

December-February 2024

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Transitions and Connections

BY SEAN TRAHAN, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

Autumn heralds a season of change, as many people begin closing up their summer camps. Wildlife is preparing for the incoming chill, while the crisp air ushers in the early morning fog over Fields Pond. The tranquility is interrupted only by the gentle descent of leaves and the acorns falling from the oaks, as squirrels jump from tree to tree.

As fall transitions into winter, my wife and I reflect on the end of the latest chapter in our life on Fields Pond. Like migrating birds, we returned in the spring and left in the fall, just as we do every year. This year, we did not witness the arrival of a fledgling loon, but eagles and ospreys graced us with their presence. Deer were a common sight, diligently tending to our flowerbeds, making our fall cleanup tasks lighter. This summer also marked a significant milestone for the Fields Pond Audubon Center: 25 years of contributing to our community, through educational programs that bring us closer to the natural world. The celebratory event on August 26th was a resounding success, showcasing the rich history of the nature center and the invaluable support of PVC members like you.

To commemorate FPAC's 25 years, PVC board member Bob Milardo has organized an initiative to assemble a time capsule. It's filled with pictures, letters, and stories from FPAC staff and volunteers through the years, along with anecdotes from local residents who were

living on or near Fields Pond long before Maine Audubon established a sanctuary here. As we review these materials, we are reminded of our organization's rich history, and the privilege of being part of this remarkable journey.

Penobscot Valley Chapter volunteers, in partnership with Maine Audubon staff at FPAC, are diligently planning winter and spring events. These include bird walks, guest speakers, and various nature-based activities. Attendance at recent programs has been growing, as we work to improve our communications with members and communities in the Penobscot Valley region. If you, as a chapter member, have ideas for programs that could benefit our regional community, or wish to play a more active volunteer role, please reach out.

With winter approaching and the greater challenges of the world in mind, it becomes even more crucial to prioritize community, spend time with friends and family, and connect with nature. Please take a moment to enjoy a peaceful walk along a trail, observe our fellow creatures scurrying through the forest, or simply close your eyes to embrace the silence. These moments are opportunities to appreciate the natural world around you.

To stay informed about upcoming programs and events statewide, visit Maine Audubon Events at https://maineaudubon.org/events. Additionally, make sure to follow our chapter Facebook posts at

PenobscotValleyAudubon, and subscribe to our weekly listserv by sending an email to Jim Zeman at PVCAudubon@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, or wish to discuss volunteer opportunities or learn more about PVC programs, please don't hesitate to contact me via my personal email: Sean.Trahan@gmail.com.

WELCOME TO PVC NEW AND REJOINING MEMBERS!

Dianna Branson, Bangor Robert Burke, Newburgh Katherine Crosby, Brewer Martha Gladstone, Bangor Brandon Henry, Bangor Mike Ludwig, Bangor Cayla Moore & Stephen Wagner, Bangor Kurt Ongman, Old Town Nancy & Ed Podgorski, Bangor Mark Smedberg & Kathy Harris-Smedberg, Bangor Diane White, Hampden

NEW CORPORATE PARTNERS

Darling's, c/o Susan Maiden, Brewer The First National Bank, c/o Kristen McAlpine, Bangor



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, PVCAudubon@gmail.com to sign up for these services.

CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Sean Trahan
Vice President	Gloria Vollmers
Secretary	Sean Trahan
	Jim Zeman
Chapter Representative, Maine Audubon Board	
	Sandi McRae Duchesne

AT-LARGE CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

Bruce Bowden, Ellen Campbell, Timothy Conmee, Bob Duchesne, Bob Milardo, Gordon Russell and ex-officio board member David Lamon.

CHAPTER COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Programs & Field Trips	Bob Milardo
Auction Committee	Ellen Campbell

Natural Selections

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Visit us on the Web

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



FIELDS POND JOURNAL: New Projects, New Faces

by David Lamon, Northern Operations and Programs Director

This fall marked the beginning of a new collaboration between the Fields Pond Audubon Center (FPAC) and the Bangor School District. "Penobscot Classrooms" is a two-year project, working with Bangor's entire 5th grade staff and students. Maine Audubon and our community partners will help students and teachers explore and learn more about the environmental and cultural landscapes of the Penobscot River watershed. Activities this fall included hosting a dozen classroom visits to FPAC, where 5th graders explored the Penobscot watershed through hands-on stream ecology, learning why streams are important for both wildlife and human populations. Their teachers acquired fieldbased expertise at FPAC through a series of educator workshops, focused on incorporating placebased outdoor learning into their curriculums.

