



THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

Winter 2012



JUNE 19: ANNUAL MEETING

**Program: "Adventure to the Bottom of the World --
The Birds & Wildlife of the Southern Ocean & Antarctica."**

Speakers: Jeannette & Derek Lovitch

**Location: Kennebunkport Conservation Trust,
53 Gravelly Brook Road, Kennebunkport.**

Free & open to the public. For more information call 967-4486.

6:45pm: Annual Business Meeting

7:00pm: Social Time & Refreshments

7:30pm: Program

If we say, "A birding trip to Antarctica," what do you think of? Penguins are probably the first thing that comes to mind: stately King and Emperor Penguins, dapper Adelines and Chinstraps, and comical Rockhoppers and Macaronis. Perhaps albatrosses as well: Massive Wandering Albatrosses with 11-foot wingspans, elegant Black-browed, and the chic Light-Mantled.

So, join us on June 19th as we share our 2010 trip to the Southern Ocean through stories, photos, and sound. We'll see you then! (Photo & text by Jeanette & Derek.)



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The Harlequin, the newsletter of the York County Audubon Society, is published quarterly in spring, summer, autumn & winter. Autumn deadline: September 10th.



The Harlequin is printed on 50% post-consumer recycled paper.

HELP YCAS GO GREEN!!!

Can you help us Go Green? Receiving your copy of *The Harlequin* by email can help stem the waste stream while eliminating postage and printing costs. We will send you an email alert when the new issue is posted on our web site (yorkcountyaudubon.org) so you can download the new issue. We need your help! Please contact Linda Eastman at islndr@myfairpoint.net

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

email: _____

NEW MEMBERS:

Ruth Gillin ~ Old Orchard Beach
Linda J. Bibro ~ Limington
Louise Trask ~ East Waterboro

WELCOME BACK:

Patricia Bright ~ Buxton
Dave Fedrizzi ~ East Waterboro
Lisa Noel ~ South Berwick
Carol R. Sadler ~ Buxton
Ellen Wolf ~ Kennebunk

YCAS BIRDING CHALLENGE

Pat Moynahan & Linda Eastman

This year marks our twelfth annual Birding Challenge fund-raiser. We began very humbly, bringing in a grand total of \$262, in 2001. We peaked in 2007, with a total of \$5,038 in donations from individuals and businesses; since then, we've still managed to collect munificent funds annually from many generous donors. For example, Kennebunk Savings Bank assisted us with matching grants for four years in a row (2004-2007). We also owe many thanks to our dedicated fundraising YCAS members, without whom we could not manage.

Our main purpose in raising funds is to donate the money to various worthwhile projects within York County. Our major recipient is National Audubon's Seabird Restoration Project on Stratton Island (Arctic, Roseate, and Common Terns); we also support rehabilitation at The Center for Wildlife. The Center offers Children's Programs throughout York County on our behalf, and participates in our Winter Wildlife Day. We have also contributed to the Nature Conservancy's restoration of the boardwalk at the Saco Heath, as well as to other land trusts throughout the county. All told we have raised and reinvested more than \$40,500.

YCAS is fortunate to have some enthusiastic folks participating in teams for the 24-hour birding opportunity. Last year, we had our highest number of species reported during our compilation - 170. This year, Andy Aldrich, of Sanford, is fielding our first Bird by Bicycle team. How can you participate?

We'll be carrying on our tradition again, May 18, 5pm - May 19, 5pm, and hope you'll join us as a team member. The more eyes and ears out there, the better! The more birds we see, the more funds we raise (we hope), and therefore, the more funds to be dispersed to York County Conservation/Birding efforts. Please contact Linda Eastman at 286-9586 on how you will contribute.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE BIRDS

Marian Zimmerman

What we do matters! It really does. I am not speaking of just the big things like what career we follow or if we get married or decide to buy a house or take a trip across country. I am speaking of all the little actions and choices that make up our days. Little things like recycling a detergent bottle instead of throwing it in the trash, walking to the corner store rather than driving, or putting on a sweater instead of turning up the heat really do make a difference. Individually each of these actions does not seem to amount to much. It is easy to consider them inconsequential, but when repeated over time or when combined with the choices of others the impacts do add up. The total of all the little decisions combines to make up the cumulative, or big picture, impact.

