



# THE PILEATED PRESS

Western Maine Audubon Society

A CHAPTER OF THE MAINE AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 832, FARMINGTON, MAINE 04938

Volume XLII Number 1

September 2012

## Monthly Program

### High Peaks Conservation

Wednesday, September 12 at 7 PM

Room C 23, Roberts Learning Center      University of Maine at Farmington

**D**id you know that Franklin County's largest conservation effort is on the verge of completion? Two parcels around the Crocker Mountain summit and the Orbiton Stream watershed, totaling 18 000 acres, are about to be protected. This effort represents years of steady, quiet work by local conservation groups, the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, and the High Peaks Alliance. What is the 'High Peaks'? What is being protected and why? How will the project impact traditional land uses such as recreation and forestry?

Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust Executive Director **Carol Haas** will present an overview of the project, its history and importance, and how it will impact those of us who live, work, and recreate here. This is an historic project and well worth understanding and even celebrating. This program is free and open to the public.

#### **Coming Attractions:**

##### **Wednesday, October 10: Salmon Restoration**

How many of you know that the Sandy River watershed is the focus of the biggest salmon restoration effort in the Northeast? The Sandy and its tributaries have near perfect Atlantic salmon habitat and the first returns of fry hatched in its waters are just now coming up the Kennebec. Fisheries Biologist Paul Christman will be presenting the fascinating story of his work. Join us October 10 .

##### **Sunday, October 21: Eagle Talk and Pot Luck**

This will be held at the Wilton Fish and Game Associations Club House on Rt.2 in Wilton. This is co-sponsored with WFG. Our speaker is Patrick Keenan of Biodiversity Research Institute, Gorham, ME, an expert on eagle populations in Maine. More information to come in our Oct. newsletter.



The end of summer! How could that be?

It is time now for pumpkins and potatoes, fall hikes and foliage, filling the wood shed, and more.

What a crazy summer it was with record setting heat and drought across the country. Here in Maine we had unusual heat in the early spring followed by frost, the combination doing a number on some of our fruiting trees and berries. Then there were spring rains! Water logged soil hindered the germination of some crops and set back others. July's prolonged hot dry spell was great for making hay, but had us rushing to finish our drip irrigation project. August restored some balance, and, all in all, Mother Nature has provided a bountiful harvest of most crops

Mother Nature is just out our back door here in Maine, and if we open that door, she beckons with the sound of a robin in spring, a flash of blue from a blue bird, the strutting of a wild Tom turkey, and the hooting of a distant owl in the still of the night. She often comes to us on the farm with the visit of a moose to the field, or a fox to the chicken coup. We can step into her world as well, but are increasingly less comfortable stepping off the path, having lost the sensitivity, skills, and knowledge of our ancestors.

The film, Mother Nature's Child, both depresses because of the increasing number of children who grow up without contact with the natural world, and inspires because of programs which bring children back to that world. Thoreau said, "In wildness is the preservation of the world." Contact with that "wildness" can and does turn lives around. Find out more at: <http://www.mothernaturesmovie.com/the-film/>

It is important, then, to preserve spaces in our world for wildness. In Maine we are blessed with many acres of undeveloped land and thus, we have much to work for. Industrial wind on our Western Mountain tops, and an east-west highway would both squander some of our precious wilderness areas for profit. Profit for us, the public, or profit for corporate and private interests?

Locally, then, the High Peaks Initiative is important. It seeks to preserve a large tract of scenic wildness; wilderness which is in our back yard. Please come to our first talk to learn more.

I hope you will continue to support us and enjoy the programs we sponsor. We on the Board of Directors have fun doing what we do. We are always open to new ideas for programs, and are open now also to new members joining us on the board. Please e-mail or call with your ideas or, perhaps, interest in being on the board of Western Maine Audubon.



