

Some Thoughts on Migration

Spring is a time of high color. In April and early May trees have fewer and smaller leaves and when the Baltimore Oriole announces its presence with song, the bright orange is easily found. Even small warblers have difficulty hiding, and for me there is little that beats seeing a singing Blackburnian Warbler at close quarters. By fall, warblers have molted to muted colors. My 1947 edition of Roger Tory Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds has two pages devoted to confusing fall warblers. The first has those with wing bars and streaking, the second no streaks or wing bars. For the most part, however, they are greenish above and yellowish below. I gave up early on their identification until I saw them from above, thirty feet up in a tree house. During blueberry season I would be freed from picking after I'd gathered my required four quarts. Then I watched birds and sought critters in the ponds and under rocks. I had just learned how to "pish," and I tried it from my tree house aerie. The response to my "pishing" was the most activity that I'd ever seen during my eight years of birding. (I was twelve.) Almost immediately ten or so confusing fall warblers were below me on bushes and on the ground. From above, even the confusing were not so confusing and the less confusing were identifiable because of colors, although dulled by late summer molts.



Photo: Rob Bryan, Horseneck Beach, MA

Shorebirds also show breeding plumage in the spring. Both sexes of Red Knots are a beautiful salmon color as they fly 7,000 miles from Argentina to the High Arctic. A major stop is Delaware Bay where they refuel on horseshoe crab eggs. But horseshoe crabs have been overfished and only recently have restrictions been placed on that fishery. The East Coast red knot population has plummeted from more than 100,000 in the 1980s to only about 30,000 today. The decline in horseshoe crab eggs is one likely cause in the decrease in numbers of North American Red Knots. Long distance migrants face not only loss of breeding and wintering territories, but also decreasing food sources to power their migratory flights over immense distances.

I have lived near the seashore for only ten years, and the rare spring view of a red male Sanderling continues to

startle me. As he approaches the breeding area his colors become more vibrant. In the fall, males molt to the mottled-above and white-below plumage of females. The best way to identify Sanderlings is to note the wind-up-toy movement back and forth in the waves along the shore as they seek what the tide is bringing in or uncovering.

Merrymeeting Audubon's fall trips to Popham and Seawall Beaches often produce large numbers of shorebirds heading for their winter homes along the shores of Central and South America. Most of them breed in the High Arctic, north of Hudson Bay, and many return along the coast or islands of the Gulf of Maine. Fall shorebird identification poses similar challenges as those in identifying fall warblers, but on a good day seeing their numbers alone is worth the trip. (See pages 3 and 4 for more details.)

Ted Allen

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Scholarship News

The Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships to 20 young people to attend camp this summer. One high school student spent a week at Audubon Camp on Hog Island, studying Coastal Maine Birds. Fourteen winners went to the 4-H camp at Bryant Pond to participate in one of its many environmental programs, for example: conservation camp, primitive skills, nature arts and photography, or fishing camp. Five younger children went to Tanglewood 4-H camp in Lincolnville, which offers a more traditional camp experience, including outdoor exploration and building of self-confidence. One junior high student, who attended Tanglewood last year, participated in the counselor-in-training program this year. While we know that all these youngsters will have had wonderful experiences, we expect that they will be sending us letters, relating what they learned and enjoyed during their weeks at camp. Look for their camping news in the winter issue of *The Call*.

By chance, in July, I had the pleasure of meeting one of our scholarship winners. Spencer Gray, of Woolwich, went to Bryant Pond for three summers. His essays and thank-you letters were always outstanding. He told me how much his experiences at camp have influenced important choices he has made. For high school, Spencer went to Milton Academy, which offers strong outdoor education. In addition, he attended Chewonki Semester, a program that stresses awareness of one's place in nature. Spencer will be a freshman at the College of the Atlantic this fall where he plans to study environmental science. He is an impressive young man, who is well on his way to becoming a responsible adult, who will make a difference in this world.

The MMA Scholarship Committee continues to welcome donations to the scholarship fund so that we will be able send more children to camp next year. Checks may be sent to the Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Fund, c/o Jane John, 134 Middle Bay Road, Brunswick, ME 04011. Thank you for your generosity.

