

# THE HARLEQUIN

## York County Audubon

### A Chapter of Maine Audubon

Spring 2024

[www.yorkcountyaudubon.org](http://www.yorkcountyaudubon.org)

## The Amazing Waves of Spring Migration

Although May is the peak season for Maine birders, spring migration is actually under way from mid-February to mid-June. Here's an overview of what to expect at each point in the season.

**Late February:** Waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans) are beginning to move, along with early returning birds like American Woodcock, Turkey Vultures, Red-winged Blackbirds and Grackles.

**March 1 - 15:** Waterfowl migration is under way with arrivals including Ring-necked Duck and Northern Shoveler. Raptors include the Red-shouldered Hawk. Killdeer and Brown-headed Cowbirds are seen.

**March 16 - 31:** Piping Plovers begin to appear. Hardy birds like Tree Swallow and Eastern Phoebe are returning..

**April 1 - 15:** Migration is picking up. Raptor migration continues, including Kestrels, Merlins and Osprey. Early shorebird migrants are evident, including Greater Yellowlegs. Other early migrants include Northern Flickers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Hermit Thrushes, Great Blue Herons, Double-crested Cormorants (replacing Great Cormorants), and Swamp and Chipping Sparrows (as the American Tree Sparrow departs). By the middle of the month, a sprinkling of other warblers turns up.

**April 16 - 30:** First arrivals for many species, including Neotropical migrants like warblers, vireos, and orioles. Early warblers like Palm,



*Magnolia Warbler at Kennebunk Land Trust's For All Forever Preserve – Ken Janes photo*

Pine, and Yellow-rumped are numerous by month's end. Typical migrants in this period include Eastern Towhee, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, House Wren, and sparrows such as Savannah and Field. Herons, egrets, and rails have their main arrival. Raptor migration features Broad-winged Hawks. Also appearing are Barn Swallows and Purple Martins.



*Lesser Yellowlegs at the Sanford Lagoons – Ken Janes photo*

**May 1 - 10:** Sometime in this period, weather conditions will produce the first really massive arrivals of Neotropical migrants. After this big wave, numbers of individual migrants will drop off between successive waves, but diversity will remain high through most of May. Migration of raptors and waterfowl is winding down, but shorebirds are still building toward their peak. Arrivals include Wood Thrush, Baltimore and Orchard Oriole, Veery, Eastern Kingbird, Whip-poor-will, Least Flycatcher, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Warbler arrivals include Black and White, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Ovenbird, and Prairie. Shorebird arrivals include Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Willets.



*Black-throated Blue Warbler at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm – Ken Janes photo*

**May 11 - 20:** Numbers of migrants will vary day to day depending on weather, but diversity is very high during this period. Among the warblers, earlier migrants like Palm and Yellow-rumped are declining, but later ones like Magnolia, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Canada, Wilson’s and Black-throated Blue have arrived. Cuckoos, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager, Bobolink, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Red-eyed Vireo are all typical mid-May migrants. Diversity and numbers of shorebirds are excellent in available habitat. Least and Common Terns arrive at their nesting areas.

**May 21 - 31:** Some days continue to produce very high numbers of migrants, although they are harder to see as the trees fully leaf out. Summer residents are singing but there is less song now from migrants, since females (which generally don’t sing) tend to migrate later than males. Alder and Willow Flycatchers, and Eastern Wood Pewee all peak in late May, Red-eyed Vireo can be abundant, and thrush migration continues to be excellent. Many shorebird species are now at their peak numbers.

**Early June:** The songbird migration is mostly over, but in the migrant traps, stragglers of many species can be found through the first week of June. Shorebird migration is still in evidence.

*This overview of the timing of migration is adapted, with permission, from an article that famed birder and author Kenn Kaufman wrote on spring migration in Ohio, his home turf. Many thanks to Kenn for all his great books and contributions to birding. His new book, The Birds that Audubon Missed, is due out in May.*

#### YCAS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Bill Grabin, President	Kennebunk
Laurie Pocher, Vice Pres & MYBC	Ogunquit
Kathy Donahue, Treasurer	Kennebunk
Britney Fox	York
Dan Gardoqui	Cape Neddick
David Doubleday, Programs	Kennebunk
Doug Hitchcox	Windham
Heather Rutledge	Kittery
Joyce Toth	Wells
Marian Zimmerman	Biddeford
Marion Sprague, MYBC	Westbrook
Mary Bateman	Wells
Rebekah Lowell	Biddeford
Seth Davis	Bangor

For all upcoming events and general please visit our website:

[www.yorkcountyaudubon.org](http://www.yorkcountyaudubon.org)

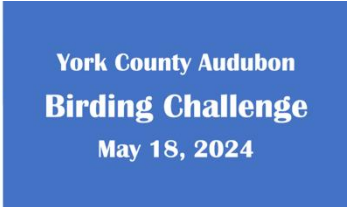
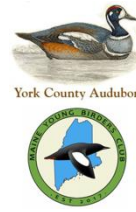
And for the latest news, photos and updates, please visit us on Facebook at:

[www.facebook.com/yorkcountyaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/yorkcountyaudubon)



# YCA 2024 Birding Challenge to support the Maine Young Birders Club

For over 50 years, York County Audubon has offered diverse programs to connect people with nature. In 2016, we identified a need for youth-focused birding experiences and launched the Maine Young Birders Club (MYBC) for ages 11-18. The club provides opportunities for young birders to deepen their understanding of the natural world while forming lasting friendships.



