

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



March - May 2020

Birding for Your Good Health

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

Have you ever stopped to think about why birding (especially in the spring after a long winter) is such a positive experience? I recently ran across an article listing 10 health benefits of birding. You'll be able to relate right away to some of these observations; others may not be so obvious.

1. Appreciation for nature: visiting birds in their natural habitat gives you a better sense of what conditions they need to survive and thrive.

2. Patience: it takes time to find and identify birds, and to develop the skills to help you do so.

3. Contemplation and introspection: spending time outdoors searching for birds can be very meditative, and provides ample opportunity to slow down and think things through.

4. Quick reflexes: you need to be ready to act quickly when suddenly

surprised by a flutter of wings or burst of song notes.

5. Mental alertness: you also need to process a variety of clues – bird coloration, size and shape, behavior, sound, and habitat when making an identification in the field.

6. Cardiovascular health: just getting outdoors regularly can boost heart health, and while most birding is done at a slow pace, the occasional trek up a mountain or to a distant location to spot that special bird can really get the blood flowing.

7. Sense of community: if you take part in organized bird walks or meet others regularly on your outings, you inevitably develop friendships with like-minded individuals, who not only enjoy the same hobby, but feel strongly about protecting the natural world around us.

8. Acceptance: anyone who birds on a regular basis knows that things don't always turn out the way you anticipated – the weather didn't cooperate, the birds hadn't arrived yet, or your camera battery was dead. You can't control every outcome. But you can find joy in what you did see and experience, and return to try again another day.

9. Travel: birding can take you to new destinations and adventures you might not otherwise experience, whether it's a trip to another part of the state or a distant country, all of which can broaden your horizons.

10. Improved physical strength: holding binoculars or cameras at the ready and keeping muscles tensed to look into the canopy can help your overall fitness.

Penobscot Valley Chapter volunteers and Maine Audubon staff are once again offering Neighborhood Bird Walks this coming May throughout the greater Bangor area, to help you realize some of these healthful benefits of birding. We've included familiar destinations as well as some new locales, where you can enjoy nature, sharpen your birding skills and meet old and new friends. The morning walks are free of charge, and open to all levels of birding experience. The list of walks is included in this issue of Natural Selections. Please keep it handy, and join us as we engage in our favorite spring pastime. We also welcome your thoughts and comments at penobscotvalleyaudubon@gmail.com.



Harlequins by Bob Duchesne—see field trip, Page 5

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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 <https://pvc.maineaudubon.org>
www.facebook.com/penobscotvalleyaudubon

FIELDS POND JOURNAL

BY DAVID LAMON, FPAC MANAGER

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER

New visitors to the Fields Pond Audubon Center are often surprised to hear that the Center is open year-round; yes, even in winter and early spring! In fact, winter is one of the best times to enjoy Fields Pond. Ice skaters, ice fishers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, hikers, and kids playing in the snow have all enjoyed these activities at Maine Audubon's Fields Pond sanctuary during the past winter. A visit to Fields Pond is a great way to stay active during the long Maine winter season. This winter, our volunteers stayed active, too: helping to maintain and create new trails, sprucing up the nesting bird boxes (for spring's returning Eastern Bluebirds and Wood Ducks) placed throughout

the property, and helping staff the visitors' service desk on weekends. Our popular Family Fun pre-school program continued this winter, getting our younger community members outdoors to learn more about the environment. Speaking of learning, we offered an array of public education programs this winter, focusing on outdoor recreation, biology, ecology, natural history, live-animal visits, films, handcrafts, art exhibits, travel logs, and seasonal celebrations. This diversity of programs is only possible with your support. So take a moment to look over the upcoming programs, and considered heading over to Fields Pond before we officially leave Maine's long winter season behind; enjoy!

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 for March through May.

March 12, 2020

Carson, Rachel. **Silent Spring**. 1964 (many editions and page lengths).

April 9, 2020

Darwin, Charles. **The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms**. 1881 (many editions and page lengths)

May 14, 2020

Young, Jon. **What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World**. 2012. 241 pp.



