



The Call



Newsletter of the Merry Meeting Audubon Society

Volume 37, Issue 1, March 2009

The President's Perch

As I'm writing this, the snow is blowing around outside the window again, and it hardly seems possible that this issue highlights all the chapter activities during spring migration that is not that far away. Already some reports are coming in of Red-winged Blackbirds and Turkey Vultures returning to Maine. The annual meeting of the chapter will be held April 28th, when we will be treated to an excellent program described elsewhere in this issue, and we hold the annual election of officers. During my term as President the past three years, I have frequently used this space to promote conservation issues. One of the first topics advocated the purchase of shade-grown, organic coffee to promote habitat for many of our migrating birds. I recently had the pleasure of a birding week in Panama, where one morning was spent birding on a coffee plantation. While birds were not often found in the coffee plants themselves, there were lots of birds moving through the trees that provided the shade for the coffee. In addition to many varieties of neotropical species, Tennessee, Wilson's, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, and Bay-breasted Warblers and American Redstarts were easy to spot. I also have seen monocultures of coffee varieties developed to grow in the sun, and as you would guess, birds were not present.

The Smithsonian Institute offers a "Bird Friendly" seal of certification for shade grown, organic coffee, and one variety of coffee from Wicked Joe has this certification. It's likely that any organic coffee will be shade grown, so if you don't see the "Bird Friendly" seal, look for an organic certification. According to the recent issue of "BirdScope" from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, a simple rule is "if it's really cheap, it's not sustainable." Cheap coffee is only inexpensive because the environment and the tropical birds are paying much of the cost.

Finally, here are six ways that we can each do our part to help birds, whether we are serious birders or casual bird-watchers.

- Make your windows bird-safe through safe placement of bird feeders or protective netting.
- Avoid using fertilizers, insecticides, or herbicides on lawns and gardens. It's estimated that seven million birds die from exposure to lawn chemicals.
- Landscape with native plants to provide food and resting places for birds.
- Keep cats indoors. Cats are estimated to kill 500 million birds every year. Cats that are kept indoors live longer, healthier lives.
- Reduce, reuse, and recycle. The more the demand for new paper, the less sustainable forestry becomes. Minimizing the use of paper products protects bird habitat.
- Support local nature walks and environmental programs. The more we know about our local area, the wiser our choices will be on local and regional issues.

Good birding.

John Berry

Remembering Dorothea Frysingher

I recently received news that Dorothea (Dottie) Frysingher passed away last March. Dottie was a very active Merry-meeting Audubon Society Board member in the 80's and 90's, serving in several offices and taking a leading role in many activities. All who knew her will remember her cheerful energy and how much she loved our outings. My favorite memory of Dottie relates to our Morse Mountain Warbler walk. Dottie and fellow octogenarian Jim Hand unexpectedly joined us on the summit. They had arrived at the parking lot after the main group had departed up the mountain and hiked up together. We were all surprised and delighted to see them. We saw a lot of great birds also. The whole environmental community has lost a great friend.

George Sergeant

Chimney Swift Project

Chimney Swifts are about to lose their home at the old Brunswick High School on McKean Street. Demolition is scheduled to begin in July this summer. Funds are urgently needed to replace the chimney before next spring's migration.

Up to 300 Chimney Swifts use this location as a roosting site during spring migration. With the destruction of old forest, swifts became dependent for their survival upon the built landscape.

For more information visit www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting.

Checks should be made payable to Merrymeeting Audubon and addressed to:

Swifts, Merrymeeting Audubon,
PO Box 544, Bath, Maine 04530.



Thanks to Rosemary Mosco for the Swift drawing.

Merrymeeting Audubon

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS (Elected Annually)

PRESIDENT	John F. Berry, 725-2051
VICE-PRESIDENT	Ted Allen, 729-8661
SECRETARY	John Howland, 725-6734
TREASURER	Karen Barstow, 688-4842
ME AUDUBON TRUSTEE	Mark Mahnke, 443-6267

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Elected for 3-year terms)

2011	Andrew Gilbert, 846-8002	
2011	Wayne Robbins, 443-2287	
2011	Stella Walsh, 807-3679	Publicity and MMAS Web
2009	Glenn Evans, 443-9652	Sanctuary Caretaker
2009	Carol Jack, 729-0220	Refreshments and Potluck
2009	Judy Camuso, 415-3611	
2010	Beth Bullock, 729-9650	Scholarships
2010	Karen Carlisle, 833-6033	Speaker Program Assistant
2010	Mike Fahay, 443-1253	

