

*A catbird and the invasives*

## O, what a tangled web. . .

One morning at four o’ clock, I awakened to a catbird’s song. Currently, I only manage about six hours of continuous sleep, which means I wake up in time for the dawn chorus. The singing of birds is one of my greatest joys in life, and I have to be awake an hour before sunrise to hear the best chorus. I find this a delicious form of “bird watching.”

Back to the catbird. This particular catbird, one of a pair I surmised, produces a morning song which is not often interrupted by the mews and slurs of bright sunlit hours. I knew from daytime observations that the pair must have a nest nearby, and I tried to locate it. I looked into the large euonymus bush where a catbird nest had been destroyed several years ago



**Catbird**

by a hungry blue jay. The bush provides much of the cover in my small urban yard. However, I didn’t find a nest there.

A week later, when I considered how to free my lilacs from invasive honeysuckle and bittersweet—which had easily taken advantage of deferred maintenance—I noticed that the catbird

See **TANGLED WEB**, page 5

## Bird banding: how we study and protect our feathered friends

Imagine holding a Pileated Woodpecker in your hand. Bird banding provides an excitement hard to beat. From the amazing talons of a Sharp-shinned Hawk to the iridescent throat of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, they amaze and delight us.

While seeing the details of a bird’s adaptations and plumage up close fascinates, very serious reasons drive the process of banding birds.

Bird banding is a non-invasive, long-term method of observing and studying birds without interfering with their natural behavior. Individual identification of birds makes possible studies of range, dispersal and migration, behavior and social structure, life-span and survival rate, reproductive success and population growth.

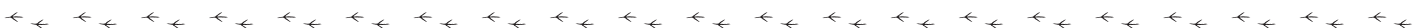
So how are the birds captured for banding? Songbirds are generally captured through the use of mist nets. These fine mesh nets usually range from 6 to 12 meters and are strung between two poles. They have shelves created by horizontal lines that create loose pockets. A bird flies into the net and drops into the pocket formed by the netting. The bird is extracted and placed in a bag. The bag provides a relatively dark and safe place for the bird while being carried back to the banding station. Nets are only opened in fair weather when it is neither too hot, cold or wet for the bird’s safety. Nets are closed when the station is not operating.

When a bird is banded, the bander collects important data about the bird’s age, sex, condition, and plumage characteristics. Through this process we learn much about bird natural history providing vital information that can be used to protect critical bird habitats and pass other conservation measures so birding will always be available to enjoy.



**Stella Walsh, Merrymeeting Chapter board member, is banding a Pileated Woodpecker. Bird banding provides a broad range of vital information about bird natural history, e.g. personal characteristics, natural behavior patterns, migration, life-span and survival rate, just to name a few areas of interest.**

See **BIRD BANDING**, page 5



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E-mail us at:

[merrymeeting@maineaudubon.org](mailto:merrymeeting@maineaudubon.org)

**CATBIRD** photo courtesy of John Berry; **BUFFLEHEAD DUCK** drawing courtesy of S.G. Goodrich, *Animal Kingdom Illustrated Vol. 2*; **CANADA GOOSE** & **WHISTLING SWAN** drawings courtesy of Elliot Coues, *Key to North American Birds*.

“If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.”

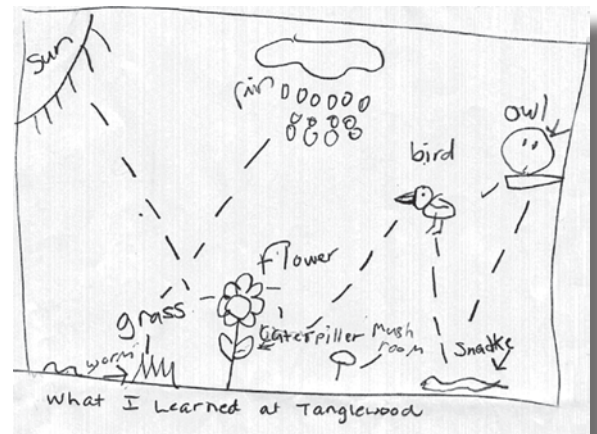
*Rachel Carson*

# Nature nurtures bond with kids

It often seems that children today don't share the love of nature and the outdoors that their parents and grandparents felt when they were young. Preoccupied as they are with smartphones, tablets, and social media, they seem to prefer the blinking lights of laptops and video games to the summer night signals of fireflies, the blaze of a shooting star, the shimmering northern lights, or the dying glow of a brilliant sunset.

