

Merrymeeting News

The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • P.O. Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357

FALL 2003

*To Preserve, Protect
and Improve the
Unique Ecosystems
of Merrymeeting Bay.*

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay is a
501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
Support comes from members' tax-
deductible donations and grants.

Education

Hands Around the Bay, Speaker
Series, field trips.

Conservation & Stewardship

Protecting natural resources through
private and public ownership,
easements and stewardship.

Membership Events

Paddle tours of the Bay, field trips,
conservation meetings, potluck
suppers and shoreline clean-ups.

Research and Advocacy

Water quality, data collection, toxics,
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RESTORE MAINE'S NATIVE FISH

Over the past two centuries, Maine's rivers have lost an incredible array of native species, due to the trinity of pollution, damming and overfishing. Two hundred years ago, there wasn't a river in the state that didn't have large populations of silvery alewives swimming upstream every spring. Millions of pounds of shad were harvested commercially from colonial times up to the early twentieth century. Other species such as tomcod, American eels, salmon and sturgeon were present in great abundance.

Now, it's the isolated river in Maine that has healthy runs of any of these fish. A central requirement of the Clean Water Act is restoration of our rivers, and to many, that means restoration of a river's full complement of native species; these fish co-evolved over the millennia, they depend on each other in countless ways, and thus they should be co-restored. The 1999 removal of the Kennebec River's Edwards Dam, the 2002 removal of the Smelt Hill Dam on the Presumpscot, and the recent announcement of a major deal to restore fish passage to 500 miles of habitat on the Penobscot River are, despite the justified celebration attending them, in fact relatively small steps towards a much larger goal of rebuilding all our state's rivers.

In the meantime, as native species have declined, much effort has gone into stocking of a few non-native species attractive to many recreational fishermen such as smallmouth bass. Two recent incidents related to these non-native fish illustrate what one advocate has called the state's "multiple personality disorder" when it comes to fish restoration, and raises the question of what our ultimate goals really are. The first incident was the State's attempt this year to restore native alewives to the Sebasticook and Kennebec rivers by stocking them in feeder ponds on the Sebasticook's west branch. Bass fishermen who frequent those ponds raised a ruckus, saying that they were concerned - despite the fact that there is no scientific evidence for this - that the alewives would wreck their bass fishing, by outcompeting or even perhaps devouring the bass.

The proposed alewife stocking was part of a Department of Marine Resources [DMR] restoration plan, adopted with significant public input, and which has been carried out in many other watersheds whose lakes now boast happily coexisting populations of bass and alewives. But the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife [IF&W], which has the responsibility of permitting the stocking, caved in to public pressure, and denied the stocking permits. Thus, the legally mandated restoration of a native species to its historic range, was blocked by a department under fire from [some] fishermen to protect a non-native species. This is not the only watershed in Maine where this conflict has played out to the detriment of the native species.

The second incident happened more recently, on the Machias River watershed. The Machias River is one of the state's few remaining homes to native wild Atlantic salmon, which have been the focus of intensive and expensive restoration efforts coordinated by the state's Atlantic Salmon Commission [ASC]. So it came as a shock to many when they found out that non-native smallmouth bass had been transferred into Fourth Machias Lake by IF&W biologists this year, and in previous years into Third Machias Lake. Now, bass prey on salmon, and the introduction of these fish into the Machias system was tantamount to giving the fox the keys to the henhouse. There's an agreement between IF&W and the ASC that they will talk at least once a year to discuss any potential management conflicts. Evidently these talks have not happened over the past few years.

There needs to be more coordination among state agencies if we're to restore all our rivers' native species. But there's more required than that: currently, different agencies are responsible for different portions of Maine's fisheries. IF&W takes care of freshwater fish, DMR takes care of what swims through salt water. The ASC deals with salmon rivers. That kind of Balkanization undermines any attempt to look at our rivers as ecosystems that provide a connection between our inland, freshwater reaches and the marine environment. And it is the native, sea-run fisheries of Maine - the tomcod, the sturgeon, the alewives and the salmon - that symbolize that connection, and whose presence has been missing from our rivers, and our lives, for far too long. No one is suggesting that we get rid of such recreationally enticing species as the nonnative smallmouth bass. But is it too much to ask that the state declare it a priority to restore our native fish, and that each and every management decision reflect that goal?

