

# The Call

*Newsletter of Merrymeeting Audubon  
A Chapter of Maine Audubon*

*Volume 43, Issue 1, Spring 2013*

## **Species Profile: Eastern Meadowlark**

The Eastern Meadowlark is representative of farmland and open country throughout eastern North America and a welcome sign of spring as the male delivers a flute-like melodic song from fence posts. The meadowlark is a chunky, medium sized songbird related to blackbirds, not to larks, with a black V on a bright yellow breast. The male has a long, sharp bill, conspicuous white margins on the tail when in flight, and pale brown and black dappled upperparts to camouflage the bird when on the ground. The female is similar, but less strongly marked. A similar species, the Western Meadowlark can be separated only by song. The meadowlark has a large variety of calls and whistles plus a primary song consisting of flute-like notes, often slurred together and descending in pitch. It is sometimes described as saying “spring of the year.”

The Eastern Meadowlark is most common in pastures and native grasslands, hay fields, weedy borders of croplands, orchards, airports, and overgrown fields. It needs a territory of about six acres. They may also be found in grassy dune areas. Locally they are frequently found in the fields near Brunswick High School.

A meadowlark feeds almost entirely on the ground and the diet consists primarily of insects, including crickets, grasshoppers, grubs and caterpillars. The winter diet contains weed seeds and waste grains. Foraging birds walk or run on the ground. Their flight is like that of a quail, with alternating periods of gliding with wings held stiff and periods of rapid wingbeats.

Birds from northern New England migrate, usually in small flocks during daylight hours to southern New England or the southeastern US. They generally return to their territory of the prior year. Males have two mates at a time. The female builds the nest in standing dense dead vegetation of dried grasses and bark strips and attaches it to the surrounding vegetation. It is usually well concealed in a small depression such as a hoof print. Sometimes the nest has a complete roof and an entrance tunnel up to a yard long.

Population studies indicate a declining trend, especially in the northeastern states, with a decline of 70% since 1970. This is attributed to the disappearance of suitable nesting habitat due to changes in land use and human encroachment. Agricultural practices directly affect breeding populations through degradation of suitable habitat, grazing of livestock, and mortality from early mowing and use of pesticides. Mowing or haying should be delayed until early August to avoid destruction of nests and young. Meadowlarks are extremely sensitive to the presence of humans in their breeding territory. A female flushed from her nest during incubation invariably aborts the nesting.

*John Berry*

## **Scholarship News: And the Winner is...**

Emily Cox is the winner of the Merrymeeting Scholarship to Coastal Maine Birding for Teens at Hog Island. She is from Topsham and is a junior at Mt. Ararat High School. She describes herself as “a small girl with a big passion.” Emmie has had an interest in birds since her early childhood and is particularly interested in their behavior and interaction with other animal species. Her advisor wrote a glowing recommendation for her. She is a leader of Mt. A’s Envirothon Team, which participates in environmental field competitions. The knowledge of ornithology which she will gain at Hog Island will be a great asset for the wildlife component of the competitions. The members of the scholarship committee were extremely impressed by both her essay and her advisor’s recommendation. (continued on p2)



*Eastern Meadowlark, male singing; photo John Berry*

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**Birding Questions**

When I first started birding with a group of people who knew more than I did, I worried about the unwritten rules of birding. Was it ok to ask to look in someone's scope? Where do I stand not to be in the way but still hear the comments of the experts? Is it ok to go off on my own or would that be impolite? Do I thank the leader, and is it permissible to leave early?

**Response**

Novice birders are welcome on all Merrymeeting Audubon field trips, but be sure to introduce yourself to the leader and the group as a novice. Most birders and all trip leaders are very willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for birding. When birding you must respect the welfare of birds and their habitat, but those considerations will be discussed in another edition of *The Call*.