For those looking for information on what to do when you come across a injured animal or bird, you might want to contact The Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Here is a site to try:  
<http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/rehabilitation/listofrehabbers.htm>

# Conservation Corner

Steve Bien

Photo by Dave Field

## And Now For Some Good News

As I stood at the foot of Elk Lake in the heart of the Adirondack High Peaks two weeks ago I felt a pang of envy – but only briefly. Elk Lake is a private reserve that sits in the middle of a 12,000 acre parcel in the Adirondack Park. The view from the lodge and lake sweeps around at some of New York's highest peaks and trout streams grace the valleys. The pang was brief because our own High Peaks are on the threshold of a major conservation effort of their own,

Maine's High Peaks are right here in Franklin County, in the area bounded by Kingfield, Carabasset Valley, Stratton, Rangeley, and Phillips. This spectacular 200,000 acre expanse includes 8 of Maine's twelve 4000 foot peaks. But it is not just the ridgeline that makes this area unique. Its streams are home to brook trout and some waters are seeing the rebirth of Atlantic salmon populations. The larger mammals of the region are well known - bear, moose, deer, lynx, and bobcats - and many of us catch the songs and colors of spring bird migrations.

The current Crocker Mountain and Orbiton Stream conservation effort is nearing completion, and it marks the first step of the larger goal of protecting as much of the High Peaks as possible. Three local groups, the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, and the High Peaks Alliance, are partnering with willing sellers to purchase land and conservation easements on about 18000 acres: the summit areas on Crocker Mountain and the Orbiton stream watershed. Crocker's fragile summit and mountain slopes are threatened by second home development. Orbiton Stream is home to native brook trout and the site of very successful Atlantic salmon restoration (see October program). These sensitive lands are embedded in a working forest and are part of the area's essential culture and vital economy.

Times change but conservation needs do not. The Adirondack Park followed a legacy of bequests by large logger baron era land owners who could give the state vast acreage in one sweep of the pen. In today's Maine, especially since the great paper industry divestitures of the 90's, parcels are relatively small and conservation efforts have more players and moving parts. They are also more expensive.

Forest products largely left the Adirondacks by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but in today's Maine this is still a vital industry and employer. For this reason, maintaining traditional forest based industries and access have been especially important in the process.

These efforts are coming at a key time. This enormous change in land ownership has changed the very ground we walk on. As we have seen, especially in western Maine, second home acquisition and development have exploded as the real estate brokers turn around and subdivide the holdings they have bought. More and more roads that were once open to the public are now gated, and this is just the beginning of the trend of shuttering these quasi public lands.

Equally important, these lands are being taken out of effective forestry management

Continued on next pg.



through their fragmentation into smaller parcels. It takes large scale acreage to make effective timber management practices such as thinning and replanting efficient and effective. The acreages where these are practiced have declined by 60% in the last 15 years. Although we are now in a downturn, when the economy returns so will the demand for pulp. And without question there will be an increasing demand for fuel wood in our energy future.

This is win- win for all of us. Traditional recreation and forestry will be protected while we also make a down payment on expanding the tourism possibility of our region. Today tourists increasingly seek areas of big scenery and abundant recreation possibilities. There is no reason Maine's High Peaks region cannot stand tall among other possible choices such as the Smokies, The Adirondacks, and even Yosemite. There is no reason that the towns that border this region cannot be trail towns that share in the wealth that 4 season recreation can bring.

The Crocker and Orbiton Projects are hopefully just the first phase of protecting the High Peaks. At our September program, you will have chance to hear more. Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust Executive director Carole Haas will talk about what is under way and what is to come. We hope you can join us for our first program of the season.



## Citizen Science– Loons

### Loon Habitat Quality Assessments 2012-2013

What is loon habitat? All animals live in a habitat, a place where they get what they need to survive: food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young. The key element of habitat for breeding loons in Maine is their territory, the area they defend from other loons.

This citizen-science initiative's goal is to have volunteers across the state of Maine get out on lakes and ponds, look for loons and document features of loon territories and nesting sites to help assess "habitat quality".

