



THE MAINE CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

THE MAINE WILDLIFER



FALL 2020

HOW TO SURVIVE A PANDEMIC: THE WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST EDITION

by Mao Lin, Programs Chair, on behalf of the METWS Executive Board and Committee Chairs

In lieu of a conventional newsletter for 2020 (because this has not been a conventional year), we are featuring member's stories with the theme "Coping with COVID." As wildlife biologists, we experience the world a little different than most people. We get excited when we see a new bird, a rare bird, and, oftentimes, just a favorite bird. We mark the seasons with day length, the angle of the sun, tracks in mud or snow, and the sounds we hear (or don't hear) at night. For many of us, the "office" might be a wildlife refuge, management area, a proposed project area, or an outdoor laboratory. Our "nine-to-five" might take place on a mountain top, in a tract of forest land, on a sandy beach, or even on an offshore island; sometimes, our "nine-to-five" might be 9 pm to 5 am as we adapt our schedules to the rhythms of our nocturnal study organisms.

So as winter creeps in and coronavirus case numbers continue to rise, let's keep doing what we do best! Let's enjoy the natural world while we study it, manage it, and work to conserve and protect it. Get outside and go cross-county skiing. Grab a camera (let's be honest—your phone) and take pictures of our assemblage of strange winter ducks. Look for mammal tracks in fresh snow. Read and write stories or listen to a podcast about nature. If there is a group of professionals that excels at social distancing, it's probably wildlife biologists! But remember that through The Wildlife Society you have a network of like-minded professionals that are an extended family. We would love to hear from you! If you would like to share your stories and photos in future newsletters or on our social media feeds, please contact your secretary-treasurer at kwaddle14@gmail.com.

For now, chapter meetings and programs are on hold until we can get some traction with ideas, speakers, technology, and people to help with the planning and implementation. If you are creative, organized, and would like to become more involved with the chapter, please contact your program committee chair at mao.lin@tetrattech.com. We are planning to have a spring 2021 meeting and *spoiler alert* it will likely be virtual.



Photos by Mao Lin: Garter Snake, Variable Darner Dragonfly, Peregrine Falcon, Red Squirrel.

On a Business Note:

This past spring, with all the concern and confusion caused by COVID-19, the Executive Board voted to cancel our spring business meeting. The spring meeting also serves as the Chapter's annual meeting, and the time of year when our new officers are voted in by the membership. Board members expressed concern about voting and swearing in new officers outside of a formal annual meeting. Thus, another Executive Board vote occurred, and was approved, to continue with the existing officers and committee chairs until new officers can properly be installed during an annual meeting. Not surprisingly, there are no provisions in our Chapter bylaws that address how to handle voting and transitioning to new officers if the annual meeting cannot be held. To address this, we've suggested edits to the bylaws and made other changes that were brought up by the membership at the last meeting. Those changes will be ready for review and approval by the membership and The Wildlife Society (national) in the upcoming months.

COPING WITH COVID

If I were to think of one word to describe how I have progressed through 2020, it would be “adapt.” The year started with the purchase of my first home, a hundred-year-old farm house fixer-up project. This was the first time I have lived by myself and the first couple of weeks were filled with anxiety from looking at all the projects I needed to accomplish and wondering where I would find the time. Soon after the pandemic started, and it began to sound like I wasn’t going to be able to leave the house. I began to adapt to this new lifestyle, quiet times, and freedom to be with myself. I made lists and tried to accomplish something each day, which brought me joy and a sense of pride, rather than anxiety.

I found new ways to work out as my basketball league, gyms, and yoga classes were cancelled. I changed my routine by finding yoga classes online, using heavy objects around the house as weights, and even bought a basketball rim so I could keep my jump shot fresh for whenever our league opens back up.

We have adapted at work as well. Many projects were on the horizon at the beginning of the year and we worried how we were going to get all this stuff accomplished when we couldn’t hire our seasonal staff, ride in a car together, or even meet in the office. We made lists, prioritized our projects and we began to make progress. Just like my house lists, I began to check things off my work lists giving me a daily sense of accomplishment and pride. With this crazy year starting to come to an end, I am amazed at how I and we have adapted and been able to accomplish so much under the current circumstances.

