

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



Talking to Owl from the Connecticut

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler is published in January, April, July and October. Subscription is \$6.00 per year, based on a calendar year. Renewal is due in January. New subscribers during the year will receive all four issues for that calendar year. Make checks payable to *The Connecticut Warbler* and mail to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430. Individual issues may be purchased for \$1.50 each, when available. All Rights Reserved.

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ABOUT OUR COVER

This immature Great Horned Owl was photographed by John Laworik on the campus of Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY.

EDITORIAL

COUNTERACT THE LOSS

Hopefully all subscribers had an opportunity to read Robert Dewire's fine editorial which appeared in the April, '82 issue (Vol. II, No. 2) of *The Connecticut Warbler*. In the event you missed it, I would strongly recommend digging out that issue. A sizeable proportion of Connecticut's active birders can be heard echoing his sentiments about the loss of the state's birding "hot spots," one by one. We cannot, in the future, expect exciting birding in our region unless we take an active roll in preserving the remaining viable habitat. And I wish to carry this one step further.

There is no reason why Connecticut birders, either individually or collectively, couldn't design and institute a workable nongame wildlife management plan for each of these remaining habitats. It is obvious that the financially strapped Department of Environmental Protection does not presently have the resources to initiate such a plan, despite the dedication of the staff biologists. However, with the cooperation of the DEP, Audubon societies, land trusts, and local governments, it should be evident that we can succeed in this endeavor. Let us not forget that we have available to us the expertise of Connecticut Audubon Society's Wildlife Conservation Committee, which includes ten of the top professional conservationists in the state.

Here are some examples of possible management projects.

Sherwood Island (Westport) Millpond draw-down. In the spring and fall during shorebird migration, the water level could be adjusted, thus replicating Jamaica Bay's East Pond, which annually attracts more than 35 species of shorebirds including numerous rarities.

Manresa Power Plant (Norwalk). Dense stands of Phragmites have overtaken the formerly open fly-ash pools that not too long ago provided a way stop for resting migrant shorebirds. A suggestion might be to conduct a controlled burn, with the cooperation of the utility.

Lighthouse Point impoundment (East Haven). There has been some talk by New Haven birders to initiate a project similar to the above, to create an impoundment at Lighthouse Point Park.

Goose Island, (Norwalk). This island at one time supported a nesting colony of the now Blue-listed Roseate Tern. A management plan to clear some of the vegetation and/or provide nest sites might provide an alternate nesting site for this declining species.

These are just a few examples and suggestions as to what might be done to counterbalance the constant loss of prime wildlife habitat in the state. Suggestions or comments on these ideas would be appreciated. Only with the active cooperation of concerned citizens can we ensure continued fine birding in the state, as well as the preservation of dwindling habitat.

Frank W. Mantlik
Guest Editor
Saugatuck Valley Audubon Society

THE 1982-1983 CHRISTMAS COUNT

by Fred C. Sibley and Dennis Varza

Our initial analysis last year was much quoted in **AMERICAN BIRDS**, giving us encouragement to try it again. This year, as for at least a decade, 15 counts were held (4 northern, 5 middle of the state, and 6 on the coast). The weather through early December was warmer than normal, but on the first weekend of the count period, when 12 counts were held, winter returned. On December 18th and 19th there were below freezing temperatures, overcast skies, strong winds and some snow in the air, but most ponds, lakes, and marshes were open. Three coastal counts (New London, Old Lyme, Stratford-Milford) taken the weekend of January 1-2 had temperatures in the 40's, following almost 2 weeks of mild weather. If anything, it was harder to compile a large list or find large numbers of individuals in the mild weather.

Although the total count of 472,000 individuals is down slightly from last year's 486,000, this figure masks the real picture. If we eliminate Starling counts, the figures are approximately 239,000 this year and 265,000 last year. The passerine totals (song birds) are down only slightly from 117,000 to 108,000, due mainly to a drop in crow numbers on the inland counts. The big difference is in the waterbirds. For this group, the number seen on coastal counts dropped 30 percent or about 40,000 birds, while the inland counts increased 100 percent or about 25,000 birds. These shifts are due to inland increases of gulls and Canada Geese and the decrease coastally of these species plus Brant and Greater Scaup.

New Haven took high count at 118, seven below last year, and Hartford lost out to Woodbury-Roxbury for high inland count, 71 versus 78. Greenwich took honors for most observers at 207, while Hartford with 92 topped the inland counts. Both were down from last year by 30 and 40 observers, respectively, reflecting the trend on most counts.

The 159 species recorded on all counts, plus a Black-faced Parakeet seen at Oxford, ties the all-time low. There was one species new to the count, an Indigo Bunting seen during the count period at Lakeville-Sharon. The 12 rarities, down from 16 last year, are discussed below.

Two Snowy Egrets were found at Stratford-Milford and a third was seen count period. Whistling Swan was recorded for the third time, one at New Haven. Blue-winged Teal, recorded nine times during the decade, were seen at New London, Old Lyme, and Greenwich (a record seven here). Chukars were first reported at Greenwich in 1976 and in decreasing numbers to 1979. This year at least one survivor of this 1976 release was still present. Turkey numbers have increased greatly in the state, with three counts recording them, and Lakeville-Sharon coming through with a record 58. A single Lesser Yellowlegs at Westport was the 6th record for the decade. The dowitcher seen at Stratford-Milford last year and then confirmed on the Valentine's Day Count as a Long-billed Dowitcher was back this year. A record three Glaucous Gulls were reported at New Haven. The Lesser Black-backed Gull returned to Greenwich for the fifth year, and another was discovered on the Oxford count. The Ipswich Sparrow is usually reported only at Stratford, but this year it was missed there and picked up at Old Lyme (second time on count). Grasshopper Sparrows were found at Litchfield Hills and Quinnipiac Valley, although recorded only three times in the previous decade. Lincoln Sparrows with seven previous records were recorded at New Haven and Old Lyme.

The best bird was obviously the Indigo Bunting. Second was a toss-up between Grasshopper Sparrow, Snowy Egret, Dowitcher, Whistling Swan, and the inland Lesser Black-backed gull.

COASTAL WATER BIRDS: The Common Loon has shown little change over the decade with annual concentrations at New London and Greenwich, but the Red-throated Loon has not only declined by 50 percent during this period but has not been

found in numbers outside Old Lyme, and the count of 146 Horned Grebes was below average. Pied-billed Grebes, really a pond bird, were also present in below average numbers. The diving ducks were about average with a few exceptions; scoters were almost non-existent except at New London, where high numbers of all three species were recorded, including a record 143 Black Scoters. Goldeneyes, Bufflehead and Red-breasted Mergansers all turned up in above average numbers inland.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS were found on every coastal count with four counts reporting new highs. Although the 69 is not a record, this is the first year the birds have really spread out from their normal winter concentration at New London.

POND AND RIVER BIRDS: Ducks were present in generally higher numbers and species rarely recorded inland were found on several counts for the first time (Pintail, Green-winged Teal and Hooded Merganser at Salmon River; Shoveler at Hidden Valley; Hooded Merganser at Quinnipiac Valley; and Ring-necked Duck at Storrs). There were more Canada Geese on inland counts than on the coast, the reverse of the normal year.

Mute Swans continue to increase with a record 1,232 this year and a record 39 inland (23 at Hidden Valley, 12 at Oxford, 3 at Salmon River, and 1 at Storrs). The Gadwall was considered rare ten years ago, but numbers have increased gradually, and this year 201 were recorded on the coastal counts, or double the previous high. The count of 79 Wood Ducks was a record but mainly due to 66 at Greenwich.

HERONS: Despite the abundance of open water, heron numbers were disappointing. There was a record 12 Great Blue Herons inland, but the 78 coastally was about average. Black-crowned Night Herons were recorded in the lowest numbers ever, 7 versus an average of 44.

RAPTORS: A coastal record of 19 Turkey Vultures was found at Greenwich and Westport and a near record of 42 inland. The low count of 3 Goshawks and 10

Rough-legged Hawks was presumably due to the warm weather. The 49 Sharp-shinned Hawks were a record, and the 7 Cooper's Hawks were well above-average. Northern Harrier numbers were down sharply from last year (30 versus 55), but above average. Kestrel numbers at 128 were down slightly, and Osprey was missed after being seen on three counts last year.

RAILS: Only Virginia Rail with an above average 41, plus an inland record at Quinnipiac Valley, was found in respectable numbers. coots were particularly rare on inland counts, 78 versus an average of 517.

SHOREBIRDS: Woodcock and snipe were down coastally and up on inland counts, presumably correlated to the warm weather and unfrozen marshes. Killdeer, 86, continued the decline started in 1976. Sanderling, which used to be a sporadic visitor, are now regular in good numbers on several coastal counts.

GULLS: Gulls were abundant on inland counts, with Greater Black-backed Gull up 300 percent over average, Ring-billed Gull up 600 percent, and Herring Gull up 100 percent. Last year, there were 6,000 gulls reported inland, this year 24,000. The Ring-billed Gull has increased in numbers steadily since 1977 and may continue to do so.



OWLS: Great Horned Owls were reported in record numbers, 122, and Screech Owl in near-record numbers, 268. The count of 4 Short-eared Owls was down from a record 21 last year, while Barn Owl at New Haven and Snowy Owl at Greenwich were the only records of these species. Only one Saw-whet was recorded coastally, but four were found inland at Lakeville-Sharon, Quinnipiac Valley, and Woodbury-Roxbury.

WOODPECKERS: A banner year for all species. Flickers and Pileated Woodpeckers were much more abundant inland and above average coastally. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were found in average or above-average numbers across the state. The hairy and downy ratio runs 20 percent higher on inland counts, but there has been little change in total numbers over the decade. The 12 coastal Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers was above average, but inland it was seen only at Woodbury-Roxbury. The Red-bellied Woodpecker continues its spread into Connecticut, with 64 birds seen this year versus 13 a decade ago. The rare Red-headed Woodpecker was recorded at Lakeville-Sharon, Salmon River, Oxford, and Woodbury-Roxbury for a new record.

PASSERINES: The general pattern for small land birds was above average numbers inland and average numbers on the coast. The differences from 1981 are slight, when inland numbers were also above average. There were record numbers of Black-capped Chickadee (8502), White-breasted Nuthatch (1306), Brown Creeper (137), Golden-crowned Kinglet (304), House Wren (4), and Starling (74,000) on the inland counts.

Bluebirds were found in record numbers both inland (330) and on the coast (179), following a large increase in numbers last year. The coastal birds were mainly restricted to Greenwich and Westport, a pattern that showed up for Wood Duck and Turkey Vulture also.

Fish Crows evidently responded to the warm weather as a record 143 were heard on a record six counts setting count highs

for four of them. Observers still follow an outdated crow identification rule: namely, Fish Crows are identified only by call. Non-calling crows are the mute morph of the Common Crow. Fish Crows are increasing in numbers, despite some masking of this increase by identification difficulties.

Both Purple Finch (1288) and House Finch (8420) were recorded in record numbers across the state, with over half the counts reporting new highs. Up to this year, Purple Finch numbers have remained almost constant, while House Finch numbers have increased slightly on the coast and very dramatically inland. At present, House Finches outnumber Purple Finches 10 to 1 on the coast and only 4 to 1 inland.

The birds often considered as fair-weather late lingerers were universally down in numbers: Rufous-sided Towhee (89 versus 99), Hermit Thrush (54 versus 201), Baltimore Oriole (1 versus 3), Brown Thrasher (10 versus 18), Gray Catbird (33 versus 38), and Yellowthroat (3 versus 5).

The winter-invasion species were essentially not here: Red-breasted Nuthatch, 58 versus decade average of 111, Pine Grosbeak, 10 versus 247, Redpoll, 12 versus 152, and Pine Siskin, 35 versus 593. Even Evening Grosbeak, that has become an annual visitor rather than an invasion species, was down (1080 versus 2027). No crossbills of either species were recorded for the first time in over a decade.

The Lapland Longspur at Stratford was the only one versus an average of 18. Snow Buntings were only recorded on 4 counts, for an incredibly low total of 11 versus an average of 220. A count period Water Pipit at Westport was the only one recorded in the state.

Last year was a below-average year, but this year must be a record low. Species this year 159 versus 161 last year; high count 118 versus 125; rarities 12 versus 16; new state highs 11 versus 23; new count highs 182 versus 197; new count species 32 versus 41; observers 954 versus 1009; average coastal count 109 versus 115.

The following paragraphs list each of the fifteen counts and summarize the notable birds recorded and birds observed during the count period. The "noteworthy" species are those recorded three or less times in the past ten years and are listed for each count. Bold faced species are new to that count. "Large numbers" refers to new high counts that are significantly higher than previous counts. The number appearing after the count name is the total number of species recorded since 1971.

UPLAND COUNTS

STORRS: (114): Natchaug Ornithological Society. Compiler: Shirley Davis. 33 observers; 59 species plus 4 in count period. Noteworthy: American Wigeon, Wood Duck, **Ring-necked Duck**, Cooper's Hawk, Yellow-rumped Warbler. Large Numbers: Canada Goose, Hooded Merganser.

HARTFORD: (131): Hartford Audubon Society. Compilers: Steve Davis and Jay Kaplan. 92 observers; 71 species plus 1 in count period. Noteworthy: Green-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Baltimore Oriole, House Wren. Large Numbers: Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Fox Sparrow.

LITCHFIELD HILLS: (108): Litchfield Hills Audubon Society. Compiler: Ray Belding. 68 observers; 65 species. Noteworthy: Red-shouldered Hawk, Common Snipe, **Long-eared Owl**, **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, Winter Wren, Grey Catbird, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, Rufous-sided Towhee, **Grasshopper Sparrow**. Large Numbers: Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull.

LAKEVILLE-SHARON: (136): Housatonic and Sharon Audubon Societies. Compiler: Bob Moeller. 71 observers; 68 species. Noteworthy: Great Blue Heron, Hooded Merganser, Winter Wren, **Indigo Bunting**, Savannah Sparrow. Large Numbers: Turkey, Common Snipe, House Finch, Purple Finch.

MIDLAND COUNTS

SALMON RIVER: (105): Mattabesec Audubon Society. Compiler: Jim Mockalis. 22 observers; 71 species plus 1 in count period. Noteworthy: **Pintail**, **Green-winged Teal**, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Common

Goldeneye, Bufflehead, **Hooded Merganser**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, Goshawk, **Iceland Gull**, **Red-headed Woodpecker**, House Wren, Grey Catbird, Rusty Blackbird, **Chipping Sparrow**. Large Numbers: Common Merganser, Great Black-backed Gull, Eastern Meadowlark, Swamp Sparrow.

QUINNIPIAC VALLEY: (115): Compiler: Willford Schultz. 24 observers; 70 species. Noteworthy: Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, **Hooded Merganser**, Red-breasted Merganser, **Virginia Rail**, **Short-eared Owl**, Long-eared Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Savannah Sparrow, **Grasshopper Sparrow**. Large Numbers: Ring-necked Duck, Ring-billed Gull, Mockingbird, Red-winged Blackbird.

OXFORD: (106): Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society. Compilers: Rod Hudson and Buzz Devine. 18 observers; 60 species. Noteworthy: **Cooper's Hawk**, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Woodcock, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Black-faced Parakeet**, **Red Headed Woodpecker**, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Grey Catbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Rufous-sided Towhee. Large Numbers: Mute Swan, Great Black-backed Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Starling, Purple Finch, House Finch.

WOODBURY-ROXBURY: (114): Compiler: Buck Jenks. 64 observers, 78 species, plus 2 in count period. Noteworthy: Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, American Woodcock, **Long-eared Owl**, **Red-headed Woodpecker**, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Thrasher, Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow. Large Numbers: Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Brown Creeper, Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Purple Finch, House Finch, Field Sparrow.





HIDDEN VALLEY: (119): Compiler: Jim Hammer. 17 observers; 68 species, plus 2 in count period. Noteworthy: Great Blue Heron, Pintail, **Shoveler**, Ruddy Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, **Turkey**, Bobwhite, Long-eared Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Winter Wren, **Carolina Wren**. High Numbers: Canada Goose, Mallard, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Common Crow.

COASTAL COUNTS

NEW LONDON: (157): Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center. Compiler: Bob Dewire. 29 observers; 108 species. Noteworthy: Double-crested Cormorant, Gadwall, **Blue-winged Teal**, Goshawk, Cooper's Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Marsh Wren, Dickcissel. High Numbers: White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Bobwhite, Ring-billed Gull, Fish Crow, Cedar Waxwing.

OLD LYME: (163): Potapaug Audubon Society. Compiler: Jay Hand. 56 observers; 110 species. Noteworthy: Double-crested Cormorant, Brant, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, Cooper's Hawk, Greater Yellowlegs, Fish Crow, Ipswich Sparrow, **Lincoln's Sparrow**. High numbers: Canada Goose, Great Horned Owl.

NEW HAVEN: (186): New Haven Bird Club. Compilers: Fred King and Fred Sibley. 88 observers; 118 species, plus 3 in count period. Noteworthy: Double-crested Cormorant, **Whistling Swan**, Sanderling, Chipping Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow.

STRATFORD-MILFORD: (177): Connecticut Audubon Society. Compiler: Dennis Varza. 35 observers; 97 species, plus 6 in count period. Noteworthy: Snowy Egret, European Wigeon, Ruffed Grouse, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing.

WESTPORT: (165): Saugatuck Valley Audubon Society. Compilers: Frank Mantlik and Dennis Varza. 132 Observers; 110 species plus 2 in count period. Noteworthy: Double-crested Cormorant, European Wigeon, Lesser Yellowlegs, **Sanderling**. Large Numbers: Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, House Sparrow.



GREENWICH STAMFORD: (169): Greenwich Audubon Society. Compilers: Fred Purnell, Tom Baptist, and Joe Zeranski. 207 observers; 112 species, plus 3 in count period. Noteworthy: Red-throated Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, **Blue-winged Teal**, Redhead, Northern Harrier, Snowy Owl, Eastern Phoebe, House Wren, Yellow-breasted Chat. High Numbers: Lesser Scaup, Purple Finch, House Finch.



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TALKING TO OWLS: TIPS FROM A STRIXINE ADDICT

by Julio de la Torre

Some folks can whistle a fine trill; others can hoot up a storm, but only a few can do both. Those who possess neither talent can press a button and have a friendly conversation with owls by means of a portable tape cassette player.

I'd like to share with you a few bits of information that may help to increase your chances of being a successful owl finder. The hour or two immediately after sunset or before sunrise are the best times to catch the pulse of a Strixine serenade. Owls, however, can be stimulated to call at almost any hour of the night at the appropriate time of the year.

For Screech Owls, the prime period for duetizing is April to early May; Great Horned Owls begin pair-bonding in December and continue to hoot vigorously through mid-February; March seems to be the magic month for Barred Owls; Long-eared Owls often hoot in late February or early March; and northbound Saw-whet Owls regularly toot during the same period. Therefore, February emerges as a most promising owl-finding month.

Owls are highly responsive to both inter and intra-specific stimuli. One common response on the part of a small and mobile species like the Screech Owl to the presence of a solitary, potentially lethal raptor like a Great Horned Owl, is for several Screech Owls to encircle the "enemy" while signalling their position with aggressive whinnying. What this means to the owl finder is that almost any owl call may trigger a variety of responses. Still, it is wasteful to go trekking through snowdrifts hooting at random. I suggest you try the following plan: first, visit suitable spots at the right time and try to find owls as they call on their own. Failing that, try to stimulate whatever may be out there by using a Screech Owl call. Do it softly at first, leaving three to five second pauses between calls. If

there is no reaction, increase the volume gradually, making sure to broadcast the calls over a wide arc. Last, but hardly least, expand the periods of silence and intensive listening for possible distant responses.

