



The Call

Volume 48, Issue 2, FALL 2018

Lawn care: avian friend or foe?

by John Berry

Sure, we all love green, healthy-looking lawns and we take great pains to achieve them. But how many of us stop to think, on a grass-roots level (pun intended!) about the adverse consequences those “great pains” levy on the surrounding environment, particularly the avian population?

A multi-“cided” problem

Pesticides are the fourth largest cause of bird mortality after windows, feral cats, and high-tension wires, according to the “*Sibley Guide to Birds*”.

Weed killers, fungicides, and insecticides can be highly toxic to birds, by directly poisoning them and by altering the ecosystem they depend on for survival. It’s estimated that at least 67 million birds die in the U.S. each year due to pesticide toxicity.

In addition to bird mortality, pesticides cause harm by:

- Killing insects that are eaten by birds.
- Accumulating in fish and small animals consumed by predatory birds.
- Killing plants that produce edible seeds.
- Causing nonlethal but dangerous health issues among avian survivors including: thinned eggshells, suppressed immune systems, and disorientation while migrating.

Even products labeled “nontoxic” affect the environment in ways we may not see or understand.

The domino effect

Overall, insecticides not only destroy the birds’ insect food, but they generally contaminate the air, plants, leaves, seeds and flowers. Fertilizers contribute to water pollution, another bane to avian health. At risk are lakes, streams and eventually the ocean—the endpoint of all watersheds—which are paramount to birds and their food sources.

According to the (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center, many birds die each year when they ingest pesticide granules or eat poisoned insects.

The pursuit of the “perfect” lawn now drives many homeowners to use an unprecedented volume of herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, fertilizers and herbicide-fertilizer combinations known as weed and feed products that offer little or no benefit to turf.

There are an estimated 40 million acres of lawns in the U.S. and we put 80 million pounds of toxic products on them, a rate *ten times higher than agricultural use.*

However, there are ways to restore the balance of nature.

Welcome two new Board members

Susan Fenn — is recently retired and lives in Arrowsic with husband, Bill and Husky, Miya. She previously lived in Bird Creek, AK and Casco, ME.

Susan loves exploring the Maine outdoors, learning about the natural world, and enjoying mild adventures in all seasons including birding, kayaking, hiking, skiing and camping. She received a BS degree from University of New Hampshire, with past work experience in technical sales and sales support at NCR, Boise Cascade/Mead Paper and Dielectric. Currently she serves on the Arrowsic Conservation Commission and was a past board member of Loon Echo Land Trust.

Donna Salko, a native of Pennsylvania, stumbled upon birding through her passion for photography. When the common backyard birds were well-documented photographically, she sought to learn more. She was involved in updating the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, and trapped Canada Geese for a Game Commission research project.

Today her passion for birding and photography cannot be separated. Donna published two children’s books with her lyrical animated verse and her own photography. She reads “*Gertie’s*

Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter

Officers

Karen Carlisle, *Secretary* 833-6033
John Berry, *Treasurer* 632-7257

Board of Directors

Ted Allen • Glenn Evans
Susan Fenn • Carol Jack
Dee Miskill • Jane Robinson
Donna Salko • Gordon Smith
Jay Stormer

The Call

Dee Miskill, *Editor*

Scholarship Committee

Bronda Niese (*chair*)
Steve Spear (*co-chair*)
Ted Allen • Kathy Claerr
Sue Sergeant

Coordinators

Ted Allen, *Archivist*
Maurice & Cathie Dauphin, *Bird ID*
Doug Sutor, *Christmas Bird Count*
Glenn Evans, *Hamilton Sanctuary*
Carol Jack, *Membership*
Carol Jack, *Refreshments*
Karen Carlisle, *Speaker Programs*
Jane Robinson, *Field Trips Coordinator*
Jay Stormer, *Web site & Publicity*

E-mail us at:

merrymeeting@maineaudubon.org

DONNA SALKO, from page 1

Birdies: A Children's Guide To Friends That Fly" and her second title "*Quackers and Friends*" to pre-school children and elementary students in Pennsylvania and Maine.

