

New volunteers join Merrymeeting Chapter

We are happy to welcome three new volunteers to the Merrymeeting Audubon Chapter. Many of you know that we spent a couple of months advertising for a new editor of *The Call*. Tulle Frazer, former editor, was delighted when **Dee Miskill** volunteered for the position.

Those who attended the Annual Meeting in April had a chance to meet Dee, and could see firsthand her enthusiasm and many ideas for *The Call*. Her experience includes producing newsletters for: the Mid Coast Hospital, St. Charles Borromeo Church, the Mid Coast Chapter of the American Red Cross, and the Orr's Island Library. Dee lives in Harpswell where she and her family are constantly entertained by the birds and assorted wildlife competing for the seed 'n' suet buffet in their yard.

We had an even longer search for new Scholarship Committee members. After several months, we finally connected with two very talented people. **Steve Spear** and **Gail Bruce** both have camp backgrounds and experience with the formalities of outreach and administration.

Steve is a Maine native who returned to Maine from Connecticut, where he served in public schools as a special education administrator. He is an experienced camper, having attended the Massachusetts Audubon Wildwood camp, as well as the YMCA camp here in Maine. He has a lifelong interest in birds and also enjoys photographing butterflies. Steve has two adult sons and resides with his wife, Rochelle, in Topsham.

Gail comes from an active Audubon family in northeastern Connecticut.

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• *The ongoing challenge of environment vs. habitat*

Breeding birds of the Josephine Newman Sanctuary: 1970-2014

The earliest photograph of the Josephine Newman Sanctuary, taken at the turn of the last century, shows a hillside with few trees. On the top is a small chestnut tree rising next to a large nineteenth-century house. That house became Josephine Newman's adulthood home, overlooking her well-known flower gardens populated by species of birds somewhat different from those we see today.

Change is inevitable

Today the garden has been taken over by staghorn sumac and bayberry, both scattered among foundation stones. Faster growing pines have challenged the chestnut tree. The 119-acre Sanctuary has been reforested. Recently trees have gradually invaded the field; wet marshes and alder swamps have become markedly dryer. Ducks which might have nested in the cattail marsh, and the American Woodcock which nested in the wet thickets adjoining the field, do so no more.

The environment changing the least is the *edge*.



American Woodcock

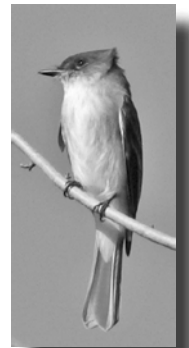
A saltwater tidal cove creates a border between two distinct environments, called an edge, which bounds three natural communities: hemlock, spruce-fir, and mixed forests. This variety provides nesting sites for diverse avian species, food for birds nesting off the

Sanctuary, and others which are flying through.

Challenges for breeding birds

We can glimpse the dynamics of bird reproduction in these communities by comparing two studies: the first, by Maine Audubon and many others in the early seventies; the second, by Merrymeeting Audubon in May and June of this year. The earlier survey recorded 38 species nesting in the Sanctuary; the recent count was 24.

Analysis of the differences provides us with a clearer view of how environmental changes affect the distribution of breeding birds. Which birds nested there in the seventies, and did not this past spring? For example, Phoebes build nests attached to man-made structures. Earlier, the large house and barn provided a perfect Phoebe nesting environment. Today, the only such building is the kiosk at the beginning of the main trail through the Sanctuary, and no Phoebe has chosen it yet.



Phoebe

Due to rapid reforestation practices, there are no more Kingbirds, Cedar Waxwings, or Song Sparrows, which are more commonly found in fields near dooryards and barnyards. The older survey records a Black-throated Blue Warbler nesting near Josephine Newman's garden. None were recorded this year.

