



Northeast Kingdom Audubon

A Chapter Of the National Audubon Society

Fall 2006

The mission of Northeast Kingdom Audubon is to foster the stewardship and enjoyment of birds, other wildlife and natural habitats.

Trip to Hog Island

I would like to thank the Northeast Kingdom Audubon for the scholarship to Hog Island Youth Camp. We learned about many things, including marine life, freshwater ecology, forest ecology, ornithology, insects, astronomy, friendship and trust. We learned about caring for the environment and how nature operates like a community: every animal and plant play an important role. On our all-day boat trip to Eastern Egg Rock, we learned how puffins were restored after being killed off by hunters in the 1800s. We had excellent puffin viewing and photo ops.

One of my favorite activities was going to the salt mud flats. We had an awesome time getting muddy and catching crabs and fish. Another activity that I really enjoyed was the Island solo. We had about an hour to just sit in one spot and think or read or draw.

During my stay at Hog Island I kept a watch list which included osprey, cormorant, crow, herring gull, black-backed gull, loon, common tern, arctic tern, roseate tern, black guillemot, bald eagle, chickadee, puffin, laughing gull, blue heron, harbor seal, periwinkle, mussel, barnacle, crab, sea star, and dogwinkle. I had a wonderful time meeting new people and reconnecting with old friends. Thank you again for making this possible.

—*Claire Simons, St. Johnsbury, VT*
NEK Audubon Scholarship Recipient

Notes from the President ...

Another year has passed and I just finished our Annual Report for the State Office. So, what exactly did our chapter accomplish this year?

Tom Berriman, trip leader supreme, led bird trips each month — Plum Island, the coast of Maine, the Champlain Valley, Lake Memphremagog, Victory Bog, the Nulhegan Wildlife Refuge, and local trails. You absolutely don't have to be able to identify birds to go on these trips. It's always exciting to see a beginner becoming hooked!

With the BIRDATHON we raised enough money to send Emma Rose Kaplan, Carrie Harvey and Claire Simons to the Audubon camp on Hog Island off the coast of Maine.

Charlie Browne conducted a month-long "Discovering Birds" class, packed with information for novice and seasoned birders alike. Carolyn Boardman initiated "Bird Notes," a monthly column that appears in the *Caledonian-Record* on the last Tuesday of each month. And finally, we hosted programs on the Avian Flu, a Snowshoe Expedition in Ungava Bay and the new Hardwick Trails System.

In addition to chapter work, several of us spent numerous hours each week, out and about, looking for breeding behavior of the bird species in our blocks. Our results will be published in the second edition of the *Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas*. It's rewarding to have to follow up on what we see and hear. What a thrill to see woodcock "peent" ten feet in front of me, circle up, descend twittering, and land on precisely the same spot ... Or hear the wavy calls of chickadee fledglings trying to get it right!

So, we've been active, improved our skills and pleased to see an ever-growing interest in birds and wildlife habitat in this corner of Vermont.

northeast Kingdom audubon BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2006-2007

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Bird Chatter: High-Sky Acrobatics

Donna and I had just pulled over to the Route 5 shoulder near the Barnet Mountain overlook of the Connecticut River and Comerford Dam. We were hoping to catch a glimpse of the peregrine falcons, which have been nesting on the Barnet Mountain ledges for the past few years. Almost immediately, we saw one of the adult falcons just south of the nesting ledge, heading north. Within seconds, a motorized sound pierced the air; and, then, a vehicle, followed by a motorcycle, raced into our sight, heading south on Route 5.

They streaked past us. And, to our astonishment, we saw that same falcon, which moments ago had been heading north, now only a few feet behind the speeding motorcyclist, locked onto the motorcycle with laser precision. We were amazed at the falcon's ability to do a 180-turn and to descend to the same level as the cyclist in a matter of seconds. We were, also, amused that the cyclist had no idea that he was being pursued. The pursuer became the pursued. (One wonders what could have happened to the cyclist if the bird had actually struck him.) We were, also, disheartened to consider how disturbing such intrusions must be to this nesting pair.

