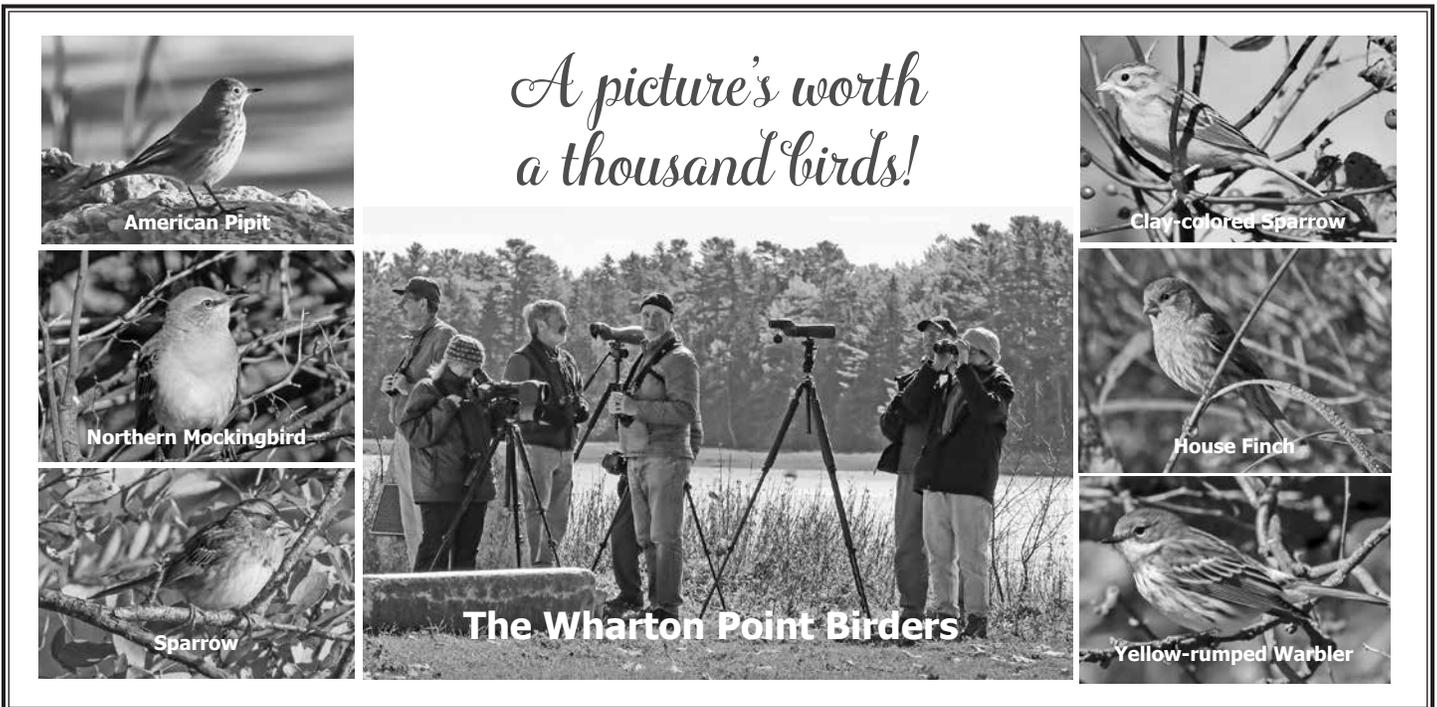


Avians abound for this year's Big Sit!



It's amazing, when you think about it, what activity and excitement a 17-foot circle can produce! As odd as that sounds, Merrymeeting Audubon celebrated our 7th annual **Big Sit!** on Sunday, October 14th at Wharton Point in Brunswick. Thirteen avid birders observed an impressive 66 species from within our circle. Following two years of very poor weather (rain/wind), we were fortunate to have great viewing conditions this year, resulting in the second highest species total.

The day began before dawn with a pair of **Barred Owls** calling back and forth nearby. As dawn was beginning to break, a **Wilson's snipe** flushed from the marsh and flew overhead uttering harsh call notes.

Participants observed 21 species of water and marsh birds from our Big Sit! circle, including geese, ducks and four kinds of shorebirds. But one of the best birds of the day, spotted by Jane Robinson, a Chapter Board member, was a cooperative **American Bittern** hunting and moving very

slowly (as bitterns do) along the edge of a marsh panne.

