratton Island in Saco Bay. For many years now, YCA has made an annual contribution to support the work done each summer on Stratton Island, and we are pleased to announce that henceforth, our future annual donations will be given in her honor as the “Pat Moynahan Stratton Island Memorial Gift.”

Another of her passions was engaging young people and inspiring their love of nature. When one of our former Board members, Lena Moser, worked with a local middle school teacher, Nathan Hall, to propose establishing the Maine Young Birders Club under YCA’s auspices in 2016, Pat was, of course, an enthusiastic advocate.



photo by Margie Schoeller

Along similar lines, within the last year, YCA established a Birding Backpack program that donates complete birding kits to local libraries. The first one has been successfully put in place at the Kennebunk Free Library, and we are now engaged in an effort to make these available to libraries throughout York County. In a public notice regarding Pat’s passing, her family had noted that “Pat would be delighted to have you consider a donation to the York County Audubon Society.” We are honored to announce that the many donations that we have received (and any additional ones we receive) will be dedicated to supporting the Birding Backpack program, enabling young birders and their families to experience and get hooked on the joy of birding and exploring nature for years to come.

While Pat’s joy for life touched hundreds of people, her loss was particularly felt by many who have been connected to YCA, and we wanted to give some of our current and past Board members an opportunity to share a few memories:

We will never forget her shouts of excitement when finding a rare or new bird for her list. We know she mentored many people, but we wouldn't be the birders we are today if she hadn't taken us "under her wing." A wonderful person who advocated for birds and people. *Bob and Anne Watson*

Pat was always ready for an adventure. She loved all species of birds and birding with anyone, beginner to expert. I have birded with Pat for many years and have so many memories that it seems everywhere I go there is a reminder of her. *Joanne Stevens*

We all have so many great memories of the fun times we had birding with Pat, especially our "birthday birding and luncheon outings" when we would get together to bird locally and then enjoy lunch at a local eatery to celebrate a birthday. See Photo!

Marie Jordan



Last January, Pat asked me what my birding goals were for the year. I wanted to see a Boreal Chickadee, so we planned a trip to Moosehead Lake for the spring. We spent several days birding the dirt logging roads in northern Maine. Besides navigating the sometimes-treacherous terrain, we talked about birding habitats, birding experiences, travel, books, and politics. I didn't get the chickadee, but as it always was with Pat, it was a great experience. *Kathy Donahue*

Pat was an endless source of enthusiasm, a fierce defender of every bird on earth, and a friend and teacher whose reach was so extensive and so deep that her loss is mourned by all who knew her. Her influence on me and countless other birders cannot be overstated. *Monica Grabin*

Though it's now some two months plus since Pat's death, I still remain in a state of disbelief that she's gone. I attended an open house given by Pat's family in honor of her many illustrious accomplishments, more than half expecting her to march in, demanding to know what we were all doing in her house. We first met on the sand bar to Basket Island, which led to many wonderful years of close friendship that endured until the end of her life. I'm not out exploring as much now, but I still mark down what I see and/or hear. Pat seemed to put that in my blood! She was an excellent birder (one of the best!) who wanted to pass that on to others. Her presence is sorely missed! *Linda Eastman*

Pat was a force of nature in her unwavering support of birds and the birding community. I feel honoured to have called her a friend and will never walk Hills Beach without remembering the brightness of her spirit. *Marion Sprague*

I have many fond memories of Pat out in the field, but one of the best was when there was a Red-headed Woodpecker reported at Timber Point and I ran into Pat walking in. She asked if it had been seen and I said I just saw it. Her eyes lit up and she literally started running and almost skipping with excitement. I went back and watched it with her for 10-15 mins and she just exuded so much joy. I will dearly miss running into her and catching some of her infectious positivity. *Seth Davis*

***** Upcoming YCA Zoom Programs *****

There's no charge for our Zoom programs, but advance registration is required for each one. Please go to our website, yorkcountyaudubon.org to sign up.

Our Smallest Raptor: the Northern Saw-whet Owl - *with Zoe Korpi* – Tuesday, March 22nd at 7:00 pm



With a size not much larger than a soda can, the Northern Saw-whet owl is the smallest raptor in eastern North America. It is a delight to encounter, but due to its secretive nature, it is often overlooked. Much of what we know about this species today is thanks to extensive banding efforts. While our knowledge of this species has grown, many mysteries remain.

Zoe has banded and studied these birds in Maine and Pennsylvania. She has a strong interest in understanding how human activities impact and threaten the survival of bird species and how those threats can be mitigated.

Hummingbirds – Recent Research and Spectacular Species We Have Met – *with Dana and Bob Fox* – Tuesday, April 19th at 7:00 pm



Lifelong birders Dana and Bob Fox, who have traveled extensively on 6 continents and visited more than 40 countries will share their adventures with 10 different, remarkable species they have seen on their journeys in the Americas.

They'll provide information including: what is a hummingbird, how did they evolve, how do their nectar gathering and pollination activities compare with bees and butterflies, what do they eat besides nectar, what are their feeding techniques, what is torpor, how is their iridescence produced, and what is unusual about their courtship behaviors?

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





What's That Bird I'm Hearing? – with Doug Hitchcox – Tuesday, May 17th at 7:00 pm

Take your birding to a new dimension, literally! Learning to identify birds by their songs or calls will help you find more birds, and aurally read the landscape. In this program we'll focus on the skills to identify and recognize different vocalization, rather than just playing hundreds of recordings, but there will be plenty of examples!

Doug Hitchcox is the staff naturalist at Maine Audubon and a member of the YCA Board. He's an Outreach Coordinator of the Maine Bird Atlas, and is dedicated to doing anything he can to promote and protect wildlife in Maine. 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.

Bird Songs – with Monica Grabin – Tuesday, June 21st at 7 pm

Bird Songs? No, not the songs birds sing, the songs we sing about them. Monica, a folk singer from way back, has known many songs about birds for years, but it was Pat Moynahan who first got her started writing songs of her own about birds and the fanatics who love them. Some are funny, some are celebratory, but almost all are close parodies of songs many of you will be familiar with. Accompanying herself on guitar and banjo, Monica will share the stories behind the songs while also honoring the memory of Pat Moynahan and her endless enthusiasm for birds and the people who love them.



***** Previous YCA Zoom Programs *****

Many of the Zoom programs that we've presented are now available to stream from our website, www.yorkcountyaudubon.org. Just go to our website and type "video" into the search box to see the lengthy list!



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