Some of you may have already met Brianna Guy, a newer member of our staff here at Fields Pond. Brianna joined Maine Audubon this past summer to assist with our summer camp programs, and she has remained on staff as a part-time Naturalist/Educator. Brianna is a 2020 University of Maine graduate, with a BS in Wildlife Ecology. Her previous work has included wildlife rehabilitation at Avian Haven and Acadia Wildlife Center. We're

very excited to have her as part of our team. If you haven't had the chance to go out with Brianna on a sanctuary walk this fall, be sure to take the opportunity to join her in the field this winter!

Another new face, at least to us at FPAC, is Bailey McGee. Bailey is working here for a few hours each week as our latest "Davis Intern" - an academic internship at FPAC for enrolled University of Maine students, generously sponsored by PVC members Ron and Lee Davis. Bailey is majoring in Wildlife Ecology, with a minor in Education. Although she had never visited Fields Pond before this fall, Bailey is no stranger to Maine Audubon and its mission, having worked for two summers in the day camp program at Gilsland Farm in Falmouth.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

David Lamon has been promoted to the Senior Leadership Team at Maine Audubon, with expanded responsibilities. As the new Director of Northern Programs and Operations, David will continue to serve as FPAC Manager, while also overseeing initiatives to extend Maine Audubon's outreach and educational programming to people and communities throughout the northern half of Maine. Please join us in congratulating David on his promotion! Those who work closely with him know that it is a well-deserved honor.

Bangor Grade 5 teachers gather at FPAC. Staff photo.



SPRING BIRDING IN LAPLAND

by Gordon Russell

In June of 2023, my wife Jane and I went on a birding trip to northern Finland and Norway, including the region known as Lapland. We began near the western city of Oulu, Finland, about 375 miles north of Helsinki and roughly 100 miles south of the Arctic Circle. The first three days were spent around Kampele Bay, part of the Gulf of Bothnia. There we were introduced to Whooper Swans (Finland's national bird), Great Crested Grebes, Tufted Ducks and a variety of waterfowl. Inland, there was a good mix of forest and wetland birds. Some of these species closely resembled North American birds, such as the Great Tit which looked like a colorful Black-capped Chickadee, and the patterned Fieldfare that behaved just like its cousin the American Robin. We were pleased to see a nesting Great Gray Owl, a species occasionally seen here in Maine in winter, and a Black Woodpecker, Europe's largest woodpecker.

Much of Finland is relatively flat and wet. With ample opportunities to stop at lakes and bogs along the way, we had nice views of Smew, Arctic Loon, and Red-throated Loon as well as a Horned Grebe in breeding plumage. Heading east and north toward the Russian border, the country developed much more relief. We found a White-throated Dipper in one of the swift-running rivers. Crossing the Arctic Circle (67° N), we paused for a traditional toast of cloudberry liqueur. In the Lapland region of Finland, originally inhabited by the Sami people, reindeer (aka caribou) were plentiful, right along the road. Continuing north, the forest began to include more stunted birch woods, and fewer pines.

A modern bridge over the River Tana brought us into Norway, and we could see snowfields on the higher elevations ahead. At a memorable lunch stop along the road, Eurasian Oystercatchers were nesting next to the picnic tables. We were moving into a rocky Arctic landscape, with few trees and plentiful bogs and tarns. This was not quite Arctic tundra, as there was no permafrost. Birds such as Long-tailed Jaeger were nesting on the open ground. Ice had just melted in the lakes and ponds, where species such as Red-necked Phalarope and colorful Ruff were in breeding plumage.

Moving onto Norway's Veranger Peninsula, we headed for the towns of Batsfjord and Vardo on the Barents Sea. We were at 70° N latitude, roughly level with Utqiagʻvik (formerly known as Barrow), Alaska. The landscape was rocky and treeless, and the sun never set. Rock and Willow Ptarmigans, a Bluethroat, and a Dotterel presented themselves to us. Black-legged Kittiwakes were nesting everywhere in Batsfjord, on window ledges and door frames.

Our stay in Norway included a short boat trip to Hornoya Island, just off Vardo. This rocky island is home to thousands of nesting Common Murres (known as

Common Guillemots in Europe), Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, and European Shags, the beautiful green-backed cousins of Maine's Double-crested Cormorants. There were lots of walking paths around the island, allowing you to approach within a few feet of these nesting seabirds.