This week a neighbor shared that he has become aware that he needs to give up the comfort and convenience of following the proceedings of the City Council from his living room and go down to city hall to attend the meetings personally. This small change not only allows him to stay informed of city business but also enables him to contribute directly to the decisions that are made. Being present makes it possible for him to engage in the process, which in many instances is the "drudge work" (his words, not mine) of being a responsible member of the community. The additional time it takes to go downtown and the discomfort of sitting on hard wooden chairs is offset by the opportunity to participate in the process and help the community achieve good governance.

My neighbor's example encourages me to consider what small changes I can make that will yield a difference. It is not a question of totally rearranging my life, but seeking to get a better return in what I am already investing and making that little extra effort to get more of what I value. The end result makes it all worthwhile.

And just think of what we could accomplish together if we all would do this. You know, it is that cumulative impact thing. Imagine having essential habitat designated for Piping Plovers on the beaches they use for nesting and feeding. Or imagine having fireworks ordinances that kept our beaches litter free and healthy for people as well as wildlife that use them. Or again imagine having opportunities for our children to experience the wonder of nature and to learn how to be good environmental stewards.

Together we can make a difference. But we need you. The sum total of all of our efforts really does matter and they really can make a difference. So please, join my neighbor in committing to be an active participant and not just a spectator. Come and join us on a bird walk or attend a monthly program. Sign up for a Birding Challenge team or make a financial contribution. Attend a Piping Plover workshop. There are lots of ways to get involved. Watch your local paper for our activities or check our web site www.yorkcountyaudubon.org. Our choices do matter. We'll see you there!

A PIPING PLOVER EXPERIENCE

Monica Grabin

Every year Piping Plovers come to Maine's beaches to next and raise their chicks. They have a hard time, though, because they have to share those beaches with people and their pets. Piping Plovers have been a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act since 1986, but because their nesting is so sensitive to disruption, their numbers continue to decline. What can we do? We can teach ourselves and our children how to be better neighbors to the Piping Plover.

The York County Audubon Society, along with Maine Audubon, has created a lively and interesting program for children, to introduce them to this beautiful bird which nests so close by. They can pretend to be little plovers feeding on the beach, while waves crash around them, they can make their own little chicks to take home, and even travel to beaches where the plovers breed to see the adults and chicks for themselves!

This is a free program which York County Audubon would love to bring to your town. It's a lot of fun for the children, and will really do some good in helping to protect Piping Plovers, so that future generations can enjoy them too. Piping Plovers have been summer visitors to Maine for hundreds of years --- let's make them welcome. For more information, please call Monica Grabin at 985-3342 and visit yorkcountyaudubon.org for more on our mission and the Piping Plover.

The *Maine Wildlife Conservation Film Festival* takes place at Reel Pizza Cinerama in Bar Harbor the weekend of May 18-21. Over 30 conservation, natural history and wildlife documentary films will be screened. For information visit: www.MaineWCFF.com

WHAT EXACTLY DOES YORK COUNTY AUDUBON DO?

Bill Grabin

Is York County Audubon a group that presents interesting speakers? Is it a group that leads bird walks? Is it a group that promotes conservation and nature education? Most local residents – and even many YCAS members – often have a relatively one-dimensional view of what YCAS offers. And that's quite understandable, as it reflects whatever contact they have had with the organization. But, in actuality, York County Audubon provides a wide array of services to the greater community.

Our speaker series is well known, presenting interesting and varied speakers seven times a year. This year it has taken us from songbird migration to exceptional photos of our galaxy, from 3D nature photography to the birds of Ecuador, from Maine Islands to the Galapagos to Antarctica. The speakers are as interesting and varied as their topics, so come join us on the third Tuesday of March through June and September through November. We meet at Wells Reserve at 7:00 pm.

