



# SOMES · MEYNELL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

*Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the Somes Pond Watershed*

Summer 2017

Issue No. 18

## SOMES-MEYNELL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

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1898 – 1990

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## Message from the Board *by Dan Kane*

My seven year old daughter began her annual survey of edible wild plants as soon as we arrived on Oak Hill Road in early June. Mint, sorrel, blueberries, huckleberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, cranberries, and wintergreen (for tea) are all on her ever expanding list. We ate our first blueberries around July 1st, and all indications are that the huckleberry harvest will be good in August. I always look forward to returning to Somesville. It still feels like home to me, and it is good to see old friends and experience the familiar sights, sounds, and smells of Mount Desert Island. The thing I most look forward to, though, is seeing how excited my daughter is to get outside and explore, hike, swim and learn whatever lessons nature has to offer.

Kids always seem to me to be at their best when they are outside. Nature engages their interest and imagination. When my daughter and her friends hike the trails in Acadia, they disappear ahead in a reverie perhaps looking for some natural treasure or building a fairy house out of birch bark and sticks. My friends' teenagers happily drop their smart phones and pick up paddles to go explore one of our nearby ponds.

Outdoor education is more important than ever now that technology makes it so easy to disengage from the natural world. The opportunities to learn all branches of science including ecology, biology, geology and math are everywhere. Nature is also great inspiration for writing and the creation of art. Of course to get outside into the woods, up on the mountains or out on the water, you have to walk, hike, run, paddle, swim, pedal, or skate. All of those

activities improve both physical and mental health.

As a board member at the Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary, I'm excited about Director Billy Helprin's commitment to outdoor education and about the work he has done with local schools. In addition to being a science curriculum adviser to the school district, Billy has run educational programs for Tremont, Trenton, Pemetic, MDES, Connors-Emerson, The Community School, MDI High School, and even COA. This past school year he worked with a group of 7th and 8th graders from MDES to study red pine health and the effects of the red pine scale infestation. In February, 3rd and 4th graders from Tremont went outside to study the snowpack, dig snow pits, and learn about avalanche safety. In June, The Community School and others helped with the annual alewife count down at the Mill Pond. These experiences connect students to the environment, engage them in real scientific study, and perhaps plant the seed of a lifelong love of the outdoors.

Of course, the benefits of outdoor education apply equally to adults. If you have a chance, I encourage you to visit the Sanctuary for one of the many programs, nature walks, or paddles that Billy organizes every summer. Whenever I spend time with him, I learn something new. As we all learn more about the ecology of Somes Pond, we'll be better able to care for this incredible place we call home.

I look forward to seeing you out on the trails or down at the pond this summer!



# Director's Message *by William Helprin*

The past year at the Sanctuary has been focused on increasing the organization's value to the local community. I see the value of the Sanctuary in terms of connecting students with the outdoors and other elements of nature beyond themselves. I also see the value of the Sanctuary as a place for locals to walk and enjoy nature in relative solitude or as a part of the Thursday morning nature walks. The Sanctuary provides science curriculum support and student activities for our school district in all seasons. Our headquarters is available to more and more groups as a meeting place in a beautiful setting overlooking Somes Pond. I also see value in helping protect our precious lakes from aquatic invaders, and in our ongoing work monitoring and protecting MDI's resident loon and alewife populations.

I am a committed life-long learner. Living on this island certainly makes it easy to expand one's understanding of our local world and beyond with all the educational opportunities offered by great organizations of all types and knowledgeable residents and visitors alike. Life-long learning is more than just the acquisition of knowledge, which is always changing and updating. It is also about maintaining the sense of wonder and curiosity

we all had when we were small children, asking good questions, making detailed observations, examining relationships, and adjusting our conceptions.

I want to share with you some thoughts of a friend of mine who I think exemplifies a great attitude towards learning, growing, and sharing. His name is John Correa, a "retired" resident of Trenton along with his wife Marcie. John has been a valuable volunteer for me while I was the MDI Land Steward for Maine Coast Heritage Trust and with me at the Sanctuary over the past two years. He may be busier in his retirement than when he was working full time. This past winter and spring he completed the second level course of the Maine Master Naturalist Program and did a capstone project with me about alewife education of school kids. His evaluation of the course to his instructors, excerpted here, struck me as a realistic endorsement of the value of wonder in our life-long learning endeavors.