Find out more at: <http://maineaudubon.org/wildlife-habitat/the-maine-loon-project/loon-habitat-quality/>

Helen Balgooyen sent us this on Earthworms \_\_\_\_\_



An Interesting article: earthworms in a study in India appear to have digestive systems that clear some toxins from organic waste as it rots. We've always thought that everything that goes into an earthworm's mouth eventually appears again on the other end, but scientists say when it comes to heavy metals - including cadmium, copper, lead, manganese, and zinc - that's not the case.

"The worms' digestive system is apparently capable of detaching heavy metal ions from the complex aggregates between these ions and humic substances in the waste as it rots. Various enzyme-driven process then seem to lead to assimilation of the metal ions by the worms so that they are locked up in the organism's tissues rather than being released back into the compost as worm casts."

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/causes/lowly-earthworm-sucks-toxins-from-poisoned-soil.html#ixzz24YgxscS2>



# Nature Watch



One of the very nice things about this late summer time of year is seeing the large number of Monarch butterflies in our yard and fields. First it was fun finding a little chrysalis hanging under the milk weed leaves and now it is just delightful watching the butterflies flitting about everywhere. It wasn't too long ago that we weren't seeing any here. Having a good crop of milkweed helps.



We heard some very interesting and exciting news from Dave Corrigan, a Registered Maine Master Guide, who was telling us about a Golden eagle sighting that a hiker along the Appalachian trail reported to him. This fellow thought he saw a golden eagle and a fledgling on August 3rd. Dave writes "For several weeks now I have been seeing an eagle in Caratunk that I at first thought was an immature Bald. I have seen it a half dozen times, but it wasn't until just a couple days ago that I got a chance to really study it through binoculars, and realized that it is a Golden. I also saw a smaller bird, possibly the fledgling, join it as it was soaring, but it was very high up, and I only got to observe the pair together for about a minute." This is pretty exciting news, hope to hear more from Dave in our next newsletter!

And speaking of eagles, the ones in Norridgewock looked like they were successful this season. These little guys look like they were patiently waiting for a snack. The bird at the page top is one of the proud parents. They could generally be seen near by, keeping a close eye out.

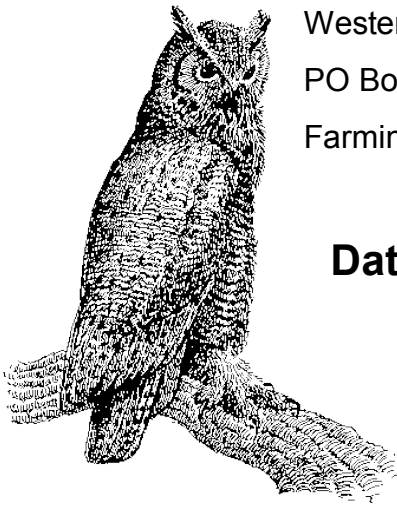


Photos by Sallie Wilder

Here is an Osprey family we have been watching up in The Forks. There is at least one young one in this nest. A few years ago I had the dubious pleasure of watching an osprey catch and eat a trout out in front of our camp. They do not gobble their meal down. This fellow was dining for a very long time! Took 15 minutes, it seemed, for the fish to stop flopping. Of course, I didn't have my camera that day.

We would like to hear about your nature stories. So please send them to me at [aewilder@tdstelme.net](mailto:aewilder@tdstelme.net) If you took a picture, that's good too, we will put in what we can. Our deadline is generally around the 19th of the month. Thanks. SW






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**Yes! I'd like to join!**

Please enroll me as a member of Maine Audubon and Western Maine Audubon.

Please send *Habitat* magazine and my membership card to the address below.


\_\_\_\_\_ My Check for (\$35 Individual level or up through \$1,000 Director's Circle ) is enclosed. Please check the Audubon web site for details.  
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