

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



March–May 2024

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Spring Has Sprung!

BY SEAN TRAHAN, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

As the days grow warmer, we find ourselves on the brink of spring, a season cherished by many. While some eagerly anticipate the arrival of warmer months, there are those lovers of cooler weather and tranquility, who can't help but feel a twinge of disappointment as the bustling crowds of tourists return. Yet we all acknowledge the annual ritual of mud season—a reminder of nature's cyclical dance.

Our dedicated PVC board has been diligently crafting a calendar of spring events, with a special focus on embracing the wonders of spring through our annual program of guided neighborhood bird walks. These events, beloved by our board, our members, and the community at large, serve as a gateway to exploring the great outdoors. Led by passionate volunteers, they provide an enriching experience for all. Find details about the bird walks and other chapter events in this newsletter, on our Facebook page, and on our website.

As a chapter, PVC is building on our past successes, growing our membership, and fostering connections within the community. In line with our nature-focused mission, we are excited to announce ongoing discussions with Geaghan's Brewery to revive our Birds and Brews events. Once the logistics are worked out, we hope these events will prove successful and help to enhance our visibility in the Bangor area.

In February, PVC hosted its first hybrid Zoom/in-person program at the Fields Pond Audubon Center. Gordon Russell and Jane Rosinski shared a captivating travelogue about their birding trip to Finland and Norway. For those who missed it, a recording is now available on our website and on Facebook. We are trying to ensure that everyone can enjoy our free monthly programs, whether in-person or from the comfort of their living room. It's a new direction for us, and we hope you share in our excitement as we navigate this learning curve.

Fields Pond Journal

BY DAVID LAMON

Stay curious and keep moving. If Winter gives us a time to pause and reflect, Spring brings opportunities for movement and curiosity. Awakenings, migrations, mating, nesting, birthing, and blooming are all happening during this season of beginnings. Each spring day seems to bring new changes with it as our planet moves through space, as we in the northern hemisphere become more directly illuminated by the sun. Speaking of planetary positioning, April 8th will witness a rare total solar eclipse from our place on earth. The Fields Pond Audubon Center is planning an eclipse watch party, with specific details available on our Maine Audubon website. Please join us! Also, consider joining us this spring for a program specifically focused on being curious. "Curious by Nature" is a new seasonal program series (see description in the programs listing). Log on and join in the fun with other curious Maine Audubon Members this spring.

Spring is a bustling time for everyone, with gardening, camp preparations, and the joy of witnessing nature awaken from its winter slumber. As we collectively embrace the vibrant energy of Maine in spring, we invite you to stay informed about our upcoming programs and events. Visit our website at pvc.maineaudubon.org, follow our Facebook posts, and subscribe to our weekly emails. Should you have any questions or suggestions for future programs and field trips, feel free to reach out to me personally at Sean.Trahan@gmail.com.

WELCOME TO PVC NEW AND REJOINING MEMBERS!

Katie Baron & Ryan Clark, Holden
Julia Bates, Bangor
Allen & Jessica Braun, Carmel
Cheryl Brown & Linda Sheltmire,
Natick, MA
James Campbell, Greenville
Jeanine Crockett, Winterport
Vicki & Alan Darrah, Hermon
George Elliott, Bangor
Grace & Mark Jacobs, Monroe
Mitchell Kogut, Bangor
Katherine & Arlo Proctor, Old Town
Luke Rand & Claud Cummings, Bangor
Lisa & Brian Sturgeon, Brewer
Shellie Tourtilotte, Orrington
Clarissa Trasko, Bucksport
Kimberly Wilson, Batavia, OH

REJOINING CORPORATE PARTNERS

Bangor Savings Bank,
c/o Joyce Senaki, Bangor

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

CHAPTER OFFICERS

President..... Sean Trahan
Vice President Gloria Vollmers
Secretary Sean Trahan
Treasurer Jim Zeman
Chapter Representative, Maine Audubon Board of Trustees 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

Editor..... Sandi McRae Duchesne
Design & Layout..... Donne Sinderson
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& Tonya Trahan

Visit us on the Web

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



BOB TALKS BIRDS

Learn While You Walk

by Bob Duchesne

Penobscot Valley Chapter volunteers are looking forward to leading our annual series of neighborhood bird walks in May. Please make us work.