Red-bellied Woodpecker by Doug Hitchcox—see related program, Page 3

My current job requires a lot of travel - often two to three weeks a month of jetting around the country, and sometimes abroad. Living on Fields Pond offers me a quick commute to the Bangor "International" airport; best of all for me, however, is the silence of the surrounding area in the wee hours of the morning. It's an experience one never forgets. In the pre-dawn when I'm flying out somewhere, I often find myself walking down to the dock, catching a glimpse at the stars overhead, listening to the loons and their cries, and a mink or muskrat chomping down on some mussels somewhere in the dark. A slight breeze whisks through the towering oak. I start to ponder if these creatures can see me, standing there in my blazer, knowing that they are fortunate to get to stay there and bask in the glowing sun, swim in the cool

water and watch the sun creep up over Copeland Hill. I turn and work my way toward the road to catch the approaching Uber and start my day.

This flight is a quick trip to New York, and the airport is full of people sporting their souvenir Bar Harbor sweatshirts. Kids are running through the terminal, parents chasing them, all recharged from their stay at Grandma and Grandpa's house on the coast or at camp. Me, I look at my reflection in the glass: blazer, collared shirt, and a cup of coffee. Bummer. On the plus side, it is a great day for flying - a crisp clear sky, means that one can see forever. Luckily, I have a window seat to look out, and as the plane ascends into the sky we take off to the east. We fly over Fields Pond, and within the mix of the random pattern of sun shimmering off the water, I can see a canoe and a few kayakers out for their morning paddle. We bank to the right, heading southwest towards New

York. Within a few minutes I am asleep, only to be woken shortly thereafter by the announcement that we are landing in New York.

As I walk up the jet bridge towards the terminal, I can feel the hustle and bustle of the big city - the smells, the crowds of people, the echo of public announcements in the distance. Sensory overload, given that just a few hours ago it was just me and some creatures hanging out by the water. I heave a big sigh, as I reach into my bag and pull out my phone. A quick press of the button and an image of a loon, with its large red eye and water droplets on its face, stretches across the screen. I manage a quick smile, knowing that soon I will be back to the peace and quiet of Fields Pond, where time stands still and my nature friends will be there waiting for me.

Ring-ring, ring-ring. "Sean speaking...."

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS – SPRING 2020

We invite you to join us as we explore Maine's natural history and environmental concerns, with special attention to the abundant wildlife and diverse ecosystems within the greater Penobscot Valley region. Free monthly programs that follow the school year calendar (September-May, no January) are one of the many benefits of your membership in the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon. All chapter programs are open to the general public, so feel free to bring a friend or an out-of-town guest!

PUB NIGHT with JOHN HOLYOKE

Thursday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.

Mason's Brewing Company, 15 Hardy Street, Brewer

John Holyoke, featured columnist for the *Bangor Daily News*, will share a few of his most memorable outdoor adventures. John has just published his first book, *Evergreens*, and he will have copies available for purchase and signing. You are invited to arrive early (5:30-6 p.m.) for supper and drinks, in appreciation for Mason's making their event room available to us. Specialty desserts and drinks will be available for order during John's presentation.

DECADES OF CHANGE

Fields Pond Audubon Center

Thursday, April 16, 7:00 p.m.

Bird populations in Maine are constantly changing. Over 460 species have been recorded in Maine. Some have been here for a long time, while others are fairly new. Some are accidental, and others have been introduced. As our state celebrates its bicentennial, Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist, Doug Hitchcox, will explain some of the major changes and fluctuations that have occurred in our avian fauna species and numbers since Maine's admission to the Union.