After doing a bit of research, I realized that we should not have been astonished by the falcon's adeptness, agility and speed. Peregrines capture their prey in mid-air, locking onto a bird, and making their stoop (a bullet-like dive) at speeds that have been estimated at 200 mph! They strike their prey with their feet, either stunning it or

killing it and, then, catch it in mid-air as it plummets to the ground.

This same acrobatic agility is seen in their courtship flights, where they climb high into the air and dive in whirling spirals, touching wings. Ah, to see that would be spectacular!

The peregrine falcon population in Vermont is a success story. By the 1970s, the peregrine population in eastern United States was nonexistent, primarily due to the use of toxic pesticides. According to a phone conversation with wildlife biologist Margaret Fowle of the National Wildlife Federation, which is monitoring the Vermont peregrine population, there are now 33 territorial pairs, of which 26 pairs are nesting. The increasing Vermont population, which was entirely introduced by humans through a process known as hacking, is "well ahead of the other New England states." 2005 was a record-breaking year and this year is showing progress and stability. Ninety birds have been released over the past five or six years in Vermont (as part of the 6,000 which have been released nationally over the past 25 years) and the population is now well established. What good news!

It is relatively easy to monitor the population since peregrines return to the same nesting sites year after year, sites that often include high ledges and open skies and fields, requisites for discovering flying prey and doing their maneuvers. They are so consistent in returning to the same sites that it has been observed that one nesting site in Wales has been in existence since 1243.

—Bill Marshall

Information obtained from: Margaret Fowle, wildlife biologist with the National Wildlife Federation; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Wisconsin Department of Wildlife Management



Buying Birdseed? Feeders?

Buy them at Howard's Home and Garden!

Upon presentation of this coupon, ten percent of October sales will be donated to Northeast Kingdom Audubon in support of the Windsong Wildlife Sanctuary in East Peacham and in support of the ecology camp scholarships for students.

In addition, purchases of \$25 or more with this filled-out coupon, are good for one NEK Audubon chapter membership, including the newsletter and email updates on field trips and other activities.

Please donate ten percent of my purchase to Northeast Kingdom Audubon in support of Windsong Wildlife Sanctuary and ecology camp scholarships:

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ amount of purchase _____

List birds you see at your feeders: _____

Bird Banding at Nulhegan Refuge

The NEK Audubon was invited to the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Brunswick, Vermont, this summer to help and observe Jim Chace do his bird banding. Jameson F. Chace is an Assistant Professor in the Dept. of Biology & Bio-medical Sciences at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island. Over the past five seasons he has been color banding and mapping Canada Warblers at three locations in the refuge. He also has run a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship Program) long-term banding station on the refuge. What do we learn from MAPS banding? From captures we can identify age-structure in populations and the breeding status of the population. From recaptures we get a measure of survival rates.

The station is a long-term constant-effort bird banding station, located in a regenerating mixed Acadian northern hardwood forest. The banding protocol follows the MAPS protocol (<http://www.birdpop.org/maps.htm>). The station operates 17 mist nets with lengths that range from 6 to 18 meters, on 7 days during the breeding season (May 31-August 8). On each day of operation the station opens at sunrise and closes 6 hours later, weather permitting. The effort is intended to inform the refuge biologist and

manager of population level responses, of avian productivity and survivorship and community level responses, of species composition, within the regenerating forest. Because the station follows the MAPS protocol, these data are directly comparable with over 500 other stations in North America. The station has a mix of boreal specialists (boreal chickadee and spruce grouse), northern mixed forest (Canada warbler, red-eyed vireo) and northern hardwood species (black-throated blue, an abundance of warblers (14 species), early successional (chestnut-sided warbler) and late-successional (scarlet tanager). Most commonly captured species include magnolia warbler, Nashville warbler, veery, hermit thrush, ovenbird, Canada warbler. This summer 59 species, of those 19 are confirmed breeders and 16 likely breeders, occurred at the refuge station; a great number were transients through the study area.

