



The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • PO Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357 • 207-666-1118 • www.fomb.org

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is to preserve, protect, and improve the unique ecosystems of the Bay through:

Education

Conservation & Stewardship

Research & Advocacy

Member Events

Support comes from members' tax-deductible donations and gifts.

Merrymeeting News is published seasonally and is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay.

For more information, contact:

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Coordinator/Organizer
207-666-1118
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THWINGS PT. SESSION 6

In 1654 at the home and trading post of Thomas Ashley on what is now Thwings Pt. in Woolwich, a group of early settlers met and signed papers forming the first European style government in the Merrymeeting Bay region. Following Ashley on the site came Edward Hutchinson c. 1720 and Nathaniel Thwing in the mid 1700's. Including the initial Phase 1 archaeology survey in 2011 soon after FOMB and The Nature Conservancy protected the 90 acre parcel with cooperating landowners, this summer's dig was the sixth on the site.



Photos: Ed Friedman

Our focus this year was attempting to define the structure perimeter of the easterly and elder of two cellar holes. An apparent post hole outside the cellar and found in 2015 had indicated the structure may well have extended beyond the foundation. Unfortunately we found no further traces this summer of additional post holes. If accurate, this indicates the old dwelling probably rose directly above the 10 x 20 foot cellar hole.

The dig was led once again by former Maine Historic Preservation Commission historical archaeologist Lee Cranmer assisted by former MHPC staffer Kathy Bridge. Many thanks to current landowners, Claire and Michael Robinson, for their ongoing support and cooperation in excavating this highly significant site and to Tom Walling for scheduling our fantastic volunteers.

Thanks to our great crew!!

Terri Parker, Nathan Lipfert, Ned Baxter, Karen Dudra, Ed Friedman, Dianna Dietrich, Kimberly Clark, Hillary Warner-Evans, John Edgecomb, Tobias Herman, Max Legasse, Claire and Michael Robinson, Sue, Ted and Ellie Batutis, Mary Perkins, Sharon Oehmig, Nate Gray, Jason Bartlett, Kyle and Olive Beeton.



FALL BAY DAY

On balmy Tuesday, September 26th we hosted 195 students from Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, North Yarmouth Academy, Dresden and Fisher Mitchell, Bath schools during our annual Fall Bay Day at the Merrymeeting Bay Wildlife Management Area. This was our largest Fall Bay Day in quite a while and we turned away an additional school because our capacity was limited to 15 sessions including: watershed modeling, Native American dwellings, beach seining, archaeology, anadromous fish printing, primitive skills, art in nature and conservation canines.

Many thanks to presenters: Steve Eagles, Kent Cooper, Steve Musica, Leslie Anderson, Betsy Steen, Mark Gershman, Roy Morejon, Fred Koerber, Nate Gray, Megan McCuller, Andrea Southworth, Tina, Hannah & Nathan Goodman, Grant Connors, Maggie Lynn, Colin Richardson, Ryan Busby, Mark Pasterczyk, Jason Bartlett, and Doug Watts.



