Family Camp Scholarships available to beautiful Hog Island, Maine

We are once again offering a free scholarship for an adult and child to attend Family Camp on an island in Maine the week of August 12th to August 17th, 2018. Application deadline is March 15, 2018. Please visit nepaaudubon.org for applications.

The camp is designed for families with children ages 8-13 years old. The Audubon scholarship is for one child and one related adult. One of the two applicants must reside in Lackawanna, Susquehanna, Wayne or northern Pike County, Pennsylvania. Grandparents, aunts, or uncles are welcome.

The Audubon Family Camp provides a unique opportunity for families to enjoy nature together. The pristine environment on Hog Island, Maine offers a wide variety of habitats for nature study. Campers cruise Muscongus Bay in search of seabirds and seals. They examine aquatic insects and amphibians in a freshwater pond, look for mushrooms and wildflowers in the forest, and search for fish and marine invertebrates along the intertidal zone. Evening programs include night hikes and stargazing. Each day begins with an optional early morning bird walk and ends with a family campfire program filled with songs, stories, and skits.

“We have witnessed how transformative the experience has been over the 30-plus years we have sent people to this wonderful island,” says Audubon board member Pete Snyder. Last year’s scholarship winners, Marcella and Amy Amendola, share their experiences at Hog Island on the next page. Below is Marcella’s favorite photo from her trip.

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2017 College Scholarship Winners

When the Scholarship Committee sat down last May to review the college scholarship applications, they found a unique situation. There were two applicants who were qualified and deserving of the NEPA College Scholarship. These two students happened to be twins, Emily and Elizabeth Ritter. Scholarship Committee member Jim Sanders proposed that we create a one-time memorial scholarship in memory of Michael “Jake” Burkhardt, our 2015 scholarship winner. Audubon treasurer, Nancy Savage, and Jake’s family endorsed this idea and we were able to award two college scholarships for 2017.

Emily and Elizabeth Ritter are 2017 graduates of Honesdale High School. They are the daughters of Robert and Tina Ritter of Beach Lake. Emily attends Millersville University as a biology major with a focus on animal behavior. Elizabeth is studying biology at Shippensburg University.

The twins accepted the awards at the June NEPAS Board meeting with their parents and older sister, Heather. They shared their plans for the future and were enthusiastic and grateful to Audubon for the scholarship.

Also at the June meeting, our 2013 scholarship winner, Carmen Francesco, presented her graduation project, New Generations Climate Justice Pilot Program, that she had given at Prescott College. She thanked NEPAS for the support over the years and shared her plans to work in environmental and social justice in Philadelphia. The Northeast PA Audubon Society is proud to support these students and wish them well as they continue their life journey.

This college scholarship is open to all high school seniors in Lackawanna, Susquehanna, Wayne and Pike Counties of PA who will be attending a two or four-year college full time and majoring in one of the following: Forestry, Natural Resources, Environmental Planning or Engineering, Fish, Game, or Wildlife Management, Ecology and/or Environmental Studies.

The scholarship is awarded in increments of $1,000 per year each year. Applications are available at nepaaudubon.org and are due by April 30, 2018.
2017 Audubon Camp Scholarship Winners:

“Hi, my name is Marcella Amendola and I am the 2017 camp scholarship winner. I am 13 now and 12 when we went. I went with my mom and my brother who is 8. I had an amazing time with my family and new friends. We learned so much, not just about the camp but about each other. I can’t imagine what my life would be like without that amazing experience.

We did many new and exciting things every day. It was very similar to school, very organized and everyone was assigned a group. Many days there were electives, I choose the Seine Net elective, the Green Crab survey, and some of the photography electives.

Each day was great learning something new if it was an elective or the lectures at night, or even just walking around talking to new people during free time. I met one of my best friends at this camp. We talk every day and we have even met up a few times. I would have never had this opportunity to meet with so many brilliant people, many of which work or play a part in the college I would like to go to, Drexel University.

