



THE PILEATED PRESS

Western Maine Audubon

A CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

BOX 832, FARMINGTON, MAINE 04938

Autumn 2017

Programs

Wednesday, September 13 at 7PM

Amphibians and Reptiles Native to Maine

North Dinning Hall, (Olsen Student Center) University of Maine at Farmington



We share our forests, meadows and backyards with 34 species of frogs, salamanders, snakes and turtles. This talk will present an up close and personal view of all these amazing creatures, focusing on their natural history and ecology. Come and join us as we explore the beautiful and reclusive amphibians and reptiles that call Maine home.

Matthew Chatfield is an Associate Professor of Conservation Biology at Unity College. He earned his Doctorate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Michigan. He subsequently worked as a postdoctoral researcher and, later, as a Visiting and Research Assistant Professor at Tulane University in Louisiana. With interests in threatened and endangered species, especially amphibians and reptiles, he has worked on such broad-ranging issues as habitat destruction, climate change, and amphibian disease. He currently resides in Belfast and, when not teaching or conducting research, he is engaged in such pastimes as hiking, camping, birdwatching and generally just being in the outdoors.



Wednesday, October 11 at 7PM

Lessons from Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center
a citizen's guide to helping the birds of Maine

North Dinning Hall, (Olsen Student Center) University of Maine at Farmington

This presentation will discuss common reasons why birds are admitted to Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center in Freedom and what public citizens can do to help our local birds. We'll discuss the facilities and recent cases at Avian Haven. 2017 summer admissions include orphaned and injured eagles, owls, hawks, loons, bitterns, herons, ducks, and many species of songbirds.

Continued from front pg.

Laura Suomi-Lecker is the education and outreach coordinator and long-time volunteer with Avian Haven and also the Technical Director at Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District where she does a variety of bird-related programs.

Attached photo is of two loon chicks that were actually hatched at Avian Haven this summer. Parent was taken from the nest by an eagle and the other parent left and did not return. The eggs were brought to Avian Haven and now these two juvenile loons are at the facility, busy learning to catch live fish, preening and growing like the proverbial weeds!



Wednesday, November 8 at 7PM

The Ecology of Dam Removal

North Dinning Hall, (Olsen Student Center) University of Maine at Farmington

Western Maine Audubon's final talk of the Fall season will be by a Nature Conservancy staff member experienced with small dam removal projects within the state of Maine.

“Conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends” is the mission statement of the Nature Conservancy. They have been closely involved with dam removal projects across the state of Maine.

Small dam removal has been controversial, and consideration of removal of the Week’s Mills dam in West Farmington is no exception. The Atlantic Salmon Foundation would like to remove the dam to aid the repopulation of Atlantic salmon to the stream waters above the dam.

Come and hear the pros and cons of such a project through a look at similar projects which have taken place on other parts of our state. The talk will center on the ecologic changes expected with dam removal so that we, locally, can be better informed about the project proposed for our area.

These and all our programs are free and open to the public



"Our relatively cool and somewhat damp summer featuring "bucket" showers and evening rainbows has flown by. Our farm/CSA is bursting with produce of all sorts leaving no time for writing interesting and informative columns. Many apologies from the president!

We do have three very different and interesting programs lined up for this fall, as outlined in this newsletter, and we hope to see you this fall, along with your friends and neighbors. Please note the new meeting room - the North Dinning hall of UMF.



Beauty Happens

As I sit at my Drury Pond camp pondering the colors of the hillside and the melodies of birds lifting up into the morning air, my eyes, yes, but equally my soul is stirred. Beauty is all around us, or can be, and it can be surprising what a deep, soulful experience its contemplation can be. Indeed, if we don't have it at hand, we can go to great, sometimes energetic lengths to seek it. Is that an accident, a cultivation, or is it deep within us? To explore this experience, Richard Prum's new book, [The Evolution of Beauty](#), is the perfect read. Prum is Professor of Ornithology at Yale University and he has spent a life time in the field pursuing this question in his research on bird evolution and behavior. We might have more in common with birds and their aesthetics than we might think.