We returned south and flew home from northern Finland, having logged over 175 species of birds. To see photos of some of these birds and other highlights from our trip, please join us at Fields Pond Audubon Center or online on February 2, 2024 for our slide show travelogue. It will be offered both in-person and via Zoom.

Ruff in breeding plumage Photo Credit: Jane Rosinski



BLUE WINTER

by Robert Francis (1901-1987)

Winter uses all the blues there are.
One shade of blue for water, one for ice,
Another blue for shadows over snow.
The clear or cloudy sky uses blue twiceBoth different blues. And hills row after row
Are colored blue according to how far.
You know the bluejay's double-blue device
Shows best when there are no green leaves to show.
And Sirius is a winterbluegreen star.

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 still scheduling hybrid FPBG meetings, for attendance either in-person or online via Zoom. If you would like to participate, please contact Joyce directly at rumeryj9@gmail.com. Here is the title and a brief synopsis for February's selection. The group will take a hiatus during December and January.

February 8, 2024

Macfarlane, Robert. The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot. 2012. 432 pp.

The author examines the subtle ways we are shaped by the landscapes through which we move. In this exquisitely written book, which folds together natural history, cartography, geology, and literature, Macfarlane sets off to follow the ancient routes that crisscross both the landscape of the British Isles and its waters and territories beyond. The result is an immersive, enthralling exploration of the voices that haunt old paths, and the stories our tracks tell.

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER WINTER PROGRAMS 2023-24

Please pre-register online for all programs at maineaudubon.org/events.

December-January: Winter Photography Contest at Fields Pond

What wonderful wilderness photos can you capture? Submit your outdoor photos of native wildlife and wildlife habitat in winter, taken anywhere on the Fields Pond Audubon Center sanctuary, throughout December and January. Voting on the winning photos will take place online and in person at the Fields Pond Winterfest on February 10! Check the Maine Audubon website for more details, at maineaudubon.org/fieldspondphotocontest.

Sustainable Eco-friendly Wreath Making Workshop

Sunday, December 3, noon to 3 p.m. Cost: \$45 members, \$55 nonmembers Get yourself in the festive spirit by joining this special workshop to create your own beautiful wreath from scratch. Wreath artisan Claire Ackroyd will guide you in the process of using regionally-sourced greens, as well as items you can gather from the natural landscape or harvest from your garden. This workshop is perfect for beginners, and no prior skills are required. You'll take home your own beautiful wreath on a 10-inch ring. Starter greens, ring, and wire will be provided. Please bring your own pruning shears or scissors, and gloves if you need them.

Holiday Bazaar & Double Discount Day at Fields Pond

Saturday, December 9, 10 a.m to 3 p.m. (Craft Bazaar), 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Double Discount Day)

Come shop for your holiday gift list, and support Maine Audubon at the same time! Vendors with nature-themed crafts will be onsite, and our Nature Store will have a wide selection of special seasonal gifts. Maine Audubon members eceive a double discount of 20%. Stick around for the food, drink, and festivities at the PVC Holiday Party, starting at 4 p.m.!

Night Tree: Welcome Winter Family Celebration at Fields Pond

Saturday, December 16, 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$10 member families, \$12 nonmember families

Join us for a family-oriented celebration of nature in winter as we recreate Eve Bunting's classic story, The Night Tree. Starting with a read-aloud of this enchanting story, we'll then create edible ornaments to decorate our own night tree to share with Maine's winter wildlife. Come relax and spend time with your loved ones, as we get ready to welcome the longest night of the year. Warm beverages and snacks await! Advance registration is recommended. Drop-ins welcome if space is available.

Seed Sowing Workshop

Saturday, January 6, 9 a.m. to noon (Snow date: January 13)

Cost: \$40 members, \$50 nonmembers In this hands-on workshop, Maine Audubon staff will introduce native seed propagation for growing your own native wildflowers and other plants from seed. Participants will leave with several pots sown with seeds and ready for maintenance-free outdoor germination.

Weekly Preschool Nature Hour at Fields Pond

Wednesdays from 9:30 to10:30 a.m. (8-week session, starting January 10)

Cost: \$80 member, \$100 nonmember per child (siblings under 2 free)

Advanced registration is encouraged! Drop-ins are welcome if space is available, please call ahead.

Young children and their grown-ups are invited to join our team of educators and naturalists to explore nature together through STEM activities, stories, art, and play. Each session is designed to foster learning, inspire a lifelong love of nature, and teach ways we can support and protect our earth together. Ages 2-5.

Winter Ecology Series #1, Ecology Walk Saturday, January 20, 10 a.m.