Our annual Birding Challenge – a 24-hour “bird-a-thon” – raises funds to sustain and expand MYBC. Teams attempt to identify as many species as possible, sponsored by friends, family, and businesses. Last year’s event raised over \$5,000, supporting impactful outings like trips to Monhegan and Stratton Island.

This year, we hope to continue offering exceptional experiences while reaching more young birders from underserved communities. Funds raised will allow us to plan educational outings in conjunction with organizations like the Center for Wildlife and the New Hampshire School of Falconry, as well as social events like pizza parties for members and parents, and more.



You can donate and support our efforts at <https://go.dojiggy.io/yca2024> or by scanning the QR code. Every contribution, large or small, makes a big difference! If you’re truly up for the challenge, we also welcome you to join a team and join the fun on May 18th. Visit the site and click “About” and “FAQs” to learn more.

Your generosity means so much. With your help, we can inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. Thank you!

*As a Chapter of Maine Audubon, a recognized 501(c)(3) organization, all contributions to York County Audubon are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.*



## The 2023 Coastal Birds Report

*This article was excerpted from Maine Audubon's Coastal Birds 2023 newsletter. The full newsletter and additional information on all the work done by the Coastal Bird Project can be found at <https://maineaudubon.org/projects/plovers-terns/>*



*Piping Plover chick. Laurie Pocher photo*

These incredible little birds never cease to amaze; when Piping Plovers arrive in March, the beach can be an extremely unfavorable place—sometimes it's even snowing! As their chicks start to hatch, it can be grueling hot with not a cloud in the sky to provide shade, not to mention the hordes of people the birds need to navigate through to forage. Piping Plovers continue to incubate their nests or brood their chicks in all conditions. Their adaptability to the harsh beach environment is quite impressive. These birds seem to get tougher and tougher every year.

Piping Plovers migrate as far south as the Caribbean for the winter, then have to make the trek all the way back up to Maine for the breeding season. A lot of variables are at play that are in nature's hands during these long migrations, but the Piping Plover population has reached numbers that have far exceeded what we once thought could be possible. The countless hours spent by all stakeholders working together to ensure that these birds and humans can share the beach is immeasurable. It takes hard work from state and federal biologists, volunteers, beach front landowners, town employees, town, state, and federal law enforcement, state park employees, lifeguards, and more!

For the sixth consecutive season, in 2023 we saw a record high number of breeding pairs of Piping Plovers. The state was home to 157 breeding pairs this nesting season, with some pairs nesting in places never before occupied or that had been vacant for many years. However, only a total of 201 chicks survived until fledge age. This resulted in our productivity being 1.28, our lowest productivity since 2007 and less than our recovery goals of 1.5 chicks fledged per pair. Two of our southernmost beaches, Ogunquit and Wells, continue to wow with their numbers, although they were lower than last season. Ogunquit hosted 16 nesting pairs, which fledged 24 chicks, and Wells had a record high 16 pairs that fledged 29 chicks.



*Piping Plover with chick.*

It's not all about the plovers. In 2023, seven sites in Maine hosted nesting Least Terns, including Laudholm Beach, Goose Rocks Beach, and Stratton Island. Our coordinated surveys in June resulted in our second lowest pair count in the past ten years. However, the continual loss of nests and subsequent re-nesting at various sites makes it unclear if these counts reflect an actual decline in population. Least Terns are a relatively long-lived bird with an average lifespan of 15 years. Least Terns, given the necessary space to nest and care for young, are a relatively resilient species. This resiliency along with continued cooperation and partnerships with biologists, landowners, and land managers provides opportunities for this state endangered bird to rebound.



Along with the wonderful Piping Plover, the Coastal Birds Crew monitors other species along the coast. Shorebirds as a group, include sandpipers, plovers, avocets, oystercatchers, and phalaropes; they range from the size of a small sparrow to around 20 inches long, or about the size of a crow.



