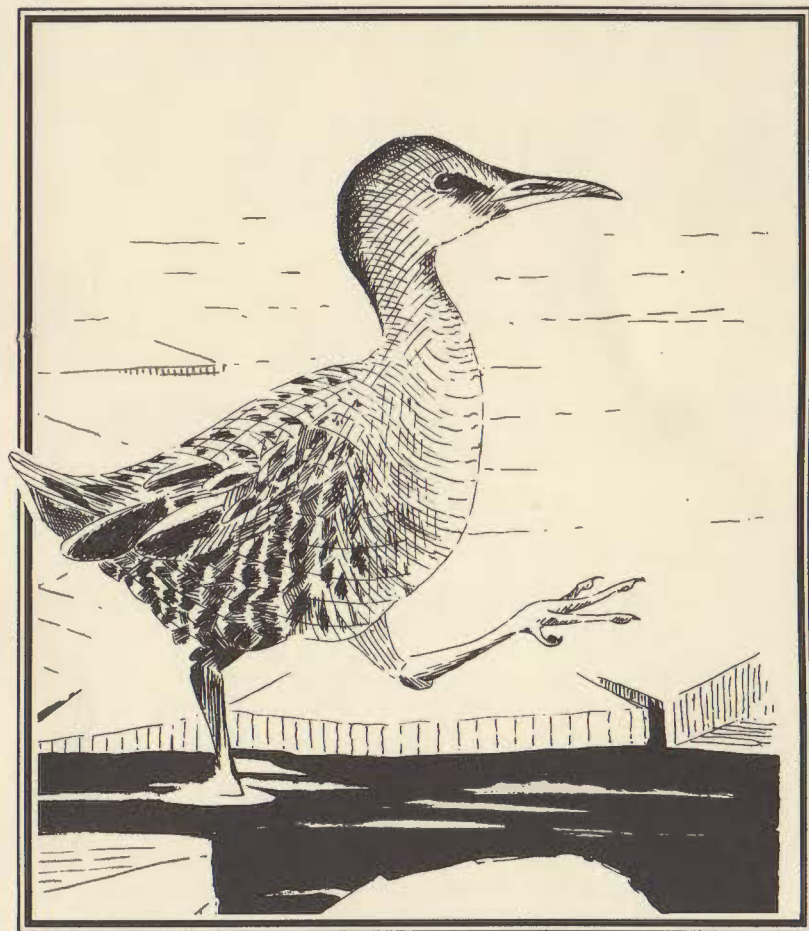


THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Roland C. Clement, Norwalk

"Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*)"

Roland C. Clement, Connecticut Ornithological Assoc.'s first president and a former vice-president of the National Audubon Society, first took an evening course in drawing with pencil, pen and brush at a textile design high school in his home town, Fall River, Mass., when he was nineteen. But this interest was sidetracked during a long career as naturalist and conservationist.

Upon retirement in 1977, he first tried watercolor sketching with Carolyn Beehler of Hamden, then decided to go back to basics and took courses in drawing, watercolor and portraiture at the Silvermine Guild Arts Center in New Canaan. But art continued to be a part-time activity because he remained involved in Audubon work and community affairs, was a Mellon Fellow at Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies in 1983, and has since written a history of the Audubon movement.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

***Pressure can be
exerted to force
action on behalf
of the terns.
Let's do it!***

"Save the Roseate Tern!" I cry. Others shout, "The Roseate Tern is Saved!"

The Roseate Tern has been placed on the federal endangered species list. My friends point out that this gives the tern added protection, attention, research funds and possibly its own recovery team. Of course, they do not mean to imply that Roseate Terns, under this umbrella of protection, will become as abundant as Herring Gulls, yet their tone of voice assures one that all is now well with the terns. One need not fret, the well-oiled government machinery will soon produce a solution to the Roseate Tern problems; much as it did for the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, California Condor, Black-footed Ferret, Bachman's Warbler and others.

Obviously I speak partly in jest, as endangered species programs have scored some amazing successes. Even those species cited above have not failed because they received endangered status. However, neither the Roseate Tern nor any other species is assured of sunny skies, a full crop and ample nesting beaches just because it receives endangered status. Rather than jubilation, we should show a little shame for allowing this tern to decline to the extent it has. Might we also get more involved in its future?

The Roseate Tern, unlike the Piping Plover, was well-enough studied in Connecticut that a number of management ideas might have been implemented. Each however, required more than a little political maneuvering, considerable initiative by some individual and a genuine concern for the future of Roseate Terns (i.e. work that would do nothing for your resume nor engender much appreciation). These management ideas remain viable. As the species is now endangered and since a state non-game program has been established, pressure can be exerted to force action on behalf of the terns. Let's do it!

Consider the following: a very promising colony of Roseate Terns on Tuxis Island, off Madison, was eliminated by rats. This island supported some 30 pairs of Roseate Terns in 1980 and might have double that number. Anyone interested in poisoning rats?

During the past decade, gulls have moved onto several islands with Common Tern colonies and either eliminated or seriously reduced tern nesting. Almost any Common Tern colony is a potential site for Roseate Terns. Each loss has thus been an actual or potential loss of nesting Roseate

Terns. Who's going to push for gull control on Rock Island, Lyddy Island, White Island and Waterford Island? Combined, these once supported 15-20 pairs of Roseate Terns.

Duck Island, off Westbrook, hosted 8 pairs of Common Terns in 1983, 20 in 1985 and several hundred in 1987. Roseate Terns also appeared in 1987, perhaps as many as 15 pairs. Duck Island has the potential to be as important a nesting site as Tuxis was in 1980. Human vandalism and disturbance have been minor factors, but there is potential for such disturbance on Duck Island in the future. Night-heron predation has been a serious problem for Least Terns, particularly on nearby Menunketesuck Island, and until this year, resulted in the loss of most Common Tern chicks on Duck Island. Night-heron predation has become an increasingly serious problem, perhaps more of a problem for the larger terns than we realize. This site should be closely monitored and corrective action taken as needed. How about some study of night-heron control?

Jeff Spindelov has used tires as nest sites for Roseate Terns on Falkner Island, however, the tires must be replaced each year and are successful only when placed in areas the terns are already utilizing for nesting. A more productive method was used successfully in 1979 and 1980. Jeff placed boards, sheets of plywood and similar objects along the rim of the island, suffocating the grass and providing a clear landing area for terns. Roseate Terns quickly utilized these areas, placing their nests in the dense grass surrounding 3 sides of the board. Without a clear area, the terns cannot land at the tops of the cliffs. I understand there is now little, if any, nesting by Roseate Terns on the top of the island. Unfortunately, the resident (introduced 1977) European rabbits also liked the boards, resulting in considerable nest loss. A method worth trying again *sans* rabbits?

There are other problems facing the Roseate Tern - poisons in the food chain, mortality on the wintering grounds - but there are beneficial programs that can be undertaken now; from poisoning rats on Tuxis, to placing nest platforms on Falkner's, to wardening Duck Island, to reducing gull populations. Let's ask for some action! (Before it's too late)

Fred Sibley
19 Cedar Grove Rd., Guilford, CT 06437

*Night-heron
predation has been
a serious problem
for Least Terns...*

STATUS AND HYBRIDIZATION OF CLAPPER AND KING RAILS IN CONNECTICUT

Anthony H. Bledsoe

The Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*) and the King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) comprise a pair of closely-related species distributed widely in the New World. Throughout most of their ranges, the species segregate ecologically into salt and fresh-water marsh populations. The Clapper Rail occurs in coastal salt and brackish marshes from Cape Cod (Hill 1965) to southern Texas; locally along the Pacific Coast from central California south to Nayarit, Mexico; along both coasts of South America south to northern Peru and southern Brazil; and in mangroves throughout most of the Caribbean (American Ornithologists' Union, [hereafter A.O.U.] 1983). Inland in western North America, the Clapper Rail also breeds in fresh-water as well as salt and brackish marshes at Salton Sea and along the lower Colorado River Valley (A.O.U. 1983). The King Rail breeds primarily in fresh-water marshes in eastern Nebraska, southern Michigan, and southern Massachusetts south to southern Florida and southern Texas, on Cuba, and in several states of interior Mexico (A.O.U. 1983). It occasionally inhabits coastal brackish marshes as well as fresh-water marshes.

In this paper, I review the historical and current status of these two rails in Connecticut. Because populations of the King Rail in the middle Atlantic states are appar-

ently declining (Tate 1986), an assessment of the local status of the King Rail is needed to determine whether the Connecticut populations are likewise decreasing. In addition, the status and interactions of Clapper and King rails in Connecticut, and particularly the evidence for local hybridization, are of interest for the study of the systematics of the *R. elegans-longirostris* complex.

Historical Status

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, the Clapper Rail was apparently a rare summer resident in Connecticut. Although Linsley (1843) stated that the Clapper Rail bred abundantly at Stratford, Merriam (1877) listed the species as "not common" and Burr et al. (1908) considered it a rare summer resident near New Haven. Sage and Bishop (1913) concurred with this assessment, terming the Clapper Rail "a rather rare summer resident of the salt marshes of the western part of the state; occasionally wintering." Of the sixteen "recent records" listed by Sage and Bishop (1913), only two (at Guilford and Saybrook) came from east of East Haven.

As late as 1928, the Clapper Rail was considered a rare summer resident (Howes 1928). About 1931, Connecticut populations began to increase, and by 1944 the species was common in suitable habitat all

along the coast (Saunders 1950). It declined slightly in subsequent years (Saunders 1950) but nonetheless remained a common breeder and occasional winterer into the second half of the twentieth century (Mackenzie 1960; N.S. Proctor, pers. comm.).

The King Rail has historically been much rarer in Connecticut than the Clapper Rail. Linsley (1843) published the first definitive Connecticut record, an egg-bearing female captured in Stratford. Merriam (1877) considered the King Rail "rather rare" and cited only Linsley's record and additional records from Portland and Saybrook, the latter a winter specimen. Averill (1892) listed the species as a "rare summer resident" and provided an additional Stratford record. Sage and Bishop (1913) termed it rare and gave six localities of occurrence (Glastonbury, Wethersfield, East Had-dam, Middletown, North Haven and Guilford) in addition to those cited above.

Unlike the Clapper Rail, the King Rail apparently did not increase during the 1930's and 1940's. Saunders' 1950 article on changes in status of Connecticut birds did not mention the King Rail, and Mackenzie (1960) noted that it bred only "sparingly" in Guilford at Leetes Island, Old Scroggie Pond, and the East River. Manter (1975) listed it as "casual, very rare, transient" in the Storrs region. The King Rail thus remained a rare breeder and sporadic winter visitant in Connecticut from the mid-1800's on.

Current Status

The Clapper Rail is now an un-

common to fairly common breeder in the coastal salt and brackish marshes of Connecticut. Observers for the Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas (CBBA) recorded Clapper Rails in eight coastal blocks from Norwalk to Old Lyme from 1982-1985, with probable or confirmed breeding in each block. The CBBA did not record the species in the Niantic, New London, Mystic and Watch Hill blocks, where coverage was limited, but Clapper Rails probably breed in the large areas of suitable habitat available in these sectors.

In migration, from mid-March to mid-May and from late August to early November, the number of Clapper Rails increases noticeably, presumably as a result of northward dispersal from southern populations and migration of the few Clapper Rails that breed north of Connecticut. During migration and winter Clapper Rails occur in small parcels of salt and brackish marsh as well as in the larger marshes inhabited during the nesting season. The species occurs sparsely in coastal marshes during mild winters and is rare to absent in very cold periods. Most coastal Christmas Bird Counts record 1-5 Clapper Rails in about half of the count years.

The King Rail continues to be a rare, local breeder in fresh-water and brackish marshes of Connecticut. The CBBA records provide an indication of the species' rarity and local distribution: from 1982-1985 King Rails were recorded in only three blocks (West Torrington, possible breed-

ing; Branford, possible breeding; and Old Lyme, confirmed breeding). Although King Rails are often detected only by voice, even observers familiar with the calls of the King Rail and other marsh species rarely record the King Rail during the breeding season in Connecticut. The paucity of breeding records thus probably reflects its actual status rather than the difficulty of detecting it.

Recent Connecticut breeding records are primarily from the coastal plain, the Connecticut River Valley and the northwest hills. However, the wider geographic distribution of historical records suggests that the species can breed in suitable habitat almost anywhere in the state.

A decline in numbers of breeding King Rails cannot be discerned from the information currently available, in part because its rarity has hindered the accurate estimation of its numbers. However, the widespread destruction of marshes during this century, particularly along the coast, probably reduced the historically small King Rail populations.

During migration, when King Rails from other states pass through Connecticut and expand their habitat tolerances to include salt marshes, the species is recorded more frequently than during the breeding season. It is nonetheless sparse to rare. The King Rail is rare in coastal marshes during mild winters and very rare to absent in very cold periods. Nearly all recent Connecticut Christmas Bird Count records have been from the large marshes at

Milford Point and Old Saybrook. At the latter locality, the species has a 109-year history of winter occurrence, from 14 January 1876 (specimen, Merriam 1877) to 30 December 1984 (Amer. Birds 39:146, 1985).

Hybridization between Clapper and King Rails

Although the Clapper Rail and the King Rail are for the most part distributed parapatrically (that is, next to one another without overlap), they occur together locally in a narrow zone of brackish marshes along the coast of eastern North America, where they may hybridize. Some authors (e.g., Ripley 1977) consider the Clapper and King rails to be conspecific (members of the same species).

The evidence for hybridization between *R. longirostris* and *R. elegans* consists of observations of mated individuals, in several instances accompanied by young (Meanley and Wetherbee 1962, Meanley 1965), and of the existence of specimens purported to be hybrids (Meanley 1969, Ripley 1977). However, Meanley and Wetherbee (1962) found "no variation in plumage . . . that could suggest hybridization" among specimens collected in an area of overlap along Delaware Bay, and an adequate description of a hybrid specimen has apparently yet to be published.

The ornithological collection of the Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University contains a study skin from Connecticut (YPM 15230) that appears to be a hybrid Clapper x King rail. The specimen label states that the bird, a male,

was "picked up in a backyard in worn condition" in New Haven in October 1951 (no specific date is given) and "died without feeding". The specimen resembles a King Rail but its lesser wing coverts are dull russet, its back feathers are gray at the edges and gray-brown along the margins of the central black sections, its brown cheeks are tinged with gray, and its upper abdomen, breast and sides of the neck are a pale cinnamon. Phenotypically it is thus intermediate between *R. e. elegans* and *R. l. crepitans*, the local breeding subspecies. However, because nearly all species of rails exhibit some tendency toward vagrancy, other subspecies of Clapper and King rails must be considered in the diagnosis.

The Yale specimen most closely matches certain specimens (e.g., YPM 8959) of the so-called "olive phase" (Ripley 1977) of *R. l. obsoletus*, a subspecies of the salt marshes of the coast of central California. In fact, the specimen diagnoses to *R. l. obsoletus* without discrepancy based on Ripley's (1977) key. However, several characteristics of the Yale specimen do not match those of *R. l. obsoletus*. The supercilium is cream-white, unlike that of *obsoletus*, in which the supercilium is tinged with warm buff, and the gray-brown color of the cheeks extends more ventrally than in *obsoletus*. The linear dimensions of the specimen (flattened wing = 149.2 mm, tail = 61.9 mm, exposed culmen = 57.3 mm, tarsus = 54.2 mm) either fall below the range of values given by Ripley (1977) for male *obsoletus* (wing and tail) or lie within the

range but near the lower limit (exposed culmen and tarsus). The range of values for *crepitans* overlaps that of the Yale specimen in each dimension, while in *elegans* the ranges of tail and tarsus values, but not of wing and culmen lengths, overlap the Yale specimen's lengths. The plumage and mensural characteristics thus argue against the possibility that the specimen is a vagrant example of *R. l. obsoletus*.

The Yale specimen (YPM 15230) is thus most likely a hybrid King X Clapper rail, probably *R. e. elegans* X *R. l. crepitans*, although nothing in the specimen's phenotype eliminates the southern races *R. l. waynei* and *R. l. scotti* as possible parental forms on the *longirostris* side.

The specimen thus adds support to the occurrence of interbreeding between these rails, suspected from previous studies. Reports of King Rails mated to Clapper Rails at Milford Point, East Haven and Old Saybrook (N. S. Proctor, pers. comm.) indicate that local hybridization is certainly possible and might occur more regularly than the single hybrid (if it was indeed raised in Connecticut) suggests. The most promising areas for the study of hybridization in Connecticut are the marshes along the Connecticut River, where the CBBA has confirmed the nesting of both Clapper and King rails in the Old Lyme block, and along the Housatonic River near Milford Point.

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I thank the Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas for permission to

inspect its breeding records of Clapper and King rails from 1982-1985. I am also grateful to K. S. Thomson, C. G. Sibley and E. H. Stickney (Yale Peabody Museum) and K. C. Parkes and D. S. Wood (The Carnegie Museum of Natural History) for permission to study specimens in their care, and to K. C. Parkes for his comments on this manuscript.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Summer: June 1 - July 31, 1987

Clay Taylor

An obvious problem with compiling and presenting this report is the overlap of ornithological events. Spring migration oozes into mid June with the last northward-bound shorebird and fall migration starts only a few weeks later in early July. June and July are peak nesting months for most birds in Connecticut, but many have been on territory or eggs since April and others will fledge young as late as September.

I will handle this year's report in a way that I find a little distasteful, but it satisfies my urge to separate apples from pears. Late spring migrants and lingerers will be covered separately from the breeding season, which will be presented in its entirety. Next year I would like the Spring and Fall reports to cover the entire migration without arbitrary cut-off dates while the summer report would deal exclusively with nesting birds.

Weather: Conditions for incubation of eggs and feeding of nestlings in June and July were, in a word, ideal. A majority of days were sunny, temperatures were average for the period and rainfall was slightly below average but not low enough to cause major problems. There were no abnormal weather systems to cause any massive dislocations of populations.

LATE SPRING MIGRANTS AND WANDERERS

Birds in this category were, for

the most part, waterbirds and shorebirds, with a smattering of hawks.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Common Loons were reported at Milford Point June 7(DV) and June 11(RE). Horned Grebes occasionally summer in Long Island Sound, but one in breeding plumage in Groton July 11 must have been quite a sight(RD). Fishermen at Penfield Reef off the Bridgeport-Fairfield shoreline reported a White Pelican (FMa) in late June.

No extra-limital herons or ibises were reported and the number of northern ducks summering on Long Island Sound was fairly small. Five Greater Scaup were in the Darien-Stamford area June 14, lingering Brant were seen at Milford and Sandy Point in mid-June(DV) and Red-breasted Mergansers at Hammonasset St. Pk. were not surprising. However, an adult male Black Scoter at Hammonasset was present from June to late August and afforded some good photo opportunities(RS) as well as letting one bathing birder swim to within 25 feet of it!

HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

Without a doubt, the raptor highlight of the season was an adult Swallow-tailed Kite circling over Lake Whitney in New Haven June 10 (FMc, AS). This bird is likely a

fallout from an excellent spring kite incursion to the East. An immature Bald Eagle was feeding on gulls at Chimon Island June 2 (MB), while a similar bird (the same one?) was in downtown Bridgeport feeding on fish in late June (MB).

Shorebirds remained in good variety until mid-June before clearing the mudflats. The Curlew Sandpiper mentioned in the spring report, was actually seen June 7 at Barn Island (LB,FP). A number of Wilson's Phalarope reports were logged; 1 at Lordship Marsh, Stratford June 2 (DV), 2 at Marshlands Conservancy, Greenwich in late May-early June (MFN) and 1 at Hammonasset in early June (MJ,EP). A female Red-necked Phalarope was at Sandy Point, West Haven June 8 (RE). White-rumped Sandpipers were reported in good numbers; 4 at Milford Point, June 7 (DV) and single birds at Milford Pt. (RE) and Sandy Point (JBa) June 11. Late dates for other shorebirds included June 11 at Sandy Point for Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers (JBa); Dunlin, Red Knot and Semipalmated Sandpiper at Long Beach, Stratford June 12 (DV), Greater Yellowlegs at Norwalk Harbor, June 15 (FMa), Lesser Yellowlegs and mixed shorebirds at Stratford June 23 (DV).

Breeding terns will be covered later, but Caspian and Royal Terns were present although unpredictable through the period. An adult Caspian was at Penfield Reef June 30 (FMa), while Royal Terns were seen on at least 4 occasions in June and early July at Hammonasset St. Pk. (JBo,CT).

The gull of the season was an immature Common Black-headed Gull at Short Beach, Stratford, June 24 (DV). Ring-billed Gulls never left Hammonasset for the breeding grounds and Laughing Gulls began to appear at Milford Point June 19.

DOVES THROUGH PASSERINES

Few late migrants or range overshoots were reported, except for a singing Mourning Warbler on the Western Conn. Bird Club June Count (hereafter WCBC) June 7. Singing Swainson's Thrushes in Washington June 7 (FMa,CW) and Woodbury June 10 (RN) were not resighted but could be breeders and the record should draw more attention.

June 23 at Stratford saw Lesser Yellowlegs and mixed shorebirds (DV), so the first fall wanderers had returned a bit early in 1987.

THE BREEDING SEASON

The "Connecticut Warbler" Seasonal Report Form for summer asked for an assessment of the breeding season and most rated it as average to good with some qualifications about species abundance. Dave Rosgen, following up on Breeding Bird Atlas data, writes "very successful for most birds, despite some early season failures due to cool, rainy weather and some late season abandonments due to drought-caused food shortages". These problems were in April and August, respectively. The remainder of the period was quite favor-

able for nesting and brood rearing. One observer commented on the "excellent year for early fledging"(KH) and another mentioned heavy nest predation by black snakes, mammals and other birds(JK). Success begets popularity and the food chain continues onward.

Among species seen in below average numbers were some warblers, meadowlarks, swallows and swifts, waxwings and cuckoos - the latter two notorious for their variability. Comments on higher than normal numbers seen included Orchard Orioles, Fish Crows, Eastern Phoebes and Eastern Bluebirds.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Common Loons again nested at the Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford(DR) while 2 other pairs were territorial but didn't nest(DR). Pied-billed Grebes again raised young at the Lordship Marshes in Stratford and a territorial male was at the White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield(DR,DT). Double-crested Cormorants nested at usual coastal sites, while summer residents at Lake Gaillard, East Haven, the Nepaug Reservoir(DR) and the Connecticut River(CT) raise the possibility of future inland breeding.

American Bitterns continue to decline in the State with a few territorial birds in the northwest corner. Least Bittern were present but hard to find in a number of locations, and a pair at Lordship

Pond, Stratford was suspected of breeding(DV). Herons along the coast seem to be in good shape but, Cattle Egrets were scarce in their usual feeding spots(FMa). Great Blue Herons are doing well in both northern corners of the state with over 25 sites ranging in size from 1 to 55 nests and a new colony was found in Torrington(DR). A Yellow-crowned Night Heron was seen at Milford Point June 5(RE) and Yellow-crowned, as well as Black-crowned Night Herons with young were in Rowayton in July(MF).

A male American Wigeon at the Lordship Marshes in June(DV) was interesting, while Gadwall at the Milford Point marshes were probably breeding(FM). The WCBC June count tallied 28 Wood Ducks, their second highest total. Shoreline Mallards and American Black Ducks seemed to be in normal numbers and, unfortunately, so were the Mute Swans and Canada Geese.

HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

The biggest 1987 nesting success story has to be that of the Osprey - 77 young were fledged from 35 nests across the state, for an average of over 2 per nest! Outstanding! Look for additional nests and range expansion of the Osprey in the next few years.

Buteos and accipiters nested at expected levels this year, while the Northern Harrier at Milford Point on June 5(CE,RE) remains a tantalizing possibility.

Calling Clapper Rails were well reported along the coast and King Rail x Clapper Rail pairs were re-

ported at Barn Island Stonington(LB) and Manresa Island, Norwalk(RS,FMa).

