

THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

Winter 2015

A Dramatic New Study Raises the Alarm for North American Birds

It's a new year ... and many challenges are upon us. While it's not the way we might prefer to start off the year, a new study from National Audubon Society presents a very sobering picture: ongoing climate change threatens nearly half the bird species in the continental United States and Canada, including dozens of iconic birds like the Bald Eagle, Common Loon, Baltimore Oriole and Brown Pelican.

"It's a punch in the gut. The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming," said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. "That's our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Global warming threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds - and the rest of us - depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively if we are going to avoid catastrophe for them and for us."

The study identifies 126 species that will lose more than 50 percent of their current ranges - in some cases up to 100 percent - by 2050, with no possibility of moving elsewhere if global warming continues on its current trajectory. A further 188 species face more than 50 percent range loss by 2080 but may be able to make up some of this loss if they are able to colonize new areas. These 314 species include many not previously considered at risk. The report indicates that numerous extinctions are likely if global temperature increases are not stopped.



The Common Loon would continue to be found in winter and its winter plumage (above) along Maine's coast, but would no longer grace Maine's lakes in summer with its beautiful breeding plumage (below) and haunting call.



John Picken photo

"The prospect of such staggering loss is horrific, but we can build a bridge to the future for America's birds, and we know that when we do the right things for birds, we do the right things for people too," said Audubon President David Yarnold. "This report is a roadmap, and it's telling us two big things: We have to preserve and protect the places birds live, and we have to work together to reduce the severity of global warming."

Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed 30 years of North American climate data and tens of thousands of historical bird observations from the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and U.S. Geological Survey's North American Breeding Bird Survey to understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them. Understanding those links allows scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive - and not survive - in the future.

While some species will be able to adapt to shifting climates, many of North America's most familiar and iconic species will not. The national symbol of the United States, the Bald Eagle, could see its current summer range decrease by nearly 75 percent in the next 65 years. The Common Loon would continue to be found in winter (and winter plumage) along Maine's coast, but would no longer grace Maine's lakes in summer with its beautiful breeding plumage and haunting call. State birds which might disappear from their states include the Baltimore Oriole (Maryland), Brown Pelican (Louisiana), California Gull (Utah), Hermit Thrush (Vermont), Common Loon (Minnesota), Mountain Bluebird (Idaho and Nevada), Ruffed Grouse (Pennsylvania), Purple Finch (New Hampshire), and Wood Thrush (Washington, D.C.).

"We know that climate variables - including temperature and precipitation - determine where most birds live and where they don't, because it is too hot, for example," said Terry Root, a Nobel Prize-winning Stanford University professor who serves on Audubon's board of directors but was not involved in the study. "The Audubon study

determined the climate variables that dictate where all North American birds live today and then brilliantly used climate forecasts to project where birds will most likely occur in the future. We all will see the effects of changing climate in our own backyards. We just cannot ignore such a sobering wake-up call."

The study, which was funded in part by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has numerous implications for conservation, public policy and further research and provides a new suite of tools for scientists, conservationists, land managers and policy makers. For example, the study identifies "strongholds," areas that will remain stable for some birds even as climate changes and are candidates for protection and management.

Audubon has launched a new web portal - climate.audubon.org - dedicated to understanding the links between birds and global warming, including animated maps and photographs of the 314 species at risk, a technical report, and many in-depth stories. We encourage you to take a look!

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For all upcoming events and general information, please visit our website:

www.yorkcountyaudubon.org

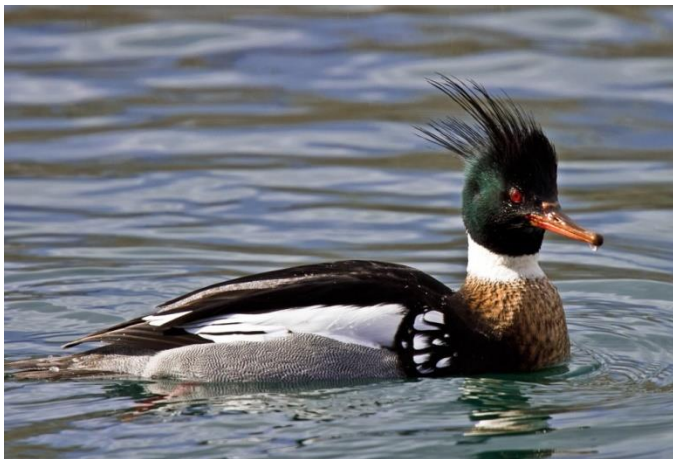
And for the latest news, photos and updates, please visit us on Facebook at:

www.facebook.com/yorkcountyaudubon

Two more successful Christmas Bird Counts – by Pat Moynahan, Marie Jordan and Bill Grabin

