THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

by Mark S. Szantyr

Mark is an artist and educator living in Waterbury, Connecticut with his wife Gail and his 14 year old son, Bobby. A long-time Connecticut birder, he is a licenced bird-bander, and is Secretary of the Avian Records committee of Connecticut.

Mark received his Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from the University of Connecticut in 1992 and is currently teaching art at Eastern Connecticut State University and Quinebaug Valley Community College. He has illustrated a number of texts and ornithological journals, including many covers for *The Connecticut Warbler*. He is a regular contributor of articles on bird identification for this publication.

RED-NECKED, RED, AND WILSON'S PHALAROPES

Julian Hough

These veritable 'spinning tops' of the bird world are perhaps the most delicate and diminutive waterbird visitors to our coasts. Their frantic, clockwork-like feeding action and dazzling plumages make them instantly appealing.

Phalaropes provide an interesting example of sexual role-reversal; the dull-plumaged male undertakes most of the parental responsibility while the brightly plumaged female does the courting.

Status and Distribution

Both Red-necked and Red Phalaropes are rare passage migrants in Connecticut, with Red-necked averaging more records than Red. Both species have been recorded from April/May and October/November, but most often are seen in late autumn and winter when storms may push them nearer to shore. Notable records of Red-necked Phalarope (Zeranski and Baptist, 1990) include an incredulous 500 to 1,000 Red-neckeds in East Haddam, 16 April 1929 (following an April storm), and 70 Red-neckeds in Stonington, 9 May 1969. These pale into insignificance when compared to a flock of 600,000 on Lake Tengiz (Kazakhstan) in May 1959 (Hayman et al. 1986).

Unlike other phalaropes, the main migration routes of Red Phalaropes are oceanic, with many birds wintering in the western Atlantic. According to Cramp (1983), the Nearctic population makes a southeast movement following the breeding season, to winter in the Atlantic off West Africa.

Their close cousin, Wilson's Phalarope, is a lower latitude breeding species, nesting in the prairies of central and western North America. It is an uncommon spring migrant and regular fall migrant in Connecticut, sometimes breeding as close as Massachusetts.

Identification Pitfalls

Most identification problems occur between Red-necked and Red Phalaropes outside of the breeding season, especially those seen at sea, when observations are often at long distance in harsh conditions. Wilson's Phalaropes, while superficially similar, are never found at sea and are separable by their white rump, a feature

lacking in both Red-necked and Red Phalaropes. Breeding adults of all three species are distinctive, but juvenile and non-breeding individuals may cause some confusion.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Identification

Size: 17-19 cm (7"). A small-headed, short-legged, plump wader with a needle-thin bill. Typically seen swimming, or 'spinning' gracefully on the water. Non-breeding individuals can be separated from Red Phalarope by the slightly longer neck and thinner bill. In juvenile plumage both Red-necked and Red Phalaropes are almost identical and care should be taken when separating them - note the bill shape!

Red-neckeds are earlier migrants than Red Phalaropes and are more likely to be seen in full juvenile plumage unlike Red Phalaropes which tend to occur later in the autumn, and are more likely to show new, grayer first-winter feathering on the mantle. In flight Red-necked shows a dark rump and a noticeable white wingbar. On land, the legs are short and blackish-gray in color.

Red-necked Phalarope, adult winter, *date unknown (Chris Elphick) The needle-like bill is a pro-Red-necked feature, while the well-defined dark mask eliminates Wilson's Phalarope. This bird has nearly completed its molt to adult winter plumage; note the darker, retained tertials.*

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Identification

Size: 19-21 cm (8"). Only likely to be confused outside the breeding season when all three are essentially gray and white. Best separated by size and bill structure. In the briefly held juvenile plumage, Red Phalaropes are *almost* identical to Red-necked Phalaropes, apart from their slightly shorter neck and bill. Another clue is that Red Phalaropes are later migrants than Red-neckeds and are generally less likely to be seen in full juvenile plumage.

In flight, they have a Sanderling-like appearance with a dark rump and outer primaries, which contrast with a broad white wingbar. They have a characteristic, erratic zigzag flight, often keeping low to the water and, unlike similar shorebirds, will frequently alight on the water.

Red Phalarope - juvenile, in captivity, *date unknown (Chris Elphick) Almost identical to Red-necked Phalarope in this plumage, and best told by their shorter, blunter bill (often with a paler base). However, unlike Red-necked Phalarope, they have an earlier molt to first-winter plumage and as a result are unlikely to occur in Connecticut in this plumage.*

Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*)

Identification

Size: 22-26 cm (9 1/2"). Wilson's is the largest of the three phalaropes. Wilson's Phalarope is a long-legged and long-billed bird with *yellowish* legs in non-breeding plumage. In winter, easily told from the other phalaropes by the more prominent supercilium (due to a darker forecrown) and lack of a black eye-patch. In flight, it is easily identified by its lack of wingbar, square white rump, and legs which project a little past the tail.

Wilson's Phalarope - adult winter, *Salton Sea, California Sept. 1991 (Julian Hough)*
The uniformly gray upperparts indicate an adult bird. The long bill, gray forehead and lack of a defined mask rule out Red-necked.

Wilson's Phalarope - juvenile, *Cape May, New Jersey September 1993 (Julian Hough)*
The white rump is diagnostic. Note the long, needle-like bill and pale legs.

Descriptions

A Table comparing the various features of these three phalarope species follows.

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PHALAROPE COMPARISON TABLE

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Adult female - summer

Brighter than the male. Females have a gray crown and mantle which extends as a band across the upperbreast neatly framing the bright reddish foreneck. The chin, throat and underparts are whitish.

Adult male - summer

Averages much duller than the female with the gray areas muddied with brown, and the reddish foreneck is browner and interrupted along its lower border by darker mottling.

Adult winter

Adults have more uniformly gray upperparts and tertials with a grayer crown and blackish ear-covert patch.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Adult female - summer

Strikingly attractive! A black cap gives way to rich ruddy red underparts with an isolated white cheek patch. The bright yellow bill is often dark-tipped. The upperparts are blackish-gray with buffy yellow tramlines.

Adult male - summer

Averages paler below than the the female with a less pronounced cap and cheek patch.

Adult winter

Winter plumage is the most likely dress adorning most Conn. individuals. Essentially Sanderling-gray above, white below with a small isolated blackish eyepatch. The gray extends up the nape as a thin line and terminates on the rear crown.

Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*)

Adult female -summer

The upperparts are pale dove-gray with a paler hindneck, throat and belly. The ear coverts are blackish and extend down the sides of the neck. This graduates into dark maroon and meets on the upperparts in a "v" shape. The throat is peachy-buff and contrasts with the white breast.

Adult male - summer

Males have a darker, browner crown with darker, mottled upperparts and a less contrasting head pattern. There is some variation with bright birds approaching some females in plumage, so caution should be used when sexing them. Legs are black in breeding birds.

Adult winter

When seen the yellowish legs are a dead give-away. The long, needle-like bill contrast with the pale lores and supercilium, otherwise, they are gray above and whitish below.

PHALAROPE COMPARISON TABLE

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Juvenile

Warm brown above and whitish below. The blackish-brown crown and ear-covert patch are the most striking features. The mantle is edged with buffy-yellow tramlines and the wing-coverts are dark centered.

As autumn progresses, the upperparts become grayer like the adults, but the dark, juvenile tertials are retained.

Voice

A short, sharp, "zit".

Habitat and Behaviour

Boggy tundra and pools during breeding, but also may frequent, rocky, freshwater pools or more estuarine habitat. On migration may be found inland on reservoirs, lakes or marshes but during winter they are generally pelagic.

Often tame and approachable. A high-energy species, which constantly seems to be on the move. Most often seen spinning around in circles (in an attempt to draw up food) and picking frantically at the water's surface.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Juvenile

As Red-necked in plumage, though far less likely to be encountered in this plumage in Conn. First-winter birds retain some dark-mottling on the mantle and crown and, unlike adults, show dark-centered tertials. Some individuals may show a restricted, peachy-buff wash on the throat.

Voice

Generally silent

Habitat and Behaviour

Nests at higher latitudes than Red-necked but is essentially similar in habitat and behavior, frequenting boggy tundra pools and open oceans. May be found inland after harsh weather and often proves remarkably tame. Rarely seen on land, preferring to spend most of its time swimming on the water.

Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*)

Juvenile

Similar to Red-necked in juvenile and first-winter plumages, but has yellowish legs and lacks a dark eyepatch. Shows a narrow gray stripe extending across the ear coverts and down the side of the neck.

Voice

Generally silent

Habitat and Behaviour

Unlike the other two species, Wilson's Phalaropes are not pelagic, but prefer inland waters with emergent vegetation. One of the most striking behavioral traits is that they are more at home on land than either of their cousins. They readily feed along muddy margins, characteristically darting backward and forward and stooping to pick insects from the water's surface.

HOTSPOT:
Birding Your Local Patch for Fame and Glory!

Mark S. Szantyr

It seems that the longer that I look at birds, the less I feel I must leave Connecticut for the thrill of exotic locations or infrequently seen species. No, it seems that I am getting more and more satisfaction out of staying here and working our little state to see what I can find. Getting even more to the point, I get an amazing amount of satisfaction out of birding, as the British put it, my local patch.

While some of my brethren are of the belief that a rolling stone does in fact gather moss, and often their gadabout antics do produce an avian wonder or two, there is a lot to be said for covering a small parcel of land well and often. Working the same cover over and over... slow, slower, and even slower yet. Walking the same field, river course, town park, beach, gravel pit, or reservoir day after day, methodically noting what is there and daydreaming about what might show up "*if the winds were just right.*"

I offer a few examples that should convince you that less can be more.

Patrick Dugan is an avid Connecticut birder from Fairfield County and is undoubtedly familiar to most of you. Patrick birds a town park on the coast in the city of Stamford. He birds it nearly every day (he estimates approximately 300 days a year!). It is convenient for Patrick as it is near to both his home and his place of business. (I am not naming this park outright because this is Patrick's "Hotspot" and I would like to encourage you to find your own). In his travels Patrick has managed to list 268 species of birds from this 83-acre park and its surroundings. If that were not amazing enough, the list of birds includes Eared Grebe, thirty-five species of waterfowl including Harlequin Duck, White Pelican, Razorbill, eleven species of gulls including Franklin's Gull, Yellow-throated and Prothonotary Warbler, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Dickcissel. If you extend his range just a mile beyond the confines of the park, add approximately 30 species, and add Northern Fulmar, Parasitic Jaeger, King Eider, and Lark Sparrow to the mix.

When asked about birding locally, Greg Hanisek, former Chairman of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut and Field Notes Editor for the Connecticut Warbler responded, "The best local patches can change from season to season. In the fall, a commu-

nity garden gone to seed can be a magnet for all kinds of passerines, as well as the hawks that hunt them. In the spring, a cemetery or park with mature oaks draws in warblers and other migrants. At the moment, my favorite local patch is my neighborhood in Waterbury, an area of older homes tucked into the rugged terrain of the bluffs overlooking the Naugatuck Valley. Oak trees soar above the houses, and in May warblers probe their catkins for insects. I've recorded all the regular warblers there, including Mourning and a number of Cape Mays. Other visitors of note have included Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Gray-cheeked Thrush and with the help of my neighbor, Bruce Finnan, Philadelphia Vireo. I start almost every morning in May with a walk around local streets."

The next example is mine. Until a few years ago, I lived in Storrs, a bucolic little town in the quiet northeast corner of Connecticut. Birders fondly referred to this quiet corner as a birding "black hole". It seemed that virtually no bird of any interest showed up in Tolland or Windham County, at least nothing to drag birders away from the highly productive (and highly birded) New Haven, Fairfield, and Litchfield Counties. I was in graduate school and found time for chasing birds a little hard to come by. A few of us who lived in the area decided that we would begin birding a few of the local sites more regularly. We felt that if we didn't, we would not get any time in the field, as traveling to glory spots like Hammonasset was just not in our schedules (it takes well over an hour to get anywhere else in the state from up there!). In the fall, we worked W lot, the northern-most parking lot on the University of Connecticut campus. We found that in mid to late summer, the dike that separates the Windham Airport from Mansfield Hollow Reservoir in North Windham could be interesting as it offered views of the grass runway areas as well as the seasonal mudflats that border the reservoir. Luckily, we found that Upland Sandpipers occasionally stopped at the airport grasslands as fall migrants and small numbers of shorebirds would sometimes use the mudflats so we could get in a little local shorebirding as well as enjoy a nice walk in the breeze of the elevated dike.

On 10 July 1995, my life (and all my ideas about chasing birds and the northeast Connecticut "black hole") drastically changed. A few days earlier, my "*gang*", consisting of Bruce Carver, Louis Bevier, and me, began walking the two mile roundtrip along the top of the dike. The water level had been drawn down beyond its normally low late summer level in order to extinguish a large mill

fire in nearby Willimantic. There were a few shorebirds showing up and we were interested to see what we might find. On the morning of the 10th, while at the first bend on the dike, we spotted a Long-billed Curlew on the grassy runway approach area of the Windam Airport.

Long-billed Curlew *Photo by Mark Szantyr*

This was the first chaseable, documented Connecticut occurrence of this species in nearly one hundred years. Needless to say, this encouraged our local birding routine. While showing off our local find to other birders, we rediscovered a local nesting population of Grasshopper Sparrows, and observed a Horned Lark feeding a heavily spotted fledgling along the edge of the airport runways. Both of these are significant additions to Connecticut ornithological information. But it didn't stop there. On 5 September, while surveying the increasing number of shorebirds at the Dam, Bruce Carver and I found and documented two juvenal Sabine's Gulls, a first state record. And still it didn't stop. In doing these shorebird surveys, we noted approximately nine different Baird's Sandpipers, fifteen American Golden Plovers, several White-rumped Sandpipers, a single flock of in excess of forty-five Pectoral Sandpipers, and northeast Connecticut's first documented Western Sandpiper. On 18 September, Bruce, Sherman Suter, and I found a Northern Wheatear bouncing among the boulders forming the rip-rapped walls of the dam.

Northern Wheater *Photo by Mark Szantyr*

Amazing! And here is the kicker. When things eventually slowed down at the dam, we continued to work it every day. Paying dues, you might say. We also included the aforementioned W Lot at UCONN into our routine. At this farm field less than a mile from my back door, with enough persistent coverage, we managed to locate a Sedge Wren, Northern Shrike, Orange-crowned, Mourning, and Connecticut Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, and many of the more common but good to see warblers and sparrows. What a year! And I didn't go more than eight miles from my home!

So what makes a local patch? What you need is a place that is easy to get to at a very regular rate. It is also a plus if you enjoy going there. It need not be the perfect place. As Greg Hanisek mentioned, it could be seasonally determined. Maybe it is a park near home, or a community garden, or the brushy edge of a river adjacent to a large shopping center, or your local landfill, local reservoir property, a power line right-of-way or if you are lucky, your own back yard.

What will change one of these mundane locations into a Hotspot? **You...** and your time and effort in birding the area. I find it fun to keep notes on my local patches, in fact, even keep lists of what I find, when I find it, numbers, behavior,...all the things that keep me interested in these places are also the things that make me a better observer and therefore, a better birder. The most important thing is the persistence of coverage. You will spend

many, many, many seemingly unproductive hours birding these locations. As I said before, you are paying your dues. Enjoy the walk, enjoy and study the common birds, learn to take notes, sharpen your skills....

Another story.... Later that same year, 26 October 1995, I was standing in front of my home in Storrs. I was waiting for Sherman Suter so that we could go and chase a reported rarity. While I waited, I was scanning the skies and treetops for Evening Grosbeaks that had recently been at my feeder and that Sherman wanted to get a look at.

On the horizon I noticed a speck in the sky. This speck was slowly making its way toward me and as I am always on the look out for a new "yard bird", I stayed with it. It looked a bit like a Northern Harrier and as I had not seen one in the yard that year I was already getting excited. As the bird came nearer, my Northern Harrier gradually turned into a Swainson's Hawk! Sherman arrived and he put his Questar on it and confirmed my ID. I grabbed the camera from my car and got some poor but documenting photos as it passed over my house.

I hope that by now I am preaching to the choir. I hope you are inspired to investigate the green or even not-so-green spaces you have around your home or office for their untapped birding potential. I hope you are convinced that there can be no place like home for exciting birding possibilities.

Imagine...your back yard....**A HOTSPOT!**

MARK SZANTYR, 145 Farmington Ave., Waterbury, CT 06710

CONNECTICUT'S 2002 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

Neil Currie

In his book "Hawks Aloft" Maurice Broun, Hawk Mountain's first naturalist/guardian, described the sanctuary's first years. While welcoming eager hawk watchers to this newly protected hawk watch site in eastern Pennsylvania in the early 1930's, and "asking" unfriendly hawk hunters to leave the now private ridge top, he managed to count passing hawks. Red Letter Days is the title of a chapter in which he told of and described some of the spectacular flights he observed. Seventy years later we have the Northeast Hawk Watch (NEHW), an organization of hawk enthusiasts, watching and counting at sites throughout New England and eastern areas of New York and New Jersey. Another group, the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), maintains hawk watching sites across the continent and in Mexico and Central America. The Connecticut lookouts are part of these networks and during thirty years of watching and recording we have come to expect our own red-letter days.

The most numerous of the hawks that migrate over Connecticut are the Broad-winged Hawks. Next are the Sharp-shinned Hawks, followed by American Kestrels and Ospreys. Over the years the migrations of these hawks have produced many red-letter days and the fall flight in 2002 had its share. At the Middle School in Torrington on September 18 a large flight of 3443 Broadwings passed. On the same day 4352 Broadwings were migrating over Chestnut Hill in Litchfield. Again on September 23 and 24, 5288 Broadwings passed over Torrington Middle School and another 4197 were over Chestnut Hill. At Chestnut Hill, where counts have been taken in most of the last thirty years, the fall count of 12,686 Broadwings was far and away the highest ever recorded there – a red letter year! (Tables 1 and 2)

The high counts at these two sites seem to have been at the expense of more southerly lookouts in Connecticut (Tables 1 and 2). For the second year in a row Broadwings were crossing Connecticut to the southwest on a front further to the north and west than usual. Apparently, for this reason, the high counts usually expected at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich never materialized. The 2002 total of 5,222 Broadwings was the second lowest ever at Quaker Ridge (Table 2 and 3).

At Lighthouse Point in New Haven (Tables 1 and 4) Sharp-shinned Hawks, American Kestrels, Ospreys, and three Swainson's Hawks produced red-letter days. On September 28, 1,734 migrating hawks included 650 Sharpshins, 484 American Kestrels, and 125 Ospreys. Even 351 Broadwings contributed to this total. At the time, this was the third largest flight of hawks ever recorded at Lighthouse Point. Two weeks later, however, on October 14 a flight of 1,906 hawks topped this. The day included 1,355 Sharpshins, 289 American Kestrels, 120 Cooper's Hawks, 33 Merlins, and 19 Ospreys. On September 28, two miles to the north of Lighthouse at East Shore Park, a flight of 1,181 hawks included 468 Sharpshins and 235 American Kestrels. Four Swainson's Hawks were a record number for the fall migration season in Connecticut. On September 24 one of these rare Swainson's Hawks was observed from the Middle School site in Torrington. On the same day another Swainson's was at Lighthouse Point, and still two more appeared there, one on October 3, and another on October 15. These all made for red-letter days.

The fall 2002 migration was noteworthy for other reasons. The low count at Quaker Ridge was disappointing, but 53 Bald Eagles and five Golden Eagles there were a plus. Seventy six Bald Eagles at Lighthouse was a record exceeding the previous high count of 52 in 1999, and 10 Golden Eagles set another new record. At inland lookouts Bald Eagles were seen in good numbers, the best year ever. At Johnnycake Farm in Burlington, 21 Bald Eagles was five shy of the record 26 for that site, and at Chestnut Hill 16 was only one shy of the record for that site (Table 1). Although apparently not migrating, Black Vultures observed at hawk watch sites are also noted in Table 1. This species is becoming more frequent in Connecticut.

The following individuals, joined by many other hawk watchers, helped in counting hawks at Connecticut's fall 2002 hawk lookouts: Lois Aldi, Ralph Amodie, Renee Baade, David Babington, Bill Banks, Tom Baptist, Dan Barvir, Trudy Battaly, Mike Beath, Ray Belding, Ron Bell, Bud Benson, Tom Bravo, Nolan Britt, Polly Brody, Paul Carrier, Al Collins, Mary Ann and Neil Currie, Janet D'Amico, Paul Desjardins, Angela Dimmitt, Cynthia Ehlinger, Dick English, Larry Fischer, David and Ann Fiske, Steve Foisey, Frank Guida, Tony Hager, Greg Hanisek, Barbara Harrigan, Ernie Harris, Lynn James, Elsbeth Johnson, Seth Kellogg, Jeff Kirk, Lois Lounsbury, Lisa Lozier, Stephanie Lozier, Donna Rose Manwaring, Steve Mayo, Robin McAllister, Chris McCrary, Judy Moore, Marty Moore, Brian O'Toole, Drew Panko, Janet

Petricone, Matt Popp, Steve Potter, Mike Reese, Al and Betty Root, David Rosgen, Jeri Ross, Meredith Sampson, Fred Schroeder, Bruce Sebastian, Randy Suhl, Tony Tortora, Bill Wallace, Steve Walter, Joe Zeranski, Jim and Carol Zipp. As always, my apologies to anyone I have inadvertently omitted.

NEIL CURRIE, 10 Mountain Laurel Lane, Sandy Hook, CT 06482

HAWK FLIGHT SITE LOCATIONS

SITES	TOWN
Taine Mountain	Burlington
Johnnycake Farm	Burlington
Middle School	Torrington
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield
White Memorial	Litchfield
Good Hill	Woodbury
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater
Briggs Hill	Sherman
Fawn Hill	Brookfield
Bent of the River	Southbury
Osborne Hill	Sandy Hook
Huntington State Park	Redding
Flirt Hill	Easton
Maltby Lakes	Orange
East Rock Park	New Haven
East Shore Park	New Haven
Lighthouse Point	New Haven
Waveny Park	New Canaan
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich

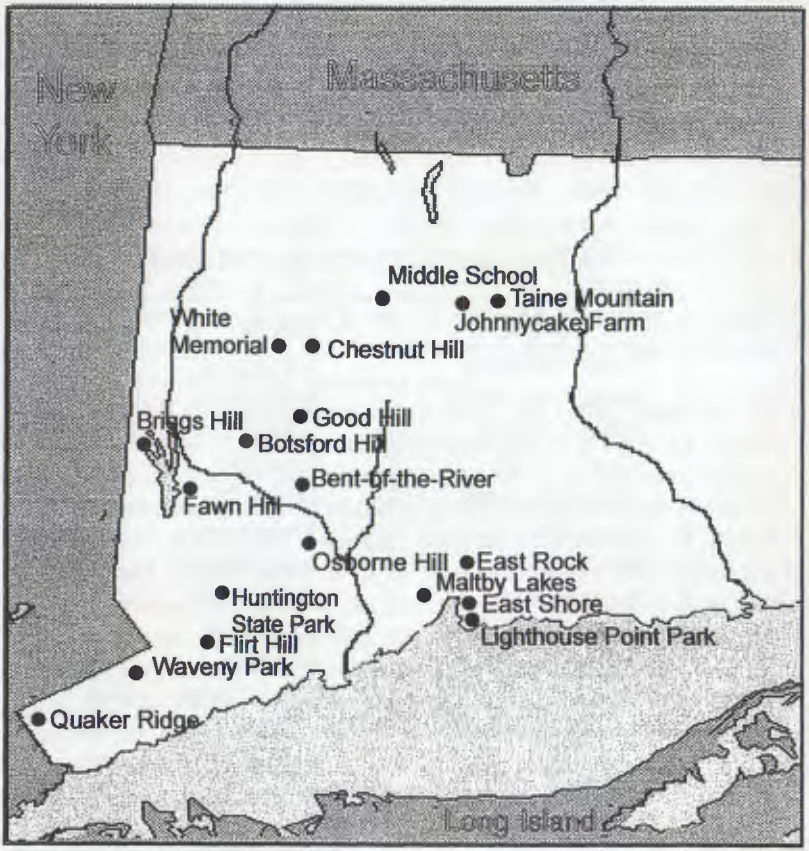

Figure 1. 2002 Hawk Flight Lookout Sites

Table 1: Connecticut - All Sites -Fall 2002

SITES	SPECIES**																		Hrs.	Total
	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR		
Taine Mountain			3			7				80								3	8	93
Johnnycake Farm			48	21	13	117	13			1221					61	6			37	1500
Middle School			83	8	3	84	25	1	6	10715	1	23			39	3	2	43	121	11036
Chestnut Hill	5*		42	16	13	147	2		3	12686			2		43	2		21	95	12982
White Memorial	15*		13	6	2	10	6			879					1				14	917
Good Hill			9	3		7	4			811					1	2		2	28	839
Botsford Hill			2		1	12	1			205					1				8	222
Briggs Hill	7*		9		2	9	4			179		9			8	1		1	14	222
Fawn Hill			34	7	3	45	3		2	2012		19			10	1		17	32	2153
Bent of the River			14	7	4	34	4	1		2039					3			2	30	2108
Osborne Hill	5*		67	6	1	95	6			860					17			16	31	1068
Huntington State Park			7		2	18	1			218		1			6			1	21	254
Flirt Hill			12	4	62	110	23	1	1	24		31			377	9	1		93	655
Maltby Lakes			358	10	11	110	11			1746					87	4	3	12	100	2352
East Rock Park			4		2	12	2			20		1			2				2	43
East Shore Park		39	66	3	10	812	79	3		515		12			329	4	1	6	21	1879
Lighthouse Point		471	1418	76	413	8096	796	10	90	737	3	550	1	10	1807	332	50	202	566	15062
Waveny Park		13	22	6	4	37	4			138		1			12	1	2	3	22	243
Quaker Ridge	4*	520	585	53	159	1748	292	8	69	5222		206		5	453	46	23	234	464	9623

* Not counted in total.

** Refer to Table 3 for species abbreviations definitions

Table 2: Broad-winged Hawk Flights - Fall 2002

DATES / SITES	Pre	September												Post		Total
	12	12	13	14	16	17	18	19-22	23	24	25	28	29	29	Hours	BWs
Taine Mountain		3		3			28		43		3				4	80
Johnnycake Mountain		21	13	68		208	459	25	7	260	100	50	10		37	1221
Middle School	191	94	59	306	1259	12	3443	40	2201	3087	14	7		2	121	10715
Chestnut Hill	46	55	49	140	1788	1980	4352	55	4100	97	10	11		3	95	12686
White Memorial				34	105	740									14	879
Good Hill	26	61	3	128		341	211	41							28	811
Botsford Hill										190	15				8	205
Briggs Hill		1	13	15					113	37					14	179
Fawn Hill		96	88	184	4	839	708	5		88					32	2012
Bent of the River	5	172	54			474	118		1026	190					30	2039
Osborne Hill		96	167	76	8	284	229								31	860
Huntington State Park				7		49	162								21	218
Flirt Hill	1		1			10	7			5					93	24
Maltby Lakes	244	695	32	4		267	367	71		51	15				100	1746
East Rock Park							20								2	20
East Shore Park	8											373	134		21	515
Lighthouse Point	14	21	1	2	0	3	6	1	12	66	14	351	190	56		737
Waveny Park		53	7			5	65	8							22	138
Quaker Ridge	138	312	187	36	2	1733	1287	8	534	351	17	25	333	259	464	5222

Table 3: Quaker Ridge, Greenwich, CT - Fall 2002

MONTH	Hrs.	SPECIES																		Total
		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	
August	19			9			7	2		1	4					1			1	25
September	207	1	3	456	33	85	990	109		5	4973		7			291	29	3	113	7098
October	177	3	449	119	19	68	728	163	7	44	245		149		4	160	16	20	112	2306
November	61		68	1	1	6	23	18	1	19			50		1	1	1		8	198
Total 2002	464	4	520	585	53	159	1748	292	8	69	5222		206		5	453	46	23	234	9627
Total 2001	597	3	618	502	49	154	2460	297	14	172	4487		228		5	594	44	16	101	9744
Total 2000	552	3	213	400	50	125	1834	349	10	114	14408	1	286	1	3	527	49	13	59	18445
Total 1999	471		382	633	77	145	2282	321	17	137	10938		346	2	8	804	63	13	110	16278
Total 1998	616		353	923	93	313	3436	315	9	128	9949		238		8	922	67	19	82	16855

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
SW - Swainson's Hawk
RT - Red-tailed Hawk
RL - Rough-legged Hawk
GE - Golden Eagle
AK - American Kestrel
ML - Merlin
PG - Peregrine Falcon
UR - unidentified raptor

Table 4: Lighthouse Point, New Haven, CT - Fall 2002

MONTH	Hrs.	SPECIES																		Total
		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	
August	20			50	1	3	5				1					1			2	63
September	199		32	1026	31	186	3752	253	1	5	680	1	23			958	144	15	67	7174
October	210		399	342	32	164	4037	494	4	51	56	2	353	1	4	826	138	32	115	7050
November	137		40		12	60	302	49	5	34			374		6	22	50	3	18	775
Total 2002	566		471	1418	76	413	8096	796	10	90	737	3	750	1	10	1807	332	50	202	15062
Total 2001	552		178	852	23	506	8143	707	3	87	307		503	1	1	1699	326	84	193	13613
Total 2000	588		315	967	49	388	4606	690	10	85	1152		347	1	3	1653	243	33	169	10711
Total 1999	548		198	1474	52	628	6058	847	25	68	352		969	5	2	2152	402	50	197	13479
Total 1998	560		254	1516	41	806	6529	771	17	26	371		258	5	3	2598	341	48	156	13740

Table 5: Twenty Five Years at Lighthouse Point, New Haven

YEAR	Hrs.	SPECIES																		Total	Total BWs
		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PF	UR		
1978	228		0	438	0	136	5171	47	0	6	236		9	0	2	1652	19	3	124	7843	7607
1979	248		3	644	2	268	7747	106	7	2	448		27	0	1	3722	121	20	316	13434	12986
1980	419		17	835	0	666	9426	91	5	25	2164		122	8	0	3792	118	18	210	17497	15333
1981	528		23	1070	4	706	13973	381	13	12	5017		103	3	0	7220	356	24	104	29009	23993
1982	417		16	859	2	352	10136	179	2	12	506		79	1	0	2323	75	17	92	14651	14145
1983	358		0	489	0	340	6417	98	0	0	717		0	0	0	1905	94	0	0	10060	9343
1984	452		40	800	4	515	9401	159	2	14	977		168	10	1	1667	95	29	120	14002	13025
1985	501		49	1171	3	648	10532	364	10	23	2907		207	9	0	2459	248	14	361	19005	16098
1986	587		128	1489	13	988	12000	475	26	54	8142		374	13	6	4251	447	25	787	29218	21076
1987	565		261	2059	21	947	8946	446	19	40	2172		248	2	3	3774	235	25	237	19435	17263
1988	488		136	2453	8	677	7320	480	22	37	9330		131	5	1	2938	375	26	1005	24944	15614
1989	534		121	4036	16	788	9656	1000	12	81	598		333	4	2	4572	553	48	949	22769	22171
1990	611		128	3708	17	890	10834	1855	36	289	2352		490	6	2	4619	1382	95	1141	27844	25492
1991	580		228	3034	17	399	8659	1863	30	474	910		658	4	1	4115	783	44	1182	22401	21491
1992	488		242	1935	10	487	9683	1863	13	112	1264		498	2	0	3736	436	46	954	21281	20017
1993	582		230	3284	32	1054	10105	2191	19	94	6088		253	1	4	4568	1020	61	1128	30132	24044
1994	651		196	1566	29	800	8035	911	3	58	5738		321	0	5	4128	224	39	456	22509	16771
1995	513		181	1407	33	481	5386	688	7	62	766		717	1	0	1879	307	53	207	12175	11409
1996	528		180	1384	26	259	5639	538	27	52	1212		404	1	6	1887	204	71	133	12023	10811
1997	543		206	1811	38	459	8212	876	12	50	2054	1	212	0	1	1865	242	53	155	16247	14193
1998	560		254	1516	41	806	6529	771	17	26	371		258	5	3	2598	341	48	156	13740	13369
1999	548		198	1474	52	628	6056	847	25	68	352		969	5	2	2152	402	50	197	13477	13125
2000	588		315	967	49	388	4607	690	10	85	1152		347	1	3	1652	244	33	169	10712	9561
2001	552		178	852	23	506	8143	707	3	87	307		503	1	1	1699	326	84	193	13613	13306
2002	566		471	1418	76	413	8096	796	10	90	737	3	550	1	10	1807	332	50	202	15062	14325
Total	12635		3801	40699	516	14601	210709	18422	330	1853	56517	4	7981	83	54	76980	8979	976	10578	453083	396568
No/Yr	505		152	1628	21	584	8428	737	13	74	2261		317	3	2	3079	359	39	423	18123	15863

IDENTIFYING OUT-OF-CONTEXT MERGANSERS

Mark S. Szantyr

Ah, the imagination. In the Christmas movie classic, "A Miracle on 34th Street", actor Fred Gwynne, as Santa Claus, explains to a youngster that the Imagine-nation is a nation, like the French nation or the English nation...a separate world where we suspend what we know for what we would like to believe.

