

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



January - February 2020

Create Your Personal Conservation Plan

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

As we enter the new year, we face numerous environmental challenges that must be addressed if we are to continue to enjoy the natural world around us. Some of these we can tackle on a local or personal level; others will require getting involved on a larger scale.

This past September, the journal *Science* reported the alarming findings by an international team of scientists that wild bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada have declined by almost 30 percent since 1970. This amounts to roughly 3 billion birds! Habitat loss due to increased agriculture and other development is the major factor for the disappearance of birds, which was reported for all regions and biomes, including forests, grasslands, arctic tundra, and coastlines. Continued use of pesticides and the ever-increasing amount of plastic waste in the environment also contributed to the rapid die-off. There were some bright spots in the findings, as numbers of waterfowl, raptors, and turkeys actually increased over the past 50 years, due in large part to dedicated habitat conservation efforts on the ground and laws and regulations that have eliminated some of the most harmful pesticides like DDT.

The report on bird losses did offer hope, if we are willing to make changes in our personal behavior, and apply some of the strategies that have been successful for waterfowl, raptors and turkeys, including habitat restoration and protection. On a personal or local level, the findings call for taking "7 Simple Actions to Help Birds". These include:

1) Make windows safer to reduce collisions, by using screens or attaching stickers to the glass

- 2) Keep cats indoors to reduce predation
- 3) Landscape using native plants and reduce lawn area
- 4) Avoid pesticides, both in your gardening and in your diet
- 5) Drink coffee that is shade grown and produced in forest settings that support birds
- 6) Reduce plastic waste
- 7) Become a "citizen scientist" by helping with annual bird surveys such as Project Feeder Watch

Hopefully you've been doing some these things already. For more information on how you can help reduce the decline in birds, visit <https://www.3billionbirds.org>.

Restoring habitat for birds and other wildlife also requires actions on a larger scale. The increases in waterfowl, raptors and turkeys recorded since 1970 have resulted from legislation such as the Endangered Species Act, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Typically, conservation initiatives are supported by state and federal laws and implemented using partnerships that include local land owners. Policy makers need to be reminded that these efforts are being carried out by numerous stakeholders and have been successful. As environmental stewards, we must remain vigilant and engaged in

policy development and implementation at all levels to prevent backsliding or elimination of successful conservation strategies.

And so, the new year presents an opportunity to create your personal conservation plan. Tackle the 7 Simple Actions to help birds. Support candidates for office who will work to improve conditions for birds and other wildlife. Become actively involved in organizations, such as Maine Audubon, that are working to address the climate crisis and to protect natural habitats in the state. Finally, connect with like-minded individuals who share your stewardship values, by coming on bird walks and field trips and attending programs offered by the Penobscot Valley Chapter. We'd love to have you join us. Please let us know what you're thinking, at penobscotvalleyaudubon@gmail.com.



Photo by Bob Duchesne

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 to sign up for these services.

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Natural Selections

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FIELDS POND JOURNAL

BY DAVID LAMON, FPAC MANAGER
FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER

This past fall we started new environmental programming for schools, including water quality and forestry programs. These programs brought students in Grades 4 through high school out to Fields Pond to collect and analyze data to better understand the ecology of forest and lake environments. Students used professional scientific tools and protocols to monitor the quality of our forests and lake water at Fields Pond. We look forward to growing these programs in coming years, and we invite interested teachers to contact us to learn more about environmental education opportunities at the Fields Pond Audubon Center.



In October, we held our first-ever 5K trail/road race. Although the weather was wet and cool, the runners who participated had great things to say about the scenic and challenging course at Fields Pond. We invite you to start training for next year's run! October also brought together an enthusiastic and hardworking team of over two dozen volunteers for our Fall Stewardship Day. It felt like a culmination of the community building we've been doing since Fields Pond Audubon Center reopened. Maine Audubon's Property Manager, Peter Baecher, led a team of University of Maine students in building a French drain around the building. A member of the Maine Audubon Board of Trustees, Sean Trahan, who grew up

on Fields Pond, worked with another group of volunteers to secure bog bridging along a section of trail. A third group, including a team of Unity College students, worked on trail signage improvements and took down our summer picnic shelter. Much was accomplished!