It was also a good day for raptors (seven species observed), including two **Northern Harriers** who kept us entertained with their acrobatic hunting forays back and forth over the nearby weedy field.

We viewed impressive numbers of small land birds, including eight kinds of sparrows. Among the various sparrows we enjoyed a first-time-ever treat, following a **Clay-colored Sparrow** several times during the day in and out of weedy, scrubby growth.

To round out the bird sightings, we noted five species of warblers, including a nice-looking **Orange-crowned Warbler** and two **Cape May Warblers**. What a day!! Since the inception of Merrymeeting Audubon's Big Sit! seven years ago, we've documented a grand total of 111 bird species. That's quite a feat when you think it's all done from within a 17-foot circle!

Gordon Smith

Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter

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E-mail us at:

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Our Web Site:

merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org

“Our task must be to free ourselves....by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”

– Albert Einstein

Summer camp memories 2018

The midnight call of the Loons echoing over Lake Cobbosseecontee; huddling around a crackling campfire as our counselors tell ghost stories; sleeping all night under an overturned canoe during a rainstorm; singing “The Ashgrove” in two part harmony on the bus. These are just a few of the irreplaceable memories I have from my childhood experience as a camper.

The Chuck Huntington Scholarship Fund helps to create such memories for area children each summer, and the feedback—thank you notes and letters we received from our 2018 Tanglewood and Bryant Pond 4-H campers—makes it clear that camping leaves an indelible impression on young people. When you come face-to-face with the natural world for the first time you are not likely to forget that “porcupines have orange teeth,” or “owls can turn their heads really far,” or that “goats are fluffy.” The sights and sounds of camp life are magnified and amplified, and the sense of smell is engaged like never before. Our campers included the following in the category of “smells that I remember”: bug spray, lasagna, dirty feet, mint, garlic bread, goat manure, and pine trees.

The list of favorite meals was long and varied, and included Vegan Lo Mein, Fancy Dinner Night, and of course, pizza. The 4th of July hot dogs and burgers were high on the list, as were Tanglewood’s plum scones. One parent wrote that as soon as her son returned home from camp he asked her to “Get that plum scone recipe, Mom!”

Children love to learn and our campers reported an interesting array of skills, ideas, and facts acquired during their week-long adventure. They learned how to cook over a camp fire and keep the fire going when it rains, how to carve bow drills, make robots, and build debris shelters. One camper was impressed by the fact that “goats will eat everything,” which is okay because “animals have better digestive systems than people.” Favorite activities included kayaking, swimming, hiking, face painting, and one camper’s preferred event, “siesta.”

Perhaps the best way to summarize the importance of summer camp is to include the note we received from Sam, a Bryant Pond camper: “I will never forget my excitement when I got your letter [approving his scholarship]. It was a dream come true. My week at camp was an amazing experience. I have been telling everyone about this camp all summer. Thank you again for this opportunity”. – Sam

The scholarship committee has already begun making plans for the summer of 2019. We invite all members of Merrymeeting Audubon to join us in this important venture. If you would like to make a contribution, please make checks payable to: MMA and notate on the MEMO line: **The Chuck Huntington Scholarship Fund**. Send it to: **The Chuck Huntington Scholarship Fund**, c/o Steve Spear, 9 Livernois Drive, Topsham, ME 04086.

Steve Spear

The Chuck Huntington Scholarship Fund gratefully acknowledges the continued support of *Wild Bird Supply*,
541 U.S. Route 1, Freeport.



Field Trips & Nature Programs 2019

www.maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting

Please Take Note:

If inclement weather (rain, strong winds, extreme temperatures) is predicted, the Field Trip may be canceled. Please call the Trip Leader before venturing out.

JANUARY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5
7:00–11:00 A.M.

Field Trip: South Coastal Birding

On this annual outing from Ogunquit to Biddeford Pool, we should see many of Maine's wintering birds including Harlequin Duck, scoters, Purple Sandpipers, and maybe a Snowy Owl or



Harlequin Ducks

King Eider. Bring a lunch or a snack.