A few weeks ago, I received an e-mail alerting me to a Red-breasted Merganser on a local park pond. Wow! This would be a great addition to my city list. While a common coastal bird in winter, Red-breasted Merganser is fairly uncommon inland. Though occasionally reported from some of the larger lakes around the state, especially during times of peak waterfowl migration, to see one on a small pond in an urban park seemed like quite an opportunity.

I rushed out of the house and arrived at the park and Bingo! There it was! A juvenile merganser on the pond with Mallards and two recently-released Muscovy Ducks. As my British friends say, it's a tick! Or was it?

The series of cell-phone calls I then made tells the rest of the story.

Call number one: Hi Greg, I am looking at a juvenile RB Merg on the small ice-skating pond at Hamilton Park!

Call number two: Hi Greg, I think it is an RB Merg...I need to study it a bit more...why isn't it a Common Merganser....? It has the shaggy crest and is so dark....

Call number three: Hi Greg. Never mind.

Common and Red-breasted Merganser

The two larger merganser species that occur in Connecticut, Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) and Red-breasted Merganser (*M. serrator)* normally occupy quite different habitats while in the state.

Common Merganser, a common migrant and uncommon nesting species in Connecticut, is most often encountered on large lakes and reservoirs or on the state's larger rivers and, during the breeding season, along some smaller rivers. While often encountered at estuaries of the larger rivers, this is a species of fresh water and rarely, if ever, seen on the open waters of Long Island Sound.

Red-breasted Merganser is, likewise, a common migrant species in Connecticut. Occasionally found inland, this species is a very regular fixture on the Sound in winter. A few individuals normally over-summer along the Connecticut coast but breeding has yet to be determined in the state. Unlike the other two species of merganser that occur in Connecticut, Red-breasted Merganser is a ground nesting bird that historically has been found nesting in estuaries along the shores of Long Island, New York. Certainly a Connecticut nesting should be watched for.

Inland, Red-breasted Merganser is a very uncommon migrant, with only a handful of individuals being confidently reported from the larger inland reservoirs and lakes.

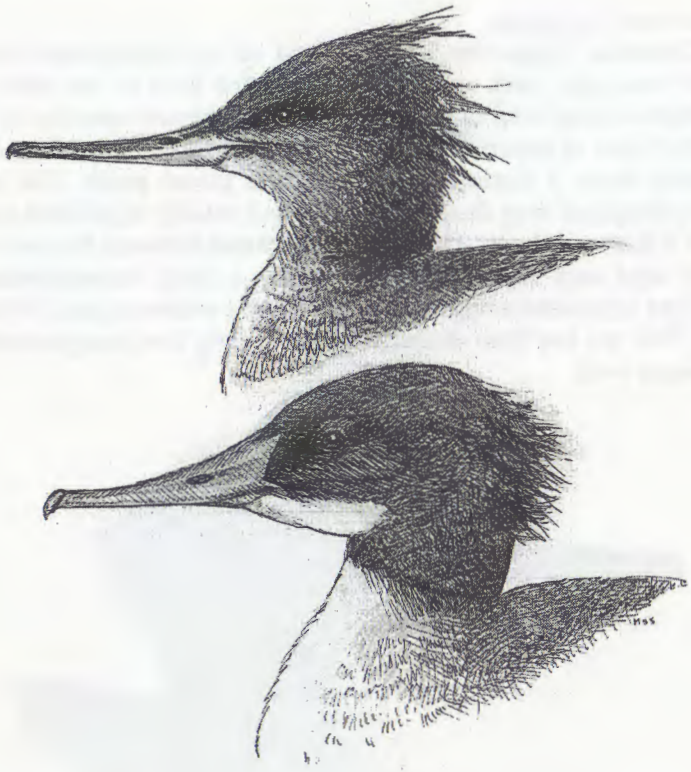

Figure 1. Typical head structure and plumage of female and immature Red-Merganser, *Mergus serrator*, (Top) and Common Merganser, *M. merganser* (Bottom).

Adult males of the two species are readily identified and are well illustrated in all the common field guides. Females and immatures of these species are much more similar to each other and at times, especially when out of the normal context, can pose a very difficult identification challenge.

The key features that should be studied when trying to make this identification are the structure of the bill, especially the shape of the bare parts as they meet the head of the bird, the line of demarcation between the dark neck and throat feathers, and the pale breast, the degree of pale breast feathering, the shape and location of the shaggy crest feathers, and the pattern of dark and light feathering on the face and chin.

Common Merganser

Common Merganser is the largest of our mergansers with a stout head and neck and a full crest at the back of the head. The reddish-brown head of the immatures and female usually forms a distinct line of separation from the white breast. These forms also usually show a distinct, clear-cut white throat patch. The bill is fairly long and very deep at the base and usually is reddish orange with a darker culmen. The line of separation between the feathered loral area and the base of the bill is a long, forward-slanting straight line terminating in a shallow curve where it joins the lower bill. This is a key field character in separating lone mergansers that are seen well.

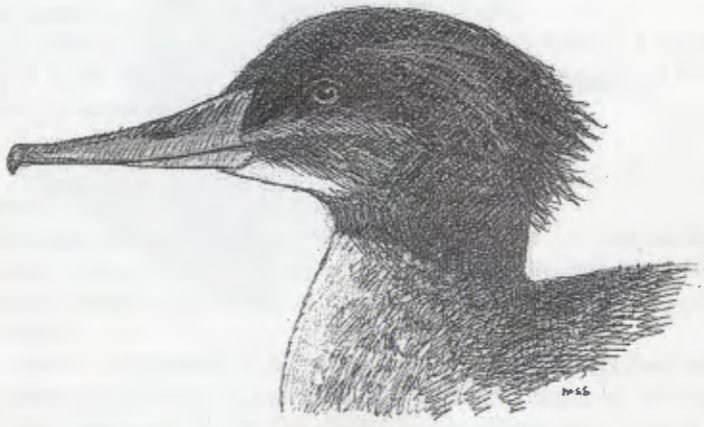

Figure2. Common Merganser, juvenal, showing more obvious white line in loral area and less distinct border patch and line of demarcation between neck and upper breast.

Red-breasted Merganser

While smaller than the Common Merganser, size may be difficult to discern on a lone bird. Red-breasted Merganser sports a longer and thinner bill and it is not as deeply based as Common Merganser. The line of separation between the feathered lore and the bill is a rear sweeping curve, not the long straight line of Common Merganser. Bill color is similar to Common Merganser or a bit paler orange. The head of immature or female Red-breasted Mergansers is similar to that of Common Merganser but there is often an indication of a pale loral stripe and often this is accentuated by darker feathering around the eye. The crest of this species is shaggier or more disheveled than Common Merganser and often separates into two distinct peaks, one off the rear crown and one off of the nape. The line of separation between the head and breast is not as clear as in Common Merganser as the body and breast are generally a darker gray and not the clean white of Common Merganser. While Red-breasted Merganser may show a whitish throat, it is rarely as clearly demarcated as in Common Merganser.

What Happened in Waterbury?

The bird on the small pond in Waterbury was an immature Common Merganser. In this plumage, a few of the character distinctions between the two species are blurred. This bird showed a fairly clear separation of brown neck from white breast in the center of the breast but the sides of the neck and breast were not as clearly demarcated. The crest of the bird was very ragged looking but the bird was actively feeding and therefore was wet and messy looking during my entire observation. The white throat patch was present but the edges were not as clean and clear as they would be in adult female Common Merganser. This bird also showed vestiges of its juvenal facial plumage and therefore showed a faint pale area through the lores.

Only after I took a long and hard look at the shape of the base of the bill was I certain of the bird's identification as a Common Merganser....it would have been so cool to tick Red-breasted Merganser on my city list!

The Third Merganser

Female Hooded Merganser was never in question, as it is much smaller and darker, with none of the bright whites or reddish browns of the other two species. Likewise, it is more round-headed and the crest is fuller, incorporating nearly the entire rear portion of the head and nape and the bill is usually much darker.

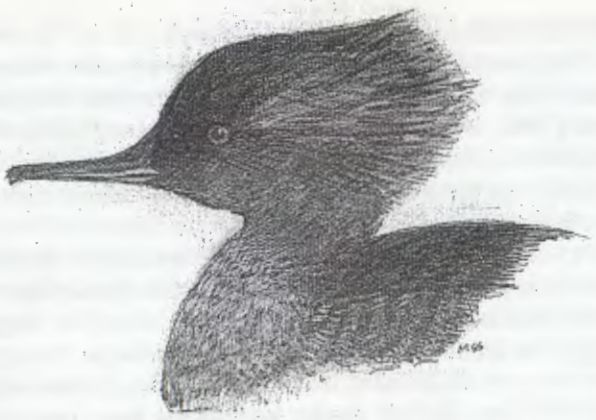

Figure 3. Female Hooded Merganser, *Lophodytes cucullatus.*

An Interesting Note:

It seems that in the European form of Mergus merganser, or Goosander, the shape of the base of the bill where it meets the face, is more similar to Red-breasted Merganser (a soft rear-sweeping curve) than it is to Common Merganser. Other plumage characters of this form are similar to Common Merganser. While this form has never been identified in Connecticut, it might make for great sport to try noting this character on any merganser seen out of season or out of normal habitat so as to eliminate or, with luck, document this visitor from the Old World.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jamie Meyers

Sibley's Birding Basics, David Allen Sibley, (2002, 154 pages, Albert A. Knopf, New York, NY, $15.95, softcover).

With a third new volume on bird identification now on the shelves, and split versions (east and west) of his highly regarded Guide to Birds planned for release during 2003, David Allen Sibley is well on his way to becoming the best known brand name in identification guides since Roger Tory Peterson. That title is neither lightly given nor unearned, and this economical volume earns its keep.

I can well picture two birders in the same bookstore pulling this book off the shelf for the first time and having disparate initial impressions. One might glance through the early chapters, read about pishing, and how to tell similarly colored birds, such as cardinals and tanagers, apart and think that the contents are too basic, while the other might flip through the later chapters that cover bird topography, molt and related topics and think that the concepts covered here are not basic at all. The truth lies closer to the latter of those two imagined points of view.

Granted, a good bit of what is covered in the first eight chapters or so are things that most birders, who've been active in the field for any decent period of time, already know. There are discussions on optics, what makes a species a species, and the difference (or the lack thereof) that factors such as size make in identification. However, even in the opening chapters, there are concepts that simply don't appear in any other birding guides on the market today. Not more than twenty pages in, alongside text covering fairly basic topics such as those noted above, there are several pages about taking notes and sketching, two very under appreciated techniques to learning that pitifully few new birders are encouraged to undertake.

Another key point made early on is that the modern day birding modicum of identifying difficult species by instinct and "jizz", while certainly having its place, is neither infallible nor the optimal approach to putting a name to a feathered form. Chapter 4 deals specifically with misidentifications, and provides an impor-

tant and frank discussion that is as important as any chapter in the book about proper identifications. One of the misidentification tales spun here involves a New Jersey hummingbird record in which the author himself was later proven incorrect. I personally respect the field birder who is not afraid to admit their mistakes and to see them as learning opportunities instead of failures, and hope that readers will also take that to heart.

While nuggets like that aren't especially widespread in the first half of this tome, the real gold is found in latter chapters. Having dealt with traditionally considered basic concepts in birding by that point, Mr. Sibley covers in eighty or so pages what most standard field guides have until now relegated to an inside cover or perhaps a couple of short introductory pages with a generic bird illustrated to show various feather features. Those had their purpose and place, and some, like the silhouettes shown on the inside cover of the Peterson guides, were groundbreaking in their time.

However, where those just scratched the surface, the treatment in this book digs far deeper, illustrating various topographical features in far more detail than has even been attempted in any other mainstream field guide. Mr. Sibley devotes a half dozen pages to a presentation of birds as differently shaped as herons, hawks, and hummingbirds in similar profiles, showing similar feather groups in each. Some sketches deliberately lack any strong coloration, forcing the reader to focus on fine details other than color, which is a useful innovation.

Aging of birds, especially in the gulls and shorebirds, is a generally recognized key to identification. The terms used when discussing the age of a bird, such as "first winter" or "modified basic", can be confusing, especially since there are two competing models out there. I found the chapter comparing and contrasting the "life year" (juvenile/first year/adult) and "Humphrey-Parkes" (alternate/basic) terminology to be presented in terms that brought those somewhat dry concepts to life, thanks to the combination of text and accompanying art. The author doesn't really favor one model over the other; he feels both are useful in their own ways.

As an intermediate birder, the most important thing I feel I've gained from my reading is that it's time for me to reconsider my idea of what is truly "basic". When one thinks back to the history of bird identification, what was once difficult is now basic through new learning, understanding and technology. To me, the true beauty in this tiny book is the nudge that Mr. Sibley gives birders not to just ID birds by instinct and "jizz" but to truly study them from a more critical point of view and recognize subtle yet vital

details that lead up to better identifications and birding experiences. In other commentaries, I have seen this guide discussed as the birding equivalent of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, and that somewhat bold comparison works for me, especially in the latter chapters.

If there is a criticism I could levy, it's that I'm left hungry for a more detailed companion volume that focuses more on more thorny identification issues between similar species. In passing, Mr. Sibley talks about how differences between the molt of Cliff and Cave Swallows in the fall can help tell them apart, and I can't help but think that he's sitting on a treasure trove of similar information that could make for a dynamite "Advanced Birding" guide some day. But in the spirit of the word "basic", the ultimate triumph of this book is that it gives the general birding community a new way to see, which is a valuable gift indeed. In so doing, it carries on the Peterson tradition, both textually and artistically. At a time when the hobby is enjoying a surge in popularity and new birders are joining the tribe daily, I highly recommend this book to any beginning to intermediate birder looking to improve their skills.

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BLUE JAY COURTING ENSEMBLES

Dwight G. Smith

Courtship among Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) is poorly known. Despite the abundance of this species, most observations are primarily anecdotal in nature, resulting from chance observations. In this paper I present observations of eight different courting ensembles of Blue Jays observed over a period of several years. Available information about Blue Jay courtship ensembles was initially summarized in Bent (1946) and Hardy (1961) who noted that surprisingly little is known of this intricate and intriguing behavior. A typical Blue Jay courtship ensemble consists of several males that collectively court a single female with song, other vocalizations, various postures, and motions.

I observed two courtship ensembles in 1999, four in 2001, and two in 2002. Four of the courtship ensembles were observed in the immediate vicinity of the Farmington Greenway Linear Park in

Hamden, Connecticut, and one each was observed in Naugatuck State Forest, White Memorial Foundation, and in yardscapes in Hamden and New Haven, Connecticut. Dates of observations of the courtship ensembles ranged between 26 March and 11 April. Basic patterns of all observed courtship ensembles were similar in that each consisted of several males courting a single female, but each ensemble differed somewhat in details.

Sizes of the courting groups when first observed ranged from 6 to 12 birds, falling within the range of courtship ensembles reported in the literature. Since several authors have suggested that these ensembles may last for several hours I could not be sure that the observed sizes of the courtship ensembles represented their size when they initially formed. In all ensembles the female was the quiet member, while the males were very vocal and mobile, although their motility and range of movements always centered about the female.

The largest courtship ensemble, observed 11 April 2001, consisted of a loose-knit flock of 12 birds clustered among the upper branches of a leafless white ash. Further observations revealed that 11 of the birds were concentrating their attention on a single bird, which was apparently the female. The female "appeared" to take little note of all of their activities, either as a group or as individuals. Her only response was to look away, apparently feigning disinterest. The males responded to her "seeming lack of enthusiasm" by increasing the intensity of their efforts. They sang, hopped about, stretched, swayed back and forth, drew themselves up to their full height, and slicked back their feathers. Occasionally males jostled one another on the branches, although I did not observe any actual fighting among the males. Their vocalizations varied from the typical "jay scream" to a chorus of song, to a guttural noise, which Bent (1946) likened to a "snoring frog" or very dry rattle. During vocalizations many of the males slowly bobbed or swayed up and down as if extending to their full height and then relaxing into a "slouch" or compact mass typical of a perching Blue Jay. I was able to watch this ensemble for 35 minutes before the female flew off through the woodland canopy trailed by all of the males in a long stream or train. The female's departure was not preceded by any obvious signal to the males—rather she often simply took flight while several of the males were in mid-chorus. Her departure precipitated instant activity amongst the males—those nearest to her almost immediately took flight in an energetic burst of pursuit to keep up with her while several of the other males hesitated for a few seconds before more leisurely following in the

same general direction. She flew for about 120 yards before settling in the branches of a tall tulip tree. The whole group of males eventually gathered around her, some perched above, others below, but all in the same tree. Again, motion and song routines were repeated for about 22 minutes before she again took flight across the tops of the trees and was lost to my view. All but two of the males took flight after her. Both males remained for several minutes then departed in another direction, apparently no longer taking part in the courtship chorus.

The smallest courtship ensemble consisted of 5 males and a female when first observed in the middle branches of a small (4 meter, 22 feet) white pine. Males in this group were the most active of any courting ensemble observed. They sang constantly although not in chorus. Songs varied from nervous chirps to a dry rattle to the melodious "love" song, with the dry rattle being most frequently performed. The males frequently changed positions amongst the branches, hopping from branch to branch but always centering their movements around the female. After eight minutes of observation the female flew to another white pine about 60 meters distant with all males in pursuit. They remained at this new site for only a few minutes before she again departed. This time, however, only three males followed her. The other two males chose to remain behind in the tree for several minutes, then departed in another direction. After their departure I again watched the courtship ensemble of three males and one female, now located in the lower branches of a Norway spruce about 40 meters distant from their previous location. The remaining three males continued to "serenade" the female with vocalizations and movements.

Blue Jay courtship ensembles clearly function importantly in the mate selection process. The process is driven by the female, who is clearly the key participant. She alone decides when to move from one location to another. Exactly what determines the timing of her movements remains unknown.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

SUMMER, JUNE 1 THROUGH JULY 31, 2002

The summer season didn't produce much in the way of vagrants, but a number of significant breeding reports were submitted. Although July was quite dry, a wet spring created good nesting conditions for birds of freshwater wetlands, which include some of our most scarce breeding species. Note especially the reports from White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield. Perhaps most heartening was the first good news in years about breeding American Kestrels. While grassland habitats continue to disappear, the state's healthy forests produced a wide array of observations on successful nesting, including the southward expansion of some traditionally northern species, especially Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. On the coast, Piping Plovers did well at Milford Point but Least Terns had an abysmal season overall.

LINGERERS, WANDERERS and STRAYS

A non-breeding Common Loon was on Bantam Lake in Litchfield July 13-30 (JE et al.), and the usual lingerers turned up in Long Island Sound (m.ob.). A **Brown Pelican** was reported from the Niantic River in East Lyme June 6 (DRb fide AGr). Several reports of **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** , which appear to be assuming annual status inside Long Island Sound, included six off Stonington on June 18 (BDw) and 10 from Ender's Island in Mystic June 19 (FN). Other good counts were 12+ from Old Saybrook to the Rhode Island border July 15 (AGr) and 12 off Avery Point, Groton, July 28 (TK). Of special interest was one far west at Stamford on June 19 (PDu, AC), with three more there July 14 (AC, DC) and up to 12 on a July 21 boat trip from Stamford to Norwalk (PDu et al.).

Single Great Egrets appeared July 28 on ponds in Newington (RZ) and Southbury (RN) and July 30 in Watertown (RN); of the coastal-nesting heron species, this is the most likely to wander inland. Two Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen in flight at dusk June 15 in Waterbury (BF), adding to a number of recent summer sightings in that area. Pending confirmation of nesting, they'll

remain in this category. One at Bantam Lake on July 30 was no doubt a post-breeding wanderer (DRo), and two summered at Lake Zoar in Southbury with no evidence of nesting (RN).

In addition to the usual smattering of Red-breasted Mergansers in Long Island Sound (m.ob.), lingering waterfowl included a Snow Goose to at least June 17 at Sherwood Island State Park (hereafter SISP) in Westport (AH); single male Long-tailed Ducks June 16 at Point of Woods, Old Lyme (CH), June 21 at Chaffinch Island, Guilford, (MD) and July 27 at Sandy Point, West Haven (BDe); and a Hooded Merganser July 14 at Frash Pond in Stratford (FG, PDu). Nine Ruddy Ducks remained at Laurel Reservoir in New Canaan until at least June 16 (FG, PDu).

Two American Coot lingered through June at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (DRo et al.) An immature Bonaparte's Gull, presumably about one year old, was in Southport June 13 (CB). A first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull turned up July 15 at Bissell Bridge boat launch in Windsor (JMe). A Forester's Tern appeared July 21 at off Westport (JH), and one was present July 27 at Sandy Point in West Haven (NB). Milford Point held three Forster's Terns July 29 (NB). Roseate Terns, essentially wanderers away from the Falkner Island breeding colony, were widely noted from New Haven harbor to Milford Point in late July (m.ob.)

A White-throated Sparrow present continuously from spring until at least June 17 in a Rocky Hill yard appeared to be a lingerer outside normal breeding areas (AW). Because of their potential to breed far out of range, two Evening Grosbeaks seen June 8 at Cornwall Bridge probably rate as wanderers, rather than as late migrants (DM).

NORTHBOUND MIGRATION

A Black-bellied Plover and two Semipalmated Plovers were good inland finds June 5 at Great Pond in Simsbury (LK, JMe). A Marbled Godwit, always a good find, was at SISP on June 15-17 (AH et al.). Sandy Point in West Haven still held six White-rumped Sandpipers June 8 (SS). Four White-rumped Sandpipers and seven Semipalmated Sandpipers were at Southport Beach June 16 (CB). A Wilson's Phalarope was at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison on June 3 (JMa, BM).

An Alder Flycatcher was in a birch grove at McKinney Refuge in Stratford, far south of breeding areas, on June 9 (CB). A Blackpoll Warbler and a Mourning Warbler, two typically late-moving species, were

still at Milford Point June 8 (CW). The latest Blackpoll Warbler was June 11 in Woodbury (RN).

SOUTHBOUND MIGRATION

Three Greater Yellowlegs were at Stratford Great Meadows July 2 (CB). A Whimbrel appeared July 27 at Milford Point (NB, DV et al.). The first two Red Knots were reported July 25 at Sandy Point (LJ), which held a Western Sandpiper July 27 (NB, DV et al.). The Semipalmated Sandpiper count reached 2,000 at Milford Point by the last week in July (m.ob.). Pools on Access Road in Stratford held a Pectoral Sandpiper and three Short-billed Dowitchers July 14 (FG, PDu). Two Pectoral Sandpipers were near Cockenoe Island, Westport, July 21 (JH). The first Black Tern was noted July 27 at Sandy Point (TK, BDe et al.).

Swallows, among the earliest of passerine migrants, produced the following count July 14 in Stratford: 45+ Bank Swallows, 20+ Rough-winged Swallows, 20+ Tree Swallows and 12+ Barn Swallows (FG, PDu). A Cliff Swallow July 16 in Milford clearly was a migrant as well (SS). Another good movement occurred July 21 at Lake Zoar, Southbury, which included 45 Tree Swallows, 15 Northern Rough-winged Swallows, 25 Bank Swallows, 35 Barn Swallows, 80 Cliff Swallows and a Purple Martin (RN). Yellow Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes, both early-migrating species, were noted on the move throughout the Southbury-Woodbury area July 21-30 (RN).

BREEDERS

A pair of Pied-billed Grebes, rare and secretive nesters, escorted two downy chicks at a pond at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield in early June (GH et al.). A Great Blue Heron colony with up to five nests held two visible immatures in mid-July in Hebron (ND). Another colony of up to six nests was present for at least the second consecutive year in Southbury (BDe). At least one Little Blue Heron was at Harvey's Beach, Old Saybrook, throughout June (JO), with an adult and an immature at nearby Plum Bank Marsh July 21 (J & AO); two adults were at SISP on June 16 (FG, PDu), and immatures were at islands off Westport and Norwalk July 21 (JH). A leucistic adult Black-crowned Night-Heron was at SISP June 16 (FG, PDu). Breeding Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in the Quinnipiac River drainage in Hamden represent the eastern-most nesters in the state (FMc et al.). An American Bittern was seen June 17 at the McKinney Refuge in Stratford (CB). The

Quinnipiac River marsh in Hamden held a Least Bittern June 8 (FMc). Both American and Least Bitterns were in breeding habitat at White Memorial in June (RN et al.), with three fledged Least Bitterns reported (RN et al.). A juvenile Glossy Ibis was at McKinney Refuge in Stratford July 5 (FG). A **Black Vulture** was far east in Sterling July 13 (RD), and this species is now a potential breeder in any part of the state.

A male Wood Duck was paired with a female Mallard on the Pomperaug River in South Britain (RN). At McKinney Refuge on June 21, waterfowl included two pair of Gadwall with five young and a male Green-winged Teal, a species that has been confirmed nesting in the area in the recent past (DSo, RH). Two drake Green-winged Teal were there July 5 (FG). Two fledgling Hooded Mergansers were noted June 22 in Cornwall (BDe, SH). Common Mergansers with broods are now regular on the Pomperaug and Naugatuck rivers (m.ob.).

Northern Goshawks have a broad breeding distribution in the state, as illustrated by a territorial pair in June in Salem (RC). Cooper's Hawk, a widespread breeder that has increased over the past decade, was reported on territory in June from Litchfield, New Canaan, Waterbury, and Farmington (m.ob.). Sharp-shinned Hawk, seldom detected as a breeder, was near Northwest Park in Windsor June 16 (PDe), and two were at Devil's Hopyard State Park in East Haddam July 20, when the begging of young birds was heard (PDe). A female Northern Harrier was in appropriate breeding habitat June 6 in Lyme (HG), and a female at the state's only confirmed nesting site, Stratford Great Meadows, was seen food-carrying in early July; eventually two juveniles were observed (CB). A pair of American Kestrels in downtown New Haven fledged two young (LB, DSo), and a pair was suspected of nesting in New Milford (fide RN). Of special note was a successful kestrel nest box program organized in the Northwest Corner. In Sharon, five new boxes provided by Miles Sanctuary were erected in a former study area that held boxes in decrepit condition. In addition, the Cornwall Birding Group built and erected 11 boxes in Cornwall. All five Sharon boxes fledged, producing 19 young; in addition a pair of probable barn nesters was noted and a group of adults and fledglings was found in July at the Benton Hill fen property (AGi). In Cornwall, two of the boxes produced eight nestlings (AGi).

The Cranberry Pond Trail at White Memorial produced four

Ruffed Grouse June 10 (DRo). King Rail, a very elusive marshland breeder, was seen and heard June 9 at Station 43 in South Windsor (CE, LT). A total of at least 10 Piping Plover chicks were fledged at the Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center at Milford Point, the best year ever (MB). A Black Skimmer was at Sandy Point, West Haven, June 1 (AR), with two there June 15 (PDe), and six were at Cockenoe Island in Norwalk June 3 (AH). Both places have supported breeding in the recent past, but there was no evidence of successful nesting this summer. Barn Owls appear to be in residence at one, and perhaps two, private locations in Stratford. Barred Owls are fairly common breeders, but not everybody has one stirring up the songbirds in their backyard the way a homeowner in Guilford did on June 17 (GN). A Long-eared Owl was heard in June and July in Woodbury, but evidence of breeding was not found (RN, BJ). Two Northern Saw-whet Owl fledglings were found in early July in Cornwall (GB); this species is presumably a sparse but widely distributed breeder in the state.

The presence of four to five pairs of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers as far south in Southbury as Heritage Village, represented a continuation of this northern species' range extension (RN). The burgeoning sapsucker population was illustrated by 33 counted at various areas in White Memorial on June 8-9 (DRo, SH). The same areas yielded 30 Hairy Woodpeckers (DRo). Acadian Flycatcher was noted in East Rock Park in Hamden June 3 (FMc) and at Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury June 6 (CL). There also were two in New Hartford June 29 (DT), and a regular breeding area in Southbury held two to three pairs (RN et al.). This easily overlooked Empid occurs widely but thinly in both deciduous riparian and hemlock glen habitats.

Common Ravens were apparent nesters at Bolton Notch State Park, where a family group was present June 3 (JMe). This was one of many breeding sites now established across the state's northern and central tiers, as the birds begin to expand farther south, such as in the Sleeping Giant area of Hamden. A Horned Lark was in appropriate breeding habitat June 4 at a private site in Suffield (JMe). The Shepaug Dam area of Southbury held colonies of up to 50 Bank Swallows and 250 Cliff Swallows from May until dispersal in mid-July (DRo, RN). A territorial Winter Wren in Southbury was south of usual breeding areas (RN).

Surveys in June revealed 17 or 18 species of breeding war-

blers at White Memorial (DRo et al.). Northern Parula is a species that is probably breeding in the state, but confirmation is needed. Records this summer included one or two heard singing in June at Bent of the River (BO et al.) and one apparently territorial bird in the Schagticoke area of Kent (RN). The upper Northwest Corner supports a strong population of Black-throated Blue Warblers, but two to three pairs in Woodbury suggested a southward expansion of the breeding range (AD, RN). Worm-eating Warbler, an unobtrusive but widespread breeder in appropriate habitat, included four singing males June 3 at Bolton Notch State Park (JMe). A Kentucky Warbler was along a power cut in West Hartford on June 1-3 (MSc et al.). Although unconfirmed as a breeder in the state, a Mourning Warbler June 29 in New Hartford was suggestive (DT). Two Yellow-breasted Chats, very sparse breeders statewide, were reported from Northwest Park in Windsor July 28 (JW).

A private site in Suffield held at least nine Grasshopper Sparrows and at least six Savannah Sparrows June 4 (JMe). Two Grasshopper Sparrows were at Northwest Park, Windsor, July 28 (PDe). The wetlands of White Memorial hold one of the best Swamp Sparrow populations in the state; a survey June 8-9 turned up about 120 individuals (DRo et al.). A pair of Dark-eyed Juncos July 14 in Thomaston was south of usual breeding areas in the state, but not far from a place where a juvenile was seen last year (JMe). The two were seen gathering food and sounds of young birds begging were heard. In an area more typical of breeding, eight to ten adults, some with young, were present in June near Colebrook Reservoir (RN, SH).

