

# THE HARLEQUIN

York County Audubon

[www.yorkcountyaudubon.org](http://www.yorkcountyaudubon.org)

Winter 2017

## If Not Us Who? If Not Now When?

York County Audubon is not usually thought of as a bunch of rabble-rousers, but maybe we should be. At least, the Board of YCA has been thinking that we need to be more proactive and ask our membership to be so as well. Our commitment to the environment and all it contains can't be allowed to shrink back in the face of an onslaught, which is what we face at the moment. It's not easy to get back up and keep walking when a bully has tripped you. It's not easy to face up to intimidation. But it's absolutely necessary to do so.

In October of 2016, our presenter was Jennifer Burns Gray, who is Maine Audubon's Legislative Advocate. She spoke of the challenges in Augusta under the LePage administration, and how they might increase in the event of a Trump win. Actually, few thought Trump would win, so it didn't seem too dire. But the worst fears of environmentalists have been realized, and with the nominees to head environmental agencies seemingly being picked specifically to dismantle those agencies, our response has got to be clear and vehement.

It has been stated many times that the absolute best way to make a difference on policy is to contact your legislators on issues. Please, do that. And to keep informed of what is happening on the legislative front, you can visit Maine Audubon's home page. There you will see news of environmental issues both local and national. For example, as I checked the website today, there is an Action Alert on the nomination of Scott Pruitt to head the EPA, and how important it is to oppose him. And what does Maine Audubon suggest you do? Call your Senators! You can sign up for



*Piping Plovers will have increasing difficulty on Maine's beaches as water levels continue to rise.*

Action Alerts to be emailed to you, and it's an excellent way to stay informed of important developments. But don't just read about them; talk about them, ask about them, tell your representatives how you feel about them. It takes only a few minutes to call a legislator's office, tell them your views or ask their position on a topic. It takes only a few minutes more to write a letter. Even emails and Facebook likes can be helpful, but the more direct the contact, the better. Encourage friends who share your views to do the same. Our representatives need to know that we exist and that we care enough to get involved.

The other thing that you can do as Audubon members and environmental stewards, is to learn as much as you can about the threats facing us here in Maine and around the world from pollution, climate change, and habitat destruction. To this end, YCA intends to have articles in each issue of the

Harlequin about these issues, focusing in particular on York County and the state of Maine. We hope you will find them helpful and that you'll share your ideas and concerns with us, including ideas for future articles. And know that there are many, many of us who will be working with you.

To find your representatives at the state and federal level, just search for them on Google. They all have offices in Washington and in Maine, and calling or writing to any of them is easy. If you don't know your representatives, you can find them through [USA.gov/elected-officials](http://USA.gov/elected-officials). There you can find members of both houses of Congress as well as at the state and local level. You can also find the heads of all government departments and agencies.

For Maine government members, search for Maine elected officials, or go to [Maine.gov/portal/government/officials/html](http://Maine.gov/portal/government/officials/html). There you will also be able to find any addresses or phone numbers of members of the State Legislature and state agencies. It's often easier to do a general search than to type in a lengthy web address, so you can search for terms like "Maine elected officials" or "Maine climate change."



*Least Terns are another threatened species in Maine. - photo by Ken Janes*

## YCA welcomes its New Members!

*August - November*

Barbara Cabral & Richard Steller	Buxton
Veronica Davis	Buxton
Lisa Esposito & Steve Ryder	Biddeford
Edward C. Frady	Arundel
Amanda & Andrew Goldman	Lyman
Robelyn Guillerault	Saco
Mike and Kristina Mains	Buxton
Tara McNeal & Don Perkins	Old Orchard Beach
Jessica Tostado	Sanford
Janet Bevins	Wells
John and Judy Chapman	York
Barbara Colbert	Sanford
Mary A, Gagnon & Willam D. Ogle	Berwick
Bob and Jane Garvey	Kennebunkport
Joscelyne Hilton & Craig Silva	Lebanon
Robert Judge	Sanford
Michael & Elizabeth Pillsbury	Parsonfield
Beverly and Fred Spares	Limington
Patricia and Dennis Boston	Biddeford
David and Lucy Hardy	Wells
Steven Roberts & Linda Towle	Hollis Center
Brian Wardwell	Limerick
Gayle Brown & Joe Kantauskis	Tucson, AZ
Cathy Cone-Sabo	Saco
Amy Rose Goodness	Saco
Lauren and Ken Handler	Cape Porpoise
Audrey A. Morgan & William R. Richards	Waterboro
Jeanne Thurston	Saco
Alan Weinstein	Old Orchard Beach
Lisa Witham	South Berwick

### YCAS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Bill Grabin, President	985-3342
Joyce Toth, Vice President	216-4756
Kathy Donahue, Treasurer	967-4102
Monica Grabin, Secretary	985-3342
David Doubleday, Programs	967-4486
Doug Hitchcox, Field Trips	671-0185
Eileen Willard, Director	967-5118
Ken Janes, Email, Membership	967-2955
Lena Moser, Director	205-9915
Marian Zimmerman, Birding Trail	710-3015
Mary Bateman, Publicity	646-8589
Pat Moynahan, Workshops	284-5487

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

[www.yorkcountyaudubon.org](http://www.yorkcountyaudubon.org)

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

[www.facebook.com/yorkcountyaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/yorkcountyaudubon)

## **The Great Backyard Bird Count Returns February 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>**

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 20th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2017. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2014 GBBC data highlighted a large irruption of Snowy Owls across the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes areas of the United States. The data also showed the effects that warm weather patterns have had on bird movement around the country. For more on the results of the 2016 GBBC, take a look

at the GBBC Summary, and be sure to check out some of the images in the 2016 GBBC Photo Contest Gallery.