Fortunately for Merrymeeting Audubon, we've been privileged to work with kids for whom the outdoors offers great adventures. The summer camp scholarship application essays we receive each spring are testimony to the fact that many of today's children have a profound love of nature and are eager to learn as much as they can about the outdoors and its inhabitants. Often this is expressed in poetic imagery. Lucy recently wrote of her love for the sound of peepers, rolling waves, calling seabirds, and “the distant howls of coyotes.” Alisha described the “lovely flowers of spring, the bright greens of summer, the breathtaking colors of fall, and the lovely white snow everywhere in winter.” Some children express their appreciation of nature more directly. “I like to see the trees,” wrote Mayson, “I like bugs, animals, and birds. I like the fresh air.”

All of this year's applicants shared an intense desire to learn. Mike, who likes foxes because “they are sneaky and fast,” wants to learn “how I can help make the world a better place for animals.” Blake would like to know “how to sing songs, build camp fires and use a compass.” Adeline was proud to include in her application a drawing depicting what she learned last summer about nature's interdependent life cycle.



**Adeline, one of the lucky kids returning to Tanglewood this year, sent Merrymeeting Audubon a drawing which depicts nature's interdependent life cycle that she learned in last year's camp experience.**

Merrymeeting Audubon is dedicated to providing financial assistance to area children and youth to help make their summer-camp dreams come true. This summer we supported 32 youngsters who attended the 4H camps at Tanglewood and Bryant Pond, as well as the National Audubon Camp at Hog Island. We also provided assistance for two area teachers who attended the Educator's Week at Hog Island. Scholarship awards totaled \$14,000.

Each year we rely on the generosity of contributors to meet the growing needs of the scholarship fund. Will you help send a child to camp next summer? Please send your contribution to **Steve Spear, 9 Livernois Drive, Topsham, ME 04086**.

Mara loves nature “because it is very peaceful.” She and the other young people of our area will be grateful for your support.

*Steve Spear*









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# MEMBERSHIP FORM

Merrymeeting Chapter

**YES!** I would like to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in my community and  
 **join**  **renew my membership** with Maine Audubon and the Merrymeeting Chapter.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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# Field Trips & Nature Programs 2015

[www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting](http://www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting)

## September

*Tuesday, September 1, 7:00 p.m.*

**Board Meeting hosted by Ted Allen**  
For directions call 729-8661.

*Saturday, September 12, 6:30 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Rachel Carson NWR**

The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was established to preserve ten important estuaries from Kittery to Cape Elizabeth that are key points along migration routes of waterfowl and other migratory birds. We will look for migrating shore and marsh birds. Bring a snack/lunch and water. We will return by 3:00 p.m.

➤ Meet at Hannaford in Brunswick at 6:30 a.m. FMI call Glenn Evans at 443-9652.

*Sunday, September 13, 8:00 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Morse Mountain**

The Bates Morse Mountain Conservation Area is a great spot for watching the fall migration of raptors. Maurice and Cathie Dauphin will help you identify the birds as they fly overhead. After the view from the top, enjoy Seawall Beach and any late migrating shorebirds. Bring sturdy shoes and lunch.

➤ Meet at the Morse Mountain parking lot off Route 216, Phippsburg, at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Maurice at 389-2585.

*Sunday, September 19, 4:00 p.m.*

**Field Trip: Sunset Birding at Popham Beach**

Join us for an evening of birding at low tide at Popham Beach for late shorebirds and other migrant species.

➤ Meet at bathhouse on the southwest side of the parking lot at 4:00 p.m. FMI Doug Suitor at 841-1951.

*Sunday, September 20, 7:30 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Androscoggin River Trail, Lisbon**

Opened in August 2014, the Androscoggin River Trail is a paved walking trail along the river in the town of Lisbon. Expect to observe migrating vireos, thrushes, warblers, and sparrows.

➤ Meet at Hannaford in Brunswick at 7:30 a.m.; or 7:50 a.m. at the Sabattus River boat launch parking lot on Route 196 between Lisbon Falls and Lisbon Center. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

*Saturday, September 26 and*

*Sunday, October 18, 7:00 a.m.*

**Field Trips: Green Point Farm WMA, Dresden**

Fall migrants will be the target on these two walks through the weedy fields at Maine Inland Fish and Wildlife's Green Point Farm Wildlife Management Area. Migrant sparrows abound, with ten species recorded here and individuals at times numbering in the hundreds. We'll also look for other migrants in the variety of habitats Green Point has to offer.

➤ Meet at the Bath CVS at 7:00 a.m. to carpool; or at 7:30 a.m. at Green Point Farm. Park next to the large green metal shed at the Farm (not at the little green farmhouse by the bridge). FMI call Ted Allen, 729-8661 regarding the first trip; call Gordon Smith, 725-0282 regarding the second trip.

*Tuesday, September 29, 7:00 p.m.*

**Program: Connecting Bird Research to the Community**

➤ **Location: Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick.**

Learn about bird banding and its

value to our understanding of birds.

