

Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



Winter 2016

Winter In Maine

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

How do you survive winter in Maine? If you're like me, you don't let the weather keep you from enjoying the outdoors. I try to get outside every day for a walk, cross-country ski or snowshoe. (Being retired helps.) There are usually some birds around, and the ones you see and hear are the real survivors. Sure, most of the birds you looked for in spring and summer have departed for warmer climates. (Hmmm, is there a message there?) You can still enjoy the ones that stick around. Take time to marvel at how chickadees, kinglets, woodpeckers and other forest birds can get through the short days and frigid nights. Keep your seed and suet feeders full, and you'll be rewarded by hungry visitors throughout the day (hopefully not too many furry ones). If we're lucky, there will be a variety of irruptive northern species in the area – Bohemian waxwings, pine grosbeaks,

redpolls and siskins to mention a few.

If there's snow on the ground, you can usually find animal tracks or scat to puzzle over. You can also challenge yourself by trying to identify trees and other plants when they lack familiar leaves and flowers. In short, there's always something out there to get your attention, and always something for you to get to know better than you did last winter.

Penobscot Valley Chapter volunteers and Fields Pond Audubon Center staff are always on hand to help you get through the winter months. We offer a variety of programs and field trips, as described in this issue of Natural Selections. Please join us for one of these activities, and bring along a friend or family member. Please check us out on our website, www.maineaudubon.org/pvc, or on Facebook. Feel free to contact me at gruss@roadrunner.com. Let us know how we can better serve you and your interests in the natural world.

PVC Field Trip- Winter 2016

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!

Snowy Owls in Acadia

Saturday, March 5, 2016
Bad weather date: Sunday, March 6

Snowy Owls typically inhabit Acadia's highest peaks in winter. They can be observed or photographed above tree line under more natural conditions, away from buildings and other structures. Multiple sightings of owls are often possible.

Gordon Russell and Jane Rosinski will

lead a snowshoe hike up Sargent Mountain, the second highest peak in Acadia, in search of Snowy Owls and scenic winter vistas. This is a rigorous snowshoe outing, two miles from the parking lot to the summit, including 0.8 miles up a steep slope until you get above the tree line. Participants should be reasonably fit and experienced on snowshoes; poles are recommended. Meet at FPAC at 8:30 a.m. to carpool to the Parkman Mountain parking pulloff area on Routes 3/198 in Mt. Desert, or arrange to meet us there. The cost is free (\$5 donation to FPAC optional). The trip size is limited to 12 people. Please call 989-2591 to pre-register.

Thank You to Our Auction Donors and Bidders!

The Penobscot Valley Chapter Annual Online Auction was a great success again this year, raising over \$2,000 to support grassroots environmental action, environmental education, and public awareness of wildlife issues in our region. Auction Chair Ellen Campbell did her usual fine job of soliciting and organizing a wide range of donations from individuals and local businesses, and Webmaster Bob Duchesne posted the item descriptions and kept online bidders up-to-date despite spirited bidding. We thank all of you who participated as bidders, and we hope you will join us in thanking everyone who contributed items and services to the auction.

Business Donors were Bangor Daily News, Bangor Police Department, Bangor Symphony Orchestra, Bar Harbor Whale Watch, Blaze Restaurant, Briar Patch, Collins Center for the Arts, Fiddlehead Restaurant, Lucerne Veterinary Clinic, Maine Audubon, Maine Discovery Museum, University of Maine Hockey. Individual Donors were Joe Bertolaccini, Bruce Bowden, Ellen Campbell, Tim Conmee, Bob and Sandi Duchesne, Katie Greenman, Byron Hale, Ed Harrow, Gary Poisson, Gordon Russell and Jane Rosinski and Jim Zeman.



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:

- \$45 household; \$35 individual
- \$25 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@myfairpoint.net to sign up for these services.

Chapter Officers

- President Gordon Russell
- Vice President Bob Duchesne
- Secretary-Treasurer Jim Zeman
- Chapter Representative, Maine Audubon Board of Trustees Ellen Campbell

At-Large Chapter Board Members

Bruce Bowden, Tyler Collins, Timothy Conmee, Katelin Craven, Sandi Duchesne, Gloria Vollmers, David Zelz, Michaela Zelz, and ex-officio board member Eric Topper

Chapter Committee Chairs

- Programs & Field Trips Ellen Campbell
- Communications & Education ... Gloria Vollmers
- Membership & Board Development .. David Zelz
- Advocacy Sandi Duchesne, Tim Conmee
- Stewardship Tim Conmee

Natural Selections

- Editor Sandi Duchesne
- Design and Layout Susan Heinonen Pate
- Webmaster Bob Duchesne
- Facebook Coordinator Katelin Craven

Visit us on the Web

- www.maineaudubon.org/pvc
- www.facebook.com/penobscotvalleyaudubon

FIELDS POND JOURNAL

BY ERIC TOPPER
EDUCATION DIRECTOR, MAINE AUDUBON

Welcome to the new "Fields Pond Journal," now a regular column in the Penobscot Valley Audubon Chapter's quarterly newsletter. In this column, you'll find a seasonal update from Maine Audubon's staff at the Fields Pond Audubon Center. If you've never visited this stunning 210-acre wildlife sanctuary and education center in Holden, please come see us for a program or a snowshoe hike this winter!

