



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:

Dup Crosson
Coordinator/Organizer
207-666-1118
fomb@comcast.net



ARCHAEOLOGY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN WOOLWICH

In 1654 at the home and trading post of Thomas Ashley, on what is now Thwings Point in Woolwich, a group of early settlers met and signed papers forming the first European-style government in the Merrymeeting Bay region. From July 7th to 18th, 2014, volunteers are invited to join Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) in a cooperative venture with the Maine Historical Preservation Commission (MHPC) during continued excavations of this important historical site along the Kennebec River. The site has been described as possibly the most significant un-excavated historic archaeological site in Maine.



Volunteers at our 2009 Thwing's Point dig.

concentration previously unearthed. The 2014 dig will continue homing in on the original building site, including two formerly unearthed cellar holes. Leading the dig will be retired MHPC historical archaeologist Lee Cranmer.

FOMB invites volunteers to assist with the project. Volunteers are required to pre-register with minimum time commitments of a half day, though multi-day assistance is encouraged, space permitting. A \$20.00 minimum donation to FOMB is suggested to help defray the \$2,000 FOMB cost share of the \$7,000 project. Donations of at least \$50.00 from non-FOMB members will include a one-year membership in the organization. Any artifacts recovered remain the property of the landowner.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to work with and learn from trained archaeologists while making an important contribution to our knowledge of Maine history. There will be a maximum of six volunteer slots available per half day session. Donations – at levels far less than a similar field school might cost – will help support the continued work of FOMB in areas like this one. The morning time slot is 8:00am-12:00pm and the afternoon slot is 12:30-4:30pm with a lunch break at noon. Pre-registration is required. Contact Dig Coordinator Sarah Cowperthwaite at 449-1450 or sarahcowperthwaite@rocketmail.com to register.

Ed Friedman

A Phase 1 survey is the initial archaeological exploration given a new site. The purpose is to quickly cover a large area in a methodical manner. Small test pits are dug, soil stratigraphy and any artifacts found are recorded, and the pits are back-filled. This was done in 2007 by FOMB volunteers and MHPC staff. Results from the Phase 1 survey indicated future and more complete excavations were desirable, and so a subsequent 2009 Phase 2 survey focused on an area of artifact

SPRINGTIME LOVERS

“It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o’er the green corn-field did pass,
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.”

-Shakespeare

Most of us love this time of year (other than mud season), and the birds of spring offer us some of nature’s most endearing scenes. A pair of Canada geese on a neighbor’s pond looking for a nest site, two bluebirds stuffing grass in their new box home, ospreys gathering sticks to expand a towering nest on a dead spruce, the return of the great blue herons to a nearby marsh – all of these warm our hearts and inform us that winter is gone. The passing of winter also means that once again we can witness the courtship of one of America’s great birds, the wild turkey.

While turkeys are attractive in their own way, with feathers of rich russets and tans that become iridescent in sunlight, they are no match for a Baltimore oriole. With protruding eyes, jowls, a head covered in fleshy caruncles and dangling snoods, the turkey will win no beauty contests. And no one will mistake a hen’s gravelly “cluck” for the cheerful “terr EEEEE” of the redwing black bird. But when it comes to real life drama in mating habits, turkeys take a back seat to few species.

As the snows of March begin to melt, look for flocks of turkeys along country roads, pecking for scarce seeds and insects to rebuild fat reserves depleted during a long winter. While the hens feed, there will be a nearby tom with love on the brain. He’ll drop his wings, plump up his body feathers and spread his tail in his full glory, hoping to find a mate. The ladies will generally ignore the amorous fellow, leaving him frustrated but persistent.

If you want to fully appreciate the breeding antics of turkeys, set your alarm clock for 4:00am, and head for a nearby patch of woods with tall roost trees (you can identify roost trees when you find curly greyish white droppings on the ground, about the size of your finger,

but stay back at least 50 yards to avoid spooking any resident birds). As the first faint glow of sunrise appears on the horizon, the forest slowly comes to life. Along with the morning songbirds, you may hear gentle clucks and purrs from a flock of turkey hens as they prepare for a day of foraging.

