

# Natural Selections

Newsletter of the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon



October-December 2017

## Celebrate the Penobscot

BY GORDON RUSSELL, PRESIDENT  
PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

I recently was asked to speak to a group of students about the Penobscot River Restoration Project. For those who may not be familiar, the PRRP resulted from a comprehensive settlement agreement involving hydroelectric project licensing and fish restoration in the Penobscot River watershed. (Maine Audubon was a party to the agreement.) The settlement ultimately led to removal of the Veazie and Great Works dams on the lower river, and construction of an innovative fish bypass at the Howland dam at the mouth of the Piscataquis River. Great Works and Veazie dams were taken out in 2012-2013, and the Howland bypass was completed in 2016. Fish passage facilities were added or improved at four remaining dams, and hydropower generation increased at six locations on the main river or tributaries.

The PRRP benefited 11 species of migratory fish, and opened up roughly 1,000 miles of previously inaccessible spawning habitat. Some of these fish, such as American shad and river herring, had not been able to ascend the river beyond the lowermost Veazie dam for well over a hundred years. This year the migratory run of river herring exceeded 1.25 million, while shad numbered close to 4,000. Atlantic salmon, striped bass and sea lamprey also made impressive showings. The return of river herring, although still far below historic population levels, is particularly encouraging. Alewives and blueback herring serve an important ecological function as food for numerous fish and avian predators in the river and estuary.

A few short decades ago, the river was terribly polluted with industrial and domestic wastes, and blocked for almost all species of migratory fish by dams. Treatment of wastewater and reduction or elimination of industrial discharges have left the river looking extremely clean and habitable. Removal of dams and new fish passage facilities have allowed migrating fish to reach suitable spawning and rearing areas. Some problems remain, including the lingering effects of mercury contamination in the lower river and estuary, and hopefully there soon will be a plan to address those concerns. Overall, however, the Penobscot River has shown its resiliency, and there is cause for optimism about the future of the river and its fishery resources.

We hope you have had an opportunity to enjoy the river this year. There are waterfront parks and festivals in a number of communities up and down the river. Access to the river for boating, fishing and walking trails is also on the rise. More and more people are discovering the valuable resource we have in our own back yard. It is truly worth celebrating.

## PVC Annual Benefit Auction November 1 to December 8

It is almost time for the Penobscot Valley Chapter's Annual Benefit Auction! Bidding will be conducted online at [www.maineaudubon.org/pvc](http://www.maineaudubon.org/pvc), starting on Wednesday, November 1, and continuing through 12:00 p.m. EST on Friday, December 8 (this is also the date of the annual PVC Holiday Party). A few items will also be offered for silent and live auction during the Holiday Party, which starts at 6:00 p.m. Please share the auction website link with family and friends far and near, so they can join in the fun!

Chapter board members are currently soliciting auction donations from local merchants, artisans, and nature lovers in our community. If you have items or services you would like to contribute to help promote grass-roots environmental outreach and programming in eastern Maine, please call Auction Chair Ellen Campbell at 843-5858 or e-mail her at [ellenrc@myfairpoint.net](mailto:ellenrc@myfairpoint.net). Your donations are fully tax-deductible, and we will provide you with a receipt so you can document the estimated value. Thank you for your support!

## Welcome New PVC Board Member Sean Trahan

Sean Trahan from Orrington recently joined the Penobscot Valley Chapter Board. Sean grew up in the area and lives half the year on Fields Pond. He brings local knowledge and enthusiasm for stewardship and other chapter priorities. We look forward to working with him.

# 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@hotmail.com](mailto:kjzeman@hotmail.com) 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..... Sandi McRae Duchesne

### AT-LARGE CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

Bruce Bowden, Timothy Conmee, Ellen Campbell, Katelin Craven, Gloria Vollmers, and ex-officio board member Eric Topper.