While most people likely associate activities such as viewing wildlife and outdoor recreation with milder weather and longer days, Maine's winters afford many important and rewarding opportunities for staying connected to and active within productive habitats around us. Snow and ice provide new means of travel and exploration, as well as increasingly visible mediums for observing signs of wildlife such as tracks and scat. Winter is also a perfect time to hone your bird ID skills and to get to know our year-round residents better without the additional challenge of dozens of migratory species mixed in. This, as well as the importance of baseline species inventories, is why perennial citizen science efforts such as Christmas Bird Count and Great Backyard Bird Count take place in December and February respectively.

As we always strive to do, our busy program menu at Fields Pond this winter reflects this special seasonal focus. Families, youth and adults alike can enjoy numerous

programs and events which introduce and inspire ways to explore habitats, celebrate winter wildlife and contribute to citizen science and field research. You'll find upcoming Fields Pond programs listed here and at www.maineaudubon.org. Fields Pond's program coordinator, Cyndi Kuhn, and outreach intern, Haley Netherton, remain especially eager to hear from Maine Audubon members and supporters regarding new program ideas or about schools, programs or facilities whom might benefit from Audubon programming. Visitors to the center this winter will also enjoy ongoing updates to the Discovery Room and our favorite books and retail items to help pass a cold winter.

Lastly, in October Maine Audubon launched a new strategic plan for the organization. We are now in the process of unveiling the public presentation of our updated program and engagement strategies. Our centers and chapters lie at the heart of this new five-year plan, and we are particularly excited about the prospect of Fields Pond becoming a regional hub for education, interpretation and stewardship around the northern forest ecosystems and the diverse groups and communities whom share a stake in their future health and sustainability. Please stay tuned as we roll out specifics and begin to implement the new plan over the coming months.

Many thanks for your membership and support for Maine Audubon!



Fields Pond Book Group Gathers

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. Here are the titles that the group will read and discuss over the next few months. Please visit www.maineaudubon.org or call FPAC at 989-2591 to read a short overview of each book.

January: No book club meeting this month. Use the time to snuggle under a warm comforter with your favorite wintertime nature reading!

February 11: *Seven Flowers: And How They Shaped Our World* by Jennifer Potter, 2014, 320 pages.

March 10: *The Tapir's Morning Bath: Solving the Mysteries of the Tropical Rain Forest* by Elizabeth Royle, 2001, 336 pages.

FIELDS POND PROGRAMS

All of these events take place at Fields Pond Audubon Center, 216 Fields Pond Road in Holden. For detailed information, additional program listings, and to register, please call us at 989-2591 or visit us at www.maineaudubon.org.

Family Programs

Family Fun: Exploring Winter

7 Wednesdays: January 13- February 24
10-11:00 a.m.
\$70/family (ages 2-5 plus caregiver)

Great Maine Outdoor Weekend Family Snowshoe

Saturday, February 13, 12-2:00 p.m.
\$20/family, \$5 snowshoe rental

Winter Family Day of Play

Friday, February 19, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Members FREE

Family Discovery Program: Tracks and Scat

Saturday, March 12, 1-2:30 p.m.
\$10/family

Family Fun: Emerging Spring

7 Wednesdays: March 16 -April 27
10-11:00 a.m.
\$70/family (ages 2-5 plus caregiver)

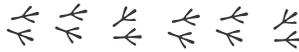
Youth Programs

February Vacation Camp

Tuesday-Thursday, February 16-18
9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
\$40/day \$100 full session, (ages 6-11)

Homeschool Field Trip

Thursday, February 25, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
\$50/child (ages 6-12)



Adult Programs

Naturalist Series:

Decades of Change

Thursday, January 14, 7-8:00 p.m.
\$10

Guided Moonlit Snowshoe Tour

Friday, January 22, 7-9:00 p.m.
\$10/person, \$5 snowshoe rental

Birding Basics: Identifying Birds

Thursday, January 28, 7-8 p.m.
\$10

Afternoon Art Classes

Saturdays in February 1-2:30 p.m.
\$60/person plus \$20 materials fee

Naturalist Series:

Winter Ecology

Wednesday, February 11, 7-8:00 p.m.
\$10

Winter Bird-feeding Workshop

Friday, February 12, 7-9:00 p.m.
\$5/person plus \$10.00 materials fee

Uncovering the Mystery of Snowy Owls

Tuesday, February 23, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
\$5/person

