

The Christmas BRRRRRd Count

2017 Bath/Phippsburg and Freeport/Brunswick
Christmas Bird Count Summaries

This year, Don Hudson, a CBC veteran and co-compiler with Stella Walsh, “retired” after working the Bath/Phippsburg CBC since 1984. We also mourned the passing of Stella, dearest friend and compiler of the Freeport/Brunswick CBC.

The counts themselves were both quite different. The early Bath/Phippsburg count was the warmer of the two events starting at 12 degrees, with the high reaching a toasty 28 degrees. The 32 participants tracked down 80 species over the course of the day right in line with our 30-year average of 80.6 species. Highlights included the return of an Atlantic Puffin to the count for the first time in 10 years, a couple of Snowy Owls and a decided lack of “winter finches”.

The Freeport/Brunswick count, held on its new date of the Friday before New Year’s, was a more challenging affair. Temperatures began the day at -12 degrees and never really made much of an attempt get above 0. Regardless, the 31 dedicated birders searched the frozen bays and documented 60 species, our second lowest count since it was restarted in 1995. Highlights of this count were heated car seats and warm winter gloves. Be sure to visit Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count website for a photo gallery of birds seen across the country as well as historical results and details about this 118th Annual Christmas Bird Count <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

Thanks again to all the participants of the CBC. We look forward to 2018 as we hope for an invasion of winter birds.

Doug Suitor

The Naturalist’s Notebook

A book review by John Berry

I was introduced to this book at the Maine Audubon authors’ talk in late October. While they discussed the importance and benefits of being an attentive observer of the natural world, a key point for me was the emphasis on taking notes on what you see. I had attempted to keep a journal years ago, that ended up being a commentary on the weather, what I did, and where I went, but nothing about what I saw. Lacking meaningful information over several years, I gave it up and threw it out.

The *Naturalist’s Notebook* is different. Nat Wheelwright and Bernd Heinrich, co-authors of the book, are noted biologists and nature educators. They provide guidance on how to become a naturalist, an observer of the natural world around you wherever

you live, how to record meaningful notes on your observations that will help you analyze data over time, and suggestions for experiments you might perform.

The first half of the book is the guide for how to keep a journal, with suggestions of where you might focus your attention whether in a rural or urban setting. The second half of the book is a five-year calendar format with eight days for all five years, on a two-page spread, designed to compare what you see the first week of May, over a five-year period. For instance, you can document when you see your first Yellow-rumped Warbler, then anticipate and compare its return in following years. This notebook can be a compendium of noteworthy events, such as the first dandelion blossom, the first Monarch butterfly, the first Maple blossom, or the first frost, yet doesn’t require an entry every day. In fact, Heinrich suggests doing a small sketch of something you observed in the



A Herring Gull in the winter sky.



An icy bay



Bernd Heinrich (L) is professor emeritus of biology from the University of Vermont. Nat Wheelwright (R) is a biology and ornithology professor at Bowdoin College. Both have kept journals for many years, samples of which are included in the book.

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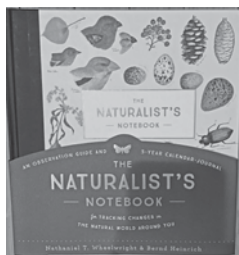
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NOTEBOOK, from page 1

unused spaces. The book itself is “coffee table” quality with Heinrich’s wonderful artwork illustrations on the cover and its gilt-edged pages, but while you might be tempted to keep it tabled, it is clearly intended to be used almost daily.

I purchased the book at the event, but after perusing the materials, decided that

it would be an ideal tool to help my grandchildren become connected to the natural world and be better observers. So they now have their own copies.



Hog Island Audubon Camp offers an exciting new program for teens

Readers of *The Call* know that Merrymeeting Audubon grants scholarships to students in elementary, middle, and high schools so they can attend various age-appropriate, Audubon summer camps in Maine. Last Fall’s issue of *The Call* outlined a comprehensive summary of the camps’ programs.