### CHAPTER COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Programs & Field Trips .....Ellen Campbell  
Communications & Education..... Gloria Vollmers  
Advocacy.....Sandi Duchesne, Tim Conmee  
Stewardship ..... Tim Conmee

### *Natural Selections*

Editor ..... Sandi McRae Duchesne  
Design & Layout ..... Donne Sinderson  
Webmaster.....Bob Duchesne  
Facebook Coordinator ..... Katelin Craven

### Visit us on the Web

[www.maineaudubon.org/pvc](http://www.maineaudubon.org/pvc)

[www.facebook.com/penobscotvalleyaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/penobscotvalleyaudubon)



## FIELDS POND JOURNAL

### BY STAFF

FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER

The slow fade of fall has begun and we have quickly returned to “resident season” for people, birds, bats and butterflies. The busy summer season is a fond memory, but also a rich source of data, experience and learning for Maine Audubon’s diverse conservation and education work throughout the state. To that end, we will be launching several exciting new initiatives aimed at maintaining connections, expanding our reach, and hopefully engaging you, our members and supporters, more deeply in our important mission of conserving Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat.

The change in seasons brings some big changes to Maine Audubon’s digital presence, too. In September, we launched a brand new website. The redesigned [maineaudubon.org](http://maineaudubon.org) focuses on making all of our great content easier to navigate and consume, whether you’re on a desktop or a phone. We have also already begun collecting program registrations through our new event tool, which is creating a better experience for customers while also streamlining our processes here in the office.

Here’s a little more about the changes you are seeing:

- A new website navigation helps you accomplish any of the wide variety of tasks that may have brought you here – whether it’s finding an upcoming event, making plans to visit a sanctuary, finding answers to a wildlife question, learning about a conservation project, becoming a member, or getting involved as a citizen scientist or activist.

- The first time you register for an event or program, you’ll need to create an account in our new events registration system (if you’re a member, you’ll receive a 20% discount at checkout). The next time you register, your information will be saved in your account and the process will be that much easier.

- Be sure to check out “Maine’s Naturalist,” a new hub of information about wildlife on our site, including the latest notes from staff naturalist Doug Hitchcox and a growing body of #MainesNaturalist content from around the state.

Our partner in this redesign is a local company, Rainstorm, Inc. of Orono, Maine. Since last spring, the

team at Rainstorm has worked with us to create this new digital home for Maine Audubon, and they’ve been great partners throughout the process. We are very excited about the new site we’ve built together. We’ll be working with the Penobscot Valley Chapter and others over the subsequent months to help update their web presences, too.

Websites are always evolving, and ours is no exception. One of the best things about the new site is that it is built to be a platform on which we can grow. Your feedback and reactions to these new changes will be integral in helping us figure out what form that growth should take. Please share any questions or comments you have with us at [feedback@maineaudubon.org](mailto:feedback@maineaudubon.org).

Thank you for your support for Maine Audubon and Fields Pond!

### FIELDS POND THANK-YOUS

- Sam Peterson for the outstanding trail improvement to our Brook Trail. The bridge you built for your Eagle Scout project will keep hikers happy and safe for years to come. Thank you!

- Danielle D’Auria, Trish and Wes Hutchins, Sally Jones, Jean Adamson for volunteering your time during our Summer Camp weeks. Our campers love learning from the experts!

- Sandy Serpell and Maggie Guthrie for your assistance preparing for the Chamber of Commerce event on the busiest day of the busiest week of the summer.

- Pat Snyder for sharing your butterfly expertise with interested folks at Fields Pond Audubon Center. Your contributions to the North American Butterfly Association’s annual butterfly count are commendable.

- Hannah Webber, Libby Orcutt and Schoodic Institute along with an incredible team of Earthwatch volunteers for assisting in developing an easy and accessible phenology walk for all to enjoy. We love all our citizen scientists!