*Naomi Schalit
Maine Rivers*

SAY YES WHEN FOMB CALLS

Many of you are probably FOMB members like me: happy to write the annual check and glad that other members like to get their hands dirty. Maybe you have thought about getting involved in an activity, but there was always something on your calendar already. Or maybe you just assumed that there must be plenty of volunteers in an organization the size of FOMB, and they really don't need one more. Let me share my experience with the FOMB mussel study this fall and see if I can convince you otherwise.

I received a call from Ed asking if I could spend a Saturday at the International Paper (IP) facility in Jay collecting mussel cages that had been set in the Androscoggin River two months earlier. I had helped two years ago on the first mussel study that FOMB did, putting the cages into the water at designated sites, carefully setting the depth of the cages, and recording the GPS locations. Ed thought I might like to help with the other end of the study to get the full picture.

Looking at the calendar, I found no convenient excuse, and said yes. I was going to have to give up a Saturday of fly-fishing at the time of year I like best, and I was going to spend a day at a huge, industrial facility that strikes fear in the hearts of many. I wasn't exactly bubbling with enthusiasm, but I've learned that sometimes these things that we dread turn out to be great experiences that we wouldn't trade for the world. This day turned out to be one of them.

We met in a crowded conference room around 7AM: volunteers from FOMB, IP and Applied Biomonitoring staff, and representatives from the Maine DEP. The plans for the day were set forth: several boat crews would be dispatched to collect the cages from the locations above and below the IP plant; the cages would be cataloged and



Mixing it up in the IP lab.

transported to a lab at IP; and then the process of harvesting, weighing, and measuring each mussel would begin. It was a full day's work, and with the threat of rain, the boat crews were in a hurry to get busy.

I headed out with Rick Toothaker from the IP wastewater treatment facility and another FOMB volunteer, Leon Ogrodnik. We had to find and pull 3 cages from each of 5 sites above and below the plant's discharge pipe. As soon as we had raised the first cage, the day started to get interesting. We logged the GPS coordinates of the cage (it probably moved some during the month in the water), and then examined the plastic tubing and the mesh that held the mussels. In the short time the cage had been in the water, it had become a hot bed of aquatic insect activity. The fly-fisherman in me began to catalog the assortment of nymphs. There were caddis in all sizes and colors, some in cases they'd built for protection, others free-ranging. Stoneflies, a real indicator of oxygen levels in the river, were crawling over the water mosses and in the silts that had collected on the cages. Mayflies and midges were everywhere. As we pulled each cage, we excitedly checked it over to see what new bugs we might find. I was shocked and delighted. Things were looking good, even as we headed in with our last batch through the cold, wind-swept rain that was developing.

Then the real science began. We returned to the lab where Sandra Salazar of Applied Biomonitoring had been busily setting up for the harvesting operation. Some of us sat at

a large table and became shellfish shuckers, carefully separating the mussel meat from the shell and laying them on trays. I headed up the weighing station, which had a digital scale hooked up to a laptop computer to record and store the weight of each mussel. Others had the task of cleaning trays and shucking knives as they were emptied to make sure that we did not cross-contaminate toxins that might be found at one site and not another.

We took breaks as we needed them and consumed a fair amount of pizza at lunch, but most of the day we were hard at work shucking, weighing, and freezing the tissues of our humble water quality monitors that had been sacrificed for the cause. Sometime after 4PM we finished up, shook hands, and headed back home through what had become a heavy, wind-driven rain.

I felt encouraged, even enlightened by the events of the day. Much to my surprise, the IP staff were truly interested in the study. It was so unexpected to find such an abundance of insect life on the cages that I am still in disbelief. The efforts of FOMB really do make a difference, bridging the gap between conservation organizations and industry while aggressively and innovatively working to clean up our rivers. It's a great feeling to watch that happen and to take part in it.

Next time FOMB calls, clear that day on your calendar and say yes. You'll be glad you did.

