

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



September–November 2021

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Pausing to Give Thanks

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

The fall season approaches and we rush to enjoy the remaining warm days of summer. It's that time we try to take care of things we haven't been able to get to, like a special birding trip with friends or that house painting you've been avoiding. After being constrained by the pandemic for so many months and eager to get back to normal, it's easy to get caught up a flurry of activity without pausing to feel thankful for a few things.

Hopefully, you've remained healthy and active and able to get outdoors. Many have been able to bird and enjoy nature on their own, despite lingering concerns and caution regarding the virus. We were excited to be able to resume our Neighborhood Bird Walks in May, and thrilled with the response. Over 200 people came on these outings, which have been going on for over a dozen years. We recorded nearly 100 species with some truly memorable moments. For those who attended the bird walk to Essex Woods and marsh, it was a treat to see elusive Virginia rails close up and in the open (and no one with a camera!). As we've said before, these walks are not only a chance to see birds, but to connect with like-minded birders in our community. We can all be thankful for the renewed opportunity to enjoy these special moments.

We're also grateful that there has been solid support for Maine Audubon over these past months. Memberships and donations have been strong, and we look forward to serving new members as well as long-time supporters. Hopefully, you will be able to participate in our annual online auction this November, something we were not able to do last year. In any event we are here to serve you. I look forward to receiving your input and comments. Please send your ideas to penobscotvalleyaudubon@gmail.com.

PVC ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION NOVEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 3

It is almost time for the Penobscot Valley Chapter's Annual Benefit Auction! Bidding will be conducted online at <https://pvc.maineaudubon.org>, starting on Monday, November 1, and continuing through 12:00 noon EST on Friday, December 3. Successful bidders can pick up and pay their items at the annual PVC Holiday Party, starting at 6:00 p.m. on December 3. For remote bidders and those unable to attend the party, we will arrange an alternative pickup or delivery time. Additional items will be offered for live and silent auction during the Holiday Party. Please share the auction website link with family and friends far and near, so they can join in the fun!

Chapter board members are currently soliciting auction donations from local merchants, artisans, and nature lovers in our community. If you have items or services you would like to contribute to help promote grass-roots environmental outreach and programming in eastern Maine, please contact Auction Chair Ellen Campbell at ellencamp47@gmail.com. You may also drop off donations at Fields Pond Audubon Center during open building hours; call ahead to 989-2591 to make sure someone is there to take in your donation and get your contact information. If you track annual charitable donations for your federal tax return, let us know and we will gladly provide you with a receipt on PVC letterhead so you can document the estimated fair market value. Thank you for your support!



Cadillac Hawk Watch 2019. Photo credit 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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Stewardship.....Tim Conmee

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

For the month of July, the FPAC staff were based out of downtown Bangor. The Fairmount School on 13th Street became our headquarters and classroom, as we extended the "River In My Backyard" ecological outreach program into a month-long camp called "River Explorers." Working with fourth and fifth-grade students, Maine Audubon education staff provided hands-on STEM learning, focusing on the complex ecology of the Penobscot River Watershed.

River Explorers students were able to get close-up with Maine's endangered Atlantic Salmon, to learn how restoration and research efforts have been working to help restore these iconic fish to their native habitats. Viewing issues through the wide lens of a watershed gave students an understanding of how each part was connected to the overall health of the Penobscot River—including their own school. Using our "Bringing Nature Home" program model, students completed habitat restoration projects on their school grounds and at the Fields Pond sanctuary, using native Maine plants. These plants provide erosion control and host a multitude of native insect pollinators, which in turn support our local wildlife.

Since water was the overarching theme that connected everything within the watershed, students visited a variety of streams, ponds and rivers throughout the month-long program. Hands-on experience with water quality testing in these various freshwater systems enabled students to compare and contrast the various factors that influence overall water quality within the Penobscot River Watershed.

We will be continuing the "River In My Backyard" after school program with the Bangor school system this coming school year, and are looking forward to more adventures with the students!



Campers restore habitat with native plantings.
Photo credit David Lamon



Preparing a salmon for tagging and measurement. Photo credit David Lamon



Campers plant cardinal flowers to attract pollinators. Photo credit David Lamon

Thankful for Turkeys in Maine

by Bob Duchesne

The Butterball that might grace your Thanksgiving dinner is a far cry from what the Pilgrims ate. Indeed, this turkey tale is complex, worthy of reflection while you set the holiday table.