Upland Sandpipers were seen in Stratford(DV) and Westport(RW) in late July but may have been post-breeding birds. Bradley Field in Windsor Locks had 12 nesting pairs but Brainard Airport in Hartford had only a few birds, continuing a decline. The state may end up with only one breeding location. American Oystercatchers nested for the first time at Hammonasset but the nest was destroyed(CV).

Piping Plovers suffered a similar fate at Hammonasset with 5 out of 6 attempts failing. Elsewhere in the state, Piping Plovers nested with better success and a record number of nesting pairs were present. In Stratford, a request by the DEP to the town for removal of nude sunbathers from the Plover nesting area made the 6 o'clock newscast.

The Sandy Point Least Tern colony did well in 1987 but smaller colonies fared poorly, especially at Menunketesuck Island in Westbrook (night-heron predation), Milford Point (cats) and Griswold Point, Old Lyme (skunk). The Common Tern colony at Duck Island, Westbrook has increased dramatically in recent years with a ten-fold increase in nesting pairs from 1982 to 1987; over 200 pairs of Common and 8-10 pairs of Roseate Terns (a first for the location) nested this year. Over 350 Common Tern chicks and 18 Roseate chicks were banded in June and July(CT, JBo, KC). In previous years, predation by night-herons has taken all of the chicks as on nearby Menunketesuck. This year

large numbers of chicks fledged, evidently due to the number of terns reaching a level large enough to drive off the night herons.

DOVES THROUGH WRENS

The I-95 overpass Common Barn Owls have been reported by Carl Trichka(CW7:4) and no other new nests were found. The Middletown birds showed a decrease of numbers of young fledged(GZ). Saw-whet Owls nested in Canaan with additional territorial males in the northwest corner(AG,MD). Two Whip-poor-wills in Barkhamsted(SKe) was a positive sign, as the species is spreading across the state again, with its main food source, the giant saturniid moths, becoming more common. Amongst the bird sightings was a note about luna moths at the porch light during May in Sherman(JK).

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were reported in good numbers, including a record 8 on the WCBC June 7. A late fledging was being fed Sept. 14 in Sherman(JK). The woodpeckers, except Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, were reported in record numbers on the WCBC count. A Red-bellied Woodpecker in East Granby(SKe) documents that specie's continued range expansion. Olive-sided Flycatcher nested again in Norfolk(GB) and other territorial birds were seen in Barkhamsted, Hartland and Norfolk. Acadian and Alder Flycatchers were poorly reported and perceived to be down in numbers, while Willow Flycatchers and Eastern Phoebes were reported as abundant. The swallows received mixed reviews,

tending to the negative, and Purple Martins had a horrible year, losing entire colonies in some areas(DH). The only bright spot was a new colony started at Hammonasset.

Fish Crows were reported in frequent small flocks in Shelton and Ansonia (JBa) as well as in traditional coastal areas(EB&JBr). Common Ravens continue their expansion in the state; the Canaan pair(DR) returned, two new nests were found in Sharon(DR,et. al.), and two nests were reported in Boston Hollow, Westfield(LB,RC). Winter Wren was confirmed as nesting in Torrington for the first time and the WCBC June count tallied its first Marsh Wren.

THRUSHES THROUGH HOUSE SPARROWS

Eastern Bluebirds had a good year, arriving early and nesting successfully in a number of locations. An early spring cold snap apparently killed 11 Tree Swallows in a bluebird box near Lake Warmaug, New Preston, but the bluebirds built a nest and raised young atop the bodies anyway(JK)! Hermit Thrushes continue to expand southward through the state(DR). A fledgling Swainson's Thrush was netted in Willington(GC). Golden-crowned Kinglet was confirmed as nesting at White Memorial, Litchfield(DR). White-eyed Vireos are expanding northward and hit a record on the WCBC count and are expanding northward. One sang throughout the period in Watertown(RN).

Pine Warblers were reported from many locations statewide, and

the May abundance of Kentucky Warblers held over into June. Hooded Warblers were commented on as being abundant in the southern half of the state.

An interesting sparrow note was an amazing 20 singing male Grasshopper Sparrows at Bradley Field, Windsor Locks. Vesper Sparrow was not mentioned. Seaside Sparrow was reported from Barn Island(SKo). A few tide-killed young Seaside and Sharp-tailed Sparrows were seen at Hammonasset this year(CT). A record 12 Orchard Orioles were found on the WCBC count while Eastern Meadowlarks seemed to be scarce. Bobolinks did well when they beat the mowing machines(DR). Pine Siskins were confirmed nesting in Morris(GL) and nestlings were banded in the Storrs-Mansfield area(LB). A pair of Evening Grosbeaks in Sherman(LE&AE) were probable but not confirmed nesters.

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1984 SHOREBIRD SURVEY AT THE MOUTH OF THE HOUSATONIC RIVER

Dennis Varza

The shorebird migration in Connecticut is a conspicuous spring and fall phenomenon, eagerly awaited by the state's birders. Despite this, there is little documentation that could be used to detect changes in abundance and timing a decade from now. This survey provides such a reference point for the mouth of the Housatonic River as well as documenting patterns of migrations not readily apparent in the literature or from casual observation. The study site includes all of Stratford south of the Connecticut Turnpike including Milford Point and Silver Sands State Park. The area was covered once every other week in winter and every third day during the migration. Counts were planned to cover the best tide and habitat for each species. Birds in the marshes and on the outer sandbars were counted from shore without the aid of a canoe. Observations made by others were added for uncommon species such as Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) or Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) in November. Thirtyfour

species of shorebirds were observed during the year (Table 1). Results for the five nesting species were inconclusive because of difficulty in separating migrants from nesting birds. Fourteen species occurred too infrequently to give meaningful information. The remaining 15 species are shown in Figure 1.

The direction and timing of a shorebird's migration is a response to the environment that maximizes survival and productivity. Arctic nesting grounds provide an abundance of food during a short summer season. To take advantage of this situation, the birds must cover the long distance to the breeding grounds in a short period and thus take the most direct route. Species nesting in the western Arctic migrate through the Mississippi Valley and are rarely seen in spring on the Connecticut coast. Lesser Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica*) and Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*) are examples. Along the east coast, the further north one goes the less likely one will find western species. An observer in

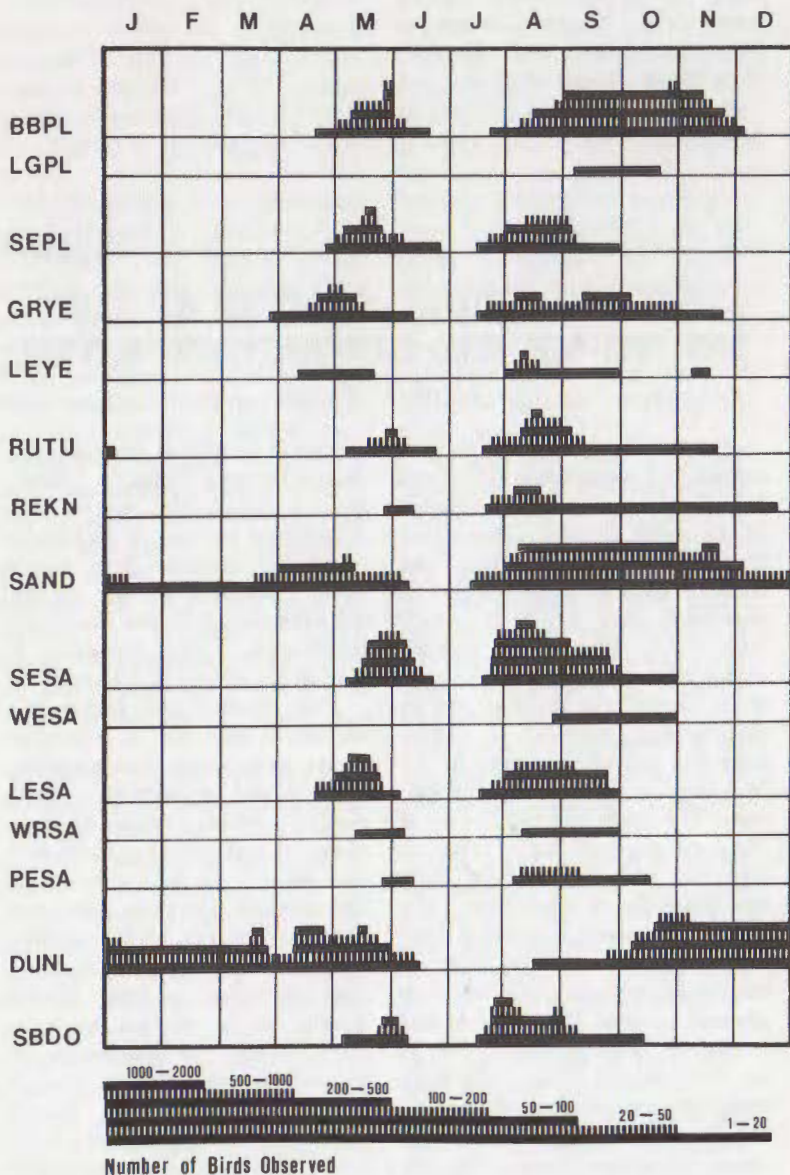


Figure 1. The seasonal abundance of the shorebirds observed at the mouth of the Housatonic River in 1984.

Florida will see more western species than an observer in Maryland who, in turn, will see more than an observer in Connecticut. By the time the migration reaches Nova Scotia, only the regional nesting species are usually seen.

With respect to the timing of the migration, a narrow, well defined migration period is produced because early migrants may perish in late spring storms while late migrants will not have enough time to raise young. Species nesting at more southerly latitudes find their nest sites available earlier and therefore, migrate earlier. Greater Yellowlegs is the southern most nesting species in Figure 1 and it is the earliest migrant. Semipalmated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) and Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*) are also sub-Arctic nesters and they migrate earlier than Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) and Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*) respectively. Our locally nesting Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) arrives before all others. Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) and Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*) are the highest of the high Arctic nesters and the last to migrate.

Once breeding is over, the shorebirds must migrate again to follow the food supply. The fall migration is less hurried as the object is not so much to reach the wintering grounds, as to find food resources along the way. Long after snow has come to the Arctic, there are still large numbers of feeding areas in Connecticut. The birds, therefore, take a migration route that pro-

duces the most food. For many individuals it means travelling southeast across northern Canada into Hudson and James Bays and from there to the Atlantic Coast between Nova Scotia and Chesapeake Bay. Once on the coast, it is south to South America. This northwest to southeast pattern of large numbers of shorebirds attracts western species into the flocks and accounts for records of Baird's Sandpipers (*Calidris bairdii*), Buff-breasted Sandpipers (*Tryngites subruficollis*) and American Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*).

The broad period of migration observed for a given species is caused by the different migration periods of the young and adults, plus the slower fall movement. In general, the adults migrate first and don't molt until they reach their wintering grounds, while young birds stay longer in the north to molt new feathers before migrating. Careful observation of migrants in the fall will show the one broad pattern is really two overlapping peaks: first the adults and second the young birds.

Some general comments on shorebird migration in Connecticut (See Figure 1): Late May is the best time to see shorebirds in the spring. Late July is the best time for peeps and a chance for finding stints. September and October are best for western vagrants. The "Semipalmated Sandpiper unless otherwise identified" rule does not work in early May when Least Sandpipers dominate, or after September when Western Sandpipers are as likely. Least Sandpipers are rare after

early June. Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) can be as common as Greater Yellowlegs in August. In winter Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) are

far more common than Sanderling. Black-bellied Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones and Red Knots, considered rare but regular winter residents, are actually late fall migrants.

BBPL	Black-bellied Plover	REKN	Red Knot
LGPI	Lesser Golden Plover	SAND	Sanderling
SEPL	Semipalmated Plover	SESA	Semipalmated Sandpiper
N PIPL	Piping Plover	WESA	Western Sandpiper
N KILL	Killdeer	LEAS	Least Sandpiper
I AMOY	American Oystercatcher	WRSA	White-rumped Sandpiper
A AMAV	American Avocet	R BASA	Baird's Sandpiper
N WILL	Willet	I PUSA	Purple Sandpiper
GRYE	Greater Yellowlegs	DUNL	Dunlin
LEYE	Lesser Yellowlegs	PESA	Pectoral Sandpiper
I SOSA	Solitary Sandpiper	I STSA	Stilt Sandpiper
N SPSA	Spotted Sandpiper	SBDO	Short-billed Dowitcher
I UPSA	Upland Sandpiper	R LBDO	Long-billed Dowitcher
R MAGO	Marbled Godwit	N AMWO	American Woodcock
R HUGO	Hudsonian Godwit	I COSN	Common Snipe
I WHIM	Whimbrel	I WIPH	Wilson's Phalarope
RUTU	Ruddy Turnstone	A RNPH	Red-necked Phalarope

A - not expected every year; R - one or two birds expected every year; I - Several birds are likely to be seen, but their abundance is irregular due to special habitats or they are at the edge of their range; N - nests.

Table 1 The species of shorebirds observed at the mouth of the Housatonic River in 1984.

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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. All manuscripts receive peer review.

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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“Le Conte’s Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)”

David A. Sibley is a well known young ornithologist with extensive knowledge of bird identification and migration. Much of his time is spent leading birding tours to all parts of the continent. His artwork, which graces the front cover of our journal, has appeared in a number of publications including the front cover of the upcoming issue of *Birdwatcher’s Digest*. He has recently co-authored and was the artist for the newly published book *Hawks in Flight*.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

EDITORIAL

This list comprises all species that have been officially documented within the State of Connecticut...

It is with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment that we publish in this issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* the new official Connecticut State Checklist of Birds. This list comprises all species that have been officially documented within the State of Connecticut. It is the result of the effort of many people to research and compile an accurate, complete and up to date list. Many hours were spent pouring over old records, journals and documents in order to verify the 377 species listed herein. These species have been officially recognized and authenticated, by the leading ornithologists in our state.

The basis for this checklist was the Sage and Bishop list compiled in 1913. This list has been updated and revised extensively to reflect sightings and additional information gathered since its publication. The order of the listing was revised in accordance with the latest AOU checklist.

There have been several recently published checklists for Connecticut birds which have proven useful for birders in the field. Plans are now in the works to print COA field checklists in the near future.

There are those that will not agree with omissions from this list and that is to be expected. A work such as this is bound to elicit some controversy and as new species are recorded in the State, revisions to the checklist will be made.

We wish to thank all those who have worked so hard to compile and review this checklist to assure its completeness and accuracy. We hope that the list will prove informative and useful to you.

Betty Kleiner, Editor
5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT 06070

CHECK-LIST OF CONNECTICUT BIRDS —1988

George A. Clark, Jr.

This is an official check-list compiled by the Connecticut Rare Records Committee (hereafter CRRC) of the Connecticut Ornithological Association. Members of the CRRC who have participated in the preparation of this check-list are listed in the Acknowledgments section. Common names and sequence of species follow the sixth edition of the *Check-list of North American Birds* (American Ornithologists' Union 1983) and a supplement (AOU 1985) which include scientific names except for certain foreign species reported as escapes. Extant specimens or photographs document all accepted species except for the 20 marked with an asterisk (*). The latter species are included on the basis of historically known specimens or photographs seen well by qualified ornithologists of the time, or on the basis of well described sightings reviewed by the CRRC. Copies of records submitted to the CRRC are on file at the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History in Storrs.

The historically important check-list by Sage and Bishop (1913) is 75 years old. Recently, DeSante and Pyle (1986) and Barkman (1987) have published check-lists, but these do not fully coincide with the current check-list of the CRRC. Although it has been customary for check-lists not to document fully the sources of information, the second report of the CRRC (1987) does provide information on numerous unusual species. The current check-list totals 377 species in contrast to the 334 reported by Sage and Bishop (1913).

CONNECTICUT STATE LIST

Red-throated Loon
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Eared Grebe
Western Grebe
Northern Fulmar
Black-capped Petrel
Cory's Shearwater
Greater Shearwater
Manx Shearwater *
Wilson's Storm-Petrel
White-faced Storm-Petrel
Leach's Storm-Petrel
Northern Gannet
American White Pelican
Brown Pelican
Great Cormorant
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga*
Magnificent Frigatebird
American Bittern
Least Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Cattle Egret
Green-backed Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Wood Stork *

Fulvous Whistling-Duck
Tundra Swan
Mute Swan
Greater White-fronted Goose
Snow Goose
Brant
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Green-winged Teal
American Black Duck
Mallard
Northern Pintail
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
Eurasian Wigeon
American Wigeon
Canvasback
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Tufted Duck *
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Common Eider
King Eider
Labrador Duck * (extinct)
Harlequin Duck
Oldsquaw
Black Scoter
Surf Scoter
White-winged Scoter
Common Goldeneye
Barrow's Goldeneye
Bufflehead
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
American Swallow-tailed Kite
Bald Eagle

Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk

Northern Goshawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Swainson's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Rough-legged Hawk
Golden Eagle
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Gyr Falcon
Gray Partridge
Ring-necked Pheasant
Ruffed Grouse
Greater Prairie-Chicken (Heath
Hen, extinct) *
Wild Turkey
Northern Bobwhite
Yellow Rail
Black Rail
Corn Crake
Clapper Rail
King Rail
Virginia Rail
Sora
Purple Gallinule
Common Moorhen
American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Black-bellied Plover
Lesser Golden-Plover
Wilson's Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Wilson's Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
Greater Yellowlegs

Lesser Yellowlegs
 Spotted Redshank
 Solitary Sandpiper
 Willet
 Spotted Sandpiper
 Upland Sandpiper
 Eskimo Curlew
 Whimbrel
 Long-billed Curlew *
 Hudsonian Godwit
 Marbled Godwit
 Ruddy Turnstone
 Red Knot
 Sanderling
 Semipalmated Sandpiper
 Western Sandpiper
 Least Sandpiper
 White-rumped Sandpiper
 Baird's Sandpiper
 Pectoral Sandpiper
 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
 Purple Sandpiper
 Dunlin
 Curlew Sandpiper
 Stilt Sandpiper
 Buff-breasted Sandpiper
 Ruff
 Short-billed Dowitcher
 Long-billed Dowitcher
 Common Snipe
 American Woodcock
 Wilson's Phalarope
 Red-necked Phalarope
 Red Phalarope
 Pomarine Jaeger *
 Parasitic Jaeger
 Laughing Gull
 Franklin's Gull
 Little Gull
 Common Black-headed Gull
 Bonaparte's Gull
 Ring-billed Gull
 Herring Gull

Iceland Gull
 Lesser Black-backed Gull
 Glaucous Gull
 Great Black-backed Gull
 Black-legged Kittiwake
 Ross' Gull
 Gull-billed Tern *
 Caspian Tern
 Royal Tern
 Roseate Tern
 Common Tern
 Arctic Tern *
 Forster's Tern
 Least Tern
 Sooty Tern
 Black Tern
 Black Skimmer
 Dovekie
 Thick-billed Murre
 Black Guillemot
 Atlantic Puffin
 Rock Dove
 Band-tailed Pigeon *
 White-winged Dove *
 Mourning Dove
 Passenger Pigeon (extinct)
 Black-billed Cuckoo
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo
 Common Barn-Owl
 Eastern Screech-Owl
 Great Horned Owl
 Snowy Owl
 Northern Hawk-Owl
 Barred Owl
 Great Gray Owl*
 Long-eared Owl
 Short-eared Owl
 Boreal Owl
 Northern Saw-whet Owl
 Common Nighthawk
 Chuck-will's-widow
 Whip-poor-will
 Chimney Swift

Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Winter Wren
Belted Kingfisher	Sedge Wren
Red-headed Woodpecker	Marsh Wren
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Downy Woodpecker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Hairy Woodpecker	Northern Wheatear
Black-backed Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird
Northern Flicker	Townsend's Solitaire *
Pileated Woodpecker	Veery
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Swainson's Thrush
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Hermit Thrush
Acadian Flycatcher	Wood Thrush
Alder Flycatcher	American Robin
Willow Flycatcher	Varied Thrush
Least Flycatcher	Gray Catbird
Eastern Phoebe	Northern Mockingbird
Say's Pheobe *	Brown Thrasher
Great Crested Flycatcher	Water Pipit
Western Kingbird	Bohemian Waxwing *
Eastern Kingbird	Cedar Waxwing
Gray Kingbird	Northern Shrike
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Loggerhead Shrike
Horned Lark	European Starling
Purple Martin	White-eyed Vireo
Tree Swallow	Solitary Vireo
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Yellow-throated Vireo
Bank Swallow	Warbling Vireo
Cliff Swallow	Philadelphia Vireo
Barn Swallow	Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay	Blue-winged Warbler
American Crow	Golden-winged Warbler
Fish Crow	Tennessee Warbler
Common Raven	Orange-crowned warbler
Black-capped Chickadee	Nashville Warbler
Boreal Chickadee	Northern Parula
Tufted Titmouse	Yellow Warbler
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Chestnut-sided Warbler
White-breasted Nuthatch	Magnolia Warbler
Brown Creeper	Cape May Warbler
Carolina Wren	Black-throated Blue Warbler
House Wren	Yellow-rumped Warbler

Black-throated Gray Warbler *	Lark Sparrow
Hermit Warbler *	Lark Bunting
Black-throated Green Warbler	Savannah Sparrow
Blackburnian Warbler	Grasshopper Sparrow
Yellow-throated Warbler	Henslow's Sparrow
Pine Warbler	Le Conte's Sparrow
Prairie Warbler	Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Palm Warbler	Seaside Sparrow
Bay-breasted Warbler	Fox Sparrow
Blackpoll Warbler	Song Sparrow
Cerulean Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Black-and-white Warbler	Swamp Sparrow
American Redstart	White-throated Sparrow
Prothonotary Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow
Worm-eating Warbler	Harris' Sparrow
Ovenbird	Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Waterthrush	Lapland Longspur
Louisiana Waterthrush	Smith's Longspur
Kentucky Warbler	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Connecticut Warbler	Snow Bunting
Mourning Warbler	Bobolink
Common Yellowthroat	Red-winged Blackbird
Hooded Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Wilson's Warbler	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Canada Warbler	Rusty Blackbird
Yellow-breasted Chat	Brewer's Blackbird *
Summer Tanager	Boat-tailed Grackle
Scarlet Tanager	Common Grackle
Western Tanager	Brown-headed Cowbird
Northern Cardinal	Orchard Oriole
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Northern Oriole
Black-headed Grosbeak	Pine Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak	Purple Finch
Indigo Bunting	House Finch
Painted Bunting	Red Crossbill
Dickcissel	White-winged Crossbill
Green-tailed Towhee *	Common Redpoll
Rufous-sided Towhee	Hoary Redpoll
American Tree Sparrow	Pine Siskin
Chipping Sparrow	American Goldfinch
Clay-colored sparrow	Evening Grosbeak
Field Sparrow	House Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow	

Species under review. — Reports of the following species are now under review by the CRRC: Arctic (or Pacific) Loon, Sooty Shearwater, Mew Gull, Burrowing Owl, Gray Jay, Fieldfare, Mac-Gillivray's Warbler, Baird's Sparrow.

Introductions, escapes, releases. — Species that have occurred due to introductions, escapes, or releases but that have not survived through breeding in the wild for ten years are excluded from the list of state birds. Published reports of occurrence in Connecticut exist for Scarlet Ibis, Greater Flamingo, Black Swan, Barnacle Goose, Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*), Ruddy Shelduck, Common Shelduck, Spot-billed Duck, Chukar, Kalij Pheasant, European Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*), Sharp-tailed Grouse, California Quail, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Monk Parakeet, Blue-crowned Conure (*Aratinga acuticauda*), Canary-winged Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot, Black-billed Magpie, Yellow-billed Magpie, Cuban Crow, European Robin, Red-crested Cardinal, and European Goldfinch. The CRRC has not critically examined reports of sightings for most species in this group.