FREE

Join Maine Audubon staff for outdoor learning about the unique strategies that plants and animals employ to survive this challenging season in Maine. Be prepared for a moderate amount of physical activity, and dress appropriately for the weather of the day. If conditions allow, bring snowshoes (or call ahead to reserve a pair of ours, for a \$5 rental fee). Program is free, but online pre-registration is required. (Group size will be limited for safety reasons).

Full Moon Snowshoe Hike

Thursday, January 25, 5 p.m.

Cost: \$8 members, \$10 nonmembers
Join us for a peaceful winter's moonrise
hike, on the night traditionally known as
the Wolf Moon. Online pre-registration
required, as this special trek will be
limited in group size. A limited number
of snowshoes are available to rent
by advance reservation only (for an
additional \$5 fee) or you can bring your

Winter Landscape Watercolor Workshop

Saturday, January 27, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm Cost: \$45 member, \$55 nonmember plus materials

Guest instructor: Cassie Sano. Whether you are a complete beginner or looking to refresh your skills, this class will cover the basics of watercolor painting, materials, techniques, how to set up your palette, and the difference between painting from photos vs. in the field. Please note, participants will need to bring their own watercolor supplies. A detailed list of the tools and supplies needed for the class and the artist's recommendations will be provided upon registration.

Winter Ecology Series #2, Winter Tracking

Saturday, February 3, 10 a.m. FREE

Join Maine Audubon staff for a winter walk around the Fields Pond sanctuary, 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 walking pace will be easy, but winter conditions can sometimes make for more challenging conditions. Come prowl around outside to see what your wild neighbors have been up to! Program is free, donations appreciated. Space is limited, so online pre-registration is required.

Bats of Maine

Tuesday, February 6, 6 p.m. FRFF

Wildlife Biologist Cory Stearns of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife will talk about the eight bat species of Maine. Topics include bat biology, population status, MDIFW's bat research and monitoring efforts, and what you can do to help bat populations.

NOTE: This will be a hybrid in-person

FPAC PROGRAMS Continued

and online Zoom presentation. Program is free, but online preregistration is required.

Fields Pond WinterFest

Saturday, February 10, 10 a.m to 2 p.m. FREE

A day to celebrate all things winter! We are planning fun indoor and outdoor activities for the whole family. A complete schedule will be provided closer to the event date. Free for all!

Travelogue: African Adventures

Friday, February 16, 6 p.m. FREE

Discover Africa's wonders with world travelers Leslie Clapp (President of the Downeast Chapter of Maine Audubon) and Blaise deSibour of Blue Hill. The couple will share photos and stories from their eight-week adventure in South Africa, with a side trip to Rwanda and Uganda. Explore the Western Cape's Cedarberg Mountains, the famous Garden Route, and the Cape of Good Hope, before heading east to Kruger National Park and the lush Drakensberg Mountains. Experience an incredible range of landscapes—from South Africa's rugged coastline and semi-desert interior, to Uganda's equatorial forests and the Nile River brimming with wildlife. Enjoy up-close encounters with birds and other amazing animals, including the bizarre Shoebill, endangered Mountain Gorillas, and countless big cats. This was a naturelover's trip of a lifetime! NOTE: This will be a hybrid in-person and online Zoom presentation. Program is free, but online preregistration is required.

Winter Ecology Series #3, Winter Bird Walk

Saturday, February 17, 10 a.m. FREE

Winter birding can present great opportunities for the beginning birder. Maine serves as a winter destination for many species that spend their summers in Canada. We'll look for our hardy year-round residents, such as cardinals and chickadees, as well as less common migratory birds like dark-eyed juncos and redpolls! FREE, but preregistration is required due to limited group size.

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS, WINTER 2023-24

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!

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY AND NATURE PHOTO EXPO

Saturday, December 9, 2023, 4-7 p.m. In-person at Fields Pond Audubon Center

We are pleased to restart PVC's long tradition of holding an annual Holiday Party - our first since 2019! "Heavy" (supper-worthy) hors d'oeuvres will be served, along with an assortment of party beverages to put everyone in the holiday spirit. Winning bidders in PVC's online auction can pick up and pay for their items, and additional items will be offered at the party for silent bidding. Prior to 6 p.m., you can also browse through a wide assortment of curated holiday gift merchandise in the Fields Pond Nature Store, and take advantage of Double Discount Day. Maine Audubon members get a double discount (20 percent!) off the listed retail prices, and yes you can join or rejoin as

a member at checkout in order to receive the discount. The evening's highlight will be a nature photography expo, another beloved PVC tradition to wrap up the calendar year. Photographers are invited to showcase and describe some of their favorite wildlife encounters and nature-based travel experiences from the years 2020-2023. Bring along your own digital photos, slide shows, and videos on a thumb drive or a laptop with an HDMI port if you'd like to participate in the expo, or just come to appreciate the natural wonders captured on camera by your fellow PVC members.

