



# The Call



Newsletter of the Merrymeeting Audubon Society

Volume 41, Issue 3, December 2011

## President's Letter: HOG ISLAND

Hog Island, a 330-acre island in Muscongus Bay, has a long history of human use. Abanakis dug clams and fished in the area for thousands of years. European settlers cut trees and cleared the land for farming, which no doubt included some hogs. Mabel and David Todd purchased the island in 1908 to prevent it from being clear-cut. They built a rustic camp there, which family members enjoyed until the 1960's.

When Mabel died on Hog Island in 1932, Millicent, her only daughter, inherited Hog Island. She negotiated with National Audubon's executive director, John Baker, to protect the island and to develop Audubon's first educational summer camp on the north end of the island. Roger Tory Peterson led sessions at the opening of the camp in 1936 and Rachel Carson visited Hog Island in 1960. Stephen Kress was an ornithology instructor in the 1970's and founded *Project Puffin*, which has restored Puffins to two Maine islands whose remaining Puffins were killed off by hunters in the 1880's. *Project Puffin* now runs Hog Island. Their website (<http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.html>) gives details on the 11 programs that will be offered there in 2012. The programs include two sessions for teens and one for families.

Last year Merrymeeting Audubon sent a high school student, Maggie Bouchard, to the *Coastal Bird Studies* class at Hog Island. In her thank-you letter she wrote, "If I had to pick the part I liked the best it would have to be the fact that even though I was a beginning birder, I got to talk and bird with experts .....and the late night programs were way more interesting than I had expected."

We would like to expand this scholarship program for high school students. Maggie's experience at Hog Island awakened an interest in environmental science. What a great opportunity to offer students of this age... when many are beginning to think about future studies or work.

Our longer-running scholarship program for middle school-aged kids continues. The scholarship program could really use your support. To contribute to it see details in the article on page two.

*Ted Allen*

## Winterberry

Wow, this is the best year I can remember for winterberry. After the leaves fall off, the bright red berries look even more showy, especially after a fresh snowfall. These berries are just over 1/4 of an inch in diameter, grow right off the stem, and will remain on the branch throughout the winter. The branches of winterberry are often used for decoration in wreaths and flower boxes.

Not only are the berries beautiful; they are a fantastic food source for many wildlife species. They are one of the preferred foods for Catbirds, Mockingbirds, Brown Creepers, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Turkeys, and many species of woodpeckers, to name just a few. In addition to food, they also serve as an excellent source of cover for many species. If you are trying to attract birds and other wildlife to your backyard, winterberry is the shrub to plant. Go on-line to read about propagating them or purchase them at a nursery.

Winterberry, (*Ilex verticillata*), is a member of the holly family and is the most common native holly in Maine. Like most hollies, it is dioecious, with separate male and female plants. Female shrubs require at least one male plant nearby to pollinate them to produce berries. Both sexes produce small, greenish-white flowers in spring, but male flowers are born in clusters, while the female flowers are born singly or with just a few blossoms per cluster. Only the female flowers will mature into the showy berries. Winterberry is a common wetland indicator found throughout the Northeast on wet soils near swamps and ponds or in wet woods.

Judy Camuso

## Merrymeeting Audubon

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Chuck Huntington, Proofreader, *The Call* 725-5657  
Mark Mahnke, Field Trips 443-6267  
George Sergeant, Membership, *Call* Managing Ed. 442-8195



Hermit Thrush on Hermit Island field trip.  
Photo by John Berry.

## “It was awesome!”

Our scholarship recipients wrote wonderful letters to thank Merrymeeting Audubon for their camping experience this past summer. At Tanglewood campers learned about aquatic animal life, composting, sustainability, and knot tying. Some of the activities they enjoyed were swimming in the river, making a mural, acting, and taking care of the resident goats. Bryant Pond campers learned about stream ecology and composting, climbed mountains, visited mines, kayaked ten miles on the Androscoggin River, and completed a ropes course.

