

# THE CALL



September 2025 - February 2026



## Legislative victories!

*Ches Gundrum, Director of Advocacy  
Maine Audubon*

*Maine Audubon has faced many struggles over time with its efforts to protect wildlife and the environment through legislation. Recently, we have achieved many victories to secure the viability of the natural environment and wildlife habitats for future generations.*

The first session of the 132nd Maine Legislature concluded in June and it was one of our most productive ever. Maine Audubon worked across political aisles to help secure important victories for Maine wildlife and habitat. Defending against attacks on environmental protections is just as important as advancing pro-wildlife policies. Despite the many challenges we faced this session, I am pleased to report that we helped secure some serious wins for wildlife in Maine this session. Below are just a few examples of our “victories”:

### **We opposed and defeated:**

LD 56 & 69—Repeals Maine’s landmark plastic bag ban.

LD 173—Reduces funding to combat aquatic invasive species by exempting certain watercraft from registration requirements.

### **We supported several issues to become laws:**

LD 497—Expands protections for the terrestrial habitat surrounding state-recognized “Significant Vernal Pools”.

LD 1543—Establishing a Maine Green Schools Network, which will collaborate with other state agencies, tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to help promote environmental, outdoor and climate learning programs in our schools.

LD 1323—Requires Board of Pesticides Control to conduct a robust study to analyze impacts of neonicotinoids and neonicotinoid-treated seeds on pollinators and people in Maine.

LD 1529—Advances state planning efforts to conserve mature forests and under-developed, remote ponds.

None of these victories would have been possible without the pro-active support of our membership and the people of Maine. The natural treasures, be they a clean and safe environment or the beauty of the abundant wildlife, need our advocacy in all measures to be enjoyed by future generations. We won’t give up!



*Can we afford  
to let these treasures  
disappear?*



## Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter

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Dee Miskill, *Editor*

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### PHOTO ATTRIBUTIONS:

BUTTERFLY, SEAGULL, BUMBLEBEE, WHITETAIL DEER FAMILY, DUCKS:  
**DONNA SALKO**; SNEAKY PAT FEEDER: **GLENN EVANS**; EVERY BIRD FROM  
SEA TO SHINING SEA BOOK: **ETHAN AND INGRID WHITAKER**; OWL  
RELEASE: **AVIAN HAVEN**; VILLAGE WEAVER BIRD, MALE LION, LEOPARD,  
KORI BUSTARD: **ED ROBINSON**; BOBOLINK, FAWN: **DONNA SALKO**;  
MITCHELL FIELD: **DEE MISKILL**.

## New changes to The CALL

Dee Miskill, *Editor*

Our regular readers might notice some differences to *The CALL*'s formatting.

Instead of publishing all our Guided Bird Walks (formerly Field Trips and Nature Programs) in a 1-to-3 page insert, the Walks' and Special Events' information has been distilled down to highlights in this newsletter. However, you can find all the details and directions for the Walks on our website: [www.merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org](http://www.merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org). You can also sign up for "*Remind Me*" notifications, download *The CALL*, and learn more about our Chapter via [maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting](http://maineaudubon.org/merrymeeting).

# Local kids enjoy the rewards of another summer at camp!

Peggy Page, *Scholarship Committee Chair*

As Maine's warm weather welcomed another summer camp season, Merrymeeting Audubon's scholarship awards continued to help scores of happy kids create lifelong memories of exciting days at camp — and 2025 was no exception. Thanks to the generosity of our members and donors, two teens enjoyed National Audubon's famous Hog Island camp, and 15 lucky kids gathered around the campfires of UMaine's 4H overnight camps. Scholarship awards go to kids who live in the areas served by our Chapter—Bath, Brunswick, Topsham, Harpswell, Boothbay and Bowdoinham. A complete list of eligible towns can be found on the Scholarship page of our website: [www.merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org](http://www.merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org).

The Scholarship Committee loves the letters that kids send with their applications. One girl headed for Bryant Pond camp told us "I am excited to attend *Junior Explorers* because I get to stay overnight and catch and study wildlife (but not bears!)" An 11-year-old from Arrowsic attended *Survivor Camp*. He told us he looked forward to "learning to survive in the woods. My family likes to hike and if I get lost in the woods I will be able to fend for myself." A wise 10-year-old from Bowdoinham looked forward to the smell of camp: "It is the smell of the past, how air should smell without pollution, without screens, without the pressure to rely on modern day technology".

