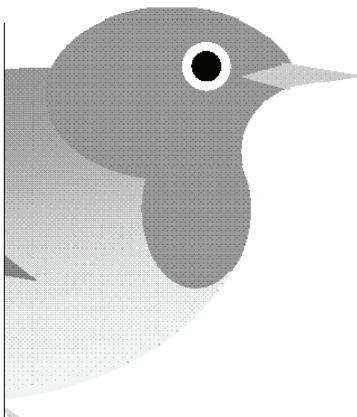
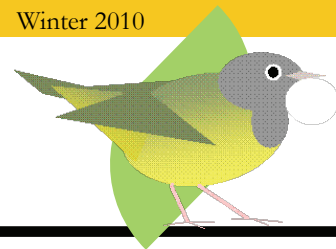


COA BULLETIN



111TH ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

CONNECTICUT CBC SCHEDULE 2010-2011

COMPILED BY STEPHEN P. BROKER

Please contact compilers directly for information about participating in a count.

*= information confirmed by compilers

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2010:

*Hartford, CT (CTHA): Compilers: Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019, jkaplan@thechildrensmuseumct.org, OR jaybrd49@aol.com (H) 860-693-0157, (W) 860-693-0263 and Steve Davis, 860-242-2135 (blizzard date, Sunday, December 19) (Hartford Audubon Society)

*New Haven, CT (CTNH) Compiler: Chris Loscalzo, 67 Wepawaug Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525, closcalz@optonline.net, 203-389-6508 (New Haven Bird Club)

*Storrs, CT (CTST) Compiler: Steve Morytko, 288 Varga Road, Ashford, CT 06278, smorytko@yahoo.com (H) 860-429-9600, (M) 860-680-5728

*Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (CTWR) Compilers: Renee Baade, 46 Obtuse Road, Newtown, CT 06470 rbaade@juno.com (H) 203-270-9953; Chris Wood [handles data submission], 6 Orton Lane, Woodbury, CT 06798, cwood20@earthlink.net, 203-263-5331

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2010:

*Greenwich-Stamford, CT (CTGS) Compilers : Brian O'Toole, 203-869-5272; Gary Palmer, 34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807. Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807. Direct e-mail to Brian O'Toole, otoole29@yahoo.com

*Lakeville-Sharon, CT (CTLS) Compiler: Bob Moeller, P.O. Box 1119, Sharon , CT 06069, bob.moeller@snet.net, 860-364-5936 See the Audubon Sharon website for future postings: <http://sharon.audubon.org/index.htm>

*Litchfield Hills, CT (CTLH) Compiler: Raymond E. Belding, 1229 Winsted Road #30, Torrington, CT 06790, hoatzin1@optonline.net, 860-482-4046 (Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

*Oxford, CT (CTOX) Compiler: Roy Harvey, 32 Wanda Drive, Beacon Falls, CT 06403, rmharvey@snet.net, 203-888-5757

Continued on page 2 →

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

CBC Schedule	1-2
Long Beach demo	3
Missing Wagtail	4, 7
November rarities	5
CT Warbler 25 yrs ago	6
Young Birders Club	7



Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) in Storrs Nov. 28. See page 5 for more rarities. Photo by Nick Bonomo

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2010

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

*Quinnipiac Valley, CT (CTQV) Compiler: Wilhelmina "Billie" Smith, wrsct@aol.com, 203-265-5295; Contact: Loretta Victor, lorettavictor@sbcglobal.net; 203-634-1911 (Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society)

*Salmon River, CT (CTSR) Compiler: Joe Morin, 8 West Street Terrace, Cromwell, CT 06416, 860-635-2786; Contact: Alison Guinness, 418 Tater Hill Road, East Haddam, CT 06423, wjguinness@snet.net, 860-873-9304 (Mattabesock Audubon Society)

Westport, CT (CTWE) Interim Co-compilers: Mardi and Townsend Dickinson, 203-846-0359, mardi1d@gmail.com

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2010:

*Barkhamsted, CT (CTBA) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 53 Country Lane, Canton, CT 06019-3407, dtrippjr@comcast.net, 860-693-6524

*Stratford-Milford, CT (CTSM) Compiler: Steve Mayo, 27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524, rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net, 203-393-0694

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2011:

*New London, CT (CTNL) Compiler: Robert Dewire, 9 Canary Lane, Pawcatuck, CT 06379, robertdewire9@comcast.net, 860-599-3085

*Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY/CT (NYHV) Compilers: Carena Pooth, 22 Brothers Road, Poughquag, NY 12570, carena@prodigy.net, 845-724-3236; Angela Dimmitt, P.O. Box 146, Sherman, CT 06784, angeladimmitt@aol.com, 860-355-3429 (snow storm date January 2, 2011)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2011:

*Old Lyme-Saybrook, CT (CTOL) Compiler: Barbara Hawes (Potapaug Audubon Society, P.O. Box 591, Old Lyme, CT 06371) bhawes71@gmail.com

*Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood, CT (CTEW) Compiler: Sue Harrington, 28D Anton Road, Storrs, CT 06268, hoopoe@sbcglobal.net, 860-429-6257

UNCONFIRMED DATE (Please Check With Compiler):

Napatree, RI-CT-NY (RINT) Compiler: Shai Mitra, Biology Department, College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314 mitra@mail.csi.cuny.edu

SAVE THE DATE

THE 2011 COA ANNUAL MEETING IS

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2011

AT MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FEATURING ALAN BRUSH, DANIEL KLEM, AND BLAIR NIKULA

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Patrick Comins, COA President

DEMOLITION AND RESTORATION UNDERWAY AT LONG BEACH WEST IN STRATFORD

In September, contractors for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Town of Stratford began work to remove the 41 abandoned cottages on Long Beach West in Stratford, the first steps in a project that will restore one of Connecticut's largest undeveloped barrier beaches to native dune habitat and restore public access to the area. Long Beach West, part of the Stratford Great Meadows Important Bird Area, and a popular destination for birders from around that state, contains a unique set of habitats that provide nesting areas for some of our nation's and our state's rarest and most beautiful species such as federally-threatened Piping Plovers and state threatened Least Terns. The beach, including the area where the cottages are being demolished, is also home to a variety of rare plants and provides nesting habitat for diamondback terrapins and horseshoe crabs.

Long Beach West is a critical component of the Stratford Great Meadows Important Bird Area (IBA), one of only 27 such sites in Connecticut recognized by Audubon as essential to birds at some point during their life cycle, either as a place to nest and raise young, as a stopover during long and arduous fall and spring migrations, or as a place to forage and find food throughout the year. Long Beach West and Pleasure Beach are both part of the same barrier beach system and a key component of the Stratford Great Meadows ecosystem. This barrier beach provides critical protection for the Great Meadows Marsh, which has hosted nearly 300 different bird species, provides a sheltered nursery for recreationally and commercially important shellfish and finfish, serves as a key filter for water quality in Long Island Sound, and helps to protect the Stratford and Bridgeport communities from flooding.

Just as exciting as this restoration success is the opportunity that lies ahead to create an outdoor classroom and birding destination at Long Beach West. Many conservation organizations and government entities, including COA, Audubon Connecticut, The Trust for Public Land, the Connecticut Audubon Society, Congresswoman DeLauro, the Town of Stratford the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the EPA Long Island Sound Study, the Connecticut DEP, Mayor Harkins and the people and leaders of Stratford and the broad coalition of environmental stakeholders joined together to support this conservation effort. All of the partners look forward to future opportunities to further enhance habitat, improve public access, and increase opportunities for wildlife watching so that Long Beach West can continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

As this past September's 3rd Annual Stratford Bird Festival and the recent flock of tourists around the first ever New England appearance of a White-tailed Kite at Stratford Point have shown, birding and nature can be big business. The federal dollars employed at Long Beach West are not only benefiting the threatened and endangered wildlife that rely on this site – Connecticut's largest remaining stretch of undeveloped barrier beach – they are also providing jobs and helping spur economic development while restoring safe public access to one of our state's natural treasures.

For more information please see these links to news stories:

<http://www.ctmirror.org/story/8205/two-communities-reach-different-conclusions-use-waterfront-land>

<http://environmentalheadlines.com/ct/2010/10/29/groundbreaking-for-restoration-project-at-long-beach-west/>

For videos of a cottage being demolished please see:

<http://www.facebook.com/patrick.comins/posts/165982986759408#!/video/video.php?v=448212849479>

<http://www.facebook.com/patrick.comins/posts/165982986759408#!/video/video.php?v=448219354479>

<http://www.facebook.com/patrick.comins/posts/165982986759408#!/album.php?aid=125175&id=730539479>

THE CASE OF THE MISSING WAGTAIL

BY FRANK GALLO

September 14, 2010 – Stratford Point. A day with clear deep blue skies. Three birders were in the parking lot talking.

The bird flew in from Long Island Sound calling, "chirp chirp . . . chirp chirp . . . chirp chirp." As it came over the building behind us and passed directly high overhead, it looked black and white with a dark nape and smudge behind the eye – and had a long white tail. Its wings folded in against its body, it bounced like a large pipit but with longer intervals between the dips. It was the size of a . . . It sounded like a –*wait, memory stirred* – a wagtail. "OH MY GOD!"

