



# Landmark Heritage Trust

A land trust for the towns of Carmel · Dixmont · Etna · Hampden · Hermon · Monroe · Newburgh · Winterport

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MARCH 2013

## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT:

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## MONEY CONFUSION

We have received some inquiries about our financial solicitations. To clear up any confusion in this area, we would like to review just what we do to raise our operating funds.

In the Spring of the year (usually March), we send out a dues renewal letter to invite our members to renew their membership and show their support of the land trust itself. Membership dues, however, cannot cover the operating cost of the organization.

Therefore, like many non-profits (schools, hospitals, libraries, etc.), we have initiated an annual appeal to solicit funds beyond dues payments alone. As a registered charitable organization, this allows us to approach non-members also. This appeal goes out in the Fall of the year (usually November).

Due to the fact that return envelopes enclosed with the solicitations are the same in both cases, some members confuse one with the other. Some members combine a dues payment with an extra donation to cover both needs. Some members respond to both requests. Some members respond on an irregular basis.

However you choose to respond, be assured your financial help is vital and much appreciated.

Sincerely,

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We thank Ron Logan of Orono again for allowing us to use some of the incredible bird photographs he's taken over time. A few are shown on the right, which we showed in our January 2012 issue. Another one is on page 6. Ron, when you read this, you may want to know that we spotted most of the birds you highlighted on this sheet. Maybe next year someone will see an indigo bunting, pine grosbeak, redpoll, and redstart at the NPNA.



Landmark Heritage Trust is a nonprofit corporation available to work in Carmel, Etna, Dixmont, Hampden, Hermon, Monroe, Newburgh, and Winterport to protect open space and the area's agricultural, scenic, historical, and recreational resources. We encourage conservation of natural resources by fostering environmental awareness through education and preservation of open space through conservation easements, donations of land and other resources. Landmark Heritage Trust is open to everyone. We are always looking for new members, especially people interested in helping by volunteering their time and expertise. All are welcome to attend our meetings to learn more about this local land trust.

## A SWAMP SPARROW AT THISTLE POND

by Caren Plank

With snow forecast and cold pressing in, Rebecca Childs and I, two Monroe bird spotters participating in the North Penobscot Bay Christmas Bird Count, almost headed home mid-afternoon. We had begun the day with the eagerness of most watchers, outfitted with guides and cameras, binoculars and expectations. And without extraordinary effort, the morning had yielded up a diverse allotment of individuals and species: a field flush with Common Redpolls, a spattering of opportunistic Blue Jays and American Crows, chevrons of geese whose identification strained our necks. There were the usual extended families of foraging turkeys and alongside the bank of a stream off Route 141, a skittish Red-tailed Hawk. Most remarkably, just earlier, winding our way slowly along Upper Oakhill Road, we had even better luck: the unidentified object we had first glimpsed from a considerable distance clarified into the shape of a Barred Owl. Clapsed to a branch, as if for dear life, the owl perched, stoic and unmoving. I remember feeling a slight wave of relief when from out the woods across the road, a faint, but distinctive, hooting arose: hoo hoo ho-ho, hoo hoo ho-hooooow. A second Barred Owl, in some proximate relation to the first, awaited nearby.

It was about then we almost called it a day, content to muse together upon our store of sightings and impressions until the North Penobscot CBC watchers joined together to report and pool their findings later that evening. There is something reassuring and congenial in these gatherings, especially coupled with the knowledge that across the country tens of thousands of similar watchers are coming together to share observations that can be used for the betterment of birds and habitat. But, for whatever reason, we didn't stop. Instead, we took a short break for lunch, settled my dog into the back seat of the car and headed out again. We decided we weren't going to miss Thistle Pond. Thistle Pond lies off Back Brooks Road in Monroe and feeds a swamp-like moss-lined rivulet of water that trickles into Marsh Stream, itself a tributary of the Penobscot River. Gazing through the reeds and grasses, we first made a brief survey over the pond. But the pond looked abandoned and grey-white, eerily quiet and we turned away. It was about then we noticed a small bird.