Praise from the campers included: “I had the best time EVER! “Thank you for giving me the privilege to do all this fun stuff!” “I had so much fun I wanted to stay another week.”

A parent said, “Thank you again. Ryan had a great time. When I picked him up, he was filthy, exhausted, and his first words were, ‘Hi mom, can I come back next year?’”

For the last few years, we have had more and more worthy candidates for camp. Unfortunately, due to lack of funds, we could not give them all scholarships. We are gradually losing some of our longtime sponsors as they get older or move out of state. We need new sponsors to help send kids to camp in 2012. If you can help, please make out a check to: Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Fund and sent it to The Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Committee, c/o Jane John, 134 Middle Bay Road, Brunswick, ME 04011. If you have questions, call any member of the scholarship committee.

Thanks in advance for your generosity. You will make a difference in a child’s life forever.

*Barbara Tucker and Beth Bullock*

## Maine Audubon Membership

To join or renew your membership with Maine Audubon, National Audubon, and your local Merrymeeting Chapter, you can save paper by doing so on-line at [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org).

To join/ renew by mail please make your check payable to **Maine Audubon**. Send it to Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Road, Falmouth ME 04105. Please include your address, email, and phone number.

The membership levels are: \$25 for seniors and volunteers, \$35 individual, \$45 household, \$65 contributing (includes a tote bag), \$100 patron (includes a tote bag and a subscription to *Audubon* magazine)



## Field Trips and Nature Programs 2011 - 2012

### December 2011

*Saturday, December 17*

#### **Bath Area Christmas Bird Count**

Join one of several Merrymeeting teams in the field for this annual event, which brings together experienced and inexperienced birders alike. A pizza party will be held immediately following the count to compile the data and share any special sightings. For additional information contact Don Hudson at 207-443-9795 or [wdonhudson@gmail.com](mailto:wdonhudson@gmail.com).

Count area includes Bath, Arrowsic, Phippsburg, Georgetown, Southport, and Newagen.

For information on counting birds at your feeder for the Dec. 17 or Jan. 1 CBCs, see the form on page six.

### January 2012

*Sunday, January 1*

#### **Freeport-Brunswick Christmas Bird Count**

For information contact either Don Hudson (as above) or Stella Walsh at 207-807-3679, [stella.walsh@earthlink.net](mailto:stella.walsh@earthlink.net).

Count area includes Freeport, S. Freeport, Brunswick, and Harpswell.

*Tuesday, January 3, 7:00 pm*

#### **Board Meeting, hosted by Carol Jack: directions 729-0220.**

*Saturday, January 14, 7:00 am*

#### **Field Trip - South Coastal Birding**

On this annual outing from Ogunquit to Biddeford Pool, we should see many of Maine's wintering birds including Harlequin Duck, scoters, Purple Sandpipers, and maybe a Snowy Owl or King Eider.

Bring lunch or a snack. Meet at the CVS parking lot in the Bath Plaza at 7:00 am, or at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20. For additional information or a meeting time and place in Ogunquit, contact Maurice Dauphin at 389-2585.

*Tuesday, January 24, 6-9:00 pm, Mid-Coast Red Cross, 16 Community Way, Topsham*

#### **Potluck Dinner and Slideshow**

Enjoy good company, delicious food, and a virtual break from winter at this show and tell meeting. Bring your favorite slides. A screen and projector will be provided. If you want to show digital slides, you will need to bring a computer and projector.

Bring a dish to share. Feel free to bring a friend. PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN PLATE AND SILVERWARE. Beverages are provided.

Directions: From the intersection of US 201 and Rte. 196 go east on 196, towards Bath. Turn right (south) off Rte 196 onto Community Way, at the first traffic light and sign for The Highlands (NOT north to Highland Green Homes & Golf).

The Red Cross is almost immediately on your left.

Call Carol Jack at 729-0220 for more information.

