



# THE PILEATED PRESS

## Western Maine Audubon Society

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

Volume XLIII Number 4

### Monthly Programs

March 2014

**Wednesday, March 12, 2014 at 7PM**

### State of the Birds

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

Bird populations in Maine are constantly changing. A total of 445 species have been recorded in Maine; some have been here for a long time while others are fairly new. Some are accidental and others introduced. A few of those species have been extirpated and we may never see them again. **Doug Hitchcox** will explain some of the major changes and fluctuations occurring with Maine avian fauna.

A Maine native, Doug grew up in Hollis and graduated from the University of Maine in 2011. The year he graduated, he travelled to every corner of the state trying to observe as many species as possible in what is known as a 'Big Year.' He ended the year having seen 314 species in the state, a new record for Maine. Throughout college, Doug worked at the Scarborough Marsh Audubon Center running their store and leading walks and tours. Doug was hired as Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist in the summer of 2013, a long time "dream job" for him. In his free time, Doug is one of Maine's eBird reviewers, owner and moderator of the 'Maine-birds' listserv, York County Audubon board member, and Secretary of the Maine Bird Records Committee. This program is free and open to the public.

### **Wednesday, April 9, Forestry Practices in Maine's Public Lands**

**Room C 23, Roberts Learning Center, University of Maine at Farmington, 7PM.**

Forester **Bill Haslam** will discuss the nature of Maine's Public Lands program including its goals, history, and controversies of management. This program is free and open to the public.

### **Wednesday, May 14, Creating Katahdin Woods and Waters National Park**

**Room C 23, Roberts Learning Center, University of Maine at Farmington, 7PM.**

**Lucas St. Clair**, president of Elliotsville Plantation, Inc., will discuss efforts to conserve land in the North Maine Woods for future generation's recreation, sporting, and conservation pursuits.

More on these last two programs in upcoming issues.

Burt Knapp

# President's Column

Photo by Burt Knapp

Turkey tracks on 'lift off.'

The UMF Community Chorus, as part of its winter concert in December, sang Five New England Songs – 5 poems set to music by the contemporary composer Peter Niedmann. One of these poems was by Edward Johnson (1598-1672), entitled New England's Annoyances:

New England's annoyances you that would know them,  
Pray ponder these verses which briefly doth show them.  
The place where we live is a wilderness wood,  
Where grass is much wanting that's fruitful and good.

From the end of November till three months are gone,  
The ground is all frozen as hard as a stone,  
Our mountains and hills and vallies below,  
Being commonly covered with ice and with snow.

And when the northwester with violence blows,  
Then every man pulls his cap over his nose;  
But if any's so hardy and will it withstand,  
He forfeits a finger, a foot, or a hand...

Well, it has been quite a winter with ice and with snow, but what fun it has afforded with fresh powder for skiing, and, at Christmas, a solid icy crust for unparalleled sledding!

A recent winter outing with WMA Board Members highlighted another joy of winter: wildlife observation and tracking. Many animals and birds are active in winter, taking the winter season in stride, or should I say, "on wing". We did a snowshoe hike from Paul McGuire's and Robin Lee's house. Turkey tracks were everywhere! Most interesting were the tracks followed by wing marks, being a record of their runway trot and "lift off" – see picture. One clearly had trouble getting air born, there being foot tracks, then wing marks, then foot tracks and wing marks, and then finally just a set of wing marks at final take off.

In the frozen marsh we found mink tracks. Up on a wooded slope we found porcupine tracks and then sighted the porcupine himself, a brown "fuzz" ball high in the slender branches of a deciduous tree. The fields and woods were crisscrossed with deer and coyote tracks. Mouse tracks with their characteristic tail markings are always fun to see. Squirrel tracks abounded.

Bird sightings included blue jays, ravens, and a flock of robins feeding on apples still clinging to some of the trees in an old orchard.

