

# **THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER**

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

CONNECTICUT  
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ASSOCIATION



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## THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The editors invite submission of articles, notes, black and white photographs and line drawings for publication in *The Connecticut Warbler*. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the sheet only, with ample margins. The style of manuscripts should follow the general usage in recent issues.

Cover: John H. Dick's Connecticut Warbler sketch.

## EDITORIAL

As a newcomer to the Connecticut Ornithological Association board, I am meeting people who have an incredible amount of determination and dedication to their work. I am in awe of these people. They include people who have spent a lifetime carefully learning and observing, people who have spent months carrying out research in harsh, uncomfortable conditions to clarify one point of a bird's life history, people who give up their spare time to work on committees, meet deadlines, review manuscripts, etc. All sorts of dedicated people with one thing in common — an interest in birds.

When I start feeling smug about my own accomplishments, I am humbled by the achievements of others. I am also coming to realize that in order to accomplish something of real and lasting value you have to do the job well and that takes large amounts of time and perseverance.

More and more I realize the value of our publication, *The Connecticut Warbler*. Connecticut long needed and now has a place where information about our birds can be organized and shared by the birding community. We are finding out who is working on research projects and what they are learning. We are acquiring an understanding of the past and present bird distribution in order to have a point of reference for tomorrow. How would we judge the significance of future changes if no one had recorded the present situations.

To continue the gains already made, COA needs the continued support of its present members and the addition of new members. If we are to expand the scope of our involvement in the birding community, improve and enlarge our journal, and hold meaningful annual meetings we need an expanded membership. Without the hard work and dedication of many people there would be no COA with its many advantages to Connecticut birders.

What can you do to help even if you don't have the time to be an officer, board member, or volunteer? You can encourage others to join COA, you can provide suggestions on the contents of the journal, you can contribute field observations to the seasonal reports, you could even increase your membership grade. If you want to be more deeply involved, want to volunteer for a committee or write an article for the journal please do so or contact one of the board members for suggestions.

COA is at a critical point in its history. While we have overcome the obstacles in the formative years and have many assets and points in our favor, we must continue to grow if we are to assume a permanent spot in the Connecticut birding scene.

Debra Miller, RFD #1, Box 199.3, Deep River, CT 06417.



# THE 1986-1987 CHRISTMAS COUNT

FRED C. SIBLEY

Hartford with a supporting cast of northern counts took almost all the prizes this year. Barkhamsted recorded the first Christmas Count sighting of a Common Raven although Lakeville-Sharon came within a mile of taking that record a week earlier. Litchfield Hills had the State's only Pine Grosbeaks and Storrs had 15 noteworthy species (second only to Hartford's 16). Hartford came up with 4 species new to the northern counts (Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Loon, American Bittern and Snowy Owl) plus Harris' Sparrow, Double-crested Cormorant, Merlin, and Hooded Merganser; all new to Hartford plus 2 species recorded on no other State count — Osprey and 3 Peregrine Falcons. This added up to a record 91 species and a remarkable count all around.

Other exciting finds included a Black-backed Woodpecker at Old Lyme (a first for State Christmas counts), Common Teal at Stratford, Barrow's Goldeneye at New Haven, and Lark Sparrow at Westport.

Hartford also had the most observers (154) beating out Greenwich-Stamford (151) for the first time ever. The count period covered the peak of the flu season and this may have been the cause of record low observer numbers on 3 of the 6 coastal counts and 3 of the 4 older northern counts.

In total individuals seen Hartford again tops the list with 128 thousand, 25 percent of the state total and triple the second place New Haven count. Even when we eliminate the 70 thousand starlings from the Hartford count it still leads all the State counts.

Only 9 species were reported to have over

10 thousand individuals on this year's counts. In order of abundance: European Starling with 146 thousand, Herring Gull - 42t, American Crow - 42t, Canada Goose - 35t, Ring-billed Gull - 19t, Rock Dove - 12t, Black-capped Chickadee - 12t, and Mallard - 10t. American Crow and Black-capped Chickadee were regularly present on 1900-1910 Christmas counts, but Herring Gull and European Starling were recorded only a few times in that period. The other species were absent in the first decade of counts.

This was a year for northern birds. Although not a real winter finch invasion, there were great numbers of Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches. Our last crossbill invasions were in 1978-79 and 1981-82 (poor). Maybe next year. However in addition to the Common Raven and Black-backed Woodpecker mentioned above there were Snowy Owls at Hartford, New Haven, Stratford-Milford and Greenwich-Stamford and Northern Shrikes at New Haven, Salmon River, Barkhamsted, Hartford, and Lakeville-Sharon. After a number of poor years it is nice to see a good showing of shrikes.

Hawk numbers continue to increase. Sharp-shinned (107) and Cooper's Hawks (19) numbers were 4-6 times higher than ten years ago; there were a record 29 Bald Eagles seen with 12 on the Woodbury-Roxbury count and 8 at Old Lyme, Merlins showed up on 2 inland counts and 3 Peregrine Falcons turned up in Hartford.

Owl numbers continued upward with Northern Saw-whet Owl the real standout. The state record of 27 was mainly due to an unbelievable 14 at Lakeville-Sharon. Half of these were found in the evening after they failed to call or respond in the pre-dawn hours, a thought for next year. This little owl was recorded on only 1 count in

1977-78 but on 8 this year. In fact only 1 count has failed to record this species at least once in the last 3 years.

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

Do we have a decline in small passerine numbers? There are some disturbing signs. The coastal counts had a record low 42 thousand European Starlings with every count except Westport scoring a new low. A cause for joy? Blackbird numbers were also low but these species have exhibited erratic fluctuations in the past, so their decline may be a 1 year aberration. If the blackbird and European Starling declines are linked what is causing the decline? There were also record lows on half the coastal counts for some feeder birds - Downy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Fox Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco with below average counts for the rest. The number of species with low counts this year was more than double the average on coastal counts. Significant high counts, those more than 50 percent above the previous high, were only half as numerous as in other years. The decline in numbers are real, observers on every coastal count commented on the difficulty in finding passerines. However, it is still not clear if this is a cause for alarm, a naturally low year, or an artifact due to birds being more widely dispersed or further north. Tune in next year.

This was another warmer than average year and particularly unusual in that every count was run in warm, near perfect count conditions. The excess of open water re-

sulted in high numbers of water birds in the Great Blue Heron, American Black Duck and Canada Geese were present in record numbers in the north; Great Blue Heron, Canvasback and Hooded Merganser in the middle of the state.

In the race for high species count Stratford-Milford (119) continued to lag behind New Haven (123), but both declined sharply from last year bringing them within range of Greenwich-Stamford (116). In the mid-state race Woodbury-Roxbury (74) with a record low count was tied by Salmon River. In the north Lakeville-Sharon and Storrs (68) tied for second 23 species behind Hartford. Time to reclassify Hartford's as a coastal count.

Last year we talked about coastal, mid-state, and northern counts holding their own if they recorded 70, 65, and 60 percent respectively of their 10 year species total. Only 3 counts fell outside these figures; Hartford (69%) and New London (74%) doing very well while Westport (59%) had a disastrous year.

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

There were 23 species seen on only 1 count. Those not already mentioned were: Black Scoter and Pine Warbler at New London; Palm Warbler and White-winged Crossbill at Old Lyme; Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler and Glaucous Gull at New Haven; Sora, Red Knot, Western Sandpiper, Barn Owl, and Seaside Sparrow at Stratford-Milford; and Red-headed Woodpecker at Westport.

## INDIVIDUAL COUNT SUMMARIES

The following paragraphs list each of the 17 counts and summarize the notable birds. The number following the count is the total of species seen since 1977-78. This is followed by this year's count total and count period birds. Species seen 4 or fewer times in the past 10 years are noteworthy; those seen only once in the period are starred (\*). High counts and low counts are for the same 10 year period. Total individuals seen are rounded off to the nearest thousand.

WHOLE STATE - 17 counts  
(220 - 163 + 1); 889 observers;  
446,000 individuals

NORTHERN COUNTS - 6 counts  
(149 - 115 [high] + 2); 338 observers;  
185,000 individuals

TRAIL WOOD: (56 + 0); 19 observers;  
5,000 individuals. Compiler: Shirley  
Davis. *Noteworthy*: Wood Duck, Buffle-  
head, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk,  
Merlin, Killdeer, Savannah Sparrow.

BARKHAMSTED: (79 - 56 + 1); 45 ob-  
servers; 10,000 individuals. Compilers:  
David Rosgen and David Tripp, Jr. *Note-  
worthy*: Mute Swan, Common Raven,  
Northern Shrike, Rusty Blackbird.

STORRS: (108 - 68 + 4); 29 observers  
(low); 12,000 individuals. Compiler:  
Shirley Davis. *Noteworthy*: Great Blue  
Heron, Snow Goose, Wood Duck, North-  
ern Pintail, Redhead\*, Cooper's Hawk,  
Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey\*,  
Iceland Gull\*, Eastern Screech Owl, Long-  
eared Owl, No. Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-b.  
Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Savannah Spar-  
row. *High Counts*: Ring-billed Gull, East-  
ern Bluebird, House Finch. *Low Counts*:  
Am. Black Duck, Ruffed Grouse, Mourn-

ing Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern  
Cardinal.

HARTFORD: (131 - 91 [high] + 2);  
154 observers (high); 128,000 individuals.  
Compilers: Jay Kaplan and Steve Davis.  
*Noteworthy*: Common Loon\*, Double-  
crested Cormorant\*, American Bittern\*.  
Gadwall, American Wigeon, Hooded Mer-  
ganser\*, Osprey, Merlin\*, Peregrine Fal-  
con, American Coot, Killdeer, Lesser  
Black-backed Gull\*, Snowy Owl\*, No.  
Saw-whet Owl, Harris' Sparrow\*, North-  
ern Oriole. *High Counts*: Great Blue  
Heron, Canada Goose, Green-winged Teal,  
American Black Duck, Belted Kingfisher.  
*Low Counts*: Horned Lark.

LITCHFIELD HILLS: (112 - 65 + 0); 37  
observers (low); 16,000 individuals. compi-  
ler: Ray Beldin. *Noteworthy*: Canvasback,  
Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Turkey  
Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk,  
Iceland Gull\*, Great Black-b. Gull,  
Caroljna Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler.  
*High Counts*: Pileated Woodpecker, Pur-  
ple Finch, Common Redpoll. *Low Counts*:  
Downy Woodpecker, Song Sparrow, House  
Sparrow.

LAKEVILLE-SHARON: (111 - 68 [low]  
+ 1); 54 observers (low); 13,000 individu-  
als. Compilers: Robert Moeller. *Notewor-  
thy*: Cooper's Hawk, Great Black-backed  
Gull, Northern Shrike, Savannah Sparrow,  
Snow Bunting. *High Counts*: No. Saw-  
whet Owl. *Low Counts*: Mallard, Ameri-  
can Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, Downy  
Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee,  
Brown Creeper, American Robin, Northern  
Cardinal, Song Sparrow, White-throated  
Sparrow.

MID-STATE COUNTS - 5 counts  
(145 - 96 [low] + 0); 140 observers;  
80,000 individuals



**SALMON RIVER:** (118 - 7 + 0); 36 observers; 9,000 individuals. compilers: David Titus and James Mockalis. *Noteworthy:* Hooded Merganser, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Bobwhite, Long-eared Owl, Brown Thrasher, Northern Shrike, Yellow-breasted Chat\*, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll. *High Counts:* Mute Swan, Canvasback, Common Goldeneye, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren. **QUINNIPIAC VALLEY:** (115 - 71 + 1); 21 observers; 18,000 individuals. Compiler: Wilford Schultz. *Noteworthy:* Snow Goose, Hooded Merganser, Turkey Vulture, American Coot, Yellow-b. Sapsucker, Carolina Wren, Rusty Blackbird, Common Redpoll. *High Counts:* Great Blue Heron, Savannah Sparrow. *Low Counts:* Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Red-winged Blackbird.

**OXFORD:** (101 - 64 + 1); 18 observers; 19,000 individuals. Compilers: Buzz Devine and Mark Szantyr. *Noteworthy:* Turkey Vulture\*, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, No. Saw-whet Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-b. Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe\*, Fish Crow, Rufous-sided Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Pine Siskin. *High Counts:* Red-Tailed Hawk. American Crow. *Low Counts:* American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Cardinal, Field Sparrow.

**WOODBURY-ROXBURY:** (112 - 74 [low] + 2); 51 observers; 28,000 individuals. Compiler: Aldro Jenks. *Noteworthy:* Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck\*, Iceland Gull, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll. *High Counts,* American Black Duck, Hooded Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, House Finch *Low Counts:* Mallard, Eastern Screech Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-winged Blackbird, House Sparrow.

**HIDDEN VALLEY:** (102 - 66 + 5); 14

observers; 7,000 individuals. Compiler: Sibyll Gilbert. *Noteworthy:* Snow Goose, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Common Snipe, Barred Owl, Long-eared Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-b. Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, White-crowned Sparrow\*, Common Redpoll. *High Count:* Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch. *Low Counts:* Ruffed Grouse, Heron Gull.

#### COASTAL COUNTS - 6 counts

(215 - 156 [low] + 1); 411 observers  
(low);  
180,000 individuals (low)

**NEW LONDON:** (152 - 112 + 2); 25 observers; 21,000 individuals. Compiler: Bob Dewire. *Noteworthy:* Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle\*, Merlin, Sanderling\*, Short-eared Owl, Marsh Wren, Pine Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Common Redpoll. *High Counts:* Sharp-shinned Hawk, Dunlin, Horned Lark, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-winged Blackbird, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, *Low Counts:* Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Bufflehead, Northern Harrier, American Coot, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, European Starling.

**OLD LYME:** (160 - 113 + 1); 57 observers; 19,000 individuals. Compiler: Jay Hand. *Noteworthy:* Wild Turkey, No. Saw-whet Owl, Black-backed Woodpecker\*, Palm Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat\*, Common

Redpoll. *High Counts*: Great Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Eastern Bluebird, Pine Siskin. *Low Counts*: Virginia Rail, Bonaparte's Gull, Marsh Wren, Gray Catbird, Rufous-sided Towhee, Fox Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird.

NEW HAVEN: (183 - 123 + 2); 65 observers; 44,000 individuals. Compiler: Stephen Broker. *Noteworthy*: Brant, Blue-winged Teal, Barrow's Goldeneye\*, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike\*, Ipswich Sparrow\*, Northern Oriole. *High Counts*: Mute Swan, Ruddy Turnstone, Marsh Wren. *Low Counts*: Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Ruffed Grouse, Downy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, European Starling, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, House Sparrow.

STRATFORD-MILFORD: (173 - 119 + 0); 28 observers (low); 27,000 individuals (low). Compilers: Dennis Varza and Fred Sibley. *Noteworthy*: Common Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Sora, Red Knot, Western Sandpiper, Iceland Gull, Barn Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chipping Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Common Redpoll. *High Counts*: Red-throated Loon, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Red Knot, Seaside Sparrow. *Low Counts*: Hooded Merganser, Rock Dove, European Starling, Common Grackle.

WESTPORT: (172 - 102 [low] + 0); 85 observers (low); 36,000 individuals. Compiler: Frank Mantlik. *Noteworthy*: Bald Eagle\*, Merlin, Purple Sandpiper\*, Red-headed Woodpecker, Water Pipit, Lark Sparrow\*. *High Counts*: American Coot.

*Low Counts*: American Black Duck, White-winged Scoter, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Gray Catbird, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

GREENWICH-STAMFORD: (166 - 116 + 0); 151 observers (low); 33,000 individuals (low). Compilers: Tom Baptist, Gary Palmer, Berna Weissman. *Noteworthy*: Red-necked Grebe, Redhead, Cooper's Hawk, Merlin, Greater Yellowlegs, Snowy Owl, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chipping Sparrow. *High Counts*: Green-winged Teal. *Low Counts*: Pied-billed Grebe, American Kestrel, Herring Gull, European Starling, Rufous-sided Towhee, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Grackle.

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## FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF WHITE-WINGED GULLS

CARL J. TRICHKA

Many birders find it difficult to identify species that are similar in overall appearance and habits such as the vexatious fall warblers, "peeps", or sparrows. For others it's gulls. Because gulls are large and inhabit open areas such as beaches and estuaries, they usually can be studied at one's leisure. Therefore, most gulls can be identified with a bit of patience.

One group of gulls wintering in Connecticut nonetheless causes birders



some consternation and uncertainty in identification — the “white-winged” gulls.

The group consists of three gulls: Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*), Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides glaucooides*) and Kumlien's Gull (*Larus glaucooides kumlieni*). I have also included Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*), simply because it is associated with and often confused with Kumlien's Gull although it is not usually classified as a “white-winged gull.”

I have condensed the literature on the field identification of these gulls and presented in chart form the first and second winter plumages, the plumages most frequently encountered by birders in Connecticut.