The following is a guide to successful owl finding:

Screech Owl (*otus asio*) The most common, widely distributed species and easiest to attract. **BEST SITES:** Flowages (in winter, preferably unfrozen) with thickets, backed by vigorous second growth woods — key factor being plenty of cavities. Often close to residential areas. **TYPICAL CALLS:** Two distinct vocalizations: a descending, querulous whinny, like a miniature toy horse, and a sustained mellow trill on one pitch, occasionally speeding up or slowing down. Screech Owls are fairly easy to see as well as hear. Watch for the telltale silhouette of a flying bird and try to pick it out with a flashlight as it lands.

Great Horned Owl (*bubo virginianus*) Fairly widely distributed; relatively easy to hear; sometimes easy to attract depending on individual temperament, which varies greatly. **BEST SITES:** Well-timbered hillsides with a good mix of soft and hardwoods, close to lakes, river valleys or meadows. **TYPICAL CALLS:** A deep, resonant hooting; variable. One common pattern: a full-voiced, booming hoot, followed by a cluster of rapidly uttered, softer, pulsing hoots and ending with two full-voiced, drawn out hoots: WHOO (who-who-who-who) WHOOO—WHOOO.

Barred Owl (*strix varia*) Not uncommon, but restricted to specific sites, often with large intervening areas where, despite the presence of apparently suitable habitat, it is almost never encountered. **BEST SITES:** Dense, wet deciduous woodland, or mixed, well-watered, deciduous/evergreen tracts. A fair number of old, tall trees with substantial hollowed-out areas seems to be a prime nesting/roosting prerequisite. **TYPICAL CALLS:** Paired groups of four hoots each, vigorously rhythmic, emphatically uttered: How — WHO - ha WHOO! . . . How -WHO - ha WHOOAaahh! (commonly represented as "Who-cooks-for-you? Who-cooks-for-y'all?") Tonal quality is unique,

something like a blend of bark and hoot with a strong dose of nausea at the end. It is important to note that this species has a stunning repertory of calls in addition to the above. They can hoot, moan, groan, gurgle, cackle, whistle and hiss and for good measure are quite capable of long, loud screams which sound like someone being skewered with a red-hot poker!

Long-eared Owl (*asio otus*) Decidedly present . . . and decidedly difficult to converse with. In 15 years of owling I have never been able to attract a Long-eared Owl with its own call. On the other hand they seem quite responsive to Screech Owls and occasionally have answered a Barred Owl or great horned owl call. **BEST SITES:** The preferred habitat is by and large similar to that of the Barred Owl, except that long-ears tend to range into higher and/or less waterlogged areas. This species tends to be, if anything, more restricted than the Barred Owl in many otherwise productive owling localities within my study area. **TYPICAL CALLS:** Three distinct vocalizations: a hoot (or hoots), a bark and a meow. Hooting can be double or single. The double hoot is soft, dove-like, quite full and musical, and uttered in a leisurely, relaxed rhythm. The single hoot is typically a long, downward slurred, quavering call, thoroughly melancholic — the perfect sound effect for a haunted house. The bark is remarkably doglike, like the yapping of a toy poodle, but always in rhythmic groups of three: “wreck-wreck-wreck.” It is unquestionably an alarm call and is frequently uttered in flight. If the bark is doglike, the meow is strikingly feline. It is rather long, with a snap at the end. I have heard this sound mostly as an aggressive response to screech owls calls. I must add that the hoot is an exceptionally rich, even, round sound, like a soft, mellow, musical fog horn.

Saw-whet Owl (*aegolius acadicus*) In late February and early March I make it a habit of listening for northbound migrants. **BEST SITES:** Old successional fields reverting to woodland, with a luxuriant growth of junipers, preferably adjacent to tall timber and close to open water. Occasionally in

evergreen tracts. **TYPICAL CALLS:** Volumes have been written on the language of this bird, and the trees chopped up for the paper on which to print this might just as well have been left for saw-whets to nest in. The name is almost certainly an Anglicized version of the French-Canadian fur trappers term “chouette,” meaning little cabbage, widely used to designate any small owl. Like all owls, this species has a wide vocal range. It’s most typical call is a musical, tooting whistle, toot-toot-toot-toot . . . , endlessly repeated as the bird perches on top of a cedar turning its head slowly. Excited birds quite often change this to a rather shrill, rapidly repeated, two-syllable whistle, whee’oo-whee’oo-whee’oo.

A WARNING ABOUT DISTURBANCE: The recent rash of incidents involving disruption of the life cycle of wild birds, many of them resulting from tape recorder abuse, is in my view scandalous.

Owls react aggressively to intruders of their own or other species. Indiscriminately pelting mated birds with aggression-and/or-anxiety-triggering stimuli is abusive and reprehensible; doing so to a known or suspected nesting pair is downright felonious.

In this, as in all other things, a little elementary horse sense goes a long way, so let moderation be your byword. Do experience the enchantment of moonlit woodlands . . . and enjoy the thrill of conversing with the owls!

Julio de la Torre is a well-known naturalist and lecturer whose speciality is owls.



BLACK VULTURES IN CONNECTICUT

by Dr. Noble S. Proctor

On January 7, 1983 Clay Taylor and George Zepko were astonished to see a Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) come by their observation point in Chester and head north up the Connecticut River. They called me to report the record and to find what, if any, other records had been found in researching the upcoming Connecticut checklist. As unusual as this record seemed, a review of the literature showed the species has had a long and interesting history in the state.

The Black Vulture is basically a southern and tropical species. In recent years, like many other southern species, it has slowly moved northward. In Connecticut, records date back to October 1879, when a lone bird was shot at Bolton Reservoir. In 1910 another adult was collected in East Lyme and these two specimens, checked by Sage and Bishop, are the first occurrences for the state. There is a bizarre story associated with one found in Durham in March 1929. Two boys shot at a pair of birds and wounded one. The wounded bird was caught and taken to Middletown where it was displayed in a store window for over a week. After this display, verified by both Griswold and Viebert, the bird was returned to the boys and kept as a pet until its death several months later.

Since 1929 there have been at least 14 sightings from every month except February. Massachusetts has at least 20 sight and specimen records dating back to the mid-1920's. Many of these birds were found on Cape Cod, the offshore islands or on the coast. New York has over three dozen records, 90 percent from Long Island. This coastal concentration is not surprising as the birds avoid mountainous country, and the coastal areas are warmer and support a more southern fauna and flora. In tropical areas, the Black Vulture is the common dump bird and not unexpectedly, dump

sites have proven to be an attracter in the east. The species has nested in Pennsylvania, and there are several roost sites in that state. In New Jersey a nest was discovered for the first time in 1982.

With this marked northward movement, one should scan the large Turkey Vulture roosts in Connecticut with more care. The bird seen on January 7 by Clay Taylor and George Zepko was later found at a roost near Salem and was still there on January 25. The Black Vulture will certainly put in more appearances in the coming decade, so check the Turkey Vultures carefully.

Noble Proctor is Professor of Biology, Southern Connecticut State College, New Haven, CT.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

by Jay Hand and Jim Mockalis
AUTUMN: SEPTEMBER 1-NOVEMBER
30, 1982

The unusually early spate of autumn weather continued from late August into the second week of September, bringing with it good numbers and a variety of migrants into the state. Shorebird movement seems to have peaked around that second week, judging from the frequency of sightings during that time. The remainder of the autumn season was marked by the absence of any substantial weather patterns typical of the season. For the most part it was remarkably warmer than normal, with a brief cold snap late in the period serving as a reminder that winter was truly in the offing. The lack of strong prevailing winds accounted for the relatively low numbers of hawks observed by hawk-watchers, but may have allowed several western species to meander into the state without being driven farther south.

GREBES THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-neck Grebes appeared in mid-November, with 3 at Hammonasset (*vide* RBA) and 1 at Greenwich Pt. (DB) on the 14th. A surprising highlight of the season was the **Leach's Storm Petrel** seen in N. Greenwich on Oct. 11 (TB,D&JB).

Hérons of note were a Little Blue at Greenwich on Sept. 5 (DB), a Cattle Egret

at Hammonasset on Sept. 11 (BD,MS), a Louisiana see through the summer in Norwalk Harbor up until Sept. 19 (CW,*fide* FM), and American Bitterns at Hammonasset on Sept. 11 (BD,MS) and at Lordship on Nov. 1 (DV). The first Brant of the season were reported from Hammonasset on Nov. 28 (RS), while 20 Snow Geese flew over Lighthouse Pt. on Oct. 3 (BD,MS), and a single bird was found at Hammonasset on Oct. 16 (HJM). Another was at Hammonasset on Nov. 28 (RS).

Gadwalls were noted at Frash Pond, Stratford, their numbers rising from 10 to 18 between Nov. 19 and 22 (DV). Dramatic numbers of European Wigeons appeared in late November with the first bird showing up at Smith Cove, New London, Nov. 28 (RA), followed by 1 at L. Saltonstall on the 30th (*fide* RS). A concentration of 89 Ruddy Ducks were observed at South Cove, Old Saybrook, on Nov. 14 (RD,JM). A King Eider of unnoted sex was seen at Neck Road, Madison, on Nov. 21 (NP,*fide*RS) and may have been the same bird observed at Hammonasset from the 26th through the 29th (*fide* RBA).

HAWKS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

An unusual occurrence was a Northern Goshawk at Milford Pt. on Nov. 28 (FM,BD,MS), but a real bonus was the **Swainson's Hawk** observed from Fred Sibley's new hawk-watching and banding station in E. Haven on Oct. 27 (CT,BW,JZp,RS). Golden Eagles were reported by hawk-watchers at Greenwich Audubon Ctr. on Oct. 10 and 24. Four migrating Bald Eagles were noted by the Greenwich Audubon Ctr. Hawk Watch: 1 Oct. 19, 1 Oct. 25, 2 Oct. 26. An early wintering bird showed up at Saugatuck Res. on Nov. 24 (BB,*fide* FM). The only reported Peregrine was one seen at Lighthouse Pt. Oct. 3 (FM,TD). Merlins were reported from coastal locations — 1 from Milford Pt. on Sept. 11 (DBe,RS) and 2 from Greenwich Pt. on Oct. 2.

Golden Plovers put in their scheduled appearance at Hammonasset Sept. 11 (BD,MS). Expected but never easy, 2 Hudsonian Godwits were observed Sept. 16 at Manresa (FM). Also at Manresa that day

was a Whimbrel (FM). Other sightings of Whimbrels included 1 at Milford Pt. Sept. 11 (DBe,RS) and 1 at Hammonasset Sept. 13 (JH). Unusual, yet the second reported occurrence of the year, was a **Northern Phalarope** observed at Milford Pt. on Sept. 11 (DBe,RS). Curiously, only 1 Baird's Sandpiper was reported — from Hammonasset on Sept. 11 (BD,MS). 3 early Purple Sandpipers were noted from Riverside, Greenwich, on Oct. 2 (TB,JZ,*fide* DB). Stilt Sandpipers were reported from Manresa, with a single bird on Sept. 12 and 2 on the 30th (FM). Interestingly, Buff-breasted Sandpipers were seen in two locations on the same date, Sept. 11 — 3 at Hammonasset (BD,MS) and 3 at Milford Pt. (DBe,RS).

GULLS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

The earliest reported Bonaparte's Gulls were 2 at Greenwich Pt. on Nov. 1 (DB). The Greenwich Pt. Lesser Black-backed Gull showed up for its fifth consecutive winter on Sept. 3 (DB). Unusually late Forster's Terns were observed at South Cove, Old Saybrook, on Nov. 14 (JM). As many as 7 Royal Terns were once again present at Meigs Pt., Hammonasset, for several weeks. The last sighting may have been Sept. 13 (JH). Perhaps these birds had dispersed from a Long Island breeding location. A single Caspian Tern was also reported from Hammonasset on Sept. 2 (CT). The best location for Black Skimmers continued to be Milford Pt., where 2 imm. birds were seen Sept. 6 (BD,MS).

Unquestionably the most unusual bird of the season, and perhaps of the year, was a **Band-tailed Pigeon** that actually landed among the bait pigeons at the E. Haven hawk-banding station on Nov. 7 (BW,CT *et al*). The only Short-eared Owl reported was one at Hammonasset on Nov. 6 (JM), while the only Saw-whet was at Valley Road, Bethany, on Nov. 28 (BD).

Lighthouse Pt. once again produced migrating Red-headed Woodpeckers, with an imm. on Oct. 10 (BD) and another on Oct. 23 (BD,MS). Other individuals were seen in Greenwich on Oct. 16 (TB,JZ, *fide* DB). An uncommon visitor from the North, a **Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker**

was reported Oct. 5 from Harwinton, where it frequented a red pine grove and was seen scaling bark off the trees in the fashion peculiar to that species. This bird had the distinction of being sought by many but seen by few.

Of the Western Kingbirds reported, one was seen in Greenwich on Sept. 8 (BG, *fide* DB), and the other was present at the E. Haven hawk-banding station Nov. 6 and 9 (BW). A late Great Crested Flycatcher was noted at Hammonasset Oct. 23 (BD,MS), while an Olive-sided was observed at Naugatuck S.F. on Sept. 4 (B&DD).

JAYS THROUGH LONGSPURS

Noticeably absent throughout the fall were Blue Jays. It is surmised that a poor acorn crop due to recent gypsy moth defoliations triggered their early departure. Another vagrant from the North was a **Gray Jay** discovered in Harwinton during a search for the Three-toed Woodpecker on Oct. 7 (RB, *fide* RS).

Less obscure in fall than in spring, Philadelphia Vireos were seen in several places — 1 in N. Greenwich Sept. 11 (TB,JZ, *fide* DB), 1 in Salem on Sept. 18 (JH), 1 in the nets at Birdcraft on Sept. 18, and 1 in N. Greenwich on Sept. 19 (TB,JZ, *fide* DB). Another autumn speciality, an Orange-crowned Warbler was seen fleetingly at Smith-Richardson on Dec. 5 (FM). A Palm Warbler of the western persuasion was banded at Birdcraft on Oct. 10, while single Yellow-breasted Chats were observed in Greenwich on Sept. 4 (TB,JZ, *fide* DB) and at Smith-Richardson on Nov. 14 (FM).

A late Rose-breasted Grosbeak was banded at Birdcraft on Oct. 27. A pleasant surprise was the **Blue Grosbeak** found in Greenwich on Oct. 16 (TB,JZ, *fide* DB). An elusive visitor from the midwest, a sub-adult ♂ Dickcissel frequented a Greenwich feeder from Nov. 6 into the winter (*fide* DB). Conspicuously absent were the northern finches, notably Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and both crossbills.

The Sable I.-type habitats of Greenwich and Milford Pts. once again produced single Savannah Sparrows (Ipswich race) on Oct. 30 (TB,JZ, *fide* DB) and on Nov. 28

(FM,BD,MS), respectively. A Grasshopper Sparrow showed up in the nets at Birdcraft on Oct. 16 while a **Henslow's Sparrow** was observed at Hammonasset on Nov. 20 (MS). Vesper Sparrows were found at three locations-Lighthouse Pt. on Oct. 23 (BD,MS), Manresa on Oct. 28 (FM) and Lordship on Nov. 1 (DV), and a Lark Sparrow was in Hamden Sept. 27, 28 (RR, *fide* RS). There were five reports of Lincoln's Sparrows: the earliest was seen in Salem on Sept. 18 (JH); followed by one at Taylor Farm Park, Norwalk on Oct. 2 (FM); one at Lighthouse Pt. on the 3rd (BD,MS); one in Middletown on the 4th (JM) and the last at Birdcraft on Oct. 17.

The earliest of the very few Snow Buntings seen during the season was an individual at Lordship on Nov. 1 (DV). The only other report came from Hammonasset on Nov. 10 (RS). Similarly, Lapland Longspurs were limited to 2 birds at Long Beach, Stratford on Nov. 22 (DV).

Observers and contributors abbreviated in the text:

Rare Bird Alert, Robert Askins, Tom Baptist, Ray Belding, Dick Bernard (DBe), Doris & John Bova, Birgitte Brennan, Roland Clement, Buzz & Debbie Devine, Robert Dewire, Townsend Dickinson, Barbara Girdler, Jay Hand, John Higgins (JHi), Frank Mantlik, John Maynard, Jim Mockalis (HJM), Jim McBride (JMcB), Noble Proctor, Robert Ridgely, Dave Rosgen, Ray Schwartz, Mark Szantyr, Clay Taylor, Dennis Varza, Brian Wheeler, Connie Wood, Joe Zeranski, Jim Zipp (JZp).
Frequently referred places:

Smith-Richardson Sanctuary, Westport; Hammonasset State Park, Madison; Lordship marsh, Stratford; Manresa Power Plant, Norwalk; Birdcraft Sanctuary, Fairfield; Lighthouse Pt., New Haven; Sherwood Island State Park, Westport.

Other abbreviations used:

Am.: American, Conn.: Connecticut, et al: and others, *fide*: reported by, imm.: immature, I.: Island, Is.: Islands, L.: Lake, N.: North, Pt.: Point, R.: River, Rd.: Road, Res.: Reservoir, S.: South, S.F.: State Forest, S.P.: State Park, UConn: University of Connecticut, ♀ : female, ♂ : male

NOTES AND NEWS

WINTER ATLAS WORK

by Christopher S. Wood

There is little breeding activity taking place in mid-winter, so it's a perfect time to do some groundwork in your atlas block without the distractions of bird song, color and fascination with the outdoors.

With trees bare and vegetation sparse, you now have access to areas unreachable in summer. Used nests are exposed now so study the locations and habitats for clues to be used during the next field season. As obvious as they are now, how many active Northern Oriole nests have you found? This is also a good time to study nest identification by consulting **Field Guide to Nests, Eggs and Nestlings** by C. Harrison without disturbing active nests. Now is the time to observe the overall habitat composition of the block, vegetation structure, wetlands type and size, diversity of habitat, etc. Take notes on a map, which will facilitate field work this summer. This should provide excellent data for the ecological comparisons we intend to make in the Atlas.

This is also the time to search out some of the more elusive species such as hawks and owls and woodpeckers, bluebirds and others might also offer some evidence of their territorial preferences.

When the weather preempts field work but you're still craving Atlas activity, pull out your records and Atlas materials and review your results from last season. Notes should be made on gaps in your confirmation results and then compare your results with those from a similar block nearby. From this and other research, list the species that should then be expected or for which a higher breeding status should be expected. Just performing this exercise will help you focus on those species. If all of this still is not enough to satisfy your Atlassing appetite, build and install Bluebird, Screech Owl or martin houses for those easy confirmations.

Getting in the field during the off-season will save you valuable time during the breeding season, and you might even find a good winter bird. It is also suggested that you keep a record of your preparation activities, the amount of time spent and any interesting discoveries. This information will be asked for to document the project's complete and comprehensive research.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Connecticut Warbler welcomes articles and notes about the birds of Connecticut, bird banding, observations, identification of difficult species, etc. Manuscripts submitted for publication will be reviewed by members of our Advisory Board and edited prior to publication.

To assist prospective authors, all manuscripts should be submitted on bond paper, typed double-spaced and be on one side of 8½ x 11 in. paper. Margins should be one inch all around.

Tables should be kept to a minimum and be on separate sheets, one per page. Photographs should be sharp and of good contrast. Glossy black and white pictures are preferred. Drawings or sketches should be executed in black ink with little or no shading. All lettering should be done with a lettering guide or marked on a separate page for typesetting. All photos and sketches will be returned to the author if requested.

Since we are now using photographs for our cover jackets, anyone who has black & white photos of birds or scenic shots depicting Connecticut and its habitats are invited to submit them for consideration as cover photos. We can work from photos or negatives. Full credit will be given for those photos and the photographer in the publication. All materials submitted will be returned to the sender if requested.



IN MEMORIUM

It is with a great deal of sadness that we report the death of one of our Editorial Advisory Board members. Thomas R. Hoehn passed away on Feb. 8, 1983. Tom was the waterfowl biologist for the Connecticut D.E.P. and was very involved in coordinating research projects with local, state and federal agencies. He contributed several fine articles to this journal and will be sorely missed. The entire staff wishes to express their sympathies to Tom Hoehn's family at his untimely passing.