Species reported but not accepted. —

The CRRC has reviewed but not accepted reports for the following: White-tailed Tropicbird, Brown Booby, Reddish Egret, Trumpeter Swan, Cinnamon Teal, White-tailed Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Whooping Crane, Common Green-shank, Rufous-necked Stint, Long-toed Stint, Long-tailed Jaeger,

South Polar Skua, Heermann's Gull, Thayer's Gull, Ivory Gull, Bridled Tern, White-winged Tern, Common Murre, Razorbill, Great Auk, Rufous Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Carolina Chickadee, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bewick's Wren, Sprague's Pipit, Bell's Vireo, Townsend's Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Western Meadowlark. Most reports not accepted were judged to be inadequately documented. Only a few reports were shown to be clearly erroneous.

A goal of the CRRC is to improve the quality of documentation for records. Sight records are now the main source of information on distribution and abundance of birds in Connecticut. It is important that sight records be of as high a quality as possible, because such records are used in scientific studies and as a basis for making decisions relating to management and conservation.

Acknowledgments. — Past and present members and alternate members of the CRRC have all contributed to the preparation of this check-list: L. Bevier **, T. Burke **, N. Currie, B. Devine **, R. English **, E. Hagen **, F. Mantlik **, F. Purnell **, F. Sibley **, M. Szantyr **, C Taylor **, D. Varza, J. Zeranski **; those individuals whose names are marked with a double asterisk (**) have reviewed the check-list presented here. Helpful information has been submitted by other contributors too numerous to acknowledge individually, but special help was given

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FIRST DOCUMENTED RECORD OF LE CONTE'S SPARROW IN CONNECTICUT

Jay Kaplan¹ and James Moore²

Christmas Bird Counts are, by no means, an exact record of an area's bird life as there is too great a margin for error. Nevertheless, these counts can be most useful in at least two respects; demonstrating trends for certain species over a period of years and documenting sightings of individual birds of interest. It is in this latter category that the authors recorded the first documented Connecticut sighting for Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*) during the Barkhamsted Christmas Bird Count held 27 December 1987.

Le Conte's Sparrow normally winters from west central Kansas, southern Missouri (rare), southern Illinois (rarely), western Tennessee, central Alabama, south central Georgia and South Carolina south to eastern New Mexico (rarely), eastern and southern Texas, the Gulf Coast (east to western Florida) and southeastern Georgia. It regularly migrates through the Great Plains and irregularly through the Ohio Valley. According to the sixth edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds (1983), it also migrates casually to the east coast from Maine southward. Thus, it seems surprising that there are no prior records for this species in Connecticut. On its breeding grounds in the northern plains, Le Conte's Sparrow inhabits moist grass or sedge meadows, the

shrubby edges of marshes and bogs and areas of tall grasses. In migration and in winter, it can be found in weedy fields, broomsedge and cat-tails.

A secretive bird, it was first described by John James Audubon in Volume VIII of *The Birds of America*. Audubon named the species for a young friend, Dr. John L. Le Conte who, "was much attached to the study of natural history." (*The Birds of America*, Vol. VIII, p.221). We, too, are attached to the study of natural history. However, we certainly did not expect to find this species while participating on a Christmas Bird Count in Connecticut.

One of the interesting aspects of Christmas Bird Counts is that many marginal areas are well-covered in an attempt to count the maximum number of individual birds present within a 15 mile diameter circle. Thus, groups of birders will cover areas on Christmas Count day that may be overlooked during the rest of the year. Such was the case when the authors entered an approximately four acre parcel of open field that, during the summer months, serves as community garden plots for residents of the town of Canton. During the winter season, the area is overgrown with the remains of vegetable plants gone to seed, as well as common "weed" plants including goldenrod (*Solidago sp.*), asters

(*Aster* sp.) and a wide variety of other seed plants. This affords a good winter food supply for seed-eaters such as Tree, Song and White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos. In late fall, the field attracts the aforementioned species in good numbers, making the field a valuable spot on Christmas Count day, perhaps the only day of the year on which the field is birded. At 11:00 AM (EST), the authors entered the field in search of feeding sparrows. The day was clear with the temperature at about 24 degrees F. and virtually no wind. While we were counting Tree Sparrows, a smaller sparrow with a bright orange face suddenly appeared some ten yards from Kaplan. First appearances cast this bird as a Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*); however, that was a most unlikely candidate as Canton is some fifty miles from the salt marshes of the Connecticut shore, and Sharp-tails are not normally seen in Connecticut in December. A mental process of eliminating other buff-chested sparrows - Henslow's, Grasshopper - ensued. Le Conte's Sparrow came to mind, but was initially dismissed as improbable, at best. Yet, the field marks were there: dark crown bisected by a cream colored median stripe, a bright orange face with gray ear patch, buff-orange throat and upper breast, white lower breast and belly, dark streaks along the flanks. The bird flew close to the ground and landed on a small shrub some twenty yards away at the edge of the field. Beyond the shrub line was a wooded swamp. Kaplan's camera was locked inside Moore's

car....and Moore was out of sight. Fifth grade student Tim Boughan was unable to locate Moore in the woods to the north of the field. So with his eyes firmly on the bird, Kaplan shouted loudly for Moore who, after what seemed like hours, but in reality was under a minute, appeared from the woods at a run. Retrieving the camera, while the bird obligingly remained in the shrub, Moore was able to observe the bird for ten minutes. While Moore verified the sighting, Kaplan photographed the bird using Kodachrome 64 film, a Canon AT1 camera with 400mm Sigma lens at a speed of 1/250 second. Twenty minutes after the initial sighting, the bird flew into the woodland border separating the field from swamp and subsequent efforts to relocate the bird were unsuccessful. An extensive check of the Peterson Field Guide to the Birds: Eastern Region and the National Geographic Society Guide to North American Birds, confirmed the initial identification as that of Le Conte's Sparrow.

This sighting represents the first documented record of this species in Connecticut. A previous sighting of this species in Middletown, CT in October 1980, was not confirmed. There are, however, several sightings for this species in the northeast. Since 1976, there have been six sightings in neighboring Massachusetts. All were coastal with three from Cape Cod, two from the Newburyport area and one from Nantucket. Additional coastal sightings include one from Newfoundland (1982), one from Sandy Hook, New Jersey (1985), two

from Long Island, New York (Jones Beach 1970; Gardiner's Island 1971). Two inland sightings include one from Ithaca, New York 11 October 1897 (Birds of New York State) and one from Lincoln Center, Maine 26 June 1976.

The bird remained in the field until 9 January 1988. It was observed by approximately 100 individuals and extensively photographed by a number of competent observers.

Addenda: There is a moral, of sorts, to this sighting. It is true that birds show up in unusual places and this sighting demonstrates that unusual birds can and will appear in the most unlikely places and at unexpected seasons. The recent Second Report of the Connecticut Rare Records Committee (Conn. Warbler 7:4) lists two other sparrow species. One of these records, Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*), also occurred 27 December 1986 at an inland site. Therefore, it is crucial to bird a wide variety of areas within the State at all seasons in order to learn as much about our avifauna as possible.

The authors would like to thank Karen Clarke of the Watkinson Library at Trinity College and Paul Desjardins of The Hartford Audubon Society for assistance with research for this manuscript.

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THE 1987 - 1988 CHRISTMAS COUNT

Stephen P. Broker

The 1987-88 Christmas Bird Count extended from December 19 until January 3 in Connecticut. Once again, we had 17 state counts: 6 Northern, 5 Mid-State and 6 Coastal. The Trail Wood count was conducted for the second year, Barkhamsted for the fourth. The weather on Saturday, December 19 was reasonable, while on the 20th, the weather was awful statewide, with rain, sleet and icy roads. Late December and January counts enjoyed generally good weather, except that Stratford-Milford counters suffered through cold and windy conditions December 30. Counts were very bunched this year. Can we better coordinate in the future?

A total of 157 species were observed on the 17 counts, as were 6 Count Period (hereafter, CP) species. The 813 observers who participated counted a total of 427 thousand individuals. These numbers are on the low side. In 1984-85, for example, 176 species were seen, a total of 573 thousand birds. Previous years have seen more than 1000 observers in the field.

New 10 year High Counts for the state were recorded for 21 species. The most significant of these included: Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Oldsquaw, Common Merganser, Wild Turkey, Ruddy Turnstone, Ring-billed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Pine Siskin. New state Low Counts were recorded for 13 species, most notably Horned Grebe,

Brant, American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup, American Kestrel, Horned Lark, European Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle and Purple Finch. New to the 10 year State list are Gyrfalcon, Spotted Sandpiper and Le Conte's Sparrow; (about which more later). Dropped from the 10 year list is Hoary Redpoll, last seen on the 1977-78 Christmas Bird Count. The 10 year total now stands at 218 species.

The 10 most abundant species were: European Starling (124,000), Herring Gull (51T), Canada Goose (39T), American Crow (31T), Ring-billed Gull (24T), Black-capped Chickadee (14T), Mallard (12T), Dark-eyed Junco (11T), House Finch (11T), and Rock Dove (9T). Following these species in abundance were House Sparrow (8579), Mourning Dove (8501), American Black Duck (8230), Blue Jay (7646), White-throated Sparrow (5788), Greater Scaup (5527), Tufted Titmouse (4044), Common Merganser (3905), Great Black-backed Gull (3601) and American Tree Sparrow (3371).

Among state rarities, of which there were a healthy 11, Barkhamsted took top honors with significant finds. Most important of these was the sighting of Le Conte's Sparrow, a beautiful sparrow of grassland, weedy meadows and marshes with a range typically through the prairie and western Gulf states. This bird is now recognized as a new State species record and it remained through January 9 allow-

ing many birders to travel to Canton to enjoy it. Also found on this count were Green-backed Heron and Common Raven (CP). The other rarity produced on Northern Counts was Wood Thrush, found on the Hartford CBC. Of Mid-State Counts, the one state rarity was Black-and-White Warbler, found on the Woodbury-Roxbury Count. Coastal rarities included Great Egret and Yellow-crowned Night Heron (both from Greenwich-Stamford), Gyrfalcon (new, New Haven; an immature male which has been entertaining birders at the West Haven Town Dump for the last 2 1/2 months, 3 American Oystercatchers (Old Lyme), Spotted Sandpiper (new, New London; last seen on the 1973-74 State CBC), and Snowy Egret, reported both on Stratford-Milford and New London counts. Additional species unique to one count in the state are indicated in the Individual Count Summaries section with asterisks (*).

It is reasonable to expect a certain number of species to achieve new High Count or Low Count records each year, simply as a result of statistical variation. Taken in the 10 year context, however, the following changes in numbers of individuals recorded are considered worth mentioning. There may well be genuine trends at work.

Waterfowl. Mute Swan was at average or below average totals in the north and mid-state regions, but this introduced species reached record high numbers along the coast, particularly at New Haven and Westport. Mute Swan num-

bers have been on the high side for each of the last 6 years. Canada Goose numbers were twice as high as they were 4 years ago and earlier. Most dabbling and diving ducks were observed at average levels, including Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Hooded Merganser. However, this was the first year in 10 on which Northern Shoveler and Red-head were completely missed. Lesser Scaup numbers were very low, while Oldsquaw were high. Oldsquaw numbers have been high but variable for the last 8 years. Common Merganser numbers were very high, particularly on Northern Counts where open water was readily available. Brant was at a 10 year low, but there is considerable variation in Brant numbers from year to year. Scoter species were somewhat below average in numbers, as were Northern Pintail and Canvas-back.

Raptors. Average numbers were recorded for Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Northern Goshawk, Buteo species, and Merlin. The 25 Bald Eagle sightings in the state were close to the 10 year record. For the last 3 years, Bald Eagle numbers have been substantially higher than was the case in the preceding decade and a half. Cooper's Hawk numbers, above average this year, have also been higher for the last 3 years. Gyrfalcon is an exciting addition to the State CBC list. American Kestrels were in a very short supply, however, having been found in record

lows in northern and mid-state regions and near record lows coastally. There is mounting concern about this small falcon.

Wild Turkey. The 401 Wild Turkeys counted in Connecticut this year comprise a number which is 5 times higher than last year's count. All but 9 of these birds were recorded on Northern Counts. The State program for reintroducing this species seems to be enjoying considerable success. The total lends credence to the view of one State observer that "one of these years we're going to have a lot of turkeys"

Gulls. Ring-billed Gull numbers increase about as fast as solid waste sites grow. This species has doubled in numbers on counts in the last 6 years. Herring Gull was above average in numbers, while Great Black-backed Gull counts were of average size. Nine Iceland Gulls counted, tie the high total, and Laughing Gull, formerly qualifying as a rarity, has with the Stratford-Milford sighting, now been found 5 times in 10 years. One CP Glaucous Gull is on the low side.

Southern Invaders. Red-bellied Woodpecker reached a new state high, with 166 counted this year, thanks to record numbers in the north and good counts elsewhere. The last 3 years have been good for this species, which has doubled its numbers on counts since 1984-85. Carolina Wren, also at a new high, has doubled count numbers over the last 5 years, although there is a suggestion of cycles with this spe-

cies. No significant changes have occurred with Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, or Northern Cardinal in recent years, although titmice did squeak to a new 10 year high.

Flocking birds. Observant Christmas Count birders have commented that fewer individuals were seen in the air this year. This is certainly in part owing to reduced numbers of European Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Starlings recorded their lowest numbers in two decades. This was the 4th straight drop in Starling numbers; they were twice as plentiful in 1983-84. Is rejoicing premature? Redwings were also at a 20 year low, as were grackles, although grackles are widely variable in their numbers from year to year. Cowbirds were well below average on most counts. Crows, also variable in numbers from one year to the next, were at average levels, although observers finding major roosts in New Haven and Westport would beg to differ.

Other Passerines of Interest and Concern. Some concern was raised last year over possible declines among passerines. Songbirds require additional study, statistically, in order to elucidate patterns or trends; however, the following comments can be made about selected species. At 583 individuals, Horned Lark was very poorly represented this year. This species has been very variable in past years and no apparent trend has yet emerged. Eastern Meadowlark, on the other

hand, has had low numbers for 3 of the last 5 years and can be viewed as being on the decline. The nearly 600 Eastern Bluebirds counted in the state in 87-88, comprise an average total, but the last 7 years have seen much better bluebird counts over preceding years. Purple Finch was low this year - very low. Kinglets were abundant, with Golden-crowned having a big year in Connecticut and Ruby-crowned definitely above average. Pine Siskins were also very high. Explanations for declines in some of the above-mentioned species may be diverse, but we would do well to begin documenting the various types of habitat loss on a systematic basis in the several years ahead.

Special thanks are due Fred Sibley, whose careful and laborious tending of State CBC records for the past 17 years has made this imperfect analysis at least attemptable. His contributions to State ornithology cannot be over-emphasized. Thanks are also due the 22 compilers in the State for their fine work and also the very important sponsoring organizations in Connecticut: Connecticut Ornithological Association, Dennison Pequotsepos Nature Center, Greenwich Audubon Society, Hartford Audubon Society, Housatonic Audubon Society, Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Mattabeseck Audubon Society, Natchaug Ornithological Society, Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society, New Haven Bird Club, Potapaug Audubon Society and Saugatuck Valley Audubon Society.

INDIVIDUAL COUNT SUMMARIES

The following paragraphs list each of the 17 State counts and provide basic information on the results of the 1987-88 Christmas Bird Counts. The numbers following the count name refer to the total species seen on the count and the numbers of species seen during count periods. The number in parentheses is the total of species seen during the past 10 years (since the 1978-79 count). Exceptions are Trail Wood, which held its 2nd count this year, and Barkhamsted, which held its 4th count. The number of individual birds seen on the count is given, rounded off to the nearest thousand. Number of observers participating in the count is then given, followed by the name of the compiler. Rarities are listed, those species which have been observed 4 or fewer times in 10 years. Asterisks denote species unique to that one count. Other noteworthy species, which have been seen more than 4 times in the past decade, are referred to in the preceding section of this report. Finally, species recorded in new high or low numbers are listed. The one species dropped, Hoary Redpoll, was last seen more than 10 years ago.

WHOLE STATE - 17 counts.

157 spp +6CP (223); 427,000 individuals; 813 observers. 21 new High Counts; 13 new Low Counts; 3 new species; 1 species dropped.

NORTHERN COUNTS - 6 counts.

107 spp + 2 CP (152); 172,000

individuals; 314 observers + 51 feeder watchers. 29 new High Counts; 4 new Low Counts; 3 new species; 0 species dropped.

TRAIL WOOD: 53 species + 1CP (low count for 2 years) (66); 6000 individuals (record high); 15 observers. Compiler: Shirley Davis. *Rarities:* Ring-necked Duck, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Barred Owl, Rufous-sided Towhee, Field Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird.

BARKHAMSTED: 62 spp + 2 CP (84); 11,000 individuals; 33 observers + 18 feeder watchers; Compilers: David Rosgen & David Tripp, Jr. *Rarities:* Green-backed Heron*(new), Bufflehead (new), Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Barred Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Common Raven*(CP), Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush, Le Conte's Sparrow*(new), Red Crossbill*(CP), White-winged Crossbill (new).

STORRS: 62 spp + 3CP (110); 11,000 individuals; 28 observers (record low); Compiler: Shirley Davis. *Rarities:* Great Blue Heron, Canvasback, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Iceland Gull (CP), Long-eared Owl, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Catbird (CP), Brown Thrasher, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow. *High Counts* (9): Great Blue Heron, Hooded Merganser, Ring-necked Pheasant, Great Black-backed Gull, Long-eared Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Chipping Sparrow. *Low counts* (5): Mallard, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, American

Crow, Purple Finch.

HARTFORD: 90 spp + 1CP (128); 110,000 individuals; 153 observers + 33 feeder watchers; Compilers: Stephen Davis & Jay Kaplan. *Rarities:* Snowy Egret (new), Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Bald Eagle, Merlin, American Coot, Killdeer, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Snowy Owl, Long-eared Owl, Fish Crow, Wood Thrush*. *High Counts* (30): Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Killdeer, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Red-bellied woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Wood Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Cardinal, Rufous-sided Towhee, Swamp Sparrow, House Finch, Evening Grosbeak. *Low Counts* (3): Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, House Sparrow.

LITCHFIELD HILLS: 69 spp + 2CP (114); 13,000 individuals; 43 observers; Compiler: Ray Belding. *Rarities:* Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Goshawk, Great Black-backed Gull, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl (new), Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat (new). *High Counts* (11): Great Blue Heron, Gadwall, Common Merganser, Wild Turkey, Great Black-backed Gull, Long-

eered Owl, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Fox Sparrow, Pine Siskin. *Low Counts* (7): American Kestrel, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, American Crow, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird.

LAKEVILLE - SHARON: 56 spp + 0 CP (record low) (108); 20,000 individuals; (record high); 42 observers (record low); Compiler: Robert Moeller. *Rarities:* Mute Swan. *High Counts* (4): Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. *Low Counts* (12): Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Mockingbird, Dark-eyed Junco, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch.

MID-STATE COUNTS - 5 counts.

100 spp + 1 CP (146); 72,000 individuals; 127 observers. 14 new High Counts; 5 new Low Counts; 1 new species; 0 species dropped

SALMON RIVER: 66 spp + 1CP (119); 13,000 individuals; 27 observers; Compiler: David Titus. *Rarities:* Hooded Merganser, Northern Harrier (new), Wild Turkey (new), Yellow-breasted Chat, White-crowned Sparrow, White-winged Crossbill. *High Counts* (8): Great Blue Heron, Hooded Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Woodcock, Ring-billed Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Pine Siskin. *Low Counts* (9): Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped

Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

QUINNIPIAC VALLEY: 66 spp + 2CP (record low) (115); 17,000 individuals; 16 observers; Compiler: Wilford Schultz. *Rarities:* Pied-billed Grebe, American Wigeon, Turkey Vulture (CP), Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin. *High Counts* (9): Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, American Wigeon, Common Merganser, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch. *Low Counts* (7): Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Screech-Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Meadowlark, Purple Finch.

OXFORD: 57 spp + 1CP (100); 7000 individuals; 19 observers; Compilers: Buzz Devine & Mark Szantyr. *Rarities:* Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Killdeer, Brown Thrasher, Savannah Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird. *High Counts* (11): Mute Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow. *Low Counts* (11): American Black Duck, Mallard, Red-tailed Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, European Starling, Purple Finch, House Finch.

WOODBURY-ROXBURY: 82 spp + 1CP (113); 26,000 individuals; 48 observers; Compiler: Aldro Jenks. *Rarities:* Wood Duck, Gad-

wall, American Wigeon, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Iceland Gull, Long-eared Owl, Eastern Phoebe*(new), Black-and-White Warbler*(new), Common Yellowthroat. *High Counts* (21): Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Hooded Merganser, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Ring-billed Gull, Iceland Gull, Great Horned Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch. *Low Counts* (2): American Kestrel, European Starling.

HIDDEN VALLEY: 71 spp + 2CP (record high) (104); 10,000 individuals; 17 observers; Compilers: Sibyll Gilbert & Jeanne Kauffman. *Rarities:* Wood Duck, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Wild Turkey, American Woodcock (new), Brown Thrasher (new), Northern Shrike* (new), Snow Bunting, Eastern Meadowlark (new), Common Redpoll, Common Snipe, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush. *High Counts* (31): Great Blue Heron, American Black Duck, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Common Snipe, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nut-

hatch, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Snow Bunting, House Finch, Pine Siskin. *Low Counts:* none.

COASTAL COUNTS - 6 counts.

149 spp + 4CP (217); 183,000 individuals; 372 observers (record low). 15 new High Counts; 12 new Low Counts; 2 new species; 1 species dropped.

NEW LONDON: 111 spp + OCP (150); 30,000 individuals; 25 observers; Compiler: Bob Dewire. *Rarities:* Snowy Egret (new), Lesser Scaup, Turkey Vulture, Merlin, Sora*(new), Spotted Sandpiper*(new), Short-eared Owl, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Water Pipit, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow. *High Counts* (17): Mallard, Turkey Vulture, Merlin, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, Dunlin, American Woodcock, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Long-eared Owl, Northern Flicker, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat, White-crowned Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird. *Low Counts* (6): American Kestrel, American Coot, Bonaparte's Gull, American Robin, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch.

OLD LYME: 110 spp + OCP (157); 20,000 individuals; 44 observers; Compiler: Jay Hand. *Rarities:* Green-winged Teal, Wild Turkey, American Oystercatcher*

(new), Greater Yellowlegs, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow (new). *High Counts* (24): Red-throated Loon, Great Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Gadwall, Common Merganser, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Coot, Greater Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, American Woodcock, Barred Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Water Pipit, Field Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco. *Low Counts* (4): Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Lark, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird.

NEW HAVEN: 112 + 11CP (record low) (179); 55,000 individuals; 78 observers; Compiler: Stephen P. Broker. *Rarities*: Eurasian Wigeon*, Turkey Vulture, Osprey*, Gyrfalcon* (CP) (new), Wild Turkey (new), Boreal Chickadee* (CP), Ipswich Sparrow, Northern Oriole. *High Counts* (18): Common Loon, Mute Swan, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Sanderling, Dunlin, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Chipping Sparrow, Ipswich Sparrow, Northern Oriole, Pine Siskin. *Low Counts* (11): American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup (CP), Common Merganser (CP), Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird.

STRATFORD-MILFORD: 111

+ 3CP (172); 31,000 individuals; 35 observers; Compilers: Dennis Varza, Fred Sibley & Mark Szantyr. *Rarities*: Snowy Egret (CP), Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck (CP), Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Laughing Gull*, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Barn-Owl*, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Bluebird, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-crowned Sparrow, Evening Grosbeak. *High Counts* (18): Great Cormorant, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Woodcock, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Barn-Owl, Snowy Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Water Pipit, Yellow-breasted Chat, Dark-eyed Junco. *Low Counts* (12): Red-throated Loon, Horned Grebe, Hooded Merganser, American Kestrel, American Coot, Dunlin, Rock Dove, Great Horned Owl, Horned Lark, European Starling, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird.