A female Boat-tailed Grackle was seen carrying food June 17 at McKinney Refuge in Stratford, the state's established breeding locale (CB). Two pairs were believed to be in residence, and four birds of indeterminate age were seen there July 5 (FG). These birds were no doubt the source of five seen July 14 at nearby Sikorsky Airport (FG, PDu). The White Memorial survey June 8-9 turned up an excellent total of 40 Purple Finches (DRo et al.). Farther south, up to four pairs were at various locations in Woodbury (RN, MSw). Southbury, a stronghold for breeding Orchard Oriole, held seven to eight pairs until the July dispersal (RN); there were also two to three pairs in nearby Woodbury (RN).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 145 Farmington Ave., Waterbury, CT 06710) if they are to be included in the field notes].

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PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 41

After reading Mark Szantyr's solution to last month's photo challenge, I have now regained control of the reins, metaphorically speaking, of the runaway horse. With plenty of spare time on his hands, his humorous approach to last month's Bobolink was enjoyable. Unfortunately, since I do not teach, and therefore have little free time, I have to apologize that this month's solution is rather devoid of such humor. I thank Mark for stepping in and giving us all a reprieve, albeit a brief one, from me.

So, here we are, minding our own business, when we glance down and notice a small, heron-like bird standing motionless by a riverbank. The dark, streaky plumage recalls Green Heron or American Bittern, but the, pale iris (orange-red in life) white-spotted upperparts, and streaked crown rule out both of those species at any age. In fact, by a process of elimination, the only heron-type birds with these features are Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night-Herons, a conclusion that many of you will have reached quickly. Both night-herons keep their brown juvenile plumage through the winter and into the following summer, so it is a plumage that should be familiar to all birders.

Breeding adults of both species are very distinctive, but immatures, in their brown-streaky guise can be tricky.

The main differences are to be found in the head pattern and even a cursory glance will be enough to form a correct identification. In Black-crowned, the bill is

stout tapering to a relatively pointed tip. In Yellow-crowned, the bill is not only shorter and thicker, but it is all dark. In our mystery bird, the dagger-like bill is pale with a contrasting dark tip and identifies the bird as a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron.

Other plumage features are the browner and slightly paler ground color to the body plumage (darker, more grayish in Yellow-crowned), and the white spots on the upperparts are larger and more oval-shaped (smaller and finer in Yellow-crowned).

With experience, both species can be identified by their different structure, or "jizz." Yellow-crowns have smaller, "squarer" heads compared with Black-crowned, and combined with their longer legs, give Yellow-crowns a rangier appearance. Black-crowns typically have a more domed head shape and appear squat and "hunch-backed."

These differences in "jizz" are great clues for identifying flying birds when plumage features cannot be seen, or birds silhouetted against a setting sun. Black-crowns are compact and blunt-winged, and their short legs result in just part of the foot projecting beyond the tail; Yellow-crowns, with their long legs, show a longer foot projection beyond the tail which is visible at some distance. This is a great way to separate these two birds. However, I suggest looking at a lot of Black-crowns in flight to form a benchmark for gauging the above differences.

Gil Kleiner took this photo of a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron in August 2002 at Malhuer National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon.

JULIAN HOUGH, 51 Brook Street, 6-C, Naugatuck, CT 06770.

Photo Challenge 42 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 computer 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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The Connecticut Warbler

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Volume 23, Number 2 April 2003

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*)

by Paul Fusco

Our front cover artwork is again contributed by the talented artist and photographer, Paul Fusco. His artwork has appeared on a number of front covers of *The Connecticut Warbler* as well as in other publications, including the *Connecticut Wildlife*, a magazine published by the Connecticut DEP.

Paul is also renowned as a photographer and his photographs have appeared on and in numerous journals including *Birding*. You may have seen Paul walking a trail somewhere, looking for a bird to capture on film with his large telephoto lens.

The MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD – 2003

The following is the presentation of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award by Milan Bull at the Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Ornithological Association on March 15, 2003.

Welcome.

The Mabel Osgood Wright Award was established in memory of one of the most influential conservationists of the 19th Century who, with a handful of Connecticut women activists, helped change the fashion industry to promote one of the first bird conservation movements of our time. Her efforts led directly to the establishment of the Connecticut Audubon Society, and later, to the creation of the National Audubon Society. Mabel was the first editor of Bird-Lore Magazine and close friends with Frank Chapman who spoke at the first annual meeting of the Connecticut Audubon Society at Fairfield High School in 1898.

It was the intention of the COA Board to make this award from time to time to those people in Connecticut who have made a significant impact on our knowledge, study, and conservation of birds. We quickly discovered, however, that there are so many great people throughout the state who deserve this award, that even if we presented it bi-yearly, it would be a long time before we covered all the bases! We are indeed fortunate to have such a long list of distinguished citizens who have done so much for Connecticut ornithology and conservation.

Having said this, I can only offer apologies to this year's awardee, Dr. Dwight Smith, for seemingly taking so long to get around to a man who so clearly deserves this award and our admiration!

Dwight has been a fixture in Connecticut ornithology since his arrival at Southern Connecticut State University in 1970 after completing his undergraduate work at Elizabethtown College, Penn., and his graduate work at Brigham Young University. Dwight is the Director of the SCSU Biology Department Graduate Program as well as Chairman of the Biology Department and teaches a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses in biology, botany, zoology, conservation, field natural history, and ecology among others.

Most of us know Dwight from his many publications, especially his Connecticut Birding Guide in 1996, which he published with his friend and colleague, Buzz Devine. This, of course, is just the tip of the iceberg, as Dwight has authored and co-authored more than 12 books and over 400 manuscripts in ornithological, scientific, and natural history journals. His contributions to our own publication, *The Connecticut Warbler*, are legion. His effort and dedication to COA is admired by all of us, not the least being our Editor, Betty Kleiner! Dwight seems always ready to lend a hand and fill in a gap with a needed manuscript whenever called on. We thank you for that Dwight!

For those of you who haven't had a chance to catch up on some of his publications, you are missing an opportunity to learn and enjoy some very readable and interesting science right in your own backyard. One of my personal favorites is his published manuscript in *The Connecticut Warbler* entitled "Eastern Screech Owl Foraging Behavior."

Besides serving on our editorial staff, Dwight helped guide our Site Guide Department, and served on our Board of Directors. He is married to Ellie Smith and lives in Hamden.

Please join me in congratulating our Mabel Osgood Wright Award winner, Dr. Dwight Smith.

CORRECTION:

In Vol. 23, No. 1, page 3, in the caption for Red Phalarope, the photographer was Paul Fusco, not Chris Elphick.

PODICEPS GREBES IN THE SPRING: Testing Your Powers of Observation

Mark S. Szantyr

Identifying the two species of Podiceps grebes that might occur in Connecticut is a task that varies in degree of difficulty depending on the season. It is perhaps most difficult in the month of April. At this time, Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), the regularly occurring winter visitor, is in the midst of transitioning from its easily recognized, well-demarcated black-and-white basic plumage to its rich, warm and quite dark chestnut and black finery with a splash of golden yellow that extends from behind the eye to the top of the rear crown.

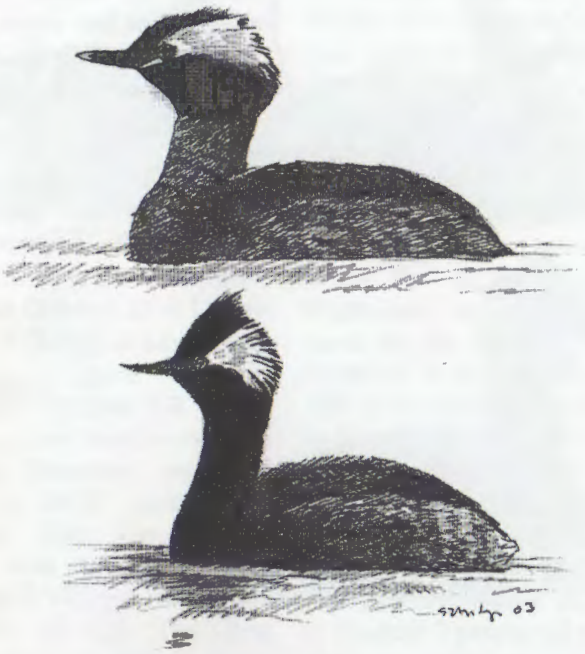

Figure 1. Alternate plumage Horned Grebe (above) and Eared Grebe (below).

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) a western relative of Horned Grebe, is being found at an increasing rate in the east. While once considered a real rarity, it is now best termed an uncommon or sporadic annual migrant or winter visitor. In Connecticut, Eared Grebe has two main peaks of occurrence: late August and September and again in mid to late winter, usually during the period of the Christmas Bird Count. It is as likely to be found on inland bodies of fresh water, some surprisingly small, as it is to be found on Long Island Sound, while Horned Grebe is much more likely to be found on Long Island Sound and only occasionally on large inland lakes.

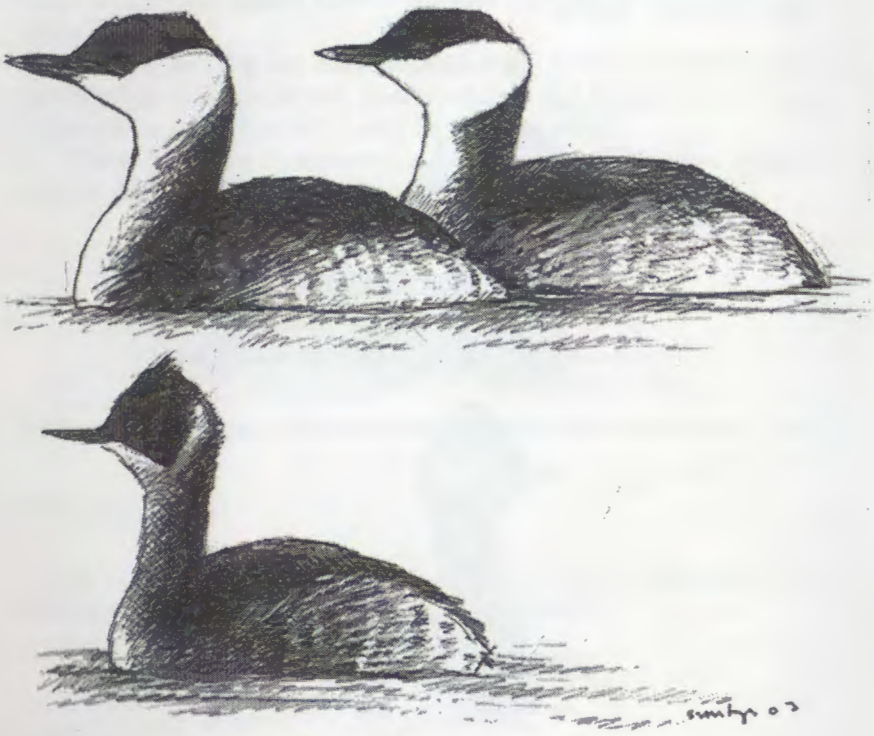

Figure 2. Basic plumaged Horned Grebes (above) and Eared Grebe (below).

In both alternate and basic plumage, Eared Grebe is darker overall than Horned Grebe. In basic plumage, this dark headed and dark necked bird shows variable amounts of white on the sides of the head behind the eye near the auriculars and the eye is usually well-surrounded by black. The neck is usually overall washed with dusky gray, causing greater contrast with the paler chin and breast than is apparent in Horned Grebe which is generally white below and whose head is nearly evenly divided at the center of the eye with black above and white below. In alternate plumage, Eared Grebe is mostly rich black with browner upper parts and reddish brown flanks. Like Horned Grebe, there is a splash of golden yellow behind the eye, but this color is more limited to the auricular region in this species.

In April, Horned Grebes begin their molt from the black-and-white basic plumage to the darker and more colorful alternate plumage. In some intermediate stages, these birds can appear surprisingly like Eared Grebes, that is, showing darker heads and necks and showing various amounts of pale on the head behind the eye.

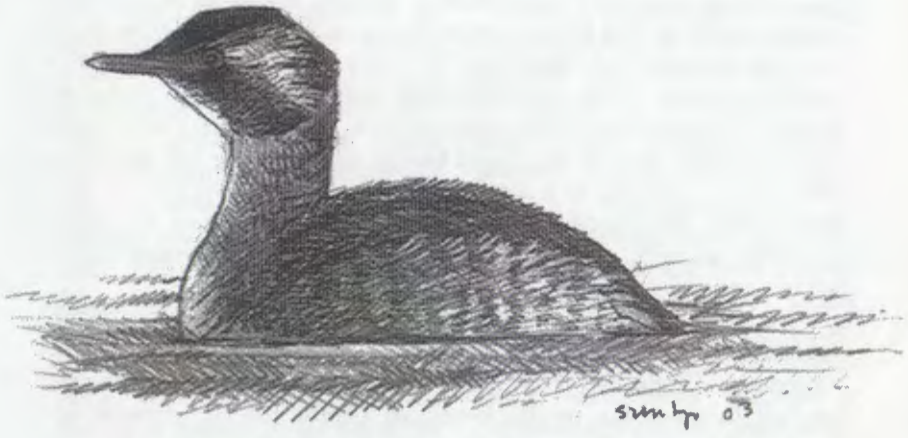

Figure 3. Transitional plumage Horned Grebe, often encountered in April in Connecticut.

So how do you make certain that the bird you have found bobbing in the surf is an Eared Grebe and not a Horned Grebe in molt?

Structure of the Head.

Without a doubt, the best way to separate Eared Grebe from Horned Grebe is by studying the shape of the head. Eared Grebe, in all plumages, shows a distinct peak on the top of the head over the eye. Horned Grebe shows a more gradual slope to the forehead, culminating in a less pronounced peak at the rear crown, well behind the eye. The peak on the Eared Grebe's head can be dramatic and is visible at great distances. The overall effect of this difference in head shape is to make Eared Grebe appear "pinheaded", that is, the head appears small and nearly continuous with the slim neck. Horned Grebe, contrastingly, appears larger headed and shorter necked as the head appears to be more prominent. And while Horned Grebe can actually show a pronounced crest when the tufts of the head are fully erect, this peak is much behind the eye, not above as in Eared Grebe.

The Bill.

Horned Grebe and Eared Grebe have distinctly different bill shapes that, due to conditions of coloration and lighting, might appear very similar. Horned Grebe has a medium length, pointed bill, with a seemingly symmetrical curved shape to upper and lower mandible. The bill is dark with a pale tip. Eared Grebe has a bill that appears upturned, that is, with a nearly straight upper mandible and a lower mandible that curves upward in approximately the distal third. The bill is all dark. The Horned Grebe's bill is thicker than that of the Eared Grebe and the pale tip, which is often hard to discern at a distance, causes it to appear shorter and stouter still. The all dark bill of Eared Grebe is thinner and finer and being all dark, often appears longer than that of Horned Grebe (which appears artificially shorter due to the pale tip).

For a really wonderful discussion of these differences, check the Macmillan Guide to Bird Identification by Harris, Tucker, and Vinicombe. While this is intended as a discussion of the European form of *P. nigricollis*, or Black–necked Grebe, the comparison offered to *P. auritus*, Slavonian Grebe in Europe, holds true for our North American forms as well.

REFERENCES:

Harris, A., L. Tucker, and K. Vinicombe. 1989. The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification. Macmillan Press Ltd., London, U.K.

MARK SZANTYR, 145 Farmington Ave., Waterbury, CT 06710

THE 2002-2003 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Stephen P. Broker

Christmas Bird Count enthusiasts from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York joined forces once again during the mid-December to early-January CBC period to brave the elements in pursuit of our early winter bird populations – the year-round residents, winter visitors, lingering migrants, and vagrants of the State of Connecticut. This year, the seventeen bird counts located entirely or partially within Connecticut borders and conducted continuously since 1986 were joined by a new kid on the block, the Napatree, Rhode Island CBC. Shai Mitra and colleagues recognized an important span of shoreline bordering New London's count circle in the west and the South Kingston, RI circle in the east, and they established the newest count for which Connecticut can claim a share. Shai writes, the count circle "extends north to the vicinity of Ashaway, Rhode Island. It includes the eastern portion of Fisher's Island."

The Napatree Christmas Bird Count is a welcome addition to the CBC coverage of southern New England. As this narrative and the accompanying table of results show, Napatree's reach eastward of Long Island Sound, eastward of the waters adjacent to Long Island's Montauk Point, and into Block Island Sound extends our view of southern New England bird life tantalizingly close to the early winter avifauna of the Atlantic Ocean. Napatree introduces a number of new elements concerning the coastal water bird populations that are drawn to Long Island Sound from the east, and it enables us a more complete understanding of what we have previously been considering only from Fisher's Island, New York to the west. Napatree also poses certain challenges to the maintenance of continuity in interpreting demographic trends in some bird species. Loons, gannets, cormorants, ducks, gulls, and alcids are in big supply in the new count circle. For this reason, and because of the expanded coverage of coastline, Napatree species results are presented in the table separate from the results of the 17 longer term "Connecticut" counts. Further elaboration of this broader view of the avifauna is made later in this article.

All told, 171 Count Day and 1 Count Week species were observed in the 18 count circles, including 7 Count Day species unique to Napatree. The 731 birders out in the field and 124

birders at feeders represent a good turnout for the CBC season. In spite of that, we recorded the second lowest number of birds in thirty years. This reduced number can be attributed almost entirely to the depressed numbers of European Starlings we have experienced in the last five years, as compared with the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. We once again had more than a fair share of exciting discoveries and rarities. Highlights include Snow Goose (Blue Form) at Pawling/Hidden Valley, King Eider at Greenwich-Stamford, Old Lyme-Saybrook, and Napatree, Razorbill at New London, New Haven, and Napatree, Nashville Warbler at Westport and Napatree, Clay-colored Sparrow at Greenwich-Stamford, and Boat-tailed Grackle at Stratford-Milford. Black-legged Kittiwake, Dovekie, Snowy Owl, and Lark Sparrow were additional good finds at Napatree. Best of all were the new additions to the 30 year Connecticut species list that forms the basis of this analysis of population changes: a Storm-Petrel species and six Thick-billed Murres at New London, and a Rufous Hummingbird and a Black-throated Gray Warbler at Old Lyme-Saybrook. One gets the impression that some of the action has shifted to the east!

The autumnal days of October, November, and December leading up to count period were characterized by cooler weather and above normal precipitation. Northeast Regional Climate Center data (Cornell University) indicate that October initiated a cooling off from the consistently warm months of this past late spring and summer. November and early December saw continuation of cool weather as well as a good amount of rain and snow. Precipitation in Connecticut was 123% of normal in November and 109% of normal in December.

The three counts held on Saturday December 14 experienced morning and afternoon light to heavy rain and temperatures ranging from the mid-30s to mid-40s. By Sunday December 15, morning temperatures for six counts cooled to the mid-to high-20s under partly cloudy skies, followed by some afternoon clearing and an absence of precipitation. The weather was fundamentally the same for three counts on the weekend of December 21-22, and Barkhamsted's northern count of December 24 was understandably cooler in the morning but mild by afternoon. Temperatures dropped by the weekend of December 28-29, however, and Hartford and Edwin Way Teale-Trail Wood birders offset the chill with mostly clear skies. Pawling/Hidden Valley dealt with light rain in the morning and heavy rain in the afternoon of New Year's Day. New London's January 4 count saw the only snowfall this season, and cool temperatures of 30-37°F. Old Lyme-Saybrook closed the

CBC period on Sunday, January 5 with oh-so-chilly temperatures of 19-28°F and partly clear to cloudy skies.

The following information on species high and low counts is based on the totals for all counts except Napatree, so as to be consistent with reports published in *The Connecticut Warbler* each of the sixteen previous years. Thirty-year record high counts were recorded for twenty five species, most notable among them being Common Loon, Mute Swan, Bald Eagle, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Razorbill, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Carolina Wren. Additional species seen at fairly high numbers included Brant, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Monk Parakeet, Common Raven, and Tufted Titmouse. Thirty year record low totals were recorded for six species, including Ruffed Grouse, Long-eared Owl (missed on count day for the first time), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak (missed on count day for the first time). Black-crowned Night-Heron, Canvasback, Ruddy Turnstone, Swamp Sparrow, and Snow Bunting also were recorded at fairly low numbers. Common Redpoll was the one count week species for the state.

Here are some broad generalizations about some of the families of birds observed. Loons were up in numbers, while grebes were down. Herons were seen in average to below average numbers. Ducks, geese, and swans were respectably represented, with Brant and Long-tailed Duck being particularly abundant. Vultures were easily and commonly found. Hawks and falcons continue their steady rise in numbers, with the notable exception of American Kestrel, now struggling to hold its own. The gallinaceous birds are totally dominated by Wild Turkeys. Rails were in average supply. Among plovers and sandpipers, American Oystercatcher now occurs near-annually, and most other species continue to be variable in numbers from year to year. Gull species are down somewhat, except for the record high number of Iceland Gulls.

Alcids are beginning to make an appearance in early winter waters of Long Island Sound. Parakeets abound! Barn Owl still is to be found at the widely spaced "here and there", but most owls were in shorter supply than usual. Good numbers of woodpeckers were to be had, especially the ever-growing populations of Red-bellied Woodpecker and the demographic advances of Northern Flicker. While corvids are variable in number, Fish Crow is up and Common Raven steadily moves in. Wrens were abundant (Carolina, Winter). Of the thrushes, Eastern Bluebird reached a near-record high and American Robins were far closer to the typical winter than to their spectacular years of the recent past. Northern

Shrike was present in non-irruptive numbers, and we long ago bid adieu to Loggerhead Shrike. European Starling rebounded 40% from the notably low numbers of the previous three years, but its numbers pale in comparison with the halcyon days of the 1970s and 1980s. Eight species of wood warblers made their way into binocular view, including one flashy one (Nashville) and one very flashy one (Black-throated Gray). Among sparrows, Field was low, Fox was high, Swamp was low, and White-crowned was high. Low cowbird numbers and very low meadowlark numbers comprise all that needs to be said about flocking birds. Once again, the hopeful were disappointed by an absence of winter finches, with few Purple Finches, no crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks also *in absentia*.

A few bird species deserve special comment this year. Mute Swan numbers have been relatively stable for the last decade, but the swans have taken a population swing upward as perceived this winter. Some might think it's time to shake, rattle, and roll. In the last year, Bald Eagle has turned a big corner and is returning to Connecticut as a breeding and wintering bird. Highly vulnerable to nest disturbance, it needs our continued vigilance and protection, but the signs of reestablishment are all of a sudden encouraging. Merlin continues a decade long growth in numbers, and Peregrine Falcon increases are in part a reflection of lingering birds staying close to home as they seek future nesting success. Birders seeking Razorbill for their state lists have enhanced possibilities for such accomplishment, as these alcids do appear to be out on the Sound in small numbers. During the late 1960s, CBC participants were able to scrape together about half a dozen Red-bellied Woodpeckers statewide. By the end of the 1970s, the number was up to three dozen per year. At the conclusion of the 1980s, we were counting more than 250 of these southern woodpeckers. Today, we are in excess of 1200 in a count period. This year's total represents a 14% increase over last year's record high tally.

We're facing an interesting test of the hardiness of Carolina Wren in southern New England. Recall that we achieved record high numbers of this southern wren in 1992-93, with more than 1000 counted, ten times as many as in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Successive hard winters with lots of snow cover immediately following the record high year resulted in the decimation of the Carolina Wren population in Connecticut. These wrens dropped in numbers to 34% of the 1992-93 total by 1994-95 and to a mere 21% of the record total the following year. Going out on the proverbial limb, I predict a similar crash in numbers in the several years ahead, particularly if next year approaches this past mid to late winter in voluminous deposits of snow.

One of the biggest recent losers in our bird population sweepstakes has been Ruffed Grouse. For the ten-year period 1970-71 through 1979-80, we averaged 160 grouse on the statewide count. During the following decade, the average increased to 176 per year. The big years of 1979-80 through 1982-83 reached as high as 250 per year. Then, the decline in the grouse population set in. Over the past five years, we have been able to locate an average of 15 individuals. I've not made the effort to get educated and talk with the game bird wildlife folks, but the plummeting of grouse numbers corresponds precisely with the meteoric rise in Wild Turkey numbers in Connecticut. This certainly has the appearance of being a classic example of direct competition. There has been a less severe but significant falling off in Ring-necked Pheasant numbers during the same time period. This introduced species, of course, is regarded as dependent on restocking programs to maintain its numbers.

The other big loser in Connecticut is Evening Grosbeak, which has undergone a major shift in wintering range since 1988-89. (See the BirdSource website for CBC range maps). In the years before the fall, grosbeaks were counted in early winter in excess of 1000 individuals (7 times), 2000+ (three times), 3000+ (twice), and 4000+ (twice). This year, we had none. You win some, you lose some! Two additional species of note are Red-breasted Nuthatch (irruptive and in low supply this year) and Purple Finch (at 62, the lowest count by far for the last 34 years, the farthest back my database goes at present).

Finally, some additional comments are warranted about the individual totals that Napatree has recorded in its first year of existence, that potentially cloud the picture for Connecticut. There are at least a dozen bird species that Napatree counted in numbers that totally swamp the results of Connecticut's seventeen long-standing CBCs. Here is a list of those species, followed by the total number observed in the 17 count circles, and then the Napatree number in parentheses: Red-throated Loon, 124 (141); Common Loon, 234 (253); Northern Gannet, 9 (80); Great Cormorant, 248 (504); Black Vulture, 30 (18); Common Eider, 2 (494); Surf Scoter, 54 (131); Black Scoter, 24 (674); Red-breasted Merganser, 1593 (1478); Bonaparte's Gull, 481 (388); Razorbill, 18 (156); Yellow-rumped Warbler, 265 (402). This is why the Napatree results are presented in the table that follows in a column to the far right, separate from the other counts' totals. It also provides a clue as to why some of our Connecticut birders just love to head even further east, in the general direction of Nantucket Sound, for at least one Christmas Bird Count each year!

STEPHEN P. BROKER, 50 Hidden Place, Cheshire, CT 06410-3723

103RD ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY - CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2002-03

	NORTHERN COUNTS						MID-STATE COUNTS					COASTAL COUNTS						State	
SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	Total	NA
Red-throated Loon	1											9	26	15	45	13	15	124	141
Common Loon	1				1		1					13	14	148	32	8	16	234	253
Pied-billed Grebe									2			1	8	8	5	11	2	37	
Horned Grebe	3		1									35	6	36	26	6	41	154	38
Red-necked Grebe														2				2	
Storm-Petrel, sp.														1				1	
Northern Gannet												2	2	4	1			9	80
D.c. Cormorant			CW										6	39	1	2	3	51	35
Great Cormorant			CW							8		69	15	34	72	29	21	248	504
Cormorant, sp.														11		2		13	
American Bittern															1			1	1
Great Blue Heron		9	21	1	3	1	9	3	7	2	13	34	24	53	34	12	35	261	50
Great Egret																		0	3
Black-cr Night-Heron												1				CW	4	5	3
Black Vulture							14	CW			16							30	18
Turkey Vulture		3	1			12	52		13	1	6	29		55	9	5	33	219	52
Gr. Wh.-fronted Goose			1									CW					CW	1	
Snow Goose			2	1	2		1					3876	5		3	1	1	3892	
Snow Goose(blue form)								1										1	
Canada Goose	460	885	6405	3358	4580	990	1011	398	2979	909	2293		3633	1588	1403	2495	1639	35026	514
Canada Goose (small)				1														1	
Brant												240	33	221		161	2409	3064	32
Mute Swan	2		15	28	23	1	20	9	56	31	64	181	586	274	440	26		1756	229
Wood Duck				10					1	2	7	7	34	2	7		11	81	
Gadwall			2	1			2	1	2			77	235	49	10	150	9	538	
Eurasian Wigeon												1	2					3	
American Wigeon								1	3			69	121	56		99	98	447	
American Black Duck	347	43	228	105	40	74	12	58	68	273	92	551	651	509	1363	1033	573	6020	388
Mallard	389	449	1655	831	237	261	225	517	608	384	765	1366	1625	1909	572	1068	603	13464	369
Mallard Hybrid	1			3				8					20		2	27		61	
Blue-winged Teal														2				2	

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	Total	NA
Northern Shoveler													1		2	2		5	
Northern Pintail								1	2				3		2	2	1	11	
Grn.-wngd Teal (Amer.)			2				1		2				6		1	10	8	30	
Canvasback												2	4	50	18	57	15	146	
Redhead														CW			3	3	
Ring-necked Duck	18	1	CW	45	23		28		37	38	2	87	146	231	59	33	157	905	23
Greater Scaup												36	2472	156	616	30	446	3756	4
Lesser Scaup				2					2			3	3	1	1	31	1	44	
Scaup, sp.					1													1	
King Eider												1			1			2	1
Common Eider														2				2	494
Surf Scoter														18	34		2	54	131
White-winged Scoter												1	103	13	6	8	30	161	38
Black Scoter												CW		21	3			24	674
Long-tailed Duck												298	76	22	53	20	827	1296	13
Bufflehead	2				8			3	2			502	71	442	80	105	132	1347	124
Common Goldeneye	1		CW		71			16	2	8		118	281	159	198	361	95	1310	73
Hooded Merganser	50	6	4	29	55		76	42	20	3	4	181	116	306	68	102	149	1211	33
Common Merganser	180	12	185	754	125	17	206	196	212	103	679	710	39	62	47	55	**10**	3592	9
Red-br. Merganser												222	136	633	169	220	213	1593	1478
Ruddy Duck				2	18			3	15			62	50	2	520		27	699	
Duck, sp.		7			23	6												36	
Bald Eagle	13	1	3	8	1		1	4	1	7	8	4	CW	1	49		1	102	
Northern Harrier	1		7		1		1		2		5	1	20	3	22	14	2	79	12
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	1	18	5	6	3	8	5	8	5	9	16	11	10	12	3	9	131	10
Cooper's Hawk	3	3	13	6	11		1	1	5	4	3	9	7	7	8	2	5	88	2
Northern Goshawk	1		1		1					1		1	1			CW	CW	6	
Accipiter, sp.		1					1								1		1	4	

BA - Barkhamsted
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HA - Hartford
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LS - Lakeville - Sharon
ST - Storrs

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PA - Pawling NY - CT
QV - Quinnipiac Valley
SR - Salmon River
WR - Woodbury - Roxbury
GS - Greenwich - Stamford

NH - New Haven
NL - New London
OL - Old Lyme - Saybrook
SM - Stratford - Milford
WE - Westport
NA - Napatree

CW Count Period
--- First time not seen in 20 yrs.
XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low Count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

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	NORTHERN COUNTS						MID-STATE COUNTS					COASTAL COUNTS						State	
SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	Total	NA
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	4	6			1	3		3	12	3	1	8	1	12	4	4	63	3
Red-tailed Hawk	30	41	214	64	56	24	49	40	51	44	64	110	71	18	52	28	49	1005	10
Rough-legged Hawk													2	1	1			4	
American Kestrel		1	2		1	2	1		3			2	0			3	2	17	3
Merlin			3									1	5		3	2	3	17	2
Peregrine Falcon			2									1	1	1	4			9	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	7	3	14		2	8	4	6	2	11	CW		2	4	CW	5	69	20
Ruffed Grouse	2			2	2		1								1			8	
Wild Turkey	165	54	33	158	203	70	35	170	98	22	117	47	87	8	29	16	60	1372	
Clapper Rail													2		1		6	9	
Virginia Rail									1				2	2	5			10	5
American Coot				6			1	15	4			4	5	22		4	16	77	1
Black-bellied Plover												9	1	47	9		26	92	
Killdeer										1		13	4	7	4		8	37	6
American Oystercatcher													1					1	
Greater Yellowlegs												6	7			3	1	17	
Ruddy Turnstone												28		2	6		27	63	
Sanderling													119	3	11	0		133	39
Purple Sandpiper												8	73	20	54	2	15	172	57
Dunlin													12	73	84	1	276	446	66
Wilson's Snipe						1			1				6	3	1		1	13	
American Woodcock									2			CW	3	3	2			10	5
Black-headed Gull														1				1	1
Bonaparte's Gull												215	0	17	21	181	47	481	388
Ring-billed Gull	1486	82	1281	748	74	164	1659	453	1232	522	1401	1636	3025	810	2716	2852	692	20833	440
Herring Gull	118	32	868	14	30	39	1805	56	80	119	243	1268	991	4283	1568	2218	1891	15623	2777
Iceland Gull			3										2	2	1	1	1	10	
Lesser Bl.-backed Gull												1						1	
Great Bl.-backed Gull	6	15	415	4	1	9	52	8	4	18	74	141	177	399	48	203	185	1759	245
Black-legged Kittiwake																		0	1
Gull, sp.		263			21	1				1								286	

