



# *the* ***Pileated Press***

Western Maine Audubon, *a chapter of Maine Audubon*

Box 832, Farmington, ME 04938

## **- Our Spring Talks 2025 -**

### **“Burder” on the North America Express**

**March 12 – 7pm** Thomas Auditorium of Preble Hall at UMF, Farmington

**March 13 – 5pm** Begin Room of Carrabassett Valley Public Library, Carrabassett

*Speaker: Fen Levy*

Forest birds have declined steeply in North America over the last 50 years, and there are multiple suspects for the causes of those declines. One key suspect in this investigation for many species is habitat change from development or commercial forestry. However, habitat

change can play out in a variety of ways depending on a species’ specific habitat needs, and some disturbances can be beneficial. We will explore how shifts in forest management since the 1990s have changed the landscape of bird populations and bird habitat across the commercial forests of Northern Maine, and brainstorm strategies to maintain and improve this relationship over the coming century.



*Photo Credit: [maineaudubon.org/projects/forestry-for-maine-birds](https://maineaudubon.org/projects/forestry-for-maine-birds)*

*Fen Levy is an ecologist at Tufts University who works at the intersection of human histories of land, forest management, and bird conservation. Since 2020, they have been studying the effects of changing timberland ownership and management on bird habitat in the Maine North Woods, and exploring Maine bird population trends in the context of North American bird declines. They are also working with forest managers to guide ecologically sensitive harvest decisions, and the Appalachian Mountain Club, Maine Audubon, foresters, and members of the Wabanaki Alliance to build a lasting footprint of science and land history communication in the North Woods. In the long term, they hope to continue working on research and science communication in support of bird and land conservation in Northern New England. They are also a songwriter and drag artist, both of which are inevitably heavily bird-inspired. Guide to the Birds of Maine (2022), and forthcoming books on evolution and avian conservation.*



Photo credit: [maineaudubon.org/advocacy/offshore-wind-and-wildlife/](https://maineaudubon.org/advocacy/offshore-wind-and-wildlife/)

## Offshore Wind in the Gulf of Maine

**April 9 — 7pm Thomas Auditorium of Preble Hall at UMF, Farmington**

*Speaker: Nick Lund*

As climate change continues to wreak havoc on Maine's lands and wildlife, we must look towards the development of local, clean renewables. Offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine holds incredible promise, but must be done with utmost care and consideration. Join Maine Audubon's Nick Lund to learn about offshore wind, and hear what the organization is doing to ensure that this technology could be deployed with the fewest environmental impacts.

## May 10th - Annual Spring Warbler Walk

*Whistle Stop Trail, Farmington*

Our Annual Spring Warbler Walk will take place at the Whistle Stop Trail in Farmington at 8am. We will provide doughnuts and coffee.

## May 17th - Bird Walk in Wilton

*Foothills Land Conservancy Trail, Wilton*

Join us at 8am for an additional bird walk at this fantastic birding hotspot.



Photo credit: Tim Flight



## June 5-8th - Rangeley Birding Festival

From Boreal Chickadees in our vast forests to Loons on our magnificent lakes to the rare Bicknell's Thrush in the high peaks above, the Rangeley Region is rich with birds. Add in both migrating and breeding warblers, and you have a unique opportunity to see and learn about birds that are difficult to find in other parts of Maine, all in one weekend!

FMI: [rangeleybirdingfestival.com](https://rangeleybirdingfestival.com)





Photo Credits: Tim Flight

## Mountain Birdwatch Trip Report

*Tim Flight*

I rolled over in my sleeping bag to turn off my alarm. It was 3:29 am. The alarm wasn't going off yet, one minute to go, but I was awake. Nervous anticipation. I was likely three miles from the nearest human, seven miles from the nearest paved road. My kinda spot.

Out of the tent, headlamp on, I grab a small backpack and head out a long ago abandoned skid road. I get to my first survey point about ten minutes before I need to be there. The stars were amazing, but I was here to count birds. The darkness wouldn't impact bird identification, the dawn chorus would soon be deafening. Reading my chicken-scratch datasheet might be a problem though.

4:14 am, time to count birds. I had been studying the vocalization of the ten focal species for several months. Oh, and Eastern Red Squirrel too-- nest predators. Knowing their population trends might help predict nesting success of mountain birds.

Count the birds for five minutes, blank your mind and repeat four times. After twenty minutes at one survey location, move along to the next survey location. Six points on each survey route. This is the Mountain Birdwatch protocol a project of Vermont Center for Ecostudies. Hundreds of routes surveyed each year; 25 years of data so far.

My first survey route was remarkable. Boreal chickadees, Magnolia warblers, so many Swainson's Thrushes. Near the end of my route a Merlin sped through to spice things up. It is still before 9:00 am and I've completed my survey route.

The weather was good and I continued up Caribou Plateau for my second survey route. With one now under my belt, the second ought to be easier. I spent





most of the day laying in the woods out of the sun reading. I'm quite tolerant of bugs, but a bug net wasn't optional that afternoon.