Without your gracious gift and help I would have never met so many children my age that share my common interests.”

“I am Amy Amendola, mother of Marcella. This week at camp was everything I hoped it would be and more. She has always liked nature, outdoors, animals and has done well in science at school. This camp was the perfect setting for her to realize everything she loves can become her career path. The camp staff challenges children to improve themselves and become more than they were when they arrived. I can truly say their mission was accomplished in our case. This year Marcella is excelling in science, first in line for dissection days and getting her science fair project ready for regional competitions in the hopes of going to State levels in the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science program.

She also has discovered a love of photography that is a great creative outlet. The picture on the front page is one of her favorites from the week on Hog Island. We are all grateful for the experience of camp that was made possible by your generous scholarship award. Thank you!”

SAW-WHET OWL BANDING

On the night of November 27, Northeast PA Audubon Society (NEPAS) arranged for people to watch Darryl Speicher of the Pocono Avian Research Center catch, measure, collect data from, and release saw-whet owls.

There were a lot of people there as the Monroe County Conservation District was having an open house that day. NEPAS has been taking adults and children to watch the saw-whet owl program from Darryl and Jackie Speicher of Pocono Avian Research Center for a number of years. During that time, they have captured as many as 9 and as few as 0 owls. In all the years we have been going, only once did they not catch any owls.

The owl banding now takes place at the Monroe County Conservation Building. We meet in a good sized room where they have a door to the outside so they can leave to go out to check the mist nets. That way, they can easily check to see if they have caught any owls without going through the building. Mist nets are fine nets that stretch across a large area. They have saw-whet owl recordings on one side hoping to attract the little owls to fly into the nets where Darryl can retrieve them. They go out about every half hour to check the nets.

They begin banding in the beginning of October and finish in November. This has been a slow year for birds in the area and the saw-whets are no exception. Last year they caught a hundred owls, but this year (up to the October 27th) they had only caught 7. We were lucky as we caught 2 saw-whets that night, most nights they didn’t catch any this year.

The banding can be stressful for some of the owls though it does them no harm and they fully recover in a very short time. The owls deal with this stress in different ways such as being aggressive, being docile, being very alert or as the second saw-whet we caught, going to sleep. I have never seen that before and I guess she was completely relaxed in Darryl’s capable hands.

Darryl did his usual marvelous job of explaining what he was doing and why, and telling us all about the owls. Darryl’s presentations are always interesting, fun, and humorous. I’m sure everybody learned a lot and thoroughly enjoyed the evening.
Bird walk at Lacawac Sanctuary

On September 16, David Trently of the NEPA Audubon Society led a bird walk at the Lacawac Sanctuary. It was a warm, sunny day, and the birds cooperated fairly well. We began at 8:00 a.m. and ended around 10:30, with a group of ten people, including one from as far away as Costa Rica.

We started by watching some bird activity in the trees around the Environmental Education Center, but most were pretty high up and difficult to see. Best bird was a Cedar Waxwing, but it was perched with the sun behind it and didn’t offer any good views. So we walked through the woods to the lake, where we were treated to an amazing bird show! Two Cooper’s Hawks would alternate between perching in the trees and chasing Blue Jays and at least five Northern Flickers. This went on for over a half hour, with no bird getting caught by a hawk, and was continuing when we decided it was time to go look for more birds.

Some Hairy Woodpeckers and a couple of White-breasted Nuthatches were the only species we found until we got to Heron Pond. While no birds were on the water, and the Ospreys had vacated their nest, we had some activity from Chipping Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, two Common Yellowthroats, a Prairie Warbler and a Black-throated Green Warbler. The warblers were surely taking advantage of the nice weather and the abundance of food around the pond, as they prepared to move south for the winter.

When we returned to the Education Center, a few of us got a glimpse of another warbler, an Ovenbird. While we ended the day with just 18 species of birds, the group certainly had an enjoyable time and learned a lot about the feathered friends in their backyard.

