

# THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2023

## Cathie Pelletier Storms Into Town

by Jon Knepp

Cathie Pelletier's 13th book *Northeaster* debuted in January and, as part of her book launch tour, she traveled to Thompson Free Library on February 13th to discuss her latest work. A midwinter book tour in Maine with so many 13s associated with it seems to be destined for disaster, but we had a blast hosting Cathie at the TFL and her book and her book talk went off without a hitch.

Cathie Pelletier's latest, *Northeaster*, chronicles everyday Mainers' experiences during the devastating blizzard of 1952. With glowing reviews from the Wall Street Journal, Portland Press Herald, Yankee Magazine and more, and strong sales throughout the state, the book has emerged as an instant classic. A lot of that has to do with the true-to-life depictions of characters throughout the state, backed up by an immense amount of research and talking to their families. In fact, Cathie refers to the books as "ours" not "hers" because she thinks it belongs to the families as much, if not more so, than it belongs to her.

These local connections and stories really helped to bring participants to the library. Jayne Lello, said that the program was "fun, engaging, and culturally enriching . . . I was amazed by the historical detail!" Many in attendance were from the local historical societies. Milo in particular was well-represented. They actually contributed



documents, stories, and interesting tidbits to the book that made it much more than just an account of a historical event, it's a gripping story that draws readers in. Cathie's immense research for the book took her all over the state and beyond, but also to our own library, as former director Greta Schroeder is listed in the acknowledgements!

Cathie really enjoyed touring. She told me "I never want to leave the house to promote—most writers are like that—because we are usually a year even more into a new book or project. But once I leave, being such a hermit as I am, I realize how much I've missed seeing and visiting with people and have a great time. The crowds for *Northeaster* have been wonderful and like at

the Thompson Free Library, I have folks in the audience related in some way to the book, most often the children and grandchildren. In Dover, the oldest son of Daniel Speed came to meet me and say hello. So that has been most rewarding. Harland Davis's son and I went to visit Harland's grave in Cushing. Bill Wilson said, 'I feel through this experience that I have finally gone to my father's funeral.' That's heart-warming. So it was worth getting out of my raggedy pajamas and going on the road to promote the book."

We thoroughly enjoyed hosting Cathie and look forward to having her back at the library. Powerful stories such as *Northeaster* are always engaging, especially when they have ties close to home.

 **Watch this on Youtube**

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# Paving Her Own Path as a Writer

Wendy Denney, owner of the Guilford Bed and Breakfast and author of three novels, regaled us with the first section of her newest book *Gold Dust on the Highway* and talked about her writing process on March 23. For Wendy, that process starts with her characters. While writing, the people in her stories take her to places and situations she's never been in herself and she is often just along for the ride! She also spoke of her love for self-publishing. A graphic designer by trade, Wendy likes that self-publishing allows her to tackle things like jacket design and not sending out endless manuscripts to publishers—which she hates! She has also connected with other local authors, both here and previously in Oregon, which she



says helps her process. We love having local authors and learning about their technique, which is as unique as each individual writer.  
-Jon Knepp

 **Watch this on Youtube**



Laurie Bowen,  
Food Systems Program Associate  
UMaine Cooperative Extension



Kass Urban-Mead PhD,  
Mid-Atlantic Pollinator Conservation Specialist  
& NRCS Partner Biologist  
Xerces Society



Jeremy Markuson,  
Maine NRCS Biologist

## The Bee's Trees

by Kim Brawn

Piscataquis County Soil & Water Conservation District's "Pollinators and the Forest" on February 16 was billed as a way to understand how our forests support pollinators and how forest landowners can support them too. Kass Urban-Mead, Mid-Atlantic Pollinator Conservation Specialist & National Resources Conservation Service Partner Biologist, Maine NRCS Biologist Jeremy Markuson, and Laurie Bowen from UMaine's Cooperative Extension joined forces for this hybrid presentation.

"We had presenters and attendees both in-person and virtually. That set-up hasn't happened before, so there was a learning curve, but it went well," said TFL's director Jon Knepp who worked with PCSWCD's education coordinator Kacey Weber to get things up and running.

In-person attendee Alex Shaffer said, "It was nice to learn about resources and

contact information available for landowners on how to encourage native species of pollinators in one's backyard." He was especially pleased to learn about the Pollinator-Friendly Garden Certification that provides great tips for "what kinds of plants to have in your garden, when to plant, and when to clean up your garden in the spring."

In the same vein, Jon's main takeaway was, "If you have questions as a landowner, the local Soil and Water and Extension offices are great resources! Whether you're looking to see more butterflies in your yard or want to improve crop yields, there are tons of people waiting to help you and these two organizations can make it happen."