Birding Basics:

Observing Behavior

Friday, February 26 7-8:00 p.m.
\$10

Naturalist Series:

Bringing Nature Home

Friday March 18, 7-8:00 p.m.
\$10

Birding Basics: Making it Count

Thursday, March 24, 7-8:00 p.m.
\$10

Volunteer at Fields Pond

Fields Pond Stewardship Day

Saturday, January 16
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
FREE

PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS • WINTER 2016

The Penobscot Valley Chapter offers FREE monthly programs on natural history and conservation-related topics that reflect the interests of our membership. We hope you will be able to join us each month for an evening of camaraderie, learning, and FUN! All programs are open to the general public, so please feel free to bring a friend!

Frogs and Turtles of Maine

Fields Pond Audubon Center
Friday, February 19, 7:00 p.m.

Explore the charisma and ecology of Maine's frogs and turtles with amphibian and reptile biologist Kris Hoffmann. How do painted turtles breathe under the ice in the winter? Why do wood frogs only breed in vernal pools? Why don't spotted turtles eat in the summer? Where do green frogs spend the winter? How long does a box turtle live? What can Mainers do to help amphibians and reptiles? We'll work our way through how to identify



each "herp", their natural history, their unique values, and their behavior through an engaging presentation and discussion. Kristine Hoffmann is a Ph.D. Candidate in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Conservation Biology at the University of Maine. She specializes in reptile and amphibian conservation, and has over 15 years of experience chasing snakes and catching frogs. Kris is currently writing her dissertation on the ecology of Maine's all-female amphibian, the unisexual salamander.

Hiking Maine: An Evening with the Author

Fields Pond Audubon Center
Friday, March 18, 7:00 p.m.

Local author and former Borders Books inventory manager Greg Westrich will present a slideshow and describe his memorable experiences in hiking and writing about Maine's wild places. Greg is the author of four hiking guides for Maine. He will share some of his knowledge and experience gained on the trail, including how and what to pack, using a GPS device, and useful tips for backpacking with kids (his own children are now ages 9 and 14). Greg will also read inspirational passages from his nature writing that, he hopes, "...will help us all broaden our thinking about our big backyard." Copies of Greg's books will be available for sale and autographing.

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.



This newsletter is printed
on recycled paper

Field Trip Report: Snow Geese and More

BY BOB DUCHESNE
VICE PRESIDENT, PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER

The article below was abridged due to space limitations. To read Bob's full report, please visit the Penobscot Valley chapter website: www.maineaudubon.org/pvc/blogs.

There are roughly one million Greater Snow Geese in the world. Nearly all of them pass through Cap Tourmente, northeast of Québec City, en route to their wintering areas in the Mid-Atlantic states. In October 2015, the Penobscot Valley Chapter organized a field trip to view the geese by day and tour the ancient walled city of Old Québec by night.

The geese pass through Cap Tourmente from early September through October. Migration peaks around Columbus Day weekend, which is when we visited. That weekend usually coincides with peak foliage season, and the scenery is always spectacular. A majestic ridgeline funnels favorable north-south wind currents. "V" formations fill the skies as tens of thousands of geese approach Cap Tourmente from the north.

The geese were not the only attraction. White-crowned Sparrows,

lingering warblers, migrating hawks, and a Purple Gallinule, far north of its breeding range, were among the highlights. I typically see this bird in the Everglades in South Florida.

We spent our first evening exploring the heart of Old Québec. We strolled around the gated city and the fortress, then wine and dined at one of our favorite historic restaurants. This tour spoils people.

This year's trip was particularly fruitful. After several days of below-

normal temperatures, the weather improved significantly. This brought waves upon waves of newly arriving geese down from the arctic. The numbers quintupled during our weekend on the St. Lawrence. Thousands congregated directly in front of our blind, accompanied by thousands of green-winged teal. At one point, an American bittern foraged in the marsh almost within arm's length of us, seemingly ignoring our presence. Birding adventures don't get much better than this.

Scholars Wanted: Inez Boyd Research Award

The Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon (PVC) invites enrolled University of Maine students to apply for the 2016 Inez Boyd Environmental Research Award. The award is named in honor of the late Inez Boyd, one of the chapter's original founders, a lifelong environmentalist and an inspirational leader who worked tirelessly to make her community a better place for all living creatures.

PVC will award up to \$1000 in April 2016 to support undergraduate or graduate academic research relevant to its mission: 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. Special consideration will be given to research projects that strengthen ties between the University of Maine, Fields Pond Audubon Center, and the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon.

For eligibility guidelines and a downloadable application package, please visit the Penobscot Valley chapter website: www.maineaudubon.org/pvc. Deadline for submission is March 25, 2016.