



spring  
2016

# Lifestyle

News, Personalities and Perspectives from

## HIGHLAND GREEN

*A masterpiece of Maine living for those 55 or better*

THE BIRD  
ISSUE

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HIGHLAND GREEN

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## Highland Green is for the Birds

An avian theme embodies a spirit of conservation, nature, volunteerism and community

The Highland Green logo features a wild duck emerging from cattails. The image represents the natural setting of the community and the ability to embrace flora and fauna within the environs of its vast 635-acre campus. Symbolism aside, it is common to see numerous wild duck species among the bulrush in the Heath Sanctuary at the center of Highland Green.

All streets in the first four phases of Highland Green are named for birds that can be found on this remarkable site. Potentially familiar names such as Goldfinch, Chickadee, Grouse, and Sparrow can be seen on road signs. Less familiar labels such as Veery, Redpoll, Junco, Grosbeak, Flicker, and Towhee may spark natural curiosity.

Hundreds of residents from 29 different States and counting have flocked to Highland Green and have alighted in what an ever-increasing number of people are realizing is one of the most exceptional communities anywhere. The combination of local ownership, convenient location, lower-maintenance living in free-standing custom-built homes that are unavailable in simple condominium developments is unique. Carefully planned financial strength and stability enhance an affordable high-quality of life. These benefits are enough to make Highland Green stand alone.

Many say that neighborly ambience, dynamic resident-organized recreational, social, educational and volunteer

activities, and the diversity of origin and background of the people here create a sense of community like no other. And many find that Highland Green comes exactly as advertised and better, with real people featured in advertisements, newsletters, videos and blog posts. They find a genuine diversity of ages unavailable in a traditional retirement community or continuing care community. They find a real 55+ Active Adult lifestyle.

What sets Highland Green even further apart from other options is a one-of-a-kind integration of conservation and nature. In fact, Highland Green won a prestigious 50+ Housing Council

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### HIGHLAND GREEN

7 Evergreen Circle, Topsham, Maine  
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HighlandGreenLifestyle.com



Award for Best Integration of Nature and Landscaping at the International Builders Show in 2014, beating out communities from around the country.

One-third of Highland Green's acreage is forever preserved open space. The 230-acre Cathance River Nature Preserve features five miles of trails, a combination of forested and wetland areas, vernal pools and the dramatic Cathance River. At the center of Highland Green is the unique 30-acre Heath Sanctuary. These beautifully preserved spaces allow residents to enjoy magnificent natural beauty and prime bird watching just outside their backdoors within the security of New England's premier master planned community.

The Preserve and the Heath Sanctuary are part of a conservation easement granted to the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) as part of the initial development of Highland Green in 2000. BTLT's mission is to "preserve, protect and steward the cherished landscapes and rich natural resources of our communities."

The Cathance River Education Alliance (CREA) is a non-profit environmental and educational organization co-founded in 2000 by Highland Green Developer John Wasileski and Bowdoin College Professor John Rensenbrink. CREA operates the Cathance River Ecology Center on the



The Heath Sanctuary on the Cathance River Nature Preserve at Highland Green

Preserve at Highland Green, an independent learning center and nature museum. CREA's mission is to foster the wise use of the Preserve and provide nature and science based education for adults as well as local schoolchildren.

Experienced environmental educator and former Maine Audubon center director Matt Dubel serves as the Executive Director of CREA. "The Cathance River Preserve is a jewel," says Matt. "It's also the product of a partnership among three great organizations.

Highland Green Management, BTLT, and CREA share a Memorandum of Understanding that commits all three of us to share the responsibility of the trail system and the Preserve."

A high percentage of Highland Green residents are CREA members, BTLT members, or both. Many volunteer as trail monitors and with trail maintenance, serve on boards and committees, and participate in nature based educational programs and hikes, including bird watching outings.