The leader will expect others to look thru their scope. The proper procedure is to look quickly and then step away so that others may also look. After everyone has seen the bird, then it would be fine to ask to take a longer look. Generally you do not touch the scope unless you need to adjust the focus knob to adjust for your vision, and be careful not to bump the tripod. Other people on the trip may not be as comfortable allowing others to use their equipment, but it is fine to ask.

Most field trips are small enough that participants can all hear the leader. In larger groups you may need to move toward the front for part of the time. Keep your noise level down to enable others to hear the leader and to allow all members of the group to hear singing or calling birds. Conversations are expected, but when the group stops to see or hear a bird, conversations should stop. When you see a bird, it is best to speak softly and not point at the bird, since loud noises and motions may cause the bird to fly. If you don't know the species of a bird or you misidentify one, others will help you. Everyone has misidentified a bird before, and sometimes a bird has to be studied before it can be identified.

Since you have joined a group for the birding experience, it is not appropriate to go off on your own, especially going ahead of the group. You may leave the group at any time, but be sure to let the leader know because the leader is trying to keep track of the group and make sure they are all together.

It is nice to thank the leader, since they are all volunteers who are sharing their passion and knowledge.

*Karen Carlisle and John Berry*

**Scholarship News: continued from p1**

The "runner-up" for the scholarship is a sophomore at Morse High School. His thoughtful essay on the reasons for studying ornithology and its interrelationship with our environment spoke to us of this young man's own passion. As we had saved only one space for the Hog Island program, we put him on the wait list with hopes that a space will open up for him. We congratulate both of these outstanding students!

A number of donations have come in early this year in response to thank-you letters which included copies of the camper's own enthusiastic letter. Our annual appeal to our faithful co-sponsors went out in February. Last year's annual silent auction proceeds raised \$645, quite a bit less than in previous years. We would like to have at least \$13,000 in the scholarship account in order to send as many deserving campers as possible to camp for a week. We welcome donations, large and small. You may send a check to Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Fund, in care of Jane John, 134 Middle Bay Road, Brunswick, ME, 04011.

Scholarship information packets have been sent to the elementary and middle schools within the MMA catchment area. For younger children, Tanglewood offers a traditional camp experience, which includes natural history. Bryant Pond attracts older campers with a wide range of programs, such as conservation camp, fly fishing, natural explorer, survival camp, primitive skills, and new this year, warden camp.

The Committee is currently seeking a computer savvy person to maintain and update project documents in Word and Excel. Other committee members do fundraising and compose and collate letters for mailing. Annual time commitment is November to April when we have four to five meetings. Merrymeeting Audubon is seriously committed to introducing children to nature and conservation. If you would like to join us, please contact one of the following committee members: Beth Bullock, 729-9650; Barbara Tucker, 729-3343; Sue Sergeant, 442-8195; or Ted Allen, 729-8661.



# Field Trips and Nature Programs 2013

\*\*\*\*Trip leaders' phone numbers are listed on page 2.\*\*\*\*

*Saturday, March 30*  
**Field Trip - Bowdoinham**  
FMI contact Doug Suitor.

## April

*Tuesday, April 2, 7:00 pm*  
**Board Meeting, hosted by Ted Allen**

*Saturday, April 13*  
**Field Trip - Scarborough Marsh**  
On this annual welcome-to-spring outing we hope to see Brant and other migrating waterfowl, Wilson's Snipe, sandpipers, herons, egrets, Glossy Ibis, and sparrows. Bring lunch or a snack.

Meet at the Bath CVS at 7:00 am or at the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20 am. FMI contact Maurice Dauphin.

*Saturday, April 20*  
**Field Trip - Whiskeag Creek, Bath**

Join Merrymeeting Audubon and the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT) to explore Whiskeag Creek where it empties into the Kennebec River at Thorne Head. The targets for this trip include Canada Geese, Black Ducks, Mallards, Blue and Green-winged Teal, Common Mergansers, as well as early arriving songbirds.

Meet at the CVS in Bath at 7:30 am or at Sewall Woods on Whiskeag Road at 8:00 am. FMI contact Ted Allen.