### February 2012

*Saturday, February 4, 9:00 am*

#### **Field Trip - Reid State Park, Georgetown**

Reid State Park is a magnificent site in winter. Join Merrymeeting Audubon and search for the many species of coastal birds including grebes, loons, and scoters that use this area. We will also look for Short-eared Owls, Purple Sandpipers, and wintering songbirds.

Dress warmly. Bring lunch or a snack. Meet at CVS parking lot at Bath Plaza at 8:30 am to carpool. For more information contact Andrew Gilbert at 329-7525.

*Tuesday, February 7, 7:00 pm*

#### **Snow date for January board meeting, hosted by Ted Allen**

*Saturday, February 18, 8 am*

#### **Field Trip**

Meet at Brunswick Hannaford. Birding spots to be determined by recent bird sightings. For more information contact Doug Sutor at 841-1951.

*Tuesday, February 28, 7:00 pm*

#### **Public Program: Songbird Superhighway**

*Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick*

University of Maine ornithologists Rebecca Holberton and

Adrienne Leppold will discuss the findings from the Northeast Region Migration Monitoring Network. The Gulf of Maine is a major migration route for many species of birds. As many as a half million or more songbirds fly over Maine's island and coastal areas in the mid-coast region alone. Birds using Maine islands breed in Maine and nearly every Canadian province. This project provides information useful for habitat conservation and for assessing the potential impact of wind development on migratory birds in the Northeast.

## March 2012

*Saturday, March 3, 7:00 am*

### **Field Trip - Salisbury Beach and Plum Island**

Join the search for wintering birds on this all-day outing to coastal Massachusetts. First stop is Salisbury Beach State Park, where we will look for wintering ducks, loons, and grebes, as well as Short-eared Owls. Iceland and Glaucous Gulls will be the target birds in Newburyport. Then on to the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island to see Snowy Owls, Snow Buntings, and more wintering waterfowl.

Bring lunch and dress warmly. Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford, 7:00 am or contact John Berry (725-2051) for a meeting spot and time in Yarmouth or at Salisbury Beach.

*Tuesday, March 6, 7:00 pm*

### **Board Meeting, hosted by George Sergeant:** directions 442-8195.

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

### **Public Program: Two Shades of "Green" in Costa Rica**

*Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick*

Beautiful beaches, verdant rain-forest, and exotic wildlife help to make Costa Rica one of the world's premier eco-tourism destinations. But is it working for both people and nature?

Bowdoinham resident Dave Sherwood lived in Costa Rica for five years where he worked as an environmental journalist. He'll talk about the country's conservation history and of the good, the bad, and the ugly of its burgeoning eco-tourism industry. He'll take us on an insider's tour of some of the country's best- (and least) known destinations.

## April 2011

*Tuesday, April 3, 7:00 pm*

### **Board Meeting, hosted by Beth Bullock:** directions 729-9650.

*Saturday, April 14, 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.

Bring a lunch or a snack. Meet at the Bath Plaza CVS at 7:00 am or the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20 am. For additional information contact Maurice Dauphin at 389-2585.

*Tuesday, April 24, 6:00 pm*

### **ANNUAL MEETING and AUCTION**

*St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, McKeen Street, Brunswick*

More details in the next *Call*, which will be out in late March.

## Stuff This Bird:

is a game I learned on NPR years ago about Thanksgiving time.

Fun for birders and non-birders alike. Warning: I've played it while hiking and sometimes it's difficult to stop even when you don't want to play anymore. Requires at least two to play, but the more the merrier.

Think of the name of a bird to which you can add one more letter anywhere in the name to create a new word.

Example 1: You might say to your friends, "Add an S to this bird and you get an adjective that means strict or serious."

Answer: After awhile one swift friend might reply, "The bird is a **Tern**. Add an S to get **Stern**."

Example 2: Add an N to this bird and you get a jailor.

Answer: The bird is a **Turkey**. Add an N to get a **Turnkey**.

If things are getting slow we sometimes stretch the rules to allow phonetic spellings. However, a purist would not approve of this variation.

