

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



March–May 2023

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Spring Birding — The Tradition Continues

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

Well, it's that time of year again. Like poring over seed catalogs when the snow may still be knee-deep in your yard, PVC volunteers have been hard at work organizing this year's spring bird walks. Many of you are already familiar with our Neighborhood Bird Walks each May, and we thank you for your continued interest and participation. We're offering a full slate of walks this year, many of which will be familiar to those of you who have participated in the past. Whether you are a newcomer or a long-time chapter member, we hope you can all join us for a walk or several this year.

Spring birding is an exciting time. Birds that have been away all winter have come back, singing and getting ready to nest, joining our hearty resident species that have toughed it out all winter. All are ready to start the next generation. Getting back into the full swing of spring

birding is always a little challenging, even for more experienced birders. We all have to dust off a few cobwebs in order to recognize the sights and sounds of birds that have been gone all winter. If you are new to birding or recently moved to the area, you're probably looking for good places to bird, and like-minded people to bird with.

Our Neighborhood Bird Walks are an excellent way to get into the full swing of spring birding. These walks are led by local volunteers who will help you see the birds, or identify the songs and calls you're hearing. The walks, all in the greater Bangor area, are free and appropriate for all levels of birding experience. A list of the walks is included in this issue of Natural Selections.

Please stick a copy on your refrigerator or bulletin board, so you can make plans to take part.

For well over a dozen years, volunteers from Maine Audubon's Penobscot Valley Chapter have been leading bird walks in May to celebrate the



joys of spring birding. Just as the birds return each year to our area, some of our volunteer leaders step up year after year to guide us and share their knowledge. We are eternally grateful to these folks – we could not sponsor these trips without them.

Spring is definitely a busy time, whether it's for birding or gardening or the many other things you've been looking forward to all winter. A lot will be happening over a relatively short time period. Take advantage of what you can. You won't be disappointed. We'll do our best to keep you informed of upcoming bird walks and other events. Follow us on Facebook, or check our website (Penobscot Valley Audubon) for details. And by all means, let us know how we can better serve you.



Yellow Warbler, top right
Eastern Bluebird, bottom left
Photo credit Jane Rosinski

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.

CHAPTER OFFICERS

President.....Gordon Russell
Vice President.....Sean Trahan
Secretary..... Sean Trahan
Treasurer.....Jim Zeman
Chapter Representative, Maine Audubon Board of Trustees..... Sandi McRae Duchesne

AT-LARGE CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

Bruce Bowden, Timothy Conmee, Matt D'Angelo, Bob Duchesne, Tim Dunlea, Bob Milardo, Gloria Vollmers, and ex-officio board member David Lamon.

CHAPTER COMMITTEE CHAIRS


Programs & Field TripsBob Milardo
Auction Committee.....Ellen Campbell

Natural Selections

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Design & Layout..... Donne Sinderson
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<https://pvc.maineaudubon.org>

 www.facebook.com/penobscotvalleyaudubon

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER SPRING 2023 PROGRAMS

Unless otherwise noted, all programs will be offered in-person at Fields Pond Audubon Center. Get full descriptions and pre-register for all programs at <https://maineaudubon.org/events>.

First Saturdays: Family Fun!

March 4, April 1, May 6

10 -11 a.m.

\$10 member/\$12 nonmember

Ages 2-5, siblings under 2 free

Young children and their grown-ups are invited to spend an hour exploring nature together through stories, songs, art, and play. Each Saturday session will include a mix of indoor activities and outdoor adventures. Note: drop-in space cannot be guaranteed, please call ahead.

Second Fridays: Read & Ramble

March 10, April 14, May 12

10 -11 a.m.

\$10 member/\$12 nonmember

Ages 2-5, siblings under 2 free

Join us for a monthly, entirely outdoors interactive storytime in the outdoor classroom, geared towards children ages 2-5. Please note that the outdoor pavilion has a roof, but is otherwise exposed to the elements. Afterwards, we'll set you up with a related, self-guided activity to enjoy on the Fields Pond sanctuary trails. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Exploring Seasonal Landscapes at Fields Pond – Painting Workshop

Wednesday, March 1

6:00-8:00 p.m.

