



the ***Pileated Press***

Western Maine Audubon, a chapter of Maine Audubon

Box 832, Farmington, ME 04938

- Our Spring Talks 2024 -

All talks this spring will be in person at 7:00 PM in the Thomas Auditorium of Preble Hall on the UMF campus. For those who cannot attend in person, you may attend via Zoom. The link for the sign in will be posted both on the website under the event, or on the Western Maine Audubon Facebook page on the day of the talk. The Zoom session will be recorded and posted on the website's video page.

March 13th – Maine Big Night: Amphibian Migration Monitoring

Speaker: Greg LeClair

April showers bring more than just May flowers to Maine - they bring the massive annual migration of amphibians, colloquially known as “big nights”. As many of these amphibians plod and hop through the landscape, they face unfortunately steep odds of reaching their breeding locations. While natural barriers (rivers, mountains, etc.) and predators are risks that Wood Frogs and Spotted Salamanders have calculated into their migratory plans, many have not had the time to adjust to the newest, and perhaps most deadly, risk during these migrations - roads.

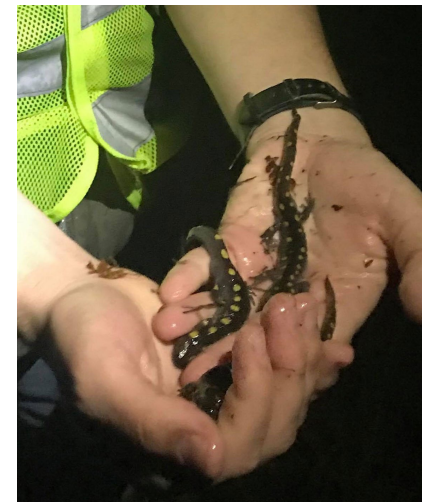


Photo Credit – Greg LeClair

This persistent and likely increasing threat is what inspired the creation of Maine Big Night: Amphibian Migration Monitoring (MBN). MBN is a community science project that harnesses the energy of community members throughout the state to accomplish two major tasks; record data on amphibian crossings and assist the creatures across the road to directly reduce mortality as a temporary means of protection.

Since the inception of the project in 2018, MBN has recorded 21,586 amphibians and surveyed 349 sites from Kittery to St. Agatha, which was recorded on the backs of 388 unique certified volunteers (plus many more joining them - perhaps thousands of Mainers have now participated in MBN!). Combined, volunteers have contributed just over 224 days of road monitoring, allowing 15,939 amphibians to be shepherded safely to and from their breeding locations.

Come and learn more about salamanders and how you can help them.



Photo Credits – Matthew Chatfield

April 10 - Everything you didn't realize you needed to know about turtles in Maine

Speaker: Matthew Chatfield

Turtles are somehow so familiar to us—having found a place in many cultures' creation stories, being featured in countless children's books, and making Hollywood appearances—yet researchers are only now appreciating their unique biology and ecological roles. They have existed for 230 million years and have proven extraordinarily resilient, even surviving the mass extinction event that killed off the non-avian dinosaurs. Despite our affection for them and their resilience, turtles are facing unprecedented challenges in the modern world and rank among the most endangered vertebrate groups on Earth. Maine is fortunate to be home to many of these beautiful, enduring, and vulnerable creatures. This talk will explore the turtles of Maine—their biology, how to observe them, and what we can all do to ensure their continued existence on our fragile planet.

Bio: Matthew Chatfield is an Assistant Professor of Evolution and Eco-Health at the University of Maine where he studies the evolution, ecology and conservation of reptiles and amphibians. He received a BA in Biology from the University of Chicago and a PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Michigan. He subsequently spent five years at Tulane University and six years at Unity College. Dr. Chatfield also serves as the Principal Investigator of the Maine Wood Turtle Project.

May 8th - Memories of a Wildlife Biologist

Speaker: Ronald Joseph

Ron's talk will mainly focus on wildlife and his role in protecting and conserving species as described in detail in his recent book: *Bald Eagles, Bear Cubs, and Hermit Bill: Memories of a Wildlife Biologist*, published by ISLANDPORT PRESS, 2023.

He will focus in particular on the most current threat facing Maine's fish and wildlife: a warming Pine Tree State that will result in winners and losers.

Ron Joseph was born in Waterville in 1952 and grew up in neighboring Oakland. He developed a love for the outdoors and wildlife on his grandparents' dairy farm in Mercer, where he spent many weekends, summers, and vacations working and exploring. He especially loved birds, a passion nurtured by his mother, and spent hours perched on stacks of hay bales watching swallows dart in and out of the barn to feed their nestlings. That fascination led him to study ornithology at the University of New Hampshire where he earned a degree in wildlife conservation. He later earned a master's degree in zoology from Brigham Young University.

In 1978, he began a career as a state and federal wildlife biologist, often with a focus on the restoration of endangered species. In 1990, Ron began working as a private lands wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, helping landowners restore hayfields and wetlands for migratory birds. He played a pivotal role in restoring Maine's bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and Canada lynx populations. He is now retired, but continues to speak, volunteer, and lead birding trips. In this Q&A we spoke to Ron about his love for birds, his accomplishments as a conservationist, and his thoughts on the current state of wildlife preservation in Maine.



Photo Credit – Paul Cyr



Photo Credit – Bill Leikam

-President's Column-



Photo Credit – Burt Knapp

Greetings Everyone,

As I write this it is pouring rain on 12" of snow. It is less than a month since the December 18th flood and windstorm which left devastating damage across our state. Our weather patterns have definitely changed and adapting to all of this will be challenging. So, I have decided to take a break from all of this and have fun sharing with you some really special animal encounters I have experienced through the past years.