➤ Meet at north end of the Bath Plaza parking lot near McDonald's at 7:00 a.m. or at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20 a.m. or at a meeting place and time in Ogunquit. FMI call Maurice Dauphin at 389-2585.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13
8:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M.

Field Trip: Winter Coastal Birding, South Harpswell

As time and conditions allow, we'll search Pott's Point, Basin Point and Mitchell Field for waterfowl, gulls and various wintering land birds.

➤ Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 8:30 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.



Snowy Owl

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20
8:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M.

Field Trip: Reid State Park, Georgetown

Reid State Park is a magnificent site in winter. We'll search for coastal birds including grebes, loons and scoters. A Snowy Owl is always a possibility, as are various winter finches.

➤ Meet at the Bath Shopping Plaza parking lot, across from McDonald's, at 8:30 a.m. or at Reid State Park main parking area overlooking The Lagoon at 9:00 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 6:00 P.M.

Board Meeting: Gordon Smith's house

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 9:00 A.M.

Field Trip: Cape Elizabeth Coastal Birding

We'll visit coastal birding sites in Cape Elizabeth including: Portland Head Light, Dyer's Cove, Two Lights State Park and Kettle Cove.

➤ Meet at Brunswick Hannaford (to carpool) at 8:00 a.m. with Gordon Smith, 725-0282; or 9:00 a.m. at Portland Head Light with Andrew Gilbert, 207-329-7525.

FEBRUARY

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 7:00 P.M.

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

Public Program: Birding in Eastern Australia and Tasmania, John Berry and Nick Lund, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

➤ Location: Curtis Memorial Library, Morrell Room, Brunswick

MARCH

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 8:30 A.M.

Field Trip: Reid State Park, Georgetown

Winter in Reid State Park offers wonderful opportunities to search for coastal birds including grebes, loons, and scoters. Join Doug Suitor to also look for Purple Sandpipers and win-



Purple Sandpiper

tering songbirds. Dress warmly. Bring lunch or a snack.

➤ Meet at the Bath Shopping Plaza parking lot, across from McDonald's, to carpool. FMI call Doug Suitor at 841-1951.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 7:00 P.M.

Board Meeting: 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Public Program: Celebrating Maine's Wild Creatures with Ed Robinson, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

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

Ed grew up in the beautiful Finger Lakes area of Western New York, and spent all his spare time exploring the woods, wetlands and fields around home. Though he has traveled the

world for his career, using diverse skills in photography, biotechnology and aquaculture, he has always nurtured his love of nature. Living on Orr's Island in Harpswell, Ed enjoys Maine's wildlife on land and sea. An active outdoorsman, he owns an old farm in NY where he looks forward to spending many weeks each year doing active habitat management there. In his spare time, Ed serves as a trustee of the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT), is a board member for Maine Operation Game Thief, and sings with the Nor'easters Barbershop Chorus. After many years of writing for a variety of publications, Ed recently published his first book, "Nature Notes from Maine: River Otters, Moose, Skunks and More."

APRIL

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 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.



Blue Heron

➤ Meet at the Bath Shopping Plaza parking lot, across from McDonald's, at 7:00 a.m. to carpool, or at Brunswick Hannaford at 7:20 a.m. FMI call Maurice Dauphin at 389-2585.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 8:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.

Field Trip: Waterfowl of Bowdoinham

We'll search access points along

Brown's Point Road for waterfowl and early Spring land migrants.



Robin

➤ Meet at Brunswick Hannaford at 8:00 a.m. or at the Town Landing Maily Waterfront Park in Bowdoinham at 8:30 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 8:30 A.M.–1:00 P.M.

Field Trip: Brunswick Landing

We'll explore a variety of habitats for early returning migrants. Expect to walk paved and dirt paths (up to 2.5 miles total).

➤ Meet at the parking lot off Admiral Fitch Avenue (.6 miles from Bath Road entrance) opposite the Southern Maine Community College complex at 8:30 a.m. FMI call Gordon Smith at 725-0282.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23

Annual Meeting: 7:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: TBD

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

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 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 Bath Shopping Plaza parking lot, across from McDonald's, to carpool or, at Sewall Woods on Whiskeag Road at 8:00 a.m. FMI call Ted Allen at 729-8661.

SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 7:30 A.M.–12:00 P.M.

