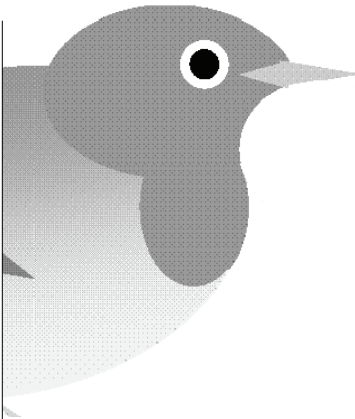
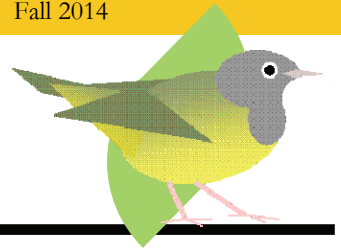


# COA BULLETIN



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TINA GREEN

Greetings COA Members,

A new addition to the *COA Bulletin* begins with this very first President's Message.

I hope you enjoyed the summer months and were able to get out birding, whether it was in your backyard, or while vacationing with family or friends, or perhaps on a birding tour at an exotic location. One of the best things about birdwatching is that you can do it no matter where you are!

I spent most of my summer on Cape Cod where I continued to hone my seabirding and shorebirding skills. I studied my field guides in the evening and got out early every morning, rain or shine. Every moment spent out in the field was a learning experience and wonderful memories of watching shearwaters and jaegers or bitterns and rails will make me smile on a cold January day.

One of the best ways for you to sharpen your birding skills is to participate in a guided walk or a COA workshop. COA will be offering three more workshops this year including the upcoming raptor workshop on September 21st (Lighthouse Point Park Migration Festival), a sparrow workshop on October 18th, and a sea duck workshop on November 23rd. You can view the details for these workshops as well as other walks and events on the [CT Birding Events Calendar](#) on the COA website.

Please mark your calendars for our next annual meeting which will happen on Saturday March 21, 2015. We have another outstanding lineup of speakers, including Norm Smith, known for his Snowy Owl research; Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle, authors of *The Warbler Guide*; and David Sibley, renowned author, artist and former CT resident. It's sure to be a memorable day.

Enjoy fall migration, and I hope to see you all on a walk or at a workshop or "out in the field"!



Wilson's Phalarope,  
Leete's Island Marsh, Guilford.  
Photo by Maggie Peretto.



Tina Green

COA President

## Upcoming Events

<b>September 21 (Sunday)</b>	<b><u>Lighthouse Point Park Migration Festival</u></b>
8:00 am—3:00 pm	Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven, CT “Celebrating Birds, Butterflies, and Dragonflies”
8:00 am – ongoing	Hawk Watching (mid field viewing area)
8:00 am to 9:30 am	Bird Walk led by Chris Loscalzo
8:30 am to 11:00 am	Bird Banding Demo w/ CT Audubon Society
9:00 am to 10:00 am	<b><u>COA Raptor Workshop</u></b>
	<b>Led by Steve Mayo</b>
9:30 am to 10:45 am	Children’s Bird Walk led by Flo McBride
9:30 am to 10:45 am	Bird Walk led by Mike Horn
9:30 am to 3:00 pm	Monarch Butterfly Tagging in the Butterfly Garden
11:15 am to 12:15	Horizon Wings – Live Raptor Show
9:00 am to 11:30 am	Lighthouse Tours
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	Lighthouse Tours
12:15 pm to 1:15 pm	Live Music by “5 in the Chamber”
11am to 2:30 pm	Ride the Historic Carousel
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm	“Skyhunters in Flight” – Falconry Demo

**Suggested Donation of \$5.00/car funds next year’s festival**

<b>October 18 (Saturday)</b>	<b><u>COA Sparrow Workshop</u></b>
7:30 AM	Silver Sands State Park, Milford, CT
<b>November 23 (Sunday)</b>	<b><u>COA Sea Ducks Workshop</u></b>
8:00 AM	Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison. CT



Buff-breasted Sandpiper (L) and American Golden-Plover (R), Rocky Hill Meadows, September 1, 2014. Photos by Russ Smiley.

