



the **Pileated Press**

Western Maine Audubon, *a chapter of Maine Audubon*

Box 832, Farmington, ME 04938

- Our Fall Talks 2023 -

All talks this fall 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.

September 13th – Owls of Maine and the Maine Owl Pellet Project

Speaker: Zach Olson

The Maine Owl Pellet Project (MOPP) is a collaboration between the University of New England, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service that aims to engage the public and promote crowdsourced science to better understand the diet of Maine's owls and the distribution and composition of the small mammal community on which they prey, including the threatened northern bog lemming, to inform conservation efforts. The talk will combine information about the common owls in Maine, an introduction to the northern bog lemming, a project update, and information about how interested individuals can participate.

To learn more: <https://sites.une.edu/maine-owl-pellet-project>

Zach Olson: An Associate Professor of Animal Behavior at the University of New England. He received a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from South Dakota State University in 2004, a M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from Frostburg State University in 2006, and a Ph.D. in Wildlife Genetics from Purdue University in 2010. He has authored or co-authored over 30 scientific publications focused on wildlife conservation and scavenging ecology, and has worked with wild animals ranging from gray seals and bighorn sheep to hellbenders and timber rattlesnakes. He enjoys being outdoors with his wife and two young kids, training his bird dog, and being bitten by his small parrot.



Photo Credit – Marc Lausier



Photo Credit – Mael Glon, Ph.D. (@maelbirds on Instagram)

October 11th - Rising seas and warming waters: Climate stresses to Gulf of Maine marine species

Speakers: Dr Hannah Baranes, and Andrew Allyn

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.



Photo Credit – Gulf Of Maine Research Institute

Dr. Hannah Baranes: Hannah joined GMRI 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.

November 8th – Wildlife Tracking in Maine

Speaker: Charles Hulsey (Chuck)

Chuck will share wildlife tracking and species ID tips and techniques that he has used over the years while doing winter wildlife tracking surveys for lynx, bobcat, pine marten, and fisher. These techniques allow for accurate identification of the owner's tracks, even if of poor quality, which is commonly the case. I took the attached picture while doing Canada lynx surveys in western Maine. The tracks were filled in but could be identified from a hundred feet away as lynx due to their size, and just importantly, the track pattern. I will cover these things during my talk.

Charles Hulsey: a 1978 graduate of the University of Maine at Orono with BS Wildlife Mgt. and BS Forest Management degrees. He worked for the Maine Forest Service from 1978-1988, most of that time as a district forester providing management advice to small woodland owners. He has worked for the MDIFW since 1988, nearly all of that time as the Regional Wildlife Biologist in Region D, western Maine. He is presently working on three statewide projects: Writing wildlife habitat management guidelines for the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands with fellow wildlife biologist Sarah Spencer; providing deer wintering area management assistance statewide; and providing additional assistance capacity to the Department's relatively new private lands program.



Photo Credit: Charles Hulsey

-President's Column-

Photo Credit – Burt Knapp

Greetings Everyone,

As I write this in mid July it is, yes, yet again raining. Our vegetable gardens for the CSA we run are once again under water. It has been a challenging spring and summer. The extensive fires in Canada, withering heat in the south and west and floods in New England make it frighteningly clear that we are experiencing the results of the earth's warming climate. Although it may not seem like much, all of us can and should do our part to slow global warming.

A new proposal: The US Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to establish a National Wildlife Preserve in the High Peaks Area of western Maine. The focus would be on conserving wildlife and habitat in this diverse region. With a warming climate it is felt that birds, plants and animals may need to move to higher elevations for survival and there are many species which would benefit from having this area conserved. Maine Audubon as well as other conservation groups are very excited about the potential in this proposal. Watch for more info as this project moves forward.

Our fall talks will start off in September with a talk on the owls of Maine by the Owl Pellet Project. In October we will hear from speakers about warming in the Gulf of Maine by researchers from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. I expect this will be sobering information. In November with colder weather approaching you will have a chance to learn to identify animal tracks in the snow. Hope to see you all at the fall talks.

Nancy Knapp



Photo Credit – Ethan Whitaker

Maine Bird Lore: The Canada Jay by Folklorist Margaret Yocom, Farmington, www.margaretyocom.com

You know something's up when a bird has almost as many names as it has tail feathers: whiskey jack, lumber jack, moose bird, meat bird, tallow bird, butcher bird, camp robber, gorbey—the list goes on!

When I was working in the woods with Rangeley logger Rodney Richard and his three sons, there was one bird they always fed: the Canada jay. The Richards had heard from other woodsmen that the birds were the souls of dead loggers. Maine woodsmen also swear that anything you do to a gorbey will happen to you. A logger once told

University of Maine folklorist Edward Ives about a man who got so angry at a lunch-stealing gorbey that he kicked the bird and broke its leg. A day or so later when the man was hauling wood with a scoot (a sled), he caught his foot in the trace-chain and fractured his leg.

