THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) by Julian Hough

Northern Shrikes staged a widespread invasion into our region this winter, and our cover commemorates their visit.

Julian Hough, originally from England, moved to Connecticut recently from Cape May, New Jersey. He has worked as a field biologist for the Long Point and Cape May Bird Observatories, mainly studying songbirds and their migration. He is a talented artist, preferring to work with pen and ink. His artwork has appeared in a number of birding journals, including *Birding*, many European journals, and the recently published book *The Birds of Cape May*. He also has a keen interest in photography and is a free-lance writer.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Volume 16, Number 1, 1996

SIXTH REPORT OF THE CONNECTICUT RARE RECORDS COMMITTEE

MARK SZANTYR, FRANK W. MANTLIK, AND DAVID F. PROVENCHER

This sixth report comes three years after the fifth (Clark and Bevier 1993), and the committee recognizes with deep regret the delay and frustration this has caused the observers who dutifully reported their sightings of rarities. While a large backlog has been processed, a number of difficult cases remain pending. Our aims are not diminished, and rarities enthusiasts will find much of interest in this report.

The committee's principal aim is to provide a complete and accurate record of rare birds seen in Connecticut. All reports, including original field notes, photographs, tape recordings, descriptions, and members' comments on each record are archived at the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. Those people preparing local bird reports, regional books, identification papers, or summaries of distributional records will find these files of great value. Since the accuracy of these publications depends on the integrity of the committee and the decisions it makes, we sometimes take longer to decide difficult reports, preferring to get them right and avoid reversing our decision, thereby creating a need to correct other publications. While this is not the reason for the past backlog, it should explain why some reports take longer to reach a final decision. More information about the Rare Records Committee and how it works can be found in an article elsewhere in this issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*.

The committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List—these are species marked with an aster-

isk on the Connecticut Ornithological Association's *Field Checklist*—and any species new to the state. The most recently published state list contains 390 species and is available from the Connecticut Ornithological Association (314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT 06430). Please note that Black Vulture and Common Black-headed Gull have been removed from the Review List and that Western Kingbird has been added. Please read Mark Szantyr's appeal for rarities reports (*The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. 15 (3):101–102). Submit written reports along with any photographs or sound recordings to the Secretary, Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268.

HIGHLIGHTS

This report contains 103 records of 68 species reviewed by the Connecticut Rare Records Committee (hereafter CRRC or the committee). The committee accepted about 65% of all records reported here. The records span dates from 1959 to 1995, although most (74) are from 1992 to 1994. Significant records in this report include the following:

1st — Pacific Loon, Bridled Tern, Razorbill, and Ash-throated Flycatcher
1st & 2nd — Mountain Bluebird
2nd — Gray Kingbird, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Chestnut-collared Longspur
3rd & 4th — Le Conte's Sparrow
4th — Townsend's Solitaire and Tufted Duck

Some species formerly designated as Hypothetical on the state list (i.e., species supported only by written details of accepted sight records) now have that designation removed based on photographs deposited with the CRRC. These are Tufted Duck, Arctic Tern, Bohemian Waxwing, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. For the first three species in that list, the records presented here are the first formally reviewed by the committee. These species had been admitted to the state list based on the published materials at hand to the committee when it first put together the official state list. Over the next few years, the committee expects to formally review the previous sight records for these species and others with older records.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

This report provides details on six additions to the Connecticut state list, which now stands at 392. Monk Parakeet is formally added to the state list in this report along with the five species listed above. In addition to recent reports for White-faced Ibis, Cinnamon Teal, Mississippi Kite, and Sabine's Gull, older reports of four other

potential first state records are currently under review. Some of the species new to the state list in this report were already included on the most recent checklist published by the committee (August 1994); the recent records for Pacific Loon and Mountain Bluebird were not included on that list.

FORMAT

This report continues the format of previous reports. In the case of accepted records, only observers who submitted reports are listed with the original finder listed first and followed by an asterisk. Observers who submitted a photograph are acknowledged with "†" following their names. Hyphenated numbers (e.g., 92–24) following the observers are CRRC file numbers. The species are listed in order according to the A.O.U. Check-list (1983) and supplements. Records are listed chronologically. Each record lists the locality (including town), date(s) of occurrence, and observers as noted above.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people helped the committee with its decisions in this report. We offer our appreciation to Davis Finch, Les Tuck, and, especially, Bruce Mactavish for help in resolving a difficult record. Linda Pearson and Alison Olivieri provided valuable information on the Monk Parakeet to the committee. George Clark and Fred Sibley gave assistance with the specimens in their care and offered sage advice. Jon Dunn and Paul Lehman settled some particularly knotty identification issues. Members and former members who voted on the records in this report are: Louis Bevier, Polly Brody, Milan Bull, Tom Burke, George Clark, Bob Dewire, Richard English, Ed Hagen, Jay Kaplan, Frank Mantlik, Dave Provencher, and Mark Szantyr

CONTRIBUTORS

The committee greatly appreciates the time and effort expended by the following people who submitted reports on rarities (thank you for your patience!): Ralph Amodei, Jim Bair, Margaret Barker, Charles Barnard, Jr., Louis R. Bevier, Lysle Brinker, John W. Bova, Thomas R. Baptist, Alan H. Brush, Tom Burke, Paul Carrier, George A. Clark, Jr., Roland C. Clement, Kenneth M. Corey, Mary Ann Currie, Neil Currie, Arnold Devine, Patrick Dugan, Carl Ekroth, Richard English, Jeff Fengler, Joseph Ferrari, Davis W. Finch, Shawneen E. Finnegan, Larry Fischer, Valerie Freer, Sam Fried, John Gaskell, Hallett R. Gates, Jr., Bill Gaunya, Henry Golet,

Geoffery A. Hammerson, Mr. and Mrs. F. Paul Haney, Greg Hanisek, Ted Hendrickson, John Himmelman, Robert Holland, Julian Hough, Frederick Ianotti, Elsbeth Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Thomas Kilroy, Jr., Betty Kleiner, Gil Kleiner, Brian Kleinman, Rebecca T. Kling, Tom Koronkiewicz, Steve Kotchko, Rachel Lawson, Paul Lee, Paul E. Lehman, William R. Liedlich, Gordon Loery, Robin Magowan, Merle S. Malthauer, Frank W. Mantlik, Curtis Marantz, Joyce Marshall, Bill Martha, Stephen Mayo, Todd McGrath, L. J. K. Morabito, Joseph Morin, Sandra S. Munson, Nancy Olmstead, Russ Naylor, Bryant Northcutt, Brian O'Toole, Cathi Pelletier, Noble S. Proctor, David F. Provencher, Ray Schwartz, Richard Soffer, Dori Sosensky, Geoffrey Styles, James S. Tierney, Julio de la Torre, David Tripp, Lyle Whittlesey, Dale Wierzbicki, William R. Van Loan, Jr., Lisa C. Wahle, Robert Winkler, Chris Wood, Jeff Young, Susan Yurkus, Joseph D. Zeranski, and James Zingo.

ABBREVIATIONS

Hammonasset = Hammonasset Beach State Park, CW = Connecticut Warbler, AFN = Audubon Field Notes, AB = American Birds (the successor of AFN), NASFN = National Audubon Society Field Notes (the successor of AB). Months of the year are shortened to their first three letters.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

PACIFIC LOON (*Gavia pacifica*). One observed from shore off West Haven 12 Nov 1992 provides the first record for Connecticut (G. Hanisek*; 92–24; Figure 1). The species is added to the state list designated as hypothetical.

The sole observer studied this bird for over twenty minutes as close as fifty yards. Unfortunately, the bird was not relocated the next day. The detailed description and experience of the observer, especially with the species in the East, were convincing evidence for the committee. First state records receive close scrutiny before acceptance, and single observer sight records must measure up to even stricter criteria. All but one member accepted the record; the dissenting member accepted the record as pertaining to Arctic or Pacific Loon.

Pacific Loon and Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*) were again recognized as separate species only recently (AOU 1985). The familiar name to North American birders, Arctic Loon, is now restricted to forms breeding principally in Eurasia. The chief characters thought to separate Pacific Loon from Arctic Loon in juvenal and basic plumage are absence of white flank patches and presence of a dark ventstrap in *pacifica*. Also, *pacifica* often show a chinstrap, which is absent in *arctica* (Reinking and Howell 1993). The observer of the Connecticut bird specifically noted a lack of white flank patches, but did not note a chinstrap or whether a

ventstrap was present or absent. Because the chinstrap and ventstrap may be very difficult to see in the field, it is not surprising that these features were not noted (see Hanisek 1996, in this issue).

The occurrence of Pacific Loon in our region is verified by a specimen from Long Island (Bull 1974), but no specimen of Arctic Loon is known from anywhere along the East Coast. There are numerous sight records of unspecified Arctic/Pacific loons from nearby Massachusetts (over 40) and Rhode Island (over 25) mainly from October to March; however, Connecticut has had only a couple of reports pertaining to the species pair, none of which has been accepted even as Arctic/Pacific until the current record. The disparity in sightings with our neighboring states is difficult to explain. On the one hand, Pacific Loons prefer oceanic waters, which Connecticut lacks, but on the other hand, several records from New Jersey are for large, deep, inland reservoirs. The winter of 1992–1993 saw two Massachusetts reports of *arctica/pacifica*. The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee has accepted previous reports only as Arctic/Pacific Loon (Petersen 1995).

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*). An alternate plumage bird was on the Five Mile River, Darien, 26 Jun 1993 (R. T. Kling*, W. R. Van Loan, Jr.; 93–16), and an immature was at Greenwich Point Park, Greenwich, 3–4 Sep 1993 (J. W. Bova*†; 94–28). Most Eared Grebe reports in Connecticut are from January to April; the June record reported here is one of few, if any, for that month in the Northeast.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). An adult stopped briefly at Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford, 3 Oct 1992 (D. F. Provencher*, V. Freer, M. Barker; 92–21). Three observers saw two birds flying over Hammonasset, Madison, 18 Feb 1994 (John

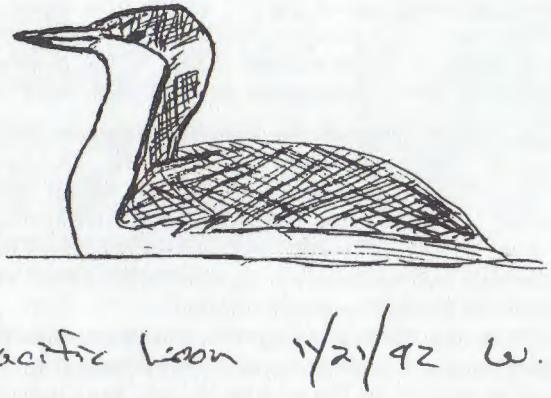

Figure 1. Pacific Loon, West Haven, 12 November 1992 (*sketch by Greg Hanisek).*

Gaskell*; 94–8). An alternate plumage adult was at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, 17 Jun 1994 (R. Winkler*, R. Soffer, C. Barnard, Jr.; 94–19).

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*). An immature was present at Milford Point, Milford, 30 Jul 1993 and was believed to be present through 10 Aug (T. Kilroy Jr.*, S. Mayo; 93–19). Sightings from nearby coastal marshes suggest this bird wandered somewhat during its stay in Connecticut.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*). An immature was at Westport 2–10 Dec 1994 (C. Barnard, Jr.*, J. Young†; 95–3). The committee did not make a subspecific determination for this individual, although the bird did show some of the characters of *A. a. flavirostris*, which breeds in Greenland.

The bird was reported as the Greenland race based on its orange bill color, but the committee cautions that bill color is widely misinterpreted and is not the best means of identifying this subspecies of White-fronted Goose. Other subspecies in North America show "orange" bills. Further, many observers uncritically assume that the Greenland race is the most likely, when that is not necessarily the case; the midwestern race, *frontalis*, is also known from the East. Kaufman (1994) has suggested that the Greenland race is perhaps quite difficult to separate in the field from other races in North America and has perhaps been over reported. Other characters shown by the Greenland race are its darker, browner head and neck, more extensive black mottling on the underparts (adults) or diffusely spotted and more uniformly dusky underparts (immatures), and larger size; the bill is also darker, somewhat yellow-orange. Unfortunately, these characters are most useful when viewed in comparison with a White-fronted Goose of another subspecies, a comparison unlikely in the field here in the Northeast. Perhaps also driving these subspecific identifications is the widespread opinion that Greenland birds are of "wild" origin, and thus "countable," whereas others are likely escapes. While the natural occurrence of North American races of White-fronted Goose in the Northeast is somewhat problematical, many individuals are probably "wild" birds.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*). An immature male in first alternate plumage was at Greenwich Harbor, Greenwich, 24 Mar–early April 1992 (L. Brinker*†, L. R. Bevier, B. Northcutt†; 92–10; Figure 2). This bird is believed to be the same individual that first appeared at Rye, New York, from 25 Dec 1991–Feb 1992 (AB 46:241). This bird returned again in the next two winters, but no reports have been submitted to the committee for the succeeding winters.

With this record the hypothetical designation for this species in Connecticut is dropped; there are three previous sight records from 1956 to 1975 (Zeranski and Baptist 1990). These older records have not yet been formally reviewed by the committee. The Tufted Duck is commonly held by aviculturalists, and it is possible that some birds seen in our region have escaped from captivity. In most cases, the exact nature of the

occurrence cannot be proved. Nevertheless, a pattern of natural vagrancy seems apparent for this abundant, migratory Eurasian duck.

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). A female was observed actively feeding with Oldsquaw off Penfield Reef, Fairfield, 28 Feb 1992 (C. Barnard, Jr.*; 92–15). The committee expressed concerns about the described head pattern, which indicated that the only white marking on the head was the small, round, white spot over the ear coverts; no white was seen in the lores or chin. One member's comments noted that in their experience the pattern was within the range of variation seen on female Harlequin Ducks. Thus, the committee was persuaded to accept the record.

The eastern North American population of Harlequin Duck is endangered and has declined since the last century (Goudie 1989). Wintering populations are rare and local south to Rhode Island at coastal rocky headlands pounded by rough surf; the species is very rare south of there and in Long Island Sound.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*). A male was off Burial Hill Beach, Westport, 10 Mar 1993 (C. Barnard, Jr.*; 93–7). A male was on the Connecticut River at Enfield 6 Mar 1994 (C. Marantz; 94–7), where up to two were reported present from 23 Jan 1994 onward (CW 14:113); the committee received only the report from Marantz. Up to two or three, including both sexes, have spent the previous four winters at this locality, but reports for preceding years have not been received. Even though the species is of regular occurrence in the state, the committee encourages observers to submit reports for all sightings.

Figure 2. Tufted Duck, Greenwich Harbor, Greenwich, 30 March 1992 (*photo by Bryant Northcutt*).

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*). A single bird was observed flying over a residence in Cromwell 14 Nov 1990 (J. Morin*; 91–15). Two birds were flushed off carrion in Kent 11 Jun 1991 (J. Maynard*; 91–27). Two were seen soaring with Turkey Vultures over New Milford 20 Feb 1992 (N. Currie*; 92–6).

The number of Black Vultures seen in western Connecticut has increased in recent years with most reports from New Milford and Kent. Its occurrence in summer has led to speculation that the species may soon be discovered breeding in the state. Wintering birds in those towns likely have been sustained, in part, by the New Milford Landfill. It will be interesting to see if the recent closure of this landfill will affect the status of this species in Connecticut. The committee no longer reviews reports of this species in Connecticut.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*). A light phase individual was well described by two experienced observers at the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch, Greenwich, 12 Oct 1991 (J. de la Torre*, J. Ferrari; 91–23). The bird was presumably an immature based upon its description.

SANDHILL CRANE (*Grus canadensis*). An immature was at the Hardings Farm fields in Lyme 14–26 Dec 1991 (H. Golet*†; 92–8).

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*). One in basic plumage was seen by two observers on Griswold Point, Old Lyme, 2 Nov 1992 (D. F. Provencher*, T. Hendrickson; 92–28). The bird was searched for unsuccessfully the following day during a nor'easter.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*). One described as being in basic plumage was studied at Broad Brook Reservoir, Cheshire, 25 Oct 1965 (D. W. Finch*; 91–11). A bird in juvenal plumage was at Milford Point, Milford, 14–20 Sep 1988 (S. Fried†, F. Mantlik; 91–10).

The Cheshire bird remains the only record for Curlew Sandpiper away from the immediate coast in Connecticut. This record was not published in *Audubon Field Notes* for that season but was published in Zeranski and Baptist (1990) with the dates 23–25 Oct. The report in the committee's files from D. Finch (via R. English) only indicates the bird's presence on 25 Oct.

The Milford record is significant as one of few reports of juvenal plumage Curlew Sandpiper in the Northeast and the first for Connecticut. This bird was viewed by many people, but sadly, only the slide without written notes and the description by one committee member were submitted. At least one member felt that the image in the slide was unidentifiable, and it is the written evidence alone that accurately describes the plumage to age. This shows that photographs alone may be insufficient to document a sighting.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*). One in basic plumage was seen at Milford Point, Milford, 3 Sep 1990 (S. E. Finnegan*; 90–25). Sightings of this species in Connecticut are rare and usually the result of coastal storms. This sighting, however, was not weather related.

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*). An adult in basic plumage was in Torrington 26–27 Nov 1990 (D. Tripp†*; 91–30). One molting into alternate plumage was at Sandy Point, West Haven, 21 Feb 1992 (C. Pelletier*; 92–11). One in basic plumage was at the South Cove causeway, Old Saybrook, 28 Feb 1992 (J. Kaplan*; 93–6). A bird completing its molt into alternate plumage was at Woodmont 2 Apr 1994 (R. Naylor*; 94–13).

The Torrington record is the first for inland Connecticut and one of very few inland in New England. Common Black-headed Gulls have increased significantly in the Northeast and now are reported annually in Connecticut with multiple individuals occurring, usually in the company of Bonaparte's Gulls. A small wintering population has become established near Providence, Rhode Island. The committee no longer reviews reports of this species in Connecticut.

LITTLE GULL (*Larus minutus*). An individual molting into definitive alternate plumage was reported from Oyster River Beach, West Haven, 2–20 Apr 1994 (Russ Naylor*; 94–12). Up to three other birds reportedly joined this individual, but no details on these were submitted to the CRRC. Little Gull occurrence in Connecticut has become annual in the spring with peak being late March to early April.

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*). An alternate plumage adult was at Sandy Point, West Haven, 27 Aug 1994 (A. Devine*†; 94–37). The bird was roosting in a group of about two hundred Common Terns and several Forster's Terns. Despite the fact that the observer did not note the wing pattern in flight, considered most useful for identification by the committee, the photographs and written description from this experienced observer were adequate for acceptance.

With this record the hypothetical designation for this species in Connecticut is dropped. Although previously accepted to the state list based on several sight records and lost specimens seen by reputable ornithologists in the past, this is the first formerly reviewed and accepted record for Connecticut. Zeranski and Baptist (1990) summarize a number of unreviewed reports. In addition, the committee has in the past attempted to determine the identity of a trunk specimen (a skinned body in alcohol without legs, wings or neck) reported to be this species in the Peabody Museum at Yale University (YPM 1586; West Haven, 22 Sep 1961). To date, no authority has been able to identify this specimen.

Although Arctic Terns breed as close as Massachusetts, the status of this species in Connecticut remains an enigma. The scarcity of Arctic Tern reports in Connecticut is perhaps explained by its movements. Following breeding, some birds move north while most migrate southeast towards Africa, and thus away from Connecticut, before heading south to Antarctica. All reports in Connecticut, and perhaps especially fall reports, should be treated with extreme scrutiny and should be carefully documented. Some features of Arctic Tern identification will be discussed in a forthcoming article in the *Connecticut Warbler* (Provencher and Szantyr in prep.).

BRIDLED TERN (*Sterna anaethetus*). An adult was at Falkner Island, Guilford, 27 Jun 1992 and, presumably the same bird, 13–16 Aug 1992 (J. Zingo*†; 92–18). These sightings are treated as one record. Excellent photographs of the tern in flight were obtained (Zingo 1993) and indicate an individual showing characters of the race *melanoptera*, with entirely white outer tail feathers as well as extensive white on the next two tail feathers from the outside (Olsen and Larsson 1995).

This is the first record for Connecticut. The Bridled Tern is casual in the Northeast, where most records are associated with hurricanes or tropical storms, unlike the record above. Notably, the same summer as this record, a Bridled Tern was reported off Cape May, New Jersey, on 12 Sep, and single Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuscata*) were at Great Gull Island, New York, 12–27 Aug (AB 47:72, 1993) and Scituate, Massachusetts 31 Jul (AB 46:1121, 1992). These sightings suggest that some phenomenon, perhaps related to a gyre of the Gulf Stream, was drawing these warm-water species close to the coast.

DOVEKIE (*Alle alle*). A basic plumage individual was seen by two observers at Hammonasset, Madison, 12 Nov 1990 (N. S. Proctor*; 90–23). The bird was discovered following the passage of a coastal storm.

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*). One in basic plumage was photographed off the Stonington breakwater 27 May 1973 (B. & G. Kleiner*†; 91–7). Although the identification had mild endorsements by Davis Finch and Les Tuck (older, brief letters), some members were not convinced the photographs adequately eliminated Common Murre and requested the opinion of Bruce Mactavish of Newfoundland. The committee voted to accept based upon his written reply, noting Thick-billed features such as the shape of the bill, shape of the head (domed crown and bump on forehead), the blackness of the upperparts, the dark face pattern, and the black extending into the sides of the breast.

RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*). An immature was present in the outfall of the Millstone Nuclear Power Station, Waterford, during a nor'easter 16–17 Dec 1992 (D. F. Provencher*; 94–26). Although no photographs were obtained, the committee accepted the record unanimously based on the detailed description from close views by an experienced observer. Three observers saw an adult in basic plumage flying westward over Long Island Sound off Griswold Point, Old Lyme, 7 Mar 1993 (D. F. Provencher*; 93–25).

These are Connecticut's first and second accepted records for this alcid, which is added to the state list designated as hypothetical. Several previous sightings have either lacked any description whatsoever or have been described inadequately. Razorbill sightings in southern New England waters have increased in recent years, with, for example, 100+ off Point Judith, Rhode Island, 21 Dec 1991 and 546 there 5 Jan 1992 (AB 46:237, 1992).

BOREAL OWL (*Aegolius funereus*). One was at Sperry Park, Middlebury, 12 Jan–24 Feb 1992 (A. Devine*†, T. R. Baptist†, F. W.

Mantlik†, L. R. Bevier; 92–9). This species is very rare anywhere south of the boreal forests. However, the winter of 1991–1992 saw a modest irruption of Boreal Owls into the Northeast, and armed with this knowledge the finder was specifically searching for it. For more on the status of Boreal Owl in Connecticut and this bird in particular see Devine and Smith (1994).

Although this bird delighted many people, future discoveries may be kept secret if unethical birding behavior, such as shaking the roost tree or climbing adjacent trees for better views, is reported again. We can all enjoy rare birds and protect them from harm if birders conduct themselves according to rules of common sense and courtesy.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). One was in Stamford 20 Dec 1992–15 Jan 1993 (T. W. Burke*, T. R. Baptist, F. W. Mantlik†; 93–2; Figure 3). This is the first accepted record of this species for Connecticut. The documentation was detailed and conclusively ruled out other possible vagrants such as Dusky-capped or Brown-crested Flycatcher. This bird was seen well by many observers, but sadly the committee only received reports from three people!

Figure 3. Ash-throated Flycatcher, Stamford, 1 January 1993 (*photo by Frank W. Mantlik*).

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*). One was in Stratford 28–29 Sep 1994 (J. Kaplan; 94–25).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus forficatus*). An immature was found at Barn Island State Wildlife Management Area, Stonington, 3 Jun 1993 (D. F. Provencher*, F. W. Mantlik†; 93–18). The bird was actively feeding low in brushy edges of one of the WMA impoundments and was observed by a number of birders later in the day.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*). One was at Greenwich Point Park, Greenwich, 18–22 Nov 1992 (B. O'Toole*, A. Devine†, L. Brinker†, J. Bair; 93–1). This is only the second record for Connecticut, the other being of one photographed in Old Lyme 9–10 Oct 1974 (Zeranski and Baptist 1990).

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*). One or two were heard singing predawn by seven observers at Peat Swamp along Route 4, Goshen, 18 May 1990; many subsequent observers found up to 3 singing territorial males and one or more females through at least 8 July, with evidence of breeding (L. R. Bevier*†, R. Naylor; 90–19). One was heard and seen by a single observer in a New Milford pasture 6–18 Jun 1993 (Chris Wood*; 93–17). Although the observer reportedly photographed and tape-recorded this bird, the committee does not have copies of those materials in its files.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*). One was found and photographed along Stillson Road, Southbury, 18 Dec 1993–10 Feb 1994 (M. Ann Currie*, N. Currie, R. Naylor, R. Schwartz†; 94–1). This is the fourth record for Connecticut; an old report from Hartford (c. 1937) has not yet been reviewed by the committee.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). One was at Hammonasset, Madison, 20 Sep 1990 (S. Fried*†; 90–26). One was seen by three observers at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve, Groton, 19 Sep 1993 (B. Kleinman*, J. Marshall, G. Styles; 93–22). Yet another was at Hammonasset, Madison, 17–18 Sep 1994 (C. Marantz†; 94–36). This latter report was seen by many observers, and yet only one person submitted documentation to the committee. The 1990 record at Hammonasset consisted only of a photograph without written notes of the observation. Such submissions are very difficult for the committee to evaluate. Please write and submit field notes for all rarities reports.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*). A female was at the "Guilford Sluice," Guilford, 4 Dec 1994–4 Feb 1995 (T. Koronkiewicz*, N. S. Proctor, L. R. Bevier†; 94–32; Figure 5). A first basic male was in Sandy Hook 18 Dec 1994–23 Jan 1995 (N. Currie & L. Fischer*, P. Brody, J. Hough†, P. E. Lehman, S. E. Finnegan, R. Naylor; 94–35; Figure 6).

These constitute the first and second records for Connecticut and only the fourth and fifth for New England. As further example of the species' winter influx into the Northeast, a group of three birds were in

Wellfleet, Massachusetts, and one wintered as far north and east as Newfoundland, that province's first (NASFN 49:122).

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*). One male frequented a feeder in Killingworth 15–25 Jan 1994 (R. Naylor; 94–5). The owner of the property this bird visited was most helpful to birders, allowing many to enjoy this beautiful thrush—many thanks to the Gombards.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*). A flock of up to twelve birds was seen and photographed as they fed on apples in Goshen, 14 Feb–15 Mar 1994. Over 100 observers came from far and wide to see them (N. S. Proctor*, C. Marantz, R. Naylor, F. W. Mantlik†, B. Martha†, L. Whittlesey†; 94–6). A photograph was published (CW 14:116).

Although this species had been accepted to the state list based on numerous sight records, this is the first formally reviewed and accepted record for Connecticut. The hypothetical designation is removed based on the photographs on file with this record. These birds were part of a widespread invasion by the species into the Northeast, including the largest invasion into New England on record, with 3000+ in Massachusetts alone (NASFN 48:174–175, 184). There apparently were two previous specimen records for the state, but their present whereabouts are unknown; at least thirteen published sight reports also exist (Zeranski and Baptist 1990).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*). One was seen by numerous observers at Nod Brook Wildlife Management Area, Simsbury, 18–22 Mar 1986 (J. Kaplan; 95–2). One was at Pine Creek Open Space, Fairfield, 18 May 1992 (C. Barnard, Jr.*; 92–14). This species has become even scarcer in recent years.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Dendroica nigrescens*). One immature male was seen by numerous observers at Byram Park, Greenwich, 29 Nov–14 Dec 1994 (J. D. Zeranski*, J. W. Bova†; 95–1). This is the second record for the state, and the hypothetical designation for this species on the state list is now removed based on the photographs submitted with this report. The diagnostic mottled blackish-gray throat, bold dark cheek patch, and yellow supraloral spot are clearly visible in the photos. The wide white malar stripes were misinterpreted by some observers as a white throat, thus leading them to identify this bird as a female.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Dendroica dominica*). One was in Woodbury 30 May 1994 (R. Naylor*; 94–11). Another was at Mirror Lake on the campus of the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Mansfield, 9 Nov 1994 (G. A. Clark, Jr.*, B. Gaunya; 94–29). The Storrs bird was a first for northeastern Connecticut.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*). One female was seen by several observers along the Mill River at East Rock Park,

Figure 4. Black-throated Gray Warbler, male in first basic plumage, Byram Park, Greenwich, 1 December 1994 (*photo by John W. Bova*)

Figures 5 and 6. Mountain Bluebird: left female, "Guilford Sluice," Guilford, 6 December 1994 (*Louis Bevier*); right first basic male, Sandy Hook, 23 January 1995 (*Julian Hough*).

Hamden, 30 Apr 1994 (R. Naylor; 94–10). There are several records for this locality.

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*). One was at the Branford Supply Ponds, Branford, 24 Apr 1994 (J. Himmelman*; 94–16).

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Guiraca caerulea*). One male was seen by six observers just east of Storrs along the Nipmuck Trail, Mansfield, 9 May 1993 (D. Wierzbicki*; 93–11). A female said to be accompanying this bird was not accepted, the description being insufficient for the committee to evaluate the identification.

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*). One male was at a feeder in Old Lyme late Oct 1989–5 Apr 1990 (H. R. Gates, Jr.*, F. W. Mantlik†; 90–8). The birding community was not notified until 7 Feb 1990; it was then seen by dozens of observers, and constitutes the second record for Connecticut (for first, see CW 3:21–22). One male was present the entire day at a feeder in Watertown 6 May 1993 (Mr. and Mrs. F. P. Haney*; 93–10). Some committee members had questions regarding the origin of Painted Buntings in Connecticut; however, these sightings fit a general pattern of occurrence for this species in the Northeast.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*). One was seen by six observers at Station 43 Preserve, South Windsor, 8–10 Oct 1991 (C. Ekroth*, J. Kaplan, T. McGrath; 91–26). One was seen by a single observer at Millstone Point, Waterford, 23 Oct 1992 (David F. Provencher*; 92–27).

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*). One was seen by dozens of observers in a farm field off Crook Horn Road, Southbury, 22 Oct 1994–24 Jan 1995 (W. R. Liedlich, R. Naylor; 94–31). Although initially reported as an immature, nothing in the descriptions of this bird allowed the committee to confidently age this bird. Most individuals of this species probably are not identifiable to age in the field after juvenal plumage is molted in late summer. Occasional streaks on the underparts are sometimes seen, indicating immaturity; no streaks were seen on the underparts of this bird, however.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus henslowii*). One was seen by three observers at Hammonasset, Madison, 9 Nov 1991 (J. Kaplan*; 91–25). One was seen by three observers at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, 8 Nov 1992 (D. F. Provencher*; 92–26).

LE CONTE'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus leconteii*). One was at Hammonasset, Madison, 7 Oct 1992 (D. F. Provencher*; 92–25). One was in a farm field off Crook Horn Road, Southbury, 12–17 Oct 1994 (M. Ann and N. Currie*, G. Hanisek, C. Marantz, R. Naylor; 94–23). These are the third and fourth records for Connecticut.

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR (*Calcarius ornatus*). A male in alternate plumage was well described from the short-grass field adjacent to the runway at the Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, 7 Jun 1994 (G. Hanisek*; 94–15). This is the second record for Connecticut. Interest-

ingly, the first record also was from Stratford, a specimen taken there 29 Aug 1968 (Bulmer 1970).

A second longspur reported 7–8 Jun 1994 at the same time and place as the present record was tentatively identified as a Lapland Longspur, *C. lapponicus* (CW 15:29). While the description from one observer of this bird better fit juvenal plumage Horned Lark, another observer's did appear to describe a longspur but not Lapland. This would be an extraordinary date for that species south of Canada, adding further suspicion to the identification. The description of the nape and wing "without obviously richer color" in fact better matches female Chestnut-collared Longspur and would seem to eliminate Lapland, which always shows reddish brown on the greater wing coverts. The committee did not review this second bird.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*). A male was at a birdfeeder in Niantic 5 Mar 1991 (N. Olmstead*; 91–5).

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*). A bird described as an adult male was seen and heard at Greenwich Point Park, Greenwich, 31 Mar 1993 (P. Dugan*, 93–12). Details of the vocalization as well as the date of the occurrence support the identification as Boat-tailed Grackle. Some concern was expressed, however, that the observer did not attempt to eliminate Great-tailed Grackle, *Q. mexicanus*, which has occurred in the Northeast (see account below under "Records not Accepted" for more cautions regarding this species).

SPECIES ACCEPTED TO STATE LIST, population established

MONK PARAKEET (*Myiopsitta monachus*). This species is accepted to the state list based on a population that seems to have grown from a core group established in Fairfield county since the early 1970s (L. Pearson *in litt.*). The species now nests at numerous localities along the coast from Darien to West Haven and inland to Danbury. The total statewide population is around 400 individuals today, but the exact number is very hard to determine due to the nomadic nature of this species. The population is increasing and new nesting colonies are being found regularly. The population of Monk Parakeets in Connecticut appears to meet all of the criteria for introduced species established in the *ABA Checklist* fourth edition (DeBenedictis et al. 1990)—a more-or-less contiguous population exists that survives normal mortality and nest failure, produces offspring that maintains or increases the population level, and is not *directly* dependent on human support.

The American Birding Association (ABA) recently added this species to its checklist of North American birds based on populations in Florida and Texas (*Birding* 26:96). In that report, the ABA checklist committee questioned the status of other populations, including those in New England, stating that they were sustained by human assistance, e.g. feeding. The Connecticut committee disagrees with that opinion, citing a careful review of this species in Connecticut by Olivieri and Pearson

(1992), who indicate that Monk Parakeets are thriving and expanding here and are not dependent on humans for food any more than are, for example, Northern Cardinal or House Finch, which in New England are both comparatively recently established breeders that probably took advantage of bird feeders to survive winters. While bird seed is the predominate food in winter, these parrots have been seen feeding on frozen fruits, plant buds, and grass in winter. The diet and breeding times are similar to those reported for a colony near Chicago (Hyman and Pruett-Jones 1995). Juveniles are first seen in Connecticut colonies usually in July. Monk Parakeets apparently survived eradication efforts in Connecticut in the early to mid-1970s. A comparison of the numbers reported by Niedermyer and Hickey (1977) with those in Olivieri and Pearson (1992) for the early 1970s shows that the Connecticut population was likely underestimated in those years as reported in the earlier study.

While the committee is uneasy with a generalization that this species is now "officially established," members agree that the Connecticut population is similar to other populations in the United States. In some ways, the Monk Parakeet is probably more self-sustaining in the state than are Bobwhite and Ring-necked Pheasant, which rely on restocking in parts of their range within the state. Further study is needed on population growth and diet of the Monk Parakeet in Connecticut.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable.

MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus puffinus*). The sparse details provided for a report from Long Island Sound off of Stonington 15 Jul 1993 (93–21) did not satisfactorily eliminate other possible members of this genus such as Audubon's Shearwater, *P. lherminieri*, or Little Shearwater, *P. assimilis*. There is one record of Manx Shearwater in Connecticut, a sight record of a single bird seen from Greenwich Point 17 May 1980 (Purnell 1987).

WILSON'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanites oceanicus*). A report of a storm-petrel on the Connecticut River near its mouth near Old Lyme on 10 Aug 1991 (91–16) lacked sufficient details to certainly eliminate other storm-petrel species, although it was agreed that Wilson's is the most likely.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). Two birds were reported on 12 Nov 1990 off of Meigs Point, Hammonasset, Madison (90–24). Most committee members felt that the details provided did not convincingly eliminate other storm-petrel species, especially considering the extreme wind conditions under which the observation was made. The date of 12 Nov also would be the latest date on record for this species in Connecticut and an extremely late date for New England.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*). The committee agreed that an immature frigatebird was seen at Menunketesuck,

Waterford, 6 Aug 1990 (91–1). Immature *Fregata* are notoriously difficult to identify (see *Birding*, 26:402–415), and the committee decided that the details provided did not satisfactorily eliminate other members of this genus. Lesser Frigatebird, *F. ariel*, has been photographed in Maine (AOU 1983). There are approximately three accepted reports of *F. magnificens* from Connecticut, and unlike other tropical seabirds, these occurrences are not exclusively associated with tropical storm systems.

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna bicolor*). Four were reported at Lordship Marsh, Stratford, 30 Aug 1994 (94–21). While the timing of this sighting is consistent with the northward wanderings of this southern species, the description provided does not convincingly eliminate other more likely duck species. There is one accepted record of this species in Connecticut; three were present 16–29 May 1987 in North Stonington (Clark 1989).

TUNDRA SWAN (*Cygnus columbianus*). At least four swans were reported from Camp Harkness, Waterford, on 14 Feb 1993 (93–5). The observer eliminated Mute Swan, *C. olor*, by the details provided but did not address other swan species. The difficulty of swan identification is underrated, and field observers are cautioned to double check any non-Mute Swan. Both Whooper and Trumpeter Swans, *C. cygnus and C. buccinator*, recently have been seen in Connecticut under circumstances that suggested the individuals were escaped birds. Trumpeter Swans have recently been introduced into central North America, and these birds or their offspring have been reported from the East Coast. Also, Whooper Swan is kept in captivity in the our region. The possibility of vagrants of both these species, however, should not be discounted.

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*). A female eider reported off Meig's Point, Hammonasset, Madison, 1 Jan 1991 (91–3), was not described sufficiently to eliminate the similar Common Eider, *S. mollissima*. Details of head pattern and shape should be carefully noted on female and immature eiders to identify this rare winter visitor to Connecticut waters.

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*). The committee felt that a report from Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, 8 Apr 1992 (92–17), while probably correct, offered no description of the bird and was distant enough from usual localities for this species in the state that it was warranted to require at least some basis for the identification. This species is increasing rapidly in Connecticut. This increase has resulted in the species being removed from the CRRC Review List as of our meeting in January 1995.

AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*). A report from Barlow Cemetery Road, Woodstock, 14 Mar 1991 (91–12) was accompanied by no description of the bird seen. The committee could not accept such a report. It is noted, however, that a Swallow-tailed

Kite reportedly was seen over Falmouth, Massachusetts, later the same day as the Connecticut report (AB 45:416). The Connecticut sighting was published tentatively as a Swallow-tailed Kite (CW 11:129).

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*). A female kestrel reported from the Quaker Hill Hawk Watch at the Audubon Center in Greenwich on 1 Sep 1993 (94–4) was insufficiently described to positively identify this very rare vagrant. Even if identification had been possible, the question of origin was raised by a number of members. *F. tinnunculus* has been reported once in Massachusetts, three times in Alaska, twice in New Jersey, and once in New Brunswick.

GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*). The committee received a report of a bird over Interstate 91 in New Haven 9 Nov 1993 (94–3). The bird apparently was seen without optical aids and from a moving vehicle. The details provided were considered insufficient, and concerns were raised concerning the circumstances of the observations. Identifying falcons in flight can be tricky. Not only does one have to consider the varying sizes and plumages of the "standard" fare, but a careful observer must also be aware of the possibility of escaped falconer's birds and the extent of experimental hybridization being carried on between commonly kept species used by the falconry community.

BLACK RAIL (*Laterallus jamaicensis*). One was reported seen in daylight in a saltmarsh channel along Leete's Island Road, Guilford, 30 Jun 1994 (94–17). The account of this bird did not eliminate other possible rails, in particular the precocious chicks and juvenile rails which are also all black and which begin to appear at this time of year. Further, the committee was wary of the fact that the observer did not use optical aids and had not previously seen Black Rail. The flight noted did not eliminate the weak flutter flight of young rails, and Black Rails are very rarely *seen* flying. Committee members also wished that there had been follow-up, perhaps after dark, to confirm this sighting. Black Rail is a rarely encountered visitor to Connecticut and its secretive nature makes documenting and assessing its actual numbers quite difficult. Any and all sightings of this species are interesting and should be reported promptly as the species is an historical and potential breeder in the state.

RUFOUS-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*). A bird described as "in pre-breeding plumage" was reported at Milford Point, Milford, 18 Jul 1992 (92–16). The committee felt that the description did not eliminate other more regularly occurring *Calidris* and did not meet standards sufficient to support a first state record. Stint identification is extremely difficult at best; detailed plumage descriptions as well as descriptions of structure are critical. Even with photos, confirmation of this identification can be difficult. Observers are asked to remember that Sanderling, *C. alba*, can be unnervingly similar to Rufous-necked Stint, especially as Sanderling molts out of alternate plumage. While

the observer had considered this, nothing in the description eliminated Sanderling, and thus forced the committee not to accept the report.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*). A juvenile was reported from Hammonasset, Madison, 22–27 Aug 1992 (92–20). Another, also a juvenile, was reported from Milford Point, Milford, 22–23 Aug 1992 (95–4). As stated above, stint identification is extremely difficult and thus requires careful documentation and very critical observation of plumage characters as well as bill structure and primary extension. Even with close scrutiny, not enough is known about exceptionally bright plumages of more common species such as Semipalmated Sandpiper, *C. pusilla*. The committee felt that the details in both of these reports were insufficient to support the identification as Little Stint and that even the slide documentation of the Hammonasset bird did not support the identification. It was also noted that the timing of these sightings was earlier than expected for a juvenal plumage Little Stint, for which documented occurrences in North America are from September. There is no accepted record of Little Stint from Connecticut.

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). A bird described as a juvenile "dark morph" jaeger was reported off Meig's Point, Hammonasset, Madison, 10 Jan 1992 (92–1). The committee agreed that the details of the sighting did not convincingly eliminate other jaeger species nor did it eliminate other possible pelagic species. In addition, the date of occurrence was highly unlikely for a jaeger. Pelagic bird surveys conducted by Manomet Observatory, Massachusetts, during the winter have never recorded any jaeger species in New England waters (Veit and Petersen 1993).

MEW GULL (*Larus canus*). One bird was reported from Milford Point, Milford, 30 Aug 1991 (91–18). The description did not eliminate other likely gull species or support the identification as Mew Gull. Even the exact age of this bird was not clear from the description. Gulls exhibit a wide range of variation in late summer due to molt and wear that causes bleaching and fading as well as unusual plumage patterns. Such odd individuals are sometimes difficult to identify.

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*). A first-winter gull reported as this species was photographed near the Housatonic River in New Milford 15–16 Jan 1991 (91–14). The committee reviewed this material at length and concluded that the plumage was within the range of heavily pigmented Iceland Gull, *L. glaucoides*. In particular, the primaries and tertials were not typical of Thayer's Gull and better fit Iceland Gull. Further, the inner wing and tail pattern were not clearly discernible in the photographs; the pattern in these areas is essential to identification of first-winter Thayer's. This is a difficult identification problem that is addressed in the excellent article by Zimmer (1991). There is one accepted sight record of Thayer's Gull for Connecticut (Bevier and Clark 1990).

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*). Three were reported from the

sand bar off of Milford Point, Milford, 20 Aug 1991 (91–17). The committee felt that the descriptions did not conclusively rule out Common Tern, *S. hirundo*. The descriptions of bill color and upperparts color from the two submitted reports were contradictory and caused concern over the total identification. Likewise, several key field marks were not noted. Most members agreed that difficult identifications based on one or two field marks should be avoided. Some features of Arctic Tern identification, especially the difficulty of assessing the underparts color, will be discussed in a forthcoming article in the *Connecticut Warbler* (Provencher and Szantyr in prep.).

RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*). Two birds were reported from Fisher's Island Sound near Middle Clump 11 Mar 1993 (93–9). The committee feels that while the description of the bill seemed consistent with *A. torda*, other descriptive plumage characters did not definitely separate these birds from other black and white alcid species. Considering the views, reliance on the bill features seemed questionable. Some additional concern was raised about whether or not these birds were in Connecticut waters because of the proximity to the boundary with New York.

NORTHERN HAWK OWL (*Surnia ulula*). A bird reported as this species was seen 10–14 Mar 1992 in the vicinity of Falls Village (92–7). Although a lengthy report, the portion describing the bird itself did not note any of the tell-tale head markings of Hawk Owl; thus, the committee was unable to identify the bird beyond "raptor species." Some members also expressed concerns that during the winter of 1991–1992 virtually no Hawk Owls ventured south of their more northern haunts. Northern Hawk Owl is a very rare winter visitor, with just five reported occurrences in Connecticut.

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes aurifrons*). One was reported from Fisher Meadows Nature Trails, Avon, 9 Jan 1992 (92–2). The bird was looked for but not refound. The committee found this report interesting but was hesitant to accept a record of a species that is largely non-migratory and previously unrecorded from anywhere near Connecticut or the Northeast. Such an extraordinary sighting was even more difficult to accept based only on a single observer report. A xanthic form of Red-bellied Woodpecker (*M. carolinus*), a common woodpecker in Connecticut, is known (see photographs, AB 29:683 and 29:46) and might conceivably be seen in Connecticut. This form is amazingly similar to Golden-fronted Woodpecker, even showing yellow on the crown, and could account for the Avon sighting. Unfortunately, even though the tail pattern was well-described, other features necessary for a definitive identification were not noted.

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (*Picoides tridactylus*). A woodpecker reported as a female of this species was reported at Harwinton 15 Jun 1993 (93–14). As intriguing as this report is, the details of the observation, including well-described plumage characteristics, do not conclu-

sively eliminate Hairy Woodpecker, *P. villosus*. Hairy Woodpecker is variable and some plumages, including juvenal plumages, can closely approach that of Three-toed Woodpecker. The date of the sighting is more consistent with juvenile Hairy Woodpecker than Three-toed Woodpecker, whose occurrence in neighboring Massachusetts is confined to winter and early spring. There are no accepted records of Three-toed Woodpecker for Connecticut.