Seriously, this is a great opportunity to learn and improve your own ability to find and identify birds. Make the leaders work! Ask questions. Make identification guesses, and seek verification. Request help, if you don't see the bird that others are seeing.

Color and field marks are the most common identification clues used by all birders. Experienced birders use several more clues.

One clue is absurdly simple: your trip leaders are familiar with the location of that day's walk, so they know what to expect. In many cases, the same birds show up in the same spots year after year, because those spots contain their preferred habitat. It's a clue you can use on your own, too. Wherever you live, your neighborhood has the same collection of birds, year after year. With minimal effort, you can not only recognize your local birds, you can learn to expect where to find them.

Trip leaders certainly use audible clues. We schedule our walks for May, when birds are at their most vocal. They are literally telling us where and what they are. Not all bird vocalizations are easy to remember, but many are. Ask your leader for tips on how to remember them.

Trip leaders study bird behavior. They can recognize a bird by what it is doing. Let's say, for instance, that a bird is climbing up a tree trunk. In our area, the likely candidates would be white-breasted nuthatch, red-breasted nuthatch, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, black-and-white warbler, and brown creeper. That one behavior eliminates all the other birds from consideration. And if the bird is walking DOWN the trunk, it's got to be one of the two nuthatches – the only Maine birds that can walk headfirst down a tree.

Trip leaders recognize subtle differences in bird movements. Let's say we're on the very popular Essex Woods walk. Many birds fly over this wetland. Tree swallows are blue on top, white on the bottom. They have an easy, agile flying style as they dart around the sky. Eastern kingbirds are also blue on top, white on the bottom. But they have an aggressive, fast-beating, more direct flight style.

Chimney swifts often forage over Essex Woods. They resemble flying cigars, with a fluttery, bat-like flapping pattern. Cliff swallows are sometimes seen here, too. They are also somewhat cigar-shaped, but their strong, efficient flapping pattern is radically different.

Your leaders rely on their acquired skills and field experience to identify birds, and you can and should try to learn from them. What new skills can you start to practice on your next bird walk?

One final question to ask more experienced birders: what binoculars are they using? Many birders want to upgrade their optics, but few know how to choose among all the brands out there. Here's an opportunity to ask for a chance to try out someone else's. Nearly everyone will be happy to oblige. Binoculars vary widely, and there is no substitute for trying a pair to see if they work well with your vision and personal preferences. If you're on my walk, ask to try out my high-end Swarovskis. The answer is yes, but you can't take them home.

Penobscot Valley Chapter, Fields Pond Audubon Center

Neighborhood Bird Walks

May 2024

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.

Wednesday, May 8: Indian Trail and Penobscot County Conservation Assn., Brewer

Leaders: Gordon Russell, Jane Rosinski
Meet at Penobscot County Conservation Assn., North Main St.

Saturday, May 11: (World Migratory Bird Day): Fields Pond Audubon Center, Holden

Leaders: David Lamon, Gordon Russell
Meet in Fields Pond Audubon Center parking lot.
This walk starts at 8:00 AM.

Tuesday, May 14: Bangor City Forest, Bangor

Leaders: Bob Milardo, Gordon Russell
Meet at parking lot in BCF at end of Kittredge Rd.

Wednesday, May 15: Essex Woods, Bangor

Leaders: Paul Markson, Gloria Vollmers
Meet in the parking lot at the end of Watchmaker Rd

Friday, May 17: Saxl Park, Bangor

Leaders: Laura Levenson, Elizabeth Payne
Meet in Cascade Park parking lot, just off State St.

Monday, May 20: Leonard's Mills, Bradley

Leader: Bob Duchesne
Meet at the junction of Government Rd and Rt. 178

Tuesday, May 21: University of Maine, Orono

Leader: Sandi Duchesne
Meet 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).

Wednesday, May 22: Mt. Hope Cemetery, Bangor

Leaders: Jim and Kathy Zeman
Meet in the parking area inside the State St. entrance.

Thursday, May 23: 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.

Tuesday, May 28: 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 Avenue, turn left on Putnam Rd, aka Orono Landfill Access Rd. Meet at the trailhead parking area in front of the gate.



FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER SPRING 2024 PROGRAMS

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

Curious by Nature

Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

March 7 and 21, April 4 and 18,

May 2 and 23

FREE via Zoom only.

Pre-registration required.

Join us for a series of hour-long programs by Maine-based naturalists. In each session, we will focus on one of Maine's native wildlife species. Presentations will include information on species ecology and biology, notes on their bizarre behaviors and adaptations, trivia and other games, and an opportunity for Q&A with Maine Audubon staff and/or a special guest speaker. This program is a great opportunity to increase your knowledge of Maine's wildlife in a fun and informal setting.

Curious by Nature for Classrooms

Thursdays, 1:30-2:00 p.m.

March 14 and 28, April 11 and 25,

May 9 and 23

Level: Best suited for grades 3-8

FREE virtual programs via Zoom, either live or recorded. Pre-registration required. Have your students Zoom live with a Maine Audubon naturalist, or replay the recorded program at a time that works well for your class. Each session we will cover one Maine wildlife species, exploring everything from their scientific name to extreme adaptations and odd morphology. This fun and informative program is a great opportunity to build your students' knowledge about Maine's wildlife in a fun and informal setting. Classes participating in the live Zoom will also have a post-session Q&A session with each presenting naturalist and/or special guest speaker.

Weekly Preschool Nature Hour

Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m.

8-week program starts March 13 (no session on April 17)

Entire Series: \$80 members, \$100 nonmembers per child

Individual Session: \$12 members, \$15 nonmembers per child

Ages 2-5, siblings under 2 free

Young children and their grown-ups are invited 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. Online pre-registration is strongly encouraged due to limited space. Drop-ins are welcome if a space is available; please call ahead, 207-989-2591, to confirm.

Moonlight Hike

Saturday, March 23, 6-7 p.m.

Price: \$8 members, \$10 nonmembers

Join us to experience the different sights and sounds of nature that emerge after sunset. Learn about the surrounding ecosystem with a staff naturalist, while we explore the Fields Pond sanctuary by moonlight with our eyes and our ears. This program is family-friendly and suitable for all levels of hiking experience and knowledge about the natural world. We will be hiking slowly for about half a mile along uneven trail surfaces that contain rocks, roots, and muddy areas. Please come dressed and prepared for changeable weather and trail conditions. We may end up using snowshoes, depending on ground conditions on the date of the hike; please bring your own if you have them. Group size is limited, and snowshoes are available by advance reservation only (additional \$2 fee) for those who need them. Please call 207-989-2591 to reserve.



Roads, Rain, and a Couple Thousand Amphibians - Call it a Big Night!

Monday, March 25, 6:30 p.m.

Hybrid Zoom/FPAC presentation

Free; online pre-registration required for Zoom participants.

Big Nights are fascinating and unique natural events that occur every spring. With spring rain and warming temperatures, thousands of frogs and salamanders will emerge from

underground winter burrows and migrate en masse to their vernal pool breeding grounds. These miniature migrations often put them in harm's way on roadways. How we can assist and protect these ancient populations will be the subject of this presentation. Join us to hear how you can get involved in this community science project. Volunteer kits will be available on-site at FPAC for checkout. Our presenter, Greg LeClair, is a graduate student in ecology and environmental science at the University of Maine. As the creator of the "Maine Big Night" project, he coordinates the collection of statewide data on Maine's amphibian migrations.

Spring Bird Walk Series

Eight-week series begins Friday, March 29, 8-9:30 a.m.

FREE but please pre-register online to save your spot.

Spring is a perfect time to celebrate Maine's tremendous variety of bird species, as hundreds of migratory birds return from their wintering grounds. Spring is also a great time to observe birds, as migrants and year-round residents alike don their most vibrant plumage and begin to sing and call to attract mates and defend their territories. Please choose appropriate footwear for potentially wet or muddy trail conditions. Binoculars will be provided at no cost for those that need them. Please pre-register online, as space is limited. Drop-ins are welcome if space allows.

FPAC Volunteer Training

Saturday, Apr 6, 2024; see session times below.

FREE, online pre-registration required.

We're looking for nature-loving volunteers to help with public outreach and programs. Choose the session that best suits your abilities and interests, or feel free to sign up for both!