Ben Hunsberger

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Merrymeeting News

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BUGS, MUD AND LOTS OF DIGGING

What was it that first sparked your interest in the environment? Was it the discovery of a clam in the mud along the shore, the sighting of an eagle's nest during a walk in the woods, the realization that the caterpillar clinging to a leaf will become a beautiful butterfly, or was it a set of Audubon cards that helped you identify the birds in your parents backyard? Not every fourth grader who attends Bay Day will become an environmentalist, in fact probable few will. But perhaps Bay Day can provide that spark, that moment when a child first looks around and begins what may become a lifelong appreciation of the woods, the meadows, the rivers, and the things that inhabit these places, such as bugs, fish, birds and little animals that scurry through the grass and burrow into the earth.

For the "old hands", that is the guides, chaperones and schedulers; each Bay Day follows a somewhat familiar pattern in a familiar place. However, for each group of 4th graders who come to Bay Day it is a unique experience. This fall, Bay Day had 400 eager boys and girls digging for old artifacts, examining bugs, identifying plants, building a model watershed, and learning the art of ancient tool making. The enthusiasm of the children is best described in their own words. "The water shed it was cool. Maybe I can come again, it is cool there. Tell Jeff thank you for showing us the pond and all the little bugs in the water." —Glenna. "I learned that all the rivers and streams meet at Merrymeeting Bay. It was really really cool making the mud map. It was fun too." —Meghan. "I learned how to dig and see how old a tree was. I really like to dig in the pits. I love to dig." —Liam. "Thank you for inviting me. I enjoyed the pond looking at the creatures like blood suckers. I enjoyed the watershed doing mud!" —Ashley. "I saw a spider, two leaches, and a baby caterpillar at the pond. Thank you." —Gus. "Thank you for the tree cookie. I'm glad I was able to come and have a ton of fun. I liked the fuzzy black and red caterpillars that were all over the place. I also like digging in a hole." —Caleb.

FOMB's goal is to have every fourth grader in each school around the Bay attend Bay Day. We are getting closer to that goal. For Spring Bay Day in May of this last year we had 200 children attend the event at Chop Point School in Woolwich. The turnout for this fall's Bay day at the Merrymeeting Wildlife Management Area in Bowdoinham exceeded all expectations. Four hundred children! We had students from seven different schools—from the towns of Bath, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Brunswick, Dresden, and Topsham. There were 15 different presentations going on all at once, dealing with subjects such as aquatic invertebrates, mud plants, trees, wildlife, ecology, anadromous fish surveys, watershed, archaeology, non point source pollution, Native American tool making, dogs as a conservation tool, geology, bay art from plant life, and a plant walk. In observing the children one was impressed by their enthusiasm, perception and quickness in grasping the nuances of similar vegetations, the differences between wildlife in the meadow versus the woods or the shore, and the rapt interest they displayed in presentations such as ancient tool making.

This fall's Bay Day was a success with a capital "S." Volunteers were the ingredients that made it a success. Volunteers such as the guides who put a great deal of thought and effort into their presentations, the chaperones who shepherded the children from place to place, and the behind the scenes volunteers who coordinated the schedule and attended to the many small details of such an event. Our next Bay Day will be in the spring of 2004. If you would like to volunteer as either a presenter, a chaperone, or in some other way please contact Ed Friedman or Clancy Cummins.

Clancy Cummins

MANY THANKS

Thanks for the Muscles

Our caged mussel retrievals on the Kennebec & Androscoggin Rivers took a lot of coordination and work. Many thanks are due to: Sandra & Mike Salazar, Barry Mower, John Reynolds, Leon Ogrodnik, Ed Friedman, Tom Saviello, John Cronin, Tom Dearthoff, Bill Milam, Ben Hunsburger, Tom Griffin, Rick Toothaker, Bob Nadeau, Will Brune, Keel Kemper, Melissa Evers, Jim Thornton, Mike Roulin, Darren Brown, & Tom Sawyer.

And meanwhile back at the lab...

Special thanks are due to Francois Gagne, Christian Blaise, and Chantal Andre all of Environment Canada who conducted the vitellin bio-assay on our Kennebec mussels and to the Salazars for arranging this.

And back at the Bay...