*My wife nailed it when she called me a "budding naturalist." But I am not a newly budding naturalist, as I have in my own circuitous way been on this path since I was a*

*young boy. I would be a lot further along if I had been more focused and had life not gotten in the way.*

*...I have to say that my interest in nature study is not so much in teaching information to kids, or adults for that matter, it is more about trying to get them to see and explore the wonders of the world whether in the garden or in wild nature. My capstone project was on alewife, but it could just as easily have been on the migration of monarch butterflies, birds, wildebeests or whales, or a budding flower, or how the earth goes around the sun. They are all mysteries to me, plus a thousand more.*

I hope that as you read the stories and look at the photos enclosed within this newsletter that you will recognize the value of this small organization and be motivated to share ideas to make it even more so. It goes without saying that your financial support is also important for achieving greater depth of value to our expanding community. Here's to maintaining wonder and uncovering some of the mysteries around us together!

## Infrastructure Improvements

This past winter the Sanctuary embarked on a necessary infrastructure improvement: the replacement of the original septic system for the headquarters building. Not glamorous but necessary to continue hosting school groups, public talks, and workshops, and ensuring protected water quality for Somes Pond. There were some final touches this spring but most of the project was done in a very cold couple of weeks in December. Thanks to Bill LaBelle for septic design plans, Ron Sanborn and the crew at John Goodwin Jr. for installation of the system, HG Reed for wiring, and American Concrete Industries of Veazie for discounted materials. A benefit of the replacement was the creation of additional parking spaces around the existing driveway.

*Small opening created for well designed compact leach field, now useful as additional parking and space for eventual picnic tables and visitor group use.*





# Meet Summer Field Assistant Alex Douwes

The Sanctuary's Summer Field Assistant this year is Alex Douwes. Alex will be a senior at the University of Delaware this fall with a major in marine science focusing on marine biology. He has participated in multiple stream health studies, fisheries management planning, and other ecological research in Delaware and Maryland. Alex hopes to research deep sea fisheries and deep sea organisms in graduate school, specifically finding new deep sea species and cataloging new areas in the abyssal zone.



Alex is originally from a small town near Frederick, Maryland and grew up with a fascination for the biodiversity of nearby rivers. During recent summers he has participated in management planning and removal of invasive terrestrial species and has assisted Delaware's Department of Natural Resources with horseshoe crab spawning counts in Delaware Bay.

Beyond studying ocean and freshwater ecosystems, Alex enjoys playing lacrosse, fly fishing, mountain biking, and playing the bagpipes (which he started learning from his father when he was seven). He has only been to Mount Desert Island once before this summer, three years ago, and fell in love with the area at first sight. He has been very much looking forward to working at the Sanctuary and hopes to learn as much as possible about the area and connections between the ocean and our streams and lakes. He is well on his way to doing so and has already been a big help with alewife migration monitoring and stream passage improvements, school visits, loon territory monitoring, water quality sampling, and courtesy boat inspections for invasive plants. If you hear bagpipe music coming from the Sanctuary deck you'll know who is making it!



*A rainy spring produced some formidable whitewater for alewife to negotiate on their upstream spawning run.*



*Weir pool maintenance underway, April 22*



*2nd dam Weir pools overflowing, May 11th*



*Long Pond outlet flow, May 10*



*Trenton 4th grade Sanctuary visit, May 12th*



*Mill Pond fish ladder*



# 2017 SUMMER & FALL PUBLIC PROGRAMS

## THURSDAY MORNING BIRDING/ NATURALIST WALKS

*Every Thursday through summer, fall, and even into winter, from 8:00 - about 10:00.*

Meet at Sanctuary headquarters to explore Sanctuary trails, and sometimes beyond, looking for whatever the group is inspired by and working on our bird ID skills by sight and sound. Join the camaraderie of the group by sharing your recent sightings around the island and growing our collective knowledge of nature.

## UPDATE ON TICK-BORNE DISEASE IN MAINE

*Tuesday, August 1st at 7:00*

Staff including Chuck Lubelczyk from the Maine Medical Center Research Institute will talk about the emergence of tick borne diseases in mid-coast and Downeast regions of the state and share results of a recent study based on coastal island communities and their perspectives on this significant public health issue in Maine.

## FULL MOON PADDLE

*Monday, August 7th at 6:30*

Watch the moon rise over the mountains from the vantage point of kayaks or canoes on Somes Pond. Open your senses to the sights and sounds as we transition from dusk to moonlit night. We'll watch our resident loon pair with one fast growing chick, hopefully catch a glimpse of bats, nighthawks, muskrat. Catch up on what has been happening around the pond from Sanctuary staff. Bring your own canoe or kayak and meet on the pond near the island. Please call for details.

