

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



June - August 2020

Reflections on Coronavirus

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

As you read this edition of *Natural Selections* we have hopefully begun our slow but steady recovery from the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown and physical distancing have been challenging, to say the least. We all look forward to birding in the spring of the year. This is a special time, not only to reconnect with resident and migrant birds as they return and actively begin nesting, but also to see old birding friends and make new acquaintances on the trails. Unfortunately, opportunities to gather with others in the local birding community, including organized bird

walks, field trips and programs, have had to be called off or greatly modified in the interest of public health and safety.

Thankfully, despite a cool spring this year, natural events continued unabated all around us. Ice and snow melted, new growth emerged, and birds returned. Hopefully you were able to get out regularly on your own to enjoy the natural world during this special time of the year. Perhaps you were able to take part in the recent Penobscot Valley Chapter's Birding Sweepstakes, our attempt to give you a fun alternative to our annually scheduled

May bird walks. If you didn't actually submit an entry in the Sweepstakes, we hope the bird lists we provided from past years' Neighborhood Bird Walks gave you a useful reference. We all miss being together at this time, but also find that trying to keep up with our seasonal routines can be therapeutic.

The global pandemic and resulting economic shutdown also provide a unique opportunity to observe how quickly natural communities begin to rebound, when they are given a respite from the heavy hand of humanity. Air and water are clearer than they have been in decades. Animal populations are returning to national parks and other natural spaces in the absence of human visitors. Let this be a time to reflect on how our activities and behaviors have been impacting the planet, and what needs to change to ensure our long-term survival in harmony with the natural world around us.

By all accounts, it will take time to restore a sense of normalcy as we learn how best to deal with the lasting effects of the coronavirus. The Penobscot Valley Chapter will continue to look for ways to serve you. We look forward to joining you again for local bird walks, field trips and informative programs when it is considered safe to do so. Please continue to visit us on Facebook for updates, and email your thoughts to penobscotvalleyaudubon@gmail.com.



Ron Logan scored the Swallow Trifecta at Boulder Pond, better known as the first Taylor Bait Pond.
Left to right: northern rough-winged swallow, tree swallow, and barn swallow.

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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Visit us on the Web

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

FIELDS POND JOURNAL

BY DAVID LAMON, FPAC MANAGER
FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER

Fields Pond has been busy! Yes, the Nature Center building has been closed these past few months due to the COVID-19 restrictions, but the sanctuary has seen a HUGE increase in visitor use during this time. Many of you have been out on the trails, enjoying the unfolding of the spring season at Fields Pond. Some of you have been engaging with us through weekly "Mystery Animal" clues that we set out on a different trail each week. Others have been connecting online through our weekly "Family Fun" packet of activities for introducing pre-schoolers to nature, and through our Zoom public-programming events. The week-long virtual vacation camp for kids that we held back in April was a new way for us to teach, and teachers throughout Maine have been utilizing Maine Audubon's weekly online environmental education lesson plans for their students in Grades K-8.

However you chose to keep connected with Maine Audubon

over these past months, we're glad you did! This challenging time has shown how important every part of our community is, and how we all need one another to survive - a lesson nature teaches us on a regular basis.

Looking ahead to the coming months, we will likely continue to face challenges. Here at Fields Pond Audubon Center, we need your support. Help can come in many forms: dropping off bird seed for our feeding stations, attending programs (if not in-person, then online), following established property and safety guidelines while out walking our trails, making purchases through our Nature Store, giving financial donations, volunteering your time, renewing or establishing new Maine Audubon memberships.

Together we're a stronger community, and we look forward to staying connected with you throughout these challenging times. Stay well!

MEET THE 2020 IBERA RECIPIENT, AND VIEW THE 2019 IBERA PRESENTATION!

The 2020 recipient of the Inez Boyd Environmental Research Award (IBERA) is Greg LeClair, a master's degree candidate in Ecology and Environmental Science at the University of Maine. He plans to study wood turtles, a threatened species in Maine, and whether environmental DNA (eDNA) can be used to better assess the size, status, and locations of Maine's wood turtle populations. Greg is advised by Professor Michael Kinnison, Ph.D. Congratulations, Greg!

Our 2019 IBERA recipient, Luke Douglas, was scheduled to present his research findings

at PVC's Annual Meeting in May. Unfortunately we had to cancel that meeting due to COVID-19 restrictions, so Luke put together a video presentation that is now available for download on our website, <https://pvc.maineaudubon.org>. Luke's project studied rusty blackbirds, and how they typically use industrial forest tracts in Maine and NH throughout their lifecycle. His research will help foresters manage their harvests productively, while also taking measures to protect this rapidly declining species. Please check it out - it's a fascinating video! Luke is advised by Professor Amber Roth, Ph. D.

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER PROGRAMS - SUMMER 2020

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

Insect BioBlitz

(subject to COVID-19 restrictions in effect on this date)

July 18, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Calling all bug-catchers! Join the second annual Insect BioBlitz. Collect data and add to the record of species of insects found at Fields Pond. Instructions will be provided and we will have entomological experts on hand to identify all the insects. Come for an hour, or stay the whole time. FREE for all!



Teacher Workshop: AQUATIC WILD!