Session1: Educational Guide, 9-10:30 a.m.

Educational Guide (EG) volunteers lead nature walks and assist our educator-naturalist staff with outdoor programs for families and youth. Desired skills for an EG include an appreciation for the natural world, and a desire to share your enthusiasm with people of all ages. This position requires public speaking and positive group management skills.

Session 2: Visitor Services, 11 a.m. to noon

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FPAC SPRING 2024 PROGRAMS Continued

Visitor Services (VS) volunteers help broaden the public's knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of the Fields Pond Audubon Center. As Maine Audubon's principal public-facing representatives at Fields Pond, VS volunteers greet visitors at the reception desk, provide information about the FPAC sanctuary and trails, respond to phone inquiries, conduct sales in the Nature Store, help to maintain outdoor bird feeding stations, and assist with behind-the-scenes staff projects. This position requires attention to detail and a friendly, easy-going manner.

Homeschool Naturalists: Spring Session

Thursdays, April 11 and 25, May 2 and 16, 10 a.m. to noon

Individual sessions: \$12 members,

\$15 nonmembers per child

Entire series: \$40 members,

\$50 nonmembers per child

Sign up for the FPAC Homeschool Naturalists program to increase your child's ecological literacy this spring. Maine's ecosystems undergo extreme changes during the spring season. The cold weather and quiet make way for warmer days and an abundance of emerging new life. Hibernating creatures wake up and emerge from their winter shelters, and birds return from wintering grounds. Find out how local flora and fauna manage to secure their share of natural resources and territory during this hectic time. Homeschool Naturalists will contribute to community science research as they explore, observe, and track phenological variations in plant and animal life across the seasons, right here on the grounds and trails of the Fields Pond sanctuary. This outdoors-oriented program can be an integral part of your child's science curriculum. Space is limited, so register today!

Woodcock Watch!

Thursday, April 11, 6:15 p.m.

\$8 members, \$12 nonmembers

The display of male American woodcock, termed the "Sky Dance" by Aldo Leopold, is one of the first hallmarks of spring when they migrate back to Maine from their wintering grounds in the southeast US. The US Fish and Wildlife Service uses counts of calling male woodcock on their singing grounds to monitor populations, and these surveys suggest woodcock have declined over the last half-century. Using new GPS tracking technology,

University of Maine researchers have led efforts across the eastern US and Canada to learn more about woodcock migration. Erik Blomberg, Associate Professor of Wildlife Population Ecology and chair of the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation Biology at the University of Maine, will discuss the biology of woodcock breeding and migration, and highlight new findings that have been made possible with GPS tracking technology. After Erik's presentation, we will walk outside to observe displaying male woodcock at twilight on the Fields Pond sanctuary.

Story Time with Cassie Sano

Saturday, April 13, 10-11 a.m.

Price: \$8 member family,

\$12 nonmember family

Join us for an enchanting adventure in the North Woods with Maine author-illustrator Cassie Sano! In this engaging program, Cassie will read aloud from her most recent picture story book, "Baxter the Moose." Baxter invites children into a whimsical world where imagination knows no bounds. Cassie's delightful story describes the adventures and misadventures of Baxter, the moose with a penchant for cartwheels. Following story time, Cassie will guide kids in drawing their own pictures of a moose!



April School Vacation Camp at Fields Pond

Monday-Friday, April 15-19, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Registration is now open! Scholarships available. Please visit www.maineaudubon.org/camps for more information.

Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 20, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Join us to celebrate Maine's natural landscape! Learn about small ways you can take action to make a BIG impact on your local ecosystem's health. This celebration is family-friendly and full of fun activities for all ages. At press time, the following events were scheduled,

with more likely to be added as the date approaches.

•9:30 -10:30 a.m. Family-friendly beginner bird walk (free)

Bird nest box building workshop (fee)

•11 a.m. to noon Family-friendly beginner bird walk (free)

Bird nest box building workshop (fee)

•10 a.m. to noon (ongoing): Make your own native plant seed bombs (free)

Price: \$25 members, \$30 nonmembers for nest box workshop; otherwise free

Spring Stewardship Day

Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m. to noon

FREE – volunteers needed, the more the merrier!