COORDINATORS (Appointed)

Ted Allen, 729-8661	Conservation Comm. Rep.
Bruce Amstutz, 729-4135	Archivist, Educational Outreach., Speakers
Maurice and Cathie Dauphin, 389-2585	Bird Identifiers
Tulle Frazer, 725-8942	Editor, <i>The Call</i>
Don Hirsch	Email Bird Alert
Don Hudson, 882-7323	Christmas Bird Count
Chuck Huntington, 725-5657	Proof Reader, <i>The Call</i>
Jane John, 729-5881	Scholarship Committee
George Sergeant, 442-8195	Membership, <i>The Call</i> Asst.
Sue Sergeant, 442-8195	Scholarship Committee

Christmas Bird Count

Thirty participants logged 51.5 hours in frigid winter temperatures and light snow spotting 80 species on the Lower Kennebec Christmas Bird Count on December 20, 2008. Finds in Reid State Park included a Peregrine Falcon, a Rough-Legged Hawk, a Ruddy Turnstone, six DUNLIN, and 182 Red-Necked Grebes for a total of 233 Red-necks.

The Cape Small section of the Lower Kennebec produced a Wood Duck, a Northern Pintail, the second of three Rough-legged Hawks tallied, a Snowy Owl, and both a Red and several White-winged Crossbills.

Other good finds included a Wood Duck, an Iceland Gull, a Carolina Wren, two White-crowned Sparrows, and two Hermit Thrushes.

Stella Walsh



Field Trips and Nature Programs 2009

April 2009

Tuesday, April 7, 7:00 pm

Board Meeting, hosted by John Howland

For directions call John at 725-6734.

Saturday, April 18, 7:00 am

Field Trip - Scarborough Marsh

On this annual welcome to spring outing we hope to see Brant and other migrating waterfowl, snipe, sandpipers, herons, egrets, ibis, and sparrows. Meet at the Bath CVS at 7:00 am or the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20 am. Bring lunch or a snack. For additional information contact Maurice Dauphin at 389-2585.

*****Tuesday, April 28, 6:00 pm*****

Annual Meeting and Silent Auction with Guest Speaker Jan Pierson

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church Meeting Room, McKean Street, Brunswick

Merrymeeting Audubon is thrilled to present Jan Pierson, one of the founders of Field Guides and a veteran of 30 years of international birding, who will speak about his favorite birds. You can expect great food, an exciting auction, good company, and an excellent presentation by one of Maine's premier birders. Please fill out and mail in the reservation form on the back of this issue.

We are seeking items for the auction such as new merchandise, artwork, services, vacation rentals, etc. Contact Beth Bullock at 729-9650 for more information.

May 2009

Saturday, May 2, 9:00 am – noon

Work Day, Hamilton Sanctuary, West Bath

Come help clear trails, clean up the memorial garden, and make other small post-winter repairs.

Directions: Take the New Meadows exit off U.S. Route 1 in West Bath. Turn left onto New Meadows Road and go straight ahead to the stop sign. Here New Meadows Road turns into Foster Point Road. Follow Foster Point Road three miles to the sanctuary sign and parking area on the right. For more information call Glenn Evans at 443-9652.

Tuesday, May 5, 7:00 pm

Board Meeting, hosted by Mark Mahnke

For directions call Mark at 443-6267.

Tuesdays, May 5, May 12, May 19, 7:00 am

Field Trip - Bradley Pond Warbler Series, Topsham

Merrymeeting offers three warbler walks at the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust's Bradley Pond. This relatively easy walk through varied habitat will focus on spring warbler migration. Meet at 7:00 am at the east side of the Brunswick Hannaford or at +/- 7:10 am at Bradley Pond, 2nd parking lot. For more information contact Ted Allen at 729-8661 or John Howland at 725-6734.

Wednesday, May 6, 7:00 am

Field Trip - Hermit Island, Phippsburg

Explore the "other half" of Hermit Island with its forest and hiking trails out to the more remote beaches. We will look for migrating warblers,

thrushes, tanagers, and grosbeaks; check the shore for shorebirds and waterfowl, and the sky for migrating raptors.

Meet at CVS in Bath at 7:00 or at Head Beach, Hermit Island, Route 216, Small Point, at 7:30. For additional information contact Mark Mahnke at 443-6267.

