

hirundo



YOUR NATURE EXPERIENCE

Hirundo Wildlife Refuge Receives Grant from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund for Free and Low-Cost Paddle Programs

Old Town, ME (July 3, 2025) — Hirundo Wildlife Refuge is proud to announce it has been awarded a \$8,175 grant from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund to support its 2025 paddling program. The award, funded through Maine's Bee Bucks instant lottery tickets, will partially underwrite the program and enable Hirundo to expand free and low-cost access to recreational paddling opportunities along the Pushaw and Dead Streams.

The grant is timely: the 2020-2024 Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) found a significant increase in the number of individuals participating in outdoor recreation activities, including paddling.

Reflecting this statewide trend, Hirundo has experienced growing demand for recreational access to boats and paddling gear. Over the past four years, more than 1,500 people have taken advantage of the Refuge's free Saturday paddle rentals and affordable guided paddles, which include themed outings like full moon, sunrise, sunset, and leaf-peeping paddles for ages 8 and up.

"In a region where affordability is a barrier for many, this grant helps us keep nature accessible," said Stephanie Larouche, Hirundo board chair. "Paddling at Hirundo is more than recreation—it's an invitation to connect with the land, the water, and each other."

Hirundo will extend its popular Saturday free boat access, add midweek paddle opportunities, and increase the number of guided group paddles led by Certified Maine Guides with this funding.

The grant will also support paddle safety training, expanded volunteer involvement, and outreach efforts to grow partnerships to welcome even more visitors to the water.

Located just 10 minutes from the University of Maine and 20 minutes from Bangor, Hirundo offers free access to over 2,400 acres of conserved woodlands and wetlands, more than 7 miles of trails, and seasonal boat access. Each year, more than 7,000 people visit the Refuge to explore, learn, and rejuvenate.

Thanks to the support from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, Hirundo can sustain and expand its paddling program to serve even more of the community. To reserve a free Saturday kayak or canoe rental, or to sign up for a guided paddle program, visit hirundomaine.org from now until the end of the 2025 paddle season in October.

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