- Kelsey Grousbek, Bryce Hach, Donald Budge, 2 Feet Brewing and especially Greendrinks Bangor for a most excellent summer event. Fields Pond Audubon Center may never be the same. . .

- Kiley Davan for an above-and-beyond summer internship experience. Your upcoming Fall season with Maine Audubon and Fields Pond Audubon Center will be even more exciting.

## FIELDS POND CENTER PROGRAMS

Please note that all programs with fees require pre-registration and payment via the Maine Audubon website, [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org). If you can't access the website, please call FPAC at 989-2591 or e-mail [fieldspond@maineaudubon.org](mailto:fieldspond@maineaudubon.org) for assistance with pre-registration.

Sunday, October 1

### GMOW Stewardship Day

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Free

October 4 - November 15

### Family Fun Fall Series

Seven-week program for pre-schoolers with parent or guardian on Wednesday mornings.

10 to 11 a.m.

\$70/member family or

\$105/non-member family

Thursday, October 12

### Annual Boundary Hike

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Free

Saturday, October 28

### Family Discovery Series: Fall Festival at Fields Pond

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Members Free

Non-mbrs \$7 per person

Learn and play as a family. Come dressed as your favorite woodland critters. Costume construction and parade, crafts, learning activities, and refreshments will add to the fun. There will be family-friendly activities throughout the day to enjoy. Visit the Maine Audubon website to download a full schedule of events.

Thursday, November 9

### Volunteer Appreciation Gathering

7-9 p.m.

Free

This year's event will be offsite! Please RSVP to FPAC at [fieldspond@maineaudubon.org](mailto:fieldspond@maineaudubon.org) or telephone 989-2591 to learn more.

Saturday, November 11

### Family Discovery Series: Live Owl Show

Two showtimes, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1-2 p.m.

Adults \$12 member/\$15 non-mbr

Children \$8 member/\$11 non-mbr

Friday, December 8

### Double Discount Day for Maine Audubon members in the Fields Pond Nature

Store (Immediately precedes the PVC Holiday Party and Photography Expo) 4-6 p.m.

Wednesday, December 13

### Cold Moon Evening Hike

4-5:30 p.m.

Adults \$8 member/\$10 non-member

Children \$6 member/\$8 non-member

Children under 5 Free

Thursday, December 12

### Family Discovery Series The Night Tree: A Winter Solstice Celebration

4-5:30 p.m.

\$15/member family or

\$20/non-member family

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Be a birder, covering your assigned territory within a designated Bird Count Circle. Or, be a feeder-watcher. If you live inside either circle and have a bird feeder, you can count your birds for about an hour. Then simply email or call the coordinator to report how many of each species visited.

### Orono-Old Town Christmas Bird Count

date TBD at press time

### Bangor-Bucksport Christmas Count

date TBD at press time

Visit [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org) to learn how to get involved.

## FPAC SCHOOL PROGRAMS 2017-2018

We are booking fall field trips for our **Secrets of the Forest and Nature in Winter** sequences. Call to reserve your classroom, afterschool, scouting, and homeschool field trip dates as soon as possible! Call Cyndi Kuhn 989-2591 for pricing and more information.

## PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER PROGRAMS

The Penobscot Valley Chapter offers FREE monthly programs on natural history and conservation 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 with like-minded people. All programs are open to the general public, so please feel free to bring a friend! All programs take place at Fields Pond Audubon Center.

### WEASELS OF MAINE

Friday, October 20, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

There are six species of weasel (Mustelidae) that breed in Maine, ranging in size from the long, sleek river otter to the tiny short-tailed weasel. None are listed as rare or endangered in our state. Yet many Mainers who spend considerable time outdoors have never seen a mustelid in the wild, although it's easy to find their distinctive tracks in winter. All weasels are shy, solitary, largely nocturnal carnivores with reputations for being fearless, ferocious, and bloodthirsty: they will kill more prey than they can eat, and cache the rest for later. Cory Mosby, wildlife biologist and mustelid specialist for Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, will present a fascinating program that explores the facts, fiction, and confusing nicknames for these widespread, relatively abundant Maine mammals that are often so very hard to spot.