Join the FPAC staff for a morning of stewardship activities focused on improving our sanctuary trails and public access spaces. Bring your own work gloves, and come prepared for outdoor work with layered clothing and sturdy footwear. Snacks provided! Please pre-register online, or call 989-2591 for more information.

Foraging for Pigment

Saturday, May 4, 9 a.m. to noon

Price: \$75 members, \$85 nonmembers

Learn about the history of pigments while making your own pigment from natural materials found in Maine, with artist Nathan Allard. The workshop will start with foraging for raw materials, and crushing them to form pigments using a mortar and pestle and a glass muller and plate. You'll then learn how to temper the pigment with egg yolk for traditional Renaissance egg tempera painting. Basic paper and brushes will be available for use, but Nathan encourages participants to bring their own high-quality watercolor art paper and favorite brushes if they have them.

World Migratory Bird Day Celebration

Saturday, May 11

FREE

Join with fellow bird-lovers across the Northern Hemisphere in this annual worldwide celebration, at a time when most of our migratory species are returning to their breeding grounds. A partial listing of planned events is provided here. More events will be added to the schedule as the date approaches; to stay informed, please sign up for the weekly listserv (see Page 2) if you have not already done so.

Cont'd. on next page

FPAC SPRING PROGRAMS Continued

- 8:00 a.m. Bird Walk with David Lamon and Gordon Russell
- 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Spring Optics Sale, try before you buy!
- 6-7 p.m. Owl Prowl

Browntail Moth Management

Thursday, May 16, 6:00 p.m.

Hybrid Zoom/FPAC presentation

Free; online pre-registration required for Zoom participants.

Many in Maine are uncomfortably familiar with the non-native browntail moth, due to its itchy effects during an outbreak. This species has been established in Maine for over 100 years, but many things have changed since it was first detected. Angela Mech, Assistant Professor of Forest Entomology at the University of Maine, has conducted extensive research on browntail moths. Angela will discuss the history, biology, and ecology of the browntail moth, and highlight some of the research underway to better monitor and manage this invasive and skin-irritating pest.

Small Wonders Guided Nature Walk with Aislinn Sarnacki

Saturday, May 18 10 a.m. to noon

Price: \$12 members, \$15 nonmembers

On this easy hike on the FPAC sanctuary trails, we'll stop to discuss and admire the small wonders of nature that are often overlooked. Salamander eggs, caddisfly larvae (carrying around tiny, self-made homes) and early wildflowers such as trilliums are among the things we might see. Aislinn Sarnacki, an outdoor journalist, Registered Maine Guide, and host of Maine Public TVs *Borealis*, will share how she's explored flora, fauna and fungi through her writing and photography. Group size will be limited, so register today!

Spring Phenology Walk at Fields Pond

Wednesday, May 22, 4 p.m.

Free; online pre-registration required.

Witness the transformation of nature as it awakens from winter slumber, exploring the early stages of growth in plants, trees, and flowers. The program aims to foster a deeper connection with nature, enhance participants' knowledge of spring phenology, and provide hands-on experience for active observation. We hope you will join us on our Phenology Trail to observe patterns of growth and the joy of exploring nature's renewal this spring.

Basket Crafting Series with Jes Steel

Jes Steele has a deep passion for the wilderness and for teaching. She has been working in the field of Adventure and Environmental Education for more than 30 years. Her current journey is about connecting more deeply with herself, others, and the wilderness. Course fees cover all materials plus instruction.

I. Birch Bark Basket Making

Wednesday, May 29, 5-8 p.m.

Price: \$50 members, \$60 nonmembers

In this class, you will learn how to make your own birch bark basket. We will head out in the woods and see how to

identify the right trees, how to collect the bark from downed trees, how to process the bark, and finally how to make a basket.

II. Fiddlehead Basket Workshop

Friday, May 31, 4:00-9:30 p.m.

Price: \$80 members, \$90 nonmembers

In this workshop you will create a nice basket to collect fiddleheads, mushrooms, or herbs, whether you are hiking in the forest or wandering in your garden. The finished size is approximately 4 x 8 x 10 inches.