Photo: Pam Hanson, Art (fort?) in Nature

Photo Below: Ed Friedman, Where the Wild Things Are - Hannah & Nathan Goodman

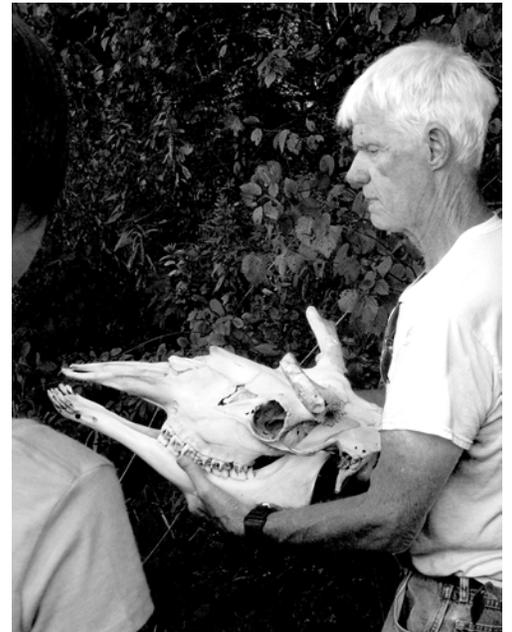


Photo: Mike Robinson, Wildlife Walk - Grant Connors

Thanks to our wonderful chaperones: for ensuring students got from one session to the next in a timely fashion: Becky Bowes, Phil Brzozowski, Linda Hornbeck, Sarah Findley, Jamie and Julie Rea, Pam Hanson, Bob Fesler, Alex Poliakoff, Bill Heaphy, Dana Cary, Elise Strauss-Bowers, David Whittlesey, Mike Robinson, Susan Chase and Martin McDonough.

Special thanks to: Wild Oats for our delicious lunches, Joan Llorente our lunch queen, Kathleen McGee for organizing, Ed Friedman for on-site wrangling and MDIF&W for use of the site.



CONSERVATION EASEMENT COMPLETED

Through the generosity and foresight of landowners Arthur Hussey and Janet Daley, 46 acres of extensive forest, wetland and field draining into Sedgely and Mallon Brooks, tributaries of the Cathance River have been protected in perpetuity. The acreage, providing extensive wildlife habitat and with 1,800' of developable road frontage is now protected by a conservation easement held by FOMB.

With outstanding woodlot characteristics, extensive road frontage and accessibility to major travel routes, the parcel was a prime candidate for development if not protected. The easement preserves this important parcel as a protective buffer to the Cathance River, considered by US Fish and Wildlife Service as “highest value” wetland and shoreline habitat, indicating the area is high priority wintering, migration or production habitat for waterfowl, as defined by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and/or habitat for federally threatened or endangered species.

Please contact Ed Friedman at 666-3372 if you are considering permanent protection for your land.



Photos: Ed Friedman

HE FISHED EVERY MORNING OF SUMMER. AND, WAS HOME BY 7 A.M.

BOWDOINHAM, Maine — The striped bass arrived with a bang this spring on Maine’s Kennebec River, a melee of swirling currents, careening gulls and breaking fish. After several years of disappointing action, their annual migration north from the Chesapeake stirred in me an excitement I hadn’t expected.

As a fishing guide years ago, stripers had provided an income, enabling me to live by the tides and breathe the salt air daily. Now they were back. The only way to really reacquaint myself with them, I knew, was to fish every day.

I still had a boat — a simple 16-foot skiff — and plenty of fishing rods and gear. And we are fortunate to live on Merrymeeting Bay, a freshwater tidal delta through which flows nearly one-third of all the water in Maine.

But my wife was skeptical. There would be some ground rules, she said.

I would have to be home by 7 a.m. That meant starting early, often by 4 a.m., and fishing in the wee hours when I was least likely to be missed. Waking any of the big three on my departure — my wife, our 2-year-old daughter or the dogs — risked a chain reaction that could call into question my claim that these outings would have minimal impact on home or work life.

So I began dressing, even making coffee, in a shed beside our house. This allowed me to roll from bed and out the door in silence, wearing little more than my underwear. I’d programmed the coffee maker outside to begin brewing precisely nine minutes before my bedside alarm rang. The timing, perfected over weeks, ensured a piping-hot beverage but spared my wife the

FISHING (CONTINUED)

the familiar — but singularly sleep-depriving — gurgle and aroma of fresh-brewed coffee. My clothes, fishing gear, even creamer and a stirring spoon, were laid out just-so the night before.

By the time I hit the water each morning, I was caffeinated and ecstatic. More often than not, a soft orange glow had crept onto the horizon, fading seamlessly into the starry blue of the receding night sky. Bait dimpled on the surface. Quiet pervaded.