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	Total	NA
Dovekie																		0	1
Thick-billed Murre														6				6	
Razorbill													1	17				18	156
large alcid sp.														5		2		7	
Rock Dove	209	118	3521	106	427	241	176	170	560	72	229	816	1775	381	410	887	323	10421	221
Mourning Dove	265	307	1291	416	280	282	193	437	253	205	519	631	506	273	**206**	329	298	6691	225
Monk Parakeet												75	183			290	249	799	
Barn Owl													1			2		3	
Eastern Screech-Owl	1		18	10	2	CW		16	24	**2**	**8**	29	**4**	2	29	4	19	168	1
Great Horned Owl	13	6	7	12	3		4	6	9	4	9	8	4	**0**	25		9	119	4
Snowy Owl																		0	1
Barred Owl	2	1	3	4	3	1	1		1	1	1	1		2	4		3	28	1
Long-eared Owl												CW						**0**	1
Short-eared Owl							1								2	2		5	
North. Saw-whet Owl	10	2	2	3		1			1	2	1	2	1	6	1			32	3
Rufous Hummingbird															1			1	
Belted Kingfisher	5	3	24	10	6	1	13	9	10	8	8	25	38	20	26	6	17	229	15
Red-hdd. Woodpecker			1								1	1		1				4	
Red-bld. Woodpecker	48	34	186	61	28	31	57	73	52	73	110	177	98	40	86	38	50	1242	15
Yellow-bld. Sapsucker			4	4	1	1	1	6	4	4	3	4	5	2	14	1	2	56	3
Downy Woodpecker	140	82	324	180	81	83	83	140	73	89	200	220	122	50	117	25	75	2084	40
Hairy Woodpecker	38	5	46	32	15	14	12	30	11	14	23	54	13	**2**	12	3	22	346	1
Northern Flicker	13	18	142	25	7	36	55	32	90	65	75	43	85	64	81	31	33	895	51
Pileated Woodpecker	5	4	4	7	6		2	2	1	3	7	5	1		5		5	57	
Eastern Phoebe			1					1		1					1			4	1
Northern Shrike	1			2														3	
Blue Jay	423	343	978	482	322	376	393	398	422	393	759	475	579	255	387	143	216	7344	173
American Crow	672	367	20000	6008	849	480	1329	791	894	602	3015	**1067**	5243	673	461	573	1569	44593	138

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NA - Napatree

CW Count Period
--- First time not seen in 20 yrs.
XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low Count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

103RD ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY - CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2002-03

SPECIES	NORTHERN COUNTS						MID-STATE COUNTS					COASTAL COUNTS						State Total	NA
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE		
Fish Crow			3	6			1	6		1		16	143	2	1	29	44	252	2
Common Raven	36		1	8	4	3	2	1		3	5							63	
Horned Lark		60	144	7	385	223	20	40				CW	38	32	129	34	6	1118	59
Black-cpd. Chickadee	1085	477	782	1496	503	489	376	477	310	576	**628**	562	415	428	655	119	**196**	9574	259
Tufted Titmouse	348	222	686	505	147	274	272	283	232	369	634	566	328	268	498	122	209	5963	120
Red-br. Nuthatch	**7**		11	5	1				1		-	3	1		1		2	**32**	
White-br. Nuthatch	204	142	202	303	119	103	66	126	81	118	219	203	74	36	104	32	56	2188	43
Brown Creeper	8	9	29	21	5	4	2	5	3	7	9	4	5	2	12		8	133	4
Carolina Wren	21	39	134	17	11	32	19	34	44	71	104	148	116	98	148	32	41	1109	117
House Wren													1	3				4	
Winter Wren	6	3	21	4	1	6	2	5	2	6	10	8	9	7	3	1	10	104	4
Marsh Wren				4									1		4			9	5
Golden-crown' Kinglet	60	17	38	53	41	6	20	24	8	21	57	6	40	16	17	2	8	434	42
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1		6		1			1			2	5	2		6		3	27	2
Eastern Bluebird	108	113	103	297	135	113	218	101	133	272	332	54	27	50	234	8	81	2379	41
Hermit Thrush		6	8	6	2	3	6	2	4	11	27	9	16	15	13	4	2	134	15
American Robin	132	303	412	386	1008	250	290	252	525	141	370	183	348	315	709	33	31	5688	313
Gray Catbird		3	7	3		1	4	CW	5	7	10	11	13	24	7	3	**1**	99	16
Northern Mockingbird	32	35	220	33	19	45	61	29	93	44	64	110	189	109	89	68	61	1301	123
Brown Thrasher			1										1		3			5	1
European Starling	1013	2216	30300	3178	2389	2167	937	891	6880	844	3458	6464	13072	3782	**708**	3932	2969	85200	1860
American Pipit			4						2		2	50	35	3	6	6		108	1
Cedar Waxwing	575	46	61	427	313	129	113	786	61	181	495	73	44	27	74	15	25	3445	
Orange-crown' Warbler												1					CW	1	
Nashville Warbler																	1	1	1
Yellow-rmpd. Warbler		1	17	1			20		13	22	19	11	14	100	25	4	18	265	402
Blk.-thr. Gray Warbler															1			1	
Pine Warbler														1				1	1
Palm Warbler													1					1	1
Common Yellowthroat				1					1									2	
Yellow-breasted Chat										1		1		2				4	4

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	Total	NA
Eastern Towhee	3		5	1		1	4		1	4		CW	7	17	11	2	5	61	19
Amer. Tree Sparrow	139	81	557	347	111	78	119	257	71	93	220	97	399	167	236	223	57	3252	76
Chipping Sparrow	1		3										6		3		1	14	4
Clay-colored Sparrow												1						1	
Field Sparrow		11	26	1		2	8	2	22	11	27	5	24	62	12	13	3	229	20
Vesper Sparrow																1		1	
Lark Sparrow																		0	1
Savannah Sparrow	1	6	33	1				2	8	7		1	22		20	9	4	114	7
'Ipswich' Sparrow													1			3		4	
Saltm. Shp-tailed Sparrow																		0	2
Fox Sparrow		CW	6	4		3	3	3	5	9	12	15	25	24	24	1	5	139	41
Song Sparrow	65	72	514	79	37	89	207	156	146	93	259	318	352	211	325	132	189	3244	196
Swamp Sparrow	2		11	11	3	5	4	3	15	1	9	3	21	11	21	2	3	125	33
White-thr. Sparrow	83	147	764	208	57	172	440	316	284	424	714	860	831	810	521	189	251	7071	559
White-crn. Sparrow			1			2				2	23	1	4	2				35	
Dark-eyed Junco	1140	646	1823	980	370	483	524	689	500	685	1484	936	488	306	412	171	446	12083	219
Lapland Longspur														1				1	
Snow Bunting												1		4	12	2		19	
Northern Cardinal	174	139	547	188	89	124	126	165	176	147	324	252	221	197	236	94	130	3329	144
Dickcissel											1							1	
Red-winged Blackbird		13	694	8	16			1	42	8	10	32	291	58	171	21	5	1370	1
Eastern Meadowlark									4				6	6	5	5		26	1
Rusty Blackbird			13								3	2	9	42	6	1	2	78	1
Common Grackle	45	1	6025	3		15	2		22	106	4	9	636	4	23	12	14	6921	1
Boat-tailed Grackle																3		3	
Brown-hdd. Cowbird	1	14	540	283	5	69	2	4	35	25	-	24	104	12	69	3	2	**1192**	
Baltimore Oriole														3				3	
Purple Finch			5	18	6	1		6	6	4	**1**		4		1		10	**62**	CW

BA - Barkhamsted
EW - Edwin Way Teale-Trail Wood
HA - Hartford
LH - Litchfield Hills
LS - Lakeville - Sharon
ST - Storrs

OX - Oxford
PA - Pawling NY - CT
QV - Quinnipiac Valley
SR - Salmon River
WR - Woodbury - Roxbury
GS - Greenwich - Stamford

NH - New Haven
NL - New London
OL - Old Lyme - Saybrook
SM - Stratford - Milford
WE - Westport
NA - Napatree

CW Count Period
--- First time not seen in 20 yrs.
XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low Count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

103RD ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY - CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2002-03

	NORTHERN COUNTS						MID-STATE COUNTS					COASTAL COUNTS						State	
SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	Total	NA
House Finch	292	161	626	515	66	192	234	166	244	344	320	447	**246**	410	347	131	186	4927	612
Common Redpoll					CW													CW	
Pine Siskin	10			16						4							2	32	
American Goldfinch	317	114	558	260	147	121	221	128	260	294	219	331	189	86	249	125	125	3744	75
Evening Grosbeak																		**0**	
House Sparrow	387	366	1875	501	81	393	385	306	490	432	413	1221	1377	848	562	981	375	10993	242
TOTALS																			
Individuals	11425	8673	85762	23747	13720	8823	12312	9391	18668	9446	21335	28983	44053	23280	19214	20625	19439	378896	16640
CD Species	70	61	88	79	69	61	74	71	86	77	**73**	110	121	119	124	98	113	163	115
CW Species	0	1	4	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	7	1	1	0	3	3	1	1
Field Observers	35	14	141	48	29	17	25	25	13	44	**23**	68	69	33	69	28	50	731	21
Feeder Watchers	8	0	32	11	**1**	0	1	18	0	1	1	26	5	4	7	0	9	124	2
Total Observers	43	14	173	59	30	**17**	26	43	13	45	24	94	74	37	76	28	59	855	23
Party Hours	111	62.5	364	131.8	66.5	65.5	75.25	66.5	61	100	135.5	230	163	91	126	91	111	2051.5	58
Party Miles		465								432		769			484	331			

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EASTERN SCREECH-OWL VOCALIZATIONS

Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith

Introduction

The Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) is the most common owl species found within Connecticut. It has adapted especially well to urban and suburban habitats and can be found in open space parcels, parks, and preserves, and along town and city streets (Devine 1982, Devine and Smith 1996). It is less common in the wilder and more forested regions of the state, probably because it is a natural prey of larger owls, especially the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and Barred Owl (*Strix varia*).

Because screech owls are so common and widespread within the state many birders and wildlife enthusiasts have encountered them or heard their vocalizations in the twilight hours of dawn and dusk or during the night. Herein, we present a summary of Eastern Screech-Owl vocalizations and their behavioral context. This summary is based on 30 years of our observations and study of the Eastern Screech-Owl in the Northeast.

Categories of Vocalizations

Like so many of our North American owls, the Eastern Screech-Owl has a rich variety of vocalizations that range from its songs to various calls given by adults and young. In fact, noted owl researcher J. T. Marshall suggested that the screech owls have the greatest variety of calls of any owl known to him (Marshall 1967). Interestingly, the Eastern Screech-Owl rarely screeches and far more often the main vocalizations of this owl are the territorial song and the mating or courtship song.

Eastern Screech-Owls typically engage in two singing bouts per night; the first begins shortly after sunset and continues into the early hours of darkness; the second singing bout usually begins in early morning hours before sunrise. Screech owls may occasionally sing or call during daylight hours, especially during the nesting season and when following and watching over newly fledged young.

Mating or Courtship Song

The courtship or mating song of the Eastern Screech-Owl is also called the bounce song or monotonic trill. It typically consists of a series of short, trilled notes described as *ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho*, the song

continuing for several seconds. The notes may be even in distribution, length, and quality but often the first notes are slightly higher, longer and more inflected while the remaining notes are more hurried and successively shorter as in *wheeoo, woo, woo, wo, wo, wo.* The courtship song has been likened to a bouncing ball because the series of notes dies away like a tennis ball bouncing faster and faster just before it stops.

Unmated males use the courtship song to attract females, which respond with a longer, slower, and higher pitched version of this song. Once the pair bond has formed, a male continues to use the courtship song to elicit the female's interest in potential nest sites within the territory, sometimes even singing within his choice of nest site while the female waits and observes "patiently" nearby. We have heard males vocalize this song at roost sites in January and February suggesting that the mating song may be used to elicit her interest in potential roost sites within the male's territory.

The courtship song may be heard from late December into June, but typically peaks during courtship months of March and April when mating and nest site selection occurs, then declines thereafter for the remainder of the summer and into fall. The song is given at any time of night but most typically in the hours immediately following darkness. Mated pairs may duet, with the male typically initiating a singing bout and the female joining in an antiphonal rendition.

Cavanagh and Ritchison (1987) reported that the courtship song averaged 2.5 seconds in length with an average of 35.8 notes uttered at a near constant frequency. However, we have noted longer (to 6 seconds) duration and greater frequency inflections from start to finish.

Invitation Song: The invitation song is an abbreviated version of the courtship or mating song given by the male to attract the female at her nest or roost site. We always heard this song in the early evening hours during the mating season, when the male of a mated pair would arrive in the immediate vicinity of the female's daytime nest or roost site and announce his arrival to her with this brief song. The invitation song gets her attention and calls her to the evening's activity. It consists of a few warble notes given in a low, muted fashion as *wheoo* or *wooo.*

The invitation song is apparently given only in the context of attracting the female. Interestingly, we were unable to determine exactly how the male knew where the female had roosted during the day. We sometimes heard males give this call when both members

of a pair roosted together—typically the male would leave the roost shortly before the female, then summon her a few minutes later from a nearby branch with this song. Within a few seconds of this song the female exited the nest or roost site and joined the male, often sitting on the same branch near him. A few minutes later the two would depart for the evening's activities.

Territorial Songs and Calls

Eastern Screech-Owls respond to playback of tape recorded song with several vocalizations indicating territoriality including whinnys, hoots, barks, and bill snapping. Of these, the whinny, which is also called a wail or a tremulous whistle, or descending trill is the most important as the primary territorial song of this owl.

Whinny: The whinny has been likened to a version of *"Oh-o-o-o-o that I had never been bor-r-r-r-r-n"* vocalized as a tremolo or quavering wail, sometimes seemingly dreary, at other times very sharply and aggressively given. It sometimes sounds like the whinny of a horse, which is probably why this call is given the name whinny.

The territorial whinny song may be given at any time of year when a screech owl on territory is challenged but is most frequently given from late summer into early spring with peaks occurring from October into January. The whinny may also be used in conjunction with the mating song.

Cavanagh and Ritchison (1987) reported that the whinny lasted an average of 1.24 seconds in length. We have found that the whinny can vary considerably between owls, suggesting that it plays a part in recognition of neighbors and of intruders. Territorial songs of neighbors are ignored or responded to briefly but territorial songs by an unknown intruder are responded to vigorously both in song by both members of a pair and also by aggressive flight displays until the intruder departs.

Some researchers have identified the territorial song or whinny as a screech. Although not truly a screech, a slow, drawn-out version of this song may sound sufficiently eerie to be considered a screech by some individuals.

Bill Snapping: Our observations suggest that bill snapping is possibly the most common response of screech owls to intruders or disturbance and occurs throughout the year. Adults of both sexes and older young snap their bills vigorously when disturbed or

alarmed by intruders, predators, people, and even traffic or loud and unusual noises. Bill snapping is especially prevalent when adults are guarding recently fledged young. Bill snapping is loud and vigorous and carries over 10-20 meters distance or more on a quiet night. Functionally, bill snapping occurs in a disturbance context. For example, we observed this vocalization in response to our climbing to nest sites or roosts. Gehlbach (1996) suggested that bill-claps conveyed "personal discontent, whereas hoots, barks, and screeches signal intrusion and potential predators" but this is an incomplete list. Rather, we most frequently heard bill snapping when screech owls were responding to intruders or potential predators.

Intruders that elicited bill snapping included ourselves, squirrels running near the nest or roost site, an opossum (*Didelphis virginianus*) trying to get into a nest box, a raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) climbing about on the branches near an active nest, and even a dog walking beneath the nest site elicited bill snapping. A female screech owl responded with vigorous bill snapping when an American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) flew into a tree in which three recently fledged young were roosting, suggesting also that bill snapping in this context served as a quick warning call to the young or a display of alarm or irritation directed towards the crow, which departed immediately after the bill snapping.

Barks and Hoots: Barks seem to intergrade with hoots and it is sometimes difficult to determine which the owl is performing. Barks can be described as short, sharp, and raucous hoots consisting of a single note. In our experience, barks were given when the adult, usually the female, was highly agitated. Some barks were followed by an attack or pseudoattack in which the adult swooped towards us, although no actual contact occurred.

Like bill clapping, hoots are given in response to intruders or to disturbance. Softer hoots may also be a contact call that informs recently fledged young. We most frequently heard screech owls hooting when we were around the nest or in the immediate vicinity of recently fledged young. Sometimes screech owls gave a single hoot but more often three or four hoots were given. The intensity of the hoots varied from soft hoots to stronger and more aggressive hoots although we were unable to establish any relationship between length and loudness of hooting bouts.

Distress and Warning Calls

Intruder Warning Call: Wuat or Whup: A sharp, whistled "wuat" or "whup" higher pitched than the monotonic trill is regularly uttered by adult owls when an intruder approaches the nestlings or fledglings. Adult owls begin using this call shortly before owlets fledge and continues for several weeks thereafter, until the young have sufficient flight capability. If humans or animals (dogs or cats) disturb the adults or young, the call is repeated at regular intervals, until the intruder leaves or the owls depart the immediate area. Once the call is given the owlets immediately cease making noise. During diurnal hours this note is also given if intruders approach fledglings. Kelso (1938) recorded Screech Owls using a warning call, but referred to it as a whistled "wheei" or "yeee."

Screech Call: *Ehht or Ehht-ehht*: Despite the bird's name, screeches are one of the rarer vocalizations given by this owl, yet they do occur and exemplify loud and sometimes piercing vocalizations that can only be labeled as screeches. The screech is actually an alarm call infrequently given by adults when a human approaches the nest or recently fledged juveniles. The call is probably the well-known screech for which this owl is named. Both male and female adults seem to give the alarm call when concerned about the safety of the young. This call is given primarily by an adult in flight as it swoops at an intruder. Kelso (1938) apparently recorded this alarm call although he referred to it as sounding like "*eeyah*" or "*eeyah-ah-ah.*"

Hiss: We have only heard the hiss call twice during this research. It is used as either a warning call or an indicator of distress, both of which may overlap in transition and translation. On two separate occasions, a screech owl being scolded by a pair of robins (*Turdus migratorius*) and a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) responded with a hiss. Both incidents occurred at dusk. Gehlbach (1996) suggested that the hiss vocalization was rarely given, and then only in the context of a louder example of expiration but his interpretation appears to be inaccurate.

Vocalizations of Owlets

During their prefledging development young screech owls give a range of calls, vocalizations, and other sounds that are generally not given by adults, including peeps, chirps, cheeps, chuckles, and raspy begging calls.

Peeps, Twittering, Chuckling, Rattling Calls: Peeps function as a contact call between young and adults and may also signal discomfort. Faint peeps begin within the egg even one to two days before hatching and continue afterwards from two or three weeks. Peeps are also uttered as a discomfort call in response to disturbance stimuli such as when the young are pushed or jostled about in the nest, either by other nestlings, or by movements of the adult settling on the nest. When we weighed and measured the young they peeped almost continuously in response to our presence and also our handling of them.

Peeping vocalizations are replaced by twittering or chuckling as the young owls grow. Twittering is uttered in response to the same disturbance stimuli that gives rise to peeps but is stronger, louder, and more persistent. Twittering actually gives rise to a more concerted three to four note chuckling or rattling, still given in the same context. All three calls are also sometimes vocalized by recently fledged young and occasionally adults in disturbance situations, mostly during mobbing or from being approached or when handled during banding or when we fitted them with radio transmitters.

Growls and Croaks: Occasionally, when young were handled during weighing and measuring they uttered a low growl or deep hoarse croak while also bill snapping. Later, the irritation or alarm note changed to a deep, hoarse, abbreviated version of the whinny.

Begging Calls: The begging call of young screech owls was aptly described by Kelso (1938) as high-pitched but very raspy "creeping." As the young developed, the begging call sounded like "kree" or "chee" which begins at or near dusk and continues into the night. After fledging the begging call could be heard from 45 to 60 meters on a still night and aided in locating the owls.

Bent (1938) describes this begging call as a "sharp, child-like cry like keerr, sometimes rolling at the end" but this rendition conveys little of the unmistakable raspiness of the call. At first the begging call is given from within the nest confines but as the young acquire muscular strength and learn to wait at the nest entrance the rasping call intensifies in pitch, tone, and loudness. Some authorities claim that rasping calls begin at dusk but we more often heard them somewhat later, usually within 5 to 15 minutes before darkness. Rasping calls continued persistently almost all night long, diminishing immediately after feeding but increasing in intensity again until shortly before daylight.

Although Bent (1938) noted that screech owl begging calls comingled with nocturnal insect noise, we were easily able to distinguish them from background insect noise. In fact, on two occasions we were able to discover active nests by following the begging calls of young to their source in a tree cavity. Young continued their rasping begging calls for two to three weeks after leaving the nest, but their intensity peaked just at dusk and declined during the night. Rasping calls continued until the young were fed or alarmed by a nearby disturbance. On several occasions as we approached young emitting the begging call one of the adults responded to our intrusion with a short, curlish barking vocalization that caused the young to immediately stop calling. The rasping begging call is also sometimes uttered briefly by females during the food-begging repertoire seen in Eastern Screech-Owl courtship.

Discussion

Eastern Screech-Owls exhibit a wide variety of songs and calls, possibly the widest variety in all of our North American owls. Songs and calls of the owls are used for 1) courtship and mating; 2) establishing and defending territory; 3) providing warning or distress notice; 4) relaying information from the young to the adults (i.e., begging calls). Each song or call is given in a specific context and conveys specific types of information to other screech owls, mates, or young.

Several songs and calls are regularly given by screech owls during different seasons. The warble (mating song) is the song most often heard from winter into the mating season, while the whinny (territorial call) is common from mid to late summer into winter. However, both songs are given with varying frequency throughout the year. Two other calls are important and regularly heard during the nesting season, the intruder warning call ("wuat" or "whup") and begging call of the young. Both calls indicate an active nest or fledglings nearby.

That Eastern Screech-Owls respond to playback of tape recorded song provides a reasonably effective means of surveying this otherwise shy and retiring owl, especially since their habit of roosting in secluded cavities during daylight hours eliminates all other survey methods.

Hopefully, this information will provide birders and researchers with additional tools for locating screech owls when conducting breeding bird surveys, bird censuses, or just identifying unknown sounds in the night.

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BOOK REVIEW

Chris Elphick

Birds of Storrs, Connecticut and Vicinity, Third Edition, by George A. Clark, Jr. (1999, 150 pages, Natchaug Ornithological Society, Mansfield Center, CT, $10, softcover; available from NOS, PO Box 192, Mansfield Center, CT or www.nosbird.org)

The Storrs area, loosely defined as Mansfield (in which Storrs lies) and contiguous towns, is probably best known in birding circles as a place to chase rare geese. There aren't too many spots in the United States that can boast a list of six geese species – and still have at least one more worth looking for. But geese are not all that the Storrs area has to offer. A host of rarities have been found in the area – including Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Sabine's Gull, Cave Swallow, and Long-billed Curlew – and there is a lot of good birding even when there are no vagrants around.

Due to the presence of the University of Connecticut, this relatively under-populated portion of the state has received a disproportionate amount of attention from birders. One result is all those rare birds – clear evidence that there is much to be found by anyone willing to head away from the favorite haunts along the coast. Another is perhaps the most comprehensive and thorough book on the birds of any part of the state. *The Birds of Storrs* first appeared in 1965 and was revised to produce a second edition a decade later. Both editions were written by Jerauld Manter, who began teaching ornithology at the university in 1928. Now, we have yet another edition, this time produced by George Clark, aided by a gaggle of others, most of whom have been leading players in the Storrs-based Natchaug Ornithological Society (in the interests of full disclosure I am now a member of the NOS). Throughout, the book is expertly illustrated by Mary Jane Spring, Mark Szantyr, and Larry Wasiele.

The third edition is more than just an update; it constitutes a complete revision and reevaluation of all that is known about the birds of the area. As a former UConn professor and state ornithologist, George Clark is well known throughout the state. His long tenure in Storrs, somewhat unusual given the constant turnover in the birding community as university affiliates come and go,

puts him in a unique position to provide both historical and current perspective on the area's ornithology. This depth of knowledge, and clear love of the topic, shines out from every page.

I come to this review with a variety of experiences. The third edition of the *Birds of Storrs* was published soon after I moved to Connecticut, and so it provided me with an essential tool for learning the birds of my new home. Now, having lived and birded in Storrs for four years, I'm finally beginning to feel qualified to judge the book from the perspective of an insider. In addition, having used the book as a text in a field ornithology course, I have a sense of its value to beginning birders who are learning not only the area's birding spots, but the birds themselves.

Like many local guides the book does several things. The first section introduces the area by describing its climate and geography, summarizing historical changes in the birds that can be found, and providing a brief seasonal guide to the birds present at different times of the year. Next follows a brief history of ornithology in the region. This section includes details of both work conducted through the university and the activities of local birders, and makes it clear that this dichotomy is tenuous at best, with amateurs and professionals continuously intertwining their interests and skills over the years to build the body of knowledge on which the book is based. The following 20 pages are given over to a short bird finding guide, with over thirty sites discussed. All the best known sites are here (Lot W and Horse Barn Hill, Windham Airport, Boston Hollow), plus many other places that don't make the headlines (or rather, these days, the list servers), but still warrant attention.

Finally, there is the meat of the book, status accounts for the 283 species known from the area up to April 1998. The methods used to evaluate records for inclusion are clearly laid out at the onset, and the supporting documentation for records is described in the accounts. Each species account follows a standard format, with a brief general statement about the frequency and timing of occurrence for each species, followed by details of the types of habitat used in the area, extreme dates of occurrence (for non-residents), noteworthy historical records, population trends, etc. In other words, all the expected stuff, but laid out succinctly and clearly to give the reader just what they need without giving more than is necessary. Littered throughout these accounts is a wealth of great tidbits. My favorites include the story of the great UConn duck-feeding controversy, which was resolved only when the state legislature intervened, and the strange appearance of a mummified

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow on a bridge in Willington (I'm not making these things up, and I'm not giving any more details ... you'll have to buy the book!)

So, what should be done to make the fourth edition an even better buy? Well, there is of course the never-ending job of updating. At least six species have been added to the area's list since the third edition was finished, and with luck there will be a few more soon. The status of other species is also constantly changing. For example, Greater White-fronted Geese are now annual and Common Ravens just keep getting commoner. Equally, the growing rarity of Evening Grosbeaks appears to have become a trend worth discussing. But besides this obvious need there are two major additions that I think would make the book close to perfect. First, as a newcomer to the area, I find it a bit frustrating that the book does not provide more guidance on where to see particular species. Some information is given in the great primer on the area's best birding spots, but I would have liked it if more of the species accounts included bird-finding suggestions.

Second, more detailed information on the abundance of each species at different times of the year would be helpful. Again, some information is given – early and late dates for migrants, and results from May counts (giving presence/absence information from 1969-96), Christmas Bird Counts (1956-94), and the Willimantic Breeding Bird Survey route (1967-95). But, I would like to have the detail provided by those horizontal bar graphs that track the abundance of each species from January to December, widening as the species gets more common and narrowing to little dots as they become scarce. Both these comments come from the perspective of the birder, rather than the ornithologist, in me. Inevitably, there are a few typos, and I felt that minor revisions to the maps would make it easier to locate a couple of the birding spots described. As a careful chronicle of the area's birds, however, I have little to add: it's hard to find fault with a book that is meticulous enough to include both of the Storrs area's hornbill records, even the one that could not be identified to species (because it was both dead and seen only in a photograph).

To conclude, this is a great little book, a steal at ten bucks, and something that anyone who is serious about getting to know the state's birds should definitely own.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

FALL, AUGUST 1 THROUGH NOVEMBER 30, 2002

Greg Hanisek

The season began as a continuation of a warm, dry summer. It ended with a significant Thanksgiving snowstorm that marked the beginning of a cold, snowy winter. In between fairly typical autumn weather prevailed in a season of significant avian events, including a historic flight of Cave Swallows, a record count of Swainson's Hawks, a long-staying Black-throated Gray Warbler and the continuing up-tick in records of Greater White-fronted Goose and Rufous Hummingbird. A number of other significant sightings spice up this report, which benefits from the increase in field note submissions encouraged by the use of e-mail.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A total of 16 Red-throated Loons on Lake Waramaug in New Preston on November 17 was an excellent inland count (EA); on the coast c. 280 were counted November 22 during a 30-minute passage off Greenwich Point (MSa). A possible **Pacific Loon** was reported October 25 off Long Beach in Stratford; the observer took an appropriately conservative approach but good details support the identification (CB). Staging Pied-billed Grebes peaked at 12 from October 19 to 25 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (DR et al.). The season's five reports of Red-necked Grebe all came in November, as expected (RB et al.).

A count of 22 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** off Groton on September 3 was a good total for state waters (CT). This species is increasing its visits inside Long Island Sound, with up to six as far west as Stamford on August 9 among a number of seasonal reports through early September (PDu). At the beginning of the 1990s, Northern Gannets were still uncommon inside Long Island Sound. Numbers increased steadily during the decade, and this fall produced major flights, such as 500 to 1,000 off Groton on November 23. (GW). An immature **Brown Pelican** made a brief appearance August 1 on a jetty off Milford Point (DSo, MSt) for one of just a handful of state

records. Typically heavy migratory flights of Double-crested Cormorants included 1,700 over Greenwich Point during a 45-minute period October 4 (MSa).

It was another excellent season for migrant American Bitterns, with about a dozen reports, primarily from the coast in late October and November. A Least Bittern was still at Little Pond in Litchfield September 12 (DR). Pools on Access Road in Stratford held 120 Snowy Egrets and 25 Great Egrets August 16 (FMa). A Black-crowned Night Heron was far up the Naugatuck River in Torrington August 4 (DTr), and an immature was on the Naugatuck River in Waterbury August 25 (RP). Three Yellow-crowned Night Herons were still in Stratford October 30 (FMa). A Glossy Ibis made an inland appearance September 3 in Southbury (DM).

The ever-expanding Black Vulture population brought a flock of 11 over White Memorial September 17, the most ever seen there (DR); 30 were in a big mixed vulture roost October 5 in New Milford (ADi). This season's reports of the increasing **Greater White-fronted Goose** were singles October 9 in Windsor (PDe), October 31 in Somers (CEk), October 31 to November 15 in East Windsor (MO) and November 2-3 at Farmington Meadows (PCi). Migrant Snow Geese were widely noted overhead on September 29, with a high of 80 at Lighthouse Point (SMa et al.); 200 were over Southbury October 2 (PCo) and 350, including three "blue morph," were over Quaker Ridge in Greenwich October 4 (JW). On the ground, a flock of 57 visited Little Pond in Litchfield October 13 (DTr et al.) and 110 were in a cornfield in Salisbury October 4 (AG). A Brant was inland in Storrs November 20 (MSz).

