



# THE PILEATED PRESS

## Western Maine Audubon Society

A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

BOX 832, FARMINGTON, MAINE 04938

Volume XLIV Number 4

March 2015

### Monthly Programs

Wednesday, March 18 at 7:00 PM

E-birding

Room C 23, Roberts Learning Center University of Maine at Farmington

**Doug Hitchcox**, Staff Naturalist at Maine Audubon will give us both high points and the “low down” on e-birding, an online program both intriguing and inherently useful to birders at any level.

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Wednesday, April 8 at 7:00 PM

“The Secret World of the Black-capped Chickadee”

Room C 23, Roberts Learning Center University of Maine at Farmington

We hear them; we see them; we even try to mimic them; we are cheered by their antics, particularly on the darkest, coldest days of the darkest, coldest season. But what do we really know about our little black-capped backyard buddies? Join veteran researcher **Susan Smith** on a journey into “The Secret World of the Black-capped Chickadee.”

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Wednesday, May 13 at 7:00 PM

“What’s New with Maine’s Canada Lynx”

Room C 23, Roberts Learning Center University of Maine at Farmington

“What’s New with Maine’s Canada Lynx”, presented by **Mark McCollough**, lead biologist for implementing policies pertaining to Canada Lynx in the northeast for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. What trapping rules describe as the “incidental taking” of two Canada Lynx in late 2014 has raised public interest, curiosity and some confusion about the status of this predator currently on the endangered species list. It is hoped this program will help an interested public gain a clearer view of what these cats face in Maine, one of the few states with lynx habitat.

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More information can be found on pg. 4 on all our Programs and Field Trips for the next 3 months.  
(An insert one can stick to their fridge for easy reference!)

# President's Column

Paul McGuire

Early in February, Western Maine Audubon board members gather at a member's place for an hour or so of skiing or snowshoeing, followed by a potluck lunch. It isn't billed as a business luncheon, but as might be expected, conversation eventually settles into plans for spring programs generally mixed with thoughts about what a pundit might call "the state of chapter."

The program piece of our discussion generally consists of putting final form to plans we've been passing through e-mails since the November annual meeting. The results of this discussion can be found on the program schedule for spring and summer activities found elsewhere in this edition of the Pileated Press. It includes more field activity added to a variety of evening programs about wildlife and issues surrounding it. We think it is a good offering and hope members agree.

Other than taking some time, constructing a slate of programs is a relatively straightforward, concrete proposition. By using available data, the current state of the chapter is also clear enough. What is less so, is what the trend in membership and finance mean in the longer run. So, with no more prescience than anyone else, and well aware of the adage that geography is destiny, here's how things look from my perch.

A look at the chapter map on the Maine Audubon website coupled with rudimentary knowledge of Maine's population distribution make it clear that Western Maine Audubon is possibly the largest, yet one of the least populated among the seven chapters of the statewide organization. In the best of times, the chapter's share of membership revenue (20% of membership income is forwarded quarterly to the chapter) is sufficient for the modest programs offered. In times of slow or no growth in membership, the bones really begin to show. They're showing now.

That is where we find ourselves at this time. Despite an occasional upward blip, we have witnessed a slow decline in membership over the past few years, thus suffering a commensurate drain on income. This situation has led us to a point at which, to remain solvent (and thus in business) we are faced with reducing costs without paring programs which are the very reason we exist at all. Since program expenses are generally fixed, consisting as they do, of modest honoraria and meals for presenters, if we wish to continue offering monthly programs each spring and fall, there isn't any financial wiggle room there.

The wiggle room lies in the processes we employ to get the word out about our programs and other chapter matters. Of these, the most expensive method by far has been printing and mailing out six issues of the Pileated Press each year, and each year it has consumed an ever-increasing chunk of our budget to a point where something has to give. This, then became the focus of conversations at meetings late last year and the potluck lunch this month. Those conversations all led to the decision to make a few changes.

Before getting to the changes, some efforts at communicating will continue. Instituted a year or so ago is the employment of the mailchimp distribution program by which changes in the schedule due to weather or other matters too late for timely appearance in newspaper or other media will be sent to members whose e-mail addresses were submitted. For those who haven't done so, call Paul 207-778-0706, or e-mail to [paulm\\_04938@yahoo.com](mailto:paulm_04938@yahoo.com)

Also as has been the case for years, Western Maine Audubon maintains a section of the Maine Audubon website where chapter news can be found.

Now, to the changes: annual issues of the Pileated Press have been reduced from three issues to one for each spring and fall. Among the usual features, program listings for the season will appear on a "pull out" page which can be saved and posted for quick reference

Next, to broaden the dissemination of Information and to encourage members' participation in chapter matters of all sorts, we have opened a facebook account which requires no more than a "like" for one to get involved.