The problems posed by worn plumages, overlap in size, lack of other birds to compare with, and the possibility of a hybrid form further complicates identification. Hybridization does occur frequently with related species, and hybrids have been recorded in the Northeast.

All four gulls breed in arctic regions and winter along the coasts of North America. Thayer's Gull, formerly considered a subspecies of Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), migrates from its breeding grounds in the high Canadian arctic to its wintering ground along the Pacific coast and occurs sporadically along the Atlantic seaboard. The Glaucous Gull is a circumpolar breeder and migrates to both coasts in winter. The Iceland Gull has a more restricted winter range along the coasts of northeastern United States and Canada and western Europe. The nominate form of Iceland Gull (*L. g. glaucooides*) winters chiefly in Europe, while the race (*L. g. kumlieni*) winters on our northeast seaboard.

As is the case with many gulls, the white-wings are scavengers. Thus, they often appear at landfills, sewage treatment

plants and fishing piers, as well as at coastal beaches and estuaries, and your chances of finding one are greatly improved by visiting such sites.

Adult-plumaged birds of this group present few problems of identification. Their field marks are amply covered in the popular field guides, except for Kumlien's Gull, which several recent guides depict but do not describe. It generally takes four years for these gulls to acquire adult plumage, and first and second winter plumages cause the most difficulty in identification because they are highly variable.

Juvenal plumaged birds of this group would not be encountered in this area in winter having molted into first winter plumage prior to arrival. The first winter plumage is usually a lighter version of the juvenal plumage with juvenal primary feathers and tail feathers retained. The first and second summer plumages are also acquired by a partial molt giving the bird a paler look with the gray feathers appearing on the back and head replaced by whiter feathers. The accompanying chart summarizes the characteristics of each species in first and second winter plumages. Each age group is represented by a series of field marks necessary for identification. Size is not always a reliable indicator since Iceland, Kumlien's and Thayer's overlap the Herring Gull. Only the Glaucous Gull might readily stand out, since it approaches the Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) in size.

To locate one of these gulls, scan a resting flock and look for a very light bird with noticeably pale primaries. Then check all the field marks, paying particular attention to bill color, size and shape, head shape and length of wings with respect to tail length. Not all the field marks will be readily seen when the bird is at rest. Once you have the

apparent marks, flush the bird to determine the color of the wing tips from above and below, and the bird's flight characteristics. By this time you should have accumulated enough information to identify the bird with some certainty.

I thank George A. Clark, Jr., Anthony Bledsoe, Roland Clement, Noble Proctor and Fred C. Sibley, who reviewed this article and made constructive comments.

#### GENERAL APPEARANCE

**GLAUCOUS:** Larger than a Herring Gull, wings reaching the tip of the tail at rest, barrel-chested, flight lumbering, massive bill and flat crown giving a fierce facial expression.

**ICELAND:** About the same size as a Herring Gull, bill thinner, smaller and more tapered, primaries are paler than rest of wing, wings extend well past the tail, head small, flight buoyant and graceful.

**KUMLIEN'S:** Similar to Iceland except for gray spots in wing tips, eye dark in all plumages, bill and flight characteristics as for Iceland Gull.

**THAYER'S:** The immature has a dark eye smudge, pigeon headed look, bill slender and delicate, not thick, at tip, wings project well past the tail, primaries never as pale as Iceland Gull unless viewed from underneath.

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TABLE I. Comparison of Immature "White-Winged" Gulls.

	GLAUCOUS	ICELAND	KUMLIEN'S	THAYER'S
EYE	1st W Dark brown	Dark brown	Brown	Dark brown
	2nd W Pale yellow	Pale yellow	Brown	Dark brown
LEGS	1st W Pale flesh	Fleshy pink	Fleshy brown	Deep flesh pink
	2nd W Pink	Fleshy pink	Fleshy brown	Deep flesh pink
BILL	1st W Flesh pink, sharp black tip	Dark horn - similar to 2nd W in March	Dark horn	Black overall
	2nd W Flesh pink, tip less distinct	Pink horn gray with black tip	Pale gray-pink, dusky tip	Flesh pink, dark tip
BODY	1st W Marbled pale tan, thin white tail band, buffier than Iceland	Mostly white with buffy barring, no tail band	Creamy buff, tail pale gray brown with thin gray-white band.	Gray brown, Distinct brown tail band
	2nd W Pale creamy tan with gray brown streaking	Fine buff mottling, tail paler, speckled with less distinct bars	Pale gray-brown mottling all over	Gray brown, paler than Herring Gull, distinct tail band
WINGS	1st W Tips gray brown not black, white trailing edge on primaries	No black on tips but tan wash paler than rest of wing	Grayer than Iceland with dark or dusky spots on tips	Tips medium brown and darker than rest of wing
	2nd W Light with no sharp bars on coverts	No black tips but tan wash paler than rest of wing	Tips with indistinct white mirrors	Gray spots in wing tips

## CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Summer: June 1 - July 31, 1986

The summer of 1986 was a productive one for Connecticut's breeding birds. The weather was generally cool with above normal rainfall throughout the period. Day-time highs ranged from the 70's through the low 80's, with only three days in July going over the 90° mark. Nighttime temperatures dropped into the 50's for most of June and into the 60's during July. There

were no exceptionally strong fronts during the period, but the passage of many small storms produced above average rainfall; almost 3.5 inches above normal for June and 1.5 inches above normal for July. The Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas, in its final season, received good coverage in all of its 596 blocks with almost 12,000 new breeding records.

### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A late Red-throated Loon was at Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford June 7 (DA,JKa). Several summering Com-



mon Loons were along the coast and at several inland lakes and reservoirs. The only confirmed nesting produced one chick at Nepaug Reservoir, New Hartford (JKa, DR). Pied-billed Grebe was a new nester in Newtown (HC) and nested successfully in Stratford (DV) for the third year. A *Red-necked Grebe* was off Greenwich Point July 14-31 (MFN). Double-crested Cormorant was newly confirmed nesting in East Windsor (DR), New Canaan (JS), Branford (NP) and Stonington (RS et al.). This is the first inland nesting in Connecticut of this rapidly expanding species. There were no new nesting areas and few sightings of American Bittern. Least Bittern was a new nester in Waterford (RD), while the populations in Stonington and South Windsor continued to do well. It was an exceptional year for Great Blue Herons. Nesting was confirmed in 8 additional towns and the other 11 known breeding colonies produced over 450 young. Great Egret was a new nester in Stonington (RS) and Branford (NP); Snowy Egret in Branford (NP); and Little Blue Heron in Stonington (RS). Black-crowned Night-Herons were found at 7 new nesting sites and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron nested in Bridgeport (DV). Mute Swans continued to expand their range inland with breeding confirmed as far north as Salisbury (DR). An immature Snow Goose at the Southbury Training School pond June 1-4 (RN), 12 Brant in New Haven Harbor July 2 (MS) and 3 at Milford Point July 25 (JB) were probably summering birds rather than migrants. A *Northern Pintail* with seven young at Litchfield (DR) was the second confirmed nesting for the State. Gadwall was a new nester in North Haven (RS) and Blue-winged Teal in South Windsor (BK). Reports of summering diving ducks included 4 Old Squaw off Greenwich Point June 3

(RH), a White-winged Scoter off Old Lyme July 23 (DV) and an immature male *King Eider* off Westbrook June 25 (DV). Common Mergansers nested successfully throughout the Farmington River watershed and possible breeding birds were seen on the Connecticut and Housatonic Rivers. Nesting confirmations for Hooded Merganser came from 8 new towns.

#### HAWKS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

An immature Bald Eagle was at Greenwich Point June 15 (MFN). An Osprey nesting in Guilford (DH<sub>i</sub> et al.) represents the westernmost nesting in the state. Sharp-shinned Hawk in Hartland (DH<sub>o</sub>) and New Milford (JK<sub>f</sub>), Cooper's Hawk in Newtown (HC), and Northern Goshawk in Avon, Barkhamsted and Washington all represent new confirmed nestings. A Peregrine Falcon in downtown Stamford June 4-8 (MFN) was unusual for the period. Singing male Northern Bobwhite were in the northwest corner of the State, where they have been absent for years. A *Black Rail* was observed in Stonington June 5 (JL<sub>e</sub>). Clapper Rail was confirmed nesting in Stamford, while Common Moorhen (EE) was confirmed in North Stonington. It was an average season for shorebirds. Piping Plovers nested at new sites in Groton and Old Saybrook (DV). American Oystercatcher was a new nester in Westbrook (DV) and present in Stratford July 10-19 (DV). Other unusual sightings include a *Solitary*, Pectoral, 2 Semipalmated, and 2 Least Sandpipers in Stratford June 20 (DV), and 4 Ruddy Turnstones at Greenwich Point June 17 (MFN). Six Bonaparte's Gulls were found at Greenwich Point June 29 through July 20 (MFN). A first summer *Iceland Gull* at Milford Point July 5-16 was found dead there Aug. 1 (DV). Despite

predation by Black-crowned Night-Herons, the 800+ pairs of Least Terns in West Haven nested successfully and a new breeding colony was found in Groton (DV). A Black Tern was sighted at Griswold Point, Old Lyme June 20 (DV), and a Black Skimmer at Milford Pt. in early July (m.ob.). In Sharon, Common Barn Owl was a new nester, fledging three young (m.ob.), while in North Haven a territorial bird remained through the summer (RS). Northern Saw-whet Owl nested in Sharon (DR) and probably nested at 7 other north-west locations. Common Nighthawk was a new nester in New Britain (MC) and Waterbury (MS), while Whip-poor-will was new for New Hartford. Newtown provided the second state nesting of *Red-headed Woodpecker* (HC).

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

New Acadian Flycatcher nestings came from Kent (RM) and Redding (MS), while Alder Flycatcher nested at 8 new sites in the State. Cliff Swallows increased markedly in the western part of the state this year. A migrant Cliff Swallow was seen in Stratford July 8 (DV). A pair of *Common Ravens* with three recently fledged young in Canaan June 22 (DR) were the first and only confirmed nesting for the state although they probably breed in several other locations in the northwest corner. Carolina Wrens staged a major invasion of inland areas, as they were confirmed nesting in 20 new blocks with many probable and possible nestings. Winter Wren was newly confirmed as nesting in 4 northwest locations. Eastern Bluebird had an exceptionally good year throughout the State as did Hermit Thrush in eastern Connecticut. A late spring migrant Gray-cheeked Thrush was in Easton June 2 (MS). White-eyed Vireos

expanded their breeding range northward to Hampton and several towns on the Mass. border, while Solitary Vireos pushed south to North Stonington in the east and Woodbridge in the west. Golden-winged Warbler was confirmed in another Sharon block (DR), and Magnolia Warbler was confirmed nesting in Granby (JKa), New Hartford (PC) and West Haven (MA). Black-throated Blue Warbler was confirmed in many new areas in both north-western and northeastern Connecticut. Yellow-rumped Warblers pushed far south of their usual breeding range to Woodbridge, Roxbury and North Stonington. Pine Warblers staged an equally impressive expansion, being found in 25 new blocks. A Bay-breasted Warbler appeared in Ashford July 19 (DR) and a Blackpoll Warbler in Woodbury June 3 (RN). Worm-eating and Hooded Warblers surged northward this summer, the former being confirmed in Sharon and other northwestern towns while the latter was found in Killingworth, Pomfret and Hampton. A Mourning Warbler in Woodbury June 9-12 was an exceptionally late bird (m.ob.). Yellow-breasted Chat increased slightly with new nestings in Groton, Hamden, Stonington and Waterford. Savannah and White-throated Sparrows were confirmed in several new blocks, the latter confined to the northwest and eastern hills. Dark-eyed Juncos increased within their core range in the northwest hills, as well as expanding southward and to lower elevations. Early southbound Bobolinks were flying over Milford July 17 (MS). A female Boat-tailed Grackle was observed at Hammonasset State Park June 5 (DV). The season's outstanding find was a pair of *White-winged Crossbills* with 3 downy young in Voluntown in early June (JL). The only new Pine Siskin nesting came from Mansfield

(LP), while nearby Ashford produced Connecticut's second breeding record for *Evening Grosbeak*.

*Contributors:* David Anderson, Margaret Ardwin, Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas, James Bair, Louis Bevier, Ella Bradbury, Joseph Bradbury, Winnie Burkett, Paul Carrier, George Clark Jr., Harold Crandall, Neil Currie, Mary Czapinski, Robert Dewire, Mike Dudick, Ellen Erhardt, Mrs. Harvey Gaylord, Marjorie Hackbarth, Ed Hagen, Michael Harwood, Rick Helprin, Ed Hiestand, David Hill (DHi), Don Hopkins (DHo), Jay Kaplan (JKa), Jeanne Kauffman (JKf), Jeff Kirk, Betty Kleiner, Jim Lafley (JLa), Jim Lee (JLe), Frank Mantlik, Robert Moeller, Russ Naylor, Mianus Field Notes, m.ob. many observers, Lauren Parmelee, Noble Proctor, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Tom Rochovansky, David Rosgen, Ray Schwartz, John Souther, Mark Szantyr, Clay Taylor, Dennis Varza, Chris Wood, Connie Wood.

## NOTES AND NEWS

CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING will be held on Saturday April 11, 1987 at Connecticut College in New London. The day's events will include workshops, bird walks, a keynote address and the business meeting.

Bird walks will run from 6 - 7:30 am in the Connecticut Arboretum at the college and workshops will start around 9 am. The eight workshops are organized around the theme of adaptation and deal with different groups of birds. Dr. Gregory Butcher, a former Connecticut resident now in charge of the nest record program at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, will speak on *Monitoring bird populations: The contribution of amateurs*.

Anyone interested in birds is invited to attend. For more information contact George Zepko, Box 966, Middletown, CT 06457 or phone 347-1133.

\* \* \*

SAVANNAH AND GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS: If you see color banded Savannah or Grasshopper Sparrows in the coming months please report them to Ti Crossman, U-43 Life Sciences, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268. He would like date, location, habitat description, and the color-band combination for any such sightings. He has color-marked the birds as part of a habitat choice study and needs your assistance in locating dispersing birds.



# SNOW BATHING BY COMMON RAVENS

DONALD A. HOPKINS

On the 4th of January 1987 while watching from the overlook on Route 20 at Barkhamsted Reservoir I observed two Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) come down to feed on a deer carcass. The carcass was close to the shore in the shadow of the trees on the east side. There was a distinctive size difference in the two birds, which I assumed to be a large male and smaller female. After feeding from approximately 10:30-11 am the birds flew about 200 feet further out onto snow-covered and sunlit ice. The birds were then watched through a 30X scope while the smaller bird proceeded to perform a strange series of activities.

The Common Raven probed the snow with its beak 3 or 4 times and then lowered itself into the snow rolling to one side with the upper wing slightly flexed and the upper leg visible. It then pushed forward in the snow about one body length before standing up and repeating the procedure of probing, dropping to the belly and pushing forward on its side. Occasionally it pushed straight forward on its belly so the beak plowed through the snow and the probing

was sometimes a combined probing and flicking action. After this initial bout of ten minutes or so the smaller bird flew back to the larger bird and both engaged in this "snow bathing" for another ten minutes. On four occasions the bird "snow bathed" in unison belly to belly with the upper feet appearing to touch. Calling was heard at this time.

After this second bout of bathing the two birds flew some 300 feet to a piece of driftwood sticking out of the ice. The larger Common Raven then preened its breast several times while the smaller bird did more "snow bathing". Both birds then departed and were not seen again.

These activities occurred between 11 and 11:30 am in bright sunlight at a distance of about 1100 yards from the observer.

As the ravens appeared to feed until satiated and left the carcass on their own accord undisturbed by other animal life, the "snow bathing" behavior would not appear to be a displacement activity. The "snow bathing" was also performed with such uniformity in its many repetitions by both birds it would seem to be a regular behavior for these birds. Snow bathing by Common Ravens does not seem to have been reported previously.

27 London Road, Windsor, CT 06095

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# **THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER**

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*





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The editors invite submission of articles, notes, black and white photographs and line drawings for publication in *The Connecticut Warbler*. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the sheet only, with ample margins. The style of manuscripts should follow the general usage in recent issues.

Cover Photograph: Common Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) photographed by Ray Schwartz, Old Saybrook, Spring 1985

## EDITORIAL

As the Editor of *The Connecticut Warbler* for the past year and a half it is now my turn to editorialize.

First, I wish to thank everyone who has contributed articles for publication; without the authors the "Warbler" could not exist. Your letters, phone calls and personal comments, both positive and negative, are appreciated; this journal is for you the readers. Yes, criticism is good because it prevents us from becoming swell-headed over the job that we do. We need to know what you do and don't like about the "Warbler".