CHANGES FOR '83

Our subscribers will notice our new look. We have been tussling with this for some time and a decision has been reached. The changes are major ones, but they were necessary to maintain our present subscription rate. You will find a redesigned cover and improved and expanded content. We are planning new features that will be appearing in future issues, and you, our readers, will find the editors of *The Connecticut Warbler* committed to making this journal deserving of your continued support.

BIRD BANDING CONFERENCE

The Eastern Bird Banding Association will hold their 1983 conference and annual meeting on April 15-17, 1983 at Wesley Forest, Wiekert, PA. The site is located about halfway between State College and Lewisberg, PA, on Route 45.

For information or reservations, contact Walt Protzman, P.O. Box 1967, Bloomfield, NJ 07003. Home phone is (201) 748-3442.

MOVING?

Have you moved recently or had any change in your address? If so, would you please forward the change to us so we can update our mailing list. Issues of *The Connecticut Warbler* are mailed at bulk postage rates and as such are not forwardable to another address by the post office. So rather than loose your copy in the caverns of the post office, please update your address with us. Thank you.

ERRATUM

In the final paragraph of the article entitled **WINTERING GADWALLS AT HEATHER POND**, by Lee & Frank Wagner, which appeared in the October 1982 issue, part of a sentence had been omitted. The first sentence of that paragraph should read: "Our observations suggest that the Gadwall arrives in mid-September or early October and departs in mid-March or early April." Our apologies for any confusion that may have occurred.

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The Connecticut Warbler is a quarterly publication devoted to the advancement of the study of birds and their conservation in the state of Connecticut. It is published by the Natural History Services Department of the Connecticut Audubon Society. Address all correspondence to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

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Permit No. 95



THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



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The Connecticut Warbler is published in January, April, July and October. Subscription is \$6.00 per year, based on a calendar year. Renewal is due in January. New subscribers during the year will receive all four issues for that calendar year. Make checks payable to *The Connecticut Warbler* and mail to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430. Individual issues may be purchased for \$1.50 each, when available. All Rights Reserved.

The editors invite the submission of articles, notes, black and white photographs and line drawings for use in *The Connecticut Warbler*. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the sheet only, with ample margins. The editors must reserve judgement as to how much of this material to use and return postage should be provided if materials are to be returned.

About our cover

*This Northern Wheatear was
photographed by Ray Gilbert at the New
Canaan Nature Center on Oct. 10, 1982.
See article in this issue.*

EDITORIAL

ENVIRONMENTAL ORNITHOLOGY, OR APPLIED BIRDWATCHING

These are exciting times for ornithology in Connecticut. The last ten years or so have seen a fledging of appreciation for bird study as neophytes like myself have been drawn into the flock. Opportunities for direct involvement in ornithological research have also grown as the state's colleges, bird clubs, and state and national Audubon groups have initiated or encouraged data-gathering projects on a scale unprecedented in our history. Our research questions have been "which birds do what, where and how many of them do it?" But as our data banks fill, we must begin to ask, "how can we use what we learn to protect, enhance and encourage Connecticut's indigenous wildlife?"

One of the active projects is the Breeding Bird Atlas, which at this printing has completed its second year of field work. In 1982, 11,323 records were entered into the project's computer data retrieval system. In about one-half of the study blocks covered, 176 species were found exhibiting breeding behavior and over 350 volunteers participated in the work. This effort marks the first large-scale contribution to wildlife management in the state by non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts, a fact which has significance beyond the immediate research goals. However, the remaining work looms over that completed.

The numbers and ability of birders in Connecticut have allowed this atlas project to set a larger clutch of research eggs than other state atlasing efforts. In 1983 we began experimenting with density analysis data collection, a task that requires more than average interest and expertise in the field. This work will take advantage of the magic of statistical manipulation and collect information from select areas only. When this information is combined with species data from the basic atlas files, and with other research data, we will be able to calculate diversity indices that, in turn, will correlate with such factors as habitat quality and quantity. Given the sophistication of George Zepko's computer at Wesleyan University, almost unlimited research possibilities beckon.

Applying this information to the study of problems facing many species in this state will be the next challenge. As Dr. George Clark discussed in this space recently, bird habitat in Connecticut is dynamic because of economic development. We should remember, though, that habitat change has been dramatic since the arrival of Europeans on the continent, when Connecticut was almost completely covered by forest. Today we go afield in a field rich with diversity, some good, some bad, but certainly different from that of the primeval state. And when we seek to apply our special knowledge to wildlife management, we face difficult questions posed in the context of modern economic realities. Should we manage forests for Pileated Woodpeckers, or old fields for Golden-winged Warblers? Should coastal habitat be manipulated for terns? In short, what should be our priorities for protection, enhancement, or management of birds in Connecticut?

The simple answer is to encourage the healthiest diversity possible, as it is far easier to go from too much to enough, than from not enough to plenty. The Breeding Bird Atlas and other research projects will give us important guidance for wildlife management decisions and allow birders to make a tangible contribution to wildlife management in Connecticut. Any birder who wishes to continue seeking nearly 300 species of birds each year in this great state should be compelled to support such research; after all, it's for the birds!

Christopher S. Wood
Guest Editor
Chairman, BBA Project

FISH CROW BEHAVIOR

by Dr. Jeffrey D. Shepherd
and James Matthews Sr.

Because the Fish Crow is one of the least-studied of Connecticut birds, we believe there is value in reporting some unusual observations. The weather was clear with a slight breeze about 7:00 a.m. on 22 February, 1982 at the Canal Street Pumping Station of the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, located at Kings Highway North in Westport, CT. A local group of Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*) was vigorously mobbing an unseen animal in a large stand of 75 foot White Pines behind the station, adjacent to the Saugatuck River.

At 10:00 a.m. a Red-tailed Hawk, often seen nearby, flew to a small Catalpa tree at the rear of the pumping station. This area of the river attracts numbers of Canada Goose, Mallard, and Peking Duck (mallards of domestic stock). These birds usually ignored the hawk, but at other times they seemed to recognize it's hunting mien and quickly left the area. On February 22, the geese and the mallards flew off and did not return. The Peking ducks swam up river and clustered on the lawns near several houses. The crows, which had not been seen to react in this way before, started to mob the hawk; some flew to the Catalpa and perched in it with the hawk, while others perched in the surrounding White Pines or flew around the hawk with much raucous calling. The Redtail did not seem bothered by this activity.

One of the crows, glided from the Catalpa to the ground. Just before it landed, the hawk hurtled from the tree in a fast dive and struck the crow with its extended talons, knocking it to the ground. Immediately the hawk landed on the flapping crow and pinned its left wing. The other crows dove at the hawk but it ignored them and continued to hold the crow by its left wing. The hawk made no attempt to strike the crow with its beak.

While this was going on, one of us walked to within 15 feet of the birds. The hawk, who watched us and not the crows, disengaged itself and flew across the river. The wounded crow was retrieved for rehabilitation.

The following morning, near the Catalpa, the carcass of another Fish Crow was found. Its plucked feathers were bent in the V-shape characteristic of other birds killed and eaten by hawks. Most of its breast muscle and viscera had been eaten.

When the wounded crow was first closely examined no external signs of damage were apparent. The bird did, however, carry its wing low and away from its body. This suggested a dislocation of the humerus. The bird was missing the entire outer toe on its left foot and had a thick pad of skin at the point where the toe normally meets the tarsus. The toe had obviously been missing for some time. Experience with captive Starlings has shown that the loss of a toe is fairly common, at least in that species.

The Fish Crow was also missing most of the feathers surrounding its left eye, especially in the feather tracts directly above and just posterior to the eye. There were no signs of wounds, but, the rear portion of the left eye had an opaque film such as seen in cataracts. We assume that the corneal opacity was due to injury.

The rescued crow behaved calmly when handled and appeared to enjoy being scratched behind the head, even pushing its head back to maintain the contact or increase the pressure. Behavioristically, there were several surprises. It was fed a variety of bits of meat and vegetables. Peanut butter on crackers was an instant hit, and the first food it could be fed by hand. However, this bird would only take hand-held food if it was held above eye level so that it had to reach up with its beak. Food held at eye level or below, even when the bird was aware of its presence, was ignored. As soon as it was elevated sufficiently it would be taken with a swift spearing motion. Another surprise occurred when half a hen's egg with some albumen was left in its cage. The next morn-

ing the bird had consumed shell and all. It did this on several occasions, never leaving more than a few pieces of shell.

When sleeping, the bird always tucked its head under the undamaged wing. As with sleeping Starlings, the senior author observed that the crow did not grip the perch tightly with its toes, but instead, maintained a loose, relaxed hold. All sleeping birds we have observed rocked gently forward and back. When the motion becomes too severe a bird usually opens its eyes, looks around briefly, repositions its toes on the perch and resumes its rest. We have not seen the constant toe adjustments reported by Berger (1965) for Kirtland's Warblers, perhaps because this only occurs in smaller birds. The crow always perched for sleep facing in the direction of the first light of dawn. If, during the night, it was manually turned on its perch to face away from first light (as was done as many as 10 times in a single night) it would always be found in the morning sleeping so as to face the dawn.

It soon became obvious that whatever was wrong with the left eye was destroying vision on that side. In an attempt to arrest this loss, simple first aid methods were tried. First, the area around the eye was bathed with mild soap and warm water, and then cleansed with hydrogen peroxide and methiolate. Sterile eye drops were applied. Despite this procedure the eye became totally opaque a week after captivity. On the tenth day of captivity defeathering appeared around the right eye, and a small opaque area developed in the posterior portion of the eye. Similar treatments were applied to stem the loss of vision on the right side. Two days later a small amount of pus-like material was exuded on the left side behind the eye. The ear apparently did not share these complications. At this point it was felt necessary to dispatch the bird for humanitarian reasons.

This bird would appear to be a notable example of a diseased or damaged individual becoming selected against by natural predation. The limited vision on the side from which the hawk attacked seems relevant. Also, even though the bird did not appear

to behave in an unusual manner, even up to the time of its blindness, its impairment must have affected its abilities in its natural habitat. The bird presumably survived longer in captivity than it would have in the wild.

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Dr. Shepherd received his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut. His dissertation topic was: An Analysis of Proposed avian perching mechanisms.

Mr. Matthews is a supervisor with the Bridgeport Hydraulic Co. and has had a life-long interest in observing nature.

CHIMON ISLAND PROJECT: AN UPDATE

by Carl J. Trichka

Chimon Island has been the scene of active bird research for several years, originating with Robert Dewire's study of the gull colony in 1973 and continuing with studies of the heronry initiated by the Natural History Services Department of the Connecticut Audubon Society in 1981. Along with the gull colony, this site hosts the only heronry in Long Island Sound. Eight species of herons and egrets currently nest here.

In 1981, Sandra Erskine, a student at the University of Colorado and a native of Connecticut, was chosen to initiate a study of the nesting herons, provide an accurate count of nests of each species, band as many nesting birds and chicks as possible, and color dye the white herons to track their dispersal from the island. Most of these objectives were met, and research posed additional questions concerning the colony.

In this 1981 study, a total of 822 nesting pair of herons and egrets were recorded. They included 510 pairs of Black-crowned Night Heron; 2 of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron; 217 Snowy Egret; 17 Cattle Egret; 28 Great Egret; 23 Glossy Ibis; 12 Green Heron

and 13 of the Little Blue Heron. Black-crowns and Snowy Egrets accounted for 88% of the nesting herons on the island. A total of 341 branchers (immatures) were banded with a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service numbered band and 100 of these were color-dyed with a picric acid solution. One of the Snowy Egrets banded on June 29, 1981 was found dead on the Yaguez River, Puerto Rico, on April 4, 1982. A Black-crowned Night Heron banded as a chick May 26, 1981, found dead near Philadelphia on May 20, 1982. As to the color-dyed birds, we received only two reports, and these were seen feeding in nearby waters.

The effect of chick mortality by predation and disturbance on the island was of concern. Few predators were found on the island, but Fish Crow, Norway Rat and Herring Gull were considered potential predators. Very little, if any egg stealing, chick molestation, or consumption was noted, although this behavior has been noted in other heronry studies. Probably the severest threat to the heronry results from human disturbance. Past studies in other areas suggested that this factor caused the birds to desert and seek other nesting sites. Island hopping was noted between Chimon and nearby Shea Island, where 200 pair of

Black-crowned Night Herons and 10 Yellow-crowned Night Herons were nesting.

During the 1982 nesting season, Peter Marra, a student at Southern Connecticut State College was field researcher and warden for C.A.S. The study goals were to again identify all nesting species, census nests on both Chimon and Shea, initiate a nesting success study, band juvenile herons, and conduct a nest site (habitat) study.

Preliminary surveys of the adult heron population indicated a decrease of 46% from 1981 on Chimon and an 80% increase on Shea. Only the Great Egret and Glossy Ibis populations showed an increase of 10.7% and 8.7%, respectively, on Chimon. Black-crowns showed a 61% decrease from 1981, and Snowy Egrets a 52% decrease. Due to the drastic reductions in nesting, all activities within the heronry were suspended for the season, and research personnel took every precaution to ensure that any human disturbance from visitors was kept to a minimum.

A raccoon was observed on the island in the colony at various intervals and although never directly observed ravaging the nests, crushed egg shells and destroyed nests were found. It is believed that the raccoon affected about 15% of the heronry. Repeated attempts to remove the animal failed, but it was not seen after August 2. By then, the young birds had fledged and the raccoon posed no threat.

The resultant increase in nesting pairs on Shea can probably be attributed to predation and human intrusion. Shea Island is smaller than Chimon, and is heavily used by vacationers throughout the summer months, so its potential for increased nesting is low.

Despite the precautions taken during 1981, it seems likely that the presence of researchers in the colony affected some adults and caused a shift to Shea. Coupled with this was raccoon predation.

The research on this vital heronry will be continued but the 1983 goals will be confined to re-censusing the colonies of Chimon and Shea, a nest success study on Chimon, and a species interaction study on Shea.



THE NORTHERN WHEATEAR IN CONNECTICUT

by Ray Gilbert

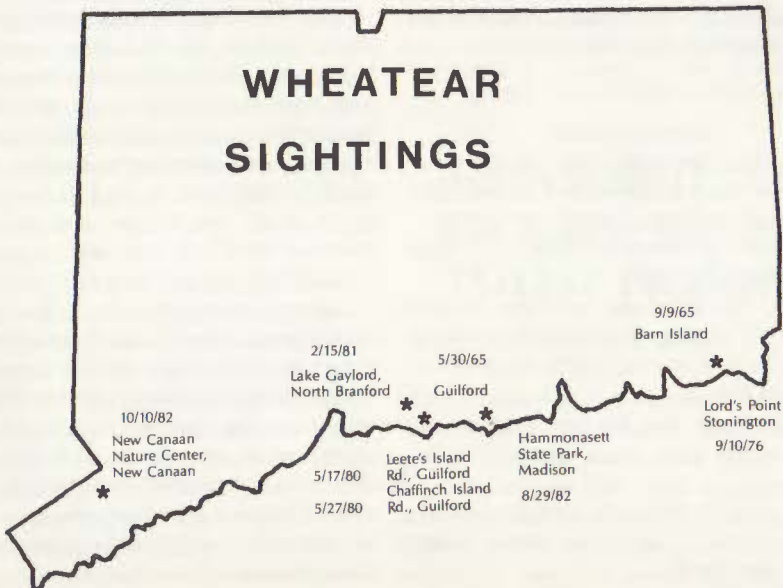
The Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) is a bird of Greenland, Iceland, northern Europe, Asia, Alaska and northern Canada. During Fall migration those birds nesting on the North American continent cross considerable stretches of ocean to reach the European mainland and, finally, their wintering grounds in Asia and Africa in one of the most rigorous and unusual migratory flights known.

It appears from reports over the years, however, that a few of these birds move south into the United States and even into tropical areas in Cuba, Bermuda, Barbados and Chile (Forbush and May, 1955; Bent, 1949; Bull, 1964). Whether these birds have been blown off course by violent storms or are exploring new migratory routes has not been determined, but their appearance out of their normal range always creates a great deal of excitement among birders.

The wheatears seen in Connecticut are probably of the Greenland race (*O. oenanthe leucorhoa*) which have summered in Quebec and Newfoundland-Labrador. In Fall these birds have a grey-brown crown and back, dark wings with light feather edgings, tawny sides and breast, a dark eye-line, white superciliary stripe, chestnut ear patch, white throat, undertail coverts and tail, and a broad inverted T-shaped pattern in black on the distal end of the tail which is bordered by a light terminal band. The legs and bill are black.

The breeding plumage of the male is similar to the winter pattern but the crown and back are light grey, the wings and ear patch are black and the sides and breast are only slightly tawny. The female resembles the male in winter plumage. The over-all body shape is similar to the bluebird but the size is closer to that of a large sparrow.

These birds seem to prefer open rocky areas and sand dunes during their Connecticut appearances, usually staying within a few miles of the coast, but inland sightings of wheatears have been reported from north-western New York, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska and Colorado. (Bull 1964, Peterson 1980).



The wheatear is a very active bird, moving rapidly over the ground as it searches for small invertebrates, including insects and worms. They may also take insects on the wing. While feeding, and if disturbed, they may flick their wings, bob their tails, and utter their "chack, chack" call. When in flight the distinctive inverted T-shape tail pattern is quite visible. Their rapid flights are usually of short duration.

These birds seem to have little fear of man, allowing close approach and extensive observation.

Although they are usually found on or near the ground, the bird in Stonington was perched on roof tops, and the New Canaan bird perched in a tree after being harassed by a Mockingbird.

The wheatear seldom stays at any one site for more than a day, so alert other birders as soon as possible and be sure to record pertinent data including date, time, location, habitat, behavior, plumage, weather conditions both on the day of the sighting and for the day or two prior to its appearance, and the names of any other observers.

This is an exciting bird to add to any life list.

The name wheatear refers neither to wheat nor ears, but is rather a distortion of the Anglo Saxon "white arse" which refers to the white rump (Terres 1980).

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WHAT IS SUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION FOR UNUSUAL RECORDS?

by George A. Clark, Jr.

Although some bird observers profess disinterest in rarities, nearly all become excited when they find one. Sooner or later anyone who spends much time seeking birds will probably encounter a rarity, such as a first occurrence or first nesting to be reported from a town or for the state. In the 19th century it was customary to document such records by taking the birds as specimens, a practice now generally prohibited. Although a specimen, even a single diagnostic feather or an abandoned eggshell fragment, is still one of the least debatable kinds of documentation for rarities, the vast majority of current records must rest on other evidence. As a general rule, the greater the rarity, the more detailed the documentation should be.

Unfortunately, no kind of evidence is free from possible error, and there is no sure method for guaranteeing authenticity of particular records. In some cases, even where specimens are available for reexamination, they have been erroneously identified or mislabeled as to date and locality. Moreover, museum specimens are sometimes inadequate for identification, such as for many individuals of the Willow and Alder Flycatchers, which are most easily distinguished by their calls and nest construction.

Notes made in the field can be critically important in judging a record. How long was the rarity seen, from what distance, and through what magnification? What features were seen and how do these point to the identification made? What leads to the elimination of possible alternative identifications? This last question is particularly important but often neglected by inexperienced observers.

Having more than one observer enhances the chance for acceptance of a record. However, I can recall a number of occasions when initial identifications made by a small crowd of observers proved wrong on closer study. In groups there is a tendency to reach a consensus in which less experienced observers accept uncritically the judgment of those who speak authoritatively. Ideally, a rarity should be viewed at length and by several experienced observers each at different times. Further, it is desirable that the different observers be willing to be critical of each other's identifications.

Experience of an observer is difficult to measure, and I am wary of recent suggestions to measure experience with a simple formula. A warbler expert may not be at all proficient in identifying Shearwaters, and experience with one genus of warblers may be more important than the total number of kinds of warblers the observer has seen. Size of a life list and time spent afield are questionable indices of an observers skill.