It's not easy getting 400 4th graders out on the Bay shores for a day. Thanks for all the help to our presenters, chaperones, and planners: Clancy Cummins, Ann Hammond, Sue Westlake, Carey Phillips, Bill Milam, Steve Eagles, John Cross, Jason Bartlett, Ed Friedman, Andy Cutko, Jeff Varrichione, Steve Pelletier, Ben Lubbers, Jay Robbins, Lee Cranmer, Bill Burgess, Amanda Similien, Alison Voner, Jack Witham, Jamie Silvestri, Christy Monroe, Ed Benedikt, Bill Briggs, Jean Briggs, Joe Kochevko, Leon Ogrodnik, David Chipman, Dee Cummins, Curt Fish, Becca Follansbee, and the K-9 dream team: Maggie, Hawk, Tag, Amy, & Allie.

And before the post office could deliver to you our Speaker Series cards...

Thanks went to [and go to] the Maine Island Trail Association, Brunswick Topsham Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy for sharing area mailing lists and to our terrific volunteers Leon Ogrodnik, Carole Dyer, Larry Laliberte, David and Marilyn Tilton, and Ed Friedman for eliminating most duplicates, labeling and sorting 2100 cards.

Data Base...

Thanks for continued data base management to Warren Whitney

Without an office...

We use a number of different work spaces. Thanks to those contributing most often to meeting our needs: the Bowdoinham town office crew for space in the Coombs School, Steve Pelletier for space at Woodlot Alternatives, and Jay Robbins for space in his Richmond Historical Society building. Many thanks to the hard working group of outgoing steering committee members from 2003. We will miss Steve Eagles, Bill Milam, Steve Taylor, Steve Pelletier, Andy Cutko, Frank Burroughs, DeWitt John, & Peter Vickery. These members have served for a wide range of times, left at different times, and for a variety of reasons. It's wonderful to know that all will continue to work with FOMB in various capacities during the future. We welcome too, our new committee members and encourage anyone possibly interested in joining the steering committee to contact the chair for details.

Ed Friedman

TIDINGS

Gunning floats are usually about 16 feet long, with a beam of 4 feet or less. They ride low in the water, like a loon. They are used for ambush and for stalking, neither of which is a high profile activity. A few are one-man boats, and are smaller, with a proportionately shorter cockpit and longer deck. But the typical float has a cockpit that is about 3/4 as long as the boat and is partitioned by a thwart, which usually doubles as a narrow shelf. The boat, like a canoe, works well with a single person in it, but it works best with two people. You put the better shot and/or the poorer boatman and/or the paying customer or guest of honor in the forward cockpit. You put the poorer shot and/or the better boatman and/or the guide or host--in other words, me--in the rear. I am not licensed to take out paying customers. I take out friends who are good shots. In other circumstances they are also good conversationalists, but hunting, a solidly companionable activity, is not a conversational one. You keep your tongue in your head and your head in the game.

Gunning floats, like kayaks, have generic similarities that instantly distinguish them from any other kind of boat, and at the same time they, like kayaks, vary considerably among themselves. They owe their similarities to their function--duck hunting--and to the fact that they are designed to be sculled: that is, to be propelled by a single oar extended out the back. They owe their variation primarily to the places they are used.

Gunning floats belong, I guess, to what you would call a vernacular tradition of boatbuilding, and localism is what creates and defines the vernacular. The November, 1966, edition of *Down East* featured an article on Jim Whitney, a guide, decoy maker, and gunning float builder whose father was a guide, decoy maker, and gunning float builder. By the time *Down East* got to him, the younger Whitney was 75, and reckoned he had over the course of his career turned out about 500 gunning floats, all based on his father's design and all built in his father's original shop, in Falmouth. One look at them indicates that he and his clients hunted mostly on salt water--in his case, on the Presumpscot estuary and as far up as Maquoit Bay. Like many predators, particularly those that hunt from ambush, he was highly

specialized with regard to habitat.

Gunning floats of the Whitney subspecies differ markedly from what you see around the Bay, rather in the way that a sea duck--an eider or scoter--differs from a puddle duck--a black or teal. The Whitney float is chunkier, less graceful, and rides deeper in the water. It has a V bottom instead of a rounded one and a small keel runs the length of it. It would be slower and less maneuverable than its Merrymeeting cousins, but better able to hold its course in a cross wind, and exceptionally stable in rough water. Seen from above, it looks like a watermelon seed or a whitewater kayak with the stern squared off. It has only a very low coaming around the cockpit, and a relatively extensive deck separating the cockpit from the gunwales and bow. It is not adapted to even the smallest of outboard motors, but does have oarlocks, as well as a sculling port. The rim of the cockpit is a bare seven inches above the water line; with the hunters lying down inside and the decks draped with grass mats, the boat would look like a midget mudflat.