Each year, York County Audubon sponsors two Christmas Bird Counts (“CBC’s”) as part of National Audubon Society’s worldwide CBC. Our two counts are centered in York/Cape Neddick and Biddeford/Kennebunkport. Each count covers a geographic circle, carved out into six or more territories. Each territory has a team that scours it during “count day” looking for all bird species, and recording the numbers seen of each. It can, at times, be a bit more art than science, as we attempt to count - but not double count - the birds we find. We also have supporters who monitor their home feeders during the day and contribute their totals. We ask them to report the greatest number of each species that they see at any one time during the day.

At the end of the day, we meet to compile the counts and share highlights. Once compiled, the counts are forwarded to National Audubon for their master compilation. Both locally and nationally, the totals are reviewed to assess trends in the populations of all species. While the totals can vary fairly dramatically year to year due to the weather that happens to grace us on count day, the bigger picture over time can be very informative.



Male Red-breasted Merganser off Parsons Beach in Kennebunk *Ken Janes photo*

This year, the Southern York County CBC was held on December 15th, while the Biddeford-Kennebunkport CBC was held on December 27th.

Interested in Getting More Involved?

If you are enthusiastic, passionate about birds and nature, enjoy working with knowledgeable and fun people, and value educational experiences and sharing them with others, then being a York County Audubon Board member might just be for you. If you'd like to know more, please email us at ycas@yorkcountyaudubon.org.

Accustomed to often encountering bitter cold on these counts, the conditions this year were as mild as anyone could remember. That was pleasing for the birders, but reduced the sightings of some birds. With the ground and woods free of snow, many birds were widely dispersed, as many food sources remained available to them.



Common Goldeneyes taking Flight
Marie Jordan photo

Despite those “challenging conditions,” there were many great sightings and good totals. **On the December 15th count overseen by Pat Moynahan, thirty-five participants identified 94 species of birds in this circle, Maine’s southernmost count area.** The day was spectacular - clear blue skies, very little wind, and temperatures 28-39 degrees. Streams were running with only some icy edges, while early morning hoarfrost reminded us of the season. *[continued on page 4]*

The open streams gave up Wood Duck (for the 4th time in this 39-year count). A calm sea allowed good viewing of 95 Harlequin Ducks (a near record) and continuing large numbers of Black Scoters (643). A Pacific Loon was identified in the most southern section of the count. Both Red-necked and Horned Grebes were high counts (130 and 105), and Great Blue Heron numbers were up to 9. Red-tailed Hawks increased to 35, while 2 Red-shouldered Hawks thrilled Section 2 participants. Continuing shorebirds included 188 Sanderlings and 8 Dunlin. Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers continued to increase, with new highs of 28 and 91 birds. Other increases included White-breasted Nuthatch (158), Carolina Wren (18), and Eastern Bluebird (131, beating last year's previous high of 113).

American Robin was far and away the most dramatic change of the day (a total of 1537, almost triple the previous high of 543!), with Sections 4 and 6 experiencing the majority of the movement. Song and White-throated Sparrows continued an upward trend (103) and (87). American Goldfinch also blew the old numbers out of the water with 871 seen, from a previous high of 445. No new species were added to the count this year.



Horned Grebe in winter plumage *Ken Janes photo*

On the December 27th count overseen by Marie Jordan, we had 89 species seen on count day plus one count week bird - a Hermit Thrush. (“Count week” includes the 3 days before and after count day. Any species found in that CBC’s territory during count week which were not found on count day are noted as count week birds.) The

temperature reached an amazing 50 degrees with bright sun and little wind, making for an *extremely* comfortable day.