As I returned to a field I was brush-hogging at work the other day, I noticed a coyote in the distance. As I



approached in the very loud tractor I scrambled to get a picture of the coyote before he scurried off into the brush. To my surprise the coyote stayed in the field and almost ran along side the tractor for the next 20 minutes. He was filling his belly and chasing voles as I mowed over the field. For some reason (still unknown to me) this adaptation or behavior came to mind when I was thinking of ideas for this writing. I don’t know what it means but I do know things will always change and we can and will continue to adapt our behaviors to be successful in our personal and professional lives.

- Sean Campbell



I doubt I will find any detractors when I say that 2020 has been a challenging year. Between a global pandemic, working from home, zoom calls, and the accumulating hours of screen time I have certainly found myself fatigued. A salve I have applied to this ailment has always been outdoor immersion. You can all imagine my excitement when I was invited to tag along on not only one, but two moose hunts this year. These outings gave me weeks of enjoyment prior during the planning stages, exhaustive and rewarding weeks during the hunts, and they will likely provide me with a lifetime of reminiscing. Two days prior to the first hunt, while scouting, I found myself anxiously awaiting a bull who

was crashing his way through alders thicker than I can walk through. Later that morning, I had the greatest grouse outing of my life. I managed to shoot my four grouse limit, out of a seven grouse covey. All while dealing with a jamming shot gun in-between every shot. I will certainly bore my wife and friends with this story annually for as long as I live. While we didn’t connect with the bull we desired in week one, we certainly had a hunt to remember.

During the second moose hunt we met with success on Monday afternoon, but since we had already paid for 4

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nights of camping in Deboullie, some of the finest woods our great state has to offer, we decided to stick around. This time in the woods filled with hunting, birding (including beautiful sightings of common redpolls and black backed woodpeckers) and camping provided me with a much needed recharge to my batteries.

As 2020 and its challenges continue I hope you all remain safe, happy, and outside! I look forward to “Biologist and Brews” and in person meetings in the future.

- Joe Roy



2020 has seemed like a very long year at the Kelshaw household. My wife had knee surgery on the last day of 2019 and the long recovery began. We started working from home January 1, 2020 and the isolation began. My wife was released to go back to work a few days before St. Patrick's Day, and then the shutdowns and quarantines began a few days later and we were sent home once again. It is now mid-October and we are still working from home with no end in sight. In addition, because of her surgery our family was unable to take advantage of the time to go hiking and on bike rides or dog walks together. So, it has been an isolating year, however, I have found ways to cope. I run. Some would say I run a lot. When my work schedule allows, I run five to seven days a week, and strive for typical 5k to 10k distance. I also run at least one ½ marathon a month. During my runs I like to focus on the wildlife; what am I seeing and hearing?

Where am I seeing it, what is the habitat? Over the year what bird species have come and gone and what are the patterns and their habits? When was I seeing breeding and nest building activity? It has been a very enjoyable experience. I really enjoy the sunrise runs where I get to start in the dark and watch the world wake up. On one sunrise run when I rounded the corner at Wharton Point (in Brunswick – which is a great spot for birding) I heard a whoosh above my head. It was a flock of 14 Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) that settled in the marsh and began feeding. It was a great experience. This year has really tested our resilience, but we can find ways to stay positive and healthy. So, get out there, get moving – your blood flowing – your dopamine levels up, and enjoy Maine's wildlife.

- Rodney Kelshaw



Wharton Point Sunrise



Cadillac Mountain Sunrise (I ran up)

COPING WITH COVID

After a summer internship VHF-tracking Northern Bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*) in Florida, I made it a goal of mine to learn the process of mist-netting and trapping birds. On October 5-6, I volunteered on a Woodcock migration project in Jackman, ME. I assisted UMaine graduate student Liam Berigan, and UMaine gamebird ecology professor Dr. Erik Blomberg, with trying to catch American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*). The purpose of this project was to get a better understanding of woodcock migratory patterns. We set up mist nets at strategic locations to capture these birds during their



crepuscular flight. The term crepuscular was new to me before this project, but perfectly depicts the behavior of woodcocks, as they are most active at dawn and dusk. Once captured, these birds were fitted with GPS transmitters, and individuals tracked via satellite across several states. Although I wasn't able to catch any of the targeted species, it was special for me to catch a hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) in one of the nets. Just being able to learn this process and volunteer was truly special for me. It was an experience that I won't forget.

