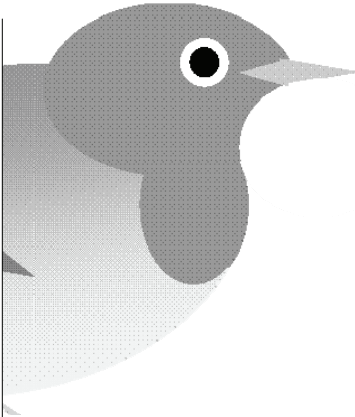
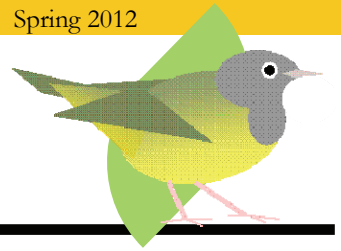


# COA BULLETIN



## COA ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 24, 2012

The Connecticut Ornithological Association's 28th Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, March 24, 2012, at [Middlesex Community College](#) in Middletown, CT. The program will feature three world-renowned speakers, the presentation of COA awards, the Association's business meeting and election of officers and board members, vendor exhibits, and the ever-popular COA raffle. Special raffle prizes this year feature original artwork by some of our state's most talented and respected artists, and include a White-tailed Tropicbird carving created and donated by world champion carver Keith Mueller.

See pages 5-6 for the complete program schedule and registration form .

### FEATURED SPEAKERS



**Richard Crossley** is an internationally acclaimed birder and photographer who has been birding since age 7 and who, by age 21, had hitchhiked more than 100,000 miles chasing birds across his native Britain and Europe. His love of the outdoors and his interest in teaching, design, and technology have shaped his unique vision for the future of birding and bird books. He is excited by the prospect of using new technologies to bring "reality birding" to

a wide audience through a combination of books, TV projects and the internet. His lavishly illustrated and prize-winning book, *The Crossley ID Guide: Eastern Birds*, revolutionizes field guide design by providing the first real-life approach to identification. His goal in the book was to take every image and piece them together in a revolutionary format, showing birds in a wide range of views—near and far, from different angles, in various plumages and behaviors, including flight, and in the habitat in which they live.

Mr. Crossley will enlighten and entertain us with his tales of lessons learned while growing up in the wild British birding scene, and provide some insight into his innovative approach to birding, and his thoughts on our relationship to the natural world, and to TV, advertising, books, and business.

Continued on page 2 →

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Complete  
Annual  
Meeting  
Program  
Schedule  
is on Pages 5+6

## COA ANNUAL MEETING

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

**Alvaro Jaramillo** was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior. Research forays and backpacking trips introduced him to the riches of the Neotropics, where he has traveled extensively. He is the author of *The Birds of Chile*, an authoritative yet portable field guide to Chile's birds, and also writes the "Identify Yourself" column in *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Among various projects he recently finished part of the sparrow chapter for *The Handbook of Birds of the World*, and is writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia. Mr. Jaramillo was recently awarded the Eisenmann Medal by the Linnean Society of New York, an honor awarded occasionally for excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur. When not writing, he runs Alvaro's Adventures, a birding and nature tour company that emphasizes fun and a rich birding travel experience.



Mr. Jaramillo will address the intriguing topic "Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know about Gulls but were Afraid to Ask." He theorizes that gull watchers may be using a different identification process than warbler watchers, and reassures us that most gull identifications are relatively easy, if we can let go of the fear of gulls. He will give us some pointers for easy gull identification while dealing with aspects of biology, taxonomy, and conservation. But the real story is about how much fun and excitement there is to gull watching in North America and how birders might be missing out on something that is actually a good time!

**Wayne Petersen** is Mass Audubon's director of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) program. He has lectured and conducted birding workshops across North America for over 35 years, and his tour leading experiences have taken him nearly around the world. His writing projects include authoring the *National Audubon Society's Pocket Guide to Songbirds* and *Familiar Backyard Birds (East)*, co-authoring *Birds of Massachusetts* and *Birds of New England*, co-editing the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas, and contributing to *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding*, *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*, and *Arctic Wings*. Mr. Petersen was a founding member of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, is a New England Regional Editor for *North American Birds*, and serves on the advisory committee for the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. His knowledge and broad perspective of the seasonal distribution of New England bird life was recognized in 2005 when he received the American Birding Association's *Ludlow Griscom Award* for outstanding contributions in regional ornithology.

Mr. Petersen's presentation will "Faces" - an investigation into the most familiar bird species of view and a brief look into the stranger or more remarkable New England bird species. You may be surprised and even



bring us "Unfamiliar Facts About Familiar" how much we really know about some of our backyards. He will provide a light overview of some of our more regularly encountered. Their life stories are in some cases almost than fiction. Mr. Petersen will share his lives of birds, both locally and beyond. entertained by what you find out.