This summer, the Hog Island camp in Bremen is offering a new program entitled “*Mountains to Sea Birding for Teens*.” This is an intensive 6-day, 5-night program that will study woodland and coastal bird species in Maine. The first few days will be spent at Maine Audubon’s Borestone Mountain Sanctuary looking for woodland species such as the Boreal Chickadee and the Spruce Grouse.

The group will return to the Bingham Cottages on Hog Island and search for shore birds, nesting species, and puffins. Camping conditions are rustic: participants will spend each night in sleeping bags, will have limited access to electricity, and no access to the internet. Campers will be encouraged to create nature journals and field notebooks throughout the week.

One teen camper, Zoe, attended a Hog Island camp last season. This is what she said about her experience:

I could think of few things that would compare to the week I spent at Hog Island last summer. I got the opportunity to spend a whole week on an island with endless birding and educational opportunities, as well as kind people willing to share their love and knowledge of birds with me. Going into the program, I considered myself an observer of birds in the natural world, but seeing the passion and enthusiasm of the birders around me further piqued my curiosity and [my] own enthusiasm. Whether we were taking a silent hike through the woods to hear bird calls, listening to a lecture on bird behavior, or waking up at 4:00 a.m. with the birds to record their calls, every moment spent at Hog Island was truly special.

Zoe’s camp and high school experiences have helped her clarify what she really likes to do. She volunteered at the *Family Days* event at Hamilton Audubon Sanctuary in West Bath, and made a video of that event. One of her teachers supports Zoe’s enthusiasm by suggesting new projects for her to pursue.

Merrymeeting Audubon’s newly-established **Chuck Huntington Scholarship Fund** is pleased to offer a full scholarship (\$1295) for one teenager to attend this new program this summer. Applications are available at local area high schools and on the Chapter’s web page. This is a unique opportunity for an aspiring biologist or ornithologist, or anyone interested in pursuing a career in the environmental sciences. We look forward to awarding this scholarship and hearing about our recipient’s adventure next Fall.

Ted Allen



Maine Audubon’s Borestone Mountain Sanctuary buildings will house campers attending the new Hog Island program, “*Mountains to Sea Birding for Teens*”. The participants will spend the first part of their week living here while looking for a variety of woodland avian species. *Photo courtesy Hog Island National Audubon.*

Beginning birders want to know...

Q: We've discussed fall migration, but what makes birds decide to migrate in the spring and how does weather and climate affect that?

A: Spring migration, the mass movement of birds toward their breeding grounds, is a move to areas of high or increasing food and nesting locations. The long distance migration of many of our summer visitors probably evolved over thousands of years and is, we believe, controlled by genetic makeup incorporating responses to weather, food sources, and day length. Likely, our tropical migrants moved north for the seasonal abundance of food and increased daylight, that studies indicate allow them to raise roughly twice the number of young as those birds which remain and nest in the tropical locations.

Spring migration is believed triggered primarily by day length. Spring migrants are in two general categories, the long distance migrants that come from South America or tropical regions, and the short distance migrants that are coming from areas as close as Massachusetts. Generally speaking, the challenges for the short distance migrants from weather or climate change are not as severe, although unusual late season cold weather can pose problems for birds that rely on flying insects. They also can time their departures based on the local weather that usually is not drastically different in seasonality from their intended destinations, and has the same effects from climate change.

The long distance migrants have much more of a challenge. The weather in Costa Rica, for example, is no indication of the weather in Maine or in the boreal forests of Canada. Studies of climate change indicate that changes in the northern portions of the globe are changing faster than in the tropical regions, making adaption more difficult. Warmer, earlier springs here mean that the bounty of caterpillars, the primary food source for many of our nesting birds, is hatching earlier since that is driven by temperature.

Some studies have indicated significant declines in the populations of birds that arrive too late for the caterpillar hatch. One action that we can take that may lessen the impact is to plant native plants in our neighborhoods, providing more food sources, and thus more food, even if later in the insects' life cycle.

John Berry and Karen Carlisle

Workday for Wildlife



Over Earth Day Weekend (April 21-22, 2018), Maine Audubon and Maine Audubon Chapters will organize and lead a series of volunteer opportunities designed to benefit our communities and the environment.