## MAINE'S AQUATIC INVASIVE PLANTS AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO LIMIT THEIR DAMAGE

*Friday August 11th at 7:00 and Friday  
September 8th at 7:00*

Roberta Hill has been active in lake protection efforts and community outreach in Maine for twenty years, and is the Invasive Species Program Director for the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program. She is the originator and coordinator of VLMP's Invasive Plant Patrol (IPP) program. Working in close collaboration with lake associations, conservation groups and State Government, the IPP program has trained over 3,800 people, including volunteers and professionals, to screen Maine waterbodies for the presence of these plants. The VLMP's IPP program is widely seen as a model for citizen-based early detection, allowing for rapid response. These programs will help raise awareness of invasive aquatic plants and animals and recruit citizens for participation in the IPP

Paddle September 9th. Roberta will talk with us about protection success stories and challenges still coming our way.

## LET NATURE INSPIRE YOU – CHILDREN'S ART WORKSHOP WITH REBEKAH RAYE

*August 12th 10:00-12:00 am*

Join artist, illustrator, art educator and children's book author, Rebekah Raye for a morning of observation and inspiration, drawing and painting from nature around the Sanctuary. We'll start out with an informative walk with the Sanctuary Director, where we will learn about different habitats and sketch out what we observe. We'll then gather back at the HQ building and deck to turn our sketches into paintings expressing our experiences onto paper. Ages 6 ++. All materials provided. Open to families, registration required.

## STORM SURGE PROJECT TRAINING: A CITIZEN SCIENCE APPROACH TO MEASURING STORM SURGE-ESTUARINE INTERACTION IN MAINE

*Thursday, August 17th 6:00-8:00*

Training for volunteers who would like to contribute to the project introduced by Dr. Kim Huguenard (Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Maine), Dr. Laura Rickard (Department of Communication and Journalism, UMaine) and graduate students July 20th. The research project will measure water movements, storm surge, and physical characteristics of estuaries that may intensify or attenuate the effects of storm surge. This information will be critical for communities planning for future coastal development and climate change adaptation. The study will compare three Maine estuaries with varying characteristics, Bass Harbor, the Penobscot River, and the Bagaduce River. This training is for local residents to help with data collection in Bass Harbor and possibly Southwest Harbor. Call for more information.

## INTRO TO MUSHROOM NATURAL HISTORY, IDENTIFICATION, AND PHOTOGRAPHY

*Friday, August 18th at 7:00 pm for the  
talk and Sanctuary walk Saturday the  
18th 9:00-11:00 am*

Maine Coast Heritage Trust Land Steward and Naturalist Kirk Gentelen will share his enthusiasm for the natural history of mushrooms, their role in ecosystems, interactions with humans, and mushroom photography. Every species is different "so you can never tell what's going to come up on a fungus walk. Having a group

search, find, and really discover the world of fungi is a unique focus for a walk – and there can be discoveries at every turn." These events are for all interest and knowledge levels.

## NATURE JOURNALING WORKSHOP

*Saturday, August 26th 9:00 to 11:30am*

Master Naturalists Roberta Sharp and Karen Zimmermann will lead a field session on how to make the most of your nature observations by sketching and note taking. Sure to bring out the details of your time spent in nature and develop a personal means of sharing with others. Basic techniques will be covered at Sanctuary headquarters, then we'll head out to the woods along the beautiful shoreline of Somes Pond. Basic materials included, limited to 12 people.

## REVISITING A CLASSIC ECOLOGICAL STUDY OF WARBLERS ON MOUNT DESERT ISLAND

*Wednesday August 30th 7:00*

At Bass Harbor Head, in 1956 and 1957, Robert H. MacArthur studied the foraging behavior of five species of wood warbler, resulting in Population Ecology of Some Warblers of Northeastern Coniferous Forests (MacArthur, 1958), an influential contribution to the field of Ecology. In the warbler breeding seasons of 2014 and 2015, Acadia National Park Biological Technician and College of the Atlantic Graduate Student Bik Wheeler repeated MacArthur's classic study in the same location, to reassess warbler niche partitioning and observe possible changes over time. Almost 60 years after the historical study, the forest structure, warbler species assemblage, and taxonomic classification have shifted, raising questions of how this foundational ecological theory withstands the test of time.

## INVASIVE PLANT PATROL PADDLE – LONG POND

*Saturday, Sept. 9th 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM*

The IPP Plant Paddle is a 3-hour guided exploration that takes place on shore and on water. Participants will learn how to use field guide keys to help identify suspected invaders, become familiar with some common native plants, and practice the skills needed to be an effective early detector. Novices will be paired with experienced "IPPers." This program will be led by the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program and co-hosted by VLMP, Acadia National Park, Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary and other partners. Group size is limited – please call for details. Opportunity for continued survey work on other lakes on Sunday the 10th.

