



# THE PILEATED PRESS

Western Maine Audubon

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

Volume XLII Number 6

## Monthly Programs

May 2013

### The State of the Honeybees

Wednesday, May 8 at 7PM

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

**M**any of us take honeybees for granted except when our paths cross unpleasantly. But bees are essential for many of the foods we eat and much of the beauty we see in flowering plants.

Rick Cooper has been a certified Master Beekeeper since 1994 and was the first in Maine to receive this certification from the Eastern Apicultural Society. He started keeping bees in 1980 with just a single hive and now runs almost 100 colonies of bees.

His talk will cover everything from how we have come to where we are, how the bees are doing, and a look at the future of bees. Topics will also include a little about the bees, a little about the flowers and a little about keeping bees. Also, pollination, the bees' true calling and a bit about honey will be covered. If you ask he might even chat briefly about the value of the bees' sting. Free and open to the public!



### High Peaks

Wednesday, May 29 at 7PM

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

Peter McKinley is an ecologist and conservation planner for the Wilderness Society. He will speak to us about the High Peaks Landscape which includes approximately 200,000 acres north and south of the Appalachian Trail and ridgeline, spanning Saddleback Mountain and Mount Abraham in western Maine. This landscape is the largest block of unfragmented high elevation forest habitat as yet unprotected in the state of Maine. It's importantance is in the middle and lower elevation forest; aquatic, and wildlife communities that are noted for their high ecological diversity and viability. It is also important to the ecological connectivity of the northern forest which spans several states and provinces. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of this latest effort to protect this regionally important area. Free and open to the public.

### Field Trips

#### Saturday, May 11, Warbler Walk

We will again be hosting our annual spring warbler walk along the railroad tracks in West Farmington. We will meet at the Whistlestop Trail parking lot at 7AM. Our walk usually lasts about 2 hours and is a rain or shine event, so dress accordingly. All birders' eyes and ears are welcome. For further information call Steve Bien at 897 5215.

#### Saturday, June 1, Field Trip: High Elevation Plants and Birds on Mount Abraham

If you are curious about Mount Abraham's high elevation birds and plants this field trip is an opportunity for just that. Peter McKinley is a biologist from the Wilderness Society with a research background including songbird and landscape conservation, and serves as a MATLT board member.

On Saturday, June 1 he will lead a walk that will start low and wind its way up to the Mount Abraham ridgeline. We hope to catch the warbler migration and the first blush of forest wild flowers. If we are lucky Bicknell's thrushes, Blackpoll warblers, and many others will be calling, and Pete is expert with both eyes and ears.

This will be an all day, strenuous hike. The logistics are still in the works and the final details will be available on the WMAS and Maine AT Land Trust websites or by contacting Steve Bien 897 5215, [sbien@myfairpoint.net](mailto:sbien@myfairpoint.net)

# President's Column

Burt Knapp

Photo: Sandhill Cranes, SW

Nothing heralds spring and the promise of renewal more than the return of the Robin. What better way to begin the day than to a chorus of early morning bird song. What a joy to hear the first *okalee* of the Red-winged Blackbird, or the first high-pitched *kideer* of a returning Killdeer. The Slate-colored Juncos are active again around the yard and along roadsides, conspicuous as they flit away showing off their white outer tail feathers.

We enjoyed the sharp whistle of the Cardinal while in Massachusetts on Saturday before our recent fateful Patriot's Day. We wondered at a re-enactment of that first battle of the Revolutionary War in Concord and Lexington, along the Battle Road. Interesting tidbits gleaned from soldiers and others in period costume were: In 1775 the farmers were not accustomed to using their muskets for hunting as there was little in the way of wildlife in a country-side fully cleared for farming. Wood was being imported from New Hampshire, as the supply of timber had been depleted in and around Boston.

Imagine a more intensively farmed countryside! Many farms have reverted to woodlands as old stone walls thru many a wood bear silent witness. Next fall, Drew Barton, UMF Professor of Biology will deepen our wonder and understanding in a talk: "Maine Forests: Now and Then." It will be a comparison of how Maine forests have changed from pre-settlement to today in terms of area, species, physical structure, age, and the like.

You will have to wait, however, as we have a number of interesting events planned for you still this spring: A talk on honey bees, our annual Warbler Walk, and a special talk by Peter McKinley- Climate Adaption Ecologist of The Wilderness Society. His talk will focus on the importance of the High Peaks landscape to wildlife conservation, especially breeding and migratory forest birds in the context of a changing climate. There is a movement to create a National Wildlife Refuge to assist other ongoing conservation efforts occurring in this landscape. The talk will be cosponsored by the Maine Appalachian Land Trust. Peter will also be leading a birding trip in the High Peaks region, helping participants learn about, and hopefully see and hear, the endangered Bicknell Thrush and other alpine and sub-alpine birds, and forest birds found at lower elevations along the way.