We had new high counts for several species: 26 Common Merganser (previous high 23), 28 Red-tailed Hawks (25), 2 Merlin (1), 6 Savannah Sparrow (3) and 37 Red-winged Blackbird (14). The Eastern Bluebird continued its (most welcome) trend of expanding its winter population in southern Maine; this year the count was 93, a significant step up from last year’s 63, and each year has set a new high count for several years now. And we had two new species never before seen in the 55 years of this CBC: an American Redstart and a pair of Tree Swallows.

We had some “night owls” roaming about this year who, out before dawn, found a Northern Saw-whet Owl and 5 Great Horned Owls. It is only the second time a Western Tanager has been found on our count day - a bird that many have been able to enjoy since it was spotted in a Kennebunk neighborhood early on this count day, and remained there for many days thereafter.

Most of all, thanks to all who participated, including many who joined us for the first time. If you’d like to join us next year, keep an eye on our website in November for contact information. We’d be delighted to have you.

YCA welcomes its New Members:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Susan Furst | Shapleigh |
| Jasmin Robinson | Standish |
| Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell S. Ross | Boston, MA |
| Barbara Sevigny | Saco |
| Irene Starbird | Hollis Center |
| Megan Zopfi | Wells |
| Jessica Bartlett | Kennebunk |
| Harold and Mona Brewer | Key Largo, FL |
| Mary Beth Brown | Kennebunk |
| Marsha Clegg | Wells |
| Mr. and Mrs. Paul Dean | Biddeford Pool |
| Joan Tishkevich and family | Arundel |
| Jonathan and Erin Cole | Old Orchard Beach |
| Allen B. Morgan, Jr. | Memphis, TN |
| Henry and Snow Morgan | Memphis, TN |
| Frank Nudd | Brownfield |

Birding Patch – Marginal Way at Perkins Cove in Ogunquit *by Marian Zimmerman*

Marginal Way, beginning at Perkins Cove, provides a footpath along the rocky shoreline of Oarweed Cove that offers extensive views of the cove and ocean where ducks and seabirds can be readily observed. This is a favored spot for birders from November through March, when crowds are sparse and winter birds are near shore. The shoreline path is open to the public year round and may be combined with a return trip to Perkins Cove through the residential community to look for other birds.

A highlight in this area are the Harlequin Ducks, often seen at close range. This is one of the places along the southern Maine coast where seeing them in winter is expected. Other regularly occurring winter birds include Common and Red-throated Loons, Horned and Red-necked Grebes, Black Guillemots, Common Eiders, Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Red-breasted Mergansers, and all three species of scoters. Scanning the horizon might yield Northern Gannet or Black-legged Kittiwake. King Eider are often viewed just to the south of here (from Cliff House) and may occasionally venture north into this area. It is also possible to luck onto a Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, or Dovekie.

Birding the inland habitat has yielded White-winged Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Cedar Waxwing, and a variety of sparrows and other passerines. In good finch years, other species might also be found here. The path along Marginal Way is open to the public year round and free.

Directions: From the north: At the intersection of Route 1 and Shore Road in Ogunquit, turn left onto Shore Road and proceed for 0.8 mile to the parking lot. Marginal Way begins at the left edge of the parking lot.

From the South: At the intersection of Route 1 and 1A in Cape Neddick, take Route 1A for 0.9 miles and turn left onto Shore Road. Continue for 4.6 miles, turning right onto Perkins Cove Road. (You will pass the Cliff House on the way.) The parking lot will be on the left in 0.2 miles.

Quest for 300 begins Year 5

By Scott Richardson

We've just begun our fifth "Quest for 300," York County Audubon's collective effort to find 300 bird species in the county in the span of one calendar year. It's a just-for-fun goal tracked through eBird, the maine-birds email list, and the grapevine. Anyone's sightings are welcome and most appreciated. On our website, you can see the complete lists of the species seen each year.

Together, we've made it to 300 once so far:

2011: 295

2012: 301

2013: 278

2014: 284

2015: What'll it be?

In 2014, seven species turned up for the first time since we started the Quest: Eurasian Wigeon, Canvasback, Northern Bobwhite, Golden Eagle, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, and Painted Bunting.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at the Wells Reserve in June *Ken Janes photo*

But eight species were missed for the first time: Stilt Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, Little Gull, Bohemian Waxwing, Connecticut Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Pine Grosbeak, and Common Redpoll.