Her third book "*Wings Of The Wetlands*" is currently a work in progress. Donna is awed by all that Maine has to offer, both in avian variety and in the friendly support from fellow birders. She is honored to be a member of Merrymeeting Audubon.

"In nature nothing
exists alone."

Rachel Carson

MMA Scholarships: Educators become students at Hog Island

Two very lucky teachers from local area schools were recipients of MMA scholarships to the National Audubon Hog Island Educators Week. One awardee, **Marianne Warner**, had waited years to take advantage of this Hog Island opportunity, but timing was not in her favor... until now. The other awardee, **Tina Wood**, was a "first timer" and so thrilled to be chosen. Here are personal highlights of their experiences:

Marianne Warner — On a cold February morning, I opened my e-mail to discover that I would be attending the Hog Island Educators Week on an MMA scholarship! Finally! I knew I would refresh my natural history knowledge, gather teaching ideas, and become rejuvenated as a teacher, but I had no idea what an inspiring, uplifting community I would join. National Audubon has done a spectacular job of attracting and supporting a truly diverse group of educators, spanning many ages, areas of the country, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and varieties of teaching experience. Expert leadership from the tightknit Hog Island staff, coupled with involvement of classroom and environmental center teachers, blossomed into a week of inspirational, experiential, and lifelong learning.

Each day and night, we enjoyed exploring together in many places: from the boat, in the forest, in the milkweed field, in the tide pools, along the rocky shores, and in the seine net pulled through the edge of the sea. We observed both living and nonliving natural wonders: the resident osprey family, seals close to camp, rock formations on the

shore, bioluminescent plankton, puffins, guillemots, terns, and harbor porpoises, stars and planets through the telescope, and a multitude of life in each habitat we explored.

At a moving final share session,

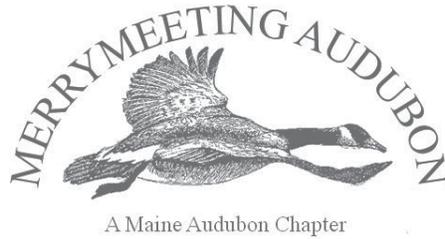


Hog Island Educators exploring natural wonders of the sea by pulling up a seine net filled with various living and nonliving items of interest.

participants expressed that they had come out of their shells, experienced new joys and discoveries, followed their curiosities with supportive, knowledgeable staff, and renewed a sense of wonder about the natural world.

Tina Wood — [Dear Merrymeeting Audubon] I am home after a life-changing experience at the National Audubon Camp on Hog Island, thanks to you! I saw my first Puffin, Roseate Tern and Wilson's Storm Petrel. I learned the Golden-crowned Kinglet's song, saw fledgling Northern Parulas bothering their tired parents, happened upon a Merlin, and discovered the feathers of two osprey chicks stolen from the nest in the middle of the night by a Great Horned Owl! While the birds captured my imagination and the vast beauty of the island and Muscongus Bay made my heart soar, it was the

See **TINA WOOD**, page 7



Upcoming Field Trips and Nature Programs

(See the full trip descriptions inside)

SEPTEMBER

- Saturday, September 1 Curtis Farm Preserve
- Sunday, September 2 Morning Birding at Popham Beach
- Saturday, September 8 Morse Mountain
- Sunday, September 9 Androscoggin River Trail
- Sunday, September 23 Green Point Farm WMA
- Tuesday September 25 Board Meeting at Gordon Smith's home

- Saturday, September 29 Bird Banding at River Point

OCTOBER

- Saturday, October 6 Brunswick Landing
- Sunday, October 7 Green Point Farm WMA
- Saturday, October 13 Work Morning – Hamilton Sanctuary
- Sunday, October 14 Dawn to Dusk: THE BIG SIT!
- Sunday, October 21 Green Point Farm WMA
- Tuesday, October 23 Board Meeting & Public Program
- Saturday, October 27 Hermit Island

NOVEMBER

- Sunday, November 4 Waterfowl of Sabattus Pond

DECEMBER

- Saturday, December 1 Waterfowl Walk, Giant Stairs
- Saturday, December 15 Christmas Bird Counts: Bath - Phippsburg
- Friday, December 28 Christmas Bird Counts: Brunswick - Freeport

“ Must we always teach our children with books? Let them look at the stars and the mountains above. Let them look at the waters and the trees and flowers on Earth. Then they will begin to think, and to think is the beginning of a real education. ”

David Polis





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.*

September

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1,
7:00–11:00 A.M.**

**Field Trip: Curtis Farm Preserve,
Harpswell**

We will explore this Harpswell Heritage Land Trust preserve for Fall migrants, including shorebirds on Basin and Curtis Coves. Expect to walk on easy/moderate trails (about 2.5 miles total). No restroom facilities available.