ANNUAL MEETING and IBERA LECTURE: RUSTY BLACKBIRD HABITAT in COMMERCIAL FORESTS

Fields Pond Audubon Center

Thursday, May 7, 6:00 p.m. potluck supper/7:00 p.m. business meeting and program

Please join us for a potluck supper to celebrate spring and conduct the PVC Annual Meeting. Following the election of officers and board members for 2020-21, we will hear a presentation from Luke Douglas, MS degree candidate in Forest Resources at the University of Maine and PVC's Inez Boyd Environmental Research Award (IBERA) winner for 2019. Luke will describe his ongoing academic research project, partially funded by PVC, on the survival of rusty blackbird nests and fledglings within the vast working forests of northwest Maine and northern NH. This uncommon species has declined by about 85 percent since the 1970s, and it is ranked as a Priority 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need within Maine. Luke's research proposes to help wildlife biologists and foresters develop better harvesting strategies to conserve, and possibly even enhance, rusty blackbird breeding habitat within the industrial spruce-fir forest.

BRINGING NATURE HOME: WHY NATIVE PLANTS MATTER

Fields Pond Audubon Center

Thursday, May 21, 7:00 p.m.

"Bringing Nature Home" is Maine Audubon's new community engagement and habitat stewardship initiative, based on the bestselling book of that title by Doug Tallamy. Join Maine Audubon's Director of Education, Eric Topper, to explore the plants, practices and perks involved in restoring native food webs in Maine gardens, yards and communities. Our individual efforts to support pollinators, birds, and other native wildlife can be both intimately rewarding, and broadly beneficial. **NOTE: if you are inspired by Eric's presentation, please make plans to attend FPAC's Annual Native Plant Sale on Saturday, May 30, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. All plant species have been selected and lovingly cultivated by Maine Audubon staff and volunteers, and all are appropriate for the climate and growing season within the Penobscot Valley region.**



Monarch
on
Milkweed

Penobscot Valley Chapter, Fields Pond Audubon Center

Neighborhood Bird Walks

May 2020

Unless otherwise indicated, all walks are FREE and run from 7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Rubber boots or waterproof shoes are recommended, due to wet grass and occasionally muddy conditions. In consideration of wildlife and fellow birders, no pets please on these bird walks.

EVENING WOODCOCK WALK

Tuesday, May 5: Fields Pond Audubon Center, Holden

Leader: David Lamon, Fields Pond Manager

Please note that this evening walk is preceded by an educational program on the American woodcock, starting at 7 p.m. at FPAC. The program will be followed by a short walk to observe the courtship sky dance of male woodcocks on their lek. Both the talk and the walk are free to Audubon members/\$8 non-members.

Friday, May 8: Indian Trail and Penobscot County

Conservation Assn., Brewer

Leaders: Gordon Russell, Jane Rosinski

Meet at Penobscot County Conservation Association on North Main Street.

Saturday, May 9: (World Migratory Bird Day) Fields Pond Audubon Center, Holden

Leader: Doug Hitchcox, Staff Naturalist

Meet in Fields Pond Audubon Center parking lot. Please note that this walk will start at 8 a.m. rather than 7 a.m., and will run for about 2 hours.

Wednesday, May 13: Mt. Hope Cemetery, Bangor

Leaders: Jim and Kathy Zeman

Meet in the parking area inside the State Street entrance.

Friday, May 15: Leonard's Mills, Bradley

Leader: Bob Duchesne

Meet at the junction of Government Road and Route 178.

Monday, May 18: University of Maine, Orono

Leader: Sandi Duchesne

Meet near the Arboretum in the parking lot between the Emera Astronomy Center and the Jordan Observatory.

Tuesday, May 19: Essex Woods, Bangor

Leaders: Steve Mierzykowski, Robert Ostrowski

Meet in the parking lot at the end of Watchmaker Road.

Wednesday, May 20: Bangor City Forest, Bangor

Leaders: Paul Markson, Gloria Vollmers

Meet at the BCF parking lot at end of Kittredge Road.

Thursday, May 21: West Penjajawoc Preserve, Bangor

Co-sponsored by Bangor Land Trust

Leaders: Elizabeth Payne, Lucy Quimby.

Meet at the dead end of Fox Hollow Lane, off Essex Street.