### ATTU: THE HOLY GRAIL OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDING

Friday, November 17, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Attu in the Aleutian Islands, the westernmost point in the United States located 1500 miles from mainland Alaska, is known worldwide as a birding mecca. It featured prominently in the hit movie "The Big Year," and it was the target destination for an intrepid group of five Maine birders in the spring of 2012. Doug

Hitchcox, Maine Audubon's staff naturalist, will present a travelogue of photos and stories that document his amazing birding adventure into the Eastern Hemisphere, highlighted by rare species, colonies of over two million birds, song sparrows the size of robins, enduring 20-foot (and higher!) seas en route, and a bird that only recently rebounded from the edge of extinction.

### ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY & NATURE PHOTO EXPO

Friday, December 8, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Tis the season for PVC's annual Holiday Party! "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 available at the party for silent and active auction bidding. Early birds can visit the Fields Pond Nature Store from 4-6 p.m. for Double Discount Day, when Maine Audubon members get a double discount (20 percent!) off retail prices for unique nature-related gift items, including many special holiday items brought up from the larger Falmouth store especially for this event. The evening's highlight will be a nature photography expo. Professional and amateur photographers will have the opportunity to showcase and describe some of their favorite wildlife and outdoor travel photos from 2017. Bring along your own digital photos and movies on a thumb drive (or your own laptop) 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.

# MAINE AUDUBON

Penobscot Valley Chapter

c/o Fields Pond Audubon Center  
216 Fields Pond Road  
Holden, Maine 04429

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit 46  
Bangor, ME

**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.

## PENOBSCOT VALLEY CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS – FALL 2017

*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!*

### **FIELD WORKSHOP: MASTERING THE ART OF SMARTPHONE/TABLET PHOTOGRAPHY**

Saturday, October 7 (Rain date: October 8), 9:00 a.m. to noon at FPAC

Cost: FREE

Worldwide, more photographs are now taken with the smartphone than with any other camera. In this hands-on workshop, photographer Gary Harmatz will tell you what you need to know in order to capture creative and dynamic images, using this high-powered camera that is almost always at your fingertips. Indoors, Gary will guide you through the many features of your smartphone camera, and recommend some inexpensive tools and apps for taking, enhancing, and embellishing photos. Then it's time to head outside to try out your newfound features and artistic skills on the grounds around Fields Pond

Audubon Center, with personalized advice and assistance from Gary as needed. Gary has been traveling the world as a wildlife, nature, travel, and underwater photographer for almost 30 years. He resides in both Florida and Maine. This program has a rain date of Sunday, October 8, same meeting time.

### **WEST SIDE WATERBIRDS**

Saturday, November 18, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cost: FREE

Join trip leaders Jerry Smith and John Wyatt for their popular annual six-hour round trip from Bangor to Belfast, with stops in Hampden, Winterport, Frankfort, Stockton Springs, Searsport, and Belfast, checking for waterfowl in open water and later autumn passerines throughout. Meet at the Bangor Waterfront parking lot on Front Street at 8:00 a.m. Leave your vehicle and ride with Jerry or John. We'll stop to stretch our legs, but little or no walking involved. Bring beverage and snacks/ lunch, or eat at the Belfast Food Co-op. Call the Fields Pond Audubon Center at 989-2591 to let us know you are coming.

## 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. Here are the titles that the group will read and discuss during October and November. There will be no book group meeting in December. Please visit [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org) or call FPAC at 989-2591 to read a short overview of each book.*

### **October 12, 2017**

McNamee, Thomas. *The Inner Life of Cats: The Science and Secrets of Our Mysterious Feline Companions.* 2017. 278pp.

### **November 9, 2017**

Montgomery, Sy. *The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness.* 2015. 261pp.