We hope to implement some changes in the near future. The first is to add four additional pages to the "Warbler". We find that we continually hold back articles because of lack of space. Certain seasonal articles must be included in the issue to which they pertain and we find we must put off indefinitely printing other manuscripts. This is not to say that we don't need more articles — quite the opposite! Four more pages to fill will require a larger backlog of manuscripts to provide a variety of topics with which to work. We are looking for contributions of original articles on research, field studies, observations, Connecticut birds, and articles of interest to beginning birders.

We would also like to use artist-contributed illustrations on our front cover and will print a brief biographical sketch of the artist with such contributions. We are primarily interested in pen and ink or scratchboard drawings, but dark pencil work may also be acceptable.

Please send your articles or photocopies of your artwork to the editor. We hope to make *The Connecticut Warbler* bigger and better than ever.

Betty Kleiner, Editor, 5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT. 06070 Phone 658-5870

# THE CONNECTICUT ENVIRONMENT - PART ONE

ROLAND C. CLEMENT

Editor's Note: This is the first half of an article on the Connecticut environment. The second half will be published in a future issue of the *Warbler*.

## I. The Landscape.

Birders, like gardeners, are more alert to the change of seasons than the ordinary citizen. The more we understand our regional climate and the vegetated landscape of our environment, the more meaningful the occurrence of seasonal events and population changes become.

A long perspective helps. We probably live in an interglacial age. It is well to remember that the continental ice of the last great glacial advance began melting back from these Connecticut acres about 13,000 years ago. In the last 10,000 years the northern tree line, which is now at the latitude of Churchill, Manitoba, was some 300 miles farther north, and an equal distance further south than at present. The Seventeenth Century is well known to have marked a climatic deterioration so severe in Europe that it was called "The Little Ice Age." There is currently disagreement about whether or not we have entered another cooling phase, since the first half of this century was markedly warmer than the nineteenth century or the last decade.

In 1985, the Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) published a large, handsome map of Connecticut illustrating the bedrock geology in color. The scale is one inch for every

four miles (1:250,000), and the compilation is the fruit of decades of field studies brought together by Dr. John Rodgers, a Yale University geologist, who made many of the original studies. A glance at this map shows that the land forms of our state represent rocks of very different ages. We are all somewhat aware that a central lowland (the Connecticut River valley, without its eastward diversion by glacial deposits near Middletown) separates the roughly equal Western Highlands from Eastern Highlands, both of them higher in the north. DEP has also recently published an interesting popular account by Michael Bell, entitled *The Face of Connecticut: People, Geology, and the Land*. The map sells for \$10 and the book for \$12.95.

The soils and the vegetation of Connecticut are among our best clues to the history of this landscape, and both are still changing. They seemed fixed only by comparison to our own brief history. Our soils are made of glacial till (mixed clay, silt, sand, and gravel) mixed with the organic debris of forest growth; of materials first sorted by water, and to a lesser extent by wind. The soils are called Brown Podsolis, a series characterized by a thin surface accumulation of slowly-decomposing organic matter (mostly from trees, hence "forest duff"), and the leaching out of clay and iron compounds by rainfall. This results in an acid soil, and in the redeposition of iron compounds several inches down; a process which often leads to cementing of the underlying materials, creating a "hardpan." The large river valleys and the coastal plain have extensive deposits of sorted (graded) materials washed from the waning ice sheet of 10,000 years ago. These persist as sand plains and a variety of terraces. These sandy deposits are good groundwater reservoirs and are often called aquifers in our region.



## II. Climate.

The Northeastern United States is dominated by a succession of biweekly cyclonic storms that skirt the polar front north of us. These storms move from west to east and produce two to four day intervals of bright weather between disturbances, with northwest winds in winter, and westerly or southwesterly winds in summer. This is what led Mark Twain to say of New England weather, "If you don't like it, wait a minute." Precipitation, mostly as rain (10 inches of snow yields 1 inch of water), usually ranges between 40 and 50 inches and is rather evenly distributed among the seasons. Temperatures depart from latitudinal expectations because they are influenced by proximity to Long Island Sound, which tempers extremes in both summer and winter; and by elevation, which exceeds 1000 feet mainly in the northwestern corner of the State. Because air cools at about 3.5°F with every added thousand feet of elevation, the northern half of Litchfield County is cooler, retains snow longer, has more "northern" vegetation, and is where we look for "Canadian Zone" birds to nest. Details of the Connecticut climate are provided by Brumbach (1965).

## III. Vegetation.

As already suggested, the climatic and soil conditions are most obviously reflected and discerned in the vegetation of a region. This, in turn, creates the primary habitats for birds and other animal life. Ecologists Frank E. Egler of Norfolk and William A. Niering of Connecticut College, New London, have summarized our knowledge of the vegetation of Connecticut in Fig. 1, adapted from their 1987 publication cited at the end of this discussion. The concepts

of "Life zone," "biome," and "biotic province," have had a checkered career because, useful as they were in generalizing many facts of plant-animal distribution, nature always turns out to be more complex than our theoretical schemes. Even so, most of these systems of classification agree in dividing Connecticut into two roughly equal regions, the coastal half being rather typical Central Hardwoods deciduous forest dominated by a variety of oaks and hickory and including the Tulip Tree. Dice (1943) calls this the Carolinian Biotic Province and its affinities are linked to those of the Central Atlantic States. The Mockingbird, Cardinal, and Tufted Titmouse were once considered typical Carolinian species, but they jumped the open boundary, and are now well established in what used to be called the Transition (or Alleghanian) Zone. It is tempting to credit these changes in distribution to the increase in winter bird feeding, but the causes are probably more complex. The Mockingbird is not a feeder species, for example, and probably benefits more from the extensive planting of multiflora rose by farmers and sportsmen. Like the Cardinal, it is a "suburban" species, and both may have been assisted in moving northward by the opening up of woodlands, the planting of conifers and forsythia edges, etc. What about the influence on vegetation and birds of milder winters in mid-century? Here is a good project in field ecology awaiting some enterprising researcher, amateur or professional.

As suggested, our forest have been subjected to great changes in recent centuries. From 1700 to 1850, two-thirds of the countryside was in open fields or farms; now much of that land has returned to forest.

As Fig. 1 shows, Egler and Niering separate Connecticut into four zones of vegeta-

LITERATURE CITED

tion. Zone I, the northernmost in both geographical and faunistic terms, is confined to the Canaan Mountain plateau of Norfolk, a southern extension of the eastern Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. This zone is dominated by Hemlock, White Pine, and northern hardwoods (Beech, Yellow Birch, and Sugar Maple), with a sprinkling of Paper Birch and an understory of Striped Maple.

Zone II lies between the uplands of Zone I and the 1000 foot contour a few miles to the south, contains a similar mixture of dominant trees, but differs because Gray Birch and Red Cedar become important old-field invaders.

Zone III occupies the balance of northern Connecticut. Like Zone II, it is part of the Central Hardwood Region, but Hemlock and White Pine remain as important constituents.

Southern Connecticut constitutes Zone IV, with more Tulip trees, although it too is a part of the Central Hardwoods Region. The boundary between Zone III and IV marks the southern limit of old-field stands of White Pine.

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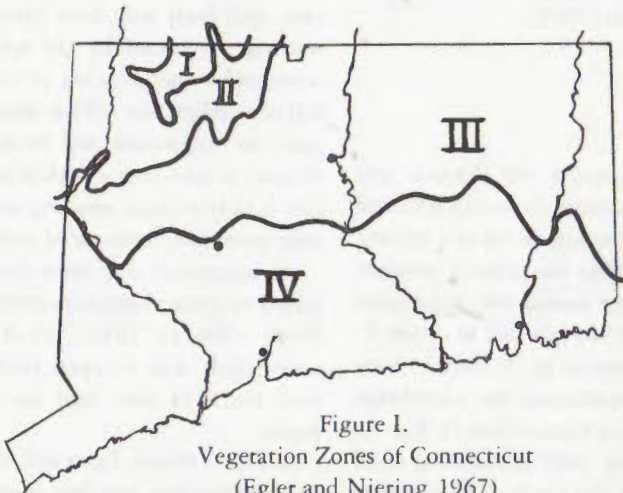
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71 Weed Avenue, RR#2, Norwalk, CT 06850.



# UNUSUAL PIPING PLOVER NESTING

DENNIS VARZA AND  
RAY SCHWARTZ

On May 28, 1986 while censusing Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) and Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*) along the Connecticut shore we found a pair of Piping Plovers at Fenwick Point. This area of beach, on the west side of the Connecticut River near its mouth, has not previously been used as a plover nesting site. Since both birds were banded, interest in their origin was great. Trapping at the nest on June 17, approximately 18 days after the start of incubation, resulted in the rapid capture of both birds. One (971-25014) had been banded as a nestling at Sandy Point, West Haven on May 30, 1985; the other (971-25046) at Long Beach, Stratford on June 10, 1985. All four eggs hatched and at least three of the chicks fledged.

It is very encouraging that two inexperienced nesters would colonize a new site along the Connecticut shore and successfully fledge their brood. Does this indicate an expanding plover population? Each bird moved a relatively short distance from its banding site, 50 and 70 km respectively, mating with another inexperienced bird rather than an established bird. The Sandy Point and Long Beach sites are both productive plover areas and each has 3-4 nesting pairs. All other sites in Connecticut have only 1-2 pairs. The Fenwick Point site is similar to many other small sand beaches not used by Piping Plovers and this 1986 nesting requires some rethinking of what constitutes suitable nesting habitat. It differs from the birds' natal sites in not having

a salt marsh area immediately behind the nesting beach, in being more open, and in being a relatively small beach. This nesting is unusual for many reasons and raises many questions that can only be answered by continued banding and study.

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## NESTING SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS IN CONNECTICUT

D.A. HOPKINS<sup>1</sup>,  
G.S. MERSEREAU<sup>2</sup>  
AND L. FISCHER<sup>1</sup>

Sage and Bishop (1913) listed Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) as a common breeding bird in Connecticut. Environmental changes have greatly altered this species' status and Dowhan and Craig (1976) list it as declining in the State. In the past 20 years only three probable nestings have been reported to the Connecticut's Natural Diversity Data Bank: New Milford in 1967, Canton in 1982 and Hartland in 1983. No nests were found but fledged young and attending adults were observed.

In 1983 and again on May 18, 1986 S. Kellogg located a pair of territorial Sharp-shinned Hawks in Tunxis State Forest in Hartland. He reported the latter sighting to the authors who searched the area and found a nest with five freshly laid eggs on May 25. Eggs were still present June 14, and by June 28 hatched young were present. The five young were banded on July 6 by Mersereau and sexed as four females and one male.



The nest was 16.9 m up in a White Spruce (*Picea glauca*) and measured 33 cm X 51 cm. The nest tree, not the largest tree in the area, had a diameter at breast height of 76 cm and was located in a thick stand of spruce, near an open area. This open area had an old log in its center where, judging from the scattered feathers, captured prey had been plucked. This location is similar to nesting areas described by Bent (1937).

Sharp-shinned Hawks are definitely nesting in the State and may be overlooked by birders unfamiliar with their nesting habits. We encourage you to follow up late May sightings of Sharp-shinned Hawks and check for possible nesting. How rare a nester is this accipiter?

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank Seth Kellogg for finding the nesting pair. Nancy Murray searched the Connecticut Natural Diversity Data Bank and we are indebted to her for this research.

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1. 27 London Road, Windsor, CT 06095.
  2. G.S. Mersereau, P.O. Box 321, Tariffville, CT 06081.
  3. L. Fischer, 124 Sugar Street, Newtown, CT 06470.

## GETTING TO KNOW BLUEBIRDS

ROLAND CLEMENT

Any bird called the Bluebird should, one may naively expect, appear blue when one sees it. But this is an expectation created by bird artists and photographers who portray only blue individuals. Actually, our Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), more often than not, is not blue in appearance. This is why so many people think it is rare, or almost non-existent. They don't recognize it, even when they see it.

The problem is that the Bluebird's blue is not a pigment, but a structural color. Put simply, it is a refracted color, a result of light being scattered by tiny air bubbles built into the feathers of the bird's back, wings, and tail. When you look at a Bluebird, if the light comes from ahead or from one side, the bird will appear dark gray, though you may see its reddish breast. Only when, and if, the bird flies away from the light will you see its blue color reflected. It then appears as an ethereal flash. This is what makes the Bluebird so delightful: it surprises us. The flashiest birds are males; females and young show less blue.

To really get to know Bluebirds, then, you must learn to recognize them by form, so they won't escape you when they perch quietly at the wrong angle to the sun. The Bluebird is only slightly larger than the abundant House Sparrow one sees in the city; but it is chunkier, round-shouldered, and short-tailed, with a finer bill than a sparrow. Its hunched-up appearance is easily recognized once you learn to distinguish it; and once you really know it, you will see many more Bluebirds, even in winter if you

live in southern Connecticut. Figure 1 shows the average numbers of Bluebirds seen on each of the seventeen Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts over the last five years.

In winter these small birds spend most of the day in the shelter of open woods, preferably on slopes warmed by the sun. They feed on small fruit, such as the berries of sumac, but hardly a week goes by that does not provide a few flying insects which are

much more nutritious fare. Not so many nest here now as formerly, when the countryside was dotted with small farms, each with a small apple orchard that provided many limb cavities for nesting. We can make up for this scarcity of nesting sites by erecting suitable nesting boxes, preferably in field borders.

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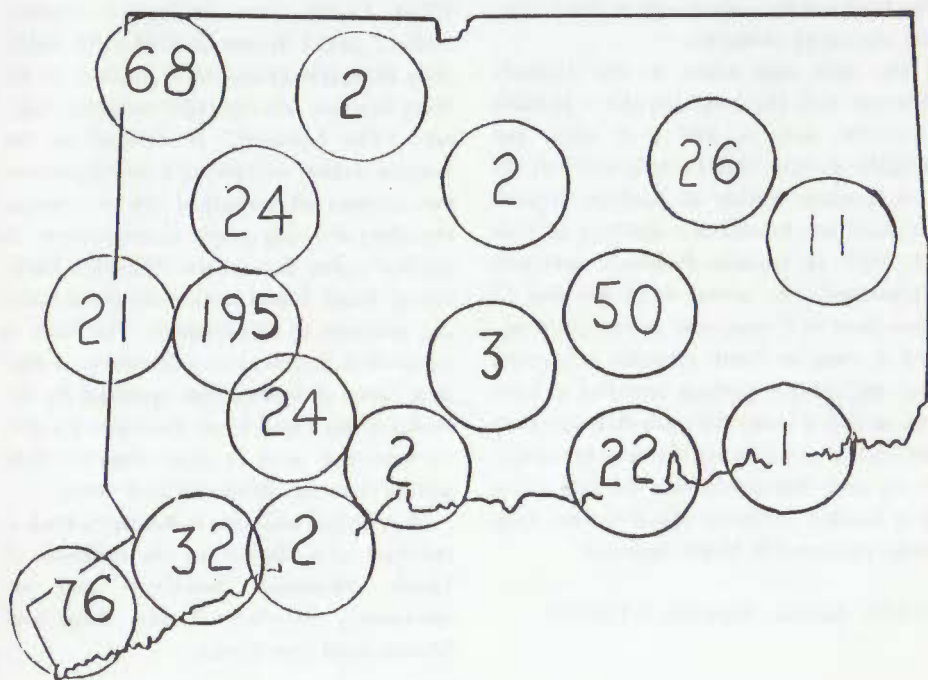


FIGURE I.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF EASTERN BLUEBIRDS  
ON CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS COUNTS —  
1981-1986

# COMMON BLACK- HEADED GULL FROM HOLLAND

RAY SCHWARTZ

On August 22, 1985 I was checking beach drift birds at Sandy Point, West Haven, and finding a dead gull picked it up for closer examination. It was a winter-plumaged Common Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) with a foreign leg band. The bird had been dead only a short time, and was easily identified.

The bird was taken to the Peabody Museum and the band (Arnhem Holland 3105378) sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After a lengthy wait the bird banding station at Arnhem replied. The bird was banded as a nestling on June 20, 1967 in Drenthe Province, northeast Netherlands. Its arrival 6117 km and 18 years later in Connecticut is very exciting. Did it come to North America as a young bird and remain, perhaps breeding in Canada; or did it make the trans-Atlantic journey each year following the nesting season? In any case this is evidently the first record of a banded Common Black-headed Gull being recovered in North America.

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## BOOK REVIEW

*A World of Watchers*, Joseph Kastner, 1986. Published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY. 241pp. ISBN 0-394-52869-7. \$25.

In 200 or so pleasant, easy-to-read pages, a former editor of *Life* magazine enthralls us

with an account of the world of birdwatchers. Because we are part of that world, we naturally enjoy reviewing its history. Having read many such accounts, I can attest to a warm feeling generated by Mr. Kastner, who knows the New York region birders' community, and who summers on Block Island where many of us would enjoy being neighbors.