**Complete Program and Registration Form: Pages 5 & 6**

## Conservation News Update

### Addition to Barn Island WMA Protects Nesting Area for Grassland Birds

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection closed a deal to protect the 16-acre Crowley property as part of the Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in May, 2011. The property hosts nesting Bobolinks and Saltmarsh Sparrows, both species of special concern, and provides opportunities for landward migration of the important tidal marshes of Barn Island. The preserve will be owned in title by the Avalonia Land Conservancy with an easement held by the Connecticut DEEP, and managed as part of the State Wildlife Management Area. The property was protected through a grant from the USDA Grassland Reserve program made possible by a partnership that included a small grant from COA, as well as funds from the Audubon Connecticut IBA Small Matching Grants Program, and other conservation organizations. COA and Audubon members also provided extensive information on bird records for the parcel and technical assistance in the grant-writing process.



USFWS and DEEP staff tour the Bobolink field adjacent to Barn Island, now a part of the WMA. Photo by Patrick Comins

### Connecticut Audubon Society Restores Coastal Dunes at Stratford Point

Connecticut Audubon Society, together with site owner DuPont and specialized contractor 'All Habitat Services, LLC', constructed a soft erosion control structure along the 'low-energy' north shore of Stratford Point in late 2011—a novelty in Connecticut. The use of hard structures, such as rock or concrete walls, has traditionally been the method of choice to control erosion in tidal areas. However, in recent years this approach is being revisited and novel, 'soft' erosion control structures are being put to the test in many areas surrounding Connecticut. As their name suggests, these 'soft' structures are relatively flexible and can absorb some of a wave's energy as it crashes onto the structure, rather than deflect it like a hard surface would. The latter scenario often results in undermining of the structure and/or excessive erosion at its base, causing a sea wall to become compromised over time.

The entire structure is built around a series of sediment-filled geotextile tubes. Each tube is filled to capacity with a mixture of sand and organic compost to form a 12-inch diameter 'sausage' that runs the entire 750 foot length of the dune. Individual tubes are arranged in a step-ladder fashion, stacked up to nine tubes high in some places, and held together by sheets of additional geotextile fabric. The sediment-filled tubes are flexible and dynamic and settle snugly around the variable contours of the shoreline. They are placed against the face of the eroding shoreline and the entire structure is engineered to match the height of the existing bluff.



The tubes are hidden from view by sediment and 38,000 dune grass plugs to form an artificial coastal dune system. Historically, the intertidal zone of Stratford Point was densely vegetated with Smooth Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*), rooted in banks of organic peat. A large-scale remediation in 2000-01 led to the removal of large amounts of lead shot from the site's upland and tidal areas - a remnant of the site's history as a trap and skeet shooting club. However, this environmental clean-up also caused the loss of all peat substrate and associated plant life from the intertidal zone. This loss of vegetation zone has destabilized beach sediment and led to erosion of the site's shoreline due to unabated exposure to wave action. Between 2001 and 2011, over 100 horizontal feet of upland was lost along sections of the north shore of Stratford Point, and erosion continued to be a problem. Continued monitoring of the area will not only tell whether the soft erosion control structure does its job of stabilizing the shoreline, but also whether plant and animal species that depend on coastal habitats will gradually occupy the newly created habitat.

Scott Kruitbosch,  
CAS Conservation Technician

Dune restoration photo by Twan Leenders

## Conservation News Update



Over-washing of Long Beach dunes following Tropical Storm Irene in August, 2011. Photo by Patrick Comins

### Long Beach West Cottages Removed in the Nick of Time

The 42 abandoned cottages at Long Beach West in Stratford were removed prior to the start of the 2011 nesting season, which turned out to be just in time. When Tropical Storm Irene struck Connecticut late August, it coincided with a spring high tide. This confluence of events was particularly acute at a few places along our shore, including Long Beach West in Stratford. Damage there was dramatic, with over-washing of the dunes occurring at several points along this barrier beach. This actually improved habitat for beach-nesting birds by creating sparsely elevated beach habitats at slightly higher elevations than was previously present, but it could easily have been bad news for the environment. The 42 cottages were loaded with contaminants, including lead paint, mercury switches, asbestos and even PCBs. One of the cottages was actually painted with PCB-laden paint and was located exactly where one of the dune over-washes occurred. The Town of Stratford estimated that up to 1/3 of the cottages, including their associated contaminants would have been washed into the Great Meadows Marsh.

### Volunteers Needed for Coastal Bird Conservation Projects

Audubon Connecticut and the Connecticut Audubon Society, with funding from the National Foundation for Fish and Wildlife's Long Island Sound Futures Fund, are teaming up to work with the Connecticut DEEP and Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge to increase stewardship and monitoring of nesting terns, plovers and egrets and migratory shorebirds, including Manomet International Shorebird Surveys.

