

Merrymeeting News

The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • P.O. Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357

SPRING 1999

*To Preserve, Protect
and Improve the
Unique Ecosystems
of Merrymeeting Bay.*

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Support comes from members' tax-deductible donations and grants.

Education

Hands Around the Bay, Speaker Series, field trips.

Conservation & Stewardship

Protecting natural resources through private and public ownership, easements and stewardship.

Membership Events

Swan Island Picnic, paddle tours of the Bay, field trips, conservation meetings, potluck suppers and shoreline clean-ups.

Research and Advocacy

Water quality, data collection, toxics, fisheries restoration.

1999 Steering Committee

Frank Burroughs, Bowdoinham
Dana Cary, Topsham
Andy Cutko, Bowdoinham
Ed Friedman, Bowdoinham
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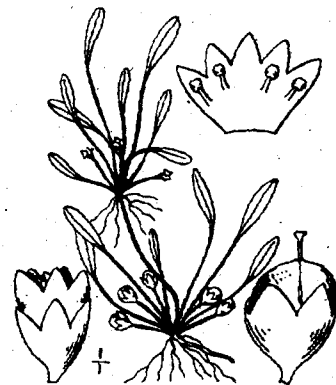
On-Line

<http://www.col.k12.me.us/mmb/fomb@gwi.net>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

MAY 19 MUD PLANTS OF THE BAY
7PM at the Bridge Academy in Dresden Mills (call for directions)

Barbara Vickery, Director of Conservation Planning for The Nature Conservancy and Andy Cutko, Ecologist, Maine Natural Areas Program, will show slides by way of introduction to the Bay's mud plants-rare and otherwise. They will also update you on a survey of the Bay done last summer (see article "New Survey Examines Rare Mud Plants on the Bay", page 4, Fall 1998, Merrymeeting Notes).



mudwort

MAY 20. A MERRY MEETING ON THE BAY DAY

Chops Point School in Woolwich
School children from around the Bay will be participating in workshops and watch a performance of Mr. and Mrs. Fish. (see article page 5)

Volunteers are needed from 9-Noon to assist workshop leaders and from 2-3:30 p.m. to help with cleanup.

MAY 22 ANNUAL SPRING CLEANUP ON THE BAY

12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Meet at the Bowdoinham Town Landing at 12:30 p.m. Please call 442-8535 to let us know you are coming so that we can coordinate cleanup locations. (see article page 2).

**JULY 27 ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER SOURCE TO THE SEA CANOE TREK:
Merrymeeting Bay Section**

Join the source to sea paddle in it's second to last day as we paddle through the Bay from the Brunswick Boat Landing to Chops Point. Specific information on this section will be featured in the Summer Merrymeeting Notes or call 666-3376. For more information on the whole trek which starts at the headwaters on July 7 and ends at Popham Beach on July 28 call Sue Lincoln, Trek Coordinator at (207) 824-0191.

AUGUST 14-15 ANNUAL SWAN ISLAND PICNIC AND OVERNIGHT

Save this weekend! Individuals are welcome to come for the day on the 14th and enjoy tours of the island or stay overnight for potluck supper, singing and general fun. This year we plan to have more activities for kids. The summer newsletter will have more information and a sign up form.

VOLUNTEER WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM LAUNCHED ON THE BAY

This spring, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay will launch a volunteer water quality monitoring program on the Bay. In 1999 we will focus on a few important sites on the Kennebec and the Androscoggin, and in coming years we hope to expand the program to all tributaries. In an effort to learn more about the quality of the water flowing into our Bay, volunteers will use testing kits to monitor dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature and possibly bacteria counts. These

criteria were chosen to match the criteria used to determine river classification (see companion piece). In order to obtain credible results, FOMB is coordinating with The Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the Friends of Casco Bay to ensure that locations chosen, tests used and testing procedures are appropriate. All our monitors will undergo training. Initially, Friends of Casco Bay, which has been doing water quality monitoring for a number of years, will

be training our volunteers to use the testing kits. Theresa Torrent-Ellis, who will be our volunteer monitor coordinator has already received this training and will eventually train volunteers on her own. We plan to do our first tests on the Bay in May.

Are you interested in volunteering to become a water quality monitor or in helping to pay for this undertaking? Currently we need individuals to test on the Androscoggin and as backup testers on a number of the Kennebec sites. Donations to help cover the cost of test kits, which are \$200 each, would be most appreciated. Call 666-3376 for more information.

