

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Contact:

Amanda Moeser, Project Coordinator: 207-781-6180 x207; amoeser@maineaudubon.org

Joe Dembeck, MDIFW: 207-287-5022; joe.dembeck@maine.gov

Jeff Reardon, Trout Unlimited: 207-615-9200; jreardon@tu.org

Brook Trout Anglers urgently needed to complete remote surveys by September 30th

FALMOUTH, MAINE, August 22, 2011 — Maine Audubon and its partners are seeking new volunteers to explore remote ponds with their rods and reels before the end of this year's fishing season on September 30th. Along with partners Trout Unlimited and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), Maine Audubon is seeking volunteer anglers willing to survey a total of 187 remote ponds for the presence of previously-undocumented populations of wild brook trout.

The state of Maine contains 97% of all the wild or native brook trout ponds remaining in the entire country, and has been designated as the last true stronghold for wild brook trout in the eastern U.S. The presence of brook trout is a sign of healthy pond ecosystems that are likely to provide excellent habitat for many other wildlife species as well. But in order to protect and manage these natural resources appropriately, biologists need to know where trout live - and that's where volunteers come in.

“We need information on these ponds so we can manage them,” says Joe Dembeck of MDIFW. “There are hundreds of unsurveyed ponds around the state, and it would be many years before our staff could get to all of them. Volunteers can help us identify and prioritize the ponds that contain brook trout so we can focus our efforts there.”

Volunteers have already surveyed over 50 ponds this summer, and new populations of wild brook trout have been documented in approximately one of every three ponds surveyed. In addition to brook trout, volunteers have spotted many notable wildlife species, including moose, black bear, frogs, turtles, osprey and kingfishers. However, many ponds remain unexplored, and the project's goals won't be attained unless new volunteers join in before the project wraps up at the end of September.

“It’s important for anglers to help with the survey and share our knowledge with fisheries biologists in this joint effort to protect native brook trout,” explains Donna Garand, an avid outdoorswoman and volunteer angler. Garand was joined on her survey pond by family friend and beginning angler, 14 year-old Josh Rogan. After three visits to the same pond, they did not find brook trout, but did find pickerel and small-mouth bass, which frequently displace native brook trout. Not all the ponds contain trout. Some ponds are fishless, while others contain competing fish species such as bass, chub, brown bullhead, and pickerel.

“This project is truly an adventure—half the fun is what you find on the way to the pond, the other half is what you find in the pond, which may include a thriving population of wild brook trout!” says Maine Audubon project coordinator Amanda Moeser.

“September is a great time to be outdoors in Maine,” adds Jeff Reardon of Trout Unlimited. “The weather and waters are cooler, leaves are starting to change color, bugs are less of a bother, and most importantly, trout are becoming more active.”

Maine Audubon and its partners will provide maps, photos, data sheets, and instructions for how to survey each pond. Volunteers should be enthusiastic about fishing for brook trout, be comfortable in remote settings, and have a sense of adventure. Surveys can be done any time before September 30.

Maine Audubon’s Amanda Moeser will be coordinating the surveys and assisting volunteers as needed. Please contact Amanda at Maine Audubon at 207-781-6180 x207, or amoeser@maineaudubon.org, for more information or to sign up to volunteer. Additional information is also available at <http://tumaine.org/brooktrout.htm>.



MAINE AUDUBON works to conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat by engaging people of all ages in education, conservation and action.