The NEK Audubon members who visited the banding station were pleased to learn so much from Jim and thrilled to see the birds up close. There will be another opportunity next summer for members to help Jim out with his study. Many thanks to the Refuge staff and Jim for this interesting opportunity.

—Carolyn Boardman

Upcoming Events • September - December 2006

All activities and Board Meetings are open to the public. Events are listed in our newsletter and in local newspapers, but may be updated or change. We appreciate a \$3/member or \$5/non-member donation and pre-registration for trips and programs. To learn more about the NEK Audubon Chapter, how to join, camp scholarships or trips, visit our website: www.nek Audubon.org. For trip info contact: Tom Berriman at 626-9071 or email thomas.berriman@verizon.net.

September 10, Sunday: Parker River Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island for fall migration. Meet at the rest-stop, exit 44 interstate 93 in New Hampshire at 6:00 a.m. Bring bag lunch. Return early evening

September 11, Monday: Informational and Planning Meeting, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Fairbanks Museum Classroom. Open to all.

September 24, Sunday: Hawk Watch at Weeks State Park in New Hampshire. Meet in front of Fairbanks Museum at 8:00 a.m. Bring snack. Return 2:00 p.m.

October 2, Monday: Informational and Planning Meeting, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Fairbanks Museum Classroom. Open to all.

October 8, Sunday: Victory Basin. We'll take a hike and see what's up. Meet at Damon's Crossing at 8:00 a.m. Bring a snack and water.

October 22, Sunday: Champlain Valley and Dead Creek. Snow Geese and Waterfowl. Meet at West Danville park and ride intersection of Routes 2 and 15 at 7:00 a.m. Bring a bag lunch. Return late afternoon.

November 5, Sunday: Campers' Presentations and Potluck Supper, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Location to be announced. Emma Rose Kaplan, Carrie Harvey and Claire Simons will give presentations on their Audubon Camp experiences on Hog Island. For more information contact Airie Lindsay 802-748-8515, (airie@kingcon.com).

November 6, Monday: Informational and Planning Meeting, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Fairbanks Museum Classroom. Open to all.

November 19, Sunday: Maine coast. Wintering Waterfowl. Bring a bag lunch. Return early evening. Meet at rest stop exit 44 interstate 93 New Hampshire at 6:00 a.m.

December 3, Sunday: Champlain Valley North of Burlington. Bring a bag lunch. Return late afternoon. Meet at West Danville park and ride intersection of Routes 2 and 15 at 7:00 a.m.

December 4, Monday: Informational and Planning Meeting, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Fairbanks Museum Classroom. Open to all.

AND ... Anyone interested in a 3-day trip to Machias Seal Island, Jonesport, Maine in July of 2007 should contact Tom at 626-9071 or email thomas.berriman@verizon.net. Limited space available.



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1302 Main Street
St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

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How to join Northeast Kingdom Audubon

There are two ways to become a member:

1. To join the National Audubon Society (first time): send \$20 (or more) payable to the National Audubon Society to: Audubon Vermont, 255 Sherman Hollow Road, Huntington, VT 05462.

phone: 802-434-3068 email: vermont@audubon.org; website: www.audubon.org

When you join the National Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of our NEK Audubon Chapter member and we receive the entire first year's membership money for our chapter's use. You may opt for: a) No Audubon magazine; b) No telemarketing calls; c) No national solicitations; d) Local (VT) appeals only; e) Anonymity ... by so indicating on your application.

2. To join Northeast Kingdom Audubon only: Send \$10 or more yearly (honor system!) to: NEK Audubon, Charlie Browne, Treasurer, 1302 Main Street, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

No matter how you become a member, you will receive a newsletter three times a year and may attend our Board Meetings, which are usually held on the first Monday of each month from 4:30-6:00 at the Fairbanks Museum. Whether or not you are a member, if you send your email address to airie@kingcon.com you will receive our Updated Events Calendars and local notices. Remember to keep us informed of changes in your email address. You can expect about one email per month.

Visit the NEK Audubon chapter website, www.nekaudubon.org for lots more information!