118th Christmas Bird Count Highlights

Two of the highlights of note were the 4 species of waterfowl around Lake Wallenpaupack: Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common Loon and Hooded Mergansers. Another was a delightful count of 35-40 Robins, 12 Cedar Waxwings and 25 Goldfinch feeding in and around a patch of winterberry and sumac in Beach Lake. The bird of the day was the Dark-eyed junco with almost 200 reported sightings.

Mallards were high in number again with 200+ reported in various areas of open water and finally, the 2 Black vultures counted in Hawley.

Annual Appeal Response

The 2017 Annual Letter Appeal was conducted in late November and December. This appeal is only conducted once a year to raise important funds to continue our activities. The donations received from this appeal are used for the continuation of outreach and education offered to the various communities and schools throughout our region. The response has been very heartwarming. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has donated to us this year and in the past. If you haven’t donated and would like to do so, please go to our website for the information on how to do this. Thank you for your continued support!

Did You Notice a Lack of Birds this Past Fall?

Our chapter received an unusually large number of calls and messages this past Fall, asking about where all the birds have gone. The short answer is that fall usually brings with it an abundance of natural food. Therefore, birds skip the usual feeder fare and make use of this temporary abundance. For the long answer, and to learn more from the experts about this natural phenomenon, please visit our website.

A Special Thank You—

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Margaret Yarina for her very generous donation. It is greatly appreciated. It will be used to help continue the programs and scholarships that we provide. Thank you so much!

Eco-Notes by E-mail

Eco-Notes is available by e-mail. It appears in the same colorful, easy-to-read format as the paper version, but without the cost, paper, or ink. Go to our website, nepaaudubon.org, to sign up.

Our Mission Statement

Our goal is to conserve and restore our environment to benefit humanity as well as birds and other wildlife through education, action, and advocacy.

Find lots more about birds and the environment and the latest information on upcoming programs at www.nepaaudubon.org.

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Follow us on Twitter:
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INTERESTED IN JOINING THE NEPAS BOARD?
NEPAS is looking for people interested in joining our Board as a director or officer. Anyone interested please call 570-253-9250 or e-mail audubonworks@gmail.com. The board meets every first Monday of the month at 5:30 in Honesdale.

Mark Your Calendars
(Check our website at nepaaudubon.org for the latest information and updates)

2018 NEPA AUDUBON PROGRAMS/FIELD TRIPS

February 16-19: GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT. Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon dawn to dusk. Count birds in your back yard for Citizen Science in Cornell’s important national survey! Call Bob at 570-676-9969, or get tools and how-to’s at http://gbbc.birdcount.org/

February 24: Library Environmental Education Series. See NEPA Audubon website. Wayne County Public Library, 12:30 – 2 PM.

March 22: Library Environmental Education Series. See NEPA Audubon website. Hawley Public Library, 4 – 5:30 PM.

April 14: “ADOPT A HIGHWAY” litter pick-up. Join us for our annual cleanup along Route 191 near Lake Ariel, PA. Free breakfast afterwards!! Call Kathy at 570-253-9250 to sign up.

April 21 Library Environmental Education Series. See NEPA Audubon website. Northern Wayne Community Library, 11 AM – 12:30 PM.

April 28: BIRD WALK AT LACAWAC SANCTUARY. Begins at 8 AM. Meet at the visitor center. We’ll explore the area around the Lacawac Sanctuary. Northeast PA Audubon Society’s expert birders will help you see and hear plenty of birds this morning! We recommend you bring binoculars.

May 12: PENNSYLVANIA ANNUAL MIGRATION COUNT. Join a team to look for returning migratory birds. All ages, all levels of expertise & knowledge welcome. Contact Chris at 570-446-9597 or cfischer@nepaaudubon.org.

July 21 & 22: 32nd ANNUAL AUDUBON ART AND CRAFT FESTIVAL. 10 to 5 each day. A wonderful family event with art and crafts for sale, free wildlife shows, nature exhibits, and children’s crafts. The $5 entrance fee supports NEPAS