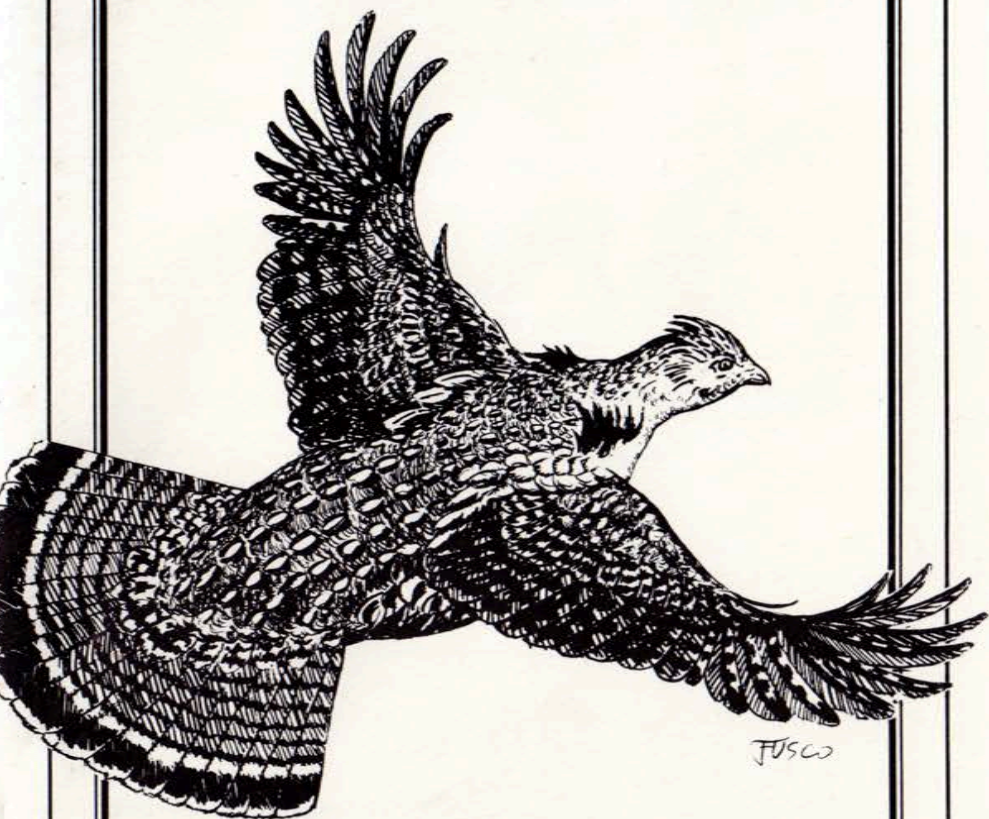


# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



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Again we use a drawing by Paul Fusco. Paul has been a graphic designer for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division since 1988. He is involved in media production including illustration, photography and graphic arts in the Division's Public Awareness Program. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the COA.

You may see more of Paul's illustrative work in the Wildlife Division's bimonthly publication *Connecticut Wildlife*.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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Volume 14 Number 1

January 1994

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## Contents

## Winter 1994

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- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 2  | <b>Winter Finches in Connecticut</b><br>David F. Provencher   |
| 10 | <b>Connecticut's Fall 1993 Hawk Migration</b><br>Neil Currie  |
| 18 | <b>Eastern Bluebirds Raise Black-capped Chickadee and Their Own Young at the Same Site</b><br>James M. Zingo, Kathleen Murphy, and David Rosgen |
| 20 | <b>Eastern Bluebirds as Interspecific Helpers: A Review</b><br>James M. Zingo   |
| 27 | <b>Tree Damage by Nesting Double-crested Cormorants in Connecticut</b><br>Carol R. Lemmon, Gregory Bugbee, and George R. Stephens               |
| 30 | <b>Book Review</b><br>George A. Clark, Jr.  |
| 33 | <b>Connecticut Field Notes</b><br><b>Summer: June 1 - July 31, 1993</b><br>Jay Kaplan   |
| 38 | <b>Answer to Photo Challenge 7: Mongolian Plover</b><br>Louis Bevier  |
- 
-

# WINTER FINCHES IN CONNECTICUT

David F. Provencher

The winter finches that normally occur in Connecticut, in greatly varying numbers from year to year, all possess very distinct calls from which they can readily be identified. Quite often the birder will see a flock of finches passing high overhead or will hear finches in the distance without ever seeing them. Being able to recognize their calls will allow the birder to identify them and can greatly increase the pleasure of winter woodland birding. The best way to find finches in Connecticut is to be prepared—know what to listen and look for prior to going into the field.

The following discussion will cover the various calls of the finches that normally occur in Connecticut in winter. It will also discuss differences in flight style and behavior as well as a few field marks. The article does not present a thorough treatment of visual identification—that I leave to the many excellent field guides available. At the end of the discussion I have recommended recordings that may be used to study the vocalizations of particular species, as well as some areas in and out of Connecticut where one may search for winter finches.

I have grouped the species by behavioral and vocal similarities which, for the most part, correspond to the actual taxonomy. A few finch species of very rare occurrence in the East are not considered in this text.

## GROUP 1: AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, PINE SISKIN, COMMON REDPOLL, HOARY REDPOLL

The species in this group are small active birds that are usually found in flocks, ranging from a few birds to several thousand, as in the case of redpolls. They are all quite vocal in flight and can also be very talkative when perched. Their flight styles and habits are generally similar: deep undulations and mixed flocking. Visually, they are quite different from one another at close range, but the differences are imperceptible in flight at a distance. Vocally, they share similarities but have detectable differences that allow them to be identified by ear at quite a distance.

All four species feed on seeds in weedy fields, on catkins in deciduous tracts, on cones in coniferous tracts, and at feeders where the preferred foods are thistle and black oil sunflower seeds.

### **American Goldfinch**

A common resident of Connecticut, this species can be seen at any time of year. While a familiar bird to many of us, the goldfinch has calls that are important for us to discuss, since the other finches in this group have some similar vocalizations. A solid familiarity with the sound of a goldfinch will make recognition of the others easier.

**Calls:** In flight the American Goldfinch usually gives a call of two to four notes variously described as CHI-DUP, TI-DEE-DI-DI, or PO-TA-TO-CHIP. It is clear, relatively loud, and can be heard for quite some distance. This flight call is unique and is easily memorized. Of greater importance, due to a similarity with the call note of Redpolls, is the call note given when perched. This call, sometimes given in flight as well, is a rising, whistled WHEE-EE. It is liquid and clear and sweeps distinctly upward with a whining quality at the end.

**Behavior:** A familiar visitor to the backyard feeder, the goldfinch in winter is usually found in relatively small flocks. In flight they travel in a loose group, giving their characteristic flight call frequently.

### **Redpolls**

Common and Hoary Redpolls are considered separate species by most authorities, but conspecific by others. The presence of these irruptive species in Connecticut can vary greatly from year to year, from none at all to an abundance. The Hoary Redpoll normally occurs further north than the Common and it is far less likely to show up in our area in any given year. Reports on sightings of Hoary Redpoll should be forwarded to the Connecticut Rare Records Committee. It should be noted that the two species of redpolls are difficult to distinguish in the field. The vocalizations of the two are not known to differ and thus are treated as the same here.

**Calls:** The flight note is given in multiples ranging from one to three or four, sometimes more. It is a dry, sharp, CHIT-CHIT-CHIT. The cadence is rapid and the call is given often, and is sometimes described as a rattle. A flock of redpolls in flight is very vocal and is not likely to escape unnoticed.

Another common call given by the redpoll is one similar to the WHEE-EE call of the American Goldfinch. There are some important and noticeable differences, however. The goldfinch note sounds as if it has two parts, the first level and the second rising. The redpoll note is a shorter, rising SWEEE which has a distinctly strained, grating quality when compared to the clear note of the goldfinch.

**Behavior:** Redpolls in winter are often found in large flocks numbering into the hundreds or even thousands. Flocks in excess of

10,000 have been recorded in Maritime Canada. As with any migratory species some individuals travel much further than the others, and a lone redpoll would not be an extraordinary find. When they fly, redpolls usually form tight groups with a good deal of positional change within the flock. They give their flight call repetitively and large flocks are very noisy. Redpolls are usually not very wary and respond well to pishing, sometimes dropping from flight into the trees around you. In winter they are found in weedy, brushy areas, catkin-bearing trees, and conifers.

### **Pine Siskins**

Pine Siskins are heavily streaked, mostly brown birds showing varying amounts of yellow at the base of the flight feathers and at the base of the tail. Although their numbers vary from year to year, siskins are among the more regularly occurring winter finches in Connecticut, occasionally remaining to breed here.

**Calls:** The most commonly given call in flight, a sharp descending WEEER or SWEEER, is very important for identification, because it is virtually unique among the species discussed here. The key feature of this call is that it descends, and with just a little practice this diagnostic note can be heard and recognized at a great distance. A second characteristic call is usually given by perched birds, but is less frequently heard in winter than on the summer breeding grounds. A rising ZHREEE!, it has a distinctly buzzy quality and is often given from a very high perch. In flight, siskins produce a number of sounds, with parts often reminiscent of goldfinch and redpoll but the quality is different from either. The important thing to remember is that both goldfinch and redpoll make predominantly one type of call in flight in winter. If you hear a chattering flock going over which puts you in mind of both goldfinch and redpoll, you are listening to siskins. Listen closely for the descending WEEER note.

**Behavior:** Gregarious. Siskins may be found in mixed flocks with American Goldfinch. Quite vocal in flight, they can also be very talkative from a perch on the coldest winter day. An individual will, at times, perch very high in a tree and serenade all and sundry. As avid users of feeders when the season progresses, siskins will utilize habitats ranging from weedy fields to towering pines and hemlocks. Their preferred habitat is usually in proximity to coniferous areas.

### **GROUP 2: RED CROSSBILL AND WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL**

Crossbills hold a fascination for most North American birders. Imagine a species that has evolved so specialized a feature as crossed

mandibles! This adaptation is specialized for extracting seeds from cones, and both species are tied irrevocably to coniferous trees. The crossed bill is difficult to see at a distance, but can sometimes be picked up in flight against a light sky. Crossbills are chubby finches and look chunkier in flight than the Group 1 finches.

Both species occur in Connecticut erratically, appearing in heavily coned coniferous tracts and to see them you must usually find cones.

### **Red Crossbill**

The somewhat more southerly of the two, Red Crossbills may breed at odd times and in erratic distribution. The male is usually brick red and black, the female usually olive to olive-yellow and black. Its distribution sets it apart from the other northerly finches, and years when redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks are flocking south, there may not appear a single Red Crossbill in our area.

**Calls:** The flight note is a rich JIP, JIP-JIP, JIP-JIP, JIP. This note is more musical than that of the other finches discussed here and is given at a more leisurely pace. When learning this note, pay close attention to its relatively slow cadence, given singly and in pairs, and in particular to its rich quality. You are unlikely to hear any other vocalization from this species in winter.

### **White-winged Crossbill**

This crossbill is notably different from the Red in having distinct white wing bars. These wing bars are highly visible on a perched bird and may or may not be on a bird in flight. Picking up this field mark in flight depends upon the lighting and the position of the bird relative to the observer. Viewed from underneath this field mark may be virtually invisible.

A boreal finch if ever there was one, White-winged Crossbill is found in areas of spruce, hemlock, and pines. Spruces with cones are the favored winter haunt. (Surprisingly, however, there is a resident population on Hispaniola in the Caribbean!)

**Calls:** The call note of this species is reminiscent of redpolls. The note is a CHUT-CHUT, CHUT or a CHET-CHET, CHET-CHET. It is richer than redpoll in quality and is not given with the redpoll's rapid cadence, nor with as many repetitions. It is more harsh and flatter than the rich note of Red Crossbill. If you hear what you believe to be a redpoll, but somehow it seems too slow and too rich, you are probably listening to a White-winged Crossbill.

The White-winged Crossbill song is sometimes heard in winter as well. This distinctive song is a series of trills not unlike junco, but given on different pitches. This song may be uttered in flight as well

as when the bird is perched. Occasionally brief snatches of this song are interspersed with the flight note.

**Behavior of both Crossbills:** While these birds can be very vocal in flight, they can also be silent while perched. They use their crossed bills to pry open cones to extract the seeds, often pulling smaller cones free from the tree and pinning them to the branch with their feet while they work them open. The empty cones then fall to the ground. Larger cones are worked in place while the birds often hang upside down to get at the seeds as pieces of the cone are dropped to the ground. The sound of a steady rain of litter from a coniferous stand should always be investigated as it might be the sound of crossbills feeding. These diners can be quite deep into the branches and may not be obvious at first glance. Squirrels have the annoying habit of also producing this effect!

### **GROUP 3: PURPLE FINCH AND HOUSE FINCH**

These two species, along with American Goldfinch, are the most common Connecticut finches. House Finches are common year-round residents in our state, while Purples vary from year to year, although they are present every winter and are uncommon breeders.

#### **Purple Finch**

The male of this attractive species is a raspberry or rose color rather than purple. A common mistake of beginning birders is to mistake House Finch for Purple Finch. House Finches vary from bright red to orange-yellow, but are rarely the rich raspberry of Purple Finch. Both male and female Purples display a facial pattern lacking in House Finches. Purple Finches are chunkier and have a semblance of a crest, much like a phoebe.

**Calls:** The call note of Purple Finch is a light, sharp PICK, or PIT, especially in flight. It is given singly and is one of the easiest finch call notes to learn. Less frequently heard is a musical SHUR-LEE, usually given from a perch.

**Behavior:** Found in mixed woodlands and coniferous tracts as well as at feeders, Purples are much less likely to be found near the ground than House Finch and are often observed perched high in trees. They usually occur in small flocks or singly in winter but may "stage" in larger numbers during migration at a favored site or feeder.

#### **House Finch**

Introduced in the East from western North America, the House Finch has become a common to very common resident. If you wish to observe this species closely, put up a feeder and wait but a short while.



**Calls:** The primary flight call in winter is a loud, sharp, high-pitched CHEEEP or CHEEET. When perched House Finches give a loud, rising WHEEEP.

**Behavior:** Numerous around human habitation, House Finches can be found feeding from tree-top level down to the ground. Opportunistic, gregarious, and easily observed, House Finches are often the most common bird in a given area, such as around your backyard feeder! A permanent resident, House Finches do undergo a limited migration out of poor foraging areas.

#### **GROUP 4: PINE GROSBEAK AND EVENING GROSBEAK**

These two species are the largest of the winter finches likely to be found in Connecticut. They are handsome birds and the Evening Grosbeaks add a dash of color to a feeder tray. Although both are large finches, there are several obvious differences. The vocalizations of the Evening Grosbeak are loud and harsh while those of the Pine Grosbeak are liquid and melodic.

##### **Pine Grosbeak**

The adult male Pine Grosbeak is a very handsome bird, with its deep raspberry-red coloration, black wings and white wing-bars. Unfortunately this species is one of the least likely of the finches to occur in Connecticut in a given winter.

**Calls:** The signature flight call of this species is a Greater Yellowlegs like, PWEE-PWEE-PWEE, sliding up the scale. The quality of this call is flute-like and relaxed, not urgent like a yellowlegs. Another call heard from this species is an alarm note described as CHEE-VLI, which you will probably hear only after you have flushed the bird.

**Behavior:** The Pine Grosbeak is often very approachable, almost tame. Occurring singly or in small flocks, this is a versatile species that feeds on fruit, seeds, and berries. Such a varied diet allows the Pine Grosbeak to take advantage of all available food in an area and thus it tends to irrupt later in the season and in smaller numbers than more specialized feeders. This species rarely visits feeders, preferring food such as old rotting fruit left on the trees of an orchard. Pine Grosbeaks can often be seen picking up salt or grit on a snowy roadside.

A long tail, large size, and deeply undulating flight make Pine Grosbeaks a distinctive flight silhouette in winter. Orange-yellow immatures and females usually make up the bulk of a winter flock.

##### **Evening Grosbeak**

The male is a brilliantly plumaged bird with a heavy light-colored

bill. About a century ago, the Evening Grosbeak underwent a population increase and range expansion which brought it into our area in a big way. It occurs in Connecticut annually in varying numbers, often continuing further south and becoming rather scarce for us as the season progresses.

**Calls:** Two calls are likely to be heard in winter: a loud harsh PEEER given in flight, and a more quiet clicking sound when perched or in flight. A large flock in flight is often very vocal and loud. The PEEER is detectable at long distances, making Evening Grosbeaks in flight one of the easiest of finches to detect on a still, cold winter day.

**Behavior:** Evening Grosbeak is a gregarious species with undulating flight, white wing patches, short tail, and a loud call note. In winter they can be found in mixed forests, coniferous tracts, and at feeders. It is not uncommon for a large flock to visit a feeder during migration, clean it out, and then disappear. As with certain other species, such as Pine Siskin, they can usually be found in our area at favored feeders even during winters when they are virtually absent from the rest of the state.

## WHERE TO LOOK?

As with any species, anticipating a finch's needs will greatly improve your chances of finding them. When searching for a particular species, one should consider the proper habitat. When finches irrupt they tend to search for similar habitats with familiar food. It is generally true that the more northerly species gravitate to coniferous or mixed woodlands in our area. Trees of particular interest include spruce, hemlock, cedar, and larch. The presence of cones on these trees is very important, since coniferous trees do not produce cones every year and an area without cones is not likely to have finches. Species such as crossbills will be found lingering only in coniferous areas. Redpolls can be found nearly anywhere small seeds are available, such as weedy fields or brush covered barrier beaches. Look for Evening Grosbeaks in mixed woodlands as well as orchards with old fruit and at sunflower feeders.

Among the better locations in our state to search for winter finch species include: Barkhamsted Reservoir and surrounding areas, Tunxis State Forest, Boston Hollow Road in Ashford, Pachaug State Forest in Voluntown, the northwest hills, and any other significant areas of cone-bearing trees. Some productive areas outside of Connecticut include Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

## RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

The following is a listing of available recordings that have examples of the species covered in the preceding discussion. Each recording is given a letter code which is then used in the recommendation list.

(A) Guide to Bird Sounds. This is a joint product of The National Geographic Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

(B) A Field Guide to Bird Songs of Eastern and Central North America. Second Edition. The Peterson Field Guide Series.

(C) Western Bird Songs. Peterson Field Guides.

(D) Alaska Bird Songs. Alaska Bird Observatory.

(E) Birds of Northern and Central Alberta. Barb and Jim Beck.

The following is a list of each species, all the recordings which have examples of its vocalizations, and the best recording for each.

American Goldfinch: (B),(C). Best is (B), a good reproduction of the flight call.

Pine Siskin: (B),(C),(E). Best is (B). (E) has a good rendition of what you might hear from a perched bird.

Common Redpoll: (A),(C),(D),(E). Best are (C) and (D)

Hoary Redpoll: only (C) has an example of this species.

Red Crossbill: (A),(B),(C),(E). Best is (A) but (C) is good.

White-winged Crossbill: (B),(C),(E). These are all good but unfortunately none of the recordings has the flight call.

House Finch: (A),(B),(C). Best is (A).

Purple Finch: (A),(B),(C). Best is (A) with a clear example of the PICK flight note. (C) is good.

Pine Grosbeak: (B),(C),(D),(E). Best is (C) which is the only recording with the flight call. (E) is good for some other vocalizations.

Evening Grosbeak: (B),(C),(E). Best is (B) with a good example of the PEEER note. (E) is good as well.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The English words that I have used to express bird vocalizations are a mixture of my own and others. We as individuals often perceive audio input somewhat differently, and these English representations may or may not work for you. I would like to acknowledge especially Louis Bevier, for assistance with some of the descriptions I have included.

43 Branch Hill Rd., Preston, CT 06360

## CONNECTICUT'S FALL 1993 HAWK MIGRATION

Neil Currie

The Year of the Eagle? The Year of the Broad-wing? The Return of the Osprey? The Return of the Harrier? Any one of these would be a proper title for a review of Connecticut's 1993 fall hawk migration. Put them all together and it was a spectacular fall. Add the hundreds of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, American Kestrels, Merlins, and Peregrines that passed through Connecticut, and it was more than spectacular.

If the eagles and Broad-winged Hawks were not enough, the rebound in numbers of Ospreys and Northern Harriers after a three-year decline is also noteworthy. At Lighthouse Point Osprey numbers totaled 3,224, up from 1,935 in 1992, and Northern Harrier numbers were 1,054, up from 487 in 1992. At Quaker Ridge Northern Harriers totaled 154, up from 80 in 1992.

Watches (counts) began on August 21st, following the passage of a cold front the previous day. At Lighthouse Point the next three days produced 169 hawks, of which 105 were Ospreys. Another cold front August 27th brought out the Quaker Ridge watchers, and on the 29th they recorded 95 hawks, including 43 Broad-wings. The season was underway, but only the Ospreys were ready to migrate in any numbers. A cold front September 1st brought northerly winds, but it was still too early. The first good showing at Quaker Ridge followed another cold front September 4th. The following day there were 40 Ospreys, 61 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 49 American Kestrels, but few Broad-wings. Still another front passed on the 10th, and already there had been as many cold fronts as occur during an entire fall in some years. Hawk watchers look for these fronts as they are usually followed by northerly breezes, which seem to get the hawks going. By this date it was Broad-wing time.

With September 11th falling on a Saturday, eager watchers were at their favorite lookouts hoping for good numbers of Broad-wings. The birds began their migration as expected, but still not in great numbers. On the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, southerly winds blocked the expected flight, and Thursday brought rain. Friday found a heavy overcast and easterly winds across the region. Only Ospreys, a few kestrels, and sharpies were flying at Lighthouse Point. Avid watchers, most tied up at work during the week, had received a huge break. The lull continued, as Saturday brought another day of rain. There had been six flightless days during the peak

migration period for Broad-winged Hawks. During those six days, however, something special was taking place to the north of Connecticut and Massachusetts. In northern New England, skies had been clear. Broadwings were on the move and as they continued to migrate to the southwest out of New Brunswick and Maine, they piled up against the poor weather in our region, their numbers building. Finally, late on Saturday, a cold front cleared Massachusetts, Connecticut, and the states to the southwest. On Sunday, September 19th, on northerly winds, these hawks were released and began moving to the southwest.

The Year of the Broad-wings? Yes! On September 19th, birders watching from Booth Hill, northwest of Barkhamsted Reservoir in West Hartland, from South Windsor, from Quaker Ridge in Greenwich, and from New Haven (Figure 1), witnessed the greatest flight of Broad-winged Hawks ever recorded over Connecticut. Table 1 follows the hour by hour progress of this flight. Almost every lookout tallied record numbers of Broad-winged Hawks: 25,000 at Booth Hill (almost 13,000 in one hour), 23,000 at Woodchuck Lane in Harwinton (over 15,000 in one hour), 23,000 across the north-south line between Bridgewater and Redding, and a two-day count at Quaker Ridge of over 28,000. This great flight was observed in other states as well. On the morning of the 19th, at three sites in southern Massachusetts, just north of Barkhamsted Reservoir, over 21,000 Broadwings were counted. To the southwest, this mass of hawks was seen at lookouts in southeastern New York just north of New York City, in northern New Jersey at Montclair (29,000 on September 19th and 20th), and in southeastern Pennsylvania across a line extending from Philadelphia to Lancaster.

In Connecticut, hawk watchers returned to inland lookouts on September 20th to find that most of the Broad-wings had passed. However, the tail end of the flight was moving close to the Connecticut coastline. Apparently, strong northwest winds on Sunday had pushed the lines of hawks, originally moving southwest, further and further to the southeast. By mid-afternoon they began to appear over New Haven (Table 1). On Monday, September 20th, close to 5,000 Broadwings passed over Lighthouse Point on Long Island Sound, and almost 6,000 flew over Quaker Ridge in Greenwich. No doubt many of these hawks were counted at more than one lookout, and no doubt many in this mass were never seen by watchers at the active sites. Whatever the actual sight count, for birders who witnessed this flight, it was an awesome sight. One long-time, veteran birder felt this was one of the two or three great moments in his birding career. This thought was echoed by many others.

The year of the Eagle? Yes! Although eagles don't pass in the thousands, or even the hundreds, fall 1993 produced record numbers of both Bald and Golden Eagles. Table 2 gives the totals for all species at all active lookouts. Bald Eagles totaled 173, Golden Eagles 15, both figures impressively higher than the fall counts of the previous year. Watchers at Quaker Ridge recorded an amazing 64 Bald and 11 Golden Eagles, and the 32 Bald Eagles seen over Lighthouse Point were also a record. The flight of September 19th played a major role in the "Year of the Eagle." That Sunday, flying with the Broad-wings, an incredible 116 Bald Eagles were counted: 6 at Booth Hill, 19 at Johnnycake Farm in Burlington, 11 at Chestnut Hill in Litchfield, 9 at Botsford Hill in Bridgewater, where at one point three adults passed in single file, and 26 at Quaker Ridge.

Following the great flight of Broad-winged Hawks, the migration continued along the Connecticut coastline. With hawks of many species passing daily, the counts continued until mid-November at Quaker Ridge. At Lighthouse Point hawks were also passing each day, sometimes by the hundreds, and watches continued until November 30th. On the afternoon of November 18th, hawk number 30,000 passed over Lighthouse Point. Raptor number 29,997, a few moments before, had been a Golden Eagle. How close! At Lighthouse Point it was a record year (Table 3), and the third highest count in ten years of hawk watching at Quaker Ridge (Tables 4 and 5). When these figures are compared to the approximately 31,000 hawks seen at Cape May, New Jersey, in the fall of 1993, it is obvious that something special was taking place in Connecticut. Hopefully, birders who have not experienced such fall migration will come to Lighthouse Point or Quaker Ridge, or perhaps to one of Connecticut's inland sites next fall.

Recorders and observers at Connecticut sites last fall included: Georgia Abbott, Lois Aldi, Guy Badger, Dan Barvir, Trudy Battaly, Ray Belding, Ron Bell, Betty Bell, Polly Brody, Tom Burke, Paul Carrier, Barbara Cole, Neil Currie, Bob DeCandido, Patrick Dugan, Richard English, Joe Ferrari, Jay Gartner, Paul Grady, Joyce Grohoski, Frank Guida, Greg Hanisek, Don Hopkins, Elsbeth Johnson, Seth Kellogg, Dick Kenny, Phyllis Kitchin, Garry Lemmon, The Lincolns, Steve Mayo, Jim McBride, Jerry Mersereau, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer, Drew Panko, Matthew Popp, Arne Rosengren, M. Sampson, Ray Schwartz, Ed Shove, Dori Sosensky, Art Titus, Tony Tortora, Mike Usai, Edith Wells, Jim Zipp, and Joan Zulpa. Apologies to others I did not list.

10 Mountain Laurel Ln., Sandy Hook, CT 06482.

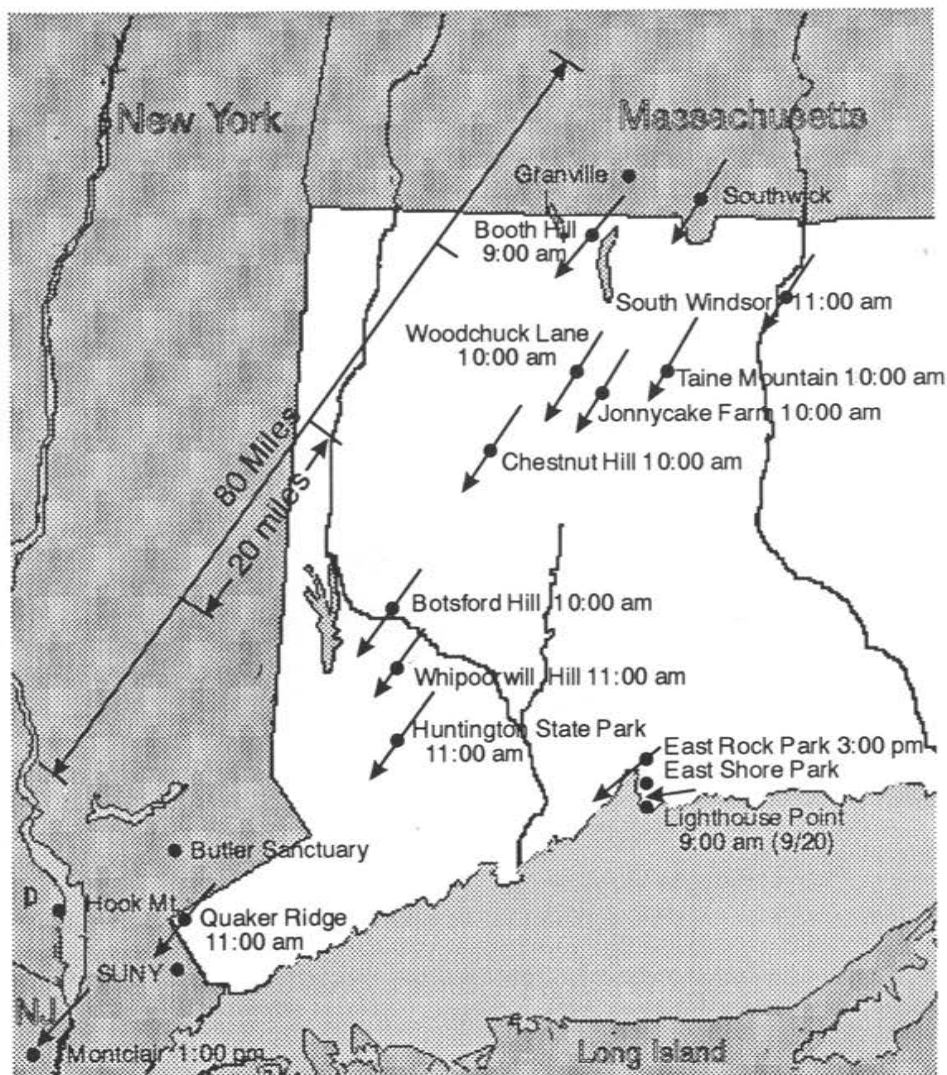


FIGURE 1: BROAD-WINGED HAWK FLIGHT  
September 19, 1993 Times of arrival

TABLE 1: BROAD-WINGED HAWK FLIGHTS

Standard Time	September 19, 1993										September 20, 1993							Total	
	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3		
Booth Hill		96	4972	12804	3668	3427	202	7			No Coverage							25176	
Beelzebub St.		11	44	5	503	99	54	0			30	33	9	5	2			795	
Woodchuck Lane		35	236	15269	7330	247	201				No Coverage							23318	
Jonnycake Farm	0	27	725	4559	2173	186	35	16			33	5	2	0				7761	
Taine Mountain			17	2018	1708	301	349	63			No Coverage							4456	
Chestnut Hill	33	37	293	3396	353	461	7	24	14	13	0	36	5	3	5			4680	
Botsford Hill		7	8	3564	3678	617	291	115	27	9	46	17	24	1				8404	
Whippoorwill Hill		13	14	289	2347	1750	186	69	93	39	53	21	69	210	9			5189	
Huntington S.P.	0	1	70	802	3131	4744	685	125	73		No Coverage							9631	
East Rock Park								452	870	332	80	893	524					3151	
East Shore Park		No Coverage										No Coverage							
Lighthouse Point	0	0	11	25	20	30	45			106	1525	3100	104	5				4971	
Quaker Ridge		23	42	5	2122	6353	6103	3200	3265	907	55	775	1285	3448	440	297	45	28365	

Total - September 19 112536  
 - September 20 13361  
 125897



TABLE 2: CONNECTICUT - ALL LOOKOUTS - FALL 1993

SITES	Hours	SPECIES														Total		
		TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML		PG	UR
Bridgewater	31.5		30	10	5	77	2			8867				27	2		4	9024
Burlington #1	10.0		37	4		19				4551				1	1			4613
Burlington #2	33.0		34	22	6	44	11			8222				25			9	8373
Greenwich	511.0	396	518	64	154	2053	166	11	132	29118	252	1	11	535	27	13	113	33565
Hartland	7.0		33	6	5	48	11	3	1	25176	2			12	3		7	25307
Harwinton	18.5		22	5	3	59	3		3	23467	13			4			6	23585
Litchfield	39.0		30	12		24	1	1	1	4803	1			19		2	8	4902
New Haven #1	580.5	230	3224	32	1054	10105	2191	19	94	6088	253	1	4	4568	1020	61	1128	30072
New Haven #2	58.0	264	204	8	42	3653	133	2		786	107			812	9	8	8	6036
New Haven #3	6.0	20	13		10	356	43	1		3151	11			400	8			4013
Newtown	44.5		59	7	11	127	8		1	5795	42			84	1		20	6155
Redding	17.5		33	3	3	64	6			9700	2			25	1			9837
South Windsor	41.5		11		1	25				887				18			10	952
TOTAL - 1993	1398.0	910	4248	173	1294	16654	2575	37	232	130611	683	2	15	6530	1072	84	1313	166434
TOTAL - 1992	1279.0	746	2624	63	599	14244	2142	26	240	30708	1073	3	3	4711	496	68	1177	58923

## SITE LOCATIONS

Bridgewater - Botsford Hill  
 Burlington #1 - Taine Mountain  
 Burlington #2 - Johnnycake Mountain  
 Greenwich - Quaker Ridge  
 Hartland - Booth Hill  
 Harwinton - Woodchuck Lane  
 Litchfield - Chestnut Hill  
 New Haven #1 - Lighthouse Point  
 New Haven #2 - East Shore Park  
 New Haven #3 - East Rock Park  
 Newtown - Whippoorwill Hill  
 Redding - Huntington State Park  
 South Windsor - Beelzebub Road

## SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

TV - Turkey Vulture  
 OS - Osprey  
 BE - Bald Eagle  
 NH - Northern Harrier  
 SS - Sharp-shinned Hawk  
 CH - Cooper's Hawk  
 NG - Northern Goshawk  
 RS - Red-shouldered Hawk  
 BW - Broad-winged Hawk  
 RT - Red-tailed Hawk  
 RL - Rough-legged Hawk  
 GE - Golden Eagle  
 AK - American Kestrel  
 ML - Merlin  
 PG - Peregrine Falcon  
 UR - unidentified raptor

**TABLE 3: LIGHTHOUSE POINT, NEW HAVEN, HAWKWATCH - FALL 1993**

MONTH	Hours	SPECIES																Total
		TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	
August	54.5	1	235	1	21		8		3	33	1			34	6		5	348
September	210.0	31	2578	21	545	5107	1239	1	8	5953	8		2597	325	22	651	19086	
October	189.5	172	460	9	403	4329	877	15	25	100	62		2	1920	680	35	441	9530
November	128.0	26	11	1	85	669	67	3	58	2	182	1	2	17	9	4	31	1168
TOTAL - 1993	582.0	230	3284	32	1054	10105	2191	19	94	6088	253	1	4	4568	1020	61	1128	30132
TOTAL - 1992	487.5	242	1935	10	487	9683	1863	13	112	1264	498	2	0	3736	436	46	954	21281

Species abbreviations as in Table 5

**TABLE 4: QUAKER RIDGE, GREENWICH, HAWKWATCH - FALL 1993**

MONTH	Hours	SPECIES																Total
		TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	
August	37	2	31	2	1	14	1			47	8			16			4	126
September	211	29	411	53	85	1093	61	1	12	29053	55			329	14	3	52	31251
October	212.5	297	76	9	60	912	102	6	105	18	110		10	190	13	10	55	1973
November	50.5	68			8	34	2	4	15	1	79	1	1				2	215
TOTAL - 1993 *	511.0	396	518	64	154	2053	166	11	132	29119	252	1	11	535	27	13	113	33565
TOTAL - 1992	525	396	410	24	80	2495	183	11	117	8187	468	1	3	465	47	17	181	13085

\* Includes 1 Black Vulture. Species abbreviations as in Table 5

TABLE 5: TEN YEARS AT QUAKER RIDGE IN GREENWICH

YEAR	Hours	SPECIES																Total
		TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	
1984	100	42	109	6	29	1018	19	1	6	12813	59	1	123	1	3	28	14258	
1985	404	193	297	9	235	3099	45	11	32	14398	317	1	474	5	9	238	19363	
1986	602	201	618	23	268	3629	75	15	23	39743	544	2	6	673	9	7	337	46173
1987	604	395	1021	24	332	3800	169	10	75	12405	374	1	4	894	30	22	299	19855
1988	524	377	683	22	260	3337	153	14	152	34125	282	5	851	40	16	202	40519	
1989	534	244	687	11	256	3511	169	4	98	12522	209	4	986	48	22	279	19050 *	
1990	615	414	1038	21	164	3381	269	27	191	9997	481	1	8	980	82	39	304	17397
1991	530	453	461	12	74	2128	146	13	106	7823	349	5	622	39	13	182	12426	
1992	525	396	410	24	80	2495	183	11	117	8187	468	1	3	465	47	17	181	13085 **
1993	511	396	518	64	154	2053	166	11	132	29118	252	1	11	535	29	13	113	33566
Ave/Year	495	311	584	22	185	2845	139	12	93	18113	334	1	5	660	33	16	216	23569

\* Includes 1 Swainson's Hawk

\*\* Includes 1 Black Vulture

## SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

TV - Turkey Vulture

SS - Sharp-shinned Hawk

BW - Broad-winged Hawk

AK - American Kestrel

OS - Osprey

CH - Cooper's Hawk

RT - Red-tailed Hawk

ML - Merlin

BE - Bald Eagle

NG - Northern Goshawk

RL - Rough-legged Hawk

PG - Peregrine Falcon

NH - Northern Harrier

RS - Red-shouldered Hawk

GE - Golden Eagle

UR - unidentified raptor

# EASTERN BLUEBIRDS RAISE BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES AND THEIR OWN YOUNG AT THE SAME SITE

James M. Zingo<sup>1,2</sup> Kathleen Murphy<sup>3</sup>, and David Rosgen<sup>1</sup>

There are several records of Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) as interspecific helpers (see review by Zingo 1994). We report here an unusual case in which a pair of bluebirds usurped a nestbox from a pair of Black-capped Chickadees (*Parus atricapillus*) and then cared for two chickadee nestlings prior to producing their own young. The nestbox, part of a statewide network maintained by the Connecticut Bluebird Restoration Project (Rosgen and Zingo 1993), was located on a golf course (Figure 1) at the Country Club of Farmington in Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut, and was inspected about

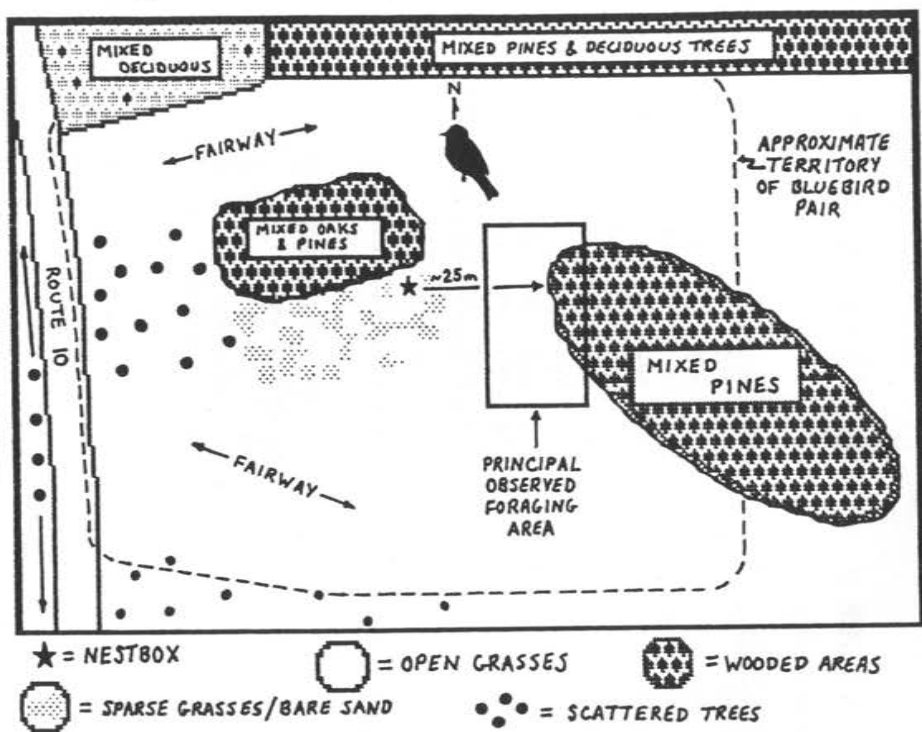


Figure 1. A map of the habitat surrounding the nestbox. The distances, proportions, and spatial relationships shown are approximate.

once each week from late April through the end of August 1992.

