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York County Audubon

A Chapter of Maine Audubon

Autumn 2023

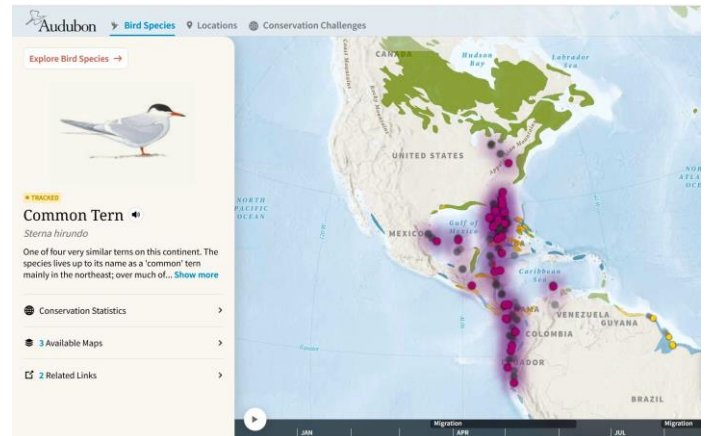
A Breathtaking Look into the Secrets of Bird Migrations - Jeff and Allison Wells

How often have you watched a little warbler flitting in the backyard shrubbery and wondered where that bird had come from—and where it might be going next? Or have you noticed the sudden appearance of gulls or ducks in the bay or at your favorite pond and pondered the mysteries of their movements? Do you think about where that osprey whose nest you watch every year may spend its winters?

An online bird migration atlas called the **Bird Migration Explorer** (birdmigrationexplorer.org) released last year by the National Audubon Society and nine founding partner organizations, now lets you answer these and many other questions as you delve into the details of the migratory movements of over 400 bird species. This revolutionary web-based platform brings together migratory tracking data from hundreds of individual studies—the largest compendium ever assembled—combines them with eBird maps modeled from millions of observer records, and displays them using leading-edge, colorful animated maps.

The Bird Migration Explorer took years to build with a large team of scientists, programmers, mappers, designers, writers, and others. It's easy to use and visually stunning, making it fascinating not only for the avid bird enthusiast but even for those with a mild passing interest.

And kids will love it!



Our eyes were certainly opened to more than we expected when we tried the Bird Migration Explorer for the first time.

We were enthralled in the Bird Migration Explorer to see the movements of common terns from Maine arriving on the shores of northern South America even by mid-August, some continuing farther to southern South America. In contrast, Gulf of Maine breeding Arctic terns are shown traversing in fall across the Atlantic and the globe to Africa and south into sub-Antarctic waters before their spring return.

Tracking data from ring-billed gulls that breed in the St. Lawrence River of Quebec shows their late-summer movements into Maine and the eventual exodus of most of them south from New Jersey to Florida by late December.

We challenge anyone not to be completely blown away by the animated map showing the migrations of tracked blackpoll warblers from their Canadian and New England breeding range to their northern South American wintering range.



Pectoral Sandpiper at the Sanford Lagoons in September, stopping on its way from its Arctic breeding grounds to its “winter” home in South America (our winter that is) – Ken Janes photo

Did you know that herring gulls from Midcoast Maine have been found as far north as northern Hudson Bay, south to northern Mexico and Florida, and west to north Texas?

Consider this: a common redpoll banded in Maine was recovered near the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on the North Slope of Alaska more than 3,000 miles away!

Did you know that more than 8,000 banded or tracked birds connect Maine to at least 16 other countries across the hemisphere? These Maine bird connections range from three snow geese 2,000 miles to the north in High Arctic Canada to a blackpoll warbler 3,500 miles to the south in Yaquerana, Peru!

We didn’t know these facts either until we discovered them using the Bird Migration Explorer.

Talk about making the point that the future of the birds that we all love is a shared responsibility with people and nations across the world!

Along with wowing people with these amazing bird migration stories and connections, the Bird Migration Explorer and the datasets behind it should prove invaluable in guiding future bird

conservation efforts. We hope it will also be an inspiration reminding world leaders of the need to raise their collective ambitions and increase national funding commitments and other efforts to protect our planet.

Jeffrey V. Wells, Ph.D., is a Fellow of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Vice President of Boreal Conservation for National Audubon. Dr. Wells is one of the nation's leading bird experts and conservation biologists and author of the “Birder’s Conservation Handbook.” Allison Childs Wells, formerly of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a senior director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine, a nonprofit membership organization working statewide to protect the nature of Maine. Both are widely published natural history writers and are the authors of the popular books, “Maine’s Favorite Birds” (Tilbury House) and “Birds of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao: A Site and Field Guide,” (Cornell University Press). Note that a version of this story originally appeared in the Boothbay Register.