On the program website participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during and after the count. Be sure to check out the Explore a Region tool to get an idea of what you can expect to see in your area during the next GBBC.

## **Winter Wildlife Day Returns to the Wells Reserve at Laudhom on Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10-2**



For the seventh 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. 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, Tracking walks & crafts: 11-12, Family friendly snow sports and plenty of hot cocoa 12-2pm



## The Quest for 300

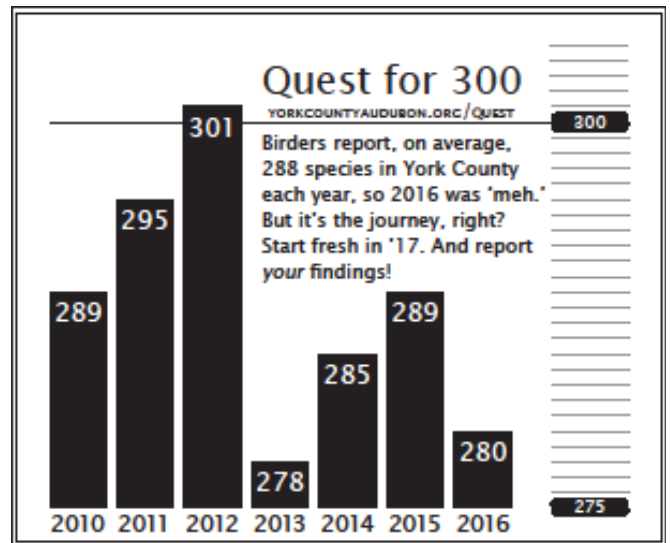
How many bird species can be seen in York County in a single year? We do our best to answer that question each year with our tracking of the “Quest for 300.” We reached 300 once, with 301 in 2012.



*Little Egret (top) with Snowy Egret at Biddeford Pool. Note the Little Egret’s plume. The range of the Little Egret extends from Europe to Australia. Occasionally, one finds its way here.*  
 – photo by Marjorie Watson



*A King Rail in the marsh in Wells – photo by Andrew Aldrich*



For 2016, the total was “only” 280, but that included many unusual sightings. There were three species that had never been seen in the seven years we’ve been tracking our York County sightings: Little Egret, King Rail and Swallow-tailed Kite. To see what’s been seen (and not seen) each year, you can scan the checklist on the Birds & Birding drop down menu on our website. And certainly let us know if you’ve seen anything that we haven’t!



*A Swallow-tailed Kite glides over the Sanford Lagoons.*  
 - photo by Josh Fecteau

## Two Excellent Christmas Bird Counts

Beginning on Christmas Day in 1900, the Audubon Society has been sponsoring Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) to help monitor the health and status of bird populations throughout North America. In that first year, there were 25 count circles with a total of 27 birders. Now, there are over 2,300 count circles each year with over 70,000 birders participating, with the locations stretching from Alaska to South America.

Each year, York County Audubon sponsors two counts. The Southern York County circle extends from Kittery to Ogunquit, while the Biddeford/Kennebunkport count circle reaches from Kennebunk to Saco. Each count territory is 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. 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.

This year, the Southern York County CBC was held on December 21st, while the Biddeford - Kennebunkport CBC was on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Both were great days to be out birding. 82 species were tallied on the S. York County count and 87 on the B/K count.

It was the 45<sup>th</sup> year that the S. York CBC has been held, and the 57<sup>th</sup> year for the B/K count. S. York had record high counts for 5 species, while B/K had high counts for 9! Eastern Bluebirds continued to demonstrate their successful year-round expansion into southern Maine, with records set for both counts (141 counted in S York and 152 in B/K).



*Eastern Bluebirds were found in record numbers on both counts. These ones were at York Land Trust's Highland Farm Preserve. - photo by Shiloh Schulte*



*One of a record 4 Wood Ducks found on the S. York County CBC. - photo by Shiloh Schulte*



## York County Audubon announces Hog Island Scholarship for July, 2017 Program



YCA is seeking an educator or community leader to participate in a one-week program on famed Hog Island off mid-coast Maine in July 2017. YCA will sponsor one participant who can benefit from the Hog Island experience and use it to teach others. **Complete info is available on our website and applications are due by March 15th.**

**The program is entitled “Sharing Nature: An Educator’s Week” and will run from July 16th through July 21st.** The YCAS scholarship will pay 70% of the recipient's cost for program tuition, room and board.