*Space is limited and registration is required.*

*For more information or to register, please call 244-4027 or email us at [somesmeynell@gmail.com](mailto:somesmeynell@gmail.com)*



# Species Spotlight: Osprey

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) are consummate hunters of fish, usually found along coastlines or inland lakes and rivers where their favorite prey is found. They weigh about 3.5 pounds and are shorter in wingspan than only eagles and turkey vultures for local raptor species at 63 inches. Their long, relatively narrow wings are often sharply bent into an “M” or “W” depending on which way you’re looking at them, making them easy to identify while in flight.

One of my favorite aspects of the alewife migration is the opportunity to watch these amazing hunters at work. The thousands of fish returning to spawn draws many predators, but the osprey is the most dramatic to watch - hovering high above the mill pond, Somes Pond, or the cove, chirp-whistling away, then – target lined up – they plunge down into the water, sharp-taloned feet first.

It is hard to comprehend how well they can see their underwater prey from up high, but more often than not it seems, they come away with a 10-12 inch silver-sided, dark-backed fish, who is not going to like its aerial experience. Soon after lifting off from the water, the osprey maneuvers the fish so that it is facing head first in the direction of flight, more aerodynamically efficient for the trip back to a nest to feed its young. At times there may be five or six osprey hunting simultaneously. Bald eagles often wait for an osprey to make a catch, and then chase them until the better hunter releases its catch and the pirate swoops down to pick it up.

Wildlife photographers also flock to the action of the alewife run, and MDI summer resident Ray Yeager is one of them. Ray captured these great images of hunting osprey several weeks ago in and around the mill pond in Somesville.





# Alewife Migration Project

The alewife migration in Somesville started slowly this spring, presumably because of our very high stream flows from plentiful rainfall. Only 46 fish entered the mill pond before May 20th. It was a different story when the fish ladder was checked on the morning of the 20th!

After the gate was opened at the top of the ladder for an hour and a half that morning, at least 8,600 fish headed upstream. The day's total was 12,663 (37% of the entire 2016 run). By the end of that first big weekend, about 18,200 had started their upstream journey – that's just over half of last year's total. Footage from the weekend can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/somesmeynellwildlifesanctuary/> and scrolling down to the May 21st post.

At the mill pond, we ended up with a count of 39,813 alewife, spanning from the first fish on May 12th to the last on June 23rd - a recent record! 2013 had the prior recent high count with 37,021. In 2016 there were 33,159; 2015 = 23,078; 2014 = 35,716.

Over the past 15 years, most incoming alewife in Somesville have typically spawned in Somes Pond, with an average of 10-15% continuing to Long Pond. This year at the Long Pond outlet we counted a total of 8,669 alewife. This number is very accurate due to hand netting them out of the trap and into the lake. That number was 21.8% of this year's mill pond total, 43.1% of the 2016 Long Pond total, and 354% of the 2015 Long Pond total. The numbers at Long Pond are increasing, but we are not sure why 2016 had so many (20,100, 61% of run total). Relatively low stream flow rates requiring less energy to make the trip and improvements to passages may have been factors that year.

The first 978 alewife arrived at Long Pond on May 24th. Travel time for some of that first big pulse of fish at the mill pond was four days. That is quite an athletic feat considering the high water flows and obstacles like the cascades below the Somes Pond outlet! These are

tough, strong swimmers. Only 25 alewife entered Long Pond after June 13th.

We are required to monitor the recovery of the local alewife population after significant fish passage improvements that were coordinated by former Sanctuary Director David Lamon 11 years ago. In 2005 a total of only 361 alewife entered the Somesville mill pond. We – and the fish – are much better off now, thanks to those fish passage improvements and a great deal of partner and volunteer help.

Each spring and fall, before and after the run, we create the best passageways possible by shoring up weir pools that are deteriorating, placing rocks and sandbags strategically to direct fish to the best channel, and removing obstacles like logs and other debris. We block off pools and channels that do not lead to the next fish ladder as best we can. EBS in Town Hill was kind enough last year to donate and offer purchase at cost of many

sandbags which have been very helpful for temporary channel refinement. At some point fairly soon we will have to address the weir pool walls that have started to fall apart and Sanctuary member support for this project will be important.