My first thought was that it moved like a wind-up toy, those plastic chicks, given to children, at Easter. Hopping intently through the leaf-litter along the edge of the road that lined the stream, we could barely keep up with the bird's pace. A few black and brown feathers on its back fluttered, in some disarray, and its upturned tail appeared sparse. Although its coloration, movements and size somewhat resembled those of a Dark-eyed Junco, we could not settle on that identification or any other. Could it be a species of sparrow? Which one? For awhile, we followed behind, the bird getting further out of reach, until reluctantly, we headed back to the car. But, some uncertainty about the bird, not only its identification, but, perhaps, its condition, kept us from driving off and we walked back to see if we could get a better look.

By this time, we were joined by a third person, a nearby resident coming home for the evening. With the bird again in sight and guide books open, he registered a vote for a Junco, common to the area. Still uncertain, I fumbled through even more pages. And as we continued to stand about and congenially hem and haw and the bird continued to patter through the leaves, another set of eyes had already focused upon and clarified the matter of the bird, for itself. These eyes were adept and accustomed to hunting the edges of woods. Streaking through the trees in an unforgiving feat of flight and purpose, a Northern Shrike impaled our bird, lifted it up and took it off to eat. It did so before our eyes, within feet of us, and we were irrelevant and helpless.

Later that evening, relying on an image from Rebecca's camera, an expert birder, Ron Harrell, identified the ill-fated bird as a Swamp Sparrow. It was, alas, an anti-climactic moment. The Northern Shrike and Swamp Sparrow were singular sightings on this particular count. And, we played a small part in proffering that information. Yet, what I will remember from the 2012 Bird Count is how two birds simply vanished, caught up in the propulsive forces of necessity and the swirl and immediacy on nature: survival and sacrifice - raw survival, unwitting sacrifice lived out before us.

## SUMMARY: 2012 NPNA YEAR OF THE BIRD

by Don Phillips

Few people witness the gripping saga as observed by our intrepid bird counters in Caren Plank's narrative. Tucked within her writing is a reminder of how far removed we are from the everyday facts of life that go on just outside our windows - the threats that birds and other wildlife encounter from all directions, every moment of every day. For them, life comes down to one truism: eat-or-be-eaten.

I can only wonder how many riveting life-or-death moments occur at the Northern Pond Natural Area on a daily basis, moments when predators kill so they can survive another day, or miss their target to add to the precariousness of life. For those of us who traipsed the NPNA last year – with or without binoculars in hand – we all consciously or unconsciously observed vestiges of Nature's iron clad "bird-eat-bird" rule. Sometimes these vestiges are subtle, other times not. Consider the following observations from last year's *Final Tally: NPNA Year Of The Bird* (shown on next page):

4/26 – A cache of Wood Duck feathers observed on the ground by members of the Downeast Hiking Club, with the consensus that a "predator (a hawk?) had killed it" (see photo, right);

4/26, 5/18, 10/12 – Red-Shouldered Hawk, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, and a Bald Eagle were spotted. These birds, predators all, have their own grisly tales to tell the squeamish if they could only speak.



Memorable observations in Nature do not necessarily have to involve dramatic Wild Kingdom type moments. Rather, they may be quite unobtrusive at best and, I like to think, performed just for an audience of one (note from your editor: I confess that I have a problem with anthropomorphism). Indeed, these otherwise innocuous moments often come when I finally glimpse, *at long last*, exactly what species it is that is singing that certain captivating song that permeates through the forest like a springtime mist. When this happens, I feel privileged; after all, I feel that I *earned* the special knowledge that was imparted to me.



Take the following as an example. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, walking the grounds of the NPNA by myself, I spent an hour stalking whatever bird was accountable for singing a beautifully sputtering, descending song that I had been hearing regularly as of late, not only at the NPNA but within other mixed softwood-hardwood forestlands. It turned out to be a Canada Warbler, a bird as handsome as its song is mysterious. It took awhile but I was finally in a position to get a long enough glance at him. His barely quivering beak and vibrations in his throat timed perfectly with the trill I was hearing. Identifying the creator of this music was truly a reward that kept on giving each time I heard it afterwards.