I got much more sleep the second night but was still awake a few minutes before my alarm. Still in my tent, I heard wing fluttering and a bird landed inches away from me. Was it investigating this new feature in their yard? Did it have any idea there was a human there? Then it called. Not a full song, a couple of chip notes or a "contact call". There was no mistaking the identity. Bicknell's Thrush. There's a Bicknell's Thrush inches away from me calling! One of the hardest birds in North America to observe.

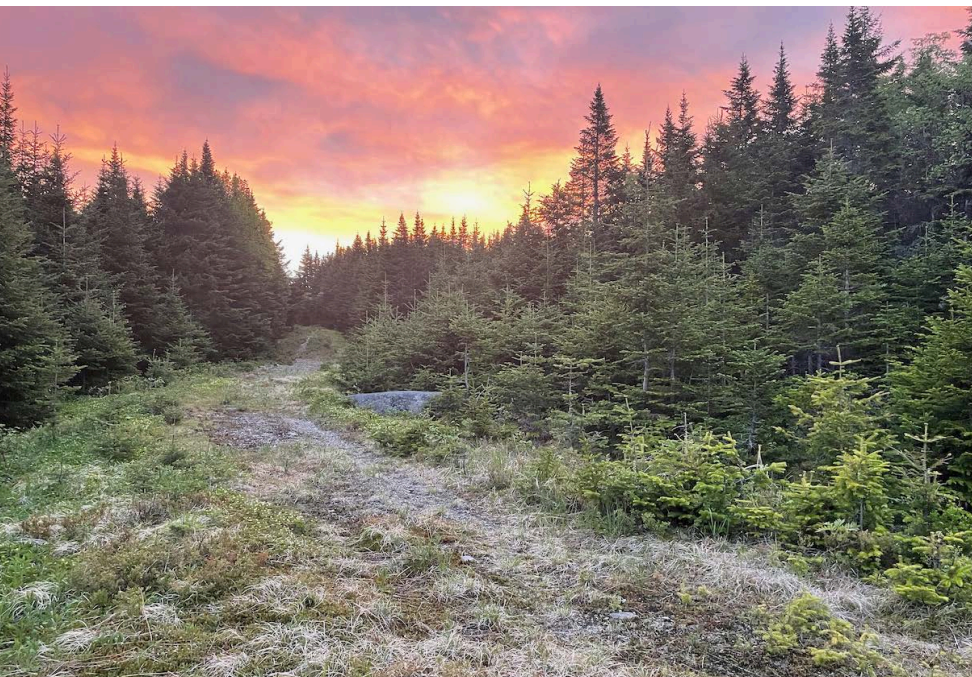
Oh, and the sunrise at 3,000 feet was spectacular.

This survey route was no less interesting. Lots of Bicknell's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, and even a couple Fox Sparrows. All species among the ten focal species. As a bonus I had a standoff with a Bull Moose playing chicken with me along the old skid road. Somehow I won.

I finished my second survey route, hiked back to my tent, made breakfast, and packed up for the hike out. I can't wait to do it all again in June of this year. It is only 10 focal species, and some routes you can drive to. Will you join me and adopt a route?



*Photo Credits: Tim Flight*





## *-Change in Leadership-*



*Burt & Nancy Knapp*

### *Greetings Everyone,*

*After 8 or so years of heading Western Maine Audubon I have decided it is time to step back and have someone younger and with new ideas take over. I am excited to introduce Tim Flight to you as the new president of WMA. He is an avid and experienced birder and enthusiastic about conservation in Western Maine. He lives, works, and skis in Carrabassett. Welcome Tim!*

*I have enjoyed my years as president of WMA . I have particularly appreciated the opportunity to bring educational and interesting talks to people in this area. I sincerely believe that knowledge of the natural world around us leads to the desire to protect it. I hope the talks have stimulated this and will continue to do so in the future. We are privileged to live in a very special place. Enjoy and cherish it.*

*Nancy Knapp*

### *Hello Western Maine Audubon!*

*Thank you for the kind introduction, Nancy. But most of all, thank you and Burt for your many years of dedication to Western Maine Audubon! I'm excited to let everyone know that both Nancy and Burt have agreed to stay on the Board of WMA, helping me with the transition. Nancy has assumed the role of Vice-President, and Burt is remaining on as our Secretary.*

*As Nancy mentioned, I live in Carrabassett, where I can be found birding, biking, hiking, snowshoeing, or "ski-shoeing" the backcountry. There are endless places to explore in our remote corner of Maine, and I love exploring them. Projects like the Maine Bird Atlas have sent me to new corners of Western Maine, many times during the winter season when they are particularly hard to reach.*