Finally, with the cooperation of Mt. Blue TV (public access television), we plan to record evening programs for the convenience of those who cannot attend.

That's it for now. On behalf of other board members, I hope to see you at the programs we've put together for the coming season.

# Conservation Corner

Steve Bien



A Carolina Wren foraging in Warren.

Photo taken earlier this month by Don

A Carolina wren has been a regular at my office feeder in Farmington. This is only a little unusual as over the past 20 years Carolina wrens have been slowly moving North from Massachusetts and now are the most common 'winter wren' in Maine. I am curious about state wide numbers but I did find that 14 were seen on the Monhegan Christmas Bird Count this year. This is one of the more pleasant aspects of the changing climate that also brings us more deer and moose ticks among other changes. Something is afoot.

Indeed. As many of you know 2014 has been logged as the warmest year since formal record keeping began in the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, although the rate of recorded temperature increase has somewhat flattened since 2000, there have now been 354 consecutive months with global temperatures greater than the 20<sup>th</sup> century average. Using the less direct analytical tools of tree rings, pollen, and radioisotopes, it is now estimated that the current world climate is the warmest in the last 11000 years.

Not all parts of the world are equally affected. Our corner of the world, the Northeastern United States, barely conforms to this pattern. On the other hand, the higher latitudes of the north and its oceans are showing the strongest warming and this is especially bad news for polar bears, which depend so heavily on sea ice. As hunters of seals, they must make the gorgings of the winter, when they can hunt off the ice, last for the year, which they spend in some degree of starvation. With, on the average 3-4 weeks less ice than 20 years ago, Hudson Bay populations are severely stressed and in decline and may well be doomed. If current trends continue Hudson Bay may be ice free by midcentury. Already, polar bears in the Churchill area have been semi domesticated through a program of direct feeding. Is a polar bear that depends on chicken and beef carcasses still a wild animal? What are we to make of this trend of warming, habit loss, and human dependence? How far can it go?

The answer quite simply is quite far. Jon Mooallen, in his recent book, *The Wild Ones*, shows how several species have come to be entirely dependent on us for their survival and this may be just the beginning. His writing is only a sampling of a situation that has become quite common place. The Lange Metalmark butterfly has lost its habitat in the Antioch NWR and now exists in large part because of an artificial breeding program. Volunteers capture pregnant females and drive them 350 miles to a lab where their young are raised in a lab and then driven north again to be deposited on maintained plantings of naked stem buckwheat. That plant too depends on cultivation for its survival.

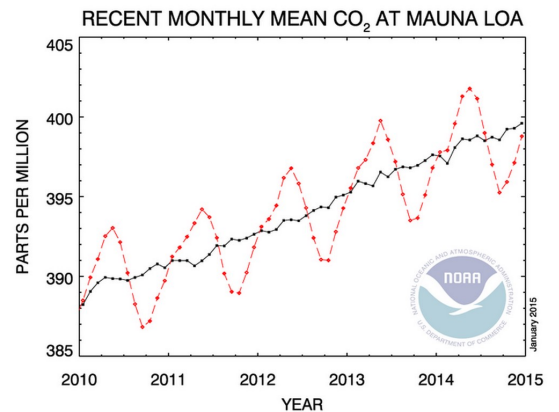
Mooalam also tells the story of the more widely known Whooping Crane, a conservation success story if ever there was, sort of. Whoopers were down to not quite two dozen birds in the 1940's when their protection began, and they now number close to 400. At the time of European settlement it is estimated that 10,000 whoopers lived in a population that stretched from Texas to New Jersey, but hunting and destruction of its marsh habitat brought that bird to the brink of extinction. Habitat protection saved and has stabilized the Texas population. A second Florida population has also been established but this one consists of birds hatched in a lab in Maryland, trucked to Wisconsin, where they are to fly and are led on their migration to Florida by volunteers in ultralights.

While the metalmark and the Whooping Crane are not victims of climate change, their plights, like the polar bear, are directly related to habitat loss. And in each of these cases, and many others, we can go to great lengths to save animals, but ultimately our efforts are limited because we cannot save their habitats. Ironically, the Endangered Species Act, which has been cited to protect these animals, was not really passed with this intent. "The purposes of this Act are to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved." The protection of threatened species was really a means to a larger end.

Ecosystems may be the point but in fact this almost never happens because it is so impossible to pull off. Does this fact trivialize species conservation efforts? Only certain animals and plants will ever catch our attention enough to prompt the outpouring of energy, money, and time; many if not most will remain below the radar screen for being too small, too far away, not cute enough... Indeed, it is hard to avoid the question of what all this conservation is for? Most of Hudson Bay may lose its polar bears but small populations will probably survive elsewhere in the Arctic. Puffins are a fragile population in Maine but are terrifically common elsewhere. We put a lot of misguided effort into re introducing caribou in the 80's. Should we look askance or even dismiss efforts to preserve local biodiversity when the results are ultimately so limited and in some ways self-centered on what we think of as wild and what we want to see out the window?