*Wednesday, April 24, 6:00 pm*  
**Annual Meeting, Silent Auction, and Talk "Tropical Birds of New England" by Chris Petrak**

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

Many of the birds which breed in New England are tropical species which come north for the abundant protein resources needed to raise their young. The program will provide a photographic sampling of these birds, many of which are among the most

beautiful birds found in North America. Chris Petrak, a retired Presbyterian minister, is a birding hobbyist and photographer. His essays on birds have been collected into two volumes.

\*\*\*Please mail in your reservation! See the last page of this *Call*.\*\*\*

*Saturday, April 27, 9:00 - noon*  
**Work Day - Hamilton Sanctuary**

Clear trails, repair erosion damage, and spruce up the memorial garden.

Please contact Glenn Evans if you plan on coming.

*Sunday, April 28*  
**Field Trip - Reid State Park**

Reid State Park includes habitats for coastal waterfowl, freshwater ducks, and marsh birds. We also expect to see early migrants in the woodlands and open areas of the park. Bring a lunch or a snack.

Meet at the CVS parking lot at Bath Plaza at 8:30 am to carpool or at the bathroom parking lot at 9:00 am. FMI contact Doug Suitor.

## May

*Saturday, May 4*  
**Field Trip- Spring Birding**

The site of this trip will be determined based on reports of rare migrants or abundant species. FMI about time and carpooling, see the website by May 1. FMI contact Doug Suitor.

*Tuesday, May 7, 7:00 pm*  
**Board Meeting, hosted by Chuck Huntington**

*Wednesday, May 8*  
**Field Trip - Brunswick Landing**  
(former Navy Base)

This is the first time we have been able to go birding on the property since 2001. We used to go there every spring before that. The easy trails go through varied habitat of mixed woods, fields, streams, and swamps, to a pond. We'll see a variety of migrating and nesting birds, including an active Osprey nest.

Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 am to car-pool to the gate near Cooks Corner. FMI call Carol Jack.

*Saturday, May 11*  
**Field Trip - International Migratory Bird Day at Viles Arboretum, Augusta**

Join us on International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) for a bird walk through what was formerly known as the Pine Tree State Arboretum. Other morning programs for children and adults include bird banding and a raptor demonstration. Bring a lunch or help support IMBD by buying a grilled lunch there. The 224-acre arboretum includes woods, fields, and ponds that are easily reached by six miles of trails. Fifteen warbler species were among the many migrants seen here during IMBD in past years. Wetland species found in May include Sora and Virginia Rail.

Meet at 8:00 am at the kiosk in the Arboretum parking lot. FMI contact Doug Suitor.



*Sora by D Kilby*

*Sunday, May 12 and Tuesday, May 21*  
**Field Trips - Bradley Pond Warbler Series, Topsham**

These two relatively easy walks pass through a conservation easement surrounding a privately-owned working farm. The easement includes varied habitat. We focus on migrating land birds: warblers, flycatchers, blackbirds, vireos, sparrows, and an occasional raptor.

Meet at 7:30 am at the Brunswick Hannaford or about 8:00 am at Bradley Pond, 2nd parking lot. FMI contact Ted Allen.

*Wednesday, May 15*

**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 vegetation.

Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 am or the parking lot at Florida Lake, Rte. 125, Freeport, at 7:30 am. FMI contact Ted Allen.

*Thursday, May 16, 7:30 am*

**Field Trip - Crystal Spring Farm, Brunswick**

This trip is run jointly by MMAS and BTLT. Jan Pierson will lead this walk through a variety of habitats including fields, forests, and ponds. We hope to see sparrows, Bluebirds, Bobolinks, and several species of warblers.

Meet at Crystal Spring Farm on Pleasant Hill Road in Brunswick at 7:30 am. FMI contact Ted Allen.

*Saturday, May 18*

**Field Trip - Morse Mountain and Seawall Beach**

The Bates-Morse Mt. Conservation Area is a great spot for late migrants and nesting woodland birds. We will also see shorebirds, gulls, and probably nesting Piping Plovers.

Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford parking lot at 7:30 am or at Morse Mountain parking lot off Rte. 216, Phippsburg, at 8:00 am. FMI contact Gordon Smith.

*Sunday, May 19*

**Field Trip - Spring Birding Roundup Site to be arranged.**

The site of this trip will be determined based on reports of rare migrants or abundant species. For more information about time and carpooling, see the website by May 17. FMI contact Mike Fahay.

*Wednesday, May 22,*

**Field Trip - Pennellville**

This easy trail goes through varied habitats and ends at a saltwater cove. We will see Bobolinks, woodpeckers, warblers, some nesting songbirds, hopefully some ducks, eagles, hawks and Ospreys. Wildflowers will be blooming by then also.

Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 am to carpool or meet at 7:30 at the soccer field on Pennellville Rd. FMI contact Carol Jack.

*Friday, May 24*

**Field Trip - Chimney Swifts, Auburn**

Come and enjoy the spectacle of a hundred or more Swifts swirling into their chimney roost before they continue to their breeding locations.

Carpool from Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 pm. FMI contact Ted Allen.

*Saturday, May 25*

**Field Trip – Thorne Head, Bath**

This field trip is run jointly by MMAS and KELT. Thorne Head overlooks Whiskeag Creek (see April 20) and is located on the Maine Birding Trail. The preserve is rich in vireos and warblers. The paths provide level walking under a canopy of mature trees.

Meet at the CVS in Bath at 7:30 am to car pool or at the preserve parking lot at the north end of High St. at 8:00 am. FMI contact Ted Allen.

## June

*Saturday, June 1*

**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. Nearby colonies of Purple Martin and Bank Swallow are within a short drive. It will be a leisurely paddle. Bring a lunch. Limited space is available for those without a canoe or kayak.

For meeting place and time, contact George Sergeant.

*Saturday, June 15, 8:30 am*

**Field Trip - Cathance River Preserve, Topsham**

We will walk the trails looking for Towhees, sparrows, warblers, woodpeckers, and other birds. Wildflowers, ferns, and mosses grow in the moist woods by the river.

Take Rte. 196 and turn into the Highland Green Community on the north side of the highway. Drive in about 1/2 mile and meet in the parking lot of the Golf Course, on the left. FMI call Carol Jack.

*Saturday, June 29, 8:00 – 11:00 am*

**Work Day - Hamilton Sanctuary**

Cut back trails and remove non-native bittersweet to maintain native habitat. Pending state approval, we'll work on the new trails.

Please contact Glenn Evans if you plan on coming.

## August

*Sunday, August 18*

**Field Trip - Site to be Determined**

The site of this trip focusing on migrating shorebirds will be determined based on reports of rare migrants or abundant species. FMI about time and carpooling, see the website by August 16. FMI call Mike Fahay.

Welcome to the following new members who joined during 2012. We hope that you will find field trips or talks of interest to you. A few people who rejoined may be listed here as new members. If so, we are sorry for the mistake.

**Arrowsic**

Ellen G. and Donald M. Kornrumpf  
Karen A. Mignone and Jeffrey G. Miller

**Bath and West Bath**

Ms. Mary Ellen Bell  
Ms. Sally Hogan  
Ms. Katherine Larrabee  
Ms. Sue McLeod  
Ms. Wendy Palmer  
Mrs. Susan C. Seaman  
Mr. George Waldman  
Mr. Danny Whitman

**Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor**

Ms. Lois Berry  
Mr. Donald Celler  
Lee Hammond

**Bowdoin**

Sherrie and Charles Denticio

**Bowdoinham**

Mr. and Mrs. Frank G. Smith  
Georgia and Michael Walker

**Brunswick**

Ms. Dorothy B. Berner  
Ms. Margy Burroughs  
Mr. Sean Callahan and Ms. Betsy Biemann  
Mr. Jack Collins  
Mr. Joseph de Rivera  
Mr. and Mrs. Roy DeCesare  
Deborah and John Farnham  
Patricia Harris and Deborah Silverman  
Mr. and Mrs. David L. Hillman  
Ms. Joan Hughes  
Jon and Lorna Lichter  
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Gregory Blanchette and Ruth Pease  
The Honorable Robert Howe