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### BY KATHY VAN DER AUE, COA VICE-PRESIDENT

On Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, Patrick Comins (Audubon Connecticut), Miley Bull (Connecticut Audubon), Sandy Breslin (Audubon Connecticut), John Oshlick (COA) and Kathy Van Der Aue (COA) met with Susan Whalen (DEEP Deputy Commissioner for Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources), William Hyatt (Natural Resources Bureau Chief), Richard Jacobson (Division Director for Wildlife Conservation) and Henry Alves (Park Supervisor at Hammonasset State Park). The central purpose of the meeting was to update the birding community on a number of DEEP projects and policy updates, including proposed changes at Silver Sands and Hammonasset Beach State Parks. This meeting is a continuation of the ongoing dialog between the birding community and DEEP which grew out of the Great Horned Owl nest destruction that occurred at Hammonasset two years ago.

Policy changes birders should note are that **DEEP has banned the use of drones** at State Parks unless permission is specifically authorized by the Commissioner. They have also **banned fighting kites**. The kite incident at Hammonasset this summer was due to the party (which had been banned previously for kite fighting) being issued a permit under a different identity. Apparently these kites are flown low to the ground and are not easily visible to the park staff. **If any of you see either drones or fighting kites, please call the dispatch number (860) 424-3333 to notify the authorities.**

DEEP is working on standardizing the routes for **special use permit activities such as 5K/10K walks and runs at Rocky Neck, Bluff Point and Hammonasset Beach** to minimize the impact on habitat. The surface for these routes has not been determined yet, but they will be confined to existing paved or unpaved pedestrian paths as much as possible.

In response to concerns raised by the birding community, DEEP became involved in the **Rentschler Field mowing program**, instructing the contractor as to when mowing should take place in order to protect nesting Upland Sandpipers and Grasshopper Sparrows. DEEP staff will continue to monitor the fields to ensure appropriate activity by the contractor.

The **fields at the Suffield WMA** were mowed in early spring in order to control shrubs and maintain the important grassland environment. Grasshopper Sparrows nested successfully here this year, per Jenny Dickson, DEEP Supervising Wildlife Biologist.

**Silver Sands Improvements:** Due to increased use of the beach at Silver Sands, the current available public facilities (porta-potties) have become a health concern. The plans call for a public restroom facility and lifeguard station with a deck and small concession stand to be built at the east end of the park near the existing traffic circle and parking lot. The unpaved parking areas will remain unpaved. Plantings will be of native plants. There are no plans for trails in the landfill area at this time.

**Charles Island:** Work is underway to remove some invasive trees and plant native plants with the intention of benefitting the rookery. Removal and replanting will be done on a successional schedule beginning on or about September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The removal of invasives will require some "cut and paint" application of herbicide.

**Hammonasset Beach:** Planned projects are replacement of the bathhouse that was washed away by Hurricane Irene and a new nature center. The new Meigs Point Nature Center will be built behind the existing nature center. The plans include a bathroom which will be accessible from the outside when the building is closed. The unpaved overflow lots will remain unpaved. The plans for improvement in general retain the existing grasslands and will select native plants when planting is to be done.

° **West Beach:** An over dune boardwalk will be built to encourage the public away from walking on the dunes to reach the beach and the walkway in the dune area has been eliminated. The new bathhouse will include lifeguard facilities, and will be built in the site of the present paved parking lot. The parking lot drainage design features a rain garden which will be planted with native shrubs and grasses.

° **Black Pines:** A disease is attacking the Japanese Black Pines and only dead ones have been removed. They are working with the Yale School of Forestry to choose appropriate replacements. They are aware of the crossbills and how they favor these trees. No Norway Maples are contemplated.

° **Greenway Parking Lot access:** The park will now be **open to foot traffic beginning at 6:00 a.m.** until sunset with parking available at the Greenway (east of the mail gate near the access road to park headquarters). No permits will be required.

° **BURT (Beach Utility Recreation Trail):** They have been relocating and upgrading the water, gas and electricity service lines to the various areas of the park. As a result certain areas have been dug up. Upon project completion, all the lines will run through the same area and locations no longer used will be replanted with native plants. The new area for all the lines will become a pedestrian/bike trail and will also be the Hammonasset location for the 5K/10K walk/run special permit activities. The trail will be paved (paving materials not yet determined).