This spring we welcomed Forrest Bonney to the board of Western Maine Audubon! We continue to welcome ideas for future programs – this is your organization, so make yourself heard!



Honey Bees entering their new home

Once again, check us out online at <http://maineaudubon.org/western/>. Sign up for the e-newsletter by e-mailing me at [bknapp@beeline-online.net](mailto:bknapp@beeline-online.net). Happy Spring!



Photo of Cedar Waxwing by Kathy McInerney

# Conservation Corner

Steve Bien

Photo: Lesser Scaup, Kathy McInerney

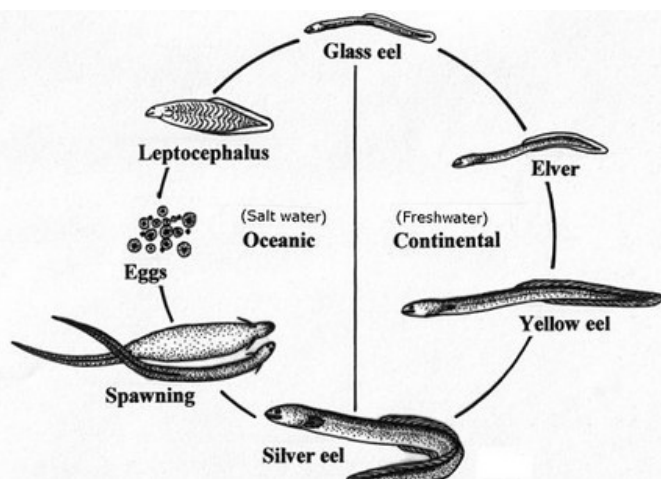
## Consider the Eel



Maybe a glass eel ought to grace our next license plate, since they, not the lobster, are the state's most valuable marine resource. Elvers now fetch \$2000 per pound and rising. By comparison last year's lobster was worth an average of \$3/ pound. Of course many more lobster are boated, 123 million pounds last year, compared to 18000 pounds of elver in 2012, but the fact remains that this is our new gold and a gold rush is on. Right now, until the end of May, licensed netters and poachers will do their best to lay their hands on the elver run. Last week a Rockland man was arrested for the illegal possession of \$22,000 worth of elvers, all of eleven pounds, which when you think of it would be pretty easy to hide.

Elvers are young eels that are returning to their native waters to mature. Once they reach adulthood many years later they will leave the brackish water in which they have grown to spawn thousands of miles away in the Sargasso Sea. How these creatures get here is a remarkable puzzle. They begin their lives as drifting larvae. It is only when they drift to the continental shelf that they develop the ability to swim and somehow they direct themselves to their streams of birth where they return in thick numbers.

Elvers are caught in two related ways: dip nets and funnel shaped 'fyke' nets, although a small number are caught simply by hand. The fishery is quite tightly regulated – only 400 licenses are issues by the state each year, and this number is fixed. It is the state's intention that all elver anglers should be governed by this rationing system but the Passamaquoddy Nation has gone on record as having a different idea. Insisting that under law they have a right to manage their fisheries, they do not restrict the number of elver permits they issue to their own members. Rather, any member of the Nation can get a permit but the overall tribal catch is set at 800 pounds, regardless of the number of Passamaquoddy permits. They insist that setting a catch limit is a far more effective management tool than arbitrary permit numbers. Moreover, their system allows more to participate and therefore greater sharing of income. Maine's 400 licenses yielded about 18000 pounds of elvers last year, or 45 pounds per holder. The 200 odd tribal licenses each brought in about 4 pounds.



They may not only have a sense of economic justice on their side. A 1976 Washington District Court decision gives tribes the right to co manage marine resources

independent of states. But the Department of Marine Resources and Governor LePage do not appear to be willing to take this sitting down. Indeed the governor has, in classic style, shown a willingness to go all the way to mat on this by threatening to punish the Passamaquoddy's in any way he can if they don't bow to the state as the sole regulator of this resource.

Continued on next pg.

History and context have their places in this argument. The Passamaquoddy have something like a 60% unemployment rate. As one writer to the BDN explained: “ We came, we infected, we took and killed, until the original inhabitants of this land experienced a 96 percent population depletion since first contact. Our assimilation policies have created some of the most socio-economically distressed peoples in the U.S. and Canada. We need to carry that truth in our consideration of how to relate to Wabanaki people, not out of guilt but out of fairness.” (*Arla Patch, of Bryant Pond, served on the Wabanaki Truth and Reconciliation subcommittee. April 11 BDN letter*). Need one say more?



It is also worth considering where the eel is in all this. After all, efforts to protect the less valuable but no less essential and remarkable adult have been resisted despite its precarious but still unprotected status. American eel numbers continue to decline because of water pollution and the hazards of dam turbines. But the economic benefit of their half of the life cycle is somehow hard to see.