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*). One was reported from a wet meadow at the Benton Hill Fen, Sharon, 8 May 1990 (90–17). The committee felt that this report, though probably correct, was far too meager to certainly eliminate other wren species, especially Marsh Wren, *C. palustris*. The observer neither described nor noted any character or vocalization conclusive or diagnostic for Sedge Wren. The locality, habitat, and date, especially in a year when other Sedge Wrens were found in northwest Connecticut, all are supportive. Nevertheless, there must be some indication of how the bird was identified for the committee to accept a report.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). An untitled sketch, presumably submitted as a Northern Wheatear, was reviewed as that species for a bird seen at Hammonasset, Madison, 14 Nov 1991 (92–5). The committee could not accept this record as it was not accompanied by any details; in fact, the report never even named the species it was intending to document. The committee asks that along with field sketches and photographic evidence, a written testimony concerning the sighting be submitted. Further, the committee can only review sightings assigned to a particular species.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*). Two reports were rejected. One was from Hammonasset, Madison, 6 Oct 1992 (92–23) and another was from Newtown 12 Mar 1993 (93–8). The committee felt that the details of the Hammonasset sighting did not eliminate other more common species, including Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*. In this case, the observer appeared to have identified the bird mainly on the basis of behavior without the corroboration of field marks; the behavior described was not diagnostic. The Newtown sighting, though probably correct, was made under difficult viewing conditions. This indicated the details were uncertain, and thus, the identification was questionable. No optical aids were used in this sighting. There are only three accepted records and a fourth unreviewed record of this western species for Connecticut, all from late November through February.

REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*). Two birds were reported on a lawn in Woodstock 7 Aug 1992 (92–22). Based on the details and photographs seen by members, the committee concluded that identification was likely an error. In fact, the committee unanimously concluded that the photographs show juvenal plumage American Robins, *T. migratorius*. Very few of us would have any trouble identifying a common bird like a robin in adult plumage, but the committee warns that juvenal plum-

ages of common birds are unfamiliar to many observers. In this case, the notes and photographs made subsequent identification possible, thus illustrating the importance of carefully describing and photographing a bird thought to be a rarity.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*). A male was reported from North Beaver Dam Pond in the Taconic section of Salisbury on or about 23 April 1993 (93–15). The committee felt that even though this species is becoming more regular in spring, the lack of descriptive details for this sighting did not allow for full evaluation. Please note that the timing of this report coincides perfectly with dates of documented occurrence in Connecticut.

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*). One was reported in Old Greenwich 2 October 1991 (91–20). The details provided stated the bird was a female but did not eliminate other more expected species. The description of the bill as large and pale also seemed wrong for Painted Bunting.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*). Two reports were rejected. One was from Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, 27 September 1992 (93–3), and another was from Stratford 26 October 1993 (93–23). The Westport report lacked sufficient descriptive details of the bird to allow the committee to accept the identification. Further, the observation was brief and the observer unfamiliar with the species in question. The written details for the Stratford report did not support the identification, and the photographs submitted with this report depict, in the committee's opinion, a Chipping Sparrow, *S. passerina*. Although most field guides mention the rump pattern as a key field mark separating Clay-colored and Chipping Sparrows, a careful description of the face and head pattern, noting the presence or absence of a dark line through the loral area, is more helpful and reliable for identification. The photographs of the Stratford bird clearly show a dark line in the loral area (among other things), indicating the bird was a Chipping Sparrow.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*). A report of a male at Lordship Marsh, Stratford, 4 July 1992 (92–13) was not accepted after much debate concerning the possibility of Great-tailed Grackle, *Q. mexicanus*, a species of tropical and sub-tropical America once known in the United States only from southern Texas. The Great-tailed Grackle is rapidly expanding northward and has been recorded in Illinois, Ohio, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. While the timing of the Stratford report is consistent with other records of Boat-tailed Grackle in Connecticut, any sighting of a "large-tailed" grackle here should be documented sufficiently to eliminate Great-tailed until more is known about its pattern of vagrancy. The observer did not note eye color, head shape, or call notes which would help separate these two species of grackle. It is noteworthy that Boat-tailed Grackles have occurred at the Lordship Marsh both prior to and subsequent to this report. Most recently, a male and

two females apparently attempted to nest at this location during the summer of 1995 (report under review). For a cautionary note on the identification of Great-tailed Grackle in the Northeast, see Bevier (1994).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, natural occurrence questionable (identification accepted).

BARNACLE GOOSE (*Branta leucopsis*). One was seen on the Housatonic River south of the Shepaug Dam, Southbury, 2 February 1992 (92–3). Another was seen at the Fairfield County Hunt Club, Westport, on 20 October 1994 (94–34). Every spring and fall, we receive at least a few reports of Barnacle Goose. Usually these are birds seen with large, migrating flocks of Canada Geese, *B. canadensis*. The Barnacle Geese in these instances usually show no sign of having escaped from captivity and exhibit all the wariness of wild geese. Why do we question the origin of these individuals? Barnacle Goose is commonly kept in captivity and is commonly known to escape from captivity. Captive waterfowl, after having been out in the "free world" for a time, revert to very wild behavior and may follow wild flocks of geese on their migratory movements. The Barnacle Goose has occurred naturally in North America as demonstrated by a pair shot in the late fall of 1981 on the coast of Newfoundland, the male banded in Spitsbergen north of Norway. Nevertheless, because we are not able to conclusively prove the wild origin of this very popular aviary species, we are forced to regard all occurrences of doubtful origin.

ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*). An "English" Robin spent the winter of 1959–1960 at a bird feeder in West Cornwall (93–13). This bird was captured and banded and the identification was confirmed. This species has never been recorded in North America in other than a captive condition. In fact, this species is relatively sedentary, with the British Isle population undergoing only very limited seasonal movement. The committee believes that, based on the complete lack of history as a vagrant, and our inability to rule out a captive origin for this individual, our best recourse is to not accept until such time as a pattern of vagrancy may develop. The committee would like to encourage observers to document any occurrences of exotic species. This information can prove useful in future evaluation of the avifauna of our state.

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THE CONNECTICUT RARE RECORDS COMMITTEE: AN OVERVIEW

LOUIS R. BEVIER

The Connecticut Rare Records Committee (CRRC) first met ten years ago in September of 1985. It seems appropriate, therefore, to reflect briefly on its history and to summarize its procedures for both the old and the new generations of birders in the state.

The origin of the CRRC is one of fits and starts but is centered on the need to evaluate the credibility of sight records. Prior to the CRRC, the editorial advisory board of *The Connecticut Warbler* organized a committee to produce a "Checklist of The Birds of Connecticut." This required weeding through nearly 70 years of records since Sage and Bishop (1913). The committee began compiling reports on species not documented by photographs or specimens, and Dr. George Clark, Jr., was asked to "set up an objective" three person team to review these reports (Varza 1981). While no checklist was published, the files became part of the CRRC archives.

The CRRC was formed apart from the checklist effort and sponsored by the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA). Several of the people working on the checklist, however, went on to participate in the CRRC. Of these, Dennis Varza, Joe Zeranski, George Clark, and Fred Sibley, deserve special recognition for establishment of the CRRC.

Although review of sight records was the initial impetus for the CRRC, it now serves to review of a much broader range of evidence, including specimens, photographs, recordings, and written descriptions, as part of its charge to provide a complete and accurate record of birds reported in the state. All information gathered is deposited at the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History in Storrs, where the evidence can be examined by those with a serious interest. In this way, the body of evidence provided by sight records can be evaluated much as specimens can be in a museum. To make these files of lasting value, a major aim of the CRRC has been to improve the quality of documentation for records.

From my perspective as a past secretary of the CRRC, it has come a long way towards achieving these goals, but much work remains, especially with regard to records prior to the Committee's inception and records of rare breeders.

What is the Committee?

The CRRC consists of ten members who serve three year terms following nomination and election by the CRRC and approval of the

COA Board of Directors. A member may serve up to two consecutive terms and then must retire for at least one year. The CRRC meets two to four times annually.

What is reviewed?

The CRRC maintains a *Review List* . These are species of rare annual occurrence in the state. Most species on the list average fewer than five occurrences annually, but some difficult to identify species are included even if they occur more frequently. Reports of species new to the state are always reviewed. The *Review List* is available from the secretary; also, see "Guidelines for Submission of Rare Records" by Julian Hough in this issue.

For some species, the characters used to identify them are not discernible in the field, e.g., immature female Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds. The CRRC reviews such reports as species pairs. Reports of unidentified species that under good circumstances are identifiable will not be reviewed, for example, "storm-petrel" or "frigatebird," but reports of these will be filed.

The CRRC also solicits reports of rare breeders. These are listed on the most recent checklist (available from the COA). In addition, evidence for breeding of any of the state designated Endangered, Threatened, and Species of Special Concern will be reviewed at the discretion of the CRRC. Remember, the identification of the birds *as well as* evidence for breeding are required for any of these reports.

What about rare subspecies?

The Committee encourages observers to document and submit reports of vagrant subspecies; however, CRRC procedures regarding these reports is being reevaluated. Unfortunately, development of a list of subspecies that are identifiable in the field is difficult and subjective, in part, because the delineation of the various named subspecies themselves ranges from clear-cut to overlapping. Some names, such as Red-shafted Flicker, Oregon Junco, Spotted Towhee, and pale "lored" White-crowned Sparrow associated by many birders with a single subspecies are, in fact, groups of subspecies. These pose a minefield of problems for observers armed only with field guides. Observers must avoid slipping into quick categorization. In some cases, all that can be said is that an individual might show the characteristics of a particular subspecies.

What happens to a report?

Each report is assigned a unique number (e.g., 90–20 is the twentieth record received in 1990). Descriptions pertaining to the same bird received from other sources are combined under the same record number. The secretary determines if there is sufficient infor-

mation to circulate the report; if not, more information might be requested from the reporter. Once several reports have accumulated, the secretary distributes these to the members, who then return their votes and written comments.

Up to three votes may be taken on a report. Acceptance requires that the evidence for the report convince all, or all but one, of the members that the identification is correct. If a majority feels the evidence is inadequate to support the identification, then the report is rejected. Any votes other than these are recirculated with the members' written opinions. Members must refrain from discussing their opinion on the first vote, but discussion and debate is encouraged on the second and third rounds and at meetings. If after the third vote the report is rejected by more than one member, this becomes the final decision. Likewise, members may accept an identification but reject the record because they question the natural occurrence.

What happens to rejected reports?

Both accepted and rejected records are published in Committee reports. Importantly, evidence for ALL records is permanently filed. Those whose reports fail to gain acceptance should not take this as a judgment that the bird was misidentified or that the observer's abilities are questioned but that the evidence was insufficient to support the identification. Remember, these files must measure up to the adequacy of the historical record being maintained. Further, a report can be resubmitted even after a decision is published if there is *new and substantial* information regarding the record. This can happen with questions of origin, for example, where a supporting pattern of occurrence becomes established.

State lists and work load

The CRRC has published three state lists. The first (Clark 1988) listed 377 species in contrast to 334 in Sage and Bishop (1913). The second was a field card totaling 380 species (September 1989). The third, and most recent, includes 390 species (August 1994).

The CRRC has reviewed over 300 records and published about 260 in its second through sixth reports. In the last few years, the CRRC has handled on average 40 records per year.

Hypothetical species

Ornithologists often use this term to indicate species of uncertain occurrence in a region. The CRRC has chosen to use the term to designate species credibly reported in the state but lacking extant photograph or specimen. The term hypothetical is only used as it applies to inclusion of a species on the state list and *not* to any sight record lacking specimen or photograph.

Documented sight records of species new to the state that meet the rigorous standards of the Committee can be included on the state list but are designated hypothetical. Admittedly, this is a confusing use of the word because on the one hand the term indicates uncertainty, but on the other the CRRC is endorsing documentation it deems certain. Two hypothetical species on the state list have been accepted based solely on anecdotal evidence; they are Labrador Duck and Greater Prairie Chicken (Heath Hen). In some ways, the term hypothetical is more aptly applied to such circumstances, and the Committee might reconsider how it uses the term, since it has accepted the notion of validating sight records. Some people have attached significance to the number of observers involved with sight reports, but I know of circumstances where *independent* parties of several observers studying a bird at *different* times agreed on the wrong identification as later learned. I cannot imagine, therefore, a circumstance where an arbitrary number of observers makes a report any more acceptable. The Committee has chosen to apply the same demanding standards to all reports, with single observer reports receiving the most scrutiny.

Does the Committee rule on personal lists?

No. Many people watch birds solely for their own enjoyment, and their lists are their own business. If you wish to share your sightings in published reports, such as the "Connecticut Field Notes" section in this journal, then written descriptions are essential, but your list is your own. Doing one's level best to document a rarity is all we expect.

Unfortunately, the Committee often is put into the position of being the arbiter of lists. When people compare their list with others, the basis for comparison is usually the official state list. The American Birding Association (ABA) has even set up rules for listing that require one to follow local rare bird committee decisions. This is not a position even the active listers on the Committee relish!

Who has worked on the Committee?

Twenty-five people have served on the committee since its inception. In addition to the ten current members listed below, the others are: Tom Baptist, Louis Bevier, Tom Burke, Winnie Burkett, George Clark, Neil Currie, Richard English, Ed Hagen, Jay Hand, Fred Purnell, Fred Sibley, Clay Taylor, Dennis Varza, and Joe Zeranski.

The following biographies will introduce the current members. The years of current terms are shown in parentheses; an asterisk indicates members who must retire when their term expires.

CURRENT RECORDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Polly Brody, Newtown (1995–1998*). A field ornithologist, poet and writer. Polly is a founding member and past president of the Western Connecticut Bird Club.

Milan Bull, Fairfield (1993–1996*). Director of Field Studies & Ornithology and Director of the Fairfield Nature Center for the Connecticut Audubon Society. Miley has conducted research on colonial nesting birds (herons, terns, and plovers) in Connecticut.

Buzz Devine, Plymouth (1995–1998). Environmental Analyst in DEP's Hazardous Waste Enforcement Section. Buzz has collaborated with Dwight Smith to produce a forthcoming birding guide to Connecticut.

Bob Dewire, Pawcatuck (1994–1997*). Established and runs his own business, NatureScapes, providing natural history programs and field trips to people of all ages.

Greg Hanisek, Waterbury (1995–1998). News Editor for the *Waterbury Republican-American* and author of a nature column in that paper. Greg compiles and writes the "Field Notes" section for *The Connecticut Warbler*.

Julian Hough, Naugatuck (1995–1998). A free-lance writer, photographer, and talented bird artist, who has worked for both Long Point and Cape May Bird Observatories. Julian has lived and birded in India, Nepal, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East.

Jay Kaplan, Canton (1993–1996*). Director of Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton and President of COA. He wrote the "Field Notes" section of *The Connecticut Warbler* from 1989–1995.

Frank Mantlik, Norwalk (1993–1996), *Chairman*. U.S. Postal Service carrier, accomplished wildlife photographer, past president of COA, and past secretary of the CRRC.

Dave Provencher, Preston (1994–1997). Chemist for Northeast Utilities' (Millstone), Vice President of COA, and author of site guide to Bluff Point, establishing the "hot corner" as one of state's major ornithological discoveries and marvels.

Mark Szantyr, Storrs (1994–1997), *Secretary*. An accomplished artist and photographer. Mark is a past president of the Western Connecticut Bird Club and was the first secretary of the CRRC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Buzz Devine, George Clark, Fred Sibley, Mark Szantyr, and Joe Zeranski for help preparing this article.

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LOUIS R. BEVIER, 25 West Phil-Ellena St, Philadelphia, PA 19119

DOCUMENTING A RARE BIRD

LOUIS R. BEVIER

One of the pleasures of watching birds is sharing observations with others. Whether it is a first for the year or a first for the state, we naturally enjoy telling other people of our finds. If your sightings are used for a detailed study of birds in your region, then you have made a lasting contribution both to other people and to bird conservation. To ensure your observations are not ignored, you must practice keeping notes. A part of this is learning to document rare birds.

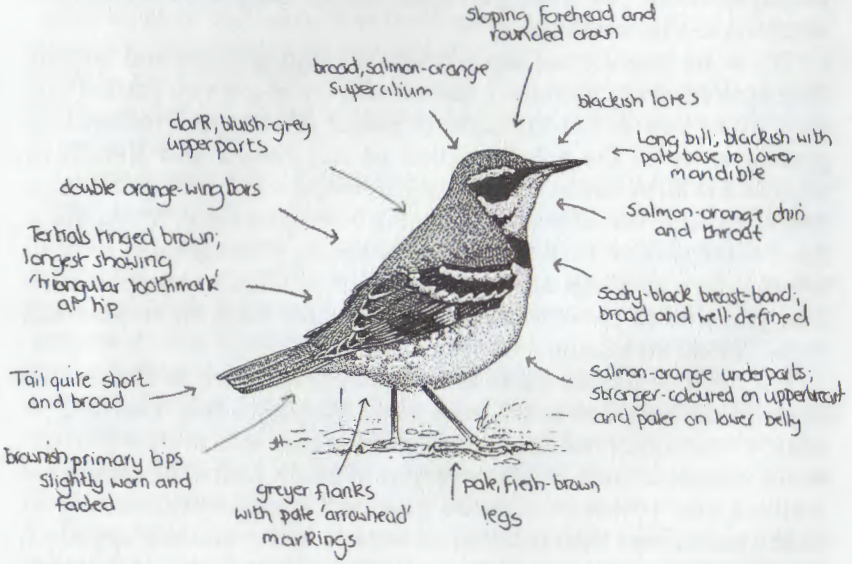
The allure of listing is undeniable and the prospect of finding unusual birds has probably led to better coverage of our state than at any other time. Improved optics and identification techniques have increased the skills of birders. Let's put this to good work. While this issue is devoted to statewide rarities, don't forget that some "mundane" birds can be rare on the local level. A Western Sandpiper on a small, inland pond might seem unworthy of a description at the time, but when you learn it is the only local record, you better have a description.

There are many excellent articles on keeping notes and writing descriptions, so in this short space I will try to get you started and then point you in the direction of useful references. Photographs greatly enhance the substantiation of any record and should be sought if at all possible. Obtaining videotape or recordings of vocalizations is also valuable and becoming more prevalent. If you document a rarity with such materials, including photographs, remember that tape and film are ephemeral; for their long term preservation you should have the originals deposited with an archive and copies made for personal use.

For most of us, the basic form of documentation is the written description based on notes *taken while studying a bird*. Learning to write a description takes practice, and the best way to start is to describe common birds or photographs of birds. Learn the names for feathers and patterns on birds (use bird topography outlines in field guides), and then develop an orderly and consistent approach to description: size and structure, head, upperparts, underparts, etc. Follow the same order each time. Don't be put off by jargon like tertials or scapulars. Communication with others is most effective if these terms are used. Two publications that will help you are: *The New Approach to Identification* by Peter Grant and Killian Mullarney (1989) and *Advanced Birding* by Kenn Kaufman (1990). The first, a

pamphlet, is a brilliant, concise distillation of techniques for describing the field marks on birds, understanding molt and plumages, and judging size and structure. Have you ever wondered why tail spots on warblers look different from above and below? This booklet will help you understand what you see on a bird. Kaufman's book is not just for advanced birders, it is for anyone wishing to learn more about the birds they see and has an excellent beginning chapter on birding techniques.

Take notes while watching the bird! This is often difficult, particularly when you want to chat and enjoy a rarity with your friends. Get them to help out, though. One can write as another dictates, then reverse roles. This is a great learning exercise. Sketches of the bird can be quite helpful. It is relatively easy to draw a diagram of the bird with notes pointing to observed patterns. Avoid the temptation to use a field guide when making these drawings, and remember that one's aim is to describe the *individual* bird under study and not a generalized image of the species.



♂ VARIED THRUSH, NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

MARCH 21, 1995 - Julian Hough.

Generalized images of a species cause one to overlook or to be fooled by common abnormalities and deformities, illusions of color under different lighting conditions, misperception of size, geographical variation in a species, or the oddball hybrid. Through careful observation you will avoid these problems and acquire a deeper and more lasting appreciation for birds.

Besides writing descriptions of what you see, other forms of documentation might offer themselves to you. You might find a rarity as a window-strike, road-kill, or the like. Salvaged birds can provide valuable information. You must obtain a permit to salvage birds, even to pick up feathers. Ask state and federal wildlife officials about these permits. An alternative is to call a museum or a permitted bird bander to take the bird. The body should be placed in a plastic bag and taken to a museum with careful notation of exactly where and on what date the bird *was found* (not the date the museum took it). Write with pencil or indelible ink.

Bird banders who trap a rare bird should take careful notes, measurements, and photographs from a number of angles. The practice of rehabilitating injured birds has become important to bird conservation, and people working in places where birds are taken, such as veterinary hospitals, should obtain the exact date and place where the bird was found. Sometimes injured birds are transported great distances, and this can confuse the place of origin.

FURTHER READING

An outline for writing descriptions and how to prepare documentation to the Connecticut Rare Records Committee can be found in "Guidelines for Submission of Rare Records." For more information, I recommend the following:

"What is Sufficient Documentation for Unusual Records?"
by George Clark (*Connecticut Warbler* 3:19–20, 1983)

"How to Document Rare Birds"
by Donna Dittmann and Greg Lasley (*Birding* 24:145–159, 1992)

"The Importance of Documenting Birds"
by Mark Lynch (*Bird Observer* 23:276–283, 1995)

The Western Birdwatcher by Kevin Zimmer (Prentice-Hall, 1985)
good lessons on note taking and bird identification

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◀ Sketches of rarities are a refined practice by British birders. This rarities submission by Julian Hough reveals hours of practice describing birds. While most might not be able to draw this well, the diagramming of patterns and colors is within our capabilities. Even stick figures with notes can be very useful. You will improve with practice.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF RARE RECORDS

JULIAN HOUGH

For the majority of birders, there is nothing more rewarding or exciting than discovering and identifying a rare or unusual bird. The Connecticut Rare Records committee was formed to assess and adjudicate on the occurrences of any such extralimital species within the state. It is responsible for maintaining the state list as well as concurrent awareness of the bird species recorded within state boundaries. In order to evaluate and document sightings of rare or scarce species, the committee asks that written descriptions be submitted for assessment. Descriptions should include all relevant details of the bird, including any sketches (however crude) and, most importantly, any available photographs.

There is an art to writing a convincing description and this article will suggest some helpful guidelines for those making future submissions.

For some rarity-finders, it is both a privilege and an honor to write such reports. For many others, filling out such a formal report is regarded as a chore. As a dedicated birder, it is more aptly termed a duty. It is accepted that some birders, even the most experienced and reliable field people, are not adept at writing descriptions. To commit a live bird to paper and to convey all the salient points to someone else can sometimes prove problematical.

Herein lies the primary problem of assessing rare records. Committee members might not have had the benefit of seeing the bird you describe; each member must vote on a record based on the written material. A member will make a composite from all the supplied details; therefore descriptions should include as much detail as possible. One persistent problem is that submissions often contain precise descriptions of the bird's location, habitat, or movements but fail to describe the bird itself. This information is vital to the acceptance of a submission.

If a submitted description is rejected, it is for one of two reasons: (1) The written information did not conform to the currently accepted criteria used to identify that particular species, or (2) The submission lacked sufficient detail. Many of the submitted descriptions fall into the second category. When a record is rejected, it is not necessarily that the committee feels a mistake has been made regarding the identification, but that either similar or confusion

species were not sufficiently ruled out, or important plumage details were not noted due to the brevity of views. As a result, from an assessor's point of view, the identification is not proven beyond reasonable doubt. In some cases where important detail is lacking, the committee will try to solicit the information from the observers. If the documentation is not forthcoming, or cannot be provided, the record is rejected.

A cautionary note should be added at this point. The committee is aware that most birds do not sit out and allow a feather by feather dissection. While some genuine rarities are reliably identified, they do not always give the observer time to note details that would be sufficient to make a formal acceptance possible. Do not be afraid to state that you did not note leg color, wing-pattern, etc.; sometimes a negative comment imparts more information to the assessor than an ambiguous description.

If you are lucky enough to find a rarity, we urge you to take a detailed description at the time of discovery and, if possible, to obtain a photographic record. Even a poor quality photograph can be of great help in the acceptance process. The committee would prefer descriptions to be based on original field notes rather than on notes written after the current literature has been referenced. Observers are therefore urged to submit copies of their original field notes with their formal written description. If you find a good bird, always try to inform other birders in the vicinity, as well as one of the members of the committee, as quickly as possible. The more people that see a rarity, the easier it is to document the occurrence.

SUBMITTING A DESCRIPTION FOR ADJUDICATION

On the next page is an outline of what one should record for any of the species listed on the committee's Review List or unrecorded for Connecticut (see C.O.A. *Field Checklist, Birds of Connecticut* species marked with an asterisk). This list can be obtained from the C.O.A., 314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT 06430.

On a final note, the committee would like to thank all the finders of rarities for their compliance with the requirements of the committee. Above all, we thank you for unselfishly sharing your discoveries with other birders. Happy hunting!

JULIAN HOUGH, 51 Brook St., Apt. 6C, Naugatuck, CT 06770

RARITY RECORD FORM (OUTLINE)

Species (age and sex, if determined, and number of individuals)
Locality (include specific site and township)

Date of observation
Time and duration of observation
First and last dates of occurrence (if known)

Weather/conditions (e.g., sun, clouds, wind, tide stages, etc.)
Distance from bird
Optics used

- Please include the circumstances of how the bird was discovered as well as a detailed description of the bird.
  Suitable sub-headings would be:
  - General behavior
  - Size and structure
    (incl. comparisons with accompanying/similar species)
  - Head pattern
  - Upperpart (including wings and tail)
  - Underparts
  - Bare Parts

- Discussion on the identification:
  - State positive reasons (based on plumage features) why such an identification was made and state reasons why and how similar/confusion species were ruled out.
  - State previous experience with species?
  - State previous experience with similar/confusion species?
  - Are there persons who do not agree with the identification?

Your address and telephone number
Other observers? (three names)
Is anyone else reporting it? Who?
Was the bird photographed? If yes, by whom?

Sign and date your report.

If you have field notes, please attach copies to the submission.
A report form is available upon request from the Secretary,
Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268.

VAGRANT BIRDS AND THE QUESTION OF ORIGIN

GREG HANISEK

Finding, identifying and documenting a rare bird ought to be enough, but sometimes it isn't. Rarities committees routinely deal with one other knotty problem—the question of origin.

This is often the most difficult to resolve. In fact, it is often impossible and casts a shadow over a committee's decision. It is worth consideration, however. The alternative is to throw up our hands in despair (which we can do after the committee imparts its wisdom).

Origin questions fall into two broad categories: (A) birds that have escaped from captivity, and (B) birds that have arrived by artificial means.

Category A is much more clear cut, at least in theory. If an individual bird has escaped from captivity or has been turned loose, it can't be counted on a list. Many species, such as tropical finches and parrots trafficked both legally and illegally for the cage trade, have virtually no chance of arriving in Connecticut under their own power. If a species is regularly held in captivity and is not a long-distant migrant, it can be rather easily dismissed. The Pin-tailed Whydahs from Africa, which showed up in Stratford this year, are a case in point.

While it might seem easy to determine the obvious "cage birds," there are difficult cases. The Harris' Hawk is an essentially non-migratory tropical bird popular among falconers and therefore considered suspect as a vagrant. Yet in the fall of 1994 Harris' Hawks were found from California to Louisiana and, most surprisingly, to Wisconsin. Irregular dispersal events such as this make any firm predictions about some species impossible.

Long-distance migrants pose a more difficult problem, especially if they are species also held in captivity. Classic examples include many waterfowl. At best, conclusions about some of these birds come down to probabilities. A species such as Eurasian Wigeon, which regularly occurs in passage as nearby as Iceland, is considered a strong candidate for natural occurrence, and virtually every individual seen is treated as a natural vagrant. Yet things are never black-and-white. Eurasian Wigeons also occur in aviary collections, and a given individual could be an escape. Another long-distance migrant, the Barnacle Goose, is so commonly kept in captivity and known to wander widely once escaped that it is difficult

to accept any occurrence without hard evidence, such as was the case with a pair in Newfoundland, the male having been banded in Europe (see *American Birds* Vol. 38, pp. 257–258, 1984).

The examples above explain why we SHOULD bother with such troublesome records. An individual occurrence might confound a committee, offering no preponderance of evidence in favor of acceptance. Over time, however, subsequent records may suggest a seasonal pattern of wandering that tips the scales in favor of natural occurrence. This is where the joint efforts of birders who submit records and committees who seriously consider them bear scientific fruit. The outcome is far more important than one birder's triumph or disappointment over a single committee result.

Birders who submit such records also must consider the identification carefully. Often the escaped birds are unfamiliar species. Flamingos are a good example. Most people assume that out-of-range flamingos in the United States are escaped Greater Flamingos, the nearest ranging species. This assumption is often wrong, and it is important to carefully study the bird and write a description.

A subset of this category involves species, such as European Starlings and House Sparrows, that have arrived by unnatural means but have established viable populations. Eventually, birds of this type may be accepted as part of the self-sustaining avifauna. In Connecticut, the Monk Parakeet is the best recent example. After more than 20 years of successful breeding and population expansion, it has been accepted onto the state list.

Category B is fraught with pitfalls. It involves birds that probably didn't sneak out of a cage but seem poor candidates for long-range vagrancy, especially across oceans. So how did they get here? Maybe they hitched a ride on a ship. The question of ship-assistance often arises with species such as European passerines. The answers aren't easy. Some consider the whole issue a red herring. If a bird is resourceful enough to hop a ship, so be it. Why worry about it? Yet how should one treat a resourceful ship-hopping bird that was kept as pet until the next port-of-call or trapped aboard in a shipping container? Others take a purist approach. If it seems likely a bird got here without using it's own power, it shouldn't be counted.

The uncertainty may seem disconcerting, but look at it another way. Your individual record may become hopelessly bogged down in speculation, but it also becomes part of an overall body of literature that may someday provide answers to what at the moment seem impossible questions.

So heed the plea on the rare Bird Alert: we need your reports.

GREG HANISEK, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

FIRST PACIFIC LOON FOR CONNECTICUT

GREG HANISEK

On 3 December 1992, I observed a small, dark loon a short distance off the beach opposite St. John's-by-the-Sea Church in West Haven. Through binoculars I tentatively identified it as an Arctic or Pacific Loon (*Gavia arctica* or *G. pacifica*) based on my experience with Pacific Loon in California and New Jersey. A look through a telescope strengthened my opinion, so I took notes and made a sketch.

DESCRIPTION

The head and neck showed a pattern of strong dark and light contrast. The eye was set into the dark facial feathers, without any white crescent above and just a small one below. The contact point between dark and light feathers down the neck was a smooth line without any of the pale indentations or hints of partial collars seen in Common Loon. The nape showed some paler gray, but the neck feathers were darkest along the border with the light foreneck.

The neck appeared rather short and thick, and the head seemed smooth in profile compared to the angular-headed Common Loon, which shows a large ridge on the forehead. The West Haven bird had the classic smooth Pacific-type profile with the head appearing somewhat puffy and swollen at the nape. The bill seemed straight and evenly tapered, lacking both the massive appearance of Common Loon and the slightly upturned lower mandible of Red-throated Loon.

The bird's upperparts appeared dark without the prominent scaling effect created by broad pale feather edges. Based on this pattern, I believe the bird was an adult, although the subdued afternoon light may have played a role in this perception.

The loon's flanks were uniformly dark almost to the waterline and lacked distinctive white patches at the rear of the flanks, which based on current knowledge is considered a key point of separation between Pacific and Arctic Loons.

IDENTIFICATION

Standard field guides, especially the older ones, emphasize bill shape in separating this species complex, "Arctic" Loon, from Common Loon and Red-throated Loon. Birders are probably better served by looking for other characteristics, because bill size and

shape tend to be rather subjective and variable. Overall size of the bird also can be difficult to determine. The sharply contrasting dark and light pattern of the head and neck is a good character for Arctic/Pacific Loon. Adult Red-throated Loon is usually dark down the center of the hind neck and lighter along this border than Arctic/Pacific; Common usually shows pale indentations or partial collars. The head shape also favored Arctic/Pacific.

Many Pacific Loons in non-breeding plumages show a thin "chinstrap," but I could not discern one on this bird. This chinstrap is apparently not found at all on Arctic Loon but may also be absent on some Pacific Loons. To differentiate the West Haven bird from Arctic Loon, I relied upon the fact that the rear flanks lacked any obvious white patches. Pacific Loon is apparently extensively dark along the flanks and never shows these white patches. Our other regular loons may show white along the flanks, however, and one needs to be sure that the bird in question has been narrowed to Arctic/Pacific before relying totally on this feature for identification. Red-throated Loon, for example, usually shows extensive white along the full length of the flanks, and Common Loon may appear to show small white flank patches.

DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS

Arctic and Pacific Loons were considered the same species from the 1930s until they were split by the American Ornithologists' Union in 1985. The last word on separation of these two similar species in the field has not been written, and opinions on handling them are far from unanimous. The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, for instance, has accepted records as Arctic/Pacific Loon, without differentiating the two species, whereas New Jersey has accepted Pacific Loon on its state list.

There are many records of Arctic/Pacific Loon in the Northeast, including a specimen of Pacific Loon from Long Island, New York (see *Birds of New York State*, 1974, by John Bull). Thus, Connecticut has been long overdue for a record. The Connecticut Rare Records Committee has accepted the West Haven record as the first Pacific Loon for the state, and regardless of how one treats Arctic and Pacific Loons, the West Haven bird also appears to be the first record for that species complex in Connecticut.

GREG HANISEK, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

RAZORBILL IN CONNECTICUT

DAVID F. PROVENCHER

On 16 December 1993, I was working at Millstone Station in Waterford while a major low pressure center over the Atlantic was pounding the Connecticut shoreline with strong northeast winds. I was outside about midday and spent some time scanning Long Island Sound for storm blown birds. I detected a few gannets and two kittiwakes at some distance offshore while looking thorough my scope. When I took my eye from the scope, I noticed an immature Razorbill (*Alca torda*) approximately 40 feet in front of me in the station's outfall. This outfall is the discharge of the station's cooling water and flows at several hundred thousand gallons per minute. This discharge is routed into an abandoned quarry and then into Long Island Sound. The water from the discharge is warmer than the Sound and supports schooling fishes and crustacean growth where it enters the Sound.

The Razorbill was diving in the outfall and resurfacing after 10 to 20 seconds, usually in a different location. I observed the bird for about 10 minutes until I no longer could find it after one of its dives. After I initially observed the bird, it worked its way further out into the disturbed area of the outfall until I lost it. I returned after work on the 17th with no expectation of relocating the bird but discovered it was still present. I observed the bird through two dives before I lost it again. I had no photographic equipment with me on either occasion. I returned on the 18th with a camera to try to record the bird but was unable to relocate it. Subsequently, this record has been accepted by the Connecticut Rare Records Committee as the first for Connecticut (Szantyr et al. 1996).

DESCRIPTION

The individual was a stout bird patterned in black and white. The body was thick and compact. The head was heavy, and the neck was short and very thick, looking more like an extension of the body. The head was held with a slight upward tilt, and the bill was angled slightly above the horizontal. The bill was dull black with no distinct markings. It was much thicker in the vertical dimension. The tip of the bill was blunt with a slight point low on the distal end. The eye appeared wholly black. The tail was pointed, the central rectrices being of greater length than the outer. The tail was held cocked upwards at an angle above the horizontal. The upper

part of the bird was black with perhaps a very slight grayish-brown cast. The black covered the upper part of the head, including the crown, a portion of the face, and the nape, and extended over the mantle as well as the wings and tail. The white covered a portion of the face, chin and throat, breast, flanks, and undertail coverts. The demarcation line between the white and black started near the gape and ran back below the eye and swept up through the auriculars. It then curved downward along the length of the neck and turned sharply towards the rear of the bird meeting the tail feathers where they adjoined the bird's body. This demarcation line was fairly sharp but not as sharp as an adult would typically display. The demarcation of black and white in the auriculars was somewhat blurred. The secondaries were tipped in white but not as distinctly as an adult's would be. The overall appearance of the individual was one of heavy features and compactness.

IDENTIFICATION

The identification of the large alcids in basic plumage hinges on key plumage and structural differences. Perhaps the most similar are immature Razorbill and basic plumage Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*). The two are separable most easily by structural differences. Razorbill is bulkier and appears very thick-necked. It usually tilts its bill up and holds its tail cocked upwards. This gives the bird a heavy bodied look with both pointed ends cocked upwards. The Razorbill's bill is very thick vertically throughout its length and is blunt ended. The murre's bill tapers distinctly to a pointed tip. The murre usually holds its bill horizontally or slightly dipped towards the water's surface. The murre's tail is shorter than the Razorbill's and is not held cocked upwards. The head of the murre appears smaller and the neck thinner than Razorbill's. The Millstone bird was judged to be an immature based on the lack of markings in the bill, the somewhat gray-brown cast to the upperparts, and a less distinct white secondary line.

DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS

The North American population of Razorbill breeds in Atlantic Canada from the Bay of Fundy north to the Hudson Strait. During winter they occur in open water off their breeding grounds south regularly to Massachusetts, with fewer birds venturing south casually as far as South Carolina. They are the only large alcid regularly seen off the New England coast. Young Razorbills tend to go farther south than adults late in the winter (Nettleship and Birkhead 1985). The North American Razorbill's diet in winter is mainly crusta-

ceans with the balance being fish. The substantial crustacean growth around the outfall of Millstone Station may have attracted this storm blown individual.

Three previous occurrences reported for Connecticut are published in Zeranski and Baptist (1990)—one in April, one in December, and another in January, all from southeastern Connecticut. While other sightings have at times been casually reported in the state and those listed above were probably correct, the Millstone record appears to be the first well seen and adequately documented record for Connecticut.

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BOOKS ON BIRDS

Alan H. Brush

Terns of Europe and North America, by Klaus Malling Olsen and Hans Larsson (1995, 176 pp., 208 color photos, 41 color drawings, 23 maps; Princeton University Press, ISBN 0-691-04387-6) is another of the recent spate of "identification guides." These volumes are something more than pocket-size field guides, but something less than technical monographs. This one is dedicated to species of the Sternini, considered a subgroup of the Laridae. Traditionally the gulls and terns are closely associated within the Charadriiformes. No particular taxonomic revolution here. However, the coverage is partial, presumably a choice of the authors who are based in the Northern Hemisphere (Holarcticcentric?). While many tern species are distributed widely, coverage here excludes species with limited distribution in the southern hemisphere. Consequently, only 23 of the world's 45 species are included.

There is not much controversial about the taxonomy within the terns. Geographic variation is slight in most species, but includes identifiable races in others. The presence of complex plumage sequences can cause some problems for identification, which in the field is a problem peculiar to the human population. The birds sort this out themselves.

Terns are an attractive group as they occur in coastal areas, marshes, and other places with strong clear sunlight. These places are open, encourage opportunities to observe the acrobatic flight typical of the group, and bespeak strongly of summer. Some species migrate long distances, "following the sun." Consequently, some Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) live much of their entire lives under conditions of essentially continuous long days. Further, by changing locations twice annually they interact with a different set of congeneric species. Tern migration is most remarkable, little studied, and insures long days year round.

How have Olsen & Larsson dealt with this group of birds? The species accounts are pretty standard in format. Structural information, with an emphasis on field appearance (jizz), plumage, behavior, voice, molt, and geographic variations are all discussed. Each presentation includes a map with breeding and non-breeding locations. The text and a minimal two column index, one common

names and one Latin names, is followed by 208 color photos. The photos cover a wide range of conditions and plumages so that they might be helpful under field conditions. But the unusual images are the color sketches that accompany each species description.

Tucked into each species description are one or more plates contributed by Hans Larsson. These are wonderful. Some illustrate birds in flight, others the subjects on the ground in a non-obtrusive background. Yet others illustrate some specific detail such as variation in tertial color pattern among confusing species. For most species essentially all plumages are included. Equally important is Larsson's ability to capture subtle aspects of body shape and posture. Other plates illustrate details of head patterns among molts, a feature not usually found in most guides and a welcome addition. These are not your regular 'cookie-cutter' field guide figures!

Clearly the illustrations make a difference in this book. One is impressed with similar techniques in the recent *Birds of Europe* by Lars Jonsson (1993, Princeton University Press) who did both the text AND the drawings! In many ways these plates are crafted like the older medical illustrations by masters such as Frank Netter who, unlike more contemporary forms of medical illustration, produced works that demonstrated that *experience* as well as technique were important. The artist's ability to expound posture and shape plus texture and color is quite a contrast to the photographic presentation. Certainly both are useful, but in this case the plates have an astonishing "eye appeal."

Without doubt, these drawings are informative. They provide a wonderful example of the interaction between art and science. Most current field guides use stereotypic depictions of the species. They are a step removed from experience, as you don't always see woodpeckers perch vertically on a tree trunk, sparrows on a small branch, or gulls on a piling. Such work is informative and allows the author to point out specific characters useful in identification, even if they are difficult to discern in the field. At another extreme are the attempts of the artist to show all the features of a bird in a single view. Audubon was probably the master of this genre. Larsson, Jonsson, and others (including Burn) are working hard to break the mold of very formal bird illustrations. The static conditions dictated by 'field guide' posture can be expanded and massaged to illustrate shapes and postures. This is a welcome change in both the artistic view and the world of publishing.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

SUMMER, June 1 to July 31, 1995

Summer is our shortest field notes period but also the most complex. Spring migration laps over into early June, which is also an interesting time for vagrants. By the end of the month southbound migration has begun. The pace of migration accelerates through July, and birds heading south pass post-breeding wanderers—mainly herons, gulls and terns—moving north. They both cross paths with northern waterbirds such as loons and scoters spending a celibate summer on Long Island Sound. All of this serves as an overlay to the heart of the breeding season. This year each element had something interesting to offer, such as a stunning rarity, the scarcest of migrants, an overdue addition to the state list and a new confirmed breeder. We even entertained visitors from the southern hemisphere. So read on, as we sort out which is which.

NORTHBOUND MIGRATION

The northbound shorebird movement can spill into June quite conspicuously, as illustrated by 1,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 100 Ruddy Turnstones and four Red Knots June 1 at Milford Point, Milford (FM). A Western Sandpiper and a White-rumped Sandpiper June 4 at Milford Point fit into that category as well (DP,LB), but a Short-billed Dowitcher June 16 at Falkner Island in Guilford (JS) could have been going either way. The tail-end of the spring passerine migration is a shorter and more ephemeral event, one best appreciated along the coast where breeding woodland species don't complicate the issue. At Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP), Madison, on June 1, there was no doubt that a Canada Warbler and two Blackburnian Warblers were still heading north, along with two more typically tardy Blackpoll Warblers (SH). There was nothing typical about a Louisiana Waterthrush lingering there May 27 to June 3 (MH), but an Olive-sided Flycatcher May 31 in Redding was right on schedule (CB).

JUNE VAGRANTS

Few birders look for migrants beyond the last big flurry of May,

but it becomes more apparent each year that birding in early June can offer extravagant rewards. Consider the following list: American White Pelican, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bridled Tern, Chuck-will's-widow, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Chestnut-collared Longspur. All were seen in Connecticut during the past five Junes. This year's prime contribution was a flurry of **Mississippi Kite** sightings that should establish an overdue first record for the state. One kite was reported June 3 over Newtown (NC) and another lingered in the Stamford-Darien area, where it proved very elusive from June 13–17 (PDu, MM, JM, BV, CH). These dates fit nicely into the established pattern of kite vagrancy. A sub-adult male **Blue Grosbeak** that sang June 4–6 at Northwest Park in Windsor (FM) also fit the vagrant mold, as did a male **Summer Tanager** June 16 in Old Lyme (JH).

SOUTHBOUND MIGRATION

Vagrants and late migrants spice up the season, but the southbound shorebird migration is the dominant non-breeding event. It was abetted this year by a couple of strong July cold fronts, and it produced the season's outstanding rarity, a **Long-billed Curlew** found July 10 at Windham Airport in North Windham (MS,LB,BC). The bird remained through July 16, posing for photos and for lots of appreciative birders. It was the first Connecticut report since 1968 and the first fully documented one.

Shorebird movements were good overall, producing about 20 species. The high tide roost on gravel bars at Milford Point built up through July, holding 2,000 to 6,000 shorebirds and several hundred gulls and terns. The dominant species, Semipalmated Sandpiper, peaked at 3,000 to 5,000 July 25–30 (CB,FM). Also present at that time were 150 to 200 each of Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, and Short-billed Dowitcher (GH,CB,FM). On July 19, about 100 Sanderling were present (FM). Griswold Point in Old Lyme also held good concentrations, including 150+ Semipalmated Plovers, 25 Lesser Yellowlegs, 500+ Semipalmated Sandpipers, 50 Least Sandpipers and 20 Short-billed Dowitchers, all July 31 (DP). Watch Rock in Old Lyme held 150+ Least Sandpipers July 21 (DP), and inland, 25+ were at Mansfield Hollow July 10 (MS,BC).