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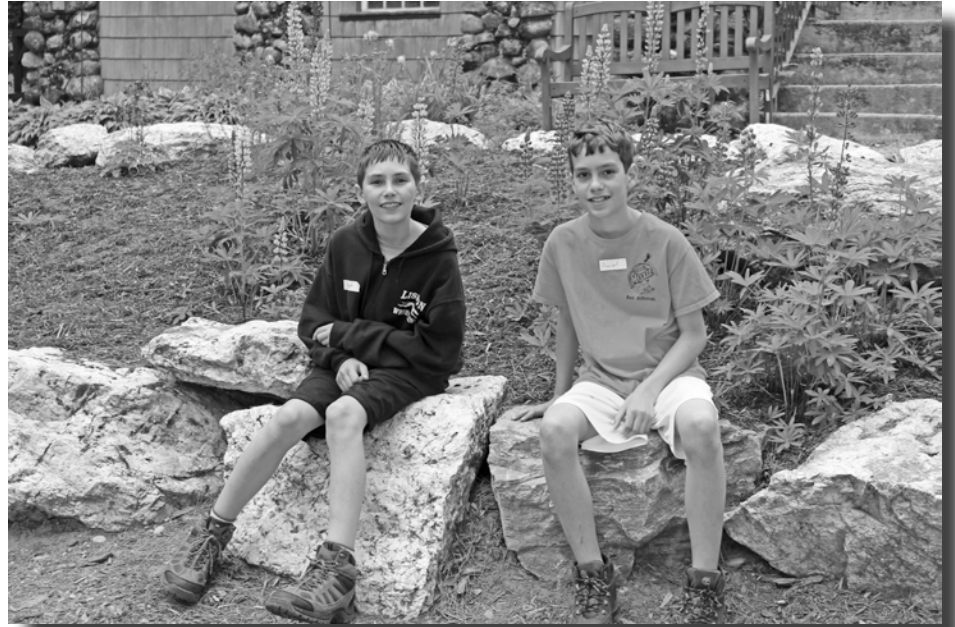
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Bird drawings courtesy of the private collection of Roy Winkelman. The Phoebe photo courtesy of Doug Suitor.

“**A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children.**”

John James Audubon



This summer, brothers Daniel, (*left*) and David Poulin, (*right*) attended the Bryant Pond 4-H Camp, in the Junior Maine Woodcraft Program, their first step in pursuit of becoming Registered Maine Guides.

News from Bryant Pond

MMAS Scholarship winners Daniel Poulin, age 11, and David Poulin, age 12, from Lisbon, ME, participated in the *Junior Maine Woodcraft* program at Bryant Pond 4-H Camp. This week-long program is the first step in becoming a Registered Maine Guide, a goal of many youngsters growing up in Maine, and includes learning some of the basic skills which a guide would need to take hunters, fishermen and others into the forests and wilder areas of Maine.

The boys wrote enthusiastic thank you letters telling about their experiences: living in a tent in the woods, learning how to make a fire in the rain using only one match, and cooking their food over a fire. They learned how to safely handle an axe, a saw and a knife. A favorite activity was the aqua zip line, which took the boys zipping over Lake Christopher and into the water.

The fourth day, heavy rain and a flood warning forced the campers back to the comforts of the main camp, living in cabins and enjoying the delicious food served in the dining hall. After each meal, all the campers did chores. These included dining hall cleanup, weeding the garden

and feeding the animals.

At the end of the week, both boys were excited to receive their Junior Woodcraft Badges. In their thank you letters, they also expressed their appreciation for the Merrymeeting Audubon's scholarships. They hope to return to camp next year to take *Maine Woodcraft*, the next step in becoming Maine Guides.

Letters from other Bryant Pond campers, as well as those campers who attended Tanglewood 4-H Camp on MMAS scholarships, should start coming in this month and into September. You can see them and photos of the campers posted on the scholarship program board and on display at the Merrymeeting Audubon Speaker meetings.

As always, we are grateful to our many generous co-sponsors who support the Merrymeeting Audubon Scholarship Program. The Poulin brothers are great examples of young people whose lives might be dramatically influenced by a week at an environmentally-based camp such as Bryant Pond or Tanglewood. Many thanks to all who gave!

Beth Bullock

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Another major environmental change is the reduced flow of water through the alder swamp thickets and cattail marsh. As a result, the Common Yellowthroat and Red-winged Blackbird are gone.