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Heather Rutledge is a nature enthusiast who sees the whimsical side of our natural world and enjoys sharing her knowledge with children more than any other audience. She has two boys of her own, ages 8 and 10 – both of whom have autism – and feels that exposing them to Maine’s natural treasures has benefitted them greatly over the years. Previously, Heather was a volunteer for New Hampshire Audubon’s Massabesic Center, where her main job was animal care – her favorite part of which was looking after the resident Raven! She has done multiple after school programs based on various subjects, including bats, the eastern cottontail, and bird walks. In addition to that, she offers wildflower walks via Kittery Adult Education. As an autodidact, she loves teaching those from all educational backgrounds so that they can learn more about themselves and all things nature related by spending time outdoors (and less time in front of screens!)

Heather has been called a “top tier nest finder” and seeking and observing breeding birds is her passion. Other interests include gemology, lepidoptera (moths in particular), and she is bananas about bats!

York County Audubon is delighted to welcome two new Directors!



Britney Fox grew up collecting quartz crystals and bird watching in her suburban Massachusetts backyard until she moved to Maine when she was 12. Though she had another brief stint living in Mass., Britney moved into her home in York in 2012, where she has permanently settled into Maine and has never looked back. Discovering the multitude of bird species with which she shares her home re-ignited Britney’s love of birds. Then, with a gentle nudge from a work friend, she picked up the hobby of birding and her love of nature and birds has grown exponentially ever since. She also has a passion for wildflowers and especially loves searching for and finding native orchids. One of Britney’s favorite hobbies is photographing nature. Britney worked as an animal welfare professional for over 10 years, volunteers her time to nature conservation and education efforts whenever possible, and still lives in her personal birding paradise with her husband, daughter, son, dog, and cats.

For many years, YCA has offered scholarships to Educators and Teens for week-long National Audubon Society programs on famed Hog Island. Here's a 2023 account.

What do you get when you combine beautiful coastal islands, wonderful local cuisine, enthusiastic educators, and of course, puffins? Educator's Week at Hog Island.

I was so excited to learn this spring that I had been selected as the recipient of the June Ficker Scholarship from York County Audubon. This year happened to be the 50th anniversary of the Puffin Project, which was started in 1973 by biologist Steve Kress. Having a chance to visit Egg Rock where he had re-introduced puffins and seeing the thriving colonies of birds was an amazing experience.

What amazed me on the first night was that there were nearly thirty participants and ten staff that were going to be part of the week. People came from all over the country: some from New England, many from the Atlantic Coast and the Midwest, and others from as far as Florida and California. Many of the educators, like myself, had been sponsored by local or state Audubon groups. Our jobs were as varied as our places of origin. We had elementary, middle level and high school teachers, college professors, and outdoor educators. Most had backgrounds in the sciences, but some taught subjects like English or Art. Some of the educators were recent college graduates, and others were veterans of our craft. What was common to all of us, though, was that everyone was excited to be there.

Mornings on Hog Island always started with hot coffee, because they must have known that teachers run on caffeine. Each day involved different activities from which we could choose. You could learn about the geology of the coast of Maine, nature journaling, pond studies, mycology, birding basics, technology, and even photography. One day we traveled on foot to the far side of the island to explore the intertidal

zone. Using seine nets and hand nets we were able to collect and examine green crabs, hermit crabs and fish species like cunners and winter flounder. Evening programs included talks and presentations on diversity, mindfulness and studies of bats, insects, and even seals.



The evening meals were wonderful and diverse, incorporating locally sourced ingredients. Offerings like seafood paella, shepherds' pie, curry and tasty desserts, kept us well fed and gave us an opportunity to sit together and share our experiences of each day. And, of course, no trip to the Maine coast would be complete without a lobster dinner to finish off the week.

The highlight of Educator's week, no doubt, was the boat trip to Egg Rock to view the puffin and other seabird colonies. We saw lots of puffins, terns (common, arctic and roseate), laughing gulls, guillemots, eiders, loons, an oystercatcher, a greater shearwater and a Wilson's storm petrel.

I will always cherish the memories of my trip to Hog Island. The opportunity to explore, learn, and share knowledge with so many fellow educators was truly an uplifting experience. I made lots of new friends and I hope to return to Hog Island as a volunteer, someday, to be able to give back to the program from which I received so much.

- Christine Durocher teaches seventh grade science at Wells Junior High School.

The 2024 Maine Birds Desk Calendar is on its way!