Whimbrels, never a stock item on our coast, were nicely scattered with two at Griswold Point July 28 (DP) and singles July 24 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (DP), July 25 at both Bluff Point (DP) and Avery Point in Groton (MS,LB) and on various dates after mid-July at Milford Point (CB et al.). The coastal points are the best places for shorebird variety, but airports are the best places for migrant Up-

land Sandpipers. Three were at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford July 16 (GH,CB), and one was at Windham Airport July 28 (MS,LB). Pectoral Sandpipers weren't easy to find, with one at Milford Point July 30 (FM), one at Griswold Point July 27–31 (DP) and two at Windham Airport July 28 (MS,LB). The first Dunlin arrived July 25 at Barn Island in Stonington (DP), and the first Red Knot appeared July 7 at Milford Point (JK,BKl). The only Stilt Sandpiper reports were of singles July 25 at Barn Island (DP) and July 27–29 at Griswold Point (DP, JH).

Southbound movements aren't limited to shorebirds. A Merlin and a Peregrine July 28 at Griswold Point were probably on migration (DP), and a visit to Lighthouse Point in New Haven on a July 10 cold front revealed overhead movements of several hundred Tree Swallows and Red-winged Blackbirds, along with smaller numbers of Bank Swallows and Bobolinks (GH). Bank Swallows seem especially ready to move out early, as illustrated by 100+ on a runway at Windham Airport the same day (MS,LB), three at West River, Guilford, July 3 (JZ), and two in New London July 9 (FM,FP). Migrants banded at Falkner Island included an Acadian Flycatcher July 24, just the third there since 1978 (JZ), and a Louisiana Waterthrush July 25 (JS et al.). Both species are noted for moving south early and are difficult to detect in passage on the mainland. A **Loggerhead Shrike**, which may be the state's rarest "regular migrant," was seen in Greenwich July 26 (TRB). It was the first report since 1992. The date is somewhat early but not completely out of line with the southbound schedule of the now severely depleted northeastern breeding population.

POST-BREEDING DISPERSAL

Wanderers from the south presented a mixed bag. The heron incursion was generally unremarkable, although about a dozen reports of immature Little Blue Herons seemed good (m.ob.). One or two Tricolored Herons throughout July near the West Haven–Milford boundary also were noteworthy (m.ob.). Non-breeding terns were in short supply. Royal Tern went unreported with one significant exception: an early one became a new tick on the Falkner Island species list June 21, and what might have been the same bird was seen two days later at the mouth of the West River in Guilford (DS). Black Terns produced just two mainland reports, from Guilford July 5 (JZ) and Milford Point July 30 (GH), but singles were seen three times in June and seven times in July at Falkner Island (JS,CG et al.). The only Black Skimmers reported were singles in early June at Milford Point and HBSP June 23 (NC), and at Falkner Island July 14 and 18 (DS,SR et al.). However,

Forster's Terns were scattered along the coast in good numbers in July, with the first report July 9 at Watch Rock (HG) and an excellent high count of 20+ July 28 at Griswold Point (DP). Laughing Gulls swept northward in a wave that included 1,000+ off Harkness July 24 (DP).

NON-BREEDING LINGERERS

Non-breeders hanging around the Sound, and elsewhere, included at least a dozen Common Loons scattered from Barn Island to Milford Point (m.ob); a Common Loon in high breeding plumage on the Housatonic River–Lake Zoar in Newtown June 17–21 (PB,DR et al.); a Red-throated Loon at HBSP June 8 (SK et al.); a sub-adult Northern Gannet at HBSP June 12 (GH,NC) and another July 29 off Griswold Point (JH), which may have been summer firsts; a rare and unseasonable Tundra Swan flying by Sherwood Island State Park in Westport June 15 (RW,RS); six Brant at West Haven through July (MS,DP) and up to two at Falkner Island June 1–14 (JS et al.); a pair of Ring-necked Ducks, a species noted for lingering but not nesting, at Cavanaugh Pond, Newtown, through at least June 5 (PB,AT); a Lesser Scaup at Laurel Reservoir, Stamford, June 6–11 (FM,PDu); a male Bufflehead June 18 in the Mianus River, Greenwich (GP); an Oldsquaw June 26 in Norwalk (FM); a male White-winged Scoter June 12 in Westport (FM); a male Black Scoter at HBSP June 12 (GH,NC) and two males July 30 at Harkness (PD); a male and two female Red-breasted Mergansers July 8 at Barn Island (DP), one at Falkner Island June 1–4 (JS et al.) and one at Milford Point July 2 (PD); and a Ruddy Duck at Laurel Reservoir, Stamford, June 11 (PDu).

Summering shorebirds included a few Black-bellied Plovers at Milford Point (GH) and two Greater Yellowlegs at Lordship (GH,MS et al.), all of which were present through June. Up to five Bonaparte's Gulls summered between the Thames and Connecticut River mouths (DP et al.), and an unseasonable report of a first-year Little Gull came from Bluff Point July 25 moving to Millstone Point in Waterford the next day (DP).

STORM-PETREL INVASION

Before we move on to the breeding species, one other seasonal category bears mention—species that "winter" at our latitude after nesting in the southern hemisphere during austral summer. These birds, primarily shearwaters and storm-petrels, seldom alter their pelagic range enough to enter Long Island Sound, but this year we got a treat. Four **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were found July 14 off Bluff Point in Groton (DP). This sterling discovery woke up the birding masses, who soon found the Mother Carey's lode at the mouth of the

Thames River. Storm-petrels remained there through the end of the period, with counts as high as 45 from Avery Point in Groton, where birds could be seen feeding up into the river north of Eastern Point (m.ob.). A few were seen as far west as the mouth of the Connecticut River and at least one reached HBSP (CR, DS). They arrived during a period of hot, humid weather, but reasons for their appearance remain speculative.

THE BREEDING SEASON

GREBES THROUGH WATERFOWL

July was drier than normal but things didn't really get parched until the following month. Overall, there was no weather that clearly affected breeding success, but note the references below to high tides.

A probable nesting pair of Pied-billed Grebes was present for the third consecutive year at Laurel Reservoir, Stamford (FM,PDu). At press time, heron and egret numbers from the DEP's Colonial Waterbird Survey had yet to be collated. However, news accounts stated that on the Norwalk Islands, the colony on Chimon Island has plunged from 1,021 pairs in 1989 to zero pairs this year, while at Cockenoe Island in Westport, pairs increased from zero in 1992 to 87 this year (*Norwalk Hour*, *Connecticut Post*). On Great Captain's Island in Greenwich, Gallo's boat survey found 25 Great Egret nests, 12 Snowy Egret nests, six Black-crowned Night Heron nests, plus a Little Blue Heron fly-by. Two Tricolored Herons through the period at Barn Island raised suspicions of breeding (m.ob.). Three of the increasingly uncommon Cattle Egrets were present through the period at Kowalsky's Farm, Westport, raising the possibility of nesting on nearby Cockenoe Island (FM et al.).

Inland, an adult Black-crowned Night Heron was at Shepaug Dam in Southbury June 14 (DR) and an immature was in Waterbury July 24 (RN). Any information on inland nesting by this species would be of interest. Yellow-crowned Night Herons were scattered in small numbers, with up to five through mid-June at Manresa Island, Norwalk, (FM) and three on June 4 at Milford Point (DP). At least two pairs of Least Bitterns were conspicuous at Station 43, South Windsor, the best spot for this species (MS,LB et al.). A family group was reported there July 10 (Bob Biada fide FM); a single was at Lord's Cove, Old Lyme, July 13 (HG), and breeding was suspected in the Quinnipiac River marshes in Hamden (AR et al.). Glossy Ibis were along the coast all season, with a high count of 30+ at Milford Point July 7 (JK,BKl) and a juvenile reported as "looking very young" among a group of 15 at Barn Island July 8 (DP).

A DEP survey checked water-

fowl at inland sites for the seventh consecutive year: Canada Goose—10,100, for a second straight year over 10,000; the total in the first year was 5,400. Mallard—about average at 15,300 pairs; numbers have ranged from 12,500 to 19,000. Black Duck—259, which equals the first year of the survey but is down from the 1991 peak of 906. Wood Duck—4,670, for a third straight year over 4,000; the first two years' totals were 2,300 and 1,800 (Merola 1995). Apart from the survey, Gadwall raised a brood on the Lordship marshes in Stratford, with at least five young present in late July (GH,NC). The Felix and Oscar Award went to a male American Wigeon and female Mallard escorting ducklings June 4 at Lake Quassapaug, Middlebury (fide RN), although actual hybridization wasn't established. A female Common Merganser had a dozen young on the Pomperaug River in South Britain throughout the period (JN,RN), and a juvenile was at River Road, Kent, June 26 (MS et al.).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Black Vultures continue to raise breeding suspicions in Kent, where four were present June 10 (BD), and in adjacent New Milford, where one was seen June 16 at the Sunny Valley Preserve (CW). The state's only Bald Eagle nest, at Barkhamsted Reservoir, hatched one chick. It was the fourth consecutive year of successful nesting, according to the DEP. The agency monitored 103 Osprey nests, an eight percent increase over last year. They fledged 148 young, up from 137 in 1994, but productivity has plunged to 0.09 young per active nest at the large Great Island colony in Old Lyme. The DEP has plans to study that disturbing situation (Victoria 1995a). For the first time, two pairs nested successfully at Milford Point (FM). An Osprey July 26 in Willimantic (LB) and a Bald Eagle July 10 at Windham Airport (LB) were both unexpected. Single Sharp-shinned Hawks were in Waterbury June 15 (RN) and Franklin June 11 (MS). Northern Goshawks were reported sporadically throughout the period at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton (JK,BKl) and July 26 at West Hartford Reservoir (JK,BKl). The single Northern Harriers on Falkner Island June 4 and July 27 weren't breeding there (JS,JL), but along with one June 23 at West River, Guilford, they raise suspicions about trysts in the mainland saltmarshes nearby. Two adult Peregrines remained in downtown Stamford throughout the period (TRB).

The Northern Bobwhite population in the southeast seemed to suffer serious losses during the severe winter of 1993–94, so it was good to find singing birds this season at Groton-New London Airport and at Harkness

(DP,NC et al.). A single also was reported June 16–19 at Sterling (RD). In spring, birders noted another spike in the ever-rising Wild Turkey population. This was borne out by data gathered during the state's spring gobbler season. The DEP now estimates the statewide population conservatively at 15,000 to 18,000 and says it has mushroomed in the past few years. Hunters killed turkeys in 125 of the state's 169 towns, with a high of 58 in Sharon. The number of juvenile birds taken by hunters also has increased, indicating a healthy population. Evidence of this included four hens escorting 19 poults July 16 in Woodbury (RN). The DEP thinks one factor may be a crash in the raccoon population caused by rabies, which may have reduced nest predation. Favorable weather in spring of 1993 and 1994 also was cited (Kilpatrick 1995). The scarce and elusive King Rail was reported from Station 43 June 4 (FM) and Great Island, Old Lyme, July 6 (AG). Common Moorhens were reported from Sharon, with a probable nesting pair at the Audubon Center in June (CB,MS) and one at Roy Swamp July 1 (BD), and from Hamden, with a bird in the Quinnipiac River marshes July 15 (DEP).

American Oystercatcher has rapidly colonized the coast from Greenwich to Stonington. A pair at Milford Point illustrated the tenacity that has allowed this to occur. Nesting on a gravel bar that barely peeks above normal high tides, the birds lost a nest to an abnormally high June tide. However, they nested again and had two downy chicks by July 25 (GH et al.). A pair whose nesting attempts failed twice in spring remained at Falkner Island through July (JS,JZ). Young Killdeer on the UConn and E.O. Smith High School campuses in Storrs raised the possibility of roof nesting (GC). The beleaguered Piping Plover maintained its toehold on the coastal strip. The DEP estimated 32 pairs fledging 40 young, compared to 30 pairs with 44 young last year (Victoria 1995b). Seven at Milford Point July 7 was a nice count (JK,BKl).

GULLS THROUGH KINGLETS

Coastal nesting species elicit a lot of concern, but no one is shedding any tears over this news: the DEP's waterbird survey shows the Herring Gull population undergoing a steady decline since 1977. Great Black-backed Gulls were found to be holding steady. We received no information on Roseate Tern nesting success at Falkner Island, but adults were more conspicuous than usual from shore, especially at HBSP, Avery Point and Griswold Point (m.ob). The high count was 15 at Griswold Point July 19 (DP). Unusually high tides were one factor in a poor reproductive season for Least Terns. The DEP found 538 pairs at nine locations, a signifi-

cant increase over last year's 334 pairs. However, only 53 young were known to fledge, compared to 332 last year. Tides washed out 400 nests in June and 200 in July. The largest colony held 351 pairs at West Haven (*fide* J. Victoria).

Monk Parakeets must have found out they're now legitimate. Observers from Westport to New Haven are reporting new nests and increasing numbers (m.ob.). Both species of cuckoo were banded on Falkner Island in July (JS). The well-studied Barn Owl nests in Middletown and Middlefield each fledged five young this year. The young were banded June 22 in Middlefield and June 29 in Middletown (GZ). Whip-poor-will reports are always welcomed: this season's included four in Mattatuck State Forest, Plymouth, June 18 (BD), three in West Granby June 24 (BKr,GK), "a few" in June at Saugatuck Reservoir, Weston (RW), one at Lake Wintergreen, Hamden, June 4 (FM) and one in West Cornwall June 26 (MS et al.). A single Common Nighthawk, declining as a breeder, was in Greenwich June 18 (TRB). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker appears to be doing well as a breeder. Reports included four in Barkhamsted June 24 (BKr,GK), two in West Granby June 25 (BKr) and "many" in northern Litchfield County, including seven along River Road in Kent during a June 26 Big Day (MS et al.). The Falkner Island crew netted and banded two adult and three hatching-year Downy Woodpeckers for the season, after getting only two in the past 15 years, which suggests an unusual amount of post-breeding dispersal (JS,JZ). Watch for more on this trend in the fall report.

Acadian Flycatcher seems to be thriving, with 15 on the Woodbury-Roxbury June Count (RN et al.), three at Bigelow Hollow State Park, Union, June 3 (BD), and reports in June from Boston Hollow in Ashford (MS), Devil's Den, Weston (RW), Poverty Hollow in Redding (RW) and Mount Riga in Salisbury (MS et al.). An adult Horned Lark feeding two young out of the nest was found July 13 at Windham Airport (MS). This is significant because the state Breeding Bird Atlas did not report any larks in the northeast. Our Bank Swallow colonies are almost wholly dependent on quarrying operations. Fresh earthworks in New Milford allowed a colony to expand from about 60 birds last year to more than 200 this year (GH,DO). However, work on a gravel bank in Willington resulted in just one bird present June 14 at a site that held 100+ last year (MS). Four Cliff Swallows, scare and local as breeders, were in Bloomfield June 1 (BKr), and up to 14 pairs were at an apparently new nesting site at Saugatuck Reservoir in Weston/Redding (RW). Two Purple Martins visited a backyard martin house June 28 in Sterling (R&LD).

Fish Crow is spreading into the Northwest Corner. A pair with one young was at Candlewood Lake June 13 (DR) and one was flying over Canaan village June 5 (GH). Away from more typical northern nesting locations, a Red-breasted Nuthatch on the Ordway Preserve in Weston June 6 was present for the second straight year (CB). Swainson's Thrush, one of the state's more marginal potential breeders, was singing at Cranberry Pond, Litchfield, June 11 (DR), and a Hermit Thrush was south of its breeding strongholds June 25 at Saugatuck Reservoir in Weston (RW). A pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets was nest-building June 14 at White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield (DR), and two were likely nesters June 10–11 at West Hartford Reservoir (PD).

VIREOS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

Away from the coast, the gentle hills between Waterbury and Danbury seem to hold the best supply of White-eyed Vireos. Birds were logged at four locations, including fledged young in Watertown (RN). Warblers of note included: singing male Magnolias June 24 in People's State Forest, Barkhamsted (BD) and June 30 in Mohawk State Forest in Cornwall (BD); two singing male Black-throated Blue Warblers in Litchfield June 10 (RN,LW), one at Skiff Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Kent June 21 (CB) and five in Barkhamsted and West Granby June 25 (BKr,GK); 20+ Yellow-rumped Warblers in White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield, in June (RN); a **Yellow-throated Warbler**, present for the sixth consecutive year in Kent, through at least June 26 (m.ob.); 25 Blackburnian Warblers and 40+ Pine Warblers in June at White Memorial (RN,AD) and reports of the apparently increasing Pine from at least five towns in lower Fairfield County (m.ob.); up to three singing male Kentucky Warblers through June in East Haddam (SO et al.) but none for the first time in many years from Greenwich Audubon Center; two Hooded Warblers each in Woodbury and Southbury (RN) along with reports from East Haddam and Kent (JH), Redding (FM,CB) and Weston (RW); a Canada Warbler in Barkhamsted June 25 (BKr,GK); and a Yellow-breasted Chat on territory at Station 43 in June (BD et al.).

Birders are quick to lap up the gravy, and sometimes they find the meat and potatoes underneath. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** in late May, followed by the aforementioned Blue Grosbeak in early June, helped people from around the state discover Windsor's beautiful Northwest Park. In addition to vagrants, this site held up to six singing male Grasshopper Sparrows (PD,LB), six to eight Indigo Buntings and several pairs of Orchard Orioles, including a nest in a small planted maple

along a grassland edge (MS et al.). It was a good summer for Grasshopper Sparrows, which had seemed in recent years to be limited to Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. In addition to Northwest Park, up to two were at Windham Airport in June and July (TH et al.). Others were found in Glastonbury (fide GC), Huntington State Park in Redding June 4–July 16 (TRB,RW) and near the Buckland Hills Mall in Manchester–South Windsor, although the latter spot is slated for development (PC et al.). Of similar significance was a Vesper Sparrow found in Manchester in late July and suspected of nesting (PC). The last confirmed nesting in the state was in Torrington in 1985 (Zeranski & Baptist 1990).

In a season full of exciting discoveries, the most important was probably the addition of a new species to the state's breeding list. On June 1, a male **Boat-tailed Grackle**, acting as if on territory, was found in a thicket at the edge of the Great Meadows saltmarsh in the Lordship section of Stratford (FM,CB). Birders checking the site the next day found two females as well (GH,NC,BD et al.). All three were seen into early July. On several occasions the females were seen carrying food, and at least once they were observed removing fecal sacs (MS,LB). No young were observed, but using Breeding Bird Atlas criteria, this constitutes a confirmed breeding record. Also of note was a pair of Evening Grosbeaks in Barkhamsted June 9, marking the second year in a row at that location during a Breeding Bird Survey (JK,BKr).

EXOTICS

A Black-headed Conure was at Sunny Valley Preserve, New Milford, July 20 (CW, AT).

[*Editor's Comment:* Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on latest COA Checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Rare Records Committee (Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268), if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.]

OBSERVERS,
CONTRIBUTORS (**boldface**)

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Frank Mantlik, Janet Mehmel, Michael Moccio, **Russ Naylor**, Jim Nolan, Dick O'Brien, Sean O'Brien, Gary Palmer, **Dave Provencher**, Fred Purnell, **Charlie Rafford**, Sarah Richards, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen, David Shealer, Richard Soffer, Dori Sosensky, **Jeff Spendelow**, **Mark Szantyr**, Art Titus, Bill Van Loan, Leigh Wells, Rob Winkler, **Chris Wood**, **George Zepko**, and **Jim Zingo**. Reports from Falkner Island, compiled by Spendelow and Zingo, refer to Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Guilford.

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GREG HANISEK, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

CORRECTION: In the Spring 1995 Report (CW15:4) an early Black-throated Blue Warbler and American Redstart were seen in Windsor, not South Windsor.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Louis Bevier

[A new quiz and answer to last October's photo will appear in the next issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*.]

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler (ISSN 1077-0283) is devoted to the study of birds and their conservation in Connecticut and is published quarterly (January, April, July and October) by the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced, with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on an PC disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Membership, including subscription to *The Connecticut Warbler* and *COA Bulletin*, is based on a calendar year and is renewable in January: Individual, $12.00; Contributing, $25.00; Family, $18.00; Sustaining, $40.00. Life membership is $300.00, payable in three annual installments. Send membership application, dues, change of address, and make checks payable to: Connecticut Ornithological Association, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

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– Address Correction Requested –

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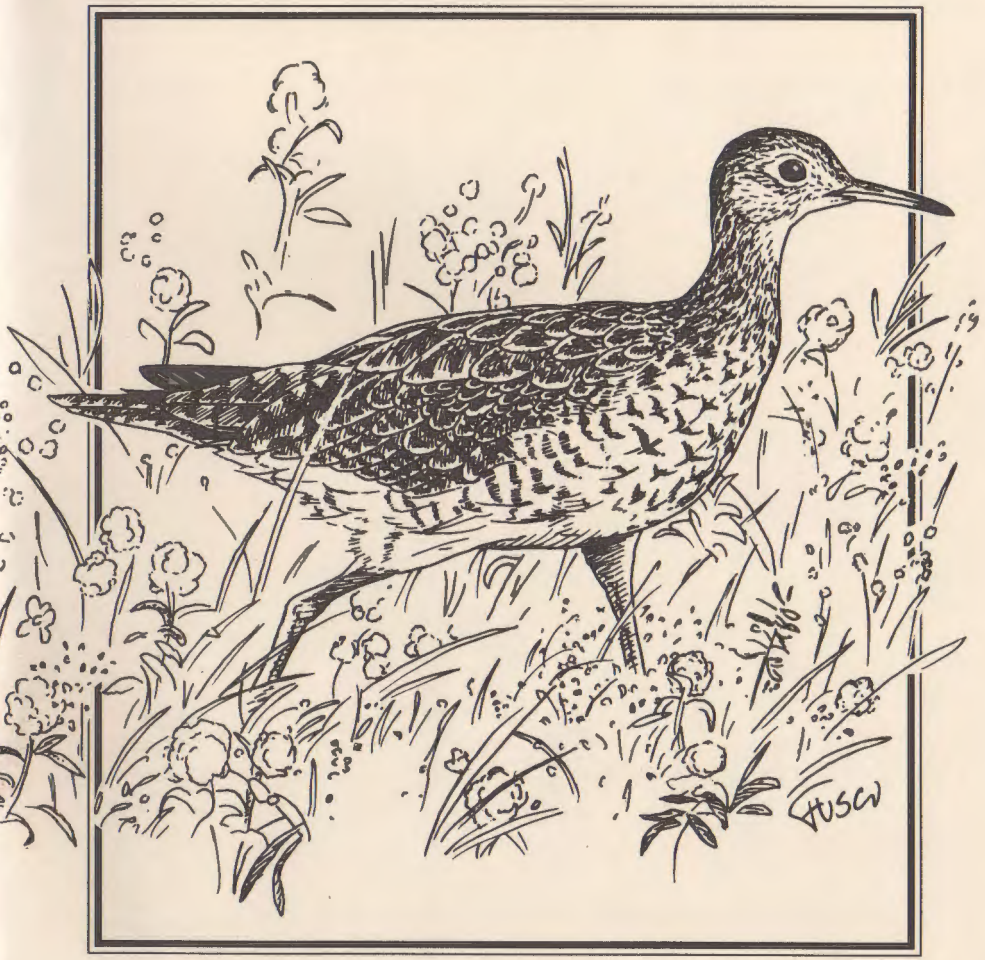
THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



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The Connecticut Warbler

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

Volume 16, Number 2 April 1996

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*) by Paul Fusco

Upland Sandpipers may be found in a number of places in Connecticut during migration, but their only known nesting site is at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. Our front cover depicts the way we may see this species feeding on their breeding grounds.

Paul Fusco is a Visual Media Designer for the Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division. Both his drawings and photographs grace the covers and pages of *Connecticut Wildlife*, a publication of that department. Paul is a member of the board and chairs the Conservation Committee of the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

THE MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD

Editor's Note: The following is a portion of the presentation by Milan Bull, of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award, at the annual meeting of the Connecticut Ornithological Association on March 23,1996.

Since 1991 the Mabel Osgood Wright Award has been presented at this Annual Meeting of COA in order to recognize those many individuals who have made significant contributions to the study and conservation of birds in Connecticut. I know you are aware that there is no lack of eligible recipients.

This year's award was especially easy to make. It involves a person known to the vast majority of us involved in any way with birds not only here in Connecticut, but across the country and countries as well.

Although our recipient, a 1955 Cornell graduate, has taught everywhere from the University College in Nigeria to Adelphi, his many talents in ornithology were honed with the Smithsonian Institute's Pacific Ocean Biological Program and he gained national recognition with his work on the California Condor with the Endangered Species Program. He also served as the director of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California in the late 60's.

His 26 years in Connecticut at the Yale Peabody Museum in New Haven as Collections Manager has literally made his name a household word necessary to the very existence of every student of Ornithology, not only at Yale, but at every other university, institution, society, and association in the state that deals with field studies involving birds. The numbers of students, State and Federal biologists, Connecticut Audubon employees, birders and others interested in birds that he has helped are legion.

He is the quintessential field man who is always there in the background with not only great ideas and advice, but with absolutely tireless backbreaking hard work. Whether you need to look at a series of study skins, set up a transect, grid, or net lane, or need a few acres of phragmities dug out of your friendly neighborhood bird sanctuary, he is always ready and able to lend a hand.

He has been the inspiration and the backbone of most of the projects involving bird studies in Connecticut from the colonial waterbird survey and the Faulkner Island Tern Project, to Least Tern and Piping Plover studies. He is a founder of COA, a member of CAS and the Birdcraft Museum as well as numerous scientific organizations. He is married, has four children and lives in Naugatuck.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great personal pleasure and appreciation that we present the Mabel Osgood Wright Award to Mr. Fred Sibley.

THE 1995-96 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

STEPHEN P. BROKER

The 1995-1996 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was conducted between December 16 and January 1. There were seventeen counts whose 15 mile diameter circles are located wholly or partly in the state. Shown below and on the tables are data for each count and the regional results for Northern (6), Mid-State (5), and Coastal (6) areas. Whereas prior CBC reports have been based on 10 year analyses of data, the present report is based on 20 years worth of data, with the premise that there has been good consistency to the extent of coverage of each count for the past 20 years. This discusson then, is based on examination of the results of the 324 Christmas Bird Counts conducted in Connecticut during the periods 1976-77 through 1995-96, and on 41 spreadsheets of data for each year, each count, and each region in the state.

Information includes total Count Day (CD) and Count Period (CW) species for each region or count (this year and for the last twenty count years), total individual birds counted, and numbers of field observers, feeder watchers, and total observers. These data include listings of those species recorded in 20 year high numbers, species recorded in at least 14 to 20 year low numbers, species new to the count, rarities, and other noteworthy species. New species are those recorded for the first time in 20 years, although some species may have been seen prior to 20 years ago on a given count. Rarities are defined as species observed 3 or fewer times in the last 10 years and 7 or fewer times in the last 20 years. Other noteworthy species are those which do not meet the definitions used for new or rare species but which are otherwise quite unusual or infrequent in their occurrence on a count.

The tables which accompany this report present the 1995-1996 CBC results in their entirety and highlight observable trends in the data for each count area

WHOLE STATE

17 CBC's were held in the state. A total of 161 CD + 2 CW species (66.3% of 20 year total, 236 CD + 10 CW species) and 407,741 individuals were counted. 798 field observers and 184 feeder watchers, for a total of 982 observers, participated in the count.

20 YEAR SPECIES HIGH COUNTS (15+1 hybrid): Red-throated Loon, Mallard hybrid, Common Eider, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Wild Turkey, American Oystercatcher, Monk Parakeet, Eastern Phoebe, American Crow, Northern Shrike.

14-20 YEAR SPECIES LOW COUNTS (19): Double-crested Cormorant, Wood Duck, American Kestrel, Northern Bobwhite (missed first time in 20 years) , Killdeer, Common Snipe, American Woodcock, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat (missed first time in 20 years), Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Purple Finch.

NEW SPECIES (0).

RARITIES (8 + 1 form): Greater White-fronted Goose, Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, Black Vulture, Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon (CW), Long-billed Dowitcher, Common Black-headed Gull, Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES (3): Northern Gannet, American Oystercatcher, White-winged Crossbill.

NORTHERN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Northern count area includes Barkhamsted (BA), Edwin Way Teale - Trailwood (EW), Hartford (HA), Litchfield Hills (LH), Lakeville - Sharon (LS) and Storrs (ST). A total of 111 CD + 5 CW species (69.5% of 20 year total, 163 CD + 4 CW species) and 185,199 total individuals were counted. 300 field observers and 108 feeder watchers (20 year High Count), for a total of 408 observers (20 year High Count), participated in the count.

20 YEAR SPECIES HIGH COUNTS (12): American Black Duck, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Wild Turkey, Long-eared Owl, Eastern Phoebe, Common Raven, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Shrike, European Starling.

14-20 YEAR SPECIES LOW COUNTS (6): Common Goldeneye, American Kestrel, Gray Catbird, White-throated Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch.

NEW SPECIES (1): Greater White-fronted Goose.

RARITIES (7+1 form): Red-throated Loon, Merlin, Lesser Black-backed Gull (CW), Monk Parakeet, Short-eared Owl, Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco, Lapland Longspur, White-winged Crossbill.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES (2): Great Cormorant, Greater Scaup.

MID-STATE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

This count area includes Oxford (OX), Pawling NY - CT (PA) (formerly Hidden Valley), Quinnipiac Valley (QV), Salmon River (SR), Woodbury - Roxbury (WR). A total of 108 CD + 0 CW species (64.7% of 20 year total, 164 CD + 3 CW species) and 68,134 total individuals (14 year Low Count) were counted. 165 field observers (17 year Low Count) and 16 feeder watchers, for a total of 181 observers, participated in the count.

20 YEAR SPECIES HIGH COUNTS (16): Great Cormorant, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Wild Turkey, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Shrike, American Tree Sparrow.

14-20 YEAR SPECIES LOW COUNTS (14): Common Goldeneye, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Northern Flicker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, European Starling, Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, House Finch.

NEW SPECIES (1): Dickcissel.

RARITIES (3): Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Lapland Longspur.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES (7): Double-crested Cormorant, Red-breasted Merganser, Virginia Rail, Fish Crow, Northern Shrike, Lincoln's Sparrow, Pine Grosbeak.

COASTAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

This count area includes Greenwich - Stamford (GS), New Haven (NH) New London (NL), Old Lyme - Saybrook (OL), Stratford - Milford (SM), Westport (WE). A total of 151 CD + 3 CW species (65.3% of 20 year total, 226 CD + 10 CW species) and 154,408 total individuals (20 year Low Count) were counted. 333 field observers and 60 feeder watchers, for a total of 393 observers, participated in the count.

20 YEAR SPECIES HIGH COUNTS (18+1 hybrid): Red-throated Loon, Mallard hybrid, Common Eider, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Wild Turkey, American Coot, American Oystercatcher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Monk Parakeet, Barred Owl, Eastern Phoebe, American Crow, Northern Shrike.

14-20 YEAR SPECIES LOW COUNTS (22 + 1 form): Great Cor-

morant, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Pintail, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Herring Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, European Starling, Common Yellowthroat (missed first time in 20 years), Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, "Ipswich" Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch.

NEW SPECIES (1): Black Vulture.

RARITIES (6): Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, Gyrfalcon (CW), Long-billed Dowitcher, Common Black-headed Gull, Northern Shrike.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES (2): Northern Gannet, American Oystercatcher.

RARITIES of 1995-96

Greater White-fronted Goose was recorded only for the third time in 20 years, being found on the Storrs count this year. This species previously had been observed in 1989 in Woodbury-Roxbury and in 1985 in Westport. Greater White-fronted Goose is a breeding bird of the arctic tundra and subarctic open forest, from Alaska to western Greenland and northern Eurasia. While this species winters along the Pacific Coast to Mexico and along the Gulf Coast also into Mexico, it is found casually east of the Mississippi Valley including along the Atlantic Coast. Greenland and Canada races both have been observed in Connecticut, where the species is regarded as a very rare vagrant.

Common Eider has been recorded on four New London counts, two old Lyme-Saybrook counts, one New Haven count, and one Stratford Milford count (1994) over the past twenty years. This year New London counted 100 Common Eider off Fisher's Island and thus not in Connecticut waters. This species is abundant off Cape Cod (Chatham) and the Islands, where the population is estimated to be in the range of half a million birds. It is found off the eastern end of Long Island and south along the coast to the Chesapeake Bay, but it remains very rare on Long Island Sound off Connecticut shores.

Drake Harlequin Ducks were observed in 1988 on Greenwich - Stamford and New London counts and in 1989 on the Westport count at the Norwalk marina. This year an adult female was found off Merwin Point, Milford on the New Haven count. The eastern North American population breeds from extreme northern loca-

tions south to central and eastern Quebec and eastern Labrador and in Greenland and Iceland. The wintering range along the Atlantic Coast extends to Cape Cod, Rhode Island, and southern Long Island and casually south along the entire Atlantic Seaboard. Harlequin Duck is a very rare migrant and winter visitor in Connecticut, as it typically favors rocky coastlines more common to Rhode Island. Rocky Merwin Point is in a sense a predictable location for Harlequins making it this far west in Long Island Sound.

Three very rare raptors were observed on the 1995-96 Connecticut counts: Black Vulture, Golden Eagle, and Gyrfalcon. Black Vulture is a southeastern species whose range previously extended as far north as the Chesapeake Bay and through Delaware and Maryland. Sightings in Connecticut have increased over the past decade or so, to the extent that it is no longer a great rarity. There are, however, only three sightings of Black Vulture on Connecticut CBC's, the first occurring in 1989 when a single bird was seen on the Woodbury - Roxbury count, and the second in 1992 when three were seen again in Woodbury - Roxbury. This year one Black Vulture was seen on the Greenwich - Stamford count.

Golden Eagle is not nearly so rare on Connecticut counts; individual Golden Eagles have been seen six times since 1983. This year's record is of an individual seen in Moodus, part of the Salmon River count. Zeranski and Baptist (1990) describe Golden Eagle as "rare but regular in winter" in Connecticut. Gyrfalcon first made the Connecticut CBC list in 1987 when observed during Count Week for the New Haven count. This individual remained in the New Haven area for a major portion of the winter of 1987-88, roosting on the southern terminus of West Rock Ridge, capturing starling prey at the then-operating West Haven landfill, and beheading and consuming its victims while perched in a snag next to the crematorium at Evergreen Cemetery. With frequent fresh-fallen snow below this favored tree, it was a sanguinary scene to say the least. Gyrfalcon again makes the Count Week list in 1995-96 with a bird observed on the Old Lyme - Saybrook count.

Our vote for Bird of the Count goes to the Long-billed Dowitcher closely studied and thoroughly described (including definitive single note keek calls as opposed to the three note tu-tu-tu of Short-billed) on the Stratford - Milford count. This individual was found feeding on tidal flats at Johnson's creek in Bridgeport. The only previous CBC records of dowitchers occurred on consecutive years from 1980 through 1982 when a Short-billed Dowitcher was seen in Greenwich - Stamford, followed by a dowitcher species, and a Longbilled Dowitcher in Stratford - Milford. The rarer

Long-billed Dowitcher migrates through our area fully a month later than does the Short-billed congener, but it occurs as an accidental by early winter. The species migrates from Quebec and Nova Scotia to wintering grounds in Florida and the Gulf Coast, most of Mexico, and Central America. Short-billed Dowitcher winters somewhat further northward along the Atlantic Coast, around Florida to the Gulf Coast, western and eastern coastal Mexico, through Central America, and to western and eastern coasts of northern South America.

For the third time in five years, Common Black-headed Gull was observed on a coastal count. Most recently, this handsome small gull was observed in Old Lyme - Saybrook (1991) and New Haven (1993). Greenwich - Stamford recorded one in 1978 and adds one seventeen years later with this year's record. Common Black-headed Gull breeds in Newfoundland, Iceland, and Eurasia, and the western population winters from Newfoundland, Labrador, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia south to Long Island, with casual occurrence southward to Florida. Zeranski and Baptist (1990) call it a rare winter visitor in Connecticut, and Veit and Petersen (1993) list it in Massachusetts as an "uncommon to locally fairly common winter resident."

Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco, typically the Rocky Mountain subspecies, is rare throughout New England, so the occurrence of one on the Litchfield Hills count this year is of significance. This marks the fourth time in twenty years that the "Oregon" version of winter junco has been recorded on one of our counts; northern, mid-state, and coastal regions all have reported this subspecies during the time period.

Other statewide noteworthy species include Northern Gannet in Greenwich - Stamford (this pelagic species has been seen now on four different coastal counts over the last five years and for six times in the last eight years), American Oystercatcher in Old Lyme - Saybrook (a large shorebird of striking appearance seen four years in a row and seven times since 1984 - in New London and Westport but most regularly in Old Lyme - Saybrook), and a single White-winged Crossbill on the Edwin Way Teale - Trail-wood count (observed on Connecticut counts for the eighth time since 1977).

STEPHEN BROKER, 76 Diamond St., New Haven, CT 06515-1313

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1995-96

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Red-throated Loon			1									16	31	9	142	19	8	246
Common Loon												8	11	33	21	9	4	86
Pied-billed Grebe							2				2	10	12	10	6	21	3	66
Horned Grebe				CW								33	16	60	56	10	24	199
Red-necked Grebe													1	1				2
Northern Gannet												2						2
Great Cormorant			1				5		3	15		33	25	23	26	35	17	183
D. c. Cormorant							1			1		1	6	11	5	1		26
Cormorant, Sp.															15			15
American Bittern															1			1
Great Blue Heron		14	9			CW	10	3	2	5	7	26	29	29	13	20	23	190
Black-cr. Night Heron												3	1	7		8	7	26
Mute Swan			1	21			36	11	187	105	32	81	462	533	126	48	189	1832
Gr.Wh.-fronted Goose						1												1
Snow Goose		1	4	2	1			1	3		2	2	1	3	2	1		23
Brant												22	16	53			524	615
Canada Goose	52	42	4425	360	3246	1360	938	1255	1992	1089	7513	4639	4845	1644	834	1987	3630	39851
Wood Duck			2	CW	2	1			1	2	2	9	4	2		1	5	31
Green-winged Teal				1	3				3		2	1	13		5	84	7	119
American Black Duck	70	29	127	186	338	25	58	39	75	155	117	665	1235	583	603	1516	765	6586
Mallard	244	346	1533	696	1412	285	327	227	767	318	966	1330	1597	1749	600	562	1152	14011
Mallard Hybrid			1									2	49			12	3	67
Northern Pintail				2			2				2	1	1		1			9
Blue-winged Teal														1				1
Northern Shoveler												1		CW		2		3
Gadwall				3								12	97	25	4	149	9	299

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Eurasian Wigeon													1			1		2
American Wigeon			2		2				1	1	2	47	**52**	62	3	96	115	383
Canvasback												2	37	89	24	123	13	288
Redhead												3	1		13			19
Ring-necked Duck		10		13			6	2		2	12	438	42	34		50	5	614
Greater Scaup				CW								1617	1768	106	155	570	20	4236
Lesser Scaup				1			9					1	157	60		4	1	233
Scaup, Sp.										2			25					27
Common Eider														100				100
Harlequin Duck													1					1
Oldsquaw												208	80	15	9	66	181	559
Black Scoter													17	5	2			24
Surf Scoter												3	51	32	60			146
White-winged Scoter												CW	117	20	14	12	20	183
Scoter, Sp.															21			21
Common Goldeneye	4			1	4		3	---		1	4	341	263	202	285	387	340	1835
Bufflehead				CW			2					415	175	**503**	156	99	354	1704
Hooded Merganser	11		2	9			21	13			10	103	157	308	24	66	75	799
Common Merganser	63		158	28		19	162	56	27	326	715	86	303	**4**	633	125	49	2754
Red-br. Merganser			3						1			291	166	618	185	170	353	1787
Ruddy Duck							1		3			51	19	1	10	2	2	89
Black Vulture												1						1
Turkey Vulture		3		3		CW		3	3	2	8	39		3	1		27	92

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

CW Count Period
--- First time not seen in 10 + yrs.
XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1995-96

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Bald Eagle	5	1	7	2	2			3	1	9	17	1	2	2	16		1	69
Northern Harrier			1			1			2	1	1	2	13	13	32	18	9	93
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	2	31	3	6	1	6	3	7	6	10	11	22	13	21	8	11	164
Cooper's Hawk	2	2	8	3	4	3	1	9	3	5	13	9	5	4	5	4	5	85
Northern Goshawk	1		1	1	2			1		1	1	2	1		2		1	14
Accipiter, Sp.																	6	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	CW	2	7	1		3	4	1	4	4	6	11	8	4	24	1	4	84
Red-tailed Hawk	15	19	138	40	40	16	39	51	58	32	79	90	78	37	40	28	77	877
Rough-legged Hawk	1	CW	1								1		2	1	10	1		17
Buteo, Sp.						1				1							1	3
Golden Eagle										1								1
American Kestrel		---	8	CW	1	2	1	3	4	---	3	2	4	---	1	3	1	33
Merlin		1	1									2	2			2	1	9
Peregrine Falcon			2						1			2		1		1	1	8
Gyrfalcon															CW			0
Falcon, Sp.																	1	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	1		4	14	3	2	3	13	7	12	7	7	6		3	1	14	99
Ruffed Grouse	6		1	7	9	8	3	2	1	7	7	1			2		1	55
Wild Turkey	262		32	455	191	82	104	326	9	120	173	15	111		16		54	1950
Clapper Rail												CW	3					3
Virginia Rail									2				2	2	5			11
American Coot				81	27		2	9	15		12	73	39	39	129	10	2	438
Black-bellied Plover												5		18	30	CW	24	77
Killdeer									2		1	6	4	4	4	3	5	29
Am. Oystercatcher															4			4
Greater Yellowlegs													8			2	6	16

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Ruddy Turnstone												21	9	9	87		2	128
Red Knot																1		1
Sanderling													41		112	**39**	152	344
Purple Sandpiper												4	49	36	35		8	132
Dunlin												**CW**	13	43	293	83	242	674
Long-billed Dowitcher																1		1
Common Snipe			1	1		1				1	1		**2**		1	1		9
American Woodcock													**1**		3		1	5
Laughing Gull													1					1
Com. Bl-headed Gull												1						1
Bonaparte's Gull												27	99	40	7	4	3	180
Ring-billed Gull	79	38	2039	109	15	18	334	123	1083	371	868	2073	**2532**	1194	615	2182	799	14472
Herring Gull	24	102	3956	**43**	16	**59**	578	**97**	**88**	**283**	**214**	**906**	**1510**	4986	909	**1800**	2925	18496
Iceland Gull			4												1			5
Lesser Bl-blacked Gull			CW									1				1		2
Glaucous Gull			2															2
Great Bl-backed Gull	6	47	431	9	1	3	28	**4**	21	47	69	89	346	372	162	182	123	1940
Gull, Sp.										8								8
Rock Dove	256	166	3022	457	279	**207**	256	424	460	112	913	**413**	911	339	266	1277	772	10532
Mourning Dove	275	**114**	1561	422	399	290	165	697	522	379	722	**336**	**491**	392	373	463	**373**	8474
Monk Parakeet				1								7	11			202	87	308
Barn Owl													1					1
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	7	13	30	**1**	2	5	7	36	13	43	35	14	4	10	3	30	254

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XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1995-96

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Great Horned Owl	4	7	20	9	4	9	2	5	13	23	26	12	11	5	25	3	4	182
Barred Owl	6	1	5	1	2	4	1	4	1	3	4	5	2	4	5		2	50
Long-eared Owl			11						2			1		2		7		23
Short-eared Owl			CW									1	1	1	2		2	7
North. Saw-whet Owl			1		1	3		1		2	2			5	4	1	1	21
Owl, Sp.													1					1
Belted Kingfisher	5	2	20	7	4		9	**1**	6	7	12	18	22	16	23	12	17	181
Red-bld. Woodpecker	6	18	81	17	18	39	9	38	12	55	59	72	32	21	57	20	31	585
Yellow-bld. Sapsucker	1		1	1		CW		5	2	2	4	4	3	1	5		1	30
Downy Woodpecker	75	41	367	116	58	78	47	129	48	87	207	**152**	110	55	130	53	**96**	1849
Hairy Woodpecker	24	11	76	30	17	21	11	52	9	26	54	33	17	4	27	5	21	438
Northern Flicker	2	**4**	51	6	6	7	6	**5**	22	19	18	16	**29**	41	31	7	**7**	277
Pileated Woodpecker	7		3	12	8	1	1	10	4	6	7	8	3		4		**3**	77
Eastern Phoebe		2		2					1		1	2	3		1		1	13
Horned Lark	36	27	187	153	633	251	9		272	8	446	80	115	65	99	97	20	2498
Blue Jay	332	353	1097	513	283	502	231	420	283	639	993	495	360	446	671	182	237	8037
American Crow	569	461	28500	5087	1289	492	1227	1009	1267	638	4533	1886	6858	798	776	1476	4823	61691
Fish Crow			10				4	1		2		6	44	3		12	17	99
Common Raven	5	2		3	6													16
Black-cpd. Chickadee	1365	308	1664	1484	475	677	389	738	368	719	1339	895	583	523	1019	238	**412**	13196
Tufted Titmouse	155	200	964	223	82	362	163	295	84	478	652	493	211	204	345	155	**204**	5471
Red-br. Nuthatch	41	6	22	23	6	4	1	2	4	5	7	**5**	11	8	6		3	154
White-br. Nuthatch	123	**52**	322	188	79	139	56	165	47	146	270	165	71	73	123	32	**79**	2152
Brown Creeper	8	8	16	11	4	**3**	2	7	4		7	7	5		7	2	**1**	92
Carolina Wren	2	1	20	CW	4	8	6	6	4	12	19	24	17	42	46	9	17	237
Winter Wren	1	1	3	1			1	3	1	2	4	10	7		**2**	2	4	42

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Marsh Wren													3	1	2			6
Golden-crown' Kinglet	**25**	**6**	**14**	39	21	46	**5**	16	13	26	**26**	**7**	**13**	12	13		8	290
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				1		2			2		---	1	CW				1	7
Eastern Bluebird	37	86	68	211	54	73	104	106	44	185	400	87	16	64	140	1	78	1754
Hermit Thrush	2	1	3	1	1	4	13	4	6	13	24	12	13	16	19	4	4	142
American Robin	**4**	47	204	61	104	41	26	10	**30**	46	550	93	222	125	195	9	16	1783
Gray Catbird			---	1			4	1	2		---	5	10	12	11	---	**1**	47
Northern Mockingbird	36	40	192	43	**13**	93	59	68	101	70	140	**119**	184	181	163	112	76	1890
Brown Thrasher			2										3	2			1	8
American Pipit														3	1	2	10	16
Cedar Waxwing	16	38	65	64	129	177	6	13	40	10	343	101	43	92	63		13	1213
Northern Shrike	10	1	5	10	1	4		2	3	3	8	1	7	6	**9**	2		67
European Starling	1058	**1572**	76000	2528	1349	1660	**1828**	702	**2218**	**736**	**2470**	**2124**	**3711**	**3219**	2826	**1372**	9099	114472
Yel.-rumped Warbler			**5**	1		1	3	1	5	4	8	2	4	59	14	**1**	**[20]**	108
Palm Warbler													1					1
Northern Cardinal	97	54	674	194	101	185	117	217	140	163	354	275	236	186	222	131	179	3525
Dickcissel									**1**									1
Eastern Towhee		1	2	1			2		3	1	1	3	**4**	13	6	**CW**	**1**	38
Amer. Tree Sparrow	95	**33**	376	342	319	72	77	240	124	131	783	57	317	122	152	136	**46**	3622
Chipping Sparrow			1							1								2
Field Sparrow			31	1		7	38	---	12	40	37	---	**31**	55	34	**3**	14	303
Vesper Sparrow													2				**1**	3
Savannah Sparrow			6		1	1	1		6	6	4	1	20	**1**	6	**2**	5	60

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CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1995-96

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
"Ipswich" Sparrow															1			1
Fox Sparrow			4		1		CW	2		1		5	4	1	6	1	1	26
Song Sparrow	14	18	220	59	27	52	145	54	66	59	289	173	347	176	231	167	129	2226
Lincoln's Sparrow											1							1
Swamp Sparrow			8	5		3	14	3	5	7	21	11	84	---	27	4	15	207
White-thr. Sparrow	5	23	244	37	32	76	140	102	66	135	239	419	387	260	314	147	99	2725
White-crn. Sparrow					1	3		2	2		1		1					10
Sparrow, Sp.						2												2
Dark-eyed Junco	511	135	1279	395	498	510	273	342	242	479	1085	356	375	108	303	70	280	7241
"Oregon" Junco				1														1
Lapland Longspur					1				1				3	2	18	2		27
Snow Bunting	1		15	12	13	31	1		3		7	1	8	26	38	23	62	241
Red-wgd. Blackbird			331		13		2	8	7	2	---	116	1159	159	528	5	45	2375
Eastern Meadowlark			2		2		CW		7		3	2	6		4			26
Rusty Blackbird		6	20		8								3	3	3	18	4	65
Common Grackle	1		320	1	1				48	1	1	59	536	82	216	1	19	1286
Brown-hdd. Cowbird		18	489	5	25	4	CW	4	1		3	21	346	92	529	24	11	1572
Blackbird, Sp.															14		85	99
Baltimore Oriole														CW				0
Pine Grosbreak	1		1		1					1								4
Purple Finch	4	1	4	32	1	15	---		14	---	12	5	17		4		2	111
House Finch	392	27	1355	547	437	309	168	327	128	243	654	904	481	572	525	308	380	7757
Red Crossbill				1														1
Wh.-winged Crossbill		1																1
Common Redpoll		55		37			1	39			2		CW				CW	134
Pine Siskin	1		4	25		2	2		11	2	6	13	2	4	7		5	84

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
American Goldfinch	166	55	570	176	93	82	108	206	143	149	263	428	271	85	165	**19**	183	3162
Evening Grosbeak	81	18	1	32	22	CW		3	1		3	2	1					164
House Sparrow	397	271	1634	469	201	467	390	433	394	244	457	1072	799	1071	930	1148	535	10912
TOTALS																		
Individuals	7102	4958	135330	16224	12653	8932	8816	9187	11737	9074	29320	25562	36426	23620	19120	18602	31078	407741
CD Species	63	61	92	82	73	65	75	72	89	79	89	118	130	109	118	102	114	161
CW Species	1	1	2	6	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	1	2	1	2
Field Observers	27	10	171	42	26	24	25	25	17	51	47	78	67	42	50	28	68	798
Feeder Watchers	10	1	80	10	7	0	0	12	2	2	0	16	9	6	5	2	22	184
Observers	37	11	251	52	33	24	25	37	19	53	47	94	76	48	55	30	90	982
Party Hours	90	40.3	487	121	64	85	78.5	96	67	104	171	225	179	120	122	102	163	2314
Party Miles	691	273	1151	501	444	498	398	483	494	541	846	699	550	391	521	343	624	9446

SUB TOTALS	NORTHERN	MID-STATE	COSTAL
Individuals	185199	68134	154408
CD Species	111	108	151
CW Species	5	0	3
Field Observers	300	165	333
Feeder Watchers	108	16	60
Observers	408	181	393
Party Hours	887	516	911
Party Miles	3557	2762	3128

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CONNECTICUT'S 1995 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

NEIL CURRIE AND GREG HANISEK

Following a cool front the night of August 18, eager hawk watchers were at Lighthouse Point the next day to watch four just as eager raptors (three Northern Harriers and a Broad-winged Hawk) migrating to the west over New Haven Harbor. The hawk migration and hawk watch seasons were under way. During the rest of August winds were northerly on all but two days and another 112 hawks, including 68 Ospreys, passed. This was a normal count for August. August 26 was the first day of the fall hawk watch at Quaker ridge in Greenwich. For the rest of the month, as at Lighthouse, Ospreys and American Kestrels dominated the scene, and 21 Broadwings began their inland march towards Texas.