If you would like to participate in Piping Plover volunteer training on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 9am-12pm at the Coastal Center in Milford, contact Scott Kruitbosch at [skruitbosch@ctaudubon.org](mailto:skruitbosch@ctaudubon.org) or 203-218-1087.



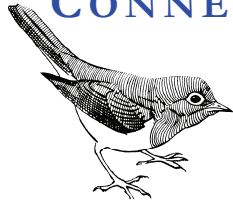
Snowy Egret photo by Bruce Finnan

### GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT IS FEBRUARY 17-20

One of the easiest way to contribute to ornithological science is to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). This year the count is Presidents' Weekend, Friday Feb. 17 through Monday Feb. 20. You only have to count for a minimum of 15 minutes, for any or all of the days, in whatever place you'd like to. It doesn't have to be your backyard. Try it!



For full details, see the [GBBC website](#)



**CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**28TH ANNUAL MEETING**  
**SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2012**  
**MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**8:00 – 9:00 Registration / COA Marketplace** – includes complimentary continental breakfast

**9:00 – 9:30 Welcome / Business Meeting**

Ken Elkins, COA President, will present a brief overview of COA's activities during the past year, followed by election of officers and board members.

**9:30 – 10:30 Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know about Gulls but Were Afraid to Ask**

**Alvaro Jaramillo**, author of *The Birds of Chile* and the "Identify Yourself" column in *Bird Watcher's Digest* will give us some pointers for easy gull identification while dealing with aspects of biology, taxonomy, and conservation. But the real story is about how much fun and excitement there is to gull watching in North America and how birders might be missing out on something that is actually a good time!

**10:30 – 10:50 Presentation of COA Awards**

\*Mabel Osgood Wright Award—presented annually to a person or persons in Connecticut who have made a significant contribution to the knowledge, study, and conservation of birds.

\*Betty Kleiner Award— honors the memory of Betty Kleiner, whose name is synonymous with *The Connecticut Warbler*, COA's flagship publication. The award recognizes a deserving author or artist in the field of ornithology.

\*President's Award—acknowledges from time to time outstanding service to COA and the birding community.

\*COA Mini-grants Award — awarded annually to the applicant(s) whose project most benefits CT birds.

**10:50 - 11:05 Break - COA Marketplace**

A time to socialize, purchase COA Raffle tickets and check out vendors' offerings of bird-related items.

**11:05 - 12:05 Unfamiliar Facts About Familiar Faces**

**Wayne Petersen** is himself familiar to many COA members as the Director of Mass Audubon's IBA program, and a long-time lecturer and field trip leader to birding hotspots around the world. His presentation will investigate how much we really know about some of the most familiar bird species of our backyards, and give us a brief look into the lives of some of our more regularly encountered New England bird species. Their life stories are almost stranger than fiction.

**12:10 – 1:10 Lunch at Founder's Hall Cafeteria** – New menu this year!

Chicken Francese, Mashed Potatoes, Ziti with Meatless Sauce, Vegetable Medley, Garden Salad

**1:20 - 2:20 Past, Present, and Future**

**Richard Crossley** is the author of the highly regarded *Crossley ID Guide: Eastern Birds*, which revolutionized field guide design by providing the first real-life approach to identification. Mr. Crossley will enlighten and entertain us with his tales of lessons learned while growing up in the wild British birding scene, and provide some insight into his innovative approach to birding, and his thoughts on our relationship to the natural world, TV, advertising, books, and business.

A book signing will follow immediately.

**2:30 – 3:00 COA Raffle**

The ever-popular Raffle will conclude our day with many prizes including avian artwork and valuable birding equipment donated by generous artists and vendors. This year's raffle includes an original carving of a White-tailed tropicbird (right) by Keith Mueller.

Raffle tickets will be available throughout the day.



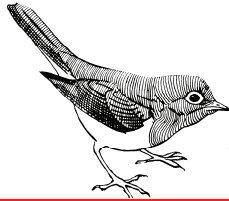
**For map and directions:** [www.mxctc.commnet.edu](http://www.mxctc.commnet.edu)

# CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

## 28TH ANNUAL MEETING

### SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2012

### MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE



#### REGISTRATION FORM

COA Annual Meeting March 24, 2012

Middlesex Community College • Chapman Hall • Middletown, CT

Early Registration: \_\_\_\_\_ Persons @ \$20.00 (pre-pay only) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Must be received by March 16) [Registration at the door: \$25.00]

Hot and cold buffet lunch: \_\_\_\_\_ Persons @ \$17.00 (pre-pay only) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please **print** name(s) as you would like to have it appear on name tag(s) :

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send check (made out to COA) & form to: Larry Reiter 32 West Mystic Ave Mystic, CT 06355



Many COA members and friends enjoyed a morning of birding and boating on Long Island Sound on Feb. 4, 2012, aboard the Project Oceanography vessel (left; photo by Steve Broker) out of UConn's Avery Point campus in Groton. Although the trip did not produce large numbers of alcids, two especially close examples of Razorbill (below) were photographed by Bill Asteriades.