THE ABCS OF RIVER CLASSIFICATION

All freshwater rivers are classified by the State as AA, A, B or C with "AA" being the most pristine and "C" being the least. The Kennebec from Augusta to Abagadasset Point is rated as class "C". This class "C" rating affords the river the least protection against future polluters because the allowable standards for factors such as dissolved oxygen are the lowest of all classifications. The Kennebec below Augusta and above Abagadasset Point has met class "B" standards during both the summer of 1997 and 1998 when the Department of Environmental Protection tested this section of the river. However, there are no plans by the State to upgrade the river to class "B" which would afford it more protection against future pollution. Industrial discharge

permits allow industries to discharge much more into the river than they actually do. If industry discharged the maximum allowed under their permits, the river would indeed be a class "C" river. Friends of Merrymeeting Bay submitted a proposal to the Board of Environmental Protection to upgrade this section of the Kennebec from "C" to "B" but the proposal was rejected because of this permit issue.

To build a case for upgrading the Kennebec from a class "C" to "B" we first need a better record of existing water quality. Does the river always meet class "B" standards? Our volunteer water quality monitors will be able to help us answer this question by testing the water from May through October (DEP is only able to test the river for a few days in August). If we can show that the Kennebec from Augusta to Abagadasset Point consistently meets Class "B" standards we will make a stronger case for upgrading the river to Class "B" which will help keep the Kennebec cleaner in the future.

THE BAY NEEDS A SPRING CLEANING TOO

May 22 from 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Now that you've gotten your house clean it's time to clean the homes of birds and beasts by joining us at FOMB's annual Bay Cleanup. Over the past three years we have removed almost twelve thousand pounds of trash from the Bay and the birds, animals and recreators are enjoying a cleaner Bay as a result. Every year more tires, plastic and beer cans are washed down the river so we must keep up the good work. Our efforts make the Bay look better and make it a safer place for the wildlife of the Bay to live.

Join us on May 22 at 12:30 p.m. at the Bowdoinham Town Landing. We will disperse into groups from there to designated locations around the Bay. Bring boots, work gloves, sun tan lotion, work clothes and your family (kids from 3 years old to 18 who have participated in the past have loved it); we'll provide the garbage bags and the Bay will happily provide the trash.

Do you know a group that might like to pitch in such as your local Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop? Can't make it on that day but would still like to help? Call 442-8535 and we will make arrangements.

To help us coordinate site locations please call Steve Hammond at 442-8535 to let us know that you plan to be there.

Spring 1999
VOL. 9, NO 2
April, 1999



Merrymeeting News

is the newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, P.O. Box 233, Richmond, Maine 04357, and is published seasonally.

Merrymeeting News is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay. For information call Betsy Ham, Executive Director 666-3376.



TWENTY NINE ACRES ON THE WEST BRANCH OF THE CATHANCE PROTECTED FOREVER

In downtown Bowdoinham across from the Community School there's a beautiful stretch of open fields with apple orchards, woods and 2200 feet of shoreline rich in wildlife habitat along the West Branch of the Cathance River. If you canoe along that stretch of river or sit on the island that's part of this property you'll feel as if you're far away from town, yet the general store is only a short distance down the road. In addition to being valuable from an authentic perspective this stretch of river also contains some of the best habitat in the country, as rated by U.S. Fish and Wildlife, for migrating water ducks and geese.

Karen and Ray Mayo, the owners of this beautiful 29 acre parcel, have generously donated a conservation easement on their land so that the 2200 ft. of shoreline will be forever protected. "It's not a commodity, it's a home. The way the land is now is how we want it to remain forever," Ray Mayo observed. "A conservation easement seemed the logical stewardship choice," Ray noted. "It allows us to put down legally and in writing what we wanted to do with our property. The easement will allow us to keep the land the way we want it kept forever and it will allow others to enjoy it as we have. This should help us to keep the property taxes at an affordable level which is an added benefit," Ray concluded.