WESTPORT: 103 spp + Monk Parakeet + 4CP (167); 21,000 individuals; 52 observers + 43 feeder watchers; Compiler: Frank Mantlik. *Rarities*: Double-crested Cormorant, Black Scoter, Cooper's Hawk, Snowy Owl, Seaside Sparrow (new). *High Counts* (11): Great Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Mute Swan, Northern Pintail, Cooper's Hawk, American Coot, Greater Yellowlegs, American Woodcock, Snowy Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow. *Low Counts* (18): Pied-billed Grebe,

Canada Goose, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Brown Creeper, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Common Grackle (CP), American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

GREENWICH-STAMFORD: 109 spp + 3CP (164); 26,000 individuals; 138 observers (record low); Compilers: Tom Baptist & Gary Palmer. *Rarities*: Great Egret*, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron*, Cooper's Hawk, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Snipe, Marsh Wren, Chipping Sparrow. *High Counts* (12): Red-throated Loon, Great Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant,

Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Red-shouldered Hawk, Chipping Sparrow, Northern Oriole. *Low Counts* (19): Canada Goose, Mallard, American Wigeon, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Rufous-sided Towhee, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak.

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06515

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Fall: August 1 - November 30, 1987

Clay Taylor

In Connecticut the spring birds and weather are beautiful, chasing winter rarities is invigorating and summer birding has a wonderful unpredictability, but fall migration is *the* ornithological event of the year. Virtually every family on the checklist may be seen somewhere in the state between August 1 and November 30. Whether your bag is ducks, hawks, shorebirds, warblers or sparrows, they are out there for the finding. With such an abundance of birds, the number of records received is correspondingly large, so I will now try to present not only rare sightings, but the interesting tidbits in a way that won't

bankrupt the COA or put you to sleep. To those who contributed sightings and impressions, I thank you very much. I learned a lot.

Overview

The 1987 Fall Migration was a good one, judging from your written responses and I concur. Depending on the location of the observer and the stage of the overall migration, it was rated as being mostly "on time" to slightly "late". Bird movement in August was only slightly ahead of time; September and October birds were pretty much right on time and the November migrants were a little tardy in their scheduled ap-

pearances. A request for dates of good movement drew responses covering nearly every day from Aug. 10 to Nov. 10, indicating that there were no real statewide fallouts. It seemed that overnight flight conditions brought localized abundances. This is also borne out by species abundances; more late sparrows and August warblers inland than on the coast, with September migrants in greater numbers from coastal locations. Shorebirds were average along the coast and almost non-existent inland, perhaps due to a dry summer. Gulls and terns were very low-profile throughout the period and mild temperatures kept waterfowl inland through November. Raptors had a very good migration in numbers and diversity, both inland and coastal. Finches flew in impressive numbers in October, but in the usual pattern were non-existent going into December.

The only real disappointment was a lack of hard-core rarities and wanderers; Anhinga, Northern Wheatear, Marbled Godwit and Common Eider make a nice, but short list. As is usually the case, none stayed very long in the State.

Weather

As summer progressed, July's drought slackened, but it wasn't until the last three days of August that the rainfall level reached its monthly average. Cold fronts August 23 and 30 gave early migrants a good push. Another front September 3 was followed by a week of mixed warm and rainy days, a front September 10 and more unsettled weather until a torrential down-

pour September 13 brought 3+ inches to Hartford. September 14-16 saw low overnight temperatures and daytime highs in the 70's to 80's so the hawks flew along the ridges. Rain September 17-18 shut things down, but flights began again on the 19th. As a low passed south of us, winds switched from northeast to north and September 21 saw the top inland hawk flights of the year on a Monday, of course! September ended with almost double the average rainfall. Fortunately it came in big batches and didn't water down the migration. October and November were well-mannered except for snow November 11 which drove birds to feeders. An arctic airmass November 20 dropped temperatures into the teens three consecutive nights, prompting ducks to move southward into Connecticut.

MIGRATION

Note: John Granton's remarkable species and number compilation from the Lighthouse Point Hawk Watch (hereafter LPHW) recorded 193 Species in 556 hours of observation, covering 19,435 hawks and 317,141 non-raptors for a grand total of 336,577 individual birds. Although 24 people are credited with contributions to this total, I will simplify things and refer to the work as John's(JG). It is a fascinating and truly important work and I hope that other hawk watchers on regularly birded observation points may try to create similar works. If an individual such as John cannot be found to compile the data, perhaps a bird club or Audubon Society could serve as the

"publisher". To obtain a copy, contact John at (203) 484-0716. Thank you, John Granton et al.!

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Migrating Red-throated and Common Loons were at Milford Point October 26(RE) while inland sightings included Red-throated Loon November 12 in Suffield(SKe), Bantam Lake November 14(RN) and Candlewood Lake November 17. A Common Loon was seen on Bantam Lake November 14.

Horned Grebes arrived October 18 in Groton and October 24 in Suffield(SKe) but were scarce through the period. Red-necked Grebes were reported on the Connecticut River in South Windsor October 10(R&AM) and Milford Point November 14(TB). Northern Gannets were off White Sands Beach, Old Lyme November 12(TH). The first Great Cormorant was reported in Stamford September 27(RH), while sightings at Milford Point and LPHW October 24 showed movement(RE,JG). A flock of over 40 Double-crested Cormorants inland over Woodbury was notable, while the LPHW total of 307 was down from 831 in 1986. An *Anhinga* soaring over Longshore Club Park, Westport September 25 was quite a surprise and constitutes a first state record (hypothetical, as no photos were taken).

Hérons, especially Great Blues, were in good numbers throughout the fall and records persisted into November for some species; Great Egret at Harkness Memorial St. Pk.

November 26(GB), Snowy Egret November 14 in Fairfield(DRa) and Cattle Egret November 13 in Mystic(CP). An immature Little Blue Heron November 15 was at Short Beach, Stratford(FMa,TD) American Bitterns were at Hammonasset St. Pk. through the period, as they were at Great Island in Old Lyme(TH); 4 were seen at LPHW(JG).

A Greater White-fronted Goose (which couldn't be identified as to race) was seen flying with Canada's in Storrs October 6(LB,WB) and a Barnacle Goose in Preston was in the same area as one seen last spring (fide Records of Southeastern Connecticut Birds - hereafter RSCB). Snow Geese were down 25% from 1986 at LPHW, totaling 1705 while Canada Geese numbered 5165. One Snow (Blue) Goose passed the LPHW October 2, while another was at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport (hereafter, SISP) September 17(FMA). Two Brant, flew past LPHW October 24(JG) and single Brant were at Bantam Lake November 14(RN) and Griswold Point, Old Lyme(TH).

Duck numbers seemed to fall within expected limits and time frames, being only slightly tardy along the coast. Rarities included a Common Eider at Morris Cove in New Haven November 28(SKo) and a Eurasian Wigeon at Lake Saltonstall, Branford(NP,RE). Some first dates: Northern Pintail September 12 at LPHW(JG), American Wigeon September 27 at Milford Point(DRo), Ring-necked Duck in Sherman October 13(JK). A male Barrow's Goldeneye at North Cove, Saybrook November 28-December

6(DT,JZe,TB) was reported to have been shot by hunters. A Ruddy Duck was at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) October 17(JB). Additional Ruddy Ducks included 5 at South Cove Essex November 5(TH) and 5 in Niantic November 21(BDa).

HAWKS

The raptor junkies had a good fix this year. Harriers and assorted accipiters were moving along the coast in late August while the first good Broad-winged flights passed over inland sites September 14-16. Flat Hill in Southbury, Whippoorwill Hill in Newtown and Quaker Ridge, Greenwich all had over 1000 Broadwings on both the 15th and 16th, while 7 other lookouts were over 100 on one or both days. Other good flight days were September 19, 21 and 25. Quaker Ridge averaged almost 1000 Broadwings per day September 14-27 (excluding the rainy days of the 17th and 18th). Lighthouse Point and Quaker Ridge finished at 19,436 and 19,855 hawks, respectively. The LPHW relied on Sharp-shinned Hawks as the most numerous hawk and Sharpie's were down this year at coastal locations up and down the East Coast. Quaker Ridge drew its numbers from 12,400 Broad-wings even though it is only a few miles from Long Island Sound.

Sharp-shinned Hawks were down 25% and Merlins down 45% from 1986 at the LPHW. Harriers were at standard numbers but an outstanding note was the number of adult males seen - 45 at Lighthouse Point between November 1 and 21,

with 19 counted November 13! Cooper's Hawks were well reported and while coastal buteos were about average, Rough-legged Hawks were scarce everywhere. Three Goshawks September 19 in Woodbury were early and the LPHW counted 7 October 12 for a season total of 26(JG). Peregrine Falcons were widespread. Reports ranged from September 2 at Milford Point(FMc) to November 12 at Lighthouse Point, totaling 25 at LPHW and 22 at Quaker Ridge.

The stars of the show were eagles and Ospreys. Lighthouse Point saw 4 Bald Eagles October 12, and 2 Golden Eagles October 13 for season's total of 21 and 3 respectively. Quaker Ridge tallied 24 Bald and 4 Golden Eagles. Bald Eagles were also reported in many other areas, including August 30 and September 20 at the Woodbury Hawk Watch(RN), September 24 in Hartland (SKe), October 5 at Great Island(TH), November 17 in Ridgefield(MS) and November 19 in Stonington(RD). A Golden Eagle was over Mystic November 22(LL) and 4 were in the Branford-North Guilford area November 2-4(NP). The successful Osprey breeding year evidently was a wide-ranging trend because the migration shattered records everywhere. Lighthouse Point's 2059 sightings was 40% above the old record set in 1986 and the 326 migrants September 26 would have been a season's total 10 years ago. Quaker Ridge had 132 September 27 for a seasonal total of 1021. Observers, both inland and coastal, commented on the large numbers of Osprey seen migrating or fishing together. Hawk Banding

Stations at Hammonasset and Lighthouse Point had good seasons, setting station records for Harriers (HBSP-116), Cooper's (HBSP-9, LP-48), Sharp-shinned (LP-248), Red-shouldered (LP-2) and Broad-winged Hawks (LP-5). Of the 3 Peregrines caught at Hammonasset (all immature females), one was a Cornell-released bird although the release site is unknown at this time.

GROUSE THROUGH SKIMMERS

The only Common Moorhen reported was an immature at Great Island October 27(TH). Increasingly scarce American Coot were reported as 1 in Suffield October 24(Ske), 12 in Coventry November 15(GC) and the Thames River November 15(MF). An adult Sandhill Crane flew by Newtown August 24(MS) and 3 were seen in North Guilford November 24(NP).

Although shorebird numbers along the coast were about normal, a flock of 120+ White-rumped Sandpipers which came into SISP during a storm September 18(FMa) was notable. There were 2 Baird's Sandpiper reports, both at SISP, August 30 and September 17-18(FMa). Two Buff-breasted Sandpipers were seen at HBSP in early September(RSc,CT) while another was at Veterans Park, Norwalk September 29(RW). Golden Plovers peaked at 18 at HBSP in August while 500+ Black-bellied Plovers August 23 at Milford Point must have been noisy(FMa). Piping Plover was last reported there on August 23(FMa). Hudsonian Godwits were seen briefly at HBSP in September(CT), at Milford Point

October 30 - November 4(m.ob) and Great Island October 24 to November 4(TH). A Marbled Godwit was seen in Norwalk Harbor August 15(JB) and another at Barn Island, Stonington September 16(RD). Whimbrel were widespread, but did not stay well into October as in other years. Four Upland Sandpipers at Lordship August 4 were probably wandering and one was at Cooper's Point, Old Lyme September 2(TH). The only Wilson's Phalarope was reported at Milford Point August 20(MA) and a Long-billed Dowitcher was sighted there October 19(FMc,PDj). The first Purple Sandpiper for the winter was at the mouth of the Thames River November 6. A Ruff was at the Guilford Sluice September 23(NP).

Gleanings from the sightings register at Milford Point include 3000+ Semipalmated Sandpipers August 23(FMa), 14+ Western Sandpipers, August 26(JZe,TB), Stilt Sandpiper October 18(JMc,CB), a White-rumped Sandpiper August 24(JZe,TB) and 5 more October 2(EH).

The best gull report was that of an immature Kittiwake on Branford's Thimble Islands October 12(NP) while an Iceland Gull October 29(LPHW), 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Hartford October 14(LB) and scattered Bonaparte's Gulls, August 1 at HBSP(CT) rounded out the gull slate. A lack of Roseate and Common Tern comments indicates a normal year, but Forster's Terns were down after two successive good years; sightings were August 8 at LBSP(LP,CT), September 3 (JS,VW) and September 6 at

Milford Point(AT). Caspian Terns were seen at Milford Pt. August 1-2 and August 20-22 while one Royal Tern was on the Thimble Islands September 15(NP). Black Skimmers were sighted at Milford Point August 20(KM) and September 20(LB) with 4 at LPHW October 17(JG).

DOVES THROUGH SWALLOWS

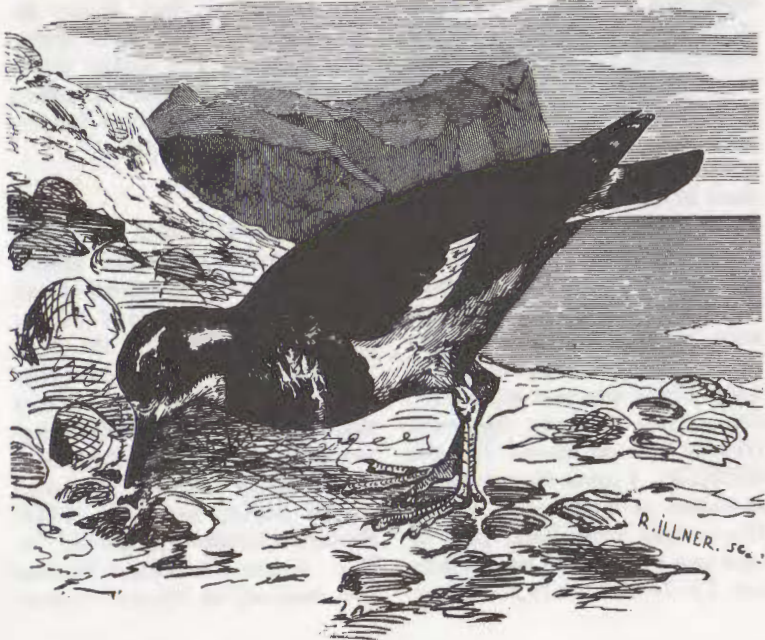
A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was banded at HBSP(CT) but few were reported, with some comments about their scarcity.

The owl migration was very late, as Saw-whets and Long-eareds moved in late November as opposed to their usual Halloween push (it's true!). A Snowy Owl was in Montville October 26 (New London Day fide RSCB) and at Milford Point November 14(CE) and No-

vember 24(RB). Short-eared Owls were at Milford Point September 27(DRo) and LPHW September 19 and October 15(JG).

The only significant Nighthawk flight was over 1,000 passing through East Lyme September 1. 1487 Chimney Swifts passed by LPHW with a late date of October 20(JG). Late inland dates for swifts were September 29 in Storrs(WB) and October 3 in Ellington(CE). Common (Yellow-shafted) Flickers were just that but a **Red-shafted Flicker** at Flanders Nature Center, Woodbury, was most interesting. Lighthouse Point tallied 16 Red-headed Woodpeckers for the season.

All the expected flycatchers were reported. Acadian Flycatchers were banded in Westport August 6(EH), Woodbury August 13(MS) and Lighthouse Point September



2(FG). Olive-sided Flycatchers were numerous, in Bethany August 28(MS), September 2 in Cheshire(TP,DRs) 2 at Flanders Nature Center August 30(RN,MS) and 1 at LPHW September 3(JG). Western Kingbirds were at LPHW October 1 and 8, and in North Haven September 7(NP). A count of 28,932 Tree Swallows passed by LPHW, with the peak period September 10-27(JG); among them were 43 Bank, 28 Rough-winged, 69 Cliff and 2162 Barn Swallow (late date November 14!).

JAYS THROUGH VIREOS

If you liked the Tree Swallow total, you will love the Blue Jay total at LPHW - 52,085! It was no surprise that jays were in low numbers come wintertime; 24,800 passed by LPHW from September 21-27. A Chough, possibly an escaped bird, was seen among Crows in Newtown November 23-23(BDe) and again in the same area February 15, 1988(MS). The peak Common Crow time was October 26-November 1, but the period and season totals of 1275 and 3244 were about 20% less than in 1986. Black-capped Chickadees were late and sparse and only 1 Boreal Chickadee was reported, at Lake Saltonstall November 15(NP). Nuthatches were in very low numbers but Brown Creepers were abundant. Sedge Wrens were seen at Southern Conn. State University September 10(NP) and in Storrs October 5(WB,LB). I guess they prefer an academic environment. Winter Wrens were everywhere, both inland and coastal, from late September. LPHW counted 11,938 Ameri-

can Robins, the high point in a very good mimid and thrush migration - all species were in good numbers. Kinglets were abundant everywhere and an early Ruby-crowned in Granby September 6(SKe) led the way for both Ruby-crowns and Golden-crowns statewide in late September.

A Northern Wheatear was found on a private beach in Clinton September 27-28, (AG,JZi,NP). The immature bird was the 6th record for Wheatear in the immediate area over the last 10 years. Water Pipits arrived October 4 in Southbury(RN), October 6 at LPHW, October 8 at Harkness St. Pk.(RD) and Griswold Pt.(TH). Amazingly, Cedar Waxwings outnumbered Starlings at LPHW, 17,329 to 16,390. Is it any wonder you couldn't find a waxwing in December? A Loggerhead Shrike was at Milford Point August 21-22(DRs, m.ob). All vireo species were reported, with several White-eyed Vireos in western Connecticut and a Philadelphia Vireo September 2 in Ridgefield(MS).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

There were 33 warbler species reported for the fall, indicating both good movement and lots of observer time. The majority of the flight went through in late August, led by a spate of Connecticut Warbler sightings; 2 were in Ridgefield September 2(MS), 1 at Milford Point August 19(K&VMc), 1 in Fairhaven August 24(RA) and 3 at LPHW September-October (2 banded by FG). A late Blue-winged Warbler was banded in Mystic October

31(RD), while Orange-crowned Warblers were seen September 16 at Sagem's Head in Guilford(NP) and at Sherwood Island St. Park October 11(RSo). Banders caught Mourning Warblers in Storrs(WB), at Flanders Nature Center(MS) and Westport(EH), a late Nashville October 22 at HBSP(CT), 3 Western Palm Warblers at Lighthouse Pt.(FG) and an early Cerulean August 11 in Westport(EH). A Kentucky Warbler and Hooded Warbler were in Ridgefield September 2(MS). Remarkable for such a secretive bird, were 4 Yellow-breasted Chats banded at HBSP(CT), 1 in East Haven(GB) and sightings at Milford Pt. September 2(FMc) and inland October 18(RN).

The only Blue Grosbeak reported was at HBSP September 28(NP). A Dickcissel seen on a Western Connecticut Bird Club Trip October 24 in Southbury(MS,BDe) was the only one reported. I banded 10 Rufous-sided Towhees at HBSP but they didn't elicit any comments from other contributors.

The sparrow migration was spotty with some species scarce here and abundant there all on the same day. Higher inland numbers included Vesper, Fox, Song and White-throated Sparrows. White-crowned Sparrows seemed scarce while Swamp Sparrows were underfoot. Storrs was the hotspot; a Clay-colored Sparrow September 30 and Grasshopper Sparrows banded September 2, October 10 and seen on September 30(WB,LB). Two Lark Sparrows were reported, an immature with Chipping Sparrows in Westport, mid-

August(RC) and 1 in Branford September 23(NP), while an Ipswich Sparrow was on Griswold Point November 4(TH). The first Fox Sparrow report was in Old Lyme November 6, feeding with Juncos. A snowfall brought a flurry of sightings from feeders just a few days later; 3 in Sherman November 12, also November 12 in Waterford(PDj) and Stratford(EB), November 14 in Guilford(TP), 8 in Waterford November 14(R&SK) and 5 November 5 in Southbury(RN).

Lapland Longspur was seen in Storrs October 5(WB,DH,LB), October 17 at Sherwood Island St. Pt.(RSo) and 35+ were at Milford Pt. October 30(SKo). Snow Buntings flurried into the State October 30 at Milford Pt.(JMc,LB), with 150 in Hartland November 6(SKe). Bobolinks were "binking" their way to Argentina to the tune of 14,559 at LPHW, with a late date of October 20 at Great Island(TH). Migrating along I-84 in Middlebury were "50K" blackbirds(MS) while the LPHW totals were no less impressive, 62,173 Red-winged Blackbirds, 37,692 Common Grackles and 14,995 Brown-headed Cowbirds. No Yellow-headed Blackbirds were reported.

The finch flight at LPHW was outstanding in October and November; 1782 Purple Finches, 361 Common Redpolls, 10,081 Pine Siskins and 7424 Goldfinches. A Pine Grosbeak was in North Guilford November 29(NP), while 8 White-winged Crossbills were seen at LPHW November 15(JG). Evening Grosbeaks flew in small numbers with other finches.

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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. All manuscripts receive peer review.

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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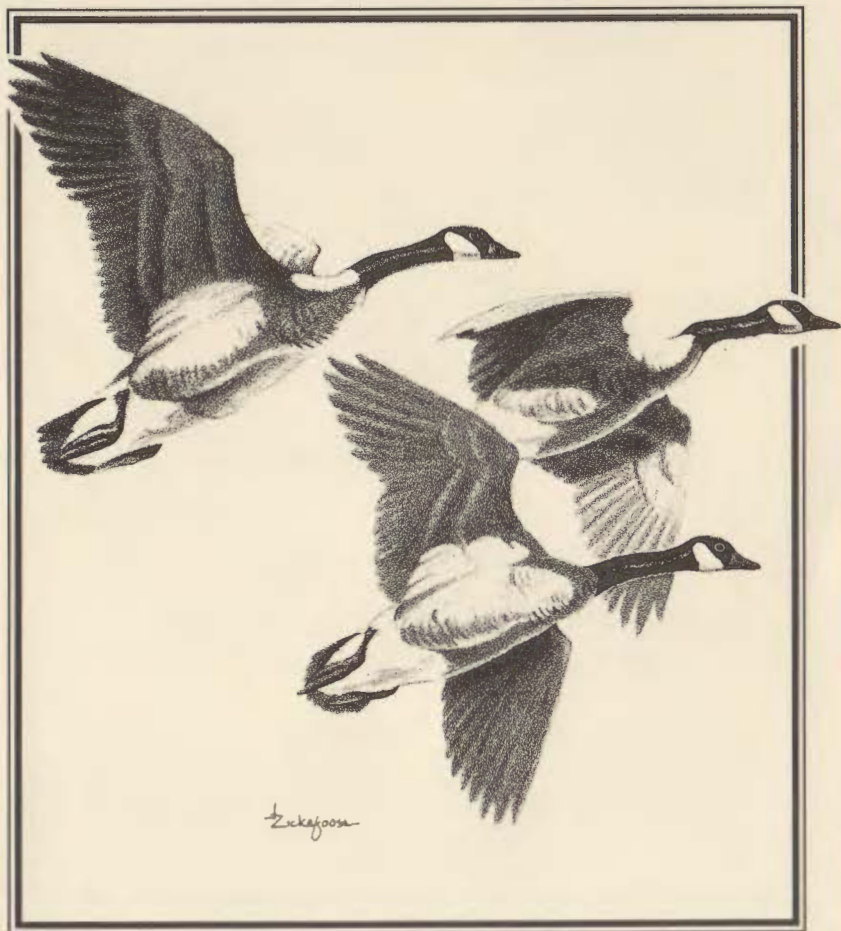
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Julie Zickefoose is a freelance artist, writer and naturalist who is devoted to the study, conservation and appreciation of birds. Her work has appeared in *American Birds*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Bird Observer*, *The Connecticut Audubon Bulletin*, *The Connecticut Warbler* and in numerous publications of the United States and Canadian Wildlife Services. She is now illustrating books on the birds of Newfoundland, Ospreys and birdwatching.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This organization is becoming a force in this state, but to remain so will require growth.