Dave Sherwood on his 16-foot skiff along the Cathance River in Maine in pursuit of striped bass. Sherwood, a former fishing guide, had set a goal to fish every morning during the summer. Photo: Grace Sherwood

note of tide, weather, water temperature and the phases of the moon, patterns emerged. One spot, for example, regularly held 8-to-10-pound striped bass, bruisers with gaudy silver stripes and broad, emerald flanks. They happily attacked a top-water lure or fly twitched along a current seam, but only in the first hour of the ebb, and then only when it corresponded with dawn.

It didn't take long to realize that few such encounters in the wild were random or accidental.

Locating stripers hinged on staying atop their prey. The Kennebec roiled with an unseen bounty of baitfish, thanks, in part, to the removal of upriver dams and the successful restoration of fish runs. Alewives, shad, blueback herring, menhaden, silversides and sand eels plumbed the river's depths in constantly shifting schools. But because there is no reliable, real-time window into the sea — not even sonar can tell you what is happening where you're not — I learned to rely on other clues.

I became adept at watching the body language, movements and direction of the gulls, kingfishers, seals, cormorants, bald eagles, osprey and herons that accompanied me on the river. Wildlife rarely loitered long without reason. More than once, a flock of terns or a bobbing seal tipped me off to a fishy spot I might otherwise have overlooked. Other times, I felt as though they were trailing me, hoping for an easy meal or discard.

These kinds of mutually beneficial relationships were common on the water.

Early in the summer, I befriended Slawek Pilat, a local eel trapper. Pilat had emigrated from Poland to New York years ago, then eventually found his way to the town of Poland, Maine, in the hope that someone there might speak his native tongue (no one did). But he preferred country living and in time landed a job at the Poland Spring bottling plant.

Trapping eels was his escape, a nod to his youth in rural Eastern Europe, when his family subsisted on smoked eels in the winter. Not long after we met, I arrived home from work to find that Pilat had left a dozen eels in a five-gallon bucket dangling from our dock, sized perfectly for striper bait. A fresh batch followed each week. In August, when he accidentally lost his motor over the transom while hauling traps, I twice ferried him and a local diver out on the bay to find it — and we did.

On my first trips, the bay and rivers seemed vast, uncharted, opaque. Finding fish in such a large expanse was daunting. But in today's one-click world, where virtually everything can be asked — and answered — online, it felt refreshing to start from scratch.

The migrations and habits of oceangoing fish like striped bass remain a mystery even today. Unraveling their secrets consumed me. What prompted schools of stripers so willing to feed one day to shut off, or even disappear, the next? Was the fishing really "least" when the wind was from the east? Why were some current rips so attractive to fish, but others, nearly identical in appearance, so often barren? Did barometric pressure really matter?

I chalked up my early successes to luck. But by keeping a meticulous journal and taking careful

In time, even the fish became more ally than adversary. Pursuing them had opened up a world of discovery and learning. To me, these fish were worth far more alive than dead. Throwing them back was my way of returning the favor to those who had done the same before me.

Still, I knew my morning outings were quite likely not without their impact.

For months, a lone cormorant perched on a shore-side oak had greeted me each dawn, like a familiar dog on a doorstep. One day in September, he was gone. Juvenile alewives were schooling ahead of their fall migration to sea. I'd assumed the bird had risen early to take advantage. But when I returned from my own morning outing, I spotted a lump of black feathers along the bank. I knew it was him.

I cruised in close and hauled the cormorant's limp but formidable body from the water. He reeked, but his feathers still glistened. Close inspection revealed a snelled hook embedded in his chest. It was rusted, tailing a good bit of frayed monofilament fishing line. I could tell from the knot that it wasn't mine, but it was clear another fisherman had unwittingly caused his premature demise.

Lessons on the water often came like this, in small doses, subtle, not obvious.

One day late in the summer, I motored out onto the bay to find tree swallows migrating by the thousands, flying low over the water like a writhing carpet. Another day, a small flock of blue-winged teal, hellbent for the tropics, strafed across my bow. That same week I noticed the wild rice had begun to shed its annual crop, a natural bounty timed perfectly for the mounting shorebird and waterfowl migrations. Coincidence?