SPRING BIRDING IN LAPLAND

Friday, February 2, 2024, 7 p.m. Offered as a hybrid program, both in-person at FPAC and via Zoom. Sign up to get the Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/ meeting/register/tZ0vdqvrzsvGddd70gfCy1HYIkUwJmuGPxb PVC Immediate Past President Gordon Russell and his wife, Jane Rosinski, will present a fascinating travelogue on their birding trip to northern Finland and Norway in the late spring of 2023. (See Gordon's related article about this trip on Page 3.) Highlights include photos of multiple species of nesting owls, loons, seabirds and shorebirds, all taken in the magical land of Santa Claus, reindeer and the midnight sun.

February Vacation Nature Camp

February 20–23, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Maine Audubon's winter vacation camp is an opportunity for children in grades 1-3 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 include topics about animal adaptations in winter, snow science, tracking, and winter ecology. Registration is available online. Scholarships are available!

Full Moon Snowshoe Hike

Friday, February 23, 5 p.m.

\$8 members, \$10 nonmembers

Join us for a peaceful winter's moonrise hike, on the night traditionally known as the Snow Moon. Online pre-registration required, as this special trek will be limited in group size. A limited number of snowshoes are available to rent by advance reservation only (for an additional \$5 fee) or you can bring your own

Winter Ecology Series #4, Winter Tree Identification

Saturday, February 24, 10 a.m.

FREE

Get outside and enjoy nature's winter wonders during this informational program and easy hike, guided by Maine Master Naturalist Karen Johnson. Karen's brief indoor presentation will give you keys to aid in winter tree identification, which we will then put to use out in the woods. Please dress for outside weather; boots and/or snowshoes encouraged! FREE but preregistration required.



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

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PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS WINTER 2023-24

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! All trips are free and open to the general public, although of course we encourage participants to join Maine Audubon at whatever financial level makes sense for them.

ACADIA IN WINTER

Sunday, February 25, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Acadia National Park is truly a fourseason delight, yet many Mainers have never experienced Acadia during the quieter winter months. For anyone with an interest in birding, it can be a magical time of year. Most of our breeding songbirds will not return until April or May, but they have been replaced by a wide variety of Canada-breeding species that spend their winters here, both on land and on the water. Trip leaders Bob and Sandi Duchesne have been birding Acadia and the "quiet side" of Mt. Desert Island in winter for five decades, and they look forward to sharing some of their favorite spots and species with you. This trip is suitable for all levels of birding experience. We will walk for short distances at

selected stops, but no extensive hiking is involved. Bring a brown-bag lunch and snacks, binoculars, a spotting scope if you have one (leaders will share theirs), and a camera if you want to capture the amazing scenery. Meet at Fields Pond Audubon Center at 7:00 a.m. to form carpools; if you live closer to MDI, we can arrange to meet you en route. Please call Sandi at 207-735-5436 to pre-register, let us know where you want to meet us to carpool, and provide contact information. Sandi will call on Saturday night prior to 7 p.m. if we need to cancel for bad weather.

Long-tailed Ducks Photo credit: Bob Duchesne



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: SIGN UP FOR THE PVC LISTSERV!

by Jim Zeman
PVC Treasurer and Listserv Administrator

We are reaching out to all chapter members to be sure you know about our weekly email reminder service, listing all of the upcoming PVC and FPAC activities. We also occasionally spread the word about important regional environmental events and programming sponsored by other conservation organizations. Let us jog your memory via email as the date approaches, for events and programs that you wouldn't want to miss!

If you've already signed up for the PVC listserv yourself, and you have friends or family who also might be interested in receiving these weekly notices, we would be glad to add them to our distribution list. Although we provide these reminders as a free service to Maine Audubon members in the Penobscot Valley region, and sincerely hope that our programming will attract potential new members, you do not have to be a member to sign up for the listserv or attend any of our programs. Our email distribution list is NEVER shared, and usually only one or two messages go out weekly.

If you would like your email added, or know other people who would like to be added, please send me a message at PVCAudubon@gmail.com with the email address or addresses. We'll take it from there. Thanks again for your ongoing support, and your Maine Audubon membership.