Thanks to Sharon and Enoch Albert, Claire Daniel, David Lamon, Alan Brackett, Karlee and Kevin Markovich, Bethany Anderson and The Community School, Gilly Gilmartin, Robbie and Jim Denegre, Chris Petersen, Bruce Connery, Bik Wheeler, Chis Heilakka, Alex Douwes, and John Correa for counting and scale sampling help at the mill pond. Special thanks to JF Burns who does the vast majority of counting and moving of fish from the trap into Long Pond. Bruce and the rest of the Biological Staff at ANP were a big help as always with work up and down the watershed. John Correa played a significant role with education efforts at the mill pond this year. The Sanctuary could, of course, not do all of this without you!



*Taking advantage of good winter conditions, Tremont 3rd and 4th grade students examined snow layers behind school on February 14th 2017. We learned what they can tell us about the winter and implications for plants and animals, including us.*



# Courtesy Boat Inspections

Sanctuary volunteers and staff have been conducting voluntary boat inspections at the Pond's End boat ramp on Long Pond this summer, as in past years. This is an important effort and first line of defense to minimize the likelihood that invasive plants and animals are introduced to the lake and others nearby. Variable leaf and European milfoil, hydrilla, European naiad, water chestnut, and others are serious threats to all lakes in Maine.

Known infestations in Maine are primarily in the southwestern region, and the states to our west and south have many significant infestations. When we encounter visitors from other northeastern states at Long Pond, they share some of the bad news of their "home" lakes being overrun with invasive plants. Fishing, swimming, and boating are much more difficult and some lakes have to be "mowed" to keep channels open. Property values on lakefront land can drop significantly when water quality and access is diminished by invasive plants. That is not something we want to confront here on MDI.

Fishing and boating are popular summer activities on Long Pond and the public landing at Pond's End sees a steady stream of boats of all types during these months. There is no horsepower limit on Long Pond, so more motor boaters from away seek it as a destination. Courtesy Boat Inspectors have to go to a training each year or be trained by someone who has. We learn about the latest infested areas, species

ID, reporting procedures, and new invasive threats to Maine including animals like zebra mussels, spiny water fleas, and Chinese Mystery Snails!

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection oversees the inspection programs and distributes funding to help with education, prevention, control, and enforcement efforts. The source of the funding is the "milfoil/stop aquatic hitchhikers" sticker that has to be purchased for \$10 when registering a motor boat for use on inland waters each year. There are fines for transporting any aquatic plant, native or not, on the outside of a vehicle, boat, trailer, or equipment, and more significant fines (between \$500 and \$5,000) for carrying invasive plants.

The role of the Courtesy Boat Inspector is to help educate boaters about how these plants spread, to help them effectively inspect their boats and equipment for plant fragments, to urge them to inspect on their own before and

after every launch, and inform them of Maine laws pertaining to transport of these plants. An inspector needs permission to inspect, so a boater could refuse. Fortunately, that hasn't happened in our experience. More often than not boaters thank inspectors for doing this job. Some of their recent comments are below:

*"Thank you for inspecting boats here. We live near a pond that is infested with milfoil and we can't use it anymore. We would love to see more lakes and ponds have the same program."*

*"It is nice to know that there are people here trying to protect the lake and keep it clean so everyone can use it."*

Thanks to our staff and volunteer CBIs: Alex Douwes, Bo Greene, Robbie Denegre, JF Burns, Alan Parks and John Correa! If you would like to join us, contact the Sanctuary, as we can always use more help. It's fun to meet visitors, help them launch their boats, and get their perspective on visiting our beautiful island. Local boaters can also help us with loon observations and educating others. The more coverage we have at the boat ramp the more likely we are to "make a save" and keep invaders out. The CBI program complements Invasive Plant Patrol efforts underway. We are guardians of the watershed and the island – come join us!



*Sanctuary Field Assistant Alex Douwes on Courtesy Boat Inspection duty at Pond's End, Long Pond.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAY YEAGER

*Echo Lake South loon pair at newly made nest site, July 18th.*



*Southern Neck Cove parents feed their two-and-a-half week old chick a small fish.*



# Invasive Plant Patrol

Mt. Desert Island has many special natural resources including beautiful lakes with very high water quality. Some of these lakes are within the boundaries of Acadia National Park, and some serve as municipal water supplies. Most are important for fishing, boating, swimming, and wildlife. Aquatic invasive plants and other organisms are a significant threat to these locally and nationally important water bodies.

The most common vector for introducing non-native invasive plants to lakes is the use of boats (and fishing equipment) that have previously been in infested lakes. We know that vessels from out of state and southwestern Maine, where infestations are becoming more common, do visit MDI. \*See related story on Courtesy Boat Inspections.