Applications for the 2026 season will be posted on our web page in the new year. Do you know kids who would enjoy this wonderful experience? Neighbors' kids? Your own kids or grandkids? Please encourage them to apply. You never know where the next John Muir or Rachel Carson will come from! In the next issue of *The Call*, we will share some feedback from this year's campers!

Your generosity makes it possible for us to offer these opportunities to kids. We also greatly appreciate support from local organizations: The Davenport Foundation and the Harpswell and Bath Garden Clubs.

To make a donation, please make your check out to **Maine Audubon**, and write **Merrymeeting Scholarship Fund** on the **memo** line. Send your check to Merrymeeting Audubon, P. O. Box 51, Brunswick, Maine 04011. Thank you!

### Welcome new members Jan - May 2025

Charlene Budrius  
Dale Gardner  
Danielle & Kent Grimes  
Suzanne Hamilton  
Phil Keefe  
Lyn Rodger  
Gordon Taylor  
Susan Ellis  
Ficha Gordon & Stuart McNeil  
Nour Maya Haddad  
Carolyn Martin  
Sandra Scholar  
Jennifer & Chase Shroder  
Brett & Sandra Thompson

Susan Carlson & Tom Allen  
Karri Clohosey  
David Fieldgate  
Richard Hilgendorff  
Megan & Clayton Kyle  
Debra Trotz & David Tarpinian  
Robert Belanger  
Duane Hinkley  
Peter Morgan  
Maranda Nemeth  
Karen Reiche  
Elizabeth Reuman  
Gabrielle & Sasha Stojanovic  
Lucy Childs

Renee & Keith Gray  
Karen Mayo  
Alexandra McAuliff  
Diana Seidel  
John & Katherine Skoski  
Julia Teitel & Geoff Parker  
Greg & Florette Braun  
Brad Burnham  
Jill Lorum  
Sarah Loud  
Halliday Moncure  
Joanne Moore  
Bridget VerVaet

# Bobolinks: fascinating birds with a funny name

Peggy Page

When people find out you are a birder, one of their first questions is often “What’s your favorite bird?” I used to shrug this question away by saying I loved them all equally, but I have come to realize that isn’t true. I confess that I do have a favorite, one I eagerly look forward to in spring: Mister Bob O. Link.



A denizen of grasslands and hayfields, the male Bobolink is conspicuous in every way — in looks, song and behavior. His smart black, white and cream plumage is sometimes described as a “tux worn backwards”. It is certainly not typical for a bird to be light on its back and black on its belly! In full display over a hayfield, he shows off his brilliant white back and wing patches while he helicopters over the grass, pouring out his jangling, almost manic song. A member of the blackbird family, the bobolink is polygamous. He is trying to impress — and mate with — as many females as he can. Her duller, buffy

plumage helps her hide in her grassy nest, but early in the breeding season, her flights can be just as exuberant as his!

Male bobolinks arrive first, reaching the grassy fields of Maine in early May to establish the best territories. In a week or two, the females arrive, and the show begins! Displaying males can be found in large fields across the northern United States and southern Canada. In our Chapter’s area, there are several great places to enjoy them. The fields of Pennellville in Brunswick are my favorites. I have counted as many as 50 birds, once the young are flying about. Between early May and early August, any large grassy field in Maine can host good numbers of bobolinks.

By mid-August, breeding is wrapping up and the males are molting their gaudy suits to take on a plumage more similar to the females. They will leave their hayfields and gather in coastal marshes for their incredible migration. They are headed for the agricultural fields of western and southern Bolivia and Argentina. It’s an annual round trip of nearly 12,500 miles!

The perils of migration are not the only threats faced by bobolinks. Their populations have decreased dramatically over the years, mostly because of the decline of hayfields in their breeding grounds and persecution as agricultural pests in wintering areas. But they have allies here in North America — groups like **The Bobolink Project** and **Ag Allies** offer advice and incentives for farmers willing to delay their haying until the young bobolinks are safely on the wing. More than 50 farmers in Maine have signed on. They are helping ensure we can enjoy the exuberant displays of bobolinks over the summer fields of Maine for years to come!