On 28 April, Murphy and Rosgen observed a male bluebird singing near the nestbox, which contained a nearly-complete bluebird nest. However, by 7 May, a pair of chickadees had built a nest atop the bluebird nest. The box was next inspected on 21 and 28 May, and both times it contained a chickadee incubating a clutch of seven eggs. On 4 June, the nest contained two 4-day-old young and five eggs. By 11 June, the unhatched eggs were gone and a pair of bluebirds were caring for the nestling chickadees. For about two hours on both 14 and 15 June, we watched the bluebirds feed the young, remove fecal sacs, and the male defend the nestbox from intruders. Adult chickadees were not seen after 15 June.

By 18 June, the chickadee young were no longer at the nest and were not seen again. The female bluebird had laid two eggs by 18 June, a third egg by 25 June, and completed a clutch of five eggs by 2 July. The five eggs hatched about 10 July; all five bluebird young were alive on 17 July; and they fledged by 28 July. We did not observe further activity at or near the nestbox.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# EASTERN BLUEBIRDS AS INTERSPECIFIC HELPERS: A REVIEW

James M. Zingo

Intraspecific helping and adoption have been documented in all three bluebird species (*Sialia* spp.; Skutch 1935, 1961, Laskey 1939, Hamilton 1943, Bent 1949, Zeleny 1976, Hayes et al. 1985), but except for cases involving brood parasitism, only the Eastern Bluebird (*S. sialis*) has been reported caring for young of other species. To provide insights as to the origins of Eastern Bluebirds as interspecific helpers, I reviewed nine records of this species feeding young of seven other species (Table 1), omitting human-induced situations (e.g., Acopian 1990, MacNeil 1991) and cases involving brood parasitism. In chronological order, these records are:

- 1) for several days a male bluebird fed nestling vireos (*Vireo* sp.) only a meter or so away from his own mate and nest (Burroughs 1894);
- 2) a male bluebird continually drove away a pair of House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*) and fed their young himself, ignoring his own young in a nestbox about 9 m away (Forbush 1929);
- 3) a male bluebird fed young House Wrens about 15 m away from his own young (Batts 1958);
- 4) a pair of bluebirds helped feed Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) nestlings, even after the young left the nest (Carr and Goin 1965);
- 5) a male bluebird helped raise Mountain Bluebird (*S. currucooides*) young to fledging (Scott 1971);
- 6) a male bluebird helped a pair of Black-capped Chickadees (*Parus atricapillus*) fledge several young before he returned to his incubating mate, the bluebirds eventually raising their own brood (Bender and Bender 1983);
- 7) a pair of bluebirds fed nestling Carolina Chickadees (*P. carolinensis*) until fledging, after which the pair began their own nest (Tripp 1984);
- 8) a male bluebird drove away a pair of Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) and took over the care of their nestlings, showing minimal attention to his own young during that period of adoption (Naber and Naber 1990); and
- 9) a pair of bluebirds raised Black-capped Chickadee young, possibly until fledging, prior to raising their own young at the same site (Zingo et al. 1994).

For Table 1, I considered the natural parents to be present if they were at the nest either at initial contact (regardless of whether or not they were driven away by the adopters) or when much of the feeding took place. The probable proximate causes (i.e., the reasons the bluebirds came into contact with young of different species) were defined as follows: low abundance - few Eastern Bluebirds in a given area, and thus a reasonable likelihood that individuals would be

**Table 1. Cases of naturally-occurring interspecific feeding with Eastern Bluebirds feeding young of other species.**

Species fed	Type of nest	Natural parents present?	Nest successful? recipients	Nest successful? adopters	Sex of feeding bird(s)	Care given*	Proximate causes	Source
<u>Vireo</u> sp.	open	Yes	not reported	not reported	male	r	close nest, calling young presum. mate incubating	Burroughs 1894
House Wren	nestbox	Yes	not reported	not reported	male	f	close nest, calling young	Forbush 1929
House Wren	nestbox	No	Yes	Yes	male	f,s	close nest, calling young	Batts 1958
Northern Mockingbird	open	Yes	Yes	No	both	r,s	calling young, possible nest failure, possibly limited nest sites	Carr and Goin 1965
Mountain Bluebird	nestbox	Yes	Yes	unknown	male	r,d,s	mateless, calling young, low abundance	Scott 1971
Black-capped Chickadee	nestbox	Yes	Yes	Yes	male	r,d	close nest, mate incubating	Bender and Bender 1983
Carolina Chickadee	nestbox	Yes	Yes	Yes	both	r	calling young, probably limited nest sites	Tripp 1984
Tree Swallow	nestbox	Yes	Yes	Yes	male	r,s	close nest, mate incubating	Naber and Naber 1990
Black-capped Chickadee	nestbox	Probably	Possibly	Yes	both	r,d,s	limited nest sites, calling young	Zingo et al. 1994 & unpubl.

\* type of care: d = defended nest from intruders and/or original parents  
r = helped to raise young, fed numerous times

f = fed young briefly or only a few times  
s = removed fecal sacs/aided in nest sanitation

unmated and available as helpers; calling young - the begging calls of nestlings presumably attracted attention; close nest - the feeding individual(s) nested near the recipient nest; limited nest sites - competition for a limited resource (cavity nest sites); mate incubating - a male fed at another nest while his mate incubated eggs nearby; mateless - one or more individuals at the nest either lost or never found a mate; and nest failure - the bluebirds became adopters after their own failed nesting attempt. I presumed a cause to be applicable, or considered it a possibility or probability, based on details of the particular event. Shy (1982) reviewed 140 interspecific feeding events among birds and described the calling young, close nest, mate incubating, mateless, and nest failure categories in greater detail. Many of the above seven reasons for initial contact are related and not mutually exclusive, so I attributed more than one proximate cause for each of the interspecific feeding events. Calling young and/or close nestings seemed to be factors at most of the nests, and these two conditions are probably especially difficult to separate.

The probable proximate causes only explain why the bluebirds came into contact with foreign young and not why the adopters acted as they did. The apparent underlying reasons were those which caused bluebirds to begin caring for foreign young after initial contact. The hormonal state of the helpers and the motivation to feed are not mutually exclusive and are implicated in all nine cases. In two cases (Tripp 1984, Zingo et al. 1994), the adopters established themselves at a nest site by helping to care for young already present, so I felt that the desire to gain a nest site for their own clutch was another likely underlying reason for these two cases, especially due to the presumed limited availability of natural and man-made cavities.

## Discussion and Summary

In the three cases for which both sexes acted as helpers, the bluebirds were paired but not concurrently nesting. In five of the other six cases, a male fed young of another species while his mate attended a nearby nest; in no case did a female alone help at a nest. Male birds are sometimes so driven to feed young that they offer food to their unhatched eggs ("anticipatory food bringing"; Skutch 1961). The calling young of another species may stimulate a male, with his mate incubating nearby, to feed them. Shy (1982) suggested that this may provide a temporary outlet for a male's feeding drive until his own young hatch. The urge to feed young may thus be stronger in males than in females. A male bluebird is not burdened with the bulk of incubation and brooding duties as is the female, and thus is probably freer to respond to the begging calls of young at a nearby



nest. This explanation may not necessarily apply to the male that became a replacement mate for a Mountain Bluebird; the prior situation of the male was not known.

At initial contact, the stimulus of begging nestlings triggered feeding behavior. When an adult bird is in an appropriate hormonal state, the proper stimuli can release parental behavior (Skutch 1961). Skutch (1961) briefly discussed the strength of the motivation to feed among altricial birds, an extreme example being that of a Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) feeding goldfish

(Lemmons 1956). When a bird loses its mate, its chances of successfully raising offspring are adversely affected, but replacement mates can increase the chances of reproductive success. The strong motivation to feed younger individuals probably facilitates the establishment of replacement mates, even crossing barriers between similar species (Scott 1971).

In eight of nine cases, the natural parents were present at the recipient nest at some point. A female Mountain Bluebird accepted a male Eastern Bluebird as a replacement mate (Scott 1971), perhaps because the female needed a replacement mate and the male of a closely-related species exhibited sufficiently similar behavior. In another case, a pair of Northern Mockingbirds tried to chase away a pair of Eastern Bluebirds, but the bluebirds persisted in feeding the mockingbird young (Carr and Goin 1965). In the other cases, the bluebirds, either by being present or by active aggression, kept the natural parents away for much or all of the time.



A male Eastern Bluebird with a caterpillar prior to feeding its young at a nestbox in Monroe, CT on 17 May 1992. photo by J. M. Zingo

The type of care given by the adopters varied, but much of the variation was probably due to differences in the amount of time the observer(s) spent watching each nest, or an absence of such details in some of the published records. In one case, a male fed young House Wrens over a short time before they and his own young fledged (Batts 1958). In another, a male fed young House Wrens for two days until the property owner erected wire mesh around the nestbox to exclude the bluebird; while he could not feed the young, the bluebird continued to defend the nest from



A male Eastern Bluebird with a fecal sac removed from a nestbox in Monroe, CT on 17 May 1992. photo by James M. Zingo

the natural parents (Forbush 1929). For seven of the nine cases, it appeared that the helpers contributed significantly to raising the young, and several of these helpers engaged in nest defense and/or aided in nest sanitation.

Of the seven recipient nests for which success was reported, at least six fledged young, and five of six concurrent or subsequent nesting attempts by helpers were also successful. However, a pair of bluebirds may have failed in their own nesting attempt prior to feeding mockingbird young (Carr and Goin 1965).

Seven of the nine cases occurred at cavity nests in nestboxes and two occurred at open nests. Because Eastern Bluebirds are cavity-nesters, feeding young at open nests might seem unusual, but bluebirds, of course, do feed their own young away from the nest after fledging. Moreover, there are numerous records of other cavity-nesting species feeding young at open nests as well as open-nesting

species feeding young at cavity nests (Skutch 1987). Active, calling young apparently provide sufficient stimulus regardless of their location.

In each of two cases, a pair of bluebirds took over the care of young of another species at a nestbox and afterwards nested in the box themselves. Gaining access to a suitable nest site by helping at another species' nest is an aspect of the competition for nest sites that may not be solely accidental and maladaptive, and may occur more often than realized. Eltzroth and Robinson (1984) documented Violet-green Swallows (*Tachycineta thalassina*) that helped at the nests of Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) and used the same nestboxes once the bluebirds had fledged.

These nine records of Eastern Bluebirds as interspecific helpers are scattered over the past 100 years. Undoubtedly, there are other records, most likely of an anecdotal nature, to be found, especially in older ornithological works which are relatively difficult to survey in a typical literature search and thus are more likely to be overlooked in reviews such as Skutch (1961) and Shy (1982). Interspecific feedings tend to be obvious and catch the interest of the casual observer, and thus are likely to be reported in some manner.

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## TREE DAMAGE BY NESTING DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS IN CONNECTICUT

Carol R. Lemmon<sup>1</sup>, Gregory Bugbee<sup>2</sup>, and George R. Stephens<sup>3</sup>

On 7 July 1993, we accompanied Terry Backer, Long Island Soundkeeper, to Grassy Island off the coast of Norwalk, Connecticut to view trees apparently being killed by the nesting activities of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*).

As we approached Grassy Island, a four acre island east of Chimon Island, we could see considerable defoliation on some of the trees (Figure 1). Cormorants were nesting in black cherry (*Prunus serotina*),



Figure 1. Defoliated trees on Grassy Island off the coast of Norwalk, Ct.

tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*). Upon closer inspection, it became quickly apparent that trees, or parts of trees, containing cormorant nests were defoliated above and below the nests. Branches above and within a six to eight foot radius of cormorant nests were stripped of their foliage (Figure 2). Lower limbs extending beyond the nests had normal foliage. Inspections of nests in hackberry trees revealed that only the cormorants' nests contained a considerable amount of hackberry twigs and leaves. Nests of Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Great

Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) and Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striatus*) contained woody twigs of many species of trees.

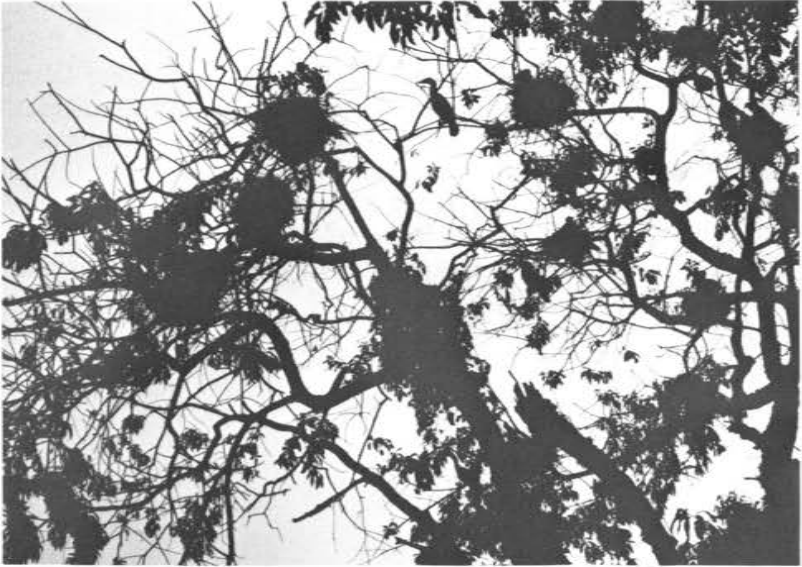


Figure 2. Double-crested Cormorant and nests showing stripped branches

The ground cover and lower sections of the trees below the cormorant nests were whitewashed with guano. The leaves of trees and ground cover showed both curling and browning. Hackberry twigs liberally coated with guano were extensively defoliated, and remaining foliage appeared burned. Buds were intact, but twig ends were wilted. It was unclear, however, whether the wilting was due to the guano or to the unusually dry weather.

Trees that contained only herons and egrets did not show any signs of stress. These birds nested in the mid to lower crown of the trees. Their nests were not readily seen, as they were mostly hidden by foliage. The cormorants tended to nest higher in the trees and stripped the foliage around their nests, making them visible at a distance. It appeared unlikely that removal of tree foliage was the sole cause of the dieback. We observed healthy trees on Chimon Island where herons, ibises, and egrets formerly nested.

We took soil samples from below hackberry trees with only cormorant nests, as well as below those trees with heron and egret nests, and below the same species of tree with no nests. Soil test results suggest

that damage to trees may have been related to excessive ammonium nitrogen and other chemicals contained in cormorant droppings as compared to herons and egrets.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

One pair of Double-crested Cormorants first nested successfully in Connecticut in 1979 on East White Rock in the Norwalk Islands (C.S. Wood in Vickery 1979). The species has expanded its range in southern New England in recent decades and has shown marked increases in populations over that time (Buckley and Buckley 1984, Hatch 1984). The Connecticut population has grown to almost 1200 pairs in the years 1980-1992 (Bull and Sibley, unpubl. data). Early nests in the state were on rocky islands. The first report of tree nesting in Connecticut occurred on Ram Island (near Mystic), with no nests in 1988 and 500 nests in 1989. In 1990 cormorants nested in small trees on Calf Pasture Island, a small island in the Norwalk Islands group. The owners cut the dying trees, and the cormorants moved to other locations (Bull and Sibley, unpubl. data).

It is well documented in the ornithological literature (McNeil and Leger 1987, Scharf and Shugart 1981) that cormorants have nested in trees in other states and have subsequently killed the trees and underlying vegetation (Palmer 1962). How nesting cormorants kill trees, while nesting egrets and herons do not, has not been determined.

Gus Ben David, Director of Massachusetts Audubon Society's Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary on Martha's Vineyard, recently has observed interactions between tree-nesting cormorants and Snowy Egrets. This sanctuary had two nesting pairs of Snowy Egrets in the mid-1980s. Massachusetts Audubon subsequently planted pitch pine trees to encourage further nesting. Nesting egrets increased to 50 pairs by the late 1980s. Double-crested Cormorants began nesting in the trees, displaced the egrets, and subsequently killed the trees and all surrounding vegetation within two seasons. Snowy Egrets no longer nest in the Sanctuary (G. B. David pers. comm.) Similarly, Jim Myers, Principal Biologist with Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife, reports an increase in cormorants over the past 12 years. In 1981, he reported only 18 nests, compared to nearly 2000 nests in the spring of 1993. Little Gould Island had seven nests in trees in 1988 and 506 nests in 1993 (Myers 1993).

Tree-nesting cormorants appear to be a threat to the trees on the Norwalk islands. Consequently, nesting sites of birds such as herons, egrets, and ibises and the resistance of the islands to erosion may be threatened.

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## BOOK REVIEW

George A. Clark, Jr.

*New England Wildlife: Management of Forested Habitats.*

R. M. DeGraaf, M. Yamaski, W. B. Leak, and J. W. Lanier. 1992.

U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, General Technical Report NE-144. Pp. 1-271. (For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402; no price listed).

More than 60% of the land area of Connecticut is now covered by forest, but much of that woodland is potentially subject to human modification. In the past it has been a common practice to remove trees from woodlands without considering the consequences for wildlife. There is now an increasing public awareness that the importance of forests goes far beyond the immediate value of the wood. When forests are altered it has often been difficult to predict the consequences for birdlife. For example, what effects are to be expected if small blocks of a large woodland are clear-cut to encourage the growth of fruit-bearing shrubs? The volume here reviewed provides initial answers for such questions.

This book, the second in a two volume series on New England wildlife, will especially interest those concerned with the relationship



between forests and wildlife, particularly for New England. Although the volume was specifically written for professionals in forestry and wildlife management, others interested in the conservation of forest birds may also find it useful. Due to the complexity of the topic, the enormous quantity of information summarized in graphs and tables, and the specialized terminology, the reading is not always easy. All readers of the book will appreciate the attractive, large, black and white photographs illustrating some of the common kinds of forests found in New England.

Although this book also covers amphibians, reptiles, and mammals and includes the whole of New England, my comments in this review emphasize those parts of this volume relevant to birds in Connecticut. Even within an area as small as Connecticut, the forests are quite varied, many dozens of bird species occur in woodlands, and numerous alternative kinds of forest management are conceivable. A common objective for forest managers in many situations is to maintain as great a diversity of wildlife as possible while allowing some harvesting of lumber. This volume is intended to indicate the potential effects of deliberate cutting of the forests, whether done selectively tree by tree or through removal of entire stands.

As a first step for management of a particular forest tract, DeGraaf et al. recommend the completion of an inventory of what is already present. If a tract to be managed is relatively small (less than 250 acres), it is also important to consider the habitat conditions and the wildlife of the surrounding area. The authors recommend that such surveys encompass ten times the area to be managed (e. g., 2,500 acres for a 250 acre tract). Ideally, owners or managers of small tracts might coordinate their efforts for the good of all, but such cooperation is often difficult or impossible to achieve. Indeed, deliberate management of private forests with consideration for wildlife is still not common. In Connecticut, programs such as the Coverts Project, organized by the Cooperative Extension Service and the Ruffed Grouse Society, have encouraged increasing numbers of woodland owners to consider wildlife as part of their management programs. Once a basic inventory of a tract and its surroundings has been completed, a set of goals can be established in terms of wildlife species to be favored through management. This book provides general recommendations for reaching specific goals, but the authors caution that the book is not intended to substitute for actual field studies in and around a tract.

Appendices covering 124 pages at the end of the book summarize (in tables) an enormous amount of information about the use of

habitats by different species of wildlife. To make full use of the appendices, readers will require additional sources to provide information on the geographic and seasonal distributions of the birds. As the authors point out, much of the information they present is somewhat tentative because their book is a pioneering effort based, to a great extent, on previously published literature. Cited publications are listed in a four page references section. The authors have not attempted to present a full bibliography on the relations between forest management and wildlife in New England.

In a few places, I noted apparent discrepancies between the authors' characterizations of habitat and my own experience. For example, on page 222, the Willow Flycatcher is listed in upland rather than wetland habitat. Although I have seen Willow Flycatchers occupying upland habitats during the breeding season in the midwestern and western U. S., I have not seen such sites used in southern New England. Here these birds would seem to be more appropriately designated as occurring in wetland habitat. In other examples, the Northern Bobwhite on page 34 and the House Finch on page 35 are listed as having preferences for coniferous forest, but these categorizations do not seem to match my experience with these species in Connecticut.

For the study of birds in general, there remains a problem of how best to describe avian habitats so that the differences and similarities between species are clearly presented. One difficulty is that habitats used by a species sometimes vary over a geographic range or even within one locality. Measurements that may be useful for characterizing habitat of one species may be useless for another. The ways in which bird habitats are described still vary greatly from one study to another. It remains questionable whether habitats for a variety of species can be adequately characterized within any single system, but the authors have certainly made a major effort to do so, and this in itself is a valuable contribution.

This book is also valuable in providing a different perspective from those found in much of the existing ornithological and ecological literature. Because the book is intended to be used in a practical way, the best tests of its usefulness would seem to be in actual field situations where management is to be applied, but such tests would probably require at least several years.

In summary, I recommend this volume for those who are interested in an in-depth approach to the relationship between New England forests and the birds that inhabit them.

Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-3043.

# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

## SUMMER: JUNE 1 - JULY 31, 1993

Jay Kaplan

**Editor's Comment:** Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (see COA Field List) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of The Rare Records Committee, if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.

Summer is often pleasant in southern New England, but birders, odd breed that they are, would prefer to slog through an icy marsh or struggle against the windswept winter beach than to venture out on a pleasant mid July morning before the sun warms the land and quiets the birds. I've never really quite understood why, but I imagine it has something to do with the chances of finding the unexpected or rare species during the summer months. Birders hope for a mid summer hurricane to drive in species of interest to the Nutmeg State. Yet, a quick look at the seasonal report notes that Manx Shearwater was reported off our coast; and in inland locations, Sandhill Crane, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Sedge Wren and nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers. There are birds to be observed, studied and enjoyed during a Connecticut summer, if one makes an effort to find them!

The season's weather brought nothing unusual. Temperatures were seasonable, exceeding 90°F but once in the Hartford area during the period. Rainfall for June was 2.63 inches in Hartford compared to a normal 3.63 inches. July rainfall measured a more significant 4.9 inches, almost two inches above the norm. There were few severe weather systems, other than the expected local thunderstorms associated with a Connecticut summer. To sum up the season in a word, it was pleasant, and perhaps most folks, other than birders, prefer it that way.

### LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Non-breeding Red-throated Loons are occasionally reported in Long Island Sound in early June. Single birds were off Greenwich Point, Greenwich June 3 (BO) and off Milford Point, Milford June 5 (SM). Non-breeding Common Loons also frequent the Sound in summer. A bird at the north end of Barkhamsted

Reservoir near the Massachusetts border June 4 (DR), however, may have attempted nesting. Thus far all summer sightings of Common Loons in northwest Connecticut have been of nonbreeders, as was the case with a bird in West Hartford's Reservoir No. 6 June 5 (BD). Another possible breeder was a Pied-billed Grebe in Roy Swamp, Sharon July 17 (BD). An

**Eared Grebe** in breeding plumage was reported June 26 on the tidal portion of Five Mile River, Darien (Bill Van Loon, fide FM). Studied at close range, approximately 20 feet from shore, the bird was swimming downstream. Birders were unable to locate the bird later in the day. Most interesting was a report of a possible **Manx Shearwater** off White Rock, Stonington, July 14 (RA et al.). Several individuals observed the bird at close range from a fishing boat. For this hypothetical pelagic visitor to Long Island Sound (Zeranski & Baptist 1990), there is one previous sight report of the species in Connecticut. In recent years, sightings of this species have increased in waters off southern New England. A report has been forwarded to the Connecticut Rare Records Committee.

**American Bitterns** were at Milford Point June 16 and July 23 and at Juniper Point, Branford June 26 (JF). A **Least Bittern** was at the Station 43 marsh, South Windsor June 12 (NC, RN et al.). This species is confirmed as a breeder at this location. A **Least Bittern** in Lordship Marsh, Stratford July 10 (Jim McCoy fide FM) and July 16 (JF) may have been an individual released at this location in April after recovering from the effects of the March "blizzard." Two **Great Blue Heron** nests, one with five young and the other with three, were found in a Barkhamsted marsh

July 14 (JK et al.). This species continues to nest in remote swamps in northern portions of the state. Three **Tricolored Herons** were at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area (hereafter BIWMA), Stonington June 3 (FM, CB), and one was at Rocky Neck State Park, Niantic June 10 (RSCB). A high of nine **Glossy Ibises** were seen at BIWMA June 3 (DP). **Glossy Ibis** were also seen during the period at Milford Point and at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison (hereafter HBSP) (m.ob.).

There were several reports of lingering waterfowl in Long Island Sound. Five **Brant** were off Greenwich Point June 10 (BO); a **White-winged Scoter** was at Milford Point July 2 (CB); a **Common Goldeneye** was in Greenwich June 26 (JZ); an **Oldsquaw** was at Milford Point July 2 (RE) and a **Bufflehead** was on Laurel Reservoir, New Canaan June 13 (FM). It should be noted that summer waterfowl reports from the Sound often indicate sick or injured individuals. There were several reports of **Hooded Mergansers**, with young, from northern and northwestern parts of the state.

A total of 65 **Osprey** nests were active in the state this season, a very slight decline from active nests in 1992. However, statewide nest productivity increased from 1.47 young fledged per active nest in 1992 to 1.83 young in 1993. This figure equals the record

high set in 1991 and includes two young fledged from a nest platform on Nell's Island, Milford (CT DEP). There were also numerous reports of Ospreys summering on inland reservoirs and rivers (m.ob.). The Bald Eagle pair in Barkhamsted successfully fledged two young July 23 (DEP), including the captive-bred Massachusetts chick that had been placed in the nest. Additional eagles were reported from north-west Connecticut through the period (m.ob.) (see related article by Don Hopkins in CW 13:114).

An adult female Northern Harrier was at Manresa Island, Norwalk June 20 (FM). There were increasing reports of Cooper's Hawks nesting in various locations around the state. An observer recently suggested that a program, similar to the one for Eastern Bluebirds, be developed for American Kestrels. This might be a worthwhile consideration as Kestrels continue to struggle in Connecticut. An adult and three recently-fledged young were in Ashford July 6 (LB,GC). A Peregrine Falcon at Milford Point July 21 (JY) was the only report for the period.

### RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

King Rails were scarce this season with reports of a possible sighting at BIWMA June 20 (GH) and a bird heard calling at Bargh Reservoir, Stamford June 6 and 13 (BO, TBu). A Common

Moorhen was in Sharon July 17 (BD). A Sandhill Crane, first observed in Sharon July 11 (Bob Moeller, fide FM), and on July 17 (LW), remained through the end of the period.

A pair of American Oystercatchers at Milford Point June 5 through the end of the period (m.ob.) exhibited an interest in nesting, but were frequently disturbed by boaters and sunbathers. Unfortunately, there is stiff competition in Connecticut for sandy beaches. The Greenwich/Stamford Summer Bird Count June 13 totaled 13 oystercatchers. One pair attempted nesting at Sand Island off Greenwich Point, but this attempt was unsuccessful (BO). Oystercatchers at Falkner Island were more successful. Two young hatched in mid June, were banded June 27 and fledged July 31 (JS). Another beach nester, the federally-threatened Piping Plover, also found tough going this season. Department of Environmental Protection reports indicate a decrease in plover pairs (24) of 40% from the previous year (40). Up to 10 Upland Sandpipers were seen through the period at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks (JM et al.), their last Connecticut stronghold. Three birds at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford July 7 (BO) may have been early migrants. Two Whimbrels were at HBSP July 27 (fide SM) and two more were at Milford Point the following day (SM). THE place

for migrant shorebirds in Connecticut is, according to many area birders, Milford Point. The 2,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers July 25 (SM et al.) must agree. Small numbers of White-rumped sandpipers, a late migrant, passed through the state in early June (m.ob.) with reports from Sandy Point, West Haven, Milford Point and HBSP. Milford Point also hosted a Bonaparte's Gull July 11 (CB), a Caspian Tern July 21 (JY) and 1-3 Black Skimmers June 27 through the end of the period (m.ob.). The nesting tern population on Falkner's Island was reportedly in good shape this year, with 130 nests of Roseate Terns and 3500 nests of Commons (JS fide FM). The famed Monk Parakeet nest tree in Bridgeport blew down in a severe storm June 9, leaving rescuers to raise over 100 chicks (AO).

Perhaps birders are the only ones to lament a scarcity of cuckoos this season, evidently due to a lack of gypsy moth or other caterpillars. A half dozen reports of single Black-billed Cuckoos came primarily from southern Connecticut. Pairs of Yellow-billed Cuckoos in Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown July 4 and in Preston July 28-31 (DP) were the only reports for this species. Three young Barn Owls were banded at the Middletown nest site, but the Middlefield site was unused (G. Zepko). In 1991, these two sites produced 12 owlets, and eight last year. This is not an encourag-

ing trend and there was speculation that the Middlefield nest may have been abandoned due to severe weather conditions earlier in the year. Downtown Waterbury hosted 5-10 pairs of Common Nighthawk through the period (GH). Common Nighthawk has declined significantly in recent decades as a nesting species in Connecticut (Zeranski & Baptist 1990). At least 13 Whip-poor-wills were in Pachaug State Forest June 19 through July 4 (DP), an impressive count for a species that has declined throughout much of Connecticut. On the evening of June 27, a flock of 200 Chimney Swifts entered a brick chimney in South Norwalk (FM). A pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers reportedly nested in Stanley Quarter Park, New Britain (DR, KM). This species is a very rare breeder in Connecticut, last nesting in Suffield in 1984 (Zeranski & Baptist 1990).

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

Of the several *Empidonax* species, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is the last to migrate through Connecticut. Individuals were sighted in Easton June 3 (CB, FM), in Pachaug State Forest June 4 (DP) and in Fairchild Gardens, Greenwich June 1 (FM) and June 5 (DP). Acadian Flycatchers are reported in increasing numbers, primarily from the northern and central parts of the state (m.ob.). A report of a Scissor-tailed Fly-

catcher at BIWMA June 3 (DP et al.) has been forwarded to the CRRC and includes photographs (FM).

Common Ravens did not fare well this season. Most of the nests in the Barkhamsted Reservoir area and a nest along the Naugatuck River, Thomaston reportedly failed. A nest in Ashford, in northeastern Connecticut, presumably fledged two young (GC). There were numerous reports of Red-breasted Nuthatch throughout the state this season including 24 on the Greenwich/Stamford Summer Bird Count. The Barkhamsted Count reported 115. This invasion is unprecedented and bears watching for the future. A singing male Sedge Wren in New Milford June 6-18, was apparently unsuccessful in locating a female (CW). Another was banded on Falkner's Island July 21 (JS). This species is now considered rare in the state.

There were few unusual warbler reports this season. A "Brewster's" hybrid was in North Stonington June 10 (DP). There were no reports received of Yellow-throated Warblers in Kent this summer. A singing male Kentucky Warbler was at its usual haunt at Fairchild Garden, Greenwich June 1 (FM). A singing male Hooded Warbler in Ashford July 4 and 6 (LB,GC) was unusual for northeast Connecticut. A single male Grasshopper Sparrow was located at the north end of Bradley International Airport June 12

(NC,RN), the only Connecticut breeding location for this grass-land species.

Purple Finches were reported from several locations this summer with singing males in two Mansfield locations June 5 and 19 (GC). Additional reports came from Hamden June 7 (AB), Pachaug State Forest June 20 (DP), Preston June 17 and July 5 (DP) and Canton July 12 (JK). Evening Grosbeaks were totally unreported from Connecticut last winter, so it was quite surprising when pairs of birds were in East Hartland June 23 and July 11 (DR et al.). Another pair was in Enders State Forest, Barkhamsted June 30 (DR). Still another pair was in Morris June 30 (GL), where one bird was caught and banded!

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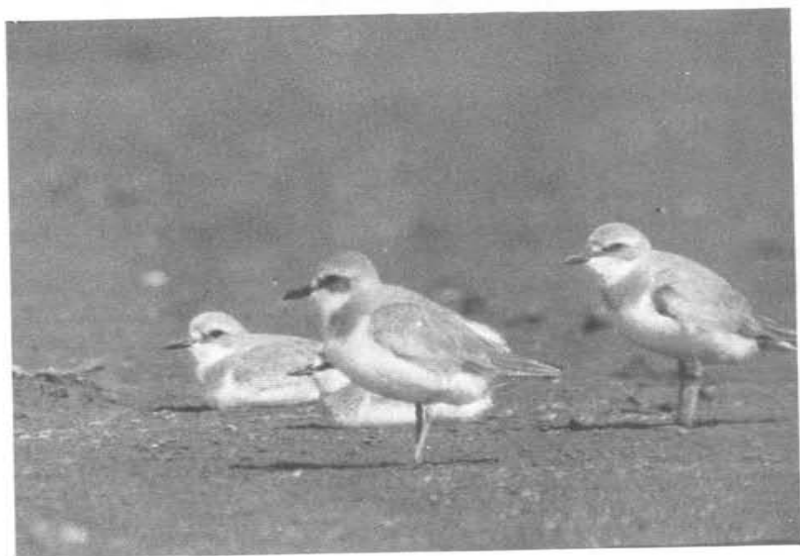
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## ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 7

Certain groups of birds are easily recognized by a basic, simple appearance shared by all the species in the group. Plovers are such a group of birds. All are compactly built birds with a stout-neck and short, thick bill. Thus our October photo challenge should present little difficulty at least to the family level.

Of the small plovers, males in breeding plumage present few identification problems, except for the Ringed and Semipalmated plovers. These two species are nearly identical in appearance, although here again adult males show the most distinctive traits. Most of the small plovers have a rather drab winter feathercoat, lacking the bold black patterns typical of summer. It is this plumage that also presents more than a few challenges to the birder.