One of the best-known stories that Maine woodsmen tell—and they tell it for true—is about a man who plucks a gorbey. Angus Enman, a PEI man who worked around Rangeley in the early 1900s, told Ives a story he heard when he was working on Blue Mountain in back of Andover. One day, when Angus and others were lunching out, the gorbies were so thick they were hopping right up to the men's feet. Angus reached out to catch a gorbey, but an older man sitting beside him said, "I could tell you a story about that. "There was a bad fella, wicked sort of fella, and he caught a gorbey. He picked the feathers off him and let him go in the cold of the winter. And he said [to the gorbey], 'Let the old son of a bitch that put them on you grow them on again.'" The old logger told Angus, "[That wicked fella] woke up in the morning baldheaded as could be."

* For more great stories, see Edward Ives, "The Man Who Plucked the Gorbey: A Maine Woods Legend," in the 1991 *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 74, No. 291 (Jan-Mar), pp. 1-8, online in the JSTOR database.

How Geology Influences Bird Habitats

by John Slack, Board Member

It has long been established that bird species prefer specific habitats. Less well-known, however, is the fact that local geology can impact which bird species are present. Many types of trees, shrubs, and grasses, for example, preferentially live on specific types of soils. Factors that affect the nature of soils include parent rock type, climate, slope of the land surface, and duration of soil formation. The pH of soils is governed by several factors such as biological activity (especially microorganisms), but initially is influenced by the chemical composition of the parent rock from which the soil develops: the weathering of limestone and similar calcium-rich rocks favors the formation of alkaline soils, whereas soils produced by the weathering of granite and sandstone (and quartz-rich schist) typically produce acidic soils. Examples of trees that grow preferentially on alkaline soils, and the birds that prefer living on or near them, include (1) basswood (blue jays, pileated woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers), (2) elm (turkeys, ring-necked pheasants, purple finches, goldfinches), and (3) juniper (robins, brown thrashers, cedar waxwings, bluebirds). Acidic soils favor the growth of the following trees and hence habitats for the following bird species (1) pine and most other conifers (nuthatches, finches, grosbeaks, chickadees, kinglets); (2) beech (chickadees, blue jays, downy woodpeckers, indigo buntings), (3) birch (goldfinches, chickadees, blue jays, crossbills, juncos), and (4) holly (robins, cedar waxwings, bluebirds, gray catbirds, hermit thrushes, mockingbirds, cardinals).



In western Maine the geology is dominated by granite, schist, and sandstone, with only minor limestone in places. As a result, and because of a broadly similar climate, our soils tend to be acidic. However, this does not mean bird species that prefer trees living on alkaline soil (on limestone) will not be present, but rather that the likelihood of seeing chickadees and kinglets, for example, will be greater in and near pines and other conifers that grow on acidic soils such as granite.

Nature Notes

By Burt Knapp, a Back Yard Birder

Follow up on our Cardinals: While we had a flock of male and female Cardinals this past winter and early spring, we have been spared the attacks on our windows, and the numbers may be down to one male and one female. All is quiet for now except for the return of a male Chestnut Sided warbler who throws himself repeatedly against the kitchen widow on occasion. He launches himself from the lilac just outside the window so I don't think he will hurt himself.

Bird Feeder notes: One need go no further than one's yard to see lots of species of birds. The following is a summary (the best I can remember) of the birds seen at our feeder and around the farm. This year the most common have been the Purple Finches and the Chickadees. Frequent have been the Nuthatches, both white and red breasted, and the Goldfinches. Our little Tufted Titmouse comes quite frequently also. In the late winter and early spring we frequently saw Down Woodpeckers, and Hairy Woodpeckers, and an occasional Yellow Bellied Sapsucker. Less Common have been the Evening Grossbeaks, and the Rose Breasted Grossbeaks. Most uncommon has been a single Indigo Bunting. On the ground we have had: A Fox Sparrow, White Throated Sparrows, Song Sparrows, Gray Juncos, American Robins, and Northern Flickers. In and around the gardens and fields we frequently see: Bobolinks, Eastern Blue Birds, Cat Birds, Eastern Starlings, Cedar Waxwings, Red Pols depending on he year, and Barn Swallows, and of course Crows and occasional Ravens. Tree Swallows have been fewer than usual this year. Birds of Prey: an occasional Shrike, Kestrel, Barred Owl, and once a Sharp Shinned or Cooper's hawk which swooped in after a Gold Finch at the feeder. Last year an adult Bald Headed Eagle attacked our chickens and caused me to promptly net the outdoor flock!

Past sightings at the farm: a Red Eyed Vireo, a Snowy Owl, a Snow Bunting, a Baltimore Oriole, a White Crowned Sparrow, a Woodcock, Killdeer, Redstarts, and Pileated Woodpeckers

Heard but not seen: Cuckoo, Common Yellow throat, and a Whip-poor-will which we had not heard for years.

Wild animals on the farm: This spring a fox pup got caught up in netting that is used to protect our chicken flock from arial predators. He was disentangled and released by an IF&W agent. We also saw a fawn sleeping inside a fenced in garden. We have no idea as to how he got in!



Photo Credit - Burt Knapp



Photo Credit - Burt Knapp

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