I doubt that anyone who makes numerous identifications is 100 percent correct. Even outstandingly good birders make occasional mistakes. Hence, the use of photographs and tape recordings is to be encouraged for documentation. Here, also, mistakes can be made. Lighting conditions can greatly change the appearance of a bird in color photographs, and not all vocalizations are diagnostic. Trapping or mistnetting, with proper legal authorization, can be a valuable adjunct, particularly for birds of small size, enabling measurements, comparisons and photographic close-ups otherwise unobtainable.

Even identification by several experienced observers together with good photographs may not be sufficient to assure a "useful" distributional record. A correctly identified bird might be an escape from captivity. One can only speculate about the origins of some of the waterfowl that have been found in Connecticut.

A committee for screening records can, if sufficiently critical, provide a valuable check, and such committees have already set good

standards in a number of regions of North America and Europe. If the screening of records is properly done, the rigorous criteria should inevitably result in some valid records being rejected because of inadequate evidence. *Observers should recognize that rejection of a record is not intended to be a comment on their integrity.* It is also inevitable that certain rarities will never be adequately identified. For example, early one fall in Hamden, Connecticut, I found a Phalarope, but with the bird at long range, no other observers present, and no photographs, I would not expect others to accept my identification.

In summary, in my opinion the best set of circumstances in the usual cases of sighting of rarities would be to have several experienced people observe at different times and then independently agree on the identifications and to have good photographs and/or tape-recordings. The evidence should then be reviewed by a critical evaluating committee which would approve for publication those records of adequate quality. Only by adhering to a demanding set of standards can we hope to have our records seriously considered by others.

I thank James A. Slater for a helpful review of my comments.

Dr. Clark is an Associate Professor at the University of Connecticut and a frequent contributor to this publication. He is presently the State Ornithologist and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board.

HYPOTHETICAL RECORD: BAND- TAILED PIGEON

by Clayton Taylor

On November 7, 1982, Brian Wheeler, Linda Mallers, Ray Schwartz and I were in a hawk banding blind in East Haven. The temperature was 51°F. and the wind was from the west-northwest at 17 knots. The location of the banding station is along the migration path of many hawks and

passerines, and about three-quarters of a mile east of Lighthouse Point.

At about 1:05 p.m. EST, I saw a large pigeon flying toward the blind from the northwest. It isn't unusual for the local Rock Doves to visit our tethered lure bird, so its presence did not draw much attention at first. As it flew by my viewing hole, I noticed a striking tail pattern, quite unlike any Rock Dove, but before I could comment on it, the bird landed in front of the blind, about sixty feet away. Brian took one look and immediately called it a Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*). The ensuing scramble and excitement in the blind caused the bird to fly off to the east, circle around and then head west. We watched it pass by the blind at 100 feet distance and clearly noticed the tail band, the light collar-mark around the neck, and the overall size and coloration. The yellow feet and black and yellow bill were seen when the pigeon first landed. There were no missing wing or tail feathers.

Brian and Linda had seen Band-tails in July on the Olympic Peninsula, and I had seen them in California and more recently in Peru in September. Our next question was: is it an escapee or a wild bird?

No leg bands were observed and later I checked with Roger Clark of the Riverbanks Zoo in Columbia, S.C., about captive Band-tails. According to the zoo directory, there are no Band-tails in any major east coast zoos. A brief study of the literature and magazines from private pigeon breeders turned up no mention of the species. Although these findings do not rule out an escaped bird, it makes it less likely.

Checking field records, we find that Band-tailed Pigeon sightings in the East have been on the rise since the early 1970's. A January, 1954 report in Louisiana was questioned (*Audubon Field Notes* 8:256). By the late 1970's, reports of this species were accorded the status of a rare but acceptable western stray. Fall sightings are most numerous, but there are mid-winter records for the southern states and a few in the spring also. September records include one in Florida in 1973 (*Am. Birds* 28:43) and New Jersey in 1980 (*Am.*

Birds 35:164). In October, Ontario had two; in 1970 (*Am. Birds* 25:52) and 1978 (*Am. Birds* 33:173), along with Alabama in 1971 (*Am. Birds*. 26:76). Other published reports are November, 1973, in Kentucky and December, 1978, in Mississippi. The New Jersey reports mentioned that the bird came down to a tethered Rock Dove at a hawk banding station!

We concluded that this sighting was a bona-fide western stray, unfortunately it was not photographed.

(Ed. note: This sighting report was forwarded to Dr. George A. Clark, Jr., the state ornithologist, for verification. He concurs that the observers are familiar with this species and the birds of Connecticut, that the report covers the diagnostic features necessary for identification, and that, if any record is to be accepted solely on the basis of a sight record, this one should suffice. The critical issue raised is one of acceptance on the state list or the state hypothetical list as a specimen, photograph, or tape recording is lacking. "Thus, I conclude," Dr. Clark writes, "that the Band-tailed Pigeon should be placed on the Connecticut hypothetical list even though I personally believe that Taylor et al. did indeed see a Band-tailed in Connecticut.")

PAINTED BUNTING — FIRST VERIFIED STATE RECORD

by Carl J. Trichka

During the spring of 1982, it was decided to assess the extent of passerine migration on Chimon Island, off Norwalk, as part of a Connecticut Audubon Society study of the heronry on that island. Arriving on May 23, 1982 in a "northeaster," I began to question this venture since the forecast was for more of the same: rain and more rain. However, by the 25th conditions were steadily improving and mist nets were set in position. The first wave of migrants hit the island that night.

Banding was busy and about noon on the 26th, Peter Marra, the C.A.S. warden and student researcher, and I came upon an Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) in one of the

nets. Alongside it was another bunting, but one entirely different in coloration. This bird was bright green!

We placed band number 950-32304 on this individual. It had a wing chord of 66 mm., and relatively low fat deposits. Its bill was horn-colored, and the fleshy gape was a bright yellow. Above, from the nape to the rump, it was of a bright green seen on parrots or hummingbirds. The wing and tail feathers were dusky, and there were no wingbars. An eye-ring was present but was not sharply contrasted with the remainder of the cheek area. The breast and lower abdomen were pale yellow. Examining the back feathers with a 10x loupe, I found that the tips of the green back feathers had a blue coloration, like that of an Indigo Bunting. We concluded that the bird was probably an aberrant form of the Indigo Bunting. Five color slides were taken and the bird was released and observed for several minutes while it preened itself in a nearby bush.

The color slides were later examined by Fred Sibley of Peabody Museum, Yale University, New Haven, CT., and John Bull of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Both concluded, that it was a female Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*). I then examined three study skins of Painted Buntings collected in Florida and loaned by A.M.N.H. One of the skins matched the bird I banded in every respect, including the blue feather tips on the backside. (A.M.N.H. 365253).

The Painted Bunting is a bird of the southern climes and breeds north to southeastern New Mexico, eastern Kansas, Texas and Louisiana, and coastally from northern Florida to North Carolina. It winters as far north as southern Florida, and less commonly along the northern Gulf coast.

There have been three other sightings of this species in Connecticut prior to this encounter. Dr. Noble Proctor recalls receiving a phone call in 1968 reporting a vividly colored bird at a feeder. He and Davis Finch went the next day to see the bird, described as a male Painted Bunting, but failed to find

it. (Pers. Comm., NSP).

Charles Hills reported an adult female Painted Bunting on October 4, 1972 in Fairfield, CT. This observation was accepted and printed in *American Birds* (Pers. Comm. CFH).

On May 7, 1982, Ray Schwartz spotted a green-colored, bunting-like bird in East Rock Park, New Haven, CT. It was in the company of two male Indigo Buntings. He later checked specimens at A.M.N.H. and concluded it was an immature male. (Pers. Comm. RS).

In a further development of the two May, 1982 encounters it should be noted that *American Birds* reported several male Painted Buntings showing up at feeders on Martha's Vineyard on May 16-19th, and another bird was seen in Westerly, R.I. on May 19th. It is likely that several Painted Buntings made their way north that spring. (A.B. 36:5 p. 831).

According to Dr. George A. Clark, Jr. state ornithologist, the above three Connecticut sightings fall short of a new state record because they are based on the observation of a single observer.

The May 26, 1982, report of a female Painted Bunting on Chimon Island, has been accepted as the first state record for this species in Connecticut because two experienced observers were involved, and because verifiable photographs were taken.



CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

by Jay Hand and Jim Mockalis
WINTER: DECEMBER 1, 1982 —
FEBRUARY 28, 1983

This winter was considerably milder than most with temperatures in December averaging about 5 degrees above normal. A mid-month cold snap reminded birders that this was still New England and not some tropical region. Snow cover was non-existent throughout the month. In fact, the trend continued into the second week of January

when the total snow fall for the month fell in one day. But good, old February held true to form producing its share of snow and below freezing temperatures.

Despite the mild winter, the Christmas Counts produced totals slightly lower than the previous year. Yet birders searched their favored spots and produced some interesting birds along with a few surprises.

GREBS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-necked Grebe sightings were sparse with one on Dec. 31 at Madison and one lingering at Greenwich Pt. until the 19th. (DB). Double-crested Cormorants appeared on the Greenwich CBC and one at the mouth of the Conn. R. on Jan. 2.

Great Blue Herons were seen in Greenwich along with two at Lordship on Feb. 28. Black-crowned Night Herons were also present in the same areas along with 1 American Bittern at Lordship.

Whistling Swans appeared at North Farms Res., Wallingford on Dec. 3 (JMcb, *vide* RS) and L. Saltonstall on the 14th (NP, *vide* RS). Brant were reported at Sherwood I. with 50 on Feb. 19 and at Old Lyme on Jan. 2 (JM, JeHi, *et al*). A Snow Goose appeared at Milford Pt. at the end of Feb. (FM). Ten Gadwall were present at Sherwood I. on Feb. 19 along with 2 Pintail and 1 American Coot. A *Blue-winged Teal* appeared at Groton on Jan. 1 (PR). Single Eurasian Wigeons were at Stratford on Dec. 5 (DV) and Mill Pond, Sherwood I. from the 5th through the 16th. A Redhead was located in Stamford Dec. 19.

The Greenwich area reported very low numbers of Greater Scaup throughout the period if in fact they were observed at all. 90 Lesser Scaup were off Fairfield on Dec. 19 (RBA) and also reported from South Cove, Old Saybrook on Jan. 2 (NP *et al*), and 4 at Stamford on Dec. 19. Bufflehead numbers decreased rapidly after the CBC in Greenwich-Stamford. Three Wood Ducks appeared on Jan. 1 in S. Windsor (PD) but sightings of other ducks at Station 43 were very scarce. A Northern Shoveler and 1 Wood Duck were present in Milford on Feb. 26 (BD, MS).

VULTURES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

On Jan. 7, eagle counters at the Chester Ferry slip spotted a **Black Vulture** with several Turkey Vultures (CT, GZ). The bird was seen again during the following week in Lyme (NP) and on the 22nd came to roost with over 100 Turkey Vultures in a Norway Spruce grove in Lyme (JH). It was seen off and on in the Lyme-Salem area through the month but was not seen again until late April in Salem.

A single Goshawk was reported from three separate locations in the Greenwich-Stamford area on three consecutive days starting on Dec. 20. It quite possibly could have been the same bird. (DB). Another Goshawk was observed making a pass at a feeder in Lyme on Feb. 22, while observers were watching a Black Vulture. (JH). A Cooper's Hawk was spotted in the Essex meadows along the Conn. R. on Jan. 2. (HJM). Good numbers of Red-shouldered Hawks were observed in the Westport-Norwalk area all through Jan-Feb. (FM). A dark phase Rough-legged Hawk appeared at Hammonasset on Jan. 21, while another appeared on the Greenwich CBC on Dec. 19 (JG) and a third was presented in Hamden on Feb. 6 (B&DD). Single Golden Eagles made appearances at L. Saltonstall on Dec. 14 (RS, DR), and at Roxbury on Jan. 8 (CS). Bald Eagles were noted with an immature at Hammonasset on Dec. 18 (BD) and up to 8 present at Shepaug Dam during Dec. One of the 1 year old eagles at Shepaug Dam wore a radio transmitter and it was later learned that the bird was from Maine (*vide* FM). The Conn. R. hosted 6-10 of the same species during the season. Two **Peregrine Falcons** were seen during the period with 1 at Hartford on Jan. 28 (RBA) and another at Great I., Old Lyme on the 24th.

Undoubtedly the highlight of the season was a grey phase **Gyrfalcon** that had birders flocking to Nell's I., Milford Pt. during Feb. It was originally reported on Feb. 20 (NC) as a large falcon and positively identified on the 27th (DE, BW). It was seen sporadically through March (*vide* FM).

At least 2 Greater Yellowlegs were present all winter at Manresa Power Plant (FM) and a single bird at Greenwich Pt. on Dec. 25 (DB). Another of the same species was also observed at Westbrook on Jan. 2 (GL, FS, et al). American Woodcock were reported from Greenwich and on Dec. 5 from Naugatuck (BD, MS), while two were present in Ridgefield on Feb. 28 (TBu).

GULLS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

Second winter Glaucous Gulls were seen at Compo Beach, Westport on Jan. 10 and on Feb. 21 at Knold's Pond, Woodbridge (BD). A second winter Iceland Gull was present at Shepaug Dam throughout most of Feb. (EH, *fide* FM). Greenwich Pt. again was the home of a Lesser Black-backed Gull that has wintered here for several seasons. Old Saybrook produced a Little Gull and a Black-headed Gull on Feb. 20 (RBA).

Two Snowy Owls were reported this season with one at Great Captain I., Greenwich on Dec. 19 (*fide* DB) and another at Milford Pt. on Feb. 26 (BD, MS *fide* FM). Also three Long-eared Owls appeared along the coast with 1 at Darien on Dec. 19 (TB), which lingered until Jan. 1; two at Milford Pt. on Feb. 18-20 (AR). Two Saw-whet Owls were at North Haven on Dec. 26 and again on the 29th. (BD, MS).

A Red-headed Woodpecker was present in Portland throughout Dec. (JHi), while Red-bellied Woodpecker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was noted in Greenwich. An **Eastern Phoebe** was present on the Greenwich CBC (SB).

JAYS THROUGH LONGSPURS

A **Northern Raven** flew over the Canton dump calling, on Feb. 26, but was not seen thereafter (JK). Fish Crows were reported from Greenwich, Essex and Clinton. A House Wren was seen during the Greenwich CBC(JC) and again on Jan. 8 (TBa). There was an obvious scarcity of wren reports and considering their plight during recent winters, are they still scarce or are observers not reporting them? Two Grey Catbirds were seen on Feb. 5 at Spicebush Swamp, W. Hartford (RC).

An Orange-crowned Warbler popped up at Smith Richardson on Dec. 5 (RBA). A Yellow-breasted Chat was found unconscious on a doorstep in Naugatuck on Dec. 4, but regained its senses and flew away. Another Chat appeared on Calves I., Greenwich, on the 19th (JG).

Dickcissels were reported from each end of the coast with one at Groton on Jan. 1 (TC) and the other was at a Greenwich feeder from Nov. to Jan. 20 (DC). Several Pine Grosbeaks were observed at Glasgow Pond, Glasgow on Feb. 13, while a **Grasshopper Sparrow** appeared at Bethlehem on Dec. 19 (RBA). A Savannah Sparrow was reported in S. Windsor, Jan. 1 (PD), while one of the Ipswich persuasion was spotted in Old Lyme on Jan. 2 (JM, JeHi). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** on Jan. 2 in Chester was a late departer (DT, MH).

No reports were received of winter finches during this season. Obviously, the mild weather conditions did not entice those birds to venture further south. To highlight that fact, we close out this season's report with the sighting of a single Snow Bunting on Feb. 22 at Pleasure Beach, Bridgeport.

Observers and contributors abbreviated in the text: Tom Baptist (TBa), Doris Bova, Sandy Buckland, Tom Bull (TBu), Tom Burke (TB), Paul Carrier, Rich Cech, Christmas Bird Count, Judith Clark, Dave Crawford, Tim Crossman, Neil Currie, Paul Desjardins, Buzz & Debbie Devine, Dick English, John Guarnaccia, Ed Hagen, Jay Hand, Mike Harwood, John Higgins (JHi), Jennifer Hillhouse (JeHi), Jay Kaplan, George Letis, Frank Mantlik, John Maynard, Jim McBride (JMcb), Jim Mockalis (HJM), Noble Proctor, Rare Bird Alert, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen, Phil Rush, Ray Schwartz, Fred Sibley, Carl Siebecker, Mark Szantyr, Clay Taylor, Dave Titus, Dennis Varza, Brian Wheeler, George Zepko.

Other abbreviations used: Am.: American, Conn.: Connecticut, et al: and others, *fide*: reported by, imm.: immature, I.: Island, Is.: islands, L.: Lake, N., S., E., W.: compass points, Pt.: Point, R.: River, Rd: Road, Res.: Reservoir, S.F.: State Forest, S.P.: State Park.

STRANGE LITTLE BIRD

by Dennis Varza

What looks like a wren, sounds like a warbler and behaves like a woodpecker? Answer: the Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*).

The Brown Creeper is a one of a kind in North America. There are six species of creepers in the world, all in one genus and in their own family. When not nesting it mixes with flocks of kinglets, tits, and woodpeckers moving about the forest in search of food. However, being cryptically colored and not very active compared to a chickadee, it is usually overlooked, and then suddenly pops up while you are looking at or for something else.



The best months of the year to look for creepers are October and April, when they are in migration. They may be found at any time of the year, however, since they both winter and nest in Connecticut in small numbers. In April the leaves are off the trees and they call more often. The call is a thin high pitched "seee" or "zi-i-i-it," reminding one of the Golden-crowned Kinglet, with which they associate. When one hears kinglets but can't see any movement in the

canopy, chances are the birds are creepers. Start by trying to localize the call to one tree. It is hard to pinpoint such high sounds, and older ears may not hear them at all. Next, patiently scan the whole tree from top to bottom for movement; usually the movement will be a short flight to the next tree. Don't worry, when feeding they go from tree to tree, so they don't travel far. When they alight you can usually follow them.

Creepers, resemble nuthatches in their habits, but only climb up the tree, never downward as nuthatches do. They hunt beetles, scale insects, caterpillars, spiders, etc. Creepers nest locally throughout the state but may be more common than realized because of their secretive habits and early nesting. The nest is a little mossy hammock slung under a strip of bark on a dead tree, where five to six eggs are deposited. The young hatch in about two weeks.

Although described by some as characterless and somewhat uninteresting, with neutral plumage and monotonous habits, the creeper is one of our more interesting birds, and always a delight to observe when discovered. These tips may help introduce you to the Brown Creeper on your next venture into the woodland.

NOTES AND NEWS

SEARCH FOR COLOR-MARKED SHOREBIRDS

In spring, 1983, shorebirds will be color-marked at several locations in South America, California, North Carolina, Virginia, and New Jersey as part of a study of migration routes. This study is part of the Pan American Shorebird Program sponsored in part by the World Wildlife Fund, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, and Manomet Bird Observatory. The 1983 work will focus on 3 species: Sanderling, Red Knot, and Black-bellied Plover. If you observe a color-marked shorebird, please try to note the following: dye — color and location on body, leg flag — color and leg (left, right), leg band — col-

or and leg (left, right). Even incomplete color-marking information will be very useful. Please send the information to Dr. Marshall A. Howe, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland 20708.

CONNECTICUT CHECKLIST

Last year, a project to produce an annotated checklist of Connecticut birds was reported in *The Connecticut Warbler*. After initial delays the project has been reorganized and is now proceeding. It is expected that a complete manuscript will be ready in 1984. The working committee is chaired by Joe Zeranski and consists of Tom Baptist, Milan Bull, Dr. George Clark, Jr., and Dennis Varza. In addition, an advisory group of twelve individuals, selected from all areas of the state, will advise the committee on various aspects of the undertaking — notably on abundance ratings for all areas. The effort is well under way and a publisher has already expressed an interest in publishing the final product. Details on the progress of this long-awaited checklist will be supplied from time to time.