Sometimes they're just not out there. When they are, though, it takes alert birders to tally 'em up and pass the word.

YCA announces Hog Island Scholarship for July, 2015



Again this year, we are seeking an educator or community leader to participate in a one-week program on famed Hog Island off mid-coast Maine in July. We will sponsor one participant who can benefit from the Hog Island experience and use it to teach others. **Complete information is available at www.yorkcountyaudubon.org and applications are due by March 15th.**

The program is entitled “Sharing Nature: An Educator’s Week” and will run from July 19th through July 24th. Program details and descriptions are available at <http://hogisland.audubon.org/sharing-nature-educator-s-week>. The YCAS scholarship will pay 70% (up to \$700) of the recipient's cost for program tuition, room and board.

YCAS’s 2014 Hog Island scholarship winners were Emily Calhoun and Susan Williams. Their description of the experience was published our Autumn 2014 issue, which can be accessed through our website.

Since 1936, some of the world’s most well-known and highly respected naturalists have come to Hog Island and 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 Kaufman, only nine years old when he read Peterson’s account of Hog Island, is now an international authority on birds and nature.

We also encourage anyone else to take a look at the many summer week-long programs on Hog Island. They’re not just for educators! They include:

- “Joy of Birding” (and music!) with Pete Dunne and Grammy award winner Paul Winter,
- “Raptor Rapture”
- “Family Camp” week
- “Arts and Birding”
- “Breaking into Birding”
- “Maine Seabird Biology and Conservation”

FMI: <http://hogisland.audubon.org/hog-island-programs>

Thank you to Kennebunk Savings Bank and You!

In 2014, YCA was awarded a donation of \$845 as a result of the votes we received from KSB customers on their annual Community Ballot for non-profits. This made us “one of the top vote-getting organizations on the ballot.” Thank you to all who voted for us, and to Kennebunk Savings Bank for their continuing support of many community organizations.

Thank you to the Wells Reserve and You!

In November, YCA again combined forces with the Wells Reserve to co-sponsor our annual Birdseed Sale fundraiser. Thanks to the participation of countless YCA and Wells Reserve members, each organization netted \$1266 to go to our respective educational programs. Thank you so much, and see you next November! And the birds thank you too!

***** Upcoming YCAS Events at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm Farm *****



Saturday, Feb 7th & Sunday, Feb 8th **Gull ID Workshop with Derek Lovitch**
This two-part workshop will get you started on unraveling the mysteries of gull identification. The Saturday afternoon session from 1 till 4:30 at the Wells Reserve will be indoors. Sunday morning from 8 till 12 will be spent in the field in Portland. **Space is limited. For complete details and to reserve a spot, please visit the event page on our website: yorkcountyaudubon.org**



Thursday, February 19th, 10 am – 2 pm at the Wells Reserve: **Winter Wildlife Day**. For the fifth year, the Wells Reserve, the Center for Wildlife, and York County Audubon team up to celebrate the wildlife of southern Maine. Join us for lots of family fun with live animal presentations, guided walks, and crafts. Snow or no snow, explore the trails and treasures of the Wells Reserve at Laudholm. If the ground is white, bring skis, sleds, and snowshoes (we have some snowshoes to share — mostly kid size — if you don't have your own). Center for Wildlife presentations: 10-11am & 12-1pm. Tracking walks & wildlife crafts: 11am-12pm & 1-2pm



Tuesday, March 17, 7:00pm at the Wells Reserve: **Japan in Winter: a Crane and Sea-Eagle Spectacle with Marie Jordan**. Japan has several claims to fame as a travel destination, but relatively few people think of the country as a wildlife destination-in winter! Highlights of Marie's trip included thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes found on the fabulous island of Kyushu, third largest of Japan's four islands, and the dancing Red-crowned Cranes and majestic Steller's Sea Eagles on the larger island of Hokkaido. She will include other bird species, interesting places and sights seen as she traveled through the country.



Our Facebook page has been the happy recipient of many new posts and has experienced a steady increase in page visits. Visitors to the page have been rewarded with “hot off the digital camera” photos of local unusual birds and other treats. Please visit the page, “like” us if you wish, and post a photo, sighting or comment of your own.

And visit our website - YorkCountyAudubon.org - to see the photos in this newsletter magically transformed from Black & White to Color!

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