At Lighthouse Point between September 1 and 9, migrants increased in number as 663 hawks, mainly Ospreys and Kestrels, migrated southwestward past the Point. During the same period at Quaker Ridge another 50 Broadwings passed, but those days saw more Sharp-shinned Hawks (74) and more American Kestrels (176) than Broadwings. By September 10 a large high pressure system had settled over the Great Lakes region bringing north winds to Connecticut. That day 404 hawks were counted at Lighthouse point. At Quaker Ridge September 10 and 11 brought the season's first big push also. On those two days, 1911 Broadwings crossed over the lookout. By now the heavy mid-September flight of Broadwings was expected. However, the clear blue skies on the 10th were an omen of things to come. Cold fronts moving eastward ahead of high pressure systems normally bring northerly breezes and puffy, cumulus clouds against which the hawks are easier to see. The fall's fronts brought some northerly winds but they were light and on just as many days, following the cold fronts, winds were from the southwest, with skies often clear and cloudless. High flying migrants were more difficult to spot and many may have been overlooked. This could be one explanation for the lowest count at Lighthouse Point in 12 years. More *on this* later.

Although Broadwings were expected at both Quaker Ridge and at inland lookouts (see Tables I and 2) the next three days were quiet, with rain keeping watchers home on the 13th. On the 14th a cold front approached, passing through the region that evening and on the 15th, bringing clearing skies and some cumulus clouds.

Although this was a Friday, many of the inland sites were manned and watchers found the Broadwings to be making their first major move. As always, the southwestward flight of these hawks was funneling large numbers of them into the Greenwich area. At Quaker Ridge the Broadwings passed by the hundreds all day and at days end the all time one day record had been set - 31,988.

That night phones were ringing and when they received the news inland watchers were astonished as their counts, reasonably high, didn't seem to account for the numbers arriving over Quaker Ridge. Where did these hawks come from? There are several possible explanations. First, there are not that many inland sites, and they are scattered (see Figure 1). In the Bridgewater - Newtown - Redding area three sites do form a north-south line across the line of flight of the Broadwings but these sites are four miles apart. Broadwings could easily pass between them undetected. Another clue comes from the sky conditions that day. The morning began clear and by 10 a.m. cumulus clouds were forming with a northwest wind pushing them to the southeast. Around noon these clouds began to disintegrate, making the search for high flying hawks, against clear blue sky, much more difficult. Did watchers fail to spot hawks high over their lookouts? Possibly, because at Johnnycake Farm in Harwinton, where the day's best inland count was made, a sharp eyed observer was spotting Broadwings overhead, but only with the aid of binoculars.

Inland the fall Broadwing counts were the lowest in years. At Whippoorwill Hill in Newtown the count was the lowest in twelve years, and on the 15th was an unspectacular 1,300. Most of the Broadwings had passed undetected, except at Greenwich, on the 15th. Lower than normal numbers migrated on the 16th and 18th and again through clear skies.

Following the Broadwing season the inland lookouts shut down. Broadwings are gone, other species of hawks continue to migrate, but inland they are so scattered watching becomes discouraging. The species that are migrating, in their southwestward flight, tend to concentrate along or close to the Connecticut coastline and to funnel towards Quaker Ridge. Thus the watches continue there and at Lighthouse Point. At Quaker Ridge there were record counts of several species (Table 5). Black Vultures were spotted for the second time in three years. (One was also seen at Whippoorwill Hill and they are now being seen regularly in Connecticut throughout the year). An astounding 23 Golden Eagles, a record, were at Quaker Ridge, 16 in October and 7 in November. Red-shouldered Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks also came in record

numbers as did Turkey Vultures in October and November. In near record numbers, Bald Eagles (55), Cooper's Hawks (259), American Kestrels, Merlins, and Broadwings passed. (Yes, although there was a one day record, the 1986 yearly count was greater). The watch at Quaker Ridge continued into November but as numbers of migrants dwindled the site shut down on November 19th.

Following the Broadwing season the other hawks continue to move over Lighthouse Point also, the largest numbers migrating between September 10th and the end of October. The most abundant are the Sharp-shinned Hawks, American Kestrels, and Ospreys. Like Whippoorwill Hill and other inland sites the season's total at Lighthouse Point was the lowest in twelve years. This is in contrast to the record numbers and the third highest non-Broadwing count ever at Quaker Ridge. The counting and study of hawk migration always seem to add more questions than are answered and fall 1995 flights provided no exceptions. Why the records and high at Quaker Ridge, but why the lows inland and at Lighthouse Point? The answer or answers are at best vague. The best explanation is probably wind, wind from the wrong direction and light wind at Lighthouse Point. When the winds are not northerly over Connecticut, flight lines tend to shift more to the west and north.

Once more the fall hawk migration was a thrilling spectacle, particularly for those lucky birders at Quaker Ridge on September 15th, and even for watchers at other lookouts where flights were not as expected.

Recorders and compilers at Connecticut hawk watch sites this past fall included: Lois Aldi, Dan Barvir, Ray Belding, Ron and Betty Bell, Polly Brody, Tom Burke, Paul Carrier, Kevin Clark, Neil Currie, Bob DeCandido, Paul Desjardins, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Carl Ekroth, Richard English, Jeff Fengler, Joe Ferrari, Larry Fischer, David Fiske, Jay Gartner, Joyce and Norbert Grohoski, Frank Guida, Greg Hanisek, Seth Kellogg, Phyllis Kitchin, Frank Mantlik, Tom Mason, Jim McBride, Jack Olszewski, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer, Janet Petricone, Matt Popp, Steve Potter, Meredith Sampson, Fred Schroeder, Will Schultz, Dori Sosensky, Art Titus, Vivek Tiwari, Tony Tortora, Mike Usai, Lyle Whittlesey, Joe Zaybrowski, and Joe Zeranski.

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SITE LOCATIONS

Booth Hill - West Hartland
Beelzebub Road - South Windsor
Powder Hill - Middlefield
Taine Mountain - Burlington
Johnnycake Mountain - Harwinton
Woodchuck Lane - Harwinton
Northfield - Northfield
Thomaston Dam - Thomaston
Chestnut Hill - Litchfield
Botsford Hill - Bridgewater
Whippoorwill Hill - Newtown
Huntington St. Park - Redding
Maltby Lakes - Orange
East Rock Park - New Haven
East Shore Park - New Haven
Lighthouse Point Park - New Haven
Quaker Ridge - Greenwich
Mount Tom - Bantam

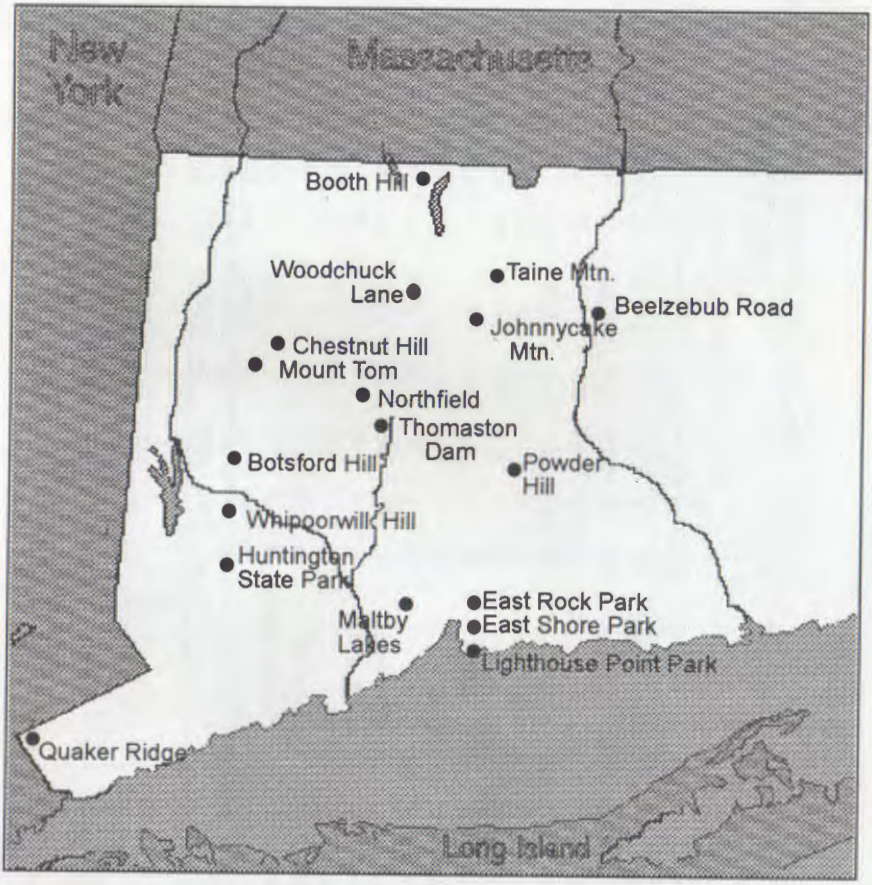

Figure 1. Broad-winged Hawk Flight Lookout Site Locations

Table 1: Broad-winged Hawk Flights - Fall 1995

SITES	September 1995										Total
	10	11	12	15	16	18	19	23	24	All other dates	
Booth Hill, West Hartland					470						470
Beelzebub Road, South Windsor	1	23		177	6	36	145				388
Powder Hill, Middlefield	5	107		48							160
Taine Mountain, Burlington	261	6		793	67						1127
Johnnycake Mt., Harwinton	467			2338	487						3292
Woodchuck Lane, Harwinton					790						790
Chestnut Hill, Litchfield					775	478					1253
Thomaston Dam, Thomaston							2092				2092
Mount Tom, Bantam					14	503					517
Botsford Hill, Bridgewater	11		22	309	417	246					1005
Whippoorwill Hill, Newtown	107	103	39	1343	281	388					2261
Huntington State Park, Redding	16	13	6	1529	94	16	51				1725
Maltby Lakes, Orange		197	5	277	48	19				88	634
East Shore Park, New Haven	112						19	89	131	35	386
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven	12	8		51		5	23	389	222	56	766
Quaker Ridge, Greenwich	598	1313	12	31988	38	1233	466	261	611	112	36632
Total	1590	1770	84	38853	3487	2924	2796	739	964	291	53498

Table 2. Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 1995

SITES	Total Hours	SPECIES																	Total
		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	
Booth Hill	6		5	7	7	1	22				470				10				522
Beelzebub Road	47			15			29				388				17			15	464
Powder Hill	15			9		1	14	6		1	160				21	2			214
Taine Mountain	18			26	4		15				1127				2				1174
Johnnycake Mt.	17			16	1	6	19	5			3292				4		1	2	3346
Woodchuck Lane	8		1	14	2	2	17	1			790	3			16			1	847
Chestnut Hill	14			17	3	1	34	1			1253				13	1		1	1324
Northfield	3						2	1		2		41			2			4	52
Thomaston Dam	2										2092	2				1			2095
Mount Tom	9			4		2	12	7			517	5			5				552
Botsford Hill	27			14	1	2	14				1005				6			2	1044
Whippoorwill Hill	41	1		44	4	4	93	6	1		2261	26			46	2		10	2498
Huntington State Park	31			23	1	12	108	11			1725	10			63	1	1	4	1959
Maltby Lakes	25		4	55	3	7	92	3			634	1			14			6	819
East Rock Park	5		25	10		12	70	7	1	4		11			8	1	1	7	157
East Shore Park	37		137	147	9	19	1055	34		6	386	70			431	3	4	37	2338
Lighthouse Point Park	513		181	1407	33	481	5386	688	7	62	766	717	1		1879	307	53	207	12175
Quaker Ridge	632	3	617	627	55	258	3123	259	15	260	36632	742		23	970	78	16	101 *	43779
Total	1450	4	970	2435	123	808	10105	1029	24	335	53498	1628	1	23	3507	396	76	397	75359

SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

BV - Black Vulture
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
* Includes one undentified Eagle

Table 3. Lighthouse Point Park Hawkwatch, New Haven, CT - Fall 1995

MONTH		SPECIES																	
	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
August	46.0			68	1	10	6	2			1				27	1			116
September	176.0		25	740	15	238	2688	321	3	1	728	19			1323	96	6	124	6327
October	173.0		111	593	14	151	2362	343	2	21	37	223			517	185	38	75	4672
November	118.0		45	6	3	82	330	22	2	40		475	1		12	25	9	8	1060
1995 Total	513.0		181	1407	33	481	5386	688	7	62	766	717	1		1879	307	53	207	12175
1994 Total	615.0		196	1566	29	800	8035	911	3	58	5738	321		5	4128	224	39	456	22509

Species abbreviations as in Table 2

Table 4. Quaker Ridge Hawkwatch, Greenwich, CT - Fall 1995

MONTH		SPECIES																	
	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
August	48.0		1	21		2	4	2			21				13				64
September	244.0		16	288	46	149	1789	95	1	4	36602	17			723	47	2	58	39837
October	233.0	3	378	310	8	93	1254	148	11	151	9	421		16	232	30	14	35 *	3113
November	107.0		222	8	1	14	76	14	3	105	0	304		7	2	1		8	765
1995 Total	632	3	617	627	55	258	3123	259	15	260	36632	742		23	970	78	16	101	43779
1994 Total	584		354	393	29	166	2128	165	5	136	18180	289		7	842	31	9	79	22813

Species abbreviations as in Table 2 * Includes 1 unidentified eagle

Table 5: 12 Years at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich, CT

YEAR		SPECIES																
	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
1984	126		54	145	6	36	1065	22	1	6	20219	62		1	144	2	4	92	21859
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	* 12427
1992	525		396	410	24	80	2495	183	11	117	8187	468	1	3	465	47	17	181	13085
1993	511	1	381	518	64	154	2053	166	11	132	29118	252	1	11	535	29	13	113	33552
1994	584		354	393	29	166	2128	165	5	136	18180	289		7	842	31	9	79	22813
1995	632	3	617	627	55	258	3123	259	15	260	36632	742		23	970	78	16	101	43779
Ave/Year	505		315	570	22	184	2784	142	11	97	18792	330	1	5	679	33	16	210	24190

* Includes 1 Swainson's Hawk

SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

BV - Black Vulture
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

BOOKS ON BIRDS

Alan H. Brush

Finding birds, knowing exactly where to go, is a skill and can be almost as exciting as actually spotting one. Deciding where to go, planning, using your knowledge of habitat, seasonal behavior, and identifying characters are all part of the package. It also helps to know where to look. Not to be outdone, authors and publishers come up with guides to where to go to find birds. These are not guides to the identification of birds (field guides), but guides to localities. They provide directions, instructions, sometimes maps, landmarks, and even parking tips.

Most birders are familiar with this genre. Coverage is usually limited to a relatively small area, perhaps an island, a specific region, physiographic feature, or the parks in a larger area. The classics, which go back a generation or two, are Pettingill's *A Guide to Bird Finding West of the Mississippi* (1953) and *A Guide to Bird Finding East of the Mississippi* (1951). At over 650 pages each, they are not easily carried into the field. The bulkiness is compensated for with G. M. Sutton's drawings. They were reasonably comprehensive, but published when there were only 48 states and many fewer birders!

It was only after some time and the increase in the popularity of birding that others appeared; one need look only on the shelf of most birders to find at least one or two. Examples that have proven handy over the years for many COA members are C. Wild's *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area* (Smithsonian Press, 1983), W. L. Murphy's *A Birder's Guide to Trinidad and Tobago* (Peregrine Enterprises, 1986), and the ever popular *A Birders Guide to Florida* by H.R. Holt (ABA Sales, 1989). The ABA, by the way, will have redone the entire Lane series, and even added several titles, by the end of the year. Booksellers' catalogues are full of examples of these guides, and most of the interesting areas in the U.S. are covered. The volumes generally are small, pocket-sized, paperbacks. They are often published by local bird groups, clubs or the ABA. The information varies in detail and accuracy. These are not intended to be a permanent record as both local conditions and the fauna change. They often include seasonal information on areas, to reflect changes with migration, weather, etc.

I want to comment here on two volumes, relatively new, and well beyond the scope of those that seem so familiar. Both are published by Princeton University Press and written by Nigel Wheatley. They are *Where to Watch Birds in South America* (1995, 431 pg., $35.00) and *Where to Watch Birds in Africa* (1995, 432 pg., $35.00). They may be considered together as they are very similar in format and content. Both are organized basically by country and include major off-shore islands. There is some introductory information for each country that includes a paragraph on getting around, accommodations, climate and timing, conservation, a bit on the bird lists and expectations. Each site give lists of endemic specialties and 'others'. Information is clearly aimed towards listers. Small maps are usually included.

Each of the Wheatley books covers over 200 sites. This means not a lot of detail—"local knowledge" in the sailing vernacular. Further, space is divided between species lists and local description. In the African volume there is also a list of species names that differ between various field guides and the Clements check list. Both books have indices based on English bird names but place names and scientific names of birds are excluded. Most locations are given a single page which includes a map! In other words, information is minimal, but useful. And where does it come from? Well, obviously Wheatley has not visited every one of the sites. Indeed, the information comes from "many birders" who have shared information, reports, comments, and all sorts of other information with the author.

The thing that was stunning to me was the geographic comprehensiveness of the effort. Looking through these volumes, which are continent wide, set me thinking about what comparable efforts are available. Handy examples are Robinson's *A Birder's Guide to Japan* (1987, 358 pg., Ibis Publishing), which covers an entire (but small) country; and J. Bransbury, *Where to Find Birds in Australia* (1987, 539 pg., Hutchinson, Australia). The latter is a much larger country, with many more species, but the volume includes some color photos of habitat. The outer limit might be A.R. Lotz, *Birding Around the World* (1987, 266 pg., Dodd Mead, N.Y.). Volumes like the one from Lotz trade vast geographic coverage for local detail. The volumes on Japan and Australia are indeed loaded with useful information and provide some of the skills necessary to navigate in the country as well as accurate descriptions of sites. In my opinion both are a cut above Wheatley.

Given the ultimate trade off between area covered and details possible, we can ask how well these efforts succeed. One reviewer

has said "Regrettably", that the Wheatley South American volume "... contains numerous factual and spelling errors". This must, in part, come from the fact that the areas involved are speciose and contain so many diverse and different habitats that countries should somehow be covered in separate volumes. It so happens that something like that is happening. D.W. Rogers has produced *Site Guides to Costa Rica* (1994, 90 pg., Cinclus $14.50), *La Ruta Maya* (1994, 54 pg. $8.95) which includes the Yucatan, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and *Venezuela* (1993, 48 pg. $14.50). Each is subtitled "a guide to the best birding places".

Site finding guides have become something more than a cottage industry. While vast areas of the world are still not covered, e.g., Russia (in the broad geographic sense and especially east of the Caucasus Mts.), China and the Indian Subcontinent, for starters, the material currently available is becoming more useful. Travel to more exotic locations has become easier, but no less expensive. My hunch is that English language site guides will become increasingly available for many of the individual countries covered in books like the Wheatley volumes. These are pioneering efforts, and the rest of the industry cannot be far behind.

The one remaining question—are they useful?—can be answered in a word. Yes. The dozen or so in the Holt series, for example, give amazingly detailed instructions, informative maps, and useful information on almost all sites. Wheatley, on the other hand, is sparse, with emphasis on the lists of birds rather than information on accessibility, details on conditions, or where to sleep and eat. If you do your birding from a "want" list, then Wheatly would be helpful. He falls a little short with information to the traveler. However, anyone planning a trip to either South America or Africa should certainly consult these books.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

FALL, August 1 to November 30, 1995

The season produced an exciting selection of rarities, including one addition to the state list, but the most interesting phenomenon involved common species. Beginning in late September, a tremendous movement of woodland birds brought tens of thousands of diurnal migrants through coastal watch points. These included regular passage species such as Blue Jays, Cedar Waxwings and American Robins, as well as more sedentary ones such as Downy Woodpeckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches. What triggered this phenomenon? Speculation centered on the dry summer, which may have diminished food supplies.

Northern irruptives also put in a good showing, especially the more common northern finches, Northern Shrikes and migrant owls. In addition, many regular migrants appeared early, as notations throughout this report illustrate. A good reproductive year on the prairies resulted in interesting waterfowl flights. This was most evident in the Central Flyway, where huge flocks of ducks jammed radar at several airports. Nothing that dramatic happened here, but note the reports on species such as Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, American Coot and even American Bittern.

The hawk flights probably serve best as reminders of how many variables come into play from year to year and how difficult it is draw conclusions based on one year's showing. Quaker Ridge in Greenwich produced some record-setting results, while Lighthouse Point in New Haven had its second-lowest seasonal total in 16 years of full-time watching. The wildly unpredictable surge of Broad-winged Hawks played a key role in this contradictory result.

Lighthouse Point and Bluff Point in Groton serve as interesting windows on the migration of passerines, which are too scattered at most locations to offer a good feel for the magnitude of seasonal movements. The season's totals given for Lighthouse Point represent a sample count covering about 110 hours. These probably represent no more than a quarter of the actual number of birds passing through for the season. Migration was good throughout the state, but the Storrs area was the hotspot.

This report is loaded with significant records from the mudflats at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir and the turf at adjacent Windham Airport in North Windham, as well as the brushy and birdy Lot W at the University of Connecticut (UConn) campus.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A Common Loon August 10 at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford-Canton represented the vanguard of the southbound movement (JMe); a tour of the coast from Stratford to Westport produced 55+ November 19 (RN et al.). Red-throated Loons put in a good inland showing at Nepaug, with four November 18-19 (JMe,JKa et al.). Coastal flights of 50 to 100+ birds were noted November 10-20 at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) and Old Saybrook (DP,GH,NC). Bantam Lake in Litchfield-Morris, a staging area for Pied-billed Grebe, held about a dozen September 20-November 30 (LW et al.). Great Meadows in Stratford, another gathering spot, held 10 on November 19 (RN et al.) and Laurel Reservoir, Stamford, had 12 on October 22 (EJ). The best Red-necked Grebe count was eight passing Meigs Point at HBSP November 4 (BD). Two were on Bantam Lake November 18 (JMe et al.), and singles were seen October 25-26 and November 6 at Nepaug (JMe), November 12 and 15 at Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford (DP,MSz), and November 15 at Greenwich Point (BO). The first Horned Grebe was a bit early October 1 in Old Lyme (HG); a few at Nepaug helped provide a view of three grebe species together October 26 (JMe).

Northern Gannets, aided by easterly storms, were easy to find in eastern Long Island Sound from mid-October to late November (JGa et al.). The high count was 250 at Harkness November 12 (DP) and a few were seen far west off Fairfield County (PDu,CB). A bird believed to be an Anhinga, a southern vagrant not yet confirmed in the state, was seen soaring at Quaker Ridge September 24 (FM). Since few tubenoses enter Long Island Sound, an unidentified shearwater off HBSP during a November 11 storm was a real treat (JHi et al.). In addition a few of the summer's Wilson's Storm-Petrels lingered in the eastern Sound until at least August 6 (LB et al.). American Bitterns put on a show at HBSP. At least five were conspicuous at high tide November 20, and at least one or two were present throughout the period (WW,CP et al). Elsewhere, two were at Milford Point November 25 (SK) and singles were noted three times in September and October at Great Island in Old Lyme (THe); others were in Stratford, Westport and Fairfield in October (CB,DP), Griswold Point in Old Lyme September 21 (DP) and East Haven November 27 (GH). The best inland counts of post-breeding herons were 25 Great Egrets on de-

hydrated Round Pond in Westport September 16 (FM) and 18 Great Egrets concentrated in a drought-shrunken wetland in Torrington September 13, along with an American Bittern and 15 Green Herons (JKi). A late Great Egret was at Mansfield Hollow November 11 (DHi). A Snowy Egret was far inland in Bloomfield August 17-22 (JMe,MP), as were two at Mansfield Hollow August 29+ (MSz). The only Cattle Egret reports came from Lighthouse Point August 25 (JGr) and Westport through August 13 (FM). Immature Little Blue Herons lingered until October 8 at Great Island (THe), October 9 at Lighthouse Point (JF) and October 22 at Gulf Pond, Milford (DR). Seven coastal reports of Tricolored Heron were all of single birds, except for four on September 4 at Barn Island in Stonington (DP). A flock of six Black-crowned Night Herons over New Milford August 29 was a nice inland find (AD).

The only Greater White-fronted Goose report came from Goodwin Park, Hartford, in late November (MO fide DH). Lighthouse Point logged 2,000 Snow Geese for the season (RBe), and flocks of 100+ were over Preston September 29 (DP), Watertown October 6 (GH) and Bluff Point in Groton October 13 (DP). The first Brant (other than a few that summered in West Haven) were six at HBSP October 10 (BY). It was a good season for Wood Ducks, with several concentrations of 50+ topped by about 100 in Litchfield September 23-24 (RN). The best count of Northern Pintail was 50 at Great Island November 27 (GH). After several years of scarcity, Blue-winged Teal put in a good showing: 15 at Shepaug Dam, Southbury, September 2 (DR); 10 at Southbury Training School September 2-3 (RN); 11 at Cemetery Pond, Litchfield, September 15 (DR); five at Mansfield Hollow September 29 (MSz); and singles at four other locations. Three Northern Shovelers were at Bantam Lake October 29+ (GH), two were at Trap Falls Reservoir, Shelton, October 14 (TK), two were at Milford Point October 16 (DP) and one was early at Sandy Point, West Haven, August 24 (BD et al.). Milford Point held 60 Gadwalls and a Eurasian Wigeon November 12 (SK); another Eurasian Wigeon was at Furnace Pond, East Haven, November4 (BD).

About 20 Canvasbacks arrived at Bantam Lake the last week in November (GH), and 110 had gathered at Frash Pond, Stratford, by November 25 (SK). The season's only report of Redhead involved one November 26 at Portland Reservoir (ES). Lake Waramaug in New Preston attracted a flock of 14 Lesser Scaup November 11 (LW), and the high count of Ring-necked Ducks was 200+ on October 27 in East Killingly (DP). A seawatch at Harkness during an October 21 storm logged one King Eider, one Common Eider, 100 Black Sco-

ters, 250 Surf Scoters and 180 White-winged Scoters (DP). The same site produced nearly 500 Surf Scoters October 28 (DP). Productive Nepaug Reservoir pulled in a flock of 69 Oldsquaws October 30 for what may be a record inland count for the state (JMe). Also good inland were six White-winged Scoters on Trap Falls Reservoir October 7 (TK). Ruddy Ducks staged a strong flight in late October, with flocks of c. 100 at Bride Lake in East Lyme (MSz,DP) and c. 50 at Bantam Lake (LW et al.) and at both North and South Coves in Old Saybrook (m.ob.). Smaller numbers were found on many lakes and ponds (m.ob.). Inland Red-breasted Mergansers included two at Mansfield Hollow November 18 (SS) and one at Bantam Lake October 29 (GH).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

The hawk watch at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich logged three Black Vultures and 617 Turkey Vultures for the season, both records (BO et al.). Three Black Vultures also frequented Sunny Valley Farm in New Milford October 10-17 (CW). An Osprey was late at Nepaug Reservoir November 23 (JKa). Lighthouse Point enjoyed a record seasonal count of 33 Bald Eagles (RBe), and about 20 reports were received from around the state (m.ob.). Prior to their migration period, probable Connecticut-bred Northern Goshawks were reported from five locations (JKa,BKl,JF,DP), but migrants were scarce; Lighthouse Point noted only seven (RBe). The Broad-winged Hawk flight is detailed elsewhere in this issue.

Rough-legged Hawks staged a conspicuous arrival November 17-19 with a total of five reported from HBSP, Griswold Point and Stratford (JF, CR, DP). Sunny Valley had two Rough-leggeds for the season along with two Golden Eagles (CW). But the big Golden Eagle news came from Quaker Ridge, which reported 23 for the season, more than doubling the old mark of 11 (BO). One was over Stamford November 5 (PDu et al.), but Lighthouse had none.

The early stages of raptor migration generally go unnoticed, but an American Kestrel August 8 on Falkner Island was probably on the move (JZ). At Windham Airport, 12 kestrels on September 10 comprised a family group of five plus seven migrants (MSz). About a dozen Peregrines were reported away from the hawk lookouts (JBa,TK et al.), and in Stamford a male and female again took up residence downtown beginning in mid-September (PDu). Ruffed Grouse are seldom mentioned by observers, but three at Ansonia Nature Center November 11 were worth noting (TK). A Sora was still calling September 29 at Little Pond, Litchfield (DR), along with 10 Virginia Rails (DR); the latest Sora report was from HBSP November 4 (BD). American Coots put in another good showing at

Bantam Lake, where about 300 arrived by October 22 (LW,PCa et al.). Laurel Reservoir, Stamford, matched that with 314 on October 29 (PDu). Coots were widespread in smaller numbers, often appearing with Ruddy Ducks.

Small numbers of American Golden Plovers were at the ususal coastal locations, with one lingering to November 11 at HBSP (m.ob.) and two the same day at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford (CB). A single was a first local record at Nepaug Reservoir September 1-7 (JoM,JMe et al.), but it was eclipsed by 15 at Mansfield Hollow on September 18 (MSz et al.). Most shorebirds separate quickly from their precocial young, but the pair of American Oystercatchers that hatched two chicks at Milford Point remained with them until early October (m.ob.). The high count for oystercatcher was eight on September 21 at Menunketesuck flats in Westbrook (DP). Three Upland Sandpipers were at both Windham Airport on August 14 (LB) and Groton-New London Airport the next day (DP); one was at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, August 6 (CB). Mansfield Hollow produced the high count of 10 Solitary Sandpipers August 28 (MSz). The high count of Whimbrel was 10 at HBSP September 23 (FM et al.). Other reports of one to four birds, between August 1 and October 1, were scattered from Milford Point to Barn Island (m.ob.). A Hudsonian Godwit September 9 at Sandy Point, West Haven (PDe), and two there the next day (BD) were the only ones reported. A Ruddy Turnstone at Mansfield Hollow August 2 was the second ever for the Storrs area (LB,MSz). The high count of Red Knot was 50 on August 5 at Sandy Point (BD). Western Sandpiper peaked at eight August 28 at Griswold Point (DP), and one at Mansfield Hollow September 7 was the first well-documented record for the Storrs area (MSz). The best White-rumped Sandpiper count was inland, with 15 at Mansfield Hollow August 29 (MSz); the latest report came from Stratford September 25 (CW). Mansfield Hollow attracted one of the Storrs area's first-ever Baird's Sandipers August 14 (MSz), with up to two present to September 7 (MSz). One was at Sandy Point August 26 (LB). The 45 Pectoral Sandpipers at Mansfield Hollow October 7 (MSz) were probably the largest group ever in the Storrs area (GC); one was still at HBSP November 3 (BY). An adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper, perhaps the state's first ever in that age-class, arrived August 2 at Windham Airport (LB,MSz). The first juvenile appeared August 24 at HBSP (BY) and singles were reported off and on through September 7 (EN,-CR,JMe). High counts were of up to eight at Groton-New London Airport September 3-16 (DP et al.) and four at Sikorsky Airport August 26-27 (DS et al.). The Short-billed Dowitcher peak was 70+ at Griswold Point August 28 (DP)

and a single was a Storrs area rarity August 14 at Mansfield Hollow (MSz). A single Long-billed Dowitcher was at Griswold Point August 14 (DP), and two were at HBSP November 4 (BD, DB). Griswold Point produced the following peak counts August 22: Semipalmated Plover, 300+; Greater Yellowlegs, 30+; Lesser Yellowlegs, 50+; Ruddy Turnstone, 15; and Least Sandpiper, 200+ (DP). Semipalmated Sandpiper peaked there August 3 at c. 1,200 (DP).

GULLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Laughing Gulls were abundant invaders, with about 1,000 on the lawns at HBSP August 7 (GH,JMa) and 25 still present November 12 (JG). A handful of Bonaparte's Gulls that summered on the Sound included four at Milford Point August 10 (PB,FS,SH) and two at Griswold Point August 12 (DP). A Little Gull August 26 at Sandy Point provided an unusual early record (LB). The birds of the season were without question the two juvenile Sabine's Gulls that stopped briefly September 5 at Mansfield Hollow. They were photographed, sketched and enjoyed by two elated observers, providing a first state record for an ultra-rare overland migrant (MSz, BC). A Lesser Black-backed Gull was a rarity for the Northeast Corner November 5 at Coventry (MSz) and one returned October 29 to winter for the fourth straight year at Lordship (RN,JF et al.). An adult Glaucous Gull was a good inland find November 26 at Shepaug Dam (RN). Single Black-legged Kittiwakes, rare visitors inside the Sound, were off Meigs Point November 7 (DP,MSz), Compo Beach, Westport, November 7 (FM) and Cornfield Point, Old Saybrook, November 12 (JHo, AG). Two Caspian Terns at HBSP were a highlight of the COA fall field day September 23 (SS,JGa et al.), and four were at Menunke-tesuck October 6 along with nine Royal Terns (DP). Royals were regular in small numbers from Old Lyme to Madison (THe et al.), with one lingering at HBSP to November 8 (JMa). There were still two Forster's Terns off Stamford November 20 (PDu). One or two Black Terns were seen through August into early September at Milford Point, Griswold Point, Meigs Point, and Barn Island (m.ob.). Milford Point held up to three Black Skimmers August 14-20 (CB,JMe et al.). Increased efforts at "Sound-watching" produced several records of alcids, all of which are rare in the state's waters. A glassy calm surface helped observers zero in on a very early Thick-billed Murre October 31 at Meig's Point (DP,MSz,GH). A Razorbill was off Griswold Point November 21 (DP) and four large alcids of undetermined species were at Harkness November 15 (DP,MSz).

Migrant Barn Owls appeared October 22 in Fairfield (CB) and November 6 at HBSP (SH), which

was an owl hotspot. The weekend of November 5-6 produced five species there (Barn, Northern Saw-whet, Long-eared, Great Horned and Barred). Migrant Saw-whet Owls, abundant in the East this fall, were first detected October 9, when three were found at HBSP (JGa), and they were seen there in ones and twos through the end of the period (CR, m.ob.) Singles were in Barkhamsted October 16 (JF), Oxford November 24 (BD) and Fairfield November 30 (CB). Long-eared Owls were seen at HBSP in smaller numbers (JGa,-BD), and one was at Lighthouse Point November 30 (RBe). The Lighthouse Point hawk watch logged seven Short-eared Owls for the season (RBe), and singles were at HBSP September 23 (JGa et al.), Milford Point November 25 (SK), Stamford October 27 and November 4 (PDu) and Fairfield November 26 (CB). Eastern Screech-Owls are uncommon in the Northeast Corner, so singles in Chaplin October 13 (PR) and Sterling November 25-30 (RDi,LD) were of interest. The lone Snowy Owl report came from Stonington Point November 10 (BD). After a first report of two August 10 at Collinsville (JKa), flights of Common Nighthawks included 100 in Madison September 2 (JGa,FD), 75 in Hamden September 1 (AB), 50 in Mansfield September 1 (MSz), 40+ over Southbury August 27 (GH), 27 over Norwalk August 30 (FM), 25 over both Cromwell (JMo) and Storrs (MSz) September 2, and 11 in New Preston August 31 (LW). A nice staging flock of about 400 Chimney Swifts circled the New Milford Green August 26 (AD). Long after the last Ruby-throated Hummingbird should have passed, a lone hummer showed up at Lighthouse Point November 6 (GH,RE). The date suggested a western rarity, but the bird zipped through too fast for even a tentative ID.

The woodpecker movement was heavy and unusual. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Red-headed Woodpeckers, both regular passage birds, appeared in below-average numbers. However, normally sedentary Downy Woodpeckers and Hairy Woodpeckers staged a major flight. Migrants were conspicuous at Lighthouse Point throughout October and early November, with high counts of about 20 of each October 23 (GH) and double-digit counts on several other days (RE). The heavy movement was borne out at UConn, where Clark noted an unusual number of reports and inquiries from throughout the state about woodpeckers drilling into wooden houses. The species involved was seldom ascertained, but Clark called the increase in reports this fall "abrupt and dramatic." A Pileated Woodpecker flew around Lighthouse Point October 9, providing only the second record at that closely watched site (GH). An adult Red-headed Woodpecker was at Sharon Audubon Center August 4 (JMo) and immatures were at Quaker Ridge

September 11 (BO) and Salisbury November 3-4 (RM).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

Single Olive-sided Flycatchers were on schedule at Griswold Point August 14 (DP) and Lighthouse Point August 28 (GH), but Eastern Wood-Pewees were running late October 13 at Bluff Point (DP) and October 18 at HBSP (SK). A total of seven Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were reported along the coast from August 27 to September 11 (PDe,DP,FM). An unidentified Empidonax was tardy October 8 at Lighthouse Point (RN). The rare-but-expected Western Kingbird appeared four times: at Milford Point September 15 (MSc), at Quaker Ridge September 11 (BO,JC), at Greenwich Point October 18 (JBo), and at HBSP November 18 (RP,NE). The usual mass movements of Tree Swallows included 5,000 at both Griswold Point August 22 (DP) and Linde Point, Old Saybrook, September 3 (JGa); a late one passed Lighthouse Point November 20 (GH). Six Cliff Swallows at Windham Airport August 23 were uncommon migrants for the Northeast (MSz) and 56 represnted a good count at Lighthouse Point August 25 (JGr). Blue Jay movements were anemic last fall, but the hordes returned this year. Lighthouse Point logged about 20,000 from September 18 to October 27, with 8,500 on October 9 (GH,FG). On September 16 hawk-watchers at Booth Hill in East Hartland counted a minimum of 21 Common Ravens in a group hanging around their lookout, easily a record count for the state (PDe,-PC). Two ravens were south of their usual haunts but close to inviting cliffs October 2 in Meriden (JKa), and Quaker Ridge logged one on October 9 (mo.b.).

The woodland exodus involved more than woodpeckers. Black-capped Chickadees staged a major flight, with a peak of 500 moving through Lighthouse Point October 23 (GH) and flocks swarming along beaches and headlands from late September into early November. The chickadees were joined by Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches, species much less prone to irruptive movements. The titmice started early, with about 200 at Bluff Point September 28 (DP), followed by a staggering 500 at HBSP October 6 (DP). They were still moving two weeks later when the big October 23 flight at Lighthouse Point produced 200+ (GH). White-breasted Nuthatch high counts included 15 on September 28 at Bluff Point (DP) and 20 on October 9 at Lighthouse Point (GH). A few Red-breasted Nuthatches moved early, with scattered reports in July and August, but a major fall irruption never materialized. The high count was 30 on September 28 at Bluff Point (DP). A Marsh Wren lingered into the last week of November at HBSP (JGa) and a half dozen remained to September 25 at

a breeding site in Litchfield (DR). Sedge Wren, a very rare migrant, showed itself September 27 at Lot W in Storrs (SS,MSz).