A conservation easement is a flexible tool that landowners can use to voluntarily restrict development and, depending on the property, other activities on their land. Depending upon the landowner's tax situation, income, property and estate taxes may be reduced. In the Mayo's case the primary goal was to protect the shoreline along the West Branch of the Cathance and to provide valuable open space in the town of Bowdoinham. To this end the property cannot be subdivided and no structures of any kind, including docks, can be built near the river. The easement does allow for limited development by the fam-

ily including one more house away from the river and close to the road as well as expansion of the existing house. The Mayos also have the flexibility to keep the fields open, care for existing apple trees, and plant new ones. By working together the Mayos and Friend of Merrymeeting Bay were able to design a conservation easement that was flexible enough to meet the Mayo's needs and yet still protect the valuable wildlife habitat along the shore of the West Branch of the Cathance and the open space along the Ridge Road.

One hundred years from now when our grandchildren and great-grandchildren canoe this stretch of river or drive down Ridge Road in Bowdoinham, this stretch of river and open space

will look much as it does today. That's good news for the great, great, great grandchildren of the fish that swim in the river and the ducks and eagles that fly and fish along the shores.

For this easement and others that we are working on around the Bay the other members of the Wetland Coalition have provided us with valuable support. We appreciate this support as we continue to work to protect

valuable habitat around the Bay. Other members of the Wetland Coalition include: Ducks Unlimited, Lower Kennebec Land Trust, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine State Planning Office, The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gulf of Maine Program. Friends of Merrymeeting Bay received a grant from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Program passed through to us from Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, which was used to work on this and other easements around the Bay.

Are you interested in talking with Friends of Merrymeeting Bay about developing a conservation easement for your land? The first step is to learn more about this flexible conservation tool by calling Betsy Ham at 666-3376.



KINGFISHERS AS INDICATORS OF TOXINS IN THE BAY

Oksana Lane from the BioDiversity Research Institute spoke at FOMB's February Speaker Series. The following is a summary of her presentation.

In the spring of 1998 BioDiversity Research Institute, Freeport, ME with funding from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Surface Water Ambient Toxic monitoring program initiated a study on the exposure of belted kingfishers to mercury (Hg) in the Merrymeeting Bay watershed.

One of our objectives was to compare contaminant levels in the birds between two ecosystems. We studied an inland freshwater aquatic system containing high mercury levels (Flagstaff Lake) and a bay/coastal environment (Merrymeeting Bay/Casco Bay) where Hg levels in piscivorous (fish-eating) birds were expected to be lower based on the existing Hg data. Our second objective was to determine the feasibility of using the belted kingfisher as a universal indicator for contaminants in aquatic ecosystems.

Why study mercury? Mercury in its organic form as methyl mercury (MeHg) is a known neurotoxin. When at elevated levels it affects the functions of the central nervous system in humans and other organisms. In humans mercury poisoning causes blurred vision, loss of hearing, numbness in legs and arms, and kidney failure. We are just beginning to study the effects of mercury on wildlife.

Why belted kingfisher?

In its report to Congress in 1997 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that piscivorous birds, especially the belted kingfisher, are at high risk to methyl mercury contamination because of their top position in the aquatic food chain. The U.S. EPA identifies 4 trophic levels in the aquatic food web. Each level bioaccumulates proportionally more Hg. Level 1 is phytoplankton, level 2 is zooplankton that feeds on level one organisms, planctivorous forage fish belong to level 3, and piscivorous fish are on level 4. The trophic level at which birds feed significantly influences their exposure to methyl mercury. For example, fish-eating birds

that feed on level 4 prey ingest approximately 5 times more methyl mercury than birds foraging on level 3 organisms.

When fish are less available, kingfishers will consume crayfish that can potentially have high methyl mercury concentrations.

Besides being at high risk to MeHg bioaccumulation, the belted kingfisher is a ubiquitous piscivore that breeds throughout most of continental U.S. and Canada and is found in both fresh and saltwater habitats. Therefore this species could potentially serve as an excellent indicator of contaminants across most aquatic ecosystems. Belted kingfishers often demonstrate site fidelity (on Flagstaff Lake in 1998 we recaptured a female in the same bank where she was initially trapped in 1997), which makes it possible to recapture them and to look at methyl mercury accumulation rates in feathers over time. The mercury concentration in feathers is proportional to the body burden of MeHg and to dietary MeHg exposure at the time of feather growth. We found that common loons from high mercury lakes tend to accumulate MeHg at a rate between 8 and 10% a year. Thus older birds will have higher feather Hg levels than younger ones. Blood mercury levels reflect the exposure on the breeding (summer) grounds.