For many years, our former Board member, Marie Jordan, an avid birder and photographer, has produced a calendar and offered it for sale, graciously donating the calendars to YCA to support our educational programs.



It's a desk calendar in a 4" by 6" plastic case that opens into a stand to display each month. Each page features a great photo she took of a Maine bird. The cost is \$10 plus mailing costs. They're wonderful anywhere in the house, and also make great gifts! YCA tremendously appreciates your support for our programs, and Marie's continuing generosity. Please check our website for full details and to see how to place an order.



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.

About Covid: we had hoped that we could clearly state that covid restrictions would not be a concern this year. It seems that we can't say that. New variants are popping up which are even more transmissible, and there's no way to know at this point what the situation will be. So, we'll be urging people to take precautions, as we have since 2020.

The Southern York County CBC will be held on Monday, December 18th, while the Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC will be on Saturday, December 30th. If you might like to find out about participating, please contact Monica Grabin at grabinmonica@gmail.com or 985-3342 or for the Southern York County CBC, or Kathy Donahue at kadona11@roadrunner.com or 967-4102 or for the Bidd/Kennebunkpt CBC.

Our 25th Annual Bird Seed Sale is coming! *Early Bird Pricing through 10/27*

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. Additional



items this year include feeders, mealworm suet and Feather Friendly window markers to keep your birds safe. Early bird pricing is available if you place your order by 4 p.m. on October 27th. Order pick-up will be at the Wells Reserve on November 3rd and 4th with easy access and volunteers on hand to help load your car.

Please visit our website to view or print an order form:

YCA welcomes its New Members!

March - August

Laura Calhoun and Jonathan McPhee	Kittery
Suzanne and Scott Craig	Kennebunk
Brian Fox	Wells
Stephen Giannetti	Wells
Patty Hall	Biddeford
Donna Losardo & Heidi Wentrup	Kennebunkpt
Mary McDonnell	Wells
Karen Stanley and Dean Klein	Biddeford
Michael Turrisi & Valerie Jackson	Kennebunkpt
Stacy Wells and Tom Scott	Limington
Jody Smith	Honolulu, Hawaii
Matthew Weikel	Biddeford
James Willcox	Kennebunk
Lois Bowden	Denmark
Dianne Fredette	Old Orchard Beach
Ryan Morrison	York
Chris Robinson & Renee Madeleine	Kennebunk
Joan Besdenis and Alan Bing	Kittery Point
Barry Cheslin and Kathee McCormack	Wells
Elizabeth Dutton	York Beach
Lauran Grover	Saco
Carol Kahl and Tom Moore	Springvale
Kathy Klein	Biddeford
Marilee Mitchell	Cornish
Pamela Pearson	York
Eric Rodenbeck	Saco
Linda Simonsen	Buxton
Bunny Barnum	Biddeford
Debra Callahan	Kittery
Michael Ferris	Kennebunkport
Jennifer Finn	Wells
Heatber Glon	Eliot
Kate and Jim Ostell	Kennebunk
Bethany Precourt	Biddeford
Mary N. Brudzinski	Kennebunk
Katherine and Kenneth Griffin	Biddeford

*** Upcoming YCA Programs and Workshops ***

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



How the Personalities of Small Mammals Shape the Growth of Forests – with Maisie Merz and Ivy Yen - Tuesday, October 24th at 7:00 pm – in-person at the Wells Reserve and via Zoom

Join us for an entertaining exploration of the role that small mammals play in forest regeneration and the movement of trees in Maine. We all know our cats and dogs have personalities, but have you ever wondered about the squirrels in your backyard? How would you even go about evaluating personality traits in squirrels, mice, or voles and why would you bother? These small mammals play an important but often unseen role in forest regeneration and the movement of trees, dispersing the seeds of the towering forests here in Maine, which in turn affects the habitat and impacts birds and all other life in the forest.

Maisie Merz and Ivy Yen are second year PhD students at the University of Maine, where they're studying the consequences of small mammal personality on several ecological processes that shape the forest landscape. Their presentation includes slides and night video that is entertaining, educational, and surprising!

The Migration of Broad-winged Hawks - with Phil Brown – Tuesday, November 14th at 7:00 pm – by Zoom only

Fall Migration is considered to be one of the birding wonders of the world. Well known birder Phil Brown is the Coordinator of the The Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock, NH. Under his guidance, the center has been partnering with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania to better understand Broad-winged Hawk ecology. Phil will show us how the study was done and explain what has been learned to date about the migration of Broad-winged hawks breeding in New England that travel to their wintering grounds in South America and back.



*** 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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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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