## Join the flocks of MMA’s Christmas Bird Counters

Peggy Page & George Sergeant

Most birders are familiar with the annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC), but for those not in the know, National Audubon has sponsored an annual Christmas Bird Count for 126 years, to date. This event has been an important citizen science project every year since 1899. In fact, it is the longest-running community science project in the nation! Merrymeeting Audubon (MMA) has hosted 1 or 2 counts a year for at least 40 years.

From December 14 until January 5, thousands of observers across the continent tally up birds in hundreds of “count circles”. Their data contributes vital information about bird populations and distribution. Each “count circle” comprises a 15-mile diameter range. MMA manages two of those circles: Freeport-Brunswick and Phippsburg-Georgetown.

An example of MMA’s 2024 results, in the Freeport-Brunswick data alone, showed: 32 counters in several groups ventured out to a circle that included coastal and inland Freeport, Brunswick and Harpswell. They catalogued 73 species. Some of the unexpected birds included: a few late-lingering Dunlin, Swamp Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers. They tallied more than 450 American Robins, 335 Black-capped Chickadees and a circle “high” of 20 Carolina Wrens. For those who live in a count area but can’t go out for a whole day, you can do a **feeder count** at home.

MMA always welcomes new counters. If you would like to be a “circle” or “feeder” participant please call or email **Peggy Page** [207-650-0549/mpage815@gmail.com] or **George Sergeant** [207-442-8195/suegeosergeant@comcast.net]. Please consider joining us for this important, rewarding and enjoyable event.

For 2025 count dates and information on how to join in, check the Merrymeeting Audubon website—[www.merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org](http://www.merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org)—in the fall.



## MMA Scheduled Events: Fall 2025 - Winter 2026

### Guided Bird Walks—Fall 2025

Merrymeeting Audubon is pleased to continue our Guided Bird Walks. All walks are free and open to everyone, beginning naturalist to advanced birder. Walk Leaders are: Gordon Smith, Peggy Page, John Berry and Glenn Evans, who will provide bird ID and commentary on birds seen and heard. Anyone interested in walking, seeing new places, enjoying fresh air and nature in a variety of habitats, Welcome! Registration is not required.

**NOTE:** Maps of directions for each property are available on our website: [merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org](http://merrymeeting.maineaudubon.org).

### AUGUST

#### Kate Furbish Preserve - East

Saturday, August 30 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Brunswick Landing Leaders: Gordon & Peggy

### SEPTEMBER

#### Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, September 6 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
(southern coastal Maine, various locations) Leader: Glenn

#### Curtis Farm Preserve/ Mitchell Field

Sunday, September 7 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
South Harpswell Leaders: Gordon & Peggy

#### Androscoggin River Trail

Saturday, September 13 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Lisbon Leader: Gordon

#### Brunswick Landing Perimeter Trail

Saturday, September 20 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Pine St. entrance Leader: Gordon

#### Green Point Farm WMA

Saturday, September 27 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Dresden Leaders: Gordon & Peggy

### OCTOBER

#### Fitzgerald Conservation Area/Bay Bridge Landing Wetland Park

Saturday, October 4 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Brunswick Leader: Gordon

#### The Big Sit!

Sunday, October 12 Dawn to Dusk  
Brunswick Leader: Gordon

#### Volunteer Work Morning Hamilton Sanctuary

Saturday, October 18 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
West Bath Manager: Glenn Evans

#### Hermit Island

Sunday, October 19 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Phippsburg Leaders: Gordon & Peggy

### NOVEMBER

#### Waterfowl at Sabattus Pond

Sunday, November 2 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Leader: John

#### Waterfowl Walk at Giant's Stairs/ McIntosh Lot

Sunday, November 30 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Bailey Island Leader: John

### Special Events: Sept. '25—Feb. '26

Merrymeeting Audubon hosts guest speakers whose topics offer unique perspectives, based on personal experiences in nature. These events are free and open to the public, no registration required. These presentations are held at the Curtis Memorial Library in Brunswick, unless otherwise noted. They run from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

### SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

Ethan and Ingrid Whitakers', *"Every Bird from Sea to Shining Sea"* highlights their adventures tracking 708 bird species during their 2024 Big Year across the Continental United States.

