



the **Pileated Press**

Western Maine Audubon, *a chapter of Maine Audubon*

Box 832, Farmington, ME 04938

- Our Spring Talks 2023 -

All talks this spring will be in person at 7:00 PM in the Thomas Auditorium of Preble Hall on the campus of UMF. They will be recorded as usual with the recording made available on our website (western.maineaudubon.org/videos) within a few weeks of the talk. Masking for the talks is discretionary.

March 8th- Herons

Speaker: Danielle D'Auria

Did you ever wonder where Maine's Great Blue Herons go in winter, and what path they travel to get there? Since 2016, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife has deployed lightweight GPS tracking devices on Great Blue Herons to follow their movements during nesting, migration, and wintering. This technology has revealed impressive migrations sometimes over long stretches of open ocean and for over 60 hours non-stop to Florida, the Bahamas, Cuba, and Haiti! Hear all about these majestic birds, how over 100 volunteers have been monitoring their colonies for the past 14 years, and how students are integral to tracking their movements within and beyond state lines.



Photo Credit - Sherrie Tucker

Danielle D'Auria is Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's species expert on secretive marsh birds, colonial wading birds, common loons, and black terns. Her work focuses on understanding state-wide populations of these species as well as land management issues affecting the wetland habitats they depend on. Over the past 14 years, she has devoted a great deal of effort to heron surveys and research, including coordination of a volunteer monitoring program called the Heron Observation Network of Maine and has used GPS transmitters to track great blue herons during breeding, migration, and wintering.

April 12th - The State of Maine's Lakes and What You Can Do To Help

Speaker: Susan Gallo

Maine has over 2,500 Great Ponds. The vast majority of them are in great shape, due in large part to strong shoreland zoning laws that protect fragile lakeside habitat and to motivated homeowners who work to make sure their properties protect lakes. However, many of Maine's lakes are at risk of losing their clean, clear water and many associated recreational, habitat, and economic values. These lakes are at a tipping point, pushed there by stormwater that carries nutrients along for the ride and made more worrisome today due to climate change. Larger, more intense storms multiply the volume of stormwater, and threaten the quality of our lakes. Learn more about what's happening with our lakes today, and some of the exciting programs and policies that are in place (or may be in place with your help!) to improve lake health. From loon restoration to homeowner programs to community education efforts for kids, there are many ways to get involved in protecting Western Maine's precious lakes!



Photo Credit – Shutterstock_639912508



Photo Credit – Shutterstock_1445166614

Susan Gallo joined Maine Lakes as their Executive Director in 2018, where she has continued to expand the LakeSmart program and is currently working on projects around lake economics and values, loon restoration, lake science outreach, and collaborative freshwater education. Prior to that she was a wildlife biologist and program manager at Maine Audubon for 20 years, where she directed the Maine Loon Project, the Maine Amphibian Monitoring Project, the Forestry for Maine Birds Program, and Maine Audubon's Renewable Energy Program. Her education includes a B.S. in Natural Resources from Cornell University, and an M.S. in Organismal Biology and Ecology from the University of Montana.

She has worked as a certified Stewardship Advisor for the state of Montana, monitored nesting success for timber companies, and has lived off-shore capturing and banding puffins and terns. Susan is a 2011 TogetherGreen Conservation Leadership Fellow, and a 2018 Source Sustainability Award Winner. She lives in Cumberland Center with her husband and enjoys visits from her college-age daughters. In her spare time, Susan likes to read, garden, run, hike and make things.



“A colony nester”, Photo credit- Stephen Kress

May 10th - Rising seas and warming waters: climate stresses to Gulf of Maine marine species

Speakers: Andrew Allyn and Dr. Hannah Baranes

The Gulf of Maine has one of the most biologically productive marine ecosystems in the world. It is also warming faster than 96% of the world’s oceans and experiencing rates of sea level rise higher than the global average. These changes place numerous stresses on Gulf of Maine marine species, particularly colonial nesting seabirds that use Maine’s coastal islands for nesting habitat and rely on marine resources to feed themselves and their young. Hannah and Andrew invite you to their presentation to learn more about expected climate-driven changes in the Gulf of Maine and their potential impacts on marine species.

Dr. Hannah Baranes: Hannah joined GMRI (Gulf of Maine Research Institute) in 2022 as a post-doctoral researcher in the Climate Center. Her work at GMRI uses statistical techniques to estimate flood hazard in areas where there are multiple drivers of flooding, such as sea level rise, tides, storm surge and river flow. Before coming to GMRI, Hannah completed her M.S. and Ph.D. in Geosciences from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she focused on understanding the dynamic processes that shape the structure and function of coastal environments. Outside of work, Hannah plays on Maine’s professional ultimate team, Portland Rising, and is an avid backcountry snowboarder.