We find kingfishers by searching for their nests. Belted kingfishers excavate a 1-3 meter burrow in the sandy banks of bays, rivers, and lakes. The availability of suitable nesting sites (earthen banks) appears critical for the distribution and local abundance of this species. They will often nest in active or abandoned gravel pits. The burrow is usually located within 0.5-2 meters from the top of the bank.

The 5-7 egg clutch is usually laid in April-May. After 24 days of incubation altricial chicks hatch and remain in the nest for 4 more weeks. The adults feed fish to their nestlings.

Kingfishers prey mainly on surface fish that are 4-14 cm long, but they will also take crayfish, insects, and amphibians.

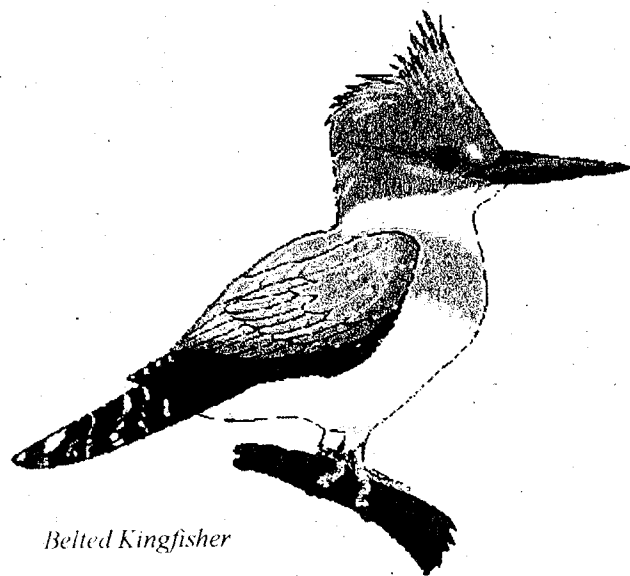
We captured adults by placing a mist net (a specially designed net used for catching birds without harming them) in front of their burrow. To gain access to the chicks we carefully excavated the nest from the back, removed the birds, collected a small blood sample, and returned them to the nest chamber. We collected blood and feather samples for Hg analysis from the adults. All birds were released unharmed.

All samples are being analyzed at the University of Maine at Orono laboratory. The results will be available later this spring.

We hope to receive additional financial support from the state to continue this work.

We would appreciate any information on the locations of kingfishers or their nests in the Merrymeeting Bay area. Please report all your observations to Betsy Ham at 666-3376.

For a more detailed description of this project ask for a copy of our report later in the summer.



Belted Kingfisher

Oksana Lane
BioDiversity Research Institute

A MERRY MEETING ON THE BAY

May 20

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay's Hands Around the Bay program will be bringing 200 students from twelve schools around the Bay to Chops Point for a day of exploration, research and fun. In the morning students will be led by fifteen volunteer guides with expertise in diverse fields such as aquatic biology, archaeology and history of the Bay. Working with small groups each guide will introduce the students to various aspects of the Bay. Chops Point, an area rich in Native American artifacts, will be the classroom for Jay Robbins and Dawn Jordan as they lead students on a archaeological dig. The dig will be carefully controlled so as not to destroy any historic artifacts but Jay promises that students will be able to get their hands dirty. Jay and Dawn will also have artifacts previously discovered at the site available for children to examine. Andy Cutko, ecologist for the Maine Natural

Areas Program, will be leading a wetland walk while Bob and Nancy Curtis, a master gardener, will be talking about gardening. Linwood Rideout, longtime Maine Guide, will be discussing hunting on the Bay and teaching the children some compass skills.

These are just a few examples of what the children will be treated to in the morning. In the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Fish, who have performed at every major aquarium in the United States, will educate the children about the Bay environment by performing dressed up as Bay creatures. It should be a fun filled and busy day.

Pat Maloney, Mark Milam and Rosi Armstrong, the FOMB Hands Around the Bay Committee have worked especially hard to make this event possible. Thank you also to all the volunteer guides including Jay Robbins, Dawn Jordan, Anne Hammond, Bob and Nancy Curtis, Su-

san Hayward, Steve Pelletier, Peter Milholland, Mike Cline, Andy Cutko, Mark Milam, Bob Elliott, Tenley Meara, Linwood Rideout and Don Lipfert. We would also like to thank Betsy Steen who designed worksheets and the artists Sarah Stapler, Lisa Shano, Michelle Barabe and Nancy Marstaller who contributed drawings to a coloring book to be handed out in advance.