Wood Frog and Moose photo credit:

Donne Sinderson

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS, Spring 2024

We invite you to join us for FREE monthly programs that typically follow the school year calendar (October-May, no January). Unless otherwise specified, all programs are offered as hybrid Zoom/in-person presentations at FPAC; please pre-register using the provided link to sign up for the Zoom presentation. All chapter programs are open to the general public, so feel free to invite a friend or an out-of-town guest!

The PVC Annual Meeting and our planned monthly program for May have been pushed back into June this year, with the final date and time still undetermined at press time. Details will be provided in the Summer 2024 issue of *Natural Selections*.

BIRD IDENTIFICATION MADE EASY

Friday, March 1, 7 p.m.

Hybrid Zoom/in-person at FPAC; pre-register for Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/join?meetingref=tZwud-urrD0oHdD69kC9Nasn3Yb2K1HUF1W3> Spring migration will soon begin. Whether you are new to birding or an experienced observer, now is the time to brush up on your field identification skills and practice new ones. Experts use visual clues such as size, shape, color, and field marks to identify birds quickly, before they can move out of sight. PVC board member Bob Duchesne will present his perennially popular slideshow tutorial, featuring scores of beautiful bird photos and some easy-to-learn, simple-to-remember tips to enhance your own rapid ID skills. He'll also touch on the advanced tricks and techniques used by experts. By knowing exactly where and how to look for birds, you may discover species that you never knew were there, even in your own backyard.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINE'S MUDFLATS

Friday, April 5, 7 p.m.

Hybrid Zoom/in-person at FPAC; pre-register for Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/join?meetingref=tZ0ofu6vrTMuEtLJEyDtd2tUNFWrf-ZVgEVf> Tidal mudflats are one of the most dynamic habitats along Maine's coast, and their complex ecosystems demand additional study. Organisms living in the soft mud sediment sustain many species, including humans. Migrating shorebirds feed voraciously on marine macroinvertebrates in the intertidal mud, giving these small birds enough energy to make long nonstop flights across the ocean to their wintering grounds. MDIFW wildlife biologist Chris West will help us dig deep to explore mudflat biodiversity and how this critical habitat has changed over time, touching on topics such as cultural significance, resource management, ecological importance, sediment composition, historical uses, and the impacts Maine's mudflats now face due to climate change and coastal development pressures.

BOOK REVIEW

BY BOB MILARDO

Our Maine:

Exploring Its Rich Natural Heritage

Editors: Aram J. K. Calhoun, Malcolm L. Hunter Jr., & Kent H. Redford.
Photographs by Laura Zamfirescu.
Camden, ME, Downeast Books, 2023,
276pp.

Editors Aram Calhoun, Mac Hunter and Kent Redford have assembled a love letter to Maine, and coupled it with the expressive photos of Laura Zamfirescu. Nine chapters describe Maine's signature ecosystems and signature species, coupled with six additional chapters on the intersection of Maine's cultural and natural heritage. Beginning with overviews of Maine's unique geology and climate, the book pursues detailed descriptions of core habitats: the Gulf of Maine, Estuaries where river systems meet the sea, Lakes (of which we have over 5,000), Rivers, Wetlands, Forests, and Alpine Summits. Chapters are written by well-known experts in their respective fields, all with decades of experience and a clear appreciation for Maine's natural history. I found the detail stunning, highly readable, and at times beautifully lyrical, while still maintaining a firm footing in science. This is not your typical Maine travelogue, or a guidebook for where to shop; it's about what makes Maine so unique, its rich and stunning habitats. It's not about where to hike or paddle, but what to see when we do so. Chapters are coupled with vignettes describing some iconic species like puffins, lobster, loons and the ubiquitous black-capped chickadee, as well as some lesser known species like green darners, the ten-banded

Neptune whelk, and lungwort. All chapters are well written by additional wildlife biologists and botanists. Among my favorites is Jennifer Neptune's essay on sweetgrass. She writes: "Alone one strand is brittle and easy to break, but braided together in three or more bundles it is unbreakable. For me, that is one of the beautiful things about sweetgrass: its ability to embody and always remind us of cultural teachings that continue to guide us today—to stand together, to be generous, to be kind, to see and respect the other beings we share this earth with, and to remember that we need each other." There are lessons in the natural world, which is why we need to know about it, to see more clearly with wonder.