**Falmouth**

Mrs. Sarah Nielson

**Freeport**

Signe Alexander  
Ms. Rosamond D. Brown  
Mr. Wilbur Cheever  
Ms. Sandra Donaldson  
Mrs. Reed Fahlgren  
Ms. Grace Houghton  
Stephanie Joy and Nick Matluk  
Mr. Robert Kinney  
Ms. Susan A. Marth  
Mrs. Rachel Meinert  
Mr. Louis Morin  
Mr. Randall Mraz  
Ms. Judy Plouffe  
Ms. Gwendolyn Sartoris  
Ms. Katrina G. VanBrugh  
Mrs. Rosemarie Whiting  
  
Dr. Melissa and Mr. Adam Wiedmann

Ms. Ethel H. Wilkerson

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Ms. Marcie Look

**Harpwell**

Sue and Neal Favreau  
Ms. Cynthia Friend  
Mrs. Margery Kivel  
Mr. Jeffrey L. Marshall  
Ms. Jay E. McCreight

**Lisbon Falls**

Ms. Jill Denniston  
Ms. Michelle Huston

**Phippsburgh**

Ms. Joan Boyer

**Pownal**

Lesli and Matt Chambers  
Mr. Michael J. Hayes

**Richmond**

Mr. Blaise Botti  
Mr. Paul Petroulis

**Southport**

Melissa and William Cullina

**Topsham**

Mr. Edward Blanchard  
Mrs. Bethany Burrill  
Cynthia and Clay Chase  
Richard and Barbara Handy  
Ms. Stephanie Jacques  
Mrs. Arielle Leclerc  
Ms. Pat Maloney  
Ms. Mary K. Moore

**Westport Island**

Ms. Cristina Giuliani

**Wiscasset**

Ms. Laura Phelps

**Woolwich**

Ms. Lasca Hewes  
F. C. Gardiner

**Yarmouth**

Ms. Stephanie Scherr

**Fleming Island, FL**

Ms. Susan North

**Rochester, NY**

Mr. Brad Saunders

**Rocky Hill, NJ**

Mr. Douglas H. Blair and Ms. Ann Reichelderfer



Hooded Merganser by D Kilby

**Nominating Committee is Inviting Nominations to the Board**

The members of the 2013 Nominating Committee of Merrymeeting Audubon are Marianne Warner and Barbara Bean. If a member knows a person who would like to be nominated to the Board of Directors please call Barbara Bean at 729-8661.

**The next issue of *The Call* will reach you in early September. Contributions to that issue are due by August 7th.**

Merrymeeting Audubon  
A Chapter of Maine Audubon  
36 Federal Street  
Brunswick, ME 04011

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**Make your reservations now for the annual dinner meeting, silent auction, and talk by  
Chris Petrak  
6:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 24, 2013  
at St. Charles Borromeo Church Meeting Hall, 132 McKeen Street, Brunswick**

Please send a check (\$20 per person), made out to Merrymeeting Audubon.  
Mail your check to: Tulle Frazer, 271 Harpswell Neck Rd, Harpswell, ME 04079.  
FMI call Tulle at 725-8942.

**Reservations must be received by Wednesday, April 17th**

*Simply Elegant* caterers will serve a buffet dinner of:

Appetizers: Salmon w/ caper and dill, Tortilla roll-up, Mushrooms stuffed with Italian sausage,  
and Guacamole w/ tortilla chips

Main course: Lemon ginger chicken, Baked haddock, and Vegetarian lasagna

Assorted delectable desserts

If you are unable to attend the dinner, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Fund. Mail your donation to: MMA Scholarship Fund, c/o Jane John, 134 Middle Bay Road, Brunswick, ME 04011