The cry of "wagtail" went up as we watched the bird fly away and into the sun before it suddenly plummeted, streaking to the ground at the edge of the meadow 70 yards away. Our jaws dropped; we glanced at one another, then ran towards it. After half an hour of looking for it without success, we expanded our search into the adjacent neighborhood. (If it was a wagtail, it might be walking around on someone's lawn as they commonly do in Europe.) While I made some calls to people to come help, I wandered along the edge of a yard adjacent to the meadow and noticed a flock of starlings feeding on the lawn. As I was focusing on them, they flushed, and with them was a pale bird with a long white tail that flashed through the edge of my vision. I yelled... but the bird was over the hedges and into the next yard before anyone got a good look at it. The size and shape looked right for our bird, but all we had was a brief glimpse. Excited, we crept up and peered over the hedges, only to see the same flock vanishing over the roof of the building next door... arrg. The search continued.

Others arrived, and we wandered the nearby neighborhoods for more than an hour searching in an ever-widening circle. The only odd bird that anyone could find was a Budgerigar over a mile away feeding on a lawn with some starlings. Frank Mantlik took photos, which showed a mostly white bird with a gray barred back and nape, gray smudge behind the eye and a long white tail..."Hmm." Budgies are about the size of a wagtail, but it couldn't be the same bird could it? No New World parrots we were familiar with bounce in flight, but do budgies? And do budgies go "chirp chirp" when they fly? Yet, what are the chances of two long-tailed budgie-sized birds occurring in the same area at the same time? I don't like coincidences; it was time for a bit of research.

First, we listened to recordings of White Wagtail on site and all agreed that it sounded most like what we heard. A point for it being a wagtail. At home we listened to calls of budgies on line, and none of the recordings sounded at all like what we had heard, but all were recordings of flocks of budgies; rarely do they travel alone in the wild. A possible second point for wagtail.

Searching my library, I came across a note in the National Geographic Guide about *Brotogeris*, the Budgerigar genus: "...rapid wingbeats are followed by brief closure of bowed wings. Flight is rapid but seems halting and undulating from wing closures and side-to-side twisting of body." Interesting. Wagtails surely bounce, but what a coincidence, so do budgies. A tie, so no points, but a nagging suspicion that I'd found a more plausible explanation for our sighting. What I really needed was to see and hear a lone budgie in flight . . . or a ticket to Australia.

Ultimately, without hard proof, bits of information, and too many no report. Sadly, there would also one that got away. Frustrating... just too brief a look. I hate loose



Photo by Frank Mantlik

there were too many loose ends, too many conflicting coincidences; the rare records committee would receive be no closure, only what-ifs and if-lys – just another but in good conscience, what else could be done? It was ends.

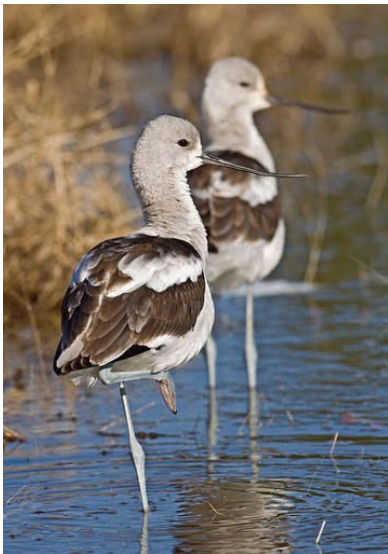
As chance would have it, the following Sunday I stopped at Lighthouse Point Park to help with the hawk watch. Shortly after arriving, I heard a distinct and familiar sound, a "chirp chirp," coming from the trees by the lighthouse. I searched with an expectation of what I'd find, and discovered its source perched in a sycamore with some mourning doves. To confirm my suspicions, I needed to see it fly. I watched it make short straight flights around the clearing before it finally took off over the trees, circled, and came back ... bouncing, wings pulled in, long tail waving, and

- Cont. on p.7

NOVEMBER IS THE MONTH OF RARITIES



Tom Sayers found this Le Conte's sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*) at Milford Point on October 28, 2010. Fortunately for Connecticut birders, the bird stayed close to its original location for more than two weeks, although it was frustratingly furtive at times. Tom took this picture on November 3.



These American avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*) were present at Cabela's pond in East Hartford from October 29 to November 2. Photo by Mark Szantyr.



This fork-tailed flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) was discovered at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford by Tina Green on November 16. It could possibly be the third Connecticut record. Photo by Bruce Finnan.



