



THE PILEATED PRESS

Western Maine Audubon

A CHAPTER OF MAINE AUDUBON

BOX 832, FARMINGTON, MAINE 04938

Spring 2018

Programs

Wednesday, March 14 at 7 PM

Maine Bird Atlas

North Dining Hall, University of Maine at Farmington

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is beginning the Maine Bird Atlas and your help is needed! The goal of the atlas is to document the current distribution of breeding birds in the state, with an interest in including wintering birds beginning 2018-19. The bulk of effort for this state-wide five-year project will need to come from birder citizen-scientists reporting breeding activity observed in Maine birds—whether you can help survey local blocks for five years or just report a chickadee visiting a birdhouse, you can help! Join Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist and Maine Bird Atlas Outreach Coordinator, Doug Hitcox, for a presentation about the purpose, goals, and expected outcomes of the atlas and how you can help.

Wednesday, April 11 at 7 PM

Beaver

North Dining Hall, University of Maine at Farmington

Beaver are perhaps second only to humans in their ability to directly impact our environment through their very concerted efforts. There is a good reason for the expression busy as a beaver. Although relatively quiet this time of year, during the warmer months beaver are hard at work engineering their food supply and shelter and we can readily see their work around us in ponds and sometimes flooded fields and roads.

The history of beaver is also inextricably entwined with ours. The settlement of the American North was largely done in pursuit of their pelts, and that feverish enterprise just about drove them to extinction. Their populations are again common and vigorous but the story of the comeback is quite remarkable. IF&W biologist Chuck Hulseay will lead us through their story and natural history.

Chuck Hulseay has long been a good friend of our chapter and frequent contributor to our evening programs. Since 1998 he has been the regional wildlife biologist of Region D based in the Strong office. He graduated from UMO in 1978 with degrees in both Forestry and Wildlife Management. Following graduation, he worked with the Forest Service on their spruce budworm program and then was a service forester. In 1988 he became assistant regional wildlife biologist for Region D and in 1988 took his current position. Chuck has a wealth of hands on experience and is a terrific speaker. Please join us for this sure to be interesting program.

Wednesday, May 9 at 7 PM

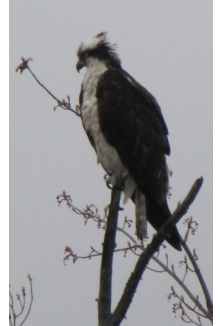
Birding in Maine

North Dining Hall, University of Maine at Farmington

A virtual tour of Guide Ron Joseph's favorite birding destinations

If you want to head in the right direction for birding this Spring, or perhaps add to your Maine life list, this presentation is for you. Retired wildlife biologist Ron Joseph will share his deep experience and knowledge of where to go and what you might see.

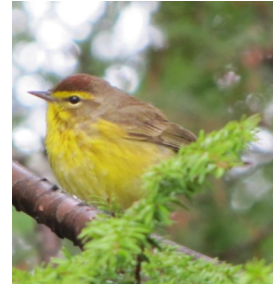
Ron retired as a Maine wildlife biologist in 2010 following a 33-year career with the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He specialized in migratory bird conservation by restoring habitat on private lands and conducting breeding bird surveys. He also studied Canada lynx and bald eagles. Today, Ron leads birding trips for Claybrook Mountain Lodge in Highland Plantation. He also writes for **Down East** and **Maine Boats, Homes and Harbors** magazines.



Field trip

Saturday, May 12, 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.



Our programs and field trips are free and open to the public.



At our meeting on March 14th Doug Hitchcox from Maine Audubon will be introducing Audubon Members and all interested birders to his new initiative: tracking birds in this area, called the Maine Bird Atlas. He is hoping to engage members of the community as "citizen scientists" to assist in this 5 year program. Maine Audubon asserts "Citizen Science is where it's At." They have been running 4 programs for several years with greater than 2,000 volunteers working in the field and sharing their observations. In fact, they feel the success of their conservation programs depends on these volunteers. Please see page 3 in the newsletter for more information on these programs.

The recent cutbacks in both funding for programs and programs themselves make it important that we, the people directly affected by the health of our natural environment, step forward to contribute in any way we can to assist in conservation efforts. So, please come to hear Doug speak on 3/14; think spring and being outdoors doing good things. That should make everyone smile!



Citizen Science is Where it's At!



How Can You Get Involved?

You don't need a PhD to be a scientist. The success of Maine Audubon's conservation programs depends on data contributed by over 2,000 people each year who get out in the field and share their observations. Shake off the winter doldrums and engage your family in a fun and educational activity this spring. Maine Audubon provides information and assistance to get you started.

Brook Trout Pond Survey

Looking for an outdoors adventure? You can be the first to document wild brook trout in remote ponds throughout the state. Your findings will help ensure that our wild brook trout populations are protected. Since 2011, volunteers have surveyed close to 250 ponds – your help is needed to finish exploring the remaining ponds on the list!