Finally many thanks to Chops Point School, the generous hosts of this event which will more than double the number of school children on the premises for the day.

We need volunteers to shepherd the children from workshop to workshop and to insure that the day runs smoothly. We particularly need help during the morning from 9:30 a.m. - noon and for clean-up from 2p.m. - 3:30p.m.. If you can help call, Betsy at 666-3376.

MR. AND MRS. FISH SWIM TO MERRYMEETING BAY

Merry Meeting on the Bay Day will feature some very special guests who will swim by to visit in the afternoon. Calling themselves "global ambassadors for ocean learning" Deb and Jeff Sandler, better know as Mr. and Mrs. Fish, have performed as costumed sea creatures in over 18 countries and 28 U.S. states over the past 20 years. Through the mouths of humorous sea creatures the Sandler's teach children about our environment. On May 20 they will perform for over 200 elementary school children as part of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay's "A Merry Meeting on the Bay Day".

Because this all smelled a little fishy to the executive director I decided to swim on by and pay the Fishes a visit. Here's what I asked:

BH: As part of my first "real" job with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, I dressed up as an Atlantic Salmon and visited area schools, so I can relate to what you are doing. How did you get your start?

Mr. FISH: Twenty one years ago we were hired as educational directors for a proposed new aquarium, the Gulf of Maine Aquarium in Portland, but we had no aquarium to educate from. We dis-

covered what really worked was to act out the sea creatures in an aquarium. Ch. 13 heard of us and said "you guys should be on TV" We said "yes, we should". A person at the station taught us how to make really nice foam costumes. We started to get calls from out of State. Since then we've been all over the world. Last year we were in Israel and Palestine. Next week we will be in Japan. We have performed in Scottish castles and jungle villages.

BH: Why do you think your performances are so appealing to kids the world over?

MR. FISH: Because of the festive nature of the performance. Its a real mix of science and fun. Sea creatures take on personalities and are fun. It gives kids real insight into how others live and how life works.

BH: Do you have any funny or meaningful performances that really stand out in your mind?

Mr. FISH: Once when we were performing I fell through some rotten boards on the stage. I had to think fast so I said, "No problem I was just going through a stage". Once a pack of wild dogs came

running through our performance. Each year we perform in front of 500 inner city kids in Boston at the Marriot Hotel. The kids have never seen anything like that before and they love it. In Jakarta, Indonesia we performed in front of 900 children, a real confluence of all sorts of countries. They roared with laughter at everything we said. In Samoa on the Equator we once performed with flowers everywhere. The kids had flowers, we had flowers. It was so beautiful.

BH: I don't want to give anything away but can you give us some idea of what you plan to do on May 20?

Mr. FISH: We aren't sure yet but something really unique to the Bay. Probably something to do with the Merrymeeting Bay food chain.

BH: Do you have a Sturgeon costume and if so is it an Atlantic or Shortnose??

Mr. FISH: No, I wish we did because that's my favorite fish, so prehistoric.

Well I'll be seeing you soon, then. Thanks for talking with us and for coming up to check out the waters of Merrymeeting Bay. I hope your visit spawns a lot of discussion.

TIDINGS/SPRING

Spring is almost always happening somewhere: if not in the higher latitudes and altitudes, then in the lower ones; if not north of the equator, then somewhere south of it. Migratory species, to which we partially belong, have to take a stand, make a choice, and decide which spring to claim as their own.

Late in March, we flew down to South Carolina, rented a car, and set off on various errands. They took us as far south and west as the pleasant hill country around Athens, Georgia, and as far north and east as the coastal plain and Myrtle Beach (which people thereabouts refer to as the coastal *bane*).

Dogwoods measured the progress of the season. They were fully in bloom in the South Carolina piedmont country around Columbia, a bit retarded toward the coast and in the higher elevations outside of Athens. Seen from a moving car, dogwoods in full flower seem to waft through the understory of the woods in ivory drifts of blossom, or to hover over the hedges and shrubs of cemeteries and fine suburban lawns.

For the mockingbirds, wrens, cardinals, and towhees, this was spring enough. We heard them singing songs of themselves very strenuously, whenever we stopped long enough to step out of the car, and even when we rolled down the window, and drove with the birdsong and the soft earthy sunwarmed air rushing in.