### OCTOBER 27, 2025

Kim Chavez and Marcy DeCoff from Avian Haven, *"A Bird's Rehabilitation Journey"*. They will discuss their roles in rehabilitating injured and orphaned wild birds with the goal of returning them to their natural habitats.

### FEBRUARY 23, 2026

Ed Robinson, *"Southern Africa"*. World traveller, Maine naturalist and author will share his treasure trove of experiences and photos exploring the exotic beauty of southern Africa.



## SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

Local birding couple **Ethan and Ingrid Whitaker** are excited to present their **2024 Big Year** across the Continental United States. Follow their one-of-a-kind journey across the country through their photos and videos of many of the 708 species of birds they identified as they:

- Visited 37 states
- Climbed snow covered mountains
- Hiked national parks and off-shore Islands
- Crossed back and forth through the southern border wall
- Sped down icy northern roads
- Stared at dumpsters for 20 hours in a 100 degree Miami heat wave
- Took dozens of airplane flights and boat trips
- And had the time of their lives!



## OCTOBER 27, 2025

**Avian Haven**, located in Freedom, Maine, is dedicated to the rehabilitation and care of injured and orphaned wild birds with the goal of returning them to their natural habitats. **Kim Chavez**, Clinic Director, and **Marcy DeCoff**, Rehabilitation Manager, will share what they do and why, the history, mission and operations of Avian Haven, and how we can help. Kim and Marcy will also recount "**A Bird's Rehabilitation Journey**", following a barred owl's journey from injury—to admission—to release.



## FEBRUARY 23, 2026

**Ed Robinson's** one-hour presentation on the stunning wildlife of southern Africa is sure to please. Enjoy this beautiful photographic tour of the exotic creatures found in three countries of the Dark Continent. Learn about lions, elephants, leopards, cheetahs, wart hogs, monkeys, and more. The talk chronicles a three-week trip to experience wild places and African culture with stays in several remote safari camps. Writer and photographer Ed Robinson of Orr's Island, Maine is a widely traveled naturalist and will share his knowledge of the region and its beautiful creatures.

Photos (left to right-top): Village Weaver Bird, Zambia; Scarred male lion, Botswana. (left to right-bottom): Leopard, Botswana; Kori Bustard, Zimbabwe

# Kids' Corner

## Whose Gertie?

Donna Salko

I love birds, and I love sharing that passion with kids! Twenty seven years ago, at the birth of my first grandchild, there were already two living grandmothers. My daughter suggested I be called "Gertie" as it was the name we used whenever we secured a new babysitter for our family.



At a very young age, this first granddaughter made me a birdhouse from popsicle sticks and wrote "Gertie's Birdies" over the birdhouse opening. A simple inspiration!

My best friend and neighbor—another simple inspiration—moved to a different part of the state where very few birds came to her feeder. She said she would even welcome blue jays, which she previously threw sneakers at to chase them away. I printed a postcard of one of my blue jay photos and wrote on the back:

Mr. Jay,  
In blue and grey,  
What is it that you have to say?  
With all the noise that you display  
You'll chase the other birds away!

We laughed and she joked "you should write a book". When my second grandchild was born I did just that. The first rudimentary book was on a copy machine at Office Max dedicated to my grandchildren.

Who knew that over the years my books would have reached diverse audiences in Switzerland, Japan, North Dakota, and Pennsylvania. I've entertained many an auditorium or classroom of young children with these books and have enjoyed discussions about backyard birding with them.

Today, I have two hard cover titles: "Gertie's Birdies: A Backyard Guide To Friends That Fly" and "Gertie's Birdies: Quackers And Friends". I recently collaborated with a now-grown granddaughter to publish a coloring book, and am currently finishing my third title: "Gertie's Birdies: Wings in the Wetlands".



The Family Program at Hamilton Sanctuary is a wonderful way to engage kids with nature, whether hiking the trails or letting them try being a "Sneaky Pat" bird feeder. It might just be an experience they will never forget, or spark a new interest they would like to pursue.

