

2015 WELLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
POSTER CONTEST



“BIRDS OF WELLS”

Entry Deadline – Friday, May 8, 2015

(Audrey Grumbling will pick up entries)

Judging - week of May 11, 2015

Awards Night - Thursday, May 28, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

at Wells Elementary School

Entry size: 11x17” or 12x18” maximum size

(2-dimensional entries without extensions, please)

This year's theme is BIRDS. Maine is home to nearly 300 species of birds. Our state bird is the black-capped chickadee. From owls to gulls, herons to piping plovers, loons to turkeys -- we can find birdlife throughout the varieties of habitats in our community. This can be as simple as birds in your backyard. Categories of birds can include songbirds, waterfowl, wading birds, raptors, seabirds, migratory birds, shorebirds, endangered and threatened birds, species of special concern, bird habitat, and more:

This information may be helpful as students brainstorm their personal approach to their visual interpretation of this year's topic.

Birds are inspiring not only for their beautiful plumage but also for their majestic flight and their pleasant calls. Because the Town of Wells still offers many places that birds can thrive, their habitats, the Town is blessed with a wide variety of species. The open ocean and offshore islands provides home for sea-going birds such as Shearwaters, Petrels, Gannets, the comical orange-beaked Puffin, and the giant Eider. Near the coastline in marshes and estuaries, live species such as Grebes and Brants and the beautiful black and white Bufflehead. In shallow waters we can see wading birds such as Sandpipers and Plovers, and at the beaches and rocky shores are of course Gulls: Black-Backed and Herring and Bonaparte's.

In the freshwater marshes and swamps and ponds and rivers is a huge avian community that includes herons, the Great Blue its giant wingspan, and the striking Snowy egret; and many kinds of ducks such as the commonly seen Black Duck. Snipes and woodcock also make use of the wetlands, and the nearby forests hold Ruffed Grouse and Wood Duck, along with Wild Turkeys, once extinct in Maine, but reintroduced and now thriving, with flocks of a dozen stepping through our yards and crossing the road before us.

Fields and gardens and woodland edges are home to songbirds, colorful and melodious. We recognize the call of the Whip-Poor-Will and the Cuckoo, and we thrill at the flash of color of a Eastern Bluebird Bunting or a Yellow Vireo, and hear the noisy tap-tap of the little Downy Woodpecker along with the loud THUMP-THUMP of the giant Pileated. At our dooryards are the birds that we know well: Blue Jays give a flash of electric blue, robins yank on worms in our gardens, hummingbirds hover around flowers, and the tiny Black Capped Chickadee hangs from branches feeding even on the coldest most bitter winter day.

Chickadees and Jays are among the birds that live with us year round, while many other species visit us on their migration from southern feeding grounds to northern breeding areas. They come from the south in March and April, and from the north as early as July and as late as October. Some, like the Plover, nest right here on our beaches, while others travel as far as the the Arctic circle to make their nests. Some of our visitors fly as much as a thousand miles, and nobody quite knows how they find their way. We might wonder where do they get the energy!

The most dramatic birds in Wells might be the Raptors, predators that eat rodents and reptiles and smaller birds. Owls, the night hunters, range from the tiny Screech Owl with its distinctive "hu-hu" call to the huge Great Horned Owl. Hawks soar in pursuit of their food, and now and then we can see our nation's emblem, the Bald Eagle, that many consider to be the most majestic bird of all.

In earlier years, the eagle and many other species of birds had nearly gone extinct, poisoned by insecticides. Today many bird species are in danger because their habitat—their home—has been destroyed. The Town of Wells has provided homes for these creatures by setting aside "Wildlife Commons" where we humans share space with the other creatures who live and visit in our town. Because both wildlife and humans depend upon clean water, it is also important for the Town to protect its marshes and swamps and ponds and river edges. If we do, these many species of bird—and it is possible to sight several hundred different species in a season—this wealth of birdlife will remain for us in the future.

OTHER RESOURCES:

Maine Audubon Society is a great resource:

"For birds and birders alike, Maine provides an abundance of excellent habitat. As the largest and most sparsely populated state in New England, Maine represents a significant portion of the breeding range for many eastern woodland bird species.

"The state's abundant precipitation (more than 40" a year) and glaciated landscape have created thousands of lakes, ponds, wetlands, and rivers that are ideal habitat for a variety of water birds. And with its deeply indented coastline and uncountable islands, Maine offers attractive habitat for breeding seabirds, migrating shorebirds, and wintering waterfowl."

<http://maineaudubon.org/birding/>

<http://maineaudubon.org/birding/maine-birding-guide-birding-by-region/>

National Audubon Society is another source, both online and in its many publications about birds and other wildlife. It publishes highly detailed books about birds. An especially useful tool is their *Field Guide to New England*, which narrow the bird section down to those species that actually inhabit New England.

<http://www.audubon.org/>

Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department has good information, including the list of Maine's Threatened and Endangered birds.

<https://www1.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/birds/>

On Wells work for the Endangered Piping Plover

Working with Maine Audubon, local volunteers patrol our beaches in Wells to help protect the endangered piping plover and least terns that nest on our beaches. Visitors are asked to share the beach with an endangered species by following some simple guidelines, such as: "Stay clear of fenced areas marked with Restricted Area signs; If you see chicks on the beach, do not follow or chase them; Keep dogs leashed and all pets far away from nesting areas. Roaming dogs and cats have injured and destroyed the eggs and chicks of piping plovers and least terns; Fly kites well away from nesting areas. Plovers and terns mistake them for predators and leave their nests to ward off the intruders; Take trash and food scraps with you when you leave the beach for the day. Garbage attracts predators."

<http://www.wellstown.org/361/Piping-Plovers>

NATIVE PLANTS, INSECTS and HABITAT

Birds are part of the interconnected web of nature. Native plants and insects provide needed food for most of our birds. Homeowners and communities can help birds by what they plant and cultivate, and how they support (and deter) insects that birds rely on. An introductory article on this:

http://www.pressherald.com/2012/04/01/native-birds-do-better-with-native-plants_2012-04-01/