Technically, Maine has four big game species: deer, moose, bear, and wild turkey. That poses some immediate questions. Why is a turkey considered big game? No other upland game bird is in that category. And when did the turkey become a game species at all?

The big game designation has much to do with regulation and management. Larger game species tend to need more attention in order to assure sustainability. Generally, that requires tagging for each animal harvested, so that biologists at the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIFW) have the numbers they need to track population trends. Fortunately, wild turkeys have been doing so well that tagging is only required for the spring season.

As for when wild turkeys became classified as big game, it's a success story that's perhaps been too successful. A lot happened between the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving in 1621, and the reintroduction of turkeys to Maine during the 1970s. At one time, the wild turkey was the primary game bird in North America. But unregulated hunting and habitat loss drove their numbers dangerously low everywhere. Turkeys were completely extirpated in Maine by the early 1800s.

Turkey species are exclusively native to the New World. The eastern wild turkey has the widest range, but four more distinct subspecies of wild turkey exist in Florida, southern Texas, southern Arizona and New Mexico, and mountainous regions of the west. A smaller, brilliantly-colored turkey species, the ocellated turkey, is native to southern Mexico. Wild turkeys were an important component of the traditional Native American diet. They intentionally burned forest patches to create meadows filled with turkey forage.

The domestic turkey is a direct descendant of North America's wild turkey. Early Spanish explorers brought wild turkeys back with them to Europe in the 1500s. These were probably turkeys captured near what is now the US southwestern border with Mexico,

since that subspecies is the only one with white tail tips. The tail tips on all other subspecies, including our eastern wild turkey, are brown. The pure white color of the modern domestic turkey is no accident. White pin feathers are less visible on a dressed bird, so selective breeding and consumer demand eventually produced an all-white turkey for our Thanksgiving feasts.

As for when the wild turkey became a game animal in Maine again, that history can be traced back to reintroduction efforts that started in 1942. The first state-sponsored attempt failed. During the 1960s, several private fish and game clubs tried their luck. These attempts also failed. Finally, in 1970, MDIFW trapped 41 turkeys in Vermont and released them in York County. This reintroduction succeeded in establishing a breeding population, but the flock grew slowly. More turkeys taken from Connecticut were added to the York County flock in 1982, boosting the population and genetic diversity. However, the first attempt to relocate some of the York County birds to Hancock County also failed, probably because poachers couldn't resist them.

By 1986, the turkey population had increased sufficiently in York County to permit a limited hunting season. 500 initial permits were issued, but just nine turkeys were bagged. By 1992 the turkeys had expanded their range northward, and Cumberland County was added to the legal hunting zone.

Until 2006, hunting permits were allocated by lottery. Once Maine had far more wild turkeys than prospective hunters, the lottery was discontinued. Today, you can buy a turkey permit either over-the-counter or online, and roughly 6000 turkeys are harvested annually across the state.

Fast-forward to 2021. Maine's wild turkey flock is robust, and occasionally annoying. Whether they are snacking in backyard vegetable gardens or pooping under bird feeders, their presence is not always appreciated. Some would argue that Maine now has too many turkeys. But, with a turkey population estimated to be somewhere between 50,000 and 70,000, the number is comparable to moose and bear.

Wild turkeys are big – and fast. They can weigh up to 25 pounds, and fly up to 60 mph. When wild turkeys first disappeared from the state in the early 1800s, much of Maine had been converted to farmland or clear-cut forest – not the best places to raise a family, if you are a turkey. As agriculture waned and forests returned, Maine's reintroduced turkeys were free to feel right at home again. And apparently, they've gotten quite comfortable here. Whether you are a bird-hunter or a bird-watcher, every wild turkey you see is a chance to celebrate the successful reintroduction of this iconic native species.



Wild turkeys. Photo credit Bob Duchesne

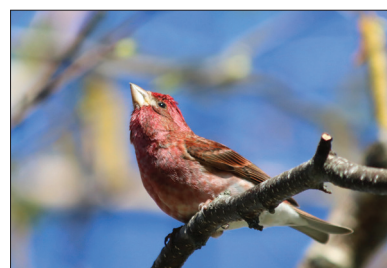
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS - FALL 2021

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 Penobscot Valley region. Free monthly programs that follow the school year calendar (October-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!