Left Photo shows a Canada Warbler looking intently at Ron Logan, the photographer.

# FINAL TALLY: NPNA YEAR OF THE BIRD, 2012

reported by many, compiled by one

**Note:** Entries in blue font indicate that bird was observed on June 2nd, Bird Day at the NPNA, by either Seth Benz or others on that day's outing. Birds shown in blue font but with a date in black font indicate the bird was first observed on the date shown, not June 2.

Count as of 12/31/2012: **63**

<b>LOONS</b>	Common Loon	May 16	<b>SWIFTS</b>			<b>WOOD WARBLERS</b>		
<b>GREBES</b>			<b>HUMMINGBIRDS</b>	Ruby-Throated Hummingbird	May 16	Yellow-Rumped Warbler	Apr 16	
<b>CORMORANTS</b>			<b>KINGFISHER</b>	Belted Kingfisher	Apr 16	Black-Throated Green Warbler	May 11	
<b>BITTERNS &amp; HERONS</b>			<b>WOODPECKERS</b>	Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker	Apr 16	Ovenbird	May 11	
<b>GEESE &amp; DUCKS</b>	Black Duck	Apr 13		Pileated Woodpecker	Apr 16	Northern Parula	May 11	
	Wood Duck <sup>1</sup>	Apr 26		Northern Flicker	May 16	Black-and-White Warbler	May 11	
	Canada Goose	May 11		Downy Woodpecker	May 16	Black-Throated Blue Warbler	May 11	
	Hooded Merganser	May 24		Hairy Woodpecker	Jun 2	Magnolia Warbler	May 11	
<b>NEW WORLD VULTURES</b>			<b>FLYCATCHERS</b>			Blackburnian Warbler	May 16	
	Turkey Vulture	Apr 13		Eastern Phoebe	May 16	Common Yellowthroat Warbler	May 16	
<b>RAPTORS</b>				Alder Flycatcher	Jun 2	Chestnut-Sided Warbler	May 16	
	Red-Shouldered Hawk	Apr 26		Eastern Kingbird	Jun 2	Canada Warbler	May 18	
	Osprey	Apr 26	<b>SWALLOWS</b>			Nashville Warbler	Jun 2	
	Cooper's Hawk	May 18		Tree Swallow	Jun 2	Northern Waterthrush	Jun 2	
	Bald Eagle	Oct-12	<b>JAYS &amp; CROWS</b>			American Redstart	Jun 2	
<b>FALCONS</b>				American Crow	Feb 24	Yellow Warbler	Jun 2	
<b>GROUSE</b>	Ruffed Grouse	Apr 26		Common Raven	Feb 24			
<b>RAILS &amp; ALLIES</b>				Bluejay	May 11	<b>TANAGERS</b>		
<b>PLOVERS</b>			<b>CHICKADEES, NUTHATCHES &amp; KINGLETS</b>					
<b>SANDPIPERS</b>				Black-Capped Chickadee	Feb 24	<b>CARDINALS &amp; ALLIES</b>		
<b>GULLS</b>				Red-Breasted Nuthatch	Feb 24	Rose Breasted Grosbeak	Jun 2	
<b>DOVES</b>	Mourning Dove	May 16		Golden-Crowned Kinglet	Apr 13	<b>NEW WORLD SPARROWS &amp; ALLIES</b>		
<b>OWLS</b>			<b>CREEPERS</b>			Song Sparrow	Apr 16	
<b>NIGHTHAWKS, WHIP-POOR-WHILLS</b>			<b>WRENS</b>	Winter Wren	Apr 16	White-Throated Sparrow	Apr 26	
			<b>THRUSHES &amp; ALLIES</b>			Swamp Sparrow	Apr 26	
				American Robin	Apr 16	Dark-Eyed Junco	31-Oct	
				Hermit Thrush	May 11	<b>BLACKBIRDS &amp; ORIOLES</b>		
				Veery	May 18	Redwing Blackbird	May 11	
				Wood Thrush	Jun 2	Common Grackle	Jun 2	
			<b>MIMICS</b>			<b>FINCHES</b>		
				Gray Catbird	May 16	Pine Siskins	Feb 24	
			<b>WAXWINGS</b>			Purple Finch	Jun 2	
				Cedar Waxwing	Jun 2	American Goldfinch	Jun 2	
			<b>SHRIKES</b>			<b>OLD WORLD SPARROWS</b>		
			<b>STARLINGS</b>					
			<b>VIREOS</b>					
				Blue-Headed Vireo	Apr 26			
				Red-Eyed Vireo	Jun 2			