\$30 member/\$35 non-member

Led by Valerie Wallace, local artist, art teacher and graduate of Rhode Island School of Design. See website for full program description. Open to all age 16 up, from absolute beginners to more experienced painters. All materials provided. Youths ages 12-15 can attend if accompanied by a participating adult who is also registered for the class.

Owl Felting Workshop

Saturday, March 11

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

\$50 member/\$60 nonmember

Led by fiber artist Kristen Walsh. See website for full program description. Class fee covers instruction and all materials.

Roads, Rain, and a Couple

Thousand Amphibians - Call it a Big Night!

Statewide via Zoom; check website for link

Friday, March 17, 6:30 p.m.

Featuring Greg LeClair, a UMaine graduate student who created and now coordinates the Maine Big Night Project. This event kicks off our statewide "Big Night Week"... Community Science in Action! See website for full program description.

Birch Bark Baskets

Saturday, March 18, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

\$35 member/\$40 non-member

Learn how to make a hand-crafted birch bark basket. Workshop includes an outdoor hike. See website for full program description. Course fee covers all materials, plus instruction.

FPAC Volunteer Training Sessions

Saturday, Mar 25; two sessions

Cost: FREE

Session 1, 9-10:30 a.m.

Educational Guide

Session 2, 11 a.m. to noon:

Visitor Services

See website for full job descriptions and desired skill sets for each. Pre-registration is required, and you can choose to sign up for one or both trainings.

Bluebird Nest Box Building Workshop

Saturday, April 1, 12:30 – 2 p.m.

\$25 member/\$32 non-member

Hands-on and family-friendly, no prior woodworking experience needed. All materials and step-by-step instruction will be provided. Children (no younger than age 7) attend free with a paying adult. Adults without kids are welcome too! See website for full program description.

Penobscot Valley Chapter, Fields Pond Audubon Center

Neighborhood Bird Walks

May 2023

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

Monday, May 8: Indian Trail and Penobscot County

Conservation Assn., Brewer

Leaders: Gordon Russell, Jane Rosinski

Meet at Penobscot County Conservation Assn., North Main St.

Tuesday, May 9: Bangor City Forest, Bangor

Leaders: Paul Markson, Gloria Vollmers

Meet at parking lot in BCF at end of Kittredge Rd.

Saturday, May 13 (World Migratory Bird Day):

Fields Pond Audubon Center, Holden

Leaders: David Lamon, Matthew D'Angelo

Meet in Fields Pond Audubon Center parking lot. This walk starts at 8:00 AM.

Tuesday, May 16: Kenduskeag Stream Trail, Bangor

Leaders: Gordon Russell, Jane Rosinski

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

Wednesday, May 17: Mt. Hope Cemetery, Bangor

Leaders: Jim and Kathy Zeman

Meet in the parking area inside the State St. entrance.

Friday, May 19: Saxl Park, Bangor

Leaders: Laura Levenson, Elizabeth Payne

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

Saturday, May 20: Technology Park, Orono

Leader: Jerry Longcore

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.

Monday, May 22: Leonard's Mills, Bradley

Leader: Bob Duchesne

Meet at the junction of Government Rd and Rt. 178

Tuesday, May 23: Essex Woods, Bangor

Leaders: Paul Markson, Gloria Vollmers

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

Wednesday, May 24: West Penjajawoc Preserve, Bangor

Co-sponsored by Bangor Land Trust.

Leaders: Elizabeth Payne, Bob Milardo, Lucy Quimby.

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

Thursday, May 25: University of Maine, Orono

Leader: Sandi Duchesne

Meet up near the Arboretum in the parking lot between the Emera Astronomy Center and the Jordan Observatory (driveway extends beyond the intersection of Rangeley Rd. and Long Rd.).

Saturday, May 27: UMaine Bike Path (North End),

Old Town

Leader: Matthew D'Angelo

Meet at Old Town Elementary School, 576 Stillwater Ave.; use parking lot in front of school.