The Northeast enjoyed a banner flight of Northern Wheatears, and Connecticut was at the center of the action. Singles were reported September 18-23 on the rip-rap at Mansfield Hollow dam (MSz et al., photo), October 6 on jersey barriers at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford (SH), September 18 in Stonington (RDe), and September 23 at Sandy Point in West Haven (SP,CM et al.). The only Gray-cheeked Thrush report came from Westport September 15 (FM). Movements of Northern Mockingbirds are poorly known, but individuals that approach Lighthhouse Point high from the east appear to be migrants. This fall seven fitting that description were noted from October 16 to November 6 (GH). Two American Pipits August 31 at Windham Airport represented an all-time early arrival date for the Storrs area and 200 were there September 28 (MSz); 120+ were at Farmington Meadows October 13 (BD). Cedar Waxwings were on the move throughout the period, with a high count of 1,000 at Lighthouse Point November 4 (GH). During a big flight of robins and waxwings on October 29, an experienced visiting observer briefly saw and heard a flock of eight Bohemian Waxwings in Sharon (FGi). This corresponded with the early arrival of Bohemians across northern New England. Northern Shrikes staged a flight so noteworthy that it defied individual notation of sightings. From October 29 through period's end, at least 30 had been reported from all parts of the state. The usual smattering of Philadelphia Vireos included singles August 29 and September 2 in Redding (CB,FS), September 15 in Southbury (NC) and September 11 and 29 at Bluff Point (DP). A Red-eyed Vireo was late, October 29 in Southbury (RN), and so were Solitary Vireos November 11 in Madison (JF) and November 12 at HBSP (JGa). Another Solitary serenaded a homeowner for 20 minutes October 19 in a Simsbury yard (BKr). Vireos are prone to do this in fall, while warblers are not. Vireo peaks at Bluff Point were 15 Solitarys on October 16 and 50 Red-eyed on September 28 (DP).

A Lawrence's Warbler livened things up in a Sterling yard August 27 (RDi). An Orange-crowned Warbler sneaked through Bluff Point October 17 (EN) and two were at Lot W, Storrs, September 27 (SS,MSz). A Nashville Warbler and a Magnolia Warbler were both tardy October 22 in Canton (JMe,JKa et al.), as was a Cape May Warbler October 29 in Old Saybrook (JGa). About 40 Black-throated Blue Warblers made a late push at Bluff Point October 17, along with 3,000 to 5,000 Yellow-rumped Warblers (GH,JHo), and similar numbers of both species were logged the previous day (DP). Inland, heavy flights of Yel-

low-rumps were noted October 14-25 at Sunny Valley Preserve (CW). In Woodbury 10 to 15 Pine Warblers, representing two or three pairs with fledged young, remained in their breeding area to about September 15 (RN). A Palm Warbler September 6 at Windham Airport set an all-time early arrival record for the Storrs area (MSz). Blackpoll Warblers moved through Bluff Point in good numbers—225 on September 28 (which also produced 550 unidentified warblers), 150 on September 24, and 100 on October 9 (DP). So did American Redstarts—100+ on September 11 (which also produced 400+ unidentified warblers) and 60+ on August 26 (DP). A Black-and-White Warbler was still at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton October 21 (JMe). A male Hooded Warbler was a nice find September 10 at HBSP (PDu). Connecticut Warblers turned up September 20 and 27 in Storrs (MSz, DP), September 10 and 16 at Bluff Point (DP), October 8 in Southbury (BD) and October 11 in Groton (DP). A seasonable Mourning Warbler was at Cove Island Park, Stamford, August 29 (PDu), and late ones were at Bluff Point September 29 (DP) and Lot W, Storrs, October 4 (MSz). A Yellow-breasted Chat showed itself at HBSP August 25 (EN) and another turned up there November 19 (DP); singles were in Westport September 30 (EH), Storrs October 1-4 (THa,MSz), Cove Island Park September 5-14 and October 4 (PDu), and Bluff Point October 16 (DP).

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Bluff Point turned in peak counts of 30 Scarlet Tanagers September 28 (DP) and 10 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks September 11 (DP). A late grosbeak was at Quaker Ridge November 5 (DP). Add Dickcissel to the list of birds staging notable flights. We received reports of at least 14 (12 coastal and two inland). A late Indigo Bunting tarried at Pine Creek, Fairfield, November 2 (CB), and a Chipping Sparrow was still hanging around Simsbury November 12-13 (BKr). Vistors to COA's fall field day September 23 at HBSP were greeted by a very cooperative Clay-colored Sparrow that showed itself throughout the day (PF, m.ob.). The first American Tree Sparrow report came from Simsbury October 30 (DP). A Vesper Sparrow in strawberry fields in Southbury August 30 was surprisingly early, suggesting possible breeding somewhere nearby (GH). More expected were two migrants there October 15-29 (RN); one to three seen sporadically October 13-November 5 at HBSP (LW,-BM,JGa et al.); and multiple sightings October 4-31 at Lot W, Storrs (GC et al.). The first "Ipswich" Sparrow was reported from Westport November 19 (JL et al.) and two were at Milford Point November 25 (SK). A Grasshopper Sparrow, a rare fall migrant, showed off its crisp first-basic plumage October 31-November 1 at HBSP (EN et al.). HBSP produced a nice count

of 14 Sharp-tailed Sparrows October 11 (DP).

Lincoln's Sparrow was an early arrival September 8 at Stamford's Cove Island Park (PDu), opening the door on a good seasonal movement through mid-October. Crookhorn Road in Southbury (NC et al.) and Lot W, Storrs (MSz,WB et al.) were especially good places to find multiple birds. White-crowned Sparrow made an early appearance at Storrs September 25 (MSz), and a pale-lored bird was at Cove Island Park October 17-19 (PDu). One of the season's odder birds was a probable Dark-eyed Junco X White-throated Sparrow hybrid at Lot W October 25 (MSz). An October 9 flight dropped 400 Dark-eyed Juncos and 250 White-throated Sparrows at Bluff Point (DP) and 120 White-throats into a Torrington yard (RBa). The same yard hosted an excellent seven Fox Sparrows November 16 (RBa) during a widespread flight that also brought five to Roaring Brook Nature Center, Canton, November 12 (JKa), and flocks of five to 12 throughout Litchfield County November 6 (CW). The first Lapland Longspurs were a bit early October 4 in Storrs (DP,MSz) and October 6 at HBSP (DP). Snow Buntings were widely reported after late October, with highs of 120 at HBSP November 5 (JGa,FD) and 150 at Groton-New London Airport November 10 (BD).

Red-winged Blackbird stages one of Connecticut's most protracted migrations. Small flocks were moving through Lighthouse Point on a July 10 cold front, and on August 7 an hour's tally there reached 1,200 (GH,NC). Flights continued through November, with more than 100,000 pouring through November 9 (JGr et al.). Away from the fields where they breed, Eastern Meadowlarks are perhaps most easily found on the lawns at Lighthouse Point during their late October-early November migration. The high count was 16 on October 23 (GH) and 15 were at HBSP November 26 (JGa). A Rusty Blackbird was an early arrival September 19 at Windham Airport (MSz), but the best place in the state to find them is probably White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield; up to 50 were there September 24 (DR). Lingering Northern Orioles were at a water garden in Old Lyme November 18 (HG), in a Hamden yard November 25 (AB) and at a feeder in Pomfret November 30 (fide MSz).

Movements of the ubiquitous House Finch seldom merit comment, but the Lighthouse Point hawk watch offers a window on the phenomenon, which is significant. Part-time observers logged 5,500 House Finches from early October through mid-November, with high counts of 2,200 October 27 and 1,000 October 30 (GH, FG). After last winter's dearth, northern finches were on the upswing. Purple Finches moved throughout the period, with 2,500 for the season at Lighthouse Point (GH,FG). The first Evening Gros-

beak showed up October 9 in Storrs (MSz), with 100+ at Lighthouse on both November 4 and 5 (GH). Elsewhere, small flocks visited feeders throughout the state (m.ob.). Pine Siskins moved in similar numbers on a similar schedule, with the first on September 25 at Storrs (MSz). The first Common Redpolls were reported November 17 in Middlebury (CW) and Preston (DP), followed by a few scattered reports. The rarer finches were still holding off at period's end, with the exception of single Pine Grosbeaks November 5 in Woodbury (RN) and November 24 in Torrington (RBa), a small flock of Red Crossbills at HBSP November 12 (fide JC) and two more at Quaker Ridge November 16 (BO,JO).

EXOTICS:

An Egyptian Goose was on Holly Pond, Stamford, throughout the period (PDe), and a Mandarin Duck was in Naugatuck for the third straight year (BP). A male Pin-tailed Wydah and two females of the same or a related species were in Stratford in October (m.ob.). A Eurasian Goldfinch was at Cove Island Park, Stamford, September 10 (PDu).

[*Editor's Comment*: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on the latest COA Checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Rare Records Committee (Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268), if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.]

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GREG HANISEK, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Louis Bevier

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 15

Last October's issue of the *Warbler* presented us with a rather elegantly proportioned bird standing at the water's edge. The white face and breast contrastring with a dark mantle and head is quite striking. Two interesting features worth noting are the dark wedge extending into the sides of the breast and the pale fringes to the back feathers.

Just what sort of bird is this? It looks like a gull because of the long wings and stout subtly hooked bill. That seems reasonable, but the face pattern is unlike any gull typically seen in Connecticut. In trying to answer this puzzle, I hit upon a wild guess based on this the white face. That guess is White-faced Storm-Petrel, an oceanic bird accidental to Connecticut. Why isn't that right? First off, a petrel would not be seen standing, and second, it would show small tubes at the base of the bill. Nice try.

Back to the right track, gulls. The scaled gray pattern above and black bill do resemble juvenile Laughing Gull. But that species has a long bill that appears to droop at the tip. It also is much grayer about the face and breast in juvenal plumage than our quiz bird. Laughing Gull also has black legs. The legs on our bird are decidedly not black. Many juvenal gulls are much darker above with a scaled appearance, but running through the list of regulars, we just can't find a match. Looking carefully at the photograph, one will notice that the inner primaries have white tips, but more than that as one looks along the edge of the wing, it becomes apparent that the inner part of the wing that is folded up here is white! At first glance this appeared to be just the belly.

Now even though I early dismissed a wild guess from the

deep oceans, another possibility comes. The dark grayish-brown, scaly upperparts, dark smudge into the breast, and apparent white inner wing fit juvenal Sabine's Gull. This species ordinarily is found at sea away from its arctic tundra breeding localities. Many Connecticut birders who saw this photo were primed for the answer because this past fall saw the first record of this species in the state. Two juveniles were photographed at Mansfield Hollow last September 5th.

To those surprised at this sighting in the interior of Connecticut, a review of the records for this species in fall shows a steady increase of records along the Great Lakes, at inland reservoirs from the desert southwest to the East, and along major interior rivers. Most of these records are associated with strong storm systems, as the two at Mansfield Hollow were. The increase of records is probably a reflection of greater observer coverage and awareness of this species. The pattern of occurrence is more widespread than Long-tailed Jaeger, for instance, another arctic tundra nester that often migrates overland in fall before reaching the ocean. Young Sabine's Gulls make their first southbound journey in juvenal plumage, and unlike most other gulls retain that plumage until they reach the wintering grounds, generally in the southern hemisphere.

This juvenile Sabine's Gull was photographed October 5, 1993, on the shores of Lake Mead, Nevada, by Jon Dunn.

LOUIS R. BEVIER, 25 W. Phil-Ellena St., Philadelphia, PA 19119-2725

Photo challenge 16. Identify the species. Answer nest issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on an PC disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)
by Barry W. Van Dusen

Wildlife artist Barry W. Van Dusen of Princeton, Massachusetts works closely with Audubon societies and conservation organizations throughout New England. His work has been featured in books, magazines, posters, and educational brochures involving many aspects of natural history, though his favorite subjects are birds.

Among the books which Barry has illustrated are *Birds of Massachusetts* (1993), *A Birder's Guide to Eastern Massachusetts* (ABA, 1994), and the recently published *A Guide to BACKYARD BIRDS of Eastern North America*. Barry enjoys traveling to new locations, often working in the field to sketch landscapes and birds direct from life. The resulting paintings and drawings have been exhibited at galleries, nature centers, and museums throughout the country and in Europe. His work has been included in Wisconsin's renowned international show "Birds in Art" and he was named Audubon Alliance Artist of the Year for 1992. In 1994 Barry was elected a member of London's Society of Wildlife Artists.

RECENT TAXONOMIC CHANGES AFFECTING THE CONNECTICUT STATE LIST OF BIRDS

GEORGE A. CLARK, JR.

The number of bird species recorded from Connecticut abruptly increased by at least three species with the recent publication of the Fortieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds* (AOU 1995). The aim of this review is to point out initial effects of that Supplement on Connecticut ornithology, including 1) changes of common and scientific names, 2) species newly recognized and known to have occurred in Connecticut, and 3) comments on sources providing information on the identification of the newly recognized species.

TAXONOMIC BACKGROUND

To facilitate clear communication, words, including names of birds, must have meanings that are as unambiguous as possible. For the names of North American birds, the standards have been set for more than a century by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list Committee, which is composed of ornithologists with extensive experience in avian taxonomy and nomenclature. Over the decades, changes in the AOU Check-list have reflected both new discoveries about the birds and refinements of ideas on what constitutes a species. In recent decades species limits for birds have been determined by whether populations would freely breed with one another if they should come into contact in nature. As an example, no hybrids occur between Veeries and Wood Thrushes, and these are considered to be separate species. The situation with Willow and Alder Flycatchers is similar even though these species are distinguishable in the field only on the basis of their vocalizations and nest structure. Although American Robins that breed in Connecticut probably never contact American Robins that breed in California, all populations of American Robins are included in the same species under the assumption that they could freely interbreed if they ever did meet in nature. If populations freely interbreed in nature, they have been placed within the same species. In contrast, if, within areas of contact, two populations do not interbreed, or do so only rarely, or only within a very limited geographic area, then they have been designated as separate species. The designation of populations as belonging to

the same or different species becomes rather arbitrary in cases in which interbreeding between two populations is only partial; the question then arises as to how much hybridization must occur before two populations are considered members of the same species. Furthermore, if two populations of similarly appearing birds are geographically separated in their breeding ranges, then the decision as to whether to treat them as members of a single species or as members of different species may be rather arbitrary.

Knowledge of North American birds has increased with the passage of decades, and changes in the AOU Check-list reflect new discoveries about 1) vocalizations, 2) geographic ranges, and 3) DNA, the hereditary material of the birds. Because additional new discoveries are likely to continue to occur, still further changes in the Check-list are to be expected. Although suggestions have been made that species should be recognized by criteria other than the potential for interbreeding between populations, proposed possible alternatives for defining species (e. g., in Zink and McKitrick 1995) would probably not do away with changes in names.

CHANGES TO THE CONNECTICUT STATE LIST

Following the sequence of species in the COA Field Checklist, I here review those new changes that affect the Connecticut state list. The Fortieth Supplement (AOU 1995) can be consulted for an indication of the details that have justified the following changes. DeBenedictis (1996) has recently summarized changes in the Fortieth Supplement, but his account does not point out the specific effects on the Connecticut list.

Great Egret has the scientific name changed from *Casmerodius alba* to *Ardea alba*.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) is the new common name replacing American Swallow-tailed Kite.

American Golden Plover has the scientific name changed from *Pluvialis dominica* to *Pluvialis dominicus*.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) is the new common name replacing Common Black-headed Gull.

Gray-cheeked Thrush has now been split into two, very similar appearing, species, the newly recognized, more restricted, Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*) and the Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*). Bicknell's Thrush was formerly recognized as a subspecies of the more inclusively defined Gray-cheeked Thrush. The Bicknell's breeds on high peaks of northern New England and at lower elevations in southern Quebec and the maritime provinces

of Canada. Although generalized maps in Figures 1 and 8 published by Ouellet (1993) might seem to indicate breeding by Bicknell's Thrush in Connecticut, there is no documentation that Bicknell's has ever bred in the state.

So far as is known, the breeding range of the Bicknell's thrush nowhere contacts that of the Gray-cheeked Thrush as now more narrowly defined (Ouellet 1993). Populations of these thrushes breeding in Newfoundland, Labrador, further north in Quebec, and to the west in Canada, Alaska, and Siberia, all belong to the Gray-cheeked Thrush in the new, more restricted definition of the species.

The wintering areas of the Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes are well separated. Gray-cheeks winter principally in South America with a few in southern Central America, whereas Bicknell's Thrushes winter only in the Greater Antilles of the Caribbean region (AOU 1995). Thus on the breeding grounds and especially in the wintering areas, birders might be able identify these species in the field largely on the basis of place and time of occurrence.

The occurrence of both species as migrants in Connecticut is well documented by museum specimens (Sage et al. 1913, Bishop 1921, Wallace 1939) so both species should be included in future lists of species occurring in the state. Unfortunately, however, it seems presently doubtful that birders will readily be able to identify these species as migrants in the state. Existing field guides are inadequate to distinguish Gray-cheeked from Bicknell's Thrushes where both occur together in the field. Song provides a potential means of recognition, but there are no reports of these birds singing while on migration in the state. The flight calls given overhead at night by migrating Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes are apparently distinctive as indicated by visual comparisons of sound spectrographs of birds migrating at night over Florida, where only Bicknell's is expected, and central North America, where only Gray-cheeked is believed to occur (Evans 1994). Indeed, nocturnal flight calls might prove to be the best means for field identification of migrants of these species without having to capture the birds.

Banders may often be able to distinguish the smaller Bicknell's from the larger Gray-cheek by measurements and particularly wing lengths (Wallace 1939, 1979:43); however, published measurements indicate overlap between Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes so color differences should also be considered, especially for birds with measurements in or near the zone of overlap. Wallace (1939) gave wing measurements of 98-108 mm for Gray-

cheeked males and 95-104 for females as opposed to 89-97 for Bicknell's males and 81-95 for females. Pyle et al. (1987) reported wing chord measurements for Gray-cheeked males of 100-109 and for females of 97-106 in contrast to Bicknell's males of 88-98 and females of 85-93. Phillips (1991) stated that wing lengths of Gray-cheeked Thrushes usually are greater than 96 mm, and those of Bicknell's less than 96, though known to reach 98. Data of Ouellet (1993) indicate greater overlap between the species; he reported a female Gray-cheeked Thrush with a wing length of only 93.4.

McLaren (1995) provided a useful summary of possible differences in plumage and bill coloration of Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's, but the differences are often subtle. It is not clear that any known characteristics other than vocalizations or measurements can enable a definite identification of the two species in the field. Birders interested in attempting field recognition of the two species should consult McLaren (1995).

Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes are cryptic or so-called sibling species, with field identification of migrants as difficult as for some *Empidonax* flycatchers. For the latter, it is an accepted practice to report birds as "*Empidonax* species" or some equivalent expression to designate birds identified to genus but not to species. There are also available names to designate some of the pairs of species in *Empidonax*, e. g., Traill's Flycatcher, which includes both Willow and Alder Flycatchers. A similar convention is needed for unidentified birds of the Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's group. The latter name for these unidentified birds is cumbersome, as were Wallace's "Northern Gray-cheeked Thrush" and "Bicknell's Gray-cheeked Thrush", so perhaps we will come to speak of "Graynell thrushes", "Bickcheek thrushes", or, hopefully, some better name to designate birds not identified to species. In this case the term "*Catharus* species" would be an inappropriate shorthand because in Connecticut that name might include Swainson's Thrush, Veery, or Hermit Thrush as well as the Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes.

Rufous-sided Towhee is now split into two species, the Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) and the Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*). This represents a return to a classification used earlier in the century. Despite declines in numbers in recent decades Eastern Towhees remain widely distributed in their occurrence and breeding in Connecticut and are well documented for the state by numerous museum specimens and photographs. The Spotted Towhee is of widespread distribution in western North America. A sight report of this species that had been held in the files of the

Connecticut Rare Records Committee (CRRC) is now under review. Specimens document the occurrence of Spotted Towhee in New York and New Jersey, and the species has been sighted in Massachusetts.

Characteristics for field identification of the Eastern and Spotted Towhees are presented in a number of existing field guides (e. g., National Geographic Society 1987). Spotted Towhees have varying amounts of white spotting or streaking on the back, scapulars, and wing coverts; such markings are only rarely found on Eastern Towhees. Furthermore, Spotted Towhees lack white at the base of the primaries as shown by Eastern Towhees. Songs and, especially, calls differ. Spotted Towhee gives a nasal "chree-ee" in contrast to the "too-whee" of the Eastern Towhee.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow is now split into two species, the relatively southern Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) and the more northern Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*). Both species regularly occur in Connecticut and are well documented by museum specimens. For example, in the collection at the University of Connecticut in Storrs there are at least 44 specimens of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows from Connecticut and more than 150 specimens of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows from the state. The latter group of specimens illustrate a considerable range of variation in appearance that occurs within the Nelson's. Differences between the two species include the sharp streaking *across the breast* of the Saltmarsh Sharp-tails in contrast to the rather blurry corresponding streaking on the Nelson's. (Be aware, however, that some Nelson's can show fine dark streaks across the breast but confined to a narrow band over a rich buff background.) Sibley (1996) has provided a detailed summary of field recognition characteristics for the two species. Occasional hybrids between the Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows are known to have occurred in southern coastal Maine and Massachusetts on the basis of analyses of DNA, but in the field such birds, which might occur as migrants in Connecticut, may in some cases not show any visible hybrid features (Rising and Avise 1993).

The Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow breeds in coastal marshes along the eastern seaboard from Cape Charles, Virginia, north to southern Maine and is the only sharp-tailed sparrow breeding in Connecticut. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow occurs only as a migrant in Connecticut. The Nelson's is divided into three subspecies, one breeding in fresh water marshes of the northern Great Plains, another in the marshes of James Bay and lower Hudson

Bay, and the third in Atlantic coastal marshes in Maine, from the Portland area north, into Nova Scotia (Greenlaw 1993). All three subspecies are known from museum specimens to occur as migrants in Connecticut, but unfortunately these subspecies are often not readily identifiable in the field (Bull 1964:449-451; Sibley 1996).

Northern Oriole is now split into the eastern Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) and the western Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). As in the case of the towhees, this split represents a return to a classification used earlier in this century. The Baltimore Oriole is widespread as a breeding bird in Connecticut and well documented for the state by museum specimens and photographs. Documentation for the occurrence of Bullock's Oriole in Connecticut is provided by color photographs taken by Frank Mantlik of an adult male at a suet feeder in West Hartford on 20 January 1977 (photos in CRRC files at the University of Connecticut, Storrs). In future versions of the Connecticut state list the Bullock's Oriole should thus be included as a fully documented species. Although Bullock's Oriole has been reported on a number of other occasions from Connecticut, a summarizing evaluation of those reports remains to be undertaken. Available field guides (e. g., National Geographic Society 1987) list characteristics that will be useable in many cases for distinguishing Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles in the field.

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SITE GUIDE
MANSFIELD AREA BIRDING TOUR

ARNOLD DEVINE AND DWIGHT G. SMITH

Editor's Note: This tour combines parts of two birding sites, the Storrs Area Tour and Mansfield Hollow State Park which are included in the authors's book, *Connecticut Birding Guide.* Illustrated by Mark Szantyr, this birding guide of over 400 pages offers birders over 100 of the best birding sites in Connecticut.

This birding tour includes parts of Mansfield and Windham in central-eastern Connecticut. The Mansfield region offers a number of interesting sites for birders who want to explore the interior of eastern Connecticut. Mainly rural and residential, much of the topography is in the form of open habitat featuring large areas of farmland, mowed and cultivated fields, thickets, and scrub. These open areas are interspersed with several interesting water bodies.

Several birding areas in this site guide are particularly good for migrants, especially during the fall (starting in July) migration. One location, the dike separating the Windham Airport from Mansfield Hollow State Park, received increase coverage in 1995, which resulted in the discovery of numerous rarities including Long-billed Curlew, Baird's and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Sabine's Gull, and Northern Wheatear.

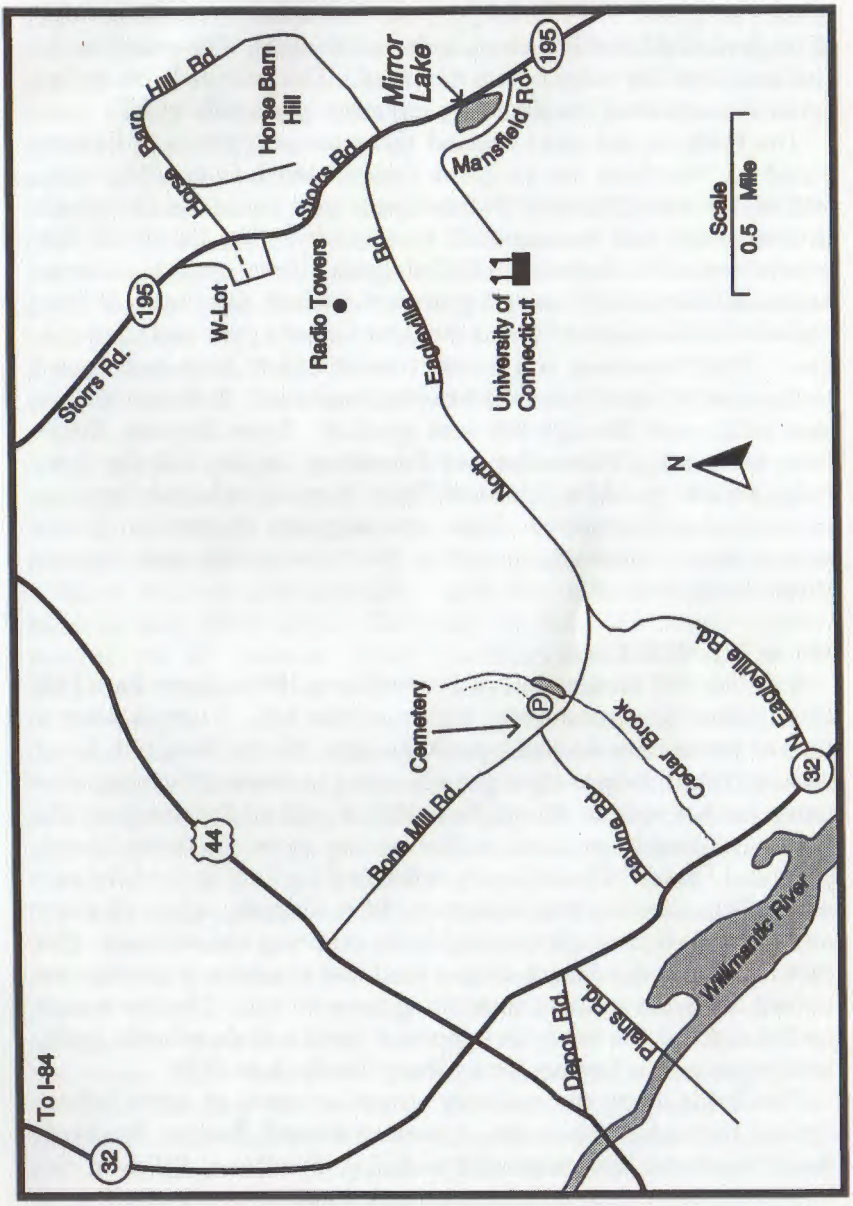
STORRS AREA TOUR

Directions

To get to the first birding site – the "W" Parking Lot on the University of Connecticut campus – take Exit 68 off Interstate 84 (Route 195, Tolland and Mansfield). Head south on Route 195 (Storrs Road) for 6.7 miles. The parking lot entrance is on the right, just north of the university water towers.

Birding

During classes the parking lot is restricted to University of Connecticut students, but it is generally open at other times. It is best to bird the campus on weekends or early in the morning before student activity picks up. Permits to park and a campus map can be obtained at the W Lot traffic booth. Don't be tempted to park illegally because the traffic police are notoriously vigilant when classes are in session.



Storrs Area Tour

"W" Parking Lot.

Habitats at the back side of the parking lot include cultivated fields to the north and west, thickets, a small pond, and large areas of mowed grass. A dirt road provides foot access around the edge of the farm field and into the woods and thickets. The pond can be checked from the edge of the dirt road. This mix of habitats has proved exceptional for attracting migrants, especially in fall.

The thickets and trees around the pond can produce Eastern Kingbird, Northern Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and American Goldfinch in late spring and summer—all nest nearby. The list of fall migrants includes Bobolink, Philadelphia Vireo (rare), Yellow-breasted Chat (rare), several sparrows such as Savannah, White-crowned, Field, Lincoln's, and the rarer Grasshopper and Clay-colored. Both Mourning and Connecticut Warblers have been found in September, mainly at bird banding locations. Both species are rare and move through the area quickly. Snow Bunting flocks have occurred in November and December. In late fall, the cornfields are also good for American Pipit, Horned Lark, and the occasional Lapland Longspur. Other rare migrants reported from this area include Whimbrel, Gyrfalcon, Northern Shrike, and Greater White-fronted Goose.

Horse Barn Hill Road.

Exit the "W" Parking Lot and cross Route 195 to Horse Barn Hill Road (directly opposite the center of the lot). Named after a former horse barn and an equestrian area, Horse Barn Hill Road makes a broad loop to the right, returning to Route 195 a short distance further south. Horse Barn Hill is part of the campus; the fields and buildings used are for raising cows, chickens, sheep, pigs, and horses. The fields are cultivated for food to feed the animals. Take care to avoid disturbing farm animals—close all gates and don't walk through the crop fields in spring and summer. The first right after the dairy barn is a road that provides central access to bird the fields and wet areas along the road side. The low marsh on the right of this road can support a variety of shorebirds, gulls, and geese, and is famous for a Glossy Ibis flock in 1958.

The fields along the roadway attract a variety of open habitat species throughout the year. American Kestrel, Eastern Bluebird, Barn, Northern Rough-winged and Tree Swallows, Killdeer, Savannah, Chipping, and Field Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlark, and Bobolinks all nest here in summer. Fall migrants that frequent the fields and grassy areas may include Horned Lark, Savannah Spar-

row, and American Pipit—which may also linger into winter. In winter, the fields often host large flocks of Canada Geese which should be carefully checked for stragglers such as the occasional Snow Goose and the much rarer Greater White-fronted Goose and Barnacle Goose. Here, and also at Mirror Lake (see below), are good spots to check the Canada Geese flocks for individuals of the smaller Richardson's race. Scan the gull flocks for the rarer Iceland Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull. Red-tailed Hawk (resident) and American Kestrel are also regularly seen in fall and winter. Merlin is a regular but uncommon migrant and Peregrine Falcon (rare) is occasionally spotted. Northern Harriers sometimes hunt over the fields in fall and winter. In summer, the pig barns and pig ponds are always worth checking for swallows, sparrows, Indigo Bunting, and blackbirds. On the eastern slope a red fox has denned for the past several years.

Mirror Lake.

From the south end of Horse Barn Hill Road turn left, heading south on Route 195 for 0.4 miles and turn right onto Mansfield Road. The lake is on the right. Although small, Mirror Lake usually contains flocks of waterbirds and some wetland edge species. In winter, the flocks of Mallards spill over onto the nearby campus lawn as they forage for acorns. Check the ducks, gulls, and geese for occasional rarities such as Iceland Gull and Greater White-fronted Goose. Double-crested Cormorant is a regular in fall. Other waterfowl which make an occasional appearance include Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Pintail. In fall and winter, Canada Geese roost on the lake at night. These birds should be checked for the same stragglers previously listed at Horse Barn Hill.

MANSFIELD HOLLOW STATE PARK

Willimantic Reservoir

This reservoir is one of the better sites in the Mansfield area for migrant waterfowl. To get to the Willimantic Reservoir from Mirror Lake, follow Route 195 south for 5.6 miles and turn left into the reservoir entrance marked by a sign "Town of Windham Water Works." While driving south on Route 195, you will bypass an open field on the left (5.4 miles) overlooking the Willimantic Reservoir. This property, owned by the town of Mansfield, is open to the public and provides a good view of the reservoir. To view the reservoir from this site, continue south to the reservoir entrance,

turn around and backtrack (0.2 miles) to a pull-off on the right side of the road.

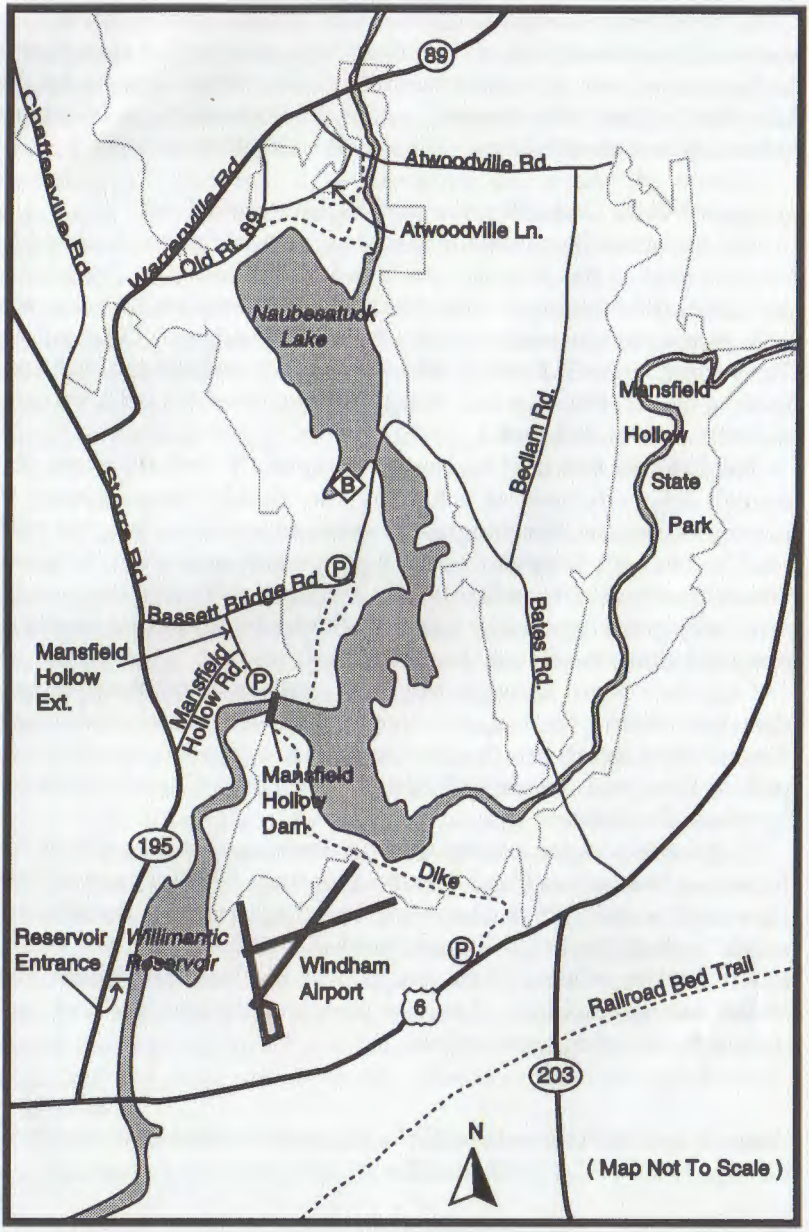
From fall through spring, check the shoreline and open waters for waterfowl and waterbirds that frequent the reservoir. Waterfowl regularly seen include Canada Goose, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, and Common Merganser. Pied-billed Grebe and American Coot frequently occur during fall migration. Occasionally during migration, unusual waterfowl such as scoters stop over at the reservoir. During the December 1995 Christmas Bird Count, two observers found a Greater White-fronted Goose within a large flock of Canada Geese.

Windham Airport and Dike

To access this spot from the reservoir driveway, follow Route 195 south for 1.1 miles, turn left and travel east on Route 6. Follow Route 6 for 2.5 miles and park on the left, near the eastern end of the airport. Walk around the barricaded road (old Route 6) and bear left up to the top of the dike which forms an elevated walkway that continues in a great curve around the north side of the airport and the southern section of Naubesatuck Lake (this is also known as Mansfield Hollow Lake). From the dike, the airport fields are to the left and a marsh to the right, behind which is a red maple swamp. The dike provides a great spot from which to scan these habitats. A scope is handy when birding from the dike since some birds are frequently seen at a distance.

The mowed grasslands around the runway can be great for a wide variety of species, including Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Kingbird, Chipping and Field Sparrows and Killdeer. In summer, the marsh is consistently good for Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Belted Kingfisher, and Great Blue and Green Herons. Bank, Barn, Tree, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows are regular from spring to September and Purple Martins appear in early fall. Grasshopper Sparrows have been found several times in summer and are considered rare breeders on the airport property. Look for the sparrows in the taller grass on the north side of the airport. Check from the top of the dike, as public access to the airport is restricted.

From July into autumn, this is also a great place to spot shorebirds and gulls. The rarer Baird's, Upland, and Buff-breasted Sandpipers have occurred in the grasslands, while Pectoral, Solitary, Semipalmated, Least, and Spotted Sandpipers, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs are regular in the pool and marsh at the



Mansfield Hollow State Park

base of the dike. Check the peeps carefully for White-rumped Sandpiper, an occasional fall migrant.

In 1995, this locale produced some exceptional birds. In July, an extremely rare Long-billed Curlew spent a week at the airport and in September, two immature Sabine's Gulls stopped briefly on the lake for a first state record. Also in September, a Northern Wheatear was spotted here. What will be in store for 1996??

Atlantic White Cedar Swamp and Railroad Bed Trail

This recently discovered birding locale in Windham is slated to become part of the property managed by the Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historical Trust. To access this location from the airport area, continue east on Route 6 to Route 203 south (0.5 miles). Turn right, drive 0.1 miles, and park on the right by a dirt trail leading up an embankment. A sign "closed to motor vehicles" signals the start of this trail.

The railroad bed trail begins at the top of the embankment. Although relatively new as a birding site, this location appears to have good potential for migrants. A mile-long hike along the railroad bed in early May can produce a variety of migrating thrushes, vireos, and warblers in the woods to either side. Birding can be especially good for canopy species, which can be spotted nearly at eye level along the elevated railroad bed.

From late April through May, the walk may produce several thrushes (Wood, Hermit, and Veery), warblers (Black-and-white, Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Cape May, Yellow-rumped, Blackpoll, Yellow, and American Redstart), Baltimore Oriole, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

In the white cedar swamp and marsh fringe listen and look for Northern Waterthrush and Swamp Sparrow. This location should also yield a number of interesting breeding species. Possibilities might include Red-shouldered Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Black-billed Cuckoo, Winter Wren, and Prairie, Black-throated Blue, and Worm-eating Warblers. A winter search of the conifers may produce a Northern Saw-whet Owl.

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PREY PATCH SELECTION IN TITMICE

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Chickadees and their relatives (the titmice, family Paridae) are small, active birds that have high surface to volume ratios. In addition, most species overwinter in cold climates. Small size and low winter temperatures combine to cause titmice to lose heat quickly to the environment, heat that must be replaced with energy from their food. These phenomena, which continually subject titmice to the threat of starvation (Ekman 1984), produce strong selective pressures for efficient foraging behavior.

Food items are often clumped together in "patches" in the environment (MacArthur and Pianka 1966). Therefore, for titmice to efficiently gather energy in a patchy environment, they must select patches in which to forage and must decide when to leave those patches. Important questions about the choice of prey patches in titmice include the following: Has selection produced traits permitting titmice to recognize, and concentrate their efforts on, higher quality patches? and (2) If titmice can select richer patches, what is the mechanism with which they do so? In this paper, we review what has been learned about these questions.

MODELS AND HYPOTHESES

Many investigators, beginning with Smith and Dawkins (1971), Smith and Sweatman (1974), and Krebs et al. (1972), have observed that, when presented with patches of different quality, titmice concentrate their search in richer patches. The question of *how* titmice select patches, however, is more difficult to answer.

Krebs et al. (1978) observed that in experimental sessions Great Tits (*Parus major*) sampled patches in the beginning of a session, and that they then concentrated on the richer of two patches later in the session. How did they assess their capture rate while sampling and how did they 'choose' the patch in which to concentrate their efforts? Most theoretical and empirical work on patch choice decisions has centered on investigating how animals decide when to leave one patch and move on to another (Green 1987). Charnov (1976) proposed an optimization model called the 'marginal value theorem' that gave the following idealized solution to this problem: leave the current patch when the rate of energy intake in the

present patch falls to the average rate for the environment, adjusted for the travel time to alternative patches.

The marginal value theorem predicts shorter giving-up times with shorter travel times and with higher quality alternative patches. These predictions have met with qualitative agreement (e.g., Krebs et al. 1974, Cowie 1977), yet the marginal value theorem often fails to predict precisely the behavior of titmice (Stephens 1990). This is not surprising because the marginal value theorem assumes that animals have perfect knowledge of their environment, something animals clearly do not have (Houston et al. 1982, McNair 1983, Green 1984). Also, the marginal value theorem addresses situations in which energy intake is continuous (McNair 1982, Green 1987); many foragers, including titmice searching for arthropods on the branches of trees, and for seeds in the cones of conifers, encounter food in the form of discrete prey.

Whereas optimization models such as the marginal value theorem can be used to predict ideal solutions to patch-choice problems, the actual mechanisms used by foraging animals can be more directly explored using "rule of thumb" models, which are designed to take animals' biological constraints into account (Heinrich 1983, Stephens 1990). Potential rule of thumb models for patch-exit include the following: (1) leave a patch after a fixed number of prey captures (a fixed-number rule; Gibb 1962); (2) leave a patch after a fixed duration of time has passed (a fixed-time rule; Krebs 1973); (3) leave the patch when the estimated capture rate in that patch falls to the estimated capture rate in the whole environment (a rate rule; see Iwasa et al. 1981, McNair 1982, 1983, Stephens and Krebs 1986, Roche in press); (4) leave the patch when the duration since the last prey capture equals the mean inter-capture interval experienced in the environment (a giving-up time rule; see Krebs et al. 1974, Brunner 1990); and (5) leave the patch when the estimated probability of capture on the next capture attempt falls to that in alternative patches (a capture-probability model; see Kacelnik et al. 1987, Roche in press, Roche et al. in press, P. Killeen, G. Palombo, L. Gottlob, and J. Beam, unpublished manuscript).

DISCUSSION

Which of these hypotheses provides the best explanation of experimental results? Gibb (1958, 1962), observing the foraging behavior of titmice in pine forests, concluded that tits form a "number expectation" of the number of prey they will find per patch (i.e., a pine cone) and that they use a fixed-number rule to decide

when to leave patches. This rule might be effective for a forager in an environment with a highly regular distribution of prey among patches. Prey are unlikely to be evenly distributed in the wild, however, and thus an animal using a fixed-number rule would run the risk of staying too long in a low quality patch or staying too briefly in a high quality patch (Dunning 1990). If a bird were using a fixed-number rule, it would be expected to leave a patch immediately after the last prey capture (Green 1987). Black-capped Chickadees (*Parus atricapillus*), in naturalistic aviary studies (Krebs et al. 1974, Roche in press), and Great Tits, in an operant simulation of patch-choice (Ydenberg 1984), did not leave patches immediately after the last prey capture. The fixed-time rule has also been rejected; an animal using this rule would be expected to stay an equal amount of time in all patches whereas observed patch residence times are generally variable (Krebs et al. 1974, Ydenberg 1984, Roche in press).

A rate model may seem the most intuitively appealing explanation of patch exit. However, doubts are raised about the rate model hypothesis by the following finding: some investigators have observed that birds presented with declining patches will leave initially rich patches more quickly than initially poor patches (Kacelnik et al. 1987, Roche in press). For example, Roche (in press) presented black-capped chickadees in an aviary with an unstable patch that declined unpredictably and a stable patch that was poor in quality, but unvarying. In a single-step change experiment, the chickadees displayed significantly shorter giving-up times when the initial prey density in the unstable patch was 60% than when it was 30% (the prey density in the stable patch was 10%). A simple rate rule predicts that a bird would remain *longer* in initially rich patches. A rate rule could predict shorter giving-up times in initially richer patches if recent information was weighed more heavily in higher quality patches, but this is a complex requirement (see Roche in press).

A giving-up time rule would provide an effective measure of capture rate in patches in which prey captures were evenly distributed (Green 1984) and inter-capture intervals would be an easy parameter to assess (McNair 1982). If prey captures were not evenly distributed, however, an animal using a giving-up time rule would run the risk of leaving a rich patch before it had undergone a decline (Green 1984). The giving-up time model can also account for the pattern of shorter giving-up time in initially richer patches. The giving-up time model predicts that a bird's estimate of the mean inter-capture interval in the whole environment will be influ-

enced by information from the current patch; thus the 60%-0 treatment would lower the birds estimate of the inter-capture interval, and shorten the giving-up time, relative to the 30%-0 treatment. However, Roche also observed a pattern that did not agree with the giving-up time model. In a double-step change experiment in which the unstable patch declined in prey density from 60% to 60% to zero, from 60% to 30% to zero, or from 60% to 10% to zero, the mean giving-up times in the 60%-60%-0 treatment were significantly shorter than in the 60%-30%-0 treatment, but the mean giving-up time in the 60%-10%-0 treatment was intermediate between those in the other two double-step change treatments. The giving-up time model predicts that the chickadees should have displayed the longest giving-up times in the 60%-10%-0 treatment because information from the 10% second step of the decline would have increased the mean estimated inter-capture interval.

A capture-probability model predicts that birds would display shorter giving-up times in initially richer patches without the requirement that they adjust how heavily they weigh recent information in different patches. In addition, this model predicts greater preference for richer patches, shorter giving-up times with shorter travel times, and shorter giving-up times with higher quality alternative patches. The capture-probability model also accounts for the intermediate mean giving-up time observed in the 60%-10%-0 treatment observed by Roche (in press); when the birds estimated identical probabilities of capture in the unstable and stable patch (when both were 10%), their motivation to stay in the unstable patch would be decreased, and thus their giving-up times would be decreased (relative to the 60%-30%-0 treatment). The capture-probability model therefore provides a compelling hypothesis for how titmice may be choosing prey patches. It predicts that titmice form and compare estimates of capture probabilities of patches in the environment and their 'confidence' in the quality of patches declines more quickly in the absence of captures in rich patches than in poor patches.