In an effort to establish baseline aquatic plant status for Long Pond, Echo Lake, and Somes Pond, the Sanctuary partnered with the Volunteer Lakes Monitoring Program (VLMP) and Acadia National Park to conduct screening surveys in September 2016. This was a massive effort with many of the most experienced volunteer aquatic plant surveyors in the state lending their expertise for several days. Fortunately, we did not find any aquatic invaders after thoroughly searching the three lakes' entire littoral zone, shallow areas where sunlight can reach the lake bottom and where plants are likely to grow.

This coming September, the partnership will conduct surveys on other MDI lakes and continue developing a trained, local, citizen-based monitoring program, funded in part by the Maine Community Foundation. The funds will help pay for public programs, project coordination and planning by VLMP's Invasive Species Program Coordinator Roberta Hill, as well as the purchase of monitoring equipment and training materials.

The goal of this project is to strengthen our MDI community by having a more educated citizenry with regard to the significant threat of aquatic invasive plants and their potential effects on recreation, wildlife habitat, lakefront property values, and outstanding scenic qualities.

I agree wholeheartedly with Roberta Hill who said after last year's efforts: "I once again find myself tremendously heartened and grateful to have been part of something that proves without a doubt, all that can be accomplished when people come together to protect what they love."

*Please contact the Sanctuary to find out more and to sign up to help this September. There will be public evening programs on Friday August 11th and September 8th; Invasive Plant Patrol training on Saturday September 9th. Survey work will be conducted for several days around the September 9th weekend. See the Public Program lineup for more information.*



*Identifying aquatic plants collected from Somes Pond during last September's Invasive Plant Patrol training, on the Sanctuary deck.*



*Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program Staff, volunteer Invasive Plant Patrollers, and Acadia National Park crew reviewing plans for survey work at Ike's Pt. on Echo Lake, September 12th, 2016.*



*Mt. Desert Water District Water Systems Operator Mike Olsen and son searching Somes Pond for aquatic plants, September 9th, 2016.*



*Trenton 3rd grade class estimates tree growth and age from measurements.*





# MDI Loon Observation Group

PHOTO COURTESY OF RAY YEAGER



Monitoring loon nesting success and chick survival on MDI's lakes is one of the Sanctuary's long term projects. We rely on our partners at Acadia National Park and many volunteer observers to

help with the effort. A large number of year-round and seasonal residents of MDI have become part of the MDI loon observation group.

Many report sightings of territorial pair nesting efforts, the arrival of hatched chicks, interactions with predators and the boating public, and some just like to know the details of loon happenings. We share photographs, ask questions, enjoy successes, and lament the losses of eggs that don't hatch or chicks that don't survive. The well-informed members of the group help educate visitors less familiar with loon behavior and how best to view them without disturbance.

Some of these observers are lake residents, some like to hike trails around particular lakes, or follow the ups and downs of a territorial loon pair they have known for years. All of them have great curiosity and a sense of stewardship for these interesting, iconic birds of the north. Sighting updates, questions, and photos are shared via email to the whole group, which has worked well for people across computer platforms and doesn't require membership in social media outlets like Facebook.

One such observer is Ruth Yeiser, a seasonal resident of Seal Cove Pond. She conveys some of her thoughts below:

*Last summer, the Seal Cove Pond loons, along with many other MDI loons, had a successful nest for the first time in many summers. Watching the chicks grow through the summer was great fun and, at times, quite stressful. The experience was made even more rewarding through our participation in the Somes Meynell loon observation e-mail list. This e-mail list created a sense of community amongst local loon watchers. Through the summer, stories and photographs of the loon families were shared by those who had a chance to observe. Through our own observations and from reading the observations of others, we learned all sorts of loon facts, theory, and lore.*

*We had to leave MDI before the chicks learned to fly. Through the fall, e-mails continued to arrive and we cheered as chicks were reported to have left their lakes for the sea. It was especially heartening when an e-mail announced that the late Echo Lake chicks had been spotted on Somes Sound before Echo Lake froze for the winter.*

*When spring came, the e-mails started to trickle in as the loons returned to their lakes and those e-mails were followed by nesting and birth announcements. Once again this summer, we report on the progress of the Seal Cove Pond chick and we follow the stories of other loon families on the Island. The loon adventure continues...*

***If you would like to be added to the MDI loon observation group list contact Billy Helprin at [somesmeynell@gmail.com](mailto:somesmeynell@gmail.com).***

## The Great Fish Migration Collaborative Education Program

This spring, Acadia National Park Education Rangers, under the leadership of Lead Ranger Michael Marion, worked with the MDI Historical Society and the Sanctuary to develop a three hour educational program for middle school students called The Great Fish Migration. Hundreds of students from schools as far away as Newport, Orono, and Penobscot visited the Somes Brook watershed from the mill pond to the outlet of Somes Pond. They learned about the local alewife migration and the history of Somesville; helped with alewife counts and fish passage; explored Brookside Cemetery; and played predator-prey food web games. Teachers and students were enthusiastic about the experience, and we hope that these schools will return with new students next year.



