

WINTER 2015-16

NH Audubon Afield

NH Audubon 101st Annual Meeting and Conservation Awards

On September 12, 2015 members and friends of NH Audubon gathered at the beautiful Crooked Mountain Rehabilitation Center in Greenfield, NH for the 101st Annual Meeting.

This year's theme was "It's In to Be Out: No Person Left Inside." The day began with morning field trips followed by a buffet lunch, annual business meeting, a silent auction, awards and honors, presentations by staff and a keynote address from David Sobel, a professor at Antioch University New England in Keene. Professor Sobel shared a thought provoking presentation, Preserving Children's Connection to Nature – How Individuals and Communities Can Help, on the importance of getting children outside.

While the concept of kids spending too little time outside was not new to most people in the audience, the examples and reasons that Professor Sobel presented surprised many. The presentation provided hope and inspiration with examples of programs that are helping children experience the outdoors, and ways that individuals can help engage kids in outdoor discovery.

NH Audubon also announced its 2015 conservation award winners, who were



Jane Doherty (left) receiving the 2015 Tudor Richards Award from Larry Sunderland. Photo by Terri Donsker.

recognized for their extraordinary work and dedication.

The Tudor Richards Award was presented to Jane Doherty of Goffstown, NH who has worked tirelessly and effectively for conservation in the Granite State. In the halls of government and within the church walls, Jane has dedicated herself to fostering a better understanding of wildlife and the environment and bringing about needed environmental policy change. Jane has also conducted volunteer bird surveys, helped as a weekly Volunteer Naturalist since 1980, and served on NH Audubon's Environmental Policy Committee.

The Goodhue-Elkins Award was given to David Donsker of N. Hampton, NH

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Backyard Winter Bird Survey February 13 & 14, 2016

NH Audubon needs your help and it's fun to participate!
See page 11 for details.

Purple Finch. Photo by Leonard Medlock.

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NH AUDUBON
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for Wildlife and for People

Forest Management on NH Audubon's Wildlife Sanctuaries

By Phil Brown, Director of Land Management

Forest management (aka – timber harvesting, or forestry) can be a very effective tool for managing wildlife habitat, and more conservationists in the Northeast have become accepting of this technique.

NH Audubon has owned land across much of the state for several decades, but forest management is still a relatively new concept for the organization. The transition has occurred slowly over the past decade, mainly, but NH Audubon has now taken a close look at forestry (either through conducting it directly, or through planning it) on about half of its acreage, including several of its larger wildlife sanctuaries.

The Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary in Antrim and Hancock is one such location where forestry has been incredibly beneficial in accomplishing multiple landowner objectives: improving wildlife habitat diversity (specifically, through several forest openings), benefiting forest structure and health, improving aesthetics

(improved views along Goodhue Hill Trail), and providing a sustainable stream of stewardship funds – which feeds directly back into managing recreation and natural resource protection, some of which can be costly.

NH Audubon is looking forward in its approach to forest management and is preparing for additional forestry opportunities beginning this winter. Consulting foresters from Meadowsend Timberlands have most recently worked with NH Audubon in developing a bird-focused forest management plan for the nearly 600-acre Kensan-Devan Wildlife Sanctuary in Marlborough.

In addition, wildlife habitat work is planned for parts of the Deering Wildlife Sanctuary in Deering this winter, and an active harvest tour is planned for February 13.



Photo by Phil Brown.

Lastly, NH Audubon is working closely with the forester for St. Paul's School (adjacent property to the Silk Farm Wildlife Sanctuary in Concord) on planning a harvest that should benefit wildlife of young forests on both ownerships.

See our event section in this issue of *Afield* or visit nhaudubon.org to learn about the three forestry-related tours planned this winter that will demonstrate pre-harvest (Silk Farm), during-harvest (Deering), and post-harvest (Willard Pond) scenarios.

Seabrook Purple Martin Colony Hits Capacity

By Pam Hunt, Senior Biologist – Avian Conservation

Efforts to help the colony of Purple Martins in Seabrook were tremendously successful in 2015. A total of 13 pairs attempted to nest, making this now the largest colony (of three) in the state.

The story began in 2013, when a single pair was discovered nesting in a swallow box – itself an unusual location for this highly colonial species. A group of volunteers became interested in expanding



Volunteers erect the pole for the martin colony in April 2014. Photo by Pam Hunt.

the local population, and in 2014 we erected a pole and a dozen artificial gourds out in the salt marsh.

That summer, the pair returned to the swallow box, but the exciting news was that five additional pairs used the gourds, and ultimately reared eight young.

The excitement continued in 2015, when all 12 gourds were occupied – plus the swallow box – and produced 45 young.

Looking ahead, the Seabrook martin team is already trying to figure out the best way to add additional capacity without impacting the local Tree Swallow population (the swallows are regularly harassed by the martins, much to the dismay of local residents). Right now the plan is to add a second gourd set-up somewhere else nearby, and in the meantime the volunteers built and



Purple Martins at the gourd rack in July. Photo by Pam Hunt.

installed a total of 50 new boxes for the swallows, which have smaller holes that prohibit the martins from getting in.

Elsewhere in the state, there were four and two pairs of martins at the only other known colonies in Laconia and Wakefield, respectively. In addition to expanding housing at Seabrook, we are in the early stages of helping out these inland colonies as well – and will hopefully achieve similar levels of success!