**Park Ambassadors:** COA has identified birders, each of whom regularly birds one or more of the major shoreline parks to be an Ambassador for that park. The DEEP has expressed willingness to work with us through the Park Ambassadors to try and protect sensitive birding areas within the parks. We hope to increase our dialog with the DEEP officials with regular meetings, to which the appropriate Park Ambassador and Park Supervisor will be invited. If you would like to become a Park Ambassador for your favorite State owned birding spot, please let us know. This is a pilot project designed to improve communication between DEEP and the birding community.



## NESTING SEDGE WRENS (*CISTOTHORUS PLATENSIS*) IN CONNECTICUT

BY CHARLIE BARNARD, JR.

While walking a hedgerow between hayfields in Shelton on June 20, 2014, I heard a probable Sedge Wren singing from the center of a hayfield on my side of the hedgerow. A cautious walk into the field failed to provide a look at the bird, which was singing from within dense, tall grasses. I then called fellow Stratford birders Frank Mantlik and Tom Murray to assist me in sighting the bird and verifying its identification. They arrived shortly afterward and we were able to see the bird well enough to identify it. In addition, Frank was able to get some good photos. Due to the fact that Sedge Wren is listed as an Endangered Species in Connecticut, we decided not to announce its presence in a broad fashion during the nesting season.

The overall area of the field was about 7 acres in size, but the damp portion was only about .6 acre. The primary grass in the damp sector was Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), which grew to 6' high in some patches. Other more standard hayfield grasses such as Timothy made up the rest of the section. There were only a couple of sedge or rush plants observed – I didn't examine them closely to see which they were. There was no standing water. The source of the dampness seemed to be a wooded wetland at the northern edge of the field from which water seeped occasionally after rainfall and ran downslope through the damp section of the hayfield.

The farmer in charge of mowing agreed not to cut the damp area so that the wrens would have a chance if a nesting attempt was being made. The remainder of the hayfield was cut the following day. The farmer did not ask for compensation, although the COA board did vote to compensate him later, which I think was a very good decision.

Observations were difficult to make, due to the density and height of the grasses. The wrens spent most of the day out of sight, with only a singing male frequently observed. Sometimes two birds would make short flights over the grasses, one following another on some occasions, before dropping back down out of sight. However, over the ensuing 3 weeks, such observations as grass carrying, probable fecal sac removal and food carrying were all observed. The last date at which a Sedge Wren was detected was July 11, when a highly agitated male (it had been singing) was seen. It is not known if young Sedge Wrens successfully fledged.



Marsh Wren for comparison  
Photo by Steve Broker

Sedge Wren photos by Frank Mantlik

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN *THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER*

COMPILED BY STEPHEN P. BROKER  
*THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER*, VOLUME IX, NUMBER 3 (JULY 1989)

### Site Guide: Naugatuck State Forest, by Arnold Devine, Mark Szantyr, and Dwight Smith

Diverse landscapes of woods, ponds and streams coupled with a beautiful ravine and 162 species of birds highlight birding explorations in Naugatuck State Forest, just minutes from New Haven and Waterbury.

The Hunter's Mountain area of Naugatuck State Forest includes about 2,191 acres of mixed hardwoods, pine plantations, laurel thickets, swampy areas, streams and a steep-sided hemlock ravine. The vegetation of this State-owned forest has been much affected by past practices. Historically, forests in the Naugatuck Valley were cut for use in the brass industry. Hardwoods such as chestnut and red maple sprouted in great numbers from the stumps, and frequent wood crops were produced by clear cutting. Later, trees were cut for railroad ties. Lumber production from both private and public lands in this part of Connecticut peaked in 1909, and has since steadily declined, although a few permits are still issued for limited cutting of timber in this and other state forests. The impressive hemlock forest that occurs on the north-facing slope of Spruce Brook Ravine is an old-growth stand little affected by human activity.

[The article continues with a listing of bird specialties in Naugatuck State Forest, including nesting species and migrants, and it provides a detailed sketch map for birding explorations.]



Naugatuck State Forest, West Block  
Photo by Buzz Devine

### Unusual Connecticut Bird Specimens in the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, by George A. Clark, Fred C. Sibley, and Roland C. Clement

This is the second report in a projected series on the location of unusual bird specimens from Connecticut. The first report concerned specimens housed at the University of Connecticut in Storrs (Clark 1989). We now report on exceptional specimens in the collections at the Yale University Peabody Museum of Natural History (YPM) in New Haven.