➤ Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:00 a.m. or at Curtis Cove Preserve **lower parking lot** off Basin Point Rd. at 7:30 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 7:00 A.M.

Field Trip: Morning Birding at Popham Beach



Black-bellied Plover

Join us for a morning of birding at Popham Beach for late shorebirds and other migrant species.

➤ Meet at the gate (closed until 9:00 a.m.) at 7:00 a.m. FMI Doug Suitor at 841-1951.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 8:00 A.M.

Field Trip: Morse Mountain

The Bates Morse Mountain Conservation Area is a great spot for



Piping Plover

watching the Fall migration of raptors. Maurice & 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 Dauphin at 389-2585.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9,
7:30–11:00 A.M.**

**Field Trip: Androscoggin River Trail,
Lisbon**

We will walk an easy paved path (about 3 miles total) along the river to observe Fall migrants.

➤ Meet at the Brunswick Hannaford

at 7:30 a.m., or at the Sabattus River boat launch parking lot off Route 196 at Frost Hill Avenue at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23,
7:30–11:00 A.M.**

**Field Trip: Green Point Farm WMA,
Dresden**

Expect a wide variety of Fall migrants in the woodlands, fields and wild rice flats of this diverse State Wildlife Management Area. We will walk paths, farm roads and open fields (about 2.5 miles total). Wear footwear suitable for walking in dew-covered grassy fields which might contain ticks. No restroom facilities available.

➤ Meet at the east end of the Bath Shopping Center at 7:30 a.m., or at Green Point Farm by the green shed at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Board Meeting—6:00 p.m.

➤ *Location: Gordon Smith's home, 21 Bodwell St., Brunswick. Call for directions: 725-0282.*

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29,
7:15 A.M.–12:00 P.M.**

Field Trip: Bird Banding at River Point Conservation Area, West Falmouth

Join Biodiversity Research Institute for a demonstration of bird banding. We will also walk the easy trails (up to 2 miles total) seeking Fall migrants. Rest-rooms available nearby.

➤ Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:15 a.m., or at Hannaford at River Point off Route 100 in West Falmouth at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.



October

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6,
8:00–11:00 A.M.**

Field Trip: Brunswick Landing

We will explore a variety of habitats for Fall migrants. Expect to walk paved and hard-packed paths (up to 2.5 miles total).

➤Meet at the parking lot off Admiral Fitch Avenue (.6 miles from Bath Road entrance) opposite Southern Maine Community College complex at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7,
7:30–11:00 A.M.**

**Field Trip: Green Point Farm WMA,
Dresden**

Expect a wide variety of Fall migrants in the woodlands, fields and wild rice flats of this diverse State Wildlife Management Area. We will walk paths, farm roads and open fields (about 2.5 miles total). Wear footwear suitable for walking in dew-covered grassy fields which might contain ticks. No restroom facilities available.

➤Meet at the east end of the Bath Shopping Center at 7:30 a.m., or at Green Point Farm by the green shed at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13,
9:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.**

**Work Morning at Hamilton Sanctuary,
West Bath**

Directions: Take the New Meadows exit off US 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 Rd. nearly to its end. You will see the Sanctuary sign and a 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 14,
DAWN TO DUSK — THE BIG SIT!**

Field Trip: THE BIG SIT!, Wharton Point (Maquoit Landing), Brunswick
Join Merrymeeting Audubon's co-captains, Gordon Smith and Jay Stormer, for this fun event. We will be staking out a 17-foot diameter circle, and from within the circle we will attempt to observe/hear all birds in the surrounding area. Observations (and listening) will begin at dawn (or before, depending on the weather) and continue until dusk, or after. Anyone is welcome to join The Big Sit! at any time during the day, and stay for as long as desired.