***ANP Lead Education Ranger Michael Marion leads students and teachers from Sebasticook Valley Middle School to the mill pond to learn about alewife and American eels.***



***MDI Historical Society Executive Director Tim Garrity discussing Somesville history with students from Penobscot School.***



# Sanctuary Member Spotlight

Successful Sanctuary activities and projects are the result of help from many individuals and partner organizations. The Sanctuary continues to build on the work of the Board, volunteers, summer field assistants, and former Director David Lamon.

Seasonal resident Unn Boucher has been an avid participant and contributor to Sanctuary activities over the past two years. She shares some thoughts about her engagement below:

*I became involved with the Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary when my husband and I spent our first full summer on MDI in 2015. I attended several lectures at the Sanctuary and went on almost every Thursday morning bird walk that summer. Along the way I met many wonderful people who have now become friends. During our walks around various parts of the Sanctuary I came to appreciate its beauty and diversity. It's less crowded than Acadia which makes it a peaceful and contemplative place, where one can admire how extraordinary nature can be. That summer I developed a real appreciation for loons, which I first learned about at a Sanctuary lecture. I was very interested, since we have a view of Round Pond and that first summer I watched one loon singlehandedly raise a chick!*

*The next summer I joined the loon observation group and saw another chick survive to fledge from Round Pond.*



*There were many more lectures and bird walks. I also had a chance to participate in the Invasive Aquatic Plant Patrol. After a lecture and some plant collection and identification, I was able to go out with this group to survey Long Pond. We found no invasive plants, but did find an arrowhead species previously unrecorded in Maine. I met a group of fascinating and very dedicated volunteers who do this throughout Maine. What a great experience! I'm looking forward to participating this year as well.*

*The Sanctuary and Billy provide many services to the community, including education on conservation, threats to our environment, ecology, birds, photography and many other subjects through lectures. Billy maintains the Sanctuary trails with volunteers, heads up the multi-partner alewife project (a huge success), helps guide for the Acadia Birding Festival, coordinates with Acadia National Park and other governmental organizations, does boat inspections for alien plants, and the list goes on.*

*Perhaps the most important thing that the Sanctuary and Billy provide is education for our young people. He works with teachers and at schools on many types of projects. Teaching children to love nature and respect the environment is essential to maintain this beautiful place!*

***Call or email the Sanctuary to learn about ways you can help us with various projects or participate in activities throughout the year.***

## Acadia Birding Festival

The annual Acadia Birding Festival (ABF) takes place on MDI the first few days of June, with Festival Headquarters at the edge of the Sanctuary at the Somesville Fire Station. This great wildlife event offers multiple field trips each day, lectures and workshops in the evenings, and usually draws several hundred people from around the country and a few from overseas. This year we offered a kids birding field trip and it was a great success! Festival Director Becky Marvil obtained many pairs of binoculars especially for children from vendors Eagle Optics, Opticron, and LL Bean - some were purchased by ABF and some were donated. Students and teachers from The Community School and area families attended the field trip to the great birding area behind the MDI High School. Fellow guide Lena Moser and I had a great time with the kids. They were taught the proper way to use binoculars and a spotting scope and delighted in the clear, close-up views of all the birds and turtles we saw along the way. Having those special, close-up views without disturbing the animals is a great way to spark kids into future wildlife interests. The binoculars will be available for next year's ABF, but in the meantime, the good news is that the Sanctuary will have them for use with younger and older wildlife watchers throughout the year. Local students have already put them to good use!





# 2017 MDI Loon Update

Last year's MDI success for fledging loon chicks will be hard to repeat. Seventeen chicks hatched, and 15 made it all the way to the fall when they were all able to fledge, or leave the lake they were raised on. Prior to last year and since 2002, the average number of chicks fledging per year on all of the lakes of MDI is 2.3. Sometimes that number is zero – none make it.

