

# Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



January-March 2019

## Happy New Year

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT  
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

We begin another new year. It's that time when we make resolutions and feel optimistic about changing the current state of affairs, whether personal, political or global. It's also a time to reflect on the realities of our environmental problems, and the ability of our governments and institutions to address them. Perhaps it's also a time for us to consider how we might get more involved in helping to protect what we value the most: clean air and water, healthy natural biological communities, and the opportunity to enjoy them far into the future.

To be sure, the threats to our natural resources seem endless. A host of extremely destructive events, including wildfires, hurricanes and flooding, are becoming more frequent. They point to the underlying harmful effects of global warming. Yet we continue to see scant leadership on climate change, which affects the environment around us and our ultimate survival. We are also alarmed by continual efforts to weaken long-standing protections such as the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, along with the agencies responsible for implementing these and other environmental laws.

The recent elections this past fall improve chances for some badly needed governmental oversight and heightened public awareness on environmental issues. This will hopefully check many of the ill-advised policies that have been implemented in the past two years. We can help educate the public by stepping up our local outreach efforts through our programs and field trips, contacts with the media, and educational activities with schools. Personal thoughts and recommendations from chapter members in future issues of Natural Selections would also help inform and inspire others.

We also need to stress the use of sound science as the basis for future policies

and actions. This includes supporting those agencies and non-governmental groups whose job requires factual data collection and analysis. We can also play a role by participating in local citizen science projects, such as water quality monitoring and bird population surveys. For example, consider getting involved in the ongoing effort to update Maine's Breeding Bird Atlas, which can use more volunteers. You will not only improve your own birding skills, but you will

help build the data sets describing how Maine's bird populations are changing, forming the basis for future decision-making.

Most importantly, continue to get out and bird, hike, ski/snowshoe, and keep yourself physically and mentally fit. Future challenges require us to be at our best. We can help with that through our nature programs and field trips. We encourage you to join us, and please let us know how we can better serve you.

### A Day On The Pond by Sean Trahan

While sitting on a cold rock overlooking Fields Pond on this wintry day, one ponders that this time of year the sun too is slow at getting started. No sounds of the loons echoing in the distance, no sounds of the hummingbirds zinging by my head, and no chirping from the chipmunks warning others of my presence. Yet, with the stillness of the day, a single ray from the east shoots into the vast sky, only highlighting the vivid blue that engulfs the horizon over Copeland Hill. Looking up, one can see a few soft puffy clouds rolling, their shapes ever morphing as the sun slowly rises. A perfect backdrop to hear, nearby on the snow, the soft crunching hooves of a deer. Glancing over, one can see the gentle flapping of its white fluffy tail as it pushes the light snow aside, looking for acorns fallen from the tall oaks in the fall. The squirrels, jumping from tree to tree way atop the now barren canopy, shake to the ground any ice or loose snow. Branches are their highways as the squirrels make their way east toward the boat landing, pausing every so often, looking down at the white forest floor, in hopes that someone has refilled the bird feeder that yesterday was empty. The stillness of the air only amplifies the settling of the ice, the eerie sound as it vibrates across the vast emptiness of the now frozen pond, echoing against the hill end to end. Hard to imagine that a mere few months ago, a canoe could be seen gracefully paddling west towards the desolate island. Looking at the island, and recalling that last journey across in a boat, I pull my hat down over my ears. The crunch of snow can again be heard, as my footprint on the snow-covered ice leaves temporary evidence of the journey I am about to take.



Gray squirrel. (Bob Duchesne photo)

# MAINE AUDUBON

Penobscot Valley Chapter

## Natural Selections

*Natural Selections* is published four times a year by the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon. Maine Audubon members living in the Penobscot Valley region automatically become chapter members and receive *Natural Selections* at no additional charge. Membership in Maine Audubon costs per year:

\$50 household; \$40 individual

\$30 senior/volunteer

Membership benefits include a discount on programs and purchases at all Maine Audubon stores as well as a subscription to the quarterly periodical *Habitat*.

The chapter offers a weekly email service to remind members about upcoming events in our region plus electronic delivery of this newsletter upon request. Please email Jim Zeman, [kjzeman@hotmail.com](mailto:kjzeman@hotmail.com) to sign up for these services.

### CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Communications & Education ..... Gloria Vollmers  
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Stewardship ..... Tim Conmee

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.....and Jane Rosinski

### Visit us on the Web

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

## FIELDS POND JOURNAL

BY DAVID LAMON, FPAC MANAGER  
FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER

Since beginning my position here, I've been impressed by the many ways that the local community helps support the Fields Pond Audubon Center (FPAC) through volunteering. For starters, there are the leaders of the Penobscot Valley Chapter (PVC) of Maine Audubon, who are an eclectic group of individuals that lend their diverse talents to the jobs of stewardship and education. From fundraising to field trips, many PVC members play a vital role in sustaining FPAC. If you enjoyed walking the well-mowed paths through the Fields Pond fields this past summer, then you have Jerry Smith to thank. Jerry is one of those volunteers who works quietly in the background whenever needed, helping to maintain the FPAC grounds for the enjoyment of our visitors. Our "feathered visitors" are always well-fed thanks to the dedication of Maggie Guthrie, who regularly comes to FPAC to maintain our bird feeding stations.

Volunteering for a cause you care about has a lot of upsides. For many of us, helping to conserve and protect the environment is an important priority in a world that suffers from so much exploitation and misuse. Doing something concrete to make our world better, no matter how small, helps us feel empowered. And then, of course, there's the ever-possible chance that we'll learn something from the experience. Whether you're a seasoned environmental champion or just getting started, there are people, animals, and even habitats that have a lot to teach us all!

### Upcoming FPAC Volunteer Training Sessions:

Educational Guide  
Saturday, January 26,  
9-11am

The main activity of a volunteer Educational Guide (EG) is to help lead FPAC's indoor and outdoor educational programs for families and youth. The EG needs an appreciation for the natural

world, and a desire to share this enthusiasm with people of all ages. This position requires public speaking and positive group management skills. Pre-registration for EG training is required; please call 989-2591 to sign up.

### Visitor Services

Saturday, February 23, 9-11am

Visitor Services (VS) volunteers help broaden the public's knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of Maine Audubon membership and the 210-acre FPAC wildlife sanctuary. VS volunteers greet visitors, serve customers in the Nature Store, respond to phone inquiries, help maintain outdoor bird feeding stations, and assist the Director with staff projects behind the scenes. This position requires attention to detail and a friendly, easy-going manner. Pre-registration for VS training is required; please call 989-2591 to sign up.

### FIELDS POND WISH LIST

- Black-oil sunflower seed for our bird feeding stations.
- Waterhog entry mat (3'x5').
- Lifejackets and canoe paddles.
- Outdoor solar spotlight for our road sign.



Lori Smith, her husband Jonathan, their son Henry and daughter Elizabeth all volunteered during this last fall's stewardship work day. Thanks to their help, we were able to install a new sign and landscaping at entrance to Fields Pond Audubon Center. (David Lamon photo)



## FIELDS POND CENTER PROGRAMS

Please note that all programs with fees require pre-registration and payment via the Maine Audubon website, [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org). If you can't access the website, please call FPAC at 989-2591.

### Discussion Course:

#### Reconnecting with Earth

*Mondays, Jan 7 – Feb 11  
6:30 – 7:30 p.m.*

What is the appropriate relationship of human beings to Earth? The impacts of industrialized societies have grown more evident, and now threaten ecological collapse. Our world is changing at an astoundingly fast pace. We get caught up in our daily lives, and end up losing touch with the deep connection we all have to our planet. Reconnecting with Earth helps participants discover a deeper respect for the planet and a renewed commitment to act—a shift that could be the key to real and lasting change.

*Members \$35, non-members \$40, includes course book*

#### Family Fun at Fields Pond

*Thursdays, Jan 10 – Feb 14  
9:30-10:30 a.m.*

6-week session for children ages 2-5 plus parent or guardian. Young children and their grown-ups are invited to spend an hour exploring nature together, through stories, songs, art, and play. Each week will include indoor and outdoor adventures designed to foster a connection to nature, encourage stewardship, and provide an introduction to group learning settings. Advanced registration is encouraged! Drop-ins are welcome ONLY if space is available.

*Member families \$60/non-members \$80, siblings under 2 free.*

#### Winter Nature Journaling

*Saturday, January 12  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.*

Join Maine Master Naturalist Andrea Lani for a day of journaling. We'll start indoors with an intro to nature journaling, featuring techniques to help even the most reluctant artists overcome their fears. Then we'll head outside and explore the sanctuary with all our senses, using a variety of journaling techniques as we write our way into stories about the natural winter world around us. *Members \$30, non-members \$40*

### "Who Goes There?"

#### Animal Tracking Workshop

*Thursday, January 17, 6 – 8 p.m.*

Learn to identify mammal tracks through slides, prints and casts. Bring a notebook to make your own track field guide and make a track cast to take home. Appropriate for all ages.