The Semipalmated and Piping plovers are the only small plovers regularly seen in Connecticut, but both are very rare in winter. The plain appearance of our quiz birds with breast bands the same color as the back indicates that they are in winter plumage. The birds in the photograph have all black bills and pale legs, features shared by both the above species. Semipalmated is generally darker above than the Piping Plover, which is the color of dry, pale sand. The tone of the quiz birds is somewhat intermediate, so what other features can we use to





differentiate the two species? Piping Plovers show white between the eye and the bill, a feature that separates it from many other species of small plover, including Semipalmated and some rare and accidental species to the Northeast, such as Wilson's and Snowy.

Could these be Semipalmated or one of the rarer species? The bills look rather large for Semipalmated, and Snowy has an even thinner and more pointed bill. Despite the lack of other birds in the photograph for size comparison, these birds look somewhat chunky and heavy bodied. The broad breast band fits Wilson's Plover, so perhaps we should consider this species. Before making that claim, however, we should exercise caution and look for any features that could eliminate that species. Sure enough, one character that would have eliminated all the species that we have considered thus far is the lack of a white collar.

One striking feature of our mystery birds is the clean white throat with pointed extensions below the ear coverts. To me, this pattern is reminiscent of a Myrtle Warbler's throat and quite unlike the effect seen on the other plovers mentioned above. But since we have eliminated any regular and some rare species in the Northeast, what options do we have? Massachusetts has had one record of Mountain Plover. That species is pale brown above and lacks a white collar but is about the size and bulk of a Killdeer and thus longer bodied than our quiz birds. Mountain Plover also does not show such a distinct breast band and has a slightly longer and more slender bill.

The other species of small plovers that lack a white collar are the two sand-plovers, Mongolian Plover, or Lesser Sand-Plover, and Greater Sand-Plover. The throat pattern and broad breast band exactly fit these species, especially Mongolian. Only Mongolian Plover has occurred in North America, and before I hear cries of foul, there is one record from the Northeast at Wildwood, New Jersey, on 13 July 1990 (see *The Birds of Cape May* by David Sibley, 1993), albeit a bird in breeding plumage. These two species are notoriously difficult to separate in the field. The Mongolian Plover has a shorter bill with a proportionately shorter nail, the swollen portion at the tip of the bill. Greater Sand-Plover is a taller and somewhat gangly bird that usually stands in a more horizontal position; its legs are especially longer above the "knee." The short bills and short tibia, the leg above the "knee," on our quiz birds are enough for us to identify them as Mongolian Plovers. Gerry Nicholls photographed these birds in South Africa during February 1976. My apologies for an especially nasty photo challenge, but please try this next one.

Louis R. Bevier



Photo challenge 8. Two views of the same bird. Identify the species, which is recorded from the Northeast. Answer next issue.

# 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 accompanied with an IBM PC disk, if possible. 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. Good quality photographs of particular interest will also be considered. 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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## ABOUT OUR COVER ARTIST:

Mark Szantyr

"Black-throated Blue Warblers (*Dendroica caerulescens*)"  
male and female

Mark Szantyr is a well-known Connecticut artist who has contributed front cover artwork for previous issues of *The Connecticut Warbler*. He has recently completed the artwork for a soon to be published bird-finding guide for Connecticut. He also paints decoys in his spare time.

Mark is a bird-bander, avid photographer, and birder. He lives in Storrs, Connecticut.

# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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Volume 14 Number 2

April 1994

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## Contents

## Spring 1994

- 
- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 42 | <b>The Mabel Osgood Wright Award</b><br>Neil Currie  |
| 43 | <b>Ludlow Griscom (1890-1959): A man of many accomplishments</b><br>William Davis  |
| 48 | <b>Book Review</b><br>Roland C. Clement  |
| 50 | <b>Two Hybrid Common <math>\times</math> Roseate Terns Fledged at Falkner Island, Connecticut</b><br>James M. Zingo, Christopher A. Church, and Jeffrey A. Spendelow |
| 56 | <b>The 1993-94 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count</b><br>Stephen P. Broker   |
| 69 | <b>Connecticut Field Notes</b><br>Fall: August 1 - November 30, 1993<br>Jay Kaplan   |
| 77 | <b>Answer to Photo Challenge 8: Great-tailed Grackle</b><br>Louis Bevier   |
-

## MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD

*Editor's Note: The following is the presentation by Neil Currie, of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award, at the annual meeting of the Connecticut Ornithological Association on March 26, 1994.*

Donald Hopkins, as an amateur ornithologist, most of your time has been devoted to the study of raptors.

In the early 1970s it had become apparent to you that hawks were migrating through Connecticut in surprisingly large numbers, and that a few other birders were aware of this also. You were inspired at that time to organize, with your friend Jerry Mersereau, the New England Hawk Watch. With the help of the Connecticut Audubon Council and friends, you did just this. The purpose of the New England Hawk Watch was to observe the migration of hawks through New England, if possible to discover their routes and numbers, and to observe the behavior of these migrants.

You approached all of the bird clubs in Connecticut and many clubs elsewhere in New England. With interested friends you formed a board of directors. You asked bird clubs and their members to participate by making financial contributions, by selecting lookout sites, and by manning these sites on three or four weekends in the fall and spring. At the same time you involved amateur radio operators, stationing an operator at many of the sites. In order to rent an airplane in which to follow the hawks, you persuaded Connecticut businesses to contribute financial help. The airplane, although useful, proved to be too fast and not maneuverable enough. You located a motor-glider which could take off on its own power, but then glide and soar with the hawks. You had no trouble persuading Bill Welch to fly the glider and in getting volunteers to fly with him as observers.

You developed a recording form for observers and when the results were in at the end of spring and fall seasons you produced the first of the newsletters of the New England Hawk Watch. For twenty years this newsletter has gone out annually free to participants and interested birders. At one time, over twelve hundred birders throughout New England were receiving this report.

Another Connecticut resident, Michael Harwood, had also been inspired by the migrating hawks. Shortly after the beginning of the New England Hawk Watch, we formed a national organization, The Hawk Migration Association of North America, also to study migrating raptors. You were a member of the committee which organized this national effort.

Throughout the years you have also carefully monitored the lives of Bald Eagles, especially at Barkhamsted Reservoir. During these



studies, you became aware that a pair of eagles at Barkhamsted were exhibiting mating and nesting behavior. You watched as a nest was built. Finally, in 1992, the first nesting of Bald Eagles in Connecticut in many years took place. Two eaglets were successfully raised, not by you, but by their parents. Through all of this, you learned much about the eagles and wrote of this in *The Connecticut Warbler*.

You were a member of the original board of directors of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, and are a life member. You are a member of the Hartford Audubon Society and take part in their Christmas Counts.

Most importantly, through your work in organizing and maintaining the New England Hawk Watch, hundreds of birders in New England and in Connecticut have become aware of the inspiring spectacle of migrating hawks. Don, you started it all. For all of this, the Connecticut Ornithological Association is honored to award to you The Mabel Osgood Wright Award for 1994.

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## LUDLOW GRISCOM (1890-1959): A MAN OF MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

William E. Davis, Jr.

Ludlow Griscom is a legendary figure in the development of rapid sight identification of birds, and the tales of his birding adventures are legion. What is not as well known, however, is the broad spectrum of Griscom's accomplishments. From a variety of executive positions he wielded power and influence on the development of the conservation movement and ornithology, as well as strongly influencing the rapid development of recreational birding.

Ludlow Griscom, born into a wealthy family in New York City, had private tutors on the family estate, and before he was 15 made more than a dozen excursions to Europe where he visited important and well placed relatives in the diplomatic service. He learned half a dozen languages, became an accomplished pianist, and in general had all the advantages that money and position could offer in the Victorian world at the turn of the century. Yet he broke with family tradition and urging, attending Cornell University graduate school, and becoming the first recipient of an advanced degree in ornithology in North America in 1915.

Griscom's interest in birds began early, with his first recollections of birds dating to age four. By the time he had graduated from Cornell he had developed the methods and skills in rapid sight identification



Ludlow Griscom - Corpus Christi, Texas 1942

(Photo by Annette and William Cottrell)

of birds that were to amaze his birdwatcher friends, and irritate the older ornithologists, whose tradition was to study birds "down the barrel of a shotgun." At that time, ornithology was beginning a transition from an emphasis on the museum, collection-based, study of the taxonomy and distribution of birds, to the study of live birds in the field involving a more holistic ecological approach. Griscom, the consummate showman, reveled in the competition and one-upmanship which rapid field identification produced. He was influential in popularizing the sport of birding and list making. His forceful and aggressive personality, his tendency to be dogmatic, and a rather militaristic bearing, produced a polarization among his bird watching acquaintances and professional colleagues. People either loved or intensely disliked him.

Following his graduation from Cornell and a hiatus during World War I, he spent eight years at the American Museum of Natural History, perhaps the premier museum-based research institution in North America at that time. During these Museum years he traveled to Nicaragua (1917), Panama (1924, 1927), and British Honduras (now Belize) and Mexico (1926) on collecting trips, establishing himself as an authority on Central American birds, and providing the basis for a series of monographic studies. His first book on local faunistics, *Birds of the New York City Region*, published in 1923, was a resounding success, and established him as something of a hero among local bird-watchers.

He made several trips to Newfoundland and Labrador in the mid-1920s with M. L. Fernald, a premier botanist at the Gray Herbarium at Harvard University, where he utilized his talents as a botanist. On one of these trips he met his future wife, Edith Sloan, who proved to be as strong and indomitable in character as Ludlow. In 1927, a year after they were married, Griscom, frustrated by the limited possibilities for advancement at the Museum, and personal difficulties with the head of the Department of Ornithology, Frank M. Chapman, took a position as a research ornithologist at the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) at Harvard University.

During his nearly 30 years at the MCZ, Griscom gradually shifted the focus of his efforts from science to administration. During the first decade he completed a series of monographs, mostly on work begun at the American Museum, including *The Distribution of Bird-Life in Guatemala* and *A Monographic Study of the Red Crossbill*. His interest in Central American birds did not disappear completely, however, and he collaborated with prominent ornithologists Alden Miller, Herbert Friedmann, and R. T. Moore on a *Distribution Checklist of the Birds of Mexico* which was not completed until two years before his death. His interest in local faunistics never wavered, and in the last decade of his life he published three books on local faunistics, including *The Birds of Massachusetts* (with Dorothy Snyder).

His administrative responsibilities at the MCZ became greater with time as the Director, Thomas Barbour, gave him increasing responsibility for running the day-to-day activities of the institution. In addition he edited the *Bulletin* series of the MCZ.

Griscom was a "joiner" and found it difficult to refuse involvement in a broad spectrum of charitable and professional organizations as part of his professional responsibilities at the MCZ, and these occupied a significant share of his time.

He was deeply interested in conservation and put special emphasis on working with organizations where conservation was a major

focus. He was a Director of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the oldest and most active of the Audubon societies, and contributed dozens of reviews and articles on bird identification and distribution to its *Bulletin*. He was Chairman of the Board of the National Audubon Society during some of its most important transition years after World War II. For 20 years his "The Season" and "The Changing Seasons" were a regular feature of the society's publications *Bird Lore*, *Audubon Magazine*, and *Audubon Field Notes*. Always controversial, his censure of sight records caused consternation and confusion among his birding friends.

He was deeply involved in the Nuttall Ornithological Club, the oldest bird organization in North America, and its offspring the premier professional society in North America, the American Ornithologists' Union. He eventually became president of both organizations, and although producing his usual swirl of controversy, he influenced the policies and direction of both. He also played an influential role in the transformation of the New England Museum of Natural History, and its parent organization the Boston Society of Natural History, into the modern Boston Museum of Science, one of the leading science museums of the world. He engineered the sale of much of the old museum's natural history collection which provoked a storm of criticism. The political pressures and effort involved in the transition to a museum with a new building and philosophy may have contributed to the rapid deterioration of his health in the early 1950s.

Griscom used his influence in these organizations to support and promote a broad spectrum of conservation initiatives. He strongly supported the establishment of federal preserves at Plum Island and Monomoy in Massachusetts, and became deeply embroiled in the controversies surrounding them. He firmly believed in a common sense approach to conservation, and fought with conservationists whom he thought to be on the radical fringe. From his position with the National Audubon Society he opposed many of the anti-hunting initiatives and polemics of the activist Rosalie Edge. He maintained that government agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, were the major forces for conservation, because no one else could bring sufficient power and resources to bear on conservation problems. He constantly chastised conservation organizations for their inefficiency and fighting among themselves.

The thread which held together the many facets of Ludlow Griscom's life was his great love of birdwatching and the companionship which it provided him. He merged his professional interest in local bird faunas with his hobby of recreational bird-watching. The competi-

tion and military planning with which he led his "army" of eager birdwatchers into the field for a "Big Day," with the goal of breaking previous records for numbers of species seen, was an absolute delight for him. Yet after the longest and hardest day he always recorded the number of each species seen, the weather conditions, and any pertinent observations after returning home.

His enthusiasm for bird watching was infectious. From the Linnaean Society meetings in the 1920s in New York, where he was the idol of a



Ludlow Griscom

(Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon Society)

group of youngsters of Bronx County Bird Club, which included such notable future ornithologists as Joseph J. Hickey, Allan Cruickshank, and Roger Tory Peterson, to the annual meetings of the Massachusetts Audubon Society where for years he was a regular speaker, Griscom inspired enthusiasm for birdwatching. He was a major influence on Roger Tory Peterson and the development of Peterson's first field guide.

In all likelihood, the development of high quality optical equipment, better transportation, and a growing concern for the environment would have produced an increasing interest in birds and birding, but there seems little question that Ludlow Griscom accelerated the development of this phenomenon. He directly influenced several generations of birding enthusiasts, and this influence has been passed on through subsequent generations to the present day.

A day of birding with Ludlow Griscom was to many an unforgettable experience. His showmanship and flair—charging ahead through

the dunes in an old beach buggy, walking through a marsh up to his knees in water wearing a suit and tie, or bellowing out the identity of warblers from a speeding car—have added to the legends of his skill in the rapid identification of birds. His contributions to scientific ornithology may fade with time as new techniques and ideas replace the old. But he will always be remembered as the “Dean of the bird watchers.”

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Editor's Note: The book *Dean of the Birdwatchers: A Biography of Ludlow Griscom* by William E. Davis, Jr., will be published by The Smithsonian Institution Press this spring.

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## BOOK REVIEW

Roland C. Clement

*Bird Impressions* by Darren Rees. Swan Hill Press of Shrewsbury, England. 1993. 11" x 12" with 85 color plates and several line drawings; no pagination.

For three years now, during the first weekend of June, The Nature Conservancy has staged a refreshingly innovative “Wildlife in Art” show in Old Lyme, Connecticut. It will be worth reserving the weekend of June 4-5 for a visit to the 1994 show.

Organized by Robert Braunfield of Hadlyme (who also exhibits), the show has brought an intriguing assortment of fresh work by lesser known artists, all of them bent on transcending the illustrative style that has beset so much of “wildlife art” for too many years. I, for one, particularly enjoyed discovering Barry Van Dusen’s versatility in handling watercolors of warblers and waterfowl.

At the 1993 show a young Britisher, who is currently residing in Boston, displayed sketches and field sketchbooks that I found so exciting in the picturing of birds as shapes and light-reflecting forms, that I soon arranged to have him send me the book of sketches being published in England that fall. *Bird Impressions* arrived before Christmas, a welcome and lovely gift.

Although I have enjoyed seeing the sketchbooks of several of the better-known painters of birds of my day, and therefore appreciate the artistic potential in them, this promise has seldom been realized in their formal work. This is largely, some of them tell me, because

the public to which they must cater, too seldom appreciate what the serious art world expects. That the collectors of paintings and prints continue to demand birds with lots of feathers, and "cuddly" mammals has apparently thrown up a roadblock to evolving a wildlife art which is more artistic than illustrative. The late Robert Mengel (who almost broke through the constraints) addressed this dilemma in the 1980 issue of *The Living Bird*, and Don Eckelberry wrote about it in the 1963 issue of that publication. We need to consider what art might do in communicating more of the wonder of birdlife for all of us to learn, appreciate and enjoy.

All of us, whether birders, illustrators or artists, begin by focusing on the characteristics of the particular animal, or group, that attracted our attention. Animal exhibitors, such as those who show horses, dogs, poultry or fish, call this assessing the criteria of conformation: proportions, color, coat, etc. The birder, like the exhibitor, usually stops comparing details as soon as they conform to a "standard," whether Peterson's field guide or some breeder's manual. The illustrator then outlines what was seen and colors it in, routinely or with personal flair.

What distinguishes art from illustration, is a refocusing that then assesses the bird (or group) as one of many shapes, values and colors in its environment. Of these, the play of light that creates values and colors is most important. But all of this is preparatory. The artist must then refocus again and decide how to order (reorganize) these natural elements for maximum effect in the limited format of the drawing or painting. The conventions of centuries of experimentation by the art world take over, and the picture itself becomes the focus of effort and judgment, no longer nature. Artists get inspiration from nature, but do not copy nature. This is, of course, an unending challenge, and the stature of artists reflects their contribution to the process, where this process has not been excessively distorted by fads and commercialization.

Darren Rees' bird sketches are thus an exciting contribution to moving wildlife art beyond illustrations, and one hopes to live long enough to watch this young artist demonstrate a continuing creativity. Because so many of his field studies were done by viewing from a distance, through a telescope, many of his birds are in repose, often with the diagnostic bill tucked into scapular tracts. His murrets, for example, assume the quality of still lifes. One lovely plate of two sleeping storks, against evening light, shows neither bills nor necks, but is all stork withal, and artistically satisfying. See for yourself.

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# TWO HYBRID COMMON × ROSEATE TERNS FLEDGE AT FALKNER ISLAND, CONNECTICUT

James M. Zingo<sup>1,2</sup>, Christopher A. Church<sup>3,4</sup>,  
and Jeffrey A. Spendelow<sup>1,2</sup>

Although these two similarly-sized species are sympatric throughout much of their breeding range, there are few published records of hybridization between Roseate (*Sterna dougallii*) and Common (*S. hirundo*) Terns. Records include at least five from Europe (Witherby and Ticehurst 1908, Perry 1972, Robbins 1974, Burggraevae 1977, van den Berg 1980) and only one from North America (Hays 1975), but we are aware of several unpublished records of hybridization at colonies in Massachusetts (I. Nisbet, pers. comm.) and New York (J. Burger, pers. comm.). Differences in sexual display probably serve as the principal barrier to hybridization (Palmer 1941), and in the northeastern United States where both species breed, Common Terns tend to nest in more open areas while Roseate Terns tend to nest in or under cover (Hays 1975, Nisbet 1981, Spendelow 1982, Burger and Gochfeld 1988).

From 1984 through 1993, we recorded several instances of interbreeding in a mixed colony of several thousand Common Terns and a few hundred Roseates at the Falkner Island Unit of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. This 2-ha island is located at 41°13'N and 72° 39'W in Long Island Sound, approximately 5 km off the coast of Guilford, Connecticut. Spendelow (1982) briefly described the island and the areas used by the nesting terns; a more detailed description of the island is in Helander (1988). The mixed pair we observed in 1993 nested in a subcolony of about 25 pairs of Roseates on the southeast section of the island's rocky beach, where we put out 30 boxes to create more protected nest sites for Roseate Terns. Here we present a summary of their successful nesting, which we followed almost daily from several days prior to the laying of the first egg until departure of these birds from the colony site.

## Courtship and Nest History

On 27-28 May and 6 June 1993, we observed the female Roseate Tern courting with other Roseates, and on 1 June, Spendelow saw her copulating with a male Roseate. However, on 7, 8, and 12 June, the female was seen prospecting nestboxes, scraping, and courting with a male Common Tern. The male was seen alone on 10 June, inspecting



a nestbox and engaging in nest-building behavior. By 10 or 12 June, the pair had apparently chosen a nest site.

At 1910 h on 13 June, Zingo observed the male Common Tern mounted on the female Roseate Tern; the birds were not disturbed as he entered a blind overlooking the pair approximately 20 m away. They remained mounted for a few minutes, but did not copulate before separating. Afterwards, they prospected and scraped in the empty nestbox chosen, and the male fed the female twice as she crouched and begged. On 14 June, the nestbox was still empty in the early afternoon, but at about 1820 h we found the first egg and labelled it with a non-toxic marker. The second egg was found and marked on 17 June.

The eggs were incubated by both parents. The first egg hatched on 6 July after 22 days of incubation and the second egg hatched on 8 July after 21 days of incubation. The length of the incubation periods was more typical of Common than of Roseate Terns (Nisbet 1981). Each chick was banded on its hatch date with a numbered U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) band (#802-82388 and #802-82394). Both hybrid chicks (Figure 1) were similar in appearance to Common Tern chicks (Figure 2). However, their down was slightly more densely and finely spotted and their pink legs and feet were tinged slightly with gray (more noticeable in the older sibling), suggesting some similarity to the streaked down and typically purplish-black legs and feet of a Roseate Tern chick (Figure 3).

We searched for and weighed the chicks almost daily until they fledged. Both chicks hid either in the nestbox or under rocks near the box until they were led away from the nest site at 1810 h on 29 July. The older chick fledged on 30 July when 24 days old, and its younger sibling fledged on 31 July at 23 days, both fledging ages more typical of Common Terns (usually 25-26 days) than of Roseates (usually 27-30 days) (Cramp 1985).

We trapped the 4-year-old female Roseate (#892-03530) on 6 July, and the 3-year-old male Common (#892-02760) on 8 July. Both had been banded as chicks at this site, and we have no reason to suspect that their behavior as adults may have been influenced by foster parents of different species. Physically, behaviorally, and vocally the adults appeared typical of their respective species (Cramp 1985). Thus, we strongly discount the possibility that either of these birds was a hybrid such as described by Hays (1975). The family group apparently left the colony by 5 August, as we did not see any of them after 1920 h on 4 August.



**Figure 1.** Common X Roseate Tern hybrid chicks at one (left) and three (right) days old, respectively, at Falkner Island, CT, on 9 July 1993.  
photo by James M. Zingo



**Figure 2.** Two-day-old Common Tern chick at Falkner Island, CT.  
photoby James M. Zingo



**Figure 3.** Downy Roseate Tern chick at Falkner Island, CT.

photoby James M. Zingo



**Figure 4.** Common Tern attempting to mount Roseate Tern at Falkner Island, CT, on 19 June 1993. The differences in bill color, back color, and length of outer tail feathers help to distinguish the two species in the field.

photo by James M. Zingo

## Observations

We observed the nest frequently during the incubation period and chick-rearing phase. During incubation, we observed four courtship feeds as well as another copulation attempt (Figure 4). The female was seen incubating about 60% of the time. Although the male Common Tern freely entered nestboxes while prospecting, he was not seen entering the box to incubate when eggs were first laid, but did so later with no apparent hesitation. The female was seen brooding and/or attending the young twice as often as the male, while the male was seen feeding the young twice as often as was the female. The male led the chicks about 25 m away from the nest site shortly before they fledged.

The behavior of the chicks appeared to be a mixture of that typical for these two species (Nisbet 1981, Cramp 1985). For example, their hiding behavior was like that of young Roseates. Their begging behavior was similar to young Roseates at first, but as they matured, it began to resemble that of young Commons. As older chicks and fledglings, their begging calls sounded like those of young Common Terns. After fledging they did not return to the nesting territory, but were seen loafing and being fed 40-60 m away from the nest site. This behavior is more typical of Roseates than Commons.

## Visual Documentation

In addition to growth data, physical inspections, and behavioral observations, we took photographs and/or videotaped the hybrid chicks every few days through fledging. This seems to be the first such visual documentation of the early growth and development of first generation Common X Roseate Tern hybrids.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our thanks to the staff of the 1993 Falkner Island Tern Project for their assistance with the field work, and we also thank the numerous cooperators and contributors to the research on Falkner Island, including: Bayberry Creek Marina, Inc.; Connecticut Audubon Society; Connecticut chapter of The Nature Conservancy; Little Harbor Laboratory, Inc.; Menunkatuck Audubon Society; Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (USFWS); Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS); and Wildlife Division of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. David Zukor provided the use of a VHS-C palmcorder, without which we would not have been able to obtain video documentation. We also thank Deanna Dawson, Jim Nichols, Matt Perry, and Chan Robbins for reviewing the manuscript.

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## THE 1993-94 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Stephen P. Broker

The following paragraphs list each of the 17 state counts and provide basic information on the counts individually, by region (Northern, Mid-State and Coastal) and for the State as a whole. Data pertaining to 10 year results span the period 1984-85 (85th Annual National Audubon Society CBC) through 1993-94 (94th Annual CBC). Edwin Way Teale - Trail Wood held its 8th count this year; all other count circles have held at least 10 successive counts.

Data are recorded below or on the following tables: Name of Christmas Bird Count (National Audubon Society/American Birds abbreviation for count); date of count; compiler(s); Count Day (CD) species + Count Week (CW) species (% of 10 year CD + CW total, then 10 year total for each); total individual birds counted; number of field observers + number of feeder watchers = total observers. New High Counts = species counted at 10 year highs. New Low Counts = species counted at 10 year lows. New Species = species recorded for the first time in the last 10 years. Rarities = species seen 4 or fewer times in the last 10 years. Species, subspecies, or forms not seen in the last 10 years (since the 1983-84 count) and dropped from State, Regional, or Individual lists are given. Ten year highs and lows are also provided for numbers of species observed, total individuals counted, and count observers.

Count abbreviations: Barkhamsted (BA), Edwin Way Teale - Trail Wood (EW), Greenwich-Stamford (GS), Hartford (HA), Litchfield Hills (LH), Lakeville-Sharon (LS), New Haven (NH), New London (NL), Old Lyme-Saybrook (OL), Oxford (OX), Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY-CT (PA), Quinnipiac Valley (QV), Stratford-Milford (SM), Salmon River (SR), Storrs (ST), Westport (WE), Woodbury-Roxbury (WR).

### WHOLE STATE

Consists of 17 Christmas Bird Counts with 169 CD + 5 CW species recorded (77.0 % of 10 year total, 216 CD + 10 CW); 401578 individuals; 767 field observers + 180 feeder watchers = 947 total observers. New High Counts (19 + 1 form): Great Egret, Mute Swan, Snow Goose (Blue Form), Barnacle Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Wild

Turkey, American Oystercatcher, Barn Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Fish Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal. New Low Counts (16): Wood Duck, American Black Duck, Greater Scaup, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Northern Goshawk, American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, American Woodcock, Herring Gull, Iceland Gull, Brown Creeper, European Starling, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow. New Species (3 CD + 2 CW): Piping Plover (CW), Tree Swallow, Boreal Chickadee (new to CD - was CW), Swainson's Thrush, American Redstart (CW). Rarities (10 + 1 form): Northern Gannet, Snow Goose (Blue Form), Barnacle Goose, Barrow's Goldeneye, King Rail, Semipalmated Plover, Western Sandpiper, Common Black-headed Gull, Townsend's Solitaire, Dickcissel (CW), White-winged Crossbill. Species Dropped (3 CD + 1 CW): Semipalmated Sandpiper, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Varied Thrush (was CW), Ovenbird.

#### **NORTHERN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS**

New High Counts (17): Northern Shoveler, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Wild Turkey, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal, Swamp Sparrow. New Low Count (7) Northern Goshawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Iceland Gull, European Starling, Fox Sparrow, House Sparrow. New Species (3): Red-necked Grebe, Snow Goose (Blue), Virginia Rail, Monk Parakeet, Swainson's Thrush. Rarities (5): Species dropped from 10 Year List (2): Golden Eagle, Ovenbird.

**BARKHAMSTED, CT (BA-CT):** Sun., Dec. 26. Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., RFD-2, Winsted, CT 06098 203-379-9237. Total Count was 67.6% of 10 year total.

**EDWIN WAY TEALE, TRAIL WOOD, CT (EW-CT):** Sun., Jan. 2. Compiler: Marilyn Higgins, Hammond Hill, Hampton, CT 06247 203-455-0063. Total count was 77.2% of 8 year total.

**HARTFORD, CT (HA-CT):** Sat., Jan. 1. Compiler: Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019 203-693-0157. Total Count was 68.7% of 10 year total.

**LITCHFIELD HILLS, CT (LH-CT):** Sun., Dec. 19. Compiler: Raymond E. Belding, 46 Scoville Street, Torrington, CT 06790 203-482-4046. Total Count was 64.5% of 10 year total.

LAKEVILLE-SHARON, CT (LS-CT): Sun., Dec. 19. Compiler: Bob Moeller, P.O. Box 1119, Sharon, CT 06069 203-364-5936. Total Count was 67.3% of 10 year total.

STORRS, CT (ST-CT): Sat., Dec. 18. Compiler: Steve Rogers, P.O. Box 270, Storrs, CT 06268 203-429-3458. Total Count was 69.5% of 10 year total.

### MID-STATE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

New High Counts (17): Pied-billed Grebe, Great Cormorant, Mute Swan, Gadwall, Ring-necked Pheasant, Virginia Rail, American Coot, Barred Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Pheobe, Fish Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rufous-sided Towhee, Brown-headed Cowbird. New low Counts (10): Bufflehead, Northern Goshawk (missed first time in 10 years), Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Killdeer, Long-eared Owl, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler. New Species (3): Snow Goose (Blue), Northern Shoveler, Boreal Chickadee. Rarities (7): Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Raven, Townsend's Solitaire, American Pipit, Pine Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill. Species dropped from 10 Year List (2): Greater Yellowlegs and Rose-ringed Parakeet.

OXFORD, CT (OX-CT): Sun., Dec. 19. Compiler: Buzz Devine, 18 South Street, Plymouth, CT 06782 203-283-0744. Total Count was 67.6% of 10 year total. Total Count was 59.1% of 10 year total.

PAWLING (HIDDEN VALLEY), NY-CT (HV-NY): Fri., Dec. 31. Compiler: Sibyll Gilbert, RR1, Box 236, Pawling, NY 12564 914-855-3266. Total Count was 67.3% of 10 year total.

QUINNIPIAC VALLEY, CT (QV-CT): Sun., Dec. 19. Compiler: Wilford Schultz, 93 Harrison Road, Wallingford, CT 06492 203-265-6398. Total Count was 67.8% of 10 year total.

SALMON RIVER, CT (SR-CT): Sun., Dec. 19. Compiler: David A. Titus, 278 Court Street, Apt. 208, Middletown, CT 06457 203-346-3735. Total Count was 63.2% of 10 year total.

WOODBURY-ROXBURY, CT (WR-CT): Sat., Dec. 18. Compiler: Ed Hagen, 47 Sycamore Avenue, Woodbury, CT 06798 203-263-5356. Total Count was 69.0% of 10 year total.



## COASTAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

New High Counts (18): Great Egret, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Common Merganser, Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Wild Turkey, American Oystercatcher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Barn Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow, Fish Crow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Oriole. New Low Counts (14): Wood Duck, American Black Duck, Greater Scaup, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Northern Goshawk, Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Horned Owl, Brown Creeper, Common Yellowthroat, Field Sparrow. New Species (4): Barnacle Goose, Piping Plover, Tree Sparrow, American Redstart. Rarities (8): Northern Gannet, Barrow's Goldeneye, King Rail, Semipalmated Plover, Western sandpiper, Common Black-headed Gull, Dickcissel. Species dropped from 10 Year List (1): Varied Thrush.

GREENWICH-STAMFORD, CT (GS-CT): Sun., Dec. 19. Compilers: Gary Palmer, 34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807 203-661-4897 and Brian O'Toole, 203-629-1027. Total Count was 69.2% of 10 year total.

NEW HAVEN, CT (NH-CT): Sat., Dec. 18. Compilers: Stephen P. Broker, 76 Diamond Street, New Haven, CT 06515 203-387-0798 and Frank Gallo, New Canaan Nature Center, 140 Oanoke Ridge, New Canaan, CT 06840 203-966-6756. Total Count was 76.6% of 10 year total.

NEW LONDON, CT (NL-CT): Sat., Jan. 1. Compiler: Robert Dewire, 9 Canary Street, Pawcatuck, CT 06379 203-599-3085. Total Count was 70.0% of 10 year total.

OLD LYME-SAYBROOK, CT (OL-CT): Sun., Jan. 2. Compiler: Jay Hand, 76 Sill Lane, Old Lyme, CT 06371 203-434-0213. Total Count was 72.6% of 10 year total.

STRATFORD-MILFORD, CT (SM-CT): Sun., Dec. 26. Compiler: Steve Mayo, 159 King's Highway, Milford, CT 06460 203-874-1860. Total Count was 67.7% of 10 year total.

WESTPORT, CT (WE-CT): Sun., Dec. 19. Compiler: Frank W. Mantlik, 261 Chestnut Road, Norwalk, CT 06851 203-846-8601. Total Count was 70.8% of 10 year total.