We here list either the number of specimens or, for certain unusual specimens, a citation of published reference or data on catalog number, locality and date. Our nomenclature follows the Sixth Edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds (1983). For each specimen marked with an asterisk, a Kodachrome photograph of one or more specimens has been deposited in the research photographic collection of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History in Storrs. Specimens in the following list are study skins unless otherwise designated as a mount, skeleton, or preserved in fluid.



Hybrid King X Clapper rail, *Rallus elegans elegans* X *R. longirostris crepitans*, a male, "picked up in a backyard in worn condition" in New Haven, Connecticut in October 1951; "died without feeding".

See Bledsoe, Anthony H. 1988. Status and Hybridization of Clapper and King Rails in Connecticut. *The Connecticut Warbler*, Volume VIII Number 1, pages 61-65.

# RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

## BY TOM ROBBEN

The Long Island Sound (LIS) Project is a multi-year initiative of the COA Research Committee. The core of and motivation for this project is this question:

Are our marine birds and their marine environment experiencing major structural changes, and is there anything we should/can do about this? We believe that COA and birders in general can help answer this question, and may have a moral responsibility to contribute their expertise and observations, since nobody else is going to know this or do this.

1. At the highest level, we are trying to learn more about the changes occurring in the overall marine ecosystem, using LIS as our "laboratory", and using birds and what-they-eat as our "window" into learning more about these changes. We need to determine if there is something we should/can do about these possible marine changes.
2. There is increasing evidence that estuaries (such as LIS) and their nearby oceans ARE changing (e.g., the large movement of Razorbills to Florida waters in late 2012) and we need to look at these sub-systems holistically to understand what is happening, how, and why. To do this we should get to know and collaborate with experts in multiple other aspects of these systems, including experts on the fish & other marine lifeforms which seabirds eat.
3. COA and all CT birders can learn more about these marine changes, and perhaps become more actively engaged to make some kinds of contributions in these areas, especially documenting our field observations.
4. Our LIS Project is documenting the natural history (especially birds and what they eat) of every part of Long Island Sound (110 miles from end to end, including both the CT and NY sides), as of 2013-2015, as a benchmark "snapshot" for comparison 10, or 50 or 100 years from now. We began this documentation in December 2013 with our first LIS Bird Count.
5. Our LIS Bird Count ran five weeks from December 1, 2013 until the last CBC Christmas Bird Count on Jan 5th, 2014. We collected a lot of LIS bird data, from many collaborative observers in CT and NY, from a dozen Christmas Bird Counts (7 CT + 5 NY), from many land-based sea-watches (including 23 days of sea-watches at Greenwich Point), from multiple cross-sound ferry trips, from three mid-sound research cruises, from several ad hoc boat trips, and from over 230 eBird reports shared with our "LIS BirdCount" eBird account. We benefited from the willing collaboration between CT and NY birding communities. We are currently experimenting with the best ways to report on all this data, including a 9-sector partition ( LISBirdCount.blogspot.com ).
6. This LIS Bird Count reported many birds within LIS, including one or more individuals of these exciting species of interest to bird science: King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Pacific Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Western Grebe, Northern Gannet, Dovekie (Quonochontaug), Thick-billed Murre (Misquamicut), Common Murre (from Orient/NewLondon ferry), Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Black-headed Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, and Snowy Owl (the only "land bird" we counted, because it was an irruption year for these owls).
7. We are currently preparing for our December 2014 LIS Bird Count, including a NEW website to collect and display the 2013 and 2014 results ( [LISBirdCount.wordpress.com](http://LISBirdCount.wordpress.com) ).
8. We hope to link our work in LIS to marine research in the Gulf of Maine and beyond, and were happy to see the very recent article by Murray Rudd on global ocean research priorities, which is so consistent with our LIS Project approach (The PDF file can be downloaded from this [site](http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fmars.2014.00036/abstract) <http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fmars.2014.00036/abstract> ).