Tuesday, May 30: Taylor Rd.- Caribou Bog Conservation Area, Orono

Co-sponsored by Orono Land Trust

Leaders: Steve Mierzykowski, Gordon Russell

Follow Taylor Rd. 0.3 miles from Forest Ave., left on Putnam Rd., (Orono Landfill Access Rd.) Meet at the trailhead parking area in front of the gate.

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS & FIELD TRIPS

FREE monthly programs 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!

UBER DRIVER FOR THE BIRDS!

Friday, March 3, 7 p.m.

Offered online via Zoom; pre-register at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8455612345>

PVC board member Ellen Campbell will share photos, videos, and intriguing tales of her adventures and misadventures as a member of the statewide volunteer "animal ambulance" network for Avian Haven, "...dedicated to the return of injured and orphaned wild birds of all species to their natural roles in the wild." There will be time at the end of the program to discuss what to do if you encounter a wild bird in need of rescue, and how to volunteer for Avian Haven yourself if you are so inclined.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK DISPLAYS

Tuesday, April 4, 6:15 p.m. This will be an indoor program at FPAC. Pre-registration required, space is limited. Co-sponsored with Fields Pond Audubon Center. See FPAC program listings for a full description. After the indoor presentation by Eric Blomberg, Ph.D., we will walk out to the parking lot to witness the male woodcock doing their annual spring courtship "sky dances." The program is free, but you must pre-register at <https://maineaudubon.org/events>.

BIRDING THE SOUTHERN OCEAN & ANTARCTICA

Friday, April 7, 7 p.m. This will be an indoor program at FPAC.

PVC board member Bob Milardo will present a travelogue about his recent birding trip to the Falklands, South Georgia, and Antarctica. Species highlights will include footage of multiple penguin colonies, albatrosses, prions, giant petrels, and snow petrels, along with the sheer magic of the Southern Ocean.

ANNUAL MEETING AND IBERA PRESENTATION: WOOD TURTLE NESTS IN MAINE

Friday, May 5, 7 p.m. This will be an indoor program at FPAC.

Please join us to elect new board members and officers, followed by a presentation from the 2022 recipient of

the Inez Boyd Environmental Research Award (IBERA). Trina Wantman, a master's degree candidate in Ecology and Environmental Science at the University of Maine will present findings from her academic research on "Nest site selection and hatchling success of Wood Turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) in central Maine." Trina's research could lead to increased protection for habitats that are both attractive to egg-laying females, and promote a higher percentage of surviving hatchlings in this endangered species.

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

EARLY SPRING BIRDING IN ESSEX WOODS

Sunday, April 16, 8-11 a.m.

Leaders: Gloria Vollmers and Paul Markson. This perennial Bangor birding hot-spot, also known as "Little Penjawoc," is always a lively place to look for puddle ducks, marsh species, year-round residents, and early-returning migratory species. Meet in the Essex Woods parking lot at the end of Watchmaker Street, off Essex Street in Bangor.

EARLY BIRDS IN CARIBOU BOG

Sunday, April 30, 8-11 a.m.

Leader: Bob Milardo. Join Bob for a leisurely walk through portions of the Caribou Bog Conservation Area (CBCA). We'll keep an eye out for species that typically migrate through our region, resting and feeding up before flying on toward their Canadian breeding grounds. Trails between the ponds host a wide variety of forest-dwelling birds, including early-returning warblers and sparrows. Meet in the trailhead parking area in front of the landfill gate off the Taylor Road in Orono.

Lots of **FREE Morning Bird Walks** Throughout May! Please check out the complete pull-out listing in this newsletter. New residents and visitors in the Penobscot Valley region are always welcome – and if you enjoy these walks but have not yet joined Maine Audubon, we invite you to join us as a member of the Penobscot Valley Chapter this spring! It's easy – just sign up at maineaudubon.org/support/membership/.

FPAC PROGRAMS CONT'D. FROM PG. 2

American Woodcock Displays

Tuesday, April 4, 6:15 p.m.

FREE but pre-registration required, space is limited

Co-sponsored with Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon

Featuring Eric Blomberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Wildlife Population Ecology at the University of Maine. See website for full program description. Following Eric's indoor program, we will move out to the parking lot to observe male woodcock performing their courtship "sky dance" at twilight on the Fields Pond sanctuary.