76 Diamond Street, New Haven, CT 06515-1313

## CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS 1993-94

88

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE TOTAL	
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE		
Red-throated Loon												10	23	10	33	6	3	85	
Common Loon					1							10	6	45	20	10	8	100	
Pied-billed Grebe	1								CW	3		2	2	7	6	1	10	5	37
Horned Grebe												32	11	51	6	19	29	148	
Red-necked Grebe	1				CW							1			CW	CW		2	
Northern Gannet														1				1	
Great Cormorant			1							6		44	27	51	48	39	22	238	
D-C Cormorant			1							2		4	19	49	3	13	4	95	
Cormorant, sp.			3										5	3	3	1	4	19	
American Bittern													2					2	
Great Blue Heron	2	16	12	1	3	2	9		7	6	8	32	36	63	36	35	35	305	
Great Egret												1	1		1	2		5	
Black-cr. Night Heron												1	1	2		20	4	28	
Mute Swan		3	2	12	3	1	102	14	228	25	50	51	252	847	102	46	152	1890	
Snow Goose (Blue)					1						1							2	
Snow Goose			12									5	0			CW	1	18	
Brant												14		31		CW	110	155	
Barnacle Goose													6					6	
Canada Goose	152	35	5113	2075	7109	1513	1698	1674	1414	226	4296	3742	2977	1857	1250	1798	3041	39970	
Canada X Gr. W-Fr. Goose Hybrid												1						1	
Wood Duck			2				1	4			3	8	6			2	9	35	
Green-wgd. Teal (Am)			3									2	29		8	19	10	71	
American Black Duck	155	34	119	171	57	35	40	33	31	138	207	522	959	1158	683	881	781	6004	
Mallard	232	222	1222	810	393	276	227	84	743	354	443	1383	1413	2056	870	1235	1327	15290	
Mallard Hybrid				1								2	20			3	4	30	
Northern Pintail			1									1	5	1	3*	1		12	

Broker

April 1994

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
B-w Teal/N. Shoveler sp.											2							2
Northern Shoveler				2		2			1				7		1	1		14
Gadwall									2		2	5	132	68		212	12	433
Eurasian Wigeon													1			CW		1
American Wigeon				7		1			CW			74	71	31		148	105	437
Canvasback						68						10	17	314		129	20	558
Redhead						1									2			3
Ring-necked Duck	6			23		3	CW	1	6	52	13	408	222	29	0	67	54	884
Greater Scaup												19	639	84	192	11	0	945
Lesser Scaup													67	1		5		73
Oldsquaw												439	99	1	4	18	48	609
Black Scoter														1		1		2
Surf Scoter													8	9	113			130
White-winged Scoter													7			4	42	53
Scoter, sp.																5		5
Common Goldeneye	1			28	350	12	CW	14	1	10	6	149	162	189	208	171	225	1526
Barrow's Goldeneye															1		CW	1
Bufflehead				2	4					1		629	126	558	128	87	230	1765
Hooded Merganser	8	2	1	23	4	2	1	13	15	5	3	187	118	409	19	20	123	953
Common Merganser	33	37	157	167	72	20	33	49	114	215	741	290	25	29	986	102	25	3115
Red-br. Merganser												180	195	713	249	141	219	1697
Merganser, sp.										1								1
Ruddy Duck				2				CW				59	1			19	23	104

BA - Barkhamsted  
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CW Count Period  
 --- Not seen for 10 yrs.  
 XX Unusual Species  
 XX New High Count  
 XX New Low count (Bold)  
 XX New Species for Count

Connecticut Christmas Bird Count

## CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS 1993-94

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE TOTAL	
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE		
Duck sp.		25				11					19								55
Turkey Vulture		1		1		—		8	CW		31	2	2	4	2		42		93
Osprey						—						1				1			2
Bald Eagle	4		2	2				1		1	7		1	CW	11	2	2		33
Northern Harrier			4		1			2	2		1		9	6	35	12	4		76
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	3	14	4	5	2	3	10	6	3	7	8	13	8	17	4	9		121
Cooper's Hawk	2		9	2	1	3		4	1		5	8	4	4	2	3	1		49
Northern Goshawk			CW		1					CW				1					2
Accipiter, sp.						1							3			1	1		6
Red-shouldered Hawk		4	4	1		3				0	2	1	2	2	15		1		35
Red-tailed Hawk	16	32	143	19	22	10	10	45	32	6	85	56	75	33	37	20	34		675
Rough-legged Hawk			3												1				4
Buteo, sp.														1					1
American Kestrel	3	4	6	1	1	4	1	4	3	1	2	1	12	4	4	1			52
Merlin	1	1				CW					—		2	1	1	1	1		8
Peregrine Falcon			1									1	2			1	CW		5
Ring-necked Pheasant	1		9	1	1	4	12	9	17	4	8	4	5	4	4	8	31		122
Ruffed Grouse	5	1	0	5	6	1	1	2	2	1	6	1	3		4			3	41
Wild Turkey	116	CW	1	277	164	8	4	14		17	36	13	8		4		4		666
Northern Bobwhite						1													1
Clapper Rail												2	2		1		2		7
King Rail													1						1
Virginia Rail			CW					2					3	3	9				17
Sora															1				1
American Coot			2	55	33			47	3			142	6	0			1		289
Black-bellied Plover												4	1	19	34		38		96

Broker

April 1994

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Semipalmated Plover															1			1
Piping Plover																CW		CW
Killdeer			1			2		---	1			31	27	8	2	7	34	113
Am. Oystercatcher															4			4
Greater Yellowlegs									---			2	3				2	7
Ruddy Turnstone												13	1	6	65		1	86
Red Knot															1		4	5
Sanderling													18		164	53	75	310
Western Sandpiper															1		---	1
Purple Sandpiper												18	15	29	7	CW		69
Dunlin												6	75	54	424	279	20	858
Common Snipe		2	1		1				7			1	16	1	2	3	2	36
American Woodcock									1			1	3	1	1	1		8
Laughing Gull														1				1
Com. Bl.-headed Gull													1					1
Bonaparte's Gull												37	512	69	32	10	21	681
Ring-billed Gull	58	59	2523	245	49	107	260	347	577	1914	1762	1349	2913	1215	1321	3935	829	19463
Herring Gull	68	495	2556	162	219	1140	296	284	125	390	3112	979	2495	4244	1651	2786	*****	25632
Iceland Gull			1								1							2
L. Black-backed Gull											1		1			1		3
Glaucous Gull			1															1
Great Bl.-backed Gull	39	68	360	22	28	45	46	34	6	216	303	92	312	309	188	501	120	2689
Gull, sp.						7												7

Connecticut Christmas Bird Count

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 --- Not seen for 10 yrs.  
 XX Unusual Species  
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 XX New Low count (Bold)  
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## CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS 1993-94

64

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE TOTAL
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	
Rock Dove	178	164	2146	176	170	472	423	328	324	29	531	596	1364	465	227	1404	981	9978
Mourning Dove	220	527	1266	365	962	254	107	472	556	301	965	425	906	378	373	345	478	8900
Monk Parakeet				1												55	66	122
Barn Owl													2				1	3
Eastern Screech-Owl	2	2	17	11	3	1	4	6	33	6	31	19	17	3	10	4	22	191
Great Horned Owl		12	8	6	6	8	4	11	8	8	22	6	11	7	13	2	2	134
Snowy Owl																	CW	CW
Barred Owl	1	5	2	1	2	3		5	4	4	4	1		2	1	1	1	37
Long-eared Owl		1				1			1			1		1	1			6
N. Saw-whet Owl	5	1				2		7	---	1	7	1	1	4	2			31
Owl, sp.	1																	1
Belted Kingfisher	2	7	11		3	10	12	8	12	18	16	29	38	30	41	15	34	286
Red-bld. Woodpecker	5	30	61	13	5	26	16	22	22	34	55	92	58	27	68	21	46	601
Yel-bld. Sapsucker			10					6		2	5	4	3	2	6	1	6	45
Downy Woodpecker	61	102	320	85	35	81	51	126	74	87	191	207	166	65	147	46	132	1976
Hairy Woodpecker	6	14	75	6	13	19	6	33	7	6	43	36	26	7	25	7	15	344
Northern Flicker	6	32	94	2	5	7	25	17	76	43	43	38	104	63	56	33	56	700
Pileated Woodpecker	9	1	5	CW	5		2	5		CW	8	5	2		7	1	5	55
Eastern Phoebe		1	1								3							6
Horned Lark		98	191	124	557	9	10		0		252		3	10	42	80		1376
Tree Swallow													1					1
Blue Jay	524	727	1139	316	222	534	464	462	355	531	1042	670	597	309	610	158	385	9045
American Crow	489	510	11000	1219	624	635	756	667	944	353	3518	1705	7902	914	678	1134	2074	35122
Fish Crow			12				20				2	2	105	10		18	66	235
Common Raven	5				4			CW										9
Black-cpd. Chickadee	1323	963	1602	1208	572	807	399	808	561	815	1616	1092	1065	736	881	259	719	15446

The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 14 No. 2

Broker

April 1994

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Boreal Chickadee								1										1
Tufted Titmouse	180	343	660	266	111	312	283	254	87	392	559	592	286	154	435	85	361	5285
Red-breasted Nuthatch	139	207	76	42	33	102	16	1	61	30	14	46	81	12	20	3	17	900
White-br. Nuthatch	112	161	261	125	57	121	57	160	43	67	223	195	94	45	113	21	121	1976
Brown Creeper	20	11	23	4	8	16	2	6	3	8	7	4	6	9	10	2	2	141
Carolina Wren	3	36	74	4	2	16	20	14	18	73	56	68	89	136	138	25	42	814
House Wren												2		2	—			4
Winter Wren		4	8			2		5		0	9	5	5	5	10	0	2	55
Marsh Wren													4		4			8
Wren. Sp.								1										1
Golden-crd. Kinglet	95	76	31	23	13	35	28	34	8	64	110	13	32	98	70	4	12	746
Ruby-crd. Kinglet	CW	1					1		4	1	2	1	6	5	2	3	2	28
Eastern Bluebird	71	92	135	64	88	118	53	139	62	100	335	49	27	6	69	5	100	1513
Townsend's Solitaire											1							1
Swainson's Thrush			1															1
Hermit Thrush	3	5	2	2	2	1	7	2	1	6	24	13	4	23	35	2	3	135
American Robin	55	210	268	335	266	27	241	35	156	313	721	779	824	177	98	311	61	4877
Gray Catbird		1	6	1			3		5	3	5	10	9	14	19	2	6	84
Northern Mockingbird	19	65	327	9	13	47	63	49	99	63	134	142	231	177	203	109	78	1828
Brown Thrasher			1								—			5	2			8
American Pipit							1						48	7	1			57
Cedar Waxwing	216	52	194	132	121	74	65	117	130	436	517	135	149	236	87	28	155	2844
European Starling	718	2947	38430	3611	1342	1728	2442	466	13271	1253	5483	5493	7249	4062	2784	2227	7281	100787

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Connecticut Christmas Bird Count

## CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS 1993-94

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE TOTAL
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	
Yellow-rpd. Warbler		13	43	1			1		0	5	9	10	1	75	16	8	12	194
Pine Warbler									1									1
Palm Warbler													CW				1	1
American Redstart													CW					CW
Com. Yellowthroat				2									1					3
Yellow breasted Chat													1					1
Northern Cardinal	130	150	749	146	97	129	117	158	199	231	362	328	310	173	238	124	208	3869
Dickcissel														CW				CW
Rufous-sided Towhee		4				2	1	3	4	14	3	1	6	9	7	4	3	61
Amer. Tree Sparrow	169	117	530	268	273	53	66	249	77	106	304	49	212	112	147	172	178	3082
Chipping Sparrow																1	1	2
Field Sparrow	1	1	29	CW		22	13	1	23	46	31	2	84	78	26	23	16	396
Vesper Sparrow															1			1
Savannah Sparrow	6		16	1					19	2	2	3	7	8	16	13	21	114
Ipswich Sparrow															3	1		4
Sharp-tld. Sparrow													CW		1			1
Seaside Sparrow													CW					CW
Fox Sparrow			2				1	1	4	4	3	CW	3	2	8	2	4	34
Song Sparrow	26	61	366	53	17	50	105	42	121	115	184	285	385	274	328	367	261	3040
Swamp Sparrow	1	1	19	11	9	6	15	8	8	19	7	16	52	13	36	6	6	233
White-thr. Sparrow	47	230	520	49	58	114	442	348	403	526	561	764	925	361	524	466	262	6600
White-cr. Sparrow					3				1	3		1		1				10
Dark-eyed Junco	741	1021	1634	701	345	510	577	539	622	743	1370	839	475	215	285	544	688	11849
Lapland Longspur															1	1	3	5
Snow Bunting		1	1												26	0	60	88
Red-wgd. Blackbird	1	35	159	25	146	22			10	4	9	4	257	20	112	18	73	895



SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Eastern Meadowlark	CW								48					6				54
Rusty Blackbird			4		1								8	10	19			42
Common Grackle		395	4038	1		2	CW	59	2	4	1	3	20	172	133	19	2	4781
Brown-hdd. Cowbird		172	467	12	238	13	4	CW	605	23	396	18	143	176	47	6	3	2323
Northern Oriole													2					3
Pine Grosbeak	2										20							22
Purple Finch	6	7	36	4	6	14	3	19	13	11	9	15	5	0	4	1	12	165
House Finch	665	551	2177	1256	535	588	578	516	657	438	1741	1152	1342	1093	1076	718	511	15594
Red Crossbill	2																	2
White-wgd Crossbill											2							2
Crossbill, sp.	1																	1
Common Redpoll	16	36	90	51	76	4		7	3		43	3	60		8	73	45	515
Pine Siskin	107	22	32	99		25		11		8		2	4		2			312
American Goldfinch	192	112	606	247	149	149	132	173	80	113	304	220	266	67	114	163	132	3219
Evening Grosbeak	CW		1	55				CW			CW		5		CW	1		62
House Sparrow	392	541	1309	309	133	354	214	217	266	280	623	732	1037	642	465	881	684	9081

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## SUMMARY - CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1993-1994

	NORTHERN COUNTS						SUB
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	TOTAL
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	7882	11877	83575	15563	15861	10810	145568
TOTAL CD SPECIES	66	70	88	73	68	72	114
TOTAL CW SPECIES	3	1	2	5	0	1	2
TOTAL FIELD OBSERVERS	22	15	133	33	25	22	250
TOTAL FEEDER WATCHER:	8	0	67	3	5	0	83
TOTAL OBSERVERS	30	15	200	36	30	22	333

	MID-STATE COUNTS					SUB
	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	TOTAL
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	10514	9316	23443	11352	33686	88311
TOTAL CD SPECIES	62	71	76	70	86	101
TOTAL CW SPECIES	3	5	2	2	1	5
FIELD OBSERVERS	24	22	20	43	55	164
FEEDER WATCHERS	0	7	3	7	0	17
TOTAL ALL OBSERVERS	24	29	23	50	55	181

	COASTAL COUNTS					SUB	
	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	28012	41377	26409	19984	22934	29107	167823
TOTAL CD SPECIES	109	130	110	116	105	111	158
TOTAL CW SPECIES	1	4	2	3	5	3	5
FIELD OBSERVERS	77	97	37	55	28	60	354
FEEDER WATCHERS	36	8	6	6	2	22	80
TOTAL ALL OBSERVERS	113	105	43	61	30	82	434

	ALL COUNTS	GRAND TOTAL
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS		401702
TOTAL CD SPECIES		169
TOTAL CW SPECIES		5
FIELD OBSERVERS		768
FEEDER WATCHERS		180
TOTAL ALL OBSERVERS		948

BA - Barkhamsted

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# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

## FALL: August 1 - November 30, 1993

Jay Kaplan

Editor's Comment: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (see COA Field List) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Rare Records Committee, if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.

There were some good birding days in the fall of 1993. Different species peak at various times during the fall migration, and this year there were some exceptional days, most notably for Broad-winged Hawks in mid-September. Fall, perhaps in part because it is our longest reporting period, seems to produce, by far, the greatest number of reports. Fall is a great time to be outdoors, and in some cases, birders feel the need for a few last "warm-weather" days prior to the onset of the cold winter season. Yet, how great a part does the weather actually play in stimulating birders as well as birds? Certain birders have actually been accused of "hoping for" hurricanes, but how many actually venture out in search of storm-blown vagrants? There were no hurricanes this season, but the weather was surely worthy of discussion.

These fall field notes are being compiled during what will perhaps be the coldest and snowiest winter on record. I recently asked a local septuagenarian if we've ever had a winter quite like this one. "Not in my lifetime," he replied. Yet, how quickly we forget the details of the previous season.

For starters, the summer of 1993 was the hottest on record, with an average temperature of 74°F, or 2.5°F over the average. August, alone, had six days where the temperature reached 90°F along the shoreline. In most years, the temperature along the our coast struggles to reach 90°F on six days through the entire summer season. The final week of August was brutally hot, with a high of 98°F in Hartford August 28. August was also a very dry month. Average August rainfall is 4.00 inches, but Hartford received a mere 1.8 inches of rain for the month; Bridgeport had the fourth driest summer on record, coming within a fraction of an inch of the driest summer since 1906. Yet, how quickly things change. Autumn officially began with the equinox September 21st, and this event signalled almost two months of colder than normal temperatures. Then, on November 15th, the temperature suddenly shot up to 78°F in Hartford. Never before has it been so warm so late in the year. With the exception of a sudden, hard freeze

November 25-26, temperatures remained mild through the remainder of the period. Rainfall for the months of September and October was above average. Hartford recorded 5.35 inches in September and 3.89 inches in October, compared to normal readings of 3.94 inches and 3.57 inches respectively. In November, total precipitation of 3.57 inches was below the average 4.04 inches. To sum up the season, one might say that our Connecticut weather was unpredictable, but isn't that the way it's supposed to be?

As it is with the weather, good birding days can be unpredictable and also quickly forgotten. Excluding the details surrounding the sighting of a "life" bird, how often do we remember the details of a particularly good afternoon at Hammonasset Beach State Park or Milford Point? Serious birders spend so much time in the field during the fall, that one birding adventure seems to run into the next. Just another reason to write down field notes. They can make delightful reading on a cold winter's night and will also help to jog the memory in recalling exactly when, where, and with whom you saw that Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Hammonasset Beach State Park!

#### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-throated Loons were well reported off the Connecticut coast with 20+ at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP), Madison November 29 (JG) and 50 in the Savin Rock area, West Haven November 16-17 (NC). Common Loons were also reported, both inland and coastally, albeit in smaller numbers (m.ob.). Over a dozen reports were received for Pied-billed Grebe with a high of five at Konold's Pond, Woodbridge October 3 (AB) and November 7 (SM). More surprising was that no reports were received for any other grebe species! Northern Gannet, once a rare occurrence in the western end of Long Island Sound, now appears on an annual basis. There is speculation that the birds fly west and upon reaching the end

of the Sound, turn back east. Gannets were off Griswold Point, Old Lyme October 31, November 6 (peak of 50), November 14 (HG), and off HBSP November 29 (JG). Two immature Great Cormorants, the first reported for the season, were inland on the Connecticut River at Haddam September 29 (TH).

Two American Bitterns were at Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven August 16 (SM), and additional birds were at Sherwood Island State Park (hereafter SISP), Westport September 25 and October 10 (RSO) and at Great Island, Old Lyme September 25–November 11 (TH). Secretive Least Bitterns were in Old Lyme, on the Lieutenant River August 8 and three were on Goose Island August 9-10 (HG). A total of 59 Snowy Egrets together in Black Rock Harbor, Bridgeport August

6 (CE) was surely impressive. A good example of post-breeding heron dispersal was seen on the Naugatuck River, Watertown, where a mixed flock of one Great Egret, two immature Snowy Egrets, two immature Great Blue Herons, one Green Heron and an immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron arrived September 2 (RN). The two "Snowies" lingered until at least September 17 (RN). A late Snowy Egret was at Milford Point, Milford November 26 (SK). A Little Blue Heron was at HBSP September 2-3 and 9-10 (JG).

An immature Tricolored Heron was at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, Stonington August 29 (DP). Cattle Egrets were in Old Saybrook October 31 (GH), at Sunny Valley Preserve, New Milford November 1 (CW) and along the Connecticut River in Rocky Hill November 13 (Chris Sprague). A White Ibis, casual in Connecticut, was at Merwin Point, Milford July 31 (Tom Kilroy) and again August 8-10 (SM, RSc). There were five reports of this species in Connecticut from 1970 to 1980, of which four were in the month of September (Zeranski and Baptist 1990). Details of the Milford sightings have been forwarded to the Connecticut Rare Records Committee.

There were numerous reports of Snow Geese throughout the state, including 450 at Lighthouse Point October 24 (SM), possibly the same birds seen earlier that

day in Niantic (DP). "Blue" Geese included adults at Lighthouse Point October 24 (SM) and at Southbury Training School, Southbury October 29 - November 30 (RN); and two adults and four juveniles at HBSP September 28 (JG). Brant peaked at 121 at Milford Point November 6 (SK).

Waterfowl began moving in October, with several species peaking along the coast in late November, among them Northern Pintail with 100 at South Cove, Old Saybrook November 27 (JG, SM et al.); Gadwall with 163 at Milford Point November 26 (SK); and Canvasback with 77 at Frash Pond, Stratford November 26 (SK). American Wigeon peaked inland in mid-month with 68 in a small industrial park pond off Interstate 91 in Meriden November 7 (AB) and 100 in Aspetuck Reservoir, Easton November 13 (JL et al.). A female Redhead was at Paderewski Park, Plainville November 13 (JM). Lesser Scaup were reported from half a dozen locations. Additional peak numbers included 30-50 Hooded Mergansers at Aspetuck Reservoir November 13 (JL), 33 at Nepaug Reservoir, New Hartford November 26 (Jim Moore) and 40 at Bantam Lake, Litchfield November 25 (GH); 180 Common Mergansers at Batterson Park Pond, New Britain November 27 (Mary Czapinski); and 42 Ruddy Ducks at Bride Lake, Niantic November 27 (SM et al.).

## VULTURES THROUGH SKIMMER

Up to four Black Vultures were seen with the Turkey Vultures in the New Milford area. Birds were seen mid-September through mid-November in the vicinity of the land fill (m.ob.) and at the nearby Sunny Valley Farm (CW). One at the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch site, Greenwich November 16 (Joe Ferrari), was the first sighting for this species at the site! Black Vultures appear to be increasing in southwestern Connecticut. Ospreys were seen well into November and a total of 4,248 seen at sites throughout Connecticut this fall far eclipses the total of the previous year (*vide* NC). Bald Eagle numbers were also impressive, a record 64 birds at the Quaker Ridge, Greenwich site (*vide* BO), and 173 at sites statewide (*vide* NC). This latter figure is an increase of 273% over the previous year. A pair of Cooper's Hawks with two immatures at White Hall Road, Litchfield August 17 (DR) was one of numerous accipiter reports. Statewide totals for all hawkwatch sites reporting included 16,654 Sharpshins and 2,575 Cooper's, both substantially higher than totals for the previous year (*vide* NC).

No discussion of 1993 hawk watch reports would be complete without a summary of Broad-winged Hawk flights on Sunday, September 19th! Following a week of southwest winds, clouds and rain, the 19th dawned with

clear skies and a northwest breeze. The hawks responded with a record flight. At Booth Hill, West Hartland, observers totaled an incredible 25,176 Broadwings. Woodchuck Lane, Harwinton, tallied 23,318 and the Quaker Ridge site totaled 28,367 in the two day September 19-20 period. Reporting sites on September 19th totaled 112,924 Broadwings (*vide* NC). It doesn't get any better than that anywhere!

Immature Golden Eagles were sighted at the Lighthouse Point Park site October 10 and 23, November 18 and 25 (ES et al.), another was in Branford November 9 (JF, NP). Quaker Ridge set another record with 11 Golden Eagles for the period (*vide* BO). American Kestrel, whose breeding numbers are low in the state, increased migrant totals over the previous year with 6,530 birds statewide (*vide* NC). A possible Eurasian Kestrel was reported at the Quaker Ridge hawk watch site September 1 (EJ). There are no Connecticut records for this species. Unfortunately, the view obtained did not include diagnostic features. Amidst the numerous reports for Merlin and Peregrine Falcon (a total 1,072 Merlin and 84 Peregrines from reporting hawk watch sites, (*vide* NC), came yet another unusual falcon report, a gray phase Gyrfalcon in New Haven November 9 (JF).

An adult and three juvenile Common Moorhens were in the

White Memorial Foundation's Cemetery Pond, October 9 (DR). Bantam Lake, always good for migrant water birds in fall, did not disappoint this year. American Coots peaked at 100 November 15 (GH). The previously reported Sandhill Crane, present through the summer in Sharon, remained through the end of the fall period (m.ob.).

There were numerous single American Golden Plover reports from Groton to Milford Point (m.ob.), but it must be remembered that this bird can also be found inland, usually on farm fields. Two were at Storrs, Mansfield September 20 (LB), nine were in South Windsor and 15 in Farmington September 26 (FD,JG). All were in freshly plowed fields.

Semipalmated Plovers peaked at 1,500 at Milford Point August 11 (SM). A Semipalmated and a Piping Plover lingered through the end of the period at Griswold Point (TH et al.), well beyond the time that most of their kin had left the Northeast for points south. Upland Sandpipers continued on their nesting grounds at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, until early September (m.ob.). Migrant birds were at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford August 14-15 (m.ob.) and at Windham Airport, Windham, where as many as four were seen August 20-26 (LB,GC et al.). The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection is inter-

ested in the potential of the state's smaller airports as nesting sites for this and other grassland species. Any summer reports would be appreciated. As the sightings above show, these airports are also important stop-over points for Upland Sandpipers in migration.

Old Lyme and HBSP hosted one to five Hudsonian Godwits from late October to early November (m.ob.). Red Knots peaked at Bridgeport's Seaside Park September 16 (CB). The sole Baird's Sandpiper report came from Sikorsky Airport August 29 (CB). An early Purple Sandpiper appeared at Falkner Island off Guilford August 7-14 (Jim Zingo,JS et al.). Birders searching for Buff-breasted Sandpiper had several opportunities this year. Two were at SISP August 23 (RSo), one to three at HBSP August 26—September 11 (JG et al.), and one was at Windham Airport August 25-26, a first record for northeast Connecticut (LB,GC et al.). Long-billed Dowitchers were reported at HBSP October 9 (BD, Sonnie Wing) and Great Island October 17 (TH). The only Wilson's Phalarope report came from HBSP September 11 (JG et al.).

The only unusual gull reports were of adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Storrs November 5 (MS) and New Milford November 20 (DP). Without hurricanes to bring in rare terns this season, the expected sightings came from the

usual places. Two Caspian Terns were at Milford Point September 18 (SK). Two Royal Terns were photographed at HBSP August 19 (LW) and up to five were seen September 16 - October 17 (JG, CB et al.). Common Terns peaked at 525 at Milford Point August 11 (SM), and one at HBSP November 24 (FD, JG) was a late date. A "hatch-year" Forster's Tern was at Falkner Island August 15 (JS). Up to three Black Terns were at Milford Point August 24 - September 8 (m.ob.). Black Skimmers were at Milford Point August 8 (m.ob.) and September 1 (CB), and at HBSP September 16 (JG).

#### OWLS THROUGH PIPIT

A Snowy Owl graced the top of a light pole at Stamford's train station November 12 (Julio de la Torre *vide* FM). So impressed were the local citizenry that the bird's picture graced Stamford's daily newspaper, *The Advocate*, the following day. Snowy Owls, particularly young birds, are often driven south in search of food before the oncoming winter. Many, if not most, do not survive to return. At least seven Short-eared Owl reports, three from Lighthouse Point (ES), all were concentrated along the coast. Long-eared Owls, on the other hand, went unreported for the period. Secretive and difficult to find, Saw-whet Owls are probably more common than reports would indicate. Saw-whets were

in Quinnipiac State Forest, North Haven November 21 (SM, ES), Lake Quassapaug, Middlebury November 22 (GH) and in East Hartland November 25 (DR et al.).

Common Nighthawks are often quite noticeable during fall migration, moving in large flocks in the still daylight hours of early evening. During a 55 minute period, 348 nighthawks passed over Ansonia August 26 (JB). A Common Nighthawk was flushed from bushes at the tip of Meigs Point, HBSP November 26 (Bill Yule). This is a very late date for this species. The following day feathers from a freshly killed nighthawk were found in the area (RSc). The Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch site totalled 76 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds August 25-September 29 (EJ), and Lighthouse Point tallied 22 hummers September 14 (SM). Red-headed Woodpeckers were observed at Lighthouse Point September 22 and 28 (ES), and at Quaker Ridge, October 25 (EJ). An Olive-sided Flycatcher was at Quaker Ridge August 30 (EJ). Some observers have commented that Purple Martin has declined over the past several years; thus 60 at Moodus Reservoir, Moodus August 1 (JM, David Titus) were well received. Common Ravens, in spite of poor nesting success reported this past summer, were observed in at least seven different towns throughout northern, though chiefly northwestern sections of Connecticut (m.ob.).



Birders recognize the perils of migration, and a sad example was the 20+ Black-capped Chickadees found dead on the roof of a four story building in downtown Hartford November 2 (S. Peterson *vide* BK). The previous night was foggy and it is assumed the birds crashed into the windows of a much taller adjacent building. A Boreal Chickadee, seen with a flock of migrant Black-capped Chickadees, was reported near the HBSP banding station November 4 (RSc). Boreal Chickadees have been nearly absent from Connecticut over the past two decades. The last invasion of this species occurred in the winter of 1975-76 (Zeranski & Baptist 1990). Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen in high numbers in Connecticut. Over 300 were found in Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown November 27 (DP), and these birds were well represented at feeders from around the state (m.ob.). A Sedge Wren was reported from Greenwich Point, September 9 (BO).

American Robins are considered a "sign of spring," but as serious birders know, hearty winter robins can be seen throughout the winter months. Nevertheless, a vast majority of these thrushes do head south in mid-fall and 2,000-3,000 were seen in Woodbury and surrounding towns October 30 (RN). There were numerous accounts of American Pipits, another species often seen during fall migration.

Flocks included high counts of 90 at Station 43 marsh, South Windsor October 3 (CE) and 60 on the Farmington Meadows, Farmington October 10 (BD).

## VIREOS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

There is no question that Philadelphia Vireos migrate through Connecticut each fall, but in what numbers? Vireos are easily misidentified and may be difficult to locate high in the tree tops. There were few Philadelphia Vireo reports this season. One was at Bluff Point Coastal Preserve, Groton September 12 (DP) and two were at the same location September 20 (DP). Two birds were in separate locations in Woodbury September 12-13 (RN) and two others were at SISP September 18 (RSo). Other than the expected Pine, Palm, and Yellow-rumped, there were very few late warbler reports. Blackpoll warblers in South Britain, Southbury October 17 (RN) and at Quaker Ridge November 3 (EJ) were the only other woodland warblers reported after mid-October. Connecticut Warblers were reported at Greenwich Point September 5 (BO) and in a Preston backyard September 19 (DP). Yellow-breasted Chats, now listed as endangered as breeders in Connecticut, were at Quaker Ridge August 31 (EJ), Greenwich Point August 31 and September 6 (BO), and at Sisson Cemetery, Lyme October 24 (TH). A Chat

was banded at the Birdcraft Museum banding station, Fairfield September 30 (AO et al.).

A late Indigo Bunting was at Ferry Park, Rocky Hill October 16 (DR). A single Dickcissel was at Lighthouse Point Park October 24 (SM), the only report of this species. There were no fall reports of Grasshopper Sparrow at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks; however, two birds were in nearby Windsor September 24 (PD). There were several reports of Vesper Sparrow including six to eight birds in Southbury October 17 (RN et al.). Numerous reports for Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows were also received this fall. There were no confirmed sightings, however, of rarer vagrant sparrow species.

It was a great year for Lapland Longspur at HBSP! The first report for this species was October 19 (LW,RB) and 14 were reported November 14 (JM). SISP also hosted longspurs with five November 9 (RSo) and there were two at Great Island October 25 (TH). Snow Buntings were also seen in good numbers at several shoreline locations including a report of 125 at HBSP November 7 (SK). There were also inland reports from the Storrs area in early November (LB,DR).

Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven is best known as a location for observing hawk movements in fall, but it also draws good numbers of migrant songbirds.

Bobolink numbers began to build in mid-August with counts of 450 at Lighthouse Point August 16 (SM), and peaking there at 1,579 September 12 (JF et al.). Reports of single Eastern Meadowlarks came from Sharon October 13 (LW) and HBSP November 29 (SK). In what was described as a very conservative estimate, 100,000 Common Grackles passed over Lighthouse Point November 17 (SM,ES).

There were early indications that we would finally have a good "winter finch" year. A Pine Grosbeak was in Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown November 17 (DP), and a White-winged Crossbill was at the north end of Barkhamsted Reservoir, Hartland November 14 (Brian Kleinman). There were scattered reports of Common Redpolls in eastern and western portions of the state. There were numerous reports of Pine Siskins from mid-October through mid-November (m.ob.) including a flock of 100+ at an East Hartland feeder November 11 (Edith Leopold *vide* BK). The most interesting reports involved that most nomadic of species, Evening Grosbeak. A report of a pair with two begging fledglings in Hartland August 1 (*vide* DR) was remarkable; however, this coincides with an influx seen in central Massachusetts. Evening Grosbeak has nested only a few times in Connecticut (Zeranski & Baptist 1990). Then in mid-October, thousands of

grosbeaks descended upon feeding stations throughout the state, only to all but disappear by the first week of November. As the winter season approached, the grosbeaks were but a memory. I will keep my sunflower feeder well-stocked in anticipation of a return visit in the spring!

Morin, Russ Naylor, Alison Olivieri, Brian O'Toole, Gerry Parkinson, Noble Proctor, David Provencher, Dave Rosgen, Ray Schwartz (RSc), Edward Shove, Richard Soffer(RSo), Jeffrey Spendelow, Eric Sullivan, Mark Szantyr, Lyle Whittlesey, Chris Wood, Jeff Young.

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**LITERATURE CITED**

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## ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 8

Our mystery bird's heavy pointed bill and plain appearance are most characteristic of a blackbird and separate it from other ground-feeding birds with long tails such as thrashers, catbirds, and towhees. Blackbirds are those noisy, common, and easy to identify birds, right? Sometimes they are, but not on these pages! For all those readers who honestly identified last issue's quiz to species, *please do not skip to the end of this answer.*

Of the blackbirds that occur in the Northeast, the grackles possess the longest tails and bills. Just to be sure, let's consider some alternatives. In autumn, a female Rusty Blackbird would have a similar facial pattern, showing the pale eyebrow, blackish lores, paler throat, and light eye color. All Rusty Blackbirds, however, have finer, sharply pointed bills and do not have as long a bill or tail as our bird. The bill of a Brewer's Blackbird is relatively blunt and more rounded along its length than the bill of a Rusty Blackbird and thus somewhat closer to



the shape of the bill on our quiz bird. Could this rarity to the Northeast be our mystery bird? An immature male Brewer's might show a similar facial pattern to our quiz bird but would have a shorter tail, shorter bill, and a darker throat and breast. With these two species out of consideration, we should examine the possible species of grackle.

The Common Grackle is one of our most abundant breeding birds in Connecticut and familiar to many people. However, even the much browner immatures of that species would never show the pale breast and light eyebrow exhibited on our quiz bird; young birds also have dark eyes. We are left with the remaining species of grackle that breeds in the Northeast—the Boat-tailed Grackle. This large-tailed grackle breeds north to New York City, and yet has occurred in Connecticut only half a dozen times. The female has a buff eyebrow, paler throat, and a pale eye, at least in populations from Georgia to New York. Although these characters point to our mystery bird being a Boat-tailed Grackle, we have not eliminated *all* possibilities.

Two potential pitfalls in identifying rarities are (1) to assume that the species occurring closest to our sighting is the only possibility or the most likely, and (2) to draw our conclusion based on supportive characters alone. These assumptions do not lead us to accurate identifications. We must also control the natural urge to identify whatever we see. The inescapable truth is that we cannot identify every bird. Most experienced observers come to realize this and accept it; in so doing, they become the most reliable observers.

Even with two views of our mystery bird, we cannot identify it with certainty, and within the context of our quiz, there is another possible species, the Great-tailed Grackle. That species has occurred in Nova Scotia at least once (a female photographed coming to a feeder in Annapolis Royal from 17 November 1983 to 8 February 1984). Unidentified grackles of this type were reported previously at three other localities in the province. The possibility that the Great-tailed Grackle might occur in Connecticut should be taken very seriously; in addition to the Nova Scotia record, there are records supported by photographs in Illinois, Ontario, and Ohio. The pattern of occurrence appears to involve fall vagrants, most frequently females. (The fewer spring reports of males seem to presage breeding.)

This sister species to the Boat-tailed Grackle has been expanding its range in the Midwest and Southwest since early this century. In the mid-1800s, the species was known in the United States only from southern Texas. By 1964 it bred north to Kansas, by 1979 to Missouri, and by 1983 to Iowa; it also spread east into southwest Louisiana. The Great-tailed Grackle spread west to Arizona in the late 1930s and at the same time moved north from Sonora, Mexico. The species was unrecorded from California until 1964 and yet is now breeding in isolated colonies along coastal southern California. The Great-tailed Grackle is found from coastal Peru and Colombia north through Central America, where its numbers have been increasing as well.

In contrast, the Boat-tailed Grackle has remained comparatively stable, advancing slowly northward only along the Atlantic Coast from southern New Jersey (first in 1892 and next in 1942) to New York (first in 1957; first breeding in 1981). The first records in southern New England, including Connecticut, all came in the fall of 1985 and spring of 1986. The Boat-tailed Grackle is found in coastal salt marshes from the central Texas coast, east across Florida, and north along the Atlantic Coast.

Identifying a female Great-tailed Grackle in the Northeast is made more difficult than along the Gulf Coast because the principal character separating it from the Boat-tailed Grackle, eye color, is not so useful here. Great-tails consistently show bright whitish to pale yellow eyes, whereas the eye color of Boat-tails varies from brownish to dull pale yellow, the latter along the Atlantic Coast. A bright pale eye is indicative of Great-tail, but a dull pale eye could be either species in the Northeast. The only other field character that might be useful is the color of the underparts. Female Boat-tails tend to be rich brown below, whereas Great-tails are duller olive-brown or a paler grayish brown. Although the female Great-tail is larger and longer-tailed, the difference could not be determined on a single bird seen in

the field. The rounded forehead of male Boat-tails is of no use with females; both are flat crowned. Males also differ in other ways that do not help us here. (See Doug Pratt's article in *Birding*, vol. 6 [1974] pp. 217-223 and James Pruitt's article in *American Birds*, vol. 29 [1979] pp. 985-992.)

Some people have proposed that because the Boat-tail is so closely tied to coastal marshes, any large-tailed grackle seen away from the coast should be studied carefully and considered likely to be a Great-tail. Indeed, there are very few records of Boat-tails away from coastal marshes (except the whole of Florida), so this may be useful. Nevertheless, any large-tailed grackle in Connecticut not seen well enough to observe the eye color and underparts color is probably best left unidentified.

So what about our mystery bird? The one eye that we can see is clearly pale, but it is not obvious or bright. The side view shows a very pale-breast and the other photo shows a darker breast. Because we only have black & white photographs to work from, the best we can say is that the bird is either a Great-tailed or Boat-tailed Grackle. The bird is, in fact, a Great-tailed Grackle (probably a first-year female and thus the darker eye) that I photographed at Santa Barbara, California, in November 1982. Evil and mischievous as this is for a photo quiz, I think it offers some good lessons about identifying birds.

*Louis R. Bevier*



Photo challenge 9. Identify the species, which is recorded from the Northeast. Answer next issue.

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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 accompanied with an IBM PC disk, if possible. 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. Good quality photographs of particular interest will also be considered. 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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Spring 1994 - Volume XIV No. 2

**The Mabel Osgood Wright Award**

Neil Currie ..... 42

**Ludlow Griscom (1890-1959)**

William Davis ..... 43

**Book Review**

Roland C. Clement ..... 48

**Two Hybrid Common X Roseate Terns  
Fledged at Falkner Island, Connecticut**

J. Zingo, C. Church, & J. Spindelow 50

**The 1993-94 Connecticut Christmas  
Bird Count**

Stephen P. Broker ..... 56

**Connecticut Field Notes**

Fall: August 1 - November 30, 1993

Jay Kaplan ..... 69

**Answer to Photo Challenge 8**

Louis Bevier ..... 77

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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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## ABOUT OUR COVER ARTIST:

Paul Carrier

### Common Raven "(*Corvus corax*)"

Again we call upon Paul for our cover art. This is his fourth illustration for *The Connecticut Warbler*. Paul has a deep interest in birds and enjoys all aspects of nature. He leads field trips, including spring and fall hawk watches for the Hartford Audubon Society and illustrates the front cover of their bimonthly newsletter. He has also prepared a well received, hawk picture guide, and has illustrated several books. Paul has his own advertising and design studio in Harwinton, Connecticut.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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Volume 14 Number 3

July 1994

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## Contents

## Summer 1994

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- 82      **Snow Geese in the Atlantic Flyway**  
         Charles Barnard, Jr.
- 87      **Maximizing Wild Birds on Small Properties**  
         George A. Clark, Jr.
- 96      **Behavior and Successful Nesting of American**  
**Oystercatchers on Falkner Island, Connecticut,**  
**in 1993**  
         James M. Zingo

### NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 108      **DEP Requests Information on**  
**Grassland Bird Species**  
         Dawn McKay
- 109      **Aberrant Nest-Building by a**  
**Great Blue Heron**  
         Roland C. Clement
- 111      **Connecticut Field Notes**  
**Winter: December 1 - February 28, 1994**  
         Jay Kaplan
- 119      **Answer to Photo Challenge 9**  
         Louis Bevier
- 
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# SNOW GEESE IN THE ATLANTIC FLYWAY

Charles Barnard, Jr.