YCAS members are available to come speak to your group as well. Two power point presentations have been developed by our past president, Marie Jordan. Marie or other Board members can bring a lively and interesting presentation to your Rotary Club, garden club or any other group that might be interested.

Two sets of field trips run throughout the year. One is on Wednesday mornings led by Dave Doubleday, and the other is a monthly bird walk on Saturday morning, each led by a different birder. We travel to birding hot spots in York and Cumberland Counties, and periodically further north, south, west, and occasionally even east!

Education is an important focus for us. In conjunction with the National Audubon Society, we provide Audubon Adventure kits each year to local elementary schools to incorporate into their curriculum. We have developed a Piping Plover program with Maine Audubon to highlight the plight of these endangered birds that nest right on our beaches. This program seeks to foster appreciation of these special birds and promote their conservation. In conjunction with the Center for Wildlife, the Wells Reserve and the Maine Warden Service, we present an annual Winter Wildlife Day, held at the Wells Reserve and featuring the Center for Wildlife's "animal ambassadors" and the Maine Warden Service's skilled trackers. It has provided grade

school children an opportunity to learn about the natural world through active participation even in the dead of winter. And each Wednesday morning through the spring and summer months, our long time Board member June Ficker leads a crew of bird banding volunteers at the Wells Reserve. They collect and contribute critical data for local and national studies. Getting just inches away from a bird as it's banded and released is a unique and hard to match experience, even if you've seen a lot of birds at your feeders or in your yard. We also sponsor a local educator at beautiful Hog Island for the Environmental Educator's Week. The recipient is able to enrich the lives of their students by applying what is learned from top experts in the field.

Other important YCAS activities throughout the year are bird surveys, including a monthly survey of the Biddeford Pool, quarterly surveys at the Wells Reserve, and the annual Christmas Bird Counts for Biddeford/Kennebunkport and Southern York County. These efforts collect valuable data that is used to monitor trends in bird populations over the course of the years. We also sponsor an annual Birding Challenge in mid-May. This is

one of two fundraising events where teams set out to see how many bird species they can find in York County in 24 hours. The money raised is reinvested in local conservation projects and environmental education programs.

The challenge of being good stewards of the wonders of southern Maine is enormous so York County Audubon seeks to collaborate with other like-minded organizations, including the Center for Wildlife, Wells Reserve, local land trusts, and the Nature Conservancy. By combining our resources we have been able to multiply the effectiveness of our efforts.

Now that you know a little more about us, how can you keep up with all the pieces of this puzzle and see where you might have an opportunity to join in? Easy! Go to **yorkcountyaudubon.org** for the latest information. We would love to have you come to our events and programs. And we promise you will be welcomed by friendly people, ready to help you to have a great time.

HOG ISLAND SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

For many years, York County Audubon has been seeking qualified scholarship applicants and then selecting one educator or community leader to participate in a one week program on famed Hog Island off mid-coast Maine. Our goal is to sponsor one

participant who can benefit from the Hog Island experience and use it to teach others. This year's program, entitled "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week," will run from July 19th through July 24th. Our winner this year is Kate Gerwig, a visual arts teacher who works with the students at Biddeford Intermediate School, which includes 420 kids in grades 4 and 5. We're excited to have her as our participant and look forward to hearing our report of how the week goes, and how she'll be able to bring some new nature programs and awareness to her students

Hog Island is celebrating its 75th anniversary as a leader in environmental education. Since 1936, some of the world's most well-known and highly respected naturalists have inspired thousands to learn about and protect birds and the environment. Roger Tory Peterson was among the first teachers on the 335-acre island. Rachel Carson described her visit to Hog Island in her landmark book, *Silent Spring*. Kenn Kaufmann, only nine years old when he read Peterson's account of Hog Island, is now an international authority on birds and one of the program instructors.