John Berry moved to Highland Green from Harpswell, Maine in 2015 with his wife Jane where they custom built a home backing onto the Heath Sanctuary. John has served on the boards of various land trusts, is currently the Treasurer of Maine Audubon, and is an accomplished birder.

John has birded in Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, Belize, Trinidad, Iceland, the Galapagos Islands, the Azores, England, Scotland, and Switzerland. He has also lead guided birding hikes right here in the Preserve. He points out that the Heath Sanctuary at Highland Green is a "hotspot" on ebird.org, a real-time online birding checklist program and global tool for birders that offers



Black Ducks arising from the Heath Preserve photographed by John Berry

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critical data for science. John and other contributors have spotted 124 species in the Heath so far and have recorded them on the website.

John says that Highland Green's diverse habitats each attract their own distinct bird life. All one needs to do is take an interest and learn how to spot them. The hobby of birding can be undertaken in any way from casual to scientific and every approach in between.

In 2015, John approached Highland Green Director of Marketing and Sales Will Honan about becoming a corporate sponsor of Maine Audubon. "I told John that since he was asking that the obvious answer was yes, with the condition that we took advantage of it for the benefit of the community," says Will. "At the time I hardly could have imagined the synergy between Maine Audubon's mission and the conservation and nature-based education theme at Highland Green. Additionally, the dynamic relationship available between Audubon's *Bringing Nature Home* landscape program and the development of landscaping at Highland Green was a next-step winner."

*Bringing Nature Home* is an Audubon educational program, named after a book of the same name by Dr. Doug Tallamy, designed to educate and inspire folks to focus on native plantings in residential settings. By doing so, they will attract native insects and pollinators and will enhance genetic and natural bio-diversity. A bonus of the program is better bird-watching opportunities.

"When I first met with Maine Audubon's Executive Director and Educational Director to show them Highland Green, I fully expected them to focus primarily on the conservation land," says Will. "While they were very impressed with the sheer amount of preserved land here and the educational components, I quickly noticed that they homed in on the areas along roadways and the spaces between houses. I learned about *Bringing Nature Home* and realized that not only would Highland Green be a great testing ground for their efforts, but that much of what they are promoting is already happening here."

Highland Green residents enjoy cooperative



Residents Nancy Spinner, John Berry, and Caroline Feely with Audubon's Eric Topper at Chick-a-finch Woods

ownership which, similar to condominium ownership, allows for collective maintenance of such tasks of repainting of houses through strategic use of accumulated reserve funds. Likewise, such yard chores as mowing, weeding, pruning and mulching are handled collectively and are performed by the in-house team of Highland Green Grounds Services. This structure allows residents to spend less time with home maintenance and more time enjoying life.

But cooperative grounds maintenance at Highland Green also allows latitude for avid gardeners and plant lovers to pursue their passion if desired, especially in their back yards. Some may not want to lift a finger while others may want to get their fingers and green thumbs in the soil.

One such resident is Nancy Spinner who had her Highland Green home built on the corner of Evergreen Circle and Chickadee Drive in 2013, where she resides with her husband Jack. To say Nancy is an avid gardener would be an understatement. She was Supervisor of Grounds at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, overseeing design, planting and maintenance of its historical gardens

spread over 17 acres. She also worked with the Seaport's shipyard on their offsite forest designed to grow trees to replace spars on historic sailing vessels. Previously, Nancy had operated a landscape design practice and has professional certificates from the Radcliffe and Ohio State design programs.

During the layout of the landscaping around the Spinner's home, Nancy was able to bring her considerable talents to the table in working with the Highland Green landscape architect. A unique planting design was created around the Spinner's home that could be easily maintained by Highland Green Grounds Services while allowing Nancy to continue to garden with her own personal touch.

The Highland Green development group also provided a low-lying common buffer area featuring native plantings between the Spinner's home, the neighboring home on Chickadee Drive, and two homes behind them on Goldfinch Drive. The resulting area is now known as "Chick-a-finch Woods" and has become a sort of community gardening spot for the abutting neighbors.