➤Meet at Wharton Point (head of Maquoit Bay) at the intersection of Maquoit and Woodside Roads. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21,
8:00 A.M. –12:00 P.M.**

**Field Trip: Green Point Farm WMA,
Dresden**

Expect a wide variety of Fall migrants in the woodlands, fields and wild rice flats of this diverse State Wildlife Management Area. We will walk paths, farm roads and open fields (about 2.5 miles total). Wear footwear suitable for walking in dew-covered grassy fields which might contain ticks. No restroom facilities available.

➤Meet at the east end of the Bath Shopping Center at 8:00 a.m., or at Green Point Farm by the green shed at 8:30 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 7:00 P.M.
Board Meeting—5:00 - 7:00 p.m.**

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

**Public Program: South Texas Rarities,
presented by Doug Hitchcox, Maine
Audubon Staff Naturalist.**

In February 2018, a group of Maine Audubon members took a private tour with Field Guides Inc. to South Texas' Rio Grande Valley.

In winter, this subtropical region is known to produce unpredictable vagrants that make this a "must visit"



Altamira Oriole

location for every North American birder. Supplement the rarities with large numbers of wintering waterfowl, sparrows, warblers, raptors and coastal birds. The trip list was extensive! Join one of the tours co-leaders and Maine Audubon's Staff Naturalist, Doug Hitchcox, for a photo-presentation to highlight the birds seen, places visited, and shenanigans of pursuing birds along the Rio Grande Valley (plus a preview of 2019 tours!).

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27,
8:30 A.M.–12:00 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 8:00 a.m. at the north end of Bath Plaza across from McDonald's, or 8:30 at Head Beach, Hermit Island, Route 216, Phippsburg. FMI call Doug Suitor at 841-1951.

November

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4,
8:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.**

Field Trip: Waterfowl of Sabattus Pond

John Berry will lead this trip to Sabattus Pond in Sabattus, ME. In the Fall, Sabattus hosts large con

centrations of migrating waterfowl, including Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, scaup, and Coots.

➤Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 8:00 a.m. to carpool. FMI call John Berry at 632-7257.

December

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1,
8:30 – 11:30 A.M.**

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

Join John Berry and Merrymeeting Audubon 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 three hours. FMI John Berry at 632-7257 or Berry.John@comcast.net.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15
Field Trips: Christmas Bird Counts:
Bath —Phippsburg**

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 Sutor at 841-1951 or dougsutor@gmail.com. ➤FMI or changes in the trip, please check our web site close to the trip date: www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28
Field Trips: Christmas Bird Counts
Brunswick — Freeport**

(See description above)

Circle 'round, birders!

by Gordon Smith

It's time for The Big Sit! The what? The Big Sit! Veteran birders probably know what it is, but for any neophytes out there, think of it as a *stationary* bird-a-thon. Instead of traveling to find the birds, you *stay in one place* observing the birds passing by.

The Big Sit! guidelines begin with a real or imaginary circle, 17 feet in diameter, from which participants can observe passing birds. MMA has established its Big Sit! circle at the large rock monument at Wharton Point on Maquoit Bay in Brunswick. Only birds observed and/or heard by someone *inside* the circle can be counted.

If a bird is seen or heard that cannot be identified reliably, due to distance or obstacles, a person 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 cannot be counted, unless someone inside the circle observes or hears it as well.

Since the inception of MMA's The Big Sit! in 2012, an impressive total of 108 bird species has been compiled, topped by two rarities never seen at Wharton Point before—an American White Pelican in 2012 and a Leach's Storm-Petrel in 2015.

The Big Sit! is an annual event occurring on the second Sunday of October. It is a nationwide, as well as global, event. Everyone is welcome, it's free, and you can stay for as long or as short a time as you like. (See *Sunday, October 14* in this Field Trip section for more details).



“
It was in the forest that I found ‘the peace that passeth understanding’” Jane Goodall

Beginning birders want to know. . .

by John Berry & Karen Carlisle

Q: Do ducks migrate and change their color like some other birds?