On a couple of woodland walks, I saw hermit thrushes. They were not in the least shy, or in any way remarkable. I must have seen them often enough when I was growing up in South Carolina, but had no reason to pay them any particular attention; the rather drab, solitary bird on the floor of the forest that flits along the path ahead of you, or watches without comment from a low branch as you pass by. For them, no matter what the cardinals, towhees, wrens, and mockingbirds may claim to the contrary, South Carolina means winter, means not yet.

Back in Maine, we have heard a robin sing, in a rather tentative, experimental way. We heard geese passing overhead at night, and flushed a woodcock along a road shoulder. On April Fools' Day the first wood frogs began their guttural clattering from a boggy patch of pasture.

But as far as I am concerned, our spring is still waiting in the wings, and the wings that it waits in are those of the hermit thrush. I sometimes think that as they slip away from their wintering grounds and seep northward, they shed their actual bodies. I almost never see them in Maine— at most, what I see is some sort of thrush in the thickest underbrush, and the light is too poor and the bird is too furtive for me to be sure that it is this one, *Catharus guttatus*, and not an impersonator like the veery or the Swainson's thrush.

In Maine, the bird is a voice. You do not hear it in yards or suburbs or open, sunny groves. You hear it from the recesses of the dark coniferous woods, in the last gloaming of evening or in the very first, almost imperceptible intimations of dawn.

The song is hollowed-out, silvery, icily and eerily pure. Like an echo in a cavernous and empty church, it seems to come from no particular source but to surround you and hush you into an exalted sense of human insignificance.

In late April and May of 1865, Walt Whitman tried to come to terms with Abraham Lincoln's assassination. He knew that every spring from now on would renew, with the blooming of lilacs in dooryards, the brutal abridgement of the greatest life his nation had ever been expressed by. The one thing in the season that seemed to speak instructively to him was this invisible thrush. "The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements," he called it; the "shy and hidden bird" that kept to the swamps. He took its song and its singing as "Death's outlet song of life," and most unscientifically coerced natural history into consoling human significance.

And even the studiously clinical prose of the ornithologists gets a bit purple when they describe this song. They resort to highfalutin' and indistinct adjectives like *haunting*, *ethereal*, *liquid*, *plangent*. The bird's Latin moniker, *guttatus*, means *speckled*, and refers to the spots on its throat. But the root meaning of the Latin ties it to water, to dripping and dropping, as in *guttatim*, which means *drop by drop*. This is strangely appropriate, suggesting both the hermit thrush's damp and dewy habitat, and the way its song's aftereffect quavers like water in a full bucket, and reverberates metallically like drops pinging into the bottom of an empty one.

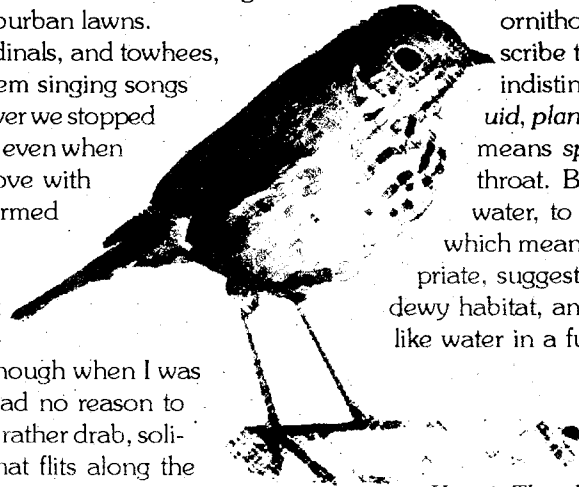
Hermit thrushes will be among us by the time the lilacs bloom. If we have one of our excellent chilly and rainy Junes, they will sing throughout the month, for as long as any of the fragile freshness of the springtime lasts. You can hear them from hillsides up and down the Kennebec valley; unseen, they will oversee the removal of the Edwards dam this summer, and sing for it as they sang for the murdered President and the grieving poet.

Plain, reclusive, tautly and enigmatically attuned to love and death, Emily Dickinson, not Walt Whitman, brought this bird's quality of song closest to a human language. When she wrote

*This world is not Conclusion.
A species stands beyond—
Invisible, as Music—
But positive, as Sound—
It beckons and it baffles*

the hermit thrush was not in fact the species she had in mind. But it might as well have been.