The Department of Marine Resources spouts confidence that its management plan is well founded and sustainable. But how well do we understand this animal and its needs? Eels live for 20 or 30 years before going seaward to spawn and die. Do we really know the impacts of harvesting 20,000 pounds of elvers each year? Can we expect to be able to hammer both ends of the eel life cycle with impunity? We should have a comprehensive management plan for the American eel which should start with their listing as the endangered species they are. Then we will be able to talk meaningfully about harvests.



### 4-H Camp Scholarship

The Western Maine chapter of Audubon is happy to announce that we will be offering a \$300 scholarship to the 4-H Camp & Learning Center at Bryant Pond, Maine for the upcoming camping season. The scholarship will be awarded to a student between the ages of 13-17 who lives in the Western Maine region served by the Audubon chapter. The scholarship is available for programs within the Primitive and Naturalist path and is awarded on a need based, first come-first served basis. Please go to: <http://umaine.edu/bryantpond/> for detailed descriptions of camp programs and to apply; or contact the camp at (207)-665-2068 for further information.



### Wood Frogs



What is that sound you hear in the early spring that sounds kind of like a duck, but there are no ducks around? It could very well be a Wood frog! Wood frogs are native to North America and are only found in the US and Canada. They are the first frogs we hear around our area. So if you are out during the day around small ponds or Vernal pools, listen, you just might hear and maybe even see, one of these little 2 inch long fellows. If you would like to learn more about wood frogs, check out;

[http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Rana\\_sylvatica/](http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Rana_sylvatica/)



Wood Frog Eggs



Wood Frog

# Nature Watch



Sure is nice to see (only 2 or 3) Sandhill cranes back in the old corn fields again. A pretty nice sign of Spring. Plus it's a rather warm day today. The Bloodroot is in bloom and I don't think it will be long before the February Daphne will be out.

Was chatting with Marnie Bottesch yesterday and she was telling me about seeing a young moose near New Sharon, a Great Blue Heron flying over and a Broad-winged Hawk. All this on Rt. 2 between Farmington and Norridgewock. Not bad! Also she mentioned how nice it was to see the eagle flying low over her driveway while she was standing right under him. Sure would be nice to have the camera over there at the time the two of them are out there together! She has also seen a Kestrel. Nice to see everyone returning.

Wanted to share with y'all some very nice bear pictures a friend of ours



who lives in Connecticut sent. She has a good friend who lives nearby in Canton, who has a resident bear that seems to enjoy her feeders. She has started taking the feeders in at night. Her friend from The Dept. of Environmental Protection looked at the pictures and estimated the bear to be 400 pounds or more! Some of us look for bears all our lives with precious little luck, and others have them right in their back yard! How sweet it is! This fellow is a real beauty, and seems very content!



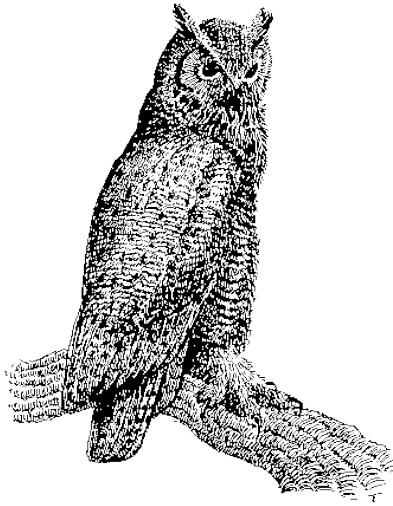
Photos of bear by Anne Duncan

This will be our last newsletter for the season. Look for your next one in September. You can always check us out and view our newsletters on line at: <http://maineaudubon.org/western/> We always look forward to hearing from you and what you are finding in the Natural World.

You can e mail me at [aewilder@somtel.com](mailto:aewilder@somtel.com)

Have a great summer! SW





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**Membership Form**

Yes, I want  to **join** or  **renew** my membership with Maine Audubon and the Western Maine Chapter.

**I want to help protect and conserve wildlife habitat and promote environmental education and advocacy in Maine.**

Please send me Maine Audubon's quarterly newsletter, *Habitat*, and *The Pileated Press*, the Western Maine Audubon Society chapter newsletter. I understand that if I join at the Patron level or higher or enclose an additional \$10, I will receive *Audubon*, the bimonthly National Audubon magazine. My membership benefits also include discounts on Maine Audubon programs and trips, on products from Maine Audubon's Nature Stores, and at Audubon sanctuaries nationwide.

Please make your check out to Maine Audubon and mail it to Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Road, Falmouth, Maine 04105.

- \$25 Senior/Volunteer     \$65 Contributing     \$500 Benefactor
- \$35 Individual     \$100 Patron     \$1,000 Director's Circle
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Questions? Call 207/781-2330 x232 or email [member@maineaudubon.org](mailto:member@maineaudubon.org).