Making it to fledging is no easy task given all that needs to happen over a few months. This includes hatching in the first place: eggs are sometimes not viable, or may be eaten by any number of predators like mink, raccoons, snapping turtles, and ravens; eggs could also be knocked off the nest by boat wakes or if a brooding adult is disturbed. Newly hatched chicks could also be eaten by predators like snapping turtles or large fish; larger chicks must avoid still more predators like eagles. Young chicks must be properly fed small fish so that they can grow quickly, and eventually, must then learn to fish on their own. Finally, they've got to learn to fly. All this has to happen so the juvenile can head for salt water before ice forms over the lake. Last year the Long Pond Outlet chick left on December 9th. Ice formed by December 11th – cutting it close.

This spring was characterized by high lake levels due to heavy, consistent rain. This made it challenging for loons in some territories to work on nest sites they used last year, or find other suitable locations. These sites need to be immediately adjacent to water deep enough for adults to approach and depart easily. If an adult is disturbed and flushes from the nest, it will want to swim underwater to get away. Loon legs are located way back on the body, like an outboard motor on a transom, making them great at swimming underwater but very poor at moving on land. Because of this, they can only occupy nest sites with a relatively shallow slope, and there are surprisingly few of them (see photo of Echo Lake South pair's new nest, as of July 18th). Lake levels have subsided now, but that also brings concerns of a nest being too far from deep water.

Nest rafts are employed on lakes to avoid this problem and help loons evade land-

based predators. Long-time loon observer and MDI resident Gerard Haraden made several over the years and one is still in use by the Southern Neck Cove pair on Long Pond. We would like to make more for placement on other lakes. If you have any 5-6 foot cedar logs about 4-6 inches in diameter, let us know!

As of mid-July, we currently have four chicks on three lakes: one on Somes Pond, one on Seal Cove Pond, and two on Long Pond – one for the Long Pond Outlet pair and one for the Southern Neck Cove pair.

At the time of writing, nesting is still underway for the Northern Neck Cove/Rum Island pair – that egg will hopefully hatch within days. The Jordan Pond pair (a new territory last year) has been nesting this year along the eastern shore near the hiking trail, which makes the nest vulnerable to human disturbance, but may be more protected from daytime predators. This year we have two pairs on Echo Lake. The southern pair has been working on a nest near the beach, close to many people during the day, which they did last year and successfully hatched and fledged two chicks in mid-August. They are getting another late start, as is the new Echo Lake North pair with intermittent nesting efforts.

Loons have been seen occasionally at Little Long Pond, a new nesting site last year with one chick fledging, but no nesting has been observed this summer to date. The Eagle Lake pair has been confounding this

spring and summer with no obvious nesting effort. Small fragments of one egg were found at Round Pond several weeks ago, likely predated before hatching. Since that time the territorial pair has only been seen periodically, and not recently.

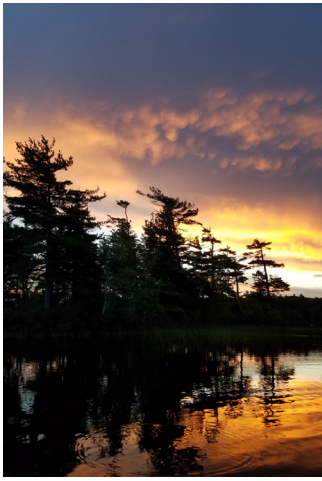
We are off to a decent start for chick numbers with more likely to come in the next weeks. It is engaging to follow the ups and downs of loon nesting seasons, as we learn how flexible these ancient birds can be in their behavior. If you would like to receive updates on MDI loon activities, please send an email to [somesmeynell@gmail.com](mailto:somesmeynell@gmail.com). Thanks to Mike Forbes for nest raft placement help this spring, Acadia National Park for placing closure and informational signs where needed, and the MDI loon group for help in monitoring and educating others.

*If you would like to receive updates on MDI loon activities, please send an email to [somesmeynell@gmail.com](mailto:somesmeynell@gmail.com).*



*Somes Pond adult loon with one month and two day old chick, July 9th.*





## Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary

*Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the  
Somes Pond Watershed*

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## Please Help Support Our Work!

These items would help us provide better educational experiences and accomplish our research and management goals. Used but workable items welcome!

- Foldable or stackable chairs - for use on deck or in headquarters
- Snowshoes of all sizes
- Small (8'x8' or so) raft – platform for use with Floating Classroom program
- Flotation foam – for loon nest raft or to make platform

All donations to the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary are tax-deductible.

*Thank You for your support!*

*Stream passage improvement volunteers including students and staff from College of the Atlantic, Jackson Laboratory, Acadia National Park, and other friends of the Sanctuary on a cold, rainy April 22nd. We made significant temporary improvements to channels that would lead fish to the fishways and away from dead ends where they're more vulnerable to predation and deplete their energy.*