As your newly elected President, I would like to thank the outgoing officers and board members for a job well done and welcome in the new slate. For a volunteer organization, a staggering number of hours are devoted to the COA. Having been deeply involved with the beginnings of this journal in 1981 and later with the formation of the COA, I can personally attest to the time spent by a handful of people wanting the COA to succeed. And succeeding we are, albeit by small leaps and bounds.

To those of you who missed the annual meeting in March, you missed a great day. Over 80 members and guests attended and the enthusiasm exhibited was very gratifying. I hope to see more of you next year.

One of our priorities is to expand The Connecticut Warbler. This means finding more good material to print, and we are considering publishing a series of Site Guides that will help up and coming birders and those new to the state to find good birding areas. We believe there is a demand for such information. To accomplish this, we need a Site Guide editor, someone who is in the field on a regular basis and can contact birders who are intimately familiar with their favorite spots. I know there is someone out there who can handle this task. So please help us out!

Another feature we are proposing is a Letter to the Editor section. There have certainly been enough articles printed in this journal to stimulate some discussion. This is your sounding board so I hope the membership uses it. If you have nothing else to say then drop us a line to tell us what a great job we are doing!

This organization is becoming a force in this state, but to remain so will require growth. That growth can only come from an expanded pool of talent. I want to hear from you out there. As I said earlier and I'll say it one more time, the names of the people you see printed on the inside covers of the journal are already working hard for the organization. We know there are other members out there qualified to help. We know we have failed to find you in the past but it is time to come forward and offer your help in your desired area of expertise. In the meantime—Good Birding!

Carl Trichka, President
65 Glover St., Fairfield, CT

CONNECTICUT PIPING PLOVERS - 1987

Fred C. Sibley¹ and Dennis Varza²

This is a report on the work done with Piping Plovers during 1987. The findings are very exciting and important to the management of Piping Plovers in Connecticut. Since our studies have terminated we wish to make these preliminary data available to other researchers in the State.

During 1987, all potential nesting areas were checked and pairs found were rechecked at frequent intervals to discover the nest. Each nesting was followed to fledging of chicks or loss of eggs. Nesting pairs (numbers in parentheses) were found at Pleasure Beach (1) in Bridgeport, Long Beach (7) and Short Beach (3) in Stratford, Milford Point (2) in Milford, Sandy Point (5) in West Haven, Hammonasset State Park (3) in Madison, Fenwick Point (1) in Old Saybrook and Griswold Point (2) Old Lyme. There was no nesting at Neck Road in Guilford (last used in 1983), Pilot's Point in Westbrook (last used in 1983), or Hatchett's Point in Old Lyme (last used in 1985) although one bird was present for several weeks at the latter locality.

During the period 1981-1986, six adults and 51 chicks were banded at Connecticut nesting locations. In 1987, four adults and two chicks were recaptured and an additional 25 adults and 17 chicks banded.

Population Size

During the year 29 nestings by 24 different pairs were documented. A non-nesting pair at Griswold Point late

in the season, another at Sandy Point early in the season plus single birds at various sites would indicate a total population of over 50. This is considerably higher than the estimates for the last four years - 36, 30, 40 and 40 respectively (Anon., 1986). We feel that some and perhaps all of the increase is due to the accurate identification of renesting pairs provided by banding.

Mate Fidelity

Four mated pairs were identified in previous years. A 1986 pair at Old Saybrook (Varza and Schwartz, 1987) separated. The male remained at Old Saybrook and the female found a new mate and nested across the Connecticut River at Griswold Point. Of the two 1985 pairs at Sandy Point, one remained paired, while the other failed to return. The 1985 pair at Milford Point split, with one bird staying at Milford Point and the other moving across the Housatonic River to nest at Short Beach. In five renestings, four apparently involved the same birds found in the first nesting.

Site Fidelity

Of six previously captured adults, four were found at the same site, while two had moved about one mile to the nearest beach. All five renestings occurred at the same site as the initial nesting. Two

pairs netted in late March, approximately a month before egg laying, established their nests within 100 feet of the capture site.

Nesting Success

There were 29 nesting attempts by 24 pairs. Ten nests failed at the egg stage and another four failed to fledge young. The remaining 15 nests fledged 31 young with only two

Predators were a serious factor at both Milford Point and Hammonasset and we see no easy solution. Some predator control would seem advisable.

nests fledging all their young. Thirteen pairs were successful in their initial attempt and two additional pairs succeeded with their second attempt. Nine pairs failed to fledge any young although three tried a second time. The total fledging rate of 1.3 chicks per pair for all pairs is less than the rates of 1.75 - 2.00 reported for the previous three years (Anon., 1986). A portion of this difference is probably due to more accurate censusing. In previous years the 24 pairs would have been reported as 20 pairs (1.5 chicks per

pair) since late first nestings would have been labeled as re-nestings. Since many Connecticut nests are placed in dense stands of beach grass they are very difficult to find and are often missed if there are several pairs of birds in the same area. Despite the checking of Least Tern nests three times a week during the breeding season, two plover nests in the tern areas were not discovered until very late - one when the chicks hatched, the other (abandoned) after the pair had started a new nest. This factor may also have made our census of nesting pairs incompatible with earlier years when tern checks were not carried out in these areas.

Some areas were more successful than others. All nests at Pleasure Beach, Fenwick Point and Griswold Point were successful. Six of the seven pairs at Long Beach were successful. Four of five pairs were successful at Sandy Point. At the other extreme, all the nests at Short Beach and Milford Point failed and only one of three pairs at Hammonasset fledged young.

Egg Loss

Egg Loss was apparently an all-or-nothing proposition. If eggs started disappearing from a nest, all eggs would vanish prior to hatching. Of 110 eggs laid, 34 were lost and an additional three failed to hatch in nests that produced chicks. This represents a 30% loss compared to 48% in 1985 (Zickefoose, 1986). The ten nests that failed in the egg stage show no common cause. Each is treated here separately.

Long Beach nest D: Abandoned - death of adult. Eggs taken by predator long after normal incubation period. One of the adults died during the incubation period and the nest was abandoned soon afterwards.

Short Beach nest 3: Abandoned - death of adult (?). A full clutch was never present. One egg was incubated and then abandoned when one of the adults died.

Milford Point nest 1: Abandoned - disturbance by predators? The nest was not found until long after it had been abandoned. See renesting, below. Milford Point re-nest 1: Abandoned - disturbance by predator. Still four eggs in nest long after normal incubation period. During the incubation periods cats were eating Least Tern chicks and Piping Plover chicks in the same area and this may have caused the adult to incubate only during the day.

Milford Point re-nest 2: Abandoned - disturbance by predator. This pair lost its chicks to cats and started a very late second nest as a result. Nest was abandoned shortly after clutch was completed. Perhaps a combination of disturbance by cats and lateness of season.

Sandy Point nest 4: Abandoned - disturbance by humans. This was a very early nesting. While the birds were completing the clutch the large Least Tern colony was being fenced and the birds were subjected to repeated and prolonged disturbance. The clutch never reached four eggs and we believe a fourth egg as well as earlier eggs were taken by crows when adults were chased off the nest

by disturbance. The one remaining egg was eventually abandoned and the pair successfully re-nested.

Hammonasset nest 1: Abandoned - cause unknown. This nest was abandoned after the chicks should have hatched and skunks or raccoons then took the eggs.

Hammonasset re-nest 1: Lost to predators? Eggs probably taken by predators. This was a very late nesting, following unsuccessful first attempt. The clutch was never completed before the nest vanished.

Hammonasset nest 2: Lost to predators. A nest that vanished shortly after incubation started.

Hammonasset nest 3: Lost to predators. Another nest that vanished shortly after incubation started.

Loss of Young

After young leave the nest they are hard to follow and the figures for number fledged are minimum counts. Even allowing for this, however, large numbers of chicks are lost before fledging. Hatching all four eggs is the rule but fledging all four young seems to be very difficult. There was an average loss of two chicks per clutch but loss of an entire brood seemed exceptional. The four broods that vanished completely are therefore worth examining.

Milford nest 2: Lost to predators. All four chicks eaten by cats, as were all the Least Tern chicks in the colony.

Short Beach nest 1 & 2: Lost to humans. The eight chicks involved here were the unfortunate victims of a breakdown in communication.

Although everyone was aware of the nests and their protective fencing, few were aware that once the chicks hatch, they roam the whole beach and hide in the beach drift. We believe the town beach sweeper, in the process of beautifying the beach, also removed the chicks.

Sandy Point nest 1: Lost to humans. All four chicks were reported picked up by beach-goers who thought the chicks had been abandoned. These people took them home where the chicks presumably died.

Adult Loss

Two adults were found dead of unknown causes and a third found sick, later died. All three were members of nesting pairs and two of the nests failed as a result of the lost mate. In the third, the eggs had hatched and two chicks eventually fledged.

Predators were a serious factor at both Milford Point and Hammonasset and we see no easy solution. Despite the predation at Hammonasset one pair re-nested and successfully fledged young during a period when two other pairs and a pair of American Oystercatchers lost their nests to predators. Some predator control would seem advisable.

Humans are an important factor, as shown in the above case histories. The disturbance caused by fence construction at Sandy Point should serve as a lesson for the future. The picking up of chicks by beach-goers and the sweeping of beaches are issues of public education. The prob-

lem of how to protect chicks once they leave the fenced areas is still unresolved.

There are additional problems, heavily debated in previous years, that are not major causes of nest loss. Heavy recreational use at Long Beach and Sandy Point, although directly or indirectly associated with several losses, did not produce catastrophic losses such as those observed at Milford Point and Hammonasset. It would be worth considering positive side effects to recreational use, such as predator reduction.

Research studies on Least Terns at Sandy Point and Long Beach covered the same areas used by the plovers but resulted in no nest losses.

One item fiercely debated since 1983 has been the marking of nests to make them more easily noted and avoided. Despite the obvious dangers of people stepping on the nests, there has been objection even to enclosing the nest area with a string fence. It is reasoned that if you mark a nest, curious people will come to look at it and vandals in the crowd will destroy the nests. In 1987 DEP took the step of putting chicken wire fences around all plover nest sites. This proved 100% successful in preventing loss of nests to human disturbance as well as keeping dogs out. The fencing did not prevent the predation by raccoons. Once chicks hatch, however, they quickly vacate the fenced areas and are then subject to all the dangers faced at unfenced sites.

Time of Nesting

We estimated the first egg date for all clutches using either date of first egg or 30 days prior to hatching and found that 10 nests were started in late April, five in the first five days of May, one in the second five, one in the third five and nine in the last half of May. Only three nests were started in June, all re-nests. Nest starts after June 1 are evidently exceptional. Although all pairs losing early clutches re-nested, none of the late nesters tried to re-nest. We propose that late April to early May is the normal nesting period and that any later nesting is nesting modified by one or more additional factors. In 1987 there were 17 nests prior to May 10, seven late nestings after May 10 and five re-nesting. Of the seven late nestings, the pair at Pleasure Beach may well have been birds nesting for the first time on an area of beach not used previously. This scenario matches that of a pair of known first year birds that nested in late May 1986 at Fenwick Point (Varza and Schwartz 1987). The instance of late nesting at Hammonasset represented a pair present since early May that may have tried unsuccessfully to nest earlier. The other five late nestings may have been due to a lack of nest sites early in the season. We speculate that the earlier nesters at Long Beach and Sandy Point used up all the available sites and the late nestings were by pairs ready to nest earlier but unable to do so because the area was fully occupied. If true, this hypothesis would greatly change our thinking on the management of

Piping Plovers in Connecticut. The following evidence supports the hypothesis proposed. At Long Beach there were four pairs present in early May. Three of the pairs nested and the fourth remained but did not initially establish a nesting territory. About the time the initial three pairs hatched their young, this fourth pair, plus three other pairs, established territories and laid eggs. All four late-nesting pairs were present in the area for a while prior to the hatching of the first clutches and established territories and started laying eggs almost immediately upon the opening up of the nesting area. In one case the clutch of the late nester was started before the eggs of the early nesters had hatched although the clutch was not completed until after young had left the area. We do not know if territorial defense is relaxed just prior to hatching thus opening the area for the late nesters, but this would seem to be a possibility. Certainly one pair was present for a month without nesting and then suddenly started, coincident with the abandonment of the area by the early nesters. Nests of the late birds were placed almost equidistant between the nest sites of the early nesters.

A pair at Sandy Point also moved in late and established a territory between two former nest sites. Again, the timing is such that the first eggs were being laid before the first nesters had hatched young but the clutch was not completed until the young had left.

Recruitment into the Population

Without banding and recapture it is impossible to know what sort of recruitment one is getting. Our data are so limited as to be almost meaningless. Four of six previously banded adults returned, two of 51 previously banded young returned and there was one banded bird that was not trapped and identified. Unfortunately the banding of young in the past and certainly this year has been very incomplete, so many of the unbanded adults trapped this year could have been hatched in Connecticut. A five-year banding program would certainly answer the questions of recruitment into the population, intra-state movement of the population and turnover of the nesting population.

The Connecticut population of Piping Plovers provides a unique opportunity for management studies because of its small size and the limited amount of habitat. Adult birds seem to return to the same sites year after year. Despite the presence of unused former nest sites, nesting pairs seem to be standing in line at more popular sites. Who colonizes new sites? Are old sites abandoned only with the death of the resident

pair or do resident pairs move to other sites? Many sites in Connecticut are too small for more than a single pair and if, as seems likely, recolonization is a problem, it should be addressed in management practices.

We have terminated our study but would encourage the State or other organizations to undertake a banding program to answer the important management questions relative to recruitment, recolonization, mortality rates, and limited nesting sites.

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1. 19 Cedar Grove Rd., Guilford, CT 06437
 2. 318 Jennifer - Jean Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Correction

In the article by G. A. Clark, Jr., "Checklist of Connecticut Birds—1988", *The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1988) on page 19, the sixth species counting from the bottom of the right hand column should be Piping Plover, not Wilson's Plover. Both of these species are on the state checklist.

ARETAS A. SAUNDERS

(1884-1970)

Roland C. Clement

Human history is that record of the past we are willing to recall and pass onto future generations. There is therefore, a recurrent, generational responsibility to attempt history, lest it be lost to oblivion. The past is gone, so in the process of recalling it we always restate it anew, making it accord with our enlarging awareness.

For Connecticut ornithology, one of the most admirable individuals of the recent past is Aretas A. Saunders. We can perhaps better appreciate him than did his contemporaries because we can now see the interconnections his creativity wove between past and present

Born in Avon, Connecticut on November 15, 1884, he first captures our attention because he attended one of the early classes of the new School of Forestry at Yale University. We note, also, that a young Iowan named Aldo Leopold arrived at Yale in 1906, whereas Saunders was due to graduate in 1907. We have no evidence that these two good naturalists interacted, but Gifford Pinchot had induced President Theodore Roosevelt to create a permanent national forest service system in 1905, so almost overnight forestry became an appealing profession for young men interested in the outdoors. Both Saunders and Leopold went to work for this new service after graduation.

Saunders' father, also a Yale

graduate, had come from Newport, R.I., from a long line of English colonists. Although Aretas received a B.A. degree, he did not graduate with his class because, having transferred to the Forestry School, he had to do extra field work to satisfy requirements. He said he really started in the world with the class of 1908. A university evaluation of those years said of him that "he is quiet and reserved but with good instincts. He was good in subjects in which he held an interest, poor in others." In modern terms, perhaps he was an under-achiever in school, but he became an inspiring teacher and demonstrated impressive erudition as a naturalist. Note, in passing, that he was a member of his class swim team at Yale

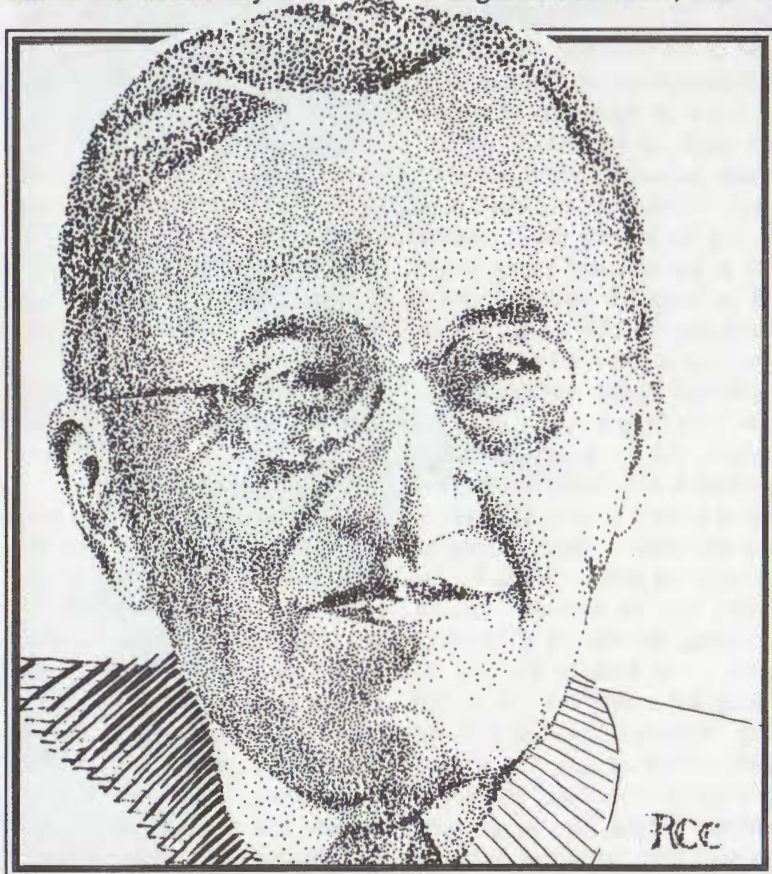
His first professional commitment was to the Forest Service, which he served as Forest Assistant from 1908 to 1913. He was first assigned to Gallatin National Forest in central Montana, where he learned to ride a horse and soon bought one of his own. Like Forest Assistants everywhere, he was a jack-of-all trades, painting flag poles, marking timber, doing paper work. In 1909 and 1910 he did timber reconnaissance in Deer Lodge National Forest, Montana, near the continental divide. That winter he was sent to Sioux National Forest in South Dakota for more reconnaissance and he

wrote of having to make camp in a blizzard, when the rolled up tents were frozen stiff. He ended his service at the Lewis and Clark National Forest whose headquarters was in prairie rather than Montana's wooded mountains.

Saunders was faithful in supplying Yale's alumni office with brief reports of his whereabouts and doings and in 1913 he wrote a long letter which he evidently expected to be printed for the edification of his old classmates. He reminded them that he was the one they would re-

member as devoted to birds. He did not say why he quit the Forest Service, but one can guess that the life of a Forest Assistant had paled. In announcing that he was now teaching mathematics and general science at a West Haven, CT. high school, he pointed out that he had not really abandoned the profession because general science was broad enough to allow the insertion of some forest principles.

Soon afterward he moved to Central High School in Bridgeport and taught there until 1948, when he



retired. For a while he lived in East Norwalk and commuted to Bridgeport by train, but later he bought a house at 361 Crestwood Road, Fairfield and lived there until his retirement.

A long succession of pupils recalled Mr. Saunders as one of their most inspiring teachers. In his quiet, soft-voiced, reserved way he introduced them to the world of nature and helped them appreciate its importance in their lives. I met him only once, about 1950.

He spent almost all his summers afield. Those of 1914-1915 were spent at the University of Montana Biological Station on Flathead Lake and led to the publication of a book, *The Birds of Montana*. Perhaps because his unaided vision was poor, Aretas did not do World War I service, but his teaching career enabled him to inspire many young people and to focus his interest in birds. Throughout the 1920's and '30's, he summered at the Roosevelt Wildlife Experiment Station operated by the New York State Museum, or at the Allegany School of Natural History in Allegany State Park, NY. His field studies resulted in the publication of over one hundred papers, mostly on the status of summer birds, but including four on mammals, two on butterflies, and one on Connecticut plants, — all while he was also becoming the country's expert on bird song. He perfected a method for the quick notation of song that allowed comparative evaluations. In 1929 he published a book, *Bird Song*, summarizing these innovative investiga-

tions. He received an American Philosophical Society grant in 1950, to extend his studies of song by travelling in the south and middle west. However, the advent of the parabolic reflector for sound recording, sonograms and playback equipment after World War II soon outmoded his approach to recording bird song.

For most of us interested in the status of breeding birds, Saunders' classic work was the 1936 booklet, *Ecology of the Birds of Quaker Run Valley*. This little book describes the habitat choices of the summer birds of that valley in Allegany State Park better than any other reference.

He married Grace Edith Adams and they had one son, Stanley B. Saunders who graduated from Middlebury College in 1940. Grace died in 1964 and Aretas then married Margaret Hendee of Clinton, and they moved to North Canaan. Early in 1970, the frail and ailing Aretas was placed in a nursing home in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He fell and broke a hip there and died from this trauma on April 7, 1970. He was buried in Mountain View Cemetery in North Canaan.

A final note on this man's gentleness and reserve comes from the late Robert Hunter, a Fairfield neighbor of his who was once president of the Connecticut Audubon Society. He told me that, like Fuertes the artist, Aretas Saunders fondled birds admiringly whenever these came to hand. Every spring morning, unless it was raining, Aretas would be up at five a.m. and off afoot to the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company reservoir

near Benson Road, where he birded for an hour or more. After breakfast, he would walk the five miles to Central High School (now City Hall) in downtown Bridgeport, then walk home again that afternoon. When I asked whether Saunders had a big

library, Bob said, "You know, I was never in his house."

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06850

CONNECTICUT BLUEBIRDS

Fred Comstock

The Connecticut Warbler (Vol. IV:3 and VI:4) has briefly reported on the banding of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) in Connecticut. In Fairfield and New Haven Counties, the banding of nestling bluebirds has continued under the permit of Carl Trichka of the Connecticut Audubon Society. Over the past three years bluebird nest boxes have been erected in suitable habitat in the towns of Bethlehem, Woodbury, Middlebury, Roxbury, Beacon Falls, Oxford, Southbury and Newtown. A total of 43 boxes were monitored in 1986, and 48 in 1987.

First nestings occurred on May 13 in 1986, and May 3 in 1987; while the last nesting took place on August 11 in 1986, and August 18 in 1987. Table I shows the number of juveniles found in the nest boxes at the time of banding, for the years 1986 and 1987. The largest percentage of nests observed contained four young (39%).

Bluebirds remain as nestlings for 15-20 days and offer an opportunity to sex the individuals at the time of banding. Some individuals, usu-

ally the last egg hatched, cannot be sexed and they are listed as unknown. Older siblings, however, exhibit color differences in their primary flight feathers ranging from bright blue in males to dingy gray-black in females and can be safely sexed in the nest box. The data also indicate that nestlings in April and May tend to fledge in 17-19 days, while those hatched in June, July and August are ready to fledge in 14-16 days. Presumably the food supply in mid-summer months is greater than that of early spring. Data also indicate that wing cord measurements are a clue as when juveniles will fledge. At 60-64 mm, some birds exhibit a tendency to fledge or may fledge prematurely. Table II indicates the sex ratios of those juveniles banded from 1985 through 1987.

Over the three year period, a total of 172 males (42%) and 146 females (36%) were fledged while the remaining 89 juveniles (22%) could not be sexed.

Declining loss of habitat in Connecticut has placed the Eastern Bluebird in a precarious position. In

TABLE 1 Number of Juveniles per Nest

<i>No. Young</i>	<i>1986 Nests</i>	<i>No. Birds</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1987 Nests</i>	<i>No. Birds</i>	<i>%</i>
1	0	0	0	1	1	1
2	4	8	5	6	12	7
3	14	42	26	13	39	22,
4	15	60	38	18	72	41
5	10	50	31	10	50	29
<i>Totals</i>	43	160		48	174	

his article "A Preliminary Connecticut Blue List", (Vol. II:3), Sibley listed the bluebird as rare along the coast and recommended a management program for this species.