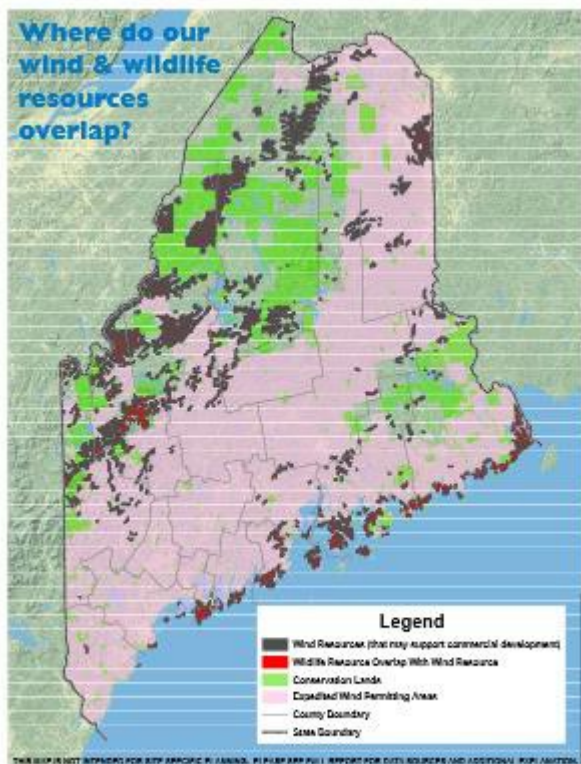
Winter is a fun time to sleuth about and to try to make sense of the signs left by our feathered and furry friends, all still very active despite "New England's annoyances". Thoughts are now turning to spring, however, and I hope to see you all at our first program on 3/12. We are pleased to bring Maine Audubon's newly hired young naturalist, Doug Hitchcox, to Farmington to introduce him to you and to hear from him about birding in Maine.



# Conservation Corner

Steve Bien

Photo by S. Wilder



## Wind and Wildlife

This past fall Maine Audubon issued an important review of the current status and possible future of wind power in Maine. Titled “Wind Power and Wildlife”, it raises good questions about balancing wind energy and wildlife goals. The paper is written around the question as to whether, assuming reasonable wildlife and land protection standards, there is enough wind resource to accomplish the goal of 3000 megawatts of generating power by 2030. Their short answer is “yes we can”. This might be reassuring but the study falls short of asking some of the deeper, harder questions that are essential if we are to balance the environmental costs and benefits of wind power: what are we getting and what does it cost?

The problems with wind power are well known at this point. The best wind resources are typically concentrated in high value areas, chiefly along the coast, out at sea, or on ridge lines. These are often critical habits for wildlife, especially some of our most endangered species. On top of this logistical issue we have the problems inherent in wind power itself: it is intermittent, small

scale, generated distant from points of use, and it is expensive.

Maine’s electricity is currently 50% renewable (25% hydro, 21% wood /biomass, 4% wind). Otherwise 50% of our electrical generation is natural gas, 0.5% coal, about 1% petroleum. At the national level these numbers are 12 % renewable (7% hydro, 3% wind, .1% solar, 1% biomass), 30% natural gas, 37% coal, and 1% petroleum.

On nation and state levels, wind and solar are a small part of the energy mix and are likely to remain so for quite some time. This is the point made by P. Vaclav Smil, Professor of Energy and the Environment at the University of Manitoba in his recent Scientific American article, “The Long Slow Rise of Solar and Wind”. Professor Smil points out that all energy advances, including wood, coal, natural gas, nuclear and renewables have shown very similar patterns of growth. Whatever the source, an energy form typically takes from 50-60 years to become efficient, effective, and fully viable. This is due to the slow speed at which the development of necessary infrastructure and technology take place. Taken in this context it is no surprise that the dial has barely moved on wind and solar. Their capacity has barely changed in their 20 years of development. They still make up barely over 3% of total energy generation and continue to be dogged by the unsolved problems of variability, small scale, and poor transmission infrastructure. After tracing the histories of the current front runners in generation, Smil argues that progress in energy technology is best served by: 1. Not picking winners through favorable legislation and subsidy, 2. Focusing on long term solutions based on realistic expectations rather than “short term fads promoted by wishful thinking” and 3. Pricing energy according to real costs and yields, not subsidy. These are

exactly the strategies we have not adapted here in Maine where the wind industry has been granted subsidy and a fast track to exploit our landscape.

