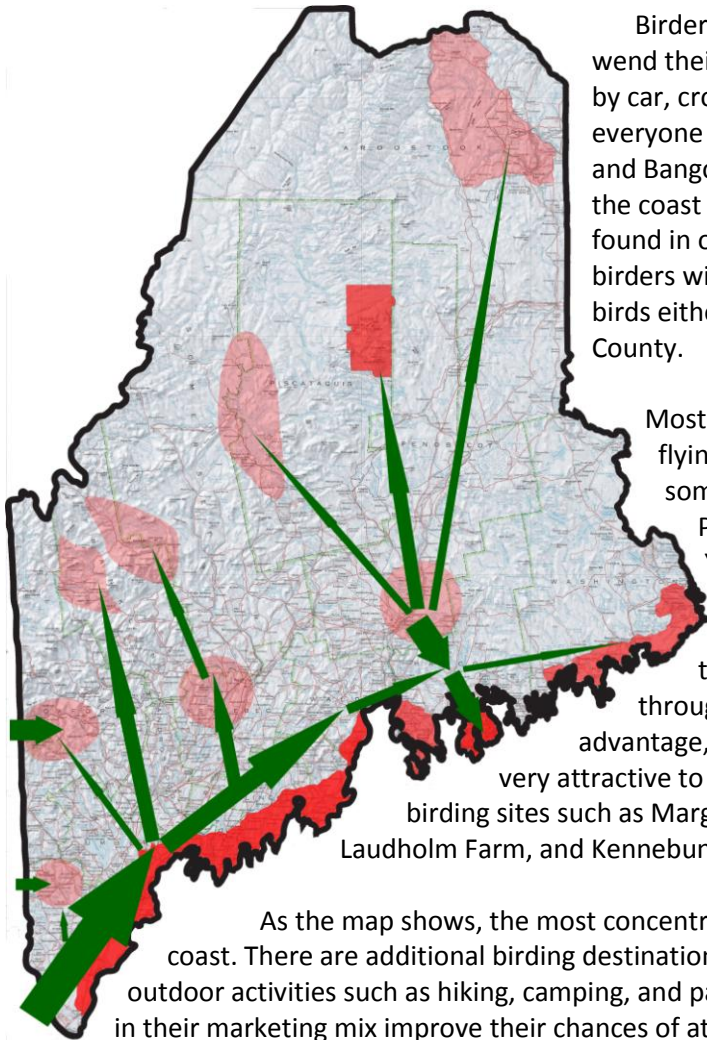


MAINE BIRDING TRAIL

BOB DUCHESNE, 478 BEECHWOOD AVE. OLD TOWN, ME 04468

BEST NESTS Newsletter
Volume 6 – September 2010

Tourist Flow



Birders are no different from other tourists as they wend their way into the state. The bulk of them arrive by car, crossing the bridge in Kittery alongside everyone else. Many arrive via the airports in Portland and Bangor. Most will spend considerable time near the coast as they chase the ocean birds that can't be found in other northern states. A fraction of those birders will also seek Maine's boreal (northern forest) birds either inland or all the way into Washington County.

Most birders driving through southern Maine or flying into Portland can be expected to spend some time at Scarborough Marsh, Biddeford Pool, or several of the other birding sites in York and Cumberland Counties. One promising strategy for innkeepers in southern Maine is to grab a bed night or two from those birders who are passing through. Hotels near the airport have a natural advantage, but inns near Scarborough Marsh can be very attractive to birders. Innkeepers in York County share key birding sites such as Marginal Way in Ogunquit, Rachel Carson NWR, Laudholm Farm, and Kennebunk Plains.

As the map shows, the most concentrated birding activity takes place along the coast. There are additional birding destinations in the boreal areas that also correlate with outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, and paddling. Inns that include birding information in their marketing mix improve their chances of attracting this group.

As has been discussed in previous newsletters, the quest for Atlantic Puffins is a driving force for many birders. Puffins should be in the marketing mix for any inn near one of the puffin tour boats to Eastern Egg Rock that depart from Boothbay Harbor, New Harbor, and Port Clyde. In the Acadia area, the Bar Harbor Whale Watch caters to puffin-watchers on its morning trips to Petit Manan. The most prized tours leave from Jonesport and Cutler to visit Machias Seal Island, which is the only puffin island that permits landing. For coastal inns not near these ports, birders are likely to be more casual and interested in a generalized birding experience. There are many Maine Birding Trail sites along the coast and many more state parks and land trust properties that can be relied upon to provide great birding. It costs virtually nothing for an inn to promote these opportunities on its web site or to have birding information on hand for guests. A key goal of the Best Nests program is to help innkeepers make these connections. Expect more information over the offseason.



Besides coastal birding, the other major lure for visiting birders is the set of northern species found in boreal pockets of Maine's working forest. The quest for these boreal birds follows four basic patterns:

1. Visitors often do the Machias Seal Island trip, then chase the boreal species around Washington County on the days either side of the puffin tour. This leads to multiple bed nights for some inns.
2. A second group eschews the puffins and searches for the boreal species inland, often in Baxter State Park or the surrounding environs.
3. For birders who first sample southern Maine, the boreal areas around Rangeley are the closest opportunity.
4. For the real hardcore birders in search of the rare American Three-toed Woodpecker, a trip to Aroostook County may be in order.

These patterns create a certain flow of tourists upon which savvy innkeepers might capitalize. Inns near these destinations should market their desirable locations. But innkeepers at crossroads and along travel routes can also capitalize on their locations, knowing that many birders are interested in lodgings that let them do day trips to both the coast and the mountains. There is also some potential for partnerships between innkeepers, possibly bundling a package that includes accommodations on the coast and inland so that birders can conveniently chase all their targets. One thing is absolutely certain: many birders spend a full week in Maine and travel to multiple destinations within the state while doing so. Few stay in one place for the week, unless they are traveling with family or they are in such destinations as Acadia National Park or Monhegan.



Birding tourists flow through southern Maine, usually after a stop at Scarborough Marsh or some of the other southern hot spots. Some will fly into Bangor and start the vacation there. Regardless, most will head for the coast or the boreal areas. But here in vacationland, many resort areas are not near these target locations. For southwestern Maine, Sebago Lake, the Belgrade Lakes, and many other vacation areas, birding is not the primary reason for visiting the region. Nonetheless, birding is a great way to add value to a particular innkeeper's attractiveness because of its

rising popularity as a leisure past time. There are great birding sites in any region. Adding such information to the inn's web site is relatively cost free.

Likewise, many inns in service center communities can add content that elevates them above their competitors. Birders traveling on business *always* bring their binoculars and will chose inns that allow them to enjoy their passion during their off hours. All of Maine's larger cities have good birding sites nearby that can be used to embellish an innkeeper's web site.

In the months ahead, this newsletter will offer more specifics for particular regions and explore potential relationships. **Coming up next month: what a summer's worth of Maine Birding Trail web site stats reveal.**