Beth Bullock



Migration of geese by F L Jaques



Field Trips and Nature Programs 2013

September

Saturday, September 7, 6:30 am to 2 pm

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.

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

Sunday, September 8

Field Trip: Wharton Point, Brunswick

This is a good time of year to see migrating shorebirds here. Meet at 9:00 am at Hannaford in Brunswick or 9:30 at Wharton Point. FMI contact Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

Saturday, September 14

Field Trip: Morse Mountain, Phippsburg

The Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area is a great spot for watching the fall migration of raptors. Maurice and Kathy 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 am. FMI call Maurice at 389-2585.

Saturday, September 21

Field Trip: Popham Beach

Celebrate the winding down of shorebird migration with Doug Suitor at one of the best mid-coast locations. Meet at CVS in Bath at 8:30 am to carpool or at Popham Beach at 9:00. FMI call Doug at 841-1951.

Tuesday, September 24, 7:00 pm

Program: Newfoundland - A How To

Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick

Join Bob Duchesne as he recounts his adventures birding Newfoundland. It took nearly two weeks to do the complete loop of Newfoundland, arriving by ferry on the western side, departing on the eastern, while visiting the northern and southern parts of the island province. Highlights include Gros Morne and Terra Nova National Parks, the L'Anse aux Meadows Viking colony, the Witless Bay sea bird colony, and the Cape St. Mary's Northern Gannet nesting site.

Saturday, September 28 and Sunday, October 20

Field Trip: Green Point Farm WMA, Dresden

Fall migrants will be the target of these two walks through the weedy fields and other habitats at Maine Inland Fish and Wildlife's Green Point Farm Wildlife Management Area.

Meet at the CVS in Bath at 7:00 am to carpool, or at 7:30 at

Green Point. The trip will end before noon. Park next to the large green metal shed at Green Point Farm (not at the little green farmhouse by the bridge). FMI call Doug Suitor at 841-1951.

October

Tuesday, October 1, 7:00 pm

Board Meeting: hosted by Ted Allen, for directions 729-8661.

Sunday, October 6

Field Trip: Leader's Choice

This ad-hoc adventure led by Doug Suitor will leave from Brunswick and head for area hot spots to follow-up on recently reported sightings.

Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:30 am. FMI call Doug at 841-1951.

Sunday, October 13

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 in Brunswick. Join Merrymeeting's Gordon Smith for any part or all of the day. FMI call Gordon at 725-0282.

Saturday, October 19

Work Day: Hamilton Sanctuary

With its open fields, young evergreen stands, wetlands, salt-water inlets, and mud flats, Maine Audubon's Hamilton Sanctuary is an outstanding natural landscape just outside Bath. Join members of Merry-meeting Audubon for a morning of work and exploration.

Meet at Hamilton Sanctuary, Foster's Point Road, Bath, 9:00 am to noon.

Please contact sanctuary manager, Glenn Evans 443-9652 prior to the day if you plan to participate.

Sunday, October 20: see September 28

Tuesday, October 22, 7:00 pm

Program: Monhegan

Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick

Doug Hitchcox recounts both the birds and birding adventures on Maine's storied Monhegan Island. From a Red-headed Woodpecker in the living room to rarities in the field, Monhegan is full of surprises. Doug is an avid birder, trip leader, and compiler of the Maine Audubon Rare Bird Alert.

Saturday, October 26

Field Trip: Hermit Island

Carol Jack 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 salt-water cove. Expect to see ducks, grebes, and loons, as well as some woodland birds.

Meet at 8:30 am at Bath Plaza near CVS or 9:00 at Head Beach, Hermit Island, Route 216, Phippsburg. FMI call Carol at 729-0220.

November

Saturday, November 2

Field Trip: Waterfowl of Sabattus Pond

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

Meet at Hannaford's in Brunswick at 8:00 am to carpool. We should be back to Brunswick by 1 pm. FMI contact John Berry at 725-2051.

Tuesday, November 5, 7:00 pm

Board Meeting: hosted by Ted Allen, for directions 729-8661.