For beginners, this book will open pleasant vistas on the work done in our vineyard by a host of precursors. The eighteen chapters provide interesting details on as many groups of people, each with its notables. Elliot Coues, "the prodigious troublemaker," gets a chapter all to himself; and so does Margaret Morse Nice, student of the Song Sparrow. An especially welcome chapter, "The Imbuers," is devoted to the women writers who played a very important but seldom acknowledged role in shaping the ideas of young people in our century. A teacher rather than writer, Elizabeth Dickens of Block Island merits the prominence she achieves in this chapter. The book is up-to-date in closing on a discussion of that new breed of birdwatcher spawned by the books of our friend Roger Peterson: the listers who now insist on more complete field guides than the old master gave them.

A principal omission in Kastner's book is the lack of a chapter on the influence of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and its fascinating founders, Rosalie Edge and Maurice and Irma Broun.

Roland Clement

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Ducks of North America and the Northern Hemisphere*, John Gooders and Trevor Boyer, 1986. Published by Facts on File Publications, New York, NY. 176 pp. ISBN 0-8160-1422-1. \$24.95.

Birders purchase bird books for a variety of reasons. Field guides are acquired to update or supplement older ones, while books dealing with only a few families of birds may be purchased as reference texts. Many of the latter are often too large to carry in the field but are used to verify difficult identifications. Other books are purchased just for the artwork or the sheer joy of reading. This volume falls into the latter category.

The text written by John Gooders provides the standard details of measurements, egg description, clutch size, incubation period and fledging time. The summer and winter range maps, although adequate for the geographical area covered, are on the small side.

The book contains descriptive accounts of the 52 duck species found in the Holarctic region and includes easily readable accounts of geographic distribution, habitat, field marks, food preferences, roosting areas, nesting requirements and behavior patterns of both adults and their offspring.

Where applicable, the accounts include descriptions of subspecies of such variable species as Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Greater Scaup and Common Eider. Each species account provides a color drawing of the male and female in flight showing upper and lower views of the wing and body.

For me, the outstanding point of this book is the artwork of Trevor Boyer. All the species are amply depicted in impeccable detail with precise color accuracy, 38 of

them in full page plates. Each plate could easily be a portrait suitable to grace your living room walls. They are not done in the customary field guide mode of side and flight view but are as individualistic as the species. The details of feathering are nearly lifelike and Boyer uses several pairs to depict each species in a variety of poses to produce as much realism as possible in a painting. Even the water appears to move in his rendition as he mixes subtle shades of green and blue with the effective use of brush strokes to depict ripples, waves and reflections.

If you enjoy looking at birds, especially waterfowl, add this book to your library.

Carl Trichka.

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## CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Fall: August 1 to November 30, 1986

The season was reported as average to poor by many observers with warblers and sparrows in low numbers. In contrast, there were a number of rarities that are now reported annually such as Tundra Swan, Black Vulture, Gyrfalcon and Clay-colored Sparrow. The Fall migration's one bright spot was a spectacular hawk migration. Record numbers were reported at many hawk watches with a continued increase of sightings of Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. Other seasonal rarities included White-fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose, Harlequin Duck, Swainson's Hawk, Black Rail, Purple Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, Northern Wheatear, and Boat-tailed Grackle. Unfortunately most of these birds

stayed but a short time and were seen by few observers.

As the first front of August arrived on the 10th, temperatures dipped into the 50's and swallows, Common Nighthawks and the first warblers began migrating. The remains of Hurricane Charles passed through Connecticut on the 18th, followed by an influx of Black Terns and shorebirds. The first falcons, Northern Harriers and Ospreys also came through at this time. The weather remained unsettled until a major cold front on August 26th cleared things out and dipped temperatures into the 40's. Following this front, there was a major movement of birds that lasted into early September. It caused a major warbler wave one expects in late August along with the peak of the swallows, Chimney Swifts, Common Nighthawks, the first Broad-wing and Sharp-shinned Hawks and Bobolinks. Also passing through at this time were the "boreal three", Olive-sided Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo and Mourning Warbler.

The first half of September remained colder than normal while the latter half was warmer than normal. Rainfall was .61 inches compared to the normal 3.91 inches. A front on the 6th produced more hawks, fewer warblers and included Connecticut Warbler and Lincoln Sparrow. A big front on September 13th brought the peak of the Broad-winged Hawk migration and the first Blue Jays, Savannah Sparrows and blackbirds. A third front on the 21st brought more northerly species including geese, Golden-crowned Kinglets, White-throated Sparrows and the late warblers. Another front on the 25th produced the peak of Ospreys, Northern Harriers and Peregrine Falcons; Red-headed Woodpeckers and Snow Geese also made their appearance at this time.

The first cold front of October on the 4th produced birds with a western flavor including Western Kingbird, Dickcissel, Clay-colored Sparrow, Caspian Tern and Long-billed Dowitcher. The front also brought the first major movement of American Robins and sparrows, including Lincoln's and White-crowned, and the very last warblers, vireos and Eastern Phoebes. New birds arriving included Short-eared Owl and the scoters. A final front on the 26th saw the last of the sparrow flocks and the first big flocks of Pine Siskins and Black-capped Chickadees.

November was colder and wetter than average and poorer for birds. A frontal system on the 5th produced many ducks and Tree Sparrows. A second and stronger front on the 9th brought flocks of White-winged Scoter, blackbirds and Pine Siskins. Another front on the 19th produced more ducks, Rough-legged Hawks and flocks of Horned Larks. An early and heavy snowstorm in the northern half of the state on November 19th and 20th, did a fair amount of damage to trees and to lingering migrants.

#### LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

An inland Horned Grebe was found on Bantam Lake, Litchfield November 2 (RN). The Red-necked Grebe that summered at Greenwich Pt. stayed until October 4. Other Red-necked Grebes included 1 at Lighthouse Pt., New Haven October 31, 1 on Bantam Lake November 9 (DR, DH) and 1 each at Stratford (RE) and Sherwood Island State Park (MS) November 23. There were 10 reports of American Bittern and none of Least Bittern, with both species now on the American Blue List. Only 1 Tricolored Heron was reported, August 3 at Milford Pt. Most Cattle Egret reports are confined to the Westport area, so 1 in

Simsbury September 9-10 (JK) was unusual. There were 2 reports of Tundra Swans, 1 of 21 birds flying overhead in Branford October 19 (NP) and 1 in East Rock Park on November 29 (RSc). This year Storrs became the center of goose studies with the presence of a Barnacle Goose September 15 thru October 15, followed by a Greater White-fronted Goose November 12-27. At Southbury, a past site for rare geese, several Blue Geese were seen in the flocks of Canada Geese during October and November (RN). Brant once again summered at Milford Pt., with 1 bird observed into September. The puddle duck picture was more typical except for a continued increase in Northern Pintail and Gadwall. Could these increases be a result of the decline of the closely related American Black Duck? Two Eurasian Wigeon were observed in New Britain October 19 (MC, JM). An out-of-season Canvasback was found in Stratford August 29 (DV). Six Common Eiders turned up at Seaside Park, Bridgeport September 19, (DV) and were subsequently found at Milford Pt. until October 4. There are a number of September records for Common Eider, perhaps a regular feature that should be checked. A Harlequin Duck made an early appearance at Merwin Point, Milford November 4-6 (FMc), but not as early as the Black Scoter in West Haven on August 19 (MS). There was an inland White-winged Scoter at Laurel Reservoir, Stamford November 2 (MFN). Ruddy Ducks have been increasing state-wide the past few years, but the 500 birds at Laurel Res. November 23 (MFN) was exceptional.

#### VULTURES THROUGH CRANES

The increasing number of Black Vulture reports are to be expected with the increase in Turkey Vulture numbers we have experi-

enced in the past decade. The most recent report is of a bird in Branford September 19 (NP). The alarm over the decline of raptors in the seventies has been replaced by the excitement of their recovery in the eighties. Each year, record numbers of birds have been recorded; the statewide total of fall sightings were Osprey 3540, Bald Eagle 51, Golden Eagle 13 and Peregrine Falcon 50. There was a spectacular flight of Broad-winged Hawks, the stock and trade of hawk counters, September 13-17. Strong northwest winds pushed birds to the coast and concentrated them there to produce a record state-wide count of 60,000. On September 14th 30,000 went over Greenwich Audubon Center and another 15,000 passed over Lighthouse Pt. A Swainson's Hawk was sighted September 19 in Branford (NP). A Gyrfalcon at Lighthouse Pt. November 21 provided an exciting finish to the season. A Black Rail turned up at Hammonasset St. Park October 6 (CT). Clay Taylor ran out of his hawk banding blind to chase a Gray Squirrel from bird seed and flushed the rail in the process! A Purple Gallinule was found at Hessely Meadow Pond in Woodbury August 30-September 1 (RN). Three Sandhill Cranes were observed calling overhead in Branford September 7 (NP).

#### PLOVERS AND SANDPIPERS

Unlike the big flocks of last year, Lesser Golden Plovers were seen in small numbers from August 30 through early November. The only concentration was a flock of 25, many still in spring plumage, at Hammonasset State Park September 3-8. There were also 4 inland at Suffield October 5 (SK). Late Solitary Sandpipers were observed in Woodbury October 4 (RN) and at Lighthouse Pt. October 28 (JG). Whimbrel



and Upland Sandpipers are now regulars in Stratford from early August to early September. Hudsonian Godwits again made regular appearances with 5 visits, 1 at Hammonasset St. Pk. August 18-20, 3 October 5-9 (RE) and 2 more November 27-29 (RS), 2 in Stratford / Bridgeport October 11 thru November 11 (DV), and 1 on Sheffield Island, Norwalk October 19 (FM). Two Marbled Godwits made a long visit to Milford Pt. / Lordship area August 19-31 while 3 more birds made short stops, 1 in Westbrook and 1 in Guilford August 30 (NP), and 1 at Seaside Park, Bridgeport September-10 (AB). Western Sandpipers, a coastal regular, turned up 20 strong on the Naugatuck River in Seymour August 16 (BD). A late White-rumped Sandpiper was reported from Greenwich Pt. November 28 (DB) and there were two inland records, 1 from South Windsor November 9 (PD) and 1 on the Naugatuck River in Seymour September 4 (BD). Four Baird's Sandpipers were reported; 1 at Milford Pt. August 31 thru September 6, 2 there September 20 thru October 4 and 1 at Hammonasset St. Pk. September 1-6. An early Purple Sandpiper was at Mulberry Pt., Greenwich September 25 (MFN) while 4 late Stilt Sandpipers passed through Lighthouse Pt. October 5 (JG). The only Buff-breasted Sandpipers reported were 2 in Guilford August 31 (NP). A Ruff, still retaining some breeding plumage, was seen at Milford Pt. August 22 (RB). One to 2 Long-billed Dowitchers were seen regularly from early September to early November from Lordship to Westbrook. Wilson's Phalarope, normally a regular in late August, was reported only from Branford, August 31 (NP). Red-necked Phalarope, on the other hand, was reported from Milford Pt. August 27 (MA) and Clinton November 17 (NP).

## GULLS AND TERNS

An out of season Bonaparte's Gull was seen at Greenwich Pt. August 1 (MFN) while single Common Black-headed Gulls were reported from Milford Pt. November 2 (DT) and Lighthouse Pt. November 27 (RE). Three Iceland Gulls enjoyed the country charm of Storrs from November 15 on, while a more conventional bird was found in New Haven Harbor November 28 (RSc). Caspian Terns were reported from West Haven August 31 (NP), Milford Pt. September 4 (DV,RSc), Hammonasset St. Pk. September 19 (RE) and Milford Pt. (2) October 4 (SK). Royal Terns were sighted August 21 at Milford Pt. (MS) and August 31 at West Haven (NP). Black Terns were unreported until Hurricane Charles arrived on August 18 after which there were birds all along the coast until early September. A late Black Skimmer was seen at West Haven October 27-29 (RSc).

## DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

The 6 parrots observed at Milford Pt. in late August were not Monk Parakeets but recently escaped Blue-crowned Conures. The only Snowy Owl report was a pair passing by Lighthouse Pt. November 20. Short-eared Owls moved through the state in mid October and as many as 6 birds could be found on Milford Pt. Northern Saw-whet Owls, in contrast, were scarce outside the northwest corner. A late bird, in both senses of the word, was found on the side of I-95 in New Haven October 11 (MS). A late Ruby-throated Hummingbird passed Lighthouse Pt. October 16 (MS,FG). A Rufous Hummingbird was reported from Middletown August 30 (DT,JM). The record, if accepted, would be a first state record.

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SHRIKES

Western Kingbirds were reported September 7 at Milford (DV), September 14 at Branford and from Stratford October 3-5 (DV). Swallows left early in August and were gone by October without late October flights of Tree Swallows. There were late Barn Swallows in Litchfield November 2 (RN) and in Old Saybrook November 3 (RSc). In the northwest corner, Northern Ravens continued to be observed regularly with over a dozen birds wandering the region. There were 2 Boreal Chickadee reports; Branford October 19 (NP) and Groton October 28 (RSc). Sedge Wrens, naturally secretive, went totally unreported. A Northern Wheatear was observed at Sherwood Is. St. Pk. September 28-30 (RSO) but few had a chance to see it before it disappeared. Shrikes were better represented this fall with a Northern Shrike in Woodbury November 23 (RN) and Loggerhead Shrikes at Hammonasset September 7 (CT), Branford October 3 (NP) and South Windsor November 23 (MT).

## VIREOS THROUGH FINCHES

Solitary Vireos were more frequently reported than usual with sightings of 10 or more birds at a time. An early Orange-crowned Warbler was found in New Hartford September 2 (JK) while a late Northern Parula was brought down by a heavy snowstorm in Canton November 19 (JK). Other late warblers included a Wilson's Warbler October 11 at Lighthouse Pt. (JG) and a Common Yellowthroat in Woodbury November 23 (RN). In general there were fewer reports of late warblers. The secretive Connecticut Warbler was widely reported in early September, then absent thereafter. Dickcissel reports were few and mostly fly by; 1 at

Hammonasset St. Pk. September 12 (NP), 1-5 per day October 1-5 in Guilford (NP), 1 in Westport October 12 (FM) and 1 at Lighthouse Pt. October 22 (FG). Clay-colored Sparrows were reported October 2 at Hammonasset (CT) and in Branford (NP). An early Ipswich Sparrow was found at Milford Pt. October 21 (RE) and 2 Henslow Sparrows were at Hammonasset St. Pk. September 2 (JK,SF). There were reports of Oregon Juncos at Saugatuck Falls November 17 (MS) and in Southbury November 29 (RN). Rusty Blackbirds were in small numbers throughout October with no large flocks. Boat-tailed Grackles were seen on the coast in Branford October 19 (NP) and in Lordship November 23 (RE). A late Northern Oriole was in Ridgefield October 28 (MS). There were strong flights on Pine Siskins and a few flocks of Evening Grosbeaks in November. Other winter finch reports included Pine Grosbeak at Lighthouse Pt. September 22 (RE), 20 White-winged Crossbills there November 21 (JG), 6 Red and 10 White-winged Crossbills in Branford October 21 (NP).

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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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## Guide for Contributors

### Preparation of Manuscripts:

The editors welcome submission of articles and notes for the *Connecticut Warbler*. Manuscripts should be typed double spaced on one side of the sheet only, with ample margins on all sides. Style of the manuscript should follow general usage in recent issues.

### Illustrations:

The editors welcome submission of line artwork of Connecticut and regional birds. Black and white photographs of particular interest will also be considered, but tend to print at less than optimum quality. Line art should be submitted as good-quality photographic prints or in original form. All originals and prints will be returned promptly after publication prints are made.

# POPULATION DENSITIES OF FOREST BIRDS IN NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

Robert J. Craig

Although a small state, Connecticut exhibits considerable diversity in its physical and hence biological environment. Geographic variation in factors like soils, topography and climate affect the distribution of forest types and therefore animal distributions. For example, certain bird species predominate in particular kinds of woodland. However, there are few data on the composition of bird communities over extensive forested areas (see Bond 1957), and Connecticut studies are either qualitative (e.g. Taber 1951) or cover small plots (Magee 1974-1984, Suchecki 1974). The goal of this study is to provide quantitative population data on forest birds in northeastern Connecticut that will help to characterize the regional avifauna.

## *Methods*

Dowhan and Craig (1976) reported on the biophysical regions of Connecticut, termed ecoregions. I chose to investigate the Northeast Upland Ecoregion, a sparsely populated area of hilly topography and cool temperatures centered around the town of Union. This area contains the southernmost extension of mixed hardwood-conifer forest in eastern Connecticut, and I studied only tracts with this predominant cover to make my findings as typical of the region as possible. The tracts varied in factors such as conifer density, moisture regime, stand

age, understory density, and extent of selective logging, however, so my observations represent average regional conditions rather than those of a single microhabitat. I examined ten sites that included nearly all extensive hardwood-conifer tracts present, and chose census routes that generally followed old logging roads or dirt roads through the forest interior.