MIANUS FIELD NOTES

Since 1972, the *Mianus Field Notes* has documented the occurrence of birds in Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, New Canaan and adjacent New York State. Ten times a year, highlights of bird observations, locations and observers are chronicled by Tom Burke, its long-time editor. Sponsored by the Naturalist's Committee of the Greenwich Audubon Society, it was originally organized and first edited by Joe Zeranski. It may be the oldest existing chronicle in the state devoted exclusively to birds. Anyone interested in subscribing to it may send \$3.00 to Sue Stappers, 1465 E. Putnam Ave., Unit 415, Old Greenwich, CT. 06870.

PIPING PLOVER RESEARCH

Piping Plovers are threatened throughout their North American range. Increased development of their specialized, unvegetated beach habitat may cause more populations to disappear unnoticed.

The World Wildlife Fund (Canada), Delta Waterfowl Research Station, and Manitoba Department of Natural Resources are soliciting help in locating birds on breeding, migration, or wintering grounds. Please send sightings of Piping Plovers, with date, location, number of birds, and color bands, if any, to Susan Haig, Delta Waterfowl Research Station, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba R1N 3A1, Canada.

SECOND ANNUAL VALENTINE'S DAY BIRD COUNT

by Dennis Varza

The Valentine's Day Count is a bird count identical to a Christmas Bird Count but is held 6 weeks later to compare changes in winter bird populations (See CT. Warbler Vol. 2, #2: p. 18 for details). This is the result of the Stratford-Milford Count. The count was scheduled for February 12th but because of a severe storm that weekend it was postponed to the 19th, and only four of the seven count areas were covered. The following results is a comparison between the same four areas for both counts.

A total of 93 species were recorded on the combined counts. The CBC had 85 species or 91% of the total, while the VBC had 79 species or 86%. The significant feature of the coastal CBCs this winter was the mild weather and the lack of birds, particularly the ducks and gulls (CT Warbler Vol. 3, #1: p. 2). The VBC had 86% of the species recorded and 74% common to both, compared to 70% and 69% for last year, which was a harsh winter. Excluding Rock Doves, Starlings, House Sparrows and House Finches, the population increased a total of 87% compared to a 56.7% decrease last year, indicating additional migration and perhaps reduced mortality. For the ducks there was a 139% increase and for gulls a 112% increase in individuals, compared to a 49% and 64% decrease over last year. It appears that the ducks and gulls missing earlier arrived by mid-February and reflect pre-winter numbers. More subtle trends await additional data from future years.

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The Connecticut Warbler is a quarterly publication devoted to the advancement of the study of birds and their conservation in the state of Connecticut. It is published by the Natural History Services Department of the Connecticut Audubon Society. Address all correspondence to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

The Connecticut Audubon Society

Birdcraft Museum:

314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06430
Phone: 259-0416

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U.S. Postage **PAID**
Fairfield, Conn.
Permit No. 95



THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler is published in January, April, July and October. Subscription is \$6.00 per year, based on a calendar year. Renewal is due in January. New subscribers during the year will receive all four issues for that calendar year. Make checks payable to *The Connecticut Warbler* and mail to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430. Individual issues may be purchased for \$1.50 each, when available. All Rights Reserved.

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About our cover:

This Yellow-headed Blackbird was photographed by Ray Schwartz in Stratford, CT during April 1983.

EDITORIAL

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

Statewide ornithological groups have been long-time fixtures in many states across the country. They perform important and diverse functions such as gathering and disseminating data and generally promoting interest and knowledge of state birds. More specifically, such groups often sponsor research, conduct field trips, monitor populations, set standards and maintain state records, and publish journals, checklists and guides. Connecticut, with high educational and income levels and a distinguished history of field ornithology, suffers in comparison to the accomplishments of such groups in other states. Unfortunately, such a statewide group has never materialized in Connecticut.

For too long a period of time, most birding activities in this state have centered around small, localized groups. While these groups have contributed to Connecticut birding, they have indirectly fostered an atmosphere of parochialism and have thus tended to keep birders isolated from one another. Beginning in the 1960's, conservation organizations which traditionally served birding interests, refocused to address the pressing concerns of a growing environmental movement, and thus sought to develop larger, broad-based memberships. These groups seemed to have found birding elitist, if not completely irrelevant, and de-emphasized it. There was no central organization that statewide birding endeavors could galvanize around.

However, in the last decade or so, a number of impressive ornithological projects have been initiated by enthusiastic birders who felt the need to reach beyond their local areas. Working with the Audubon Council of Connecticut, the Connecticut Audubon Society, National Audubon Society's Northeast office, and several other groups, they organized a popular hawk-watch network, the Rare Bird Alert, the Breeding Bird Atlas project, the Connecticut Bird Conference, *THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER*, and *AUDUBON AFIELD*. In addition, a long overdue and desperately needed publication on state birds is being prepared.

These activities reflect a strong, vital and healthy interest in avian studies. Such projects were initiated by birders around the state, who, while working together, sought to develop better communication and create closer cooperation. They have shown that regional cooperation is possible and that important projects can be completed successfully. The state's birders are now more numerous, active, and capable of leadership than ever before. In the past, most rank and file birders labored in isolation, while a very few spoke for and dominated state ornithology — probably to its detriment. This is no longer the case. These recent projects show that Connecticut ornithology has reached a more mature and advanced stage where the need for a state-wide approach to ornithology is finally being recognized and addressed.

Yet, there is not a state-wide group that birders can call their own. Activities are often fragmented among a variety of organizations. Many birding projects are run by conservation groups whose primary interests are peripheral to the birding concerns. Ornithology in Connecticut should not become a hostage of competing environmentally oriented conservation groups as they strive to expand their respective influence and membership. For example, two different groups support two separate periodicals that compete for readers and authors instead of banding together to publish the best possible state journal on birding. Not only do both publications suffer from this duplication of effort, but Connecticut ornithology may be the big loser in the long run. The study of our state birds is too important to be subjected to devious conservation politics.

Connecticut needs a state ornithological union. Unhindered by non-birding considerations, a union could mirror the aspirations of the entire birding community and provide a direction and unity that is now lacking. In spite of the many important projects now underway in the state, a union could sponsor many others projects — hopefully in cooperation with other groups — that would benefit Connecticut ornithology. Perhaps, as a first step, a semi-independent union could be created, sponsored by and working with existing organizations. This union could publish a single state-wide journal, set standards for state records, maintain a data bank available to everyone, work on studies and publications and perform many other vital functions which contribute to the advancement of regional bird study.

The creation of a central and unified organization should be of the highest priority if Connecticut ornithology is to achieve its fullest potential. When state birders reach a consensus on the importance of an organization devoted solely to Connecticut birds, then the first hurdle will have been passed. Birders should seriously weigh the advantages of a Connecticut Ornithological Union.

What do you think?

Joseph Zeranski
Guest Editor
Editorial Advisory Board

SHOREBIRD BANDING AT NEW HAVEN HARBOR

by Jeffrey A. Spendelow

The shores of New Haven Harbor serve year-round as feeding and roosting areas for many species of shorebirds, but the time of greatest use occurs in the late summer and early fall when thousands of sandpipers and plovers stop here during migration to build up their fat reserves before continuing southward. Studies of shorebird foraging behavior and ecology that have been made in this area (Baker 1974) have included census work on certain species, but little is known of (1) how long individual birds remain in the area, or (2) the amount and pattern of weight gain that occurs during these critical stop-over periods. This brief report presents preliminary results from a banding study done at New Haven Harbor.

METHODS

Mist nets were used to capture the shorebirds. Most of the netting was done in the dark either during the early morning

(0300-0700) or in the evening (1800-2200) on the mudflats of New Haven Harbor, just southeast of exit 46 off Interstate I-95. Two 64-mm mesh nets were used on a few occasions, but most of the captures were made using 36-mm mesh, 12-m long nets. The nets were set perpendicular to the shoreline over the water while the tide was beginning to fall (about 1.5 hours after high tide), and then were opened as the mudflats became exposed and small flocks of birds started to arrive from nearby roosting areas. Depending upon the number of assistants available, the number of nets in use each day varied from 5 up to a maximum of 15. Usually the nets were set singly or in groups of two or three. Because many species seemed to prefer to feed on the most recently exposed areas, as the tide went out the nets were moved so as to remain close to the water's edge.

The nets usually were left open for about two hours, but most of the birds were captured early in each banding session as the flats first became exposed. Birds were removed from the nets within a few minutes of being captured and were then placed in holding boxes until they could be banded, measured, weighed, and released together. The birds were released only after all the nets



Semipalmated Sandpiper Clay Taylor

were closed and removed from the mudflats so that they might then feed without further disturbance. Small birds were weighed to the nearest 0.1 gram with a 50-gm Pesola spring scale; large birds were weighed to the nearest gram with a 300-gm Pesola spring scale. All shorebirds captured on or after 15 August 1979 were aged by plumage characteristics as being either adult (AHY = After Hatching Year) or young (HY = Hatching Year) birds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 749 birds were banded during the fall of 1976, 1979 and 1981. Of these, 658 Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*) comprised 87.9% of all the captures and were the most abundant species active during the time netting took place. The smaller species were caught in proportion to their numbers: Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*), Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper (*C. mauri*), and Least Sandpiper (*C. minutilla*). However, relatively few captures were made of the larger species, such as the Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Greater Yellowlegs

(*Tringa melanoleuca*), Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), and Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*). The larger birds seem more wary and more likely to avoid the nets (Gerstenberg and Harris 1976), and when netted, the larger birds were more likely to escape before we could get to them and remove them from the nets. Also, there were differences in preferred feeding areas (Burger et al. 1977). Yellowlegs and dowitchers, for example, did most of their feeding in shallow water and spent little time on the completely exposed flats where most of the netting took place.

Banded individuals of only three species were recaptured. One Semipalmated Plover and one Short-billed Dowitcher were caught the day after being banded. Second individuals of each of these two species were banded on 19 August 1981 and caught 18 days later, on 6 September. During this time the plover had gained 13.5 gm, or one-third of its initial 4.5-gm weight; and the dowitcher had gained 21 gm, or about one-sixth of its initial 123-gm weight.

Twenty-five Semipalmated Sandpipers were caught twice in a single season, and 13 of these were caught nine or more days after banding. Two were recaptured 16 days later, and three 18 days later. One bird banded 5 August 1969 was recaptured 24 days later. This individual had gained 10.9 gm, more than half of its initial 20.9-gm weight. Another bird had gained 7 gm in only nine days.

Semipalmated Sandpipers caught at New Haven Harbor ranged in weight from a low of 18.9 to a high of 44.1 gm. The lightest birds represent newly-arrived individuals from Canada with depleted fat reserves; the heaviest birds are those ready to leave on the long over-water flight to the Lesser Antilles and northern South America (McNeil and Burton 1977, Morrison 1979). These results show that some birds may be able to almost double their weight during the time they are in our area.

Two of the 385 Semipalmated Sandpipers banded at New Haven Harbor in 1979 were recaptured here two years later, in 1981. Morrison (1979) also found that "birds tended to return to preferred local areas on the coast from year to year" in Canada. Two of Morrison's banded birds have been caught at New Haven, and we have also captured a bird banded in Surinam by Dr. A. L. Spaans.

Table 1 shows differences in the timing of migration by adult and young Semipalmated Sandpipers. The adults begin arriving in our area in July. Some individuals pass through quickly and may reach the wintering grounds before the first young birds arrive here in the middle of August. Most of the birds captured during the last third of August are adults, but after early September few adults remain and young predominate.

Much more work needs to be done before we can fully understand the dynamics of shorebird migration along the Connecticut coast. The results presented here, though, indicate that the mudflats of New Haven Harbor are an important staging area for several species moving from their breeding grounds in Canada southward to their

wintering areas. Morrison (1979) also remarked on "the critical importance of East Coast estuaries as refueling stops for birds about to make a long trans-ocean flight." There are only a few areas left in Connecticut where shorebirds gather in large numbers during migration. Those that still exist should be protected from further development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shorebird banding is not a task to be undertaken alone. Many assistants have helped me band shorebirds at several localities in Connecticut and I would like to thank all of them: Steve & Teri Bennett, Vince Conners, Maury Covington, Frank & John Gallo, Scott Hopkins, Pat Lynch, Tom Moycik, David, Fred and Steven Sibley, Linda Spendelow, Betsy Wajda, and Brian Wheeler.

Table 1. Age of Semipalmated Sandpipers captured at New Haven Harbor, 1979-1981.

Period	HY	AHY	Total	% HY
8/01-8/10	0	63	63	0.0%
8/11-8/20	10	74	84	11.9%
8/21-8/31	17	105	122	13.9%
9/01-9/10	126	9	135	93.3%

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Ruddy Turnstone

Clay Taylor

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

by Jay Hand & Jim Mockalis
MARCH 1 — MAY 31, 1983

March was warm at the outset, and, coupled with the generally mild winter, visions of an early spring and early migrants crossed many birders' minds. However, the month turned cold and the trend persisted well into April. Rainfall amounts soared well above the norm, especially on weekends, and the lack of sunshine and mild winds put a damper on the great re-awakening, effectively pushing springtime back a good two weeks by the third week of April. Returning migrants trickled in, often late and at best on time. Finally, just as the first wave of warblers was being anticipated, the first warm winds of the season swept in from the south at the end of April, and with them came a flood of birds that had been creeping northward and finding conditions less than optimal. Most noteworthy was the inundation of In-

digo Buntings, which usually do not appear until the third week of May. Several other species had early representatives, and some were late, but for the most part species arrived about as expected. May was not overly warm, nor was it cold, and it had its share of southerly winds to keep the birds moving through. Perhaps the heaviest movement occurred on the 24th, when a bander on Chimon I. had to close his nets because there were too many birds!

GREBES THROUGH HAWKS

Rare in the East, but occasionally seen during the season of the Horned Grebe, an **Eared Grebe** in transitional plumage was visible off Leete's I., Guilford, April 16-17 (NP). Another stranger to Long I. Sound, an imm. **Northern Gannet** was spotted off Madison on April 27 (SR, fide NP). A Green Heron was a month early in Hamden on March 26 (RS), and 2 Little Blue Herons appeared at Lordship on April 28 (RS). One Cattle Egret was seen at Greenwich Pt. on April 22 (fide DB), while on May 5 several were reported from Westport, and 1 from Stratford Airport (fide RBA), another was seen in Branford on

May 11 (RE), and 15 were at Stone Acre Farm, Stonington, on May 13 (fide RBA). The earliest Snowy Egret was seen April 2 at Gulf Pond, Milford (RE). On May 8 a Louisiana Heron was reported from Harkness S.P., Waterford (fide RBA), and another was seen near the mouth of the Housatonic R., where it lingered through the 15th (DV). Of interest is a Black-crowned Night Heron in Mansfield on April 4 (SD), while the only Yellow-crown reported was in Milford on May 10 (DV), and the only Am. Bittern was in Old Greenwich on April 27 (fide DB). First dates for Glossy Ibis were April 17, when 7 were seen in the Norwalk Is. (FM), and April 18, when 1 was in Greenwich (TB). One observer remarked at the exceptionally good flight of these birds this spring (NP). In the company of Glossies in Branford a **White Ibis** just coming into adult plumage was seen on May 5 (NP).

A surprise bird was the **White-fronted Goose** with 8 Snow Geese on MDC Reservoir #6 in W. Hartford on April 9 (PB,WB). Other Snow Geese included flights of 400 and 150 over Westport on April 5 and 12, resp. (FM), and lone birds on March 5 at Milford Pt. (RE) and on April 8 in N. Greenwich (fide TG). Gadwall was thought to be nesting in Hamden (FMcB, RS). A Green-winged "Eurasian" Teal was seen March 20 at Gulf Pond (RE), while the wintering Sherwood I. Eurasian Wigeon was last seen there March 13 (FM,TD,JB). Another, or perhaps the same bird, was seen at Lordship on the 20th (RE). A Northern Shoveler was reported on the Natchaug Ornithological Society's May count on the 15th (in the Mansfield-Storrs area), one was in the Quinnipiac marsh on May 22 (RE), and in Hamden the species was suspected of nesting (FMcB, RS). 16 Lesser Scaup were reported from Greenwich on March 22 (fide DB), while 2 King Eiders were picked out of a flock of White-winged Scoters on May 7 during a three-week scoter watch at Greenwich Pt. (DB). Besides 2155 White-winged Scoters, the watch yielded 1 Surf Scoter and 2 Black Scoters on April 28 (DB,TB,JE,JZ). Six other Black Scoters were seen off Stratford on April 19 (DV).

Turkey Vultures seem to be wintering more regularly in greater numbers and in more places around the state, as evidenced by sightings of 1 in Ashford on March 5 (GC et al) and of 4 in the New Fairfield area on March 16 (JMcl). The **Black Vulture** frequenting the Lyme-Salem area through January, but not seen in February or March, resurfaced a few miles to the north in Colchester, where it was seen briefly as it passed over Rte. 11 in mid-april (LB). A pair of Northern Goshawks nested in Pop Mtn., Weston, on April 21, while a Cooper's Hawk was seen May 10 in N. Greenwich. Returning Red-shouldered Hawks were first seen on territory March 13 in Colchester (JM) and on March 14 in Mansfield (GC). The first date for Broad-winged Hawk was April 23 in Mansfield (GC,RL), and one of the few Rough-legs reported — including the whole winter season — was from Lordship on April 10 (DV). No Bald Eagles were reported, but a Golden Eagle was at Bluff Head, Guilford, on April 17 (NP). Single late Marsh Hawks at Essex on May 26 and at Groton on May 29 (JMcc) increased the potential for nesting in the state, and 2 birds courted through the spring at Lordship (DV). The gray-phase Gyrfalcon continued at Milford Pt. until March 20, while a Peregrine Falcon was observed pursuing a bat over the Yale Golf Course on April 2 (TB1). Starting April 20, single Merlins were seen at various locations through the rest of the period: April 20 in Stratford (RS), April 21 in Windsor Locks (PD), April 28 at Yale Golf Course (TB1), April 29 in N. Greenwich (fide DB), May 3 in Greenwich (fide DB), May 8 at Milford Pt. (LS) and May 22 in Windsor Locks (PD).

TURKEYS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Wild Turkeys were heard calling in two locales this spring: through April near Devil's Hopyard S.P., East Haddam (CT) and on May 15 at Mohawk Mtn., Goshen (FM). Rail-finding abilities among birders appear to be improving, as witnessed by single King Rails found along Rte. 4 in Goshen on May 15 (FM,MS, et al), and at Old Greenwich on May 21 (TB). Always a neat inland find, especially satisfying must have been the sight

of an adult Virginia Rail with 8 young on May 4 in Redding (DD). The only Common Gallinule reported was one seen May 21 at Hamden (RS).

The first Am. Oystercatcher appeared March 27 at Lattimer Pt., Stonington (fide RBA). Another was seen in the Norwalk I. on April 17, and at least 4 pairs produced at least 3 confirmed nests there (FM). A mystery was the Lesser Golden Plover that was present in the Milford-Stratford area from the beginning of March through May 8. One was also reported from Hammonasset on April 2 (fide RBA). An Upland Sandpiper at Lighthouse Pt. on April 23 (CT, RE, et al) was right on schedule, and by May 9 the Brainard Airport birds were already on territory (JM). The earliest Solitary Sandpiper was reported from Stratford on April 24 (JZ Et al), but widespread arrival seems to have occurred about a week later, with 1 in Danbury (JHa) and 1 in Stonington (JMcC) on the 30th and 1 in Newtown (GA), and 1 at Portland Meadows (JM) on May 1. Uncommon in Summer, Willets were observed as follows: 1 at Griswold Pt. on May 1 (fide RBA), 2 at Milford Pt. on May 7, 6 at Milford Pt. on May 8 (LS), 1 at Greenwich Pt. on May 10 (JZ) and 1 at Milford Pt. on May 23 (RS). An uncommon migrant that should be watched for, a Wilson's Phalarope was identified at Branford Supply Pond on May 12 (JS,RS), while 25 Red Knots descended on Sandy Pt., W. Haven, on May 15 (RE). A Western Sandpiper was present at Milford Pt. May 21-23 (DV), with White-rumps also in the area from May 9-31. On unfamiliar ground — at least for Connecticut birders — was a Purple Sandpiper feeding on mudflats with Dunlins in the Stratford-Milford area during the week following April 25 (DV). A Stilt Sandpiper in full breeding plumage in Branford on May 8 (NP) must have been an inspiring sight, while a Ruff — a good find any time — was observed May 12 and 13 along the Four Mile R. in E. Lyme (CT).