Saturday, May 9, 7:30 am

Field Trip - Crystal Springs Farm, Brunswick

Crystal Springs Farm has a variety of habitats including fields, edge, forest, and ponds. We hope to see swallows, sparrows, Bluebirds, Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, and several species of warblers. Meet at Crystal Springs Farm, Pleasant Hill Road, Brunswick at 7:30 am. For additional information contact Ted Allen at 729-8661.

Wednesday, May 13, 7:00 at CVS in Bath for Car Pool or 7:30 am at Green Point Farm WMA

Field Trip - Green Point Farm Wildlife Management Area, Dresden

Expect a wide variety of migrant birds in the woodlands, fields, wild-rice flats, and sky of Maine Inland Fish and Game's Green Point Farm WMA. Warblers and other woodland birds, sparrows and other field birds, waterfowl, and raptors are all targets of this walk. Waterproof footwear is recommended.

For directions, contact Mike Fahay at 443-1253.



May 15 – June 5

Monitoring Brunswick Swifts

Merrymeeting Audubon will once again be monitoring Chimney Swifts at the former Brunswick High School on McKean Street. Up to 300 swifts use the chimney at this site as a migration roost descending at dusk. Please visit www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting, or contact Ted Allen at 729-8661 for specific dates and the latest information on Brunswick's Swifts.

Saturday, May 16, 8am

Pine Tree State Arboretum, Augusta

Enjoy the peak of spring migration at the Pine Tree State Arboretum with Andrew Gilbert, ornithologist and conservation biologist with the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Augusta. The 224-acre arboretum includes woods, fields, and ponds that are easily accessed by six miles of trails. Fifteen warbler species were among the many migrants seen here on May 9 of last year. Wetland species found in May have included Sora and Virginia Rail.

Meet at the kiosk in the parking lot of the Arboretum at 8 am or meet at 7 am in the Brunswick Hannaford parking lot to carpool.

For additional information contact Andrew Gilbert at 582-4234.

Wednesday, May 20, 7:00 am

Field Trip - Florida Lake, Freeport

While small by State standards, this undeveloped pond is Freeport's largest freshwater body. It provides prime waterfowl and wading bird habitat and a stopover point for many migratory species. American Bittern, a species of special concern in the northeast, breeds in the area – a rich mix of forested wetlands, seasonally flooded shrub swamps, and aquatic beds. Meet at the parking lot at Florida Lake, Route 125 Freeport. For additional information or directions, contact Judy Camuso at 415-3611.

June 2009

Saturday, June 6

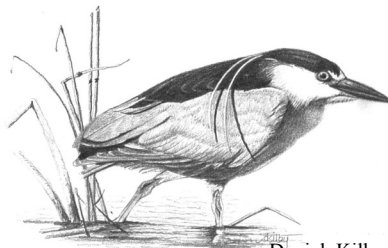
Field Trip - Canoe Messalonskee-Lake, Oakland

Messalonskee is home to nesting Common Loon, Sora, Virginia Rail, Pied-billed Grebe, Bald Eagle, Black Tern, and Sandhill Crane, among others. Nearby colonies of Purple Martin and Bank Swallows are within a short drive. Participants can expect a leisurely paddle and should pack a lunch. Limited space is available for those without a canoe or kayak. For meeting place and time, contact trip coordinator George Sergeant at 442-8195.

Saturday, June 27, 8:00 – 11:00 am

Work Day, Hamilton Sanctuary, West Bath

We'll cut back vegetation along the trails and help maintain native habitat by removing non-native bittersweet. See previous May 2 work day for directions and contact information.



The next issue of The Call should reach you in early September. The first fall trip will be a hawk watch at Morse Mt. on Saturday, September 12th.

You are welcome to submit short articles to The Call. The deadline for contributions to be considered for the next issue is August 12th.

A review of:

Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson

By Elizabeth Rosenthal

Lyons Press, 2008

Hardcover, 437 pages, \$29.95

www.petersonbird.com

Peterson's unique paintings coupled with his clear, terse species descriptions made bird identification accessible to all. While his field guides helped spread the joy of bird-watching, the hundreds of paintings, continual revisions of his books, extensive travel, and speaking engagements required tremendous energy and time. His love of birds, his work, and his fame prospered, but they took a toll on his family life. Rosenthal weaves a detailed and engaging biography through interviews with more than 100 of Peterson's colleagues and friends,

Peterson traveled extensively, but for me, Rosenthal's snapshots of the time he spent here in Maine, at Chewonki, Hog Island, and Eastern Egg Rock, are some of my favorite stories. At age 22, during the Depression, he was hired to run the nature program at Chewonki. His first contact with Clarence Allen, the camp director, was to send a blunt telegram requesting money for the train. "If you want your camp naturalist send me \$39.40. I'm broke." Peterson's spunk showed in a different way when at age 82 he camped on Eastern Egg Rock to star in the filming of a PBS *Nature* film. The experience almost cost him his life.