As we move forward into 2020, we invite you to check out our lineup of winter programming on the following pages. Whether you join us for a program or a volunteer work event, we look forward to greeting you in 2020. Happy New Year!



Photos by
Fields Pond Staff

Please note that all programs with fees require pre-registration and payment via the Maine Audubon website, www.maineaudubon.org. If you can't access the website, please call FPAC at 989-2591 or e-mail fieldspond@maineaudubon.org for assistance with pre-registration.

FULL-MOON SNOWSHOE HIKE

Friday, January 10, 6-7:30 p.m.
Members free, \$8 non-members
Bundle up and join the Fields Pond Audubon staff for a moonlit walk along the sanctuary trails. Hot beverages will be available indoors following the walk. Snowshoes will be available for those in need, but pre-registration is required to reserve a set.

ENVIRONMENTAL FILM SERIES

Tuesday, January 14, 6:30-8 p.m.
\$5 per person suggested donation
Join us for a monthly environmentally-focused film showing on the "big screen" at Fields Pond. Films run in length between 40 and 90 minutes, with time for discussion afterwards. Please call Fields Pond to find out what will be showing this month, or check out our Facebook page for details.

REQUIEM

Thursday, January 16, 7 p.m.
FREE
Requiem is a sound installation by sound artist and musician Steve Norton. The work's topic is human-driven extinction. It is an electronic music composition, whose sound materials are exclusively the sounds of bird and frog species that have gone extinct during the era of recorded sound, enabling us to hear them once again, forever or until the power goes out. In this program, Steve will address the audience at the Fields Pond Audubon Center regarding the making of Requiem, his artistic research, the work's context, and a little about the technology involved. Steve was a working musician

in the Boston area for over thirty years, playing woodwinds and other instruments in the avant-garde jazz and free improvisation communities. He recently completed an MFA in Intermedia at the University of Maine. Note: The Requiem installation will be open to the public at Fields Pond from January 13th through February 13th.

WINTER TREE IDENTIFICATION

Saturday, January 18, 9-10:30 a.m.
\$5 members, \$10 non-members
Join staff Environmental Educator and Forest Ecologist, Sophie DeMaio, to look at trees a little more closely. We will use ID keys to begin recognizing some of Maine's common native trees, even in mid-winter when we can't tell them by their leaves.

RECYCLING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Thursday, January 22, 7 p.m.
Members free, \$8 non-members
Join Shelby Wright, Director of Community Services at Coastal Resources of Maine, to learn more about the latest recycling technology in your neighborhood. Gathering the waste from over 100 local communities, the new Hampden facility will use Fiberight's proprietary state-of-the-art technology to recover resources from our waste stream and convert them into value-added products and bio-fuels. Come to find out what's happening with your trash!

MOOSE, WINTER TICK AND CLIMATE

Wednesday, January 29, 7 p.m.
Members free, \$8 non-members
Maine has the most progressive and scientific moose management program in the United States. Join Lee Kanter, Maine's Moose Biologist with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, as he explains what the research is telling us about the survival and future of this iconic Maine species.

GROUNDHOG EVE

Saturday, February 1, 2-3:30 p.m.
\$5 members (kids \$3), \$10 non-members (kids \$6)
It's almost Groundhog Day! Celebrate with yummy holiday treats and discover fascinating facts about woodchucks, the only rodents with their very own holiday! Unravel Groundhog Day lore, and learn how differently this holiday was celebrated in the old days. This is a family-friendly event.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: JOURNEY TO THE ROOFTOP OF AFRICA - A KILIMANJARO TREK

Wednesday, February 5
7 p.m.
Donations optional; all proceeds benefit FPAC and Holden Land Trust
Mainers Betty Jamison, Kris Reid and John Bryant recently travelled to Tanzania to hike and climb to the top of Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. Experience the five habitat zones on the way up the mountain, the logistics of getting there, and the beauty of the struggle to 19,400 feet. Note: This presentation is a joint fundraiser for Fields Pond and the Holden Land Trust hiking trails. Thanks for your support!