The Glaucous Gull that wintered at the Fairfield dump was last seen March 14 (DV), and an Iceland Gull was at Long Wharf on March 27 (RE). The Lesser Black-back Gull

of Greenwich Pt. fame was regular into mid-April. Normally post-breeding wanderers, an early Laughing Gull was at Oyster R., Woodmont, on April 1 (RS), and 2 in breeding plumage at Bridgeport in early April (DV). The other exotic gulls, Black-headed and Little, could be found among concentrations of Bonaparte's Gulls at Oyster R. and at Old Saybrook through most of April. An expected but often-missed migrant, a Caspian Tern was seen while observers were 'scoping gulls in New Haven on May 13 (FMcB, AR).

A Snowy Owl coincided with the Gyrfalcon at Milford Pt. and was last seen March 20, while 4 Long-ears were also in the vicinity in early March (fide TB1). Single Long-eared Owls were noted in Darien on March 6 and 14 (fide DB) and at Hammonasset on April 2 (fide RBA) a Short-eared Owl was seen as late as April 10 in Stratford (DV) and a Saw-whet was at Milford Pt. on March 20 (TB1).

Whip-poor-wills were more than a week late in arriving in Lyme, where the first 2 were heard calling on May 10 (JH), but a good flight of Common Nighthawks was observed over Marlborough on May 14, right on schedule (JM). An early Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen twice on April 23 at Birdcraft (MS, DV).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

An exciting find was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** sitting on a fence along Rte. 77 in N. Guilford near L. Quonnipaug on April 17 (NP). When approached by the observer, it flew off and was not seen again. However, this bird may well have been the one reported to the observer and identified after the fact by a non-birder who had seen it on a golf course slightly farther south a few weeks before. At East Rock, New Haven, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was seen on May 14 (RS), while Acadians were found in many new locations. They are doing quite well, and one can almost expect to find this bird somewhere within every suitable habitat throughout the state. The earliest Eastern Pewees were three on May 5 at East Rock Park. (RS). Olive-sided Flycatchers peaked the week of May 14-21, with 2 seen on the

14th in N. Greenwich and at East Rock (JMcl and RS, resp.), 3 on the 17th in the New Fairfield area (JMcl), W. Hartford (PD) and Marlborough (CT) and 1 on the 21st in Cromwell (JM,DT). Likewise, Cliff Swallows were most conspicuous May 10-18, with 1 at a reservoir in W. Hartford (JM) and about 20 at Milford Pt. (RE,DV) on the 10th, 1 at Lake Whitney, Hamden, on the 11th (RS), 1 at Yale Golf course on the 12th (TB1), 1 at Portland Meadows on the 16th (CT) and 1 in N. Greenwich on the 18th (fide DB).

A Northern Raven, surmised to be the same one seen Feb. 26 at the Canton dump, provided the second record for the Hartford area when it was seen being harassed by a crow in W. Hartford on May 17 (PD). Fish Crows continue to push inland via the Conn. R., as evidenced by 1 on April 7 at S. Windsor and 2 at Windsor Locks on April 21 (PD). As one might have expected due to their poor showing last fall, Red-breasted Nuthatches were conspicuously absent from the area throughout the period. Carolina Wrens were spotted at two inland locales: 1 in Mansfield that remained through the period as late as April 22 (NJ) and another, less remarkable due to its proximity to the Conn. R., at Hurd S.P., East Hampton, on May 14 (JM).

Swainson's Thrush could be found just about everywhere during its expected travel time in mid-May, while Gray-cheeked Thrushes were present through most of the month. Those reported were 1 in N. Greenwich on the 6th (TB), 1 on the 12th at East Rock (RE), 3 on the 21st at N. Greenwich (JZ), Milford Pt., and Cromwell (JM,DT) and 1 on the 29th at East Rock (TB1).

Ruby-crowned Kinglets were not so numerous as usual. Three Water Pipits were seen May 10 in S. Windsor (PD), while single White-eyed Vireos were seen at their northern limit in New Fairfield on May 12 (JMcc.) in Marlborough (JM) and in W. Hartford on May 18 (PD). Quite late were 2 Solitary Vireos at Pop Mtn. in Weston on May 24 (FM). Single Philadelphia Vireos were recorded at East Rock on May 11 (RS), in Kent on May 14 (CH) and again at East

Rock on May 22 (FM,MS et al).

WARBLERS THROUGH SPARROWS

A Prothonotary Warbler in full song was a pleasant surprise at Durham Meadows on May 5 (NP). Two Golden-winged Warblers were seen at Mohawk Mt. Goshen on May 15 (FM,MS,BD), while a "Brewster's" Warbler was seen May 5 in W. Hartford (PD). Six Tennessee Warblers were a little early at East Rock on May 7 (JH), and Cerulean Warblers held their own in at least Kent and Lyme and were heard or seen in various other spots around the state. Another overshoot was a singing **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Young's Pond, Branford, on April 28 (NP). Bay-breasted Warblers were in good numbers the third week of May, 5 being seen in Westport on May 18 (FM). A Blackpoll Warbler on May 7 at East Rock (JH) was slightly ahead, as this species and Tennessees usually show up at the end of the second week of April (NP), and an early Louisiana Waterthrush appeared in Branford on April 7 (NP). The Kentucky Warbler was back in Salem for the fifth straight season, and other single birds were found May 25 in Lyme (CT), May 28 at East Rock (TB1) and May 31 in Ashford (EC). The first Mourning Warbler was reported from N. Greenwich on May 17 (TB), followed by 1 in Cromwell on May 21 (JM,DT) and by 3 netted on Chimon I., Norwalk (fide DV), and 1 in East Haddam (JH) on May 24. Always nice to find, 2 Yellow-breasted Chats were seen in N. Greenwich on May 1 (TB,JZ). A Hooded Warbler was singing on territory in East Haddam on April 30 (JH,CT), and quite early were a Wilson's Warbler on May 6 in N. Greenwich (TB,JZ) and a Canada Warbler in Kent on May 2 (DV).

A Yellow-headed Blackbird usually surfaces somewhere during migration period, and one did just that on April 7 in Stratford (fide DV). A ♂, it remained through the 23rd. A bird that is on the increase is the Orchard Oriole, and they were numerous within their range in the state. Of those reported, the most noteworthy were 1 at its northern limit in Connecticut in Kent on May 14 (CH) and a slightly early individual in East Haddam on

May 1 (JH). Also on May 1, in Mansfield, was a rarity, a **Summer Tanager** (WG,JHy). Unusual but not unexpected, 2 Blue Grosbeaks turned up in Avon on April 26 (JK,BK), with other single birds in Guilford on May 5 (DH) and singing in Easton on May 22 (CH). As mentioned above, Indigo Buntings came through in good numbers beginning at the end of April, at least two weeks ahead of schedule, with 14 at Greenwich Pt. (fide DB) and 1 in Danbury (JHa) on April 26. If the sighting stands, that of an adult ♂ **Painted Bunting** in Greenwich on May 8 (LW, fide DB) would be only the second state record for this species. The observer studied the bird for several minutes, and the record is most likely a valid one. Yet another uncommon visitor to the state, a ♂ **Dickcissel**, was seen in North Mianus (Greenwich) on April 27 (SB). Absent from much of the state through the winter, a Pine Siskin lingered at a feeder at Denison-Pequotsepos Nature Ctr. in Mystic from May 20-23 (RD).

Reduced to strictly local status in all of New England, a Henslow's Sparrow was observed at Milford Pt. on April 28 (MC). A Vesper Sparrow was at Greenwich Pt. on April 22 (fide DB), while 3 were seen in N. Greenwich on April 26 (fide DB), 2 were in New Fairfield on May 10 (JMCC) and one was singing in Huntington Park in Redding May 24-30 (DV). A Lincoln's Sparrow was in N. Greenwich on May 21 (TB,JZ) and 1 was netted and banded at Chimon I., Norwalk, on May 24 (fide DV).

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Sally Richards, Arne Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Ray Schwartz, Jane Spielman, Mark Szantyr, Clay Taylor, Dennis Varza, Les Walker, Joseph Zeranski.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD IN CONNECTICUT

by Dennis Varza

At The Connecticut Audubon Center in Fairfield, we receive many calls to identify birds and to report unusual birds. Most of the calls come from nonbirders and their descriptions are sometimes deficient on critical points. A majority of the calls concern fairly common species; but there is a small percentage that may be classed as genuine rarities. Many times I have chased down hawks that flew into windows only to find Ruffed Grouse, and have had Sandhill Cranes turn into Great Blue Herons, while there are also those that never show up again. One soon becomes skeptical of these "sightings"; yet they cannot be ignored for every now and then a rarity shows up. That is exactly what happened on 7 April, 1983.

At 11:30 a.m. I received a call from a Mrs. Blackwell of Stratford, who reported a male Yellow-headed Blackbird at her feeder. I thought to myself, "Yellow-headed Blackbirds are hard to confuse." She said it came to her feeder with Red-winged Blackbirds, had a bright yellow head and chest, black body, and a white spot on the wing. At that point, I was convinced that the white wing spot was a detail that would be missed by careless observers. I then asked about size; she replied that it was a little larger than a Red-winged Blackbird. Was it still there? She said "No, but it was here earlier in the morning." I took her name, address and phone number and told her to call again the moment it returned.

The house is near Short Beach in Stratford, and there is a field where blackbirds congregate. Accompanied by Milan Bull and his brother Tom, we drove out to the house,

scanning the trees for blackbirds, and finally parked at the end of the street on the edge of the field. We scanned the large flock of mixed blackbirds, without any success. A short time later, a blackbird flew up out of the grass and landed on a fence flashing white in the wings — an adult male Yellow-headed Blackbird! We observed it for five minutes, feeding and chasing the other blackbirds. When we returned to Birdcraft Sanctuary, we called the Rare Bird Alert and other local birders so that they might see the bird. The bird was most cooperative, staying until 23 April, and was photographed by many.

The Yellow-headed Blackbird is a common western species, and the combination of abundance and prevailing westerly winds make it a regular vagrant in the east. The first record in Connecticut was a specimen collected in 1884 in Hartford by W. Treat. In the past ten years this blackbird has been expanding its breeding range eastward, and as a result, it has become more common in the east. Nearly every coastal state now reports one to several every year or so. The Stratford bird is the 12th record for Connecticut. There are two records in the first 50 years (1884-1935); two more in the next 25 years (1935-1959); one in the next decade (1960-1969); five in the following decade (1970-1979); and finally two in the past four years.

The Yellow-headed Blackbird has appeared in every month except May and June. Five of the records are for the winter (Dec.-Feb.), followed by 3 in the fall (Aug.-Nov.), 2 in the spring (Mar.-Apr.), and 2 in the summer (July). The major concentration of records in the winter is attributable to their conspicuousness at feeders. During the spring and fall, they are found mixed in flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds. So if you missed the bird in Stratford, be patient; another will probably show up. Keep checking those large flocks of redwings spring and fall, and especially keep a watch at local bird feeders.

APPARENT TORPIDITY IN TREE SWALLOWS

by John D. and Paul E. Stake

Torpidity, or temporary reduction in body temperature, in certain birds may be a natural phenomenon that allows them to conserve energy when a food shortage results from short periods of cold weather. The present report is an account of a field observation of torpor-like behavior in Tree Swallows.

At 1720 hours on April 5, 1983, three Tree Swallows were found in an empty wooden nesting box attached 42 inches above ground level on the stump of a dead apple tree located on Hanks Hill, Storrs, CT. The nesting box, originally constructed and set out to attract Eastern Bluebirds, had been successfully used the two previous breeding seasons by Tree Swallows. On banding the three swallows, it was apparent that two birds were extremely inactive (minor attempts to fly or escape), while the other was easily aroused and attempted to fly off when we banded and examined it. After each bird was weighed, banded, and the chord wing measurement obtained, we returned the three individuals to the nesting box which had been cleaned of the previous year's nesting material in January, 1983 and remained entirely bare at this date.

The birds were observed twice daily (about 0700 and 1730 hrs) for the next three days and in each instance all three birds were in the box, but two appeared to be unaware of our presence. One individual sat in an alert position on the floor of the box, but made no attempt to leave the box during the brief period that the hinged roof was raised. All three birds were photographed in the box on April 7, 1983. Again no movement of any bird was observed, but it was apparent the birds were alive, as fresh droppings were present on the floor of the box.

At noon on April 9, the nesting box was again checked and two dead individuals were found. The third individual had apparently left the box of its own accord, as the hinged roof remained latched and no evidence of predator activity was indicated. The two dead birds were removed and examined, and were noted to be extremely emaciated. Weight loss in the individual birds was 31.0 and 33.8% of the body weight of April 5. For the period April 1 to April 9, the average daily high temperature was 50.7°F (range — 40-58) and the average low was 34.7°F (range — 28-42). This may have precluded the presence of sufficient flying insects. Thus, it is suggested that the three individuals may have been in a period of torpor as a response to the cold weather and reduced availability of food.

McAtee (*Amer. Midland Naturalist*, 1947, 38:191-205) summarized several observations of torpidity in Chimney Swifts, "chimney swallows", parakeets and hummingbirds in various areas of the U.S., Italy, and Argentina, but no observation of this condition in Tree Swallows was reported. Lasiewski and Thompson (*Condor*, 1966, 68:102-103) published an account of a field observation of torpidity in the Violet-green Swallows, but were unsuccessful in inducing torpor in captive Cliff Swallows.

Whether or not torpidity is a natural and frequent means of energy conservation in Tree Swallows is unknown. Additional information on both ambient and body temperatures are needed before conclusions can be reached.



Tree Swallow

Frank Gardner

LISTING

by Joseph Zeranski

Publishing lists of the total number of species recorded by active observers can serve several general purposes. Accurate lists can give an indication of the number of species which may be found in different geographic areas. Perhaps the benefits are indirect but in the long run, lists can help encourage communication and increase general cooperation among birders as well as expand general information about avian numbers. By building personal lists, birders usually cover specific areas more thoroughly, resulting in a better understanding of species distribution within that area.

The following list totals are as of December 31, 1982. Under each of the headings is the total number of species seen and the individuals name.

STATE LIST

- 357 Noble Proctor (31-Branford)
- 306 Steve Sibley (?-Guilford)
- 300 Fred Sibley (12-Guilford)
- 299 Dick Bernard (13-Hamden)
- 297 Bob Dewire (25-New London)
- 293 George Zepko (28-Middletown)
- 292 Clay Taylor (7-Moodus)
- 292 Joe Zeranski (20-Greenwich)
- 290 Ray Schwartz (9-Hamden)
- 287 Milan Bull (20-Fairfield)
- 287 Dennis Varza (15-Fairfield)
- 286 Tom Baptist (12-Stamford)
- 285 Buzz Devine (?-Naugatuck)
- 284 Betty Kleiner (20-Simsbury)
- 282 Chris Wood (?-Woodbury)
- 275 Steve Potter (22-Stamford)
- 274 Frank Mantlik (12-Norwalk)
- 270 Ed Hagen (10-Woodbury)
- 270 Mark Szantyr (6-West Haven)
- 266 Polly Brody (26-Newtown)
- 264 Doris Bova (10-Greenwich)
- 245 Gary Palmer (20-Greenwich)
- 220 Dick Gedney (8-Madison)
- 207 Bob Moeller (11-Sharon)
- 206 Peter Bono (8-Ledyard)
- (? = No. of years not reported)

COUNTY LIST

FAIRFIELD

- 275 Joe Zeranski
- 267 Tom Baptist
- 242 Steve Potter
- 223 Gary Palmer

MIDDLESEX

- 231 Clay Taylor

NEW HAVEN

- 346 Noble Proctor
- 300 Steve Sibley
- 296 Dick Bernard
- 291 Fred Sibley
- 251 Mark Szantyr
- 232 Clay Taylor
- 208 Dick Gedney

TOWN LIST

BRANFORD

- 274 Noble Proctor

BRIDGEPORT

- 150 Dennis Varza

DARIEN

- 156 Steve Potter

FAIRFIELD

- 235 Dennis Varza

GREENWICH

- 257 Joe Zeranski
- 256 Tom Baptist
- 246 Doris Bova
- 215 Gary Palmer
- 149 Dick Gedney
- 143 Steve Potter

GUILFORD

- 273 Noble Proctor
- 264 Steve Sibley
- 224 Fred Sibley

HAMDEN

- 216 Dick Bernard

LEDYARD

- 100 Peter Bono

MADISON

- 179 Dick Gedney
- 154 Mark Szantyr

MILFORD

- 245 Steve Sibley
- 202 Fred Sibley

NAUGATUCK

- 135 Mark Szantyr

NEW HAVEN

- 302 Noble Proctor
- 243 Steve Sibley
- 199 Fred Sibley
- 135 Dick Gedney

NEWTOWN

- 192 Polly Brody

STRATFORD

- 228 Dennis Varza

WESTPORT

- 170 Steve Potter

Contributors have listed the following species as those which they would most like to see in the state. After each species is the number of votes it received. Not included was a large list of species which only received one vote and were omitted, due to space limitations.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Black Rail (9) | Tufted Duck (2) |
| Yellow Rail (7) | Peregrine Falcon (2) |
| Sedge Wren (5) | Golden Eagle (2) |
| Gyr Falcon (4) | Curlew Sandpiper (2) |
| Boreal Owl (3) | Hawk Owl (2) |
| Henslow's Sparrow (3) | Northern Shrike (2) |
| Barrow's Goldeneye (2) | Connecticut Warbler (2) |
| Harlequin Duck (2) | |

NOTES AND NEWS

A.O.U. MEETING

The American Ornithologists' Union will celebrate its Centennial at their annual meeting which will be held in New York City, 26 September to 1 October, 1983. Most of the functions will be held at the American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West and 79th St., New York City. An active schedule of scientific and social activities is planned for this historic event. There will also be two sessions when authors will be available to autograph their books. A list of authors will be published by the A.O.U. prior to the meeting.

BOOKS FOR SALE

BIRDS OF STORRS, CONNECTICUT AND VICINITY, by Jerauld A. Manter, 1975. The Natchaug Ornithological Society has copies available for \$3.75 which includes postage. The region covered by this book includes Mansfield and the contiguous towns of Willington, Ashford, Chaplin, Windham, Coventry and portions of several others. This publication should be part of any serious bird students library.

Copies may be purchased from Fred Lipschultz, Physics Dept., U-46, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268. Please state number of copies needed and make your check payable to Natchaug Ornithological Society Book Fund.

THE BIRDS OF GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT, by Locke Mackenzie, 1961. **The Connecticut Warbler** has copies available for \$5.00, including postage. The book covers the Guilford area and includes data on geography, habitats and detailed species reviews. Its coverage provides insights into population change in the past 20 years and thoroughly reviews the birdlife of coastal Connecticut.

Please state the number of copies desired, make your check payable to The Connecticut Warbler and mail to 314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT 06430.

TIME AND TIDE WAIT FOR NO BIRDERS

During a field trip to Greenwich Pt., CT to see among other species, the Lesser Black-backed Gull, another party from New London showed up with the same thought in mind. However, they arrived too late and missed the gull, because they didn't plan on the tide. The bird was normally present only at low tide and the tide difference between New London and Greenwich Point is about two hours.