Bald Eagles, Bear Cubs, and Hermit Bill: Memoirs of a Wildlife Biologist

Friday, April 7, 7:00 p.m.

FREE but pre-registration required. Waterville native Ron Joseph will share stories about his rural Maine upbringing, his lifelong passion for birding, and his decades of work with native wildlife species. Copies of his book will be available for purchase and signing following the presentation. See website for full program description.

Using Trail Cameras to Study Wildlife Behavior

Statewide via Zoom; check website for link

Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m.

Featuring Janet Pesaturo, a conservation biologist and author. Learn how to capture outdoor photos and videos that reveal the secret habits of animals! See website for full program description.

Remote Cameras in the Field

Saturday, April 22, 10 a.m. -11:30 a.m.

\$6 members/\$12 non-members

Follow up Janet Pesaturo's Tuesday night talk with some hands-on experience! Join us on the FPAC sanctuary to take a closer look at how to use both photo and video remote cameras, to capture wildlife behavior in real time. Space for this workshop is limited, pre-registration required.

Saturday Beginner Bird Walk Series

Saturdays, April 22, April 29 and May 6, 8-9:30 a.m.

FREE but pre-registration requested

If you've ever wanted to get into birding or improve your birding skills, this series is for you. Trip leader Matt D'Angelo will provide tips for both the beginner

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER PROGRAMS CONT'D. FROM PG. 4

and the more seasoned birder. See website for full program description. Pre-register online; drop-ins welcome if space allows.

Spring School Vacation Camp at Fields Pond, April 17-21

Please visit www.maineaudubon.org/camps for more information.

Needle-Felted Maine Landscape Workshop

Saturday, April 22, 1-4 p.m.

\$50 member/\$60 nonmember

This beginner-friendly workshop will offer interesting techniques for more advanced felters as well! Course fee includes instruction and all materials. Maximum of 12 participants; pre-registration required. See website for full program description.

Spring Stewardship Day at Fields Pond

Saturday, April 29

9 a.m. to Noon

FREE

Join the FPAC staff for a morning of stewardship activities, focused on improving our trails and public access spaces. Bring work gloves, sturdy footwear, and appropriate outdoor apparel. Snacks provided! Please call 989-2591 to register.

Management of Migratory Fish in Maine

Statewide via Zoom; check website for link

Thursday, April 27, 7 p.m.

Featuring Cody Dillingham, a UMaine graduate student in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation Biology. Learn more about the ecology, management, and research of Maine's 13 species of migratory fish. See website for full program description.

Drawing Nature: Field Journal & Nature-Sketching Skills

May 6 - 7, 9:30a.m.-12:30 p.m.

\$45 member/\$55 non-member covers both days of instruction. Acclaimed wildlife artist and Maine Master Naturalist Michael Boardman will teach a two-day class, pairing nature journaling and the development of art skills with natural history subjects. Both days include classroom instruction followed by outdoor field trips to sketch while directly observing nature. See website for full program description.

Owl Prowl

Friday, May 12

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Members \$8, or \$12 family/non-members \$12, or \$16 family

This family-friendly program will introduce you to the fascinating world of owls and how their unique adaptations allow them to be such capable hunters in the dark. After an indoor talk, we'll venture out into the night to "prowl for owls" along the Fields Pond trails.

World Migratory Bird Day at Fields Pond

Saturday, April 13

8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

FREE

Check on the website in early May for full program details.

American Chestnut: History, Ecology and Restoration

Statewide via Zoom; check website for link

Wednesday, May 17, 7 p.m.

Featuring Dr. Mark McCollough, President of the American Chestnut Foundation. Learn more about the exciting work being done in Maine to restore the American chestnut tree. See website for full program description.

Bringing Nature Home: Spring Plant Preview and Walk

Saturday, May 20

9 a.m. to Noon

\$12 member/\$15 non-member

Join Maine Audubon's Andrew Tufts on a native plant walk, and get a sneak preview of the 2023 Bringing Nature Home plant sale. This walk will help you identify what's blooming in the wild for pollinators in May, while providing an open environment for questions about adding native plantings to your own gardens.