Project opportunities will vary in different parts of the state, but some of the possibilities include:

- Planting native plants
- Removing invasive plants
- Stewardship or trail work
- Litter clean-up
- Advocacy opportunities

Project specifics will soon be published on Maine Audubon's website, and interested volunteers can sign up for their project of choice.

FMI: volunteer@maineaudubon.org

The CBC just won't be the same without Don



Don Hudson, (right) with the laptop, compiling the Christmas Bird Count for Bath/Phippsburg with some of our Chapter's regular bird counters.

Don Hudson has been the pillar of the Bath/Phippsburg Christmas Bird Count since 1984. We want to thank Don for his many years of service on the CBC as well as many other contributions to the environmental community in Maine.

In the 1980's we just had one count centered on Squirrel Point Light, and actually published the entire count in *The Call*. In the 1990's Don renewed the "Bowdoin" [Brunswick/Freeport] count (with help from Chuck Huntington) and we have done the two counts ever since.

Don was president of Merry-meeting Audubon from 1988-90 and also served on Maine Audubon's Board. He was executive director at the Chewonki Foundation for many years. He has done many things for the environment in Maine ranging from his expertise with alpine plant life to being a leader in bringing renewable energy to Maine.

This year, Don "passed the baton" to Doug Suitor who took over coordinating the Christmas Bird Counts. He did an excellent job with a little help from Don.

Our sincerest "Thanks", Don, for all you have done and all you continue to do.

George Sergeant





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www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting

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Guest speaker
Eric Topper

Maine Audubon's
Director of Education



"Bringing Nature Home"

Focusing on Maine birds and their habitats, Eric will introduce what individuals and groups can do, including what plants to choose and how to manage and maintain our gardens for their full ecological function and benefit. He will also discuss the large selection of beautiful native flowers, shrubs and trees we can incorporate into our yards to attract and support a multitude of birds, butterflies and other interesting native wildlife.

MMA Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 24 7:00 p.m.

Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick, ME

Desserts and Coffee provided by
Union Street Bakery

Reservations must be received by April 16th
FMI call Karen Carlisle at 841-1608



There is no charge to attend the Annual Meeting.
If you wish to donate to the Merrymeeting Scholarship Fund,
provisions will be made to accommodate you.

If you are unable to attend the Annual Meeting, please consider
making a tax-deductible donation to the **Merrymeeting Audubon
Scholarship Fund**. Mail your donation to: MMA Scholarship Fund,
c/o Steve Spear, 9 Livernois Drive, Topsham, ME 04086. Thank you.



Field Trips & Nature Programs 2018

www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting

Please Take Note:

- If you're planning to go on a Field Trip, please call the Trip Leader the night before to confirm.
- Inclement weather might cause trips to be cancelled. Please call the Trip Leader before venturing out.

February

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 8:30 A.M.

Field Trip: Reid State Park, Georgetown

Reid State Park is a magnificent site in winter. Join Doug Suitor to search for coastal birds including grebes, loons, and scoters. We will also look for Purple Sandpipers, and wintering songbirds. Dress warmly. Bring lunch or a snack.

➤ Meet at north end of the Bath Plaza parking lot near McDonald's to carpool. FMI call Doug Suitor at 841-1951.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 7:00 P.M.

Board Meeting: 5:00 - 7:00 p.m

Public Program: The Transformative Land – an artist residency in Glacier Bay, Alaska with Michael Boardman

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

In the summer of 2015, wildlife artist Michael Boardman was awarded a unique artist residency in one of the most dynamic and wild landscapes in the world—Glacier Bay, Alaska. This wilderness experience allowed him to connect with wildlife biologists to study and sketch whales, birds, bears and the incredible biodiversity of Alaska's Southeast. His presentation will include stories of his experiences, photos and images of his artwork.

Michael was raised in Maine, and specializes in field sketching and watercolor. His love of animals,



WATERCOLOR BY MICHAEL BOARDMAN

wilderness and art have led him to residences at Baxter State Park, Acadia, and Audubon's Hog Island as well as Alaska. When not searching the state for unusual raptors he can be found running Coyote Graphics, a screen printing company that markets his artwork on shirts to various Audubon shops and museums across the country.

March

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 7:00 A.M.