## Family Program at Hamilton Sanctuary

Donna Salko

Hamilton Sanctuary in West Bath, with its beautiful vistas overlooking salt marsh, mudflats and open water along with stunning wildflower fields, was the perfect setting for the *Family Birding Program* hosted by Glenn Evans and Marianne Warner, Audubon caretakers of the sanctuary. The program included a guided bird walk along the 2.9 miles of trails and the "Sneaky Pat Challenge".

Geared for 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade beginning birders, participants had the opportunity to observe resident birds living around these 90 acres of varied habitat. The hike took them past an old ice pond, now a fresh water habitat with frogs and tadpoles, through the forest looking for the barred owl and her newly-fledged offspring, and opening onto the saltwater marsh where Snowy Egrets and terns were feeding. The wildflower fields had plenty of bluebird boxes. Bluebirds and Tree Swallows had occupied nests, with parents flitting in and out with food for their chicks.

The engaging "Sneaky Pat Challenge" comprises stuffed dummies in plaid shirts, jeans, caps, gloves and trays of birdseed. Willing participants substitute themselves for stuffed human replicas. Weeks before the event, Glenn and Marianne set the scene with the stuffed dummies to attract any birds. For the eager volunteers they had plaid shirts and gloves for them to wear, replacing the plaid imposters with real humans. Parents awaited the birds' arrival from a nearby blind. While a 100% success rate is not guaranteed, it still is worth the anticipatory joy.

The sanctuary was established in 1987 by Millicent Hamilton, an avid birder and naturalist. Migratory warblers, flycatchers and sparrows share the space with herons, bitterns, ducks and mammals like mink, fox and deer. It is located on a peninsula in the New Meadows River.



# MMA's "Merci Bucket" List

1. To our wonderful Chapter members and donors who keep our Scholarship coffers filled.

2. To the families who encourage their kids to try out our summer camps.

3. To the beginning and veteran birders who attend our Guided Bird Walks.

4. To the volunteers who join our projects with a passion to protect the environment and preserve habitats for Maine's wildlife.

5. To those who give their time and energy advocating for better policies, practices and laws on behalf of wildlife and our environment.

6. To those who believe that future generations should enjoy what nature has to offer.

7. To those who want to share their

love of and appreciation for nature with the next generation through education, activities and personal examples.

8. To those whose yards provide food, shelter and untold hours of observing avian friends and assorted wildlife.

9. To the dedicated gardeners who prefer native plants and safe lawn care practices.

10. To those who brave the winter cold to count birds for the annual Christmas Bird Counts.

11. To all the Maine Audubon Chapters who support each other in our common mission.

12. To our dedicated Board, without whose talents, passions, ideas, and tireless energy our Chapter would not accomplish all that we do.

## Helping birds in crisis

Nick Lund, Advocacy & Outreach Manager  
Maine Audubon

It is estimated that one million birds die *per day* around the country after colliding with glass windows. As fall migration gets underway, millions of birds will be moving south through Maine. Some will mistakenly collide with reflective glass windows. We need your help to identify which birds are dying, and which windows they're hitting.

If you find dead or injured birds below your windows, please take the following actions:

1. Take photographs of the bird in place.
2. Email images with the date and address to [BirdStrike@MaineAudubon.org](mailto:BirdStrike@MaineAudubon.org).
3. No need to collect the bird. You can move it to a safe place to decompose if you feel comfortable.
4. If you find an injured but *living* bird, please contact **Avian Haven** at 207-382-6761.

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## 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](http://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)

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

Join or renew online:  
[maineaudubon.org/join](http://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!**



**Merrymeeting Audubon**  
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## **MITCHELL FIELD**

*in Harpswell is a beautiful place to go birding, find occasional wildlife traversing the fields and wooded trails, or just to admire nature at her best. In fact, the beautiful photos on our front page were taken at Mitchell Field by Donna Salko, one of our very talented Board members. And, Gordon Smith, one of our expert Guided Walk Leaders, has a walk scheduled on September 7<sup>th</sup>.*

*If you've never been to Mitchell Field, it's a must-go-to place. If you have been there, you know what we mean!*