Suddenly the morning calm will be rent as an amorous gobbler blasts out a mighty GOBBLE GOBBLE GOBBLE – a sound so loud it is hard to believe the source. If another tom replies, or worse, interrupts his gobble, our tom will roar back again, and again, and again. Other toms may join the chorus, their calls echoing across a valley. These calls are intended to attract willing females, and to warn off any subordinate toms from this gobbler’s harem. After 15-30 minutes of this posturing, the birds fly to the ground and assemble in flocks. The tom follows the hens, trying to split one off for breeding. If his courtship is interrupted by another tom, things may turn violent. A mature tom can approach 25 pounds, with heavy wings, powerful legs carrying sharp toes and spurs up to 2” long, and a beak that can strike a heavy blow. Spitting and hissing, their heads swollen in bright red and blue, two toms will sometimes fight to the death over a hen, with subordinate toms hanging around hoping to pick up the spoils if the dominant birds are too weak to carry on the breeding cycle. In our area, courtship peaks in mid-April to early May.



Photo: Caroline Chipman.

When most of the hens have been bred and are sitting on their nests, the toms become almost desperate to continue their fun. They can spend their days on the move, calling and looking for hens and sometimes getting into trouble. An unhappy friend of mine reports two toms waking him almost daily at 5:00am

in their earnest calling for now scarce females. A lonely tom is susceptible to careful calling by a hunter looking to put a tasty turkey in the freezer. A friend in New York reported a gobbler walking through the open sliding glass door in his office, wings spread and hoping to find love. When my friend's springer spaniel awoke from his nap, the turkey left in a hurry but not before knocking over a couple lamps!

Thomas Jefferson favored the wild turkey for our national bird, calling them "noble" and more intelligent than the winning bald eagle, which Jefferson labeled as a mere scavenger. Noble or not, turkeys have made an amazing comeback from near extinction just 50 years ago to an estimated US population of seven million birds in all 50 states. While on occasion they may seem dim-witted, I rate them as some of the most interesting birds around, and I look forward each year to seeing them strut through the yard, looking for spring love.

Ed Robinson

SPRING BAY DAY '14

On May 20th, FOMB volunteers gathered at Chop Point School in Woolwich for this season's Bay Day. 241 kids from seven regional schools got their hands dirty and enjoyed a sunny day full of valuable ecological lessons. Thanks to our guides Betsy Steen,



Building a wigwam. Photo: Eleanor Wilson.

Ed Friedman, Peter Wade, Steve Doak, Paul Dutil, Leslie Anderson, Kathleen McGee, Boris Clark, Kennon Wilson, Steve Musica, Steve Eagles, Kent Cooper, Kerry Hardy, Toby Bonney, Craig King, Jamie Silvestri, Jack Witham, Kathie Brown, Helen

Watts, Tina Goodman, Jennifer Jones, Hannah Goodman, Jay Robbins, Fred Koerber, Tom Weddle, George Sergeant, Amy Hamilton Vailea, Megan McCuller, Cathy Reynolds, and Lynda Doughty for their creativity in inspiring the kids with a variety of activities ranging from bird walks to field ecology.



Hands-on at Conservation Canines. Photo: Ed Friedman.

Also thanks to our chaperones Peggy Muir, Jane Frost, Bob Goldman, Eleanor Wilson, Pam Hanson, Anne Harwood, Tom Walling, David Whittlesey, Orman Hines, Carole Sargent, Fran Leyman, Jens Jorgensen, Diane and Douglas Richmond, Priscilla Seimer, Jeff Sebell, David Hammond, Tom Foote, Bert Singer, Martha Spiess, Joan Llorente, and Tom Hughes for keeping everyone on time and minimizing the chaos! Special thanks to Wild Oats, Henry Heyburn at Chewonki, and Mary-Ellen Dennis at the Maine DEP.

Fall Bay Day takes place on September 23rd at the Wildlife Management Area in Bowdoinham. We would love to have you as a volunteer!



Non-point source pollution. Photo: Dup Crosson.