Gunning floats around Merrymeeting Bay are seldom bought from strangers. A generation or two ago, the makers were mostly guides, just like Jim Whitney, and the most skilled of them probably sold a few on the side. Now, the tradition of the duck hunting guides has all but died out, but the tradition of homemade gunning floats continues. A good many are now made from molded fiberglass, formed over the hull of an older, wooden specimen--a sort of nautical cloning. If you take a tour of the Bay on the eve of Opening Day, in early October, you can gauge the vitality of this cottage industry. Beside most docks, in front of most camps, around most of the informal, private landings you will see one or more Merrymeeting gunning floats, variously draped and screened with three-square grass, cedar boughs, or camouflage netting. Long before dawn, armed and camouflaged personnel will come down to them, and set off into the darkness. If you were a CIA agent, with no knowledge of local customs, you would breathlessly report to the Pentagon that some nefarious, small scale amphibious assault on Bath or Dresden was imminent, and urge preemptive intervention.

Gunning floats in Merrymeeting Bay, unlike Jim



Prout float within a float photo by Heather Perry

Whitney's, need to be able to slip through the standing rice, and to be poled over dead mats of it. They need to be at home in shallow water, a foot or even less, because that is where their quarry feeds. At the same time, they need to be *capable* in the nautical sense: the currents of the Bay are no joke, and neither is the hard, sharp chop that a rough wind kicks up. The boats that have evolved for hunting on the Bay are small, slender, sea-worthy, and even comfortable. It would require really strenuous and exceptional incompetence to turn one over, or to fall out of one. Which, in November, is just as well. Properly camouflaged and tucked into the rice or up against a bank, they are nearly invisible. A three or four horse outboard kicks them along at a satisfactory rate, and if the motor fails, they are surprisingly easy to paddle.

Gunning floats of local manufacture, like sea kayaks, are very sharp and elongated in the bow, widening gradually and somehow naturally as you move back. They are beamiest somewhat aft of midships, and taper only slightly from that point to the stern. In silhouette the forward part of the boat also resembles a sea kayak. The keel line is perfectly flat; the gunwale runs parallel to it. But the silhouette changes radically in the final third of the boat's length. The hull curves sleekly upward, not like a kayak now but like the stern of a schooner. The grace of this is hard to convey, and indeed is not apparent when the boat is in the water. A gunning float turned upside down on a pair of saw horses, or, better yet, under construction in Buster Prout's small shop in East Bowdoinham, is as irresistible and gratifying to the touch as the neck or flank of a horse. Everything is bent, beveled, tapered, and faired to a fare-thee-well. I am personally qualified to speak of irresistibility in this regard, having stood in Buster's shop four years ago, and abruptly turned my back on a lifetime of hunting from canoes and of *never* I mean *never* making an impulse purchase, and gone, then and there, overboard.

Gunning floats, as I have said, perform well with a small outboard, are easy to paddle and easy to pole. But they are primarily designed to be sculled with a single oar, and in this, as far as I know, they resemble no other American boat. Fewer and fewer hunters in fact do much sculling, preferring to hide in the marsh and let the ducks come to them. Once Buster had completed my boat, he took me out in it and gave me basic instruction in sculling. I have almost as many years of experience of paddling boats, of one sort or another, as of walking, but sculling still took some getting used to--you don't master it in half an hour. I could go on at tedious length about the pleasures of it. Lying down in the boat, with the sculling oar sticking out through a small porthole in the transom, propelling the boat without ever breaking the surface of the water, in the way an alligator's tail propels an alligator, I have sculled to within ten feet of such nervous,

flighty birds as a Wilson's snipe and a Cooper's hawk. They flushed only after I had pulled abreast of them, and they could see the movement of the shaft of the oar. I have had a Solitary sandpiper hover just over the front deck; if I hadn't blinked and breathed, he would have landed on it. Tiptoeing is quiet, and, done properly, paddling a canoe is even quieter. But the only thing that moves more quietly than a sculled gunning float is a fish. The people I took out--the friends who can suspend their pleasure in conversation, keep their heads in the game, and shoot better than I do--shot well indeed this fall. We got enough ducks to satisfy us, but could probably have done better if we'd simply hidden ourselves, put out a batch of decoys, and awaited developments. But we felt no inclination to do that. We were doing the thing for the pleasure of it, and the pleasure of it--of probing into little drains and guzzles, or gliding along under the overhanging limbs of a back channel--was infallible. The ducks were gravy.