- Kyle Smelter



I am currently a junior in the Wildlife Ecology program at the University of Maine, and Treasurer of the Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Over these past few difficult months after returning to my campus area, I have been trying to keep myself as active and busy as possible. Amongst my heavy load of online classwork, I try to get out as often as possible to go on hikes at Sunhaze National Wildlife Refuge or kayaking at Pushaw Stream or on the Stillwater River. One weekend I was even lucky enough to get the chance to venture back up to Baring, Maine, where I had worked this past summer, to help with the last few nights of duck trapping and banding before the hunting season began. These past few months have definitely been difficult, but keeping high hopes during this pandemic, retaining my active sense of adventure, and my need to be outdoors have definitely helped keep me sane, as well as aided me in overcoming some of the difficulties of getting used to this new normal.

- Becca Cusick



COPING WITH COVID

This summer is one few of us will soon forget. Each May I hire someone for a 4-month season. This year I held my breath not knowing if we'd be allowed to hire, do field work together, or if all my plans for the summer would be dashed. It turned out that the most complicated part of her starting in May was figuring out how to ferry a leased vehicle to Bangor from Augusta.

Here we are at the end of that summer field season. It's a time for reflection, a time for making lists of what didn't get done, but more importantly a time to think about all the things we accomplished. I hope you're able to find some unexpected highlights from this summer to reflect upon.

At the top of my list was spending more non-work time outside than I can remember in recent history, watching my niece catch her first smallmouth bass followed soon thereafter by her second. I spent time with friends – camping and paddling are great ways to be physically distanced but socially connected! We laughed, cried, gazed at the Milky Way, watched the Perseid meteor shower, and talked to each other about how 2020 had affected each of us, our families, and friends.

The variety of field work I'm fortunate enough to do can be similarly rewarding. I saw my first praying



mantis in the wild this summer, along with first spring salamander, northern dusky salamander, and several birds I'd never identified before. I had a very close encounter with an ermine, paddled more new bodies of water than ever before, and watched as that seasonal wildlife assistant became overjoyed to see a flock of 30+ bobolinks in a field she'd spent many hours surveying earlier in the summer.



I can't deny that I often feel drained, but I feel privileged to have had opportunities to explore more at home and away. In a recent virtual symposium I attended, the presenter noted that when we are professionally and/or emotionally drained, our ability to create change is impacted. It's crucial that we take care of ourselves in order to create the change that we as humans and professionals wish to see. Take care of yourself.

- Sarah Spencer



Being a first year student at the University of Maine in the time of COVID-19 can be stressful and discouraging at times. This is no one's fault, and UMaine should be complimented on how well they are handling the situation. Luckily, there are still some ways to reduce that stress and take advantage of being in one of the most gorgeous states. One of those ways is to visit the national wildlife refuge known as Moosehorn, found in Piscataquis County. I have been lucky enough to spend some time up within Moosehorn's borders, and the amount of wildlife is astounding. Moose and bear tracks near



railways, an array of waterfowl species in the wetlands, and a walk dedicated to the timberdoodle/woodcock are just a few of the many sightings that you may have while at Moosehorn. There are even herps to be found, despite how far north the refuge really is. Some great finds that happened within the previous two weeks were a juvenile common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), a northern red-bellied snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*), and various small frogs. As a wildlife ecology student I truly do appreciate how much biodiversity and preservation can be found in the state of Maine.

- Ethan Mackenzie



PHOTOS BY CARLA SKINDER AND MAO LIN, METWS MEMBERS



Fox kits in neighborhood, Thomaston
Carla Skinder, METWS Member



Glossy Ibis at Weskeag Marsh, Thomaston
Carla Skinder, METWS Member



Beaver, Lincolnville
Carla Skinder, METWS Member



Horseshoe Crab at campground, Bath
Carla Skinder, METWS Member



Black-bellied Plovers, Scarborough
Mao Lin, METWS Member



White-tailed Deer, Moscow
Mao Lin, METWS Member

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