I would enjoy hearing from our readers about restoration attempts in other areas of the State. Are nesting boxes successful, and what is the current status of the bluebird in your area?

There has been only one recovery of a bluebird banded during our

three year study. A juvenile male, banded in August, 1986 at a golf course in Southbury, was found dead in August, 1987 about one mile northeast of its original banding site.

I wish to thank the property owners who contacted me with regard to setting up nesting boxes and allowed me to monitor and band the juveniles.

168 N. Main St., Bethlehem, CT
06751

Table 2 Sex Ratios

<i>Sex</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>%</i>
Male	37	51	53	34	82	47
Female	33	45	54	33	59	34
Unknown	3	4	53	33	33	19
TOTALS	73		160		174	

HOW TO DOCUMENT UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS

Ed Hagen

Sooner or later, if you are an active birder, you will find a rare bird—one that is out of place or out of season. You know you saw it and you could let it go at that. However, such sightings may be scientifically important and should thus be part of the official records for the State.

In 1985 the Connecticut Ornithological Association established a Connecticut Rare Records Commit-

When you see something unusual, observe as much as you possibly can during the period of observation. Notice field marks, behavior, song and flight pattern, as available.

tee (CRRC) to evaluate reports of rare birds. This group has to decide whether or not to accept a record, based on what is written on paper, since good photographs are seldom available and specimens only accidentally so. This article is designed to encourage you to submit your rare record(s) by spelling out the protocol. What you write may be the only information the CRRC will have. Your report must stand alone. Make

it good.

To start, it is a good practice to take field notes whenever you are in the field. This practice not only sharpens your powers of observation but provides a lasting record of what you saw and when. Several articles have been written on taking field notes. The fact is that most of us do not do it.

When you see something unusual, observe as much as you possibly can during the period of observation. Notice field marks, behavior, song and flight pattern, as available. Then make your own written notes as soon as possible, before consulting field guides. Even crude and elementary sketches can be helpful. Once you have gone to the guides, you may be subconsciously confused between what you saw on the bird and what you saw in the guide. Remember that the field guides will rarely depict the bird exactly as you see it in nature. Showing only selected postures and plumages, they may miss important characteristics or even be inaccurate. Record what you see in the field.

If the species you saw is distinctive (Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Burrowing Owl, White Ibis), your job is easy. However, if other birds closely resemble it (Ash-throated Flycatcher, Henslow's Sparrow, Franklin's Gull) the job is more difficult. In any case, provide all the

detail you can. Scanty information, even on easily identified birds, suggests a superficial look. A flycatcher simply described as having a long forked tail could have been either a Scissor-tailed or Fork-tailed.

Write up all the field marks that you saw, starting with the most prominent (overall/general size and shape). What did it resemble? What colors did you see? Where? Don't guess. If you did not note leg color, state so. If the bird flew, what did it show on the wings, tail and rump? These markings are often concealed when the bird is perched. What was the flight pattern? How far did it fly?

What size was the bird? Be careful. Size is often a difficult field mark. The eye can be fooled by conditions or by expectations. The best help is size relative to an adjacent known bird. The size of a solitary flying bird is particularly difficult to assess. Remember, fog or backlighting makes birds look larger than they really are.

Record the conditions of observation. What time of day was it? Be aware that early or late sun will warm colors, adding a tint of yellow, orange or pink to a bird's coloring. Was it clear or cloudy? Be accurate about the time and distance of the observation. It is a tendency of birders to under-estimate their distance from the bird and to over-estimate the length of time they saw it. Do you really know how far 100 feet is? It is not very far. Pace it off. Practice estimating. A five second look can be enough or, in some cases, even a shorter one may be adequate.

You do not have to indicate three minutes at 30 feet to be believed. What power optics (binoculars, scope) was used?

Also make a note of habitat and behavior. Was the bird moving from one habitat to another? Did it perch, skulk, run, fly straight, etc.? If it wagged its tail, was it first up or down? Was it in the company of other birds? If it sang or called, describe vocalization as best you can. Comment on loudness, duration and pitch and relate it to calls with which you are familiar.

By now you can see how important it is to be candid and accurate in describing in as much detail as you can:

- what the bird looked like.
- the conditions under which you saw it.
- where the bird was and how it behaved.

Once you have recorded all the information you can, justify your conclusion. What other species were considered and why did you rule these out? If you can, state sex and/or age (juvenile, sub-adult) of the rarity. If it is really rare, all other similar species should be considered. For example, the Asian Little Curlew may be as likely as an Eskimo Curlew. Be complete. Don't let any form limit what you have to say, even if additional paper is needed!

And finally, do not be miffed if CRRC does not accept your report. That doesn't mean you did not see the bird you claim, but only that the de-

tails you provided were not adequate to completely rule out all confusing possibilities. This often happens when the observations are incomplete, largely because of opportunity and experience. Skilled observers see more in a short period of time, but reports are accepted or rejected on the basis of details provided, not on the experience of the observer.

This article is intended to assist you in sharpening your observation

and recording skills. Questions or further assistance may be obtained from the Connecticut Ornithological Association - C.R.R.C., at 314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT 06430.

My thanks to Neil Currie, Frank Mantlik and Chris Wood for helpful comments in preparing this article.

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DIET OF THE COMMON BARN-OWL IN MIDDLEFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Geoffrey A. Hammerson

In the mid-1980s, Common Barn-Owls (*Tyto alba*) nested in a wooden box in a barn in Middlefield, Connecticut. During the nesting period a substantial amount of debris accumulated in the box and consisted almost entirely of disarticulated bones and fur. Much of the debris was the undigested remains of food items regurgitated by the nestlings, although it is probable that adult regurgitations were also included. I examined a sample of the debris and identified food items using diagnostic skull and tooth characteristics. I counted, as a single individual, any

food item represented by either an intact skull or by a skull remnant with both maxillae present. Results are listed in Table 1.

In addition to the above, the debris included the foot of an unidentified bird. I thank George Zepko for providing me with the nest box debris.

46 Kelsey Street, Middletown, CT
06457

Table 1.

<i>Prey Species</i>	<i>No. Individuals</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Meadow vole (<i>Microtus pennsylvanicus</i>)	456	78
Short-tailed shrew (<i>Blarina brevicauda</i>)	98	17
Star-nosed mole (<i>Condylura cristata</i>)	24	4
Meadow jump. mouse (<i>Zapus hudsonicus</i>)	2	<1
Norway rat (<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>)	2	<1
White-footed mouse (<i>Peromyscus leucopus</i>)	1	<1

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter: December 1, 1987 - February 29, 1988

Clay Taylor

Overview

GARBAGE BIRDING! No, it's not doing a Christmas Count in downtown New Haven. Rather it's what everyone did this winter in West Haven, East Haven, Shelton and other spots around the state - visit garbage dumps and landfills for the best birds of the season. The West Haven dump began the trend with the now famous Gyrfalcon, adding white-winged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and topping things off with an Eurasian Jackdaw. The Shelton dump pitched in with more Lesser Black-backs and white-winged gulls and a pending first state record Thayer's Gull. Northern Ravens stopped by northern Connecticut dumps, and (while not properly a dump) a weedy community vegetable garden in Canton produced the first verified Le Conte's Sparrow for our state list. Maybe "Connecticut Garbage Birding" will join "Patagonia Picnic Table Birding" in the ABA lexicon!

Lingering herons and egrets lasted only into early January, while duck numbers built slowly but held up well through the winter. Raptors were in good but not remarkable numbers and a good Snowy Owl year was echoed by coastal Short-eared and scattered inland Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Passerines were scarce with a virtual absence of Cedar Waxwings,

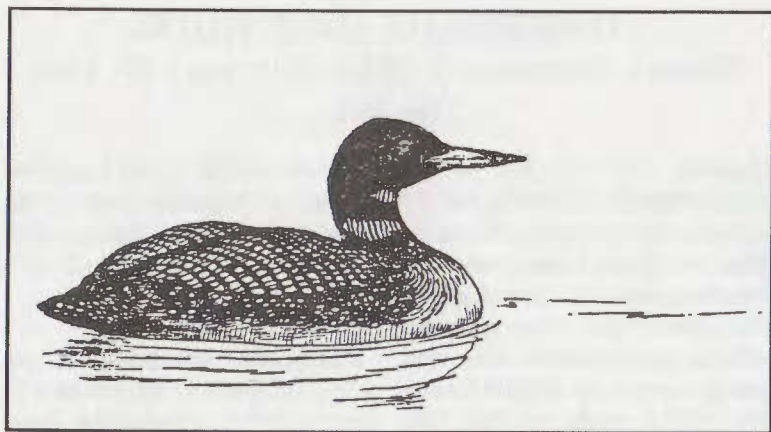
many winter finches and sparrow species. Abundant were both kinglets and late-season Pine Siskins.

Weather

December was mild with the average temperature up 4 degrees F over normal and precipitation down 60%. Unfortunate was the sleet and freezing rain that fell on so many Christmas Bird Counts on the 20th. Actually, we have been getting spoiled by so much relatively good weather on count days over the last 10 years.

January attempted to balance the books with double the normal snowfall and extremely cold temperatures in the middle of the month (10 of 12 days with a low temperature below 20 degrees F and 6 days below 0 degrees F). A brief warm period January 18 - 20, failed to remove the snow that had accumulated earlier on the 4th and the 8th. The month ended on a fine note with 55 degrees and southwest winds which carried over into February.

The 4th had rather poor weather however, and February was off to the races. It remained cold and dry until the 12th when 1.6 inches of snow/rain fell. On the 15th the winds turned out of the southwest preceding an approaching low. Temperatures reached the mid-40s and voila! the migration started. Daytime tem-



peratures remained in the 40s until February 20 when southwest winds and 50 degree temperatures were the probable cause for some interesting sightings that day (Broad-winged Hawk and Phoebe). By month's end precipitation was 20% over normal and temperatures were average - a good start for the incoming migration.

WINTER BIRD FEEDER SURVEY 1987-1988

Our questionnaire brought responses from 37 people about their winter feeding station(s). About 60% (22 total) were located in residential areas, while 24% (9) were in rural woodlands, 2 in rural farmlands and 1 in an urban setting. The remaining 3 did not check on habitat. Sunflower seed was the most popular food (31 of 37), while suet (26), mixed seed (24) and thistle (20) were also popular. Water was offered at 7 feeding stations, while 11 offered other foods, usually cracked corn or peanut hearts.

The most frequent bird visitors came as no surprise, but I was intrigued to see that all tied with 34 listings each; Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco and House Finch. The comments on House Finches; all remarked on their high numbers - so much for the population "plateau" speculation generated the previous winter. Birds reported 30 to 33 times were also familiar: Downy Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal and White-throated Sparrow. The sparrows, noted as scarce in the field and in low numbers at feeders, evidently were widespread, nevertheless.

The only species reported 25-29 times was American Goldfinch, while Hairy Woodpecker, American Crow, Starling, Song Sparrow, Pine Siskin and House Sparrow appeared 20-24 times. The Pine Siskin reports came from early and late in the season, with large flocks in the latter weeks. The 10-19 report category

featured birds either of infrequent or regional occurrence; Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, American Tree Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch and Evening Grosbeak. The grosbeaks were primarily from early in the the season or in small numbers at other times. I hope that the 17 reports of Purple Finch were all bona fide and not confused with House Finch, because field reports placed the Purple Finch low in number. Scarce at feeders were some species that can have irruptive years; Common Redpoll, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Fox Sparrow and Rufous-sided Towhee. Not reported by the 37 replies were Swamp Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Brown Thrasher, although the latter 2 were seen at other feeders (see the field report). Sharp-shinned Hawks at feeders were spotty and only 1 Cooper's Hawk was mentioned. A Ruffed Grouse(F&JB) and a Ring-necked Pheasant were write-ins.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Loons were present but not plentiful throughout the winter. Five Red-throated Loons at Sherwood Island State Park (hereafter SISP) February 26 were the high day count(FM). Pied-billed and Horned Grebes seemed low (see Christmas Count article CW 8:2), but a late February buildup at SISP topped at 120 Horned Grebes February 29(FM). Joining this flotilla was an Eared Grebe, first seen February

28(FM,FP) and last reported March 2(NC,CT). A number of birders were able to see this individual.

Hérons and egrets remained in the state well into winter, with 2 Snowy Egrets reported on Christmas Bird Counts (hereafter CBC's) and numerous Great Blue Herons throughout the state. Both Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons were at Holly Pond, Stamford December 18(RHe), and a Yellow-crowned remained at least until December 25 at Oneida Marsh, Greenwich(L.Br).

Unusual geese were scarce this winter. Noteworthy was an inland Brant seen at Southbury Training School until freeze up forced it onto the Housatonic River January 3(RN). The high count reported for the coast was 110 at Westport January 21(FM). Two Wood Ducks inland at Stanley Park, New Britain December 26(MC) were nice, while the coast carried the usual scattering of Woodies. The Green-winged Teal flock at Gulf Pond, Milford, once again hosted a male Eurasian form(m.ob), while dabbling duck numbers were good along the coast. Eurasian Wigeons reported at Lake Saltonstall disappeared at the same time a bird was found at Oyster River(RS). Other sightings included Sandy Point, West Haven(DR), January 17, 1 at Oyster River to end of period, 1 in Westport on January 20 and January 23(FM), as well as 1 in Southport February 28(FM,FP,FZ). Diving ducks were well reported, with a Redhead/Canvasback hybrid at Gulf Pond Febru-

ary 1-9(RS,DS). Redheads again were easy to find in the Thames River, New London. An adult male Barrow's Goldeneye at North Cove, Old Saybrook met an untimely end in the Connecticut River off Great Island. The duck hunters later donated it to the Yale Peabody Museum.

HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

The usual smattering of Turkey Vultures held out in the normal winter roosts (see CBC summary, CW8: 28-36) with no reports of Black Vulture this year. Bald Eagles continue their rise in numbers throughout the State with an increase in sightings away from the Connecticut River and Shepaug Dam areas. The State-wide count on January 9 tallied 19 adults and 23 immatures (42 total), while the February 13 count rose to 23 adults and 50 immatures (73 total)! One interesting sighting was at the Saugatuck Reservoir, Norwalk, where an eagle drowned and then ate a full grown Canada Goose(FM,CW). An immature Golden Eagle was regularly seen at Shepaug Dam(DR et al.), while the Chester to Essex stretch of the Connecticut River hosted an adult Golden Eagle for the 4th consecutive year - first seen January 9 at Chester(CT) and present through the period. Accipiter numbers were rather low with only the usual feeder-blitzing Sharp-shinned Hawks drawing comment.

A startling early report of an adult Broad-winged Hawk soaring with a Red-tail at Fairfield Garden, Greenwich February 20 coincides

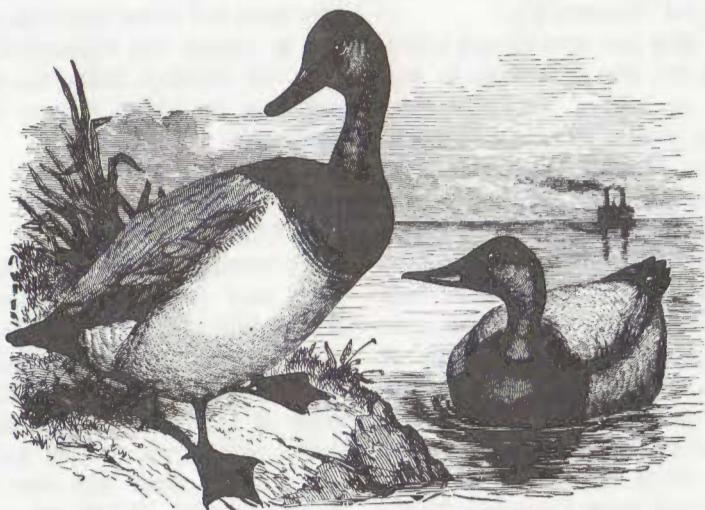
with a number of early sightings of other species on or about that date (see Phoebe). Northern Harriers were widespread and an adult male January 1, in Middle Haddam was noteworthy(DT,JM). Falcons stole the show, however as the dark male Gyrfalcon drew hundreds of birders to the West Haven dump. First seen in December at Lighthouse Point(PD), it became regular in January at the dump, feeding on Starlings, Rock Doves and even gulls. By March it had expanded its hunting range to include the New Haven waterfront. Merlins were also seen at the dump January 9(MC) and February 14(DR), as well as at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) January 31(KM), in South Norwalk February 1(CW) and in Hartford, multiple December sightings(CE). Overall, 8 diurnal raptors were seen at the West Haven dump and who knows how many owl species were regular there?

A Sandhill Crane reported walking down a frozen stream in New Canaan January 16 was very interesting and maybe a bit suspect, but investigation of the tracks in the snow found only 3 toes instead of the 4-toed print left by a Great Blue Heron; elementary my dear Watson! Rails were present in the usual wintering spots, but the most noteworthy overwintering attempt was American Oystercatchers at Menunketesuck Island, Westbrook. One was still present February 27(DT,AB). They have bred there the past few summers and evidently find the area to their liking.

The gulls put on a real show at the dumps, principally the West Haven and Shelton facilities. Birders looking for the Gyrfalcon soon spotted numerous Iceland Gulls, 7 on January 12(HM). Two immature Glaucous Gulls were there January 9(JBa) and one February 17(RE). When the Shelton dump was checked, more Icelands and Glaucous were found along with multiple Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Re-checking West Haven brought the Lesser Black-back Gull total to at least 6 individuals and there was some discussion about birds commuting between the two sites! On January 25 an apparent adult Thayer's Gull was studied(DS,RS). It subsequently vanished into the masses. An account has been forwarded to the Rare Records Committee. The only Black-headed Gull seen through the period was an adult December 6 in East Haven(BK).

DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

The usual fall owl migration was exceptionally late this year, as November migrants were seen in December and January. It was a good year for Snowy Owls, from the bird at HBSP November 24(RE) to regulars around MilfordPoint (hereafter MP) and the Stratford marshes. The Hartford CBC recorded 2 January 2 and the overall tally seemed to be 8 birds on the Christmas Bird Counts. One was predictable at Long Wharf in New Haven sitting along the edge of the new maritime building next to Teletrack(RS). Long-eared Owls were reported at HBSP December 6(JM,DT) and 3 were there January 16(BD). Northern Saw-whet Owls were at Banton St. (Quinnipac River St. Pk.) February 21(RE), in Ashford December 20(DC) and calling in



Litchfield December 6(LG). Two road kills were picked up in the Old Lyme area in mid-December(CT).

High numbers of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers continued into the winter both on CBC's and around the state: seen in backyards(CG,R&NB), 2 at Westport January 28(EHi) and 1 in East Rock Park, New Haven January 30(RE). Common Flicker was noted as numerous in Storrs(GC) and Pileated Woodpecker was mentioned as visiting many yards, but not at suet feeders. Eastern Phoebe was reported from more than one location, including 2 on the Woodbury-Roxbury CBC(EHa), one in Centerbrook January 1(JM) and 1 in New Milford February 20(AD). Debate about whether the latter had overwintered must be tempered by the obvious influx of migrants into the state on and around this time. Horned Larks were low on the coast, but reported in Mansfield through January and February(GC).

Blue Jays were reported both as high and low in numbers, so there was an uneven distribution state-wide. Northern Ravens were seen by many observers at Barkhamsted Reservoir and American Crow flocks contained 2 of the most interesting corvids to ever hit the state. A Chough seen in November near Newtown(BD) was spotted again February 15 about a mile from the first sighting(MS). One problem with this bird is not its identity, but rather its origin. Experts feel the bird may be an escapee, not a vagrant. The West Haven Dump crow flock, a

mix of American and Fish Crows, took on a Jackdaw in mid February. Seen by many people, the debate over its origin has been spiced by its apparent ties with the Scandinavian race, not the more southern European race that apparently "hitched" a ride on a freighter going to Montreal a few years ago.

Red-breasted Nuthatches and Brown Creepers were very scarce, unlike the kinglets which were seen most places in above average numbers. A Wood Thrush, apparently photographed on the Hartford CBC, was remarkable(fide JK). American Robin numbers were mixed, while Northern Mockingbirds were scarce at feeders and some observers even commented on that(SK). The American Robin movement began in mid-February, including a good flock in Westport February 22(EHi).

An absence of Cedar Waxwings state wide was remarkable, some CBC's missing them entirely and only Storrs had a consistent flock of 25+ in January and February(GC). Only one Northern Shrike was reported, on the Merritt Parkway on February 20 and 29(TW).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Wintering warbler numbers were very poor with Yellow-breasted Chat on only three CBC's, a Black-and-White Warbler on Woodbury-Roxbury and the normal scattering of Common Yellowthroats. Rufous-sided Towhees were fairly scarce in the field with one at Willard's Island, HBSP January

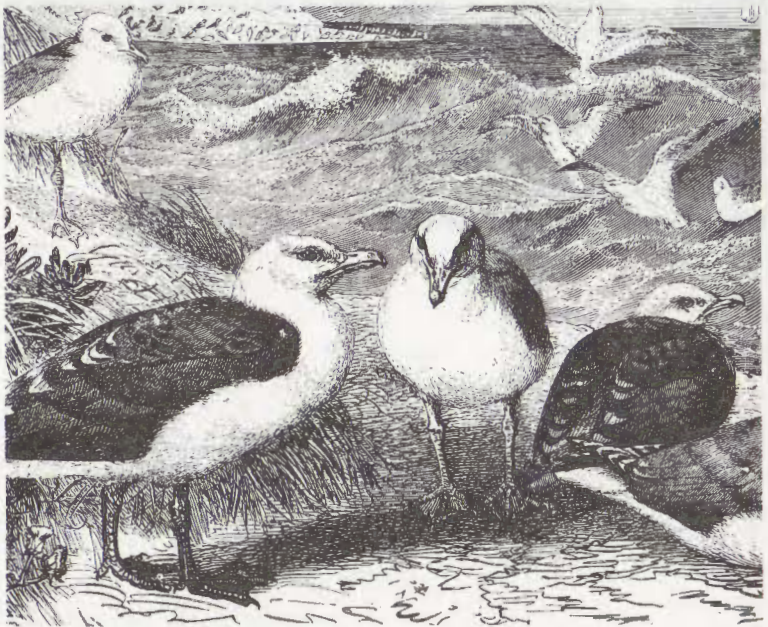
2(JM,DT). The hot towhee got away, however, as a beautiful male Rufous-sided (spotted) Towhee visited a feeder in Colchester in late January. The bird was photographed (through the window) at a distance of 2 feet and then disappeared(fide CT).

A Chipping Sparrow frequented a feeder in Ashford throughout the winter(JR). Tree, Field and Fox Sparrows were below their usual numbers. The passerine of the season was the aforementioned Le Conte's Sparrow in Canton. Found on the Barkhamstead CBC December 27, it remained until January 9(JKa, JMo). Seaside and Sharp-tailed Sparrows usually winter along the coastal salt marshes where spartina grasses are flattened down and CBC'ers are beginning to get the hang of birding them; Westport added Seaside to its 10 year list and

one observer walked all of Great Island for 2 Sharp-tails and a Seaside for the Old Lyme CBC(CT).

The February return of Red-winged Blackbirds is a long-awaited sign that the end of winter is indeed in sight. A singing male February 14 in Norwalk was good for the morale(CW). Additional movements were seen February 15(EHi), in Greenwich February 19(TG) and 250+ along the coast February 21(DR), all pointed the way to warmer weather. Common Grackles arrived in Darien February 19(FP) and in Hamden February 20(CG). Ten Rusty Blackbirds were sighted in Essex February 25(DR).