WELCOME TO PVC NEW AND REJOINING MEMBERS!

Peter Altmann, Orono
Steven Bouchard, Bangor
Stephen Coghlan, Argyle
Kreg Ettenger, Holden
Catherine Fogler, Exeter
Jennette Fisher, Greenville
Martha Harris, Winterport
Dean Harrison, East Boothbay
John Heise, East Boothbay
Anne Hess, Stillwater
Thomas Hodgman, Winterport
Kyle & Gabby Hogan, Holden
Sandra Johnson, Orono
Lori Patterson, Bangor
Michael Petrakovich, Carmel
The Saunders Family, Hampden
William and Pam Schoppmeyer, Hampden
Janet Smith and John Archer, Orrington
Adriaan Van Heiningen, Orono

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 March through May.

March 9, 2023

Hodgkins, John. *Boiling Off: Maple Sugaring in Maine*. 2020. 215 pages.

April 13, 2023

Tree, Isabella. *Wilding: Returning a Farm to Nature*. 2018. 362 pages.

May 11, 2023

Rawlence, Ben. *The Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth*. 2022. 289 pages (294 with bibliography)

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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NATURE NOTES: FUN FACTS ABOUT FERNS

BY GLORIA VOLLMEYERS

Continuing my Fall 2022 column theme about nature's aliens, defined as "things strange to us," let's look at the lifecycle of ferns. We have ferns all around us here in Penobscot County, thanks to abundant water and shade, which most ferns prefer. According to *Fern Finder* by A. and B. Hallowell, there are about 85 species in the Northeast, and many thousands worldwide. Locally familiar ferns are the Bracken, Cinnamon, Interrupted, Royal, Sensitive, Ostrich, and Christmas Fern. Here's some fern vocabulary. The FROND is the name of each fern leaf, from its top to the ground. The BLADE is the leafy part of the FROND. The RACHIS is the thin stalk within each BLADE. What you and I would call each individual "leaf" coming off the RACHIS is called a PINNA.

Ferns are very ancient, among the most ancient of plants that still exist today. They first appear in the fossil record somewhere between 360 and 400 million years ago. Ferns do not produce seeds or flowers. Instead, two independent living plants contribute to the full lifecycle of the ferns that we see in the woods, containing double sets of chromosomes (diploid) – they produce spores. The spore producers, called sori, are usually on the underside of the pinna of a fertile frond. Look for them on the

distinct fertile fronds of the Cinnamon Fern, or in the middle of the frond on an Interrupted Fern. Inside the sori are sporangia, the organs containing the spores. When released, the spores spurt into the air and land, hopefully, in a wet spot.

A spore that finds a nice damp spot will germinate and grow into small, photosynthetic plant—a gametophyte—about the size of a fingernail, called a prothallus. It has one set of chromosomes (haploid) and both female and male sex organs, but they develop at different times, so a single prothallus is unlikely to fertilize itself. The female sex organ (containing one egg) emits a chemical that guides the male sperm to it from a nearby prothallus, using water for transportation. Once fertilized, the egg will grow into a brand-new fern (diploid again), first as the familiar "fiddlehead" which is the young frond emerging from the ground.

If you want to propagate ferns, there are two ways. You can make a lot of them using their spores – look this up online to find directions. Or do it the easy way (but you won't get as many): dig up a fern you have, split it as you would any other plant, and replant. They like acidic soil, so toss in your coffee grounds.



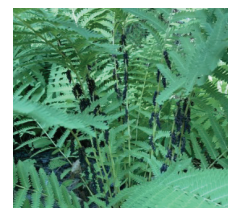
Cinnamon Fern - Sori on fertile fronds.
laurengardeningsservice.com



Sori on back of frond attached to individual pinna. Fern type unknown. Personal photo



Sori on back of fertile frond attached to each pinna - non-fertile to compare. Possibly Christmas Fern. Personal photo



Interrupted Fern - sori in middle (interrupts) fern frond attached to rachis. Personal photo