The data from the above naturalistic studies provide support for the hypothesis that titmice assess and compare patches based on capture probabilities. Further research is likely to reveal that titmice, like Blue Jays (Kamil and Clements 1990), can switch among a variety of rules of thumb in different situations. Also, the lives of titmice in the forest are obviously more complicated than in simple experimental situations. In the wild, titmice are sometimes able to recognize differences in the quality of prey patches by sight, before sampling them. Heinrich and Collins (1983) placed wild-caught

chickadees in an outdoor aviary in which two out of ten patches (birch branches) had experimentally added leaf damage and insect prey. The chickadees learned to concentrate their attention on the patches with leaf damage. This important experiment emphasizes that titmice are sophisticated foragers, capable of monitoring a variety of cues. Whereas most research on patch choice has focused on situations in which titmice must sample patch quality, in many instances wild parids will be able to recognize the quality of patches without sampling (for a hierarchy of types of information problems, see Stephens and Krebs 1986, page 102).

The selection of locations in which to forage is also influenced by the time of year in titmice. For example, Black-capped Chickadees adjust the types of trees they forage in according to which types of foods are seasonally available (Smith 1991). In addition, chickadees may even have seasonal fluctuations in their *ability* to effectively select feeding locations. Barnea and Nottebohm (1994) discovered that Black-capped Chickadees regenerate neurons in their hippocampus in the autumn when the birds are storing seeds for the winter (Sherry 1989). The hippocampus is the site of the brain where storage sites are remembered (Krebs et al. 1989) and the regeneration of neurons in this region is believed to facilitate spatial memory (see Roche 1995).

Ornithologists have considerable knowledge of how the patch selection behavior of titmice is influenced by different experimental conditions. They still have not discovered the specific mechanisms parids use to select patches, however, and have not fully explored the significance these mechanisms have for evolution and community structure. Visual cues, seasonal fluctuations, social interactions (Desrochers 1989), weather (Grubb 1978), territorial behavior (Ydenberg 1987), and the risk of predation all influence patch selection in titmice and thus provide rich potential for future investigations. Patch selection in titmice is a promising area of future research because there is a solid theoretical framework in place with which to generate testable hypotheses and because the selection of patches by titmice holds great biological significance for individual birds, populations, and the forest community.

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BOOKS ON BIRDS

Alan H. Brush

"I'm beginning to worry about the woman writer (Jessica) from Cabot Cove", he muttered, "Every time she goes to a dinner party someone shows up dead!" It seems the same can apply to birders we know in the sense that "Jeez, every time so-and-so goes out birding some rarity shows up!" We all know someone like that, or so it seems, especially if it was a day you intended to go out but were doing something else. Neither the book considered here nor the others like it will help change this for you. It just takes too many hours in the field or serious addiction to birding hot lines.

What this book might do for you, however, is provide and impressive battery of facts so that at the next dinner party you attend you can impress the other guests, all live birds, with your knowledge of avian factoids. Yes, friends, *10,001 Titillating Tidbits of Avian Trivia* by Frank S. Todd (1994 Ibis Publishing, Vista, CA, 640 pages, $24.95 (softcover) ISNB 0-934797) probably contains all the raw material necessary for a major ornithological game or at least its conversational equivalent.

The book is unassuming. No pictures, maps, charts, or diagrams. It consists of three parts. Each is printed on different colored stock. The first part, the blue pages, contains (you guessed it) 10,001 questions. The second, the white pages, contains 10,001 answers. That's 567 pages of questions and answers. The short trailer is an index of 57 doubled column pages. That's it!

Now, fascinating as the dead body at the dinner table might be, why can't you put this book down once it is open? Well, because it is so much fun. Because it elicits your curiosity about 'things', and the number of 'things' included is astonishing. Facts about birds, facts about ornithology, records, natural history, size, color, folks who write about birds, TV and movies about birds...well you get the idea. Besides the 10,001 facts, the index is actually quite useful. As you might imagine, navigating all this information can be a bit of a chore. But the index is extensive and topic oriented. One down side is that the reader, or more accurately the player, spends a lot of time flipping pages. Open the book at random, and read a question. Don't know the answer, flip to the white pages. Find the answer, thinking "Oh yeah, makes sense." Look up another—I

knew that. After a bit, you're in the white pages, reading answers and looking up the questions (blue pages). You look outside, there is a chickadee at the feeder. Oops, go to the index and find which questions cover this species. And it doesn't quit; there are 10,001 of 'em!

A book that covers similar ground is *World Birds* by Brian P. Martin. (1987 Guinness Superlatives Ltd., Middlesex, 192 pgs., numerous black, and color photos, $19.95, ISBN 0-85112-891-2). This one is brought to you by the folks that do the *Guinness Book of Records*. It is divided into seven broad chapters and is encyclopedic in format. The tone is almost plodding, but you have the impression that you are in the company of authors of comprehensive knowledge and no little understanding. The selections are well written and often sparse, but highly informative.

The figures are attractive. The black and white shots of relatively familiar birds are good because the birds' images fills the frame. This means that the details in the text have immediate visual support. The quality of the color plates is excellent. The subjects are fresh and the reproduction excellent. Yet, this is definitely not a picture book. There are some real gems here regarding the biology of birds. It differs from an ornithological textbook and fills a niche guaranteed to answer your questions, without providing the questions upfront. Once you are past your first lists, it will be volumes like this where you will find answers to your queries about the birds themselves. Each volume in its own way is readily accessible and therefore useful.

In this "Report From The Field", COA members are encouraged to report their experiences with books of all sorts, but especially field guides. The Book Review editor.

Ireland and Southern England - Incidental Birding —Bus tours and Family Visits or—Take Two

by Jane and Leonard Seeber

The luggage with the bird books went to Bulgaria. Our group tour of Ireland's castles and gardens was under way! The birding was bound to be incidental at best, but not having our field guides was worse than forgetting the toothbrushes. Luckily the first "Irish" bird we encountered was a Kestrel hovering next to a Shannon runway as we landed. Several mystery birds were observed before the adventurous luggage finally caught up with us.

Our bus tour didn't provide opportunity to look for seabirds, shorebirds, or ducks. We did stop for 20 minutes (!) at the Cliffs of

Moher and saw Northern Fulmar, Razorbills, and assorted gulls, but it was no fun in Irish wind and mist with our sweaters in Bulgaria. If ever we re-visit Ireland, that spectacular spot is a must.

We took with us two well-known birding guides: *The Birds of Britain and Europe* by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter, and John Parslow (Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., London and Glasgow, 1972) and *Birds of Europe* by Lars Jonsson (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1993). Having a couple of field guides on any trip is a good idea, we've found. These two are well-known, of course, but we had never used either of them before. The Collins publication is a fairly rugged paperback about the size of the Peterson nature guides. The Jonsson is a more elegant, heavier, hard cover. We immediately decided to take the Collins with us on the bus. The Jonsson really was unsuited for a jacket pocket or a bus seat, so we left it in the hotel room for later reference.

Fortunately, our visits to gardens and castles offered some decent birding. The crows and doves needed sorting out first off. A Rook colony at Benratty Castle offered a dangerous introduction as we strolled under the stately "rookery" trees. The Collins guide provided quick identification and that evening in our hotel we began our comparisons with the Jonsson.

The Jonsson illustrations are artistic, beautiful, and show feathering patterns in detail. The poses tend to emphasize outstanding features—heavy quality of the Rook's gray bill with its bald patch at the base, for example. Collins presents a more slender bird with a thinner and longer-appearing bill. Collins' Rook "posture" seemed more like our actual field observation.

The range maps accompanying the text are similar, although the more elegant Jonsson uses more delicate coloring. We found that the Collins was easier to see, even though the scale is a bit smaller.

The accompanying texts complemented each other. Collins says the Rook "...walks sedately." Jonsson says, "Has an odd waddling gait...". Collins also starts the narrative with, "Adult is the only large black bird with a bare face patch"—very helpful for quick identification. But Jonsson includes more detailed descriptions of plumage and features plus information about immatures, migrating patterns, and feeding habits. Jonsson does not give a key for relative abundance of the Rook, whereas the Collins uses symbols and initials to give that information.

Bird silhouettes, or general appearances in the field can change with the weather and winds, as we all realize. Jonsson normally illustrates his birds in cold or windy conditions, it would seem. Almost all examples in his book are "plump"—they seem fatter than

the birds we actually saw. The one exception was the Carrion Crow. (In Ireland we more frequently saw the Hooded Crow variation). This beautiful illustration captures the stature and character of the bird better than any we've seen and the description of the bird in Jonsson gives details of plumage which the Collins omits. Collins does describe the walk succinctly: "...walks, and sidles with ungainly hops." Short phrases like that immediately bring an image to mind of the bird's behavior and are the mark of a good field guide.

Understandably, all field guides struggle with bird song descriptions. For some species there is no problem. Both texts identified Woodpigeon and Collared Dove for us before we saw either bird. Of the Woodpigeon's song Collins simply remarks, "...a soothing coo-coo-coo'', but Jonsson is a bit more eloquent with, "...a soft 'blowing' of varied transcription, 'doo-doooh, doo doo-du', with desolate ring and having the character of an owl's call." By the way, the Woodpigeon really is a plump bird but Jonsson's seems obese!

The crows and doves were obvious to everyone. Gardens and castle grounds, however, gave us a chance at some of the smaller species. At Muckross House at Killarney we encountered our first easily spotted Song Thrush. The song came first but the bird was in the spectacular garden on a stone wall. Identification took a little time, as the thrush disappeared soon after being seen. We had the Collins with us and felt reasonably sure of the species, but because the text emphasizes comparison with the Mistle Thrush, we waited until our evening consultation with Jonsson. He also compares the two species, but we really relied on the illustrations in both books which show the brown-tinged warmth of color on the breast of the Song Thrush. It was not until we later saw the Mistle Thrush that we felt comfortable with the identification. The song descriptions were quite accurate in both books, but it certainly helps to observe and listen to both species! Our preference comes again on the side of Collins, as we felt both thrushes, especially the Song Thrush, are really rather delicate birds, and Jonsson remains a bit "heavy". We do like the inclusion of a twig or two or a blade of grass to accompany the bird illustrations, as Jonsson frequently does.

So far in this comparison we seem to favor the Collins guide. This is only because we carried the Collins all the time and used the Jonsson solely for reference and corroboration. We learned much from the wealth of impressive detail in the Jonsson and if we ever take an actual "birding" vacation in Europe, the Jonsson will

be an invaluable companion. It might be helpful at this point to more closely compare the two texts as they present the Chaffinch, one of the most common birds of England and Ireland.

We soon became aware of the ubiquitous Chaffinch. Its song is its mark—the observer always hears it first. Each of our guides tries to describe the songs and calls but each falls short—understandably. As with some other finch songs, it's the quality and timbre that the observer learns to recognize, rather than the sequence of sounds. We soon got the message. Collins uses the adjectives cheerful and rattling while Jonsson notes that song is, "always ringing and far-carrying." Both books go into some detail in describing the birds' appearance as there is considerable plumage variation among immatures and across different geographic ranges.

Common to both books is the comparison on one page of the Chaffinch and the Brambling. Both mention the mixed groups that appear in fall and winter and both agree on the distinguishing field marks. The Chaffinch illustration in Jonsson shows the male, female, and first winter plumages plus the male in flight and a side by side comparison of flight appearance of female Chaffinch and Brambling. A nicely colored African race of Chaffinch is also shown. Collins shows the male and female and slightly smaller versions of the Madeira, African, Azores, and Canary Island forms. However, the quality of the color rendition in Collins is nowhere near that of Jonsson so it is hardly possible to distinguish among the several racial forms illustrated.

The text descriptions indicate subtle but undoubtedly important differences in plumage colors among the various races of Chaffinch. For example, Collins notes that the mantle of the African race of Chaffinch is green, the Azores-Madeira from greenish, and the Canary Island form slate-blue. Jonsson, focusing on slightly different characteristics, remarks the rump of the African race is dark moss-green, whole cheek blue-gray, and breast pale pink. Collins mentions the Canary Island forms as having a bright green rump, and the African forms having black wings and black mark on forehead. These particular comments were of no practical use to us tour participants but do point out the advantage of having two guides. One small remark about a species can suddenly bring a birder's fuzzy identification into clear focus.

There is little point in comparing the song descriptions further, but it is fun to read the syllabizations. (Surely having both books in the field would help considerably with songs and calls.) Habitat descriptions are very similar, but Jonsson mentions the Chaffinch

feeding on insects during breeding season. He also gives arrival times of March-April and ending times of September-October, noting that many individuals winter over in Britain. Length of the bird is given in Collins as 6 inches (15cm) and in Jonsson as 15.5cm. The range maps are similar.

Collins includes a section of range maps for the British Isles in a separate appendix. For our purposes this was handy and helpful. The index in Collins was in two sections: one giving the scientific names, and one just before it giving common names. This arrangement proved to be a time-consuming nuisance. Jonsson combines the common and scientific names.

We extended our Ireland tour with a ten day visit with relatives in the south of England. Here was a more leisurely chance to observe the birds in their garden—the sneaky little Dunnock, the surprising Bullfinch, the delightful Robin. An automobile trip across Dartmoor yielded Peregrine and Hobby, a woods in Devon a hovering Honey Buzzard, and in some grassy scrub at the Scilly Isles, a life Grasshopper Warbler.

All birding opportunities provide at least one exciting moment. For us, it was a bean field loaded with dozens of Skylarks as we took a stroll on the South Downs of Hampshire. And, after our initial acquaintance with Song Thrush and Chaffinch during the first days of our trip, the two species shared our luncheon at a picnic table in the Scilly Isles during our final days.

Upon our return to Connecticut on June 7, we turned to two other field guides to the European birds just to check differences. One was the *Hamlyn Guide to Girds Of Britain and Europe* by Bertel Bruun with illustration by Arthur Singer (Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, London, 1981). This is an adequate field guide, but not in the same class with the Collins publication, which it parallels in format. The other is the *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain & Europe* by John Gooders with illustrations by Alan Harris. (Kingfisher Books, Grisewood & Dempsey Ltd., London, 1990.) This book devotes a full page to each species, with standardized information items given for all species. A good comprehensive guide, but lacking the more extensive and colorful explanations presented by Jonsson.

But do "Take Two", whichever suits you. The birding experience, however incidental, will be enhanced.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

WINTER, December 1, 1995 through February 29, 1996

After the surpassingly mild winter of 1994-95, this season offered a stiff dose of New England reality. Cold, snowy weather struck early, and by mid-February the total snowfall had reached record levels of 80+ inches in the interior. This put a strain on birds of prey, which moved into cities and around feeders in search of food. As a result, nature centers took in an unusual number of injured and weakened hawks and owls (fide JKa). The hard weather, combined with an abysmal fruit crop, meant an early exit for American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and other berry-eaters all difficult to find. Common winterers such as White-throated Sparrows and Golden-crowned Kinglets also retreated, but a decent showing by boreal species, including a massive flight of Northern Shrikes, made things interesting. The season ended with a whimper, as a late February warm spell ushered in the first migrant dabbling ducks, Turkey Vultures, Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles amid temperatures in the 50's.

Before moving on to the reports, the fruit situation merits further mention. The summer drought caused a near-total failure of the native crop. Even abundant introduced species such as Autumn Olive were barren. But the much-maligned Oriental Bittersweet, a twining species best-known for overwhelming native vegetation, produced plenty of berries. Birds observed eating them included robins, waxwings, turkeys and Pine Grosbeaks. When an American Crow roost formed in downtown Waterbury, sidewalks and cars turned orange in tribute to *Celastrus orbiculatus*. But perhaps the most interesting report was of at least six Ruffed Grouse eating bittersweet berries that festooned red cedars February 18 in Redding (FM,CBa).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Common Loons, Red-throated Loons, and Horned Grebes were scattered along the Sound with no noteworthy concentrations. A Red-throated Loon on Lower Bolton Pond in Bolton December 2-3 was unexpected in the northeast (GC,MS et al.).

Despite tundra-like conditions, a few Pied-billed Grebes managed to winter in patches of open water in the Lordship section of Stratford (m.ob.), in East Stamford harbor (PD), in Groton (DP), and at Smith Cove in Waterford (m.ob). A likely migrant appeared February 28 at Lake Zoar in Southbury (RN). Red-necked Grebes put in a decent showing, with singles January 9 in Old Saybrook (GH), January 10 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (hereafter Harkness) (DP), January 17 in Greenwich harbor (BO,JZ), January 19 at a small opening in the ice on Holly Pond, Stamford (PD, MM), at least two from January 28 on at the mouth of the Thames River (MS,SS,SRi,EN), and one off Milford February 27 (NH). Great Cormorants, uncommon away from saltwater, wandered up the Housatonic River to Stevenson Dam, where five of them gorged on herring and made a first appearance December 17 on the Oxford Christmas Bird Count (CBC) (GH,HH). Up to eight were at Shepaug Dam, Southbury, January 14 (TW,J&LA et al.), and four were seen February 24 on the Naugatuck River in Seymour (BD).

Two Northern Gannets made it west all the way to Greenwich December 17 (BO). After a strong autumn presence, at least two American Bitterns wintered at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP), where they were sometimes conspicuous at high tide (JG et al.). A Great Egret was still at Manresa Island, Norwalk, December 3 (FM), but egrets otherwise made themselves scarce. A group of about 10 Black-crowned Night Herons wintered near an unfrozen ditch in Stratford (GH,NC), two were in Groton January 20 (DP) and one was at the Sherwood Island millpond in Westport January 25 (FM,MS,DP). More remarkable was an immature found February 18 on a street in West Hartford (JI fide JKa). The bird, which was starving, was taken to Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, where it was fattened up. Plans to release it at the Sound were short-circuited when it managed to snip its way out of the cage. However, it hung around the Nature Center property through the end of the period.

Two black-billed swans flying up the Connecticut River December 24 at South Glastonbury were probably Tundra Swans (ES), but the increasing number of Trumpeter Swans in both captive-breeding programs and introduced populations have made swan identification problematic. Escaped, or even vagrant, Bewick's and Whooper Swans only add to the uncertainty. For better or for

worse, New Haven harbor holds one of the nation's bigger wintering flocks of Mute Swan; about 500 were packed into the West Haven corner in January (GH). Another 200+ wintered in Norwalk harbor (FM). A pair at Willimantic Reservoir December 2 were two too many in an area where they're still uncommon (GC). Autumn's **Greater White-fronted Goose** remained on a Hartford golf course through at least December 2 (JBa et al.). Two others were reported, an unusually high total; one December 23 at Fenwick Point in Old Saybrook (MD), and one on the Storrs CBC. The smattering of Snow Goose reports centered on early December, with a high of 24 on December 5 in Somers (CE). However, two wandered around the Woodbury area all winter in the company of Canada Geese (RN et al.); by late January one of the few night roosts available to them was a small opening in the ice on Lake Quassapaug in Middlebury. The Brant count peaked at 420 December 16 in Norwalk harbor (FM).

Those Mallards get around. A Mallard X Northern Pintail hybrid was reported February 4 in Westport (CBa) and a Mallard X Wood Duck was in Watertown February 23 (RN). Among the few wintering Wood Ducks were singles in Bruce Park in Greenwich January 6 (BO) and on Konold's Pond in Woodbridge January 14 (MS). The best concentrations of Gadwall and American Wigeon were at Oyster River, Milford-West Haven, with about 80 of each wintering (m.ob.). Norwalk harbor also held 80 wintering wigeon (FM). The usual smattering of wintering Eurasian Wigeons included drakes in West Haven, Bridgeport, and Milford Point (m.ob.). Two female Northern Shovelers were at Lordship in December, but were apparently frozen out by early January (GH et al.); .one shoveler was in Greenwich December 7 (fide BO). The February warm spell brought a small surge of inland migrants, which included a Wood Duck February 23 in Watertown (RN); a Northern Pintail February 27 at Bantam Lake (LW); and two Gadwalls February 25 on the Little River in Oxford (RN).

The only Redhead reports involved a maximum of three wintering at the traditional Smith Cove, Waterford, location (DP et al.) and five at Bargh Reservoir, Stamford, December 17 (PD,MM). Greater Scaup numbers were down from a year ago, with high counts of 4,300 off Fairfield-Bridgeport February 15 (CBa) and 3,000 at Sandy Point, West Haven, February 23 (DR et al.). A group of 2,000 was noted wintering off Merwin Point in Milford; fly-by flocks included 2,000 off Sherwood Island in Westport (FM)

and 500+ off HBSP (JG), both on January 14. The few Lesser Scaup scattered around the state were overshadowed by 50+ in Greenwich harbor February 25-29 (BO). A male and three female **Common Eiders** January 10 at Harkness were in a part of the state where observations have been increasing (DP). A female discovered February 8 at Shippan Point, Stamford, was a good find so far west (PD), but even better was a female **Harlequin Duck** discovered at Merwin Point on December 16 (L&MA). Historically, neither species has been strongly inclined to enter the Sound, but both of these stayed through period's end.

Black Scoters were typically hard to find, with singles December 18 at Merwin Point (JBa) and January 1 at HBSP (CR). Staging Common Goldeneyes built to 325 off Milford February 23 (DR et al.). Barrow's Goldeneyes were found at traditional locations on the Connecticut River at Enfield (CE et al.) and off Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (RS,FM et al.); at least two were present at each site. Common Mergansers crowded onto the big rivers. More than 200 were noted in January in the East Haddam-to-Chester stretch of the Connecticut River (SK), and several hundred moved up and down the Housatonic all winter (m.ob.). Ruddy Ducks cleared out quickly after a good fall showing. Up to four in Greenwich harbor through January appeared to be the only winterers (JBe,BO), although 12 in the Sound at HBSP December 31 may have been frozen out of an inland location (C&SR).

RAPTORS THROUGH GULLS

Closure of the New Milford landfill reduced Black Vulture reports to a trickle. Two wandered in the Bethlehem-Woodbury area January 21 (BD) and one was in New Milford January 10 (AT). Farther afield, one was reported December 24 near Essex (JC fide FM). Bald Eagles wintered in healthy numbers. The Connecticut River valley held 40+, with 30+ noted January 14 from the Salmon River confluence to Essex (DP). At Shepaug Dam in Southbury the 15 to 17 winterers included a bird fostered into the Barkhamsted eagle nest in 1993 (DR,TW et al.) At Miles Sanctuary in Sharon a deer carcass attracted up to five (JH et al.), and reports of singles came from a dozen other locations. A Northern Goshawk wintered at HBSP (CR et al.) and singles were reported from Wethersfield December 30 (SK); Shepaug Dam January 7 (DR et al.); Cove Island Park, Stamford, January 18 (PD); Quinebaug Valley Trout Hatchery January 20 (DP); Essex January 25 (MS,DP); and Goshen February 27 (MS et al.).

Following the pattern of two winters ago, Red-shouldered Hawks were conspicuous against the frosty backdrop (and probably hungry). We received about 25 reports. Do rodents like landfills? Ask the 12 Red-tailed Hawks holding a banquet at the Manchester dump on February 9 (MS). Rough-legged Hawks were seen irregularly in small numbers at the big coastal marshes; inland, singles were in Bethlehem December 12 (GH), Sunny Valley Preserve in New Milford December 21 (CW), Cat Den Swamp in Eastford December 27 (MS) and Southbury Training School farm February 18 (DR,RN).

After a strong fall migration, Golden Eagles were well-represented by an adult wintering on Canaan Mountain (GH,BD,RB et al.); at least two immatures in the Connecticut River valley (SMi,DP et al.); and an immature at Shepaug Dam on the Housatonic River in Southbury February 10 (DR). While American Kestrels remain in low numbers, generating just a handful of reports after mid-December, wintering Merlins continued their upward trend with at least a dozen reports. Two Peregrine Falcons wintered again in downtown Stamford (m.ob.) and two more took up residence for the season in Hartford (BD et al.). One was flying around the Electric Boat buildings in Groton February 12 (FM,GH). The diurnal raptor highlight without question was a dark morph **Gyrfalcon** videotaped and seen by several observers December 4 at HBSP, where it killed two pigeons at the hawk banding station but eluded the nets (DP,CR et al.). On December 16 two observers watched a possible white-phase Gyr flying low over the marsh (CP,RP), and perhaps the same bird was seen briefly December 23 (TH).

Both Virginia Rail and Clapper Rail wintered at HBSP, where they were occasionally seen together bathing in tidal creeks (LR,PF et al.). After a banner fall flight, 350 American Coots were still at Bantam Lake in Litchfield December 2 (BD). Numbers dropped off dramatically as things froze up, but a few wintered at Bantam Lake, Smith Cove in Waterford (MS et al.), South Cove in Old Saybrook (JG), Lake Zoar in Southbury (RN) and Candlewood Lake in New Fairfield (DR). Two American Oystercatchers were at HBSP December 3 (JG), and up to three wintered at Menunketesuck Island in Westbrook (GH et al.). The latter site also held a few Purple Sandpipers, 20+ Black-bellied Plovers, 50+ Ruddy Turnstones, 100+ Sanderlings and 150+ Dunlin. Penfield Reef in Fairfield was another good wintering spot, with 50 Sanderling, 60

Dunlin, and about a dozen Purple Sandpipers throughout the period (CBa). A Red Knot was at Milford Point December 27 (BO et al.), and another was at Harkness January 10 (DP). The shorebird highlight was a tardy Long-billed Dowitcher December 27-January 1 on Johnson's Creek in east Bridgeport. It was a first for the Stratford-Milford CBC (GH, NC,RB). A Greater Yellowlegs wintered nearby at small ponds in Lordship (PF,GH).

It was a better-than-average winter for white-winged gulls. The Manchester landfill held at least five first-year Iceland Gulls January 30 (MS,SS), and singles were at HBSP January 26-29 (CR et al.); at Middle Beach in Westbrook throughout the period (JH et al.); on Lower Bolton Pond December 2-3 (GC,MS et al.); at Quinebaug Valley Trout Hatchery January 20 (DP); at Lake Zoar January 21 (RN); at West Hartford Reservoir February 25 (DR); and on Mirror Lake at the UConn campus in Storrs February 24 (GC). In addition to the reliable Stratford seawall bird, which wintered (m.ob), at least two different Lesser Black-backed Gulls visited the Manchester landfill during the season (MS). Singles were reported December 12-February 20 at Holly Pond (PD), December 3 at Lower Bolton Pond (SS), January 23 at Menunketesuck (DP), January 25 at Oyster River (MS,DP) and February 2 at Bradley Point, West Haven (GH). A first-winter Glaucous Gull appeared January 30 at Stevenson Dam and remained for more than a week (GH et al.). Another was at the Manchester landfill December 27 (DP) and one was at Oyster River February 18 (PF). Common Black-headed Gulls also were well-reported with singles December 9-January 30 at Holly Pond (PD et al.), December 19 at HBSP (JH) and January 22 in Westbrook (NC, GH).

PARAKEETS THROUGH WAXWINGS

The growing Monk Parakeet population included a flock of up to 47 seen regularly at Compo Beach in Westport (FM). The only Barn Owl report, away from known nest sites, was a single at Bluff Point, Groton, December 3 (PF). A red-phase Eastern Screech-Owl roosted in a Wood Duck box in Sterling December 1-29 (R&LD). This is worth mentioning because of their spotty distribution in the northeast. This was illustrated by discovery of six on the Trail Wood CBC, where the Quinebaug Valley apparently holds a strong population. However, similar habitat in the Storrs area holds very few (MS). A Great Horned Owl was brooding by February 11 in Madison (EF et al.). The heavy

snow cover put pressure on owls to find food, and hungry Barred Owls were especially conspicuous. Several were reported near bird feeders; others wintered in city parks in Waterbury (DC) and New Haven (RB et al.); and some were pushed to the immediate coast (FM). The bird of the season (who-who-who could question it?) was a **Great Grey Owl** found January 14 at HBSP, where it posed for dozens of birders throughout the day (TH et al.). Unfortunately, it was never seen again. This was the seventh record for this spectacular boreal invader and the first substantiated one since 1944. Wintering Long-eared Owls included four in Milford (fide SMa) and three in Stamford (PD). A dead one was found at HBSP December 23 (TH), but two managed to survive there until at least mid-January (JG et al.). Short-eared Owls were regular at HBSP in early winter (m.ob.) but became scarce as things froze up; two on December 17 at Pine Creek in Fairfield also cleared out (CBa), but two were at Great Island, Old Lyme, in mid-January (DP). The late February warm spell brought another flurry: one February 18 (SK) and two February 23 (DR) at Milford Point, and one at HBSP February 28 (JG). After a heavy autumn flight, wintering Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported from Roxbury (RN), Fairfield (PF) Greenwich Point (BO et al.), Oxford (BD), and Milford (MS,DP).

Great Gray Owl, Hammonasset Beach State Park Madison, 14 January 1996 (*photo by Paul Fusco*)

An immature Red-headed Woodpecker wintered on a residential street in Guilford, where it visited feeders, but spent most of its

time clinging to a single dead snag in a sugar maple (m.ob). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at the Chester ferry landing on January 10 was one of the few reported after mid-December (MS). Common Flickers beat a hasty retreat and were hard to find even along the coast. Christmas Count season produced about 10 Eastern Phoebes, but they cleared out quickly after that. Horned Larks were widely reported, both inland and along the coast, probably because the constant snow cover made them more conspicuous than usual. Of interest was a small flock that landed on the bare roof of E.O. Smith High School in Storrs December 12 (GC).

Five Common Ravens were seen in Sharon January 14 (PD,BO), and two December 30 in Killingly kept up a recent spate of eastern sightings (DP). Scattered reports came from other northern locales, but numbers didn't approach those reported in the tough winter of 1993-94. A Marsh Wren was still at HBSP January 10 (JG), but Winter Wrens and Red-breasted Nuthatches joined the ranks of half-hardies that made themselves scarce. American Robin numbers were low, with a few scattered flocks including 130 at Shepaug dam, Southbury, January 6 (LW), 100+ February 6 in Ashford (MS) and 100+ February 18 in Sharon (GH,NC). Lingering Brown Thrashers were noted at HBSP December 10 (JG et al.), Bluff Point December 26 (PF), Fairfield January 7 (PF), and Milford throughout the period (m.ob.) The only reports of wintering American Pipits involved three January 1 at Pine Creek, Fairfield, with two still present January 21 (CBa). Cedar Waxwings were hard to find in most areas; the biggest flocks reported were 100+ with robins February 18 in Sharon (GH,NC), 150+ in Storrs December 19 (MS) and 150+ at Millstone Point, Waterford, February 15 (DP).

SHRIKES THROUGH WINTER FINCHES

The Northern Shrike flight drew special mention in the fall report, and the winter season revealed what a monumental invasion it was. Following 30 autumn reports, winter produced 67 on the Christmas Counts alone, including an astonishing 10 each on the Barkhamsted and Litchfield Hills CBC. Another 50+ were seen through the end of the season, and a few more were turning up in March and April. The final tally remains unknown, but sightings have already reached the 150 mark. These came from every corner of the state, and for every duplication, who knows how many went undetected? Before this year, a dozen statewide would have

been considered a major flight. The shrike invasion was the season's most noteworthy event, but the lack of warblers best exemplified this winter's harsh nature. During the mild 1994-95 season, an unprecedented 11 species were recorded in the state. This year even the half-hardy Yellow-rumped Warbler was difficult to find. The only other species reported was a single Palm Warbler on the New Haven CBC, and the CBC missed Common Yellowthroat for the first time in 20 years.

Away from the coast, an Eastern Towhee was in North Cornwall December 17 (LW et al.). Two Seaside Sparrows were still at HBSP January 1 (PF), and a Vesper Sparrow, rare in winter, was at Aspetuck Orchard in Easton December 17 (TB,JKn). A flock of 120 American Tree Sparrows December 24 in Glastonbury was the largest reported (ES). A Chipping Sparrow wintered at a feeder in Guilford (EN), another visited a Chaplin feeder December 22 (PR), and a third stayed at a feeder in Stamford December 7-February 1 (PD). Two White-crowned Sparrows seen February 15 at a Bethlehem feeder, apparently wintered (HH); another lingered to December 7 at a Mansfield feeder (BL) and one was in Sherman January 1 (DR). However, sparrow numbers overall were very low, with Field, Savannah, and Swamp Sparrows quite hard to find after the early CBC. In the north, even Song Sparrows and White-throated Sparrows were thinly distributed. Fox Sparrows were also scarce, but one visited a Wethersfield feeder at least through January 20 (SK) and another lingered to late January in Willington (BP). The usual few Lapland Longspurs were scattered along the coast, with a high of 13 on December 30 at HBSP (JBe,PD). A few Eastern Meadowlarks wintered at HBSP (CR) and one was at Durham Meadows January 15 (BD). Two Rusty Blackbirds lingered to December 30 in Wethersfield (SK) and six were at Quinebaug Valley Trout Hatchery the same day (DP). A female Baltimore Oriole visited a feeder in Pomfret in early December (DP et al.).

Despite a massive fall flight, Purple Finches were harder to find than some of the more irruptive species. Up to five visited a New Preston feeder in January (LW), but that was about it after mid-December. Pine Grosbeaks never settled in for extended stays, but scattered flocks were reported throughout Litchfield County. These included 14 near Northfield January 17 (BB), up to 13 in Salisbury February 5-10 (GH,-NC), and up to 10 at White Memorial Foundation in mid February. In the northeast, one

was in Mansfield February 7 (MS). Evening Grosbeaks were less nomadic, with flocks of 20 to 30 wintering around feeders in Goshen, Canaan, Colebrook, and West Hartland (GH,NC). A White-winged Crossbill December 30 in Quinebaug Valley was one of a kind (DP). Pine Siskins were, surprisingly, almost non-existent, but Common Redpolls staged a flight that brought small flocks across the northern tier and a few along the coast. The first flock, numbering 16 birds, appeared December 8 in Old Lyme (DP), signaling an early wave (CE et al.). A second wave appeared in early February (BK et al.) The high count was 50 in Hampton December 30 (MS et al.). This flock included a pale bird that the observers were unable to identify beyond redpoll sp., a wise course of action in many cases with this complex group.

Addendum:

Inadvertently deleted from the fall report were two significant records: The raptor rarity highlights (of that season) were a juvenile Swainson's Hawk photographed over Storrs Oct. 26 (MS,SS) and a late adult seen over Sunny Valley Preserve in New Milford Nov. 17 (CW); there are fewer than 10 state records for this western species.

Exotics:

Two Greylag Geese, trim and unbanded, wandered around Litchfield area all winter (GH, RN). An Egyptain Goose was at Holly Pond throughout the period (PD), and a Barheaded Goose hung around North cove in Old Saybrook (m.o.b.). A European Goldfinch was at a feeder in Trumbull February 17 (fide FM).

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Lee and Marion Aimesbury, Janet and Lorraine Amalavage, Homer Bair, **James Bair** (JBa), Tom Baptist, **Bob Barbieri, Charles Barnard** (CBa) , Joe Bear (JBe), Ron Bell, Curtis Benashki (CBe), Jay Carlisle, **George Clark**, David Coutu, **Neil Currie, Buzz Devine**, Mark DeWallaby, **Linda Dixon, Robert Dixon, Patrick Dugan, Carl Ekroth**, Ethel Follet, Paul Fusco, **John Gaskell**, Nita Hamilton, **Greg Hansiek**, Tom Harrington, Hanni Helayel, John Himmelman, Jerry Iwan, **Jay Kaplan** (JKa) **Betty Kleiner**, Jay Knox (JKn), **Steve Kotchko**, Becky Lehmann, **Frank Mantlik**, Steve Mayo (SMa), Stuart Mitchell (SMi), Michael Moccio, **Russ Naylor**, Elaine Nye, Michael O'Leary, **Brian O'Toole**, Bill Parizek, Cathi Pelletier, Ron Pelletier, **Dave Provencher, Charlie Rafford**, Shirley Rafford (SRi), Sally Ranti (SRi), Linda Rediker, Dave Rosgen, Phil Rusch, Neil Smith, **Richard Soffer, Eric Sullivan**, Sherman Suter, **Mark Szantyr**, Art Titus, Dave Titus, Terry Weaver, **Lyle Whittlesey, Chris Wood**, and Joe Zeranski.

GREG HANISEK, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Louis Bevier

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 16

In cold weather, some birds are forced to search for food where they might not otherwise be found. Apparently that is the case for our quiz bird, with its sharply tipped bill seemingly atypical for a visitor to a seed-feeder. The wingbars and bill shape are suggestive of a wood-warbler, birds that sometimes are found at feeders in early winter here in Connecticut. The lower wingbar appears broader than the upper wingbar, and the body plumage is relatively unpatterned. Of our regular warblers, Pine Warbler and Blue-winged Warbler come to mind because they exhibit similar patterns. Because the belly is obviously paler than the dark wash on the head, Blue-winged seems wrong. The pale flash on the lower mandible looks like that seen on Pine Warbler; nevertheless, there is no pale wedge on the side of the neck, a good mark for Pine Warbler. Looking more closely at the bill, one sees that it is somewhat conical in shape and truly quite sharply pointed. This is wrong for any warbler.

Small numbers of orioles occur annually in the Northeast from late autumn through early spring. At times, these birds visit seed-feeders when conditions for insects and fruit become unfavorable. The bill shape is clearly much better for oriole. The wingbars and the limitations of our quiz—species reported from the Northeast—leave us but three choices, Orchard, Baltimore, or Bullock's Oriole.

Orchard Oriole is one of the earliest of our breeders to depart, and thus would not seem a likely candidate for using a feeder in the Northeast. Bullock's

Oriole has recently regained its former status as a separate species from Baltimore Oriole, although the two species do hybridize to a limited extent in the areas where their breeding ranges overlap. There are occasional reports of this species in our area, often in fall or winter, but the number of reports since the species was lumped is many fewer than before.

Adult males of the Baltimore and Bullock's are readily identified by their pattern of black, especially on the head. These patterns are the same in winter except for a few buffy tipped fresh feathers on the back early in the winter. There is a difference in the molt timing of these two species, Baltimore molting before migration and thus already in Basic plumage by late fall. This is worth remembering when studying any bird suspected of being a Bullock's. Females and immatures of these two species can be very difficult to identify, and not all birds can be identified. Individual variation, hybrids, and the subtle differences invite one to be extra cautious with the identification. Another problem is the field guide treatment of these species. Some marks emphasized are sometimes not the best, for example, the pale belly attributed to Bullock's. Some Baltimores can have a pale belly, although not usually white. On the other hand, some Bullock's can have an orangish or yellowish wash there.

The important characters to identify confusing orioles are the coloration and patterning of the head and upperparts. The belly can be used as a supporting character. With our bird, the pale belly suggests a Bullock's. Let's see if that is correct. The pattern on the head often reflects that of the adult male in these species. That is that the top and sides of the head are usually uniform and of similar color in Baltimore, whereas female and immature Bullock's tend to show a paler cheek, which is similar in color and paleness to the breast, and a pale, often yellow washed, eyebrow (supercilium). Some adult female Baltimores can be quite heavily marked on the head, showing a blackish mottling over most of the head. The female, and especially, immature Bullock's often show a darker line behind the eye, reflecting the pattern of the adult male. This pattern is enhanced by the paler supercillium.

In addition to the head pattern, the back of most Baltimores is darker and with more extensive dark centers to the feathers, which can at times create an obscure pattern of streaks. Bullock's tends to be a clear gray on the back. Caution is needed, however, because many (most?) Baltimores are plain on the back.

All the above characters confirm that our bird is a Baltimore Oriole, this one photographed by Mark Szantyr on 30 November

1995 at the Connecticut Audubon Sanctuary in Pomfret, Connecticut. The identity of this bird was hotly debated and final word was only reached after extended evaluation of the slides by experts familiar with both forms. This, once again, illustrates the importance of careful documentation of suspected rarities, with photographic evidence if possible. This story has an interesting finale. This oriole was subsequently killed by one of the many Northern Shrikes that were in Connecticut last year. Examination of the feathers found at the kill site confirm the identification as Baltimore Oriole.

LOUIS R. BEVIER, 25 W. Phil-Ellena St., Philadelphia, PA 19119-2735

Photo challenge 17. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

CORRECTION:

In Volume 16, No. 2, page 69. Yellow-rumped Warbler listed under WE (Westport) should be blank (or zero).

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a PC disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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– **Address Correction Requested** –

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The Connecticut Warbler

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Volume 16, Number 4 October 1996

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*)

by Brian Kleinman

Our cover artist, Brian Kleinman, is a resident of Barkhamsted, and is currently a student at Franklin Pierce College. This is his fourth cover for *The Connecticut Warbler*.

Brian has recently illustrated guides published by the Canton Land Trust and the Farmington Garden Club. The latter, *A Trail Guide To Shade Swamp Sanctuary* in Farmington, won an award from the National Council of State Garden Clubs.

ROGER TORY PETERSON (1908-1996)

The great bird man is dead after eighty-seven productive years. For the better part of this century he was the popular incarnation of the modern bird man: keen of eye and ear, world traveler, illustrator and popularizer of birds and their conservation on two continents, inventor (or rather patentee) of the field mark approach to identifying things, editor, sought-after writer of forewords, favorite medalist and honorary degree recipient for organizations wishing to be noted in turn. He learned to use the media to advance his free-lance career, with Life Magazine, movie lectures, wildlife tours, and books.

Although he did not publish many scientific research papers, every ornithological organization was eager to list him among its councilors. His easel paintings, promoted far and wide by modern print houses, were never accepted for a juried art show.

But more important, Roger Peterson remained sincere and accessible to legions of birders—high and low—all his life. He encouraged and assisted many and never had a harsh word for those with whom he disagreed. This is how I'll remember him: not as ornithologist, though he was an excellent field man; not as artist, though his bird paintings are known to millions; but as a gentle man ever eager to share information about the birds that inspired his long life; birds, he said again and again, that are a litmus test for us in deciding what kind of environment we will leave for future generations of humans. He did his share, and more.

ROLAND C. CLEMENT
Evergreen #122, 88 Notch Hill Road, North Branford, CT 06471

THE 1996 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

JOSEPH ZERANSKI

Not unexpectedly the Summer Bird Count (SBC) presented us with some surprises, mostly positive and always interesting. One hundred and ninety three species (a record) were observed. More participants and more party hours (PH) were tallied than ever before. This is the third year that the same nine SBCs have contributed data, providing more consistent year to year comparisons. Of the many insights to be found among the complex data, new species first deserve some comment.

Four new species were recorded this year on count day (CD), plus another as a count period (CP) bird. A pair of **Common Eiders** were flushed from the shore of Great Captain's Island off Greenwich. But they showed no allegiance to the site nor were there any indications of a nest or young. This was not surprising considering that they do not normally nest south of Maine.

Long-eared Owl, called a former nester in this SBC review last year, is rarely encountered in Connecticut during the breeding season, but actually might nest here annually. In SBCs nesting was not confirmed, but was not unlikely. A pair successfully raised two young in Redding in 1995 (fide D. Norris).

A third species, **Yellow-throated Warbler,** has nested only in recent years in Connecticut, and only at one location, along the Housatonic Valley in Kent in a stand of sycamore trees. Nesting at the new SBC location is a possibility, but on the evidence, or lack of, this intriguing sighting presumably represents a spring overshoot.

Having bred not too far to the north of this state, **Rusty Blackbirds** have been found summering here once or twice previously, yet they could possibly nest here and breeding evidence is to be sought. Unless some nesting evidence is produced, these SBC birds should conservatively be considered late migrants.

During the Count Period a migrating **Black Tern** was found, another first for SBCs. Incidentally, Connecticut SBCs added another species to the all time list, Bullock's Oriole, until recently considered a subspecies of Northern Oriole, as a result of changes in the American Ornithologists' Union *Checklist of North American Birds*, Fortieth Supplement (AOU 1995).

For the second year in a row, **Gull-billed Terns** were recorded. Two birds were observed sitting on a sand bar and briefly flying off Greenwich Point by three experienced birders. This species is

an expanding nester on the south shore of Long Island, New York, and we can anticipate increasing sightings on Long Island Sound. But distinguishing it from other similar looking post breeding terns is not always accomplished without some difficulty. Unfortunately, this species continues to avoid confirmation for the state list; these two birds were not adequately photographed and additional birders were not contacted although the birds were present for about two hours.

Most SBC comments concern state wide totals, every so often illustrated by individual SBC examples. Yet each SBC experiences its own subtle and not so subtle changes. Sometimes these changes are complemented by similar changes among other counts. Often changes only reflect habitat alterations largely found within a particular count area. These local changes in bird populations are better understood by comparing each individual SBC results over a period of several years. These have been compiled and published in the October issues of *The Connecticut Warbler* since 1991.

Several species continue to increase. Among these are Osprey whose numbers have doubled from the 1994 totals. This year Osprey was recorded on four inland SBCs, and was a new species for three of these. This inland growth should soon be followed by a re-establishment of freshwater nesting if it has not already occurred.

Wild Turkey numbers increased 240% over their 1994 totals, from 135 to 326 birds. Apparently not significantly affected, by the severe 1995-96 winter, this species is now reported on all nine SBCs, with the two oldest ones continuing to report record highs. This year its numbers have become five times the *combined* totals for Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, and Northern Bobwhite. Monk Parakeet is now routinely found on both coastal counts.

Having moved in considerable numbers into the state during last year's very severe winter. Barred Owls apparently decided they liked it here and remained as their SBC numbers were 142% of the average of the prior two years.

Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers have each substantially expanded their range in Connecticut this century, the former moving northward and the latter southeastward; both continue to slowly increase in numbers.

Yellow Warblers and Redstarts, for whatever reason, have both grown 27% since 1994. Although total numbers are small, Orchard Oriole counts grew by 85% during the same period, expanding from 21 to 39 birds.

Other species have experienced a decline. The most conspicuous

is House Finch. Not too many years ago it was a widespread, often locally abundant, bird. Now, afflicted by a crippling disease, it is encountered far less often and has become much more localized. It has declined to just over half its '94' tally, to 55% overall, with its lowest recorded number on the Greenwich-Stamford SBC since 1984, and on the Woodbury-Roxbury SBC since 1982. Ring-necked Pheasant is another species which was fairly commonplace as recently as a decade or so ago. It too is becoming quite localized and reduced in numbers. It has dropped to 38% of its '94' total, from 58 to 22 birds. On the GSSBC and the WRSBC its totals were the lowest *ever* recorded, since 1976 and 1978 respectively. Perhaps it will soon follow in the wing beats of an another introduced species, Gray Partridge (*Perdix perdix*). About 90 years ago, this exotic was not considered locally uncommon, but by the 1940's it was extirpated from the state.

The two snowy, cold winters of the last three, and particularly the last one, resulted in a substantial, but hopefully temporary, drop for Carolina Wrens whose numbers went from 110 birds last year—after a slight resurgence due to the milder intervening winter—to 49 this year. In comparison, the 1992 SBC, with over 15% fewer party hours, recorded 434 birds. This year's tally was about 11% of its total four years earlier.

Experiencing a bad winter or possibly a normal, periodic 'off' year, or both, Ruffed Grouse numbers were 58% of the average of the previous two years, and the lowest on GSSBC since 1981. Possibly suffering from the same rough winter, the Eastern Screech-Owl count was only 65% of the average of the 1994 and 1995 SBC totals.

Declining in three years from 20 to 11 birds, American Woodcocks' 55% drop, if not a statistical blip, may be of concern for a species normally considered a local, but not particularly scarce, nester. Why were Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers less than 50% of the average of the two prior counts, and Hermit Thrushes just 60%? Was some of this related to the harsh winter? Interestingly, Eastern Phoebe numbers were not only ten year lows on the GSSBC and WRSBC, but the lowest on both since 1984. Ovenbird totals have dipped too.

Often SBCs totals provide a quick snapshot of species in transition and invite unanswered questions. This year was no exception.

Has the growth in the Double-crested Cormorant summering population peaked? Its numbers have dropped steadily during the last three SBCs, down almost 25%. Blue-winged Teal, very infrequent nesters, were found on the two coastal SBCs. Expanding

their nesting range southward, five Bald Eagles were found on three separate counts.

Historically well established Connecticut residents, Red-shouldered Hawks declined drastically and had become virtually absent as nesters a quarter century ago. They are now gradually re-establishing their nesting range and, while not yet attaining their former numbers, were found on all nine SBCs this year.

Sora was seen on two separate counts and was a CP bird on a third. Killdeer numbers seem to have dropped over the 1994-96 period. The decline of active dumps sites may have reduced the wintering Herring Gull population, but the nesting season totals seem to continue to grow.

Common Ravens continue to do well and were found on four counts this year. This fact would have been considered an outlandish prospect less than 20 years ago. Their relatives, American Crows, have also increased over the last three years.

The totals for most flycatchers are up this year. Last winter's weather may have affected Northern Mockingbirds; they were down 20% from the previous year. As unexpected as it may be, the European Starling population appears to have decreased in recent years. Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat numbers are up.

The **Barkhamsted SBC** produced 123 species this year. With Northern Harrier, Swainson's Thrush, and Hooded Warbler being new additions, the all time total has reached 139 species. Breeding of Common Loons was "highly doubtful" according to the compiler. The pair of Bald Eagles at Barkhamsted Reservoir failed in their breeding attempt. Golden-crowned Kinglet was first confirmed as nesting this year. Possibly paired with a female, the territorial male Swainson's Thrush was reportedly present for two weeks at 1200' altitude prior to the count. The species has not been verified as nesting in the state although it has nested not too far from our northern border. The Evening Grosbeak record consisted of two distinct pairs plus a single female, but no young were reported by the SBC submission deadline.

Including the additions of Blue-winged Teal (actually it had been reported in 1979 and as a CP birds on two other occasions, but our procedures define new species as those not seen within the last ten years) Common Eider, and Sora, the **Greenwich-Stamford SBC** recorded 139 species, with 212 species seen during all the years. Least Terns were flooded out and vacated Sand Island off Greenwich Point due to an unusually high spring high tide and went unreported for the first time since 1987. The Stamford Per-

egrine Falcons again failed to produce young. Eastern Meadowlark went unreported for the first time either as a CD or CP (once) bird. On the other hand, there were two new breeding records. A pair of Little Blue Herons nested at Great Captain's Island off Greenwich, while a pair of Soras nested just west of the Connecticut line in Purchase, New York.

The **Hartford SBC** reported 111 species of which two were new, Bald Eagle and Blackburnian Warbler. Dark-eyed Junco was new too, but it was only a CP bird. First time nesting species were Purple Martin, Savannah Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow. White-eyed Vireo and Grasshopper Sparrow made their second appearances.

One hundred and thirty eight species, including 13 new ones, were recorded on the three year old **Litchfield Hills SBC**, bringing its long term total to 151 species. The formidable list of newcomers consists of Double-crested Cormorant, Blue-winged Teal, Common Merganser, Black Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Common Moorhen, American Coot, Common Nighthawk, Northern Parula, Blackpoll Warbler, and Orchard Oriole. Yet Eastern Screech-Owl was missed! The compiler lists 91 species which have nested within the SBC area.

The **New Haven SBC** logged 123 species. New count species were a drake Blue-winged Teal, Mourning Warbler, and the hybrid "Lawrence's Warbler". Over its history the count has recorded 165 species. Others of note included a female CP Common Merganser, Northern Harrier, Common Moorhen, Dunlin, Willet, and both Blackburnian and Canada Warblers. Missed for the first time since the count's beginning were White-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo, plus Swamp Sparrow. The NHSBC compiler pointed out that 116 Carolina Wrens were seen in 1992, but this year only 19 were found.

The **Quinnipiac Valley SBC** counted 112 species. The five species newly recorded were Pied-billed Grebe, Ring-necked Duck, Osprey, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Not completely surprising were misses of Alder Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. The QVSBC compiler lists 88 species as nesting in the count circle.

One hundred and four species were compiled by the **Salmon River SBC**. Osprey, Tennessee Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird (at Portland Reservoir) were new species. Its all time total now stands at 111. Great Horned Owl, Bank Swallow, and Red-breasted Nuthatch were missed this year. Eighty two spe-

cies were noted by the compiler as being regular nesters while another 12 are considered illusive or irregular nesters.

Storrs SBC recorded one hundred species. During its existence 120 species have been seen on this count, including Wild Turkey. Its Compiler reported that 62 species are known nesters. Confirmed breeding this year were 15 species. Normally expected but not found this year were Cooper's Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Barred Owl, Winter Wren, White-eyed Vireo (absent for the second consecutive year), and Canada Warbler.

One hundred and sixty nine species have been recorded through 1996 on the **Woodbury-Roxbury SBC**. This year 132 were seen, of which Long-eared Owl, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco were new. The owls were heard and seen over several nights at sites five to six miles apart, in Roxbury and Woodbury, by four experienced observers. The encounters were described in detailed field notes accompanied by an extended review. The warbler was working in sycamore trees for about 25 minutes along the Nonewaug River. Other birds of note were American Wigeon, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Northern Raven, and Parula Warbler. Sharp-shinned Hawk was a big miss. Interesting enough, Red-bellied Woodpeckers continue their six years of growth, and for a third consecutive year Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were present, perhaps signifying a southern range expansion?

A fuller understanding of SBC results will be gained by perusing the expanded tables at the end of this article. These enable the reader to more easily compare the last three years' totals for each species.

STATEWIDE COUNT TOTALS

Dates: June 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 29, & 30. Reported on Count Days (CD) were 193 species and 95,972 individuals, plus 2 Count Period (CP) species. Two hundred and fifty-seven observers in 130 parties spent 1192.25 Party Hours (PHs), 1130.75 daytime and 61.5 at night in the field.

INDIVIDUAL COUNT TOTALS

Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 29 & 30. Count Center (The BSBC is a 13 mile east-west by a 15 mile north-south rectangle): 41° 55' N, 72° 59' W. Elevation 289 to 1457 ft. Area: Barkhamsted, Burlington

(northern 1/4), Canton, Colebrook (south half), Granby (southwest 1/4), Hartland, New Hartford, Torrington (north 1/4), & Winchester. Weather: 6/29 - Partly sunny AM, becoming cloudy; overcast with rain developing overnight. Temp 62° to 84°F. Wind var., 0-5 mph. Night - Temp 62° to 62°F., Wind ESE, 0-10 mph. 1/4" rain. 6/30 - Cloudy with light showers, drizzle, & fog ending at sunset. Temp 62° to 67°F; Wind ESE, 0-10 mph. 1/4" rain. Night- Temp 62° to 56°F. Wind E, 0-5 mph.

Totals: 123 Species, 10,564 Individuals. Twenty-two observers in 14 parties counted during 133 daytime and 8 night PHs.

Participants: *Bob Barbieri, Terry Bianchi, George Boynton, Paul Carrier, Ayreslea Denny, Duncan Denny, Rita Duclos, Michael Hamilton, Barbara Johnson, Paul Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Patricia Keener, Brian Kleinman, Joyce Marshall, Jamie Meyers, Carol Parent, David Rosgen (84-D Falls Terrace, Oakville CT 06779), Stanley Rosgen, Bud Sanders, Louise Tucker, Phylis Winer, & Sarah Winer.*

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

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 15 & 16. Count Center (The GSSBC covers a 15 x 15 mile square): 41° 05' N, 73° 37' W. Elevation 0 to at least 740 ft. Area: (Connecticut, 65% of area) Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, and Stamford; and (New York, 35% of area) Armonk, Bedford (in part), Port Chester, Rye, and White Plains (in part). Weather: Mostly sunny both days, but some clouds early Sat. AM; 6/15 - Temp 67° to 87°F. Wind NW 10-20 mph. 6/16 - Temp 68° to 75°F. Wind E-S, 10-15 mph.

Totals: 139 Species, 18,895 Individuals, plus 1 CP species. Fifty-eight observers in 29 parties counted over 265.5 daytime and 11 night PHs.

Participants: *Tom Andersen, John Askildsen, Ken Ballas, Tom Baptist, Trudy Battaly, Gail Benson, Andrew Block, John Bova, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye NY 10580), Albie Collins, Diane Collins, George Dremeaux, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Jay Gartner, Betty Grossman, Carol Hartel, Alyssa Havens, Dave Havens, Paul Hinlicky Sr., Ann Jambriska, Joe Jambriska, Michael Justice, Thomas Keesee Jr., Claudia Leff, Frank Mantlik, Hugh McGuinness, Janet Mehmel, Lannois Neely, Mike Newhouse, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob CT 06807), Drew Panko, Marlene Park, William Park, Matt Popp, Steve Potter, Polly Rothstein, Meredith Sampson, Lee Schlesinger, Bob Shriber, John Shull. Bob Siemers, Jason Siemers, Jared Silbersher, Andy Towle, Patty Towle, David Tracy, Mohan Tracy, Mike Usai, Jim Utter, Ann Vajsabel, Bill Van Loan Jr., Bill Wallace, Jack Wells, Jonas Wikander, Lynn Zeltman, Joseph Zeranski.*

Hartford Summer Bird Count *(founded 1991)*

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 8 & 9. 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, and Windsor. Weather: Hot, humid, hazy, muggy, and sticky, 6/8 - Temp 66° to 90°F. Night- foggy; 6/9 - Temp 65° to 73°F. Night - foggy.

Totals: 111 Species, plus five in CP, and 11,214 Individuals. Thirty-eight observers in 16 parties counted over 163.5 daytime and 5 night PHs.

Participants: *Bill Altmann, Dick Anton, Mary Carter, Sue Chiriboga, Pat Comins, Ron Corchoran, Ed Czlapinski, Mary Czlapinski, Fran D'Amico, Paul Desjardins, Carl Ekroth, Kathie Felice (274 Morningside Drive East, Bristol CT 06010), Mike Greenwood, Michael Hamilton, Kathy Jones, Jay Kaplan, Betty Kleiner, Gil Kleiner, Steve Kotchko, Tricia Lapolla, Stephanie Lovell, Larry Lunden, Bill McGehee, James Moore, Clark Moseley, Andrea Perko, Dave Rosgen, Meg Ryan, Mary Rudick, David Schoenfeld, Shirley Smigel, Debbie Tedford, Brian Toal, Judy Whittlesey, Mike Whittlesey, Dave Wichman, Phylis Winer, Sarah Winer.*

Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count *(founded 1994)*

Date: Sat., June 8 & 9. Count Center: 41° 43' N, 73° 14' W. Elevation 450 to 1658 ft. Area (in whole or in part): Cornwall, Goshen, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, Sharon, Torrington, Warren, and Washington. Weather: Both days - Partly sunny, hot; Temp 75° to 85°F.

Totals: 138 Species, plus one in CP, and 15,232 Individuals. Thirty-seven observers in 13 parties censused during 178 daytime and 17 night PHs.

Participants: *Melissa Allen, Bob Barbieri (56 Baron Lane, Torrington CT 06790), Cheryl Barker, Scott Barren, Joan Barry, Raymond Belding (46 Scoville Street, Torrington, CT 06790), Sue Belding, Charlotte Bostwick, George Boyton, Angela Dimmitt, David Doubleday, Ellen Doubleday, Curt Edgat, Dave Emond, Jeff Greenwood, Jeremy Greenwood, Gordon Loery, Marian Lyga, Donna Manwaring, Jerry Marcellino, Deborah Martin, Randy McHugh, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Ray Packard, Clarance Parker, Jim Parker, Virginia Peterson, Dave Rosgen, Gerry Smith, Nina Stein, Jan Sturdevant, Dave Tripp, David Wakefield, Leigh Wells, Fran Zygmont.*

New Haven Summer Bird Count *(founded 1991)*

Date: Sat & Sun, June 8 & 9. 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, and Woodbridge (in part). Weather: 6/8 - 5 AM - 6 PM, Sunny & clear, Temp 63° to 80° F. Wind SW, 0-5 mph; 6/9 - 5 AM - 5:30 PM, Cloudy, humid, and fog, Temp 68° to 85°F. Wind Var., 0-5 mph.

Totals: 123 Species, plus four species during CP, and 8,746 Individuals. Thirty-two observers in 20 parties spent 109.5 daytime and 1.5 night PHs counting.

Participants: *Carol Bedworth, Roger Bowersox, Andrew Brand, Bill Brody, Linda Broker, Steve Broker, Cathy Day, Richard English, John Himmelman, Mike Horne, Katy Hubbard, Will Hubbard, Tom Kilroy, Paul Lang, Patrick Leahy, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Chris Loscalzo, Tom Mason, Steve C. Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany CT 06524), Florence McBride, Nancy Rosenbaum, Arnie Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Ray Schwartz, Ray Scory, Tom Sharp, Debbie Tenney, Tony Tortora, Jeff Young.*

Quinnipiac Valley Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

Date: Sat & Sun, June 15 & 16. Count Center: 41° 28' N, 72° 44' W. (Intersection of routes 68 & 157). Elevation 30 to 600 ft. Area: Cheshire (in part), Durham, Guilford (in part), Killingworth (in part), Meriden, Middlefield, Middletown, North Branford, North Haven, and Wallingford. Weather: Sunny, low dew point; skies mostly clear, some cumulus clouds; 6/15: Temp 58° to 83°F. Wind NW 0 - 10 mph, Night - 74 to 62°F. Wind calm; 6/16: Temp 62° to 85°F. Wind calm, Night - 77° to 64°F., Wind calm.

Totals: 112 Species, 9,106 Individuals. Ten observers in five parties spent 45 daytime and 2 night PHs in the field.

Participants: *Mark Carabetta, Kevin Clark, Fred King, Jess Martha, Pat Martha, James McBride, Nancy Moran, John Schultz, Wilford Schultz (93 Harrison Road, Wallingford CT. 06492), Eleanor Tessmer.*

Salmon River Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 8 & 9. Circle Center: 41° 33' N, 72° 26' W. Elevation 5 to 550 ft. Area: Colchester (western), East Haddam, Haddam, Middletown (southeast), and Portland. Weather: 6/10 - Cloudy, low 80°'s, Heavy rains 10 AM - 3 PM, Night - Occasional brief showers, upper 60°'s; 6/11 - Mostly cloudy; clear and sunny after 10 AM.

Totals: 104 Species on CD, plus another during CP, and 3,126 Individuals. Eleven observers in seven parties counted over 21 daytime and 3 night PHs.

Participants: *Mary Augustiny, Elana Coffey, Larry Cyrulik, Bob*

Gastia, Nancy Lawton, Joanne Luppi, Ed Massy, Joseph Morin (8 West St Terrace, Cromwell CT 06416), Richard Potter, Pat Rasch, Ed Reneson.

Storrs Summer Bird Count *(founded 1990)*

Date: Sat. & Sun., June 15 & 16. Count Center: 41° 48' N, 72° 15' W, juncture Route 195 & North Eagleville Rd. Elevation 200 to 750 ft. Area: Andover, Ashford, Chaplin, Coventry, Mansfield, Tolland, Willimantic, West Willington, Willington, and Windham. Weather: 6/15 - Temp. 55° to 85°F. Wind WSW 0-5 mph. 6/16 - Temp. 62° to 82°F. Wind calm.

Totals: 100 Species, 4,347 Individuals. Sixteen observers in 10 parties spent 65.75 daytime Party Hours and 2 night PHs in the field.

Participants: *Fred Beardsley, Bruce Carver, Dave Corsini, Sue Craig, Bill Gaunya, Tom Harrington, Marilynn Higgins, Dolores Hilding, Bill Liberator, Shirley Olson, Carol Phillips, Bob Pirrie, Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs CT 06268), Kevin Segar, Avo Somer, Mark Szantyr.*

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

Date: Sun., June 2. Count Center: 41° 32' N, 73° 16' W. Elevation 110 to 1060 ft. Area: Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Middlebury, New Milford, Newtown, Roxbury, Southbury, Washington, and Woodbury. Weather: Mostly sunny, mild throughout, Temp 40° into 80s°F, Wind SSW 10-20 mph.

Totals: 132 Species, 14,742 individual birds. Thirty-three observers in 16 parties spent 149.5 daytime and 12 night PHs counting.

Participants: *Janet Amalavage, Lorraine Amalavage, Dave Babington, Al Baker, Ray Belding, Polly Brody, Bob Cartoceti, Mary-Ann Currie, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Larry Fischer, Ethel Follett, Buck Jenks, Susan Kirk, William Liedlich, Carolyn Longstreth, John Longstreth, Donna Mannwaring, Jerry Marcellino, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury CT 06798), Dick O'Brien, Carol Potter, Allan Root, Dave Rosgen, Bruce Sebastian, Darcy Thurrott, Art Titus, Dave Tripp Jr, Leigh Wells, Mary Wetherill, Chris Wood, Francis Zygmont.*

JOSEPH ZERANSKI, 163 Field Point Rd., Greenwich, CT 06830

1996 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					1996 State Total	1995 State Total	1994 State Total
					Mid-state		Northern					
	GS	NH	HA	SR	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST			
Red-throated Loon											3	
Common Loon	1	1					2			4	2	6
Pied-billed Grebe		CP			1			4		5	2	4
Horned Grebe												CP
Great Cormorant											1	
Double-cr. Cormorant	383	156	49	8	14	28	3	1	2	644	731	843
American Bittern												1
Least Bittern			2							2	2	1
Great Blue Heron	9	3	13	5	1	13	9	29	9	91	82	75
Great Egret	158	10								168	172	153
Snowy Egret	247	14								261	195	197
Little Blue Heron	2									2	2	1
Green Heron	**25**	10	10	7	7	9	1	7	3	79	87	82
Black-cr. Night-Heron	246	45								291	161	170
Yellow-cr. Night-Heron	3									3	10	2
Glossy Ibis	1									1		
Mute Swan	120	74		6	99	16		16		331	297	383
Brant	17	1								18	5	
Canada Goose	1686	474	708	71	132	721	366	309	126	4593	4440	3925
Wood Duck	60	10	9	17	36	46	6	92	4	280	309	347
Green-winged Teal											1	
American Black Duck	32	6	7		12		1	7	8	73	50	75
Mallard	933	212	694	15	291	161	58	87	128	2579	2618	2361
Mallard x Am Bk. Duck			3					1		4	24	6
Northern Pintail	1									1		

Blue-winged Teal	1	1								1			3						
Gadwall		5											5	10	1				
American Wigeon						1							1	1					
Canvasback Duck															1				
Ring-necked Duck					1								1	2					
Greater Scaup	2	1											3	1	1				
Lesser Scaup														1					
Common Eider	2												2						
Oldsquaw	CP												CP	CP	1				
Bufflehead														1	3				
Hooded Merganser									2				2	6	18				
Common Merganser		CP				21			49	2			72	74	78				
Red-breasted Merganser														CP	3				
Ruddy Duck	1												1						
Black Vulture										1			1		4				
Turkey Vulture	28	23	11	13	23	62	20	76	7				263	261	186				
Osprey	6	11		1	1		1	1					21	15	9				
Mississippi Kite														1					
Bald Eagle			1				2	2					5	5	7				
Northern Harrier		1					1						2	3					
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1				1		2	1					5	7	13				
Cooper's Hawk	1	1	CP	2	1	5	5	3					18	21	15				
Northern Goshawk	7						2						9	8	18				
accipiter species						1							1	3	2				
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	6	1	1	6	9	2	1	2				30	28	31				

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1996 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES (Cont'd)

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					1996 State Total	1995 State Total	1994 State Total
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Broad-winged Hawk	9	2	2	1	2	7	12	15	3	53	52	49
Red-tailed Hawk	30	11	26	6	16	65	7	29	4	194	194	140
American Kestrel	1		1	1	4	2	1	3	1	14	30	22
Peregrine Falcon	1									1	3	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	**13**	2	3		2	1		1		22	46	58
Ruffed Grouse	**4**	CP	CP	1		1	7	26	1	40	77	59
Wild Turkey	22	26	7	18	4	64	107	75	3	326	298	135
Northern Bobwhite					1				2	3	11	5
Clapper Rail	3	3								6	6	5
Virginia Rail	3		1		3	5		8		20	32	38
Sora	2		CP					1		3		1
Common Moorhen		1						1		2	1	1
American Coot								1		1		1
Black-bellied Plover	1	4								5	1	
Semipalmated Plover	3	1								4	3	CP
Piping Plover		7								7	10	8
Killdeer	51	29	54	7	26	50	13	42	15	287	307	347
American Oystercatcher	11									11	12	13
Greater Yellowlegs		1								1	2	1
Lesser Yellowlegs												1
Solitary Sandpiper											1	1
Willet		1								1	1	1
Spotted Sandpiper	3	4	11		7	7	4	3	1	40	44	34
Ruddy Turnstone		7								7		10
Sanderling											2	

Semipalmated Sandpiper		20								20	18	2
Least Sandpiper	1									1		
Dunlin		3								3		1
small sandpiper species											1	
American Woodcock				4		2	1	4		11	14	20
Laughing Gull	2	2								4	119	117
Bonaparte's Gull											1	9
Ring-billed Gull	128	102	166		24	2	1	1	1	425	326	601
Herring Gull	476	359	366	3	16	5	1		3	1229	1139	1043
Great Black-backed Gull	243	72	45	2	2	7				371	376	341
Gull-billed Tern	2									2	3	
Common Tern	62	59								121	56	73
Least Tern		560								560	452	214
Black Tern			CP							CP		
Rock Dove	229	147	234	8	148	106	32	43	27	974	1412	1320
Mourning Dove	**304**	376	369	49	319	**285**	127	270	149	2248	2242	2123
Monk Parakeet	5	9								14	8	1
Black-billed Cuckoo	3	4	14		7	12	4	6	1	51	41	29
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	9	11	8			8	1	1	4	42	47	19
cuckoo species	5									5	12	5
Barn Owl											13	19
Eastern Screech-Owl	16		1	2	10	8		1		38	61	56
Great Horned Owl	**2**		2	7	3	6	4	4		28	40	31
Barred Owl	**1**			11	3	21	11	14		61	48	38
Long-eared Owl						2				2		

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	GS	NH	HA	SR	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST			
Northern Saw-whet Owl				CP				4		4	5	4
Common Nighthawk		1		3	2			3		9	11	1
Whip-poor-will		2	1	2	2	2		6		15	12	16
Chimney Swift	60	47	87	21	43	166	99	131	82	736	702	500
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	6	4	3	1	2	7	29	13	6	71	79	47
Belted Kingfisher	20	7	5	5	11	18	19	19	4	108	118	75
Red-headed Woodpecker											1	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	107	32	44	27	18	82	16	17	21	364	284	269
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker						4	59	67		130	126	87
Downy Woodpecker	106	26	56	12	25	**34**	93	52	20	424	567	394
Hairy Woodpecker	**32**	4	12	1	3	15	43	27	4	141	158	110
Northern Flicker	180	54	96	28	52	84	51	87	26	658	828	664
Pileated Woodpecker	21	4	3	10	3	14	20	28		103	88	63
Olive-sided Flycatcher						1				1		1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	78	23	34	45	14	96	48	145	31	514	491	423
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher						1				1		1
Acadian Flycatcher	4	2	2	1		12		3		24	32	33
Alder Flycatcher				1		5	12	40		58	53	40
Willow Flycatcher	66	15	39	3	16	38	11	87	6	281	200	234
Least Flycatcher	1	4	3		4	57	57	82	15	223	159	193
Empidonax species								10		10		1
Eastern Phoebe	**53**	16	35	20	23	**108**	90	134	49	528	774	596
Great Crested Flycatcher	52	30	37	42	37	88	20	94	32	432	353	330
Eastern Kingbird	62	39	80	27	38	146	102	113	36	643	569	504
Purple Martin	17	1	6		21		2			47	32	34

Tree Swallow	99	97	138	58	93	160	487	274	83	1489	1637	1526
Nor. Rough-wgd. Swallow	84	41	14	7	17	38	51	20	22	294	299	331
Bank Swallow	3	7	12		29	51	66	61	45	274	529	370
Cliff Swallow	60		16			117	20	12		225	245	243
Barn Swallow	260	149	139	35	122	302	157	167	52	1383	1184	1197
Blue Jay	347	198	199	49	131	284	209	218	62	1697	1684	1346
American Crow	919	344	464	126	373	717	318	423	179	3863	3718	3169
Fish Crow	23	13	3		3			8		50	39	50
Common Raven					1	2	9	2		14	16	12
Black-capped Chickadee	223	100	126	67	63	277	313	351	78	1598	1877	1566
Tufted Titmouse	317	104	134	59	69	262	164	204	76	1389	1457	1182
Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	4	8			1	16	17	8	59	129	137
White-breasted Nuthatch	86	4	22	12	8	47	51	54	19	303	441	301
Brown Creeper	4		2	1	4	**1**	10	26	4	52	69	64
Carolina Wren	29		3	2	5	8		CP	2	49	110	79
House Wren	198	51	62	7	31	141	127	121	58	796	808	916
Winter Wren	3				2	**2**	6	4		17	14	17
Marsh Wren	15	43	4					8		70	83	68
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3						4			7	7	6
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	15		6	54		48	25	34	16	198	207	170
Eastern Bluebird	23	9	36	9	5	115	46	55	21	319	564	519
Veery	**119**	33	18	35	40	183	356	414	49	1247	1442	1247
Swainson's Thrush						1	1			2	1	
Hermit Thrush						9	69	28	4	110	167	142
Wood Thrush	243	99	95	75	74	**199**	188	206	56	1235	1486	1372

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1996 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES (Cont'd)

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					1996 State Total	1995 State Total	1994 State Total
					Mid-state		Northern					
	GS	NH	HA	SR	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST			
American Robin	1042	332	285	124	694	1046	429	844	252	5048	6060	6018
Gray Catbird	730	294	296	147	256	565	351	562	152	3353	3520	3204
Northern Mockingbird	173	83	166	50	88	**94**	25	28	50	757	943	820
Brown Thrasher	33	8	10	6	3	19	1	7	5	92	75	90
Cedar Waxwing	135	43	167	42	54	146	262	292	60	1201	568	1442
European Starling	841	782	1029	91	1550	**438**	180	488	368	5767	6237	6963
White-eyed Vireo	24		1	7	8	2		6		48	47	52
Solitary Vireo		4	2	1		17	31	19	2	76	128	98
Yellow-throated Vireo	**25**		4	38	6	67	35	53	16	244	220	184
Warbling Vireo	71	15	86	10	25	159	24	127	40	557	582	460
Red-eyed Vireo	200	59	91	129	52	321	486	498	63	1899	1802	1646
Blue-winged Warbler	**100**	72	35	90	58	**123**	30	157	51	716	653	653
"Lawrence's Warbler"		1								1		1
"Brewer's Warbler"								1		1		2
Golden-winged Warbler								1		1	2	1
Tennessee Warbler				2						2	2	2
Nashville Warbler											1	1
Northern Parula						1		1		2	1	5
Yellow Warbler	422	124	257	83	118	442	183	647	76	2352	2150	1847
Chestnut-sided Warbler	14	14	9	9	16	**91**	176	358	18	705	777	507
Magnolia Warbler						1	77	7	1	86	54	52
Black-thr. Blue Warbler				1		7	66	30	1	105	144	116
Yellow-rumped Warbler				2		5	73	30		110	183	118
Black-thr. Green Warbler	18	9	2	15	15	33	54	62	4	212	242	261
Blackburnian Warbler		1	1			15	41	61	3	122	137	87

Yellow-throated Warbler						1				1		
Pine Warbler	29	14	39	2	6	21	60	38	9	218	221	190
Prairie Warbler	**10**	27	23	56	19	83	6	4	21	249	226	243
Blackpoll Warbler						10		1		11		1
Cerulean Warbler				2		1		2	1	6	12	8
Black-&-White Warbler	**97**	32	23	37	19	91	118	137	21	575	597	550
American Redstart	32	8	35	107	21	230	276	384	34	1127	970	885
Worm-eating Warbler	75	12	2	33	13	13		5	5	158	164	162
Ovenbird	**141**	101	49	80	65	191	263	334	71	1295	1425	1484
Northern Waterthrush				9	6	8	1	34	3	61	69	22
Louisiana Waterthrush	30	3	4	2	1	47	24	22	2	135	134	111
Kentucky Warbler												2
Mourning Warbler		1								1	1	
Common Yellowthroat	**193**	90	161	71	105	324	450	591	76	2061	1841	1742
Hooded Warbler	3	CP		9	2	7	1	1		23	26	23
Wilson's Warbler						2				2	1	1
Canada Warbler		1		2		10	20	32		65	65	46
Yellow-breasted Chat	2									2		2
Scarlet Tanager	**94**	20	40	59	65	119	85	113	35	630	692	623
Northern Cardinal	322	140	215	58	88	301	107	162	95	1488	1702	1562
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	63	21	64	14	22	117	81	73	21	476	399	334
Indigo Bunting	83	26	35	15	20	87	51	59	11	387	298	337
Eastern Towhee	101	75	36	85	70	**121**	127	193	39	847	887	733
Chipping Sparrow	306	56	188	80	58	337	331	288	116	1760	2005	1622
Field Sparrow	17	21	11	11	12	49	9	16	16	162	186	143

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XX Noted 4 or fewer years in last 10 yrs
XX Species new to Count
XX New 10 Yr. High Total (underlined)
XX New 10 Yr. Low Total (Bold)

1996 SUMMER BIRD COUNT TABLES (Cont'd)

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					1996 State Total	1995 State Total	1994 State Total
					Mid-state		Northern					
	GS	NH	HA	SR	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST			
Savannah Sparrow			27			7		6		40	54	21
Grasshopper Sparrow			6		1					7	8	
Saltm. Sh.-tailed Sparrow	7									7	12	25
Seaside Sparrow												2
Song Sparrow	**415**	92	376	29	154	409	282	553	92	2402	2810	2328
Swamp Sparrow	**8**		4	11	6	22	47	139	1	238	297	253
White-throated Sparrow	1						5	10		16	23	21
Dark-eyed Junco			CP			2	37	9		48	66	70
Bobolink	1		32		41	181	21	264	10	550	457	347
Red-winged Blackbird	601	423	589	95	795	649	226	780	204	4362	4630	3859
Eastern Meadowlark		1	14		28	**10**	1	5	4	63	56	62
Rusty Blackbird				5						5		
Common Grackle	973	446	376	59	1153	730	273	518	163	4691	5582	4047
Brown-headed Cowbird	175	88	188	89	118	194	119	215	56	1242	1450	1129
Orchard Oriole	15	3	6		1	13		1		39	29	21
Baltimore Oriole	295	78	139	40	82	269	67	175	47	1192	1171	941
Bullock's Oriole												1
Purple Finch			1			3	43	36	4	87	91	115
House Finch	**331**	175	321	35	132	**269**	126	192	76	1657	2519	3040
Pine Siskin												2
American Goldfinch	233	102	289	34	223	278	247	262	68	1736	1878	1476
Evening Grosbeak							5			5	2	2
House Sparrow	851	354	618	39	230	**242**	205	240	214	2993	2866	2514
Other Unident./Hybrid												2

SPECIES	Coastal		Ct. Valley		Upland Counts					1996	1995	1994
					Mid-state		Northern			State	State	State
	GS	NH	HA	SR	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST	Total	Total	Total
CD Species	139	123	111	104	112	132	123	138	100	193	187	189
CP Species	1	4	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2
DEGREE OF EFFORT												
Party Hours	276.5	111	168.5	24	47	161.5	141	195	67.75	1192.3	1105.8	1101.5
Day Party Hours	265.5	109.5	163.5	21	45	149.5	133	178	65.75	1130.8	1062.3	1036
Night Party Hours	11	1.5	5	3	2	12	8	17	2	61.5	43.5	65.5
Observers	58	32	38	11	10	33	22	37	16	257	238	230
Parties	29	20	16	7	5	16	14	13	10	130	125	115
Individual birds/10 PHs.	683	788	666	1302	1937	913	749	781	642	805	918	839
Ind. birds per Observer	326	273	295	284	911	447	480	412	272	373	427	402
% Observers	22.6	12.5	14.8	4.3	3.9	12.8	8.6	14.4	6.2	100		
% Party Hours	23.2	9.3	14.1	2	3.9	13.5	11.8	16.4	5.7	100		
% Individual Birds	19.7	9.1	11.7	3.3	9.5	15.4	11	15.9	4.5	100		

For SBCs under 10 years old, only species first seen in 1996 are shown. All statistics are for SBCs at least ten years old (GS & WR).

New species and those found four or fewer years are noted in the statewide totals.

XX Noted 4 or fewer years in last 10 yrs

XX Species new to Count

XX New 10 Yr. High Total (underlined)

XX New 10 Yr. Low Total (Bold)

BA - Barkhamsted
GS - Greenwich-Stamford
HA - Hartford
LH - Litchfield Hills
NH - New Haven
QV - Quinnipiac Valley
SR - Salmon River
ST - Storrs
WR - Woodbury-Roxbury

DO FEEDING SITES AFFECT THE DATE OF SONG CESSATION BY BREEDING BIRDS?

CHRISTINA A. CARBONE

Most male birds start singing in early spring to establish territories. Singing continues throughout the breeding season and stops in late summer. From year to year the particular dates of cessation change, possibly due to weather conditions (Saunders 1948). I here present some evidence leading to a tentative suggestion that feeding sites may play a role in determining the date of song cessation.

While studying a population of birds in deciduous woodland in Ashford, Connecticut, during 1994, I recorded the presence of singing males on each territory. The number of territories studied is given in Table 1. I found that most birds that feed in trees (Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, and Scarlet Tanager) continued singing until July 25th, the last day of my study and essentially the end of the breeding season (Figure 1). In contrast, among ground-foragers (Wood Thrush and Ovenbird) the number of males singing markedly decreased during the first week of July (Figure 2).

The duration of a singing season might be determined by one or more particular weather factors, but which one or set is most important is still unknown. Average temperatures for the summer of 1994 did not greatly differ from those previously recorded for Connecticut (Figure 3). Rainfall amounts were also similar (Figure 4). Rainfall was apparently greater than average in July 1994 (5.32 inches), but most of this rain (3.42 inches) fell after the end of my study.

Although climatic conditions may affect the song cycle for entire bird communities, there is a considerable difference in song cessation dates between species. My data indicate that, at least in my study area, there is a difference in song cessation dates for birds with different feeding sites. Only one other known study reports dates of song cessation for Connecticut birds. In 1941-1946 in Fairfield County, Connecticut, Saunders (1948) found that, on average, the ground foraging Wood Thrush and Ovenbird stopped singing on 31 July and 16 July, respectively. I found that Wood Thrush singing dropped dramatically after 1 July and stopped altogether after 11 July. Saunders (1948) reported the average date of song cessation as 11 August for the Red-eyed Vireo and 28 July for the Scarlet Tanager. I found that males of these two species, as well as male Eastern Wood-Pewees, continued singing until at least 25 July (Figure 1).

The anecdotal evidence of my study leads to an hypothesis that feeding sites might affect timing of song cessation, but this possibility needs much further consideration. Possibly areas good for ground foraging in early summer are not worth defending in late summer, due, perhaps, to the drying out of the litter. If so, one might assume that the canopy continues to provide plentiful food throughout the summer. Arboreally feeding birds would therefore continue singing to defend their territories and resources. Further study will be needed to test these possibilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank George Clark for his helpful comments on the manuscript. Ruth Cutler was instrumental in providing a study site. This research was supported by grants from the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Jerauld Manter Fund of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History.

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Table 1. Total number of territories studied for each species

Species	Number of territories
Eastern Wood-Pewee	5
Red-eyed Vireo	11
Scarlet Tanager	5
Wood Thrush	14
Ovenbird	8

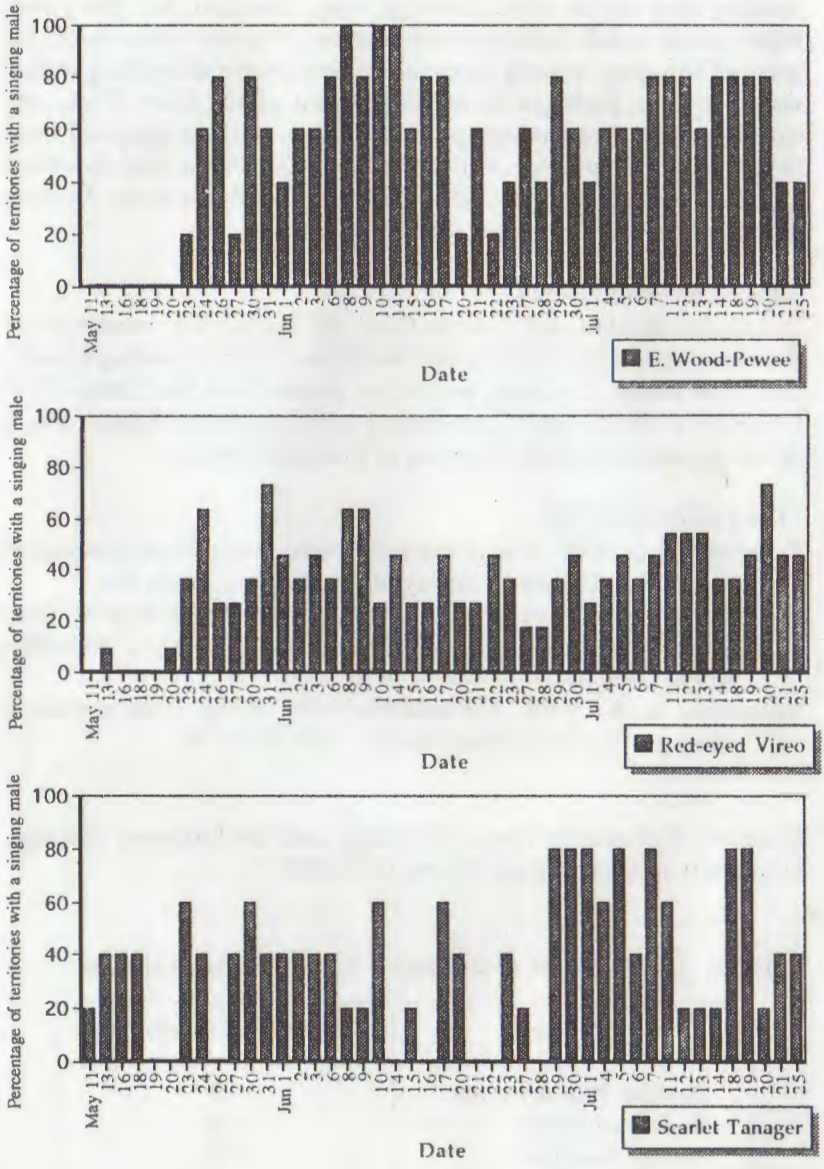

Figure 1. Percentage of males singing on territories as a function of date during the breeding season for arboreally feeding birds.

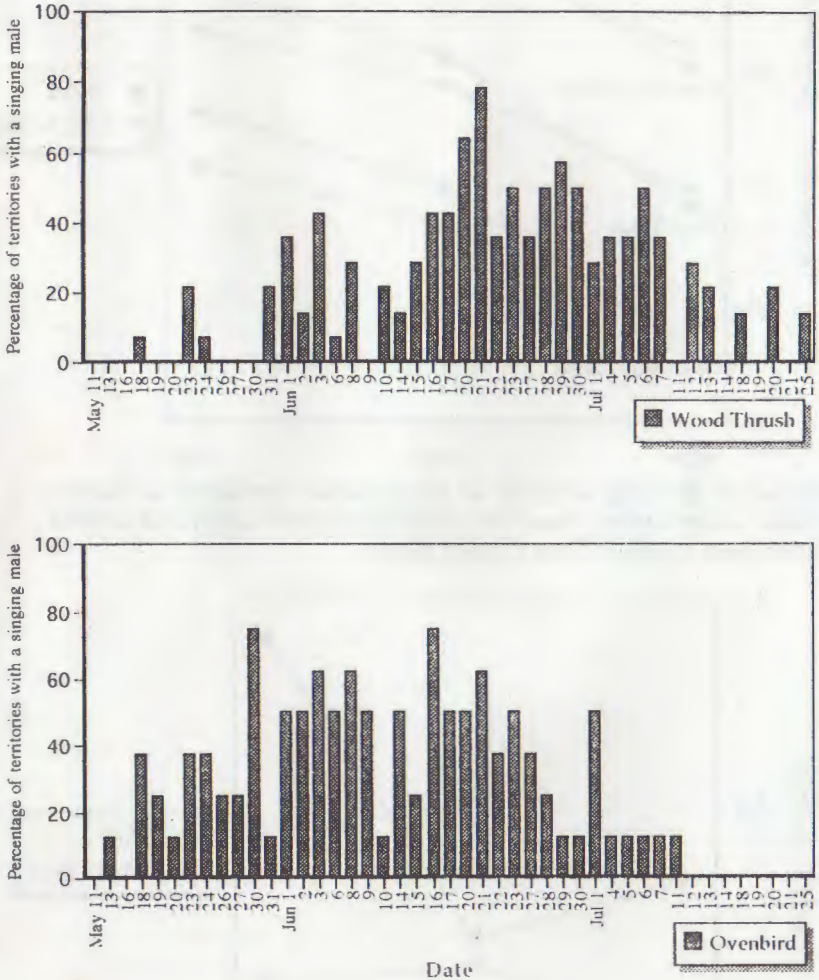

Figure 2. Percentage of males singing on territories as a function of date during the breeding season for ground feeding birds.

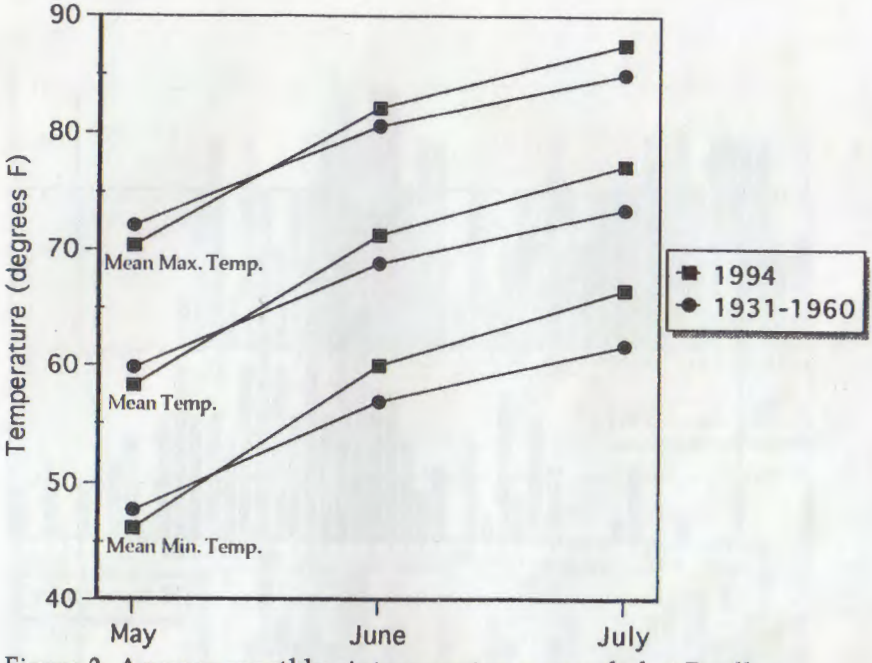

Figure 3. Average monthly air temperatures recorded at Bradley Field, Connecticut, from 1931-1960 (Brumbach 1965) and in 1994 (National Climatic Data Center 1994).