Gunning floats, when typed in to an internet search engine, will turn you up a good many entries. You learn that a fiberglass version of the Whitney float is now manufactured in Kennebunk, Maine, and available by mail order. An outfit in Port Rowan, Ontario, manufactures a one-man float called The Predator, which is based on a design originally used by market hunters around Humboldt Bay, California. It looks like a cross between the Whitney Float and a hydroplane. In Clinton Township, Michigan, the Lock, Stock, and Barrel Company, Inc., sells a model called the Brant that closely resembles the Merrymeeting design, which is unpatented. Buster Prout has no website. His output is small, his method traditional, and his product, as far as I can tell, perfect. Looking at it, you sense that the building of it was an end in itself, and the selling of it was only his way of subsidizing his vocation.

Gunning floats, unlike decoys, have not yet been officially classified as Folk Art. And so a Prout gunning float does not currently have the status of an Elmer Crowell decoy, one of which sold for \$801,500.00 last year. It is only a matter of time until this situation changes, as I have repeatedly explained to my wife and children.

Gunning floats, as specimens of inconspicuous consumption, as investments, as marriages of form and function and beauty and utility, as artifacts closely linked to Merrymeeting Bay and shaped by it, as means of slipping into an environment without disturbance, of hunting and gathering a good deal more than ducks, of giving meaning, memory, and anticipation to every autumn that rolls around, **rule**, ok?

Frank Burroughs
Tidings is a regular feature of Merrymeeting News

ESTATE TAX REPEAL... AT WHAT PRICE?

What is the price you would pay for clean water? What is the cost for clean, healthy air, garbage removal that is sanitary, roads that don't destroy our wetlands and schools that teach our children well? What is the price, and what is the consequence of not paying that price?

Government should take care of many of our societal needs; it is the piggy bank where we tithe some of our income to provide a cost-effective way to pay for roads, schools, environmental, fire, and police protection, etc. If we were to contract for these things entirely on our own, family by family, it would cost a veritable fortune, and would be wasteful and inefficient at best, and anti-democratic at least.

Taxes are the fee we pay to live in a civilized society; it is a membership, if you will, to the great democratic experiment in which we have the honor of participating. Until somewhat recently we have enjoyed the best healthcare, phenomenal schools, glorious national parks, a cleaner environment and an intricate and fairly evolved infrastructure. But that is changing, and not so slowly.

In Maine we have already cut \$1.2 billion dollars out of our budget, and will be required to cut a great deal more in the coming year. Why? And why should it matter to you and me, or to Friends of Merrymeeting Bay? Is this not peripheral to the work we are meant to do? Yes and no. Let me suggest we are living in an anti-Robin Hood scenario. We are stealing from the poor to give to the rich and that which we hold most dear is paying the cost.

In the last two decades we have gone from polluter pays to polluter gets paid. We have gone from CEO's making 40 times what their workers get paid to 400 times more. Corporate income tax has dropped, in Maine, from 30% to 8%. While individual property taxes have skyrocketed, business property tax has dropped dramatically. And while lowest income Mainers pay 20% of their income in taxes overall, those who make over \$100,000 pay less than 9%. Last year in Maine large corporations received over \$100 million in state and local subsidies while too many families are being taxed out of their homes and workers laid-off despite huge corporate profits. Congress just passed a Medicare bill that will cost \$400 billion dollars, half of which goes to profit for pharmaceutical companies, the rest will basically undermine Medicare and in about 20 years the baby-boomers will have no Medicare on which to rely. And Congress wants to eliminate the Estate Tax.

And why should we care about the Estate Tax?