**GET CURRENT,
GET ORGANIZED,
GET eBird**
*Pat Moynahan &
Doug Hitchcox*

Photo by Marie Jordan

On March 10, following our Saco River field trip Doug Hitchcox, Maine bird record holder and eBird reviewer, held a workshop for 14 YCAS members on the ease and value of the eBird method of bird record keeping. Thanks to Dave Doubleday we worked comfortably in the Church at the Cape and learned how the information from our field trip could be entered into this amazing data base.

ebird.org has grown into a massive database driven largely by birders worldwide doing what they do best: birding. In eBird, you create checklists from a day's outing, specifying place, time, and effort, which allows you to keep track of the birds you see but also collects important data for scientific uses. By collecting all this data in one place, eBird is able to generate amazing visuals such as: interactive maps, graphs, and bar charts.

Registration is easy and only requires an email address. You can immediately start entering your sightings for

any location; why not start with your yard and what is visiting your feeders? eBird can also be a great tool for finding new or desired birds, either through their maps or setting up alerts that will email you when a rare bird or one you've never seen is near you.

Joining the eBird community is a great way to give back to science. You can help a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists, and conservation biologists just by sharing what birds you are seeing!

Our March workshop helped some of us to get started using eBird. If you also need help learning eBird, YCAS would like to continue offering timely workshops of this nature. Please call Pat Moynahan, 284-5487 or Doug Hitchcox 671-0185.

WINTER WILDLIFE DAY

Monica Grabin

On the morning of February 24th, there were mysterious, big boxes on tables in the Mather Auditorium at the Wells Reserve. People were bustling about setting up face-painting, track-making, binocular-making, and hot cocoa. A little before 10 a.m. children and their parents, and grandparents, began to arrive and fill the chairs set out in front of the tables with the big boxes. At 10, Kristen Lamb, from the Center for Wildlife, began to speak about the birds and mammals that are brought to the center each year, and everyone learned about ways to protect animals. Then Kristen walked over to one of the large, mysterious boxes, and brought out her first animal ambassador, a beautiful adult Red-tailed Hawk.

So began the second Winter Wildlife Day, sponsored by The Center for Wildlife, Wells Reserve at Laudholm Farm, and York County Audubon Society. By the time it ended, 87 children and 77 adults had met a Red-tailed Hawk, a Barred Owl, an albino porcupine (named Edna), and a little Brown Bat. They had walked the trails of the reserve looking for signs of wildlife, and had fun making crafts, while learning more about our wild winter neighbors.

The Wells Reserve, the Center for Wildlife, and York County Audubon Society are dedicated to making nature accessible to children and teaching them how to be good stewards of our natural world. Winter Wildlife Day is a huge pleasure for all of us to present to local families, and we're delighted that it has been so well-received. We're already looking forward to next year!



FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

David Doubleday

Glaucous Gull

Photo by David Doubleday

It was November when Pat asked if I would lead a "White-winged Gull Chase" on February 11. We know there is no way to predict what might be around in mid-February. Given the unknowns I asked if the title could be more general - like Winter Specialties. Then as the date approached it was brought to my attention that our website still listed the trip with the original title. Yikes! Given the ebbing tide, mostly open water and this year's fickle winter weather, odds were against having much luck finding Glaucous or Iceland gulls.

We started our day in light snow at the Nubble Light parking lot. The sky was gray, the water had a little chop, and visibility was limited by snow, fog and haze. The hoped for Snowy Owl didn't show today but the 5 participants enjoyed picking out 14 species of waterfowl including all three scoters and several gorgeous Harlequin Ducks. Another treat was observing a flock of 65 Purple Sandpipers feeding on the rocks at the water's edge as the waves splashed around them.

The next stop was at the cove just north of Short Sands where the signs of spring were everywhere among the snowflakes: flocks of Robins, singing House Finches and Cardinals plus a noisy Carolina Wren. Nearby we studied a perched Sharp-shinned Hawk. Then at the Cliff House we were treated to a line of Brant flying by (versus the v of regular geese), plus 2 Razorbills, a Black Guillemot and many other birds on the water.