So what is the real price of 3000 mw of wind? If we currently have 345 mw of wind installed from 183 turbines, that is 1.9mw / turbine. That leaves 2655 mw to fill. My back of the envelope math says that would entail putting up 1400 more turbines and if a common turbine density is 10mw/mile, the additional 2655 MW needed to reach the goal would entail roughly 265 miles of turbines and 132 000 acres of cleared land (50 acres/turbine). It has been estimated that the 3000 mw goal would mean that thirty percent of Maine would have visible wind towers. Because of the scale involved, we could double our wind capacity as a state and still have little real impact.

My fear is that ultimately we will have industrialized our landscape for very little return. That is certainly the case if our goal is to stem the rise in greenhouse gases. Our nibbles at the edge of the problem with the few percent of energy that wind will deliver are tiny drops in the bucket when measured against global energy use and carbon generation. Indeed, while the rate of carbon emissions increase has slowed, probably because of the recession, global CO2 release continues to rise annually. It has gone down a bit in the developed world only to have risen a bit more in the developing world, where we have outsourced our supply of plastic crap and electronics. And therein may be the real problem. An American's carbon foot print is still 8 times the Chinese largely because of the wealth of goods and energy we consume, and until we find some way to cap that, we will not wrestle the beast to the ground. Pricing goods and services according to their carbon cost – now that would change the landscape, but it would undoubtedly prove a hard political pill to swallow for a nation struggling to regain its economic footing. These are the real questions we should be asking. Steve Bien

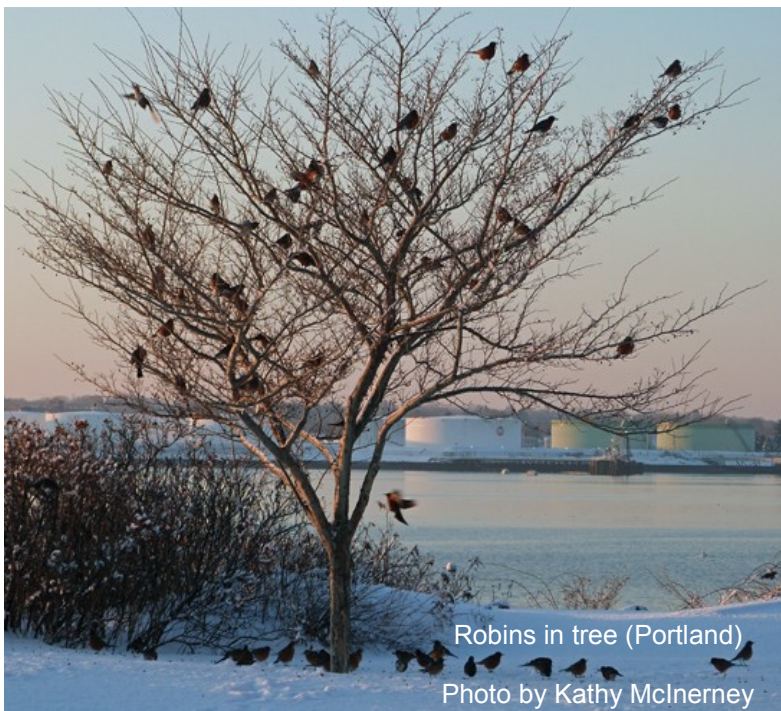
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## Maine Master Naturalist Program Launches Fourth Year

The Maine Master Naturalist Program is accepting applications for its 2014-2015 program session to be held at the Viles Arboretum in Augusta. The course provides 72 hours of classroom and outdoor experience, focusing on field natural history: geology, identification of flora and fauna, wetland and upland ecology, ecological principles, and teaching methods. By the end of this certification program, participants will have developed the skills to lead a walk, present a talk, and provide outreach to schools, land trusts, nature centers, and parks.