Monday, August 10th

8:30 am (registration)

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

\$25 Maine Audubon Members, \$27 Non-Members

AQUATIC WILD's hands-on approach to learning engages

students in investigating the world around them, connecting them to conservation careers, and participating in solid STEM activities. The NEW, REVISED AND UPDATED Curriculum and Activity Guide can easily be adapted to meet the learning requirements for academic disciplines ranging from science and environmental education to social studies, math, and language arts. The activities found in the AQUATIC WILD curriculum guide are intended for use in both classroom and informal settings. All participants receive the Aquatic WILD K-12 guide as part of the course fee. NOTE: If COVID-19 restrictions prevent meeting in-person, this workshop will still take place online. Registrants will be informed ahead of time.

Nature Photography Talk & Workshop Intensive

August 14, 7 p.m. and

August 15, 7-11 a.m.

Evening talk, August 14:

Members free, Nonmembers \$8

Workshop intensive, August 15: \$25 Maine Audubon Members, \$27 Non-Members

Photographer Jack Zievis (Red Sail Photography) presents a nature photography intensive. Join us Friday night for a stunning visual treat as Jack shares some of his best nature photos and stories. On Saturday, join Jack for a four-hour intensive photography workshop. NOTE: If COVID-19 restrictions prevent meeting in-person, a combination talk/workshop will still take place online. Registrants will be informed ahead of time.

Fields Pond Butterfly Festival

(subject to COVID-19 restrictions in effect at this date)

August 22, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Fields Pond sanctuary is home to over two dozen butterfly species. Join us for this summer celebration of butterflies. We'll tag and release Monarchs, and enjoy some family-friendly celebration activities. FREE for all!

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. At press time, Joyce was scheduling FPBG meetings online via Zoom, since all of Maine's public libraries remain closed due to COVID-19. If you would like to participate, please contact Joyce directly at rumeryj9@gmail.com and she will send you the Zoom link shortly before the meeting.

Here is the June book selection. To read a synopsis, please refer to the PVC website, <https://pvc.maineaudubon.org>.

June 11, 2020

Kimmerer, Robin Wall.

Braiding Sweetgrass:

Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants. 2013, 408 pp.

After the June meeting, the Fields Pond Book Group will take a summer break and resume meetings in October. Enjoy your summer, and keep reading!

SUMMER DAY CAMPS

Fields Pond Audubon Center • 216 Fields Pond Road, Holden

REGISTER:
maineaudubon.org

MAINE
AUDUBON

grades PreK-K Little Explorers

Member, \$80/session Nonmember, \$100/session



Daily, nature-based excitement for pre-schoolers and kindergartners. Throughout the week, Maine Audubon educators will introduce new explorers to the wonders of the natural world through storytelling, art projects, songs, outdoor games, and guided hands-on activities.

9am – noon

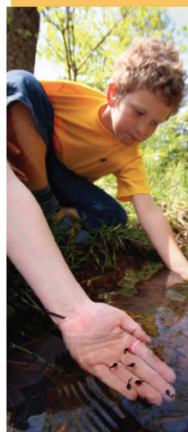
July 6-10

July 20-24

August 3-7

grades 2-5 Discovery Kids

Member, \$190/session; Nonmember, \$220/session



Discover wild nature! Experienced Maine Audubon educators will lead students on a variety of nature-based adventures that will include hikes, art and science projects, games, and hands-on activities.

9am – 3pm

June 29-July 3

July 13-17

July 27-31

August 10-14

grades 5-8 Tween Adventure

Member, \$190/session Nonmember, \$220/session



Have an epic adventure this summer! Adventure camp students will have the opportunity to explore an island, paddle a canoe, experience wildlife up close and personal, and make new friends.

9am – 3pm

August 17-21

Scholarships available. FMI: scholarships@maineaudubon.org

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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PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER SUMMER FIELD TRIPS

Penobscot Valley Chapter field trips are fun ways to meet like-minded people, while enjoying the rich natural heritage of our region. We hope you will come outside and join us!

MAINE BIRD ATLAS: BLOCK-BUSTING WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

DATES: TBA June through August, based on interest and availability of participants

It's very difficult to plan field trips for this summer. At press time, we don't know what the health and safety guidelines will be. But we've come up with a plan to help members keep in touch with nature and birds, and contribute to an important statewide ornithological study, while maximizing safety. PLEASE NOTE: if your age and/or chronic health conditions put you at higher risk, we will miss you – but the CDC recommends that you remain

home as much as possible until the pandemic resolves.

The Idea: You are craving a socially distanced birding experience in a new place. The Maine Bird Atlas (MBA) contains many priority blocks that still need to be completed. If you could combine a safe, fun day of birding with an opportunity to contribute valuable breeding species data for the MBA, that would be a win-win!

The Details: Interested people sign up for the trip(s), and indicate whether they will be birding by themselves or with household members. Trip "leaders" will request your level of birding experience

(beginner/intermediate/expert), your home location, and your dates of availability. They will provide you with directions and a specific route to bird on your own, in an MBA priority block near home. You will also receive a list of target birds on that route for you to seek out, trying to get a "Probable" or "Confirmed" breeding code for each species. (You'll get a detailed description of all breeding codes prior to your trip.)

The Community Element: Once a week, we'll send all participants in that week's block-busting adventures a Zoom meeting link, so we can share our tales from the field. **If you cannot participate in**

the trips, or if you just want to hear about what other birders are hearing or seeing, you can request to join the Zoom meetings even if you are not participating in the block-busting trips.

Is This Gonna Work? We have no idea! But it's worth a try. It's a difficult year for birders in general, and for the Maine Bird Atlas in particular, since the data collection this summer may fall short with so many contributors remaining in self-quarantine. If you're willing to give it a go, please contact Sandi Duchesne, 207-827-3782 or smduchesne@roadrunner.com, and she'll get you organized.