Wood Duck numbers peaked at c. 160 on October 5 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DR). A Gadwall made an early inland appearance August 27 at the same pond (DR). Away from usual wintering spots, drake **Eurasian Wigeons** turned up October 29 at Konold's Pond in Woodbridge (KH) and November 28 in Morris Creek on the New Haven-East Haven line (MPa). The best count of Blue-winged Teal was 20 on September 12 at White Memorial (DR et al.); 15 were at Tomasso Nature Park in Plainville October 5 (JMe), 12 were at South Cove in Old Saybrook November 1 (MSa) and six were at Station 43 in South Windsor on September 29 (SK). Two on August 18 at Access Road in Stratford were at a suspected breeding spot (CB). Bantam Lake held six Northern Shovelers on November 8 (DR, JEy), seven were at Station 43 in South Windsor the

same day (CEk) and eight were at Trap Falls Reservoir in Shelton November 3 (TK). Little Pond held an excellent inland total of 62 Green-winged Teal October 5 (DR et al.).

A summering Greater Scaup was off Milford Point August 4 (TK). A female **King Eider** was present for the third year in row at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) in Madison, arriving Nov. 30 (CR). A female **Common Eider** was seen and photographed off Ender's Island in Mystic September 3 (CT). A flock of 30+ Black Scoters Oct. 30 at Bolton Lake was in keeping with this species' habit of dropping in briefly en masse onto inland waters (MSz). A Long-tailed Duck remained at Cemetery Pond in Litchfield from October 26 through the end of the period (GH et al.); this was an unusually long inland stay and an unusually small body of water. One that probably summered was at Milford Point August 17 (BDe), and another inland bird rested on Nepaug Reservoir in Canton/New Hartford November 4 (JMe). Barkhamsted Reservoir held 80+ Hooded Mergansers November 16 (FZ). A flock of 500+ Common Mergansers visited Broad Brook Reservoir in Cheshire November 29 (JMe). Ruddy Ducks numbers hit c. 100 on October 25 at Bantam Lake, with a peak of 500 on November 6 (DR et al.). Bristol Reservoir No. 7 held 250 Ruddies on November 2 (BDe).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

September 16-17 produced counts of c. 850 Broad-winged Hawks at White Memorial (DR et al.). See the report by Neil Currie in Connecticut Warbler Vol. 23 No. 1 for a full account of the state's fall hawk flights. Four **Swainson's Hawks** for the season was the highest annual count ever for what appears to be an increasing visitor. Individuals were seen September 23-24 at Lighthouse Point in New Haven (GH, MM), October 15 at Lighthouse Point (LJ), November 1 in Milford (NH), and October 31 over Middletown (MSz). The season's first Rough-legged Hawk appeared October 25 at Lighthouse Point, with a few appearing along the coast in subsequent days (MM, AH, DCa). An immature Golden Eagle, seldom reported in the southeast corner of the state, was at Barn Island in Stonington October 15 (CEl) among the usual handful of reports statewide. Of special note were two immatures seen from an office window in New Haven October 24 (DSo). Certainly an annual presence, but almost never seen, a **Yellow Rail** found September 13 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport

ranked as one of the season's most exciting discoveries (RS). Clapper Rails usually attempt to winter in small numbers, and two on November 26 at Milford Point were heading in that direction (JBa). Two Soras on September 26 at Sherwood Island were probably indicative of a normal arrival date (FMa). A Sora was noted as late as October 13 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DTr, FZ). Single immature **Common Moorhens** were in Hamden October 5 (MPa), Wallingford October 6-7 (WSc), and Little Pond in Litchfield on Oct. 13 (DTr, FZ). All were in places where the species could breed, but the close spacing of the observations suggests some kind of migratory event.

Milford Point held an impressive 1,000 Black-bellied Plovers on August 20 (RN et al.). The highest count of American Golden Plovers was five on August 25 at Milford Point (DSo et al.); singles were noted inland September 6 at Rocky Hill (CEk) and September 15 at Colebrook Reservoir (FZ). An industrial parking lot in Stratford held 700+ Semipalmated Plovers September 1 (JHo); the last report of them came from Griswold Point on Oct. 30 (TH). Griswold Point held a gathering of nine American Oystercatchers on September 14 (TH). A Spotted Sandpiper was a bit late October 25 at Bantam Lake (DR et al.). The high count for Whimbrel was four on August 23 at Griswold Point (NB); two in stubble field September 9-11 at Old Lyme were in an unusual location (TH) and a late one appeared October 20 at Silver Sands State Park in Milford (PDe). Three Hudsonian Godwits for the season were singles at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford September 2 (F&LMa); Griswold Point October 13-20 (TH, CH et al.), and at Griswold November 5-12 (TH, HG). Single Marbled Godwits were noted August 17-September 4 at Milford Point (BDe, DV et al.) and August 20-31 in Old Lyme (NB, TH et al.). The first three Red Knots of the season were reported from Milford Point August 24 (DSo). A Sanderling made an unusual inland visit to Colebrook Reservoir on September 16 (JMe).

Milford Point held 5,000+ Semipalmated Sandpipers on August 20 (RN et al.) and a lone bird was late there November 3 (PF). The best count of Western Sandpipers was five in the industrial lot in Stratford on September 1 (JHo). A good inland flock of 25 Least Sandpipers was at Cemetery Pond in Litchfield August 20 (DR et al.). Inland reports of White-rumped Sandpiper included a late one November 8 at Litchfield Town Beach (DR et al.) and three on October 31 at Great Pond in Simsbury (JMe).

The season's Baird's Sandpipers were reported as follows: August 22 at Sherwood Island (NB), August 23-25 at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford (JMe), August 25 at Access Road in Stratford (TK), September 10 at Compo Beach in Westport (FMa), September 14-15 in Old Lyme (TH) and September 13 at HBSP (RI). By far the best counts of Pectoral Sandpipers were 28 on September 4 on the east side of Sikorsky Airport (FMa) and 25 on October 31 at Great Pond in Simsbury (JMe). Inland Dunlin included two at Great Pond on October 31 (JMe) and one at Lake Winnemaug in Watertown on November 19 (GH). The season's first Stilt Sandpiper was a juvenile on August 26 at Access Road (GH).

JAEGERS THROUGH SWALLOWS

All jaegers remain difficult to find in Connecticut. Partly as a result of that, a modest pelagic trip was organized for September 15 out of Groton. About an hour before the boat left, a **Parasitic Jaeger** was seen sitting on the water off Avery Point within sight of the marina (RI et al.). Returning quickly to form, the trip produced nothing. In addition, a jaeger sp. was seen November 17 off Stamford (PDu). The season's only **Little Gull** appeared September 4 at Sandy Point in West Haven (DV, BDe). The first Iceland Gull report came from Wethersfield Cove on November 10 (SK). With reports of Lesser Black-backed Gulls dwindling in the past few years, all of the following are worth noting: an adult September 12 at HBSP (BM); two first seen at Sherwood Island September 17 (FG), a reliable adult returning to Holly Pond in Stamford September 21 (PDu), and singles at Storrs on November 18 (CEl) and at Old Saybrook November 29 (CT). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** November 17 off Avery Point, Groton, was unique for the season (DPr, DSo). A better-than-average Caspian Tern season produced six flying by Stamford October 4 (PDu), four at Seaside Park, Bridgeport, on October 5 (DV) and one at Milford Point September 21 (FMc, NR). Three Royal Terns September 1 at Milford Point (RN et al.) were the only ones reported. In an excellent season for Forster's Tern, the high count was 100+ on October 11 at the Connecticut River mouth (HG); the late date was November 11 at Bridgeport (DV). The season's 11 Black Tern reports were all coastal from August 9 to September 1 (CB, FN et al.). Immature Black Skimmers were at Sandy Point and HBSP on September 21 (RN), but there was no confirmed nesting in the state this year. The high counts

were three at Milford Point September 7 (RH) and five in Waterford September 10 (DTo).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were unusually conspicuous in October, with the latest of the 10 reported appearing on October 27 in Ledyard (FN). A Long-eared Owl visited a private property in Trumbull on November 29 (DCa). The season's first noteworthy flight of Common Nighthawks brought c. 70 over Beacon Falls August 20 (BB). Other excellent flights included 500 on August 26 at White Memorial (JBn et al.), 225 on August 25 at Lake Zoar in Southbury (RN) and 300 on September 3 in Avon (DSc), but these were dwarfed by 2,500 counted on September 4 in Stamford (PDu). A calling Whip-poor-will on October 3 at a breeding site in Durham provided a good late date (NM). Two **Rufous Hummingbirds** for the season, at feeders in Darien and Guilford, proved upon capture to be hatch-year females. Both were banded and released, as this species continued its now-annual fall appearances (fide MSz). Apart from the usual coastal fly-bys and the long-staying birds in West Hartford, Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported October 15 in Easton (LF) and November 24 in Waterford (DPr).

The season's first Olive-sided Flycatcher appeared August 23 in Morris (JEy), and the first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was a bird banded August 20 at Milford Point (CWe). A count of 23 Willow Flycatchers August 3 at marshes in White Memorial included 15 fledglings (DR). A late Eastern Phoebe was at People's Forest in Barkhamsted November 24 (PDe). A Northern Shrike signaled the season's close with its arrival November 25 at White Memorial (DR, BM). A late Blue-headed Vireo appeared November 28 in Wethersfield (JMe). The first report of Philadelphia Vireo was a single August 20 at White Memorial (DR), with a high of at least six on September 18 at Bluff Point in Groton (DPr).

The spectacular annual staging group of Tree Swallows at HBSP numbered c. 30,000 on September 1 (F&LMa). More than a dozen Northern Rough-winged Swallows were still present September 11 in Windsor (PDe), following a recent trend toward later lingering by this species. A major **Cave Swallow** incursion occurred Nov. 23 on the central coast, with birds present at Lighthouse Point in New Haven from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Up to 30 were present at one time, with estimates of the total for the day ranging from a conservative 50 to a plausible 200 (RE, TB, DSo et al). The consensus holds that 100+ was a reasonable number in the state that

day, including two across New Haven harbor near the Yale University athletic fields (MSz). On Nov. 24, a flock of eight spent an extended amount of time at Lighthouse Point. In addition, a group of 52 was seen passing over Stamford (PDu), and a group of 60+ was reported over Greenwich (MSa). A few stragglers were seen as late as Nov 27. This movement follows the pattern set in recent years, but far surpasses previous flights in number. It's easy to overlook typical staging groups of swallows, but careful attention August 3 at White Memorial produced a count of c. 300 Barn Swallows over Little and Cemetery ponds in Litchfield (DR).

WRENS THROUGH NORTHERN FINCHES

Up to five Marsh Wrens were still at Little Pond in Litchfield November 18 (DR). A massive October 21 flight at Bluff Point produced an estimated 1,500 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 5,000 American Robins and 60 Hermit Thrushes (DPr). A Gray-cheeked Thrush was at Milford Point September 17 (CWe). A Wood Thrush was present as late as September 30 at White Memorial (DR). The first American Pipit was reported September 26 at Sherwood Island (FMa). Up to 1,000 Cedar Waxwings descended on red cedars November 18 at Bent of River Audubon in Southbury (PCo).

A Lawrence's Warbler appeared August 4 at Flanders Nature Center in Woodbury (DTu). A Tennessee Warbler was still present October 23 in Wethersfield (BDe). An Orange-crowned Warbler noted September 29-30 at White Memorial (DR et al.) started off a good run of reports: October 6 at Bluff Point (DSo), October 13 at W Lot in Storrs (CEl), October 14 in Fairfield (JHu), November 4 in Killingworth (JHi), November 8-11 in Waterford (DPr et al.), November 19 in Stratford (CB), November 24 at HBSP (GW), and November 30 in East Haven (DSo). A Nashville Warbler which showed characteristics of the western race *ridgwayi* was found November 29 at New Canaan Nature Center (DW). A Yellow Warbler was late October 20 at Thomaston Dam (BDe). One of the best birds of the season was a cooperative **Black-throated Gray Warbler** found Nov. 24 at HBSP and seen by many birders during its stay through the end of period and into the winter season (D&PB, m.ob.) A Black-throated Green Warbler was running a bit late November 1 in Canton (DTr). A flight of Palm Warblers brought 50+ to Thomaston dam on October 13 (BDe). A Blackpoll Warbler was a good late find Nov. 21 in Stratford (CB). The season's

lone Prothonotary Warbler appeared September 12 at Bluff Point (DSo, DPr). A search through Woodbury and Southbury August 3 turned up 10 Louisiana Waterthrushes, which are typically early migrants (RN). A Hooded Warbler, only sparingly noted in fall migration, was banded at Milford Point September 7 (CWe); another was at Bluff Point September 25 (DPr et al.). Big warbler flight days at Bluff Point included September 12 — 900 warblers of 19 species; and October 15 — 2,000 warblers of five species (DPr).

A male Scarlet Tanager, still showing some red in its plumage, was late November 19 in New Hartford (JK). The season's first American Tree Sparrows appeared October 29 at White Memorial (DPe). Two **Clay-colored Sparrows** for the season were found September 29 at Glastonbury Meadows (ADa) and October 27 at Greenwich Point (MSa). A **Lark Sparrow** was a good find in Bloomfield October 1-2 (JMe). At Farmington Meadows, 200+ Savannah Sparrows swarmed across the fields October 19 (BDe). A late Grasshopper Sparrow was at Silver Sands State Park in Milford November 2-8 (CWe et al.). The first Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was logged September 30 at HBSP (CEl). The first of many Lincoln's Sparrows turned up September 19 in Somers (JS), a typical first arrival date; an unusually high count of 14 was made September 29 at Glastonbury Meadows (ADa). The huge October 21 flight at Bluff Point produced c. 15,000 sparrows of nine species, predominantly White-throated Sparrows. The museum area at White Memorial held 20 Fox Sparrows on November 19 (DR) and 20 were in a yard in Barkhamsted November 17 (FZ). The first two Snow Buntings were reported October 22 from HBSP (CEl).

Two **Blue Grosbeaks** for the season were reported September 24 in Pawcatuck (BDw) and September 21 in Simsbury Community Garden (BT). A weedy squash field in Wallingford held an estimated 100 Indigo Buntings in various stages of molt on September 1 (WSc), an extraordinary record count for a single location. **Dickcissel** produced 10+ reports for the season. The peak count of Rusty Blackbirds was 140 on October 13 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DR et al.). A male **Brewer's Blackbird**, a rare and very elusive species in the state, was reported from Waterford November 10 (DPr) but not relocated. The heavy movement of August 3 produced what the observer called an "incredible" count of 60 Baltimore Orioles at White Memorial (DR). A single White-winged Crossbill No-

vember 12 in Wethersfield was unique for the season (JMo). Three Evening Grosbeaks made a brief appearance November 24 at Lighthouse Point in New Haven (SMa).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Avian Records committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 145 Farmington Ave., Waterbury, CT 06710) if they are to be included in the field notes].

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PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 42

This month's photo-challenge is the epitome of what we Brits refer to as a "LBJ" - little brown job. In this case, it's a streaky little brown job. There are few outstanding features on this bird, pale bill and legs, streaked upperparts and heavily streaked underparts.

Initially the bird suggests Pine Siskin, but a lack of wingbars and our bird's long-tailed look disqualify that species immediately. Since few adult passerines match the plumage shown by our bird, we hypothesize that it is a recently fledged juvenile. The strong legs, long tail, and pointed bill are rather sparrow-like and we assume that this is what it is - but which species?

Juvenile sparrows, prior to their post-juvenile molt to first-winter plumage, briefly appear, as in this photograph, dull and streaky. They are difficult to identify.

The bird's overall appearance, with a small bill, thin, but sturdy legs, and smallish head suggest one of the smaller Spizella sparrows. Of those that breed in Connecticut, we must choose between Chipping and Field Sparrow. In adult plumage, Field Sparrows have pale legs and bill (as shown by our mystery bird) but have a fairly open "face," lacking any

dark borders. Chipping Sparrow, on the other hand, has a dark eyestripe, which continues through the eye in a dark line. Our bird shows such a dark line and the overall dark streaks on the crown also support your thoughts that this bird is probably a Chipping Sparrow. And your identification would be right, probably more by a little guessing, and knowing the range of the species within your home state, than by plumage features.

Identification of passerines, especially sparrows, in their briefly held juvenile plumage, is very difficult, particularly in this case, given no information about time of year, plumage color or geographic location. If you got it right, give yourself a pat on the back.

I promise next month's challenge will be a little easier!

This juvenile Chipping Sparrow was photographed by Jay Kaplan in August, 2001 at Roaring Brook Nature Center, Canton, Conn.

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

Photo Challenge 43 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 computer 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

Great Egret (*Ardes alba*)

by Brian Kleinman

Our front cover artwork by Brian Kleinman was done in pencil and ink. Brian has recently started his own business, "Riverside Reptiles." He provides educational programs using live reptiles, amphibians and anthropods. He travels to schools, camps, libraries, daycares, and other organizations to teach childern the natural history and the conservation of these animals. For more information, please contact Brian at (860) 653-2535 or email snakeat@man.com.

RAPTOR VOCALIZATIONS GIVEN BY BLUE JAYS

Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith

The Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) is a distinctive member of the corvid (crow) family; its colorful plumage and raucous behavior are well known to many birders. This species is quite vocal and known to mimic numerous avian species including screams of Red-shouldered (*Buteo lineatus*) and other hawks (Terres, 1980). Many birders and other wildlife enthusiasts have likely heard a Blue Jay do a rendition of the Red-shouldered Hawk. Herein we report several occurrences of Blue Jays mimicking various vocalizations of several raptor species and suggest possible reasons for this behavior.

On September 23, 2000, a clear, bright, fall morning, while inside a house on Hunter Mountain Road in Naugatuck, Conn., at approximately 0800 hrs, A. Devine heard the call of a Red-shouldered Hawk from the back yard. Initially, he thought it was a Blue Jay mimic call, but as he was heading out the back door, a second call was sounded from the same area. This second call also sounded exactly like a Red-shouldered Hawk. Devine surveyed the backyard along the wooded property line, but no hawk was visible. Shortly, thereafter, another similar call came from the same area. Again, this call sounded like a Red-shouldered Hawk. Devine was puzzled because the bird sounded very close, however, it still was not visible. He scanned the yard intently for several minutes without any success and then decided the hawk must have been moving through the woodlot and flown away. Just as he started to re-enter the house he heard another call. However, this time the bird sounded similar to, but not exactly like, a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). This call came from the same general location as the previous vocalizations. After studying the area for several more minutes a second "Red-tailed Hawk" call emanated from the site, but this time Devine pinpointed it to a thicket of autumn olive. Devine waited to spot the imposter whom he now suspected was a Blue Jay. Within a minute or so, a Blue Jay popped out of the shrubs and landed on a compost pile near the thicket. The bird looked around intently and then proceeded to forage in and about the compost pile.

Another interesting encounter with a Blue Jay occurred in Plymouth, Conn. on August 10, 2002. At 0800 hrs, A. Devine heard several Broad-winged Hawk calls coming from a mature conifer hedgerow in his front yard. The calls sounded somewhat raspy so he attributed them to a juvenile Broad-wing. He briefly surveyed the conifers without observing any birds. One week later he heard the same hawk-like calls from the front yard. Again he checked and found no hawk. However, during his examination he heard the call come from the hedgerow in the back yard. Further investigation revealed a Blue Jay in a mature conifer near a bird feeding station.

In late winter and early spring of 2003 Blue Jays sometimes pre-announced their presence at Dwight Smith's backyard feeder in Hamden, Connecticut, with short screams that mimicked a portion of a Red-tailed Hawk territorial scream. The screams were given some distance (15 to 40 yards) from the feeder and while the jays were in flight. Birds other than Blue Jays at the feeder responded by taking flight and giving alarm calls. The behavioral bouts culminated as the Blue Jays arrived at the vacated feeder and began feeding. The Blue Jay use of Red-tailed Hawk calls was all the more noticeable because a Red-tailed Hawk nested in the woods in Smith's back yard this past spring and was seen almost every day perching along the perimeter of the woods or hunting, usually for squirrels.

Smith also noted Blue Jays mimicking the short, dry call of Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*). These mimic vocalizations also became more frequent or at least more noticeable following a two-week period in early spring of 2003, when a Cooper's Hawk monitored the same back yard feeder, occasionally "picking off" a bird. The Blue Jay rendition of the Cooper's *kik kik kik* sounded like a modified version of their dry rattle call. Again, the behavioral context was almost exactly the same as noted in the Blue Jay's mimicking of Red-tail screams.

Many authors and birding enthusiasts have noted that jays are good mimics of hawks but do not explore the subject further. Bent (1946) took note of Blue Jay calls that resembled the *"teear"* vocalization of Red-shouldered Hawks but was unable to decide whether the vocalization was a deliberate mimicking of Red-shouldered Hawks by Blue Jays or simply a coincidence resulting from certain similar notes common in the cries of the two species. What Bent was suggesting is that we humans might be confusing a portion of a jay's call with a portion of a hawk's scream.

Raptor vocalizations by Blue Jays that we have observed seem to have one or two common ecological themes. In most observations the Blue Jays used hawk vocalizations to frighten other competing species away from potential food sources, suitable restingplaces, or refugia. Substantiating evidence for this idea comes from several of our observations in which songbirds were frightened and quickly departed a feeder site on the approach of a Blue Jay mimicking hawk warning cries. In two of these instances the hawk vocalizations were heard several moments before the Blue Jay appeared—in both cases the Blue Jay repeated the hawk calls after it came into view, thereby confirming our observations.

Perhaps a Blue Jay's use of hawk calls can best be understood as a form of interspecific competition called exploitation competition or scramble competition. This is sometimes referred to as "first come, first served" as described in many ecology textbooks (e.g., Smith 1996). By frightening away other potentially competing species with hawk vocalizations the Blue Jay can exploit a food source or other ecological resources. Certainly the Blue Jay is an aggressive and opportunistic species that can modify its behavior to exploit local situations. In such cases the use of hawk vocalizations is an adaptive behavior that enhances the Blue Jay's resource exploitation opportunities.

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INTERPRETING QUINNIPIAC SONGBIRD SURVEYS:

Effects of Landscape Setting on Avian Community Composition

Sigrun N. Gadwa

Introduction

Bird Surveys were conducted in the Quinnipiac River Watershed from 1997 to 1999 as part of the QRW Association's volunteer monitoring program, using the modified Ontario protocol for forest breeding bird surveys. The study goal was to gather baseline information on bird communities in undeveloped habitat areas in the Quinnipiac watershed, and to look for patterns relating community composition and abundance to landscape setting and wetland status. Funding for program coordination came from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (hereafter CTDEP) under the Clean Water Act, and from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

Results for nine sites, the 1998 surveys and several key sites surveyed only in 1997 are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Sites varied greatly in the sizes and shapes of the undeveloped habitat blocks, proximity of busy roads, and interspersion with non-forested habitat, as summarized in Table 1. Five sites included a substantial percentage of bottomland or wetland habitat along rivers in the Quinnipiac watershed. Table 4 tabulates species occurrences for all thirteen sites and for each of the 58 bird species recorded at survey points.

Methods

Surveys took place in early summer during the breeding season, but possible non-breeders were also recorded. Highly experienced volunteer birders used the modified Ontario protocol for Forest Breeding Bird Surveys recommended by the CTDEP Wildlife Division. Ten-minute point counts were divided into two five-minute segments. Two surveys were done in early summer, prior to July 5th, during early morning (before 9 AM). Points were

Table 1. Locations of 1997-1999 Quinnipaic Watershed Inland Bird Surveys

Site Code	Town	No. Plots & Year	Location
BA	Southington	1 - 97	**Bowling Alley** Site, N. of Quinnipiac River, W. of Route 10; 2.5 acre woodlot
BB	Cheshire Wallingford	1 - 99	**Broad Brook Reservoir**, 1000+ acres of forest & rural mosaic on perimeter of reservoir
CH	Southington	1 - 97, **98**	**Churchill Rd**, by Eight Mile River, ~75 acres, forest with thicket within a 150 +acre rural area
CA	Meriden	5 – **98**	**Cathole Mountain.**, N. of Sams Road. draining to Sodom Brook, 750+ acres, upland forest
CL	Wallingford	1 - **97**, 98	**Community Lake**, ~ 10 acre wooded strip E. of Route 15 & W. of 30-40 acres of sparse flats and shrubland along Q. River
DW	Farmington, Plainville	5 - **97** [1]	**Deadwood Swamp**, headwaters of Quinnipiac River, 350 acres
JU	Southington	1 - 97, **98**	**Jude Lane**, along sewer line W. of Eight Mile River,~60 acres
MF	Cheshire	3 - 97, **98**	**Moss Farms** Lowlands, E. of Ten Mile River, S. of Jarvis St.
PR	North Haven	2 - 99	**Peter's Rock**, traprock ridge, >150 acres , mostly forested
QR	North Haven	5 - **97** [1]	**Quinnipiac River State Park**, between Q. River & Rt. 15 ~400 acres of forest, clearings, narrow rectangle (<2000'wide)
SM	Southington	2 - 97	**Southington Mountain**, Plots between reservoirs # 2 & # 3, >1200 acre tract, forested with some burned second growth
TM	Wallingford	3 - **98**, 99	**Tyler Mill** (Traprock Mtn) along Muddy River, >1200acres
WH	Wallingford	1 - **98**	**Windswept Hill**, Tyler Mill Route, N. of McKenzie Res., ~150acres

Note: Boldface type indicates that data is summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

[1] Surveys at these two sites were part of a research project conducted through the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences and coordinated by Celia Lewis, but the same survey protocol was used and data was shared.with QRWA.

placed so as to maximize distances from forest edges, and at least 200 meters apart. Data was recorded spatially on a specially designed form, divided into four quadrants, allowing accurate counts of individuals. Size of habitat block and type (s) of habitat were noted. The Ontario data recording system was also used for plots in non-forested habitat. Annotations indicating breeding activity (e.g., singing) were recorded.

Results

Tables 2 and 3 show numbers of species, numbers of individuals, and numbers of area-sensitive forest species, including both totals and average densities per plot for nine sites. Table 3 also indicates the number of disturbance-sensitive species of shrubland habitats. These tables show the maximum number of individuals observed (on either of the two surveys), and values are averaged for sites with multiple plots. Statistical analysis was constrained by differences in the number of points per site. However, patterns are very clear, even without statistical support, and are consistent with the existing scientific literature on area-sensitivity and the importance of landscape ecological integrity and wetland habitat for songbird communities. For the four sites not formally analyzed, the avian community composition, as shown in Table 4, appears to follow similar patterns.

Highest densities (over 20 individuals/plot) and high overall diversity occurred in tracts with significant forested wetlands: bottomland hardwood forest at Moss Farms in Cheshire along the Ten Mile River, along the Eight Mile River at Churchill Road in Southington, and at Tyler Mill by the Muddy River in Wallingford; and also Deadwood Swamp in Plainville and Farmington. In 1998 these forests had good ecological integrity; they were either large (over 250 acres) or set in a predominantly rural landscape. Densities in the Moss Farms bottomland forest (an average of 26 individuals/plot in 1998) were significantly higher than in upland forest on Cathole Mountain (10.8 individuals/plot). The Moss Farms Tract has a higher proportion of wetlands and a thicker understory, which supports higher insect densities. By contrast, at Community Lake wooded wetlands were dewatered when the lake drained after a dam breach in 1983, and now support low bird densities (averaging 12 per plot).

Table 2. Summary of Survey Data from Forested Tracts in the Quinnipiac Watershed.

	Tyler Mill Plots 2-4 1998	Cathole Mtn. Plots B1- 4 1998	Moss Farms Lowlands Plots 1-3 1998	Churchill Rd [1] Plot 1 1998	Community Lake 1997 [2]
SIZE OF HABITAT BLOCK	1200+ acres	800+ acres	~250	~75 acres	~10 acres
AVERAGE NO. SPECIES	15	13.3	15.5	20	15.5
TOTAL NO. SPECIES	28.0	22	22	20	15
AVG. MAX. NO. INDIVIDUALS/ POINT	21.3	10.8	26	21	12
TOT. NO. AREA-SENSITIVE SPECIES	11.0	10	11	4	3
AVG. MAX NO. AREA-SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS [3]/PLOT	8.7	10.5	15.5	7	1.5

[1] Churchill Road habitat includes a shrub component, along river and forest edges

[2] For this site, 1997 data was used rather than 1998 data, because only one survey was conducted in 1998, not the two required by protocol.

[3] Area-sensitive, which includes 1) forest interior species, 2)forest interior/edge species with better reproductive success in forest interiors, and 3) species needing large forested territories

In the three tracts over 250 acres surveyed by volunteers for QRWA in 1998, the species recorded always included a core group of area-sensitive species: Eastern Wood-Pewee, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and Wood Thrush. The Moss Farms bottomland corridor is 5000 feet broad at its widest and approximately 250 acres. 1998 surveys documented 11 area-sensitive species, including two wetland-associated neotropical migrants (abundant Veery and one pair of Louisiana Waterthrush) and several year-round residents (e.g., Hairy Woodpecker). The Cathole Mountain and Tyler Mill tracts are much larger (750+ and 1200+ acres each). These tracts had 10 and 11 area-sensitive species respectively, including Worm-eating Warbler and Black-and-white Warbler. Peters Rock and Southington Mountain (large upland tracts with only two survey points) appear to have similar avian communities (See Table 4). Average species richness per plot was notably lower than total species richness in each of the large tracts. Note that 1997 data for the Moss Farms site included single observations of several area-sensitive warblers, such as Black-throated Blue Warbler, not observed in 1998, but more common prior to the development of seventy acres of uplands at this site in the early 1990's.

Table 4 shows many forest songbird species *and* many suburban and edge species in two large forested wetland sites, with multiple clearings and gaps, surveyed by Yale researchers Celia Lewis and Jay West in 1997. These sites had the highest species richness in the Quinnipiac study. A total of 32 species were recorded in the compact 350-acre Deadwood Swamp (DS). Fourteen area-sensitive species occurred at high densities (an average of 10.6 individuals per plot) despite multiple small forest gaps and a utility corridor. By contrast, the approximately 400-acre Quinnipiac River State Park site has an elongated shape and is next to a major highway (Route 15) with somewhat larger inclusions of non-forested habitat. At this site the number of area-sensitive species was only six, with an average per plot density of 4.6, and the species total was 27. The very smallest site, the 2.5-acre Bowling Alley woodlot had a total of only eight species with no area-sensitive species. Three to four area-sensitive forest songbirds, usually including Red-eyed Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Wood Thrush, were recorded in the moderate-sized forested tracts.

Data for sites with a significant component of non-forested habitat is summarized in Table 3 and species composition is shown in Table 4. Certain shrubland species such as Blue-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Brown Thrasher, and/or Field Sparrow tend

Table 3. Summary of Selected Bird Survey Data from Sites with Habitat Mosaics of Forest, Meadow, and Shrubland

	Windswept Hill	Jude Lane	Churchill Rd [1]	Deadwood Swamp	Quinnipiac River State Park
Plots, Year	Tyler Rte, Plot 1 1998	Eight Mile Rte, Plot 2, 1998	Eight Mile Rte, Plot 1, 1998	5 Plots, 1997	5 Plots 1997
Habitat Type	Shrub - field woods mosaic	Wooded strip, by Eight Mile River & sewer line	Forest & thickets Eight Mile River	Wooded swamp with clearings utility corridor.	Floodplain forest, old field clearings
Size of Habitat Block	>150 acres	~ 60 acres	75 acres woods, >150 acres rural	~ 350 acres	~400 acres by hwy, rectangle
TOTAL NO. SPECIES	17	14	20	32	27
AVG. TOTAL NO. INDIVIDUALS	29	21	21	24.2	23.4
NO. DISTURBANCE -SENSITIVE SHRUBLAND SPECIES	2	2	3	1	0
NO. AREA –SENSITIVE FOREST SPECIES	1	4	4	14	8
AVG. MAX NO. AREA-SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS [2]/PLOT	1	3	7	10.6	4.6

[2] Area-sensitive, which includes 1) forest interior species, 2)forest interior/edge species with better reproductive success in forest interiors and 3) resident species needing large forested territories.