I conducted two strip censuses (Emlen 1977) of bird populations per site between 25 May and 1 July 1985. To census, I walked a one mile census route at about 0.75 mph and recorded the location of all individuals encountered up to 200 ft. from each side of route. I performed censuses on clear, calm days beginning at 6:30 AM EDT, but not earlier because the cold mornings and deep shadows typical of the region noticeably reduced early morning activity. To convert field data to population estimates I used the methods described in Emlen (1977).

Strip censusing yields population estimates below those of other techniques such as spot mapping, which is probably more accurate (Dickson 1978). However, strip censuses are better for large scale surveys, and avoid biased impressions of regional population densities due to effects of settlement patterns in small plots. When carefully done they should provide data comparable with those of simi-



larly performed censuses.

### **Results and Discussions**

Table 1 summarizes the population density of species encountered. For widespread species the standard deviation is given which is a measure of variation in densities at the ten routes.

The five most common species in this study were Ovenbird, Veery, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-White Warbler and Scarlet Tanager. These accounted for 46% of the individuals present. The first three species in particular are abundant in most forest types in northern Connecticut. The abundance order of these species found by Suchecki (1974) in the Union area was similar (Table 2), although the Blackburnian Warbler and Rufous-sided Towhee tied for third most common with the Veery. Over ten years Magee (1974-1984) found the abundance order of these five species to vary as follows: Ovenbird: 1-3, Red-eyed Vireo: 2-10, Veery: 2-4, Black-and-White Warbler: 4-12, Scarlet Tanager: 4-6. Other species he found in the five most common included Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, Solitary Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Rufous-sided Towhee. Population densities found by Suchecki (1974) and Magee (1974-1984), who used spot mapping procedures, generally exceeded those of my study (Table 2). However, my data often fell within the range of variation recorded by Magee (1974-1984).

Other notable findings of my

censuses were as follows: 1) Red-shouldered Hawk reappeared as a regular breeder (perhaps as common as the Broad-winged Hawk) after having previously declined (Dowhan and Craig 1976); north-eastern Connecticut currently appears to be its center of abundance in the state; 2) Acadian Flycatcher and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, although ranging north into Connecticut only relatively recently (Vickery 1977), now regularly occur in this northern habitat; because the gnatcatcher is an early breeder (April) it may have been more common than I found it; 3) Tufted Titmouse, a more southerly distributed species, was rare compared to the congeneric Black-capped Chickadee (see also Kricher 1981); 4) Red-breasted Nuthatch, although near its southern range limit, was common compared to the more southerly distributed White-breasted Nuthatch; 5) Yellow-rumped Warbler, a boreal breeder, has increased greatly since 1976 (Dowhan and Craig 1976) and now nests regularly; 6) Wood Thrush was rare compared to the other thrushes; Magee (1974-1984) also found it greatly outnumbered by Veery although he documented wide population fluctuations over 10 years; 7) Pine Siskin, another boreal species, first appeared as a widespread summer resident in 1985; 8) Least Flycatcher, House Wren, Gray Catbird, Common Yellowthroat and Chipping Sparrow were all common, but occurred primarily in openings caused by blow-downs or selective logging.

Several species were not found often enough to estimate pop-

Table 1. Census Results

Individuals per 100 ha (±SD)*	Species	Individuals per 100 ha (±SD)*	Species
2.5	Red-shouldered Hawk <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	30.4 ± 23.3	Scarlet Tanager <i>Piranga olivacea</i>
2.5	Broad-winged Hawk <i>Buteo platyterus</i>	5.8	Red-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta canadensis</i>
5.1	Downy Woodpecker <i>Picoides pubescens</i>	1.7	White-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta carolinensis</i>
4.1	Hairy Woodpecker <i>Picoides villosus</i>	17.4 ± 20.8	Brown Creeper <i>Certhia americana</i>
16.0 ± 15.6	Eastern Wood Pewee <i>Contopus virens</i>	7.1	House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
2.2	Acadian Flycatcher <i>Empidonax virescens</i>	2.8	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
8.1	Least Flycatcher <i>Empidonax minimus</i>	7.1	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher <i>Poliophtera caerulea</i>
2.9	Eastern Phoebe <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	71.3 ± 38.3	Veery <i>Catharus fuscescens</i>
9.2	Great-crested Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	6.1	Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>
8.8	Blue Jay <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	1.2	Wood Thrush <i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>
21.7 ± 8.2	Black-capped Chickadee <i>Parus atricapillus</i>	5.6	Gray Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
2.4	Tufted Titmouse <i>Parus bicolor</i>	24.0 ± 20.5	Solitary Vireo <i>Vireo solitarius</i>
9.2	Black-throated Blue Warbler <i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>	1.3	Yellow-throated Vireo <i>Vireo flavifrons</i>
18.3	Yellow-rumped Warbler <i>Dendroica coronata</i>	65.2 ± 23.0	Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>
27.5 ± 19.8	Black Throated Green Warbler <i>Dendroica virens</i>	1.8	Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>
28.2 ± 23.2	Blackburnian Warbler <i>Dendroica fusca</i>	17.7 ± 17.7	Rufous-sided Towhee <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>
35.1 ± 20.6	Black-and-White Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>	16.3	Chipping Sparrow <i>Spizella passerina</i>
14.3	American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	5.1	White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>
149.2 ± 45.7	Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>	9.2	Dark-eyed Junco <i>Junco hyemalis</i>
9.2	Northern Waterthrush <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	3.0	Pine Siskin <i>Carduelis pinus</i>
8.1	Louisiana Waterthrush <i>Seiurus motacilla</i>	12.2	Northern Oriole <i>Icterus galbula</i>
12.2	Common Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	1.8	Purple Finch <i>Carpodacus purpureus</i>
17.8	Canada Warbler <i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>	20.4 ± 15.2	Brown-headed Cowbird <i>Molothrus ater</i>

\*SD—Standard Deviation (see text)

ulations. Moreover, some species encountered are not usually considered forest residents. Comments on some of these follow: 1) Northern Goshawk - two individuals were observed near census routes and the species has nested in the region at least twice in the past 4 years; 2) Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl - all are regular breeders, but strip censuses do not effectively record them; 3) Pileated Woodpecker - I found it regular in the region in 1978, but the recent local increase in lumbering appears to have adversely affected it and only 2 individuals were recorded near census routes in 1985; 4) American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch - these species were frequently present on censuses but are only marginal forest inhabitants; 5) Cerulean Warbler - during censusing I found 3 males outside the 200 ft census strip; the species has become a regular breeder in the de-

ciduous forest of eastern Connecticut since first nesting in 1977 (Vickery 1977); 6) Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler - several of these typical boreal, old field birds occurred through June and might have nested; 7) Evening Grosbeak - a pair of these usually boreal residents present near a census strip were the first summer individuals I have found in the region.

In addition to these findings I also noted several apparent patterns of individual census strips. For example, diversity appeared highest on recently logged tracts; shrub density, particularly that of Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), seemed closely associated with the occurrence of species like the Black-throated Blue Warbler; and moisture regime seemed to strongly influence the abundance of species such as the Rufous-sided Towhee. Further investigation of these phenomena will require additional data, however.

Table 2. Comparison of Population Densities

Species	Individuals per 100 hectares		
	Sucheki 1974	Magee 1974-84	Craig This study
Ovenbird	260	133-247	149
Veery	120	95-247	71
Red-eyed Vireo	150	19-238	65
Black & White Warbler	100	0-95	35
Scarlet Tanager	80	38-171	30
Blackburnian Warbler	120	105-342	28
Black Thr. Green Warbler	70	57-152	28
Solitary Vireo	40	38-95	24
Black-capped Chickadee	60	38-114	22
Brown-headed Cowbird	60	19-38	20



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*Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey, DEP, Hartford, CT.*

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## RECORD BROAD-WINGED HAWK FLIGHT

Elsbeth S. Johnson

On September 14, 1986 a total of 30,535 Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*) were observed from the Quaker Ridge Hawkwatch site in Greenwich, CT. This represents a one day eastern North American record.

Quaker Ridge is a north-west ridge (el. 511') on the grounds of the Greenwich Audubon Center in southwestern Connecticut and lies about six miles northwest of Long Island Sound. Round Hill, 50 feet higher, is one mile east and the Rye Lake/Kensico Reservoir is two miles west with the Hudson River beyond. The views to the south and northeast are partially blocked by

trees although most hawks and particularly Broad-winged Hawks fly above the tree line.

Weekend counts at Quaker Ridge have been held since the 1960's with daily autumn coverage begun in 1985.

Hawks approach generally from the ENE and head SW over the site. They cross the Hudson River somewhere to the west. The coastal and inland flights converge over this area, and good numbers of hawks can be expected every year at Quaker Ridge. The best flights occur on northwesterly winds associated with Canadian high pressure systems.

September 1986 began with a low pressure system, followed by a high that produced a few hundred early Broad-winged Hawks. From September 10-12 only five Broad-wings were sighted as a low pressure system with 70 degree temperatures held sway. Late on September 12 a cold air mass cleared the skies and brought a sharp drop in temperature. On the 13th, the first day of the 1986 Hawk Watch Weekend, NNW winds brought in 1,027 Broad-wings. Sunday the 14th the skies were clear at 7am with a temperature of 53°F and a NW wind at 10 mph. Between 7 and 10 am EST 1,500 Broad-wings were recorded. The winds then increased to 18 mph and continued so the rest of the day. The winds shifted to NE at 11 am, N at 1 pm and NW at 2 pm with a temperature of 63°F. Between 10 am and 2:20 pm another 2,540 Broad-wings passed Quaker Ridge.

At 2:20 an enormous kettle of Broad-wings was spotted to the NE at the limit of binocular view. Birds were streaming out over the field at different levels in a band that became 20 birds wide. Three methods of counting were used simultaneously on this and all subsequent afternoon kettles with a final estimate made from the pooled results of the three counts. In one, the first thousand birds were counted (3 minutes) and the resulting figure extrapolated to suggest 6,667 passed in the 20 minute flight. In the second method two people counted by twenties (the width of the layered band) to estimate 6,400 birds. In the last method four observers made mass estimates giv-

ing totals of 5,000 to 9,000 hawks. A pooling of information gave a total of 6,400 from 2:20 to 2:40 pm. In the next 20 minutes another 2,047 hawks were counted.

Shortly after 3 pm another huge kettle, none of the birds visible to the naked eye, appeared to the southeast and was estimated at 5,200. Four more kettles following this one totaled another 10,700 birds. At 3:40 pm a large group of hawks appeared south of the ridge and then came in closer and lower to produce a canopy of hawks in kettles and streams over the awed observers. This last major flight of the day raised the total to 17,301 hawks for the hour and, with another 792 hawks between 4 and 5 pm, to 30,535 for the day.

The previous Connecticut record was 10,374 at Quaker Ridge September 16, 1984. The New England record was 19,912 at Wachusett Mountain, MA September 13, 1983 and the eastern North American record of 21,000 was set at Hawk Mountain, PA September 14, 1978. All these records are dwarfed by flights outside the region. Holiday Beach, Ontario on the western end of Lake Erie recorded 54 thousand in 18 minutes September 15, 1985 with a day total of 95,499, while Corpus Christi, TX had 500,000 October 3, 1977 and 250,000 October 4, 1977.

Elsewhere in the region, Butler Sanctuary, six miles north of Quaker Ridge, recorded 3,500 Broad-wings between 4 and 5 pm September 14 (Debra Ames). Hook Mountain, across the Judson from Butler, had 202 hawks (Stanley Lincoln) and Montclair, NJ, re-

ported 14,000 between 4 and 6 pm (Andrew Bihum).

On September 15 the winds shifted to the southwest and Quaker Ridge had only 900 Broad-wings, Hook Mountain had 1,390 (record for the year), and Butler and Montclair each had 13,000.

In the late afternoon of September 16, with NW winds to 25 mph, an estimated 7,500 Broad-wings were over Fairfield, CT (Carl Trichka) and 10,000 over Riverside, CT (Meredith Sampson).

Broad-winged Hawks normally take an inland course through New England in the fall. Flight conditions were poor for three days prior to September 13, when NW winds apparently pushed a mass of birds eastward on their way south. On the 14th this wind continued, increasing in speed and apparently held birds on a more coastal course to bring them over Greenwich, CT. On the 15th when winds were light and SW, the birds took the more direct route northwest of Quaker Ridge.

In addition to the Broad-winged Hawks, 30 Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), 1 Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), 9 Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), 155 Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), 2 Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*), 1 Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), and 48 American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) were also sighted. The observers wondered how many hawks were missed in the large masses of Broad-wings and even how many Broad-wings were flying over too high to see in the cloudless skies.

The ratio of immature to adult

birds could not be determined although birds close to the observers were predominately adult. Allen Siegle, assisted by Gary Palmer, was compiler for the day with spotters and counters Tom Burke, Jay Gartner, Ted Gilman, Frank Guida, Elsbeth Johnson, Steve Potter, Meredith Sampson, Julio de la Torre, and Joe Zeranski.

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## CANADA GEESE WITH YELLOW NECK-COLLARS DO MIGRATE.

Fred C. Sibley

On October 17, 1986 Rick Kemp of Wallingford, CT came home to find a large flock of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) in a pond behind his house. A quick check indicated there were about 500 geese in the pond, many with yellow neck-collars. Even though it was late he ran home, picked up his scope, and before dark read 11 of the collars. After sending this information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service he received a very interesting reply from Richard Malecki (Dept. Nat. Resources, Fernow Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853). The geese were banded in a 6 year project (1983-88) during which 3 inch wide, individually numbered yellow neck-collars will be placed on over 30,000 birds in the Atlantic Flyway. The population of Canada Geese in the Atlantic Flyway has increased 250 percent since 1950 and the banding and subsequent sightings of these geese should provide additional data to solve the problems associated with this population increase.

The birds Rick Kemp reported had been banded in Quebec (4), NY (1), PA (2), MD (1), DE (1), and NJ (2). Four of the birds had been sighted a total of 14 time previously: NY (4), PA (3), MD (2), DE (1), and NJ (4). The four birds from Quebec has all been banded on July 29, 1986 while the US birds were all

winter bandings and all subsequent sightings were winter sightings. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that all these birds were members of the same nesting community and were traveling together to the same wintering ground. Although this is possible, the previous sightings would indicate otherwise. Exactly two years previously, October 17, 1984, three of the four previously sighted birds were in MD, NJ, and NY respectively while the fourth was banded two months later in Delaware.

There is too little information here to draw any conclusions, but one can speculate endlessly and wish for more data. You can not only obtain your own list of neck collars to speculate on but in so doing provide enough data to the federal and state agencies so they can come up with solid answers.

If you go birding in October check any flock of Canada Geese for neck-collars and report these. I'll accept and pass on any sightings. **Make October 1987 neck-collar month! Don't pass up a neck-collar! Read and report! Let the original bander know you care! Good Hunting!**

*19 Cedar Grove Rd., Guilford, CT  
06437*

# KEEPING A BIRDING JOURNAL

Michael Harwood

This is a good time to start keeping a birding journal.

Too few of us keep written records of the birds we see and hear. Even most of us who sometimes keep written records don't do enough of it, aren't consistent about it. But there are many reasons for you to keep such records.

First and foremost, it's fun. You see an interesting bird or a bird doing something interesting, and you write down your observations, pinning them on paper and in your mind and not letting them just slip away. As you write, you call up second thoughts that enlarge the experience - maybe connect it with things you saw months or years ago.

Second, focusing that way helps you learn more about birds, and you are writing yourself a sort of informal textbook to which you can return any time for a refresher course.

Third, you create a permanent record of birds and behavior that can be combined with the records of other birders to add to the total knowledge about birds. Make no mistake about that. So little is known about birds that every birder can add to the sum of knowledge, just by watching, listening, and writing it all down.

Okay, so you never kept a birding journal before, and you're not sure how to go about it. Don't fret. Just start. Buy a pocket-sized notebook and carry it with you on birding

trips, or keep it in sight of the feeder. Head each entry with the date and time and location and weather, and then start writing down what you see. Try to do more than just make a list. You can start by keeping track of numbers, just as you would on a Christmas count. Then add details, such as what particular birds and groups of birds were doing or what they sounded like or how the experience touched you. After a while you may discover that the greatest kind of birding involves sitting in one place, watching one bird or one pond or one tree or one stretch of beach, listening carefully, and taking notes.

The real pay off for the journal writer comes when you go back later and read what you wrote or draw upon the data you collected.

You can relive great birding moments as many times as you pick up your journal. Write on!!