This cattle egret at Silver Sands State Park in Milford was one of several reported around the state at the end of October and the beginning of November. Photo by Frank Gallo



This rufous hummingbird visited a feeder in Bob and Linda Dixon's yard in Sterling for nearly a month, starting October 10, and continuing through the month of November. The Dixons graciously welcomed birders to their beautifully bird-scaped yard, which also hosted a dickcissel. Photo by Mark Szantyr, who banded the bird on Oct. 13.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

COMPILED BY STEPHEN P. BROKER

The Connecticut Warbler, Volume V, Number 4 (October 1985)

The 1983 Colonial Seabird Survey, by Fred C. Sibley & Ray Schwartz (pp. 40-43):

"Since 1977 all the gull, tern, and heron colonies along the Connecticut coast have been censused every three years on or slightly after June 1 . . . Herring Gull: The Herring Gull population is not suffering in Connecticut. There are 37 active colonies, and any rock above the high storm tide level is a potential nest site. . . Great Black-backed Gull: This is not a common nester in the Sound, but one or more pairs nested at 26 colonies in 1983. . . Common Tern: The Falkner Island colony is still the only large colony in the state. It continues to be protected by resident researchers during the nesting season, and the population has increased slightly each year (1300 in 1983). . . Roseate Tern: As with Common Terns, Falkner Island is the major nesting site (96 pairs). . . Least Tern: The total Connecticut count of 131 pairs in 1977, 100 pairs in 1980, and 130 pairs in 1983 suggest no change in population, but the limitations of the data preclude any confidence in this conclusion. . . Herons: The numbers of nesting herons continue to increase. In 1977 there were 490 pairs of 8 species on Chimon Island. In 1983 the Norwalk Islands were home for 728 pairs, and another 67 pairs nested on Ram Island, near Mystic. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY: . . . all species of herons have increased, gull populations have declined some 20 per cent, and tern populations have remained fairly stable."

Purple Gallinule; The Deceptive Vagrant: Its Occurrence in Connecticut, by Frank Gallo (pp. 43-46):

"There is little wonder, then, given the Purple Gallinule's vagrant tendencies, that at least 21 records exist for Connecticut since 1855, with 5 sightings in the past 7 years. . . The most recent sighting in Connecticut was of an adult bird 25 June 1985 that remained until 28 July 1985. As recorded with other vagrants, the bird appeared in a somewhat unusual place: the back yard and small fresh water pond of Pat and John Little of Guilford, Connecticut. The pond, partially encircled by shrubs and a tangle of vegetation and filled with aquatic plants, abuts a fresh water marsh on one end and the lawn on the other. . . In Connecticut, records exist from 16 April to 7 October with the majority of the sightings in May and June (Table I and II). The Purple Gallinule should be looked for in other months, particularly April and October. . . It is extremely likely that Purple Gallinules occur more regularly in the state than is suspected. This is suggested by the number of sightings despite the difficulty of observing them in their chosen haunts."

Eastern Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) Mortality in Southern Connecticut, by Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith (pp. 47-48):

"The Eastern Screech Owl is the most common owl in the mosaic of habitats found in southern Connecticut. As with most species of raptors, non-breeding season mortality of adults remains largely unknown, but a considerable number appear to be destroyed by vehicles [references given]. Herein we report our observations of road killed Screech Owls collected over a ten year (1975-85) interval.

METHODS: We collected 84 dead Screech Owls from the roadways of New Haven and Fairfield counties and found partial remains of 35 additional individuals. As much of the following information was recorded as possible: weight, wing length (flattened), tail length, sex, color phase, body fat, and stomach contents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: All road kills except for one on 26 July. Most dead March, and the highest number of individuals of Screech Owl mortality along Screech Owls range widely during winter during spring and summer months when tionally, studies by Smith and Gilbert extensively immediately prior to breeding necticut), possibly in search of the most March and early April when Screech Owls area in the vicinity of the nest site. Thus periods. . . Our observations suggest that because of their peculiar flight pattern, m above the ground, rather than being



Eastern screech owl photo by A.J. Hand

were found between 20 September and 29 April Screech Owls were found from October through als was recorded in March. . . The apparent sea-roads may reflect seasonal behavioral differences. months but have a much restricted home range food is more abundant [references given]. Addi- (1984) have shown Screech Owls often range more (late February and early March in southern Con- suitable nesting sites. Nesting begins in mid- restrict their movements to a comparatively small Screech Owl mortality is highest during non-nesting Screech Owls are more frequently killed by vehicles which consists of dropping low and flying about 1 struck while hunting on roads."