Frank Burroughs
Tidings is a regular feature of Merrymeeting News



Hermit Thrush

GIFT CERTIFICATES FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL

Having trouble finding a gift for the person who has everything? Why not a gift membership to Friends of Merrymeeting Bay. Just mark the gift membership box on the newsletter form and we will send the lucky person the latest newsletter along with a gift certificate acknowledging your gift. You will be doing something nice for your friend and the Bay!

YOUR SUGGESTIONS ARE IMPORTANT TO US

In the next six months we will be reaching out to all of you for your thoughts and suggestions on ways we could better protect the Bay. A volunteer steering committee member may call you to get feedback on our programs and activities. We don't want to take up too much of your time but we feel it is valuable to get input from our members to determine how we can better serve both you and the Bay. Of course, anytime you have suggestions or would like to become involved as a volunteer please write FOMB, Box 233, Richmond, ME 04357, call 666-3376 or E-mail fomb@zwi.net. We love to hear from members. Thank you in advance for your help.

FRIENDS OF MERRYMEETING BAY

Steering Committee

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Hands Around the Bay Coordinator:

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Executive Director:

Betsy Ham, 145 Pork Point Rd., Bowdoinham 04008 666-3376

Thank you to: David Hansen for designing this issue of MMNews.

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Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, P.O. Box 233, Richmond, Maine 04357

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS.

- \$15.00 enclosed for individual membership. \$20 Family
- \$30 Smelt \$50 Alewife \$100 Striped Bass \$250 Salmon \$500+ Sturgeon
- \$ _____ enclosed as an additional tax-deductible donation.

NAME _____
 RR# OR STREET ADDRESS _____
 TOWN / STATE/ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____

\$6.00 enclosed for a copy of
**Conservation Options: A Guide
 for Maine Landowners.**
 (\$5 for the book, \$1 for postage)

- Renewal Gift From:

NEW DATA SUPPORT CONTINUATION OF FISH ADVISORIES

New testing facilities at UMO are slowly catching up with a backlog of frozen fish samples submitted by the DEP for toxics testing. Results just in from 1997 samples of Brown Trout, Striped Bass & Suckers taken in Augusta from the Kennebec show excessive levels of PCB's. These data corroborate the single data set from several years ago on which the "No Consumption" advisory was based. The location suggests a PCB hotspot, most likely from the site of a former transformer-filled Westinghouse plant located above Ft. Western & closed in the 70's. When you are fishing this summer please remember to catch and release.

Ed Friedman

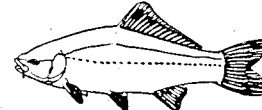
N.E. WILDFLOWER SOCIETY OUTING

The annual New England Wildflower Society visit to Coffin Wildflower Preserve will take place on Wednesday, June 16 at noon. FOMB members are invited to attend.

BOWDOINHAM LIBRARY ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Saturday, May 15, 9 am-4 pm. 666-8405
They help us; please help them.

FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY



Merrymeeting Bay

FISH CONSUMPTION SHOULD BE LIMITED

Due to PCB's and Dioxin Contamination

[PCB's and Dioxin cause cancer and reproductive disorders]

- Kennebec River: Edward's Dam to the Chops
NO CONSUMPTION: freshwater fish
- Androscoggin River: Gilead to the Bay
6 Meals per year of freshwater fish

Statewide

[Inland Waters]

Due to Mercury Contamination

[Mercury damages the nervous system]

- Pregnant, nursing, soon to become pregnant or less than 8 years old
DO NOT EAT warm water fish [bass, suckers, perch, carp, etc.]
Only one meal a month of cold water fish [trout, salmon, smelt, etc.]
- General Public: 2-3 meals of warm water fish per month

Consumption of lobster tomalley, striped bass and bluefish limited in all waters.

This posting is a public service of the Maine Toxics Action Coalition [MTAC] and Friends of Merrymeeting Bay [FOMB]. For a full copy of the State consumption advisories and more information on toxins in the environment call MTAC at 1-800-287-2345 or Maine Bureau of Health at 287-6455 or FOMB at 666-3376



FRIENDS of
MERRYMEETING BAY

P.O. Box 233, Richmond, ME 04357
Return Service Requested

**TWENTY-NINE ACRES ON THE WEST BRANCH
OF THE CATHANCE PROTECTED FOREVER**

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