

# THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2022



### Puppet Masters

by Kim Brawn

As laughter rippled through Central Hall, the truth was undeniable—everybody loves these pirates! That's right, the Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers, who are based in Bar Harbor, captured the imagination and rapt attention of all 225 or so who attended their popular show on July 6. TFL's Michelle Fagan, who coordinated the special event, described it as "a fun pirate show with many jokes and slapstick humor."

Shannen Rhoda's favorite part was at the end, "when the puppeteers came out and

showed the audience how some of the puppets worked . . . for instance, in one scene two puppeteers wore the row boat on their heads with colanders, while using their arms to make the puppets row."

Michelle and Shannen echoed a similar theme—how energizing it was to hear all the laughter throughout the program. "Frogtown knows their audience and keeps it moving and funny . . . everyone was so happy at the end because they enjoyed themselves so much," said Michelle.

### Sparks Fly

Crowd pleaser Josh Sparks and his incredible creatures from Sparks' Ark Animal Services drew 200+ people of all ages on a hot morning in mid-July. TFL's Shannen Rhoda described the assembled menagerie, "He brought a barred owl, sugar glider, chinchilla, hedgehog, tortoise, bearded dragon, and snake. Everyone packed in and around the tent in any shade that could be found. There were lots of oohs and aahs and laughter from the crowd as each new creature was revealed."

—Kim Brawn



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## And the Beat Goes On

Beautiful, lush notes filled the warm evening air as the Highlands Chamber Ensemble played an outdoor concert at TFL in early July. “We again had a large, eager crowd. The ensemble played a variety of music and brought their students with them—it’s always a highlight of the concert to see the next generation of musicians playing alongside their teachers,” said library director Jon Knepp. —Kim Brawn

## Beary Happy!

Congratulations to Amelia Robinson, winner of the TFL Gummy Bear Contest! We received 137 guesses from people of all ages. The jar contained 970 Gummy Bears!



## A Little Night Music

The last hour of a recent Thursday night library shift had an indelible soundtrack courtesy of Hunt and Allison Smith—what a way to welcome September! Wind and cool temps caused a move from outside to inside. Those gathered gratefully soaked up the duo’s beautiful music. One of them was TFL director Jon Knepp, “I always enjoy their concerts. This year they played tunes and instruments they had experimented with while stuck at home during the pandemic. Allison even brought her harp, which she started playing as a way to add variety to the monotonous days of quarantine. It was a wonderful trip through their experiences since moving to the area.” (This was our first recorded concert, find it here: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube) and visit Hunt & Allison’s website: [huntandallison.net](https://huntandallison.net)) —Kim Brawn



## New Venue, Same Great Show

In the midst of a drought, you never want to complain about rain. Still, when it poured on August 18th and 26th, the rain canceled the Harold J. Crosby concert not once but twice! Luckily, our friends at Central Hall Commons allowed us to move the concert

there at the last minute. Given that they only had a few hours’ notice, we were thrilled to have almost sixty concertgoers in attendance. With a little help from the community and flexibility, any event can be a success!

—Jon Knepp



# Vietze, Baxter Ranger

by Kim Brawn

After years in publishing, including time as managing editor at Down East Magazine, Andrew Vietze became a Baxter State Park ranger. "I was always smitten with this gift that Percival Baxter gave to the people of the state of Maine," Andrew said. The first time he visited Baxter he was ten years old. The first time he climbed Katahdin he was ten years old.

Andrew, who writes fulltime (recently as a ghostwriter) and works at Baxter from May-October, is also a licensed Maine Guide and community firefighter. While at Baxter, he's headquartered at Daicey Pond, with a view to make anyone jealous!

*This Wild Land* is the book Andrew wrote about his experiences at Baxter and was the basis of his talk at TFL in early July. Like others who came, director Jon Knepp "enjoyed hearing about Andrew's journey . . . and about his varied duties from rescues to firefighting to less-action packed days answering questions like 'where are the moose?'"



Doug and Shannen Rhoda were in the audience too. Doug grew up in East Millinocket, with Baxter in his backyard, so he was familiar with most of the places mentioned since his Dad took him there over the years. Shannen found the helicopter rescue stories particularly riveting. Coincidentally, Shannen's niece found out about the program while she was reading Andrew's book to her nine-year-old son because they were about to climb Katahdin. Unable to attend in person, Shannen had

Andrew autograph their copy.

Ultimately, a park ranger is really a jack of all trades, and it's that variety of tasks and jobs that Andrew finds so appealing. He admits to getting sucked into the rescues and other adventures and he absolutely "loves helicopters." His talk was a fascinating behind the scenes look at an iconic and truly wild place.