When can I volunteer? May-September.



Maine Loon Project

Now in its 35th year, the Maine Loon Project monitors and protects the health and population of our state's beloved bird. You can contribute to this important research by participating in the Annual Loon Count that takes place every summer. In 2013, more than 920 volunteers counted loons on 324 lakes across the state. The counters spotted 3,767 adult loons in southern Maine, and increase of over 25% from 2012.

When can I volunteer? July

Wildlife Road Watch

Maine Audubon's Wildlife Road Watch program documents where animals cross roads to help us understand movement patterns. Your observations will help inform how animals are responding to changing habitats due to climate change. This research will help the Maine Audubon biologists and partners maintain and create new habitat connections for wildlife. You can help by reporting your observations of living and dead wildlife on the sides of roads.

When can I volunteer? Year round but wildlife are most active in April-November.

Maine Turtle Watch



Spring is nearly here, and at Maine Audubon they are getting ready to observe Maine's native turtles as they start moving across the landscape once again, and you can help! Volunteers are needed across the state to survey specific road segments, that have been identified as having high potential for turtle mortality, three to four times from May through September. Maine Audubon and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife staff will conduct three trainings across the state in April to orient volunteers to the task ahead.

When can I volunteer? April

To volunteer for any of these programs call Annica McGuirk, Program Support Specialist, at Maine Audubon. 781-2330 Ext 219 or e-mail: amcguirk@maineaudubon.org (More information at maineaudubon.org/projects/)



Conservation Corner

Steve Bien

First Build It, Then Paint It Green

A race for a choice utility contract is in its final stages and the winner will be declared any day. The brass ring is the lucrative contract to bring Hydro Quebec power into Massachusetts. Three companies with three different plans are now neck and neck, but Central Maine power may well grab the prize with a huge project right here in Franklin County. With hungry energy markets to the south and a glut of power to the north, it is only a matter of time before the \$1.6 billion deal is inked.



Three competing utilities have been pushing their proposals for some time. Central Maine Power has its Clean Energy Connect project through western Maine; Eversource Energy, a Connecticut utility, is working its Northern Pass proposal through New Hampshire; and the Vermont Green Line is an underground line through the Granite State.

The negotiations have recently been a hot potato, demonstrating how complex and nuanced the deal-making can be. Originally there were three competing plans: CMP's Clean Energy Connect here in Maine; Eversource's Northern Pass plan in New Hampshire; and the Green line proposal for Vermont. Two weeks ago, Massachusetts announced that Eversource had won the contract, apparently sidelining CMP and Green Line LLC. But regulators in New Hampshire have denied Eversource's permitting on environmental grounds and there is now a good bet that CMP will win the deal, although Eversource says it will appeal.

Opposition by New Hampshire environmental groups has been wide and deep. The agricultural community, residents, towns, and dozens of major and minor environmental groups all took a stand against the line as an eyesore and tourism killer. Despite the jobs and other economic windfalls, there was no way to sugar coat 192 miles of 145-foot towers in a 400' swathe down the spine of the state. Yet here in Maine, there is hardly any conversation let alone opposition. The AMC, Sierra Club, and Maine Audubon have been silent where their counterpart organizations next door have been aroused. National Audubon signed on too. Why? We also have much to lose, although perhaps too few seem concerned. But since the project would run through our county from the Boundary Mountains through Farmington and Jay to Lewiston, maybe we ought to think about this and reconsider our silence, although time is late.

First, let's think about the Boundary Mountains. This is a 600 square mile massif of mountains in northern Franklin County. By the terms of the 1842 Webster Washburton treaty, the height of land of the Boundary Mountains was chosen as the border with adjacent New Brunswick, hence the name. Though not the spectacular landscape of the White Mountains, the region is still wild, high and relatively untouched, although visitors might want to shield their eyes from the profiles of the wind farms on Kibby and Sisk mountains. Those went up a few years ago when, sadly in my view, our environmental groups, including the AMC, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and our own Maine Audubon, did not see the protection of the Boundary Mountains as a concern.

But let's step back a little further to consider the source of electricity being tapped: the massive Hydro Quebec-James Bay hydroelectric complex in northern Quebec. Through a series of dams on the Grand River in northern Quebec, this is the largest hydro project in the world. The held back water covers an area the size of NY State. Because the terrain is glacial and of low relief, the impoundments have flooded vast acreages of the spruce-fir forest once coursed with the many waterways and interlocking lakes that were the basis of aboriginal Cree and Inuit culture. In the era before the development of the 1970's this was a thinly populated region where small villages and family groupings of native people lived a migratory subsistence lifestyle which revolved around hunting migratory caribou and other game in the winter and fishing in the summer.