BEACH SEINING TURNS UP NEW DISCOVERY

The beach seine is an ancient fisherman's tool dating from somewhere way back in Egyptian times. We use beach seines in our work at the Department of Marine Resources. We use these nets in our research and documentation of restoration work on the greater Kennebec River basin. The beach seine is a very simple net that varies in depth and length depending on the application. The ones we use on the Kennebec vary from 50 to 150 feet long. Their depths vary from six to eight feet, making them relatively small sampling nets – not the commercial giants like purse seines, which can be several thousand feet long and many tens of fathoms deep.

On each end of the net there is a staff, used both as a handle to pull it through the water and to keep it from collapsing. On the top there are a series of spaced-out floats or corks to keep the net on the surface. On the bottom of the net are a series of weights called leads. These keep the net firmly affixed to the bottom. Depending on the location the seine can be deployed from a boat or from shore, or a combination of both. We at DMR wear chest waders in most weather to stay dry and keep the cold water at bay. In the high summer we sometimes just go in shorts, which is a true pleasure.



Stacking the seine at Bay Day. Photo: Ed Friedman.

Beach seining is a lot like Christmas. You're never quite sure what you'll get. Some places are predictable, others not so much. Toby, Craig, and I were at this past fall's Bay Day, where local fourth grade students come to the shores of the Bay for a day of outdoor education. We were set up close to the mouth of the Cathance River. We had three classes that day that came to see what beach seining was all about – why we do it and why it's an effective tool to assess species composition and abundance. The kids immediately understand this concept. A pair of us would drag out the net and draw it back to shore and then let the kids haul it the rest of the way. We would immediately gather round to see what we captured. Banded killifish, white perch, yellow perch, eels, alewives, blueback herring, and mummichogs are common hauls at this site. We put them in five gallon pails and reach in to try and catch them in the buckets. It is a really good time. The kids are completely and utterly engaged – and so are we. We describe the life histories of each species and why it is important. The kids get this too.

The last seine of the day came in like all the others, with the usual suspects captured. But one fish was different—very different. Too different. Toby, Craig and I stared at this fish with mouths agape. We each had our suspicions. We each held our tongues waiting for the other to declare a species. The kids didn't care in the least – for them, each fish was entirely unique and beautiful. And indeed they all are. But this one fish, almost lilac in color, was a complete anomaly to us. It was about four inches long and rugged-looking, with a heavy regular coating of round scales and a roundish body profile. We finished the presentation and let all the fish go. We packed our kit and headed back to the office.

That afternoon I called Craig and Toby and asked the question. “What was that thing? We need to catch another; go back down and get one.” And so they did the very next day.

Carp. Common carp. Juveniles, this year's young. These fish were erroneously introduced back in the late nineteenth century as an angling opportunity: if they're fun to catch in Europe then we ought to have them here! So we put them here. Turns out it was a very poor idea. Carp angling never quite took off as anticipated but the carp population sure did! They spread to every scrap of available habitat in the lower Kennebec River complex.

They grow large, live long, and are somewhat of an omnivore. They grub along the bottom for invertebrates and vegetable matter. They suck in great gobs of mud and pass it through their net-like gill rakers to filter out the goodies. Doing this seven days a week in the warmer months doesn't do much for the water quality of the Bay. This process keeps fine particulates in suspension and decreases light penetration, thereby lessening the growth of aquatic plants. In effect this cascades through the ecosystem affecting all the aquatic organisms in the Bay.

Carp compete with every other animal in the Bay by lessening water quality. In truth we know very little about the carp other than their presence. Those we caught at Bay Day were the first young ones we'd ever captured, and I've been beach seining on the Kennebec for the past twenty three years. That day, we learned something: young carp like it near the mouth of the Cathance. We see adults on the Eastern River, the Androscoggin and the Kennebec all the way up to Waterville, but we've never seen the young.

Now that we have, what's next? We'll radio-tag some adults. About a dozen should do it. Then, we'll follow them. We'll see where they spawn. We'll see where they over-winter. Carp will get together to spawn and to sleep away the long winter months beneath the ice. Friends of Merrymeeting Bay and DMR will learn much about carp in the coming years as a result of this project. And perhaps, just perhaps, provide some relief for Merrymeeting Bay.

