

A humble life, an extraordinary legacy

Stella Walsh was a gifted, dedicated, compassionate woman who loved interacting with nature's beloved avian friends, passing on her incredible knowledge and skills to fellow birders and younger generations. Sadly, we lost this unique birder, teacher, lover-of-life and best friend on July 29, 2017.

Despite her long-term battle with cancer, Stella remained undaunted in her mission to endow the birding communities with her time, energy and expertise. She was a long-time volunteer at Biodiversity Research Institute's (BRI) River Point Bird Observatory in Falmouth. She started at River Point in 2013, and her contributions were instrumental in allowing the River Point Observatory to become a long-term research and monitoring station in southern Maine.

One of Stella's real loves was bird-banding. While she would tell you that she "just liked to fondle birds", she was a dedicated researcher who willingly shared her time and expertise with interns, bird banders and birding enthusiasts throughout the state. Her enthusiasm for avian life history and conservation, unflagging quest for knowledge, and terrific sense of humor rendered her invaluable to the small group of bird banders and environmental educators at BRI.

Without question, Stella had a "lighter side" to her unique personality. She would regale us with occasionally



irreverent, but hilarious stories about her birding and banding experiences. Watching interns scratch their heads as she described the differences between black and gray legs on Empidonax flycatchers was a delight! We will miss her presence dearly in the River Point barn.

Migration is a time when anything can happen, and Stella never missed a beat! Birds from thousands of miles away would end up in our nets, and the chances of catching that one, incredible bird kept everybody waking

up before dawn to see what landed there overnight. This autumn will feel a bit more ordinary without Stella to share that joy of discovery.

Thank you, Stella, for everything you've given us over the past six years. Migration seasons won't be the same without you.

*Andrew Gilbert, Patrick Keenan and
the BRI Staff*

"Autumn birds speak cheerful poetry from their berry-stained beaks."

Terri Guillemets

Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter

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E-mail us at:

merrymeeting@maineaudubon.org

Did you know? . . .

Bird banding uses individually identifiable metal bands to mark birds captured in nets by bird banders.

Individual identification of birds makes it possible to study dispersal and migration, behavior and social structure, life-span and survival rate, reproductive success and population growth. Information about a bird is recorded prior to releasing it.

This data also gives us an understanding of the fidelity of a bird species to a location. The banding data are sent to a central site, the Bird Banding Lab, for tracking all relevant information.

For more information on **bird banding** go to pwr.usgs.gov.

To Stella, with Love. . . .



Stella was my birding buddy and good friend for many years, always up for a birding trip...that is, until the last few years as her health declined. I spent more time visiting her and her cat, Gracie, at her apartment in Yarmouth. As she struggled with cancer and failing health, she still stayed connected with many of us through Facebook, e-mails, and text messages. She was my encyclopedia of knowledge, often scoffing at me for asking her too many questions. She'd laugh and say "Google it Becky!", and then she would Google it for me.

Stella had a big heart, always thinking of gifts for others, prepping food for Christmas Bird Counts, taking cookies to events, working on Merrymeeting Audubon postings, or answering bird e-mails sent to Maine Audubon. She entered *many* USGS bird records, and *many* eBird reports for Peter Vickery. She spent endless hours birdbanding and working on islands with tern colonies and

See **STELLA**, page 3

If you've never been to a
“BIG SIT!”
 Here's your opportunity

Sunday, October 8
Wharton Point, Brunswick

For the past five years, Merrymeeting Audubon has participated in the Big Sit! The what? The Big Sit! It's a bit of reverse psychology when it comes to “birding”. Instead of *traveling* to some lovely destination to find the birds, you *stay* in one place observing the birds as they travel around you.

When you arrive at the site for a Big Sit! you will find a real or imaginary circle, 17 feet in diameter, from which participants observe the birds as they pass by. Merrymeeting Audubon established its Big Sit! circle at the large rock monument at Wharton Point on Maquoit Bay in Brunswick.