Friday, May 22: Saxl Park, Bangor

Leaders: Laura Levenson, Elizabeth Payne

Meet in Cascade Park parking lot, just off State Street.

Saturday, May 23: Technology Park, Orono

Leaders: Jerry Longcore, Jim Bird

Take Godfrey Drive in Orono. Meet in the parking lot behind the building (formerly Nexx-Linx call center) across the road from Black Bear Inn.

Tuesday, May 26: Kenduskeag Stream Trail, Bangor

Leaders: Hope Brogunier, Gordon Russell, Jane Rosinski

Meet in the 2nd parking lot upstream of the intersection of Valley Ave. and Bruce Road.

Wednesday, May 27: Bangor Waterfront

Leaders: Bob Milardo, Gordon Russell

Meet at the last (southernmost) parking area off Front Street, by the big concert stage.

Thursday, May 28: Taylor Rd.- Caribou Bog

Conservation Area, Orono

Co-sponsored by Orono Land Trust

Leaders: Paul Corcoran, Gordon Russell

Follow Taylor Road 0.3 miles from Forest Avenue, turn left onto Putnam Road (aka Orono Landfill Access Road). Meet at the trailhead parking area in front of the gate.

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER PROGRAMS - SPRING 2020

All programs require preregistration. Go to maineaudubon.org or call 989-2591

Big Night (Pre) Celebration

Monday, March 9, 7 p.m.

Learn how to help salamanders and frogs reach their destination safely on "Big Night" when they wake up and start migrating to their breeding pools. Non-members \$8, members free

Young Birders Club

Saturdays, March 14 & April 11, 9-11 a.m., MAY 9, 8-10 a.m.

Kids ages 10-16 are invited to join the Maine Audubon staff to learn the ins & outs of birding. Binoculars and field guides will be available. \$5/class

Using Trail Cameras to Study Wildlife Behavior

Wednesday, March 18, 7 p.m.

Join conservation biologist and author Janet Pesaturo, author of *Camera Trapping Guide: Tracks, Sign and Behavior of Eastern Wildlife*, for a presentation on trail cameras and smart camera placement. \$10 Non-members, \$5 members

Family Fun Series (Ages 2-5, siblings under 2 free)

Thursdays, March 26-May 2 (no class April 23), 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Young children and their grown-ups explore nature through stories, songs, art, and play. Advanced registration is encouraged! Drop-ins are

welcome only if space is available. Non-members \$80 (\$12 drop in); members \$70 (\$10 drop in)

Birding Basics

Led by Maine Audubon Staff Naturalist Doug Hitchcox.

Part 1: Identifying Birds

Thursday, April 9, 7 p.m.

This class will teach you the essentials of identifying birds from beak to tail.

Part 2: Finding Birds

Thursday, April 23, 7 p.m.

This class will focus on how to attract birds to your yard and how to find birds. Non-members \$12, members \$8

Bluebird Nest Box Building Workshop

Saturday, April 11, 12:30-2 p.m.

In this hands-on, family-friendly workshop, you will build a box from a pre-cut kit, and learn where and how to place bluebird nest boxes. Pre-registration by April 1 is required (due to materials). Non-members \$27, members \$22

April Vacation Camp,

grades 2-5

April 20-24, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Register for single days or the whole week.

Scientific explorations, active games, outdoor explorations, and crafts. Join the fun! Members \$40/day, non-members \$50/day. Scholarship assistance available.

Carbon Credits, Climate, and Conservation

Wednesday, April 29, 7 p.m.

George L. Jacobson, Professor Emeritus of Biology, Ecology, and Climate Change at the University of Maine, will discuss the ins and outs of carbon credits. Non-members \$8, members free

Woodcock Watch!

Tuesday, May 5, 7 p.m.

Learn about the wonders of the American Woodcock; after the program, we'll head outdoors to look for the dazzling displays of courting woodcocks! Non-members \$8, members free

Teacher Workshop:

AQUATIC WILD!