Andrew Allyn: Andrew is a quantitative research associate at GMRI and a PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Since joining GMRI in 2017, Andrew’s work has focused on building species distribution models to understand where marine species are now and where they might go in the future under different climate change scenarios. Before coming to GMRI, Andrew completed his M.S. in Environmental Conservation at the University of Massachusetts Amherst while studying seabirds in Alaska and in the Gulf of Maine. When he isn’t at work, Andrew enjoys exploring Maine’s great outdoors and making a mess in the wood shop.



-President's Column-

Photo Credit – Burt Knapp

Greetings Everyone,

Hopefully by the time you receive this we will have started to move on from the current world of snow and ice toward signs of spring. Although Doug Hitchcox, the Naturalist at MA in Falmouth, recently wrote a column answering the question “where are all the birds?”, we don’t seem to have that problem here at our farm. In fact we have been invaded by what looks at times like a flock of cardinals. We currently have about 7 females and 4-5 males all gorging themselves at the feeder. The chickadees fight bravely for their turn even though they look really small sharing the feeder tray with the cardinals. We also have some mourning doves hanging around although I really associate them with warm weather. And we also have the usual winter visitors off and on.

The excessive ice instead of snow certainly speaks to climate change and 2 of our topics this spring touch on that. Our first talk in March will be an update on information which is coming from the Heron Observation Network of Maine which has been going on for 14 years. Danielle D’Auria who has been running this program will join us for that talk focusing on things like nesting and migration of the herons.

Our April talk will be given by Susan Gallo who many of you may know as she was with MA for 20 years and worked with the loon program around the state. We have asked her to discuss the status and health of our lakes which are such an important part of our local environment and are now her job focus.

Our third talk in May will be given by 2 researchers from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and relates directly to climate change, specifically how the warming of Casco Bay is affecting wildlife and birds in particular. We are very excited to have these two people coming up to Farmington to share their knowledge and research plans with us.

We are returning to in person talks as you can see from the list above. We feel it is time to make that switch. The talks will be recorded and available on the WMA website a week or so after each session. Lastly, we, the board and I, hope that there is someone out there who would like to join our board to help out with the planning of the talks. We would love to have you join us.

Nancy Knapp, President

Fun facts about Birds. Did you know? by Nancy Knapp

Do bigger brains make smarter animals? Apparently not for birds. With very small brains they can develop sophisticated tools and remember where they hid food. How do they accomplish these feats with such a small brain? Recent research suggests that avian brains have a higher density of neurons than many other animals. In addition, in spite of the increased density, avian brains, gram per gram, use significantly less energy than other mammals. Did birds evolve this trait to work with their limited energy supply? Are their neurons more efficient in some way? More research is needed to explain this remarkable finding.



"Gulls in Flight", Photo Credit – Steve Farmer

Scientific American, 12/2022, *Food for Thought*. *Weirdly efficient neurons power birds' powerful brains*. pp14-15.



Photo Credit – Burt Knapp

Woodpeckers, hard knocks, headaches anyone? by Nancy Knapp

Researchers have hypothesized that the bone between a woodpecker's beak and brain must absorb shocks to protect them from concussions. A new study however suggests that in fact "the head and beak act like a stiff hammer for optimal pecking performance rather than a shock-absorbing system to cushion the brain." They actually captured high speed video of the bill striking a target and were able to assess how much force is loaded onto the woodpecker's bill as well as its brain. They found that, because the woodpecker's brain is so much smaller than that of a human, the forces sustained by the bird are low enough to prevent injury. In fact, they think the woodpeckers could peck even harder than they do and still be safe from concussions. So they can keep right on pecking away.

Scientific American, October 2022, *Hard Knocks*, pp13-14.

Nature Notes

By Burt Knapp, board member

The Northern Cardinal (or redbird, common cardinal, red cardinal, or just cardinal) is common in the eastern and southern United States and down through Central America to the Yucatan Peninsula.*

The male is bright red with more dusky red/brown coloration on the back and wings. The female is fawn-colored, with mostly grayish-brown tones and a slight reddish tint on the wings, crest, and tail feathers. The young resemble the female until fall when they molt and the male develops his red adult coloration. Both have bright coral colored beaks. The male coloration comes from carotinoids, both red and yellow. The yellow are changed to red by a specific enzyme. A rare cardinal lacks the enzyme, and the male is yellow!

“The male sings to declare his territory and can be quite aggressive, even striking out relentlessly at its reflection seen in a window or other bright object.” (Sounds familiar!) The male and female songs are identical and must be learned. Different “dialects” exist in different areas.



Photo Credit – Wikipedia



Photo Credit – Wikipedia

A male and female couple may stay together through the season or several seasons. Genetic studies, however, show that they are not entirely monogamous! He gathers nesting material; she builds the nest and incubates the eggs, but he takes charge of the young while she sits on a second, third, or even fourth clutch of eggs.

Guess the states that have the Cardinal as their state bird?

You guessed it: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Our male cardinal has stopped bashing against our windows. In fact, we now have a flock of cardinals. We have counted 4-5 males and up to 7 females. We dread spring when our male friend again declares his territory and again starts bashing himself against our windows!

** Much of the above was distilled from Wikipedia*

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Thank you!



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