Notes: 1: Wood Duck identified based on feathers found on the ground indicating that a predator (a hawk??) had killed it; a live female Woodie was observed on May 16.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



If you would like to be on our notification list, please email Tony DeFeo at [landmarkheritage@gmail.com](mailto:landmarkheritage@gmail.com) or call him at 234-205. For Outing and/or Event questions/ideas, email Rebecca Childs at [rchilds58@myfairpoint.net](mailto:rchilds58@myfairpoint.net).

**Beaver Pond Walk** – Saturday March 9; Meet at Monroe Elementary School, 2 pm. FMI, contact Rebecca Childs

**Woodcock Evening** - Saturday April 13; Meet at NPNA 6-7 pm; FMI, contact Joan Cheetham ([jzcheetham@gmail.com](mailto:jzcheetham@gmail.com))

**Canoe/Kayak Souadabscook River to Hammond Pond** - Saturday June 22 (rain date: June 29); Meet at Violet's Landing, Bog Road, Hermon at 10 am. FMI, call Allan Tubbs at 825-3569.

## LHT NEWS & TIDBITS

### IN-GENERAL NEWS

➤ The last issue of the LHT Newsletter (Vol. 6 Issue 2, October 2012) was the first one we sent out via email to selected members (ie., mostly those with email addresses we know). Based on comments we received afterwards, we believe it was successful. We think it may have saved us up to \$1,000 when we consider copying costs and (especially) what our time is worth. We didn't get many comments, but those who did commended us for doing so. We did not get any negative comments. As we noted last time, selecting who amongst our readers we sent it out via email was basically arbitrary. We will continue to send issues out via email with the remaining getting it via regular mail for the foreseeable future. For questions or other comments, please contact Don Phillips at [info@phillipsecoservices.com](mailto:info@phillipsecoservices.com) or by calling him at 525-0930.

➤ Don't forget that LHT Newsletters going back to 2008 can be downloaded from our website.

### PROPERTY-SPECIFIC NEWS

- A special **Thank You** goes out to Seth Benz, ornithologist extraordinaire of Belfast, for the time and effort he put into the NPNA Bird Day on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. We would NEVER have gotten the 63 species we did without his help.
- We continue to request articles, photos, clippings, poetry, personal experiences or reflections about any of our holdings (or anywhere else) to put in the pages of this newsletter.
- We haven't given up yet on sponsoring an Ice Fishing Derby at the NPNA. Perhaps the winter weather in 2013 will be more conducive to hold it. Stay tuned.



**Landmark Heritage Trust**  
**P.O. Box 105**  
**Dixmont, ME 04932**

## MEMBERSHIP

Please fill out the renewal information below for another year of LHT membership. If you fill it out now, you will save the LHT time, paper, and postage. We thank you for your continual support.

Membership Contribution

- \$ 5 ..... Students & Seniors
- \$ 10 ..... Individuals
- \$ 15 ..... Family
- \$ 30 ..... Business
- \$ 100 ..... Donor
- \$ 250 ..... Patron
- \$ 500 ..... Benefactor

To volunteer time & expertise, please check

- ( ) Public Relations
- ( ) Land Monitoring
- ( ) Fund Raising
- ( ) Planning/Research
- ( ) Mapping/Marking/Existing Roads, trails etc.
- ( ) Education
- ( ) Sign Making

*Remember that contributions are tax deductible*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE & ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to the Landmark Heritage Trust, and send check to:*

Landmark Heritage Trust  
 c/o Carol Cuddy, Treasurer  
 P.O. Box 105  
 Dixmont, ME 04932