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- Only birds observed/heard by someone from **inside** the circle can be counted.
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can leave the circle to get a closer look to confirm the bird's identity.

- However, any new species seen or heard **while outside** the circle—confirming the original bird—cannot be counted unless someone **inside** the circle observes or hears it.

Since the inception of Merrymeeting Audubon's Big Sit!, an impressive total of **106** bird species has been compiled, topped by two rarities never seen at Wharton Point before: an American White Pelican at the 2012 Big Sit! and a Leach's Storm-Petrel at the Big Sit! event in 2015.

Co-captains Gordon Smith and Jay Stormer invite all interested persons to participate in the 2017 Big Sit! on **Sunday, October 8**. Observations (and listening) will begin at dawn (or before, depending on the weather) and continue until dusk, or after. Folks are welcome to join this event at any time during the day and stay for as long as desired.

The New Haven, CT Bird Club founded the Big Sit!, and it's hosted by *Bird Watcher's Digest*. This annual event takes place on the second Sunday in October.



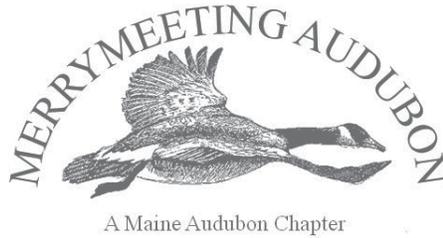
PHOTO BY ERIC MASTERSON

Leach's Storm-Petrel



PHOTO BY JAY STORMER

American White Pelican



Upcoming Field Trips and Nature Programs

(See the full trip descriptions inside)

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Stella in action at River Point Bird Observatory, talking about birds with undergraduates from the Maine College of Art.

STELLA, from page 2

puffins. Mind you, she **volunteered** for all of these activities, never asking for anything in return.

I'll miss all the bird discussions we had, our Sunday morning waffles, our birding excursions, her cat Gracie, her biscotti, the constant texting any time of any day, her crankiness, her laughter, her generosity. These memories will always be with me, and I'm happy to have been a part of her amazing life. Rest in peace Stella."

Becky Marvil

My friend Stella Walsh passed away from complications of terminal cancer. We started out related as sisters-in-law and then we became friends. She taught me tricks about cooking and gardening and lots about birds, and was determined to make me a birder. I may be one yet, Stella.

I am so sad, and will miss our text and phone chats about birds and such, and the funny cat videos she sent me. I had taken to recording bird songs on my house phone, texting them to her for a listen, and maybe help with birding by ear.

Those who knew Stella knew she was an amazing, strong, no-nonsense, intelligent, wonderful, big-hearted, bird-dedicated person. Once you got to know her, she was lodged in your heart forever.

I loved her and will miss her always. I will think of her whenever the birds sing, which will be as long as I live. Thank you, Stella, for letting me get to know you. I think she was happiest with the birds and her birding friends. Rest In Peace now my friend.

Michelle H. Wainer

Life goes on. Sadness is often best treated with a good companion and a walk in the woods. I walked out to Squirrel Point this morning, and among other things thought about how wonderful and good Stella was at helping others enjoy the lives of birds. She would be pleased to know that the terns are chasing after the juvenile alewives in the Kennebec, just beginning their first swim to the estuary and the ocean. She never missed these seasonal wonders.

Come December, and the annual Christmas Bird Counts which Stella

and I coordinated for years, I shall miss Stella's presence, enthusiasm and dedication very much.

Don Hudson

Stella's passing is a very sad loss for so many friends. I have known her through Merrymeeting Audubon nearly 18 years. I admired her excellent birding & banding ability, the work she did to help organize and compile our annual Christmas [Bird] Counts, her dedication to our Chapter, her special sense of humor and wonderful laugh. Her courage and optimism in dealing with such a difficult illness for the past 10 years was incredible. She will be missed terribly by all who were fortunate to know her.