The Estate Tax is paid only by the richest 1% of the population when they pass away. It is a tax that is levied on goods that have not been taxed during the owner's lifetime. It affects only about 24 people a year in Maine, sometimes none at all. It is a tax for which the intent is to even the playing field between the super rich and the rest of us. Our founding fathers wished to keep us from creating another aristocracy through immense, inherited accumulated wealth. It is meant to keep the robber barons from robbing, the super rich from having undo influence on our political process, and to keep war profiteers from profiting at the expense of our country and its citizens. In the past, in times of war, the Estate Tax has gone up to assure the above. Not in this Congress. They want to eliminate it, which would pull \$30 Billion out of the treasury this year and One Trillion Dollars over the next 20 years.

Repeal of the Estate Tax is also a disincentive to charitable giving. Maine would lose about \$166 million in federal funds and another \$54 million in charitable giving if the Estate Tax is repealed. Those numbers get significantly higher over the coming years. No One makes their fortune alone. It is made on the backs of workers, and job loss, and too often is made in spite of poor management practices and pure greed. Further, as a percentage of income, the Estate Tax is no larger than what the poorest in our society pay.

We need to keep the Estate Tax intact. We need to understand that tax, and others we pay, contribute to the well-being of us all and should be considered the price we pay to live in this country. If we continue to cut taxes, mostly for the wealthy, and businesses that pollute, if we continue to allow back-room deals and the undermining of our environmental laws so multi-national corporations can pocket bigger profits and still leave our state, and our country, for slave wages in third-world countries...leaving us with a third-world environment, crumbling schools, roads, and communities, then we have failed ourselves, our democracy, our environment and our children.

We must also understand that we alone cannot protect the immensity of our environment nor unaided be the guardians of Merrymeeting Bay. It is the responsibility of government, with our help, to be stalwart in defense of our natural resources that belong to us all. With the State of Maine facing yet another difficult fiscal shortfall; we must all do our fair share in contributing to our core values; excellent schools, strong communities, our natural environment; our Merrymeeting Bay.

Kathleen McGee

2003 MERRYMEETING BAY BALD EAGLE TALLY

Here is the tally for 2003 Merrymeeting Bay area eagle reproductive attempts according to Charlie Todd, Wildlife Biologist-Endangered & Threatened Species, Maine Department of Inland & Fisheries & Wildlife. Eleven eagles were fledged from a total of 11 nests. While our eagle population is slowly increasing a typical fledge rate in a healthy wild eagle population would be 2-3 per breeding pair.

- Fryer Island - 2 fledglings
- Pleasant Pt. - resident pair failed breeding attempt / new alternate nest on NE shore
 - Bald Head - 1 fledgling
 - Abby Point. - 1 fledgling
 - Swan Island - failed breeding attempt
 - Little Swan - 1 fledgling
 - Courthouse Pt.- 2 fledglings
- Eastern - resident pair did not breed / old nest persists but newer alternate nest fell in 2002 / lots of immature eagles present locally
 - Thorne Island - resident pair failed breeding attempt / new alternate nest on north interior of island
 - Days Ferry - 2 fledglings
 - Beedle Rd. Richmond - 2 fledglings
 - Others... None "in the bay" / newest finds locally are on New Meadows R.: new nest in Brunswick in 2002 and new pair in Phippsburg in 2003 / also "in neighborhood" a pair on the Sasanoa R. in Georgetown (Flying Pt.) reoccupied a traditional territory in 2002 but we can't find them in 2003.

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Coming Soon...

Thank you to David Hansen for designing this issue of MMNews & to all of our contributing writers.

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Upcoming FOMB Speaker Series Events -at Bowdoin College, Visual Arts Building-Beam Classroom

JANUARY 8 Kids & Treasures: Bay Day Archaeology at Chopps Point: Jay Robbins, *Robbins Historical Research.*

FEBRUARY 12 Gulf Island Pond: River, Lake or Ocean on the Androscoggin: Nick Bennett, *Natural Resource Council of Maine, Tom Saviello, International Paper, Elaine Makas, House Representative, District 90-Lewiston.*

MARCH 11 The Not-So-Good Ship Lollipop; Cruise Ships & Wastewater in Casco Bay & the Gulf of Maine: Joe Payne, *Baykeeper, Friends of Casco Bay*

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