Prum's studies of some of the most extravagantly beautiful birds anywhere, manikins, made him question the conventional wisdom that the adaptations we see and the process of natural selection itself are necessarily the dispassionate work of utility alone. Utility or fitness is the conventional understanding of the value of adaptations or characteristics, but as a mechanistic explanation those notions can fall short. Take for example manakins, a South American family of smallish, brilliantly plumaged birds that Prum has studied over the years. Male manakins not only have outrageous plumages, but they perform equally flamboyant mating displays. The red manakin moonwalk must be seen to be

believed, for example. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o42C6ajjqWg>)

Prum makes the point that we take natural selection as such a fundamentally utilitarian process that we apply it to everything we see, even if scarcely makes sense. This is in part because of our love of tidy, mechanistic logic but there is also a history involved, the history of the burial of Darwin's other evolutionary argument about beauty. Darwin's *other* book, [The Descent of Man](#), made an entirely different argument from that in [Origin of Species](#). [Descent](#) features examples of mate selection based on aesthetics and Darwin often casts females as the drivers of evolution because of their central role as artistic judges. [Descent](#) drew criticism and even ridicule when it was published in 1871 and many of its arguments were forgotten or buried.

Consider a simple, local example you may have come across earlier this spring, the Blackburnian warbler. Is there a more beautiful bird than a male Blackburnian? Whence and why those colors? Is that Blackburnian male so spectacularly plumed because that array connotes or provides 'fitness' or is it to complete for the attentions of female Blackburnians, who have a taste for his beauty? Darwin and Prum would argue the latter, that beauty is a conspicuous and powerful value in the natural world and a value in its own right. Interestingly, at least among birds, perhaps the most aesthetic of all creatures, the standards of beauty are staggeringly diverse and unpredictable. Beauty just seems to happen. I will circle back to this idea shortly after a dip into current politics.



The big environmental news this summer has been President Trump's decision to pull us out of the Paris Climate agreement. This move, should it happen, is widely regarded as the end of our chance to avoid the direr consequences of climate change. Our weather will get more extreme, ice fields will melt, sea levels will rise, and there will be great plant and animal disruptions on major scales. How bad might this be. I find the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) language very interesting to consider. Their summation of the models leads them to say that the effects might be on a scale comparable to what we have already seen from *habitat loss* in its impacts.

Habitat loss is clearly something the IPCC takes quite seriously. Do we? In our rush to fix climate change we seem to be willing to sacrifice the habitat issue. Here in Maine we have allowed major deforestation to enable wind farms. More recently I have also been surprised that there is little opposition to the fragmentation of habitat and deforestation that the proposed 145-mile powerline corridor will entail here in Western Maine.

To bring power to southern New England from Quebec's vast hydro empire, that powerline will cut our north woods in half. The habit damage done by those hydro projects has been on a scale that we can scarcely imagine.

Because of the drastic terms that are used to describe the consequences of climate warming, we might be led to think that nothing else really matters, and no sacrifice is too great. I am rankled by this hyperbole. I don't doubt that hardship and dislocation are in the offing and for some parts of the globe these will be quite dire. But catastrophism misstates the case by losing sight of the factor of time, and glossing over the mixed picture that will evolve. The most severe effects will take at least decades, perhaps 100's of years, and populations, human and otherwise, will be affected to varying degrees, according to their vulnerability. Catastrophism is not only inaccurate but it is also unstrategic since it breeds helplessness among us. This may be part of the reason that support for climate policies while broad, is also quite shallow.

Bad things will happen but the sky will not fall. The job at hand is to identify the jeopardy and craft relevant mitigation strategies while we do what we can to decarbonize our economies and life styles. This means focusing on particular places and people, such as areas prone to flooding, extreme weather events, and threats to food sources.

But the other message here is that if the IPCC puts the severity of climate issues on a par with habitat loss we are only compounding our predicament by sacrificing habitat in our efforts, especially since reforestation and protection of forests are vital parts of mitigation as carbon sinks.