Carol Jack



Stella working with a Northern Flicker

“
Go out, go out I beg you
And taste the beauty of the wild.
Behold the miracle of the earth
With all the wonder of a child.”

Edna Jaques



MMA: Our Scholarship Program

For many years, Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter has offered scholarships to elementary, middle and high school students to attend various summer camps in Maine—Bryant Pond, Tanglewood and Hog Island. The summer camp experience for many students has proven enlightening, exciting, inspiring and even life-changing. There are different aspects comprising the program that contribute to the final rewarding experience for the participants. Following, we will share with you, our readers, what it takes to introduce new students, as well as returning students, to the joys of interacting with nature.

The Application

Applicants come from some of the 45 towns within our catchment area. The larger towns often represented are: Georgetown, Bath, West Bath, Phippsburg, Pownal, Durham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Brunswick, Lisbon, Lisbon Falls, Harpswell and Topsham. Students choose which summer camp they'd like to attend. Then they write letters to our Scholarship Committee describing why they want to attend a particular camp, and what interests them most from the camp's offerings within their age group. Students applying to Tanglewood and Bryant Pond 4-H camps must provide the name of an adult reference. Students who wish to attend the Hog Island program must include an actual letter of reference from a teacher. This letter provides details regarding the student's interest in the outdoor world and developing skills and talents.

The time it takes from application to awarding a scholarship and registering a student for camp occurs over a few months. That's why we like to begin soliciting for potential candidates in the early Fall, when the camps publish their schedules and openings for participants.

The Camps

Tanglewood 4-H Camp, a *University of Maine camp and Cooperative Extension*, is located in a remote section of Camden Hills State Park. Campers and counselors join to form a creative community fostering a supportive and enjoyable environment for all. They emphasize community living, respect for others, safety and responsibility.

The summer offerings include overnight camps for 8-14 year olds, day camps for 4-11 year olds, a residential-based sailing program, wilderness discovery trips, and leadership programs for teens 13-17.

Bryant Pond 4-H Camp. For over 50 years the *University of Maine 4-H Camp & Learning Center at Bryant Pond* has strengthened children's relationship to the natural world with a combination of inspired outdoor fun, practical woods-wise skills, and "hands-on" conservation education.

The weekly routine for most programs includes path-specific outdoor skills development, cooling swims, canoeing, hiking to the top of Mt. Christopher, team-building on the ropes course and learning basic survival and outdoor safety skills.

Hog Island Audubon Camp offers the *Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens* program. This intensive 6-day, 5-night program on Hog Island allows enthusiastic young birders to work with some of the country's best-known birders



“Don't think: Look!”
Wittgenstein

and ornithologists on field identification, bird ecology and conservation. This program includes the unique opportunity to see Audubon's seabird restoration work in action, and is the only Hog Island program that lands participants on Eastern Egg Rock during puffin breeding season (weather and sea conditions permitting).

The Rewards

We wish we could print the actual letters and drawings from the campers, but the following are samples from the letters as they came to us (spelling notwithstanding):

"I had a great time at Tanglewood camp this summer. My favorite parts were fishing, archery (which was hard) and riding bikes to the garden every day. I learned a lot about growing good vegetables and the camp kitchen used the vegetables. . .in our meals." *John*

"I had an awesome time at Tanglewood. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to go to a week-long overnight camp. I made lots of new friends, the food was AMAZING, and I loved going to the beach with Water Focus. . . I hope I can go again. It was great." *Tanglewood camper*

"I had lots of fun with the [Bryant Pond] program. . .I chose primitive skills. . .I learned lots of stuff like fox walk, deer ears, dead space and how to start a fire." *Sarah*

"Here at camp [Bryant Pond] I learned how to make fires, make debree shelters. . .I enjoyed swimming, kyaking. . .it was a very nice experience. I liked it very much." *Kaia*