Or are we to take this as a necessary feature of the current geological age when human influences are coming to predominate on geological scales. Habitat destruction, climate change, the influences of domestication and exploitation, all of these are mounting and confirming ever more so that we live in qualitatively different geological time, the Anthropocene, when our own effects surpass the traditional geological and evolutionary influences. If this is the case, perhaps our responsibility and our efforts take on a bigger meaning as we rethink the difference and the divide between 'use' and them.

Lewis Thomas wrote in *Lives of a Cell*; we have become, in a painful, unwished for way, nature itself. We have grown everywhere, spreading like a new growth over the entire surface, touching and affecting every other kind of life, incorporating ourselves. ...Humans ... are now in charge, running the place for better or for worse.



## Western Maine Audubon Programs and Field Trips

### 2015 Day Program.

**March 11.** “Climate Change and Maine Wildlife” is the title of a presentation by Ron Joseph, wildlife biologist, retired after 33 years of public service. 11:45 AM, Thomas Auditorium, UMF. Western Maine Audubon is a co-sponsor with the Department of Biology, University of Maine at Farmington.

### Evening Programs.

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**April 8.** We hear them; we see them; we even try to mimic them; we are cheered by their antics, particularly on the darkest, coldest days of the darkest, coldest season. But what do we really know about our little black-capped backyard buddies? Join veteran researcher Susan Smith on a journey into “The Secret World of the Black-capped Chickadee.” 7:00 PM in the ground level lecture hall (adjacent to the parking lot), Roberts Learning Center, UMF.

**May 13.** “What’s New with Maine’s Canada Lynx”, presented by Mark McCollough, lead biologist for implementing policies pertaining to Canada Lynx in the northeast for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. What trapping rules describe as the incidental taking of two Canada Lynx in late 2014 has raised public interest, curiosity and some confusion about the status of this predator currently on the endangered species list. It is hoped this program will help an interested public gain a clearer view of what these cats face in Maine, one of the few states with lynx habitat. 7:00 PM in the ground level lecture hall (adjacent to the parking lot), Roberts Learning Center, UMF.

### Field Trips, spring and summer.

**May 9.** Annual “warbler walk”. Meet at 7:00 AM (rain or shine), Whistle Stop Trail, West Farmington. (no charge). Time: one to two hours.



**May 23.** Perham Stream Walk. 7:00 AM

TBA. Spring Monhegan birding trip. When available, details will be posted on facebook and the Western Maine Audubon section in the Maine Audubon website.

**August 8.** Bird walk on a trail through the Foothills Land Conservancy property at the head-water zone of Wilson Lake, Wilton. Meet at 7:00 AM (rain or shine) at the trail head parking area on Pond Road, just off Route 156 (Weld Road) north of Wilton. Habitats include managed field, wet woods and marshy wetland. Leader: Kate Weatherby. Distance: one mile. Time: one to one and one-half hours.

**Sept. 12.** Bird walk in the Flint Woods, on Titcomb Hill Road (extension of Anson St.) in Farmington. Meet at parking area at 7:00 AM (rain or shine). With its mixed coniferous and deciduous habitats, this should be a good spot for migrating warblers. Leader: Kate Weatherby. Distance: one and one-half miles. Time: one and one-half hours.

On Feb. 7 Paul McGuire writes: During a phone conversation with Sallie at about 4:00, I happened to glance for a moment in the direction of the corn crib feeder we have for the bluejays and doves. Sure enough, a pair of bluebirds sat on the ridgepole, checking it out, I suppose, for a hole. Whether in a nesting mood or not, they always seem interested in poking about any possibility. I wonder if it is the same pair seen on a walk by the Frong farm in late December. Despite reports of wintering bluebirds, it is no less a jolt when a pair is seen on a 20 degree early February afternoon, sitting on a feeder surrounded by three feet of new snow. Not long after that sighting, a sizeable flock of Bohemian waxwings crossed over the field, apparently headed for a large tangle of bittersweet nearby. Yesterday, they were picking up grit in the road above the house. I had to stop to wait for them fly up out of the way before turning into my road.



Kate Weatherby writes that she has had about a dozen Pine siskins at her feeders most of the winter with occasional Common Redpolls.

For the first time ever, we have had a pair of cardinals at our feeders all winter here in Norridgewock. Pretty exciting!

Due to the fewer Newsletters going out, we hope you will check out our web page <http://maineaudubon.org/western/> and like us on facebook! Thanks and have a great Spring and Summer. Will have another newsletter out in the Fall. Hope to see you at our upcoming programs. S.W.