Friday, May 8, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Learn about AQUATIC WILD and its hands-on approach which engages K-12 students in investigating the world around them, connecting them to conservation careers, and participating in solid STEM activities. Member \$25, non-member \$27

Buildings with Birds in Mind

Friday, May 8, 7 p.m.

Doug Hitchcox, Maine Audubon Staff Naturalist, will talk about which architectural features are most dangerous to birds and what architects and municipalities can do to reduce their impact. Non-members \$8, members free

World Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 9, 8-10 a.m.

Join Maine Audubon's Doug Hitchcox, members of the Penobscot Valley Chapter, the Fields Pond Young Birders Club, and other Maine Audubon staff for this annual birding blitz! Free

Binocular Sale

May 9, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

15% off of all in-stock Nikon binoculars and 10% off all in-stock Zeiss binoculars.

How to Be a Naturalist in the Digital Age

Wednesday, May 13, 7 p.m.

Nathaniel T. Wheelwright, Bass Professor Emeritus of Natural Sciences at Bowdoin College, Maine Audubon Trustee, and co-author of *The Naturalist's Notebook* (with Bernd Heinrich), will talk about how mindfulness and curiosity can make anyone a naturalist. Non-members \$8, members free

Annual Native Plant Sale at Fields Pond

Saturday, May 30, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Back by popular demand! It's our second annual native plant sale at Fields Pond. More than twenty varieties of native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees species will be available.

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER SPRING 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 rain, but go out anyway if the forecast calls for light showers. We hope you will come outside, and join us!

ISLE AU HAUT HARLEQUIN DUCK CRUISE

Saturday, March 28, 11:00 a.m. departure from pier (best to arrive at least 15 min. early!)

Isle au Haut Boat Company, Stonington Cost: \$35/45 to benefit Island Heritage Trust Join trip leaders Bob & Sandi Duchesne for a fine early spring ocean adventure, as Island Heritage Trust takes us out to sea aboard the Isle au Haut Ferry. The absurdly colorful Harlequin Duck is a

state-threatened species, and the largest wintering colony in the eastern US forages in the surf along the southern end of Isle au Haut. We often see an impressive tally of other seabirds, including Surf, White-winged and Black Scoters, Horned and Red-Necked Grebes, Red-throated and Common Loons, Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers, and Purple Sandpipers on this three-hour cruise. There is a heated cabin, but we advise dressing warmly in layers, since the best viewing is outside. This annual trip is sponsored by Island Heritage Trust. Cost is \$35 for Island Heritage Trust members, \$45 for non-members. We will depart from the Isle au Haut Boat Company

dock in Stonington PROMPTLY at 11:00, Saturday, March 28. Please contact Island Heritage Trust directly at 348-2455 for more information and to register. To ensure comfort, the trip is limited to 35 participants - so call quickly before it fills!

A GENTLE DUCK PADDLE TO WELCOME SPRING

Saturday, April 25, 8-10 a.m.; rain date Sunday, April 26, same time

Meet at Town of Orrington Park, Brewer Lake Road (public boat launch & parking area) FREE Bob & Sandi Duchesne and Ellen Campbell will lead a leisurely morning paddle around the Sedgeunkedunk (pronounced Se-JUNK-a-dunk) Marsh. Time permitting, we may also explore a portion of Fields Pond. Bring your own canoe or kayak, and binoculars and/or camera. We

will look for spring ducks and other early-arriving waterfowl, aquatic mammals, and interesting marsh plants. All participants should have basic flatwater paddling skills, and children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult. We will require all participants to wear lifejackets.

PLUS - Lots of FREE Morning Birdwalks throughout May!

Please check out the complete list on the pull-out page in this newsletter-and if you enjoy these walks but have not yet joined Maine Audubon, we invite you to become a member of the Penobscot Valley Chapter this spring! The enrollment/renewal form can be found on page 6, or you can sign up online at www.maineaudubon.org/join.

MAINE AUDUBON

Penobscot Valley Chapter

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

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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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Penobscot Valley 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

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Join or renew online:
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