

# hirundo

YOUR NATURE EXPERIENCE



November 13, 2023

Dear Friends,

In 2023, thanks to the unwavering support of our community, Hirundo Wildlife Refuge has been able to inspire and educate children from preschool through high school and university levels. As we reflect on this year, we're delighted to share some of our educational highlights: We hosted five enriching summer camp weeks, organized seven enlightening field trips for local schools, provided engaging Scout enrichment activities, and welcomed homeschool clubs to explore and learn in our beautiful surroundings. We also piloted a credit recovery summer school program for Central High School in Corinth, and we're thrilled to announce our plans to continue this initiative in the years to come.

Since 2020, we've set an annual goal to bring 1,000 Kids in Nature, and we are proud to report that we are not only on track but well-positioned to surpass this goal once again this year.

At Hirundo, our primary mission is to connect people with the natural environment for their well-being and to cultivate the environmental stewards of the future. We firmly believe that the advantages of spending time in nature extend to all, yet the impact on children can be profound. By igniting a lifelong passion for the wonders of the natural world we inspire children to set aside their screens and enjoy the beauty of the great Maine outdoors. The mental and physical health benefits resulting from this shift in lifestyle are well-documented. When young visitors come to Hirundo, whether on a school field trip or as day campers, we witness them building a deep love for nature and a heightened understanding of the importance of protecting it.

Hirundo's educational and outreach efforts extend beyond children. Our guided Full-Moon Hikes and Paddles, along with community gatherings such as our first-ever "Meet A Scientist" Earth Day Celebration, Fall Fest, and Winter Fun Day, have become significant attractions in our calendar.

We maintain a close partnership with the University of Maine, where our refuge serves as a dynamic living laboratory and outdoor classroom across a wide range of disciplines. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Construction Engineering Technology Senior Class for their continued support.

Simultaneously, we remain unwavering in our dedication to wildlife by enhancing their habitats within the Hirundo Wildlife Refuge. We are grateful for the invaluable input we've received on our Wildlife and Forestry Management Plan from professional foresters and the budding foresters under the tutelage of Amber Roth at the University of Maine, Orono. Through grant funding, we're actively involved in the removal of invasive plant species and the planting of native species that provide crucial support to pollinators and other resident wildlife. As you explore the Thornplum Trail, you'll encounter new interpretive signage that explains the significance of this vital work. We invite you to consider joining us next spring and summer to volunteer and further this critical conservation effort.

Find us on Facebook • web: [hirundomaine.org](http://hirundomaine.org) • email: [info@hirundomaine.org](mailto:info@hirundomaine.org)

This year, we are excited to welcome Mackenzie Roeder, our Program Director, and Tilan Copson, our Executive Director, to join our long-standing Refuge Manager/Naturalist, Gudrun Keszöcze. Our dedicated staff, alongside a dedicated corps of volunteers, are diligently expanding our capacity to meet the growing demand for environmental education and recreational opportunities in the communities we serve. While we are committed to establishing revenue streams to support our essential operations, we continue to rely on YOUR generous support.

Our goal is to raise \$20,000 in donations to sustain and enhance our activities. We are thrilled to announce that we are already halfway there, and your contribution, be it \$50, \$100, or more, will play a pivotal role in meeting the burgeoning demand for our programming, catering to kids of all ages. Every dollar you contribute holds immense value and is deeply appreciated.

Thank you for being a crucial part of our journey at Hirundo Wildlife Refuge. Together, we are making a significant impact, ensuring that our natural and cultural environment thrives for the mutual well-being of both our human and wildlife communities.

With gratitude,

Hirundo Board of Trustees and Staff



SCAN TO DONATE NOW!

OR MAIL YOUR DONATION TO:

PO Box 266

Orono, Maine 04473

**From one of our camp parents:**

*“Our girls absolutely love the Hirundo camps! They are such an amazing mix of outdoor adventure, learning, and exploring. Our girls look forward to the Hirundo camps every time they are available! Thank You.”*

**From an elementary school teacher:**

*“We learned so much about the birds around us and enjoyed being out in nature. Students loved the touch tank and looking through the magnifying glasses at the different aquatic creatures. The HUGE bullfrog was incredible to see too. Our students loved walking on the nature trails and finding some salamanders. For a lot of our students, they have never experienced nature this way before. Your staff was incredibly patient and understanding with the various needs of our students. It was a wonderful experience for staff and students.”*

**There are many ways to give! Consider supporting Hirundo with in-kind donations, or join us as a volunteer and apply a special skill you may have.**