### Summary Results of the Farmington Christmas Bird Count

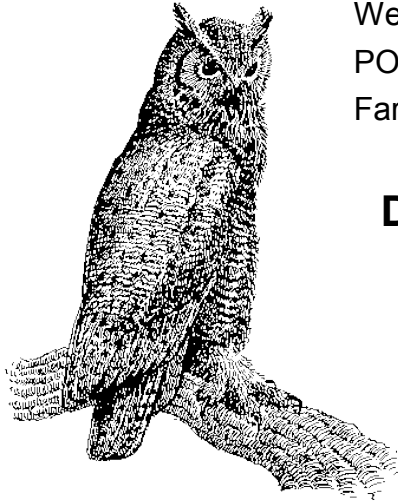
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This year's annual Farmington Christmas Bird Count took place on Sunday, December 28th, 2014. Ten birders spread out across the 15-mile diameter circle centered just north of Farmington (in Fairbanks). In addition, one feeder-watcher added to the count results. The weather this year was mild, especially compared to the bitter cold many of the same participants braved last year—the day started 54 degrees warmer than last year! Thirty species were recorded on count day, fewer than the five-year mean of 35.8. The low species total may have been a result of the mild weather. Open water was plentiful, meaning lingering waterfowl were not concentrated in traditional open-water locations such as Farmington Falls or Clearwater Pond. In addition, open farm fields likely meant that some ground-foraging winter visitors such as Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, and Horned Larks may have been present but were not concentrated in roadsides and other snow-free areas. So-called "winter finches" were also in short supply over most of the state in late December, and no redpolls, crossbills, or Pine Grosbeaks were recorded on this year's count. However, greater numbers of these species have begun to show up throughout Maine over the past month or so. Some of the highlights from this year's count were seven Eastern Bluebirds, large numbers of American Robins, and three lingering Common Loons (on Clearwater Pond). Two Red-bellied Woodpeckers were found in downtown Farmington this year. This southern species, first recorded on the count in 2009, is becoming increasingly common throughout much of Maine, especially in winter. The date for next year's count has not been set yet, but look for an announcement in a fall issue of the newsletter.

### Mountain Bird Watch Volunteer Request



Do you enjoy hiking? Are you a birder- or would you like to learn more about bird identification to support a conservation effort? Mountain Birdwatch is a long-term monitoring program for Bicknell's Thrush and other high-elevation forest birds. We're looking for beginner to experienced bird-watchers who are strong hikers to conduct a survey in the Adirondacks, Catskills, Green and White Mountains, or Maine. Hike a scenic mountain trail, enjoy the sunrise, and count birds for conservation! To learn more about Mountain Birdwatch, visit <http://vtcostudies.org/projects/mountains/mountain-birdwatch/>. Want to know what you'd do as a volunteer? Check out our volunteer resources here: <http://vtcostudies.org/projects/mountains/mountain-birdwatch/participate/>. When you're ready to select a route to survey in 2015, here's a list of routes that need volunteers this season: <http://vtcostudies.org/projects/mountains/mountain-birdwatch/available-routes/>. Please contact Mountain Birdwatch director Judith Scarl (jscarl "at" vtcostudies.org) if you'd like to learn more about this exciting program!



Western Maine Audubon Society  
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 Farmington, Maine 04938

Stamp

## Dated Material

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### Western Maine Audubon Board

#### Officers:

President	Paul McGuire	778-0706
Treasurer:	Robin Lee	778-0706
Secretary:	Steve Bien	897-5215

#### Committees:

Newsletter	Sallie Wilder	634-2215
Publicity	Steve Bien	897-5215
Membership	Nancy Knapp	778-6285

#### Directors at

#### Large:



Burt Knapp	778-6285
Art Wilder	634-2215
Tom Mauzaka	684-3781
Kate Weatherby	

### Maine Audubon and Western Maine Audubon Membership Form

Yes, I want \_\_\_ to join or \_\_\_ renew my membership with Maine Audubon and Western Maine Chapter.

I want to help protect and conserve wildlife habitat and promote environmental education and advocacy in Maine.

Please send me Maine Audubon's quarterly newsletter, Habitat, and The Pileated Press, the Western Maine Audubon chapter newsletter. I understand that if I join at the Patron level or higher or enclose an additional \$10, I will receive Audubon, the bimonthly National Audubon magazine. My membership benefits also include discounts on Maine Audubon programs and trips, on products from Maine Audubon's Nature Stores, and at Audubon sanctuaries nationwide.

Please make your check out to Maine Audubon and mail it to Maine Audubon, 20 Gilsland Farm Road, Falmouth, Maine 04105.

\$25 Senior/Volunteer    \$65 Contributing    \$500 Benefactor

\$35 Individual    \$100 Patron    \$1,000 Director's Circle

\$45 Household    \$250 Sustaining

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Questions? Call 207/781-2330 x232 or email [member@maineaudubon.org](mailto:member@maineaudubon.org).