My goal to fish every day of the summer stretched into fall, long after the leaves had turned and most other fishermen had hung up their gear. The fish and wildlife had become like family, the river as familiar as the rooms in my house. By late September, I'd logged 98 mornings in my journal. I felt I was slowly assembling the pieces of an immense puzzle, the big picture becoming clearer with each passing day.



Sherwood with a striped bass he caught on the Kennebec River. Over time, the fish became more ally than adversary, and he would toss them back into the river. Photo: Dave Sherwood

Then, on the morning of Oct. 29, I sped out with just a few minutes to spare before work. One by one, I checked all the spots. In places I'd caught fish on nearly every cast the day before, now there were none.

An unexpected feeling of loneliness overcame me. Inexplicably, and without warning, the fish had disappeared.

It would be my last lesson of the season.

Dave Sherwood - Originally published in the New York Times, Nov. 24, 2016, Reprinted with permission of the author.

2017 TRAP COUNTS FOR FISH RETURNS TO MAINE BY RIVER

River	Trap	Am. Shad	At. Salmon (MSW)	At. Salmon (grilse)	River Herring	Striped Bass	Sea Lamprey	Trap Open	Updated
Androscoggin	Brunswick	1	0	0	41,050	6	19	4/26	9/25/17
Aroostook	Tinker Dam	NC	1	0	NC	NC	NC	6/30	9/29/17
Kennebec / Sebecicook	Benton Falls	30	0	0	3,500,000	0	3	5/1	6/15/17
Kennebec	Lockwood Dam	214	34	3	289,190	134	10	5/6	9/25/17
Narraguagus	Cherryfield	824	8	27	NC	0	0	4/23	9/24/17
Penobscot	Milford fish lift	3,868	523	309	1,256,061	1,603	953	4/24	9/25/17
Penobscot	Orono	0	8	1	100,976	2	871	4/24	9/25/17
Penobscot	Weldon Dam	0	17	67	0	0	NC	5/1	9/25/17
Saco	Cataract (East + West Channels)	3,727	6	2	44,929	634	0	5/1	9/10/17
Saco	Skelton	221	1	0	5,121	3	0	5/17	9/10/17
St. Croix	Milltown Dam	38	0	0	144,512	0	8	4/26	6/20/17
Union	Ellsworth	0	0	0	936,633	0	0	5/1	9/25/17

Atlantic salmon MSW = multi sea winter (≥ 63 cm fork length); grilse = one sea winter (< 63 cm fork length)
 River herring counts = combined count of alewife and blueback herring

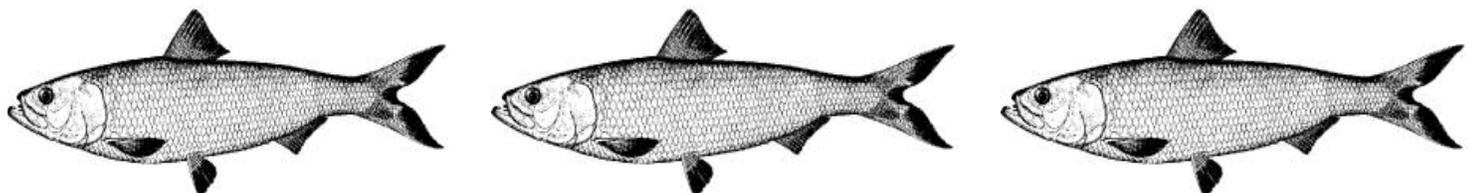
In 2011 FOMB filed suit to reopen the Grand Falls Dam (3rd dam from the mouth) fishway, closed to alewives for nearly 20 years. In 2013, the fishway was opened.

A comparison of alewife/blueback herring returns at head of tide on the St. Croix to this date with other recent years:

To May 30 # River Herring

2017	144,512
2016	30,517
2015	76,804
2014	26,798
2013	16,568
2012	36,058
2011	25,074
2010	57,707

Ten year (2007-2016) average to this date: 28,656



WE NEED YOU! PLEASE SUPPORT OUR IMPORTANT WORK

FOMB Leadership

Our accomplishments are due to the hard work of dedicated volunteers, especially those who serve on our committees. If you want to get involved and serve, please contact the committee chair or Kathleen McGee. We always welcome member input and we'd love for you to join us!