AUDUBON LAUNCHES YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB IN CONNECTICUT - COA ENDORSES EFFORT BY BRIAN O'TOOLE

On October 16, 2010, Audubon staff at the Greenwich Center launched a new club for Connecticut's young birders. After many requests from our younger hawk watchers to start such a club, we realized that there was a great deal of interest in a group especially for young and teen birders. Similar clubs already exist in New York, Vermont, Ohio, and other states and provide a great opportunity for both new and more experienced young birders to teach and learn from each other. When several other organizations expressed support for the idea and a desire to be involved, we decided to get the ball rolling.

Our kick-off event was a great success, with eleven members age eight through 15 joining us for the inaugural meeting and walk here at Audubon Greenwich. We were extremely privileged to have legendary birder and author Kenn Kaufman join our meeting and lead our initial trip. On their walk, Kenn fielded the huge numbers of questions from the kids, which ranged from separating the calls of White and Red-breasted Nuthatch to the decision-making process on English bird names at the International Ornithological Union. Their excitement and enthusiasm for the birds they saw and their time with Kenn was the perfect start to this initiative!

The Club welcomes anyone under the age of 18 of any birding skill level who wants to learn more about birds, hone his/her birding skills, and chase those rarities. Our goal is to help the members themselves lead the Club, and make their own decisions about communication and activities. Audubon will also work with other birding groups and organizations to schedule and lead monthly field trips, which will be planned for areas throughout the entire state of Connecticut and neighboring New York to make the club as accessible as possible. Future field trips may involve overnight or weekend trips (parent volunteers willing!)

Audubon is collaborating with several groups throughout the state to make this club a success, including the Connecticut Audubon Society, the Hartford Audubon Society, and the Connecticut Ornithological Association. Eleven young birders joined me and leaders Luke Tiller, Frank Gallo, and Vanessa Mickan on a field trip to Hammonasset Beach State Park, East Shore Park in New Haven, and Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford on November 21. We have established a Yahoo listserve to keep members up to date on field trips, bird sightings, and discussions.

Anyone interested in becoming a member or a trip leader for the CT Young Birders Club, contact Brian O'Toole at botoole@audubon.org.



Kenn Kaufman with young birder Maxson Comins
Photo by Patrick Comins

WAGTAIL—CONT. FROM P. 4

chirping as it went, just as I suspected. What looks like a wagtail, sounds like a wagtail, and acts like a wagtail but isn't? A white and gray-barred Budgerigar, with a white tail, of course. It would have been a whole hell of a lot easier if the budgie in Stratford had been green, like the one I was now looking at.

Note: I learned a great deal from this event. It reinforced my appreciation of the frailty of human perception, and my conviction that it is healthy to question, especially oneself, and to challenge and verify first impressions. A little information can be dangerous. Sometimes we see what we want to see, or expect to see. Who would have expected a budgie, a gray-barred white one for that matter, a bird the size of a wagtail, and a member of the only parrot family to bounce like one, to fly in off the ocean in Connecticut during wagtail migration? No one. We take in information, add up all the clues, and sometimes one plus one makes four.

I've had to revise my philosophy of birding. I try to expect the unexpected, but to remember the adage, "When you hear hoof-beats think horses not zebras;" I always double check for zebras, anyway, but now I'll never forget the budgies, either.

COA OFFICERS

<i>President</i>	Patrick Comins, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury, CT 06488, 203-264-5098
<i>Vice President</i>	Ken Elkins, 43 Park Street, Shelton, CT 06484
<i>Secretary</i>	Steve Broker, 50 Hidden Place, Cheshire, CT 06410, 203-272-5192
<i>Treasurer</i>	Fred Schroeder, 215 Lonetown Road, West Redding, CT 06896, 203-938-9165
<i>Assistant Treasurer</i>	Jack Wells, 103 Sheephill Road, Riverside, CT 06878

COA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

<i>Conservation</i>	Milan Bull
<i>Finance</i>	Fred Schroeder
<i>Membership</i>	Larry Reiter
<i>Workshops</i>	Tina Green
<i>Annual Meeting</i>	Ken Elkins
<i>Connecticut Warbler</i>	Greg Hanisek
<i>COA Bulletin</i>	Denise Jernigan
<i>Rare Records</i>	Jay Kaplan
<i>Refuge Relations</i>	Milan Bull
<i>Science Advisory</i>	Milan Bull

The COA Bulletin is the quarterly newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, published in February, May, September, and December. Please submit materials for the next issue by January 4, 2011 to:

Denise Jernigan
COABulletin 'AT' cox.net
618 Hopewell Road
South Glastonbury, CT 06073

CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.ctbirding.org