WINTER FUN AT FIELDS POND

Saturday, February 8, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
FREE
A day to celebrate all things winter! Both indoor and outdoor activities for the whole family. A complete schedule will be available closer to the event date. Please call the Fields Pond Audubon Center at 989-2591, or find us on Facebook for more details.

ENVIRONMENTAL FILM SERIES

Tuesday, February 11, 6:30-8 p.m.
\$5 per person suggested donation
Join us for a monthly environmentally focused film showing on the "big screen" at Fields Pond. Films run in length between 40 and 90 minutes, with time for discussion afterwards. Please call Fields Pond to find

out what will be showing this month or check out our Facebook page for details.

AUDUBON VACATION CAMP at FIELDS POND

Tuesday – Friday, February 18–21 (4 days), 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Students, Grades 3-5
Members: \$40 per session. Non-members: \$50 per session.
Looking for something to do over school vacation week? Maine Audubon's winter vacation camp is an opportunity for children in Grades 3-5 to learn about winter wildlife through hands-on activities and outdoor adventure. Our daily schedule includes time for art, hiking, science, games, and stories. Each day will have a different theme, and will include topics about animal adaptations, snow science, tracking, and winter ecology. Partial scholarships are available to those who need financial assistance. Please call 207-781-2330 x.273, or email scholarships@maineaudubon.org.

"WHO GOES THERE?"

An outdoor tracking walk at Fields Pond
Saturday, February 22, 9-11 a.m.
Members \$8, non-members \$12
Join Sandra Mitchell for a two-hour easy walk around the nature center at Fields Pond, looking for evidence of winter critters in the landscape. We will look for signs big and small - ranging from tracks in the snow (hopefully) to evidence of animals feeding. The walk will be slow and easy - often when there is much to see, we actually don't get very far at all! Sandra Mitchell is a Registered Maine Guide and a Cybertracker certified Wildlife Tracker. She loves to prowl around outside to see what her wild neighbors have been up to! Pre-registration is required, and we suggest you sign up quickly - space is limited.

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.

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PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS— WINTER 2020

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! Please note that there is no scheduled program in January due to weather worries, and the March program will be listed in the Spring 2020 newsletter.

COSTA RICA BIRDING, MAINE AUDUBON STYLE

*Fields Pond Audubon Center
Friday, February 15, 7:00 p.m.*

Sandi and Bob Duchesne embarked on a Maine Audubon/Field Guides birding trip to Costa Rica, with Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist Doug Hitchcox guiding their small group. Escape the cold Maine winter with this virtual trip to the tropics, as Sandi and Bob introduce you to the spectacular birding and diverse habitats that Costa Rica offers. Dense jungle, canopied rainforest, high mountain vistas, ranchland, desert, beautiful beaches on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, even several active volcanoes: Costa Rica has it all, which explains how over 900 species of birds can be found in a country the size of West Virginia. In fact, Costa Rica boasts over 50 species of hummingbirds alone! Sandi and Bob are now back home, and eager to share their photos and stories about the birds – and other wildlife – they encountered.

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER WINTER FIELD TRIP

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!

SCHOODIC IN WINTER

Sunday, February 23, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Cost: Trip fee of \$10 member/\$20 non member benefits the Fields Pond Audubon Center.

Join Bob and Sandi Duchesne for a trip to the less-traveled mainland tract of Acadia National Park. We will meet at Fields Pond and carpool to Schoodic to look for winter birds, on sea and on land. This is a great trip for novice birders and new residents who want to learn more about Maine's winter birds, and where to look for them along the Downeast coast. More experienced birders can help us scan for unusual visitors among the large flocks of seabirds that gather here each winter, and everyone will enjoy the scenic natural vistas as we travel along the rugged, wave-swept coastline. Bring a brown-bag lunch and dress in warm layers, including boots or water-resistant shoes, that will allow you to comfortably stand outside and do some short-distance walking. Please call 989-2591 to pre-register and leave your contact information. If the weather forecast for Sunday looks iffy, Sandi will call you on Saturday night between 6 and 7 p.m. to confirm or cancel the trip.