For more information on this topic and others, visit [piscataquisswcd.org](http://piscataquisswcd.org) and [extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis/](http://extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis/)



## Weed Whackers

by Kim Brawn

"It's a weed if it's growing where you don't want it to be," said Laurie Bowen at "What is that Weed?" on March 16. Laurie and Donna Coffin, both from UMaine Cooperative Extension, shared information, resources, and strategies to combat those pesky, uninvited guests.

Weeds are opportunistic and can indicate various problems, sometimes they can help you figure out what's going on with your soil. They also compete with other plants for water and shade.

Donna described how prolific they are, "One year's weed equals seven years seed." Some common weeds in Maine include ragweed, parsley, shepherd's purse, queen anne's lace, and dandelions.

Identifying weeds is crucial, as is the timing of identification. Laurie said that books, websites, and apps are great ways to help you figure out just what weed you're dealing with.

The best books on the subject are *Weeds of the Northeast* and *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* (Both available at TFL.) You can also learn the genus and species of a weed by going to Laurie's favorite website Go Botany: Native Plant Trust ([gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org](http://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org)) and using the simple key feature. Picture This is a plant identifier app that she also recommends.

Learn strategies to one up weeds at [extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis/](http://extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis/) for materials, resources, and information on weeds and much more!

 **Watch this on Youtube**



# To Boldly Grow

by Kim Brawn

The stark truth is that overwatering is the number one cause of seedling deaths. This was just one of the important points shared at the “Seed Starting” program on February 2. Donna Coffin and Laurie Bowen, from UMaine Cooperative Extension, shared a plethora of good information, tips, and resources.

When Donna asked the group what they

were hoping to learn or concerned about, “onions” “zucchini” and “garlic” were on their minds.

Topics such as when to plant, how to plant, where to plant, and how to care for them were all covered during this engaging discussion that included many practical suggestions and had Donna and Laurie fielding many audience questions.

Seed selection was an important part of the talk. Donna’s tips: buy from a reputable company and use excess seeds as well as saved seeds from the previous year.

Laurie turned the focus to seed catalogs, passing around several for participants to browse through. She said that exploring them is “a great way to spend a winter afternoon.” Then added, half-jokingly, “They’re a dangerous business, I always get carried away.” She had several good suggestions when it comes to buying seeds: order one of two unique things, have a plan

in mind, and order together as a group.

When it comes to choosing your seeds, you need to keep in mind: disease resistance info, size of mature plant, days to harvest, are you doing food preservation, and of course, the cost.

For Donna, a good indicator of higher quality vegetable seeds is a more detailed description when it comes to taste.

They gave away seed starting mix and soil test kits and reminded everyone of the One Tomato Project (Extension distributes free cherry tomato seedlings and growing info throughout Piscataquis County). Donna also showed how easy it is to turn a piece of newspaper into a simple yet effective plant pot. Their presentation was chock full of useful advice for gardeners of all levels.

For more information and resources visit: [extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis](https://extension.umaine.edu/piscataquis)

 **Watch this on Youtube**



## Egging Us On

Michelle Fagan, TFL’s youth services librarian, guided an enthusiastic group through the process of “Pysanky Egg Making” on April 1st.

Pysanky are Easter eggs decorated using beeswax and dyes. This traditional Ukrainian folk art takes place in the spring and emphasizes hope and community.

Despite some hiccups with the dyes and a few eggs that didn’t turn out quite as expected, Michelle said that people enjoyed themselves and found it really interesting. “There was good conversation and a good age range of people, it’s nice to do multi-generational programs,” she said.

—Kim Brawn

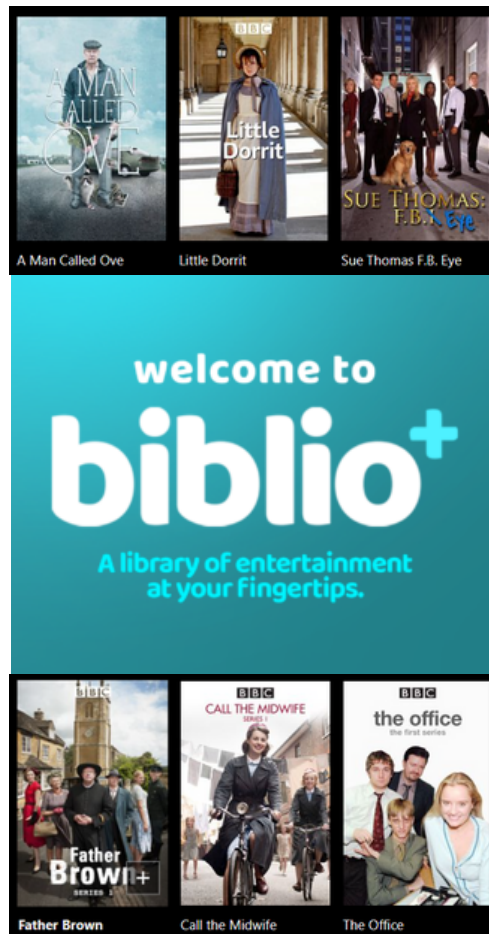


## Biblio: A Real Plus

by Jon Knepp

In February, TFL started offering Biblio+, a streaming service free to our patrons with unlimited access and no ads. Included in the service are great documentaries, BBC programs, and curated offerings, often lesser known award winners or series and movies with literary ties. It is available as an app on most devices (Android, iOS, Amazon, Windows) that can download apps, or online at [bit.ly/tflbiblio](http://bit.ly/tflbiblio)