Winter finches were feast or famine; virtually no Common Redpolls at all, while Evening Grosbeaks were reported early in the season and lots of Pine Siskins late. Both



crossbills were seen by many observers at Barkhamsted Reservoir, but virtually nowhere else. Pine Grosbeak didn't exist this year (well, it seemed that way).

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NOTE FROM FIELD EDITOR:

To those of you that send in seasonal field reports, please indicate where you see birds, especially when noting flocks, and be sure that you sign your report. This information is important when compiling the field notes for the Connecticut Warbler.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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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. All manuscripts receive peer review.

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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"Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)"

Paul Carrier is a professional artist and graphic designer for Color & Design, Newington. He has done illustrations in most medias but prefers ink marker and scratch method. As an illustrator he has illustrated several books and many commercial projects. He has always been interested in nature, especially birds and snakes. Paul attended the University of Hartford and the Paier School of Art. Many years ago, he put together a new Hawk Watch Guide to help beginning hawk watchers. He does a cover illustration each year for the New England Hawk Watch report and illustrates the front cover of the Hartford Audubon Society newsletter.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

NEW CONNECTICUT BIG DAY RECORD

Frank Mantlik

It was 10 PM, and hardly the time most sane people would think about going birding. Yet there we were - Tom Baptist, Fred Purnell, Louis Bevier and I - assembled in the Purnells' living room to plan out a final strategy for an assault on the Connecticut one-day birding record. We were planning to begin at midnight on this Sunday, May 22, 1988.

There comes a time in an avid birder's career when he becomes complacent, and thus, welcomes a challenge to his identification skills. It is such times that he may take part in a so-called "Big Day". Simply put, this activity involves a group of two to four avid (and usually 'crazy?') birders - who are, hopefully, good friends - getting together to circumnavigate an area (usually a state, or a portion thereof) with the single goal of locating and identifying as many bird species as they can in one calendar day.

Numerous "rules" exist for conducting a Big Day, as set forth by the American Birding Association, which annually publishes results in their journal, "BIRDING". Among these are: 1) team members must remain within conversational speaking distance, 2) the team may not solicit information from other birders whom they may encounter, and 3) 95% of the day's total

species must have been identified by each team member. These are pretty strict guidelines and teams are on the honor system for adhering to them.

Big Days have been conducted in all fifty states, most Canadian provinces and several foreign countries. The North American Big Day Record rests at 244 species, set in Texas in May 1985 by a team which included Roger Tory Peterson (and utilized an airplane!). In the northeast U.S., New Jersey's record stands at 201 species, set in May 1984 during Cape May Bird Observatory's annual "World Series of Birding."

As far as Connecticut goes, Big Days have been conducted almost annually for many years. The current record, which we would be attempting to better, stood at 162 species, set on May 18, 1986 by Mark Szantyr, Arnold "Buzz" Devine and this author, and concurrently by another group including Seth Kellogg and Colleen and Jay Withgott.

A Big Day can be conducted at any time of year, but in Connecticut, mid-May is usually chosen as this is the time of peak spring migration by the largest variety of species in southern New England. It should be noted that it is permissible to identify birds solely by their vocaliza-

tions, and the May woods are alive with song. It's like a Christmas Bird Count in spring...what could be more delightful?

In reality, conducting such a marathon always proves to be an exciting, if not exhausting and, at times, frustrating day. Nonstop, intensive birding and driving for up to 24 hours clearly takes its toll on the body. Surviving on coffee, cola, beer and pretzels (well...maybe a sandwich), participants have little time or opportunity to eat, and do so on the run.

So, there we sat in Fred's living room, beverages in hand, fine-tuning our proposed itinerary as prepared by Tom. To our knowledge, it was a route never before attempted. Most Connecticut Big Days begin in the cool northwest hills for northern-nesting species, later hitting the coast at day's end. This time we would try 'owling' our way to the cool northeast hills, head south, via Hartford, to the coast by 1 PM, leaving plenty of time to bird its productive beaches and marshes, and finishing in inland Greenwich at day's end. We all agreed on the soundness of the plan.

Tom had also compiled a thorough 'target list' of possible species, with each species coded by his estimate of probability in finding that species on that route at that time of year. The list contained 209 species, with codes ranging from 1 ("guaranteed") to 2 ("should find") to 3 ("difficult to find") to 4 ("very unlikely"). We felt fortu-

nate that each of us had time during the previous week to scout out some of the areas. With each of us a veteran Big-Day-er, we knew that with a concerted effort, good weather, and good luck, we might approach the current record of 162 species. But could we do it?

That was enough planning, enough talking... zero-hour was rapidly approaching. At 11:15 PM we piled gear into my Isuzu Trooper, the license plate of which is "AVOCET" - a species that would be a real bonus to find today. Binoculars, four scopes, field guides...check! Cooler with provisions, water, beer...check! Extra clothing, raingear, boots...check! Full tank of gas, spare tire, clean windows...check! Flashlights, tape recorders, thermoses of coffee...check!

The weather forecast seemed in our favor: morning fog, burning off by noon, seasonably warm, with southerly winds. At this point in time the weather didn't matter. We were going ahead with this no matter what Mother Nature threw at us. Off we sped, high with anticipation.

Our first stop was Valley Road in Easton-Redding to try for nocturnal birds, in particular Whip-poor-will and Barred Owl. Arriving at 11:50, we parked under a pitch-black stand of hemlocks, and listened. Nothing. So Fred whistled his

fine 'whip' imitation once or twice and a bird immediately called back from the darkness in response. Continuing its repetitious call until midnight, we had our first bird of the day! We next tried our Barred Owl tape, but promptly scrapped it for our own, superior vocal imitations. Suddenly we were all surprised by a loud, unfamiliar shriek of a call. Looking quizzically at each other in the amber glow of the parking lights, "Barn Owl?" we thought. The habitat certainly didn't seem right. After several minutes of patient, heart-pounding listening, we moved on, never to know. Our continued search along Valley Road for the normally-reliable Barred Owls went unrewarded. With our hooting, however, we did manage to scare up a calling Solitary Sandpiper, as well as an Ovenbird, which gave a garbled "teacher-teacher" song in its sleep. Disappointment struck. Owling for an hour on a nice night, with none on our list to show for it. However, with the clock ticking, we couldn't afford any more time here.

Our next stop was Middletown, to make a brief but unlikely try for the nesting Barn Owls on the Wesleyan University campus. Within five minutes of parking the car, we were looking at a beautiful, adult Barn Owl, perched classically in the nest-window of the church steeple. What a great sight at two in the morning! Through wet grass, we

ran back to the car, elated. That was a lucky stop, and off we drove toward our next location - the freshwater marshes of 'Station 43' in South Windsor, to try for rails.

Encountering a highway detour on I-91, we ended up in Cromwell. I suggested that as long as we were here, we should try Dead Man's Swamp instead. As we walked out into this beautiful, wet, sedge-cattail marsh, we realized that this Connecticut River backwater was alive with the songs of numerous Soras, Virginia Rails and Marsh Wrens. The heavy mist added to the mystical experience, but no King Rail, no moorhen, no bitterns, no Wood Duck. Even so, it was worth getting our feet and legs wet. It was now 3 AM and with 11 species under our belts, it was time for the grueling drive to the northeast hills. We shared gulps of warm coffee and some muffins. Driving east was hazardous, through the now-thick fog, along unfamiliar and winding Rt. 66. On top of that, my companions were all asleep; when you've been awake for 21 hours, even caffeine is useless. When we finally made it to Willimantic, I had to wake Louis for directions.

Arriving at Mansfield Hollow, just minutes before twilight, we heard the aerial courtship twitterings of two Woodcocks. Next, along a side road off Rt. 89 in Ashford, we listened to an incredible dawn chorus of song-

birds - Wood Thrushes, Veeries, Robins, Catbirds, Yellowthroats, Yellow Warblers, Cardinals, Song Sparrows and others. This reaffirmed my belief that early morning is, without question, the best time of day. There is a certain peacefulness, when animals are active and people aren't, and the vegetation glows with the first rays of sunlight. This day, we may enjoy this special time only for a few moments; there is work to be done. Upon leaving, we almost ran over a female Ruffed Grouse standing in the middle of the road.

Our list stood at 29 species by the time we arrived, just after dawn, at Boston Hollow. This dark, cool, moist ravine of towering hemlocks is reminiscent of the west coast's redwood forest, which is perhaps why Louis, a displaced Californian, birds this area so frequently. The rest of us had never before really explored this area. We were here now to seek the northern-nesting species, as well as migrant passerines. We slowly worked our way down the dirt road, leapfrogging on foot and with the car, remaining within visual and voice contact of each other.

To our delight, a Barred Owl called, then flew across the road. We rapidly racked up additional species as well: Nighthawk, Acadian, Least and Crested Flycatchers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush, Solitary Vireos, Canada, Black-throated Green,

Blackburnian and Worm-eating Warblers, both Waterthrushes, Juncos, Purple Finches, Pine Siskin, and a nest of Common Ravens. Indeed, this magical, lush preserve provided us with some fine birding. At 9 AM, 61 species were firmly inscribed in our notebook.

Farther along, the road leaves the ravine and winds through various habitats and eventually into Yale Forest in the town of Union. We carefully birded along, adding many other species, including Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Spotted Sandpiper, Winter Wren, Brown Thrasher, White-throated Sparrow, and 6 more warbler species, including Black-throated Blue, Bay Breasted, Blackpoll and Yellow-rumped.

We had been lucky with the weather. The heavy ground fog proved to be a blessing. Although the earlier driving had been difficult, the lingering mist now shaded out the hot sun until late morning, allowing the birds to remain active (and vocal), and thus, easier to locate. We celebrated this fact with a late breakfast of pretzels and beer. The chocolate-chip cookies tasted great, too!

Next, with me at the wheel, Louis navigated our lean, mean, birding machine across the rural Ashford-Chaplin-Mansfield countryside, ticking off numerous staked-out species along the way. Great Blue Heron, Eastern

Bluebird, Cerulean Warbler and others fell to our trusty binoculars. Impressive was the sight of a rolling hillside meadow, filled with a dozen territorial male Bobolinks in full, bubbly song. Three more staked out locations produced Bank Swallows, White-eyed Vireo, a pair of Black-billed Cuckoos, and at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, another pair of Common Ravens and an unexpected, lingering Common Loon. Where were the "easy" Pine Warblers?

Time was getting along. It was noon and the sun's effect was rapidly making the day hot and steamy. Fred queried, "do you guys realize that we've been birding for 12 hours?" "Yeah, just think, only 12 more to go!" It had been an intense and gratifying morning of birding in these northeast hills. And so, with 108 species on our list and a distinct sense of accomplishment, we headed toward Hartford.

Gobbling more munchies, we cruised west on I-84, with the air conditioner on high. Then north to the 'Station 43' sanctuary in South Windsor. It was hot and humid; normal people were out fishing and walking dogs. But birdwise, the area was dead. Perhaps the earlier detour was an omen of the kind of success we were to have here. Only a few mallards were visible in the cat-tail marsh. At midday the Wood Ducks, moorhens and bitterns were predictably under cover. A

check of the Connecticut River was also disappointing with few birds and nothing new. Although we managed to find a Willow Flycatcher as we were leaving, this disappointing stop taught us a lesson for next time.

We were frustrated, tired, hot and hungry. Deserving a break, we ducked into MacDonald's for some epicurean sustenance. Wolfing down our feast, we raced back onto I-91 and headed for Bradley Int'l. Airport. At 1 PM on a Sunday afternoon, the air, auto and human traffic presented quite a chaotic, noisy location in which to bird, but we were about to hit the jackpot.

We parked in a lot at the southeast corner and raced across the busy highway with our scopes, to the fenced edge of the runway. "Upland Sandpiper!", someone immediately yelled. Sure enough, way out on the grassy runway, there stood a distinctively-shaped 'Uppie'. Thank goodness we all had scopes. A jet took off and flushed the bird, which was joined by a second (probably its mate), both landing out of sight. Atop a guardrail in the foreground, Fred spotted a small, brown bird. "I've got a sparrow...think it's a Grasshopper!", he yelled, trying to outdo a 727. Scopes pivoted. Sure enough, we all agreed on the identification. Wow, we'd hit a stroke of luck, and it wasn't over yet! While still looking at the sparrow, Louis heard the distinc-

tive tinkling song of a Horned Lark. Upon looking up, we saw the sky-larking courtship flight of a Horned Lark overhead, after which the bird plummeted like a rock, landing near us on the other side of the fence. TICK!

Quickly back to the car, we made a hasty check of the northeast side of the airport, where we added 2 Savannah Sparrows and a Pheasant. We were high as kites, having cleaned up on the grassland species pronto. Upon leaving the airport grounds, we reminded ourselves that we hadn't had any hawks today. With all eyes glued to the windows - even the driver's! - we cruised down the boulevard. Success continued, as we promptly spotted a soaring Red-tail and a hovering Kestrel. Elated, with 116 species under our belts, we sailed toward the coast.

At no point during the day's birding, had anyone mentioned our team's chances of reaching the State record. Now at 2 PM, Tom, after assessing our target list, made the bold statement that "With 46 additional species at the coast, we could tie the record, and maybe even have a shot at breaking it!" From past experience, we agreed that 40 species at the coast should be "no sweat". Continuing our drive down Rt. 9 and following another bout of unwelcomed sleepiness, we managed to add Broad-winged Hawk, Purple Martins, and 3 soaring

Glossy Ibis. Amazingly, we couldn't spot a single Turkey Vulture!

The clock read 2:40 as we pulled up to the seawall at Old Saybrook, a tad behind schedule. The salt air, coupled with our anticipation of birding new habitats, stimulated in us another flood of adrenalin. The tourists and Sunday strollers gawked at us as we piled out of the Trooper, as if we were some terrorist group. In fact we were. "Birding commandos on an important mission", I thought. Scanning from the seawall netted us Double-crested Cormorants, Ospreys, Mute Swans and the usual gulls and terns.

While driving slowly across the Rt. 154 causeway, Fred spotted something that merited a repeat look. Unfortunately, it proved to be just a piece of man-made debris. But in the process of taking a second look, we spotted a Gadwall and a male Shoveler - an excellent find! Farther along, we added fledgling Great Horned Owl (that Louis had discovered roosting in a roadside pine a few days earlier), a calling Bobwhite and a pair of lingering Greater Scaup. "Nice work. Next stop: Hammonasset!"

It seemed relatively quiet as we pulled into this popular state park, famous among birders. We headed for Meigs Point to scan the Sound. Here I spotted a Red-throated Loon, in flight close to shore. Unfortunately, the others

missed seeing it, as they had just begun walking east down the beach. I caught up to them, just as we all realized it was too quiet to spend more time here. A check of the salt marsh during our drive out yielded Snowy Egret, Greater Yellowlegs, Black-bellied Plover, Laughing Gull and both Sharp-tailed and Seaside Sparrows - the latter two in the same field of view and in great light. "BINGO! Those 'skulkers' could easily be missed".

Aware of the aging day and with 138 species totalled, we raced on toward Milford Point, a noted hotspot with proven potential for rare birds. A Great Egret and, surprisingly, 2 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were in the marsh. We trotted to the beach, as my watch read 5:15. We'd timed it just right; the afternoon light was good, it was high tide, and the shorebirds were covering the sandbars before us. Scopes scanned and we quickly tallied 11 more species of plovers and sandpipers, but nothing unusual...not yet.

Next stop was the pools and marshes behind the warehouses at Lordship. This area, formerly prime for shorebirds, is unfortunately, under constant development pressure. In fact, after squeezing through a chain-link fence, birders now have to walk through a steelyard to get to the remaining habitat. Nevertheless, it's still productive and is always worth a check. Here we added

Willetts, Green-backed Heron and (luckily) a flock of 17 Brant, but where were the Pied-billed Grebes, the Least Bittern, the Tricolored Heron and the Blue-winged Teal that I'd scouted out only two days ago? "Just for the heck of it, let's check a little rain-pool up ahead", I suggested. We eased up within view of the pool and what we were about to see was sheer heaven. "A God-wit!!!," Fred exclaimed. Sure enough, there standing in what amounted to a large puddle, was a large shorebird with rich, rusty undersides and a long bill. "Hudsonian!" Not an Avocet, but in spring, just as rare. In fact, to our knowledge, this was only the third spring record for this species in Connecticut. Realizing the Big Day clock was still ticking, we studied this beautiful shorebird for several minutes more, just to make certain it wasn't the rarer Black-tailed, but no, it had dark wing linings.

Then Louis said, "Look at the bird just to the right. It's a Ruff!" We couldn't believe it; there stood a female Ruff (Reeve). Two great birds! A quick scan of the remaining 20 or so shorebirds added no new species. "Hot Stuff!" could be heard as we danced back to the car. Upon passing through the steelyard, we encountered another group of Big Day birders who were participating in the annual Great Gull Island Project Birdathon. With little time for socializing, we ex-

changed best wishes and sallied forth.

Well, as if we needed yet another jolt of adrenalin, we were reeling with excitement and flying with anticipation! We were off to Norwalk, speeding down traffic-clogged I-95. "Fast lane, please," someone in the backseat ordered. One hundred fifty four species richer than we'd been at midnight, Tom added, "All we need is 8 more species to tie...certainly do-able." We agreed, but now at 6:30 PM, it was clearly a race against the clock.

Not wanting our string of luck to end, we sailed on, hoping for more goodies along the Norwalk shore. Along the way, Tom announced the species that we were still missing: the haunting Wood Duck, Turkey Vulture, Pileated Woodpecker and Cattle Egret among others. "Wait a minute," I chimed, as my memory had been jogged. "We can get Cattle Egret right along the way in Westport". A five-minute detour to Green Farms yielded that one (and only one!). Onward to Manresa.

In the residential shade trees just outside Norwalk's power plant we ticked a staked-out, singing male Orchard Oriole. Our fingers were crossed as we rounded the bend to the plant. Due to labor strife, a 24-hour security guard had been posted all spring at the outer gate, prohibiting all trespassers - even birders like me who held a valid permit.

We lucked out...no guard! Driving right in, we set up scopes. Check off Little Blue Heron, Clapper Rail and King Rail, the latter, a bird we spotted preening out in the open marsh - a bonus! Back to the Trooper we raced. Next we made a quick half-mile jog to the seawall along Norwalk Harbor. We scoped offshore, spotting 7 American Oystercatchers on Long Beach Is., and an unexpected Tricolored Heron flying over the harbor toward Chimon Is. Two more nice 'pick-ups'. "We can't leave here needing Fish Crow," ordered Tom, so I drove once more into the power plant, this time up to the inner gate. Upon stepping out of the car, we heard the clearly nasal "uuh-uuh" of one of the Fish Crows. Tick, thank you and good-bye!

The sun was getting very low now; after all it was 7:30 PM. A quick tally of the list showed that we were tied with the record at 162 species. With little more than an hour till sunset, anything new would be gravy. So it was off to inland Greenwich, hopefully to find some of Tom's 'staked-out' birds.

We reached Babcock Preserve, with the sun hanging low in the sky. A tip-toed jog a short way down the trail rewarded us with a singing Hooded Warbler and a Carolina Wren. Also, a probable Swainson's Thrush flew across our view, but the light was poor, so we didn't count it. In

a flash, we were off to nearby Conyer's Farm, where Tom used his 'boom box' and tape to a good advantage in prompting a male Indigo Bunting to sing, just as the sun was setting.

Quickly assessing what else we might try for at this late hour, we headed to Fairchild Wildflower Garden, minutes away, hoping to find a resident Cooper's Hawk. Arriving, we bolted out of the car and into a full run over the slippery, root-covered trails of the darkening forest. Finally, upon entering the pines where the hawk had been, Louis and I simultaneously heard the distinctive, staccato, "ki-t-tuck" call of a bird in a nearby tree. "SUMMER TANAGER!" we exclaimed in unison. "It sure sounded like it anyway!" The calling continued, followed by songs. Hearts pounded as the four of us crept off the trail in the bird's direction. With great patience in searching with binoculars, Louis, Fred and Tom sighted the beautiful male Summer Tanager for a minute or so before it flew off. Despite their directions, I wasn't quick enough. Even so, it was a new 'state-bird' for Louis, Fred and me. Tom had seen one here once, years ago. "Wow! What a way to end the day," I said ecstatically. We never did find the secretive Cooper's, but our latest find more than made up for it.

By the time we reached the car, headlights were needed. We

could still get Wood Duck after dark, we thought, and there had been a family at the Audubon Center lake. Parking at the trailhead, we galloped, in near-darkness, to the dam. Approaching slowly, we scanned the water surface with our light-gathering binoculars, in search of a "woodie," but swimming in the water near us, we could see what looked like a large mammal...a River Otter! No...there were 2! As they lifted their heads above the water to look at us, we could see their distinctive doglike profile and whiskers before they silently submerged, not to be seen again.

It's this type of experience that participating in a Big Day puts you afield to witness, when you wouldn't otherwise be. It was like the time two years ago when Mark Szantyr, Buzz Devine and I saw a Porcupine along a dirt road in Kent during broad daylight. One feels privileged to see such rare sights as this in Connecticut.

Darkness had grasped the evening. Still we hiked around the entire lakeside trail, in a valiant, though unsuccessful search, for a Wood Duck. Trudging back to the car, we remembered that we still needed a Screech-Owl. At this, Fred whistled his imitation, and a little owl plaintively called back in response. "Nice save, Fred".

Back at the car, we were exhausted from the hike and the

pace of the day, hungry and grubby. Our minds were overflowing and overstressed, but we had tallied 167 species - 5 more than the old record. "It's only 9:30," I quipped, "we still have 2-1/2 hours in which we can bird". True, we could continue a crazed, flashlight-and-tape-recorder search in an effort to fill a few gaps in our list.

It wasn't meant to be. The day's rigors were rapidly catching up with our bodies. This, coupled with the realization that we'd have to go to work in the morning, resulted in the unanimous decision to call it a day. Back at the Purnell house, we sorted out gear, had a quick toast, shook hands and parted.

In summary, 162 of the 167 species were identified by each of us, well within the ABA's 95%

rule. We had driven 400 miles by car (all in Connecticut!); 7 on foot. We had tallied 100% of our Code 1 species, 87% of Code 2, 59% of Code 3 and an amazing 48% of Code 4. We had found 10 species of herons, 4 species of rails, 8 species of raptors, 20 species of shorebirds, 23 species of warblers and 10 species of sparrows...not to mention a fine list of rarities.

Still, there were some incredible misses. Most glaring were Wood Duck, Turkey Vulture, Pileated Woodpecker and Pine Warbler. However, knowing that 170 species is attainable (with a healthy share of good luck), we'll be back again next year. Once in the blood, Big Day fever is incurable!

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring: March 1 - May 31, 1988

Clay Taylor

Each year warming temperatures and melting snow bring out spring plumages, courtship song and the rush northward to the nesting grounds. At this time, unused binoculars are dusted off and field guides are relocated from under the coffee table, as the birding world awaits the warblers of May. At least that's the way it seems to be. A greater number of birders are consistently out in the field in spring than at any other time of the year and the records submitted show it. My thanks to everyone who sent in volumes of sightings and dates to me. The whole package is a clutter of information in my head right now, but I can relate to why everyone has the urge to record the comings and goings of every duck, robin, hawk and, ultimately, warbler. IT'S SPRING!

The spring migration is one of the most unpredictable of seasons. Fall migrants are in no great hurry; - they are literally pushed south by the approaching winter. Spring birds however, have a biological urge to nest and this urgency can cause them to bypass us entirely for greener pastures to the north.

Such was probably the case in 1988. Early spring migration (March and early April) went

pretty much according to plan with blackbirds and robins streaming by and ducks of all kinds heading toward their favorite prairie or tundra. Poor migrating conditions in late April and early May kept many hawks and passerines bottled up to our south and west. High pressure along the southern Atlantic coast pushed some passerines north April 6th as well as the 14th and 18th. A low pressure system then took over and either inclement weather or north winds prevailed through the end of the month. A stationary low off the coast prohibited flight until May 4 and continued to keep significant bird activity down until the 9th. May 10 saw rain, with clearing on the 11th. May 12 saw a big high pressure system with southwest winds from the Gulf Coast to northern New England - time to fly! The next 4 days were ideal and the birds kept pushing - no systems to ground them in Connecticut. Unsettled weather on the 19th stopped the flow and forced birds down, leading to good "Big Day" counts May 20 and 22. The remainder of the month saw average conditions and a wrap-up of bird sightings.