At Wells marina we found numerous ducks. Many have paired off already and two Common Loons were "showing off" - was this aggression or courtship? After a brief stop in Kennebunkport where 2 overwintering Orioles failed to appear, we headed for the final stop in Scarborough.

At Pine Point we searched in vain for the frequently reported male King Eider. In the river there were many beautiful Long-tailed Ducks, tiny Horned Grebe and rafts of Common Eider. Finally we found a large flock of roosting gulls that looked promising. At that moment we heard - then spotted the Kingfisher. Almost simultaneously, the hundreds of gulls put up into the air and we got our final species as the trip ended with an

adult Bald Eagle flying over the marsh. So while we struck out on white-winged gulls and a few other species our final tally was around 50 species for the day.

THE SACO RIVER IN WINTER

Joanne Stevens

Thursday's 65 degree temperatures must have kicked off spring fever as there was a great turnout for the March 10 YCAS field trip. Even though the temperatures had dropped back to seasonal levels by Saturday, 24 people showed up to look for birds along the east side of the Saco River, guided by our leader Chuck Homler.

At our meeting place at the train station on Saco Island we were distracted from watching a Red-tailed Hawk perched on a roof by an immature Bald Eagle flying over. Which one to look at? Our next stop was the Saco Yacht Club where we saw Common Mergansers, gulls and two Mockingbirds claiming possession of a bush on the side hill but being outnumbered by the House Sparrows.

At Laurel Hill Cemetery we were able to pick out American Wigeons and Pintails among the Canada Geese, Mallards and Black Ducks. Two more Bald Eagles, a Common Loon and Red-breasted Mergansers were added at Marston's Marina while we listened to a White-breasted Nuthatch, Song Sparrow and Juncos.



Long-tailed Ducks ~ Photo by Teresa Libby

Camp Ellis held a nice surprise of 16 American Wigeons, a high number for this area. Other birds included Common Eider, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Ducks, Horned and Red-necked Grebes. The last stop was at the little known Diamond Riverside Park hidden at the end of Irving St. where we found the Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes that are often seen from Water St. It was interesting to see the types of waterfowl change as we progressed along the river. New faces, new places and a new leader made for a fun time at this also new YCAS field trip.



BIRDING PATCH: HIGHLAND FARM PRESERVE

David Mallard

This past fall the York Land Trust (YLT) celebrated the grand opening of its premiere public access conservation property, the Highland Farm Preserve. Highland Farm, located on Cider Hill Road (Route 91) in York, is a 151 acre preserve comprised of land owned by YLT and the Kittery Water District. York Land Trust actively manages the preserve to maintain and enhance a variety of habitats as well as to provide public access for low impact recreational activities.

Visitors are welcomed to the property with ample parking, picnic tables, a (seasonal) rest room facility, and an interpretive kiosk complete with a detailed trail map, information on property history and management activities and user guidelines. Probably the most unique aspect of the public access area is its design to be ADA compliant, including an ADA trail leading to a viewing platform over a small drainage in the center of the field, providing people with limited mobility the opportunity to experience nature.

Highland Farm Preserve's diversity of wildlife habitats, including oak-pine and oak-hickory forests, rocky outcrops, early successional forest, fields, wetlands and vernal pools, provide for excellent birding opportunities. Starting at the access area, visitors gain sweeping views of the old fields and forest edges where I have found Eastern Bluebirds, various sparrows, Eastern Kingbirds, Northern Flickers, Red Tailed Hawks, Kestrels, American Woodcock, and Wild Turkey among many others. The access area also provides views across the road to an expansive hay field, also owned by YLT, and the York River. The hay field is actively maintained as a

grassland and hosts nesting Bobolinks, Meadow Larks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Harriers, and Baltimore Orioles on its edges. If you make your way down to the river's salt marshes and ponds and low-tide mud flats you may see Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egrets, Greater Yellowlegs among other wading and shorebirds as well as an array of waterfowl species.