YCAS’s 2015 Hog Island scholarship winners were teachers Nathan Hall (Kennebunk Middle School) and Christine Caprio (York High School). They provided lively descriptions of their program experiences in an article for the Autumn 2015 issue of [The Harlequin](#), which can be accessed through the YCAS website. And a report from our 2016 winner, Katie Brodeur (from the Center for Wildlife) can be found in the Autumn 2016 issue.

Since 1936, some of the world’s most 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. 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.

## East Point Sanctuary in Biddeford Pool

On the outer edge of Biddeford Pool, tucked just beyond beautiful residences and the Abenakee Club golf course, sits one of York County’s very special places: the East Point Audubon Sanctuary.

At only 30 acres, it’s actually Maine Audubon’s smallest sanctuary. But what it lacks in size it more than makes up for in beauty. A short trail weaves along the perimeter of the rocky point, providing public access to this stretch of the Maine coast. Visitors are treated to 270-degree views of Saco Bay and the Gulf of Maine, including the Wood Island lighthouse and long stretches of important coastal habitat. It is a premier migratory stopover and summer home for many birds, as well as winter home to many northern waterfowl.

Over the past couple of years, the trail’s viewsheds have improved thanks to a collaboration with the Abenakee Club and Biddeford Pool residents. With their support, Maine Audubon has undertaken a project to remove invasive plant species that have proliferated there. This included a full wetland delineation and mapping. The required permits were secured, and three and a half acres have been cleared to date. With sufficient financial support, the work will continue in 2017.

The benefits are already making themselves clear. Robert Searle, superintendent of the Abenakee Club, reports a greater variety of birds in the area. “This year was the first time I’ve ever seen a Killdeer on the golf course,” he explained. “We’ve also had a surge of Whimbrels the past couple years.” Longer term, he says, the removal of invasive plants will create an even greater variety of habitats for wildlife. “Our members have a deep respect for the ecological significance of the Biddeford Pool. It’s in that spirit that the club has been and will continue to be a great neighbor to the East Point sanctuary.”

***If you’re interested in supporting the East Point invasives removal project, or would just like more information, please contact Maine Audubon’s Bryce Hach at 781-2330, ext. 218.***

## \*\*\* Upcoming YCA Programs at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm Farm \*\*\*

### **Saving the Purple Martin - with Dennis Skillman Tuesday, March 21st at 7:00 pm**

Purple Martins are harbingers of spring, arriving in Maine in mid-April as a most welcome sign of the changing seasons. They are aerial acrobats known for their great speed and agility in flight, but their numbers have been dramatically reduced as European Starlings and House Sparrows have successfully competed with them for nesting cavities.



In 2013, Purple Martins were discovered nesting in a small birdhouse in a Hampton, New Hampshire marsh. The following year, a group of Audubon volunteers placed a gourd rack on town land nearby. Dennis Skillman is a member of Seacoast/New Hampshire Audubon, and has been at the center of their work to expand that colony. He'll talk about the success they've had which has yielded a colony filled to capacity with over 40 young fledged. Purple Martins are notoriously finicky about their choice of sites. A colony on private property in Kennebunk is the only one in Southern Maine. It's extremely difficult to establish a new colony, but with the right steps, it has been possible to enrich existing ones. York County Audubon has been working with New Hampshire Audubon,

the Purple Martin Conservation Association, the Kennebunk Land Trust and the Rachel Carson Wildlife Refuge to develop a plan to enrich our local colony.

### **Ducks, Geese, Egrets, Herons, Shorebirds & other Tidal-marsh Birds - with Brian Olsen**

**Tuesday, April 18th at 7:00 pm** Dr. Brian Olsen from the University of Maine is a principal investigator with project SHARP (*Saltmarsh Habitat & Avian Research Program*). He will present a fascinating illustrated program on this vital work with our birds.



Tidal-marsh birds have declined dramatically across our area over the last two decades. What causes the decline? How many birds are there now? Project SHARP attempts to answer questions like these. The talk will include species formerly present but now scarce or absent. Besides the common birds it will look at species in near term trouble including the American Oystercatcher, Lesser Yellowlegs, King Rail, and Whimbrel.

What are the challenges and what are the signs of hope? In this program we will learn how birds adapt in the face of sea-level rise and explore the long-term conservation of tidal marsh birds. Dr. Olsen's talk will show us some of the methods, discoveries, and implications for our birds. This timely, interesting, and educational program is free and open to the public.



Our Facebook page has experienced a steady increase in activity, rewarding visitors 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](http://YorkCountyAudubon.org) - to see the photos in this newsletter magically transformed from Black & White into Color!*

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Maine Audubon

# MEMBERSHIP FORM

York County Chapter



**YES!** I would like to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in my community and  
 **join**  **renew my membership** with Maine Audubon and the York County Chapter.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Seasonal Address: \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

I'm enclosing an additional \$10 to receive *Audubon*, National Audubon's magazine  
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- \$35 Individual
- \$45 Household
- \$65 Contributing
- \$100 Patron
- \$250 Sustaining
- \$500 Benefactor

Monthly:

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