A number of groups participated in "Big Day" counts, but the only totals I received were

from George Clark (79 species on foot in Storrs) and a new State record of 167 species set by Frank Mantlik, Louis Bevier, Fred Purnell and Tom Baptist. Congratulations! See article about this new record elsewhere in this issue.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-throated and Common Loon flights were fairly unremarkable this spring, however, the grebes had a good season, beginning with an early Pied-billed Grebe in the Naugatuck River, Woodbury, March 10(RN), the first of many statewide reports. In early March there were 100 - 200 Horned Grebes at Sherwood Island State Park (hereafter SISP) with a peak of 200+ April 1(FM,FP). The late record was a breeding-plumage bird at Milford Point May 28(m.ob), while a late inland record was on Bantam Lake April 24(LG). Single Red-necked Grebes were also seen at SISP, 1 March 24(FM) and 2 April 6(RS) as was an Eared Grebe which attracted many birders in late February.

Seventy-plus Great Cormorants along the coast March 8(FM) diminished to a single adult remaining at Milford Point May 8(DTr), while Double-crested Cormorant flocks flying north in mid-April drew notice(CG). With the burgeoning Great Lakes breeding population, might there be a connec-

tion?

There is concern for American Bittern as a breeding bird within the State. Mid-May records from Cornwall(DTr,LG) and 2 at White Memorial Foundation (hereafter WMF), Litchfield(LG) give hope for the species. There were also numerous coastal reports of American Bittern. A Least Bittern was seen well at Lordship marshes, Stratford, while another was recorded in Woodbury May 20(FM et al.).

Tricolored Herons were reported in many coastal locations in April and May, fueling speculation of possible breeding on Chimon Island(MB). An inland record at Southbury Training School(RN) April 24 was unusual. The first Green-backed Heron report was May 5(FG). Black-crowned Night Herons were reported as doing extremely well at Chimon Island(MB) and throughout the state (to the chagrin of tern banders in a few locations), while Yellow-crowned Night Herons appeared April 12 in Stratford(DTr,LG) and April 13 in Fairfield(DR).

Glossy Ibis showed up in the first two weeks of April with 5 at WMF April 12(LG) a good inland number. Eight ibis feeding in a wet field in Old Lyme(BC) May 10 were not unusual in the Connecticut River Valley, but were still unexpected. Totally unexpected was a reported all-white ibis May 22 at North Cove, Old

Saybrook(DTi,MHa,et al). In flight it showed classic ibis size and shape, but had no black in the flight feathers. Could it have been an albino Glossy Ibis or some aberrant White Ibis? Unfortunately, it was not found again.

A Greater White-fronted Goose on Mirror Lake, at the University of Connecticut in Storrs was identified as definitely not belonging to the Greenland race(WE,LB,et al). The goose story of the season occurred March 24 in Fairfield, as 17 dead Snow Geese fell out of the sky during a violent thunder storm. They lodged in trees, etc., but the few examined, appeared to be in good condition(MB). Could they have been hit by lightning crossing from cloud to cloud? Very interesting. One immature Snow Goose was sighted May 15 in Litchfield(RN,et al) and 1300 Brant were counted at Greenwich Point May 26(JZ).

The rather orderly March weather moved most waterfowl through in good numbers. A Eurasian Common Teal was spotted in a flock of approximately 200 Green-winged Teal at Milford Point(MB,RRo) and one wonders whether this was the same individual found annually at nearby Gulf Pond. Other duck sightings were 35 Pintails in South Windsor March 19(SKe); and a number of Shoveler reports - 4 at Milford Point March 29(MB), 2 April 3(SKo), 2 April 9(JB) and 4 again April 10-12 (3

males and 1 female)(LG,DTr); a Shoveler was also seen May 22 in Old Saybrook(FM), a very late date (keep an eye out for breeding at Great Island); 50+ Ring-necked Ducks at Southbury Training School(RN) and 83 in South Windsor(SKo); and a late male Bufflehead at Milford Point May 15(DTr,LG,FZ). The only real rarities were Eurasian Wigeons March 27 at South Cove, Old Saybrook(FM) and at Milford Point May 8(DTr,LG,RE) - a late date, and an immature male King Eider at SISP April 10(RS).

HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

Die-hard Connecticut hawk-watchers did not have much to cheer about this spring. The weather during peak accipiter and Broad-wing migration, mid to late April, saw poor winds and poorer flights. A Black Vulture was reported in Greenwich along the Merritt Parkway March 23(RW) and early Turkey Vulture sightings March 6(CE) and 12(RN) were obviously moving north, perhaps from in-state wintering grounds. The raptor of the season was a Swallow-tailed Kite seen in Clinton May 24(FS), right in line with numerous reports from New Jersey and New York of this species and Mississippi Kites. It was not re-sighted.

Ospreys were very numerous along the shoreline by late March, with a very early inland report March 5 in East Hartford(J&MLy). More than 11

were seen at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, March 27(FM) and a pair nested at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) for the first time in over a decade.

Northern Harriers were, for the most part, coastal, with an adult male April 19 at HBSP(CE) and the usual late season sightings in Stratford. Inland migrants were seen April 16 at the Woodbury Hawk Watch(RN). However, Red-shouldered Hawks were very numerous in March(RN), corresponding with an incredible push along Lake Ontario (see the HMANA newsletter for details). It is interesting to see that the big flight manifested itself even into New England. The usual small kettles of Broad-winged Hawks went by April 16 and 17(RN), while a very late Rough-legged Hawk May 30 at Ansonia Nature Center(DR) underscored a dramatic May flight outside of Connecticut.

April 17 brought a Merlin to Woodbury(RN) and there were numerous sightings of Peregrine Falcon throughout the reporting period. The now-famous West Haven Dump Gyrfalcon was seen as late as April 7(RSc). It was seen going to roost on West Rock and had spent the last few weeks in the State foraging away from the dump. Hundreds of birders from out of state saw the falcon before it finally left. What do you think the odds are that it will return in the winter of 88/89?

Common Moorhen was re-

ported at WMF May 12(NC,HC,JKi). An American Coot was reported in Suffield March 19(SKe), with another in Litchfield May 15(RN et al.) for a late date. A flying and calling(!) Sandhill Crane March 12 in Westport(RWe) conceivably might have been a re-occurrence of previous records from that area. Perhaps a yearly search will find that individual (?) to be a regular.

An extremely early Lesser Golden Plover was at SISF March 30(RSo). While that date raised some eyebrows here on the east coast, Golden Plovers are not uncommon in late March-early April on the Great Lakes. A high count of 150 Semipalmated Plovers were at Milford Point May 22, as well as 200 Ruddy Turnstones, 90 Sanderlings and 300 Dunlin. An Upland Sandpiper was sighted in Suffield April 30(SKe) and a total of 9 White-rumped Sandpipers were in Fairfield May 26(DR). Two very late Purple Sandpipers lingered at HBSP May 15(SF). A good spring sighting was a Stilt Sandpiper inland in South Windsor May 21(PD). A Common Snipe was in Woodbury March 4(RN) and American Woodcock were on territory in late February and early March, as expected.

May 22 provided the most exciting shorebirds along the coast, of course. A Hudsonian Godwit and Ruff shared a pool at Lordship(FM et al.). The Ruff (a

Reeve) was unusual, but the critically studied Godwit was one of but a handful of spring records.

South Cove in Old Saybrook and the Oyster River in Woodmont carried the usual large flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls along with the attendant Little Gull and Common Black-headed Gull sightings(DTr,LG,RSc,FP,PL). Bonaparte's peaked at about 1200 at Oyster River April 10(FM,FP), while an inland spring-plumaged Bonaparte's at Southbury Training School April 25 was a welcome sighting(RN). The gull blitz of the winter carried on into March with numerous Iceland Gulls around the state. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull and a Glaucous Gull were at the East Hartford dump March 17(LB).

A Caspian Tern was at Greenwich Point May 7(JZ) and a Royal Tern was reported at Menunketesuck Island, Westbrook, May 24(SM). Roseate, Common, and Least Terns all reached the breeding grounds at or slightly later than normal. Two Black Terns were at Milford Point, May 28(JB,LS,PD), while a single bird sighted May 20 in Goshen(FM,BD,MS) was skimming and hawking insects over a small pond.

DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoo reports were numerous in late May, but there were no great numbers of individuals sighted - just ones and

twos.

Common Barn Owls again nested on an I-95 bridge in Milford, but subsequent road construction may have disturbed the birds. The Middletown area supported 3 nests again, with varying success, while a sighting May 23 at SISP was interesting(RSo).

Whip-poor-wills were few and noted as such by some observers(DTr), but a calling Chuck-will's-widow in Suffield from May 14 to May 20 was exciting(SKe,CW,JW).

An Eastern Phoebe February 20(AD) was very early, with the bulk of the sightings starting about March 10-15. A peak of 30+ was reported April 7(RN). In general, flycatchers were late and scarce throughout most of the State. The northwest corner of the state reported better than average numbers of Olive-sided and Acadian Flycatchers(RN). Most Empidonax did not show up until May 14 for Least and May 20-25 for Yellow-bellied and Alder.

The Purple Martin colony established at HBSP in 1987 increased in size this year, and birds were at the nest box April 19(CE). The first Tree Swallow report was an early March 7 in New Haven(GA); Tree and Barn Swallows were at Milford Point March 22(JB); a mixed flock of the aforementioned, plus Bank and Rough-winged Swallows was at Konold's Pond, Hamden April

16(RA) and a flock of 2000+ Tree Swallows pushed through Barkhamsted April 19(SKe).

The West Haven Jackdaw stayed through March 13 and the Southbury Chough was again spotted, this time April 3 at the Southbury Training School(fide FG). Common Ravens continue a good showing in the Northwest corner, but a nest with young May 21 in Union is the first breeding record for eastern Connecticut(WB,GC).

Wrens were on time throughout the state(m.ob). Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher appeared April 7 and 10, while the thrushes were not quite so regular. Many observers lamented a lack of thrushes - Gray-checked, Swainson's, Hermit, etc., or their late arrival.

Robins flew in good numbers from late February through March, with flocks of 150-200 frequently reported. Low levels of Cedar Waxwings increased in late April and early May. No shrikes were reported.

Vireos were all present and accounted for, if somewhat late. A Philadelphia Vireo was seen in Kent May 13(LG,FZ).

WOOD WARBLERS

The general consensus of the 1988 spring warbler flight can be summarized as follows; they were (a) late, (b) in relatively low numbers, (c) very irregular in distribution across the state and

(d) wonderful to behold whenever found.

The earliest expected species arrived in the first week of April, although the lack of a March Pine Warbler record is unusual. Pine Warblers were seen April 3 in Farmington(MC) and in Simsbury April 9(KM) along with a sighting at West Rock, New Haven April 16(RA). These correspond with the only 2 sets of flight dates noted for all of April within the state. Palm Warblers were first observed April 3 at Hesseky Pond, Woodbury(RN) and peaked with an impressive 20 April 23 in Tolland(LB). The first dates for Louisiana Waterthrush and Northern Waterthrush were surprisingly close, April 13 in Canton(MHy) and April 16 in Southport(CB), respectively. I usually expect Louisiana to precede Northern by a week at least. Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen at Conn. Audubon Society, Fairfield, April 8(FP,PL).

Another set of arrival dates at the very end of April included species that usually are seen a week to ten days earlier. Typical were Blue-winged Warbler April 29(RN), Black-throated Green April 29(RN), more Yellow-rumps April 24(CG), Prairie Warblers April 28 in Southport(CB), at West Rock April 29(SB) and farther inland May 4(RN). Blackburnian Warbler April 27 in Westport(TR) was a little surprising, as was a

Hooded Warbler April 29 in East Rock Park(RE).

The first week of May saw an improvement in the poor flight weather, but it wasn't until the 8th and 9th that things really began to move. Worm-eating Warbler was seen May 5(MS), Golden-winged Warbler May 12(EH) and May 15(RN, et al) in Kent; Nashville Warbler in Woodbury May 12(RN) and Parula Warblers May 8 in Suffield(SK), May 9 and 15 in Kent(RN) were all reported inland first, then scattered coastally. It seems that the first waves of birds passed over the coastal regions before grounding themselves, possibly due to their extreme impatience at reaching the breeding grounds. Black-throated Blue Warblers were seen May 12 at the earliest(EH), with 4 May 22(RN). The toughest of the "common" migrant warblers was Cape May, first seen at WMF May 8(DT, LG, RB); many observers commented on their scarcity along with Bay-breasted Warblers. In fact a few "listers" managed to miss Cape May for their year lists.

There were no reports of uncommon/rare southern nesters, i.e. Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, etc. warblers this year, perhaps due to a lack of strong weather systems in the early spring. A Kentucky Warbler May 15 in Suffield(JW) was notable in its distance inland. Cerulean Warblers May 7 in

Ashford(WE) and in Kent May 13(LG) and 15(RN) were good inland sightings, although they have been nesting in these areas for a number of years. Mourning Warblers were reported from many places, including one banded May 15 at Flanders Nature Center, Woodbury((MS). The biggest flocks or waves didn't appear until May 22 and even later, with quite a few reports of singing Blackpoll Warblers lingering well into June. The "Big Day" groups that went late in the month of May certainly had a better time of finding warblers, although the new foliage made observations a little tricky.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A male Summer Tanager was observed and heard singing(!) May 22 in Greenwich(FM et al.). Scarlet Tanagers were at West Rock May 8(SB) and inland May 9 with a high of 10 May 13(both RN). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at Greenwich Audubon Center May 4(TG), South Wind-sor May 7(CE) and 25+ were recorded May 13(RN). A male Blue Grosbeak was photographed at a Greenwich feeder where it remained May 1 through 8(fide JZ). Indigo Buntings were first seen May 13(RN) in Kent and May 14 at Osbournedale St. Pk.(JB) with 20+ seen May 22(RN).

Tree Sparrows hung on well into April with a very late date of April 20 in Canton(SO fide JKa).

Chipping Sparrows showed up around April 5-10(m.ob). Grasshopper Sparrows were singing at Bradley Field, Windsor Locks, May 12(DTr,FZ) while Fox Sparrows were in Storrs March 15(GC) and an impressive 25 were at West Rock March 21(FG). Lincoln's Sparrows hit SISF May 12 and 14(RSo) and Miles Sanctuary, Sharon May 13(NC,HC,JKi). Swamp Sparrow was in Woodbury April 9(RN) - a migrant or winter resident?

Lapland Longspurs (6) at Lordship March 30(NC,JKi) and Snow Buntings were last reported from HBSP March 12(LG,DTr).

Blackbirds put on their usual movements in early March. Late Rusty Blackbirds were highlighted by 20+ May 1 at WMF(DTr) and one May 9 at Lake Quassapaug(RN). Orchard Oriole reports were scattered with most observers commenting about lower numbers than in the past few years. Of course, there have been lots of Orchard's in recent seasons, so is this a decline or a retreat to previous levels?

Finches were numerous but not spectacular, with Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins at unremarkable levels. The last report of Common Redpolls April 17 at the Woodbury Hawk Watch(RN). Perhaps the only way to get a real handle on finch movements is at a hawk lookout. Many comments were reserved

for an abundance of Red Crossbills throughout the state.

Observers; Contributors(boldface):

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OCCURRENCE OF THE CHOUGH IN CONNECTICUT

Arnold Devine¹ and Dwight G. Smith²

On November 23-24, 1987, between 1200-1220 hours a Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) was observed along Philo Curtis Road in Newtown, Connecticut by Arnold Devine. Four photographs were taken on November 24. Sky conditions on both days were sunny to partly cloudy with air temperatures between 40-53 degrees F.

When first noticed, the Chough was perched in an apple tree about 80 meters distant in company with several American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). Further observations with 8 x 30 binoculars clearly revealed its red, slightly decurved bill and somewhat smaller size than the crows. The Chough persistently flipped its tail up and down for about 2 minutes upon approach.

The Chough was found in the same area on the 24th. When first observed, the Chough was foraging in a field, again in the company of crows. A crow flew from a nearby apple tree and landed on the back of the Chough, whereupon the Chough flew up into the apple tree. Its flight appeared stronger and more buoyant than that of the crows; a flight photograph shows a deep downstroke and widely separated primaries. On both days the Chough immediately flew away when ap-

proached, and was not again observed.

Subsequent sightings of this species, presumably the same individual, were made February 15, 1988 at exit 10, I-84, Newtown, by Mark Szantyr, and on April 3, 1988 on the lawn at the Southbury Training School, Southbury, CT, by John Gallo.

The origin of this Chough is unknown. It may be a "boat assisted bird" or may have escaped from an aviary. A survey of local aviaries and aviary records did not provide any due to its origin.

A rare record form, Number 88-20-A has been filed with the Connecticut Rare Records Committee of the C.O.A. for review and evaluation.

Coincident with this rare find was the discovery on February 16, 1988 of another Eurasian corvid, a Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) at the West Haven landfill.

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ON THE OCCURRENCE OF A PAIR OF RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS IN NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT

S. Dillon Ripley

In November 1985, a single male Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) was seen in the trees around our house in Litchfield (27 miles due west of Hartford, altitude 950 feet), in the northwestern part of Connecticut. To my knowledge, this was one of the first occurrences of this species in our state's "Canadian Zone" wooded areas (Merriam 1877, Sage et al. 1913, Bent 1939, Mackenzie 1961, Luppi 1985). The climate in northwestern Connecticut approaches that of the Berkshire Hills to the north, being considerably colder in winter.

The woodpecker came to a feeder containing suet and I observed it periodically throughout the winter, although it disappeared after that. In the autumn of 1986, a male (same bird?) reappeared and seemed to be present for a far longer time, coming to the feeder when we provided suet and, even taking seeds put out for wintering passerines.

A female was present in the spring of 1987; the pair was on site during the entire season. That autumn I observed that a hole was being excavated in a dense stub of an ash tree. The pair now appears to be resident. During the spring of 1988, for the

first time, in addition to its characteristic low rattling call, we have heard a loud drumming, audible for a long distance, which I thought to be a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*). On the contrary, this is an aspect of display behavior of the Red-bellied Woodpecker that I have not previously noted. It is a loud, ringing note like an alarm bell, and when the timbre of the branch is suitable, the drumming can carry for a quarter mile. As of April 1988 the pair appeared to be actively engaged in nest-building, much to my delight.

The northern limit of this species' range is quite irregular, with small outpost populations in various parts of the Northeast; single individuals have recently been recorded wintering as far north as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (see recent reports in *American Birds*). Peterson (1980) shows the range of the species to include the southern half of Connecticut where he indicates that it is a permanent resident. L. L. Short (1982) states that Red-bellied Woodpeckers have bred north to North Dakota, Canada and in the northeast, as far as Massachusetts. Stickel (1963, cited in Short 1980) remarked that in the 1960's the species' range

seemed to be contracting. Contrarily, the details provided about the species' history in Connecticut by Luppi (1985) show that in the last decade the state's population has increased dramatically, although she did not explicitly cite records from our western uplands. The Litchfield record of a pair of birds showing indications of breeding appears to be a first for the hills of northwestern Connecticut.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION FOR CONNECTICUT BIRDS

George A. Clark, Jr.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the camera has become, in certain respects, a successor to ornithology's shotgun of the previous century. One hundred years ago collectors went afield and brought home specimens to document occurrence. Today's bird photographers bring back photographic images that are often used for equivalent purposes. The goal of this article is to provide a brief introduction to documentary photography in contemporary Connecticut ornithology.

Any exact tabulation on documentation for Connecticut birds will quickly become dated, so the end of 1987 was arbitrarily chosen as a closing date. At that time, according to information in the files of the Connecticut Rare Records Committee, at least 321 species of birds were documented for the State by existing specimens preserved in seven museums. An additional 32 species of birds were documented by photographs (which had been published for at least 12 of these species). In addition to photographs documenting State occurrence, there exist numerous photographs that document behavior, ecology, breeding records, and occurrence of rarities or species in unusual localities and/or

unusual dates. It appears likely that photography will become increasingly important in future documentation.

Specimens and photographs are not fully equivalent, but a strong case can be made that documentary photographs should be given the same quality of attention to specimens. In particular, each documentary photograph should be fully labelled with the date, locality, and name of the photographer. This information should be clearly printed on the slide mount or back side of the print. Additional data might also be recorded, such as more detail on the locality and circumstances, the film used, focal length of lens and specific details of exposure. Documentary photographs should be stored and handled carefully. Although most individuals and nonprofit institutions cannot afford the substantial costs of long-term storage in controlled-climate chambers, even simple efforts can greatly contribute to the longevity of photographs. Pictures should be kept free of moisture, dust and dirt and stored in the dark and away from extremes of temperature, particularly heat. Prints should be housed in acid-free envelopes and slides should not be stored in holders made of

volatile plastics that will chemically affect the picture. Because exposure to intense light, as in a slide projector, greatly reduces the useful life of slides, copies of documentary slides (rather than originals) should be used for repeated projection. With these few precautions, color slides may be kept in good condition for many years.

Although photography has been for decades a major technique in ornithology, museums with ornithological collections have generally not attempted to accumulate documentary photographs. An important exception has been Project Vireo, a major photographic collection devoted to ornithology and housed under archival conditions at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia (Myers et al. 1984). Within Connecticut, there is a small but growing collection of documentary photographs at the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History in Storrs. Perhaps an historic lack of institutional photographic collections for birds has resulted in many important documentary photographs remaining in the possession of individual photographers. Just as many specimens in the private bird collections of the 1800's have now disappeared, there is a risk that scientifically significant documentary photographs will also be lost. This has apparently already occurred with the only photo-

graphs of the Wood Stork in Connecticut. Thus, it is desirable that individuals possessing important documentary photographs arrange for duplicates or extras to be placed in archives such as those of the Connecticut Rare Records Committee and/or an appropriate museum. Unlike museum specimens, photographs can usually be easily duplicated. A dispersed distribution of copies reduces the chance of loss and makes the photographs easier for others to locate for scientific study.

As institutional collections of documentary photographs grow, there will be a need for cataloging and computerization as is now often done for specimen collections. Ideally, documentary photographs should not be used for other purposes. At the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, there is a growing file of more than 650 slides on birds routinely used for lectures and other illustrative purposes, in addition to the collection of documentary photographs.

Although 35mm slides of excellent quality are available for purchase through Project Vireo, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York and through commercial agencies, many of those who regularly lecture on birds or seek photographs for publications wish to obtain pictures that are not commercially available. For such purposes as well as for research ef-

forts, new pictures must be taken. A vast literature exists on photographic techniques and only a few comments will be made here. Successful bird photography usually requires some technical knowledge of photography and often necessitates investment of considerable time. Relative to birding, bird photography can be expensive in view of costs for equipment, film and processing. In the usual case, the preferred camera is a 35mm single lens reflex with interchangeable lens. Because birds often cannot be closely approached, long telephoto lenses of 300 to 1000mm or more are commonly used. Shorter focal length lenses can be useful when birds can be closely approached at some feeding stations or by use of carefully located blinds. There is enormous variety of photographic equipment currently on the market. The requirements of bird photographers differ so greatly that it is not possible to summarize the alternatives briefly. We can anticipate that changes in techniques will occur although details cannot be accurately fore-

cast. Although the present generation of video cameras cannot produce pictures of the quality attainable with ordinary 35mm cameras, it seems possible that within 10 years high resolution electronic images may begin to replace the photographic emulsions now in use. Such developments would provide new challenges in the exciting enterprise of bird photography.

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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. All manuscripts receive peer review.

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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