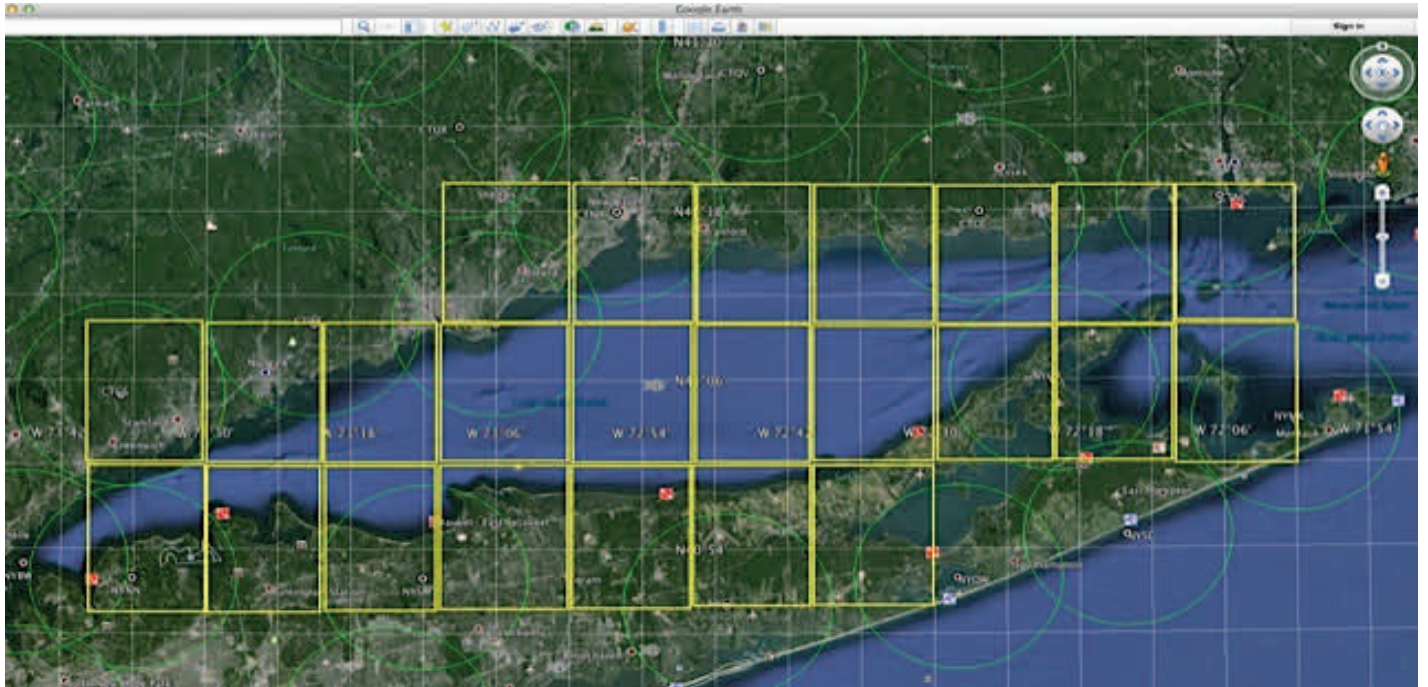
Your suggestions and participation are welcomed.

Continued on next page →



# RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

## BY TOM ROBBEN



Map of Long Island Sound showing coastal Connecticut and Long Island, New York Christmas Bird Count count circles and GIS grid system. Diagram by Tom Robben.



Great Shearwater (L) and Sooty Shearwater (R), July 11, 2014 pelagic trip from Chatham, Massachusetts, organized by Blair Nikula. Photos by Steve Broker.

## COA OFFICERS

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<i>Annual Meeting</i>	Tina Green , Kathy Van Der Aue, Lisa Wahle
<i>Conservation</i>	Patrick Comins
<i>Finance</i>	Fred Schroeder
<i>Membership</i>	Larry Reiter
<i>Rare Records</i>	Jay Kaplan
<i>Research</i>	Tom Robben
<i>Workshops</i>	Chris Loscalzo
<i>Connecticut Warbler</i>	Greg Hanisek
<i>COA Bulletin</i>	Steve Broker
<i>Christmas Bird Count Compiler</i>	Steve Broker
<i>Summer Bird Count Compilers</i>	Joe Zeranski and Patrick Comins
<i>Great Backyard Bird Count</i>	Patrick Comins

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