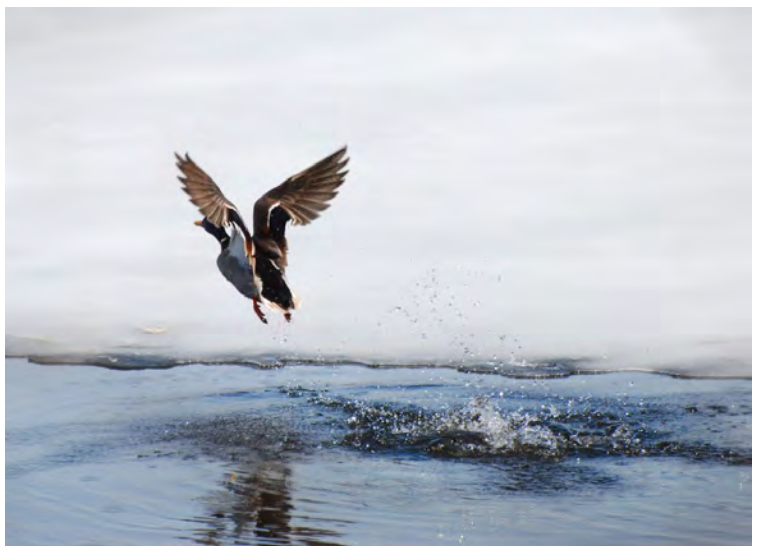
Nate Gray

“ nature isn't always even ”
- Brunswick 4th grader

PHOTOS FROM OUR FRIENDS



These goose eggs were discovered by Colleen Moore on one of her recent paddles out to the islands of the lower Androscoggin.



In April, Kathie Brown traversed the Androscoggin River walking path in Brunswick, where she caught this mallard in mid-liftoff.

RIVERSIDE PROPERTIES FOR SALE IN BOWDOINHAM

Two separate parcels in Bowdoinham are up for sale this spring, both adjacent to Merrymeeting Bay tributaries and one featuring an FOMB conservation easement.

49 Ridge Road



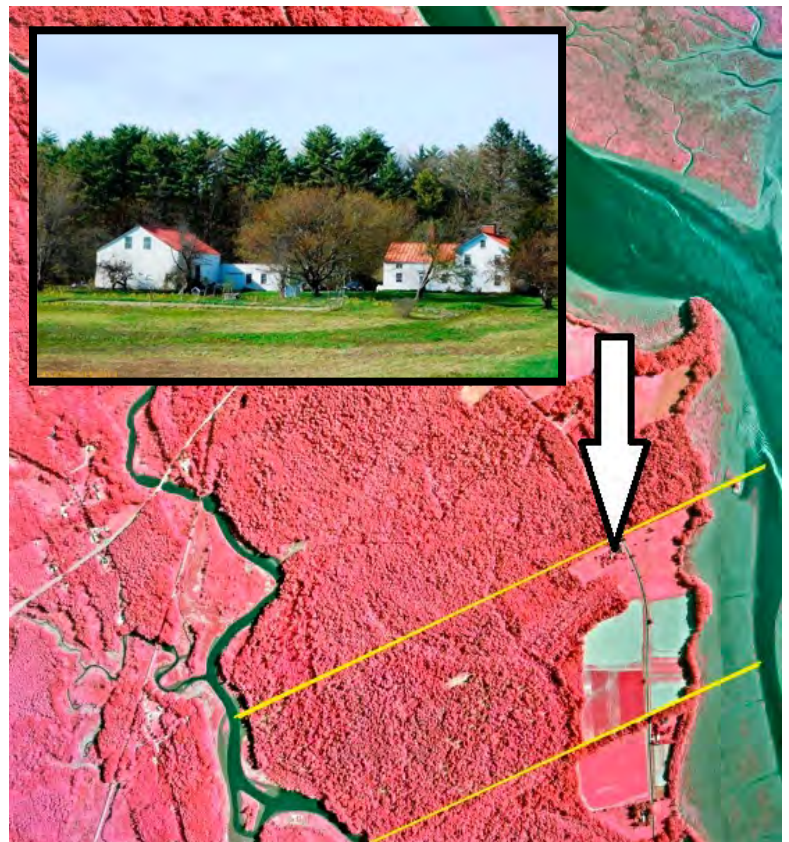
With over 2,000 feet of frontage on the Cathance River's West Branch in Bowdoinham, this beautiful protected parcel is now for sale. The 29 acre property with well-maintained farm house and conservation easement held by FOMB offers stunning views, an island, a mixture of habitats, and proximity to Bowdoinham village. The 2400 square foot home offers 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 hobby rooms, full rock rubble basement with bricked floor and a 4 bay carriage house with shop area and storage space. The Mayo property is located on the edge of Bowdoinham's village area with easy walking to elementary school, ball fields, town landing and library. Lovely gardens and fruit trees including old apples add to the allure. Available to see in August by appointment. *Contact Ray and Karen Mayo by phone: 207-522-9549.*

River to River!