Peterson died one month short of his 88th birthday. He was able to photograph and paint until the end. Many of us carry one of his legacies, a pocketful of bird portraits, when we're in the field.

Tulle Frazer

Merrymeeting Audubon Society offers camp scholarships

Merrymeeting Audubon Society is offering scholarships to two Maine environmental education camps for summer 2009. Both are residential. Full to half scholarships are available. Applicants submit essays with a completed application form, available in area schools, or by calling the numbers listed in this article.

Children now in grades 3 through 5 may apply for Tanglewood 4-H Camp in Lincolnville, Maine. Tanglewood provides traditional camp activities and environmental education on woods and wildlife. Campers select a six-day session from late June to mid-August. For information call 729-3343 or 442-8195.

Students who will be ages 10-15 by August may apply to Bryant Pond 4H Camp (formerly Maine Conservation School) in Bryant Pond, Maine. Sessions include: Natural Explorer, which focuses on outdoor recreation and forest ecology, Conservation Camp for students interested in outdoor recreation skills and outdoor ethics, and Primitive Skills, which focuses on advanced wilderness skills. New programs this year also include Treasure Camp, Paddling Adventure, and Maine Woods Discovery. For information call 729-9650.

Final applications, including essays, must be received by April 15, 2009. These scholarships are funded by the Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter and by organizations and individuals who contribute as co-sponsors.

If you would like to contribute to the scholarship fund send donations to the Merrymeeting Audubon Society, c/o Jane John, 134 Middle Bay Rd., Brunswick, ME 04011 – attention Camp Scholarships.

Jane John

My initiation

Yesterday I participated in the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for the Lower Kennebec. It was my first count. Or rather, I think it was a CBC hazing ritual. At the start it was 6 degrees with a steady 6-8 mph wind from the north, and sea smoke so thick you could hardly have seen a breaching Right Whale, never mind some lowly sea fowl. Maybe there was a Right Whale. Who would have known! You know it's really cold when getting back into your stone-cold tin box of a car is a welcome idea and your binoculars on your body have frozen and won't focus. But today I've survived and am feeling quite smug as a 'fraternity newbie.'

Of note: the hospitality of the folks on the designated stops along the way was delightful, as was their camaraderie and overall friendship and that of the members of my count group, as well. I did fall on George and crushed him into a snow bank. I think he might still be there. My apologies, Sue. And alas, I didn't see any birds as my corneas were frozen. Can't wait for the next CBC!

Robin Robinson

Hamilton Sanctuary fundraising

December was a bright month for Hamilton Sanctuary fundraising. The Merrymeeting Bay Trust generously donated a second \$30,000 while the Brunswick-based Alfred M. Senter Fund generously gave \$5000. Private donations added roughly another \$1000 to bring December's fundraising total to \$36,000. Overall, about \$210,000 was raised in a little more than a year to help pay for the recent acquisition of 19 additional acres that abut the Sanctuary. Once the original seller's tenancy ends, the new trails should be ready for the public by September 2011. We'll keep you posted.

The Merrymeeting Chapter of Maine Audubon expresses its deepest thanks to all who helped financially or in other ways to make this important addition to the Hamilton Sanctuary possible.

Glenn Evans



Merrymeeting Audubon Society
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Bath, ME 04530

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**Make your reservations now for the annual dinner meeting, silent auction, and slide show-talk by Jan Pierson
6:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, 2009
at St. Charles Borromeo Church Meeting Hall, 132 McKeen Street, Brunswick**

Please enclose a check (\$18 per person), made out to Merrymeeting Audubon, with this completed form, indicating the number of meals, and send to Beth Bullock, 31B Belmont Street, Brunswick, ME, 04011, or call Beth at 729-9650 for more information.

Simply Elegant caterers will serve a buffet dinner of lemon ginger chicken, vegetarian lasagna, roasted new potatoes, salad, and dessert.

Name (s) _____,

Reservations must be received by Tuesday, April 21, 2009

I am unable to attend the dinner meeting and auction, but would like to donate \$ _____ to the Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Fund.

Thank you for supporting the Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Fund. Donations are tax deductible.