*Members \$8/\$15 family, non-members \$10/\$20 family*

#### Winter Tracking in the Field

*Saturday, January 19, 9 – 11 a.m.*

How many times have you found strange markings in the snow, and wondered what made them? Learn to identify the signs left behind by our wild neighbors, and apply your new skills from Thursday's workshop as we head outdoors for a morning of tracking wildlife. Please dress appropriately for moderate outdoor hiking in winter weather. *Members \$10/\$18 family, non-members \$12/\$25 family*

#### Growing Up WILD Professional Training Workshop

*Saturday, February 2  
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (4 PDH credits)*

Developed by and for educators, Growing Up WILD is an early childhood education program (ages 3-7) that builds on children's sense of wonder about nature, and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Through a wide range of activities and experiences, Growing Up WILD provides an early foundation for developing positive impressions about the natural world, as well as lifelong social and academic skills. Participants receive the multi-award winning activity guide, featuring 27 field-tested thematic units with over 400 experiences. *Workshop fee: \$25.*

#### Groundhog Eve

*Friday, February 1, 7 p.m.*

Tomorrow is Groundhog Day! Celebrate with yummy holiday treats, and discover fascinating facts about the groundhog - the only rodent with its very own holiday! Unravel Groundhog Day lore, and learn how differently this holiday was celebrated in the olden days. *Members \$8/\$15 family, non-members \$10/\$20 family.*

#### Join us on Saturday, February 9 for Winter Fun at Fields Pond!

FPAC is partnering with the Curran Homestead Village to present an old-fashioned winter festival, featuring fun, memorable, and educational experiences for all ages. Outdoors, Curran will offer horse-drawn sleigh rides

and an ice harvest on Fields Pond. Indoors, FPAC will present two family-friendly programs about frozen lakes and ponds. *Fees for each program: Members Free! Non-member individual \$10, family \$20.*

#### --Winter Lake Ecology on Fields Pond, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Have you ever wondered what is happening beneath the ice on a frozen lake? How do fish and other organisms survive for so long beneath the frozen surface? Join Dr. Stephen Coghlan, Associate Professor of Freshwater Fisheries Ecology, and his students from the University of Maine for a hands-on exploration of winter lake ecology on Fields Pond.

#### --ICE Cold Science, 1 – 2 p.m.

Explore the science of cold! Participatory demonstrations and simple experiments will let you experience phases of matter, sublimation, and changes under different conditions of frozen water and gas! Join Trudi Plummer, Director of Education at the Maine Discovery Museum, for this hands-on program.

#### Maine Audubon Vacation Camp at Fields Pond, February 19 – 22 (4 days), 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Maine Audubon's winter vacation camp is an opportunity for children in Grades 3-5 to learn about winter wildlife through fun activities and outdoor adventure. Our daily schedule includes time for art, hiking, science, games, and stories. And each day has a different theme: animal adaptations, snow science, tracking, and winter ecology.

*\$40/session Members*

*\$50/session Non-members*

Camp Scholarships are available for those who need financial assistance. Please call 207-781-2330, x273 or email [scholarships@maineaudubon.org](mailto:scholarships@maineaudubon.org). You may also download the Maine Audubon Financial Aid Form (pdf).

#### Pruning Workshop:

##### Trees and Shrubs

##### Two-part workshop:

*March 21 and March 28*

*10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.*

Join Univ. of Maine Cooperative Extension staff at FPAC for a hands-on, comprehensive pruning workshop. A full program description and course fees were not available at press time. Please call FPAC at 989-2591 to get more information as it becomes available, and to register.

## PVC PROGRAMS

The Penobscot Valley Chapter offers FREE monthly programs on natural history and conservation-related topics that reflect the interests of our membership. We hope you will be able to join us each month for an evening of camaraderie, learning, and FUN with like-minded people. All programs are open to the general public, so feel free to bring a friend or an out-of-town guest!

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH: A TRAVELOGUE

*Fields Pond Audubon Center*

*Friday, February 15, 7:00 p.m.*

This is the story of an July 2018 trip from Maine to the Badlands and Black Hills of South Dakota, then on to Glacier National Park in Montana, then due north into the Canadian Rockies. It's about spending five weeks and 9238 miles in a van named "Dusty." Along the way: four American national parks, eight Canadian national parks, 11 black bears, one grizzly bear at too-close range, two moose, four badgers, and 225 bird species. Bob and Sandi Duchesne tour the sites, show the sights, and tell the tale.