When birding shore areas the tide is of critical importance to your chances of seeing a larger variety of birds or a specific species. In general, low tide is the prime time to view the mudflats for shorebirds and high tide is preferable to see birds that roost away from the shore. Ducks and rails are also easier to observe at high tide.

To assist in determining the times of the tide along the Connecticut shore, this rough guide is presented. Newspapers and radio broadcasts are sources for times of the tides, or one can obtain a copy of **Eldridges' Tide and Pilot Book** at boating stores. This guide is good for the year at points along the eastern coast south to Baltimore. The table below is an approximate guide to determine the tide along the coast from Mystic to Greenwich and hopefully it will assist birders in planning future trips.

HIGH OR LOW TIDE

FROM	TO	HR:MIN	
Mystic	Groton Pt.	2:20	*
Groton Pt.	Niantic	2:00	*
Niantic	Hammonasset	1:00	*
Hammonasset	Madison	:30	*
Madison	Milford	:10	*
Milford	Stratford	:30	**
Stratford	Bridgeport	—	***
Fairfield	Stamford	:10	**
Stamford	Greenwich	—	***

* before Bridgeport

** after Bridgeport

*** same as Bridgeport

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The Connecticut Warbler is a quarterly publication devoted to the advancement of the study of birds and their conservation in the state of Connecticut. It is published by the Natural History Services Department of the Connecticut Audubon Society. Address all correspondence to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

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Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage **PAID**
Fairfield, Conn.
Permit No. 95



THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler is published in January, April, July and October. Subscription is \$6.00 per year, based on a calendar year. Renewal is due in January. New subscribers during the year will receive all four issues for that calendar year. Make checks payable to *The Connecticut Warbler* and mail to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430. Individual issues may be purchased for \$1.50 each, when available. All Rights Reserved.

The editors invite the submission of articles, notes, black and white photographs and line drawings for use in *The Connecticut Warbler*. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the sheet only, with ample margins. The editors must reserve judgement as to how much of this material to use and return postage should be provided if materials are to be returned.

About our cover:

This Harlequin Duck was photographed in the Norwalk Islands by Jim Bleuer during early June, 1983.

EDITORIAL

AN IDENTITY CRISIS

During the last few months we have been treated to two rather special bird events. These help to point out what I feel is a need for the pooling of information and expertise that will afford more identification aids for all of us.

On Nantucket, the African Reef Heron brought a myriad of people (well over 3,000 at last count), a great deal of speculation on the "route" taken by the bird (flight or boat!) and most of all, the insecure feeling by just about everyone who saw the bird that "If I had found it, would I have identified it?" The bird first put in an appearance in April and nearly three months passed before it was properly identified. In general it looked like a Little Blue Heron but had yellow feet and a white throat. The question arose, "Could it be a Snowy-Little Blue hybrid?" This in itself would have been remarkable. But few are familiar with all the herons of the world, and it took some time before the photos got into the right hands and the bird was identified.

A few weeks later, another "mystery" bird appeared at Jamaica Bay, this time a shorebird. It was in a plumage that had the experts vascillating between Little and Rufous-necked Stint. Photos were taken, sketches made, and extensive field notes recorded. These have been sent off to the specialists who are familiar with these birds in their native habitat, and the final decision is pending.

Both occurrences point up problems facing the field birder. Travel to areas where these species are regular is not possible for everyone. Hence, key field characters whether or not described in texts, are unfamiliar. Nor does everyone have an extensive library or access to one to allow familiarity with the species. Hence, I would like to propose steps that might help all of us become better prepared afield.

First, each birder should generate a "Look Alike List." With such they could at least be thinking of other possibilities when viewing the more common ones:

Ex: Horned Grebe-Eared Grebe

Water Pipit-Sprague's Pipit

Semipalmated Sandpiper-Rufous-necked Sandpiper

As time permits, work up the distinctive field marks, and armed with these as field-guide supplements, enjoy the common form but be armed for the rarity.

Second, each major birding magazine now has a literature-review section that aids those birders who cannot review all the available literature and distill the newly discovered field aids. Perhaps it is time for this journal to start an identification aid column. From time to time we can pick out certain species to highlight, and drawing on the vast talent of field birders, get experts on different species or groups to share their expertise with us.

Via this method we could generate a series that would give us insight into the literature and the invaluable aid of wide field experience. To be successful, everyone's input is needed. Jot down birds you find problematical (winter plumages, calls, look-alike species, etc.) or questions concerning species habits or distribution. With this information in hand, we can then work it up in the series that will hopefully be a welcome supplement to the field guides for all of us.

Dr. Noble S. Proctor
Guest Editor
Southern Conn. State Univ.

HARLEQUIN DUCK IN NORWALK

by Peter Marra

The last three days of May, 1983, brought heavy fog and rain to the Connecticut coast. Conducting research on Chimon Island, Norwalk, Sue Langevin and I were more than pleased when the sun appeared for the first day of June and gave hope that we might get something accomplished. The daily census of herons departing for their off-island feeding areas was completed at 7:00 A.M. We decided to leave the island and go to East White Rock one mile to the northeast, to make a count of nesting Double-crested Cormorants.

As our seventeen-foot canoe came within thirty feet of the rock, the cormorants began to hoist their wings and disperse in all directions. Rounding the corner of the rock and heading toward the sandy landing point we sighted a duck sitting contentedly on the sand less than twenty feet away. The bird was a full plumaged, male Harlequin (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). As I reached for my camera the bird waddled off the beach, skittered over the surface and flew out of sight. For the next week and a half it was sighted consistently by a number of people. Most of the time it was in the presence of a female Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*).

The Harlequin Duck is a common resident of the north Atlantic Ocean, on Baffin Island, Greenland, and Iceland. Its breeding range extends as far south as the Gaspé Peninsula, but it nests more commonly in central Labrador and northeastern Quebec. It winters as far south as New Jersey but is more frequently seen on Long Island, at Montauk and Orient Point. In Rhode Island, the Harlequin Duck is a rare but regular winter visitor. In the past three years it has occurred consistently from late November to March at Sachuset Point.

In Connecticut, it is a rare visitor. Since 1946 there have been eleven sightings. The last one prior to our sighting was at New

Haven harbor in January of 1978 (Proctor). Surprisingly, three of the ducks were seen between June and August. Interestingly enough, all but two of these have been males.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

by Jay Hand & Jim Mockalis
SUMMER: JUNE 1 — AUG. 31, 1983

June started out warm and wet, but the balance of the summer was hot and dry. The most significant weather event was a three-day northeaster in early August that had little southward bird movement associated with its chilly winds. There was no mid-August cool snap to quicken the pace of the incipient land bird migration, and passerines moved southward at a fairly constant rate without impressing birders with their numbers or diversity. Probably the most striking feature of the period was the relatively large number of sightings of birds that normally winter on the ocean, the most notable being a Harlequin Duck in Norwalk Harbor at the very outset of the period, and the first state record for a South Polar Skua, photographed from the Bridgeport Port Jefferson Ferry.

LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Unusual were Common Loons along the shoreline throughout the summer, with one sighting in June, three in July, and four in August. A separate sighting involved one bird on Saugatuck Res. on July 16 (MS). Considered late migrants were a Red-throated Loon at Milford Pt. on June 18 (DR,PR) and the Pied-billed Grebe at Holly Pond, Darien, on June 20 (JZ); while a Double-crested Cormorant on Mirror Lake in Storrs on June 26 was noteworthy.

As usual, Cattle Egrets were most often seen west of New Haven, with 14 at Norwalk Hbr. on June 2 (FM) and 40 at Milford Pt. on July 25 (PM). One exception was a bird at Pilot's Pt. Marina, Westbrook, on June 20 (CT). Likewise, Louisiana Heron sightings were confined to the Stratford area, with

single birds at Bridgeport on June 9 (MS, *fide* FM), and at Milford Pt. on June 18 (DR,PR) and on Aug. 21 (CH), and a pair at Long Beach on July 1 (DV). Two Little Blue Herons were seen from the Four Mile River boat launch in Old Lyme on June 20 (CT), while Milford Pt. had one on July 25 (DV), and 2 on Aug. 3 (TBI). Another was noted from Griswold Pt. on Aug. 28 (JH, JM). A pair of Yellow-crowned Night Herons was present at Ash Creek all summer (*fide* DV), one was seen June 20 in Westbrook (CT), 5 were at Norwalk Hbr. on July 4 (FM), and one was reported from Lordship on Aug. 13 (BD,MS). Least Bitterns were observed in their usual haunts: Lordship on June 5 (RE), Durham Meadows on June 11, (BD,DD), and Sta. 43 South Windsor on July 2 (JMa,DT). An interesting sighting was of one at Bantam River inlet, Bantam Lake, Litchfield, in early June (GL). The only American Bittern reported became a celebrity at Milford Pt. on July 30 (*fide* DV).

An unusually high spring count of 28 Brant on June 2 was recorded at Norwalk Hbr. (FM,JB). A pair of Gadwalls was suspected of nesting at Great Is. Old Saybrook, where they were present all summer (CT). Green-winged Teal showed up in July, with one at Lordship the 13th through 27th (MOBS), and 10 at Great Is. on the 30th (CT); while 2 Blue-winged Teal were seen at Great Is. on Aug. 3 (CT). A Greater Scaup off Milford Pt. on June 11 (RE) was a winter holdover, while 19 off Long Beach on Aug. 31 (DV) were early returning migrants. Unquestionably, the best duck of the summer was a ♂ **Harlequin Duck** found June 1 feeding off East White Rock, Norwalk (PM), where it remained through the 6th (*fide* FM). A White-winged Scoter off Long Beach, Stratford, on July 25 (DV) may have been the same bird seen on the sandbar off Milford Pt. on Aug. 3 (FM). Another lingerer was a Red-breasted Merganser at Milford Pt. on June 4 (RE).

Adding to the incursion of Northern Goshawks, was a pair noted on the Woodbury-Roxbury June count on June 5 (FM,CW). A migrating Cooper's Hawk pass-

ed Sta. 43 on Aug. 25 (PD). An adult Bald Eagle in Sherman was seen infrequently throughout the summer (JK), while another was observed June 5 on the Woodbury-Roxbury count (*fide* RBA). A ♀ Marsh Hawk was in Stratford on June 5 (DV); Milford Pt. had a ♂ on July 20 (TBI), and another bird on Aug. 14 (CH).

The Wild Turkey was confirmed as a breeding species in two blocks of the Hamburg Quadrangle and one block of the Moodus Quadrangle (all in East Haddam). (CT). The hot spot for Common Gallinule remained Sta. 43, where one was seen July 2 (JMa,DT), and 2 imm. were seen August 21 (BD,MS). Another was at Great Is. on July 30 (CT).

Once again Am. Oystercatchers bred successfully on the Norwalk Is. where 4 pairs had nests (*fide* FM). A Lesser Golden Plover was notably early Aug. 23 at Milford Pt. (DV). Although not common in the state, Whimbrels were regular in the Stratford-Milford area in Aug., with several sightings of single birds (DV,JMa,DT,FM). Further proof that Conn.'s Upland Sandpipers "require" the drone of airplane engines for successful breeding was furnished at Bradley International Airport, where 2 young were observed on June 12, and 12 birds were seen on Aug. 21 (PD). Returning migrants were noted at Lordship on Aug. 13-27 (DV,MS,BD). Willets again bred at Stratford and Hammonasset. A Wilson's Phalarope at Milford Pt. on Aug. 20 (BD,MS) was joined by a second bird the next day (CH). Another Milford Pt. specialty was Red Knot, with 8 northbound on June 6 (DV), and 18 southbound on Aug. 3 (FM). Aug. produced White-rumped Sandpipers at Milford Pt. (DT,CH,TBI); while single **Baird's Sandpipers** were reported at Great Is. on Aug. 21 (CT) and at Lordship on Aug. 27 (BD,MS). And which way were those 2 Dunlins heading on July 6 at Milford Pt. (TBI)? Stilt Sandpipers were reported at Milford Pt., with 2 on July 17 (CH), and one on Aug. 25 (RS); while single Buff-breasted Sandpipers were noted there on Aug. 28 (RS), and at Sandy Pt, West Haven, on Aug. 29 (DV,RS).

GULLS THROUGH SKIMMERS

The best bird of the summer was a **South Polar Skua** photographed off Bridgeport from the Port Jefferson ferry on Aug. 19 (RS). Unusual outside of Greenwich Pt., and especially so for June, was a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Milford Pt. on the 6th (MS); and surprising was a Bonaparte's Gull at Greenwich Pt. on July 20 (JZ). Forster's Tern sightings were numerous, with equal numbers thereof coming from Milford and Griswold Pts. from July 30 through Aug. (RS, JMa, CH, JH, JM, CT). In fact, the species was not uncommon into November. Royal Terns continued to put in late summer appearances, with one at Short Beach (DV), and 4 at Hammonasset S.P. (*fide* RBA). The Hammonasset birds stayed into September. A lone Caspian Tern was reported from Great Is. on Aug. 20 (CT), while 2 were at Sandy Pt. on Aug. 27 (JMa, DT). Black Terns first appeared on July 30, with one at Griswold Pt. (*fide* RBA), and one at Milford Pt. (RS), where 3 were present the next day (RS). Three Black Skimmers again appeared at Milford, Pt., on Aug. 26 (*fide* RBA), while an imm. paused briefly at Griswold Pt. on Aug. 28 (JH, JM).

OWLS THROUGH SPARROWS

The only owl of note was a Saw-Whet found on the Woodbury-Roxbury count on June 5 (*fide* RBA). A Whip-poor-will was also found on that count (CW, *fide* FM). A Red-bellied Woodpecker was unusual for Bridgeport on June 13 (DV). Three Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and one Acadian were banded at Birdcraft during the latter half of Aug. (DV), and a solitary Olive-sided Flycatcher was found on the Woodbury-Roxbury count on June 5 (*fide* RBA).

Eight Cliff Swallows, (perhaps from a breeding colony?) were observed in Sherman on June 2 (JK), while one migrant was seen at Great Is. on Aug. 19 (CT). Not surprising, but a nice find nonetheless, was a pair of Hermit Thrushes at a nest with eggs in Peoples S.F., New Hartford, on June 25 (BD, DD).

Both hybrid warblers were found — a Brewster's in Southington on June 15 (MH, RS, BM), and a Lawrence's in the net at

Birdcraft on Aug. 3 (DV). Two Cerulean Warblers were noted on the Woodbury-Roxbury count on June 5 (*fide* RBA). A Kentucky Warbler was in Ashford on June 1 (EC, GC), and another was banded at Birdcraft on Aug. 23 and stayed in the area for 2 more days (MOBS). The Woodbury-Roxbury count of June 5 turned up a Mourning Warbler (EH, *fide* FM), and a Wilson's Warbler was banded at Birdcraft on Aug. 24 (DV). In Brookfield a Yellow-breasted Chat was found June 12 (CH), while one was present the 13th through 15th at 90 Acres Park, Bridgeport (DV, MS). Two Orchard Orioles were in Greenwich in June (JZ), and the species was confirmed nesting in Norwalk (FM). Two others were at Milford Pt. on July 13 (MH). Suspected of nesting at Bradley International Airport, were 4 adult Grasshopper Sparrows seen there on June 23 (PD).

CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Baptist, Tony Bledsoe (TBl), Jim Bleuer, Ellen Clark, George Clark, Ellen Dawley, Paul Desjardins, Buzz Devine, Debbie Devine, Richard English, Jay Hand, Michael Harwood, Charles Hills, Jeanne Kaufman, Gordon Loery, Frank Mantlik, Many observers (MOBS), Pete Marra, Bill Martha, John Maynard (JMa), Jim Mockalis, Rare Bird Alert (RBA), Dave Rosgen, Penny Rush, Ray Schwartz, Mark Szantyr, David Titus, Dennis Varza, Chris Wood and Joe Zeranski.

IDENTIFYING THE GULLS OF NEW HAVEN

by Fred C. Sibley

Do you break out in a sweat when you try to separate gulls for identification? Do you patiently wait near a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls until someone comes along to point out the Little Gull? Stop this nonsense. Spend this month learning your gulls. This article is not going to tell you how to separate a third year Thayer's Gull with an inferiority complex from a super thyroid Rock Dove.



Laughing Gull

C. J. Trichka

This article starts with the basics.

If you have trouble with gull identification, it will help to go back to square one and review what you know. "But I know a Ring-billed Gull," you say. Could you look at a zoo pond containing all the gull species of the world and pick out the Ring-billed Gull? Maybe. Herring Gull? Unlikely. In short, you have been identifying gulls by elimination. If it is not a Herring Gull, it must be a Ring-billed Gull. This is an excellent way to start birding and certainly an efficient short cut to identification. Unfortunately it is no help when you want to find that rare gull in a large flock of similar looking Herring Gulls. The elimination process using a few key field marks can be easily learned from the field guides and works great in good light with typical birds. To know the bird from the front, back, side, in flight, and in all plumages takes a lot of time in the field as well as time with the books. "Impossible," you say. Can you identify Ronald Reagan from the back, in a crowd, in old movies, and in poorly drawn editorial cartoons? Of course you can. If you can know Reagan you can know a Ring-billed Gull.

The New Haven Green is an excellent place to start learning your gulls. There are

only two species there, the larger Herring Gull and the smaller and commoner Ring-billed Gull. Bring some bread, and you can leave the binoculars at home. Gulls take more than one year to mature and in these two species you can identify the three-five year age classes from the very dark first year birds to the adults with pure white heads and tails.

After sorting the age classes to your satisfaction move to the New Haven Harbor. Take the I-95 exit to Frontage Road in the Long Wharf area and park at the western end of the road or wherever gulls are abundant. The birds will look different here. Until you become very familiar with the birds, each new habitat will give you identification problems. There are now three species present, but the much larger Great Black-backed Gull should give no problems in adult plumage. The immature birds share size and bill characteristics of the adults so compare an adult Herring and Great Black-backed Gull and then start sorting out the large immature birds. If you systematically check the first 100 roosting gulls and correctly identify them to species, you should start getting the feel for what Herring, Ring-billed, and Great Black-backed Gulls are. If you're reasonably lucky, a Bonaparte's Gull will fly by (very small, conspicuous white in wings, ternlike flight). This is another good reference bird. Very common in spring and fall migration when there is usually a Little Gull and/or Black-headed Gull in the flock. These three — plus the Laughing Gull (a summer visitor) — all have black heads in breeding plumage and white heads in winter. The first three are difficult to separate, so start learning Bonaparte's Gulls now to improve your chances of spotting the rarer species in the spring.

Your next stop should be a dump, and the Spring Street landfill off Kimberly Avenue in West Haven is a good one. Again, the birds in a new situation are going to act differently and therefore look different. If there are white-winged gulls (Iceland and Glaucous) in the area, they are probably at the dump. Get permission to drive in or walk in so you



Ring-billed Gull

C. J. Trichka

are close to the birds. After you have adjusted to the three common large gulls, start scanning the flock for birds with all white wings or light wings. Once you find one, it stands out like a sore thumb, and you will be able to follow it in the swirling flock of flying birds with no trouble. At this point, you may benefit from having a more experienced birder along who can help you in finding white-winged gulls. At some other time, make sure you return and locate the birds on your own for additional practice.

The following list may be of help. Species common all year are: Ring-billed, Herring, and Great Black-backed. Uncommon in winter is: Bonaparte's. Rare in winter are: Glaucous, Iceland, Black-headed, Little. Accidental in winter is: Lesser Black-backed. Common in spring is: Bonaparte's. Rare in spring are: Little, Black-headed. Common in summer is: Laughing. Accidental in late summer is: Franklin's. Ring-billed, Herring, Great Black-backed, Glaucous, Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are dump feeders. Bonaparte's Gull is never found at dumps, and Little and Black-headed Gulls are inevitably with flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls. Franklin's Gulls are usually found in roosting flocks of Laughing Gulls, and Frontage Road

is a good spot to check for both Laughing and Bonaparte's

In Connecticut there are usually reports on the hot line of spots to find Lesser Black-backed, Little and Black-headed Gulls. check these out when possible. The field guides and identification articles only give you a two-dimensional view of the bird; you have to see it to know it.