Field Trip: Green Point Farm WMA, Dresden

We'll search for early Spring 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 may contain ticks.

➤ Meet at the Bath Shopping Plaza parking lot, across from McDonald's, 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.



Chipping Sparrow



Pine Warbler



Fox Sparrow

PHOTO ATTRIBUTIONS:

THE WHARTON POINT BIRDERS, AMERICAN PIPIT, HOUSE FINCH, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER AND SPARROW: DONNA SALKO; NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD, AND CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: JOHN BERRY; PINE WARBLER AND FOX SPARROW: JAY STORMER; HARLEQUIN DUCKS, SNOWY OWL, PURPLE SANDPIPER, BLUE HERON, ROBIN, AND CHIPPING SPARROW: ADOBE STOCK.

Maine Bird Atlas: 2018

The Maine Bird Atlas is a five-year (2018-2022) effort to survey distribution information on breeding birds in the State of Maine. The 2018 breeding season has been completed, and results are available on the *Maine Bird Atlas eBird* site.

The basic survey unit of the Maine Bird Atlas is the Atlas Block (3.0 x 2.9 miles in size). The state has been divided into 4,082 Blocks, of which there are approximately 80 Atlas Blocks in the Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter local area. Some local Blocks have been surveyed extensively, while others have been surveyed little or not at all.

When is an Atlas Block considered complete? When:

- at least 20 hours (10 hours in remote areas of the state) has been spent actively surveying in the Block
- each habitat type present in the block has been checked
- surveys were conducted throughout the breeding season
- 50% or more of the bird species detected in the Block are categorized as “confirmed breeders”.

In our local area, at least six Atlas Blocks are considered “complete”. An example of a completed Block is the Atlas Block code, “Brunswick SW”, which includes most of central Brunswick. Many folks have participated in breeding bird surveys in the Brunswick SW Atlas Block. The results for 2018 show a total of 73 bird species listed as possible, probable or confirmed breeders. Of the total of 73 species, 38 have been observed and listed as confirmed breeders.

What is a confirmed breeding bird? Confirmed breeding is evidenced by an adult observed carrying nesting material, building a nest or occupying a nest. Other evidence of confirmed breeding is an adult observed carrying food, feeding young in the nest or carrying a fecal sac away from the nest. Confirmed breeding also is evidenced by recently fledged young observed while still dependent upon adults.

The 2019 breeding season will be here before we know it and everyone is encouraged to participate in breeding surveys. If you wish to join a group, Merrymeeting Audubon will be scheduling breeding bird survey field trips in June, July and August of 2019. Stay tuned!

Gordon Smith

Beginning birders want to know. . .

Q: Recently a friend told me that her parrot was 50 years old. That made me wonder how long my backyard birds live and what impacts their longevity.

A: Very few of your backyard birds die of old age. The oldest American Robins in our yards may be six years old although they have been known to live to fourteen years. Most songbirds have a less than 25% chance of surviving their first year of life. If they survive to fledge from the nest, then their chances increase to 50% of surviving the next year. Those odds don't improve after the first year, so if 100 birds fledge, fifty will be around the next year, twenty-five the next, then 12 and so on. Birds that migrate long distances, such as warblers, face additional risks, and the average life expectancy is about two years. The heaviest

See **BIRDERS**, next column

BIRDERS, from previous column

post-fledgling mortality occurs among inexperienced young birds, and once they become adults, the mortality percentage still remains high.

What causes the high mortality? The risks are habitat destruction, window and vehicle collisions, outdoor cats, pesticides, severe weather, starvation, and predation. Your friend's parrot doesn't have to face these risks, most of which are human-created.

John Berry & Karen Carlisle

Meet Nick Lund



Nick Lund is the new Outreach and Network Manager at Maine Audubon, Gilsland Farm.

He was born and raised in Maine and has been a birder since 2005. He writes about birds under the name *The Birdist*, and is published regularly in *Audubon Magazine* and on the National Audubon website, as well as Slate.com, *National Parks Magazine*, *National Geographic* online, et al.

He returns to Maine from Washington DC, where he spend seven years working at the National Parks Conservation Association to keep oil and gas development away from national parks. He's thrilled to bring his wife and young son to Maine, and is eager to help connect Maine Audubon to new audiences around the state.





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Brunswick, ME 04011

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