Steering Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair (Bowdoinham)
 Vance Stephenson, Treasurer (Kettering, OH)
 Tom Walling, Secretary (Bowdoinham)
 Simon Beirne (Bowdoinham)
 Becky Bowes (Brunswick)
 Phil Brzozowski (Pittston)
 Steve Musica (Richmond)
 Nate Gray (Vassalboro)

Education Committee

Betsy Steen, Co-Chair, 666-3468
 Tom Walling, Co-Chair, 666-5837

Conservation and Stewardship Committee

Chair Vacancy

Membership and Fundraising Committee

Nate Gray, Chair, 446-8870

Research and Advocacy Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair, 666-3372

Coordinator/Organizer

Kathleen McGee, 666-1118

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • PO Box 233 • Richmond, Maine 04357

Membership Levels

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Sturgeon | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Striped Bass | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Smelt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$750 American Eel | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Shad | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Wild Salmon | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Alewife | |

Name _____

Address _____

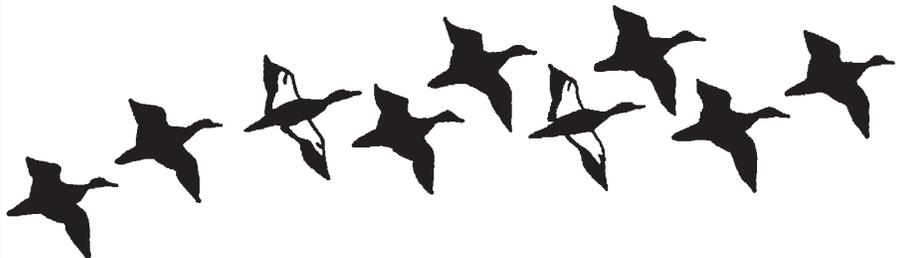
Town/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Send information about volunteer opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> I would like a sticker |

\$7 Enclosed (optional) for a copy of *Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Land Owners* [\$5 for book, \$2 for postage].



Thanks to Will Zell and Zellous.org for newsletter layout.

SUMMER OUTINGS

Over 120 people enjoyed our Summer Outside Series this year. Thanks to leaders Lee Cranmer, Kathy Bridge, Betsy Ham, Leslie Anderson, Peter Goodwin and Jay Robbins. *Photos: Ed Friedman*





Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
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Richmond, ME 04357

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ORGANIZATION

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Winter Speaker Series 2017-2018

All talks 7:00pm at Curtis Memorial Library,
Brunswick, unless noted. Details at www.fomb.org

OCTOBER 11 Be Tick Smart

Emer Smith, Field Epidemiologist, Maine CDC

NOVEMBER 08 Of Sturgeon, Crocodiles & Ice

*Jon Turk, Environmental Scientist, Expeditioneer
Beam Classroom, Bowdoin Visual Arts Bldg.
Cosponsor-Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum*

DECEMBER 13 The Amazing Sea Lamprey

Steve Coghlin, Fisheries Ecologist. UMO

JANUARY 10 A Tale of Thee Privies

Lee Cranmer, Historic Archaeologist, MHPC, Ret.
FOMB Annual Meeting & Potluck: 6:00pm, Public Welcome, Cram Alumni House, Bowdoin College • 83 Federal St., Brunswick

FEBRUARY 14 We Love Maine Bats

Steve Pelletier, Wildlife Biologist, Stantec

MARCH 14 Solar Energy for ME

*Dylan Voorhees, Clean Energy Dir., NRCM & Rep.
Seth Berry*

APRIL 11 Rewilding the East

John Davis, Conservation Athlete & Advocate, Wild-lands Network

**MAY 09 Charles Allen's Kennebec in Photos:
1898-1907**

Earle Shettleworth, Maine State Historian