That lifestyle and culture are mostly gone. The James Bay project brought construction, flooding, roads, and even money for some. The old ways have given way to modern times and modern woes, although I recognize that it is easy and, indeed, inaccurate to be entirely negative. Many of the First Nations people wanted many of the modernizing changes that occurred, and many benefitted from the jobs, money, and modern comforts. Still, it is hard to ignore the impacts of the cultural dislocation with rising rates of drug use and other mental illness, and the weakening of cultural and family traditions still very much in existence 50 years later. With subsistence harder to accomplish many live a grim life of poverty.

Continued



But what of the environmental costs? Under the vast acreages of impounded water sit thousands of square miles of rotting northern forest, and this decay is a major source of pollution from released mercury and carbon. Mercury occurs naturally and is constantly released from decaying vegetation wherever it occurs, but with decomposition on this scale, the mercury contamination is far beyond the cleaning capacity of natural systems. As a result, there has been widespread toxic contamination of fish and animal stocks throughout the region. Not only are many fishing areas now flooded out, but the fish themselves are poisonous to eat and local



Cree and Innu continue to have toxic mercury levels in their blood stream almost 50 years after the construction.

Impounded water has another environmental effect: greenhouse gas emissions. The decomposition of drowned vegetation produces significant amounts of carbon dioxide and methane, and methane is the most powerful greenhouse gas. In studied examples comparable to James Bay the net result is more carbon release than would occur from traditional fossil fuels. For example, in a study of a large dam system in Brazil, the greenhouse effect of emissions from the Curuá-Una dam was more than three-and-a-half times what would have been produced by generating the same amount of electricity from oil. So while replacing old fossil fuels plants in Massachusetts with hydropower may sound 'green', this may not be the case.

None of this power will flow to Maine. In irony on irony, the Cree and Innu have had their land despoiled to ship power to the south, and now western Maine will be used similarly. You can slice or dice the Hydro Québec energy in many ways. Yes, the deed is done, the basic project infrastructure long completed, so can't we take the power and call it good? But would we accept a pipeline for tar sand oil? Further, shouldn't our environmental groups, which tout stewardship of our natural resources and heritage, take a stand to preserve this region from fragmentation and deforestation? Maine Audubon says that working to **conserve Maine's wildlife and wildlife habitat** is central to its mission. Why the silence on this? Protecting the integrity of our forestlands and woods takes more than good intentions.

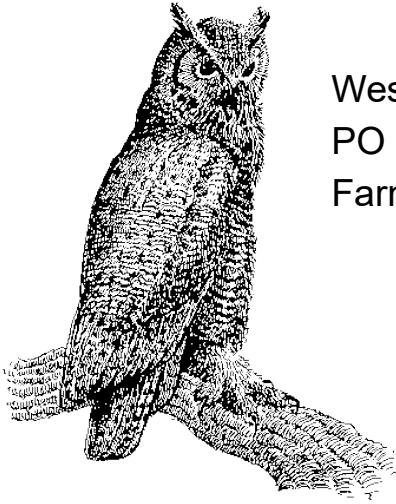


This late winter we have had a number of folks send in reports of all the birds seen at feeders. We got a nice note from Sonny Corson in early February telling of all the bird activity they are getting now, and about a year ago he sent in this report about a fisher that was feeding at a woodpecker suet feeder. The fisher came on a daily bases most all summer long. Several cats in the area came up missing, also a few chickens; one they know was taken by a fisher. A neighbor, while putting trash into an area dumpster, saw a fisher jump out the other side. Under directions of a warden, the owner stopped putting suet out and since most chickens were gone and neighbors started keeping their cats in, the fisher left for greener pastures. And hopefully deep woods!

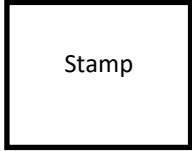
Also heard from Pam Prodan recently. She is getting a lot of activity at her feeders, but also this past Fall she had a treat when driving to Leeds and saw a group of Sand Hill Cranes, her first sighting. She sent a couple of great pictures, but I can't copy them well. So folks, please send pictures to me via e-mail.

Some of the birds seen this winter by a number of readers are; the Black-caped Chickadee, Goldfinch, Junco, Red and White Breasted Nuthatch and Blue Jay, but also Titmouse, Tree Sparrow, and Cardinals; and of course, turkeys! Always nice to see and hear about. And hopefully some of you will be interested in helping with the Citizen Science Program. Today, 2/17, a Robin was seen here at the farm. There are no worms, just deep snow. Thank you for all the reports, and have a great Sumer. S.W. aewilder@tdstelme.net





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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.

\$25 Senior/Volunteer \$65 Contributing \$500 Benefactor

\$35 Individual \$100 Patron \$1,000 Director's Circle

\$45 Household \$250 Sustaining

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Questions? Call 207/781-2330 x232 or email member@maineaudubon.org.