### PROTECTING ENDANGERED SPECIES ON MAINE BEACHES

*Fields Pond Audubon Center*

*Friday, March 15, 7:00 p.m.*

Maine Audubon has been monitoring endangered Least Terns since 1977, and Piping Plovers since 1981. Along with the help of our partners at Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, we have watched the populations go up and down over the years. Thanks to the hard-work of key partners, and Maine Audubon's ongoing success in building collaborations with countless others, from coastal town governments to volunteers to landowners, Piping Plovers are currently thriving on our beaches. In fact, 2018 was a record-high year for both nesting pairs and surviving fledglings! Maine Audubon Biologist and Coastal Birds Project Director Laura Zitske will talk about the birds, the project, what we've learned, and what we still need to figure out.

# MAINE AUDUBON

Penobscot Valley Chapter

c/o Fields Pond Audubon Center  
216 Fields Pond Road  
Holden, Maine 04429

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**Mission of the Penobscot Valley Chapter:**  
*Conserving wildlife and wildlife habitat by  
connecting people to our regional natural heritage,  
through enjoyable and meaningful activities  
that educate and promote greater environmental  
awareness.*



This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

## PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER WINTER FIELD TRIPS

*Penobscot Valley Chapter field trips are fun ways to meet like-minded people, while enjoying the rich natural heritage of our region. As a general rule, we will cancel for significant snow, rain, deep cold, and very strong winds, but go out anyway if the forecast calls for light showers or flurries. We hope you will bundle up, come outside, and join us!*

### SNOWY OWLS ON SARGENT MTN.

*Saturday, February 23, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.*

*Weather contingency date:*

*Sunday, February 24*

*Cost: FREE - \$5 donation to FPAC optional*  
Snowy Owls typically inhabit Acadia's highest peaks in winter. They can be observed or photographed above tree line under more natural conditions, away from buildings and other structures. Multiple sightings of owls are often possible. Gordon Russell and Jane Rosinski will lead a snowshoe hike up Sargent Mountain, the second highest peak in Acadia, in search of Snowy Owls and scenic winter vistas. This is a rigorous snowshoe outing, two miles from the parking lot to the summit, including 0.8 miles up a steep slope until you get above the tree line. Participants should be reasonably fit and experienced on snowshoes; poles are recommended.

Meet at Fields Pond Audubon Center at 8:30 a.m. to carpool to the Parkman Mountain parking pulloff area on Routes 3/198 in Mt. Desert, or arrange to meet us there. Limited to 12 people. Call 989-2591 to pre-register.

### ACADIA IN WINTER

*Saturday, March 2, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*

*Cost: FREE - \$5 donation to FPAC optional*

Acadia National Park is truly a four-season delight, yet many Mainers have never experienced Acadia during the quieter winter months. For anyone with an interest in birding, this is a magical time of year. Most of our breeding songbirds will not return until April or May, but they have been replaced by a wide variety of Canada-breeding species that spend their winters here, both on land and on the water. Trip leaders Bob and Sandi Duchesne have been birding Acadia and Mt. Desert Island in winter for over four decades, and they look forward to sharing some of their favorite spots and species with you. This trip is suitable for all levels of birding experience; we will walk for short distances at a number of stops, but no extensive hiking is involved. Bring a brown-bag lunch and snacks, binoculars, a spotting scope if you have one (leaders will share theirs), and a camera if you want to capture the amazing scenery.

Meet in the parking lot behind Wendy's just off I-95 Exit 193 (Stillwater Avenue) in Old Town at 6:30 a.m., or at Fields Pond Audubon Center at 7:00 a.m. to form carpools; if you live closer to MDI, we can arrange to meet you en route. Please call 989-2591 to pre-register, let us know where you will meet us to carpool, and provide contact information. Sandi will call or e-mail you on Friday night prior to 9 p.m. if this trip has to cancel for bad weather.

## FIELDS POND BOOK GROUP

*The Fields Pond Book Group meets monthly on Thursday nights at 6:30 p.m. at the Orono Public Library, facilitated by professional librarian Joyce Rumery. Here are the titles that the group will read and discuss during February and March. There will be no book group meeting in January. Please visit [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org) or call FPAC at 989-2591 to read a short overview of each book.*

### February 14, 2019

Egan, Dan. *The Death and Life of the Great Lakes*. 2018. 384pp

### March 14, 2019

Beehler, Bruce M. *North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring*. 2018. 256pp