"I really enjoyed hiking, canoeing, and making friends [at Bryant Pond]. . .what I learned will help me hunt, identify rocks, and finding edible plants." *Eric*

"I just wanted to let you know that I dropped [our kids] off at Tanglewood this afternoon for their camp session! They were so happy today to finally arrive. They look forward to going there so much—it is the highlight of their summer. Thank you again for giving them the opportunity to go. They will write to you and let the Audubon Society know all about it!" *A Parent*

Resources for the Scholarships

The primary source of funds for our Scholarship Program comes from donors—individuals and some businesses. In 2016, the total cost of scholarships to the three camps was \$9,975. This year, the total cost is \$11,189. The current tuitions at the camps are: \$595 at Tanglewood; \$635 at Bryant Pond; and at Hog Island \$1,295 (Teen Studies) and \$1,095 (Educator's Week—an opportunity for interested teachers to attend the camp on scholarship).

This year we have campers from the following towns:

Georgetown (1) Bath (8) West Bath (3) Phippsburg (1) Pownal (1)
Durham (1) Bowdoin (2) Brunswick (1) Lisbon (1) Lisbon Falls (1)
Bailey Island (2) Topsham (1)

Moving forward

We hope we have given you a better understanding of what it takes to give a young person the opportunity of a lifetime. First-time campers come away

with such enthusiasm, perhaps having experienced nature like never before and making new and possibly lasting friendships. Often first-timers become repeat campers, moving on to other levels of experience, and maybe discovering a possible future career. Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter is so proud to be such a catalyst in the lives of young people. We hope that they will take what they've learned and use it to make their world a better place.





Merrymeeting Audubon
36 Federal Street
Brunswick, ME 04011

www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting

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Maine Audubon

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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.

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Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

Seasonal Address: _____ from _____ to _____

City/State/Zip: _____

I'm enclosing an additional \$10 to receive *Audubon*, National Audubon's magazine
(free for Patron members and above)

Check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____

Charge my monthly Frequent Flyer gift of \$ _____ to Visa MC AMEX Discover

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\$35 Individual

\$45 Household

\$65 Contributing

\$100 Patron

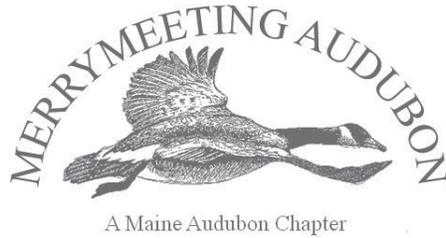
\$250 Sustaining

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Checks payable to Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Rd., Falmouth, ME 04105. Join/renew online at maineaudubon.org/join or call 207-781-2330 ext. 232



Upcoming Field Trips and Nature Programs

(See the full trip descriptions inside)

SEPTEMBER

- Sunday, September 3 Sunset Birding at Seawall Beach
- Saturday, September 9 Morse Mountain
- Sunday, September 10 Androscoggin River Trail
- Sunday, September 24 Green Point Farm WMA
- Tuesday, September 26 Celebration of Life: Stella Walsh
- Saturday, September 30 Bird Banding at River Point

OCTOBER

- Sunday, October 8 The BIG SIT!
- Saturday, October 14 Work morning at Hamilton Sanctuary
- Sunday, October 15 Green Point Farm WMA
- Saturday, October 21 Hermit Island
- Tuesday, October 24 Board Meeting & Guest Speaker Program
- Saturday, October 28 Waterfowl at Sabattus Pond
- Sunday, October 29 Viles Arboretum

NOVEMBER

- Tuesday, November 28 Board Meeting & Guest Speaker Program

DECEMBER

- Saturday, December 2 Waterfowl Walk, Giant's Stairs
- Saturday, December 16 Christmas Bird Counts: Bath - Phippsburg
- Sunday, December 31 Christmas Bird Counts: Brunswick - Freeport

“ Nature is a good mother, and sees well to the clothing of her bairns—birds with smoothly imbricated feathers, beetles with shining jackets, and bears with shaggy furs. ” **John Muir**





Field Trips & Nature Programs 2017

www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting

September

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 3:00 P.M.