On October 20, 1993, a flock of about 90 Greater Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens atlantica*) landed at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, Connecticut. [The genus *Chen* is merged into *Anser* by many authorities *Ed.*]. One of these birds wore a neck collar that later proved it had been banded August 9, 1993 on Bylot Island in the eastern Canadian Arctic—about 475 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

The Snow Goose is divided into two races. In addition to the Greater, there is also the Lesser Snow Goose (*C.c. caerulescens*). There is also a separate color phase of the bird known as the "blue goose." Although the blue phase was considered rare in the early 20th century, it now constitutes a majority in some populations of the Lesser Snow Goose (Cooch 1964). The blue phase was not known to exist at all in the race of Greater Snow Goose until 1973, when it was discovered by J. D. Heyland (Palmer 1976). The blue phase is still thought to number considerably less than one per cent of the Greater Snow Goose population (Reed et al. 1991).

Trying to identify snow geese by their race in the field is "virtually impossible" (Bellrose 1976). A series of specific measurements, bill length in particular, must be taken to identify races. A bill length of 65.6 mm or over would "probably" indicate a greater snow (Todd 1979).

We know, however, that the Greater Snow Goose has a very distinct nesting range and a migration route which brings it over Connecticut during both spring and fall on its way to and from its primary staging area—the St. Lawrence River around the Cap Tourmente in Quebec. The St. Lawrence has been noted as a staging area since at least the 1500s (Palmer 1976).

Writing in 1925, Forbush quoted a writer from the 1600s as saying that "a white goose was here in flocks of two or three thousand" in both fall and spring. It is not known how many Greater Snow Geese existed in pre-colonial times, but it appears that they were numerous. By Forbush's time, however, the Greater Snow Goose is described as being "a very rare straggler" in New England.

It is estimated that around the beginning of the 20th century the Greater Snow Goose numbered between two or three thousand (Palmer 1976). Their numbers have risen to more than 400,000 in less than a full century. This tremendous rise in population can be attributed to the following factors: the signing of the migratory bird treaty in 1916; the banning of Greater Snow Goose hunting in the

United States from 1931 to 1975; the creation of a system of wildlife sanctuaries; and a series of years which provided favorable conditions on the nesting grounds (Reed 1989).

The Greater Snow Goose comprises the only North American goose population that nests entirely above the Arctic Circle (Anon. 1981). In addition to Bylot Island, there are colonies of Greater Snow Geese on Baffin Island, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere and Devon Islands, as well as northwest Greenland (Figure 1). In the Foxe Basin off the west coast of Baffin Island, there is some inter-breeding between Lesser and Greater Snow Geese (Reed et al. 1991).

Weather conditions at these latitudes are harsh. When the geese first arrive they must find sufficient space free of snow cover to begin nesting immediately; a delay of just two weeks can cause them to skip nesting entirely (Cooch 1964). There is little food available when the geese first arrive in the Arctic, so females can lose up to 20% of their mass while incubating. During harsh weather at this time they may freeze as they sit on the eggs (Bartlett 1975). In the span of a decade the population of Lesser Snow Geese on Wrangell Island in the Siberian Arctic dropped from 400,000 to less than 50,000, because of harsh weather in the spring (Lopez 1987). The Arctic Fox population also has a bearing on the success of the nesting season (Reed 1989).

Greater Snow Geese begin leaving the nesting grounds in late August and start arriving on the St. Lawrence River, east of Quebec City, by mid-September (Bellrose 1976). Between the Arctic and the St. Lawrence, it is thought that secondary staging areas are used on the southern end of Baffin Island and the Ungava Peninsula of interior Quebec (Anon. 1981). Generally, Greater Snow Geese begin to pass over Connecticut in mid-October with their numbers increasing into November (Merola and Chasko 1989). They often fly at high altitudes—2,000 feet and above. Many apparently fly non-stop to Southern New Jersey and Delaware Bay from the St. Lawrence (Bellrose 1976). It appears that large numbers migrate over the New York-Connecticut line and are probably navigating visually using the Hudson River (Merola pers. comm.).

The primary winter range of Greater Snow Goose is between southern New Jersey and coastal North Carolina. The Snow Goose winters in Connecticut only in small numbers. Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in Connecticut from 1972 to the present totaled from six to 86 birds (Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection and *The Connecticut Warbler*). On its primary wintering grounds the geese formerly fed heavily on *Spartina* and other marsh grasses. However, in the last two decades they have increasingly been using agricultural fields. They have also shifted to agricultural areas on their St.

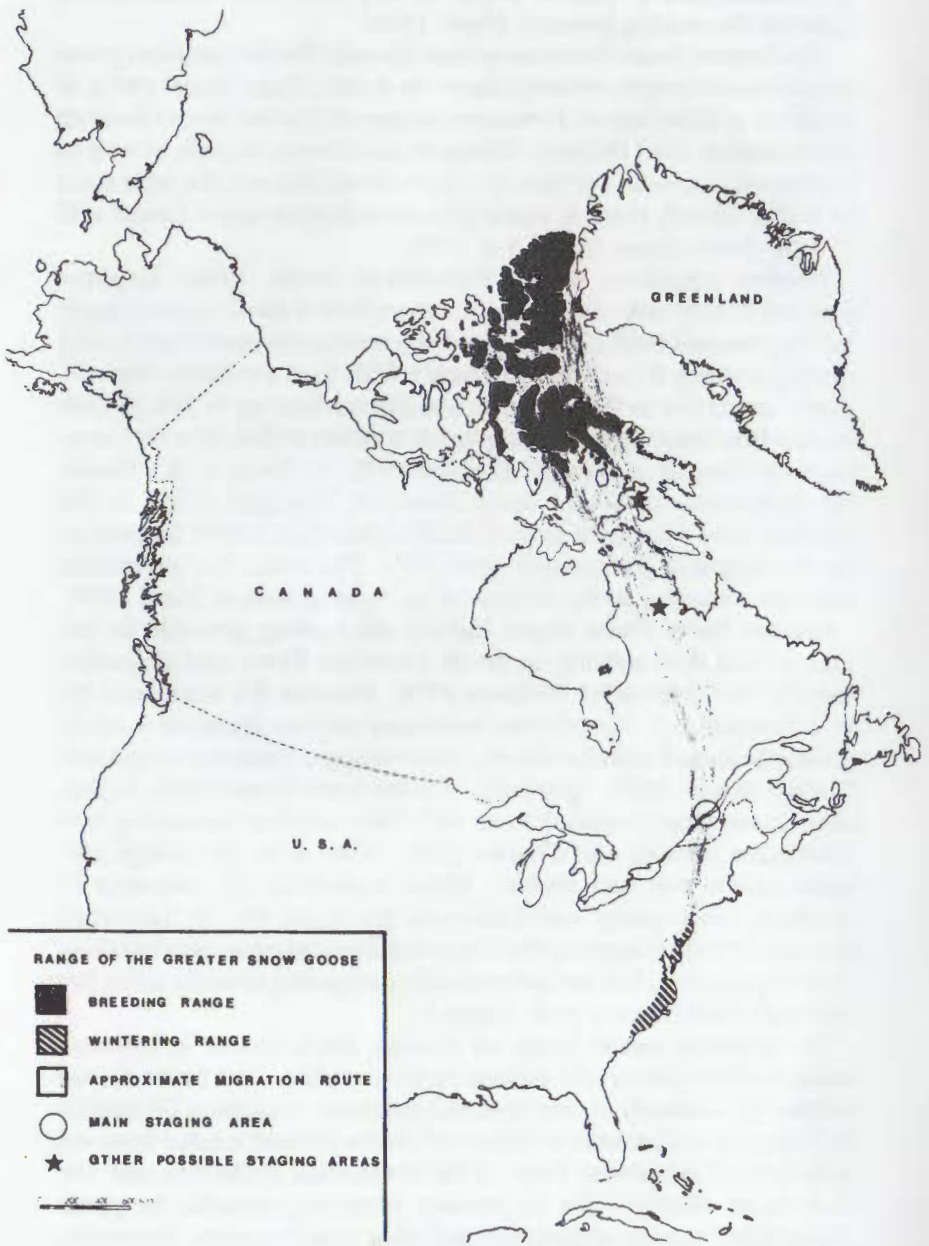


Figure 1. Range of Greater Snow Geese

Lawrence staging area in both spring and fall. Management of Snow Geese with regard to crop damage has become an important task for biologists (Reed 1991).

Those who visit the coastal mid-Atlantic areas in winter may see flocks of blue phase Snow Geese. These birds are Lesser Snow Geese that arrive from James Bay in a flight that takes them across central New York State to the west of our area (Palmer 1976).

Late March and early April once again finds Greater Snow Geese passing over Connecticut enroute to their St. Lawrence River staging area. As they arrive upon the St. Lawrence in the spring, the geese become the subject of an aerial photo survey conducted by the Canadian Wildlife Service.

In early May of 1993 the survey tallied 421,000 Snow Geese (*Am. Birds* Vol. 47, No. 3). The vast majority of these birds are considered to be Greater Snow Geese, based upon such factors as the low percentage of blue phase geese and band recoveries (Anon. 1981). Finally, it is back to the Arctic, the land "beyond the North Wind" for another nesting season.

At one time, the Snow Goose was known as *Chen hyperborea*, literally "goose from beyond the north wind." The blue goose was considered a separate species, *Chen caerulescens*. When the two were lumped into a single species, the name *caerulescens* took precedence according to the rules of scientific nomenclature.

While the saga of the Greater Snow Goose is one of management success, concerns remain. Among these are the threats posed by oil exploration and transportation, mineral extraction projects, and the threat of disease outbreak at those locations where large numbers of waterfowl are concentrated. For Lesser Snow Geese staging at James Bay, there are questions as to effects from the Hydro-Quebec project. In an unusual occurrence related by Milan Bull in *The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. IX, No. 2, at least 17 Snow Geese were hurled to earth during a lightning storm over Fairfield in March of 1988. For the present though, we can look forward to seeing and hearing flocks of "white brant" high overhead in their rhythmic migrations.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# MAXIMIZING WILD BIRD NUMBERS ON SMALL PROPERTIES

George A. Clark, Jr.

People who enjoy watching birds often wish to increase the number of wild birds in the vicinity of their residence. If a property is large, encompassing hundreds of acres, for example, then it is conceivably possible to manage the landscape to maintain or create a diversity of habitats including fields, brushy areas, woodlands, marshes, ponds, which will be attractive to a greater variety of birds. Most Connecticut residents, however, do not live in such large tracts. More often, home sites include two acres or less, so these are the focus of this article.

The potential for attracting birds into small areas varies with the characteristics of the surrounding region. In general, no very small tract is likely to be large enough to meet all the requirements for even a pair of wild birds; therefore, the suitability of such a tract depends on the characteristics of its surroundings. Failure of adjacent areas to meet needed requirements may be especially conspicuous in highly developed urban settings that lack nearby vegetation. Nevertheless, even a small, well isolated, patch of vegetation in cities may attract migrating birds in spring and fall.

Features potentially attractive to birds include food, water, cover, good nest sites, and absence of continual disturbance. The following sections consider each of these attractants. In the following discussion no attempt is made to provide comprehensive coverage, but I do mention points of potentially special interest for Connecticut residents.

## Feeding Stations

Operating a bird feeding station is one obvious way to attract birds to the vicinity of human residences. In Connecticut bird feeding is particularly effective during the cooler months, but some people attract birds by feeding throughout the year. Most feeding stations give pleasure to people without causing problems, but on occasions food has been dispensed in irresponsible ways that create nuisance situations for neighbors. Food should be provided so as to minimize the chances of its attracting unwanted rodents, raccoons, or sizeable flocks of Canada Geese, pigeons, or starlings.

A variety of foods for birds are widely sold commercially. Those

beginning to feed birds may wish to test various potential food types for their effectiveness. Pure sunflower, cracked corn, or suet, are often less expensive than the mixed feeds, which may contain substantial quantities of unattractive ingredients. Presentation of the food can be important. For example, species that feed on cracked corn often prefer to feed on broad surfaces such as the ground or platforms rather than small perches on hanging feeders. Sunflower seeds and suet are often most effectively provided in feeders off the ground.

A common problem in bird feeding is having squirrels monopolize the feeders, but solutions generally have to be specific for particular sites. For feeders on poles situated in areas of grass or lawn away from trees, suitably broad and flexible metal baffle disks on the pole can generally block squirrels climbing to the feeder. All-metal feeders that can be set to select the maximal weight of feeding animals are commercially available and can be highly effective in deterring squirrels; however, such feeders that discriminate by weight are often among the more expensive kind.

Nearly all species that regularly visit feeding stations in Connecticut are attracted by sunflower seeds in some form. In addition to Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Cardinals, and House Finches, a great variety of other species including Red-bellied and Downy Wood-



*Paul Carrier*

peckers will come. Cracked corn is attractive to numerous species but not Black-capped Chickadees or White-breasted Nuthatches.

Suet can attract woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and Carolina Wrens. The small Niger seeds, sometimes called thistle, are especially attractive to American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins. From May into September Ruby-throated Hummingbirds can be attracted to hummingbird feeders that need not

be elaborate. High concentrations of sugar dissolved in water (one part sugar to four parts water) are favored, and having either the feeder with red markings, or the fluid dyed red, may improve attractiveness of the feeder. For hummingbird feeders in particular, the food should be changed frequently, perhaps daily in summer to avoid fungus growth.

Although the possibilities for transmission of diseases to birds at feeding stations has not been much studied, in general it is recommended that feeders be cleaned at least occasionally. One example of disease transmission known from feeding stations in Connecticut involves a parasitic capillary worm, eggs of which are passed by Blue Jays in their droppings and may then be consumed by other jays feeding in the same area (Helmboldt et al. 1971). Effects of the capillary worm are most noticeable during those winters when jays are most numerous. Jays heavily infested with these worms lose the ability to swallow and lose weight (Jewell 1986). The birds starve and may be found dead in the vicinity of feeding stations.

Although the range expansion of such birds as Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, and House Finch across Connecticut may have been aided by winter bird feeding, there is apparently no evidence that individual healthy wild birds become dependent on a particular feeder and would die without the presence of that feeder. Feeding birds is probably best viewed as an activity giving pleasure to people rather than as something vital to wild birds, most species of which had well established populations in Connecticut prior to the advent of bird feeding stations.

New efforts in bird feeding may be potentially rewarding. The January 1986 issue of *Wildlife in North Carolina* (page 28) included a recipe for attracting Eastern Bluebirds: one part flour to three parts yellow corn meal with lard (not shortening) used to bind the mix together and peanut butter and/or peanut hearts added. This mixture is then packed into 1 1/2 inch holes drilled in a short length of log which is hung from a tree limb. I am not aware that such a mixture has been used in Connecticut, but such innovative food mixes might conceivably increase the variety of species attracted to certain feeding stations.

The attractiveness of any particular feeding station is likely to vary considerably over the seasons. Deep snow which covers natural food supplies make accessible feeding stations more attractive. Birds need less food when the weather is warm so may be less conspicuous at feeders during mild periods. Furthermore, during late winter and spring, especially on warmer days, chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches disperse somewhat over the landscape in preparation for the coming

nesting season. Visits to feeders become curtailed as territories and nest sites may be some distance away.

## Natural Foods

Foods other than those provided at feeding stations are of great importance for much of the year (Brittingham and Temple 1992). Because the variety of foods consumed by wild birds is so great, it is not feasible to attempt to attract all species, and therefore, choices must be made. For example, lawns may be especially favorable sites for feeding by Northern Flickers and American Robins, but may have less to offer other species. Chemical control of lawn pests has in many cases eliminated the value of lawns as feeding sites for birds, and in the worst cases has resulted in poisoning of birds (Anderson and Glowa 1985).

Much has been written about plantings that will attract birds, and much of what follows on this subject comes from Martin et al. (1951), who provided an extensive survey of plant foods used by North American birds in general. Two sources specifically concerned with Connecticut birds are Billard (1972) and McDowell (1972). Some conservationists feel that only plants native to Connecticut should be used, even though some plants native to other regions can be very attractive to birds. Just as there is concern that introduced birds may, in some cases, outcompete native ones, exotic plants in certain situations outcompete native plants. From a conservation viewpoint native plants should be favored. Plants considered to be useful as bird attractants for food and cover include pines, hemlock, cedars, bayberry, aspens, oaks, hackberry, red mulberry, spicebush, hawthorns, native mountain ashes, shadbush, blackberries, wild cherries, sumacs, maples, grapes, Virginia creeper, black gum, dogwoods, blueberries, elderberries, and viburnum (except highbush-cranberry) to name but a few. Picone (1992) has listed shrubs native to Connecticut and retail growers from which these plants are available.

Plants native to other regions, but not recommended for use in Connecticut include Asiatic bittersweet, non-native honeysuckles, Russian/autumn olive, barberries, and multiflora rose. All are already prevalent in Connecticut and are not likely to be eradicated, but, nevertheless, should not be further encouraged.

In many residential areas of the state, landscape alterations are regulated by restrictions such as in condominium dwelling areas. It may be necessary to seek changes in regulations or special authorization may be required prior to undertaking desired manipulations of the landscape. Other constraints on landscaping may include alternate uses of the land for gardening or other outdoor activities that

may limit the possible manipulations for attracting birds. Some features that may be good bird attractants may be unacceptable for aesthetic reasons in certain situations. For example, poorly weeded garden plots with a lush growth of annual weeds yielding a bumper seed crop can make such places "hot spots" for sparrows during fall migration. Weedy gardens, on the other hand, may not be acceptable in many settings. Furthermore, such gardens may be poor as a source of produce or flowers. Additional comments on vegetation are offered below in the section on cover.

Among major sources of natural food for birds are arthropods, including insects and spiders. Use of pesticides will diminish the quantity of such food sources and thus contribute to reduction in the bird numbers. Under natural conditions, birds do reduce the numbers of arthropods, but birds alone cannot control major insect outbreaks or infestations in which the numbers of insects sometimes far exceed the dietary requirements of the resident birds, as illustrated by past outbreaks of gypsy moths. Although many bird species feed on the younger caterpillars of the gypsy moth, few consume the older, larger stages of those caterpillars, although the two species of cuckoo are an exception.



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## **Water**

The most commonly seen case in which water is deliberately provided for birds is the use of bird baths, which are widely sold commercially. Algal growths may discolor the water and the container, but this is probably more objectionable to people than repulsive to birds that might otherwise bathe and drink from mud puddles and other even less aesthetically pleasing water sources.

Dripping water is more attractive for many birds than is standing water. Prior to the widespread use of mist nets to capture birds for banding, many banders used traps containing dripping water to catch insectivorous birds including arboreal warblers. Banders commonly used a siphon system in which flow through a hose from a waterbucket was regulated by a stopcock to produce a regular dripping in a shallow pan. Bird baths with dripping water are now commercially available, but, of course, cost substantially more than ordinary bird baths. Dripping water works as an attractant through much of the year but is most effective during droughts of late summer and autumn, and almost certainly least effective during rainy periods.

Connecticut homeowners have often converted natural wetlands into open ponds surrounded by lawns. Such changes make these areas less attractive to birds unless the ponds are so large as to draw waterfowl. Marshes or ponds with substantial emergent vegetation around the fringes are generally more attractive to birds than are ponds bordered by neatly manicured lawns. Greater cover around a pond will tend to encourage use by more species. As a general rule, construction of ponds appears to be a poor idea for attracting birds to small properties.

## Cover

Vegetation can make a major difference in the attractiveness of a small property. As already mentioned, in an urban setting even a small amount of vegetation may constitute an oasis for migrating birds which may be viewed at closer distances than are possible even in rural locations. In general, a varied assemblage of plants is more likely to attract a variety of bird species than is a homogenous stand of one species of plants. The varieties of native plants listed earlier as recommended food sources may also provide highly favorable cover. Soil conditions place limits on the kinds of plants that can be readily grown at specific sites. In planning landscape alteration, it may be desirable to consult experienced growers. If small properties are used for purposes other than attracting birds, such as growing vegetables, then compromises may be necessary in order to reach multiple objectives.

A favorable mix of plants will include not only a variety of species but also a combination of plant sizes, ranging from small herbaceous ones to mature trees. Generally, a good shrub layer will tend to maximize bird diversity. As previously stated, highly groomed properties, such as the lawns that now exist commonly in Connecticut, are not likely to attract a rich assemblage of kinds of birds. At

another extreme, tracts of exclusively mature tall trees are likely to have fewer bird species than those with a mix of vegetation. Also it may be difficult to observe those species that restrict their movement to the treetops.

Cover should not be so dense as to be impenetrable for birds. Close pruning of ornamental conifers can produce a dense exterior surface and considerably reduce the value of the trees as potential cover for birds, whereas a more natural growth will yield more openings in the surface of the tree and increase its cover value. This is another case in which manicured grooming of plants reduces their value for birds.

There are often strong social pressures for manicured vegetation in residential neighborhoods, and landscape management for attracting birds may involve compromises.

## **Nest Sites**

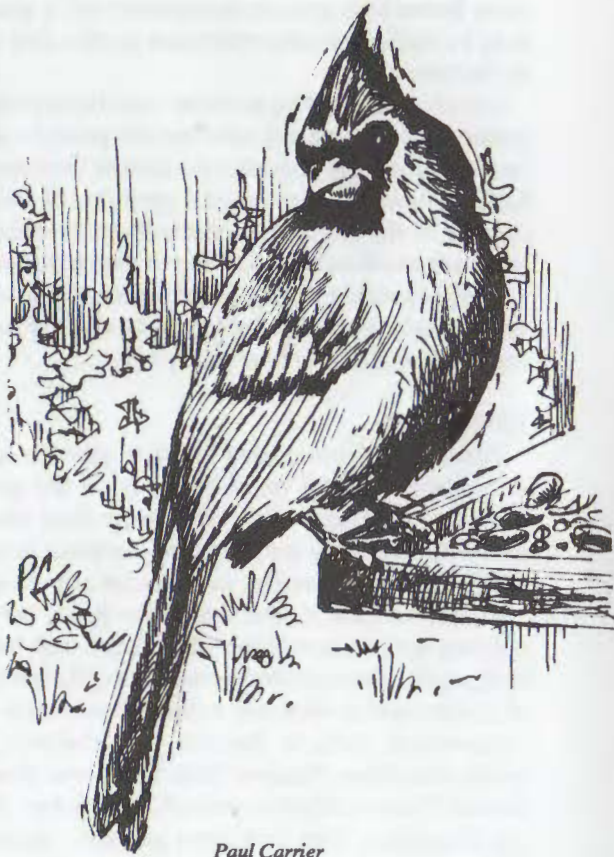
Provision of cover also helps to provide suitably concealed nest sites for birds that build nests 1) on the ground, 2) in shrubs or saplings, or 3) higher in trees. Large dead trees and snags should be saved (unless they are a hazard) as these provide potential sites for cavity-nesters as well as perches for numerous species.

Because a lack of nest sites often limits the populations of cavity-nesting species, provision of artificial nest boxes can attract species that might otherwise be absent during the breeding season. Examples of cavity-nesters that use suitable nest boxes on small properties in Connecticut include Eastern Screech-Owls (especially in coastal areas), Northern Flickers, Tree Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, House Wrens, and Eastern Bluebirds. Tree Swallows generally require an open setting and defend only a small area around the nest box, so a small open lot can provide space for a number of nesting birds. In contrast, Eastern Bluebirds are strongly territorial, often with a maximal density of about one pair per five acres, so it is not realistic to expect to attract more than one nesting pair of bluebirds on a small property. However, Eastern Bluebirds can nest successfully in the vicinity of breeding Tree Swallows so it is possible to have several bird houses on poles in an open yard or field and to attract both species together.

European Starlings and House Sparrows are introduced species that compete with native birds for nest boxes. Starlings can generally be excluded from swallow and bluebird houses by size of entrance, but House Sparrows pose a more difficult problem. Placing bird houses as far away as possible from human residences and from areas occupied by farm animals may reduce occupation by House Sparrows. All nest boxes should be cleaned following fledging, or at least

annually to discourage build-up of nest parasites.

Purple Martins have been declining in parts of Connecticut so the establishment of new colonies by placement of multi-compartmented nest boxes may help retain the species as a breeder in the state. However, trying to attract martins must be considered at present to be a gamble in many parts of the state. The large houses seem most attractive for martins when placed in areas of extensive fields or lawns, preferably with a pond or larger body of water nearby. Because the houses are commonly set over eight feet off the ground, a hinged pole



*Paul Carrier*

or equivalent arrangement is helpful for the annual cleaning of the house. In nest boxes for martins and other species, uses of plugs in the entrances can temporarily block occupation by unwanted species such as European Starlings and House Sparrows. Plugs can then be removed near the time when desired species are due to return on migration. Information on likely arrival times of such migrants can be obtained from Zeranski and Baptist (1990) and other publications covering particular regions.

### **Avoiding Disturbance**

Birds tend to avoid areas where there is continual disturbance by either people or small mammals such as house cats. Keeping cats under control can in some cases be difficult or virtually impossible. Generally, cats pose the greatest hazard for birds when on or near the ground, and arboreal species are less likely to be taken unless they



come to the ground for food or water. If cat owners can be persuaded to used belled collars, cats might be more detectable by birds. Placing of fencing around small ground areas in which birds feed or bathe may make it more difficult for cats to capture birds by eliminating the possibility of a straight run at birds from outside the fenced area. Ground cover immediately surrounding feeding or bathing areas may provide cover for cats as well as birds, and the preferable arrangement may depend on whether or not there are cats in the vicinity.

## Conclusions

Provision of food, water, cover, and nest sites, while minimizing disturbance of birds can lead to a considerable increase in the number of birds that will frequent a small property, but obviously space requirements such as territoriality place limits on how many individuals can be attracted at any one time. What is achievable depends greatly on the particular situation, so actions to be undertaken will necessarily differ somewhat from one property to the next. In general, for most properties an increase in the number of avian visitors is achievable.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# BEHAVIOR AND SUCCESSFUL NESTING OF AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS ON FALKNER ISLAND, CONNECTICUT, IN 1993

James M. Zingo

Falkner Island, a two hectare unit of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, is located at 41°13'N, 72°39'W in Long Island Sound about 5 km south of Guilford, Connecticut. This island, described in detail by Helander (1988), is the nesting site of a mixed colony of several thousand Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) and a few hundred Roseate Terns (*S. dougallii*) (Spendelow 1994a,b). This colony has been studied by the staff of the Falkner Island Tern Project (FITP) since 1978 (Spendelow 1982, Spendelow and Nichols 1989). In 1993, I made opportunistic observations of a pair of American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*) and their young. I describe here their nesting activity and behavior. I did not find similar published material on much of the behavior I observed or on oystercatcher breeding biology in Connecticut.

Oystercatchers have attempted to nest in Connecticut since the late 1970s (Proctor 1981, Anon. 1982) [not in 1980 in Westbrook as misstated earlier (Zingo 1992)]. A first attempt by American Oystercatchers to nest on Falkner Island in 1991 was unsuccessful (Zingo 1992). Although a pair of oystercatchers was seen on Falkner Island several times from April to August 1992, they made no apparent attempt to nest. In 1993, however, a pair (Figure 1) successfully fledged two young. Although young have been produced previously elsewhere in the state (e.g., Dewire 1981, Rosgen 1986, Taylor 1989), these were the first young produced in New Haven County.

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

FITP staff visited Falkner Island from 28 April to 2 May 1993, occupied the island continuously from 17 May to 20 August, and again visited the island from 4 to 5 September. We first saw an oystercatcher on 30 April, and thereafter we saw one or more adults and/or the young on most days until 15 August, after which they were not seen again.

## NEST HISTORY: INCUBATION TO FLEDGING

At about 1955 hr. on 22 May, while observing Roseate Terns from a blind on the bluff at the north end of the island, I saw an adult oystercatcher haltingly enter the Common Tern nesting area on the



Figure 1 (top). American Oystercatcher pair at their nest on 5 June.

Figure 2 (bottom). Clutch of three oystercatcher eggs (labelled) on 27 May.

northeast beach and then settle down as if incubating. I found a nest scrape with three eggs on a small section of gravel among the cobble and larger rocks. The eggs were spaced apart somewhat randomly compared to the generally neat, compact clutch of the terns. I labelled the eggs (Figure 2) the next day with a non-toxic marker and weighed them with a 50-g Pesola spring scale (A=46.0 g, B=44.5 g, and C=44.0 g). The unbanded adults were observed incubating on numerous occasions, and the nest was checked almost daily until the chicks

hatched. Egg C was pipping at about 1800 h on 13 June. The chick, still pipping at 0745 h the following day, had hatched and dried by 1130 h on 14 June. Both remaining eggs were starved (i.e., fractured by the striking of a chicklets egg tooth) at 0745 h on 14 June. Egg B hatched by 0730 h on 15 June, and egg A hatched by 1915 h on 16 June. Because American Oystercatcher eggs hatch in the order in which they are laid (Nol *et al.* 1984), presumably egg C was laid first, B second, and A third. Assuming at least a one-day interval between the laying of each egg, egg C was laid on 20 May at the latest. Incubation begins after the second egg is laid (Nol *et al.* 1984), so the incubation period was at least 24-25 days, similar to what has been reported elsewhere (Sprunt and Chamberlain 1949, Palmer 1967, Johnsgard 1981). Thus the clutch of three eggs had probably just recently been completed when discovered on 22 May. Nole *et al.* (1984) reported that, in three-egg clutches, the first egg is usually smaller and lighter than the second egg but about equal to the third egg. In this case, the second egg was slightly heavier than the first, but the third egg was heaviest.

The youngest chick, left behind on 16 June when the family group moved about 15-20 m away from the nest site, disappeared and presumably died. By 18 June, the group had moved away from the nesting terns to the gravelly north spit of the island, which at high tide is about 50 m away from the nest site and 15-20 m from the nearest tern nests. The adults were seen brooding the young on 14, 20, and 27 June. The two surviving young were first seen exercising their wings on 4 July and made short hopping flights on 26, 29, and 30 July, but apparently were not capable of sustained flight (i.e., they did not fledge) until 31 July (Figure 3), 46-47 days after they hatched. In



Figure 3. Two oystercatcher young on the day they fledged (31 July).

comparison American Oystercatchers typically fledge at 34-43 days (Palmer 1967, Reilly 1968, Nol 1985, 1989). It is possible that the quantity and quality of food available, while it may not significantly affect fledging success (Nol 1989), may affect the rate of growth and thus the age at which young oystercatchers fledge (Ens *et al.* 1992). Falkner Island and environs in 1993 may not have been prime foraging habitat for American Oystercatchers, so that the adults may have been unable to find abundant and /or high quality food for their young, resulting in relatively slow development.

### **BEHAVIOR OF THE ADULTS AT THE NEST**

American Oystercatchers are well known for their wariness (Bent 1929, Palmer 1967). The adults usually stealthily approached the nest on foot from near the water's edge about 10 or more meters away. These birds occasionally flew directly to the nest, at least once in response to repeated harassment by the terns. For three of four incubation exchanges observed where one bird returned to the nest while the other incubated, the incubating bird called before flying off. When both birds approached the nest at the same time, with one leaving and the other beginning to incubate, the birds did not call unless they were being attacked by the terns. While a bird was incubating and a tern upflight occurred in the absence of human disturbance, only once (23 May) did the incubating bird move away from the nest.

### **Responses to Human Intruders**

Initially, the adults were very skittish when approached and attempted to sneak away from the nest without giving away its location (often succeeding if we approached from the beach) prior to flying or vocalizing in attempts to lure us away. In general, the adults returned to the nest quickly after a disturbance. They stayed in sight of the nest (either at the nearby waterline or on the north spit) while researchers were on the beach near the nest, and allowed closer approaches and stayed at or on the nest more often as the nesting cycle progressed. During late incubation the birds flew up from the nest infrequently when nearby terns were in upflight from my approach to a blind. I then often approached and entered the nearest blinds overlooking the beach without the oystercatchers leaving the nest.

### **Interactions With Nesting Common Terns**

The adult oystercatchers interacted frequently with the Common Terns nesting around them. On 23 May, 28 May, and 11 June, an adult oystercatcher chased away (flew at while calling), charged, and

charged with upraised wings, respectively, a Common Tern that stood near the nest; however, terns usually initiated the aggressive interactions. These most often involved one to several terns diving (at least one day accompanied by several defecations; Figure 4) and giving attack calls or, less often, chase flights. Striking with the bill was not observed. I only witnessed one occasion of physical contact, an oystercatcher jumping backwards as it was possibly struck with a wing (Figure 5). Terns attacked the oystercatchers during 16 of 25 nest approaches observed, but forced one or both oystercatchers to retreat on only four occasions. Additional attacks occurred while the oystercatcher(s) incubated or stood at the nest, but were insufficient to drive them away. The frequent interference possibly encouraged the oystercatchers to move their young away from the nest site as soon as all three chicks hatched, although the first two young in a brood occasionally leave the nest before the third egg has hatched (Nol *et al.* 1984). Similarly, young European Oystercatchers (*H. ostralegus*) are taken to feeding territories soon after hatching (Cramp 1983).

The oystercatchers displayed various responses, usually in combinations, to tern attacks (Table 1), (Figures 4-9). Calling, wing-flaring as a tern neared, and ducking as a tern passed close (Figures 6-8) were most common, occurring as responses to about half of the observed attacks by terns. The oystercatchers most often stood their ground but jumped about (possibly driven by the terns) frequently on 30 and 31 May (Figure 5). The oystercatchers sometimes held their bills open without calling (Figure 7) and sometimes held their heads stiffly upraised with open bill (Figure 9) before ducking; these as well as wing-flaring appear to be aggressive displays (Miller and Baker 1980, Cramp 1983). Alternately, they sometimes adopted a submissive hunched posture with their heads held low and bill horizontal or pointing down slightly (Figure 4; see also Cramp 1983).

<u>Response</u>	<u># days noted</u>
Bill open	4
Calling	5
Ducking as tern neared	5
Flight	4
Head held stiffly high with bill open before ducking	2
Head held low	2
Stood ground	6
Jumping about	2
No reaction	1
Wing-flaring	5

Table 1. American Oystercatcher responses (at the nest) to attacks by Common Terns. Notes taken during 11.5 hours of observation on 8 days from 23 May-14 June.



Figure 4 (top). Adult oystercatcher on 6 June in submissive hunched posture with head held low. Note the tern droppings (small white spots) on its back.

Figure 5 (bottom). Common Tern attacking adult oystercatcher on 6 June. The oystercatcher jumped back in addition to the tern possibly initiating contact.

## BEHAVIOR OF THE YOUNG

### Responses to Human Intruders

From 14 June to 27 June when 0 to 13 days old, the downy young reacted to FITP staff mainly by crouching on the gravel (Figure 10), relying on their cryptic coloration to hide them. When held, the chicks did not make any distress calls. After being handled, they either crouched down again, or ran to the water's edge and began to swim away. During July they tended to run and swim away when approached, returning once human intruders left, but on 30 July they stayed in place, though seeming wary, when approached to within 20-30 m. After the young fledged, we did not attempt to approach them closely, but the family group flew off on 8 August when I approached the blind on the north spit.

### Interaction With Other Species

On 27 June and 4 July, adult Common Terns dived at the chicks as they ran or swam away from intruders. Also on 4 July, a chick responded to a swooping adult Common Tern by immediately dropping and crouching down on the gravel, getting up when no further attacks came. On 24 July, a Roseate Tern fledgling ran at one of the chicks in an apparent attempt to drive it away, but the oystercatcher charged the tern, grabbed its tail, and tugged briefly before losing its grip. The young charged at some of the fledgling Common Terns on 19, 24, and 30 July, at Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) on 24 July, and on 30 July one chick briefly grabbed the wingtip of a Common Tern fledgling. The oystercatchers charged with head stiffly down-stretched and bill (sometimes open) pointing straight down, similar to an aspect of piping display colorfully described by Perry (1972:104) as "like nothing so much as...old rams charging, hell for leather."

## BEHAVIOR OF THE ADULTS AWAY FROM THE NEST

### Response to Human Intruders

While guarding the young, the adults usually would fly off when approached, making loud "kleeping" sounds. They often flew around in wide circles while calling (e.g., Bent 1929), especially as the chicks grew older. They returned to their young soon after intruders entered a blind or left the area. Alarm calls given while standing were often synchronized with the head raising up and posterior dipping down ("teetering") as the bird called.





Figures 6-9 (clockwise from top left). Common Tern attacking adult oystercatcher.

6) oystercatcher calling as it begins to duck on 6 June.

7) oystercatcher with upraised (flared) wings and open bill on 6 June.

8) oystercatcher ducking its entire body as a tern passes over on 6 June.

9) oystercatcher with its head stiffly upraised and bill slightly open before ducking on 14 June.



Figure 10. Six or seven day-old oystercatcher chick "hiding" on the gravelly north spit on 21 June.

### Interactions With Other Oystercatchers

On five occasions (28 and 31 May, 14 and 24 June, and 10 July), FITP staff saw the breeding pair drive off one or more visiting oystercatchers. One of these incidents involved an aerial chase, one a ground encounter, and three included both aerial chases and ground encounters. The behavior during ground confrontations was similar to that described in Zingo (1992), an aspect of piping displays for oystercatchers (*Haematopus* spp.; Palmer 1967, Perry 1972, Miller and Baker 1980, Cramp 1983).