This presentation by **Patrick Keenan** of Biodiversity Research Institute will focus on research at River Point Conservation Area in Falmouth, ME where BRI has run a migration and breeding-bird monitoring station for the past five years. Patrick will share details about various monitoring and research methods used to measure bird abundance, track bird movements, and assess disease and contaminants, as well as research results and stories. Please join us for this exciting evening! There will be photographs and some exemplary specimens from BRI's museum collection.

## October

*Saturday, October 3, 8 a.m. - 11a.m.*

**Field Trip: Bird Banding at River Point, West Falmouth**

Please join Biodiversity Research Institute on site at River Point Conservation Area in West Falmouth for an interpretive demonstration of bird banding. BRI will be conducting mist net surveys for songbirds as part of our migration monitoring and invites you to join them to observe research methods and gain knowledge about identifying and aging birds in the hand. Guests should expect to observe the banding process, visit mist nets, and see birds in hand as they are released back to the wild. We plan time to explore the diverse 40-acre property bordering the Piscataquis River.

➤ Meet at Hannaford in Brunswick at 7:00 a.m. to carpool. FMI contact Jack Collins at 373-0336.

*Tuesday, October 6, 7:00 p.m.*

**Board Meeting hosted by Ted Allen**

For directions call 729-8661.

*Sunday, October 11*

**Field Trip: The Big Sit! Wharton Point, Brunswick**

Join Merrymeeting Audubon for this fun event. Some people have called it a "tailgate party for birders." The concept is simplicity itself: find a good spot for bird watching, sit in one spot for 24 hours, and count all the bird species you see or hear. Today there are Big Sit circles all over the world. Merrymeeting Audubon is staking out a circle at Wharton Point. Join our own Gordon Smith for any part, or all of the day. FMI call Gordon at 725-0282.

*Saturday, October 17*

**1 Work Day: Hamilton Sanctuary, West Bath**

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 nearly to its end to the sanctuary sign and parking area on the right.

➤ If you plan to participate, please contact the Sanctuary manager, Glenn Evans, at 443-9652 prior to the day, for arrival time.

*Sunday, October 18, see Sept. 26.*

*Sunday, October 25, 8:00 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Hermit Island**

Doug Suitor will lead this outing to Hermit Island on Small Point in Phippsburg. We'll walk along Head Beach, by ocean overlooks, and along a wooded dirt road by a saltwater cove. Expect to see ducks, grebes, and loons, as well as some woodland birds. ➤ Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Bath Plaza near CVS, or 8:30 at Head Beach, Hermit Island, Route 216, Phippsburg. FMI call Doug at 841-1951.

*Tuesday, October 27, 7:00 p.m.*

**Program: Learn the Anzers\***

➤ *Location: Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick*

If it swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck! But did you know 45 species of ducks (plus geese and swans) have been seen in Maine? They comprise a "family" called *Anseriformes* (\*Anzers, for short. It's not a typo!) Anzers are an order of birds that includes all of the ducks, geese and swans that reside in Maine. This evening, Maine Audubon Naturalist **Doug Hitchcox** will discuss the natural history of this family, the finer points of identifying these species, and where and when to see them.

*Saturday, October 31, 8:00 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Waterfowl of Sabattus Pond**

John Berry will lead this trip to Sabattus Pond in Sabattus, ME. In the fall, Sabattus hosts large concentrations of migrating waterfowl, including Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, scaup, and Coots.

➤ Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford at 8:00 a.m. to carpool. FMI call John at 632-7257.

## November

*Tuesday, November 3, 7:00 p.m.*

**Board Meeting, hosted by Ted Allen**

For directions call 729-8661.

*Saturday, November 14, 7:30 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Viles Arboretum**

The Arboretum provides a number of habitats for observing many kinds of resident birds and late migrants.

➤ Meet at Hannaford at 7:30 a.m. or at the Arboretum at 8:15 a.m. FMI call Ted Allen at 729-8661.

## December/January

*Saturday, December 5, 8:30 a.m.*

**Field Trip: Waterfowl Walk, Giant Stairs on Bailey Island**

Join the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust and John Berry for a look at the winter waterfowl of eastern Casco Bay from one of Harpswell's most scenic locations. Directions for the site are on the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust web site. The estimated time is two hours. FMI John at 632-7257 or Berry. John@comcast.net.

**Field Trips: Bath and Brunswick Christmas Bird Counts TBA.**

## Got Questions? We've got Anzers!

**What do these beautiful species have in common?**

Join us at the Curtis Memorial Library on Tuesday, October 27 at 7:00 p.m. for an enlightening presentation by Maine Audubon Naturalist, Doug Hitchcox.