Almost fifty patrons have signed up for Biblio+ in the month and a half we have had it, which is a phenomenal response! By far, the most popular series streamed is *Father Brown*, a BBC program based on the mystery series by G.K. Chesterton. New offerings are added every month, so stay tuned to our social media to see what else is coming to the service. To sign up for Biblio+, head to [bit.ly/tflbiblio](http://bit.ly/tflbiblio) with your library card number. If it is a 4-digit card, add a lowercase "t" in front of the number. We've also made a brochure we can hand out or you can contact the library for more information. Enjoy the streaming!



### Bigfoot, Big Turnout

Over 80 people attended the screening of Nate Brislin's documentary *Eyes from the Pines* at Center Theatre. Nate's film interviews Maine Bigfoot experts like Loren Coleman and Michelle Souliere and tells of encounters in the Atkinson area, a great local connection! —Jon Knepp

### Watch this on Youtube

Did you know that many of our programs are streamed via Facebook Live at: <https://www.facebook.com/thompsonfreelibrary> and then uploaded to our Youtube channel: [bit.ly/TFLyoutube](http://bit.ly/TFLyoutube)? Look for this symbol with our stories to find recorded programs on our Youtube page.

The recordings can also be found on our Facebook page and links to the Youtube presentations are on our website: [thompsonfreelibrary.org](http://thompsonfreelibrary.org)

### Sign Up For Our Mailing List!

Visit <http://eepurl.com/h5kXX5> to sign up now and stay up to date!

## Help Wanted

Looking for work can be daunting, that's why it's important to have a resource like the Career Center available to help job seekers. Whatever your goals or situation, Alyssa from the Career Center can help. Starting on February 28, she has visited the library on the 4th Tuesday of the month (her current hours are 11 am-2 pm) to help assist with your job search, resumé writing and interviewing, apprenticeships, training and education assistance, federal bonding information, and veteran's services.

"The Career Center is one of the state services that we desperately need in Piscataquis County. We're a very underserved community, though the need in this area is very high per capita. It was great to see Alyssa connect with a few people in need of employment guidance. Hopefully more people will take advantage of the



- We can assist you with
- Job search
  - Resume and interviewing help
  - Locating a registered apprenticeship
  - Training and education assistance
  - Federal bonding information
  - Veteran's services

opportunity and we can keep advocating for more frequent services in our area," says TFL director Jon Knepp.

Alyssa will be back at the library on Tuesday, April 25—and every 4th Tuesday of the month—from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Let's get the word out! —Kim Brawn



## Win-Win

Free stuff always generates interest and when it incentivizes people to read more books that's even better! After a successful Barnes & Noble gift card giveaway in December, we decided to turn our attention to local vendors. In January we gave out a free three-month family membership to the Piscataquis Regional YMCA, and in February patrons had the chance (most had multiple chances!) to take home a \$25.00 gift card to Center Theatre.

"We had a lot of people interested in the raffles. It was good to have something during the winter months. Everyone loves a contest, and it was great to work with and help promote local businesses," TFL's Jon Knepp said. —Kim Brawn



To learn more and support these local businesses visit [centertheatre.org](https://centertheatre.org) and [ymca.org/locations/piscataquis-regional-ymca](https://ymca.org/locations/piscataquis-regional-ymca)



## Blind Date with a Book

"A decade ago, I visited our library and found a Blind Date with a Book display put together by Barbara Lockwood and was excited to choose an unknown book to read," said TFL's Shannen Rhoda. "I was inspired to try to do the same theme this year, wrapping thirty books (including some of my favorites) and only listing a genre on their tags to help patrons choose books that they might otherwise overlook. Ten people reviewed their books, with only three deciding they had no chemistry with their blind dates. I'll call that a success! Next time I may include a section of chapter books for younger readers, since many kids were intrigued by the books that looked like presents."



## This Library is Cool as Ice!



With -50° windchills approaching on Feb. 3, we tested if boiling water will turn to snow. It does! See the video on our social media: [facebook.com/thompsonfreelibrary](https://facebook.com/thompsonfreelibrary) and [@tfl\\_library](https://twitter.com/tfl_library) on Instagram!



**Special Thanks to Kazia Knepp for helping with layout!**