### Interactions with other species

When on the north spit, the adults were observed attacking other species on 11 or more occasions in defense of their young. In turn, the oystercatchers were attacked once by a Roseate Tern (chase flight) and once by a Common Tern (dive attack). They tolerated the close presence of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*), but they aggressively defended their young from a Great Black-backed Gull (*L. marinus*) on 17 June and a Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) on 9 July, one parent flying at and possibly striking the Herring Gull. These larger gulls are potential predators on oystercatcher young. On 12 July, one adult attacked a Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) twice by holding its head high (bill pointing straight down), jumping up and down a few times, and then charging and lowering its head as it neared the

other bird. The oystercatcher may have been defending its feeding territory from a potential competitor (see Radford 1989). The adult oystercatchers also chased away terns (adults, fledglings, and once a large chick) that came too close to their young.

### PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATIONS

The oystercatchers probably gained protection for their eggs and young because of the aggressive colony defense by the Common Terns (Erwin 1979, Burger 1984, Young and Titman 1986). Despite sometimes intense and prolonged attacks by Common Terns, the adult oystercatchers usually commenced or continued incubation, their nesting efforts relatively undeterred. In turn, the oystercatchers' presence on the gravel spit kept the large gulls away from the nearby nesting terns and undoubtedly helped to deter predation of large tern chicks. On 6 June, an adult oystercatcher flew past the south end of the island giving a loud alarm call, the nearby terns responding with a brief upflight, and although no predators were seen on this occasion, such alarm calls may warn nesting terns of approaching predators (Shealer and Burger 1992).

### FORAGING AND FEEDING BEHAVIOR

Although American Oystercatchers are known to prey on tern eggs (Burger and Gochfeld 1991), we did not observe this phenomenon on Falkner Island. In past years, oystercatchers have been seen foraging at nearby Goose Island, a low rocky island about 1 km to the west. An adult was seen on Goose Island on 14 July, and on three separate days at Falkner Island an oystercatcher flew to or from the general direction of Goose Island. I suspect that the adults, at least, sometimes foraged for themselves on Goose Island, and possibly brought back food for their young. At Falkner Island, the oystercatcher family was seen foraging mainly on the north spit and, at low tide, the rocky intertidal area exposed for about 1/2 km to the north. Several times, the oystercatcher young were observed probing in the pea-sized gravel and in the organic debris, apparently foraging. The family group tended to stay near the northernmost part of the spit exposed by the tide. As the chicks grew, they also ranged to the south of the spit, usually returning to the spit for the night. On 12 July and 1 August, the family group was seen along the northwest beach. The adults broke open several 3-4 cm long Blue Mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) for the young on 12 July; the chicks usually remained apart, each fed by one adult at a time. During about 1.5 hours of observation, the

adults fed the young directly four times, the young picked at the mussel flesh in the opened shells three times, and on one occasion an adult dropped a piece of mussel onto a rock from which a chick ate it.

### BANDING OF THE YOUNG

FITP staff tried to band the downy chicks at 1-2 and 5-6 days old on 16 and 20 June, respectively, but the size 5 bands easily slipped off their legs. By 27 June at 12-13 days old, the chicks' feet (Figure 11) had grown



Figure 11. The large feet of a 12 to 13 day-old oystercatcher chick banded on 27 June.

enough so that the bands remained on their legs (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] #675-22104 and -22105). Eleven other oystercatchers (all hatch-year birds) have been banded in Connecticut: one from Menunketesuck Island off Westbrook (Taylor 1989 and pers. comm.) and 10 from the islands off Norwalk (Bird Banding Laboratory, USFWS/National Biological Survey, Laurel, Maryland). According to Bird Banding Laboratory records as of 14 April 1994, there had been no recoveries of banded oystercatchers in Connecticut, and none of those banded in Connecticut had been encountered again.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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All photographs were taken by the author on Falkner Island, Connecticut, in 1993.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Branch of Migratory Bird Research, Laurel, MD 20708.

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## NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### DEP REQUESTS INFORMATION ON GRASSLAND BIRD SPECIES

Dawn M. McKay

The Department of Environmental Protection's Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) seeks current or past breeding records for many of Connecticut's grassland bird species. The NDDB, a centralized repository of information on endangered, threatened, and special concern species in Connecticut, is especially interested in updating the data base information on the following state listed grassland species: Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark and Savannah Sparrow.

Grassland bird species are declining in Connecticut because of the disappearance of their preferred habitat. One remaining expanse of grassland area occurs at Bradley International Airport. Over the last six years, biologists with the NDDB have been working at the airport to help preserve the nesting areas for these four bird species. If you have any other breeding localities for these birds, or for other grassland bird species, please forward your information to me.

The following are additional bird species we are also very interested in obtaining breeding records for:

Whip-poor-will	Eastern Meadowlark
Bobolink	Red-headed Woodpecker
Common Nighthawk	American Kestrel
Barn Owl	Northern Bobwhite
Purple Martin	Northern Harrier
Yellow-breasted Chat	

If you do have a breeding record for any of these birds (or any state listed bird) please send me a copy of your field notes. Helpful information would include:

- the location of the birds observed (as specific and detailed as possible)
- directions to the area
- first and last observation dates
- general description of habitat
- any behavioral notes (i.e., carrying food, singing, etc.)
- evidence of breeding activity
- your name, address and phone number
- other relevant information

Information from the NDDDB is made available for the purpose of protecting our State's natural resources. Specific locational information is not released for public distribution. This is stringently upheld to protect landowner's rights and privacy, and to protect the species itself.

Please forward your information to:

Dawn M. McKay, DEP-Natural Resources Center,  
79 Elm Street, Store Level, Hartford, CT 06106-5127  
Telephone: (203)424-3592

Thank you for your cooperation with updating our records. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or write.

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### ABERRANT NEST-BUILDING BY A GREAT BLUE HERON

Roland C. Clement

For about ten days during mid-May, 1994, a single Great Blue Heron gathered twigs and built a nesting platform on the wide top step of a covered walkway between the garage and the main building of one of the attractive summer homes that are scattered about winding Indian Hill Road on Sachem's Head peninsula in southwestern Guilford, Connecticut.

The platform was about 22 inches across and nine or ten inches high, but it was apparently abandoned prior to the forming of a nest depression. Jack Clark, a Guilford estate gardener and grounds manager, first alerted a friend who then took me to see this unusual attempt at nest-building. The twigs involved were mostly from a nearby Clematis vine that the bird had carefully pruned, so that only the dead twigs were used, and no damage done to the budding vine itself. Mr. Clark saw the heron on both front and back yards, and on nearby lawns of this otherwise wooded peninsula. Small salt marshes occur a few rods away.

Although much of this report is hearsay, and the evidence circumstantial, this nest-building exercise was in so unusual a location that it seemed worth recording. Great Blue Herons do not currently nest on the Connecticut shore, but this aberrant attempt may contribute to our understanding of heron behavior, especially in an age when chemical pollution of several kinds impacts the environment and its denizens.

88 Notch Hill Rd., No. Branford, CT 06471



# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES: WINTER: DECEMBER 1, 1993 - FEBRUARY 28, 1994

Jay Kaplan

Editor's Comment: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (see COA Field List) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Rare Records Committee, if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.

The winter season began in much the same fashion as those of the past few years, relatively mild temperatures with precipitation within the normal range (4.21 inches in Hartford compared to a normal 3.91 inches for the month). With a light dusting of snow on Christmas Eve, however, Connecticut was plunged into a frigid Arctic air system that would make the winter of 1994 one to remember for a long time to come! January, to say the least, was a chilly month. After reaching 40°F on New Year's Day, the mercury did not exceed the freezing mark in the Hartford area until January 13th, breaking 40°F on only five days in the entire month. In the northwest corner of the state, the thermometer dropped below zero night after night until the last week of the month. Oh, it also snowed a lot. Precipitation measured by the National Weather Service in Windsor Locks totaled 5.83 inches almost 2.5 inches above the average for the month. February continued cold and snowy and by month's end, with 9.21 inches of precipitation, all snow, a record snowfall for the winter was not out of the question. Temperatures moderated a bit in mid-February, actually reaching 60°F in Hartford on the 19th, before falling back to sub-freezing the last week of the month. One report stated that it was the sixth coldest winter on record and while the official low at Bradley International Airport was minus 10°F, northwest corner communities reported lows of minus 30°F and below! Brrrr!

Of course, bad weather makes for great birds and this was a terrific winter for rarities. Each year, a certain section of the state acts as host of notable birds, drawing birders like a magnet. These birders, if all goes well, uncover additional rarities and soon the area becomes a "birding happening." This year, birders descended upon the peaceful community of Goshen, where, among other gems, the first documented and well-studied **Bohemian Waxwings** for the state occurred. Goshen was also a reliable location for most of the winter finches and the surrounding area produced an impressive checklist

including Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, several owls, Common Raven, and Northern Shrike. If nothing else, it was nice to see all those shoreline birders coming inland for a change!

## LOONS THOUGH WATERFOWL

Seven Common Loons in Old Lyme December 13 (SK) and four at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP), Madison February 5 (SK) were the only reports received for the period. Were loons low in number or were they just not reported? Red-throated Loons were more abundant with 11 at HBSP February 5 (SK), 75 there February 19 (CRBA), and 45+ off Old Saybrook February 7 (GH). There were numerous reports of Pied-billed Grebe, both coastally and inland, from late December through mid-January (m.ob.). Horned Grebes were reported along the coast with 23 at HBSP February 5 (SK). Red-necked Grebes were at the mouth of the Thames River, New London, February 7 (GH,NC), at Eastern Point, Groton February 13 (JH), and at Old Saybrook February 28 (GH). Northern Gannet again utilized Long Island Sound in late fall with 44 seen from Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford December 11 and seven from Millstone Point, Niantic December 16 (both DP). Two American White Pelicans at HBSP February 18 (JG) were seen flying east and may have been the same birds that were subsequently reported in Rhode Island. Great Cormorants were

reported from several inland locations including the Connecticut, Housatonic, Naugatuck and Shepaug Rivers (m.ob.) in addition to their usual coastal locations. Late Great Egrets were in Fairfield, December 3 (CB) and at Greenwich Point, Greenwich December 16 (BO). Single late Snowy Egrets were in Norwalk, December 3 (Ed Hiestand) and in Westport, December 24 (Nancy Voldstad).

Two Snow Geese were on Lake Quassapaug, Middlebury January 2 (BD) and three were at the mouth of the Oyster River, (Milford) January 10 (GH). A "Blue Goose" was at the Southbury Training School and nearby Lake Zoar, Southbury through the entire period (RN,DR et al.). Southbury often seems to attract unusual geese among the large flocks of Canadas that pass through this area. Sherwood Island State Park (hereafter SISP), Westport hosted six Brant February 19 (JF et al.). A pair of Wood Ducks remained at Lake Zoar until January 15 when the remaining open water froze (EH). A drake "woodie" was in Milford January 15 and 30 (RN,SM) and perhaps an early migrant was in the Housatonic River, New Milford February 22 (GH) plus

four were there February 28 (FM). Many winter ducks return faithfully to the same winter location. A Eurasian Wigeon was in the New Haven/West Haven area January 3 through the end of the period (m.ob.), and this is perhaps the best place in Connecticut to observe this species. Another was at Seaside Park, Bridgeport December 16-January 8 (SM,FM). Large numbers of Canvasbacks were reported in southwestern Connecticut this winter, and 100+ were in the Thames River, New London January 22 (JG et al.). It was a good winter for Redhead with inland, as well as coastal sightings, from Greenwich to Groton including up to 15 in Long Island Sound in the Fairfield/Bridgeport area January 24-February 28 (CB,JF et al.). A drake Tufted Duck returned to Greenwich February 12 through the end of the period (TB,JZ et al.), for at least the third year in a row. There has been concern of late over how Greater Scaup may be affected by pollutants on their wintering grounds off the Connecticut coast. Research continues on this topic, and the western Sound continues to attract scaup, with 10,000-15,000 at the mouth of Greenwich Harbor February 12 (GH,JZ, m.ob.). Scoters were scarce this winter with a single White-winged Scoter at SISP January 11 (GH), 20 White-winged off Fairfield, January 25 (FM), and 15 Surf off White Sands Beach,

Milford January 23 (FM,CB). At least two Barrow's Goldeneye returned to the Connecticut River, Enfield January 23-February 28, the fifth consecutive winter they have been reported from this location (CE, m.ob.). Another drake Barrow's was seen repeatedly at SISP December 22-January 8 (FM,NC). Another good spot for winter waterfowl is the lower Connecticut River. This "tidal" river rarely freezes and the open water attracts large numbers of ducks such as the 323 Common Mergansers observed in Chester January 22 (SK).

#### VULTURES THROUGH OWLS

Vultures continue to increase in southwestern Connecticut during the winter months. In addition to the large Turkey Vulture roost in New Milford, one to four Black Vultures were in this vicinity January 16 through the end of the period (GH,CW et al.). Black Vultures were also reported in Newtown January 30 (Art Titus, fide CW) and Sharon February 20 (BO et al.). A late Osprey was in Shelton, December 26 (SM). The annual mid-winter eagle count totaled 29 adult and 46 immature Bald Eagles January 8-10 (Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection). The 75 eagles compares with 61 in 1993. Rough-legged Hawks were reported from at least six different locations including a pair at the mouth of the Connecticut River, Old

Lyme January 9-23 (JG et al.). An immature Golden Eagle was at the Canaan Mountain Natural Area, Canaan February 19 through the end of the period (m.ob.), marking the third winter in the past several years that this species has frequented this location. Merlins were in West Haven January 5 and Enfield January 25 (GH). Peregrine Falcons were at Jennings's Beach, Fairfield December 16 (CB), at Shepaug Dam, Southbury January 5-February 2 (m.ob.), at Bradley Point, West Haven January 29 (SM), and in Danbury February 1-27 (R. Jones, H. Moretti et al.).

Wild Turkeys were in the news this season with reports of large numbers attracted to feeding stations. A high of 81 was reported in a Canton Center hay field with an abundant supply of cracked corn (fide JK). A dead Virginia Rail was found at Quarry Park, Rocky Hill January 1 (DR) and was sent to the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History in Storrs. At least 90 American Coot were at Bantam Lake, Litchfield December 5 (GH) and 47 were at Candlewood Lake, New Fairfield December 31 (RN, DR et al.). The previously reported Sandhill Crane in Sharon continued until at least December 14 (William Grindrod fide LW).

There were numerous late shorebird reports this season, several of them quite remarkable. A Semipalmated Plover remained at Griswold Point, Old Lyme

December 8-25. The bird was accompanied by a Piping Plover that continued until December 31 (HG, TH et al.). These are extremely late dates for both species, which normally winter from the Carolinas south. An American Oystercatcher was at HBSP December 5 (JG), and this may have been the same bird seen at Menunketesuck Island on the Old Lyme CBC January 2 (GH). Red Knots also persisted into the winter months and single birds were at SISP December 6 and January 26 (CB); in East Haven, January 10 (GH, NC), and four birds were in Fairfield, December 19 (CB). Finally, a Western Sandpiper was at Griswold Point, December 29-January 2 (HG, AG).

There were numerous Eurasian gull reports this winter. A Little Gull was at East Shore Park, New Haven January 3 (NC). Common Black-headed Gulls were at East Shore Park, December 18-20 (NC) and at Cos Cob Harbor, Greenwich February 6 through the end of the period (m.ob.). Amid speculation that they are nesting in North America, there were numerous reports of Lesser Black-Backed Gulls along the coast from Stratford to Milford (m.ob.). Of course, many, if not all, of the reports may have been of a single individual. There were at least six Glaucous Gull reports from landfills, rivers, and from along the coast (m.ob.). Two Black-legged Kittiwakes, rare in Connecticut, were off Millstone Point,

Niantic December 16 (DP). Razorbill has yet to be added to the Connecticut State list, pending review of several sightings over the past few years. Reports of an adult off Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford December 11 and an immature off Millstone Point December 16-17 (both DP) have been forwarded to the Connecticut Rare Records Committee (CRRC).

A Barn Owl was at Manresa Power Plant, Norwalk December 18-January 8 (FM et al.). It should be noted that roosting owls do not benefit from birders hoping to add species to their year lists. Disturbances at roost sites are not encouraged and any noise should be kept to a minimum. An immature Snowy Owl was at Cockenoe Island, Westport December 22-23 (FM), and remained there or on Calf Pasture Island, Norwalk through February 7 (FM, m.ob.). Four Long-eared Owls were at Greenwich Point, Greenwich December 19 through early February (m.ob.) and additional individuals were at Bradley Point, West Haven January 10 (GH, NC), at Station 43, South Windsor January 29 (BD), and at HBSP February 17 (JG et al.). There were rumors of both Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet Owls in Goshen this winter, but no reports were received for these sightings. Short-eared Owls were reported at Pine Creek, Fairfield January 8-February 6 (CB et al.) and at Manresa Marsh, Norwalk

January 8-9 (FM et al.). There were at least seven Northern Saw-whet Owls reports including one eating a white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) in broad daylight in a Canton backyard February 24 (Howard Wright, JK).

#### WOODPECKERS THROUGH EVENING GROSBEAK

A Red-headed Woodpecker wintered in Mansfield, from early January through at least February 14 (LB, SM et al.). Observers looking for a Swainson's Thrush reported on the Hartford CBC January 1, observed a Northern Flicker with all red feather shafts in Farmington January 2 (JK, JM). This individual was not a true "Red-shafted" Flicker, but rather an aberrant "Yellow-shafted" Flicker with red shafts, or perhaps a Red and Yellow-shafted hybrid. A late Eastern Phoebe was in Woodbury December 12 (GH), while another was in Southbury December 20 through mid-January, at which time it likely perished from the extreme cold (NC, GH et al.). The fact that this bird was able to survive during severe weather demonstrates the ability of some migrants to linger late into the winter season here in Connecticut. Of the many Horned Lark flocks wintering in Connecticut, the largest, 80+ birds, was reported off Route 4, Goshen February 17 (DR, LW). Common Ravens were reported in numerous western towns, but nothing compares with the 18 seen off



Figure 1. Bohemian Waxwing  
Photographed March 6, 1994 in Goshen, CT by Frank Mantlik

Under Mountain Road, Canaan February 19 (JG et al.), some of which were photographed harassing the Golden Eagle. A Townsend's Solitaire, the fourth record for the state, was in Southbury December 18 through at least February 10 (NC,BO et al.). This is the second sighting for this species in this general area over the past four years. The solitaire was not the only western thrush to winter in Connecticut. A female Varied Thrush frequented an Avon feeding station January 15 through the end of the period (JK, BKr, BKm), while a male was at a Killingworth feeder January 15-25 (Dave Gombard, m.ob.). Two Water Pipits were at SISP January 2 (EJ) and eight birds were sighted the following day (Ed Hagen). Certainly the most exciting find for the season was a flock of 12 Bohemian Waxwings (Figure 1) in Goshen February 14 through the end of the period (NP,m.ob.). This constitutes the first documented record for this species in Connecticut, although there are numerous previous sight records. The birds were feeding on the abundant apple crop of the past autumn season. There also were reports of large flocks of Bohemian Waxwings in Massachusetts as far south as Nantucket.

In a difficult winter, one would expect few late warbler reports. An Orange-crowned Warbler, was in Branford, December 2-14 (NP), where it was photographed;

a Pine Warbler was in Woodbury December 4 (RN). Single Palm Warblers were in Fairfield, December 19 (CB) and in New Haven, January 3 (NC). More unusual was an American Redstart at East Shore Park, New Haven December 24 (RN,NC et al.). A Yellow-breasted Chat at Greenwich Point January 1-16 (BO,FM,m.ob.) was the only report this period.

A very late Sharp-tailed Sparrow was at Smith's Cove, Waterford January 9 (SM). An immature White-crowned Sparrow was at Greenwich Point, January 1-24 (BO,m.ob.). Snow Buntings were reported from several shoreline locations and inland from Canton, where 26 birds roosted in a hickory tree in the middle of a snow covered hayfield January 27 through the end of the period (JK et al.). Eastern Meadowlarks have declined as a winter species in Connecticut. Thus, eight at HBSP December 4 (JG) were a welcome sight. Up to 18 Pine Grosbeaks captivated birders looking for the Bohemian Waxwings in Goshen from mid-January through the end of the period (m.ob.); 11 were in Canton February 26 (BKm) and there were numerous sightings of individual birds in northwestern Connecticut. Goshen also hosted 6-20 Red Crossbills January 19 through the end of the period (m.ob.). The only White-winged Crossbill reports came from southeast Connecticut with

individuals in Preston December 8 and Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown December 28 (both DP). Common Redpolls returned to the state in good numbers for the first time since the mid '80's, with reports from all over the state. Flocks of 60+ birds were reported at a Farmington feeder (JM) and small numbers were still evident at the close of the period. Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were also reported at feeders, primarily from northern regions. Both species were regular in Goshen, making this town the "winter finch capitol of Connecticut for 1994!"

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## ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 9

Since no one has complained to me yet about using birds that have not been found in Connecticut, I can begin this latest answer by revealing that this is the third one in a row. Among our regular birds, the long, slender bill with a slight downward curve is seen only in the wrens and the Brown Creeper. At first glance, the bill seems long enough to consider Brown Creeper. Although the transiency of rock-creeping behavior is not well studied in Brown Creepers and I am the sort of person likely to use examples of such oddities to confound my audience, one should be uneasy that the bird is not on tree bark. In any case, a creeper would show a pale whitish patch in the wing and a noticeable white eyebrow (or supercillium).

Among the possible wren species (Northeast only remember), only the Winter Wren and House Wren might appear to lack a pale eyebrow. Also, the tail appears longer than either of those two species and is tipped with white. Another interesting feature of the tail is the black bar just above those pale tips. Altogether, these features indicate that this is a Rock Wren of western North America—notice the dominant habitat in the photograph! If we could see a few frames of the camera ahead, this bird would undoubtedly be seen energetically bobbing its body and spreading its tail downward.

Although not a particularly difficult photo challenge, it is one that ought to spur on some searching this fall for what is a particularly engaging little sprite of a bird that could occur in Connecticut. The Rock Wren is usually overlooked as a migratory bird. Besides the House Wren, Sedge Wren, and Marsh Wren (to some extent), Rock



Wrens are perhaps the next most migratory of North American wrens. Despite this, the latest AOU checklist suggests that eastern records of this species are birds accidentally transported there in railroad boxcars! As will be shown below, there is a very distinct pattern to the occurrence of this species to the east of its breeding range.

The Rock Wren breeds across western North America north to southwestern Canada and east to the western parts of the Dakotas. In winter, these northern populations migrate south to an unknown extent and overlap with year round populations found south of the Great Basin all the way to western Costa Rica. Rock Wrens are aptly named, being found wherever boulders are abundant and often where vegetation seems most scarce; they thrive where it would seem no bird could. True to its wren nature, even in this barren landscape the bird is a skulker, finding cover in every available nook and crevice rather than using dense vegetation to shield its movements as most wrens do.

The extremes of Rock Wren vagrancy include a record north to the northwestern portion of the District of Mackenzie (up there next to the Yukon!), eastward to Nova Scotia, and southeastward to Florida. From New Jersey to Nova Scotia, the five records fall from October 4th to December 19th for the arrival of birds that in some cases spent the winter (to mid-February in Massachusetts and to late March in New Jersey). In the Midwest, Rock Wrens occasionally appear in spring from mid-late April to mid-May. There are two remarkable extralimital attempts to breed: a pair built a nest that was later abandoned in Minnesota, and a bird was seen carrying food near Churchill, Manitoba. Rock Wrens have been recorded in the autumn several times in the northern Midwest, with the bulk of reports from late September to early November. If I were to make my bid for this bird in Connecticut, it would be during the latter part of that period at some coastal rock jetty or sand dune.

This Rock Wren was photographed by Shawneen Finnegan March 19, 1991 at Goleta Point near Santa Barbara, California. Rock Wrens are casual to such lowland and coastal sites during migration.

*Louis R. Bevier*



Photo challenge 10. Identify the species, which is recorded from the Northeast. Answer next issue.

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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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 accompanied with an IBM PC disk, if possible. 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. Good quality photographs of particular interest will also be considered. 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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Summer 1994 - Volume XIV No. 3

Snow Geese in the Atlantic Flyway

Charles Barnard, Jr. .... 82

Maximizing Wild Birds on Small Properties

George A. Clark, Jr. .... 87

Behavior and Successful Nesting of American Oystercatchers at Falkner Is.  
James M. Zingo ..... 96

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS ..... 108

Connecticut Field Notes - Winter:  
December 1, 1993 - February 28, 1994  
Jay Kaplan ..... 110

Answer to Photo Challenge 9  
Louis Bevier ..... 118

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Pages 121-160

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## ABOUT OUR COVER ARTIST:

Brian Kleinman

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*)

Brian Kleinman, a resident of Barkhamsted, is a freshman at Franklin Pierce College. He is a member of the Hartford Audubon Society and has worked at the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, Conn. He is currently illustrating a trail guide for the Shade Swamp Sanctuary in Farmington, Conn. Brian has a strong interest in nature and birding. This is the third cover illustration he has done for *The Connecticut Warbler*.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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Volume 14 Number 4

October 1994

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## Contents

## Fall 1994

- 
- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 122 | <b>SITE GUIDE: Station 43, South Windsor, Connecticut</b><br>Arnold Devine & Dwight C. Smith          |
| 128 | <b>The 1994 Summer Bird Count</b><br>Joseph Zeranski  |
| 148 | <b>Winter Record of Boreal Owl in Connecticut</b><br>Arnold Devine & Dwight C. Smith                  |
| 150 | <b>Connecticut Field Notes</b><br><b>Spring: March 1 - May 31, 1994</b><br>Jay Kaplan & Frank Mantlik |
| 159 | <b>Answer to Photo Challenge 10</b><br>Louis Bevier   |
-

## **SITE GUIDE: STATION 43, SOUTH WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT**

Arnold Devine<sup>1</sup> and Dwight G. Smith<sup>2</sup>

Members of the Hartford Audubon Society praise Station 43 as one of the premier birding locations in north-central Connecticut. This unique locale has produced an outstanding assortment of rarities throughout the years, primarily due to its strategic location along the Connecticut River, a prime migration artery through the state's interior. Furthermore, the many terrestrial and wetland habitats at this site serve as natural magnets to attract an array of species. Birding habitats at Station 43 include deciduous woodlot, shrub wetland, old fields, agricultural land (predominantly corn and potato fields), meadows, magnificent freshwater marshes, sedge pockets, a pond, and, most importantly, the river and its flood plain. The wetland habitats are often good in summer, as they are important areas for postbreeding dispersal of bird families.

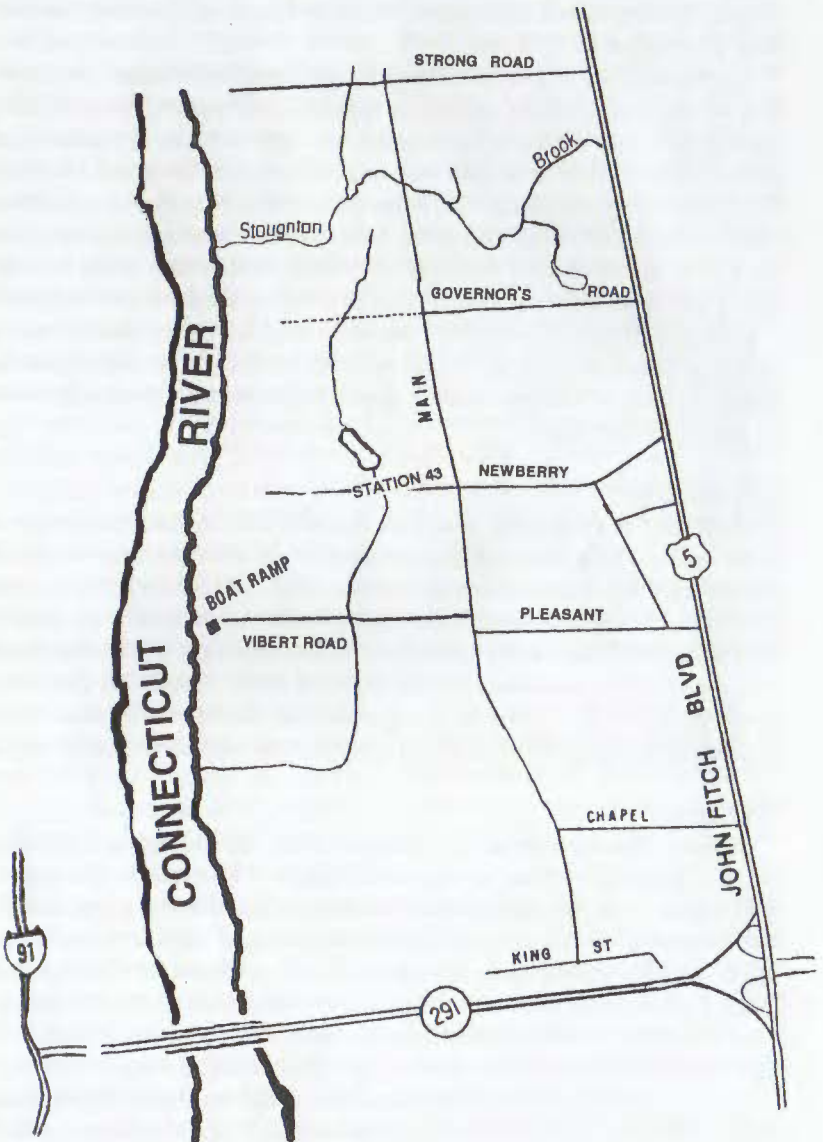
Station 43 acquired its name from the former trolley line that ran from Hartford north through the towns flanking the east side of the Connecticut River. Today the trolleys and trolley tracks are long gone, leaving only the name to remind us of that bygone era.

The birding area at Station 43 is bounded by Vibert Road (Station 39) to the south, Strong Road on the north, Main Street to the east, and the Connecticut River to the west. The Hartford Audubon Society owns about 10 acres of the wetland habitat (primarily part of a pond that is north of Newberry Road and adjacent wetland formed by the sluggish flowing Newberry Brook) at Station 43. The Vibert Road section is also an excellent site to bird, and Strong Road can be good in the appropriate season. Birding at Station 43 is restricted to foot travel, but Vibert Road can be accessed by vehicle and terminates at a state boat launch on the Connecticut River. Most of the property at Station 43 is private land (i.e., most acreage east of the Hartford Audubon Society's land and north and south of Vibert Road), however, local farmers do permit access to birdwatchers. Please use proper birding ethics and respect private property when birding this area. Since the private lands are hunted extensively after the third Saturday in October, it is advisable to wear bright clothing and stay on the town-owned roadways during hunting season.

### **Birding Specialties:**

The list of rarities observed at Station 43 is extensive and keeps getting longer. Historically some of the special sightings at Station 43





Station 43 and Vicinity

have included White Pelican, Wood Stork, Tundra Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Vulture, Golden Eagle, Purple Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Western Kingbird, Northern Shrike, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Spring and fall migrations bring the greatest assortment of species, but winter can produce surprises, especially along the river. During spring you can observe waterfowl, and species closely associated with wetland environments. Fall migration brings a return of waterfowl, but also shorebirds, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, passerines, and a variety of hawks and owls. Midsummer weeks are often good, as many postbreeding families of marsh and water birds become more visible as the young learn how to ply their trade, while the adults watch seemingly anxiously. Station 43 also supports an interesting array of breeding species found only in limited locations within the state. In fact, birding is usually good year around, although winter at times, can be slow.

### **Directions:**

From I-91 northbound, take Exit 35A - 35B (I-291 So. Windsor) and bear right on Exit 35A. Southbound traffic on I-91 take Exit 35A (I-291 Bissell Bridge). Both exit ramps merge with I-291. Follow I-291 about 2.4 miles to Exit 4 (Route 5, John Fitch Blvd.). At the bottom of the exit ramp turn left and follow Route 5 (northbound) 1.6 miles to Newberry Road (0.3 miles past MacDonald's). Turn left at Newberry Road and proceed 0.6 miles to the stop sign at Main Street. Newberry Road continues straight ahead as a dirt road directly across the intersection.

### **Birding:**

Station 43 can be birded by using a variety of strategies depending on the amount of time you have available. Two methods seem to work best: You can walk down Newberry Road to the pond and/or the field edge and return (about 0.8 miles round trip) to your car and then explore Vibert and/or Strong Roads. Alternately, take a loop walk by following Newberry Road to the Connecticut River, bear left and hike the river bank south for 0.4 mile, then pick up Vibert Road and return to Main Street (this loop trip is about 2.4 miles).

If time permits, plan to bird Governor's Highway and Strong Road; both of these roadways are just to the north of Newbury Road and are also accessed by Main Street.

### **Newberry Road**

To bird Newberry Road, park near the intersection of Newberry and Main Street, hike along the dirt road west toward the river, to the

wetlands and fields beyond. Due to the wet conditions at this locale (especially in spring and fall), it is advisable to wear protective footwear. As with any wet area, mosquitos can be a nuisance, therefore it is helpful to have insect repellent with you. Along the way the road bisects hedgerows and thickets that can be productive throughout the year, but provide good habitat for sparrows during fall migration (primarily October and early November). Sparrows to look for here include Savannah, Field, Song, Lincoln (uncommon), Swamp (nesting), White-crowned, White-throated, Fox (uncommon), Vesper (uncommon) and Tree (late October throughout winter). Occasionally unusual sparrows associate with the mixed flocks. Sharp-tailed and Clay-colored have been spotted, so be patient and stay alert when studying the flocks. When birding the road from mid-September through October, check the thickets carefully for Connecticut Warbler, a species which has occurred sporadically over the years. Typical summer species of these thickets and hedge include Eastern Phoebe, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow and Northern Oriole, among a variety of others.

About 0.3 miles down the dirt road you will come upon a Black Willow grove. Beyond that to the right (north) is a short marsh of pickerelweed surrounding a small open pond, and in turn surrounded by a shrub swamp of buttonbush. On the left side of the road is a tallgrass marsh habitat of purple loosestrife (beautiful in flower), cattail and scattered clumps of tall wild rice. The combination of wetland environments in this area hosts an attractive variety of species. Such species include Green Heron, Least Bittern, Wood Duck, Common Moorhen (species sporadic, was more regular in the past), Sora, Virginia Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Marsh Wren, and Swamp Sparrow. All of these species nest or have nested here in recent years. The elusive King Rail occasionally occurs during migration and in breeding season as well. From late May into July, the drab green and brown marsh vegetation is accentuated by small clumps of two species of iris, blue flag and yellow flag. Take a few minutes to study and enjoy these lovely flowers.

During spring and fall migrations, check the pond for waterfowl; Snow Goose (uncommon but regular), Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail (uncommon), Northern Shoveler (uncommon), American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Hooded Merganser. With luck you may find a rarity like Tundra Swan or European Wigeon; both species have occurred here. Pied-billed Grebe has proven a regular visitor during this period. Spring migration brings a complement of shorebirds. Look for Common Snipe (March and

April), American Woodcock (listen for the courtship display at dusk from late March until July), Killdeer, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers. In fall, many of the same shorebirds return, and occasionally, the rarer American Golden-Plover, Buff-breasted, Upland, or Baird's Sandpiper make an appearance in the adjacent farm fields.

Proceeding west past the wetland, the road continues as a tractor path for about 0.4 miles to the river, bypassing cropland, meadows and small woodlots. The property becomes private after leaving the wetland, but the local farmers allow access to birders. **Please respect the rights of the property owners, so that other birders can enjoy this great place.** In the middle of the field on the north side of the woodlot is a depression that fills with water in the spring, at which time it attracts large flocks of Green-winged Teal and occasional shorebirds. Breeding species to expect along this route include Common Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Carolina Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Gray Catbird, Wood Thrush, Veery, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Swamp and Field Sparrows, Common Grackle, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, and the uncommon Orchard Oriole.

Raptors are present year round. Permanent residents include Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel (uncommon), Great Horned Owl, and Screech-Owl. During winter the meadow and cropland harbor Sharp-shinned Hawk (uncommon), and occasionally a Northern Harrier or Rough-legged Hawk. Bald Eagle is an uncommon to rare winter visitor, usually observed foraging along the river. Spring and fall hawk migrations produce Osprey, Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks (Broad-winged and Red-shouldered nest in nearby areas), and sporadically a Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, or Cooper's Hawk.

For a look at the marsh from the north end, drive north on Main Street 0.5 miles from Newbury Road to the first stop sign (Governor's Highway is on your right). Park here and walk the dirt road (driveway on the right) between the horse corral and the house, west toward the river. It takes you to the north end of the marsh. Check out the pond, and the marsh to the right of the road, for herons, rails, and ducks.

## Strong Road

From Newbury Road drive north on Main Street 1.2 miles to Strong Road. Turn left down a narrow blacktop lane (which becomes dirt) toward the river. Some of the more common warblers and sparrows can be found in the woods on the left or the wet area on the right before

approaching the farm fields. In the spring, seasonal rainpools in the fields can host large numbers of snipe and other shorebirds. Up to 11 Cattle Egret were seen in the fields during the spring of 1994. During the fall, check the fields for American Pipits (October), sparrows, and blackbirds.