Field Trip: Sunset Birding at Seawall Beach

Today is "World Shorebirds Day". Join Doug Sutor for an evening of birding at Seawall Beach for migratory shorebirds. Doug will provide some educational materials and go over the identification of expected species, in the parking lot at Morse Mountain before the trip begins.

➤ Meet at Morse Mountain parking lot at 3:00 p.m. FMI Doug at 841-1951.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

Board Meeting – 6:00 P.M.

➤ **Location: Gordon Smith's home, 21 Bodwell St., Brunswick.**

Call for directions 725-0282.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 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 10, 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.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 AND

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 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 north end of Bath Plaza, across from McDonald's 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 about the second trip.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 8:00 A.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 Jay Stormer at 449-1177.

Celebration of Life for Stella Walsh Date, place and time: TBA

October

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

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 and co-host Jay Stormer for any part, or all of the day. FMI call Gordon at 725-0282.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 9 A.M.-12 P.M.

Work Morning: 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 planning purposes.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 7:00 A.M.

Field Trips: Green Point Farm WMA, Dresden

See Sunday, September 24 for Trip Description

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 8:30 A.M.-12 P.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 8:30 a.m. at north end of Bath Plaza across from McDonald's, or 9:00 at Head Beach, Hermit Island, Route 216, Phippsburg. FMI call Doug at 841-1951.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24

Board Meeting – 5:00 P.M.

➤ **Location:** Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick – Seminar Room.

Program: Lake Baikal – 7:00 P.M.

Speaker, Lena Moser

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

Lake Baikal, the pearl of Siberia, is a truly astonishing place, holding a fifth of the world's fresh water and is home to 1,500 plant and animal species, 80% of which are found nowhere else on earth. Born in Tajikistan, now living in Maine, Lena leads eco-tourism trips and will share her photos and experiences of this unique place.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 8:00 A.M.

Field Trip: Waterfowl of Sabattus Pond

John Berry will lead this trip to Sabattus Pond in Sabattus. 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.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 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 Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

November

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 5:00 P.M.

Board Meeting – 5:00 P.M.

➤ **Location:** Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick – Seminar Room. **Program:**

Round the World Birding – 7:00 P.M.

Speaker, Becky Marvil

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

summer of 2015, Becky Marvil spent 30 days traveling around the world in a private plane, from the US to Newfoundland, Azores, Turkey, Oman, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Taiwan, Russia, and Alaska. In addition to learning about different cultures, she enjoyed focusing on the birds, photographing many species and learning about regional family variations and similarities from one stop to the next. A unique way to experience bird life around the globe!

December

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 8:30 A.M.

Field Trip: Waterfowl Walk, Giant's Stairs on Bailey Island

Join 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.

This year we are dedicating the Christmas Bird Counts *in memory of Stella Walsh*. We will miss you, Stella, but we know you'll be with us in spirit.



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

Field Trips: Christmas Bird Counts Bath–Phippsburg

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

Field Trips: Christmas Bird Counts Brunswick–Freeport.

Birders of all ages and experiences are welcome. The CBCs usually begin early in the morning and last most of the day. The weather can be very iffy, but at the very least, cold and windy. Dress very warm, as you'll be outside much of the time. If you can't venture out with our teams, then consider doing bird counts at your home feeders. Submit the best estimates of birds in your yard—species and numbers. If you would like to participate as a team or individual, please contact Doug Suitor at 841-1951 or dougsuitor@gmail.com. FMI or changes in the trip, please check our website close to the trip date: www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting.



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PHOTO BY ERIC MASTERSON

Leach's Storm-Petrel



PHOTO BY JAY STORMER

American White Pelican