With its 1795 restorable home and barn located at 304 Pork Pt. Rd. in Bowdoinham, this unique 176 acre property runs from the Kennebec [2,700' frontage] to the Abbagadassett [2,000' frontage]. We are seeking a conservation buyer to protect this parcel [45 acres of field, 125 acres of woods, 6 acre homestead, and 27 acres of tidal wetland] in perpetuity. Agricultural fields are currently leased for organic growing and the property adjoins hundreds of acres of protected woodlands to the north owned by Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

The home has been inhabited continuously and has pumpkin pine floors, multiple fireplaces and several bedrooms. There is a large barn with attached one-car garage and workshop. All roofs are metal.

Price is \$1,375,000. *For more information contact Ed Friedman at 207-666-3372 or the realtor Dari Hurley @ Coldwell Banker: 207-446-2273. More details are available on the Coldwell Banker website.*



FIND US ON FACEBOOK OR TWITTER FOR THE LATEST FOMB UPDATES

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 Dup Crosson. We always welcome member input and we'd love for you to join us!

Steering Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair (Bowdoinham)
 Sarah Cowperthwaite, Secretary (Topsham)
 Nate Gray, Treasurer (Freeport)
 Tom Walling (Bowdoinham)
 Steve Musica (Richmond)
 Boris Clark (Topsham)

Education Committee

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

Conservation and Stewardship Committee

Monique Lucarelli, Chair, 443-8477

Membership and Fundraising Committee

Nate Gray, Chair, 865-9377

Research and Advocacy Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair, 666-3372

Coordinator/Organizer

Dup Crosson, 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].



HERITAGE OF THE BAY

The high waters of spring always stir up memories of the biggest floods of the past. In this photo dated 1923, the old cast iron bridge in Bowdoinham is swallowed by the overflowing Cathance River. The bridge was erected in 1895 and in 1955 was replaced by the green bridge that still stands.

Courtesy of Betsy Steen and the Bowdoinham Historical Society.





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

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OUTSIDE! 2014 SCHEDULE

- Jun 22** Cathance River Paddle with Michelle Moody, AMC
Bowdoinham, 9:00am-1:00pm. Contact Michelle, 319-7355
- Jul 7-18** Thwing's Point Dig* (\$20 suggested donation)
*Woolwich, Monday through Friday, 8:00am-12:00pm and
12:30pm-4:30pm. Contact Sarah Cowperthwaite, 449-1450*
- Jul 16** Little Swan Island Paddle with Warren Whitney
Richmond, 5:00-7:30pm. Contact Warren, 666-3376
- Jul 26** Turkey Hunt: A family-oriented eco-scavenger hunt
*Topsham, 9:00am-11:00pm. Contact Colleen Moore, 720-0541
Co-sponsored by Merrymeeting Arts Center*
- Aug 23** Invasive Plants Walk with Nancy Sferra, TNC
Bowdoinham, 9:00am-11:00am. Contact Dup Crosson, 666-1118
- Sep 7** Swan Island Outing with Jay Robbins* (\$8 Island Fee)
Richmond, 9:00am-1:00 pm. Contact Jay, 737-2239
- Sep 21** Mushroom Walk with Michaeline Mulvey
Bowdoinham, 2:00-4:00pm. Contact Dup Crosson, 666-1118

All events are free* and open to the public. Participants attend at their own risk.

Pre-registration required. For questions or registration call the contact number for each event or call Dup Crosson, FOMB Coordinator/Organizer, at 666-1118 or fomb@comcast.net. Paddler participants must posses at least intermediate skllls and bring their own boat. PFDs required.