*This Wild Land* is available at TFL. Watch Andrew's talk here [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube) & visit his website at [andrewvietze.com](https://andrewvietze.com).

# Loony About Loons

by Jon Knepp

Loons, the iconic waterfowl synonymous with Maine, are truly one of a kind. Anyone who has seen one or heard its eerie call knows how unique the bird is. Still, there is a lot I, and many other Mainers, did not know about loons. Thankfully, Nick Lund, the outreach and network manager for Maine Audubon, visited TFL on August 4th to enlighten all of us.

Nick's presentation was split into two parts. First, he gave a detailed account of loons, their lifestyle, and a lot of interesting facts about them. I enjoyed learning about loons' migration patterns. They live peacefully together on the ocean in the winter as dull gray birds before returning to lakes and ponds inland to grow their distinctive plumage and fight (sometimes to the death) over territory and mates.

For the second part of the program, Nick detailed Maine Audubon's efforts to learn more about loons in our state and ways they can improve their numbers. Thankfully, loons are



plentiful throughout the state and will continue to be with the efforts of groups like the Audubon.

The talk was very well-received! Perhaps the youngest and least knowledgeable about loons, my sons Andy and Cooper, loved the presentation, asked a ton of questions, and came away "loony for loons," as they said. Nick is a great spokesman for the Maine

Audubon and their mission. He delivered a talk which was equally informative and entertaining, mixing in humor, wonderful photography, and more in a way that kept the crowd engaged! We look forward to working with Nick and Maine Audubon again. For those that missed it, the program is available on our Youtube channel: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube).

## History Under a Microscope

by Jon Knepp



Monson, our neighbor to the north, celebrated its bicentennial this year. Andrew Witmer, associate professor of history at James Madison University and Monson native, chose his hometown as the focus of his new book *Here and Everywhere Else*. The book is a microhistory, which uses the small town to tell the story of the world at large and how it was affected by larger historical movements and changes. While in town promoting the book and helping to celebrate the bicentennial, Witmer stopped by the TFL to discuss all things small town Maine.

Carlson Williams, local history buff and program attendee, loved Witmer's insights. Carlson stated that "... Witmer has done an amazing job of obtaining insights into how things were over one hundred years ago. ... For example, in the 1830's there were two political parties, the Democrats and the Whigs, Generally the Whigs were the dominant party along the coast while inland the Democrats reigned. But in Piscataquis County both Monson and Foxcroft voted for the Whigs' gubernatorial candidates for 7 consecutive years while Dover voted for the

Democratic candidate for 6 of the 7 years. The Democrats represented the common man, individual liberty and equality while Whigs felt education and coordinated planning led to progress of society. So why such a contrast in Dover and Foxcroft's political leanings? Witmer feels that Foxcroft Academy may well have been the reason, both Foxcroft and Monson had established academies at that early period in our history."

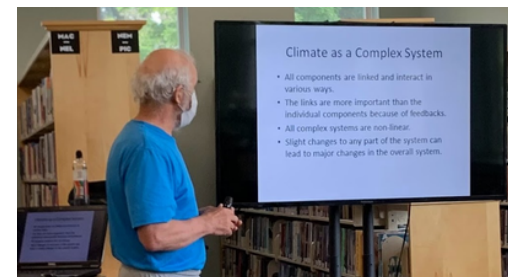
Witmer's work helps to show how history is both very small and very large. One can look at either the major players in historical events or the typical New England small town and see that both were very relevant and reflective of the times that shaped them—and they helped to shape. Local history buffs should pick up a copy of the book available at the library and also check out the talk, available on our Youtube page: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube).



## Touched by Tides

The end of June saw Chewonki return to TFL with a presentation on Tide Pools—home to a variety of species whose unique adaptations allow them to maintain stability in a world that is in a constant state of change. With their interactive traveling display, participants got to dip their hands into the three zones of Maine's rocky intertidal ecosystem and touch some of the cool creatures that reside there. "We had people of all ages. Kids really enjoyed the touch tanks—lots of turns through the line—no child did just one turn," said youth services librarian Michelle Fagan.