The final section of the book explores traditions of hunting and gathering, generational learning from the perspectives of Passamaquoddy fiddlehead harvesters, farming and blueberry barrens, past extinctions, and a final chapter on how we might address future conservation issues.

Surprisingly there is no overview of birds in Maine where over 400 species have been recorded, although we can expect to read more on a favorite taxon of wildlife for so many, especially given the recent completion of the five-year Maine Breeding Bird Atlas project. My one complaint about this book, there is no index. If you're wondering where you read about marsh valerian or Piper's pipewort, you'll need to either have a super memory, or just flip pages. Did I mention the photos that appear throughout? They're stunning, including a photo of 30+ editions of the DeLorme Maine Atlas resting in a traditional Maine canoe, along with an essay by...who other than Zip Kellogg.

Book Talk:

*These Trees Tell a Story:
The Art of Reading Landscapes*
by Noah Charney

Thursday April 25, from 5pm

Dr. Charney's new book is structured as a series of interactive field walks through ten New England ecosystems, bringing readers into the field as naturalists to understand the many interconnected layers of environmental studies. Charney, assistant professor of conservation biology at the University of Maine, uses the tools of spatial ecology to guide conservation of sensitive species and ecosystems in the face of global change and expanding human populations. This will be a hybrid event (in-person at Fields Pond and online via zoom), with pre-registration required at <https://maineaudubon.org/events>.

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 rumery@maine.edu 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)



Spring Wildflowers

Photo Credit: Donne Sinderson

Clockwise from top left:

Rhodora, Shadbush, Painted Trillium,

Red Maple (female) and Buttercup

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 FIELD TRIPS, SPRING 2024

ISLE AU HAUT HARLEQUIN CRUISES

Multiple dates in March and April

Leaders: Bob and Sandi Duchesne

Cost: \$60

One of our all-time favorite boat trips is back. For many years, PVC hosted late March boat rides around Isle au Haut to enjoy the large flocks of seabirds that gather there. The island hosts the largest population of wintering harlequin ducks in the east, plus an assortment of scoters, eiders, grebes, loons, and mergansers. Purple sandpipers and great cormorants are seen regularly. Black guillemots are abundant, razorbills are likely, and a surprising number of thick-billed murrelets were seen on the last outing before COVID put this trip on hiatus. To ensure comfort, this three-hour trip is limited to 35 people. Bring food, warm clothing, and binoculars. Meet at the Stonington ferry pier, one-half hour before scheduled trip departure. There is a toilet and a roomy heated cabin on board.

This trip was advertised first to chapter members via the PVC weekly listserv back in January, and subsequently shared with other Maine Audubon chapters and partnering

organizations in eastern Maine. The response has been overwhelming, and the first trip filled almost instantly – as did an added second trip. At press time, a third added trip was nearly filled with people who were wait-listed for the first two trips. We are listing the dates and times of all three trips here, and invite anyone who hasn't already signed up to call the Isle au Haut Boat Company directly at 207-367-6516 to check availability and/or get added to the wait list. Here are the scheduled dates and times:

Sunday, March 23, 11:00 a.m. departure (rain date: Sunday, May 30, noon departure) **FILLED**

Sunday, March 30, 9:00 a.m. departure (no rain date) May still have open slots

Sunday, April 6, 11:00 a.m. departure (no rain date) **FILLED**

SPRING MIGRATION ON INLAND WATERS

Sunday, April 21, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Leaders: Bob Milardo, Sharon Wilson Barker, and Shane Barker

FREE

Join us for a spring migration tour to productive birding hotspots in central Maine, with a focus on species that rest and refuel on Maine's ponds, rivers,

and lakes. We will make multiple stops including Plymouth Pond, Sebasticook Lake-Durham Bridge, Sprague's Mill, and Corinna Bog/Corundel Lake. We expect to spot a wide variety of waterfowl and wading birds, shorebirds heading toward their sub-Arctic breeding grounds, and plenty of other resident and migratory species. Bring binoculars and/or camera, and a spotting scope if you have one; the guides will also share theirs with participants. Meet at the commuter Park-and-Ride lot east of I-95 at Exit 174 (Carmel-Newburgh), directly across from the Dysarts convenience store. PLEASE NOTE: parking along the route is very limited, so carpooling is a must.

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