At press time (August 2021), we are planning to offer both Fall 2021 programs live at Fields Pond Audubon Center. All attendees are requested to mask regardless of vaccination status, and we request that you also maintain adequate spacing between chairs unless you share a household. If on the other hand the pandemic worsens in the Bangor area this fall, we do have the option to return to an online format via Zoom. We will let members know about the switch to Zoom at least five days in advance of each program, via the chapter listserv (send an email request to kjzeman@hotmail.com if you wish to receive weekly updates and reminders from PVC), and on our website, <https://pvc.maineaudubon.org>, both with a link to register for the Zoom program. Maine Audubon has a 500-person Zoom account that it shares with the chapters, so you don't have to worry about not getting a space if you register at the last minute.

Friday, October 1, 7:00 p.m. at FPAC
A Citizen's Guide to Helping the Birds of Maine: Lessons from Avian Haven
 Laura Suomi-Lecker, Education & Outreach Director and long-time volunteer with Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center in Freedom, will discuss common reasons why sick and injured birds are admitted to Avian Haven. She will offer suggestions for ways that concerned citizens can help to protect the birds in their community. In addition, Laura will discuss the available facilities and noteworthy recent cases at Avian Haven. This year's summer admissions include orphaned and injured eagles, owls, hawks, loons, bitterns, herons, ducks, and many species of songbirds.

Friday, November 5, 7:00 p.m. at FPAC
Best of Bob: Ten Years of Work as the BDN Bird Guy
 Ten years ago, Bob Duchesne began writing a weekly birding column for the Bangor Daily News. Many of his columns were based on his unusual and far-flung adventures in the Maine outdoors, pursuing his passionate interest in birds. All were captured in photos, many in videos. Join us for a magical evening of story-telling and pictures, as Bob shares what he considers to be his best work over ten years of extreme birding in Maine.



*Purple Finch
Photo credit Donne Sinderson*

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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:

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View all member benefits online by visiting maineaudubon.org/memberFAQ

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Card # _____ Exp. date: _____ / _____

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

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER PROGRAMS - FALL 2021

Register for all programs online at maineaudubon.org/events.

Wednesdays, September 15 - November 10, 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Family Fun at Fields Pond

Ages 2-5, siblings under 2 free

\$120/member

\$150/non-member per child
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 outdoor activities and 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 if space is available.

*Saturday, September 18
11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.*

Foraging: Finding Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants with David Spahr

There is an abundance of wild plants, mushrooms and other natural treasures in Maine that can be foraged for food, medicinal use and other purposes. We will learn about what you can find, how to differentiate the safe from the toxic, and different ways to use what you forage. Leader: David Spahr, author of *Edible and Medicinal Mushrooms of New England and Eastern Canada*. Space is limited, pre-registration required.

Cost: \$20 Members / \$30 Non-members

*Saturday, October 2
11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.*

Mushrooms of Maine

Join local favorite David Spahr as he takes you on a journey through the world of fungi. Time will be spent both indoors and outdoors learning about mushroom identification, folklore, collecting, and cooking. David's book will be available for purchase. Be prepared for a moderate amount of physical activity while outdoors. Leader: David Spahr, author of *Edible and Medicinal Mushrooms of New England and Eastern Canada*. Space is limited, pre-registration required.

Cost: \$20 Members / \$30 Non-members

*Saturday, October 2
9 - 11 a.m.*

Contemplative Hiking

A contemplative hike is an invitation to slow down and spend time in the outdoors enjoying the natural world; it's a way to be present with yourself and your surroundings. This kind of hike is not about going higher, farther, or faster than the last time, but about being fully present with whatever lessons nature offers us moment to moment. Guided explorations and insightful inspirations will help facilitate our journey. Group size will be limited, and participants are asked to bring some type of notebook to write in. Leaders: William Bigelow is a retired Protestant minister and a Jungian Consultant on The Inner Life. He lives on Mount Desert Island and sometimes

teaches courses on myth, psychology, and spirituality for Acadia Senior College. David Lamon, FPAC Manager, has been a lifelong contemplative hiker.

\$7 Members,

\$10 Non-members

*Tuesday, October 5
3:00 - 5:30 pm*

Wildlife On the Move: Using MOTUS technology in the classroom with your students

Teachers (grades 4, 5, & 6) and Administrators are invited to this Professional Development Workshop that will introduce activities and resources related to wildlife migration. Discover how to engage your students with real-time data collection and analysis. Workshop is free, and food is provided! Reserve your space today.

