

MAINE BIRDING TRAIL

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Odds & Ends

At the end of this year, my service in the Maine House of Representatives will conclude due to term limits. It's a mixed blessing. I look forward to having more time to promote nature-based tourism, but I will have less opportunity to work for change from within state government.

The Maine Governor's Conference on Tourism takes place tomorrow, January 26, 2012 at Sunday River. Certain to be on everybody's lips is a new scheme from the LePage administration to eliminate the Maine Tourism Commission and create a new Office of Marketing within the Department of Economic and Community Development. The proposal has been inserted into a bill that is currently in front of the Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development Committee. According to Carolann Ouellette of the Maine Office of Tourism:

"This proposed repeal of the commission and strengthening of the language to connect the industry to the administration and development of the strategic plan provides us with an opportunity to do a number of things:

- 1) Examine all the overlaps with current boards and initiatives and establish a more efficient mechanism.*
- 2) Allows for flexibility – broader and/or more targeted industry participation depending upon the issue.*
- 3) Show commitment to efficiencies.*
- 4) Frees up staff time (over 400 hours) which could be re-allocated to presenting/working more directly to the industry (regionally, locally, organizationally) which would help to address some identified communication issues."*

If you have an opinion you would like to share regarding this proposal, feel free to contact me. I expect to follow the proposal carefully.

Other news from the Maine Office of Tourism: Margaret Hoffman has been added to the staff. She will be in charge of industry outreach, getaways, listings, motor coach and travel shows. The Office also reports that the **FOURTH** printing of the Maine Birding Trail guide is hot off the press and demand remains high.

A little bit of news from some of the *Best Nests*:

Rauni Kew of Inn By The Sea reports that they are restoring 2 acres to habitat for the endangered New England Cottontail and will also plant milkweed and nectar plants for butterflies.

Tori Baron at James Place Inn in Freeport says the season was so busy they barely had time to come up for air. They had lots of birds at the feeder, and the cardinals, downy woodpeckers, and hairy woodpeckers are present and beautiful.

Monica Kissane at White Cedar Inn in Freeport says, "the only real 'news' is that guests keep on being surprised that Freeport is not all about shopping! When we send them off to walk around in Wolfe Neck Woods or Winslow Parks they all come back with the same dumbfounded, 'We had NO idea all of that was here in Freeport!' Of course, we do get repeat guests who do know and come prepared to walk, hike and take photos in the parks. But, it's fun to open a few eyes along the way."

Kevin Pagnano of the Maine Course Hospitality Group reports: Many of our hotels are using your site and information in various ways. Our Augusta Fairfield Inn by Marriott has created a nice package that they have seen some traffic from. She gives them a nice welcome bag and has created a package."

Jeannette and Alan Feuer at Ann's Point Inn thrilled to a young moose on their Bass Harbor property this autumn. Moose are very unusual on Mount Desert Island. They said, "the funny thing was that we had a couple of guests who had returned to the Inn early in the afternoon. We didn't see them until they came to hors d'oeuvres hour at 5:00 p.m., when one of them said to us, "We really enjoyed sitting in our room and watching a moose eating apples from the tree outside our window. How often do they come by?"

Alan D Theriault at Eagle Lake Sporting Camps had a good fall hunting season. I visited the camps this summer and can't wait to return in the spring when the birds are singing. There's a lot of great habitat on the logging roads in the area.

Patrick O'Reilly has sold the Pride Motel and Cottages. As he was turning over the reins to the new owner, he reported, "we did experience several reservations last year directly from our listing with you, particularly during the shoulder seasons of June and September. One couple from Missouri in particular I recall stayed in cabin 2 and added 3 species to their bird list just sitting on the porch of the cabin! Another couple from Holland said they added more sightings to their book in one day on the Scarborough Marsh than the entire previous year traveling in Europe."

Sally Johnson at Moosehead Hills Cabins wrote, "We had a strong summer and fall, with lots of people out moose watching----both on their own and on guided safaris."

So far, the slow winter season isn't very slow. Web traffic is showing a lot of prospective visitors researching opportunities for next spring. As usual, many people are looking at the puffin page on the Maine Birding Trail web site, and there are a surprisingly good number of people checking out the birding festivals. Even though it is only January, some of my birding tours are filling fast. My annual Big Moose Inn tour of Baxter State Park is already full. A van trip I will do for the Acadia Birding Festival is full. I'm guiding a group from Dayton, Ohio, in June and that weeklong trip and they are turning people away. It looks like it's going to be a good year. In fact, yesterday I received a request to guide a birder from Argentina who is making plans for June.