Saturday, November 16

Field Trip: Viles Arboretum and Maine Museum

Viles Arboretum provides a number of habitats for the observation of many kinds of late migrants and year-round birds. In the event of heavy rain we will meet at the Arboretum and then proceed to the Maine Museum in Augusta to observe exhibits on natural history and conservation. Otherwise we will bird first and then proceed to the Museum.

Meet at Hannaford in Brunswick at 7:30 am or at the Arboretum at 8:15 am. FMI call Jack Collins at 373-0336 or Ted Allen at 729-8661.

Tuesday, November 19, 7:00 pm
Program: Birding "the County"

Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick

Bill Sheehan recounts his experiences birding in Aroostook County. Bill is the well known author of a comprehensive Northern Maine Birding Blog and a specialist in birds of Aroostook County. A life-long birder, Bill grew up in Patten, just east of Baxter State Park, and lives in Woodland with his wife and two children. He is a member of the Maine Bird Records Committee and ornithological curator of the Northern Maine Science Museum at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, drives a Ford and prefers to find his own rather than chase other's birds.

December

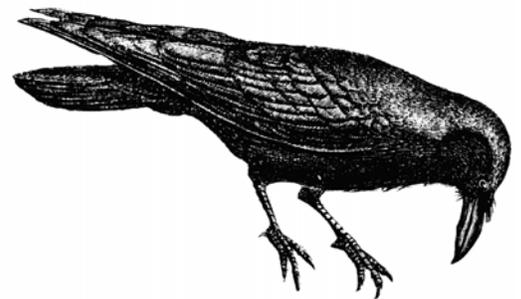
Saturday, December 14

Field Trip: Bath Area Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 29 (Corrected Date)

Field Trip: Brunswick Area Christmas Bird Count

Further details on both Christmas Counts in the winter issue of *The Call*.



Raven by L Figuiet, 1869

This yellow paper is 30% post consumer recycled.

The winter issue of *The Call* should reach you in early December. Contributions to that issue are due by November 8th.



Photos: Doug Hitchcox

Left: Black-and-white Warbler; female

Right: Chestnut-sided Warbler; male, breeding

Birding Questions: Karen Carlisle

During this spring and early summer migration I've been on many trips led by experienced birders. At times, to call in the birds we are trying to locate, they make a "pishing" sound or even use recorded calls of the birds we are seeking. Also, we try to get as close as possible to the birds to get a better view. John, would you comment on these activities?

Response: John Berry

First, "pishing" is making a sound such as "psssh", which is similar to the scolding call of a Tufted Titmouse. It is believed that other birds may be curious as to what danger may be nearby and want to determine if there is a threat. It is a technique used by birders to bring birds closer.

Birders normally want to get a better look at the birds they see. There are many ways to accomplish this, from the use of binoculars and spotting scopes, moving closer to the bird, playing digital recordings of bird songs and calls, and pishing. Because all birding can be disruptive to the birds, a code of ethics has developed to minimize the stress on the birds. The first principle in the American Birding® Association Code of Ethics is "to promote the welfare of birds and their environment; to avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, and to exercise restraint and caution during observation. Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas."

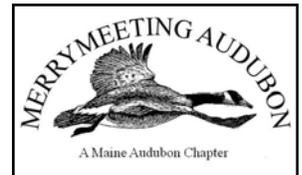
Birders should keep an appropriate distance from all species they observe, stay on trails, and avoid entering a nesting area. Disturbing a bird's feeding area or nesting site can cause stress and drive the bird away, perhaps even causing a bird to abandon a nest. If walking on a beach, walk around groups of shorebirds rather than forcing them to fly.

Of the calling techniques, pishing is probably the least disruptive to the birds, and it doesn't always work, presumably meaning that the birds are able to ignore it. Repeated, frequent pishing would however be annoying noise pollution and thus should only be done responsibly. Playing recordings of birds' songs is more annoying and is threatening if done in a bird's nesting habitat because it signals that another bird of their species is moving into their territory and will need to be driven out. Recordings should be used very sparingly and not played repeatedly. They are best used as an education tool to learn the bird songs or to let participants hear a particular song that you hope to hear.

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