Table 4: All species recorded in Ontario survey plots at all survey sites, from 1997 to 1999

Species	Land-scape Sensitive	BA	BB	CH	CA	CL	DW	JU	MF	PR	QR	SM	TM	WH
Broad-winged Hawk	a							X	X					
Mourning Dove				X	X								X	X
Black-billed Cuckoo	d			X							X			
Red-bellied Woodpecker			X			X	X				X			
Downy Woodpecker				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Hairy Woodpecker	a								X				X	
Northern Flicker			X	X					X					
Pileated Woodpecker	a						X							
Eastern Wood-Pewee	a		X		X		X		X			X	X	
Eastern Phoebe				X			X	X			X	X	X	
Great Crested Flycatcher	a			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Blue Jay		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
American Crow		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Black-capped Chickadee				X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Tufted Titmouse		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
White-breasted Nuthatch	a				X		X		X	X			X	
Brown Creeper	a						X			X				

House Wren														X		X
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	a											X				
Veery	a			X	X			X		X	X	X		X		
Hermit Thrush					X						X	X				
Wood Thrush	a			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
American Robin				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Gray Catbird			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Northern Mockingbird					X									X		
Brown Thrasher	d				X											
Cedar Waxwing								X				X		X		X
Red-eyed Vireo	a			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Blue-winged Warbler	d							X	X							X
Yellow Warbler					X		X	X		X			X			
Prairie Warbler	d				X											
Black-and-White Warbler						X		X		X				X		
Black-throated Blue Warbler	a									X						
American Redstart	a					X		X		X		X				
Worm-eating Warbler	a					X		X		X			X	X		
Ovenbird	a			X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		
Northern Waterthrush	a							X								
Louisiana Waterthrush	a							X		X						
Common Yellowthroat					X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Hooded Warbler	a												X			
Scarlet Tanager	a			X		X		X		X	X	X				
Northern Cardinal				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

Table 4 (cont'd): All species recorded in Ontario survey plots at all survey sites, from 1997 to 1999

Species	Land-scape Sensitive [1]	BA	BB	CH	CA	CL	DW	JU	MF	PR	QR	SM	TM	WH
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	a		X		X		X		X		X		X	
Eastern Towhee	d				X	X		X	X	X			X	X
Field Sparrow	d			X										
Song Sparrow		X				X		X	X		X			
Common Grackle		X		X			X				X			X
Brown-headed Cowbird				X			X				X			
Red-winged Blackbird						X			X		X			X
European Starling									X					X
Northern Oriole		X			X				X		X		X	
House Finch					X									
American Goldfinch		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X
Barn Swallow														X
Tree Swallow				X				X						
Belted Kingfisher													X	
Mallard							X							
Killdeer		X												

Notes: Boldface type indicates that summary data is shown in Tables 2 and/or 3.

[1] "a" = area-sensitive, which includes 1) forest interior species, 2)forest interior/edge species with better reproductive success in forest interiors, and 3) resident species needing large forested territories.

"d" = disturbance-sensitive species of non-forested habitats, based on distribution in Bevier (1994), with absence from many urbanized blocks in Connecticut.

to be absent from suburban landscapes (Bevier 1994). Several of these species (annotated with "d" in Table 4) of open habitats were noted in both moderate and large-sized sites, but not in the elongated Quinnipiac River State Park site adjacent to Route 15 or at the Community Lake site, with a 10-acre forested strip along Route 15 adjacent to 40-50 acres of non-forested habitat. A total of 17 species and 23 individuals, including Blue-winged Warbler and Eastern Towhee, were recorded at the Windswept Hill site, consisting of over 150 acres of rural habitat. Disturbance-sensitive shrubland species also occurred at the survey points at Churchill Road and Deadwood Swamp, sites with good ecological integrity.

This data set underscores the importance from the standpoint of songbird conservation of preserving the ecological integrity of the very large forested tracts in Connecticut. These include the traprock ridges, the eastern and western highlands, and broad river corridors that connect larger forested hillsides tract populations into

This data set underscores the importance from the standpoint of songbird conservation of preserving the ecological integrity of the very large forested tracts in Connecticut. These include the traprock ridges, the eastern and western highlands, and broad into metapopulations*. Higher species richness on larger tracts is consistent with the findings of various ornithological researchers including Robbins (1989) and Robert Askins at Connecticut College (1993).

Forested wetlands and moist woodlands were found to be notable not only for avian species richness, but also for their productivity. These results are consistent with a widely cited Massachusetts study that found density of foliage-gleaning birds to be positively correlated with density of small shrubs (1 to 3 meters) and surface wetness (Swift et al. 1984).

The Quinnipiac study, like others, found that Wood Thrush and Red-eyed Vireo do not appear to avoid small tracts and forest edges per se. However, the area-sensitivity of these species has been documented by studies of reproductive success (Donovan et al. 1995). For a variety of neo-tropical migrants nesting success is higher in forest interior "core habitat" than in edge habitat (Paton 1997). Small wooded tracts may become a population "sink" for area-sensitive species that attempt to nest there (Temple 1986 and Donovan et al. 1995).

* The term metapopulation refers to a group of distinct populations that are, however, interconnected by some degree of gene flow.

The Quinnipiac study also shows a relationship between avian communities and ecological integrity in a non-forested setting; the absence of disturbance-sensitive shrubland species is linked to proximity of highways and suburban development. In addition to nest predation on forest edges (widely discussed in the ornithological literature), noise, light, and human activities are also factors that might eliminate certain songbird species. A study in Holland by Reijnen and Foppen (1997) showed decreased species richness and abundance closer to major roads. Residential development, with lawnmowers, leaf-blowers, etc. is another major concern for disturbance-sensitive species. Multiple *natural* clearings and a non-continuous tree canopy, however, were associated with high densities of forest-interior species *and* disturbance-sensitive shrubland species at the large Deadwood Swamp tract.

Minimizing impacts on large habitat blocks is an important consideration in selecting sites and designing large projects such as golf courses and large subdivisions. This data set substantiates the value of broad buffers for maintenance of wildlife habitat wetland function for birds.

Since 1998 development has significantly reduced habitat areas at the Churchill Road and Jude Lane sites in Southington, at Cathole Mountain in Meriden, and at the Windswept Hill site in Wallingford. Follow-up Ontario Surveys would be valuable in these areas in order to find to what extent reduction in the sizes of habitat blocks has reduced species richness and/or abundance.

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CORRECTION:

In Volume 23, Number 2, April 2003, Page 52,
Under Coastal Counts, Column GS:

The number of Snow Geese should be blank with a State Total of 16.

The number of Canada Geese should read "3876" with a State Total "38902."

EGG TURNING BEHAVIOR OF INCUBATING BALD EAGLES

Donald A. Hopkins

Determining when, in the breeding cycle of a Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), eggs have been laid, is complicated by two problems. First, the adult sits so low in the nest that it is hard to see, if indeed there is a bird in the nest, while looking up from the ground. The second problem is that prior to egg laying it is quite common for the adult to initiate pseudoincubation (Stalmaster 1987, Palmer et al. 1988). An understanding of the frequency of egg turning would help to resolve these problems.

Once eggs are laid, and continuing during the incubation process, an eagle will stand, turn the eggs with its beak, and settle down onto the eggs with a rocking motion, thus continuing the incubation process (Stalmaster 1987, Palmer, et al., 1988). All speculate that this occurs once an hour. In contrast Buehler (2000) states that no data exist on the frequency of egg turning. Knowing the frequency of egg turning makes it possible to determine how long it is necessary to observe a nest to find out if an eagle is actually incubating. During pseudoincubation the eagle does not go through this process, as no eggs are present.

Methods

While observing at four Bald Eagles nests in Connecticut during the 2002 and 2003 breeding seasons, I recorded the time interval between egg turnings. Nests were observed using a 45 power telescope at a minimum distance of 1,500 feet. In searching for comparable data I found that the eagle nest at Barton's Cove in Massachusetts has a camcorder that records the eagle's nesting activities. Through the help of the Silvio D. Conte National Wildlife Refuge I obtained a written log of one year's (1998) breeding activities. The log was produced by a person monitoring a TV screen showing a live feed from the camcorder at the nest. I define an incident as the time interval between sequential egg turning carried out by a single parent eagle while in the nest incubating the eggs.

Results

At the Connecticut nests during the 2002 breeding season, 22 sequential time intervals were recorded ranging in length from 18 to 113 minutes with an average time interval of 43 minutes. During the 2003 breeding season 20 sequential time intervals were recorded ranging in length from two to 84 minutes, with an average time interval of 32 minutes.

The Barton's Cove log recorded 58 incidences of egg turning, of which only 16 were sequential and yielded time intervals. The times ranged in length from 10 to 130 minutes with an average of 41 minutes. One egg that failed to hatch remained in the nest some 14 days after the expected hatch date and was turned 16 times, four of which were used in the above computation. The total of 58 incidents over the three years yielded an average time interval of 39 minutes.

Discussion

Although the data set is small, thus making it difficult to draw firm conclusions, my observations seem to indicate that the assumption in the literature that the eggs are turned about every hour is suspect.

The data also suggest that an hour of observation should usually be sufficient to witness at least one incident of egg turning.

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EASTERN SCREECH-OWL NESTING CYCLE: CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUNG

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The Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) is a common and widespread owl in Connecticut, nesting in a variety of habitats ranging from urban open space to a mix of forest and field. Adaptable and tolerant of human modified landscapes, their only requirements seem to be a secluded cavity for nesting and a prey base adequate to support themselves and their young during the nesting cycle.

We have studied this species for the past 30 years and have previously reported various aspects of its ecology including food habits, habitat selection, vocalizations, and foraging techniques (Devine and Smith 1996, 2002, 2003, Smith and Devine 1999). In this paper we present observations of adult care and feeding of young in the nest and during the immediate post-fledging period. We were able to obtain a limited series of observations of the care and feeding of young at a number of 16 active nests. Our most comprehensive data come from a nest box in Naugatuck, two nests in natural cavities in New Canaan, one at a natural cavity and another in a nest box in Orange, and one in a nest box in Newtown.

Nesting Chronology in Connecticut

Screech-Owls are on territory by mid-February, sometimes earlier in southern Connecticut. Single birds on territory are paired by late February or earlier. Nest sites were selected at least as early as mid-March at which time both members of a pair often remained within the general vicinity during their diurnal roosting periods. On many occasions we observed females roosting within the future nest cavity two to three weeks prior to egg-laying. On two occasions we observed both members of a pair roosting within the future nest site, a nest box, during the day.

Dates that eggs were observed for Connecticut nests ranged from 28 March to 12 May. Eggs at the Clark Road, Naugatuck, nest hatched between 7 and 12 May. Eggs at a New Canaan nest hatched between 22 and 26 April.

Young were observed in Connecticut nests from late April and into early June. Young typically fledged during the first or second week in June and remained in company with the adults for several weeks afterwards, at first in the immediate vicinity of the nest,

then later becoming more widely dispersed through the territory. Several young of the year that we had radio-marked remained within the home range for several weeks after the family group disbanded. Most young departed their natal home range by mid to late summer but at least two that we observed remained within the home range through autumn and into winter before dispersing in early spring.

These Connecticut dates generally fall within the chronology of Eastern Screech-Owl reproduction dates reported in the literature. Kelso (1944) reported eggs in mid-March in Ithaca, New York, and observed young leaving the nest between late May and mid-June, about 31 to 35 days after hatching. In Superior Township, Michigan, Craighead and Craighead (1956) found earliest egg laying date of 18 April and earliest hatching date of 2 May for 26 nests. Van Camp and Henny (1975) reported egg laying dates beginning about 15 March for most of a northern Ohio population that used nest boxes. In the Ohio study, most eggs hatched between 15 April and 5 May and the young fledged about a month later.

Behavior of Adults at the Nest

Breeding behavior of adults at nests was observed for varying periods of time. Most of our observations were conducted from blinds located 10 to 15 meters from the nest tree. We also made extended observations of a Clark Road, Naugatuck and a New Canaan nest using red lights placed to illuminate the nest entrance.

During incubation the female remained alone on the eggs throughout the daylight hours. The male did not participate in incubation, but roosted in the immediate vicinity of the nest site, generally within 5 to 15 meters, either in natural cavities or in conifer foliage. After deciduous trees leafed out the male often roosted in the canopy of the nest tree or a nearby tree.

During incubation a nightly ritual was performed at most of the nests we observed. At dusk the female cautiously appeared in the nest cavity entrance and surveyed the immediate vicinity below and around the nest. If disturbed she immediately dropped back into the nest, disappearing in a fraction of a second. After a brief time she again appeared at the nest entrance.

The male approached from his roost and landed near the nest tree, typically within five meters of the nest. He appeared to carefully survey the immediate vicinity of the nest, then gave an abbreviated warble song—a monotonic trill— which we have previously described as a summons song (Devine and Smith 2003). The male

continued to approach the nest with short flights, landing and giving the summons call each time, before continuing to another perch closer to the nest. After one to three minutes the female left the nest, usually flying to perch beside the male. At other times the pair flew away from the immediate nest site and out of our view. During the time away from the nest we observed her taking food items from the male, defecating, and occasionally bathing at a nearby shallow pond. On three occasions we observed the female hunting for food, apparently for insects and other invertebrates and feed herself.

Earliest time for females returning to the nest while incubating eggs was 12 minutes after nest departure; latest time of returning was 42 minutes. On four occasions we also observed the female leaving the nest for brief periods of time in the early morning hours just prior to daylight. Following this early morning pattern the female remained on the eggs throughout the day.

After the eggs hatched the female constantly remained with the nestlings throughout the daylight hours. She briefly left the nest in the early evening hours but returned to stay the night and brood the young. We occasionally saw the male bring food to the female, presumably to feed her and the young. We did not, however, observe the male ever brooding the young.

Towards the end of the first week, however, the female began leaving the nest in the early evening hours to forage for herself and the young. At this time both adults began bringing in food to the nest, but the female did the actual feeding of the young. She returned to stay within the nest after the initial one to two hours of feeding the newly hatched young. This routine continued for six to ten days, then as the young grew older and larger the female began roosting outside the nest but always higher within the branches of the nest tree. The male continued to roost in a nearby tree that afforded a view of the nest box or nest tree.

Feeding of Young in Nest

Systematic observations of feeding of the young at the nest were observed at two nests: a Naugatuck nest and a New Canaan nest. The Clark Road nest was in a nest box; the New Canaan nest was in a natural cavity.

Feeding activities generally began within 30 to 55 minutes after sunset, rarely later, but did vary with weather conditions. During generally cloudy and rainy conditions the adults began attending the nest within half an hour after sunset. Both adults participated in bringing food to nestlings. Allen (1924) also observed feeding of

young not earlier than 2025 hours or later than 2112 hours.

Commencing with the first food delivery, both adults flew back and forth to the nest with food, sometimes making two trips within a minute. Most items were small and presumably insects. The number of trips to deliver prey ranged from 0.14 per minute to 2.1 per minute during our observation periods, which extended through the early evening hours (Table 1). These delivery rates are considerably higher than reported in the literature. Gehlbach, for example, reported prey delivery rates ranging from 2.4 to 5.1 items per hour and Bent (1938) gives a wide range of prey delivery schedules, mostly anecdotal but still valuable. The delivery rates we observed were of adults feeding to the young invertebrate food, which were abundant in the immediate vicinity of the nest. As the adults began feeding the young more birds and mammals and fewer insects and other invertebrates, their rate of prey delivery to the nest decreased considerably.

For about one week following hatching, adults entered the nest boxes with food. As the young grew and were able to move about within the confines of the nest cavity, the oldest and strongest usually took up position at the cavity entrance and consequently received most of the food delivered. For example, detailed observations revealed that the most aggressive owlet perched at the entrance took all of the food items for the first 18 deliveries before being displaced. A second owlet received the next 24 food items before it was displaced by the last owlet, which took six food items during a 20 minute period. Prey was exchanged from adults to owlets by mandible to mandible as the adult clung to the side of the nest box or briefly hovered at the nest opening.

Feeding of Fledged Young

Following the fledging of the young and nest abandonment the owlets from a number of broods were observed for varying periods of time. During the first few days fledglings perched in branches either in the nest tree or in nearby trees. This roosting procedure continued through the several weeks that we were able to follow the young. None returned to roost in the natal nest cavity and none roosted in cavities. Fledglings usually remained huddled together during the diurnal hours with one or more adults roosting close by, generally above and within two to nine meters of the fledglings.

First flights of the newly fledged owlets were short and landings were poor and sometimes badly misjudged. After much scrambling, clinging, and climbing about the owlets were able to

assume an upright perching position on the branch. Within only a few days, however, the young became much more adept at flying and would often make short flights to greet adults returning with food for them. The return of either adult with food would initiate the raspy begging calls from all of the young. Generally food was given to the most persistent and nearest begging young. By the end of the first week and continuing thereafter we occasionally observed young hunting for insects in low branches or on the ground. Although initial strike attempts were clumsy, even comical, at least a few of the young were able to grasp and eat invertebrates such as caterpillars by the end of the first week. In subsequent weeks the family group moved further away from the nest site, although still remaining within the home range, and became increasingly harder for us to find and observe.

By four to nine weeks disbanding of family groups varied somewhat, but was complete by nine weeks for all 12 family groups that we observed. Some owlets disappeared from a family group very quickly but we were unable to determine if they had simply left on their own, become separated by accident, or fallen victim to a predator. Other family groups persisted for longer periods as owlets kept company with one another, with or without the company of the adults. By mid-to-late summer all family groups had disbanded.

Table 1. Feeding Rates of Nestling Eastern Screech-Owls. Based on Observations at a Clark Road, Naugatuck, Connecticut Nest.

Date	First Arrival Time	Sunset	No. Prey Items Delivered	Time of Observations in Minutes	Number Prey Items/Minute
17 May	2025	1942	2	15	0.14
19 May	2041	1943	1	5	0.2
20 May	2039	1944	21	10	2.1
21 May	2041	1945	2	4	0.5
23 May	2040	1946	4	8	0.5
28 May	2039	1950	23	21	1.1
29 May	2046	1950	16	9	1.8
1 June	2025	1952	15	18	0.8
2 June	2027	1952	27	33	0.8
5 June	2035	1954	48	85	0.6
		Total:	Prey 159	Minutes 127	Ave/Min 1.25

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We wish to thank Debbie Gendron who helped greatly with nest observation of the Naugatuck pair, Neil Currie who kindly told Buzz Devine about the Taft School, Watertown nest, and Elinor Smith who helped with the proof-reading and editing of this manuscript.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jamie Meyers

Birds of Eastern and Central North America, Peterson Field Guides, Roger Tory Peterson, (2002, 433 pages, Houghton Mifflin, New York, NY, $22.00, hard bound softcover).

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Fourth Edition, Various authors (2002, 480 pages, National Geographic, Washington DC, $21.95, softcover).

Updates to two of the most popular field guides in recent times were released within months of each other during 2002 to surprisingly little fanfare. That in itself is telling about how glutted the market in birding field guides is. And it also suggests how well-regarded the Sibley Guide to the Birds and other specialty guides have become in a very short period of time, that neither of these updates to what were birding standards when I entered the hobby in the not so long gone mid-nineties have made much of a splash.

Both burst onto the scene making basically the same claim – that they're "fully revised and updated," and by inference, ready to fight hand in hand with the best of the best in the new century. In the case of Peterson, which is the fifth edition of the legendary guide that revolutionized birding, that is fairly true. The same cannot be said of the latest version of the "Geo" guide, which successfully challenged Peterson during the last decade but seems to be falling behind now.

Most serious birders probably know the story behind the publishing of the fifth edition of the Peterson guide. Dr. Peterson devoted a significant portion of his latter years working on this update, the first since 1980, and was working on a plate of tropical flycatchers for the book on the day he passed away in 1996. Afterwards, a team of experts including such notables as Noble Proctor and Paul Lehman worked on finishing what Peterson had mostly completed. The result is a work that still serves as the best introductory guide to the birds, on the market today.

Those familiar with previous editions (and who isn't?) will notice several immediate changes. First, the book is larger; it's only a

pocket guide now for someone who has supersized pockets. Another change is that thumbnail range maps now appear alongside each species' account, in addition to those that still appear in the back of the book. The maps in the back of the book remain, and are well updated, though they don't include migration paths, which is a drawback. Someone looking at the Vesper Sparrow map might conclude that the species never occurs in Connecticut as the state shows white on the map, and that of course is untrue. On the other hand, most other guides show the species as a summer resident, which is a stretch. In any event, it's evident to me that some care was taken in their preparation. The third difference is that many of marginally "eastern" species, especially those found in southern Texas, are included. One criticism of this volume has been that not all of the south Texas specialties appear here, and I agree with that. Why illustrate such rarities as Blue Bunting and Golden-crowned Warbler yet leave out Texas nesters like Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet?

But there is much to admire here. Sections on identification of difficult groups such as young gulls and shorebirds were expanded for this edition, and, while many of the plates will be familiar to those who carried previous Petersons around like their Bibles, revisions made to this volume reflect some knowledge gleaned on identification during the two decades since the 4th edition was released. Few would argue that Dr. Peterson's lasting legacy is that he introduced generations of budding birders to bird identification made basic and simple, and if I were to recommend one introductory guide for a neophyte, it would still be this one.

In contrast, it's puzzling why the National Geographic Society decided to issue a new edition of its field guide, since the most noticeable change is that the cover is a different color. Unlike Peterson, which features dozens of new or changed plates, the latest Geo guide sports a skimpy seven new or changed plates, which isn't enough to warrant a new edition. The orioles no longer look pudgy and fat-faced, but too many other songbirds, especially the sparrows, still do. There is a nice section in the beginning on birding basics, but other than that, I don't see where anyone currently using the third edition Geo, which itself was published only a few years ago, would reap more than marginal benefits from "upgrading" to this new volume. If you don't have a third edition Geo, this volume might be one to consider for addition to the bookshelf, but if you do, your money is better spent elsewhere.

JAMIE MEYERS, 4 Sexton Hollow Rd., Canton, CT 06019

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES WINTER, DECEMBER 1, 2002 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2003

Greg Hanisek

Cold, snowy weather returned with a vengeance, marked by a sizeable storm as early as December 5 and a very white Christmas. Temperatures fell below 0 degrees F. in mid-January, and a snowstorm beginning February 17 dropped more than 20 inches in many parts of the state, the fourth largest accumulation since 1869. Frozen lakes and ponds sent waterfowl coastward for the most part, although small oases of open water, such as Folly Cove at Bantam Lake in Litchfield and the Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield proved magnets for aquatic species. The wintry weather did not correspond with a flight of northern finches, but raptors appeared in good numbers and a record invasion of Razorbills entered Long Island Sound. A nice collection of rarities was headed up by the first Harris's Sparrow in almost 20 years, a long-staying Black-throated Gray Warbler, and a backyard Varied Thrush.

GREBES THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-necked Grebes were off New Haven December 18 (CWo), off Madison December 28 (JC), off New London January 4 (MA), off Mystic January 18 (FN), off Stamford January 25 (PDu) and off Greenwich January 26 (MSa); by mid-February sightings began to increase in anticipation of a very heavy spring flight. An **Eared Grebe**, an annual rarity in recent years, was seen sporadically off Groton beginning January 16 (DP). Up to three Great Cormorants moved up the Naugatuck River as far as Waterbury in February to take advantage of a warm-water discharge that also attracted a Black-crowned Night Heron (RP et al.). As usual, one or more American Bitterns wintered at Hammonassett Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) in Madison (SG et al.); one was in Old Saybrook January 5 (JO et al.). A good concentration of 19 Great Blue Herons visited Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield February 14 (RD). The ever-expanding Black Vul-

tures made an appearance near the far eastern coast when two were over Smith Cove in Waterford January 25 (DSo).

The season's two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were singles December 12 at Holly Pond in Stamford (PDu) and February 2 in Ellington (MO). Norwalk Harbor held c. 1,000 Brant December 7 (FMa), and good numbers persisted throughout the season, with c. 1,000 February 1 in Westport and a similar number February 9 at Greenwich Point (MSa). The season's only **Tundra Swans** were two December 3 at Milford Point (PS) and a single December 7 at HBSP (AOt). Indicative of the waterfowl movement to the coast during the deep freeze, South Cove in Old Saybrook held the following on January 13: 100+ Mallards, c. 2,000 American Black Ducks, 25 Northern Pintails, 20 Gadwall, and a Green-winged Teal (GH). Bantam Lake in Litchfield supported a good inland concentration of 90 American Black Ducks January 24 (DRo). The season's three **Eurasian Wigeon** were at the usual wintering sites in West Haven and Stamford (m.ob.). Redheads totaled c. eight for the season; they were all along the coast as expected with the exception of one January 16 at Bantam Lake (DRo). A scaup flock built to 7,000 off Shippan Point, Stamford, on February 21 (PDu). Laurel Reservoir in New Canaan held a good winter count of 73 Ring-necked Ducks December 9 (FG). Two female **King Eiders** were noted for the season, one wintering at HBSP after arriving in November (m.ob.) and one off Stamford December 13-18 (PDu). An adult male **Harlequin Duck** was found January 10 at Shippan Point (PDu). Black Scoters are uncommon in state waters outside of migration periods, so five in the Connecticut River at Old Saybrook January 1 were noteworthy (DSo), as were four on January 5 off Stratford (CB). A good flock of c. 100 White-winged Scoters was off Long Beach, Stratford, a traditional spot for this species, on February 4 (AD). The only **Barrow's Goldeneye** reported for the season was a female February 10 at Shippan Point (PDu); this species has become harder to find in recent years. Of special interest was a Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser at Shippan Point on January 25 (PDu). This classic hybrid between two cavity nesters is illustrated in Kortright•fs "*Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America.*" Widespread reports of **Ruddy Ducks** were topped by 500+ gathered at Old Saybrook January 1 as frigid weather froze lakes and ponds (DSo).

RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

An Osprey was late December 3 at Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton (MSz), but far more remarkable was a single bird that apparently wintered on the Naugatuck River in Waterbury, where it took advantage of a warm-water discharge from a sewage plant. It was first noted January 22 (GA) and was seen on a number of occasions in February (m.ob.). Bald Eagles were widespread around the state; the number wintering on the lower Connecticut River climbed to 80+ by the end of February (KE, m.ob.). A Northern Goshawk was at HBSP January 1 (CR); another was at Greenwich Point January 8 (MSa). A strong incursion of Rough-legged Hawks occurred in mid-January, mostly along the coast but including some inland sightings, after a December in which few were reported. The period January 17-20 generated coastal reports for about 10 birds (m.ob.), and one spent about a week at Bradley International Airport in late January (RT). Reports of four Golden Eagles included one at Montville January 24 (DP) and up to three among the Bald Eagle hordes along the lower Connecticut River (HG et al.) Among the widely reported Peregrines along the coast, one was on a Gadwall kill January 25 at Oyster River in West Haven (RN et al.), conjuring memories of their old-time name — Duck Hawk.

Virginia Rails are hard to find but probably present in small numbers every winter; there were two on the New Haven CBC Dec. 14. The same could be said of Clapper Rail, which was detected January 6 at HBSP (FMa et al.). An American Woodcock was still present December 5 in New London (GW); it would be interesting to know how many attempt to winter in the state. At least three Common Snipe wintered in tidal ditches in Stratford (PF et al.). **Black-headed Gulls** were at Eastern Point in Groton December 16 (DP), at HBSP January 1 (DSo), and in Milford February 8-15 (CB, NH). The closing of landfills hasn't discouraged **Iceland Gulls** from visiting the state; at least 20 were reported during the winter. Reports of five **Glaucous Gulls** for the season included one inland in Windsor December 28 (BK), and five **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were reported, including one inland January 13 at Aspetuck Reservoir in Fairfield (ER). A gull flock at Smith Cove in Waterford built to 5,000+ from January 12-20 with at least three Iceland, two Glaucous and one Lesser Black-backed Gull re-

ported (DP, RD, SFr et al.). **Black-legged Kittiwakes** are rare in Long Island Sound, so it was noteworthy that singles were well-seen at Stamford December 25 (FG, PDu) and off New London January 2 (NB). A major **Razorbill** incursion fit the recent pattern of species more typically found in the ocean entering Long Island Sound (Northern Gannet, Wilson's Storm-Petrel) in larger numbers. At the eastern end of the Sound as many as 10 to 12 at a time were being seen from shore in December and January, and a few were present as far west as Stamford and Greenwich during that period. Most surprising was a huge incursion into the western end of the Sound that produced more than 100 in Westchester County, N.Y., waters December 22, with more than 20 Razorbills/large alcids off Stamford that day (PDu et al.). In conjunction with the Razorbill flight, one **Thick-billed Murre** was seen off Waterford January 4 (LV).

OWLS THROUGH THRUSHES

Barn Owls were reported from three locations, all near the coast, a good showing for this scarce species. One was hunting in late afternoon daylight in Groton (GW); the others occupied roosts in buildings in Fairfield and New Haven counties. A total of six **Snowy Owls** for the season included a

Snowy Owl at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, CT December 1, 2002 *Photo by Rollin Tebbetts*

roadkill January 26 on Interstate 95 in West Haven (TB) and a bird far inland at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks during the first week of December (RT, MO fide CEk). One that appeared January 2 at Long Beach in Stratford (JC) remained there the rest of the winter. In addition to the usual coastal reports, Short-eared Owls were inland December 15 at a closed landfill in Naugatuck (TS), at Bradley International Airport in late January (RT et al.), in Manchester February 21 (SFo), and at Hartford landfill February 25 (DSp). A road-killed Short-ear was noted January 26 in Madison (TB). Long-eared Owls were present at several roosts in the coastal counties. At least six Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered in the state, an unusually high number. The birds were found in Newtown (NC), Waterford (DP), New Fairfield (RO), Simsbury (BT), and two in West Hartford (JMe).

Despite frigid, snowy weather single Eastern Phoebes were still present December 28 in Windsor (BK), December 30 in Westport (PS) and, remarkably, February 8 in Hamden (JHo). A modest flight of **Northern Shrikes** produced about six for the season, including three on Litchfield Hills CBC (fide RBe). Others were reported from Middlefield January 6 (GH), Plainfield January 11 (RD) and New Hartford January 15 (PCa). Five Fish Crows were still present at White Memorial in Litchfield December 15, with one lingering to January 5 (DRo); in the east, one hung around Willimantic until at least December 23 (MSz). The ever-increasing Common Raven made an appearance in the Connecticut Valley when one showed up December 17 at Gillette Castle in East Haddam (DCh). Horned Larks were widespread along the coast, with c. 150 in the Stratford Great Meadows area December 6 (JMe). However, the biggest concentrations were inland with c. 300 on January 28 in the vicinity of Bradley Airport in Windsor Locks (JMe) and up to 500 at Stearns farm in Mansfield January 29 (MSz). A House Wren was still present December 14 in Southbury (MSz), and at least four Marsh Wrens lingered to December 15 at White Memorial (DRo, EH). Three Ruby-crowned Kinglets December 28 in Windsor was a good count in a winter when even Golden-crowned Kinglets were quite scarce (BK). One of the season's prize finds was a female **Varied Thrush** that visited a feeder in Hamden for several days in late January (fide JZi).