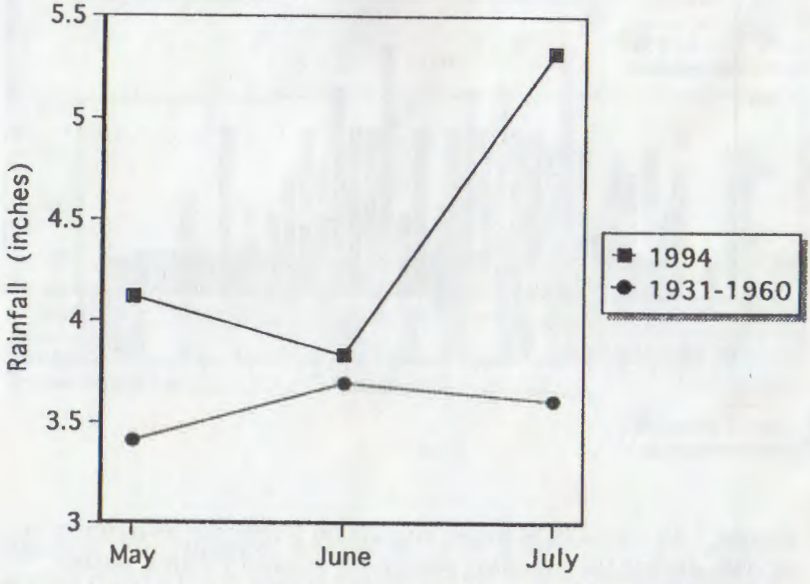

Figure 4. Monthly rainfall recorded at Bradley Field, Connecticut, from 1931-1960 (Brumbach 1965) and in 1994 (National Climatic Data Center 1994).

BOOKS ON BIRDS

Alan H. Brush

A question that often arises among birders is what books, besides field guides, are helpful in learning to recognize and identify birds. Clearly, a detailed, comprehensive field guide is essential. So too are books on "Finding Birds", especially in a new or unfamiliar location. The books I have in mind here are different yet. They *are* instructional and aimed towards developing, or increasing birdwatching skills. Here are two examples. They are not new, but have proven their usefulness, and therefore worth revisiting.

The Complete Birder is by Jack Conner (1988 Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, xiii + 285 pg., illustrations by M. LaFarage. ISBN 0-395-46807-8). Conner writes for a popular readership. A short, very personal, introductory chapter is followed by chapters on "Optics" and "Acoustics". The topic is equipment, the latter pointing out the value of calls for identification, and the use of monograms, phon nemonics. Most of the text is conversational in tone. There follows a group of chapters on the seasons and another set on "difficult" groups.

The material is presented in a chatty, anecdotal voice. I find this somewhat annoying, but it is easy reading and Conner provides a fair amount of information in a palatable fashion. As an example, in Chapter 5, "Winter", the effects of climate are related to various aspects of avian biology. He tosses in the insulative value of feathers, the consequences of the reduction in abundance of insects, fruits and other potential food sources, and the nature of the state of water on populations and locations to find birds. And so it continues, with a separate chapter on migration, through the year.

The chapters on "difficult groups" include warblers, hawks, shorebirds, terns and gulls. There is a good deal of natural history here, little of it found in field guides. The intent is to indicate both what to look (or listen) for and how to do it. The basic information pulls together bits and pieces regarding the particular birds, especially the difficult pairs. In the chapter on gulls, for example, almost seven text pages are dedicated to the general problem of intraspecific identification. A table sorts out plumages and their ter-

minology. There is also a black and white illustration of the nine plumages of the Herring Gull. The six hooded gulls are discussed separately. Other groups—dark-winged large gulls; Mew and California; Glaucous-winged, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls—are discussed in turn. Conners goes a long way in providing information and useful clues to help in identification.

In *Advanced Birding* (1990, Houghton Mifflin, Boston. xiv + 299 pg., 97 black and white figures, ISBN 0395-53376-7), Kenn Kaufman writes smartly about "Birding Challenges and How to Approach Them". He covers many of the same taxa as Conners, ignores the introductory stuff and extends the problems to their highest level. This volume is in the Peterson Field Guide series and thoroughly professional. In about 34 chapters Kaufman discusses most of the classic conundrums for North American birders. Winter loons, scaup, accipiters, dowitchers, four chapters on gulls, two on terns, *Empidonax* flycatchers, fall warblers, *Spizella* sparrows, *Carpodacus* finches, and more. He presents all the details from bill shape, through plumage, age and voice. Just about everything cogent to what you are seeing. A major theme throughout the book is his emphasis on individual variation. This is an extremely important concept in thinking about bird populations, can be illustrated easily, and extremely important to understand.

Each treatment begins with a statement of the problem, perhaps something about distribution, typical field marks, and the types of variation that confound identification. Again, this may range from interspecific hybridization to plumage morphs. Kaufman is a master at identification and presents the details needed to answer just about any question. I have found the book a treasure-trove of information and, perhaps more important, a set of guidelines on how to think about, and eventually understand, field identification of birds.

Both of these books deserve second looks. They can help sharpen your skills, broaden your appreciation for birds, and add immensely to the superficial simplicity of a list of birds seen.

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Enhancing Your Backyard Habitat for Wildlife

Peter Picone. 1995.

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division. Pp. 1-25. (For sale, DEP Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550), $5.00 check payable to DEP Urban Wildlife Program.

Most of us are aware that we can encourage wildlife to enter our yards with an assortment of attractants. Food is the most common, but there is a growing interest in going beyond bird seed by providing nest boxes, bird baths, and even bat boxes. These amenities attract wildlife, but they do not meet all of the needs of wildlife. The backyard can be viewed as a wildlife habitat in which the physical characteristics of the vegetation help to determine what kind of animals can be attracted. It is possible to integrate gardening and some management techniques with the aforementioned attractants to create a place where wildlife can get everything necessary to survive and thrive. This guide demonstrates that the right combination of food and cover make it possible to create a haven for wildlife in rural, suburban, and even in small urban yards.

This publication is designed to help the landowners create a habitat that provides the food and cover that animals need to live and reproduce throughout the year. This guide is designed specifically for all individuals with an interest in wildlife, but those with a green thumb will find it easier to imagine and implement some of the ideas. Both common and scientific names of the recommended trees and shrubs are provided. The author endorses the use of native plant species and provides a useful list of invasive exotic plants that should be avoided. In addition, the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) publishes two pamphlets (*Connecticut Native Shrubs Availability List* and *Connecticut Native Trees Availability List*—available at no cost from the same address) detailing native Connecticut trees and shrubs and listing nurseries where they can be found. Those who do not revel in designing gardens will find the suggested plans quite useful and a good starting point for many yards, but they might want to consult planting guides for information on light and nutrient requirements.

Much of the emphasis of this guide is on the year-round needs of birds. The attraction of birds is probably the number one reason to enhance land for wildlife. Birds are numerous, colorful, and their songs liven up any yard. Mammals, reptiles, and amphibians receive little attention in this publication. Their secretive nature and, in some cases, diminutive size may fool even the most atten-

tive observer of wildlife but it is likely that many of these species will also benefit and thrive with the suggested habitat changes. The food and cover that birds need will also draw other wildlife over time. If one desires to attract a particular species or group, such as butterflies, there are other, more specific volumes available.

To attract wildlife, Picone suggests four important habitat components. Food and water can be provided with commercially available feeders and baths and can be as simple or elaborate as one's taste dictates. A third component is the planting of native plants to provide food and cover. Many birds that do not use feeders are drawn to berries and the insects associated with these plants. The importance of providing herbaceous cover will be obvious to anyone who has observed a Sharp-shinned Hawk killing birds on the feeder. Excellent and comprehensive suggestions on native plants that can be used and how they might be planted in the yard are included.

The final habitat component, and probably the most complicated, is the direct management of vegetation to create a variety of successional stages. However, Picone provides little information on the use of this complicated management tool. Basically, a diversity of habitat types can provide living space for a greater variety of species than in a monotonous landscape. For example, the mowing of an old field in the late summer will prevent the forest from reclaiming the land and might attract birds such as the Eastern Bluebird that are not usually found in forests.

This publication is filled with information that will interest anyone who appreciates wildlife. Many bird lovers put out nest boxes every year only to be frustrated when starlings exclude the native birds. Picone provides the dimensions of nest boxes preferred by 24 different bird species. There are also recommendations for hanging the boxes and keeping predators out of boxes on poles. Many other suggestions fill this colorful guide and I believe that everyone will enjoy the photos and learn something new about wildlife. The dedicated landowners might want to try to get their properties certified as backyard habitats by working with the Urban Wildlife Program and a wildlife biologist. But whether you wish to try one or all of Picone's suggestions they will all help to attract wildlife where you can enjoy it most, your backyard.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

SPRING, March 1 to May 31, 1996

Hard winter weather persisted through March, and an April 10 snow storm brought nearly 20 inches to the Northwest Corner. It's not surprising then that the season's early birding centered on northern finches, the end of a historic Northern Shrike invasion and a good showing by some of the less-common gulls. Early migrants were little in evidence, but the main thrust of May passerines was excellent. May 10-20 produced good flights of the more common species and a nice showing by some of the scarcer ones, especially Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Mourning Warbler. May 11 was good, with 121 species found in Fairfield County (FM, TB), 114 species flooding Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (RS,RW) and 109 species at Sunny Valley Farm in New Milford (CW et al.). But May 19 was better, especially along the coast. Although fewer formal counts were taken, numerous observers reported heavy flights of flycatchers, thrushes, vireos and warblers. The fieldnotes are sprinkled with uncommon species found on that day. In addition to a strong migration, the season produced several interesting vagrants and a remarkable breeding record.

The waterbird sections warrant special attention, not because of any overwhelming event, but because a number of reservoirs—especially Nepaug in New Hartford-Canton and Batterson Pond in New Britain-Farmington—were closely watched. As is almost always the case, close scrutiny brought results. Imagine what might turn up if all the state's lakes and ponds got the attention they deserved.

First Arrivals

Here are some first arrival dates for regular migrants:
Great Egret—March 19 in Stratford (GH)
Snowy Egret—March 27 at Milford Point (FG)
Osprey—March 19 in Shelton (GH)
Piping Plover—March 14 in Old Lyme (MS)

Semipalmated Plover – April 27 at Milford Point (PDe)
Least Sandpiper – April 21 in Stratford (CB)
Spotted Sandpiper – April 19 in Middlebury (GH)
Short-billed Dowitcher – April 28 at Milford Point (GH)
Common Tern – April 26 in Milford (GH)
Black-billed Cuckoo – May 4 in Windsor (MS)
Chimney Swift – April 20 in Mansfield (SS)
Eastern Phoebe – March 23 in New Milford (JBa)
Great Crested Flycatcher – May 1 in Windham (BCa)
Eastern Wood-Pewee – May 11 in Hartford (MS)
Least Flycatcher – April 28 in Mansfield (GC)
Willow Flycatcher – May 11 at Hammonasset Beach State Park, (hereafter HBSP)(C&SR)
Eastern Kingbird – April 23 in Kent (GH)
Northern Rough-winged Swallow – April 4 in Southbury (GH)
Tree Swallow – March 17 at HBSP (RBA)
Purple Martin – April 19 at HBSP (C&SR)
Barn Swallow – April 14 in Watertown (RN)
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – April 21 in Norwalk (FM)
Veery – April 30 in Kent (GH)
Wood Thrush – April 27 in Windsor (GH)
Gray Catbird – April 24 in New Haven (RN)
White-eyed Vireo – April 25 in Westport (RS)
Solitary Vireo – April 20 in Redding (CB)
Warbling Vireo – April 27 in New Haven (RN).
Blue-winged Warbler – April 27 in Southbury (RN)
Nashville Warbler – April 25 in Hartford (MS)
Tennessee Warbler – May 4 in Windsor (MS)
Northern Parula – April 23 in Kent (GH);
Black-throated Green Warbler – April 21 in Canaan (CW)
Black-throated Blue Warbler – April 27 in Barkhamsted (CW)
Yellow Warbler – April 22 in Storrs (MS)
Magnolia Warbler – April 30 at HBSP (BG)
Prairie Warbler – April 21 in New Haven (SK)
Pine Warbler – March 25 in Westport (RS)
Palm Warbler – April 14 in Watertown (RN)
Cape May Warbler – May 5 in Woodbury (DB)
Chestnut-sided Warbler – April 30 in Kent (GH)
Cerulean Warbler – April 30 in Kent (GH)
Black-and-White Warbler – April 21 in Chaplin (AF) and Watertown (RN)
American Redstart – April 29 in Killingworth (GH)
Ovenbird – April 28 in Watertown (RN)

Louisiana Waterthrush – April 13 in Waterbury (GH)
Northern Waterthrush – April 21 in Old Lyme (JHa)
Common Yellowthroat – April 27 in Hartford (PDe)
Scarlet Tanager – April 28 in Watertown (RN)
Rose-breasted Grosbeak – April 28 in Watertown (RN).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Common Loons in spring illustrate the kind of multi-faceted seasonal status that makes bird distribution so interesting. Birds in both basic and full alternate (breeding) plumage pass north through the state, and early in the season many are in transition. That was the case with 20+ at the mouth of the Connecticut River March 14 (MS,DP). As birds acquire breeding plumage, they show little interest in hanging around. Lingerers, such as two on May 28 and one on May 29 at Falkner Island (JS), tend to be in drab attire. Nepaug Reservoir held a peak of 12 on April 29 (JK), and one that got tangled in fishing line May 19 at West Hill Pond in New Hartford was later released at Nepaug (JK). The high count of Red-throated Loons was 38 on April 18 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (FM). The best collections of Pied-billed Grebes were eight on Bantam Lake in Litchfield April 12 (DR,RN) and up to six on Batterson Pond through May 2 (MC). Staging Horned Grebes included 200 at Milford Point March 9 (EN) and 200+ the next day on a coastal trip, mostly off West Haven (MS,SS). Red-necked Grebes staged a strong flight, with about 20 reported along the coast (HG,PDu,JHo et al.), including five at Avery Point, Groton, March 28 (MS) and two late ones May 10 at Sherwood Island (RW). Inland, Batterson Pond had an early one on March 20 (MC); Bantam Lake held up to three April 8 (LW) to April 13 (JG,BD et al.); and four sightings involving 12 or 13 birds from April 7-16 at Nepaug included six on the 16th (JK,BD).

About 20 Northern Gannets, almost all adults, were reported from Stamford to Guilford March 18 to April 18 (m.ob.). A late Great Cormorant, an immature as expected, was on the Connecticut River in East Haddam May 20 (FG et al.). A heavy movement of Double-crested Cormorants April 20-30 included 500 in a half-hour April 30 at Compo Beach, Westport (FM). The reclusive American Bittern was reported May 1 in Mianus Park in Greenwich (BO), May 11 near Mohawk Mountain in Cornwall (LW et al.) and at Sherwood Island (RS), and May 20 in Dead Man's Swamp in Cromwell (FG

et al.). Least Bitterns were in residence in May at Little Pond in Litchfield (MS et al.), Dead Man's Swamp in Cromwell (FG et al.) and Station 43 in South Windsor (m.ob.).

A Snowy-type Egret with two long head plumes, similar to birds that caused puzzlement last spring at HBSP and in Norwalk, was seen several times in late May at HBSP (FG et al.). Little Blue Heron put in a good showing, with singles April 22 at Sherwood Island (RS) and May 17 at Cove Island Park in Stamford (PDu) and two in early May at HBSP (JG et al.). Tricolored Heron was much easier to find than usual: up to two April 20 to May 24 at HBSP (JMa,JG,DS et al.) and singles May 11 at Sherwood Island (RS,RW), May 18-20 at Manresa Island in Norwalk (DS,GH et al.), May 22 at Short Beach in Stratford (BD) and through May at Guilford Sluice (GH,NC). Cattle Egrets, whose numbers have been in decline, staged a good flight. The high count was eight May 20 at the ever-reliable Kowalski farm in Westport (MS et al.). Others included one in Moodus April 26 (C&SR), two in Hartford April 27 (PDe), one in Guilford April 28 (m.ob.), one in East Granby April 30 (B&GK), three at Hammonasset May 7-8 (JG,DP), three at Sherwood Island May 24 (RS) and up to three in Stonington in early May (m.ob.). Two Yellow-crowned Night Herons were at Milford Point in late May (m.ob.) and one was at Manresa Island in Norwalk through May (FM et al.). Connecticut's second White-faced Ibis appeared just about a year after its initial one, when an apparent first-year bird was found May 2 near Barn Island in Stonington (BS). It gorged on earthworms in a flooded field through at least May 5. A Glossy Ibis April 28 in Mansfield became one of fewer than 10 records for the Storrs area (GC), but they were widespread along the coast with a high of 56 at Barn Island April 22 (DP).

Brant stayed deep into the season, with a flock of 145 at Falkner Island May 21 (JS,MMa) and 170 migrating May 23 past Sherwood Island (FM). A flock of 500 flew northeast at Greenwich Point May 19 (JZe), 475 passed over Southbury May 23 (DR), and a few lingered through the end of the season at Sandy Point in West Haven, where a half-dozen summered last year (GH). After a winter that produced an unusually high three **Greater White-fronted Geese**, one turned up during the first two weeks of April at Shenipsit Lake in Tolland (CE et al.) and another wandered around near Barn Island in May (JC et al.). Perhaps some duplication was involved. The Barn Island bird

was joined in a small flock of Canada Geese by a Snow Goose and a **Barnacle Goose**, the latter of unknown origin. Another problematic Barnacle Goose was at Willimantic Reservoir April 6-21 (TH et al.). Two Snow Geese lingered at Batterson Pond almost daily through April 1 (MC), 28 were in a corn field in Morris April 14 (RBa) and 46 flew over Southbury April 14 (RN). The biggest flock, about 250, landed at HBSP around 5 p.m. April 2 (JG), with 50 present the next day (CR).

The abundant Wood Duck was well-represented with a high of 103 at Station 43 in South Windsor on March 31 (SK). South Cove, Old Saybrook held 20 Northern Pintails March 10 (MS,SS). Drake **Eurasian Wigeons** were noted March 24 and April 3 in Stamford (PDu) and to March 24 at West Haven (m.ob.). A pair was seen April 4 at Milford Point (FM). The small *Anas* ducks arrived in good numbers, with four forms present during the first week in April at Milford Point. The high counts there were five Blue-winged Teal (SK), 300+ Green-winged Teal, a drake **Eurasian Teal**, and four Northern Shovelers (m.ob.). Another Eurasian Teal visited Sherwood Island March 26 (RS). A Northern Shoveler was at Pine Creek, Fairfield, April 15 (CB) and two were in Southbury April 6-15 (PB).

Station 43 held a flock of 86 Ring-necked Ducks March 17 (SK), and a flock of 100+ Greater Scaup put down on Bantam Lake April 14 (LW). Canvasbacks were scattered in small numbers inland with 20 at Batterson Pond March 21 (MC). A flock at South Cove in Old Saybrook held a drake Redhead March 14 (MS,DP). A very late drake was at Held Pond in Weston May 10-11 (MB et al.). Five Black Scoters flew by HBSP April 20 (FD,JMo), for the season's only reports, and a flock of 300+ White-winged Scoters staged off the Green's Farms section of Westport March 18 (CB). Two Whitewings were inland at productive Nepaug Reservoir April 14 along with one Surf Scoter, two Oldsquaws, 17 Bufflehead, seven Lesser Scaup and six Red-breasted Mergansers (JK,JMe). The best staging flock of Oldsquaw held 300 on April 8 at Compo Beach (FM). One of the winter's Barrow's Goldeneyes was still at Sherwood Island March 16 (fide MS) and another was at Milford Point April 6 (TK). North and South Coves in Old Saybrook held a combined 150+ Buffleheads April 15 (GH). The female **Common Eider** that wintered at Shippan Point in Stamford remained through April 15 (PDu), and the female **Harlequin**

Duck that wintered at Merwin Point in Milford was last reported March 9 (m.ob.). Compo Beach held 300 staging Red-breasted Mergansers April 8 (FM). The best Ruddy Duck counts were 12 in Old Saybrook March 14 (MS,DP) and 11 at Batterson Pond March 18 (MC).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

The season's top raptor event occurred March 5, when an unprecedented flock of 25 Black Vultures descended on Sunny Valley Farm in New Milford, which has been one of the most reliable places to find this rare-but-increasing visitor in recent years (CW et al.). A single day's count had never before reached double figures. The birds remained through March 11. Through the end of the season a few were seen as usual there and in neighboring Kent, which also held up to 50 Turkey Vultures (m.ob.). Elsewhere, Black Vultures were more widely reported than usual, with one April 13 at Woodland Park in Darien (MMo), two seen on various dates throughout the period at locations north and west of Waterbury (JHo,RN, AD,MS), and one flying by the hawk banding station at HBSP May 6 (SRo). A pair of Peregrine Falcons was present again in downtown Stamford, but again they did not nest (m.ob.). Following a good fall migration, eight Red-shouldered Hawks were seen migrating March 25 over the Farmington River watershed, and another was over Storrs (MS). The latter was accompanied by a very early Broad-winged Hawk (MS). An all-white Red-tailed Hawk showed up April 30 in West Suffield (B&GK), and another was reported April 2 in Portland (VL). A sub-adult Bald Eagle fledged in 1992 in Barkhamsted appeared at Lake Zoar in Southbury March 3, almost a year to the day after a 1995 visit there (DR). The eagle count at Lake Zoar climbed to 40 through March 11 (DR). Two new Bald Eagle nesting attempts, in the Hartford and Suffield areas, apparently failed (JDi et al.). Migrant Northern Harriers remained on the move well into May, but two females and one male May 10 at HBSP (JG), along with a male and a female May 26 at Lordship marshes (JG,BD) and a female May 19 and 27 at Milford Point (FM), were suggestive of breeding.

After the harsh winter, no Northern Bobwhites were reported, an ominous sign for the state's small native population centered in the southeast. Both Virginia Rails and Soras were noisy and much in evidence in appropriate habitat during May, with the raised boardwalk at Little Pond in the White Me-

morial Foundation a good place to hear, and sometimes see both species (m.ob). One visitor to this productive Litchfield site enjoyed a bonus—two calling King Rails on May 27 (JBa). It was a good season for this reclusive species, with singles reported May 15 at Sherwood Island (RS) and May 18 in both Branford (DS) and HBSP (DS). However, observers shouldn't be too quick to call Kings along the coast, where the potential for hybridization with Clapper Rail makes for a very unsettled situation. A seasonal highlight occurred May 25, when a **Black Rail** was heard calling in the Great Meadows in the Lordship section of Stratford, a spot that has attracted the species in the past (DF,DA). It was heard through at least May 28. Two Common Moorhens frequented Cemetery Pond in Litchfield May 20-29 (MS,CW,BD et al.) and another was calling in Deadman's Swamp in Cromwell in late May (DS).

The shorebird migration carries on deep into May, and Black-bellied Plover is one of the last to leave. Examples included 10 at HBSP May 25 (JG et al.), 50+ at Falkner Island May 24-25 (JZi) and 300 at Milford Point May 27 along with 100 Semipalmated Plovers (FM). American Golden-Plover, a rare spring migrant, stopped off at HBSP April 28-30 (JG,DS,SRa). Among the many places colonized recently by American Oystercatcher was Cummings Beach Park in Stamford, which had two through the period (PDu). HBSP held an impressive flock of 60 Greater Yellowlegs on May 10 (JG). An early Lesser Yellowlegs arrived at Milford Point March 30 (GH). The best count of Solitary Sandpipers was 14 in Ellington May 18, along with a flock of 16 Least Sandpipers (CE). The first Willet was at HBSP April 20 (PDe). Six Spotted Sandpipers along Selden Creek in Lyme on May 24 represented a good spring concentration (HG). A migrant Upland Sandpiper seemed a bit late May 13 at Kosciuszko Park in Stamford(PDu,BO,MMo). More timely was one at Pine Creek in Fairfield April 21 (FM) and two at HBSP April 29 (GH,NC). One was still at HBSP May 6 (C&SR). The breeding site at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks held at least seven on April 23 (MS).

The late parade of shorebirds included eight Red Knots at Falkner Island May 24 (JS et al.) and from two to five May 20-27 at Milford Point (FG,FM); 50 Ruddy Turnstones at HBSP May 21 (JG) and 200 at Milford Point May 27 (FM); 1,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Milford Point May 27 (FM); two White-rumped Sandpipers at Milford Point May 20 and another there May 27 (FG,FM); and 50 Dunlin

at HBSP (JMa) and 45 at Falkner Island (JS), both May 24. The first four Pectoral Sandpipers were early March 26 at Sherwood Island (RS); one was on time at HBSP April 14 (C&SR), and another was late there May 13 (C&SR). The shorebird highlight was a **Ruff**, apparently a first-year male, that cooperatively showed itself from March 25 through April 14 at Milford Point, where it was photographed and seen by many birders (GH et al.). It was a good season for Common Snipe, with counts of 11 on April 9 at Sunny Valley Farm in New Milford (CW), 15 in Mansfield April 28 (GC) and 28 in Watertown April 5 (GH). The first American Woodcock was reported March 3 in Newtown (fide RN).

GULLS THROUGH GOATSUCKERS

The first Laughing Gull report of the season came from Stamford April 1 (PDu,FM). The only **Little Gull** reports came from traditional locations, one at South Cove in Old Saybrook March 14 along with a **Black-headed Gull** (MS,DP) and one at the mouth of the Oyster River in West Haven on April 2 (NC). At least two Black-headed Gulls were at Oyster River March 26-30 in a flock of 1,000+ Bonaparte's Gulls (GH,JHo,MS et al.) Another Black-headed was in Stamford harbor March 24-April 18 (PDu). The inland passage of Bonaparte's Gull brought five to Nepaug Reservoir April 14 (JK,JMe) and one to Batterson Pond May 12 (MC). A late one was at Falkner Island May 27 (JS et al.).

Two immature **Iceland Gulls** in Westbrook March 3 (JG) were part of a strong winter presence (JG). This was reflected in an unusually robust—and late—spring surge of northbound first-year migrants, including one at Southport Beach April 15 (CB), one at Compo Beach in Westport April 16 (FM), one at HBSP April 17 (RW), one in Southport April 30 (CB), one in Stratford April 28 along with a first-year **Glaucous Gull** (JHo,GH), and a remarkable five Icelands among a large flock of gulls April 14 at Milford Point (JHo). This group, combed thoroughly by an observer who grew up in Britain, also yielded three or four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** (JHo). They were described as two adults, one of the expected race *graellsii* and a darker bird possibly of the race *intermedius*, one first-year bird and possibly a second first-year. An adult was inland in Southbury April 14 (RN) and a first-year was at HBSP March 18 (GH,CW). A Glaucous Gull April 9 on Shenipsit Lake in Tolland was the first ever for the Storrs area (MS). Others

were at Stevenson Dam during the first week in March (JG et al.), at Holly Pond in Stamford March 29 (PDu) and at Sherwood Island April 14 (PDu). Black Terns staged an unusually good flight. Batterson Pond attracted three on May 15 and one the following day (MC). Others included one in South Windsor April 30-May 1 (RM,PK), two at Nepaug Reservoir May 12 (JK et al.), one at Falkner Island May 15 (MMa), and one at Sandy Point in West Haven May 21 (DS).

The high count of Monk Parakeets was 50+ feeding on seed thrown on the ground by beachgoers at Compo Beach in Westport March 11 (FM). Cuckoos were widespread after the first week in May, with Black-billed Cuckoo generating reports from all parts of the state. A Barn Owl at HBSP on May 12 was the only one reported away from nesting sites (PG). Short-eared Owls were on the move in early April, with up to four reported through April 14 at Milford Point (MB,SK,JHo,m.ob.) and singles at Sherwood Island April 14 (RS) and April 18 (CB). At least two winterers were present at HBSP in March (JG et al.). Saw-whet Owls seldom show themselves when there's enough light to follow their activities, so an observer was delighted to watch one from 5:30 to 6 p.m. March 11 as it perched on a suet log, a cedar pole and the roof rack and tailgate of a pickup truck at his home in Old Lyme (HG). Another was seen in a Westport yard March 28 (TR).

For the second year in a row, an overshooting **Chuck-will's-widow** sounded off in a birder's yard in lower Fairfield County. After last year's one-night stand in Norwalk, the phenomenon was repeated in Greenwich on May 3 (BO,PDu), an early arrival date. What are the odds that the only two Chucks in Connecticut during that period showed up right under birders' noses? Makes you wonder how many actually made it into the state. A roadside location in Mattatuck State Forest in Plymouth held four singing Whip-poor-wills May 24 (BD), a nice colony of a declining species. A single was reported May 20 in Madison (JHi). A Common Nighthawk was a bit early in Woodbury May 2 (RN) and one slept all day on a branch at Milford Point May 19 (FM et al.). A Downy Woodpecker made an unusual spring appearance on Falkner Island May 18 (JZi,MMa). Northern Flicker staged a good flight April 21, with 20+ in a small section of Westport (FM).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

The rarer flycatchers put in an excellent showing. Single

Olive-sided Flycatchers were a tad on the early side May 11 in Greenwich (BO et al.) and East Granby (B&GK). Others appeared May 18-20 in Canton (JK,JMe), May 19 in Woodbury (GH), May 20 at Sherwood Island (RS), May 21 in Waterbury (GH), May 23 at White Memorial Foundation (TG), and May 29 at Mount Riga (CW). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were even easier to find, with four at Greenwich Point (BO,JBe) and two at HBSP (SY,DS) on May 19, plus singles May 13 in Greenwich (BO), May 15 in Southport (CB), May 17-18 at Rosa Harmon Park in Stamford (PDu), May 18 at Mohawk Mountain (NC), May 19 in Woodbury (GH), May 19 in Norwalk (FM), May 20 in New Britain (MC), May 21 at HBSP (DS), and May 23 in Fairfield (CB). May 12 produced an interesting reverse diurnal flight, moving westward on strong northwest winds, at Cove Island Park in Stamford. It comprised of 66 Eastern Kingbirds and 2,500 swallows, including 175 Bank Swallows, 160 Cliff Swallows, and 50 Purple Martins (PDu). Nepaug Reservoir attracted 1,500 to 2,000+ Tree Swallows April 13-17 (BD,MS).

Away from established breeding sites in the Northwest Corner and near Ashford, a pair of Common Ravens was seen several times in April in the Naugatuck-Beacon Falls area near suitable nesting habitat (GH,BD). Singles were reported from Penwood State Park in Bloomfield on April 21 (PDe,PC) and in Watertown April 18 (JHo). A widespread flight of Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets occurred April 19, and a Ruby-crowned was a bit late May 14 in New Britain (fide RN). Brown Creepers were hard to find during the brutal winter of 1995-96, but two were noted March 2 in Ellington (CE). House Wrens on March 21 in Fairfield (LF) and March 27 in Norwalk (GN) were so far ahead of schedule that they probably managed to survive well north of their normal winter range. A more typical first arrival appeared April 25 in Storrs (GC et al.).

As usual, Gray-cheeked (sp.) Thrush was very hard to come by with just four reports—singles in the migratory binge of May 19 at Greenwich Point (BO), Norwalk (FM) and HBSP (DS) and one May 24 in Kent (BD). A bird found dead in Westport May 23 was possibly a Bicknell's (FM) (the specimen has been deposited at the University of Connecticut, Storrs). Swainson's Thrushes were in good supply, with five in Redding May 11 (FM,TB), about five in Litchfield May 13-15 (RBa), three in Windsor May 17 (MS), and a spate of sightings on May 19. The latter included

six in Norwalk (FM), an amazing 30 at Greenwich Point (BO, JBe), a singing bird at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton (JK), and four in song in Woodbury-Southbury (RN). The April 10 storm grounded a flock of 3,000 to 4,000 American Robins at Sunny Valley Farm in New Milford (CW). Not unexpectedly in light of the harsh winter and poor fruit crop, Eastern Bluebird numbers were considered to be down by several observers (PC,GC et al.). The May 11 flight at Sherwood Island included 35 Gray Catbirds, an excellent count in a small area (RS,RW). What were three American Pipits doing in Mansfield on March 5 (MS)? They don't usually move north that early, but they don't usually winter inland either. The great flight of Northern Shrikes spilled over well into spring, with individuals seen as late as April 14 at Stratford (GH). The total reported for the state, from October to April, approached 200, a number that seems almost inconceivable by modern standards. Amid this *Lanius* orgy, an alert observer picked out and carefully described a **Loggerhead Shrike** March 17 at Milford Point (TK et al.). Late Solitary Vireos included two May 27 at East Rock Park in New Haven (JBa) and one the same day at Osbornedale State Park in Derby (JBa). Philadelphia Vireo, a spring rarity, was reported at Greenwich Point during the May 19 surge (BO,JBe et al.) and on May 13 at River Road in Kent (SK).

WARBLERS

April 19 produced a widespread movement of Yellow-rumped, Palm and Pine Warblers (MS et al.) and an excellent 12 species were found April 30 in New Canaan (FG). Good flights were noted throughout May, including 14 species May 3 at Cove Island Park in Stamford (PDu); and — all on May 11 — 25 species at Sunny Valley Preserve in New Milford (CW et al.), 18 species on a transect survey in the Hartford area (MS), 18 species in Fairfield County (FM,TB) and 17 species at Sherwood Island (RS,RW). May 19 produced 23 species at Cove Island (PDu), 22 at Greenwich Point (BO,JBe), 20 at East Rock Park in New Haven (m.ob.) and 18 in Norwalk (FM). At Milford Point that day Mantlik noted warblers "dripping from scarce, short coastal vegetation and easily viewed." The only Golden-winged Warblers reported were up to two males in Kent from mid to late May (FM et al.). A Brewster's Warbler was at Cove Island Park May 2-4 (PDu), one was in Sharon May 20 (FG) and another was in Morris May 19-26 (DR). An Orange-crowned Warbler, rare in

spring, was in East Rock Park April 26-27 (DBa,PDe). To put this in perspective, Desjardins, a very active observer, hadn't seen one in spring in 15 years. Two species widely noted as abundant were Magnolia Warbler and Black-throated Blue Warbler. West Hartford held 18 each of Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers May 14 (PDe). Black-throated Blues also were densely spaced on breeding areas in Barkhamsted May 18 (GH) and on Mount Riga May 29 (CW). One, or possibly two, **Yellow-throated Warblers** appeared in late April at Chatfield Hollow State Park in Killingworth, a spot that has produced spring overshoots regularly in recent years (EN,JHi et al.). Another was in a backyard in the Riverside section of Greenwich May 19 (JWe), but success in finding the previously reliable bird (or birds) at River Road in Kent was quite spotty. A Cerulean Warbler was a nice find May 21-23 in Watertown (RN).

Blackpoll Warblers were conspicuous late in the month, as illustrated by counts of 30+ on May 21, 12+ on May 26, and six+ on May 27 in a residential neighborhood in Waterbury (GH), 12+ in Lakeview Cemetery in New Canaan May 21 (FM) and "many" in the Mansfield area May 24 (MS). Bay-breasted Warbler was another species considered more numerous than usual – e.g., 30+ May 17-19 in Litchfield County (DR), and up to eight each May 19 in yards in Darien (JMh) and Newtown (PB). Newtown produced four or five Worm-eating Warblers May 12 (PB). A male **Prothonotary Warbler** overshot to Cove Island Park April 26-27 (PDu et al.), but usually reliable East Rock Park in New Haven failed to produce this spring. The scarce Kentucky Warbler showed itself in mid-May in Hamden (AB), May 19 at Rosa Harmon Park in Stamford (PDu) and May 13 and 19 in Goshen (RBe). Mourning Warblers were perhaps the parulid stars of the season. Singles were reported on several days in mid-May from East Rock Park (m.ob.), May 13 in Kent (SK), May 15 in Canaan (TG), May 19 in Kent (DH), May 20 in New Britain (MC), May 19-20 at Cove Island Park (PDu), May 20 at Sherwood Island (RS) and May 22 in Woodbury (RN). A Louisiana Waterthrush was late May 20 at HBSP, a non-breeding site (C&SR). Counts of 35 Common Yellowthroats on May 11 at Sherwood Island (RS,RW) and 21 on May 12 in East Rock Park (SK) represented good concentrations in confined areas. The hard-to-find Yellow-breasted Chat showed itself in Uncasville May 12 (R&LD), from May 14 on at HBSP (m.ob.), and at Cove Island

Park May 18-19 (PDu). One May 20 at Falkner Island was the first ever banded there (JZi,MMa).

TANAGERS THROUGH NORTHERN FINCHES

A **Summer Tanager**, a rare spring overshoot, was photographed in a Guilford yard April 24 (CK). A grounded Scarlet Tanager was eating sunflower hearts May 14 in Sharon (BCo), a symptom of a series of cool wet days through the first half of May. This resulted in widespread reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings visiting feeders. A first-year male Indigo Bunting was quite early April 20 at a feeder in Southbury (BD,ND), and a **Blue Grosbeak** visited a feeder in Fairfield May 26-29 (CH). The season's most noteworthy record involved a pair of **Dickcissels** that nested at Northwest Park in Windsor, a place where old tobacco fields have been allowed to revert to a prairie-like condition. The male vigorously defended a territory throughout May, singing from various perches and driving off other small passerines. The female was observed and photographed building a nest for several days at the end of the month, after which she disappeared, apparently to brood eggs (EG,m.ob.). It marks the first state nesting record since the mid-19th century (Zeranski & Baptist).

A late Tree Sparrow was still in Watertown April 23 (RN), and an early Chipping Sparrow showed up March 27 in Stamford (PDu). It's hard to get Seaside Sparrows out of the saltmarsh, but one was on Falkner Island May 27 (JS,JY et al.). Lincoln's Sparrow joined the list of desirable May migrants that showed well. They were seen two at a time in White Memorial Foundation April 28 (LW,RBa), Bridgewater May 1 (RN), and HBSP May 15 (RW). Singles were in Southport May 14 (CB), HBSP (JG), and White Memorial May 15 (LW et al.) and New Britain May 24 (MC). But none of that compared to the nine found on remarkable May 19 at Falkner Island, an all-time record there (JZi,MMa) – and probably for anywhere in the state. Fox Sparrow also staged a fine flight, with up to five at a Sterling feeder March 15-April 19 (RD), seven at Devil's Den Preserve in Weston March 17 (LH,SP) and 11 at White Memorial feeders March 27 (GH). One May 5 at East Rock Park (SK) broke the previous late-date record by a full ten days (Zeranski & Baptist). Single Vesper Sparrows were in Bloomfield April 26 (JMe) and Manchester April 30 and May 18 (TH). A very rare spring **Lark Sparrow** was found in a New Canaan cemetery May 20 but could not be relocated (Jde). White-crowned

Sparrow was widely reported from April 26 through May 19 (JWi,MC et al.).

A Bobolink was out in the Sound on Falkner Island May 20 (JZi,MMa). Litchfield held 37 Rusty Blackbirds March 30 (DR) and 30+ were in Oxford April 5 (BD). Following a nesting attempt last year, **Boat-tailed Grackles** returned April 21 to the Great Meadows in the Lordship section of Stratford (CB). At least one male and two females were present, but they were much less conspicuous than last year, with sporadic sightings to at least May 19 (m.ob). Baltimore Oriole was another species noted as abundant (CW et al.), with 25 at Sherwood Island during the May 11 flight (RS,RW). Orchard Oriole was in pretty good supply as well, with three at Sherwood Island May 11 (RS,RW) and two singing subadult males in Newtown May 22 (PB) among widespread reports.

Winter finches were well-represented in March and a number lingered late into the season. New Hartford held 18 Pine Grosbeaks March 1 (JBu) and two were at White Memorial March 4 (GL, DR). After a dearth of winter reports, Purple Finches made their move with 18 at a feeder in Torrington April 22 (RBa), 12 in New Preston April 30 (LW) and 20 at a feeder in Sharon May 1 (BCo). A singing male noted May 1 at HBSP was joined May 8 by a female carrying nesting material (JG,C&SR), an unusual occurrence along the coast. Common Redpolls . included 38 in Litchfield March 28-30 (DR), 10 in Franklin March 10 (MS,SS) and three still in Torrington to April 9 (RBa). A Westport feeder hosted 25 Pine Siskins March 6 (EH). Two were still at a Torrington feeder April 28 (JWa) and 75+ were in Washington-Litchfield April 25-28 (DR). But the real late lingerers included two to May 11 in Greenwich (BO), two on May 18 in Hartford (MS), one to May 18 at North Granby (JWi), and up to four possible breeders May 19-25 at two locations in Litchfield (DR). Lingering Evening Grosbeaks included a singing male April 27 at Cove Island Park (PDu), eight in Norwalk April 30 (JBe), one May 5 in Watertown (RN) and two females May 12-19 at North Granby (JWi).

EXOTICS:

Where did all those Ruddy Shelducks come from? One in Durham May 18 (MS) was sandwiched between three at a Lisbon golf course in the first week of May and one at a pond in Farmington in the last week of May (fide MS). Another was at Holly Pond in Stamford May 29 (PDu), where it joined a resident Egyptian Goose.

[Editor's Comment: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on the latest COA Checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Rare Records Committee (Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268), if they are to be included in the Connecticut Field Notes.]

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Falkner Island reports refer to the Falkner Island unit of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Guilford and were submitted by the staff of the Falkner Island Tern Project. RBA refers to the Connecticut Rare Bird Alert.

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PHOTO CHALLENGE

Louis Bevier

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 17

Imagine yourself standing at Lighthouse Point watching a strikingly white gull wheel into New Haven harbor and settle on the beach next to some Herring Gulls. The white plumage triggers some excitement, not dispelled as you note the relatively long wings, thin bill, and rather petite size—Ivory Gull, a prize find and new for Connecticut!

Anyone who has read this column in the past knows that I am wary of identifications made under the influence of adrenaline. Sure, first impressions are important, but whenever I hear a bird was "immediately recognized" to species, it usually means short shrift given to other possibilities. The penitent observer should ask, "Why isn't this what I think it is?"

The bill is too small for Iceland Gull, and Ross' Gull has a small black bill. So, why isn't this an Ivory Gull? As one turns away from what looks "good for Ivory Gull" and towards what eliminates it, several problems come into focus. Ivory Gulls have black legs and do not show a dark band near the tip of the bill. Lastly, the wings appear somewhat dusky on our bird, not at all like Ivory Gull. Overall, the bird looks like a Ring-billed Gull except that it is mostly white.

Never fear, the possibilities for a rarity have not evaporated yet. Is there another white gull? Yes, and it is one not on the average

North American birder's radar screen. Mediterranean Gull, a black-headed gull of western Europe, has been increasing at a prodigious rate in the past two decades, especially northwestward into Great Britain, and many people consider it a ripe candidate for vagrancy to our continent. The adult is overall quite white in winter, its broad wings wholly white at the tip and its dark red bill with a black band near the tip. Second winter birds have black in the wing tips. The heart pumps faster now. Body proportions of "Med" Gull recall a squat, short-winged Ring-billed Gull. STOP! Start asking what is wrong with that species, not what is "good" for that species. Alas, "Med" Gull has a dark strap extending from the ear around the back of head like a Laughing Gull; its legs are dark (red, but we can only say they are not dark); and so it goes. First winter plumage Mediterranean Gull is even more confusable with the same plumage on Ring-billed, Common, and Black-headed gulls, but that is for another photo challenge.

Back to Ring-billed Gull. The extreme whiteness in the plumage, especially across the tertials, and the basic structure of the bird, especially the bill, are clues that this is an abnormal Ring-billed Gull. With some duskiness to the primaries, a hint of gray in the wing coverts (looking somewhat darker than the white underparts), and the dark band on the bill, this bird is not truly albino, a condition where all pigmentation is lost even in the soft parts. This Ring-billed Gull exhibits a dilution of pigments, and this is called leucism.

Albinism and leucism are abnormalities grouped under the term heterchroisms, which include other well-known examples such as, melanism (excess pigmentation), erythrism (reddishness), and xanthochroism (yellow variants). Various forms of albinism are known in birds and may be total or partial. Common examples of partial albinism are crows with white wing patches and House Sparrows with white heads or wings. More than once I've tracked down a reported Snow Bunting flocking with House Sparrows! Leucistic and albinistic gulls have accounted for reported breeding of Iceland Gull in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, well south of the normal breeding range, and an albino Bonaparte's Gull once was responsible for an Ivory Gull report in New York (see A. D. Cruickshank, Proceedings of the Linnaean Society of New York 51: 31-32, 1940).

A common misconception about the causes of these abnormal colorations is that they are purely due to mutation and always hereditary. So far as known, pure albinism is congenital, but other

conditions may be caused by diet, senility, shock, and disease or injury, in which case the condition might be transitory, being gained or lost in subsequent molts. Some birds may become partly albinistic during life. There are cases of birds banded as perfectly normal individuals later retrapped with extensive white patches (e.g., a Song Sparrow, see Root, Auk 61: 295, 1944). This diluted Ring-billed Gull was photographed in New Haven by Mark Szantyr.

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Photo Challenge 18. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a PC disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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– Address Correction Requested –

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