*Common Tern with chick. Bill Grabin photo*

**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.



*We're not just about birds. This Bobcat was spotted in the town of York! Britney Fox Hover photo*

**YCA welcomes its New Members!**

*September – January*

Raymond Beliveau	Biddeford
Jeanne and Brian Ensor	Ogunquit
Roberta Lynnworth	Biddeford
J'Aime Walker	Saco
Christina Bshara	Alfred
Eric Hall and Meghan May	Cape Neddick
Dennis Jackson	Berwick
Michelle Thomas	Dayton
Brooke Curtin-Johnson and Derik Johnson	Kenn.
Rhonda Rowars	Biddeford
June Smoot	Kennebunk
Krystin Boucher	Arundel
Rose Marie Cardona	Buxton
Jennifer Dalbec	Old Orchard Beach
Nikki and Graham Field	East Waterboro
David Kuschke	Hollis
Mary LaClair and Marc Halle	Kittery Point
Catherine Mende	North Berwick
Phil and Cindy Mugridge	Springvale
Pat and Alan Shapiro	Kittery Point
Barbara Spiegelman	Kittery
Tyler Sullivan	Kittery
Amy Allenwood	Kennebunk
Thaya duBois and David Ehrman	Eliot
Eileen Giuliani	York
Amy Kelley	Ogunquit
Charles Leinbach and Kim Icovitti	Kittery Pt
Fran Taylor and Dan Bogaty	Kennebunk

## Our Christmas Bird Counts had some great results

Each year, York County Audubon oversees two of National Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts. Dozens of birders participate in each one. The Southern York County CBC is held in mid-December and covers a circle that extends from Kittery up to Moody. In this, our 51st year, we had a new high for total species, with 101 (with 10,986 total birds counted)! This included 2 new species that had not been reported in our previous 50 years: a Fish Crow and the very cooperative Spotted Towhee at Fort Foster. The previous high for species was 97 in 2012.



*The rare to Maine Spotted Towhee at Fort Foster - Bob Duchesne photo*

We had 11 species with new high counts, some dramatically so. There were 250 Gannets (previous high 159 in 2009), and 1408 Black Scoters (previous high 980). We also had an explosion of wrens: 10 Winter Wrens (previous high 3), 46 Carolina Wrens (previous high 28), and our 1 House Wren is the first seen since 1996.

Blackbirds were also plentiful, with 55 Red-winged Blackbirds (previous high 9), 22 Rusty Blackbirds (previous high 5), and 42 Grackles (previous high 16 in 1993). There were 17 Red Crossbills (previous high 7), 5 Pine Warblers (previous high 3) and 35 Golden-owned Kinglets tied our record.



*..A Winter Wren*

The Biddeford/Kennebunkport CBC is held at the end of December, and covers a circle that extends from Kennebunkport to Old Orchard Beach. This was our 64<sup>th</sup> year. We identified a total of 92 species (with 12,303 total birds counted). This tied our previous high for total species from 2013.

We had high counts for 7 species: Bald Eagle (18), Northern Flicker (7), Common Raven (25), Carolina Wren (26), Eastern Bluebird (289), Dark-eyed Junco (834), and Red-winged Blackbird (47).

The bird of the day was a pair of Wilson's Warblers, a new bird for the count.



*A Wilson's Warbler, a most unusual bird to find in Maine in late December!*



## \*\*\* 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](http://yorkcountyaudubon.org) to sign up.**

### **Maine's Champion Big Trees – with Jan Santerre – Tuesday, April 16th at 7 pm - live at the Wells Reserve and via Zoom**

The 2020 edition of the Maine Register of Big Trees lists 146 champions located throughout the state. Join us to learn about these trees play a significant role in our environment. Jan Santerre is the Project Canopy director for the Maine Forest Service, and has managed the Maine Register of Big Trees for MFS for more than 20 years. State champion big trees capture people's imagination for their size and strength, but there is more to a champion than just its size — they are symbols of all the good work trees do for the quality of the environment and our quality of life.



### **Serendipitous Travels – Birding Without Blinders – with Sue Keefer and Steve Norris – Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 7 pm - live at the Wells Reserve and via Zoom**

Sue Keefer and Steve Norris have birded and guided birders from Maine to Texas, and far beyond. Many of you may know them from their many summers working for the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge at Timber Point, or for the very entertaining program they presented in 2018 on their travels to the Galapagos Islands. This time they'll be presenting an amusing series of illustrated vignettes about their adventures and misadventures, that all turned out for the better!

### **A Seal's Journey – with Jessica Woodend – Tuesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm – live at the Wells Reserve and via Zoom**

Marine Mammals of Maine is dedicated to marine mammal and sea turtle response, rescue, care, research and education. With a small staff and a dedicated volunteer team, MMoME provides expert stranding response across roughly 2,500 miles of Maine's coastline (including islands), covering the geographic area of Kittery to Rockland. MMoME volunteer Jessica Woodend will share the story of a rescue seal's journey from stranding to release, and all of the obstacles in between.



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

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

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

US Postage Paid  
Kennebunk ME 04043  
Permit #69

R 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/](http://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](http://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](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!

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