Saturday, October 9, 10 a.m.

Fall Foliage 5K Trail Run

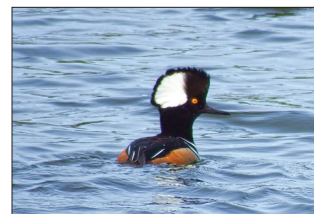
Join us for our annual trail running event. This challenging course will take you up through our beautiful, wooded trails, onto the adjoining Holden Land Trust trail system and down scenic roads for the perfect foliage tour!

\$25 registration (member)
\$30 registration (non-member) includes commemorative race t-shirt.

*Saturday, October 16
9 a.m. to Noon*

Annual Fall Stewardship Day

Join the Fields Pond staff for a morning of stewardship activities focused on improving our trails and public spaces. Bring work gloves and sturdy footwear. Snacks provided!



*Top: Peregrine Falcon
Bottom: Hooded Merganser
Photo credit Bob Duchesne*

Welcome to PVC New and Rejoining Members!

Stephanie Chesley, Holden
Heidi Crosier-Sypitkowski, Bangor
Danielle D'Auria, Orrington
Karen Greenlaw, Orrington
MacKenna Homa, Gorham
Mia Khavari, Glenburn
Logan Kline, Old Town
Brian & Rebecca Mooney, Bangor
Nancy Larson, Orono
Erin Whitham, Dixmont

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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 FIELD TRIPS, FALL 2021

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

At press time, Maine CDC guidance stated that small, socially distanced outdoor gatherings carry virtually no risk of COVID-19 transmission, although anyone who wishes to wear a mask as an added precaution is welcome to do so. To further reduce transmission risk, please do not share binoculars and spotting scopes with any participants who are not in your household.

CARIBOU BOG CONSERVATION AREA, Orono

Sunday, September 5, 8-10:30 a.m.
Leader: Gordon Russell

The restored wetlands in Boulder Pond and Black Pond (formerly known as the Taylor Bait Ponds) are now being actively managed to attract shorebirds and waterfowl. Late summer to early fall is the best time to come for shorebirds, as this is the height of their migration through our region. CBCA can often be a good spot for mammal sightings as well.

Directions: From Forest Avenue in Orono, follow Taylor Road (aka the "Dump Road") 0.3 miles to a slight left onto Putnam Road. We will meet in the trailhead parking area in front of the gate.

ESSEX WOODS, Bangor

Sunday, September 19, 8-10:30 a.m.
Leader: Bob Milardo

In late summer and early fall, it's not unusual to spot transient great egrets and migrating shorebirds at Essex Woods. We also will look for multiple species of ducks, green and great blue herons, pied-billed grebes, and hopefully a few late-migrating songbirds.

Directions: Meet at the entrance to Essex Woods on Garden Way, off Drew Lane in Bangor. Please show consideration for neighborhood residents by parking in the adjacent business parking lot (largely unoccupied on weekends) at the corner of Stillwater Avenue and Drew Lane, and not on the shoulder of Garden Way.

CARIBOU BOG CONSERVATION AREA, Orono

Sunday, October 3, 8-10:30 a.m.
Leader: Jim Zeman

Same location as our walk on September 5th, but with a whole new cast of characters. We will look for shorebirds, ducks, and warblers in migration, and scan for migrating hawks overhead. What a difference a month can make at CBCA!

Directions: From Forest Avenue in Orono, follow Taylor Road (aka the "Dump Road") 0.3 miles to a slight left onto Putnam Road. We will meet in the trailhead parking area in front of the gate.

FIELDS POND BOOK GROUP

The Fields Pond Book Group meets monthly on Thursday nights at 6:30 p.m. At press time, the Book Group hoped to invite members to participate either on Zoom or in-person at a location TBA, facilitated by professional librarian Joyce Rumery. Please contact Joyce directly at rumeryj9@gmail.com to be added to the mailing list for the Zoom meeting links and the location of in-person meetings, and to get a synopsis of each month's featured title. Here are the titles for September through November.

September 9, 2021

O'Connell, Caitlin. *Wild Rituals – 10 Lessons Animals Can Teach Us About Connection, Community, and Ourselves*. 2021. 264 pages.

October 14, 2021

Simard, Suzanne. *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest*. 2021. 368 pages.

November 11, 2021

Sheldrake, Merlin. *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures*. 2021. 368 pages.