WARBLERS THRUGH NORTHERN FINCHES

In keeping with a cold, snowy winter, the number of warbler species reported was rather low. Two Orange-crowned Warblers for the season were singles at Kosciuszko Park in Stamford, where it was banded, (PDu et al.) and in the Lordship section of Stratford in January (NC). The often-sought and often-seen **Black-throated Gray Warbler** found in November at HBSP wintered, but it became difficult to locate by late January (m.ob.). A Common Yellowthroat lingered to December 15 at White Memorial (EH, DRo). The four Yellow-breasted Chats for the season included one that appeared December 7 in a New Haven backyard (SKa); this species is probably easier to find in winter in the state than at any other time of year. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** discovered on the Greenwich-Stamford CBC wintered at Kosciuszko Park in Stamford (JMh et al.). The only Vesper Sparrow report came from Milford December 21 (fide SM). A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow turned up January 30 in the Stratford Great Meadows (CB). Three reports of Lincoln's Sparrow were unusual for a species found less than annually in winter. One wintered at the edge of Stratford Great Meadows (FMa et al.), one was reported January 5 in Litchfield (PCa) and one was caught and banded January 4 in Litchfield (GLo). A count of 23 White-crowned Sparrows on December 14 in Southbury was a unusually high for winter, even more so for an inland location (MSz). An adult **Harris's Sparrow**, the first one confirmed in the state since 1986, wintered at a feeder in Bloomfield and was photographed (fide JK).

A **Dickcissel** was seen and photographed December 14 in New Milford (DTr). Excellent mid-winter counts of (presumably) Eastern Meadowlarks were 11 on January 29 at Great Island in Old Lyme (JR) and 25+ on February 2 at Barn Island in Stonington (BDw). In addition to the usual December lingerers, a flock of 13 Rusty Blackbirds was at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield January 5 (RD) and 12 were in Middlefield February 11 (JMa); singles were in a Killingworth yard February 9 (CA) and a New Haven yard February 18-19 (GLe). Three **Boat-tailed Grackles** wintered in the vicinity of a trash transfer station in Stratford, near New England's only breeding site (CB et al). A late Baltimore Oriole turned up at Haley Farm State Park in Groton December 2 (JR). In a winter when even the more regular northern finches such as Purple Finch and Pine Siskin were hard to find, the only

Evening Grosbeaks reported were five in a Guilford yard January 13 (LG).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 145 Farmington Ave., Waterbury, CT 06710) if they are to be included in the field notes].

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PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 43

Face-to-face with a large raptor perched overhead, we are taken aback by the bird's fearlessness. The bird does not flush, but intently stares us down. At such close range, we can't seem to put a name to it. At first, the assumption that the bird is a young Red-tailed Hawk, is based only on size, since nothing about its plumage indicates that species. We quickly rolodex through our memory banks but nothing, Red-tailed, Red-shouldered?...dark morph Rough-legged Hawk?? seems to fit. We note a diffuse dark maler stripe, uniformly dark upperparts with narrow pale fringes (typical of a juvenile bird) and the coarsely streaked underparts. Look again more closely at the long pointed wingtip, and the tail which projects beyond the tips of the wings and we realize that we are looking not at the shape of a buteo, but that of a falcon...and a big one at that! Juvenile Peregrine would show a more contrasting head pattern with more marked malar stripes and wingtips, which reach as far as the tip of the tail. The long tail, broad streaks on the underparts and, more significantly, the under tail coverts (which rule out most buteos and regularly occurring falcons) are all trade

marks of a Gyrfalcon. Look at those talons! This dark assassin from the north is a rare visitor to New England and this individual terrorized the now defunct West Haven Landfill in December 1987 and for several months in 1988.

Large, dark female Peregrines are always a pitfall for the unwary, but when seen well, the huge size, slightly rounded wingtips and full tail should be evident to those familiar with Peregrine Falcons. Given excellent views, the diagnostic two-toned underwing pattern, combined with heavily marked underparts (notably on dark morphs), diffuse malar stripes, all need to be well-described on putative Gyrs, especially if they are to gain acceptance from many rarities committees.

By coincidence, everyday I drive by the spot where this bird roosted during its stay. Envious, I hope it will not be long before another long-stayer graces the state.

This excellent photograph of a juvenile Gyrfalcon was taken by the late Ray Schwartz in New Haven, Connecticut in 1988.

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Photo Challenge 44 Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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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

Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*)

by Julian Hough

Our front cover artwork by Julian is of a fairly common species found throughout Connecticut woodlands and one, many beginning birders confuse with the more common Downy Woodpecker.

Julian is a freelance artist, photographer, and writer. Many of his articles have appeared in major birding journals, as well as in *The Connecticut Warbler*. Julian's artwork has graced a number of our front covers and we are grateful for his quarterly photo challenge answers.

SITE GUIDE
Branford Trolley Trail - Branford, Connecticut

Dwight G. Smith, Arnold Devine and Robert K. Mongillo, Jr.

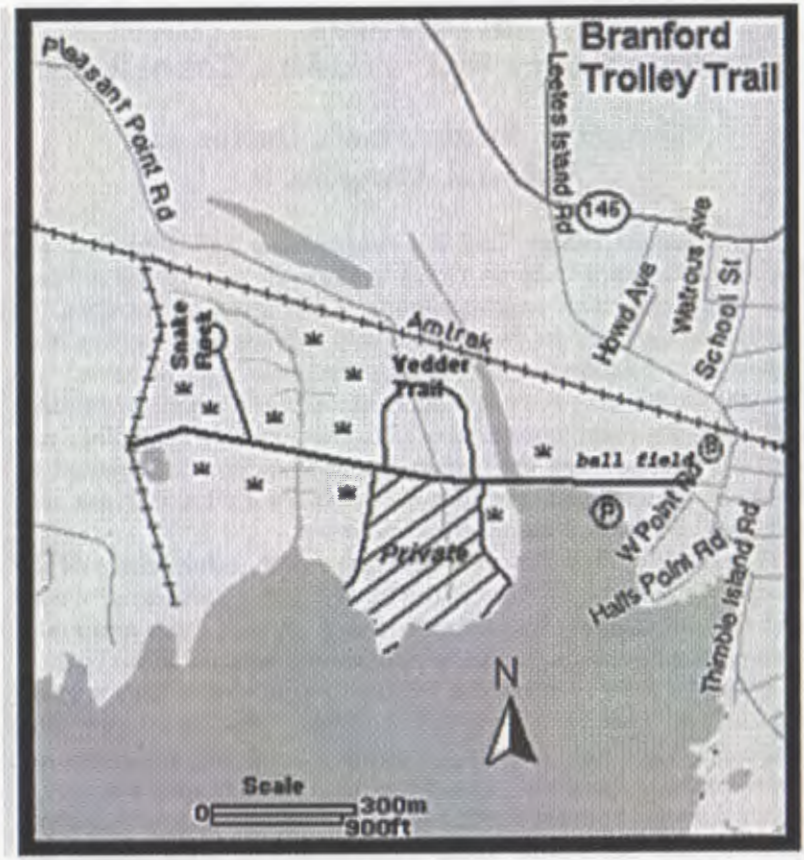
The Branford Trolley Trail is a remnant of a trolley line that ran from Pine Orchard to Stony Creek in the early part of the 20th century, connecting two neighborhoods in the town of Branford. As trolley use declined in the early to mid 20th century, the Branford trolley line was abandoned, and later the tracks were removed. Today, the trolley line supports an easily accessible and traversable trail along the coast, known as the Branford Trolley Trail. The Trolley Trail encompasses the former Branford trolley line, owned by the town of Branford, portions of the Branford Land Trust, and two small sections of state-owned property.

The Trolley Trail bisects a tidal salt marsh, offers views of the Thimble Islands, and presents the birder with a mixture of woodland and salt marsh ecosystems to enjoy. Each of these areas supports distinct avian populations at different seasons of the year.

During winter months, the Trolley Trail is host to ducks, gulls, and several species of raptors including the occasional owl. Through spring and summer, primarily during migration seasons, herons, egrets, waterfowl, shorebirds, and birds of prey can be observed. Nesting species include Clapper Rail, Marsh Wren, Seaside Sparrow, and Salt Marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, while Glossy Ibis forages during this season but breeds elsewhere. Birding is best on weekdays or early in the morning, as the trail is popular with runners, bikers, and dog walkers in the afternoon and on weekends. Both the hours and the seasons are unlimited and there are no posted restrictions. Restrooms are not available, so plan accordingly.

DIRECTIONS

On Interstate 95 Northbound take Exit 56 (Leetes Island, Stony Creek). At the end of the exit ramp take a right turn onto Leetes Island Road. If southbound on Interstate 95 take Exit 56 and turn left at the traffic light at the end of the exit ramp. Continue 0.3 miles to the traffic light and turn left onto Leetes Island Road. Continue on Leetes Island Road for 2.1 miles and take a right turn onto West Point Road (just beyond the railroad overpass). Drive through the narrow cut and proceed straight ahead on a gravel road to the



baseball field on the right. Park and lock your car. The trail starts at this point and continues westward.

BIRDING

The Branford Trolley Trail offers a pleasant hour or two of birding and wildlife appreciation along a one to two mile route depending on which spur trail you take. The trail guide we describe herein includes the core trail spanning east to west, which is the former trolley line right-of-way, and two side trails.

The baseball field and vicinity offers an opportunity to view Barn and Tree Swallows, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackles, and Red-winged Blackbirds. Just beyond the ball field, wildflowers line the path leading to a remote grassy out-cropping on the south side of the trail. A large oak tree in the center of this small refuge provides a pseudo roof for the surrounding wall of

brambly shrubs. Multiflora Rose, Beach Rose, and Winterberry encroach a lone cedar tree where Northern Mockingbirds nest in the protection of the bramble. On occasion, Cedar Waxwings can be observed plucking berries from the surroundings.

The trail continues to a bridge spanning a tidal creek that is flanked by a tidal marsh that stretches to north and south. The bridge offers an open vantagepoint to view the tidal marsh to the south with Stony Creek and a portion of the Thimble Islands beyond. Northward the tidal marsh continues to the active Amtrak rail line and an Osprey platform that sometimes supports an active nesting pair. Both north and south views from the bridge provide prime opportunities for viewing egrets and gulls. Great and Snowy Egrets and Great Blue Herons are reasonably common species that can be spotted from the bridge.

Continue across the bridge to the woodland. Here you have a choice of entering a loop trail to the right, marked with a white circle or continuing straight on the main trail. This trail works through the Vedder Property owned by the Branford Land Trust. The well-marked trail winds through a pleasant deciduous woodland down towards the edge of the marsh, then swings uphill through a coastal upland habitat.

During May migration the wooded habitat along the loop trail supports a variety of thrushes, warblers, vireos, and other song birds to be spotted and identified by a diligent birder. Other typical woodland/edge species such as Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch can be found here. The trail continues uphill, then crosses Pleasant Point Road. Shortly beyond the roadway you come to a high rocky ledge that offers a spectacular overview of a salt marsh and coastline including closeup views of an Osprey nest that was active in 2003. The overlook is also a vantage point to view the expanse of marsh. Monk Parakeets have also been observed nesting in trees in this area. From the ledge scan the shallow pools for the larger shorebirds. From the ledge the trail loops downhill to rejoin the Branford Trolley Trail. Here you can continue along the old trolley trail to explore the western segment of the salt marsh.

If you elect to bypass the Vedder property loop-trail, continue straight through the rock cut and along a rather unique portion of the Trolley Trail. The surrounding habitat begins to resemble that of a woodland swamp. In the heat of summer, this moist area becomes a refuge for swarms of insects. For those interested, several different species of dragonflies and butterflies can be located in this area.

As you exit the rock cut and continue westward (or rejoin the trail from the side loop) the Trolley Trail leads through large salt marsh and over a concrete bridge that was constructed with the support of the Long Island Sound Fund in the mid 1990's. This bridge spans a large tidal creek and allows travel across the marsh at high tide making it easier and less intrusive to the surroundings. Be sure to stay off the marsh, as it is both destructive and disruptive to the bird populations, especially during the nesting season.

In the winter, activity here is mainly limited to the cry of gulls over the ocean and along the shores of the tidal creeks. The large Black-backed Gulls scavenge the surroundings as hoards of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls circle the shore. Other species occurring during this season include Red-breasted Merganser and Greater Scaup in the tidal creek and Northern Harrier foraging just above the marsh.

It is not until April that the real show begins! As the season progresses, plovers, sandpipers, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs can be spotted walking among the seemingly lifeless marsh grass. Barn, Bank, and Tree Swallows fervently fly back and forth over the trail as they intercept insects over the marsh grasses. Even the larger Purple Martins make an occasional appearance. The swallows occasionally take a break for a photo on the telephone wires overhead. At low tide the banks of the tidal creek seem to fairly crawl as teams of fiddler crabs skittle along, evading herons, egrets, and other shorebirds. Glossy Ibis are regular on the marsh during summer months, which now appears green with life. Look carefully as the snake-like neck of the Double-crested Cormorant can be spotted in the creek as it swims against the current with its body almost completely submerged. Belted Kingfishers build nests in the distant banks of this creek. Clapper Rails feed in the marsh and along the creek and Red-Shoulder Hawks hunt the adjacent uplands and surrounding marsh. Killdeer, Semipalmated Plovers, Willets, Dunlins, and Spotted, Semipalmated, and Least Sandpipers are found during migration in this portion of the tidal marsh. Both the Common Tern and Least Tern can sometimes be seen foraging along the tidal creek.

Across the creek and to the north side of the marsh, a nesting platform is visible. A pair of Osprey occupy this platform. On the south side of the marsh, a large dead tree lurks over the marsh. At dusk, in mid-late summer egrets and herons can be seen roosting in the branches of this tree providing a picturesque scene. Check carefully for Little Blue Heron, an infrequent to rare visitor most often spotted in late summer or early autumn.

As you continue westward along the trail you will find a dike (about 300 yards from the tidal creek) heavily lined with reeds and heading north (to the right) into the marsh. A blazed trail along the dike and through the reeds leads to an upland "island" in the marsh. (Note: during summer the trail is normally hidden by the reed grass growth). This area is commonly referred to as Snake Rock Island. Snake Rock Island is woodland situated almost within the heart of the adjacent tidal marsh. This secluded area serves as a sanctuary for a variety of woodland birds and small mammals. It is here that the first signs of owls in the marsh are observed. Scout the ground for owl pellets as you head through the woods to the back of the island. Pellets in excess of four inches in length mark the nesting area of a Great Horned Owl. At dusk, the calling of Barred Owls can sometimes be heard while raccoons can often be observed shell fishing.

Year-round avian inhabitants of Snake Island woodland may include Hairy, Downy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers that can be heard chiseling trees for insects. Other woodpeckers including Northern Flicker and less commonly Yellow-bellied Sapsucker can also occasionally be observed during migration periods. Songbirds are most commonly observed during spring migration and in summer months. The marsh that fringes Snake Island is home to nesting Green Herons.

On the northern side of the island, an American Kestrel can often be seen perched among the taller trees that overlook the open marsh. Nesting warblers include Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and American Redstart.

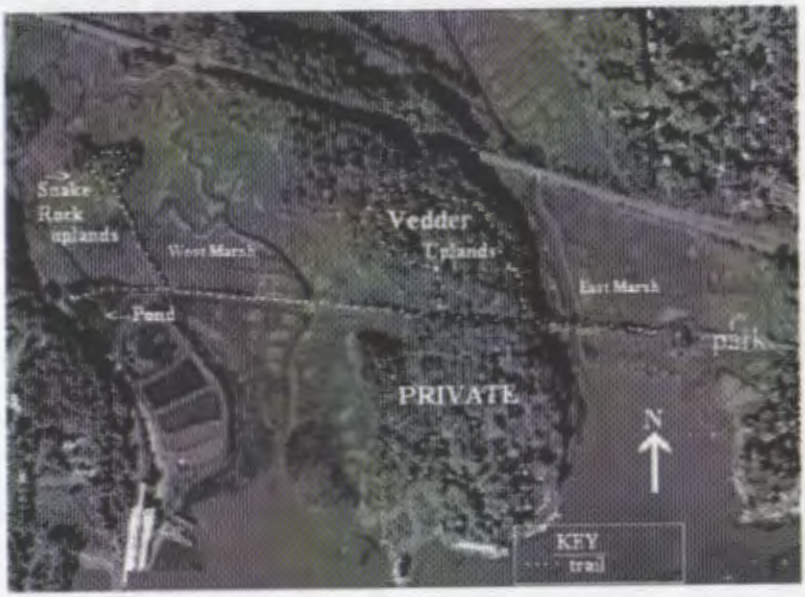
The last section of trail is usually the most productive for several nesting species. Along this stretch of marsh look for Marsh Wren, Seaside Sparrow, and Salt Marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow which all nest in limited numbers.

At the end of the trail is a small pond to the left just before the railroad tracks. This pond is an ideal location for bird and wildlife observations as it is somewhat secluded and rich in plant life, which provides food for resident populations. Take a seat on the bank or on the nearby oak tree that stretches out over the pond. In the early months of the year, this pond is one of the more productive areas along the trail. Winter waterfowl that frequent the pond include Black Duck, Mallard, and Green-winged Teal. Herons may also be present here including the more elusive Green Heron, which is frequently hidden among the reed grasses.

In late winter, the song of the Red-winged Blackbird signifies the beginning of migration. Large flocks frequent this particular

portion of the trail from the middle of March on through the seasons. In April, as the pond begins to teem with insect larvae and small fish, the more common marsh waders return. The cordgrass provides excellent cover for the birds. In the past King Rail has occurred during migration and may occasionally nest near the pond or surrounding vicinity.

Beyond the pond the Branford Trolley Trail terminates at the railroad tracks. This is an active railroad line so please be cautious in this area. If you still feel like walking you can continue to the north on a trail maintained by the Branford Land Trust.



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JUNCO COLORATION AND ADAPATATION FOR WINTER COLD

Paul Carrier

Why has the junco, mainly (*Junco hyemalis*) evolved the coloration of black upperparts and white underparts, and how does this contribute to the bird's winter survival?

For a bird that spends much of the winter foraging and feeding in snow laden environments, the idea of being black might first seem an evolutionary mistake. But evolution presumably never allows mistakes to propagate, and if black was not a favorable color for the junco, then this bird, at this time, would most likely be another color.

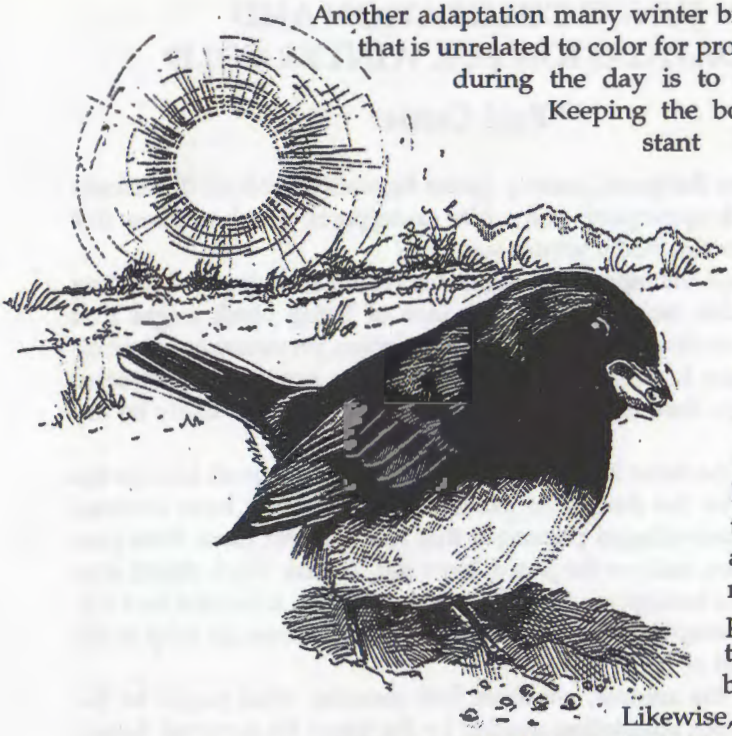
One of the most important threats facing any small bird in the wild, must be the danger of predation. Many birds have evolved cryptic or camouflaged plumages that help protect them from predation; others, such as the junco, have not. A dark black object, stirring against a background of white such as snow, is not the best coloration for escaping the vision of a hungry predator; so why is the junco colored so?

To find the answer, we must first consider what might be the most important adaptation needed by the junco for survival during the winter.

Although predation is certainly a concern for this bird at any time of the year, cold is most likely a larger threat during the winter. For a bird weighing only 15 to 20 grams, the cold can quickly overcome its metabolic furnace, especially during long cold winter nights, possibly resulting in death. So how does the junco's two-tone coloration help keep this small bird from loosing precious body heat?

Let's start with the **Black (slate-gray) upperparts**. Research has shown dark colors, such as black, absorb heat from sunlight better than do light colors. In an experiment with white and dark dyed Zebra Finches exposed to the sun, the dark birds became less active metabolically than the whites (Marchand 1996). So during the day, while the sun is shining, the junco's dark upperparts absorb solar energy, adding precious heat to its body energy.

One morning I observed a junco position itself with its black back towards the sun. While sitting still in the suns rays, it lowered the wing tips down, exposing more of its rump and back, allowing more surface to be heated by the sun's rays.

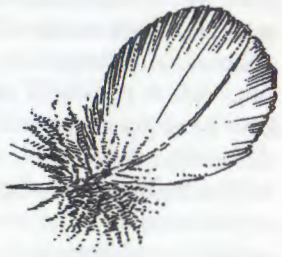


Another adaptation many winter birds employ that is unrelated to color for producing heat during the day is to stay active. Keeping the body in constant movement generates muscular heat. As you might notice during the coldest days, many birds seem to become hyperactive. This is a functional response performed to produce body heat. Likewise, on cold nights many birds have the habit of shivering. This involuntary mechanism serves the same purpose as daytime activity, in producing heat through muscular use.

However, there is a price to pay for adapting movement for generating added heat, and that price is calories. If the junco has not gathered enough food, then it will not be able to accomplish these heat-producing activities mentioned above.

What advantage might **white underparts** have towards preserving body heat? All white feather barbules lack the color granular pigment melanin. This substance gives feathers their color. The absence of melanin granules allows more air to be trapped within the feather structure, resulting in better insulation. The minus side to this better insulation is in reduced feather strength. Melanin helps strengthen the feather. However, body feathers on most birds do not need to be strong, flight feathers do, and that is a trade off most birds give up in favor of more efficient insulation among body feathers. It is also interesting to note that white animal fur (hair) has the same advantage of better insulation through larger air spaces within hollow hairs. This is a good explanation as to why several arctic mammal species change over to a white coat during winter (Marchand 1996).

A study in western North America observing winter birds having mostly black or mostly white plumages found that the darker birds tended to look for night roosts within cover, benefiting from surrounding insulation. The white-feathered birds, however, chose to roost in the open. This result was thought to show how much better the white bird's insulation qualities are compared to the darker group (Marchand 1996). White feathers have also been found to minimize heat exchange (loss) into the environment over dark feathers.



The junco's contoured white under body feathers also have another feature that helps retain body heat. These feathers possess so-called "after feathers." The bottom portion of these feathers contains plumulaceous downy barbs, adding thickness, and greatly enhancing insulation for heat retention.

Two other features unrelated to feathers that help birds get through the harsh cold winter nights are accumulated fat and digestion. Stored fat, added from excess calories consumed, burn's off slowly during the night producing inner heat. In addition, digestion of the bird's last meal also produces inner body heat. It is the job of the feathering to retain as much of this precious body heat as possible, to get the bird through a long cold night.

Conclusion:

The combination of darker upperparts and white underparts appears to serve the junco well in overcoming the rigors of winter cold. The sheer numbers of juncos counted each year here in Connecticut during the Christmas Count period, with no appreciable declines, attests to their abilities to withstand cold harsh weather.

Evolution has designed the junco to be a seemingly perfect winter survivor, and the two-tone color-combination appears to work well for them.

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THE 2003 CONNECTICUT SUMMER BIRD COUNT

Joseph Zeranski and Patrick Comins

Ornithology is perhaps unique among the sciences in the degree to which professional scientists and conservationists rely upon the data collected by volunteer observers. Were it not for the avian data collected by volunteers, we would have little clue as to population trends of concern until it was too late to correct those trends without expensive and controversial remedial action. Additionally, our knowledge of the distribution of key species would not be sufficient to allow for effective prioritization of limited conservation resources.

Such projects also serve another purpose, getting people out into the field to enjoy the marvelous, interesting and beautiful creatures that birds are. How many of us got our start in birding through taking part in a Christmas or Summer Bird Count, leading us on the lifelong passion that birding can be? The importance of this aspect cannot be understated, as people are far more likely to work to conserve things when they have a personal connection with them and citizen science projects are a great way to connect people with nature.

As have earlier COA Summer Bird Counts [SBC], the 2003 SBC provided critical insight into the status and distribution of bird species in Connecticut. One hundred and ninety species were observed on count days, just about normal. Participation in this year's Summer Bird Count was slightly down, although this may have to do with no data submitted from two of the traditional count circles received at the time this analysis was conducted. With the addition of those two circles, participation would be about average. Data from the missing circles will be incorporated into the historical database if they are received, so the efforts of the observers who took part in those counts will not have been in vain. Overall 193 observers put in a combined 1008.5 party hours, which is 84 and 90% of 10-year averages respectively. The cool and often wet weather in June may have been another factor that limited participation. The Greenwich-Stamford, Quinnipiac Valley, and Woodbury-Roxbury count circles had record low levels of participation, perhaps due to unusually rainy count days, which resulted in "dampened" participant enthusiasm.

A 10-year new low number of 87,382 individual birds were counted statewide. The top three most abundant species were **European Starling, American Robin** and **Common Grackle**. Although the below average participation and the missing data from the two circles do make an analysis of the results more difficult, we have generally tried to comment on trends which have additional indicators with which we can correlate these results (e.g. Breeding Bird Surveys, other research projects, field notes, or knowledge of factors that can affect populations of certain species).

Twenty-four species were recorded that do not nest in Connecticut and were either late migrants or non-nesting visitors. Especially noteworthy from this group were: The first records for count circles for **Red-throated Loon, Solitary Sandpiper**, and **Dunlin** for Greenwich-Stamford, **Red-throated Loon** for New Haven; **Greater Scaup** for Woodbury Roxbury; and **Blackpoll Warbler** for the Trumbull-Bridgeport circle. There were three new species for the Connecticut SBC (in addition to **Forster's Tern, Prothonotary Warbler,** and **Blue Grosbeak** mentioned below under potential nesting species): **American Golden Plover** (Trumbull-Bridgeport), **Red Knots** (Greenwich Stamford, New Haven) and **Black Tern** (Greenwich Stamford). Ten-year high counts were recorded for **Common Loons** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**. Late migrants also helped to swell numbers for some species that nest in Connecticut; all but two of the **Common Nighthawks** recorded are late migrants, but the New Haven birds are certainly interesting and may be nesters, as they are most likely to be found nesting in urban habitats, primarily on flat gravel covered roofs. Many of the record number of **Northern Parulas** are likely non-breeders or late migrants, but included in this result is the first confirmed nesting (found on the Barkhamstead SBC) for this species in Connecticut since the 1930's. The report of a **Yellow-breasted Chat** on the Greenwich-Stamford circle is certainly interesting, though not in and of itself evidence for nesting for this, one of Connecticut's rarest nesting species.

Non-nesting species recorded on the SBC included: **Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Brant, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, American Golden Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Black Tern, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher,** and **Blackpoll Warbler.**

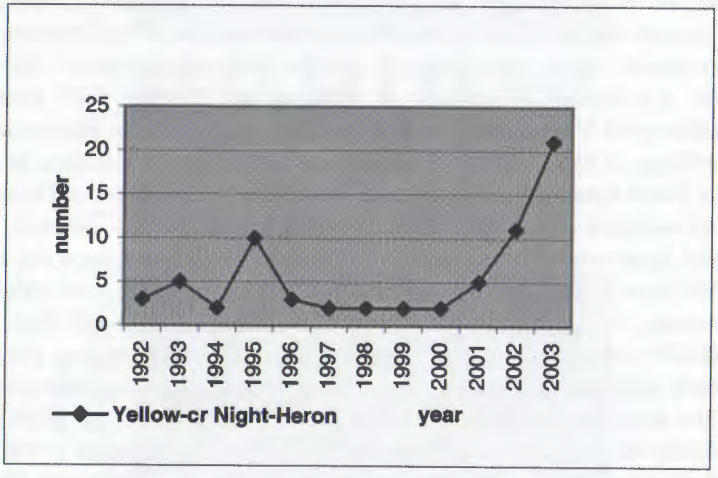
Notable nesting species

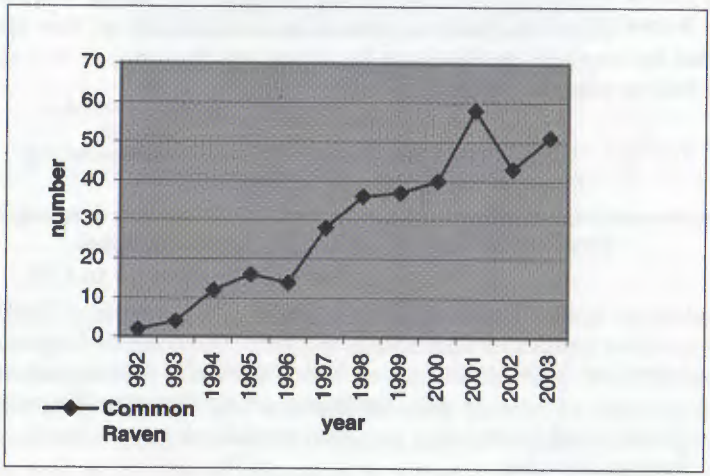
The seven **Pied-billed Grebes** recorded on the Litchfield Hills SBC circle were one adult and six chicks, confirmation of breeding for one of Connecticut's most rare and endangered species. The **American Bittern** recorded on the Greenwich/Stamford Count is certainly interesting, but is a migrant, whereas the bird recorded on the Litchfield Hills circle is more likely to be a nester. The **Tricolored Heron** recorded on the New Haven circle could be a nester; they are generally found nesting south of here, but do regularly nest as far north as Stratton Island, ME. The sighting of a **Green-winged Teal** on the Trumbull-Bridgeport circle is also of note in light of recent confirmations of breeding in Stratford, Conn. (Patrick Comins and Charlie Barnard, unpublished sighting 1998 and Dennis Varza, unpublished sighting 1999). The sighting of seven **Forster's Terns** is also interesting, as this species nests just to our south on Long Island, but has never been confirmed as nesting in Connecticut. A sighting of a **'Lawrence's' Warbler** is exciting, as this recessive outcome of a hybridization between Blue and Golden-winged Warblers is always rare. Especially of note was the report of a **Prothonotary Warbler** on the Greenwich–Stamford count.- Reports of this species in Connecticut seem to be becoming more and more regular each spring. Appropriate nesting habitat exists in this state, and it nests in New Jersey, New York, and has nested in Connecticut (once), so this species should be closely watched for any evidence of nesting behavior. Equally intriguing is the sighting of a **Blue Grosbeak** in the New Haven Circle. This species is expanding its range northward and now nests regularly to southern New Jersey and has also nested in Connecticut once.

Increasing Species

The record high number of **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** is in line with indications of increasing populations of this species in Connecticut. **Black Vultures**, to the surprise of few people, turned up in good numbers, and were seen for the first time not far from the coast on the Trumbull-Bridgeport Count Circle. The record high number of **American Oystercatchers** is in line with indications of increasing populations of this species in Connecticut and the northeast U.S. Another species that is expanding its range and populations in the state and region is **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, which also was reported in record high numbers. While not a record number, 51 **Common Ravens** is certainly an impressive number considering only two were recorded in 1992, showing up then for the first time on the Trumbull-Bridgeport count, near the

coast. A robust number of **Purple Finches** (148, 142% above average) is somewhat a surprise considering the previous poor finch winter, as this nomadic species is likely to be more common in years when larger numbers winter in our area. **Boat-tailed Grackles** appear to be holding their own since colonizing the state (in Stratford's Great Meadows area), with a 10-year high count of five recorded on the 2003 SBC.