A: Some ducks do migrate, but not all. Generally, they are not long-distance migrants, meaning that they do not fly to Central or South America like the warblers. They primarily migrate to find available food and escape extreme winters.

Ducks can be separated into two general categories: **dabblers** and **divers**, referring to their feeding methods. Dabbling ducks, often called puddle ducks, rarely dive; they feed by dipping their bills in the water or tipping forward. As you might suspect from the feeding methods, they are normally found in shallow water. Members of this group include: Mallard, American Black Duck, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, American Widgeon, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, and Wood Duck. These ducks need to have open water



Male Wood Duck

to feed, so they leave their normal fresh water for southern areas where the fresh water doesn't freeze. A few of them do winter over by moving to areas where there is shallow salt water so they may also feed on exposed mud.

The diving ducks are found in deeper water and normally dive completely underwater for food. The most common of these locally are: the Common Eider, Ring-necked Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and the three scoters and three mergansers. Many of these move from fresh to salt water for the winter, and do move southward where the salt water is not frozen. Long-tailed and Harlequin Ducks are only found locally in the winter since they breed in northern Canada and move south for open water.

As for changing color, most ducks have sexual dichromatism, which means that the males and the females have different coloration. Some males and females of the same species were thought to be different species by early naturalists. Most ducks have two body plumages per annual cycle that may differ markedly according to sex and season, but these are more extreme in males. Female coloration stays more muted year round. Most ducks acquire breeding or alternate plumage on a different schedule than our familiar back yard birds. Male Mallards, for example, are in breeding plumage from October to May, with the dark greenish head and pale body, but from June to September, they resemble the brownish female.



Common Goldeneye

PESTICIDES, from page 1

Eco-friendly Alternatives

To reduce or eliminate your use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides: use disease- and pest-resistant plants, cultivate native plant species, and reduce your lawn area.

Healthy lawns contain a variety of insects and their relatives, an important part of the natural balance. Bugs break down leaf litter or become a source of food for other insects, birds or mammals. If you manage your yard *naturally*, you can increase natural insect predators like ladybugs, praying mantises, frogs, toads and, of course, birds. Leaf mulches and compost also add nutrients to soil and eliminate the need for weed killers and fertilizers.

By applying horticultural knowledge instead of pesticides and fertilizers, **Yardscaping** practices can create quality turf that delivers recreational and eye-pleasing benefits, and is safe for birds and humans.

For more information about Yardscaping in Maine, go to: <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/lawn/index.htm>

TINA WOOD, from page 2

wildly, culturally diverse group of instructors and participants that gives me great hope for the future, and inspired me to continue thinking about nature in innovative ways. I will not forget this experience and your most generous gift!

I am using my new-found knowledge tomorrow to present a workshop to Friends of Cobbossee campers about watersheds, birds and alewives! Thank you for this gift of hope!



Merrymeeting Audubon
36 Federal Street
Brunswick, ME 04011

www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE

PAID

PORTLAND, MAINE
PERMIT NO. 92



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Merrymeeting Chapter

YES! I want to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in Maine as a **new** **renewing** member.

Annually \$30 Senior/Volunteer/Student | \$40 Individual | \$50 Household | \$100 | \$Other _____

Monthly Enroll me in the Frequent Flyer Program and charge my credit card each month:

___ \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$15 ___ \$25 Other \$ _____

View all member benefits online by visiting maineaudubon.org/memberFAQ

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Email: _____

Seasonal Address: _____ from _____ to _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____ Please charge \$ _____ to my credit card (below)

Card # _____ Exp. date: ____ / ____

Join or renew online:
maineaudubon.org/join

Our community of members is integral to our success on behalf of Maine's diverse wildlife and habitat. When you join or renew your Maine Audubon membership, you ensure that work can continue.

Thank you!

Please make checks payable to Maine Audubon | 20 Gilsland Farm Rd, Falmouth, ME 04105 | 207-781-2330 ext. 230

The white newsletter stock is FSC certified 100% post consumer recycled and chlorine free; the yellow stock is 30% post consumer recycled.