*P.O. Box 51, Washington, CT 06793*

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## CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter: December 1, 1986  
to February 28, 1987

Many considered this winter dull with few good birds. Overall, the winter was milder than normal with coastal marshes and major rivers freezing over a few days at a time. The best birds reported didn't stay long and few people saw them. These included two Eared Grebes, Gryfalcon, Tundra Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, American Oyster-catcher, Boreal Chickadee and



Boat-tailed Grackle. Birds that lingered for many to see included Golden Eagle, Common Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Lark Sparrow. Waterfowl numbers were average and appeared to migrate early in February. Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls were common with many reported at feeders. As usual details of birds observed only on the Christmas Bird Counts can be found in the CBC summary (Conn. Warb. 7:2-6).

The period began with temperatures in the 50's then turned sour with a cold system on December 5 that dropped temperatures into the 20's. Thereafter, temperatures remained above normal except for two cold fronts on the 19th and 23rd to remind us of winter. January continued warm and was wetter as well, 6.2 inches of precipitation compared to a normal of 3.53 inches. The January thaw lasted from the 10th to the 16th with temperatures reaching the 50's on the 15th. This breath of spring was ended by a cold front on the 17th bringing us back to reality. Winter finally became nasty on the 22nd when a cold front dropped temperatures around 0°F and stayed with us until the 28th when a warm front arrived. February was very dry with only .43 inches of precipitation compared with the normal 3.19 inches. Southwest winds after the 7th, put temperatures into the 40's and started birds moving north; particularly waterfowl and American Woodcock. Just as things started looking up, a short sharp freeze February 11-16 lowered temperatures back to 0°F. A final

warm front on the 23rd restarted the spring migration.

### *Loons through waterfowl*

Mild weather kept water open enough for a Common Loon to be found on the Connecticut River in East Hartford December 27 (TM). Two **EARED GREBES** made brief visits; one by the outer breakwaters of New Haven Harbor January 6 (DS,RS) and another in Guilford February 2 (NP). Horned Grebes started moving early with 70 birds seen off Milford Point February 16 (DR). An American Bittern survived the winter in the Lordship Marshes in Stratford and was seen regularly into early March. A **TUNDRA SWAN** was found at the base of Stevenson Dam in Monroe February 20 (NP). Late inland ducks of note included a Wood Duck in Kent December 21 (DR), a Red-head on Lake Candlewood December 19 (JKi), and 3 Ruddy Ducks at the same place January 5. Only 1 Eurasian Wigeon was reported this winter, a male at St. John's in West Haven from mid-January into March (m.ob.). A **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** was spotted on Lake Saltonstall January 16 (NP). The talk of the winter was a **NORTHERN SHELDUCK** observed at Sherwood Island State Park the entire period. Was it an escape or a bonafide vagrant?

### *Hawks through Gulls*

Single Osprey appeared in Sherman (DA) December 15 and Glastonbury December 27 (BM). The 1987 mid-winter Bald Eagle Survey reported 34 eagles with an equal numbers of adults and young. For



the third year a Golden Eagle was observed on the Connecticut River in Essex : mid-January into March. Northern Harriers were reported regularly in their traditional sites in coastal marshes. One in the Sherman area February 5 (JKi); may have been an over-anxious migrant. Rough-legged Hawks were reported from several areas; single birds in Lordship Marsh, Quinnipiac Marsh and the Salmon River area. A Merlin was observed at Hammonasset State Park February 14 (JM), and a Peregrine Falcon spent most of the winter in Hartford (m.ob.). An unusual inland occurrence was a Gyrfalcon at Storrs December 11 (LB). An American Oystercatcher was fooled by the warm weather and arrived at Hammonasset February 8 (MKRK). Two Greater Yellowlegs stayed at Holly Pond in Stamford to December 31 and a third bird was seen in Rowayton (MF). Other lingering shorebirds included a flock of 20 Red Knot at Milford Pt. from mid-December into February and a number of Ruddy Turnstone off Westbrook. In the scattering of Bonaparte's Gulls along the coast were a Common Black-headed Gull and a Little Gull in Old Saybrook from late January into early February. White-winged Gulls included an Iceland Gull in West Hartford (SF), 2 Iceland and 2 Glaucous Gulls in New Haven (m.ob.) and a Glaucous Gull in Bridgeport (DV). There were 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls reports; East Hartford December 27 (LB) and Sherwood Island State Park January 15 to February 20 (CT).

### *Doves through finches*

Spicing up a feeder in Westport was a partial albino Mourning Dove. The body was principally white with fleckings of normal color while the head, wingtips and tail were normal. Snowy Owls migrated through in early December with at least 2 each in West and East Hartford and 1 in Fairfield, Windsor Locks, Bloomfield and West Haven. The only one to stay was a bird in Lordship Marsh from late December to mid-February. A long-eared Owl was discovered in East Hartford with a Barred Owl. A second Long-eared Owl was found in Sherman February 11 (DA) and there was the usual bird at Hammonasset State Park in early December. Saw-whet Owls, when located, appeared to have confined themselves to the northwest corner of the state with few records along the coast. An immature Red-headed Woodpecker spent the winter at Sherwood Island State Park (FM). A single Boreal Chickadee was located in Killingworth February 2 (NP). Single Gray Catbirds were reported at Greenwich Point January 17 and Southbury February 21. A Northern Shrike spent part of January in N. Canton (BK). Despite the mild weather, winter warblers were scarce: an early migrant (?) Pine Warbler in Milford February 18 (CW), a Palm Warbler January 4 in Westbrook (DR) and a Yellow-breasted Chat at Hammonasset State Park January 4 (BK).

The Lark Sparrow that was found on the Westport CBC was last seen January 14. Another partial albino feeder bird was reported from Shelton: a Dark-eyed Junco

with a white throat and collar and white wing markings (JB). A **HARRIS' SPARROW** was reported in South Windsor December 27 (PK) but was not found again. Two **BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES** were found on Sandy Point, West Haven January 1 (NP). A Northern Oriole spent the winter at a feeder in Wilton (VW).

Winter Finches were widely reported throughout the state, particularly Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins. Evening Grosbeaks were less common, but still widely reported in small numbers. Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks were scarce with occasional sightings occurring across the northern half of the state.

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## WINTER FEEDER SURVEY

For many people the backyard feeder is the focal point of their winter birding. I hope the following survey will encourage more people to report what they have at their feeders. The cumulative reports can provide documentation of changes in winter bird populations.

This year I received 23 reports: 11 from residential areas, 9 from rural woodlands, 2 from rural farmland and 1 from an urban setting. All the feeders used sunflower seeds, 20 used mixed seed, 20 used suet, 18 offered thistle seed, 3 added corn, 2 supplemented with table scraps and 7 had water available. No correlation could be found between species seen and the habitat or the food offered.

The most varied feeder reported 32 species, the least 7 with an average of 19 species. A total of 40 species were recorded, but only House Finch was seen at all 23 feeders. Other common species: 22 feeders; Mourning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, 20 feeders; Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch.

Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird, White-crowned Sparrow, Pine Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird were reported from one feeder each, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Cooper's Hawk from 2 feeders and Sharp-shinned Hawk, Field Sparrow and Fox Sparrow from 3 feeders.

Winter finches seemed well represented with 19 feeders having Pine Siskins, 17 Common Redpolls, 11 Purple Finches, and 10 Evening Grosbeaks.



This is the first year and represents only a fraction of the feeders maintained by CW readers. I wish to thank all the people who sent in feeder reports and hope they and many others will do so for next years winter report.

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## THE CONNECTICUT ENVIRONMENT

### Part Two: Roland C. Clement

*Editor's Note: Part One of this article appeared in the April 1987 issue, Vol. VII, No. 2*

#### IV. *The Four Seasons.*

*Winter.* As the Earth's annual circuit of the sun causes its inclined plane to dip away from the sun, thus making the sun appear to recede westward, the northern hemisphere loses insulation and cools rapidly. Whereas frosts have occurred since early November, sustained freezing and snow accumulation wait until December. January is actually the coldest month, and February usually brings most of the snow. Although the bulk of the summer resident species of birds and transient visitors are long gone, many individuals of these species stay into December, and Christmas Bird Count organizers have learned to go afield at the beginning of the allotted count period so as to record the maximum number of both species and individuals. Late December cold spells

drastically alter totals downward. Winter visitors, whether waterfowl or northern finches, usually delay peak arrivals here until snow and ice lock them out of the interior. This is also when eagles visit the coast for awhile even though it means putting up with the disturbance of more people. Every winter storm is a survival test and populations slowly but steadily decline as winter progresses. Northeasterly gales, which bring most of the snow, sometimes drive pelagic birds like the alcids ashore, or even inland. A thaw often occurs in late February, but whether or not it does, Great Horned Owls begin to nest and Red-tailed Hawks pair and perform courtship flights. If winter breaks early, the "weather migrants" begin pushing north; otherwise they wait until early March, at the onset of spring.

*Spring.* Most of us recognize our own harbinger of spring. There was a time when honking V's of Canada Geese served this function for many, but today there are so many feral geese commuting from shore to golf course that one is not sure. Robins winter with us, so the sophisticated birder does not rely on them; these hardly serve well. Red-winged Blackbirds, perhaps, though they probably come only from New Jersey, or American Woodcock if you are lucky enough to have a singing ground nearby, are part of the company of "weather migrants" who test the receding ice frontier, impatient to be about their nesting farther north if possible. Often, a late storm will "dam them up" for a week or so.

By the end of March, for sure, the



first set of species just mentioned is augmented by more of their tribe, and several duck species begin migrating; and kingfishers, flickers, phoebes, and pipits arrive. The days may still be raw, but they know that the nesting season will be all too short. By the same token, our winter visitors mostly leave us in March.

Whereas most March arrivals have filtered in quietly, by mid-April there is usually a pronounced wave of new arrivals, and most of the waterfowl have gone. In today's patchwork environment, many of these species will not show up locally for another two weeks because the early arrivals settle only in good habitats, and suburban areas must wait for overflow numbers. Unfortunately, overflow numbers are becoming smaller and many habitats go unpopulated, either because they are too small or because there are no longer enough birds.

Mid-April is the last time tongues of cold air penetrate as far south as the Gulf of Mexico for the season. When this happens, the cold front may extend the whole length of the Eastern United States. To the east of that front a long trough of warm air will form and flow rapidly northward. Trans-Gulf migrants arriving on the northern Gulf Coast at just that time may then be caught up in the trough and be sucked northward all the way to New England, or beyond. As they move north, however, the front is also moving eastward, and when they reach the longitude of New York, if the front has moved off-shore, they may find themselves over water and have to continue to Nova Scotia

to make a landing. This remarkable meteorological phenomenon probably accounts for the arrival of Scarlet Tanagers two weeks ahead of schedule. Such birds of course arrive before the insects they feed on hatch and many do not survive.

May is indubitably spring for all of us. The sun is warm and the wind swings into the southwest. Birds are now streaming northward, pressing ever faster to complete what may be a journey of anywhere from one to four thousand miles from wintering grounds in Central and South America. When the nights begin to warm up, about mid-May, the oaks flower and soon begin to unfurl red and beige leaves. This is when the largest "waves" of northern warblers arrive here and birders hope that the birds beat the leaves by at least a few days, so they may be discerned in the tree tops. Since they are night fliers, waves of birds occur only when their flights are interrupted by showers immediately to the north of us. Ten miles north or south of such a "fall-out" locality, there may be few birds. With uniformly good weather, birds are not precipitated from the sky and we see only a few of these northbound species. Shorebird numbers peak in late month but we are aware of this only when late easterly gales force them inland and slow their passage. Migration actually continues well into mid-June, but the great majority of birders have by then hung up their binoculars until the return migrations begin.

*Summer.* June 21 is the summer solstice, when the sun reaches farthest north in its apparent path and

produces the longest day of summer. Interestingly July, not June, is the warmest month of the year, and August is only slightly behind, even though the sun is now on its southward path. This anomaly is a result of the effect of "continentality", wherein the interior of the continent is warmed so much that its air masses, dragged eastward by the much diminished cyclonic circulation, warms the Northeast.

Summer is of course the period of nesting, and/or renesting in several cases. A pity that so few have helped check out the status of nesting birds. Perhaps involvement in the new effort to work out an atlas of nesting birds for Connecticut will help close this information gap. We need quantitative data on distribution and on numbers to help assess what is really going on in our man-handled environment. The extensions of range we have witnessed in the last decade or two are real enough, but what do they signify? For herons and waterfowl, for example, one may expect that dispossession by marsh drainage in the South, and by drainage of pot-holes in the northern prairies, have forced several species to disperse, just as they are known to do to a lesser extent during droughts.

*Fall.* The lag between astronomical signposts, climate, and biological responses is never better illustrated than in autumn. The heat of summer comes after the sun has passed its peak, and autumn is consequently warmer than spring, both because land surfaces have warmed so much and because water changes temperature so slowly. But birds have their own schedule. The

first migrants start south when summer has barely begun. These are the shorebirds whose nesting attempts on the Canadian tundra may have proved unsuccessful; they may be back in Connecticut, southbound, by early July. Then the males of more successful pairs of shorebirds abandon their families, apparently to leave more food for their young, and stop here briefly from mid-July onward, though the height of the shorebird migration will not occur until late August or early September. Being on the north shore of Long Island Sound, we see peak numbers mostly after strong onshore winds have diverted the offshore flights, since most of the large shorebirds migrate in very long jumps, sometimes from Nova Scotia to Barbados or the hump of South America.

The small birds often leave quietly, even before the frost, though heavy frosts move hordes of them. Waves or flights are mostly restricted to sparrows, whose month is October, and to hawks who stream southward after signs of winter arrive in eastern Canada, to be concentrated en route by geography in certain favorable observation areas. We have recently rediscovered the good numbers of hawks that use the Connecticut shore as a flight path, something the Ferguson brothers of Fisher's Island knew in 1922 and earlier.

October sees large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters and lesser numbers of other pelagic species swing through Block Island Sound on their great circle of the North Atlantic. Killing frosts reach the uplands in October and the low-

lands of the coast in early November in most years, and it is this onset of cold weather that determines the exodus of the bulk of our summer resident birds and those who nested farther north. October and November are usually dry months. November is the waterfowler's month, and the birders start looking for winter visitors as the year nears its end.

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CT 06850.

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## *Editor's Note*

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With this issue of the *Connecticut Warbler* we have implemented some of the changes that were promised in the April issue. We have designed a new interior layout and have artwork drawn especially for the front cover. (See "About Our Cover Artist"). The new format of articles makes them easier to

read with the use of a laser printer and all of this is due to our new Art Director, Patrick Lynch. We plan to make more improvements in the near future with the hope of making the *Warbler* a top-notch publication.





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## *About our Cover Artist:*

Michael DiGiorgio, Middletown  
"Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)"

Michael DiGiorgio is an illustrator for Field Publications and is known as a field painter. He works directly from nature and tries to capture the feeling of the birds and other wildlife. His illustrations have appeared in Audubon Magazine, Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife and The Living Bird. He has exhibited at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, Northeastern Wildlife Exposition, Ballard Mill Gallery, Massena, NY and he helped to illustrate the National Audubon Society's Master Guide to Birding. Inquiries about commission work and other work available should be addressed to him at 18 Bretton Rd., Apt. 1W, Middletown, CT 06457.

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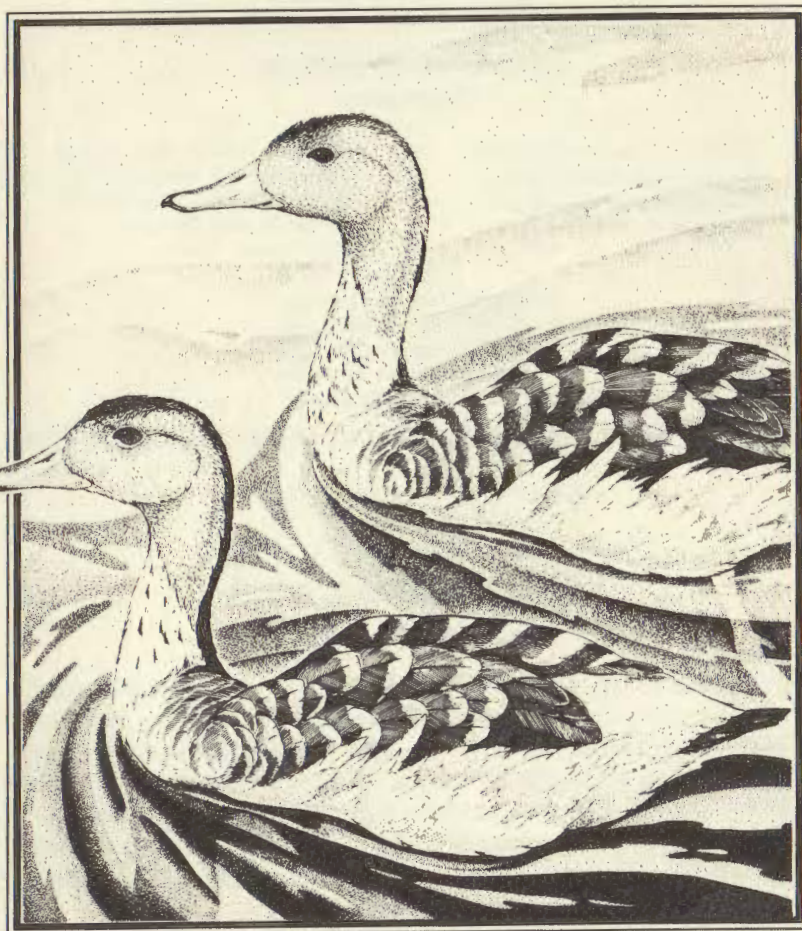
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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



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## *About our Cover Artist:*

Patrick J. Lynch, Cheshire

"Fulvous Whistling Ducks

(*Dendrocygna bicolor*)"

Patrick Lynch is a medical illustrator and photographer, and Associate Director of Biomedical Communications for the Yale University School of Medicine. He enjoys combining his skills as an illustrator and photographer with a lifelong interest in wildlife and natural history. Pat has a Master's degree in biology from Southern Connecticut State University, where he did his thesis on urban open space utilization by the Screech Owl, *Otus asio*. He is also the Art Director for *The Connecticut Warbler*.