Example 3: Add a P to this bird and you get a large swallow.

Answer: The bird is a **Gull**. Add a P to this bird (spelled phonetically) and you get a **Gulp**.

*Tulle Frazer*

The first issue of *The Call* for 2012 should reach you in late March. Contributions to that issue are due by Wednesday March 7th.

## Observations

After the MMAS November 5<sup>th</sup> trip to Sabattus Pond the group stopped at a small, marshy pond in downtown Sabattus. We watched one Kingfisher and two Hooded Mergansers fishing. The Kingfisher caught a 4" fish and carried it up to a sunny branch. We watched it for ten minutes, and it still had not eaten it when we left. We wondered why it did not eat it right away. Was the fish too large to swallow, was it waiting for the fish to die, or perhaps letting the sun warm its meal? Was the bird full and waiting until it was hungry? Has anyone observed similar behavior?

*Jane Robinson*

Photo: Belted Kingfisher (female), Syd Phillips



### **eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)) announces its latest upgrade: Version 3**

Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird is a free, real-time, online checklist program for birders. With eBird you can: record the birds you see, keep track of your bird lists, explore dynamic maps and graphs, share your sightings, and join the eBird community, all while contributing to science and conservation.

eBird's goal is to maximize the utility and accessibility of the vast numbers of bird observations made each year by recreational and professional bird watchers. The observations of each participant join those of others in an international network of eBird users. eBird then shares these observations with a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists, and conservation biologists. In time these data will become the foundation for a better understanding of bird distribution across the western hemisphere and beyond.

**How does it work?** eBird documents the presence or absence of species, as well as bird abundance through checklist data. A simple and intuitive web-interface engages tens of thousands of participants to submit their observations or view results via interactive queries into the eBird database. A birder simply enters when, where, and how they went birding, then fills out a checklist of all the birds seen and heard during the outing. Automated data quality filters developed by regional bird experts review all submissions before they enter the database. Local experts review unusual records that are flagged by the filters.

#### **eBird Version 3 includes:**

Global scope - enter and explore observations from anywhere around the world

Improved range maps - explore interactive range maps for any bird in the world

Alerts system - get customized reports about birds of interest to you in a region

eBird Top 100 - find out how your totals rank among other birders in any region

Birding + Science connection - by participating, your data become available to the science and conservation communities

Even if you don't enter data, you can still explore the information submitted by others. Join the flock, become an eBirder!

*Source - [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)*



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### Merrymeeting Audubon - Backyard and Feeder Count

- Lower Kennebec-Sheepscoot Count – December 17, 2011 (Bath, Arrowsic, Phippsburg, Georgetown, Southport, Newagen)
- Freeport-Brunswick-Harpswell Christmas Bird Count – Jan 1, 2012 (Freeport, S. Freeport, Brunswick, Harpswell)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ eMail \_\_\_\_\_

Time I spent counting: \_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Count the highest number of each species that you see **all at the same time**. Record the time you spent watching.

Report your sightings by emailing [merrymeeting@earthlink.net](mailto:merrymeeting@earthlink.net) or returning this sheet to Stella Walsh, 13 Juniper Ledge, Yarmouth, ME 04096

SPECIES	#	SPECIES	#	SPECIES	#	SPECIES	#
Mourning Dove		Eastern Bluebird		Purple Finch			
Rock Pigeon		American Robin		American Goldfinch			
Downy Woodpecker		Northern Mockingbird		House Sparrow			
Hairy Woodpecker		Starling					
Blue Jay		Cedar Waxwing					
American Crow		American Tree Sparrow					
Black-capped Chickadee		Song Sparrow					
Tufted Titmouse		Dark-eyed Junco					
White-breasted Nuthatch		Northern Cardinal					
Red-breasted Nuthatch		House Finch					

Not sure you are in the Count Area or have questions? Contact Stella Walsh at 207.807.3679 or [merrymeeting@earthlink.net](mailto:merrymeeting@earthlink.net).