Fred C. Sibley is a senior preparator with Yale's Peabody Museum, New Haven, CT.



Herring Gull

C. J. Trichka

CHRISTMAS COUNTS OF OWLS IN CONNECTICUT

by Bettina McKay, Dwight G. Smith and
Noble S. Proctor

In this paper, we use data from Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) to examine winter owl

species composition and explore trends in the counting of owls in Connecticut. Arbib (1981) and others have called attention to the abundant information contained in the CBC's and described techniques for its analysis. For many states, including Connecticut, CBC's represent the only winter census data available for most avian species. Although use of CBC data has been criticized because of the high degree of censusing variability and efficiency, Raynor (1975), Bock and Root (1981), and others have shown that use of simple normalizing statistics usually produces results which are biologically meaningful.

Methods: We compiled owl census data from ten Connecticut CBC stations which had been active for 30 years or longer: Bristol, Greenwich-Stamford, Hartford, Litchfield Hills, New Haven, New London, Oxford, Storrs, Waterbury and Westport. For each of these stations we recorded the number of owls of each species observed, number of observers and parties, party hours and party miles from the following sources: *Audubon* (1941-1946), *Audubon Field Notes* (1947-1956), and *American Birds* (1957-1980).

The frequency of occurrence of each owl species observed at each station was computed by dividing the total number of years in which an owl was seen by the total number of years during which a CBC station was active. To chart population trends of certain owls, specifically Screech Owls (*Otus asio*), Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*), and total owls counted, (or at least trends in counting of these species on CBC station counts) we computed three years running mean counts of owls per observer and displayed the results graphically.

Results: The frequency of occurrence of owls reported on all CBC's for ten Connecticut stations is shown in Figure 1. A total of nine species were reported, plus a varying number of unidentified species. There is a marked difference between stations in the numbers of species of owls reported and also a difference in frequency of occurrence of some of these species. Five stations —

Greenwich-Stamford, Hartford, New Haven, New London and Westport — recorded a minimum of eight owl species during the years in which they were active. Three stations — Litchfield Hills, Storrs and Oxford — recorded but three species, and two stations — Bristol and Waterbury — have recorded only one.

Owls most commonly reported included Screech Owls at 9 of the 10 stations and on 52% of all counts; Great Horned Owls at 7 stations and on 30% of counts; and Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) at 7 stations and on 38% of all counts. Less commonly reported owls included Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*), Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*), Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*), Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*), and Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*), all five being recorded on 20% or less counts at four stations only. The rarest owl recorded on Connecticut CBC's was a Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*) observed in 1959 at New London. The observers were able to get



Long-eared Owl

Pat Lynch

Figure 1. Frequency of occurrence of owls reported in ten Connecticut CBC Stations.

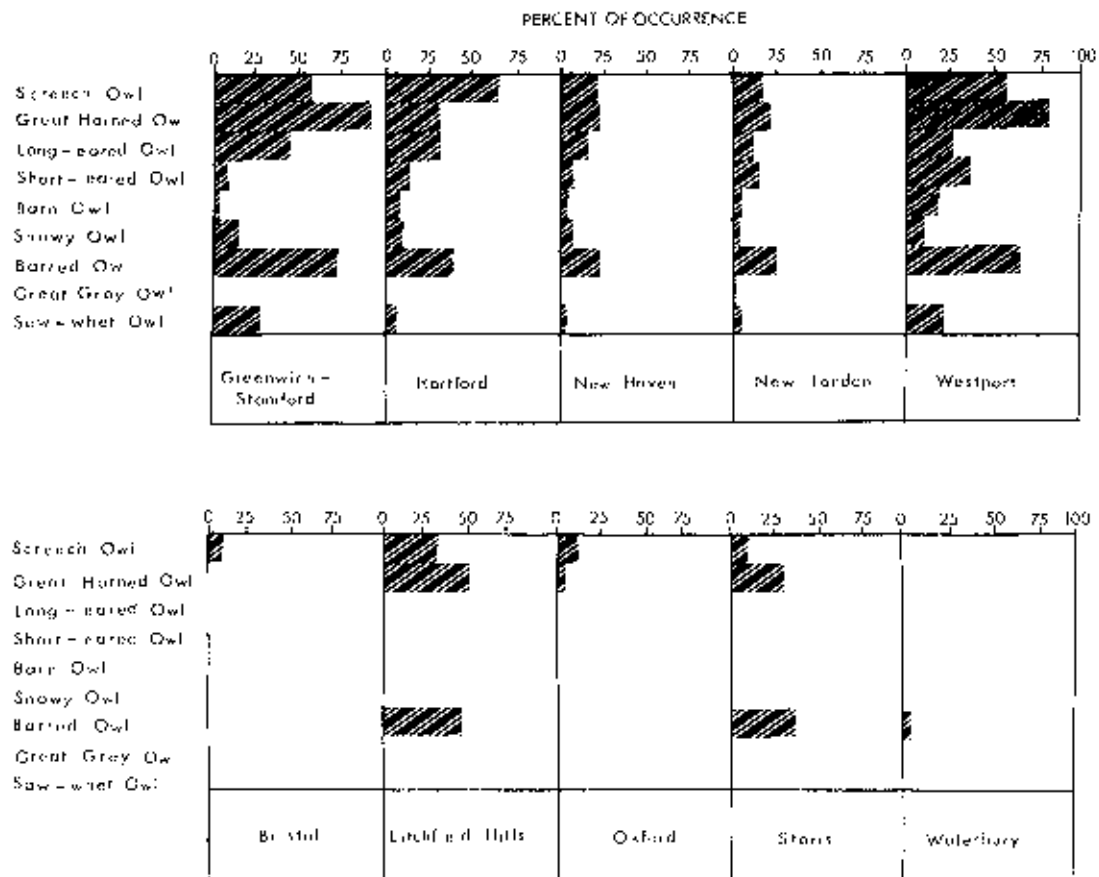
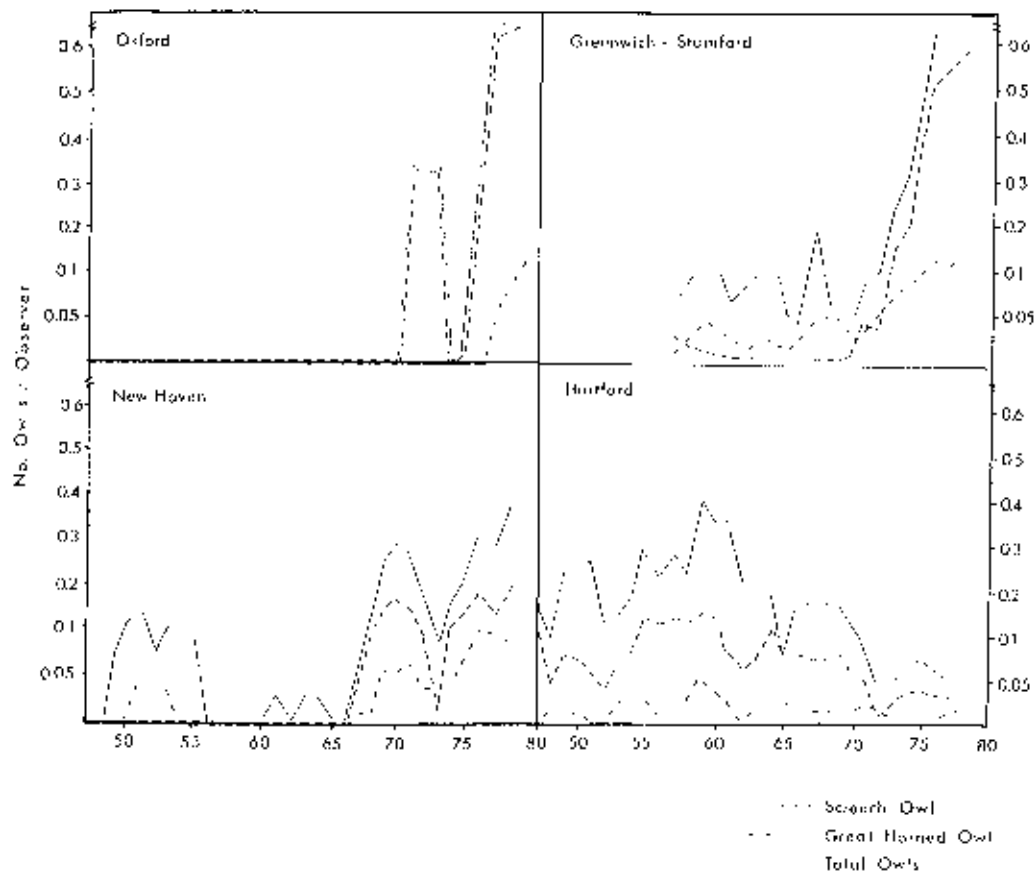


Figure 2. Yearly numbers of Screech Owls, Great Horned Owls and total owls reported from four Connecticut CHC stations.



within 25 feet of this owl for positive identification.

These results may be compared with an earlier summary of Connecticut CBC's from 1900-1939, compiled and published by Leonard Wing in 1947. During this period, there were 307 censuses, 1699 census hours and the average frequency of occurrence of owls was 14%. Wing found that Screech Owls were reported in 55% of these years and from 12% of the station counts during these years. Barred Owls were the next most commonly reported owl species, and were observed in 37.5% of the years and 5% of the counts. Long-eared and Short-eared Owls were recorded in 20% of the years and on 3% of the counts. Both Saw-whet and Snowy Owls were infrequently recorded on counts, but surprisingly neither Great Horned nor Barn Owls were reported on CBC's during those years.

The collective results provide a reasonably good measure of the diversity of Connecticut's winter owl population, but the very wide differences we found between stations must be a function of either habitat suitability of the count area or presence of observers with an interest and expertise in counting owls at particular stations. A third factor which cannot be discounted is length of time a station has been active: three of the stations which recorded the greatest number of owl species, Hartford, New Haven, and New London, are also the three longest running CBC stations in Connecticut. All began in the early 1900's.

Except for Hartford, the other stations reporting the greatest number of owl species are shoreline towns with a count area that encompasses a wide variety of habitats, from shore and riparian to urban and suburban, and rural woods and meadows. Conversely, stations reporting the least number of owl species are comparatively new or include mostly upland woodland and meadow in their count areas.

Some indication of the importance of observer interest and expertise may be noted in the graphs of average counts of Screech Owls, Great Horned Owls and total owls for

four stations — Greenwich-Stamford, New Haven, Oxford and Hartford — presented in Figure 2. Oxford shows the greatest variation and New Haven the least in numbers of Screech Owls and total owls observed. Owls were not recorded on Oxford CBC's until 1970, when almost 0.4 Screech Owls per observer were found. Oxford Screech Owl counts declined again in 1974 but jumped to 0.9 owls per observer and have remained high since. Except for the 1973-1974 dip, counts of Screech Owls and to a lesser extent Great Horned Owls increased each year during the 1970's at all of the stations graphed. In addition, these two species comprise the greatest percentage of total owls counted. While this may indicate that numbers of these two species did in fact increase in Connecticut during this decade, the results more likely demonstrate observer interest. Owling became a great sport during the 1970's and territories were often staked out in advance of CBC counts at a number of stations.

Screech Owls are comparatively abundant in urban, suburban and rural habitats of Connecticut and will readily respond to either vocal imitation or playback of tape-recorded song. The winter months are also a good time to call Great Horned Owls, which are highly territorial and have often initiated nesting activity by late December. Thus, the results reported here should probably be read as increased observer interest in owls and capability for finding them (enhanced by the portable tape recorder) rather than owl population changes.

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BIRDING LAKE CANDLEWOOD

by James Hammer

As summer recreation-seekers migrate back to urban abodes, the onset of fall and winter brings the ducks to the lake. The influx of water birds usually occurs in mid-October. Most remain through the winter, departing in early April to mid-May when the lake once again becomes a human province.

LOCATION: Lake Candlewood is in the northern tip of Fairfield County, bordered by the towns of Sherman, New Fairfield and Brookfield. It is approximately eleven miles

long and about two miles wide at its broadest point. Much of the lake is bordered by summer cottages and year-round homes, providing permanent and seasonal residents ample recreational opportunities.

ACCESS: Access to the lake has always been a problem, what with private roads running in all directions. This definitely calls for an exploratory and adventurous spirit. Two of the easiest routes to the lake are Candlewood Lake Road (which starts as White Turkey Road) on the east side, and Route 39 on the west side.

The eastern shore can be reached from Candlewood Lake Road by leaving I-84 at Exit 7, which puts you on new Route 7. Take the first exit to Federal Road, turn left at the light and proceed across old Route 7, north past Caldor's, which will be on your right. You will soon see the lake on your left. There are several marinas which offer good vantage points. Telescopes are useful because the lake is wide.

To reach the western edge, take Exit 5 from I-84 and proceed north on Route 39. This road will circle Ball Pond and then proceed through New Fairfield. Ball Pond might make an interesting side trip to look for Hooded Mergansers if the water is open. This is the route to Squantz Pond and the northern section of the lake. Unfortunately, one finds less access to the lake than expected. Asking people for access to the strategic lookouts usually works, so give yourself time to explore the small roads leading down to the lake.

DESCRIPTION: Western Connecticut has many fine seasonal birding hot spots and this is one of them. A trip to the lake in winter can be successful if you know when and where to proceed. The lake can be divided into two distinct zones. The southern portion tends to be quite built up and difficult of access. The northern end also has limited access but is less developed. This article deals only with the southern portion of the lake; in a future issue, the northern section will be covered.

The fall and winter transients include Common Loon, Gadwall, American Wigeon,

Green and Blue-winged Teal. On occasion, a flight of Snow Geese may stop in late fall. Least and Solitary Sandpiper are also fall migrants here.

A migratory line runs the length of the lake and hawk watchers frequent various promontories such as the top of Bear Mt. Reservation to scan the skies for migrant hawks. Ospreys frequent the Housatonic River and the lake during migration, occasionally lingering into late November.

The winter lake watcher will find an abundance of Common Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck, and Common Merganser along with the ever-present Mallard, Black Duck and Canada Goose. Less numerous, but common are Hooded Merganser, American Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, and Mute Swan. Occasionally, small flocks of Canvasback and Redhead spice up the day. Among the strays at this time are Horned Grebe, Oldsquaw and most recently, Northern Shoveler.

The wooded areas produce a predictable selection of residents and migrants ranging from White-throated Sparrow to Rufous-side Towhee. Winter Wren, Swamp and Fox Sparrow are also found in pockets of undeveloped land to the west and south.

One of the bonuses to be expected is the sighting of a Bald Eagle. These birds are winter residents on the Shepaug and Housatonic Rivers and frequent the lake to feed or ride the thermals.

Jim Hammer teaches at Wooster School in Danbury. He is the Christmas Count compiler for that region and a member of our Advisory Board.

NOTES AND NEWS

HAWK WATCHING WEEK

Through the efforts of E. Stuart (Stu) Mitchell, Chairman of the New England Hawk Watch Committee, an official statement was released from the office of Connecticut Governor William A. O'Neill proclaiming the week of October 2-8, 1983 as Hawk Watching Week. We unfortunately learned of this to late for incorporation in

the July issue.

Hawk migration studies in Connecticut are by no means new to the "hawkers" of this state since it all began over 20 years ago. Since then we have been leaders in hawk migration research with over 1000 people reporting data to the committee. Connecticut was the third state in the U.S. to avail itself of the Raptor Short Course made available by the National Wildlife Federation. We were placed 8th on a scale of one to ten in a recent survey of raptor research efforts by Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

So, in recognition of the contributions of our state to raptor migration studies, we doff our caps to the corps of volunteers who have worked long and hard to advance the cause. Well done!

GOOD BIRDERS CAN BECOME SHARP BIRDERS

Do you know all the regular birds in Connecticut, but never seem to find the rarities? There may be two reasons for this situation. First you may assume a flock contains only common species. For example, Lapland Longspur occurs in flocks of Horned Lark, but do you look for Chestnut-collared and Smith's Longspur among the laplands? The second reason may be experience. Better birders usually travel to areas where our rare birds are common and can observe several or more of the same species. When they return home, they are equipped to notice those differences and can do it with confidence.

Field guides can show individuals in either winter or summer plumage or both and they provide quick notes on key characteristics. However, they do not show any variations or subtleties and the drawings are the artist's interpretation of the subject. In the past, study skins were the norm before the guides came into prominence. Looking at skins, you can see the variations of plumage, age and sex combinations, feather patterns and bill shapes.

Although the value of looking at study skins is undeniable, most museums are closed in the evening making it difficult for

most people to use them. To solve this problem, **The Connecticut Warbler**, in cooperation with the Peabody Museum, is offering an opportunity to visit the collections and library. There will be four classes where specimens and the related literature will be available for study. Sharpen up your skills and get the jump when the rarity shows up.

All classes will meet at 7:30 p.m. at the Peabody Museum in New Haven (directions will be sent). Cost is \$7.00 for subscribers and \$10.00 for non-subscribers. Make checks payable to **The Connecticut Warbler**, and mail to 314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT. 06430. Fees will be used to support the publication.

MORE ABOUT LISTING

In consideration of the favorable response among our readers to the publication of the total number of species observed in several categories, we plan to publish an update. Due to space limitations, the new list will appear two years after the first one — in 1985.

A new category is proposed, the total number of species seen in the state in 1984. Those readers who are interested in keeping personal annual lists should plan to submit their years totals and also update their state, county and town lists.

High totals in most of these categories

February 1 LOONS & GREBES

Common, Red-throated and Arctic Loon; Horned, Eared and Western Grebe (both morphs).

February 15 WHITE-WINGED GULLS

Glaucous, Iceland, Ivory, Thayer's and Herring Gull.

February 29 LARGER GULLS

Great, Lesser Black-backed, Western, California, Ring-billed, Mew Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake.

March 14 HOODED GULLS

Laughing, Franklin's Sabine's, Bonaparte's Black-headed and Little Gull.

takes many hours of birding and an ability and willingness to travel. This is sometimes out of the reach of many. Therefore, the most popular and active list should be one covering their home town. In this category, virtually everyone can participate and contribute new information.

When used by birders as a very approximate judge of their own relative knowledge and degree of activity, and not as competition with other birders, listing is not only an educational and interesting sport, it is usually harmless.

Details and submission forms will be made available in late 1984.

Species	Aug. 1976		Aug. 1979							Aug. 1981			Sept.		Total	
	09	10	04	05	11	14	15	27	29	30	06	07	19	04		06
Green-backed Heron					1											1
Black-bellied Plover									1						7	8
Semipalmated Plover			4	4		3	2	8	6	3			4	5	3	42
Greater Yellowlegs												1		1		2
Spotted Sandpiper			2	1	1			1								5
Ruddy Turnstone							4								1	5
Semipalmated Sandpiper	17	2	7	64	63	101	51	41	52	30	54	9	33	41	94	658
Western Sandpiper					1										4	5
Least Sandpiper				1	1	1	2			1					1	7
Stilt Sandpiper															1	1
Short-billed Dowitcher						11	1					2		1		15
Total for Date	17	2	9	71	70	120	57	49	58	34	54	9	40	46	113	749

Birds netted at New Haven Harbor 1976-1981

Due to space limitations, the following table was omitted from Jeff Spendelov's Article "Shorebird Banding at New Haven Harbor" Connecticut Warbler Vol.3 # 3

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The Connecticut Warbler is a quarterly publication devoted to the advancement of the study of birds and their conservation in the state of Connecticut. It is published by the Natural History Services Department of the Connecticut Audubon Society. Address all correspondence to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

The Connecticut Audubon Society

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