## ***EDITORIAL***

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### **There are two reasons for the seasonal report, news and historical documentation.**

When I faced my first pile of seasonal report records, I was haunted by the question, "What is the purpose of a seasonal report?" How I answered it would determine what went into the report. After several attempts I came up with the form you have seen the past few years. I would like to take this opportunity to make my ideas about seasonal reports more explicit, hoping readers will get more out of the reports and to encourage people to send in more records. I wish I had taken the time to do so earlier as I am now in graduate school at Louisiana State University and have passed on the task of writing the seasonal report to Clay Taylor.

There are two reasons for the seasonal report, news and historical documentation. Read within a year of printing, it is for news; who saw what, when and where. I also tried to include bits of information based on the overview one gets from many reports. These help to clarify the status of species, make certain habitat or ecological relationships more explicit, and replace rumors about reports with more factual information. Now and then I would speculate about some observation to get you to think and perhaps to make a special effort to verify or refute an idea.

When a report is read several years later, one is looking at it with a comparative historical perspective. Is there any difference in bird populations between now and then? When and where is a given species most frequently seen? To make this process more effective, I have added things such as weather data; not necessarily noteworthy but important in the historical perspective. Like a spare tire, you don't appreciate it until you have need of it. I hope that these elements become interesting in five to ten years as larger patterns emerge.

The first paragraph of a report contains highlights for quick reference. The next section tries to correlate weather and bird patterns month by month. Weather is a significant factor affecting birds; this section tries to make those effects more obvious. It also brings together relationships between species not taxonomically related that might miss being separated in the species summary. I kept detailed weather information and tried to make objective descriptions of the seasons. Too often I have found subjective evaluations of cold winters and wet springs very mistaken.

The second section contains the sightings of rare birds. Species in this section are either rare enough so that all known individuals can be counted, such as Eurasian Wigeon or Kentucky Warbler; or common species in unusually large numbers. Expected early and late dates are treated in the first section, otherwise they are found here. I tried to include all reported rarities without passing judgment. In general if the likelihood of a report being accurate is at least fifty percent, it is included. We now have a rare records committee which will evaluate records. Their goals and procedures will be explained elsewhere. If a record is not accepted by the rare records committee, it does not necessarily mean it was a mis-identification. Thus its presence in the Warbler is still valuable and may indicate the times and locations in which one might look for these birds in the future.

The most important part of any seasonal report are the records you send. A report can't be written without records, and more than just rarities. A rarity is just a "flash in the pan". Changes that you see in your back yard, combined with the sighting of others, may help in the discovery of widespread trends. All reports are reviewed, kept on file and acknowledged in the seasonal report. Even if your report is not mentioned directly, it was likely used in evaluating trends and is available for others to see. The file is available to anyone engaged in a study that requires more detailed records. To encourage more observers to send in records and to get a better handle on different aspects of our bird life, I have started a third section that will include censuses of common birds. The first such census can be found at the end of the winter seasonal report (CW Vol.7, No.3, Page 38).

I would like to thank all those who have contributed records to make the report a success. A special thanks to Anthony Bledsoe, Betty Kleiner and Fred Sibley who helped make the reports presentable, and to Clay Taylor for picking up where I left off.

Dennis Varza

318 Jennifer-Jean Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808

**Changes that you see in your back yard, combined with the sighting of others may help in the discovery of widespread trends.**



# THREE FULVOUS WHISTLING DUCKS IN NORTH STONINGTON

Robert C. Dewire

On Saturday, May 16 1987, Nancy Weismuller, a teacher at the North Stonington Elementary School, took a number of her students to Assekonk Swamp, a State of Connecticut game management area of several hundred acres bordering the school property. At approximately 8 A.M., they came upon 3 ducks standing on a rock about 150 yards off shore. Using the Peterson Field Guide, they identified the birds as Fulvous Whistling Ducks (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) despite the range indication. At approximately 9 A.M., Weismuller called The Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center to report the sighting. When I arrived at about 10:30 A.M., the ducks were still present and we watched them at leisure as they sat, swam and flew briefly. The birds were unmistakable. Later that day, I sent out the word both locally and to the Connecticut Rare Bird Alert. On Sunday, the birds were most cooperative for a large number of people and good photographs for verification were taken. The birds were present through the week, however they began to move deeper into the extensive swampland and became more difficult to observe. They were last seen on Friday, May 29th. I canoed into much of the area but was unable to locate them after that date.

There has been some question as to the origin of these birds. It was noted that a game farm that had

this species was located only a few miles from the area in which the birds were sighted. I contacted the owner and he informed me that he had not had this species for 2 years and that his birds had died in captivity. He also noted that a breeder in West Greenwich, R.I. was the only other location in the area that had this species and that those ducks were banded. The birds at Assekonk were not. The Assekonk birds were reasonably wary, the species does wander and although it is certainly possible that these birds were escapes from another area, I feel that they were wild.

P. O. Box 122, Mystic, CT 06355

*Editor's Note:* This sighting has not yet been reviewed by the Connecticut Rare Records Committee.



## SECOND REPORT OF THE CONNECTICUT RARE RECORDS COMMITTEE

The establishment of a Rare Records Committee (RRC) for the State of Connecticut represents an important step in the history of field ornithology for the region. Numerous other states have established similar bodies whose role in assessing and preserving evidence for the occurrence of avian rarities is crucial for establishing consistency and completeness of the ornithological record. Obviously the best evidence for the occurrence of a bird species in the State is a specimen. For many years ornithologists were unwilling to grant credence to any reports unaccompanied by a skin. Current constraints (moral as well as practical) against collecting, coupled with the improvement of photographic and sound recording equipment and the sharpening of field skills by an ever greater number of experienced observers have opened the door to the acceptance of new forms of evidence by professional ornithologists. This has given rise to the need for procedures for evaluating and preserving this evidence for future generations of students, in much the way museum collections preserve the specimen record.

In evaluating a submitted report, the members of the RRC are concerned with the adequacy of the evidence supplied by observers in light of the permanent historical record to be maintained. Their aim is to assess the quality of the evidence, written, photographic, and otherwise, in light of what is cur-

rently known about avian distribution and the problems of field identification of the species involved. Observers whose reports are not accepted by the RRC should not take this as a judgment that the bird or birds were misidentified or that the observer's abilities are questioned, but that the report raised problems which could not be resolved, involving either identification or origin. It is the accuracy and completeness of the field report and the rigor and objectivity of the review procedure which distinguish an accepted record from an uncorroborated report.

One of the major aims underlying the establishment of the RRC is to foster an awareness in Connecticut's field ornithologists of the importance of providing corroboration for their reports of rarities. Careful field notes, sketches, photographs and sound recordings are essential to establishing a record of lasting ornithological value. The initial period of the RRC's operation has been devoted to several fundamental tasks: acceptance of by-laws governing its operation, developing criteria for an official State List, reviewing historical records, and preparing a Review List of species for which corroborating evidence of future occurrences is desired. At the same time, the RRC has begun the process of evaluating current reports as they have been submitted and eliciting submis-



sions in support of unsubstantiated or insufficiently substantiated reports of historical significance. The RRC's decisions regarding these initial reports are presented below. Sequence and nomenclature follow The A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds, 6th edition. In each case date and location of occurrence are provided, together with the appropriate RRC file number. In the case of accepted records, names of principal observers are given. First state records are so designated; the term "hypothetical" is used to distinguish those records of species for which satisfactory photographic or specimen evidence is still required, in accord with the Committee's policy regarding the official State List.

Several reports submitted to the Committee are still pending, in some cases awaiting appraisal by outside experts. The RRC reserves the right to reconsider any report, whether initially accepted or not, upon receipt of significant additional evidence. The RRC wishes to express its appreciation to the many contributors who have responded to its requests for information. Particular thanks are due to Jon Dunn for generously providing valuable assistance. The Committee would like to urge all birders to assist in making their Connecticut field observations part of the ongoing ornithological record of the State. Rare Bird Report Forms are available from the Secretary. The time and care taken to prepare a formal report of your observations represent your direct contribution to the future of ornithology in the region.

## ACCEPTED RECORDS

**GREATER SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus gravis*). An incapacitated bird captured at Branford, 9 Nov. 1985, unsuccessfully released, 19 Nov., S. Ramsby et al. (86-11); photos on file.

**MANX SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus puffinus*). One seen at Greenwich Point, 17 May 1980, T. Burke, F. Purnell, J. Zeranski (85-5). First accepted state record (hypothetical).

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*). Adult male at Thimble Islands, Branford, 28 Aug. 1979, N. S. Proctor et al. (87-16); photo on file.

**TUNDRA SWAN** (*Cygnus columbianus*). One at Hammonasset St. Pk., Madison, 3-6 Nov. 1973, N. S. Proctor, E. Hagen et al. (87-12); photo Am. Birds 28-1 (1974) cover. One adult at Nell's Is., Milford, 27 March 1977, F. Mantlik et al. (86-13); photo on file

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*). Two adults of the Greenland race (*flavirostris*) at Orange, 14 Dec. 1985—12 Jan. 1986, N. S. Proctor et al. (86-6); photo on file. One adult of the same race on Connecticut R., S. Windsor, 13 Jan. 1986, C. Taylor et al. (86-5).

**KING EIDER** (*Somateria spectabilis*). One female and an immature male at Sherwood Is. St.



- Pk., Westport, 8 Dec. 1985—4 Jan. 1986, F. Mantlik et al. (86-8)
- BARROWS GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala islandica*). One adult male at Guilford Harbor, 4 Feb. 1985, N. S. Proctor (86-2). An adult male at City Point, New Haven, 20 Dec. 1986, R. English et al. (87-7).
- GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*). One immature at Essex, 30 Dec. 1984—16 Feb. 1985, F. Mantlik, C. Z. Wood et al. (85-24).
- SWAINSON'S HAWK** (*Buteo swainsoni*). Light-phase adult at Hammonasset St.Pk., Madison, 11 Sept. 1985, D. Varza, R. Schwartz et al. (85-35); photos on file. First accepted state record.
- GYRFALCON** (*Falco rusticolus*). One immature at Storrs, Mansfield, 12 Dec. 1986, L. R. Bevier (87-18).
- AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*). One at Silver Sands St.Pk. Milford, 4—5 Sept. 1984, D. Varza et al. (85-27).
- SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris acuminata*). One juvenile at Veteran's Park, Norwalk, 15—16 Oct. 1985, F. Mantlik et al. (86-9); photos on file. The bird was banded and released on the 16th. First state record. Cover photo CW6-2, Pg. 15-17. (Dates as reported in Field Notes CW6-2, p. 21, incorrect).
- CURLEW SANDPIPER** (*Calidris ferruginea*). One adult in alternate plumage at Milford Pt. 14 May 1981, F. Mantlik (86-14).
- RUFF** (*Philomachus pugnax*). Immature male at Guilford Sluice, 15 Aug. 1976, E. Hagen, A. Jenks (87-13).
- RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*). Five birds at Sandy Point, West Haven, 18 Aug. 1985, M. Szantyr et al. (85-15); photo on file.
- RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicaria*). One individual at Stratford, 7 Oct. 1985, D. Varza, S. Bushinski (85-22).
- POMARINE JAEGER** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*). One light-phased adult at Sandy Pt., West Haven, 5 Aug. 1985, A. H. Bledsoe, S. J. Ruoff (85-26). First accepted state record (hypothetical). Previous reports of this species not yet evaluated by the Committee.
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus fuscus*). Winter-plumaged adult in New Haven, 15 Nov. 1985, M. Szantyr (86-4).
- ROSS' GULL** (*Rhodostethia rosea*). Adult in basic plumage in West Haven, 11—22 April 1984. Found and identified by D. Varza and R. Schwartz. Report provided by A. H. Bledsoe (85-4); photos on file. First state record.
- GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Sterna nilotica*). One in Madison, 4 Oct.

(hypothetical). Photographic or specimen evidence of this species' occurrence in Connecticut still needed.

**BAND-TAILED PIGEON** (*Columba fasciata*). One in East Haven, 7 Nov. 1982, C. Taylor et al. (85-9). One at Portland feeder, Dec. 1984—March 1985, S. and J. Mitchell et al. (85-8). First accepted state records (hypothetical).

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*). One with a flock of five Mourning Doves at Milford Point, 23—25 Nov. 1973, R. English et al. (87-6). First accepted state record (hypothetical).

**CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW** (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*). One in Westport Nature Center, 14 May 1982, T. Rochovansky et al. (87-11).

**BLACK-BACKED WOOD-PECKER** (*Picoides arcticus*). One female on the Chester-Killingworth town line, 4 Jan. 1987, K. and C. Mason (87-17).

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus verticalis*). One at Stratford Point, 28 Sept. 1985, D. Varza, C. Trichka (85-20). One at Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven, 7 Oct. 1985, R. English, N. Currie (85-21).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLY-CATCHER** (*Tyrannus forficatus*). One adult at Hammonasset St. Pk., Madison, 11 Oct.

1983, J. Zickefoose et al. (85-29).

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*). One at Larsen Sanctuary, Fairfield, 7 Sept. 1984, C. J. Trichka (85-2). One at Thomaston, 16 Feb. 1985, P. Carrier et al. (85-31)

**SEDGE WREN** (*Cistothorus platensis*). One bird at Hammonasset St. Pk., Madison, 6 Sept. 1985, C. Taylor et al. (85-25). One at Bradley Int. Airport, Windsor Locks, 19 May 1986, T. I. Crossman (86-16).

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). One at Hammonasset St. Pk., Madison, 5—10 Sept. 1985, R. English et al. (85-13); individual was banded and released on 9 Sept., photo on file. One at Westport, 28—30 Sept. 1986, R. L. Soffer et al. (86-18).

**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** (*Myadestes townsendi*). One adult at Bethel, 12 and 24 Nov. 1983, T. Lofgren (85-7). First accepted state record (hypothetical). A 1939 sight record has not yet been evaluated by the Committee.

**BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** (*Dendroica nigrescens*). One male in Waterford, 4—30 Oct. 1967, G. Bissel, R. Dewire, H. Gilman (87-5). First state record (hypothetical).

**HERMIT WARBLER** (*Dendroica occidentalis*). One at East Rock Park, New Haven, 1—3 May

- 1977, R. L. English et al. (87-8).  
First state record (hypothetical).
- YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** (*Dendroica dominica*). One at Osbornedale St. Pk., Derby, 17 May 1986, W. Stoddard (87-3).
- PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** (*Protonotaria citrea*). One singing male in Redding, 1 May 1986, M. Szantyr (86-17).
- BLUE GROSBEAK** (*Guiraca caerulea*). One male in Avon, 8-18 May 1985, J. Carville et al. (85-23).
- GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo chlorurus*). One at feeder in Orange, 7 Feb. 1983, L. Schlesinger (85-6). First state record (hypothetical).
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** (*Spizella pallida*). One bird in Stratford 8 Sept. 1985, D. Varza (85-19).
- HARRIS'S SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia querula*). One in South Windsor, 27 Dec. 1986, P. Lescault, P. Kitchin (87-4).
- YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*). One immature male at feeder, Milford, 16-26 April 1985, J. Calabrese et al. (85-16).
- BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). One male at feeder, Westport, 2 Jan. 1981, T. Rochovansky, N. Voldstad (87-10). First accepted state record (hypothetical).
- BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus major*). Two females at Lighthouse Point, New Haven, 7 Oct. 1985, R. English et al. (85-14). First accepted state record (hypothetical). Photographic evidence of the species' occurrence in the state has subsequently been provided.
- HOARY REDPOLL** (*Carduelis hornemanni*). One female in Norwalk, 13-14 March 1978, F. Mantlik (86-15); photo on file.
- UNACCEPTED RECORDS, Identification Questionable**
- ARCTIC LOON** (*Gavia arctica*). One in basic plumage at Merwin Point, Milford, 16 Nov. 1980 (85-32).
- EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*). One in basic plumage in Woodmont, West Haven, 2 Mar. 1987 (87-9); photos on file.
- NORTHERN GANNET** (*Sula bassanus*). One over Long Island Sound off Stratford, 3 Nov. 1985 (85-18).
- BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). Flock of 15 or more in Poquonock, Windsor, 19 Mar. 1987 (87-14).
- WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus albicilla*). A bird collected in Branford, 29 Mar. 1934. Specimen apparently lost. Identification questionable (86-12).



GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*).  
One gray-phase bird at Light-  
house Point, New Haven, 21  
Nov. 1986 (87-1).

RUFOUS-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*). One adult in alternate plumage in Guilford, 25 Aug. 1975 (87-15).

LONG-TOED STINT (*Calidris subminuta*). One in New Haven, 11 Sept. 1983 (85-38); photos on file.

SOUTH POLAR SKUA (*Catharacta maccormicki*). One on Long Island Sound from Bridgeport ferry, 19 Aug. 1983 (87-37); photos on file.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Larus pipixcan*). One in East Haven, 9 Sept. 1982 (85-28).

WHITE-WINGED TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*). One in New Milford 13 May 1979 (85-3).

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*). One in Naugatuck, 14 Oct. 1977 (85-1).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). One in Bethany, 6 Oct. 1984 (85-10).

CONNECTICUT WARBLER (*Oporornis agilis*). One male at bird-bath, Rowayton, Norwalk, 9 May 1987 (87-19).

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). Two males, one female flocking with two Rose-breasted Gros-

beaks at Portland Meadows, 2—3 Sept. 1985 (85-12).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus henslowii*). One at Bridgeport Airport, Stratford, 7 Oct. 1985 (85-17).

**UNACCEPTED RECORD;** Origin questionable (identification accepted)

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*). One male at Westport, 17 Jan. - at least 17 May 1987 (87-2); photos on file.

Submitted July 21, 1987

Fred Purnell,  
*Acting Chairman*

Committee Members for 1987:

George A. Clark, Jr., *Chairman*,  
Tom Burke, Fred Sibley, Mark Szantyr, Clay Taylor, Dennis Varza. Alternates: Louis Bevier, Buzz Devine, Richard English, Ed Hagen.

Frank Mantlik,  
*Secretary*

17 Seabreeze Pl.  
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# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

## Spring: March 1- May 31, 1987

Clay Taylor

When Dennis Varza asked me if I would take over as field editor for the "Connecticut Warbler", he had that "you've got to help me, please!" look in his eyes. Unable to resist birders in distress, I said yes. Two days later Dennis dumped a huge pile of material on my desk and laughed all the way to Louisiana State University. Actually, he did explain the logic behind the field notes and outlined my new duties as field editor, leaving me with a new appreciation for this job. Most birders will never realize the amount of behind-the-scenes work that Dennis did for the "Warbler" and for the COA. His field reports have set the standard for this column. However, I am not Dennis Varza! and my style and focus will evolve in a different form. You have been warned.

In my twelve years of birding and presentation of numerous slide programs, I thought I had met most of Connecticut's active birders, but I was wrong. Half of the reports used in these field notes were submitted by people I have never met. Let me take this opportunity to say thank you and keep up the good work. I welcome any suggestions and constructive criticism.

The general observer consensus is that the 1987 spring migration was mediocre or even poor. The weather was not helpful this spring, an early March warm spell, spurring birds to move, was followed by a dramatic cold snap with

snow. Temperatures recovered by March 22, ushering in the expected early migrants. Heavy rains and unfavorable winds in early April again shut down all movement until April 20. There were very few early arrival dates this spring - and most species arrived later than average. May was dry with cool temperatures prevailing until the eighth when the mercury finally exceeded 60 degrees F. Not surprisingly, May 8-11 was the first and most likely largest warbler movement of the season. A block of high pressure finished the month and late migrants were steady although unimpressive in numbers. The season's only rarities arrived in very late May.

### LOONS THROUGH WATER-FOUL

Most species passed through our area with numbers and dates falling within expected limits. Common Loons were later than usual, while Red-throated Loons went unreported for the period. Red-necked Grebes were reported throughout April and May with a late inland report from Suffield April 29 (SK). A Great Cormorant was present until April 19 in Stamford (RH).

Hérons were regular. Interesting sightings included an American Bittern, a declining breeder in the State, at White Memorial, Litchfield May 16 (MO); a Cattle Egret

in Kent May 10, and a few Yellow-crowned Night Heron reports. Three **FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS**, well-known for their wanderlust, were found in the Assekunk Swamp, North Stonington May 16-29 (RD, m.ob) (See article elsewhere in this issue). Other uncommon ducks were a Common Teal at Gulf Pond, Milford, (the same individual all these years?) and a Eurasian Wigeon for most of March in West Haven. Long Island Sound always carries a few divers into summer, however, reports from Suffield of Black Scoter May 4 and White-winged Scoter May 10 are noteworthy (SK). On the exotic/escape ledger, the Common Shelduck remained at Westport into May and yet another Ruddy Shelduck appeared in Southbury.

#### HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

Connecticut's spring hawk migration is never very good when compared with fall, but 1987 was a good hawk year. There were 3 reports of Black Vulture; New Haven March 8 (NHBC), North Guilford, March 27 (NP) and North Greenwich May 16 (JB). A Bald Eagle in Haddam April 9 (LS,JS) may have been a migrant or a lingering winter resident. Observers should take care in studying late immature Bald Eagles. Are the feathers frayed and worn (northern bird) or fresh and clean (southern bird recently fledged and wandering)? A Cooper's Hawk nested on the Greenwich Audubon Center property, the first area nesting record in over 30 years (JZ). Over 10 reports of Merlin attest to a very

good flight, while a Peregrine Falcon was seen at Sherwood Island State Park May 8 (RS). A few raptor junkies were treated to a taste of fall in Harwinton on April 30, with sightings of a Merlin, waves of Broad-winged Hawks and a Bald Eagle pursuing a fish carrying osprey (PC).

Station 43, South Windsor, hosted a Sandhill Crane May 20-21, a second record for that locality (AM). The shorebird migration, normal through April, became quite lively in May. The big news came from the southeast corner of the state as a breeding-plumaged **AMERICAN AVOCET** posed for birders at Barn Island Management Area, Stonington. South Windsor had both Whimbrel and Wilson's Phalarope in mid-May (MH,PK). Late dates were reported for Common Snipe in Stratford May 11 (DV) and for Purple Sandpiper in Guilford May 21 (RE). The Avocet in Stonington was followed by a Curlew Sandpiper, hopefully signalling the return of Barn Island as a top shorebird site. There were 2 reports of Ruff, a Reeve at Sherwood Island May 8 (RS) and a breeding plumaged male at Guilford Sluice May 10 (NP). Upland Sandpipers were reported from a number of locations. The only reports of Little and Black-headed Gulls came from the New Haven area in March (were the ones usually found in Saybrook Cove missing or just unreported this year?). Bonaparte's Gulls remained in the New Haven area until mid-April. A late Iceland Gull was seen at Great Island, Old Lyme April 26 (FM,CW). Black Terns were reported from Milford Point



May 9 (MB) and New Haven Harbor late May.

#### DOVES THROUGH WARBLERS

There were no significant reports of owls, either early or late, somewhat surprising given the high numbers and late passage of owls through New York State. The last reported date for Short-eared Owl was April 9 at Stratford (CE). The arrival of flycatchers, vireos, warblers, thrushes et.al. began slowly in April with some species a week later than usual. The flood-gates opened during the period May 8-11 as many species were seen and some good counts posted. Only one report each was received for Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, while the few Acadians reported were seen mainly on their breeding grounds. The first Tree Swallows were on time in late March. Shrikes went unreported - discouraging but not surprising. The biggest miss of the season was Philadelphia Vireo - were there none, or did some observers neglect to report them. A male Prothonotary Warbler at Chatfield Hollow State Park April 18 (NP) spotlights a mostly ignored birding spot only minutes from Hammonasset State Park and the Connecticut River area. A rash of Yellow-throated Warbler sightings provided a seasonal highlight. Birds were seen in Guilford May 6 (NP), Branford May 8 (NP), in Guilford May 10 (NP), West Hartford May 21 (SF) and Meriden May 26 (FW). The first Pine Warbler was reported April 4 (NP). At least 4 Mourning Warblers were banded in mid-May with

many more reported. A report of a Connecticut Warbler seems to have slipped through the cracks. Please contact me if you have any details. Kentucky Warblers staged an impressive showing, both coastal and inland. Yellow-breasted Chat was also reported from numerous locations.

#### TANAGERS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

The Scarlet Tanager flocks brought a male Summer Tanager to Sachem's Head, Guilford on May 10 (NP). An Indigo Bunting on April 17 (ML) was early but the masses came as expected in early May. Two Grasshopper Sparrows on May 10 at Bradley Field, Windsor Locks (PS) presumably bred, as they did in previous years. Other sparrows were only sparsely reported with few Lincoln's or White-crowned. Snow Buntings were last reported on March 24 at Milford Point (VW); did anyone see passing flocks in April? Rusty Blackbirds were sprinkled among the reports of arriving Red-wings and grackles but there was no mention of any Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Orchard Oriole reports were numerous with many birds lingering in the area.

Most of the finches were very late in finishing their migration with Red Crossbills in Avon until mid-May (MM). The controversy over whether Hoary Redpoll is in fact a separate species can't tarnish the luster of the two individuals that visited a Torrington feeder until March 12 (JK). Pine Siskins were still visiting many feeders throughout May and there should

be a rash of nesting reports if this species holds true to its habits. Evening Grosbeaks were reported in Storrs May 6 and in Milford May 9. Last but not least, the House Sparrow has been exterminated in all of Connecticut (just wanted to see if you were paying attention) - don't we wish!

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### A Correction

In Volume 7, Number 3, July 1987, Page 39; under "The Connecticut Environment, Part Two", in line number 5, the word westward should read "southward", and in line number 6, the word insulation should read "insolation".

## ANOTHER BARN OWL BANDING

Carl J. Trichka and  
Milan G. Bull

Mysterious and unique as owls are, it is no wonder that the sight of one evokes special and lingering memories. Although eight species of owls can be seen in the Connecticut, one has to search long and far for the Common Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). As a breeding species in this state, its range is very restricted and its numbers are few. There are probably less than a handful of known nesting sites in Connecticut.

In mid-July of 1987, Milan Bull, Director of Field Studies and Ornithology for the Connecticut Audubon Society, received a phone call from the Connecticut Department of Transportation-Bridge Inspection Division in Milford. DOT supervisor Don LaFrancois reported a nest of Barn Owls located under a bridge on I-95 over the Indian River. His description sufficed to convince Bull that the birds were indeed Common Barn Owls.

A date was arranged and we pulled onto the shoulder of the I-95 bridge along with the bridge crew, their cherry-picker, two television station crews and a local newspaper reporter. Dangling over the side of a Milford, CT bridge some fifty feet above the Indian River may seem foolhardy to some, but this was an opportunity to band a rare bird in Connecticut and the data would be of significant value.

We quickly needed a plan of action that would attend to the welfare of the owlets, achieve our



goal, and satisfy the media. Since the maximum load for the cherry-picker platform was 600 pounds, we could not accommodate the reporters, cameramen, cameras and ourselves all at one time. They were allowed to go down first to film the nest site and then returned to the pavement. Miley and I then entered the cherry-picker with the idea that we could reach the owlets, place them into a large bucket and bring them topside to band them, thus allowing the media to record the entire event. There were three owlets on the ledge but we were able to capture only two. The third appeared much larger and older and scampered out of reach along the ledge. We returned topside and affixed the two owlets with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service bands 1377-00252 and 53 and returned them to the nest site.

The lingering memories mentioned in our opening sentence refer to a somewhat similar experience

with Barn Owls in June of 1980. That time our trip was to a marina in Stratford where the owner of a small boat stored in a forty foot high steel rack reported two owlets under the tarpaulin of his boat (Trichka 1981). Both owlets were banded and in the following spring one of them nested and produced young in the tower of Wesleyan University in Middletown.

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Trichka, C.1981. Nautical Owls Surface Inland. North American Bird Bander. 6:110

1. 65 Glover St., Fairfield, CT 06430

2. 2325 Burr St., Fairfield, CT 06430

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## ORNITHOLOGY IN CONNECTICUT'S LIBRARIES

George A. Clark, Jr.

Among the very important resources for bird study in Connecticut are its libraries. Certain town libraries, colleges, and nature centers have fine collections. Three Connecticut libraries have holdings notable nationally and internationally: Yale University at New Haven, Trinity College at Hartford, and the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Ornithological holdings in the Yale and Trinity collections

have been listed in special books (Scribner and Ripley, 1961; Trinity College, 1983) which can be used to determine whether a particular older reference is likely to be present without actually going to the library. Bird study is no exception in this, an age of information explosion. Globally, more than 100 periodicals are exclusively concerned with birds, and hundreds of others regularly or occasionally include



articles on birds. Much of this information has no immediate relevance for Connecticut birds, but nevertheless a substantial amount is pertinent. For example, techniques developed for studying and conserving birds in one part of the world may well be applicable in another. In view of the many strays and escaped birds seen in the field in Connecticut, articles and books on identification from throughout the globe may at times be useful in our state. Furthermore, Connecticut residents collectively travel for business and pleasure throughout the globe and those interested in birds may seek appropriate references.

The largest libraries contain large sets of bibliographic aids to help in searching for specific information. Such series as Zoological Record, Science Citation Index, Biological Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts International, and Current Contents can provide important leads to the global literature of ornithology; some of these sources can now be accessed by computer. Unfortunately these bibliographic sources are not complete and this can be a special problem for relatively small geographic areas such as Connecticut. Much, but not all, of the earlier ornithological literature for Connecticut was cited by Sage and Bishop (1913), but hundreds of publications referring to birds of Connecticut have appeared since that time. Some of these contributions have appeared in relatively obscure sources and finding them can be partly a matter of luck. Not even the largest libraries have complete ornithological holdings, so users may have to request inter-

library loans. Photocopies can often be obtained for noncirculating materials.

Both the Yale and Trinity collections contain many of the older and rarer books of great value, due to, in part, their color plates. The most valuable of all bird books are the original elephant portfolio volumes by John James Audubon, which are now valued at more than \$1,500,000 a set. Yale has two of these sets, and Trinity has one. For such holdings special security arrangements are obviously necessary. Many of the rarer volumes have been reprinted, and prospective readers may find access to the reprints easier than to the originals.

Libraries are not without problems, which sometimes include a lack of funds for sufficient staffing and for continued acquisition. Space often becomes in short supply and preservation of deteriorating older books is a continual problem. Those who possess but do not use ornithological books or reasonably complete series of periodicals on birds may perform a valuable service to others interested in birds by donating such materials to libraries lacking those particular publications. Gifts from private individuals have been of critical importance in building the fine ornithological collections now in the State.

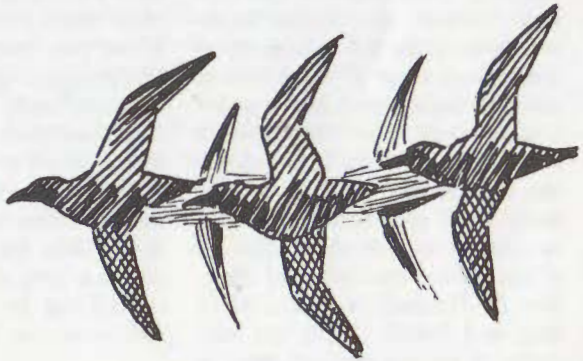
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books in the Library of Trinity  
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V. Breit and K. B. Clarke.) Trin-  
ity College, Hartford.

*Biology, Box U-43, University of  
Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268*



*Murres*, by Roland C. Clement

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## Guide for Contributors

### Preparation of Manuscripts:

The editors welcome submission of articles and notes for the *Connecticut Warbler*. Manuscripts should be typed double spaced on one side of the sheet only, with ample margins on all sides. Style of the manuscript should follow general usage in recent issues.

### Illustrations:

The editors welcome submission of line artwork of Connecticut and regional birds. Black and white photographs of particular interest will also be considered, but tend to print at less than optimum quality. Line art should be submitted as good-quality photographic prints or in original form. All originals and prints will be returned promptly after publication prints are made.



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