*Likewise, my recent work with Mountain Birdwatch (see the article in this newsletter) has placed me in parts of Western Maine few people visit in any season and areas that were heavily logged a few decades ago. It is fascinating to see how the forest and ecosystems are recovering. That ties in nicely with our first Spring talk. Fen Levy is an ecologist at Tufts University studying the intersection of forest management and will present on how Maine's commercial forestry practices have changed and how that might be impacting bird populations. The answer might surprise you! This presentation will be held both in Farmington and in Carrabassett.*

*While conservation in general is likely to face new headwinds in the next few years, we will continue to press on locally. Nick Lund will join us in April to talk about the latest science and news surrounding offshore wind in Maine.*

*My hope is to continue the great work WMA has been doing to conserve habitat and wildlife in our region. Our talks and walks will continue to be our primary means of outreach, and we're looking at ways to expand our reach. I'm open to hearing from all of you about how we might further advance our mission.*

*Tim Flight*

*wma@westernmaineaudubon.org*



*Tim Flight*

# Mountain Birdwatch About

*Tim Flight*

Over the past 25 years, the Vermont Center for Ecostudies has been conducting extensive research on the health of montane bird species in the Northeastern US. From the Catskills to Katahdin, each year volunteers conduct point count surveys along a predetermined route.

There are ten focal species [inset] plus Red Squirrel.

So how are these birds doing? A couple of the

monitored species are showing increases, notably Fox Sparrow and Boreal Chickadee. For the others, decades of data paints an ugly picture, most of the species have declined significantly since 2010. White-throated Sparrow and Hermit Thrush are showing declines of over 50% since 2010. Several are close to extirpation from their former habitats.

So how does that data impact Western Maine? In 2013 the Trust for Public Land used Mountain Birdwatching data to identify the Crocker Mountain area as an important area for conservation. Bicknell's Thrush and Blackpoll Warbler rely on the area for breeding habitat, both species are listed as 'Threatened' on Maine's list of Endangered and Threatened Species.

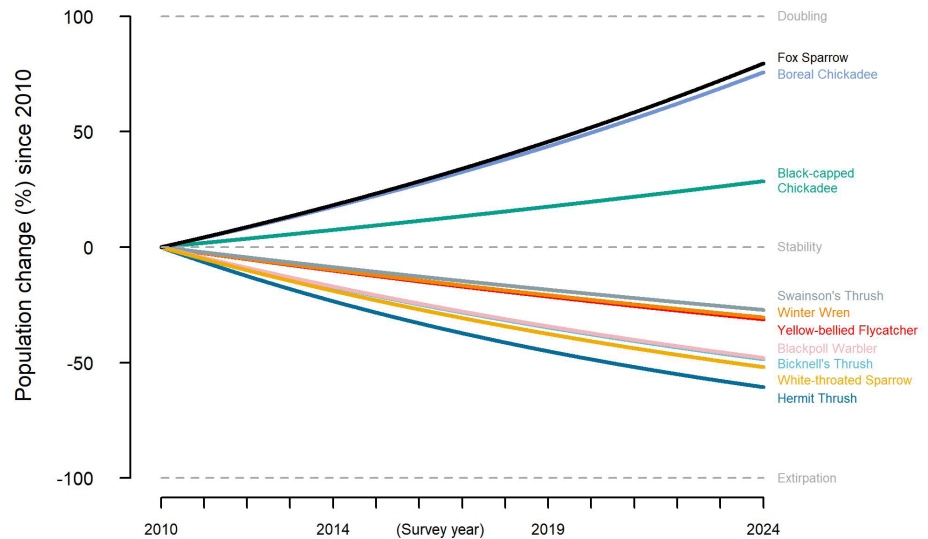
Further research by VCE has also produced papers looking at how Bicknell's Thrush use habitat around ski areas. Among the findings, Bicknell's Thrush avoided crossing ski trails wider than 35-40 m in width.

[western.maineaudubon.org/r/bt-ski](http://western.maineaudubon.org/r/bt-ski)

Read more about the project and view the data at: [mountainbirds.vtecostudies.org](http://mountainbirds.vtecostudies.org)

And YOU can help! There are unadopted routes in Western Maine and some of them you can drive to. You don't need to be able to identify every bird in the woods, just the calls and songs of the ten focal species.

[inset: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Winter Wren, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, Bicknell's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Blackpoll Warbler]



Source: Hill, J.M, and D.M. Williams. 2024. *The State of the Mountain Birds Report: Northeast 2024*. Vermont Center for Ecostudies, White River Junction, VT. [mountainbirds.vtecostudies.org](http://mountainbirds.vtecostudies.org). Accessed 2/7/2025.

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*For more information: [wma@westernmaineaudubon.org](mailto:wma@westernmaineaudubon.org)*



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**YES!** I want to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in Maine as a  **new**  **renewing** member.

Annually:  \$30 Senior/Student |  \$40 individual |  \$50 Household |  \$Other \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly:  Enroll me in the Frequent Flyer Program and charge my credit card each month:

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**Thank you!**



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