The first beautiful relationship occurred while we were living in Cumberland, well off a fairly quiet road in a wooded area. One spring morning I saw a mother gray fox with her 2 kits right outside the house near a bird feeder. The next day at 3:00 o'clock one of the kits came back, alone, cleaned up under the feeder, walked around the house to the other feeder for more food, hung around for a while and moved on. I had taken a 6 week leave from work so I was home and was privileged to watch my little friend come nearly daily, at the same time, for about a month. Initially he/she startled when I watched through a glass door but finally decided I was OK and I could quietly go outside, keeping my distance. One day he had a confrontation with a flock of turkeys which after dancing back and forth flew up into a tree. The fox sat down looking quite puzzled. Maybe he was thinking how does one fly? One day I watched him chase and catch a red squirrel. Good, I thought, he's going to survive. No more need for bird food. That was the last time I saw that exquisitely beautiful juvenile gray fox.

The second event happened on our farm here. One morning we noticed an animal racing frantically around inside our very large, fenced garden area. Fearing a fox had somehow gotten in we found instead a spotted fawn. Mom apparently had pushed through a section of fence and then had been able to leap high enough to get back out. (The position of the fence prevented walking out) but her little one could not jump high enough to get out. We opened the big gate and Burt tried to get behind it but that scared it more. While standing, Burt inside, me outside, the fawn walked up to him like a little dog. We discovered it would follow him and step by step he led it out. Burt went to close the other area and the fawn walked over to me. The poor little animal was panting and shaking all over, looking just terrified. I knew Mom was somewhere out in the field, so I started walking in that direction with my little friend staying right at my knee, trotting along. I was very careful not to touch him, but it was hard because he was so close to me. We walked several hundred feet this way along the fence and out into the field when he suddenly stopped, looked around and must have thought-now I know where I am- and off he went into the unmown hay. About 2 weeks later I saw him feeding with Mom and knew everything was Ok.

There is something indescribably special about sharing moments with wild animals. It really brings home the message that we are all related in unique ways. Why did that fawn trust me? I will never know. Have you had a special encounter with a wild creature you would like to share? Send it along and we will add it to the next newsletter. Please attend and enjoy the spring talks. We will be discussing ways in which we can all assist our natural brethren to survive in their own habitats. Think sunshine and spring.

-Nancy



Photo Credit – Daniel Jauvin | Macaulay Library

Hot off the Press

The American Ornithological Society has announced that it will be changing the names of birds which include the name of a person. Some of the names refer to people with what would now be considered unacceptable ethics or lifestyles. This actually includes a large number of birds and will take place over several years.

Herb Wilson recently had a column about sightings of vagrants over the past year in the Maine Sunday Telegram 12/31/23 pg. C6. (check out his web page for this and other articles: www.t.ly/b_ncl) He stated that “Maine had many unusual visitors” in ‘23. “Some ...visitors came from western North America, from the southern US, from Newfoundland and from Europe.” He also noted that the spring migration “usually brings a variety of vagrants to Maine.” For example, an American White Pelican was seen offshore of Portland on May 9th. The Steller’s sea eagle reappeared and spent about a month this year in the Arrowsic area. For a full list of visitors you may consult his article or contact him at whwilson@colby.edu. (It seems Maine is becoming a popular place for both birds and people to seek out!).

Doug Hitchcox, The staff naturalist at Maine Audubon in Falmouth reviewed the Christmas Bird Count in the Maine Sunday Telegram 1/7/24 pg.C6 (www.t.ly/b_ncl). Although the final results are not yet available he noted that warmer winter weather has allowed “species on the northern cusp of their wintering range to be able to linger here in larger numbers.” Overall, there was an increase in diversity and sadly but not unexpectedly, a continued decrease in abundance.

Where are Maine’s Golden Eagles? Maine Golden Eagle Study

Keep your eagle eyes peeled for Maine’s golden eagles. Documenting golden eagle presence, habitat use, and movements in Maine through community science.

From Erynn Call, Dept Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Erynn.Call@maine.gov

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in collaboration with the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group (EGEWG) and Conservation Science Global (CSG) is working to better understand golden eagles in Maine, and we need your help! The golden eagle is an Endangered species in Maine and is of concern throughout its eastern range due to its small population size, vulnerability to human-related threats, and considerable knowledge gaps about habitat use and movement.

The Maine Golden Eagle Study aims to address these knowledge gaps to inform management actions by raising awareness of golden eagles in Maine and increasing participation in conservation efforts through community science. We know we can count on Maine’s birders to achieve our goal!



Photo Credits – Erynn Call

Report your Golden Eagle Sightings!

Contributing to the Maine Golden Eagle Study is easy! There is no need to sign up. Simply report the date and location of any golden eagle sightings you are lucky enough to have in Maine.

There are two options for reporting golden eagles:

- The best way is through eBird (www.ebird.org). Create a free account and get started today!
- Sightings may also be reported on the MAINE Birds (www.facebook.com/groups/MAINEBirds)

Learn more about the Maine Golden Eagle Study by going to www.shorturl.at/adu34



Photo Credit - Erynn Call

Birds & Bagels - Spring Warbler Walk

Please plan to meet in the parking lot of the Whistle Stop Trail in Farmington on Saturday, 5/18, at 8:00AM, rain or shine. The walk will be led by Nick Ledley, professional wildlife photographer, and member of the board of Western Maine Audubon. Coffee and bagels/donuts will be offered to fuel your walk!

Nature Notes

Quiz: On a recent cross-country ski the following pictures were taken. Guess what caused the track in each picture.

The answers are below – upside down – no cheating!



Answer to the first picture: 1) Partridge or grouse – note wing marks where it took off in flight. 2) Track not made by an army of mice, but by the pine cone (upper right) rolling down hill.

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Thank you!



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