This handsome Yellow-headed Blackbird (left) was photographed by Linda Dixon in her Sterling yard in January. Numerous Big January listers and other birders took advantage of the Dixons' finely bird-scaped yard and welcoming hospitality to view the blackbird, as well as some other hard-to-come-by January species such as Fox Sparrow and Eastern Towhee. Top finishers in COA's 2012 Big January competition were Tina Green (a remarkable 156 species), Sara Zagorski (152) and Renee Baade (138).

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN  
**THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER**  
 COMPILED BY STEPHEN P. BROKER

*THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER*, VOLUME VII, NUMBER 1 (JANUARY 1987)

**THE 1986-1987 CHRISTMAS COUNT, by Fred C. Sibley**

"Barkhamsted recorded the first Christmas Count sighting of a Common Raven although Lakeville-Sharon came within a mile of taking that record a week earlier. . . Other exciting finds included a Black-backed Woodpecker at Old Lyme (a first for State Christmas counts), Common Teal at Stratford, Barrow's Goldeneye at New Haven, and Lark Sparrow at Westport. . . In total individuals seen Hartford again tops the list with 128 thousand, 25 per cent of the state total and triple the second place New Haven count. Even when we eliminate the 70 thousand starlings from the Hartford count, it still leads all the State counts.

"Although not a real winter finch invasion, there were great numbers of Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches. Our last crossbill invasions were in 1978-79 and 1981-82 (poor). Maybe next year . . . After a number of poor years it is nice to see a good showing of shrikes [Ed. Note: 5 Northern Shrikes were counted; the last Loggerhead Shrike to be recorded on a Connecticut CBC was in 1984-85.] . . Owl numbers continued upward with Northern Saw-whet Owl the real standout. The state record of 27 was mainly due to an unbelievable 14 at Lakeville-Sharon. Half of these were found in the evening after they failed to call or respond in the predawn hours, a thought for next year.

"The 'southern' invaders give mixed signals now. Red-bellied Woodpecker and Carolina Wren continue to increase with new records almost every year and totals 4 to 5 times those of 10 years ago. Alternately, Northern Mockingbird, Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal numbers have leveled off or declined slightly from 5 years ago.

"Special recognition should go to Hidden Valley for 14 noteworthy species mid-state and to Stratford-Milford for 18 on the coast. Salmon River came up with the first ever inland record of Yellow-breasted Chat in a year when this species was widely recorded on the coast."

**SNOW BATHING BY COMMON RAVENS, by Donald A. Hopkins**



Common Raven photo by Jim Zipp

"On the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1987 while watching from the overlook on Route 20 at Barkhamsted Reservoir I observed two Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) come down to feed on a deer carcass. . . There was a distinctive size difference in the two birds, which I assumed to be a large male and smaller female. . . the smaller bird proceeded to perform a strange series of activities . . .

"The Common Raven probed the snow with its beak 3 or 4 times and then lowered itself into the snow rolling to one side with the upper wing slightly flexed and the upper leg visible. It then pushed forward in the snow about one body length before standing up and repeating the procedure of probing, dropping to the belly and pushing forward on its side. Occasionally it pushed straight forward on its belly so the beak plowed through the snow and the probing was sometimes a combined probing and flicking action. After this initial bout of ten minutes or so the smaller bird flew back to the larger bird and both engaged in this 'snow bathing' for another ten minutes. On four occasions the bird[s] 'snow bathed' in unison belly to belly with the upper feet appearing to touch. Calling was heard at this time. . . Snow bathing by Common Ravens does not seem to have been reported previously."

See also Carl J. Trichka's article, **Field Identification of White-winged Gulls**, which has timely information on Thayer's Gull. "As is the case with many gulls, the white-wings are scavengers. Thus, they often appear at landfills, sewage treatment plants and fishing piers, as well as at coastal beaches and estuaries, and your chances of finding one are greatly improved by visiting such sites." [Carl Trichka included Thayer's Gull "simply because it is associated with and often confused with Kumlien's Gull although it is not usually classified as a 'white-winged gull.'"]

## COA OFFICERS

<i>President</i>	Ken Elkins, 43 Park Street, Shelton, CT 06484
<i>Vice President</i>	Randy Domina, 248 Mansion Rd, Cheshire, CT 06410
<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>	Chris Loscalzo
<i>Annual Meeting</i>	Tina Green and Lisa Wahle
<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

April 15, 2012 to:

Denise Jernigan  
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South Glastonbury, CT 06073



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