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, and 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 waterfowl. Dress warmly and bring lunch.

➤ Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 a.m., or call John Berry at 632-7257 for a meeting spot and time in Yarmouth, or at Salisbury Beach.

TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 7:00 P.M.

Board Meeting: 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Public Program: Birds and Beasts of Botswana with John Berry

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

John travelled to Botswana for two weeks in March of 2017, staying in four safari camps. He will share photographs from the trip.

John is a long-term board member of Merrymeeting Audubon, leads local field trips and is one of the authors of "Birdwatching in Maine". He is also an avid birder and photographer.

April

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 11:45 A.M.

Field Trip: Waterfowl of Bowdoinham

Join Merrymeeting on this outing to Brown Point in Bowdoinham in search of early waterfowl migrants. The area has been a good site in the past for unusual species such as Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Green-winged Teal, as well as more common treats such as Snow Goose, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, and Blue-winged Teal.

➤ Meet at 11:45 a.m at Brunswick Hannaford's to carpool or at the

Bowdoinham Town Landing at 12:30 p.m. Trip is dependent on the ice being out. Please check with www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting for trip updates; or call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 7:00 A.M.
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 lunch or a snack.
➤Meet at the north end of the Bath Plaza parking lot near McDonald's at 7:00 a.m. to carpool, or at the Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20 a.m. FMI call Maurice Dauphin at 389-2585.

SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 7:30 A.M.
Field Trip: Brunswick Landing

We will be exploring a variety of habitats for early returning migrants.
➤Meet at the parking lot off Admiral Fitch Avenue (.6 miles from Bath Road entrance) opposite the Southern Maine Community Center Complex at 7:30 a.m. FMI contact Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 7:00 P.M.
Annual Meeting: 7:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Eric Topper – Bringing Nature Home

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

See Back Page of this newsletter for more details.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 7:30 A.M.
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.
➤Meet at the north end of the Bath Plaza parking lot near McDonald's at 7:30 a.m. to carpool, or at Sewall Woods on Whiskeag Road at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Ted Allen at 729-8661.

SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 7:00 A.M.
Field Trip: Paper Mill Trail, Lisbon

We will walk the paved trail along the Sabattus River looking for early returning vireos and warblers including the Louisiana Water-thrush.
➤Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 a.m. to carpool or at the trail head parking lot at the corner of Rte. 196 and Frost Hill in Lisbon at 7:30 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

Introducing the Maine Bird Atlas

Beginning in 2018, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife will be launching a new state-wide project to document the birds that call Maine home with the "*Maine Bird Atlas*". One of the main goals is to confirm which species are breeding in the state and provide an overdue update to the "*Atlas of Breeding Birds in Maine*", which was done from 1978-1983. Much has changed since then: Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Carolina Wrens were absent in the first atlas but have now become very common, especially in southern and coastal Maine. Wild Turkeys were just becoming established at that time and only found in a few sites. But what has happened to American Kestrels, Bobolinks, and Eastern Meadowlarks? Where can you still hear Eastern Whip-poor-wills? This is our chance to document and quantify all these changes.

To do this, we need your help! The "*Maine Bird Atlas*" is a citizen-science project, relying on observations from people across the state. Whether you are hardly interested in birds or a full-fledged birder, anyone can contribute. Only you can report if a chickadee is singing in your backyard (possibly breeding), or carrying old dog hair into a birdhouse (probably breeding), or feeding their recently fledged young (confirmed breeding). If you live in a city, Rock Pigeons and House Sparrows count too. From casual observations to "adopting a block" that you'll check regularly throughout the nesting season, all efforts will be greatly appreciated as every bird counts.

Using the established **eBird database**, a citizen-science project run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the "*Maine Bird Atlas*" will have its own portal (eBird.org/atlasme) for submitting observations and exploring data in real time. You can stay current with the project and learn about trainings and other activities by following on Facebook at facebook.com/mainebirdatlas/ or online at mainebirdatlas.org.

Doug Hitchcox



Original prints are for sale with all proceeds going to the Merrymeeting Audubon Chuck Huntington Scholarship Fund. For more information contact Jay at jcs@jstorm.com.