The trail system at Highland Farm passes through the old field from the access area before branching into loops that provide a "tour" of the property's habitats and features over a total distance of 2.5 miles. The NEC trail, short for New England Cottontail, is so named as it circumvents a 25 acre habitat restoration area designed to return early successional shrubland – essential habitat for the endangered New England Cottontail as well as a suite of other species. The NEC trail offers excellent viewing opportunities into the management area which is currently in the initial stage of regeneration after being cleared in the fall of 2010. As this area re-establishes with shrubs it will serve an excellent breeding area for shrubland nesting birds and a stop over for a wide range of migrants. Above the restoration area, the Ridge Trail provides a bird's-eye view of the clearing from a prominent ledge and the chance to peer into the surrounding canopy at eye-level. The Ridge Trail, along with the Kingsbury Trail and Junkins Loop, pass through a mix of young hardwood forest and mid-aged mixed forests where I have encountered many warbler species including, Black-Throated Blue, Black-Throated Green, and Black & White to name few, Ovenbirds and other thrushes, several woodpecker species, and often hear the drum or flush of Ruffed Grouse.

In short, if you find yourself in York looking for a place to bird, the Highland Farm Preserve and surrounding area is a great bet for a "one stop shop", particularly during migration. I welcome you to join me and YCAS on April 14th for guided bird walk from 8:00-11:00am as part of the Gateway to Maine: Outside program series - reservations required, visit yorklandtrust.org. I also welcome you to share your experience and species list from Highland Farm as I continue to update the property sightings list, you can find my contact info at the York land Trust website (above). Happy birding!

LAUDHOLM SUMMER BIRD WALKS

June 9 & 23, July 14 & 28, August 11 & 25

York County Audubon
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Red-winged Blackbird ~ *Agelaius phoeniceus*

ETYMOLOGY

"*Agelaius*" is Greek for "gregarious" --- very appropriate for this sociable bird. "*Phoeniceus*" refers to the Phoenicians, who introduced the color red into Greece. The famous Phoenician purple dye, the color of royalty, may have been based on a red dye. One additional thought is that the root of the word means "to slay", suggesting again blood and the color red.

BIRD SEED SALE

The Bird Seed Sale was once again a huge success! Many, many thanks to all who helped make it such a success. Paul Wells, Pat Sanborn, Stu Flavin, Ed Belgarde, Ann & Bob Watson, Ginger Lauritis, Galen Mott, David Meserve, Kenny DeCoster, Susan Bloomfield, June Ficker, Joan Junker, Mae Findlay, Carol Heller, Lyman Page, Lisa Carignan and Nancy Viehmann. And many thanks to all who purchased seed as without you the sale would not have been such a success. Mark your calendar for mid- November for the 14th Annual Bird Seed Sale. Dates to be announced in a future issue of *The Harlequin*.

PROGRAM MEETINGS:

April 17, 7:00pm. Free: "Birding in York County."
Speaker: Marie Jordan.

May 15, 7:00pm. Free: "Stratton Island: Maine's Most Diverse Waterbird Colony." Speaker: Paula Shannon.

FIELD TRIPS:

April 14: Highland Park, York. Check the York Land Trust to make reservations. April 28: Where the Birds Are. Leader: Rob Speirs. Contact person: Bob Watson (251-1135).

May 5: Intervale Marshes, New Gloucester. Leader: Bill Hancock. Contact person: Bill & Monica Grabin (985-3258).

May 15: Rotary Park, Biddeford. Leader & Contact person: Linda Eastman (286-9586).

June 2: Brownfield Bog, East Brownfield. Leader: Lisa Thurston. Contact person: Marie Jordan (799-1408).

June 9: Hamilton House, South Berwick. Leader & Contact person: Scott Richardson (698-4461).