—Kim Brawn

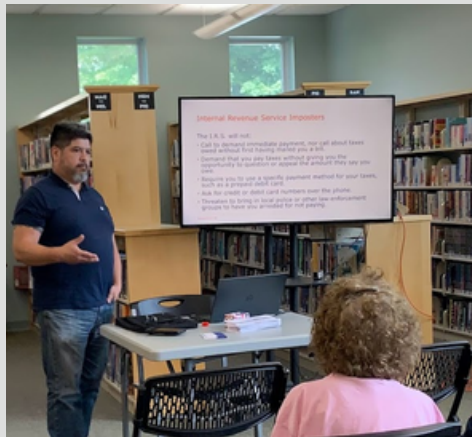


## As The World Warms

On July 14 area meteorologist Ed Hummel joined us to describe factors driving climate change, both globally and in Maine. Pat Juska, who attended the session, called it "informative, interesting, and a bit alarming. ... Ed knows his facts and has great experience. He explained, in an easy-to-understand style, that the Earth is now in a warming cycle and told us what drives those warming and cooling weather cycles, and what the effects of those drivers are." As he pointed out—and most of us realize—we're already seeing and feeling the effects of this warming. (Watch Ed's 101 here: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube).) —Kim Brawn



## Village of the Scammed



Glen Nicholas, owner of Dr. Dan/Home Technology Help in Dover-Foxcroft, has made it his mission to prevent all of us from falling victim to online (and phone) scams. He stopped by TFL in August to give us a practical guide to staying safe while using our various devices. We came away armed with actionable advice to prevent security breaches and other problems. Participant Pat Juska said, "Glen shared valuable tips and bits of knowledge to use immediately to recognize and/or prevent scams. He also emphasized the importance of computer backups and virus protection programs and cautioned not to share bank account numbers, passwords, and personal info." (Watch Glen's 101 here: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube); email him at [hth.maine@gmail.com](mailto:hth.maine@gmail.com))

—Kim Brawn

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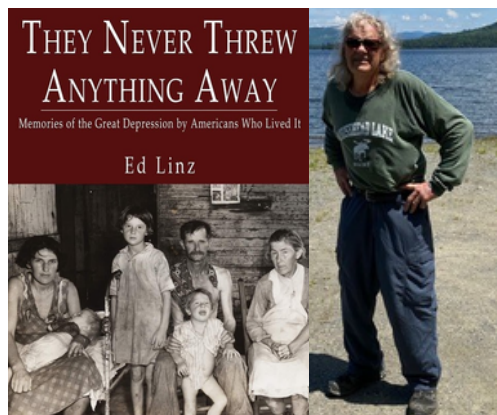


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## Overcoming the Depression

by Jon Knepp



Despite the "depressing" subject matter, Ed Linz brought his fascinating and, somehow, upbeat research into the Great Depression to the TFL on July 28. Ed spent the late '90s interviewing those that lived through the depression, gathering their stories and preserving them for future generations. Upon retiring twenty years later, the pandemic, and the economic and social disruption that came with it, brought those interviews back into Ed's mind and his book *They Never Threw Anything Away* finally became a reality.

Ed's book, and the program he presented at the library, bring to light a side of the

Depression not often seen. Rather than focusing on dry historical facts or the political players of the day, Ed focuses on everyday people who persevered through economic hardships. They were from all walks of life: musicians, masons, teachers, farmers, and others. Despite the long economic odds stacked against them, these are real people living fully fleshed out lives. This is what struck me most. Ed's message isn't one of gloom and doom, his subjects experienced some hard times, but there are good times as well. Some of them had their lives change drastically in the thirties. For others it was almost business as usual. It's about people living their lives during turbulent economic times, but rising above them, which is a good message for today.

This human touch helped to keep the audience entertained throughout Ed's presentation. Jefferson Prestridge, who attended, called it "another informative and entertaining speaker at the library. Ed Linz had some great stories to tell from our recent ancestors." For those that missed it, the program is available on our Youtube channel: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](https://bit.ly/TFLyoutube).



## Way Back When!

Everyone got a kick out of Shannen's "Travel Back to the 20th Century" Historical Fiction display. It was fun to watch kids explore a rotary phone as if it were an artifact from an alien civilization (like it is to them!).



## Bee Friendly!

Kids made seed bombs and pollinator water dishes for their gardens with Kacey from PCSWCD while adults learned how to make their gardens and yards pollinator-friendly with Laurie from UMaine Cooperative Extension.



## Bouncing for Books

The addition of the bounce house and slide took our end of summer reading carnival up a notch!



## Joy on the Fly

One Sunday afternoon in August, the Joy Truck pulled into the TFL parking lot where visitors wrote letters, made postcards, and just drew and had fun. Thank you, Merrilee, for bringing your joyous exploratorium to us—and to Greta and Trisha for coming along too!

## Meet the Neighbors

The new residents in the Maine room have ruffled some feathers! We're learning to coexist with the chimney swifts and are glad they're nesting there and not trapped, as we originally feared!



Thanks to Kazia Knepp for helping with layout!