### **Vibert Road Section:**

While here, take the time to bird the Vibert Road area, known as Station 39. From the intersection of Main Street and Newberry Road, follow Main Street 0.4 miles south and turn right (west) onto Vibert Road. Vibert Road is paved for the first 0.3 miles, then becomes dirt at the town's water pollution control plant, and remains a dirt/gravel road to the boat launch. The birdlife along this road is similar in composition to the species found at Newberry Road. Bobolink nest in the field across the road from the wastewater treatment plant.

At 0.4 miles from Main Street the road crosses Newberry Brook, a slow flowing stream supporting a cattail marsh north of the bridge and tussock sedge habitat south of the bridge. This is a very good place for both Sora and Virginia Rail. During spring and fall, this area is good for locating the same species of waterfowl and shorebirds as mentioned above. In addition, Blue-winged Teal occurs regularly during migration and is suspected of breeding in the marsh. Vibert Road is predominantly meadow and cropland from this location to the road's end. Scout the field edges closely for Ring-necked Pheasants, which like to feed on residual corn left behind by the farmers. Also, in October scan the cornfields closely for American Pipits, which can be difficult to see when they forage in the furrows.

At the end of the road, on the left, is a parking area. Park and check the river for waterfowl and gulls. In winter Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser occur on the river, and with good luck you may find a Barrow's Goldeneye. During the summer the silver maples and undergrowth that line the riverbank provide cover for Least Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, American Redstart, and Northern Oriole. Walk the dirt road (between the farm fields and river) north for about 0.3 miles to a river overlook. This area is good to view swallows (Tree, Barn, and occasionally Rough-winged). Belted Kingfisher and Bank Swallows have nested along this section of the riverbank.

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## THE 1994 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

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The number of Connecticut Summer Bird Counts (SBCs) increased by one in 1994, with the addition of the Litchfield Hills count bringing the total to nine. One hundred eighty-nine species, three more than in 1993, were recorded. **Black Vulture** and **Peregrine Falcon** occurred for the first time on a Connecticut SBC, as did Bullock's Oriole, a subspecies of Northern Oriole. Everyone's favorite crash candidate, Carolina Wren, followed through as predicted: its numbers plummeted to 32% of its 1993 total. It was one of a number of species which apparently experienced losses from the winter of 1993-94.

The presence of four Black Vultures this summer was not entirely surprising. Formerly a vagrant, it has become a fairly regular winter visitor in the last decade, especially in the western part of the state. More recently it has been found in summer, and this species may be considered one of the most promising candidates for addition to the state's list of breeding birds. A concerted field effort will probably be required to locate nesting sites to confirm this bird as a Connecticut and New England breeder.

A female Peregrine Falcon has wintered in downtown Stamford for about a decade. Last year a male arrived and courtship ensued. A nesting box was erected by the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) high above I-95, and although nesting appeared imminent, a poorly-timed roof repair project apparently drove the pair from the box. This spring a first-year male took the place of the 1993, older bird but proved unresponsive to the advances of the larger, mature female. Although he has bonded to the nest site, no nesting occurred. If these birds remain loyal to this location, 1995 may finally see the first fully documented nesting of Peregrine Falcons in the state since the late 1940's.

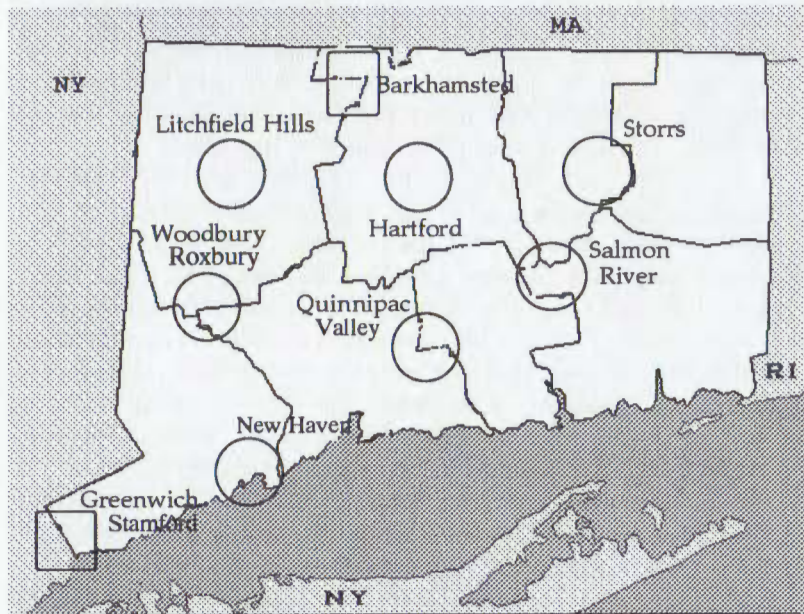
This year, making their second SBC appearances ever, were American Bittern (first seen in 1980), Canvasback (1984), Red-breasted Merganser (1990), Common Moorhen (1987), Lesser Yellowlegs (1982), Solitary Sandpiper (1979), Bonaparte's Gull (1989), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1983), Red-headed Woodpecker (1993) and Evening Grosbeak (1993). The bittern, moorhen and owl are quite rare and perhaps irregular breeders, the woodpecker and grosbeak are possible nesters with few breeding records, and the rest are migrants or summer vagrants.

Comparative figures, such as the total number of individual birds, observers, and party hours, have declined somewhat from the counts

held last year, although the overall total of species grew slightly (see tables). In addition to the 189 species seen on count days (CDs), two others were seen during the count period (CP). Ninety-two species were common to all nine counts. Sixteen species seen last year went unrecorded this year, while 19 others were noted this year. On average, 402 birds were seen by each observer in 1994.

One or two-year changes in totals for a species indicate short-term population shifts. These occur constantly as species respond to both positive and negative environmental factors. Unless prolonged for extended periods, these changes often mean little.

On the eight counts held both this year and last, declines were evident for a number of species: Red-tailed Hawk (from 177 down to 116), Belted Kingfisher (124 to 63), Northern Flicker (817 to 605), Barn Swallow (1,546 to 1,052), Blue Jay (1,625 to 1,225), American Crow (3,461 to 2,830), House Wren (927 to 792), Winter Wren (35 to 14), Northern Mockingbird (981 to 781), Song Sparrow (2,470 to 1,937), Common Grackle (4,626 to 3,625), House Finch (3,510 to 2,748) and American Goldfinch (1,528 to 1,196). Many of these declines may have resulted, at least in part, from the extreme weather of the past winter. Prolonged snow and ice, even more than cold, can adversely affect birds' wintering successes in the East, especially among the ground foragers.



1994 Summer Bird Count Locations

A sampling of the growth species found on the eight counts held both of the preceding summers would include Common Merganser (from 32 up to 78), Spotted Sandpiper (20 to 32), Cliff Swallow (156 to 221), Common Raven (4 to 11), Cedar Waxwing (1,028 to 1,162), Warbling Vireo (292 to 402), Red-eyed Vireo (1,273 to 1,350), Black-throated Blue Warbler (73 to 104), Black-throated Green Warbler (103 to 217), American Redstart (643 to 689) and Ovenbird (955 to 1,244).

Brief highlights for individual SBCs are worth noting. Barkhamsted SBC (BASBC), over its short, three-year history, has produced 132 species, of which 111 have been seen every year. New this year were American Bittern and Northern Saw-whet Owl, and Nashville Warbler was missed for the first time. Ninety-four species have been recorded as nesting. Two species were not seen on any other 1994 SBC, while ten species were added this year to its cumulative total.

In its 19 years, the Greenwich-Stamford SBC (GSSBC) has recorded 205 species and one subspecies, three of which were new this year. These includes Chukar—a small population existed in the mid 1970's but it quickly died out after human assistance was apparently terminated—Peregrine Falcon, Evening Grosbeak and that intriguing Bullock's Oriole. Ninety-nine of this total have been seen every year. Conspicuously absent were Glossy Ibis, counted in the previous eight SBCs, Greater Scaup, not found for the third time in ten years, American Woodcock, missing for the second consecutive year after 17 years of presence, and Brant, not listed for the first time in eight years. One hundred thirty-seven species have been confirmed as nesting. Least Bittern and Alder Flycatcher are possible but not confirmed. Thirteen species were unique to this count.

In its fourth year, Hartford SBC (HASBC) added six species, bringing its cumulative total to 120. Eighty-four of these have been seen every year. Among 1994 species were Least Bittern and Red-headed Woodpecker. Absent were Spotted Sandpiper, Great Black-backed Gull, and Least Flycatcher, all of which were on the three previous counts. Two species were found exclusively on this count.

Established this year, the Litchfield Hills SBC (LHSBC) recorded an impressive 130 species in its debut. Seventy-one were noted as nesters, while four were seen only on this count. Sora, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Golden-winged Warbler were among its finds.

The New Haven SBC (NHSBC) added five species for a cumulative total of 158, of which 59 have been recently confirmed as nesting. All four counts have shared the same core group of 99 species. This year Piping Plover and Barn Owl were recorded, but Broad-winged Hawk, Monk Parakeet (a CP bird this year), and Hermit Thrush were not found for the first time. Six species were not reported on another



SBC.

One hundred seventeen species, including 13 new ones in 1994, have been recorded on the Quinnipiac Valley SBC (QVSBC) in its three-year history, and 88 have been on every count. Found this year were 16 Barn Owls and the only Common Nighthawk among all SBCs. Not noted this year, but recorded in all previous years, were American Black Duck, Northern Harrier, and Pileated Woodpecker. A single species was unique to this count.

The Salmon River SBC (SRSBC) has produced 111 species over its three-year existence, including ten additions this year. Eighty-three have been seen every year. In 1994 Common Moorhen was seen only on this count. For the first time Ring-necked Pheasant, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Hairy Woodpecker went unreported.

One hundred eighteen species have been seen during the five-year history of the Storrs SBC (STSBC), with 90 of them reported every year. Forty of these have been verified as breeding. This year, for the first time, Spotted Sandpiper, Herring Gull, Black-billed Cuckoo, Great Horned Owl, and Northern Waterthrush were not found. No new species were added in 1994.

Three new species brought the 17-year total for the Woodbury-Roxbury SBC (WRSBC) to 164, 87 of which have been present every year. American Coot and Nashville Warbler were new, while Acadian Flycatcher culminated six consecutive years of growth with the highest total of all SBCs. American Woodcock went unseen for only the third time since the count was founded in 1978, Belted Kingfisher attained an all-time low, and Brown Creeper saw its lowest total in 14 years, while Magnolia Warbler was missed for only the second time since 1982, and Bobolink reached a 12-year low. Six species were found solely on this count.

As we move through the taxonomic order, a number of interesting observations can be made. It should be noted that WRSBC, a Mid-state count, possesses many of the same avian characteristics as the Northern counts, particularly BASBC and LHSBC. Otherwise, each regional grouping, Coastal, Ct. Valley, and Upland (Mid-state and Northern), as shown in the tables, comprises counts with essentially similar characteristics.

Growing numbers of Double-crested Cormorants were found on eight SBCs, with the coastal counts producing 96% of the total. Great Blue Herons were present on all counts, but the 25 on the northern LHSBC should represent breeding area birds. Somewhat surprisingly, 59% of all Green Herons were on the two coastal counts. The absence of American Black Duck from four SBCs is not a good sign for this species. Normally, ducks and geese crippled during the hunting

season and surviving the winter are unable to migrate, and linger into summer. That was not the case this year. Injured waterfowl may not have survived the extremely harsh winter, and fewer were present during the SBC period. Last year's ten vagrant waterfowl species were replaced by just three on this year's SBCs. Interesting breeding concentrations were evident for Hooded Merganser, with 15 of 18 birds on the LHSBC, and for Common Merganser, with 64 of 78 birds on the BASBC.

Of the 11 Ospreys reported (all coastal), two nested within the GSSBC and produced young. This successful breeding was possibly the first in Fairfield County this century and the only such pair along the north shore of Long Island Sound between Milford and New York City. Seven Bald Eagles represented a nice summer population. Sharp-shinned Hawk rose from six birds last year to 13 among five counts. Cooper's Hawk, slowly returning as a nester after being virtually extirpated a few decades ago, was found on eight SBCs. Eighteen Northern Goshawks, up from seven last summer, were on five counts, while Red-shouldered Hawks, present on all but two counts, were concentrated on the WRSBC. Noted in small numbers, with two or fewer birds on each of six counts, American Kestrel certainly appears to be a decreasing nester.

BASBC contained 40 of the 59 Ruffed Grouse reported statewide; their SBC totals were considered low by some observers. Demonstrating continued growth, Wild Turkey was on every count but one. Virginia Rail numbers swelled to 38 from 11 last year, thanks to an amazing 25 birds reported on the LHSBC. Twenty American Woodcocks, although higher than the 1993 total, were on only four counts and were felt by many experienced observers to be extremely scarce. Of all the gulls, only Laughing Gull was entirely coastal, and even Great Black-backed Gull was found inland, in the Connecticut River valley.

The only CD Monk Parakeet was found north, on the LHSBC, and not along the coast as expected. The fate of this species in Connecticut is uncertain, and we look forward to chronicling its future. Both cuckoos were up slightly, but this was not a big influx year. Barred Owl was the most widely distributed owl and the only owl found on all SBCs. Sixteen Whip-poor-wills were twice what were found the previous year, with 11 on the LHSBC alone. No more than one was counted on any other SBC. Up to three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen on each count, while the BASBC and the LHSBC produced 77% of the 47 birds found statewide.

Eighty-six of the SBCs' 87 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were on the BASBC and the LHSBC. The Hairy Woodpecker total was 28% of that

for Downy Woodpeckers. Last year it was 32%, and both species together declined to 84% of last year's combined total. Northern Flicker remains the commonest woodpecker statewide. Olive-sided Flycatcher was represented by a single individual on the LHSBC, the first ever outside of the WRSBC. SBCs depict Alder Flycatcher as largely a regional nester, with 29 out of 40 birds being confined to the LHSBC. Willow Flycatcher was most numerous in the south and west and weakest in the northeast. Least Flycatchers were almost nonexistent along the coast, with but a few on the Connecticut Valley and QV counts; the remaining 87% were among the three Northern counts and WRSBC.

Purple Martins were found on five counts. A marginal bank swallow population remains along the coast, while the northwest continues to support substantial numbers. Cliff Swallow has expanded its range in recent years and has become locally common in the western hills, with 243 birds, up from 156 last summer, among four SBCs. Fish Crow, expanding inland, was seen on the WRSBC, while Common Raven, still steadily increasing, was found on four counts, with the BASBC harboring a hefty nine birds.

Brown Creeper was most prevalent in the northwest. Carolina Wren, whose numbers fell from 242 birds (down from 434 in 1992) to 77, survives and continues to exist here, but as a much less common resident. Interestingly, House Wren was quite common on the BA, GS, LH and WR SBCs but much less so elsewhere. Winter Wren, like its southern cousin, Carolina, must also have been affected by the severe winter, as its numbers dropped from 35 to 14 on the eight pre-existing counts. The WRSBC totaled an impressive 52 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, 31% of the statewide total.

Hermit Thrush was found on all the non-coastal counts, and BASBC had 63% of the total. After expanding throughout the state in the last 25 or so years, Northern Mockingbird is still most prevalent along the coast. Cedar Waxwing was noticeably numerous in the BA, LH and WR areas, with 58% of all birds reported. Probably continuing a gradual expansion toward the northeast, White-eyed Vireos predominate in the southwest corner of the state, where almost half were counted on the GSSBC. Most common in the northwest and scarce elsewhere were Solitary Vireos, more than half of which were discovered on the BASBC. Although seen on every SBC this year, Yellow-throated Vireos were concentrated on the WRSBC, with 30% of the total and 28% of all Warbling Vireos as well.

Among the warblers, both Black-throated Blue and Yellow-rumped were confined to the three Northern counts, with the BASBC finding 88% (an impressive 102 birds) of the former species and 71% of the

latter. Not uncommon on the three northwestern SBCs was Blackburnian Warbler. Found in every count area, American Redstart appears to be increasing toward the southwest. The GSSBC's numbers have grown steadily: this year a record 50 redstarts were tallied, compared with just four birds on its first census 19 years ago. Reported on eight SBCs, but found mostly along the coast, was Worm-eating Warbler, which dropped from 223 to 162 birds in a year. For the first time, Wilson's Warbler was reported outside the WRSBC. Over half of the Canada Warblers were on the BASBC, and although present on seven counts, they were scarce except on the three Northern counts.

Forty-two Field Sparrows (29% of the total) were on the WRSBC. Over half of the 253 Swamp Sparrows were on the LHSBC. White-throated Sparrows were found on three counts - two Northern and, somewhat unexpectedly, the SRSBC. Dark-eyed Junco was also concentrated on two Northern counts, with BASBC producing 61 of the 70 birds reported. Oddly, one bird was near the coast. Bobolink was found on the Upland counts, where Eastern Meadowlark was also most noted in addition to having a minor presence in the Connecticut River valley. With a distribution seemingly inverse to that of the meadowlark, Orchard Oriole was most reliably found along the coast, much less so on the Connecticut Valley and Mid-state counts, and not at all on the Northern counts. Commonest in the northern areas, Purple Finch was found in small numbers on all but the GSSBC. American Goldfinch was most abundant in the three northwestern census areas, where over half of its statewide total was found.

For readers who know little about them, SBCs are Christmas Bird Counts conducted during the nesting season. Held over a one- or two-day period in June, their censusing accuracy depends heavily upon observers' knowledge of vocalizations of breeding birds. With both GSSBC and WRSBC having existed for many years, COA sponsorship of SBCs began in 1990 in order to develop more base-line data for Connecticut's nesting species. During a time when there is much speculation about and little hard evidence for population trends among breeding birds, amassing such data is important, particularly when it pertains to species that winter in tropical and subtropical forest environs.

Historically, Connecticut SBCs have recorded a total of 226 species and one subspecies on CDs, with one additional CP species (Ring-necked Duck, 1979). Fifty-seven of these have been seen on every count in every year. Another 13 have been reported only as single occurrences: Red-throated Loon (1984), Great Cormorant (1976),

Northern Pintail (1992), Black Scoter (1976), White-winged Scoter (1993), Black Rail (1986), King Rail (1993), Short-billed Dowitcher (1989), Common Black-headed Gull (1991), Lesser Black-backed Gull (1979), Caspian Tern (1989), Roseate Tern (1992), and Summer Tanager (1993). All are vagrants or migrants, except for potentially nesting Northern Pintail, Black Rail, and Summer Tanager, rare nesting King Rail, and very local nesting Roseate Tern.

In 1991, 169 species were recorded, 1992 had 178 species, and 1993 totaled 185 species. Over an indefinite period SBCs retain their ability to continue adding new species. With somewhat higher gains during their first few years, GSSBC has averaged 4.6 additions annually over its 19 years, while WRSBC, with an inland handicap, averaged 3.6 new species annually over a 17-year period. When conducted enthusiastically and even aggressively, other SBCs could experience similar growth. This year the eight pre-existing counts averaged a little over six new species each.

Many thanks to those who so ably organized and staffed these nine counts. Unfortunately, there seems to be a large participant turnover among some counts. It will be important to address this problem if SBCs are to continue as a source of recreation and information.

The 1994 SBCs further solidified the continuing effort to census breeding birds in Connecticut. Individual counts provided further substantiation of species to be expected and their frequencies. With the long-awaited publication this year of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut* (L. R. Bevier, Editor. Bulletin 113, State of Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey, Hartford), we are again reminded of the importance of documenting changing summer and nesting distribution patterns through SBCs. Counts such as these immeasurably help to carry out this significant effort. Particularly important is for each SBC to develop its own list of breeding species and their statuses: confirmed *vs.* probable. In this way expansions and retreats of nesting ranges can be more accurately chronicled.

All in all, the news is good. SBCs became better established, and their acceptance and growth proceeded unabated. Next year their evolution will continue.

STATEWIDE TOTALS Count Dates: June 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26, & 27. Reported on Count Days (CD) were 189 Species & 92,402 Individual birds (including 9 hybrid individuals, 1 subspecies, & 11 unidentified individuals), plus 2 Count Period (CP) species. Two hundred thirty observers in 115 Parties spent 1,101.5 Party Hours (1,036 daytime & 65.5 nighttime) in the field.

## INDIVIDUAL COUNT TOTALS

**Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1992*)

Date: Sun. & Mon., June 26 & 27. Count Center (The BASBC covers a 12 mile east-west x 15 mile north-south rectangle): 41° 55' N 72° 59' W. Elevation 300 to 1,450 ft. Area: Barkhamsted, Burlington (northern), Canton, Colebrook (southern), Granby (southwest), Hartland, New Hartford, Torrington (northeast), & Winchester. SBC postponed from 6/25 due to rain. Weather: 6/26 - Partly sunny. Temp 65° to 91° F. Wind SSW, 0-10 mph. Night - Temp 74° to 66°, Wind SSW, 0-15 mph. 6/27 - AM - Partly sunny with increasing clouds, PM - Cloudy with showers & thunderstorms which ended at 7 PM, and started again at 9:30; Temp 66° to 83° F. Wind var., 0-20 mph. 1" Rain. Night-Temp 73° to 64° F. Wind SW, 5-20 mph. 0.5" Rain.

**Totals:** 124 Species, 10,708 Individuals (including 1 hybrid). Twenty-seven observers in 19 parties spent 166 daytime & 9 night party hours extended over a 48 hour period. Participants: *Robert Barbieri, Ray Belding, George Boynton, Ann Davenport, Ayreslea Denny, Duncan Denny, Kathleen Felice, Don Hopkins, Jane Hopkins, Barbara Johnson, Paul Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Gloria Lynch, Jon Lynch, Susan Marsden, Rea McCarty, Brian Nichols, Holly Olszewski, Jack Olszewski, Carol Parent, Paul Parent, David Rosgen (72H Leigh Avenue, Thomaston CT 06787), Stanley Rosgen, Phil Royer, Lennie Sansone, Geoffrey Stiles, David Tripp, Jr.*

**Greenwich-Stamford Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1976*)

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12. Count Center (The GSSBC covers a 15x15 mile square): 41° 05' N 73° 37' W. Elevation 0 to at least 740 ft. Area: (Connecticut, 65% of area) Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, & Stamford; and (New York, 35% of area) Armonk, Bedford (in part), Port Chester, Rye, & White Plains (in part). Weather: 6/11 - Warm, not too hot, clouding over in afternoon, Temp 58° to 76° F. Wind S., 5 mph. Night - Rain all night; 6/12 - Rain into AM, especially inland, where it poured; rain much of the day, but coast mostly dry; Temp 64° to 74° F. Wind S., 5 mph.

**Totals:** 142 Species, 19,671 Individuals (including 4 hybrid, 1 subspecies, & 6 unidentified individuals) plus 3 CP species. Forty-eight Observers in 25 Parties; 291 daytime & 19 night Party Hours spanning 48 hours. "Numbers of many species low, due at least in part to weather, which included fog on Sunday." T.W.B.

Participants: *Tom Andersen, John Askildsen, Pat Bailey, Ken Ballas, Charlie Barnard, Trudy Battaly, Daniel Baxter, Gail Benson, Michael Bochnik, John Bova, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye NY 10580), Albie Collins, Diane Collins, Julio De la Torre, George Dremeaux,*

### *The 1994 Summer Bird Count*

*Patrick Dugan, Andrew Farnsworth, Anne French, Jay Gartner, Ted Gilman, Andy Guthrie, Carol Hartel, Paul Hinlicky, Pat Ledden, Claudia Leff, Rob Lewis, Janet Mehmel, Mike Moccio, Susan Moss, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob CT 06807), Drew Panko, Matt Popp, Steve Potter, Polly Rothstein, Chris Schmidt, Bob Shriber, John Shull, Jared Silbersher, Tom Stephensen, Andy Towle, Mike Usai, Jim Utter, Bill Van Loan, Jr., Anne Vatsabel, Jack Wells, Lynn Zeltman, Joe Zeranski.*

#### **Hartford Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1991*)

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12. Count Center: 41° 46' N 72° 40' W. Elevation 40 to 640 ft. Area: Bloomfield, East Hartford, Farmington, Hartford, Manchester, New Britain, Newington, Rocky Hill, South Windsor, West Hartford, Wethersfield, & Windsor. Weather: 6/11- Clear & calm, Temp 63° to 88° F. Wind SSW, 0-15 mph; 6/12- Overcast, 4 1/2" Rain, Temp 55° to 70° F. Wind SSE 5-20 mph.

Totals: 113 Species, 8,627 Individuals plus 3 CP species. Twenty-five Observers in 13 Parties censused over 89 daytime & 3 night Party Hours during a 48 hour period. Participants: *Bill Altmann, Elaine Cannon, Mary Cannon, Mary Carter, Pat Cummings, Dave Crockett, Ed Czapinski, Mary Czapinski, Paul Desjardins, Carl Ekroth, Catherine Ekroth, Kathie Felice (274 Morningside Drive East, Bristol CT 06010), Marge Hackbarth, Jay Kaplan, Josh Kaplan, Brian Kleinman, Peter Landerman, Dave Porter, Eleanor Powers, Dave Rosgen, Mary Rudek, Shirley Smigel, Laura Spitz, Geoffrey Stiles, Louise Tucker.*

#### **Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1994*)

Date: Sat., June 11. Count Center: 41° 43' N 73° 14' W. Elevation 440 to 1400 ft. Area: Cornwall, Goshen, Litchfield, & West Torrington. Weather: 6/11 - Sunny and Warm. Temp 70° to 80° F.

Totals: 130 Species, 11,878 Individuals. Twenty-eight Observers in 12 Parties spent 106.5 daytime & 8.5 night Party Hours covering 24 hours of censusing. Participants: *Janet Amalawage, Patricia Baech, John Baker, Bob Barbieri (56 Baton Lane, Torrington CT 06790), Cheryl Burke, Raymond Belding (46 Scoville St., Torrington, CT 06790), George Boynton, Angela Dimmitt, Lewis Faulke-Cheeh, Jeremy Greenwood, Jeff Greenwood, Paul Gros, Gordon Loery, Marian Lyga, Donna Manwaring, Deborah Martin, Russ Naylor, Holly Olszewski, Jack Olszewski, Virginia Peterson, Ray Packard, Dave Rosgen, Dave Tripp, Leigh Wells, Lyle Whittlesey, Roger Willis, Francis Zygmunt.*

#### **New Haven Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1991*)

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12. Count Center: 41° 18' N 72° 56' W. Elevation 0 to 700 ft. Area: Branford (western), East Haven, Milford,

New Haven, North Haven, Orange, West Haven, & Woodbridge (in part). Weather: 6/11- Partly Cloudy to Mostly Cloudy, Rain after 6 PM, Temp 68° to 83° F. Wind SW, 5 mph; 6/12 - Cloudy, fog with frequent heavy rain showers throughout PM, Temp 68° to 78° F. Wind SW, 0-10 mph.

**Totals:** 125 Species, 10,678 Individuals (including 2 hybrid & 1 unidentified individuals) plus 3 CP species. Thirty-nine Observers in 20 Parties spent 104.5 daytime & 1 night Party Hours covering a 2 day period. Participants: *Lee Aimesbury, Marion Aimesbury, Betty Bell, Ron Bell, Andrew Brand, Mary Jane Bowersot, Jean Buck, Jane Cheek, Ken Cheek, Nancy Clark, Cathy Day, Suzanne Eldridge, Richard English, Betty Greene, Nicholas Greene, John Himmelman, Rebecca Horowitz, Katy Hubbard, Win Hubbard, Adrienne Hudson, Donald Hudson, Tom Kilroy, Cathy Leahy, Pat Leahy, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Steve C. Mayo* (159 Kings Highway #27, Milford CT 06460), *Linda Miller, Frank Pearson, Sally Ranti, Arnie Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Vickie Smith, Jane Spielman, Kimberly Stoner, Jackie Ulrich, Pat Watson, Jeff Young, Bill Yule.*

#### **Quinnipiac Valley Summer Bird Count (founded 1992)**

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 18 & 19. Count Center: 41° 28' N 72° 44' W (Intersection of routes 68 & 157). Elevation 10 to 600 ft. Area: Cheshire (in part), Durham, Guilford (in part), Killingworth (in part), Meriden, Middlefield, Middletown, North Branford, North Haven, & Wallingford. Weather: Hot, humid, oppressive heat. 6/18- Temp 72° to 92° F. Humid & Very Hot. 6/19- Temp 73° to 93° F. Humid & very hot.

**Totals:** 110 Species, 5,827 Individuals plus 1 CP species. Nine Observers in 5 Parties spent 32.5 daytime & 2 night Party Hours covering 48 hours counting. Participants: *Dave Bryant, Majorie Hackbarth, Jim McBride, Nancy Morand, Linda Rediker, John Schultz, Wilford Schultz* (93 Harrison Road, Wallingford CT 06492), *John Wagenblatt, George Zepko.*

#### **Salmon River Summer Bird Count (founded 1992)**

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12. Circle Center: 41° 33' N 72° 26' W. Elevation 5 to 550 ft. Area: Colchester (western), East Haddam, Haddam, Middletown (southeast), & Portland. Weather: 6/11- Cloudy, low 80°'s, heavy rains 10 AM - 3 PM, Night occasional brief showers, upper 60°'s; 6/12- Mostly cloudy, clear & sunny after 10 AM.

**Totals:** 103 Species, 5,045 Individuals plus 3 CP species. Nine Observers in five Parties counted over 38 daytime & 3.5 night Party Hours during 2 days. Participants: *Mary Augustiny, Elana Coffey,*



*The 1994 Summer Bird Count*

*Larry Cyrulik, Mary Dimon, Joseph Morin (8 West St Terrace, Cromwell CT 06416), Patricia Rasch, Ed Reneson, Clay Taylor, David Titus.*

**Storrs Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1990*)

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 18 & 19. Count Center: 41° 48' N 72° 15' W. Elevation 200 to 750 ft. Area: Andover, Ashford, Chaplin, Coventry, Mansfield, Tolland, Willimantic, West Willington, Willington, & Windham. Weather: 6/18 - Hazy, hot, & humid; some early morning fog, Temp 65° to 95° F. Wind SW. 5-10 mph. 6/19- Hazy, hot, & humid; some early morning fog, Temp 67° to 88° F. Wind SW., 5-10 mph.

**Totals:** 99 Species, 4,860 Individuals (including 3 unidentified individuals) plus 1 CP species. Twelve Observers in 9 Parties censused over 57.5 daytime Party Hours spanning a 48 hour period.

**Participants:** *Bruce Carver, George Clark, Don Cook, Dave Corsini, Bill Gaunya, Greg Hanisek, Dolores Hilding, Carol Phillips, Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs CT 06268), Kevin Segar, Avo Somer, Mark Szantyr.*

**Woodbury-Roxbury Summer Bird Count** (*founded 1978*)

Date: Sun., June 5. Count Center: 41° 32' N 73° 16' W. Elevation 110 to 1,060 ft. Area: Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Middlebury, New Milford, Newtown, Roxbury, Southbury, Washington, & Woodbury. Weather: Mild & calm, humid & clear AM, breezy mid day, hazy afternoon, partly cloudy; cloudy with scattered sprinkles by sunset, Temp 45° to 80° F, Wind WSW, 20 mph. Night Temp 45°, Wind calm.

**Totals:** 134 Species, 15,109 Individuals (including 2 hybrid & 1 unidentified individuals). Thirty-three observers in 15 Parties spent 153 daytime & 17.5 night Party Hours spanning a 24 hour period on this SBC.

**Participants:** *Janet Amalavage, Andy Anthony, Bob Barbieri, Ray Belding, Ed Briggs, Polly Brody, Mary-Ann Currie, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Cynthia Edgar, Larry Fischer, Bob Foley, Ethel Follett, Greg Hanisek, Leslie Huston, Buck Jenks, Susan Kirk, Nancy Liedlich, William Liedlich, Carol Longstreth, John Longstreth, Steve Mayo, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury CT 06798), Virginia Peterson, Carol Potter, Dave Rosgen, Darcy Thurrott, Art Titus, David Titus, Leigh Wells, Chris Wood, Francis Zygmunt.*

163 Field Point Rd., Greenwich, CT 06830

### 1994 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					State Total 1994
	GS	NH	HA	SR	Mid - state		Northern			
					QV	WR	BA	LH	ST	
Common Loon	3	1				1	1			6
Pied-billed Grebe	1							3		4
Horned Grebe	CP									CP
Double-crested Cormorant	594	212	11	9	4	8	4		1	843
American Bittern							1			1
Least Bittern			1							1
Great Blue Heron	13	8	2	6	1	4	12	25	4	75
Great Egret	129	24								153
Snowy Egret	176	21								197
Little Blue Heron	1									1
Green Heron	34	14		4	5	13	4	3	5	82
Black-crowned Night-Heron	141	25		4						170
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	2									2
Mute Swan	106	133	5	4	85	34		16		383
Canada Goose	1728	341	318	162	69	583	300	324	100	3925
Wood Duck	83	37	26	8	18	74	8	91	2	347
American Black Duck	41	21	2				8	3		75
Mallard	754	233	654	29	336	146	81	86	42	2361
<i>Mallard x American Black Duck</i>	3	2				1				6
Gadwall	1									1
Canvasback	1									1
Greater Scaup		1								1
Oldsquaw	1									1
Bufflehead	3									3
Hooded Merganser							3	15		18
Common Merganser						14	64			78

Zeranski

Red-breasted Merganser	1	2							3	
Turkey Vulture	9	15	6	9	21	53	26	44	3	186
Black Vulture						4				4
Osprey	4	5	CP							9
Bald Eagle						2	5			7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	2			2	6	2			13
Cooper's Hawk	1	1		1	1	6	1	3	1	15
Northern Goshawk	7	3	2				4	2		18
<i>Accipiter species</i>	1					1				2
Red-shouldered Hawk		1	1	4	3	13	3		6	31
Broad-winged Hawk	6		4		3	11	19	5	1	49
Red-tailed Hawk	16	6	13	10	13	44	12	24	2	140
American Kestrel	1	1	2		4	4	2	7	1	22
Peregrine Falcon	1									1
Ring-necked Pheasant	29	11	2		3	7	1	5	CP	58
Ruffed Grouse	9	1			2	1	40	5	1	59
Wild Turkey	2	19	3	4	2	14	37	54		135
Northern Bobwhite			1	2			1		1	5
Clapper Rail	4	1								5
Virginia Rail	1		2	2	2	6		25		38
Sora								1		1
Common Moorhen				1						1
American Coot						1				1
Semipalmated Plover	CP	CP								CP
Piping Plover		8								8
Killdeer	51	80	24	16	23	33	28	56	36	347
American Oystercatcher	13									13

BA-Barkhamsted  
 GS-Greenwich-Stamford  
 HA-Hartford

LH-Litchfield Hills  
 NH-New Haven  
 QV-Quinnipiac Valley

SR-Salmon River  
 ST-Storrs  
 WR-Woodbury-Roxbury

XX Noted 4 or fewer yrs. in last 10 yrs.  
 XX Species new to count  
XX New 10 year high total (Underlined)  
**XX** New 10 year low total (Bold)

### 1994 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					State Total 1994
	GS	NH	HA	SR	Mid - state		Northern			
					QV	WR	BA	LH	ST	
Greater Yellowlegs		1								1
Lesser Yellowlegs	1									1
Solitary Sandpiper						1				1
Spotted Sandpiper	4	3	4		1	11	9	2		34
Willet	1									1
Ruddy Turnstone	10									10
Semipalmated Sandpiper		2								2
Dunlin		1								1
American Woodcock		1			6		8	5		20
Laughing Gull	66	51								117
Bonaparte's Gull	9									9
Ring-billed Gull	261	197	96	3	36	2	1	5		601
Herring Gull	518	250	205	14	8	45	2	1		1043
Great Black- backed Gull	198	125	11	6		1				341
Common Tern	54	19								73
Least Tern	12	202								214
Rock Dove	279	309	175	27	141	151	67	40	131	1320
Mourning Dove	395	340	227	159	143	348	183	204	124	2123
Monk Parakeet		CP						1		1
Black-billed Cuckoo	11	3	1		1	10	1	2		29
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	12	1	1		1	2		1	1	19
<i>cuckoo species</i>	5									5
Barn Owl		3			16					19
Eastern Screech-Owl	35	1	2		3	12		3		56
Great Horned Owl	7		1	1	2	10	2	8		31
Barred Owl	2	1	1	2	2	13	11	4	2	38

Northern Saw-whet Owl							4			4
Common Nighthawk					1					1
Whip-poor-will		1	1	1	1	1		11		16
Chimney Swift	<b>44</b>	33	67	36	25	<b>108</b>	82	75	30	500
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	3	1	1	1		3	21	15	2	47
Belted Kingfisher	17	4	4	8	3	7	14	12	6	75
Red-headed Woodpecker			1							1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	101	39	22	14	12	45	1	15	20	269
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker						1	40	46		87
Downy Woodpecker	<b>92</b>	37	46	13	9	53	65	50	29	394
Hairy Woodpecker	33	5	10		2	11	25	12	12	110
Northern Flicker	157	68	80	44	46	<b>79</b>	88	59	43	664
Pileated Woodpecker	17	6		2		14	17	7		63
Olive-sided Flycatcher								1		1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	91	18	17	36	22	<b>76</b>	39	80	44	423
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher						1				1
Acadian Flycatcher	7	1	1	4	2	13		2	3	33
Alder Flycatcher	1				1	3	4	29	2	40
Willow Flycatcher	44	35	13	12	10	46	14	56	4	234
Least Flycatcher	1		7	11	6	45	42	38	43	193
<i>Empidonax species</i>		1								1
Eastern Phoebe	82	26	43	46	17	132	73	110	67	596
Great Crested Flycatcher	61	26	32	13	18	80	22	53	25	330
Eastern Kingbird	<b>69</b>	29	39	26	32	105	93	81	30	504
Purple Martin	<b>4</b>	6			16	1	7			34
Tree Swallow	118	68	197	58	62	152	428	332	111	1526
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	79	25	12	52	7	61	59	24	12	331

BA-Barkhamsted

LH-Litchfield Hills

SR-Salmon River

XX

Noted 4 or fewer yrs. in last 10 yrs.