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Maine Audubon Education Director Eric Topper recently visited Chick-a-finch Woods and was duly impressed with the results and the leadership of Highland Green residents in this effort. “This area is precisely what *Bringing Nature Home* is all about and can serve as an example here and everywhere of how native plantings can support biodiversity and attract native species of birds within a residential area,” says Eric.

“Red Maple Circle” is another common area of Highland Green that is being planted with the Audubon program in mind. Red Maple Lane is an 8 lot cul-de-sac that was pre-sold in 2013 for some who desired a move in 2014 and 2015. It attracted new Highland Green friends from as nearby as Maine and as far away as Florida, North Dakota, and Utah. A design of the circle in the cul-de-sac that would be attractive and feel appropriate to the many conservation and nature-minded folks on the street was clarified by the introduction of *Bringing Nature Home*. Final native plantings are underway to enhance large stepping stones that will allow people to walk into a low-maintenance “demonstration garden.”

Residents here pride themselves on being a part of the greater community surrounding Highland Green, and not apart from it. Many are volunteers for and contributors to countless charitable, non-profit, cultural, and educational organizations. This community spirit is, for some, another attraction to Highland Green and a way to stay busy and actively engaged with others. For at least two residents, the bird theme at Highland Green extends to their passion for volunteerism.

Both Lyn Adams of Flicker Drive and Charlie Evans of Bittern Drive are involved in Avian Haven, a non-profit organization in Freedom, Maine dedicated to bird rehabilitation. It was founded in 1999, has grown an annual case load of about 1,500, and has treated nearly 12,000 birds from more than 100 species.



Street signs at Highland Green

Lyn is a graduate of nearby Brunswick High school and lived in Boston and Virginia before relocating back to Maine. She and her husband Red are “pioneers” at Highland Green, the 13th household to sign a contract way back in 2002. Today there are 175 homes here with exciting future neighborhoods already sold and many new and interesting friends on their way here from around the country.

Five years ago Lyn attended a live bird presentation put on through CREA at the Highland Green Community Center. The presenter put out a plea for volunteer transporters for Avian Haven and the cause spoke to Lyn’s passion for volunteerism and love of the natural world. Since then she has transported hundreds of birds from around Maine to the haven. At some point she had gained enough experience to host birds in need at her home overnight. She’s learned how to feed them and what unique foods different birds need to survive.

Lyn has contact with Avian Haven nearly every day and points out that each season presents its own challenges around the State. Spring and Summer bring lots of nestlings and fledglings who have gotten in trouble because of cats, or humans who unwittingly

clear trees and bushes that have nests. Autumn tends toward birds like Canada geese that are migrating south and loons that are moving toward the ocean. Winter brings many owls and other raptors that have been injured by cars. “Owls have an incredible ability to heal, especially with eye injuries. Scientists are researching how this might relate to humans,” says Lyn.

Charlie and Carol Evans moved to Highland Green from New Hampshire in 2014. At the time Charlie was still working. Trained in physical therapy, he worked with humans before transitioning to animal therapy. Moving to Highland Green exceeded their expectations. Says Carol:

*“We hardly could have been prepared for how truly deep the themes of ‘lifestyle’ and ‘community’ are in real life at Highland Green and how important a factor they are in our happiness.”*

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The Evans quickly became involved with several nearby volunteer organizations. At the Topsham Public Library, considered somewhat of a 'second community center' for Highland Green, they attended a program last October sponsored by CREA about Avian Haven.

At the end of that presentation, Charlie approached Mark Payne, who handles much of the rehab work for the organization, and asked if he was familiar with low level laser equipment used in wound healing and reduction of inflammation. Charlie has used this technology extensively in his rehab work on dogs. Mark said that while he was aware of the technology, Avian Haven could not currently afford it.