The training, which runs from June 14, 2014 through May 27, 2015, includes 10 evening classes and seven Saturdays. Tuition of \$350 covers course texts, hand-outs, and supplies. Applications are due by March 15; for more information, go to: [www.mainemasternaturalist.org](http://www.mainemasternaturalist.org). Upon enrollment, participants agree to give 40 hours of volunteer service at a conservation non-profit or school during the year following certification, and must continue to volunteer (20 hours/year) to remain active Maine Master Naturalist Volunteers.

Maine Master Naturalist Volunteers have led programs from Cape Elizabeth to the western mountains and Belfast, in addition to other sites. Fifty-five individuals have graduated from the program in the previous two years. Thirty-five more individuals, enrolled in the program at Maine Audubon Centers in Falmouth and Holden, will graduate this May. The program's goal is to develop a network of volunteer naturalists throughout the state. For more information or questions, please contact Susan Hayward, 782-5238.



Robins in tree (Portland)

Photo by Kathy McInerney

# Nature Watch



Photo by S. Wilder

Although we have had a lot of snow lately, it has been a great opportunity to get out on snowshoes or skies and see who else has been around. We have been enjoying all the turkey tracks under the apple trees, and when the snow wasn't as deep, the many deer tracks. Also the numerous little tracks of all the other critters that scurry about.

Burt Knapp sent in this observation. With pictures too, bless him! "While skiing on the Maine Huts and Trails system on Little Round Top near Flagstaff Lake, Nancy and I chanced to glance up and see a female Ruffed Grouse gracefully walking on thin branches and eating buds off the tree - beech I think, but I was too busy taking pictures to notice."



Grouse photos by Burt Knapp



Last Summer the Gould's in Wilton enjoyed watching a couple of male cardinals feeding young fledglings at different times during the season. They have been around all winter. At least 2 pairs.

We think we had a Northern Shrike chasing our Chickadees On 1/20 but it moved by so fast we didn't get a real good look. Don't know if it caught anything or not. The little guys at our feeder will all dive for cover in thick bushes or stay very still for a long time when any bird of prey happens to check us out.

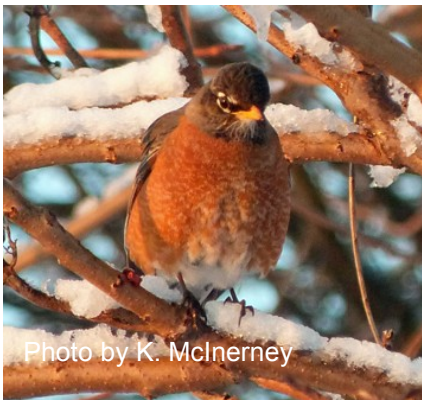
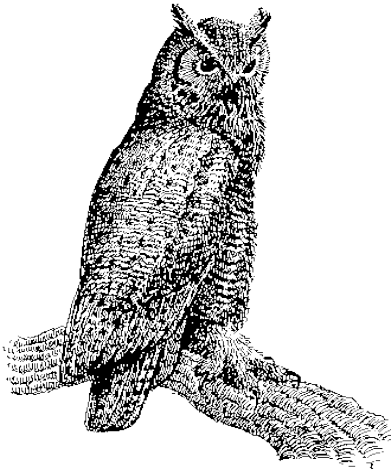


Photo by K. McInerney

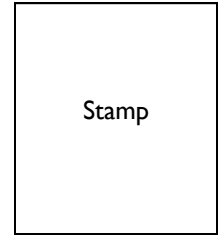
Kathy McInerney was telling me how on 2/20, while walking to work, she saw between 100 and 150 Robins on both sides of the trail. She said it was kind of magical. I put one of her pictures on pg. 4.

As always, we would enjoy hearing about what you are seeing and doing in the Natural World. You can contact me at: [aewilder@tdstelme.net](mailto:aewilder@tdstelme.net) We try and have information for the news letter in by the middle of the month. Thank you. S.W.





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**Dated Material**

**Western Maine Audubon Board**

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**Maine Audubon 781-2330**

**Maine Audubon and Western Maine Audubon  
 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 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
- \$45 Household     \$250 Sustaining

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Questions? Call 207/781-2330 x232 or email [member@maineaudubon.org](mailto:member@maineaudubon.org).