GS-Greenwich-Stamford

NH-New Haven

ST-Storrs

XX

Species new to count

HA-Hartford

QV-Quinnipiac Valley

WR-Woodbury-Roxbury

XX

New 10 year high total (Underlined)

XX

New 10 year low total (Bold)

## 1994 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					State Total 1994
	GS	NH	HA	SR	Mid - state		Northern			
					QV	WR	BA	LH	ST	
Bank Swallow	2	9	36	7	10	68	120	17	101	370
Cliff Swallow	39					<u>175</u>	7	22		243
Barn Swallow	<b>139</b>	113	71	86	148	<u>287</u>	127	145	81	1197
Blue Jay	<b>320</b>	191	106	46	76	<b>223</b>	190	121	73	1346
American Crow	775	310	355	158	152	661	246	339	173	3169
Fish Crow	11	24	11			<u>1</u>		3		50
Common Raven					1	<u>1</u>	9	1		12
Black-capped Chickadee	<b>215</b>	134	113	72	31	<u>293</u>	373	232	103	1566
Tufted Titmouse	309	95	88	100	43	<u>248</u>	107	92	100	1182
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	2	13	1	2	9	74	34		137
White-breasted Nuthatch	58	9	30	11	12	<u>33</u>	68	35	45	301
Brown Creeper	<b>2</b>		7			<b>2</b>	20	24	9	64
Carolina Wren	23	12	4	14	3	11	2	2	8	79
House Wren	216	65	46	53	21	169	155	124	67	916
Winter Wren	1	2			1	5	4	3	1	17
Marsh Wren	<u>33</u>	26	3					6		68
Golden-crowned Kinglet	<b>1</b>		<u>4</u>				1			6
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	20		10	14	3	<u>52</u>	28	19	24	170
Eastern Bluebird	44	3	147	13	14	114	106	59	19	519
Veery	159	33	14	84	23	200	321	313	100	1247
Hermit Thrush			2	9	6	5	90	24	6	142
Wood Thrush	304	81	71	96	140	262	140	173	105	1372
American Robin	1015	739	445	576	710	1097	415	806	215	6018
Gray Catbird	832	356	190	178	156	530	405	431	126	3204
Northern Mockingbird	<b>149</b>	171	89	59	83	143	25	39	62	820
Brown Thrasher	<b>25</b>	11	3	5	2	24	4	3	13	90

Cedar Waxwing	140	182	107	67	17	262	299	280	88	1442
European Starling	1706	983	900	233	982	812	211	797	339	6963
White-eyed Vireo	24	3		9	<u>2</u>	4		8	2	52
Solitary Vireo	2	3	1	1		14	54	22	1	98
Yellow-throated Vireo	37	2	6	16	2	50	23	28	20	184
Warbling Vireo	81	22	51	37	9	<u>129</u>	29	58	44	460
Red-eyed Vireo	270	59	80	129	38	282	397	296	95	1646
Blue-winged Warbler	155	77	12	49	17	<b>139</b>	81	65	58	653
"Brewster's Warbler"	1						1			2
"Lawrence's Warbler"						1				1
Golden-winged Warbler								1		1
Tennessee Warbler						<u>1</u>		1		2
Nashville Warbler						<u>1</u>				1
Northern Parula				<u>2</u>		2			1	5
Yellow Warbler	369	166	112	98	32	<b>311</b>	258	377	124	1847
Chestnut-sided Warbler	11	15	15	19	13	93	166	159	16	507
Magnolia Warbler							49	3		52
Black-throated Blue Warbler			CP			2	102	12		116
Yellow-rumped Warbler						1	84	33		118
Black-throated Green Warbler	11	11	8	56	14	35	70	44	12	261
Blackburnian Warbler						11	42	33	1	87
Pine Warbler	27	23	21	11	3	15	49	31	10	190
Prairie Warbler	12	27	17	48	8	85	7	12	27	243
Blackpoll Warbler						<u>1</u>				1
Cerulean Warbler				<u>1</u>		5			2	8
Black-&-white Warbler	112	37	24	31	9	116	109	80	32	550
American Redstart	<u>50</u>	10	43	79	7	172	282	196	46	885

BA-Barkhamsted

LH-Litchfield Hills

SR-Salmon River

XX

Noted 4 or fewer yrs. in last 10 yrs.

GS-Greenwich-Stamford

NH-New Haven

ST-Storrs

XX

Species new to count

HA-Hartford

QV-Quinnipiac Valley

WR-Woodbury-Roxbury

XX

New 10 year high total (Underlined)

~~XX~~

New 10 year low total (Bold)

## 1994 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					State Total 1994
	GS	NH	HA	SR	Mid - state		Northern			
					QV	WR	BA	LH	ST	
Worm-eating Warbler	93	10	1	17	11	18	1		11	162
Ovenbird	239	84	48	111	75	231	359	240	97	1484
Northern Waterthrush	1	CP	1		4	4	3	9		22
Louisiana Waterthrush	24	2	2	9		41	18	10	5	111
Kentucky Warbler	2									2
Common Yellowthroat	<b>209</b>	126	94	123	38	291	362	411	88	1742
Hooded Warbler	7	6	CP	5	3	1		1		23
Wilson's Warbler								1		1
Canada Warbler	3	1		2		<b>2</b>	24	11	3	46
Yellow-breasted Chat	1					1				2
Scarlet Tanager	126	40	42	47	7	145	108	65	43	623
Northern Cardinal	285	191	152	158	51	353	132	140	100	1562
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<b>68</b>	18	17	18	7	75	79	37	15	334
Indigo Bunting	110	35	15	21	6	96	16	22	16	337
Rufous-sided Towhee	116	97	20	56	19	<b>153</b>	87	135	50	733
Chipping Sparrow	328	44	188	92	47	327	295	185	116	1622
Field Sparrow	17	16	5	17	6	<b>42</b>	11	14	15	143
Savannah Sparrow			11			4		4	2	21
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	24	1								25
Seaside Sparrow		2								2
Song Sparrow	453	224	224	86	60	<b>422</b>	344	391	124	2328
Swamp Sparrow	15	2	9	22	9	25	32	130	9	253
White-throated Sparrow				2			5	14		21
Dark-eyed Junco	1						61	8		70
Bobolink	CP		20		19	<b>114</b>	24	148	22	347
Red-winged Blackbird	644	772	252	154	294	640	240	648	215	3859



Eastern Meadowlark	6		2	1	19	16	2	5	11	62
Common Grackle	<b>760</b>	554	597	173	531	730	179	422	101	4047
Brown-headed Cowbird	199	119	108	78	104	194	112	133	82	1129
Orchard Oriole	10	3	1	1	1	5				21
Northern Oriole	254	101	72	51	45	207	84	90	37	941
<i>Bullock's Oriole</i>	1									1
Purple Finch		2	8	6	1	2	50	40	6	115
House Finch	549	387	475	218	177	582	235	292	125	3040
Pine Siskin			1					1		2
American Goldfinch	<b>141</b>	214	173	63	76	223	255	280	51	1476
Evening Grosbeak	1						1			2
House Sparrow	409	453	438	182	178	280	150	207	217	2514
Unidentified Individuals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
<b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</b>	<b>19671</b>	<b>10678</b>	<b>8627</b>	<b>5045</b>	<b>5827</b>	<b>15108</b>	<b>10708</b>	<b>11878</b>	<b>4860</b>	<b>92402</b>
Count Day Species	142	125	112	103	110	134	124	130	99	189
Count Period Species	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
<b>DEGREE OF EFFORT:</b>										
Party Hours	310	105.5	92	41.5	34.5	170.5	175	115	57.5	1101.5
Day Party Hours	291	104.5	89	38	32.5	153	166	106.5	55.5	1036
Night Party Hours	19	1	3	3.5	2	17.5	9	8.5	2	65.5
Observers	48	39	25	9	9	33	27	28	12	230
Parties	25	20	13	5	5	7	19	12	9	115
Individual birds per 10 Party Hrs.	635	1012	938	1216	1689	886	612	1033	845	839
Individual birds per Observer	410	274	345	561	647	458	397	424	405	402
% Observers	20.9	17.0	10.9	3.9	3.9	14.3	11.7	12.2	5.2	100
% Party Hours	28.1	9.6	8.4	3.8	3.1	15.5	15.9	10.4	5.2	100
% Individual Birds	21.3	11.6	9.3	5.5	6.3	16.4	11.6	12.9	5.3	100

All statistics are given for those SBCs at least ten years old (GSSBC & WRSBC)

For SBCs under 10 years old, only species new in 1994 are shown.

New species and those found four or fewer years are shown under statewide totals.

BA-Barkhamsted	LH-Litchfield Hills	SR-Salmon River	XX	Noted 4 or fewer yrs. in last 10 yrs.
GS-Greenwich-Stamford	NH-New Haven	ST-Storrs	XX	Species new to count
HA-Hartford	QV-Quinnipiac Valley	WR-Woodbury-Roxbury	XX	New 10 year high total (Underlined)
			XX	New 10 year low total (Bold)

## WINTER RECORD OF BOREAL OWL IN CONNECTICUT

Arnold Devine<sup>1</sup> and Dwight G. Smith<sup>2</sup>

The Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) is normally a permanent resident of the circumpolar boreal coniferous forests of North America and Eurasia, although it may be nomadic and irruptive during severe winters when food is scarce in northern parts of its range. During these times it migrates southward into the northern United States, sometimes in sizeable numbers.

On 12 January 1992, A. Devine discovered a single Boreal Owl roosting about eight meters up in a conifer in Sperry Park, Middlebury, Connecticut. Pellets deposited below this and several other roost trees suggest that the Boreal Owl had been in the area at least through much of December. The owl was observed by hundreds of birders while at this site. During this time it generally assumed a pseudo-sleeping posture, took little notice of the visitors, and displayed no alarm.

We monitored the owl's presence almost daily, until its departure on 24 February 1992. Diurnal roost sites of the owl were located on 35 of the 44 days it was known to be in the area. During this period five different roost sites were used, all in Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*). One site was used for 26 of the 36 days, two sites for three days each, one site for two days, and one site for one day. All but one of the roost sites (the one used only three days) was high within the canopy and close to the main trunk, or bole, of the trees. Roost site selection was notable because there was always more canopy cover above the Boreal Owl than below, which Voous (1989) noted and attributed to a derived thermal economy advantage, plus avoidance of diurnal avian predators and possibly the larger owls.

This individual represents the southern most observation of Boreal Owl in Connecticut. Zeranski and Baptist (1990) lists the Boreal Owl as an accidental winter visitor in the state. They report three specimen records, one found in South Windsor in the winter of 1859-1860, a male collected 12 November 1906 in Kent, and a partial specimen found in January 1923 in South Windsor. They also reported three credible sightings, one each in South Windsor, Hartford, and West Hartford, the most recent in 1946.

The winter of 1991-1992 was apparently an incursion winter for several northern owl species. Relatively high numbers of Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*) were recorded at a number of localities in

*Winter Record of Boreal Owl in Connecticut*

New England and several Northern Hawk Owls (*Surnia ulula*) were observed in northern New England (*American Birds* Vol. 46, No. 1, Vol. 46, No. 2, and Vol. 46, No. 3). One Boreal Owl was found in Vermont, 5 March 1992, six in Massachusetts, and one in Connecticut (this paper). The six Boreal Owls in Massachusetts were found within a 20 mile radius—30 October, 5 November, 6 November, 8 November, 19 November and 27 December 1991. Three of these owls were emaciated, two were rehabilitated, and one died. This Connecticut record also marks the most southern incursion for this species during the 1991-1992 winter.

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- Voous, K H. 1988. *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere*. MIT Press. Cambridge, Mass. 320 pp.
- Zeranski, J. D., and T. R. Baptist. *Connecticut Birds*. University Press of New England, Hanover, N.H. 328 pp.

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## CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES: SPRING: MARCH 1 - MAY 31, 1994

Jay Kaplan<sup>1</sup> and Frank Mantlik<sup>2</sup>

Editor's Comment: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (see COA Field List) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Rare Records Committee, if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.

After a particularly harsh Connecticut winter, many of us eagerly anticipated the arrival of the spring season. In early March it became official. This past winter was the snowiest on record, or at least since they began keeping track at the National Weather Service in Windsor Locks. As one might imagine, migrants found little comfort in snow-covered Connecticut early in the period. Continued cool conditions kept reservoirs frozen until well into April in northern portions of the state. Is it any wonder that a number of winter visitors continued well into the spring? Perhaps these lingering "rarities" helped birders to start off the spring season on somewhat of a high note. A number of active birders commented on what they felt was an excellent landbird migration this year, as well as a fine waterfowl movement along the coast. Other observers remain concerned over "fewer" warblers and other neotropical migrants. Whatever spin one placed on this year's spring migration, it was certainly great to get outdoors. From the large number of reports received, it is apparent that many of us did just that!

March was a cool month. In spite of the distinction of "snowiest winter," it was also dry. Precipitation in Hartford totaled 3.63 inches, over two inches below normal. Temperatures exceeded 50°F on but four days, reaching 60°F only March 23rd and 24th. April finally broke winter's grasp. Temperatures were mild, the daily high temperature reading failing to break 50°F on only one day the entire month, and reaching 80°F on three different dates. April also continued dry with rainfall in Hartford totaling 2.53 inches compared with an normal 3.85 inches. May was a pleasant month with seasonable temperature readings and average precipitation.

There were several days of note during the season. March 7-8, 14 and 24 were noted for peak blackbird migration. April 30-May 1 provided exceptional movements of passerines. May 10-11 were also notable with 76 birds banded at Birdcraft Museum, Fairfield in the early morning and 96 species seen at Sherwood Island State

Park, Westport, on the former date; 21 species of warblers at East Rock Park, New Haven, and 23 in Greenwich on the latter. A Big Day Team broke the Connecticut single-day record with 176 species May 15, only to have it shattered five days later, when the team of Buzz Devine, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Bill Root, Mark Szantyr, and Chris Wood amassed an amazing 186 species. This new record may be tough to beat!

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Sherwood Island State Park (hereafter SISP), Westport, is an annual staging area for Red-throated Loons, with 45 April 1 (RS) and 50 April 11 (GH). The latest date was May 20 with two birds in Madison (EH et al.). There were at least seven inland reports of Pied-billed Grebe. Interestingly, this species was missed by both record-setting Big Day teams. Horned Grebes were reported along the shore in decreasing numbers through March with a peak of 20 at SISP March 10 (FM). The latest was May 7 at this location (JG et al.). There were six coastal reports of Red-necked Grebe, ranging from Greenwich to New London, the earliest March 6 and the latest May 14 (m.ob.). An inland sighting came from East Twin Lake, Salisbury, May 8 (GH).

There were several reports of Northern Gannet in Long Island Sound from Stamford to Old Lyme with a maximum of 10 birds off Merwin Point, West Haven, April 9 (BD, RE et al.). Great Cormorants peaked March 17 with 50 at Cockenoe Island/Peck's Ledge Light, Westport (FM). The latest

report came from Menunketesuck Island, Westbrook, May 16 (GH). Double-crested Cormorants continue to spread through Connecticut. They now nest from Greenwich to New London and are regular summering non-breeders on many inland lakes, reservoirs and rivers. Three birds at Leander Pond, Ashford, April 23 (GC et al.) are an indication of the increased occurrence of this species in northeastern Connecticut.

American Bitterns were at SISP April 7 (RS), at Richard Drive Pond, Westport, April 8 (FM), in Greenwich May 10 (BO), and were presumed nesting at White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield, where two birds were present April 15-May 14 (m.ob.). Two Least Bitterns were in Goshen May 19 (GH) and single birds were at SISP May 24 (RS), and White Memorial Foundation May 29 (LW et al.). Early egret reports included two Great Egrets in Norwalk March 21 (FM) and Snowy Egrets at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP), Madison, March 30 (JG) and at Manresa Marsh, Norwalk, March 31 (FM). An early Little Blue Heron was at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area (here-

after BIWMA), Stonington, April 4 (DP). Tricolored Herons were at BIWMA sporadically April 18-May 28 (m.ob.), at SISP April 19 (RS,RW) and May 24 (RS), and at Milford Point, Milford, May 17 (DT). Cattle Egret formerly bred on the Norwalk Islands, but apparently is no longer breeding in the state. There were a few isolated sightings along the shoreline (m.ob.), plus 11 inland in South Windsor April 27 (P. Desjardins). A Yellow-crowned Night Heron at East Rock Park, New Haven, May 13 (RE) was the "first time ever" at this location. In addition to the usual shoreline reports, Glossy Ibis were inland at Hesseky Meadows, Woodbury, April 24 (RN) and Farmington, with four flying over the Farmington Meadows May 25 (CE).

A **Tundra Swan** in Sharon May 14 (T. McGrath et al.) was a late date for this rare migrant. Another rarity was a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Bantam Lake, Litchfield, March 19-21 (GH,NC). Large flocks of Snow Geese migrating through interior Connecticut are often missed as they are very high fliers, but 350 were in Sherman March 23 (Jeanne Kauffman). An adult, blue-morph that overwintered in the Woodbury area was last seen at Hesseky Meadows April 3 (RN) and a late report of an individual bird came from SISP May 16 (FG).

Peak numbers of Green-winged Teal included 150 at Milford Point

March 26 (GH) and 100 at Griswold Point, April 3 (DP). There were few Northern Pintail reports received, but 42 in the Cromwell Meadows April 10 (JM) was an impressive total. There were a dozen reports of Northern Shoveler including an unusual one of a male paired with a female Mallard at Sunny Valley Farm, New Milford, May 14 (AD). A Eurasian Wigeon, present through the winter season at West Haven, was last seen April 9 (JG). Canvasbacks peaked with 164 at Milford Point March 20 (SK) and 80 in Greenwich Harbor, Greenwich, March 7 (FM). Among five reports for Redhead, all in southwestern Connecticut, were 18 birds at Ash Creek, Fairfield, March 21 (CB). Ring-necked Ducks peaked with 200 at Konold's Pond, Woodbridge, March 24 (AB) and 150 in Cromwell Meadows April 8 (JM). A **Tufted Duck**, present at Greenwich Harbor for the third successive winter, remained through at least March 21 (BO et al.). Greater Scaup peaked at Penfield Reef, Fairfield, with 1,600 birds March 8 (CB), while 100 Lesser Scaup were in Greenwich Harbor March 7-21 (FM,MS). Oldsquaw, apparently finding a good food source, increased through the month of March off Compo Beach, Westport, peaking at 600 March 28 (FM). All three scoter species were reported off Middle Beach, Madison, in mid-May, including two Black Scoters, rare in Con-

necticut, May 17-23 (Bill Root, EH,GH at al.). Several pairs of Hooded Mergansers nested in the vicinity of Miles Sanctuary, Sharon (m.ob.), and there was also a report of possible nesting near SISP (RS,RW), which would be unusual so close to the coast. Red-breasted Mergansers lingered into late May along the shoreline.

### VULTURES THROUGH TERNs

Black Vulture sightings continue to increase with up to eight birds seen along River Road, Kent, April 26-May 15 (m.ob.). Might they be nesting somewhere in the New Milford/Kent area? Turkey Vultures are also common in this vicinity with 55 seen at Sunny Valley Farm March 1 (CWo). Osprey continues to expand westward along the shoreline with a pair nesting for the first time on a platform in the Mianus River, Greenwich, May 30 (JZ,BO). This is a range extension of 28 miles from their nearest nesting site at Nell's Island, Milford.

Bald Eagles nested for the third consecutive year at the north end of Barkhamsted Reservoir, Barkhamsted, producing two young (CT DEP). Additionally, at least ten individuals, mostly immatures, were reported wandering around the state this spring (m.ob.). Information on the spring hawk migration was not available, but there were several reports on

nesting hawks around the state. Of interest was a "white" Red-tailed Hawk in the company of a normal bird in Warren through March (Les Ernhout, fide GH). The immature Golden Eagle on Canaan Mountain, Canaan, was eventually joined by two additional immatures and an adult bird that remained through March 21 (m.ob.). The eagles were apparently feeding on a large number of deer kills caused by the severe winter. On several occasions, the immature eagles were observed stooping on the deer herd, perhaps in an attempt to cause deer to stumble and fall on the icy, treacherous terrain. Merlins were reported at Milford Point March 19 (GH), in Bridgewater May 14 (RN) and at SISP May 15 (RS,RW). The female Peregrine Falcon, present all winter atop Stamford's Marriott Hotel, was joined by a male March 21 (Pat Bailey, Carla O'Grady). A nest box was erected by the Department of Environmental Protection March 29; however, the male eventually departed. The female remained in the area until at least May 20 (EH et al.).

Wild Turkeys have become common even in suburban Fairfield County, where birds have been seen even south of Interstate 95 (FM et al.). Northern Bobwhites were apparently hard hit in their remaining eastern Connecticut haunts. For

the second consecutive year, there was a lack of calling birds in Salem and at least one observer in that area wonders if they have been wiped out by human encroachment or predators. Meanwhile, birds in Sharon are possibly released individuals.

A King Rail was at HBSP May 16-28 (m.ob.), where, on the latter date, it was observed in a dispute with what appeared to be Clapper Rail (JG). Both birds used similar vocalizations, and the King Rail was eventually joined by a third bird, possibly a hybrid, exhibiting a paler brown neck. Virginia Rails were reported at SISP April 30 (RS) and HBSP May 22 (JG), while additional birds as well as Sora were reported in their usual marshy haunts (m.ob.). Common Moorhens were in Wallingford April 30 (SM) and Sharon May 15-24, where two birds may have attempted nesting (m.ob.). A single American Coot was on the Thames River, New London, March 7 (GH).

The earliest Piping Plover report was of two birds at Sandy Point, West Haven, March 25 (NC). American Oystercatcher has become a fairly common nester in selected locations from Greenwich to Stonington (m.ob.). The earliest report came from Greenwich March 13 (D. Bova, BO). Greater Yellowlegs peaked at Nell's Island, Milford Point, with 110 April 11 and 17 (GH, NC et al.). Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, remains the

sole Connecticut nesting grounds for Upland Sandpiper with two to five birds reported May 1-25 (m.ob.). Several peak numbers and dates for shorebirds at Milford Point include: 50 Ruddy Turnstone, 100 Sanderling, and 200 Semipalmated Sandpipers May 22 (FM, FP). There were no reports received for Red Knot or Western Sandpiper. Five Pectoral Sandpipers were on Strong Road, South Windsor, April 5 (CE). A flock of 20 Purple Sandpipers in Madison May 20 (EH et al.) is a late date. A Long-billed Dowitcher was well-seen and heard at Nell's Island, April 17 (FM). This species is very rarely seen in Connecticut in spring, and great care must be used so as not to confuse it with the closely related, and more common, Short-billed Dowitcher. Several observers reported fewer American Woodcock this spring, quite possibly due to the harsh winter and snow cover that persisted well into March. A Wilson's Phalarope was at HBSP May 13-18 (Bill Yule, JG, JK et al.).

The Oyster River, West Haven, gull flock continues to showcase the rare gulls each April. Many observers located one to three Little Gulls with the large Bonaparte's flock April 2-20 (m.ob.), while other individuals were at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, April 4 (DP) and West End Beach, Stamford, where three adults and an immature were seen April 17 (PD et al.).



An adult Common Black-headed Gull was at Oyster River March 7 (JK), April 2 (SM,RN) and April 4 (GH,NC). It can be difficult to pick these birds out of a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls that numbered 3,500 birds at Oyster River April 17 (FM). By May 20, there were but two remaining (EH et al.). Iceland Gulls were at the New Milford landfill, March 1 (GH), Old Saybrook March 26 (JH) and Southport April 13 (CB). Ten reports were received for at least three different Lesser Black-backed Gulls (m.ob.), all in March, from New Milford, Greenwich-Stamford, or the West Haven area. A Glaucous Gull was at Branford Harbor April 17 (RBA).

Two Roseate Terns were reported at Middle Beach, Madison, May 15 (JK,SM et al.). Two Forster's Terns, a rare spring migrant, were at Southport April 13 (CB). Unprecedented was an inland report from Southbury Training School, Southbury, of a well-described, breeding-plumaged adult May 1 (RN). Four Black Terns were in Guilford May 18 (GH).

#### PARAKEETS THROUGH WAXWINGS

The Monk Parakeets survived Connecticut's snowiest winter. It may interest birders to know that this species was very recently added to the state's bird checklist. Details will be forthcoming in the next report of the Connecticut Rare Records Committee

(CRRC). There were nine reports statewide of Black-billed Cuckoo, all in mid-May, but only two of Yellow-billed Cuckoo, from Woodbury May 29 (RN) and Falkner Island, Guilford, May 26 (JS). A pair of Barn Owls with one to two young was in New Haven May 20-31 (EH,NC,RN et al.). A report on the nesting success of the Barn Owls in the Middletown area will be forthcoming in the summer field report. A Long-eared Owl was at Greenwich Point March 4 and 14 (BO); while Short-eared Owls were at Cove Island, Stamford, March 18 (BO,PD), at Milford Point March 26-27 (GH,NC), and at Old Lyme May 15 (JK,SM et al.), a very late date. Northern Saw-whet Owls were in Madison March 22 (JC et al.) and in Tolland April 29 (Bob Sutton, fide GC). There were no reports from Mohawk State Forest, Cornwall, this spring, where in years past, birds had been heard into the summer.

Common Nighthawks were scarce and late with only four reports statewide in mid to late May. There were also few Whippoorwill reports amid concern that this species continues to decline as a breeder in the state. Reports came from Nepaug Reservoir, New Hartford, May 8-15 (T. McGrath, JK et al.) and from Sharon May 20 (EH et al.). An adult Red-headed Woodpecker that wintered in Mansfield, remained until April 24 (MS, fide

GC), while another adult was at A. W. Stanley Park, New Britain, for the second consecutive year, April 25 through the end of the period (MC).

Olive-sided Flycatcher reports included two in Mohawk State Forest May 15 (BD), one on the Farmington Canal, Hamden, May 19 (AB) and one in North Granby May 29 (BK). There were six reports of single Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, all in western Connecticut and all between May 12-22. A Great-crested Flycatcher was in Branford April 19 (GH, DS, S. Yurkus), besting the early record by six days (Zeranski & Baptist).

A Horned Lark at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, May 20 (EH at al.) may have nested on the "short-grass prairie" type habitat provided by airport runways. In spite of the harsh winter, Tree Swallows appeared on schedule this spring although they may have been a tad late in northern portions of the state. Up to six Cliff Swallows at SISP May 14-28 (RS) were unusual for the coast and a Barn Swallow in Mansfield April 10 (GC) was definitely "early" for the area. Up to 11 Common Ravens were seen soaring over Canaan Mountain in early March (m.ob.). This species continues to expand in Connecticut. Apparently nesting were three Ravens carrying sticks over craggy Lantern Hill, Ledyard, March 8 (Robert Askins, fide FM). Hopefully, the Mashantucket

Pequot Indian tribe will preserve this area. After several years of increased activity, the only report of nesting Red-breasted Nuthatch was from Woodbury in May (RN). Did these birds retreat northward or, do we now regard their breeding as commonplace and unworthy of notation?

Many observers reported drastic reductions in Carolina Wren populations, no doubt due to the severe winter weather conditions. It will be interesting to note whether this species quickly rebounds from this setback to its northward expansion. Gray-cheeked Thrush, an uncommon spring migrant, was at Bunker Hill, Waterbury, May 14 (GH), at Norwalk May 16 (FM) and two were in northwestern Connecticut May 17 (DT). Durham Meadows Fairgrounds, Durham, hosted 25 Water Pipits April 1 (JM et al.). Throngs of birders came from far and wide to see the Bohemian Waxwings in Goshen. First discovered in February, the birds continued to feed on roadside apples through March 15 (m.ob.), and were seen by hundreds of people. Well photographed, this is the first documented record of this species in Connecticut!

#### VIREOS THROUGH EVENING GROSBEAK

A Yellow-throated Vireo in Ashford April 28 (George Gale, fide GC) was, by one day, the all-time early record for the Storrs

area, as was a Warbling Vireo in Mansfield the previous day (Bob Sutton, fide GC). A female Golden-winged Warbler along the coast in Greenwich May 18 (BO) was unusual. Meanwhile, some observers expressed concern that the numbers along River Road, Kent, appeared down from previous years. Potential hybridization with Blue-winged Warblers is always a concern, both at River Road and in Cornwall, where single male Golden-wings were observed in the usual breeding locations. And, speaking of warbler hybrids, a "Brewster's" Warbler was at nearby Skiff Mountain Road, Kent, May 7 (RBA). A "Lawrence's" hybrid was in Storrs May 10 (GC). A Northern Parula Warbler in Branford April 19 (GH) beat the earliest published spring record by one day (Zeranski & Baptist). Cape May Warblers have been reported as scarce in recent springs, thus an amazing eight in Waterbury May 14 (GH) brought back memories of the warbler waves of the past! A male Yellow-throated Warbler returned to Kent's River Road for the fifth consecutive year. Additional individuals were discovered in Branford April 17-18 (DP et al.), in Chatfield Hollow State Park, Killingworth, May 4-23 (John Himmelman, Richard Bernard), and in Woodbury May 30 (RN). Cerulean Warbler also produced an early state record with an April 25 sighting in Branford (GH,NC),

besting the old May 1 date by six days (Zeranski & Baptist). Prothonotary Warblers were reported in Branford April 15 (fide GH) and at East Rock Park, New Haven, April 29-May 1 (SM et al.). A Louisiana Waterthrush banded at Fairfield's Birdcraft Museum was the first one banded there since 1986 (AO). Kentucky Warblers were reported at Fairchild Garden, Greenwich, May 9 (BO), in Woodbury May 15 (EH,RN), at River Road, Kent, May 21 (AB et al.), and at White Memorial Foundation May 22-24 (LW,GH). Mourning Warblers were at River Road May 14 (EH) and 21 (CB), in New Canaan May 28 (PD) and at Hamden May 29 (AB). The only Yellow-breasted Chat report came from Mohawk State Forest, Cornwall, May 14 (EH).

A **Summer Tanager** was reported in Branford April 24 (J. Himmelman, B. Root, SM et al.) and details have been submitted to the CRRC. A flock of seven Scarlet Tanagers along the Farmington River, Canton, May 1 (JK) was noteworthy. A Rufous-sided Towhee overwintered through March 17 at a West Redding feeder (fide RN), no mean feat considering winter weather conditions.

An "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow was at HBSP April 5-13 (JG). A Grasshopper Sparrow was at Cove Island Park, Stamford, April 15 (PD et al.), while up to five were at Bradley International

Airport in mid-May (m.ob.) at the state's sole breeding location for this species. Both Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows were reported as "numerous" this spring, and an immature White-crowned over-wintered at Greenwich Point (BO). A pair of Lapland Longspurs was at HBSP March 23 (D. Rosgen, JG). While this might be expected along the coast, a small flock including a breeding plumaged male in a freshly plowed farm field in Avon May 2 (Hazel Guest) was not! A dozen Snow Buntings remained in a Canton field until at least March 12 (JK). The only other spring report was of a single bird at SISP March 29 (FM).

March 7-8 were peak days for Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird migration. An early date for Orchard and Northern Orioles was April 27, both in South Norwalk (FM). Pine Grosbeaks remained in Goshen, where they were seen feeding on apples with the Bohemian Waxwings, with 22 reported March 2 and dwindling to 8 March 19 (m.ob.). Red Crossbills, also in Goshen, persisted until April 5, when 3 were seen in red pines (GH). Three Red Crossbills were also in Killingly March 16 (RD). Common Redpolls continued at feeding stations into early April, with one in Woodbury April 2 (RN) the latest report. A possible Hoary Redpoll was at a Torrington feeder April 7-8 (RB,

fide BK). Details have been sent to the CRRC. Pine Siskins were reported at feeders in western Connecticut well into May with birds in North Granby (J. Whittlesey, fide BK) and North Canton (JK) through the end of the period. Evening Grosbeaks were also sporadic at feeders well into May with 20 in Sharon May 18 (MS).

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## ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 10

With winter approaching, many of us will spend more time watching birds along the Connecticut shore with its concentrations of waterbirds. Loons are among the larger and more conspicuous nearshore birds. The long body and long-pointed bill of our quiz bird identify it as a loon. Cormorants have a similar shape above the waterline, their long flat tail not easily visible in side view; a hooked bill, held at an upward angle, and an angular "blocky" head also distinguishes cormorants from loons.

Four species of loon are possible for our region. Which one is our quiz bird? Identification of loons in basic plumage, the feathercoat we see in winter here, is sometimes more difficult than we recognize. This is due in part to an emphasis on bill shape promoted in most field guides. Unfortunately, this is often the least helpful character compared to the pattern on the face and neck. In fact, the bill is most helpful only between Common and Yellow-billed loons, and then it is the pattern of dark on the bill more than the shape that is important.

Since we cannot easily discern the bill shape on our quiz bird, we are forced to use other features to identify the bird. The body of the bird is quite dark with obvious pale scalloping, an indication of juvenal plumage in loons (except Red-throated). The head is smooth and rounded with a dark forehead. The eye is fully in the dark of the head, with just a thin crescent of white below. The neck is thick with a crisp, clean border to a white throat and foreneck. This border appears darkest along the demarcation with the white.

The lack of obvious white crescents around the eye and the sharp line down the middle of the sides of the neck, lacking any half collar or pale indentation, eliminate Common Loon (and Yellow-billed). Red-throated Loon either has an eye that stands out in a white face and a dark line down the *rear* of the neck (adults), or it has a grizzled gray face and neck, not at all like our bird.

The only possibility left is Pacific Loon, a species that has occurred several times in states surrounding Connecticut (some sight reports still in review for our state). Pacific Loon has a more rounded, velvety gray head than Common Loon. The bill is slimmer and the forehead less abrupt. Nevertheless, the best characters are the pattern on the neck and lack of wide, white eye arcs. We ought to consider one other species, however, the Arctic Loon.



The fourth edition of the AOU Check-list in 1931 subsumed the Pacific Loon under the name Arctic Loon. In 1985, the AOU again recognized the Arctic and Pacific Loons as distinct species. Many older reports simply labeled Arctic Loon are insufficiently detailed to separate the two species. Except for one possible sight record sketched and described from Massachusetts by Duncan Evered in October 1984 (see *Bird Observer*, 1985, no. 1), there are no records of Arctic Loon in the Northeast. There are now several records of Arctic Loon south along the Pacific coast of North America, and this has advanced our understanding of the identification problem.

The most striking feature separating the two species is the extent of white along the flanks. Arctic Loon shows pure white along the flanks, whereas Pacific Loon is gray there. Since this area is often submerged, a noticeable patch of white extending up at the rear of the flanks is usually the most obvious feature of the Arctic Loon. This is not simply a matter of feather arrangement as has been suggested. Peter Harrison incorrectly states that Pacific Loon has a white flank patch in his book *Seabirds* (1983). This difference in flanks was pointed out as early as 1985 in an article by Edward van Ijzendoorn in *Dutch Birding*. Two other characters previously noted by T. Walsh, G. McCaskie, and others recently have been analyzed by Dan Reinking and Steve Howell (in *Western Birds*, 1993). In a series of specimens they examined, all Pacific Loons showed at least a partial dark strap across the vent (between the legs), and most showed a complete strap; whereas no Arctic had more than a slight strap at the sides of the vent. Also, nearly all Pacific Loons in *basic* plumage show a dark line under the chin, whereas no Arctic Loon had this chinstrap. Only half of the juvenal Pacific Loons had this chinstrap, thus many may lack it as our quiz bird. This Pacific Loon was photographed by Jon Dunn in Ventura, California in early winter.

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Photo challenge 11. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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### Illustrations:

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Fall 1994 - Volume XIV No. 4

*SITE GUIDE*: Station 43, South

Windsor, Connecticut

Arnold Devine & Dwight C. Smith 122

The 1994 Summer Bird Count

Joseph Zeranski ..... 128

Winter Record of Boreal Owl in

Connecticut

Arnold Devine & Dwight C. Smith 148

Connecticut Field Notes

Spring: March 1 - May 31, 1994

Jay Kaplan & Frank Mantlik ..... 150

Answer to Photo Challenge 10

Louis Bevier ..... 159

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