The next day Charlie made a call to his contact person at the manufacturer of the laser equipment who, upon hearing about Avian Haven, immediately decided to donate it free of charge, a value of \$10,000. The only condition from the manufacturer was they receive reports on results. Both Charlie and Mark were blown away.

On the occasion of a visit to Avian Haven, Charlie helped Mark treat a wounded Bittern that had not healed successfully after a month of care. In follow up calls Mark indicated that the laser treatment had been successful in healing the wound and that they had



Charlie Evans helps treat a wounded Bittern

been continuing to use the equipment for rehabilitating other injured birds ever since.

People can find a house anywhere. And while the houses at Highland Green are well-built, customizable, energy efficient, designed for easy living, and can range in size from around 1500 square feet to 3000 square feet and up, they are only one part of a larger picture. New friends who move to Highland Green may purchase an already existing house that might have come up for resale, or may make a commitment and plan ahead in a future neighborhood and move in up to two years. But it is the other lifestyle

aspects of Highland Green that make it completely unique, and the joy can be in the journey of discovery.

Individual visits to Highland Green and larger events are about more than just viewing houses or attending an "open house." They can be conversational, comprehensive, and interactive occasions involving communication with staff, current residents, local experts, and learning about the benefits of organizational, financial, social, natural, and other lifestyle aspects of the community.

Dick and Carol Davis from Simsbury, Connecticut closed on their newly built Highland Green home on Black Cherry Lane on April 6th. It was a culmination of a voyage of discovery and of a strategic plan to relocate in early 2016. Their first substantial visit to Highland Green was a kayaking event in the summer of 2013. At that event, their Highland Green experience began with paddling on the picturesque Cathance River with other guests and some current residents.

The Davises are nature buffs and "people-persons," a fine combination for them to appreciate the natural



Carol and Dick Davis plan for their home with landscape architect Ryan Russell

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# Seen Around Highland Green

*Bird species photographed on the Highland Green campus by Maine Audubon Treasurer, expert birder, and Highland Green resident John Berry and Highland Green resident and nature photographer Jim Wilkes (JB, JW)*



A chickadee gathering nest material (JW)



Turkey chicks on a granite outcropping (JW)



Family of geese in the Heath (JW)



A Hooded Merganser in the Heath (JB)



A Spotted Sandpiper braves the Cathance River (JB)



On the cover: a Veery perched on a birch (JB)

## Featured Custom Built Homes

*There are a limited number of beautiful Highland Green homes for resale and immediate move-in.*

### 9 TOWHEE DRIVE *High Perch*

Sitting atop one of the highest elevations in the area, High Perch allows one to look out over a miles long view in the front, while the back features wooded privacy. With a stylishly appointed 1860 square feet of one-floor living, this home offers a perfect combination of formal, casual, and work space. \$520,000



### 3 CHICKADEE DRIVE *Chick-a-finch*

Cozy two bedroom with kitchen overlooking the open living space including a dining area and living room with corner fireplace. A bright sunroom addition leads you to the backyard where you can join three neighbors in the native plantings buffer garden. Out front you'll find the friendly and sunny Chickadee neighborhood. \$315,000



setting and the sense of community that Highland Green provides them. Dick has been a trustee of the Simsbury Land Trust for 20 years, including 12 as President, so the integration of conservation land into the development is a natural. At the same time, the lower-maintenance package will enable them to worry less and to enjoy their interests more, particularly Dick's love for birding. And though they can enjoy the oasis that is Highland Green, the location allows them to easily access the rest of the Maine coast, any services they might need, and Interstate 295 for a quick trip to Portland, or an easy jaunt to see their daughter in Boston. Says Carol Davis:

*“Being introduced to the wonderful team and such a broad range of residents allowed our process to happen. It is a comfortable community of people we already know.”*

By July of 2014, the future “Basswood” neighborhood, made up of 10 home sites between the Preserve and the Heath became available for folks who wanted to make a move to Highland Green in 2015 or 2016. The Davises visited, knowing that Dick's strategic plan was to retire in February of 2016, and were able to secure a home site backing onto the Heath Preserve. They are now next door neighbors with John and Jane Berry, in a neighborhood that will be complete by the end of this year. They'll have new neighbors in “Basswood,” from Maine,

New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Texas, and California, as well as many friends throughout the rest of Highland Green.