A friend and I were recently on top of Tumbledown on a day that was particularly fine for views, views that now include the Saddleback Wind and Andover wind towers. Do they fit? Do we want them there as appropriate machinery to harvest a resource, or should we preserve what our eye might otherwise prefer to see, uncluttered ridgetops? What role do those towers legitimately play in our carbon mitigation strategies? What about those forests cleared in the effort, and high elevation habitats degraded in the process.

Here in Maine, we should ask how the dollars spent on wind projects compare to dollars spent on transportation resources and infrastructure or heating efficiency. Recall that wind towers supply largely residential electricity but our fossil fuels are most heavily consumed in transportation and heating. Residential electricity has long been relatively light on fossil fuels here in Maine, while driving and jet miles go up year after year. 75,000 cars drive into Portland every day, yet Maine spends less on public transportation than any other state.

Finally, but not least importantly we need to retain space for discussion about our values including natural beauty. Beauty and aesthetics are necessities not luxuries and they need to remain a part of our environmental vision. Our environmental groups need to recommit themselves to the protection of special places, and high ridges and the great north woods, those vistas that warm the heart and enchant the eye are high on my list. Beauty happens.



How Horned Owls Came to Be

Eleanor Seamon age 9

Once upon a time beside a stream, neatly tucked in the woods, there was a family of owls. The only owls. There was Hooting, the father, then here was Heather the mother, and last of all Bobbycone, the baby. "Tonight" Bobbycone announced, "I will turn myself into a different kind of owl!" "Now, don't be silly Bobbycone you know you won't be able to do that" Heather said. Bobbycone looked downcast, he knew his mother's words were probably right. All he could do was say goodnight and go to sleep. But just the same he woke up in the middle of the day with a lurching feeling in his stomach. He looked at the fire, some coals were still burning. Suddenly an idea popped into his head, he would burn out the shape of two neat little ears on the top of his head. He went to the fire picked up a coal dropped it on his head, and a moment later he was screaming with all his might. Heather and Hooting were soon awake and dumping buckets of water on Bobbycone's head, when they were done, Heather said "Now why were you doing that, just look at the wet floor. And, Oh! Your head, what a spoiled head. Two funny ears on top!" Bobbycone just grinned and guess what, Bobbycone is now a horned owl! And that is the story of, How Horned Owls Came To Be!





This summer seems to have gone by very fast. Was good to hear from so many who had spotted Monarch Butterflies at one time or another this season. We have been seeing them most all summer, One here and one there, but never the large number we use to get years ago. But much better then last year.

Also was nice to see Sandhill Cranes in their usual corn field earlier in the season.

This has been a good summer for mushrooms. Always nice to find some morels under the apple trees in the old orchard. Seemed to have a bumper crop this year. Also our daughter grew some shitake mushrooms this Spring. Had a pretty good crop for her first attempt. And tasty!



In August Art was quite sure he heard Ravens cooing. This is the first time he has ever heard them making that sound. Have been seeing them quite frequently.



Back in May Western Maine Audubon had a very interesting field trip on the Orono Bog

Boardwalk. Was lead by Ronald Davis, retired professor of biology at UMO. Was a beautiful time of year with the rhodora in bloom, also quite interesting looking at the skunk cabbage. And we learned something about water flow and the nutrients in a bog. It's a very nice walk and I recommend it to any who have a free morning or afternoon. There are stations all along the way explaining what you might be seeing at that point.



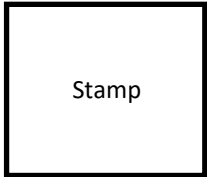
If you haven't gotten to it yet, now is a good time to be cleaning out your bird houses to make them ready for the little guys next Spring.

As always, we enjoy hearing from you and what all you are seeing and doing in the natural world. You can e mail me with your stories and, if you have them, pictures, at aewilder@tdstelve.net. It is always good to hear from you. Have a great Fall and Winter. Our next newsletter will come out in the Spring.





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Western Maine Audubon


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Maine Audubon and Western Maine Audubon

Membership Form

Yes, I want ___ to join or ___ renew my membership with Maine Audubon and 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.

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