New hope

There are, however, four birds not listed by the studies of the seventies. The Tufted Titmouse is a new invader of the northern United States, and two now nest in the Sanctuary. Three other species are possibly oversights by earlier observers: Winter

Wren, Barred Owl, and Brown Creeper. All are common migrants to places such as the increasing maturity of forests on Sanctuary lands.

**Barred Owl**

Identification of the Barred Owl is easier at night, but fortunately, it was heard during the day for this survey. I know the owl nests there because I hoot back and forth to youngsters at night from my cabin which is less than a mile away from their nesting area.

Finally, the most common current breeding species in the Sanctuary are the Black-throated Green Warbler (13)

and the Ovenbird (11). A total of seven warblers breed in the Sanctuary, and they represent the largest

group of related species. The next most frequent are Vireos with three species. All are hard-wood forest dwellers.

Although Josephine Newman's major concern was the botany of mosses and their allies, she would have enjoyed adding the Titmouse to the many visitors at her feeders. We know about her feeders mainly from illustrations, cartoons, and writings by two friends, Harry and Eleanor Stone.

If Josephine were still there, the fields would probably still be cut for hay, and the birds which populated her farm environment might still be there: Grey Catbird, Song Sparrow, and maybe even the Black-throated Blue Warbler. As it is, the forest will continue to mature, water flowage through the Sanctuary will keep declining, and the natural world will continue to respond in new ways.

Ted Allen**Black-throated Green Warbler****Ovenbird****VOLUNTEERS**, from page 1

Every rare bird alert was part of her childhood education. She has been involved in scouting and affiliated camps throughout New England, both as a camper and counselor through college. Acquiring a degree in Biology, her career began with Marine Biology and then took a turn to Environmental Health and Safety for the next thirty plus years. She recently moved to Harpswell to reconnect with fond summer memories of Casco Bay.

Members of the Merrymeeting Board of Directors feel very fortunate to have these three new volunteers for the important work that we do.

*Ted Allen***Letter to the Editor**

Thank you for the hospitality shown to me at the August 7 picnic and board meeting. As the newly appointed liaison between the Board of Trustees and Audubon chapters around the state, I appreciated the tour of Hamilton Sanctuary's many trails, accompanied by Glenn Evans, president Ted Allen, and Jane Robinson.

The substantive content of the monthly meeting, which included discussions of youth scholarships and the Trip Schedule for the upcoming 4 months, demonstrated both the vitality of your chapter and the commitment of its members.

I hope you will take me, and equally new membership development coordinator, Agata Ketterick up on the offers we made at the meeting, when we told you it was our jobs to make the resources of Maine Audubon available to your board and members, to facilitate the continued good works of the Merrymeeting Chapter.

Sincerely,
Will Lund

MEMBER, BOARD OF TRUSTEES &
CHAPTER LIAISON, MAINE AUDUBON

Beginning birders want to know

Question: Now that many birds are leaving for Fall migration, would you please explain why birds leave and how they find their way to their alternate destinations?

Answer: Migration is a complex phenomenon, and scientists are still learning many of the details. The basic reason birds migrate is availability of food. A hummingbird needs nectar to survive and must fly to an area where flowers are blooming. Neotropical birds migrate from the tropics to Maine or further north for a longer day, and a more plentiful food supply to raise their young.

Birds find their way using several different techniques, but simply put, there are three basic tools: a *sun compass*, comparing the sun's apparent position with the bird's internal circadian clock. In effect, if the clock says it's nine a.m. and the sun is on the left, then the heading is south. Birds are able to detect polarized light allowing them to determine the sun's position even on cloudy days, and for a while after sunset. Some birds use a *star compass*, orienting on the north star in this hemisphere which is an absolute point of reference. They also have a *magnetic compass*, believed to be used by long-distance migrants. It was around 1970 that this fact was conclusively demonstrated. Because the migratory feats of birds are so amazing, people found them hard to believe and folklore developed to explain how the migration might be possible, including the belief that small birds hibernated.

John Berry and Karen Carlisle



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