In August of 2015, the Davises made a visit to see the progress of their Highland Green home. It has 1890 square feet of one-floor living, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, an office, an open floor plan, two-car garage, plenty of storage, hardwood floors, custom tiled showers, and a gourmet kitchen with granite counter tops. It receives lots of light and looks out over a private view of a stunning granite ledge in the Heath sanctuary.

During that August 2015 visit, the Davises attended *Highland Green Rocks!* as official future residents. This all-inclusive event educated people about the ancient geology of the Maine coast and the unique geology of Highland Green, including its signature striped Mt. Ararat Gneiss formations. Guests also learned about the strategic use of rocks in the construction and landscaping of Highland Green, and its tremendous infrastructure. They viewed nearly the entire Highland Green campus, much conservation land, many homes, and interacted with numerous Highland Green residents. The event culminated with a social gathering at Happy Hour Rock followed by dinner at the Wild Duck Pub at Highland Green.

You can now view two ten minute companion videos on our website called *Highland Green Rocks I: Ancient Geology, a Modern Community* and *Highland Green Rocks II: A Community and Landscape Like No Other*. The first features an extensive interview with Arthur Hussey,

the founder and longtime head of the Bowdoin College Geology Department (Bowdoin is just three miles from here). The second features an interview with Highland Green backhoe operator extraordinaire and rock artist Shaun Riley and his special interest in creating stone landscape accents for Highland Green owners.

2016's major all-inclusive Highland Green event called *Highland Green is for the Birds!* will take place Friday, May 13th. This bird-themed event will allow participants to experience a complete overview of the Highland Green lifestyle and explore the vast campus through an avian perspective. They will hear from Highland Green residents who are interested in conservation, nature, birding, and volunteerism. They will see conservation land, operational aspects of the community, existing homes that are for sale, and future neighborhoods in which they can plan to build.

*Highland Green is for the Birds!* will culminate with a “three-patio happy hour” behind the Davis', the Berry's, and Dave Mosley and Andy Masland's homes on Black Cherry Lane next to the Heath Preserve. These newer Highland Green residents have worked with our landscape architect Ryan Russell to focus on native plantings that will attract a variety of butterflies and birds.

Whether you can attend *Highland Green is for the Birds!* or would like to make your own appointment to visit, you will find that the natural environment is home at Highland Green. And Highland Green residents are bringing nature home. ■



**JOIN US FRIDAY, MAY 13TH**  
 11 AM to 5:30PM and beyond  
 Beginning at the Highland Green Community Center

**11 AM (sharp) to 1:30PM**  
 Highland Green overview  
 Light lunch provided by Wild Duck Pub  
 Interviews with residents and friends of Highland Green

**1:30PM to 4PM**  
 A bird themed tour of everything Highland Green

**4PM to 5:30PM**  
 "Three-patio Happy Hour" on Black Cherry Lane

**\*5:30PM**  
 Optional Dinner at Wild Duck Pub at Highland Green

**\*Space for this event and for dinner at Wild Duck Pub will be limited so reserve your spot early.**

To learn more and to RSVP contact us at  
 1-888-854-1200 or [info@HighlandGreenLifestyle.com](mailto:info@HighlandGreenLifestyle.com)





7 Evergreen Circle  
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Explore Highland Green's award-winning low-maintenance lifestyle combining custom homes, ecology, nature, neighborly ambience, endless possibilities, strength and stability - all directly at the crossroads of Midcoast Maine.

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*Copy and photography by Will Honan, Graphic design by Brina Stairs*