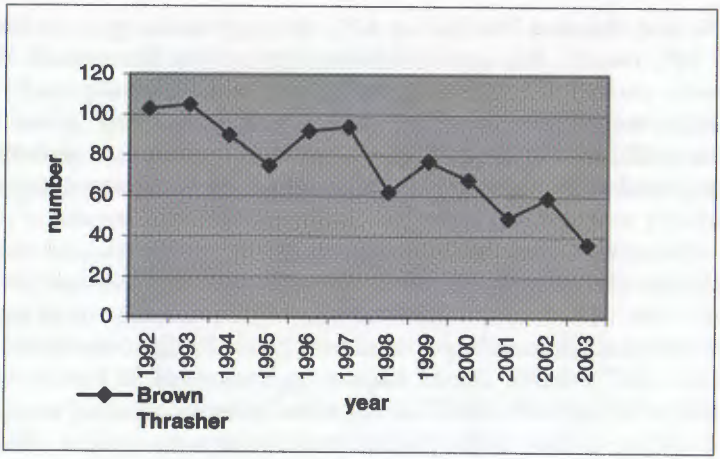
Figures 1 and 2. Increasing populations of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and Common Ravens as indicated by numbers recorded on SBC's from 1992-2003.

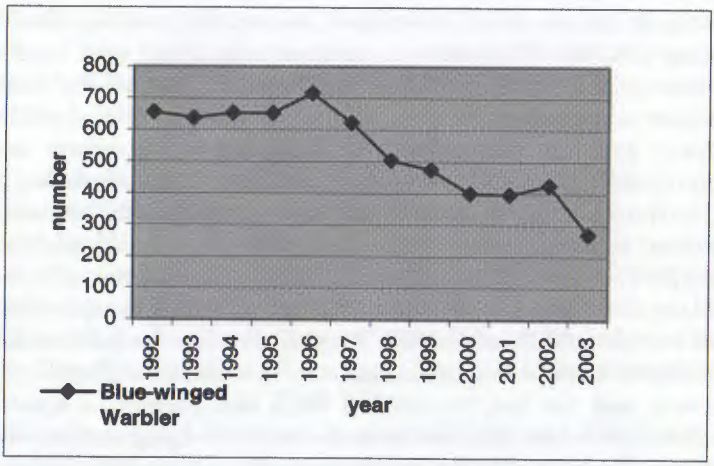
Declining species

The reduced overall number of **Snowy Egrets** compared with the 10-year average may indicate a trend of concern, as there have been serious disturbance problems at the Charles Island and Duck Island rookeries in recent years. There are indications of a significant decline in the numbers of this species nesting at Great Captains Island, and colonial waterbirds can be subject to sudden population crashes as evidenced by the sudden demise of the Chimon Island rookery in the 1980's. Especially of concern is an apparent dip this year in the population for many of Connecticut's shrubland/early successional species of conservation concern, with **American Woodcock** at 62% of its 10-year SBC average, **White-eyed Vireos** at 62%, **Brown Thrashers** at 51%, **Blue-winged Warblers** at 54%, **Prairie Warblers** at 52% **Eastern Towhee at** 86%, and **Field Sparrow** at 51% (and 10 year lows for **Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Towhee** and **Field Sparrow**). This does appear to be a real trend, looking at results for many of these species over the last ten years and other indicators, including the Breeding Bird Survey (the US Fish and Wildlife Service's primary large-scale bird monitoring project), which indicate statistically significant population declines for five of the seven species over the last 30 years (see Table 1). This is especially important since Connecticut hosts a significant portion of the global population of **Blue-winged Warblers.** Only one **Northern Bobwhite** was recorded, but most individuals of this species found in the state are likely to be of non-wild origin, as it is now a stocked or escaped species.

Table 1. BBS Trends for declining Shrubland-nesting Species in Conntecticut

Species	BBS Trend (Annual Percentage Change in CT) (Sauer et. al, 2001)
American Woodcock	Not statistically significant, but declining on species specific surveys
White-eyed Vireo	Not statistically significant
Brown Thrasher	-9.7%
Blue-winged Warbler	-3.1%
Prairie Warbler	-6.3%
Field Sparrow	-9.1%
Eastern Towhee	-5.9%





Figures 3 and 4. Number of Brown Thrasher and Blue-winged Warbler Recorded on SBC 1992-2003.

Shrubland and early successional habitats depend on natural or managed disturbance and are ephemeral in nature without active management. With the trend towards maturing woodlands in Connecticut, populations of such species should be expected to continue to decline without expanded habitat management activities as well as increased resources to support such activities.

Another result perhaps indicative of a trend of concern are dips in the numbers recorded for forest birds dependant on mid and understory vegetation layers, with 10-year lows for **Wood Thrush** at 89% of the 10-year average, **Worm-eating Warbler** at

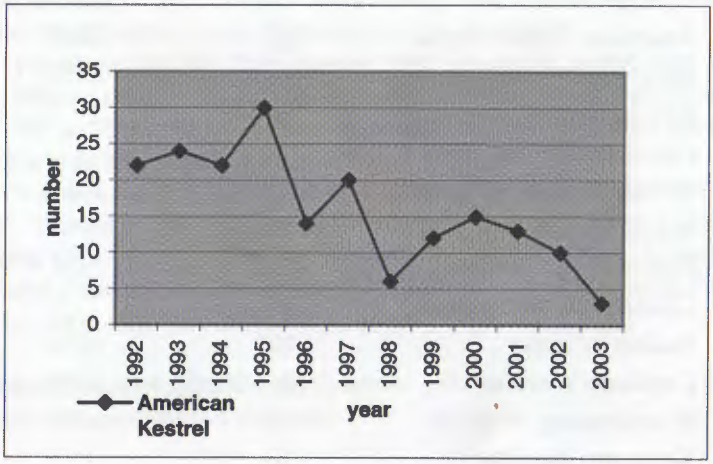
61%, and **Hooded Warbler** at 44%, although looking at the historical SBC results, this appears to be only a short-term trend. These species should be watched in the future, as they are especially vulnerable to the effects of browse on the understory layers from Connecticut's abundant White-tailed Deer population and also to the spread of invasive vegetation, such as garlic mustard, Japanese barberry and winged euonymous throughout our forests.

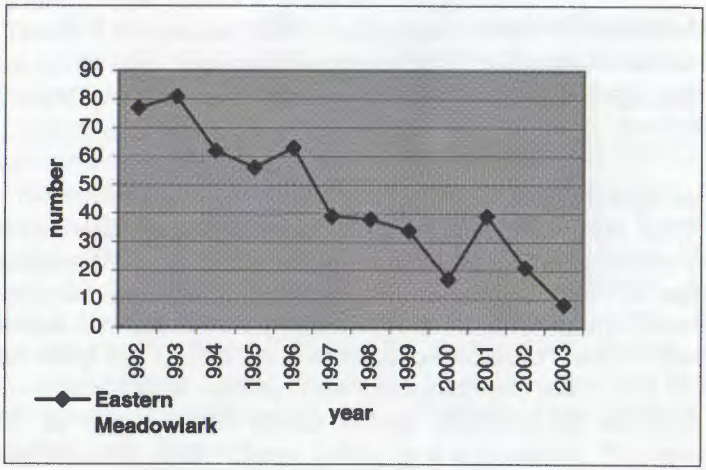
Connecticut has little remaining grassland habitat, so it is no surprise that grassland birds are not well represented on this year's SBC. Three **American Kestrels** is an extremely small sample size and the diminutive population is cause for concern in this species in and of itself. Down from a high count of 30 birds in 1995, this species appears by all accounts to have experienced a massive population decline in the state in the last 20 years. As a comparison it was found in 179 combined "Confirmed" and "Probable" nesting locations or blocks on the Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas during 1982-86. This appears to have been a bad year for **Purple Martin** colonies in Connecticut, perhaps because of the cool wet weather present from May to June; numbers only totaled 46% of its 10-year average. The report of **Grasshopper Sparrow** on the Quinnipiac Valley SBC and away from the traditional nesting areas in Hartford County is encouraging and specific locations should be reported to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection [DEP] whose Natural Diversity Database records such records of state-listed species. While this is a very small sample size, this year's totals of 20% of the SBC 10-year average for **Eastern Meadowlarks** is likely a cause for concern. Results from Breeding Bird Surveys and the last 10-years of SBCs also indicate a significant declining trend for this species in the state, and populations should be closely monitored into the future to determine whether declining trends continue. Slightly below average number of **Bobolinks** were recorded and there is concern for this species in Connecticut because of poor productivity due to early harvest of hayfields.

WatchList Species

The Audubon WatchList is an early warning system designed to draw attention to birds that may be restricted in range, undergoing long-term statistically significant population declines, dependant on limited or threatened habitat types, or have small overall populations. Volunteer monitoring efforts, such as the Summer Bird Count, can provide us with invaluable information on the distribution or key nesting locations of such species, and can provide early clues to trends of concern or indications of recovery success.

Table 2 lists the WatchList species that nest in Connecticut with at least some regularity. As a supplement to the important information on trends that the SBC can provide on these species, efforts can be expanded to track specific locations of nesting WatchList species when the information is also entered into the E-bird online avian database (a cooperative venture between Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology). http://www.ebird.org





Figures 5 and 6. Number of American Kestrel and Eastern Meadowlark Recorded on SBC 1992-2003

Table 2. Connecticut Nesting Species Included on Audubon's WatchList.

Species	Statewide Number Recorded	% of 10 year Average
American Black Duck	67	93%
Piping Plover	15	135%
American Oystercatcher	47	211%
American Woodcock	9	62%
Red-headed Woodpecker	0	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	0	
Willow Flycatcher	226	103%
Wood Thrush	1065	89%
Blue-winged Warbler	271	54%
Golden-winged Warbler	0	
Prairie Warbler	101	52%
Cerulean Warbler	9	119%
Worm-eating Warbler	91	61%
Kentucky Warbler	0	
Prothonotary Warbler	1	
Canada Warbler	42	80%
Saltm Sharp-tailed Sparrow	9	66%
Seaside Sparrow	11	465%

Notes on hard to detect coastal birds.

That only nine individual **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow** were recorded is apt testimony to the difficulty in detecting this species and the limited amount of appropriate habitat surveyed, as the true population in Connecticut likely ranges into the thousands of individuals. Certain locations in Connecticut are quite important to the global populations of this species. This combined with its BirdLife International global conservation status of "Near-Threatened", meaning it is of global conservation concern because of its small geographic breeding range, as well as limited and threatened breeding habitat, makes it especially important for us to understand the distribution of this species in the state. The four

Glossy Ibis, despite being a 10-year high count, are also a small percentage of the true nesting population of this species in the state, unless there was a sudden crash in the population (which can happen with colonial-nesting birds). The 10-year high number of 15 **Gadwall** may indicate an increasing trend, but this species can be quite inconspicuous in the nesting season. The robust number of **Clapper Rails** (192% of the 10 year average) and 10-year high number of 24 **Willet** are also likely only small percentages of Connecticut's nesting populations, as there are likely more of each species in the Great Meadows area alone.

State-listed Species

Thirty-three of the 51 nesting species that are listed as "Endangered", "Threatened", or Special Concern by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (hereafter DEP) were recorded on this year's Summer Bird Count. While non-species-specific efforts, such as the SBC, are unlikely to provide statistically meaningful or precise trend information for species such as those included on the state lists due to their small population sizes, these efforts can be extremely valuable for detecting gross trends and for locations of nesting species. Compilers and observers are encouraged to report the locations of state-listed species found on the SBC and to the COA using the Natural Diversity Database forms available at the COA Webpage http://www.ctbirding.org/natural diversity data base.htm (reports will be forwarded to the Connecticut DEP). This will provide us with a better understanding of the distribution of these species and allow for more effective conservation planning for those species by those agencies and organizations concerned with changing bird populations. Conservation of State-listed species is for the most part an issue of conserving local avian diversity, and many of these species are not threatened globally or nationally.

In conclusion, on behalf of everyone who cares about Connecticut's bird life, we would like to thank all of the observers, captains and compilers who took part in the Summer Bird Count, as well as other volunteer monitoring projects. It is the data that you provide that allows us to better understand our changing nesting bird population and make the sound conservation decisions necessary to ensure healthy populations of birds for the future.

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2003 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

Species known to nest recently within Connecticut are shown in italics. The high/low/rare/new stats (below) are given for local SBCs at least ten years old. For counts held for fewer than 10 years (TB & LH) only new Count Day species are noted. Under the statewide totals all stats pertain to the prior ten years.

XX = Rare, noted on fewer than five years during previous 10 years [outlined box]
XX = new Count Day species [darkened outlined box]
XX = more birds tallied than recorded on the previous10 years [underlined number]
XX = fewer birds tallied than recorded on any of the previous10 year [boldfaced number]
0 = not recorded on CD, but recorded on all the previous 10 years [boldfaced zero]

GS - Greewich-Stamford TB - Trumbull-Bridgeport WR - Woodbury-Roxbury LH - Litchfield Hills
NH - New Haven QV - Quinnipiac Valley BA - Barkhamsted ST - Storrs

SPECIES	Costal			Upland Counts					2003 State Totals	% of 93-02 aver	yrs seen	1993-2002		
				Mid-state		Northern								
	GS	NH	TB	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST				Ave	Low	High
Red-throated Loon	1	2							3	254%	4	1.2		8
Common Loon	3	2				3	CP		8	200%	10	4.0	2	7
Pied-billed Grebe							7		7	367%	9	1.9		5
Horned Grebe											3	0.3		2
Red-necked Grebe											2	0.2		1
Double-crested Cormorant	650	101	92	24	4	10	40	2	923	139%	10	663.5	574	964
Great Cormorant											2	0.2		1
American Bittern	1						1		2	244%	6	0.8		3
Least Bittern		1	1	1					3	118%	10	2.5	1	7
Great Blue Heron	15	5	1	12	23	66	59	5	186	173%	10	107.5	47	248
Great Egret	158	30	23	1					212	104%	10	204.2	88	376
Snowy Egret	**63**	40	33						136	79%	10	173.1	134	261

Little Blue Heron	**0**								0		10	2.2	1	5
Tricolored Heron		1							1	1100%	1	0.1		1
Cattle Egret											1	0.4		4
Green Heron	30	12	3	4	6	2	5	2	64	86%	10	74.1	62	116
Black-cr. Night-Heron	226	**16**	11						253	89%	10	283.0	161	458
Yellow-cr. Night-Heron	15		6						21	525%	10	4.0	2	11
Glossy Ibis		4							4	880%	4	0.5		2
Black Vulture			2		10	CP	4		16	400%	7	4.0		17
Turkey Vulture	34	**7**	18	36	**50**	57	56	12	270	108%	10	250.6	186	382
Snow Goose											3	0.3		1
Canada Goose	**1478**	526	294	164	**528**	248	486	59	3783	92%	10	4108.4	3379	5197
Brant	7	11							6	78%	8	7.7		29
Mute Swan	58	106	49	**44**	19		24		300	90%	10	335.1	297	462
Wood Duck	109	17	13	16	30	20	62	14	281	96%	10	292.2	273	398
Gadwall		9	6						15	223%	8	6.7		14
American Wigeon											6	0.5		1
American Black Duck	24	**3**	29			8	3		67	93%	10	71.8	50	120
Mallard	**574**	176	89	**174**	188	90	158	11	**1460**	62%	10	2372.6	2018	3022
MallardxAm Black Duck					5	2			7					
Blue-winged Teal											5	1.3		8
Northern Shoveler											4	0.5		2
Northern Pintail											3	0.3		1
Green-winged Teal			1						1	220%	2	0.5		4
Canvasback Duck											1	0.1		1
Ring-necked Duck											5	0.5		2
Greater Scaup	1				1				2	129%	10	1.5	0	4
Lesser Scaup							1		1	367%	3	0.3		1
Common Eider											1	0.2		2
White-winged Scoter	1								1	1100%	1	0.1		1
Long-tailed Duck	2								2	244%	7	0.8		4
Bufflehead	2								2	157%	7	1.3		4

2003 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

SPECIES	Costal			Upland Counts					2003 State Totals	% of 93-02 aver	yrs seen	1993-2002		
				Mid-state		Northern								
	GS	NH	TB	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST				Ave	Low	High
Common Goldeneye											3	0.7		6
Hooded Merganser		1				8	23		32	219%	10	14.6	2	50
Common Merganser		1			28	88	17		134	141%	10	95.3	32	196
Red-breasted Merganser	1								1	58%	8	1.7		7
Ruddy Duck											5	1.6		10
Osprey	31	34	3	3	2		2		75	244%	10	30.7	9	75
Mississippi Kite											1	0.1		1
Bald Eagle						10	CP		10	122%	10	8.2	2	20
Northern Harrier											7	1.5		5
Sharp-shinned Hawk			2	1	3	1	2		9	104%	10	8.6	5	14
Cooper's Hawk	2	1	1	3	1	13	12		33	141%	10	23.5	14	38
Northern Goshawk		2				3			5	79%	10	6.4	2	18
Red-shouldered Hawk	3	3	2	3	3	12	2	4	32	104%	10	30.7	25	47
Broad-winged Hawk	5	CP	1	1	1	30	13	2	53	110%	10	48.3	39	66
Red-tailed Hawk	73	14	17	22	19	31	34	9	219	113%	10	193.5	140	266
American Kestrel		1		1	1				3	20%	10	15.0	6	30
Peregrine Falcon	2	CP							2	96%	9	2.1		6
Ring-necked Pheasant	1		1	2	5				9	26%	10	34.7	9	93
Ruffed Grouse						18	7	1	26	77%	10	33.7	16	77
Wild Turkey	43	42	22	14	69	145	113	13	461	133%	10	347.5	97	645
Northern Bobwhite				1					1	25%	9	4.0		11
Clapper Rail	3	9	6						18	192%	10	9.4	5	21
King Rail											5	0.5		2
Virginia Rail			1	1	2		11		15	58%	10	26.0	11	51
Sora		1					2		3	275%	8	1.1		3
Common Moorhen											5	0.6		2

American Coot												5	0.6		3
Black-bellied Plover												7	2.4		7
American Golden Plover			1						1						
Semipalmated Plover	1	12	1						14	335%	8	4.2		35
Piping Plover		7	8						15	135%	10	11.1	6	24
Killdeer	47	**14**	16	17	**12**	21	25	6	**158**	61%	10	260.7	234	351
American Oystercatcher	42	3	2						47	211%	10	22.3	11	41
Greater Yellowlegs		2	1						3	132%	10	2.3	1	5
Lesser Yellowlegs											1	0.1		1
Solitary Sandpiper	1				1				2	275%	7	0.7		2
Willet		9	15						24	660%	7	3.6		15
Spotted Sandpiper	2	3	1	6	10	2	2		26	78%	10	33.4	20	49
Upland Sandpiper											1	0.0		0
Ruddy Turnstone	2								2	38%	9	5.3		16
Red Knot	2	6							8		0	0.0		0
Sanderling											4	1.6		9
Semipalmated Sandpiper		23							23	39%	9	59.3		349
Western Sandpiper											2	4.7		51
Least Sandpiper			1						1	138%	4	0.7		3
White-rumped Sandpiper		6							6	733%	2	0.8		6
Dunlin	1		1						2	147%	6	1.4		6
Short-billed Dowitcher											2	1.1		8
Common Snipe											1	0.1		1
American Woodcock	1				1	4	2	1	9	62%	10	14.5	8	24
Laughing Gull	26	7	1						34	90%	10	37.8	1	119
Bonaparte's Gull											4	1.2		9
Ring-billed Gull	207	201	97	14	5	2	4		530	104%	10	510.0	326	808
Herring Gull	703	116	120	6	1			5	951	110%	10	868.1	532	1229
Glaucous Gull											1	0.1		1
Great Black-backed Gull	205	47	32	1	4		1		290	98%	10	296.7	216	414
Gull-billed Tern											2	0.5		3

2003 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

SPECIES	Costal			Upland Counts					2003 State Totals	% of 93-02 aver	yrs seen	1993-2002		
				Mid-state		Northern								
	GS	NH	TB	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST				Ave	Low	High
Royal Tern											1	0.1		1
Roseate Tern											0	0.0		0
Common Tern	202	115	4						321	211%	10	152.5	56	518
Forster's Tern	7								7	7700%	1	0.1		1
Least Tern	4	200	4						208	80%	10	260.8	50	560
Black Tern	1								1		1	0.0		0
Black Skimmer	1	4							5	157%	5	3.2		12
Rock Dove	318	230	89	**118**	76	50	67	30	978	75%	10	1307.6	974	2543
Mourning Dove	592	351	149	145	323	296	349	129	2334	106%	10	2192.1	2123	2896
Monk Parakeet	19	20	30						69	269%	10	25.6	1	105
Black-billed Cuckoo	3	1	2	7	6	2	4	1	26	103%	10	25.4	7	52
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	27	6	2	1	4	2	8		50	236%	10	21.2	4	47
cuckoo species	3								3					
Barn Owl											3	3.4		19
Eastern Screech-Owl	18			1	**0**	1	12		32	80%	10	40.2	25	61
Great Horned Owl	7	1	2		**0**	12	5		27	95%	10	28.3	16	40
Barred Owl	5				2	48	23		78	152%	10	51.3	15	85
Northern Saw-whet Owl						3			3	127%	8	2.4		7
Nighthawk, Common		2					75		77	1033%	10	7.5	1	14
Chuck-will's-widow										0%	1	0.1		1
Whip-poor-will		1		1	**0**	10	3		15	98%	10	15.3	8	25
Chimney Swift	87	60	38	40	190	114	129	53	711	124%	10	575.6	492	740
Ruby-thro. Hummingbird	19	1	1	3	8	55	50	6	143	182%	10	78.7	42	137
Belted Kingfisher	21	9		6	10	27	13	3	89	80%	10	111.7	75	166
Red-headed Woodpecker											5	0.5		1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	222	64	33	23	59	37	58	11	507	146%	10	347.9	239	573

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker					2	214	135		351	221%	10	159.1	31	311
Downy Woodpecker	168	47	21	17	32	119	76	21	501	93%	10	540.1	394	764
Hairy Woodpecker	53	15	4	4	15	59	42	10	202	128%	10	158.4	110	224
Northern Flicker	162	63	36	**22**	47	82	86	14	**512**	81%	10	630.5	590	828
Pileated Woodpecker	14	3	3		8	33	45	3	109	131%	10	83.0	63	123
Olive-sided Flycatcher											6	0.6		2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	104	36	15	10	**44**	102	177	22	510	108%	10	470.6	423	661
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	2				1				3	660%	4	0.5		2
Acadian Flycatcher	2	**0**			**1**	4			**7**	27%	10	25.6	20	39
Alder Flycatcher	1				**0**	18	64		83	127%	10	65.4	12	116
Willow Flycatcher	42	34	16	21	**10**	17	85	1	226	103%	10	219.0	186	281
Least Flycatcher			1	**0**	12	32	51	2	**98**	70%	10	140.5	121	223
Empidonax species	3								3					
Eastern Phoebe	60	25	7	**13**	**78**	120	163	30	496	77%	10	641.3	528	907
Great Crested Flycatcher	83	34	20	16	37	44	124	21	379	104%	10	366.0	270	513
Eastern Kingbird	62	40	15	**21**	**96**	107	175	10	526	101%	10	518.7	489	683
White-eyed Vireo	14		1	4			1	2	22	62%	10	35.3	21	52
Yellow-throated Vireo	24	2	1	4	42	28	55	20	176	92%	10	191.5	169	245
Blue-headed Vireo	1	1		1	6	72	64	2	147	154%	10	95.4	76	159
Warbling Vireo	111	46	14	37	128	35	114	32	517	105%	10	491.3	292	664
Red-eyed Vireo	194	73	33	42	**184**	844	857	28	2255	127%	10	1774.6	1273	2784
Blue Jay	316	165	66	**68**	**171**	317	196	48	1347	95%	10	1419.8	1346	1729
American Crow	**537**	317	100	209	672	635	557	127	**3154**	89%	10	3555.1	3169	4516
Fish Crow	21	20	5	3	9	4	4		66	121%	10	54.5	39	94
Common Raven	1	5		3	4	29	9		51	195%	10	26.2	4	58
Horned Lark											1	0.1		1
Purple Martin	10	4		**0**			3		**17**	46%	10	37.0	29	54
Tree Swallow	118	**49**	77	52	185	**381**	477	83	1422	98%	10	1453.6	1194	1867
North. Rough-w Swallow	86	70	8	11	57	54	33	9	328	106%	10	308.6	259	420
Bank Swallow	2	17		10	131	60	17	6	243	79%	10	309.3	202	529

SPECIES	Costal			Upland Counts					2003	% of		1993-2002		
				Mid-state		Northern			State	93-02	yrs			
	GS	NH	TB	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST	Totals	aver	seen	Ave	Low	High
Cliff Swallow	55		43	**0**	127	23	22		270	115%	10	235.0	156	420
Barn Swallow	304	262	62	**58**	284	244	311	115	1640	125%	10	1309.7	1184	1635
Black-capped Chickadee	215	69	48	38	182	528	450	**72**	1602	99%	10	1615.7	1566	2064
Tufted Titmouse	324	80	58	58	194	357	327	80	1478	107%	10	1383.8	1053	2269
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2					**5**	7		**14**	19%	10	73.5	21	157
White-breasted Nuthatch	91	11	11	**7**	**29**	93	89	18	349	94%	10	371.1	242	519
Brown Creeper	CP		2		**0**	28	31	5	66	89%	10	73.9	48	130
Carolina Wren	131	30	11	11	19	8	11	9	230	138%	10	166.5	49	420
House Wren	**183**	39	32	24	**57**	**100**	84	25	**544**	71%	10	765.5	742	938
Winter Wren	**0**	1				5	8		14	35%	10	39.6	14	80
Sedge Wren											1	0.1		1
Marsh Wren	25	53	16	1			72		167	219%	10	76.2	37	130
Golden-crowned Kinglet											10	7.2	4	16
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	41	1	1		**37**	58	63	16	217	113%	10	191.5	146	308
Eastern Bluebird	54	12	14	13	118	118	97	15	441	86%	10	515.1	319	793
Veery	118	23	17	**9**	**95**	540	518	51	1371	109%	10	1261.4	872	1710
Swainson's Thrush											4	0.5		2
Hermit Thrush	1				1	121	52	1	176	121%	10	145.1	99	243
Wood Thrush	240	57	57	**39**	**92**	289	268	23	**1065**	89%	10	1202.9	1089	1503
American Robin	1146	387	195	158	843	778	1042	201	**4750**	91%	10	5231.5	5048	6354
Gray Catbird	1045	227	130	**78**	**337**	559	659	105	**3140**	96%	10	3271.1	3204	4093
Northern Mockingbird	151	63	39	60	**75**	71	42	21	**522**	77%	10	680.4	593	981
Brown Thrasher	21	1	2	2	**5**		4	1	**36**	51%	10	70.1	49	105
European Starling	1122	649	275	633	**593**	589	604	389	###	75%	10	6487.5	5767	8852
Cedar Waxwing	161	93	12	49	**64**	377	342	83	1181	93%	10	1272.9	568	2387
Blue-winged Warbler	56	**0**	27	25	**31**	34	82	16	**271**	54%	10	498.5	396	716

"Lawrence's Warbler"	1								1						
Golden-winged Warbler											8	0.9		2
Tennessee Warbler											4	0.6		2
Nashville Warbler											6	1.3		7
Northern Parula	1		1			5	4		11	327%	10	3.4	1	7
Yellow Warbler	551	99	70	85	308	186	646	72	2017	109%	10	1855.0	1593	2352
Chestnut-sided Warbler	5	**2**	2	6	**39**	235	275	3	567	96%	10	592.6	375	777
Magnolia Warbler	1	1			1	94	18		115	173%	10	66.4	52	96
Cape May Warbler											1	0.1		1
Bl.-throated Blue Warbler					3	131	36		170	126%	10	134.5	73	219
Yellow-rumped Warbler					**0**	79	43		122	102%	10	119.5	77	183
Black-thr Green Warbler	9	6		2	**20**	178	90	6	311	127%	10	244.5	103	436
Blackburnian Warbler					5	108	100	3	216	176%	10	122.6	55	233
Yellow-throated Warbler											2	0.2		1
Pine Warbler	38	18	14	6	20	149	69	5	319	134%	10	237.3	140	431
Prairie Warbler	7	10	4	12	**49**	11	7	1	**101**	52%	10	193.1	145	259
Bay-breasted Warbler											2	0.5		5
Blackpoll Warbler		1	1		3		4		9	206%	7	4.4		11
Cerulean Warbler						1	4	4	9	119%	10	7.5	2	15
Black-&-White Warbler	47	24	20	10	40	160	142	10	**453**	87%	10	521.6	506	639
American Redstart	28	19	4	8	**129**	300	399	9	896	100%	10	897.5	634	1223
Prothonotary Warbler	1								1		0	0.0		0
Worm-eating Warbler	44	13	4	12	**2**	1	6	9	**91**	61%	10	148.6	114	223
Ovenbird	118	**61**	39	17	**92**	449	412	61	1249	104%	10	1197.1	955	1556
Northern Waterthrush					3	5	23		31	73%	10	42.2	8	69
Louisiana Waterthrush	24	1	2	1	**20**	12	20	4	**84**	68%	10	124.4	111	160
Kentucky Warbler											6	1.3		7
Mourning Warbler											7	1.2		3
Common Yellowthroat	201	57	27	49	**177**	433	577	37	1558	95%	10	1641.6	1415	2061
Hooded Warbler			1		8	1	1		**11**	44%	10	25.3	23	37

2003 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

SPECIES	Costal			Upland Counts					2003 State Totals	% of 93-02 aver	yrs seen	1993-2002		
				Mid-state		Northern								
	GS	NH	TB	QV	WR	BA	LH	ST				Ave	Low	High
Wilson's Warbler											3	0.4		2
Canada Warbler	1				3	17	20	1	42	80%	10	52.6	21	83
Yellow-breasted Chat	1								1	183%	5	0.5		2
Summer Tanager											1	0.1		1
Scarlet Tanager	105	17	17	15	**49**	190	162	14	569	97%	10	589.6	533	827
Eastern Towhee	74	**33**	33	16	**68**	155	141	37	**557**	86%	10	646.6	585	887
Chipping Sparrow	334	45	60	60	**308**	476	349	75	1707	103%	10	1663.1	1602	2090
Field Sparrow	6	**5**	1	16	**34**	9	10	1	**82**	51%	10	160.1	143	203
Savannah Sparrow				1	1	3	5	11	21	64%	10	32.8	12	54
Grasshopper Sparrow				2					2	71%	7	2.8		8
Nelson's Sh-tailed Sparrow											3	0.3		1
Saltm Sh.-tailed Sparrow	6	3							9	66%	10	13.5	5	26
Seaside Sparrow		11							11	465%	7	2.4		11
Song Sparrow	417	138	92	72	**351**	423	504	96	**2093**	91%	10	2297.7	2212	2915
Swamp Sparrow	5	11		7	11	73	249	2	358	130%	10	276.3	140	457
White-throated Sparrow		1				**0**	4		5	40%	10	12.6	2	23
White-crowned Sparrow											2	0.8		8
Dark-eyed Junco						32	8		40	90%	10	44.3	30	70
Northern Cardinal	362	158	71	95	**240**	205	247	74	1452	99%	10	1467.8	1450	1844
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	56	25	7	**6**	**51**	95	104	7	351	98%	10	356.4	302	476
Blue Grosbeak		1							1		0	0.0		0
Indigo Bunting	50	18	6	23	77	99	60	13	346	104%	10	331.5	284	493
Dickcissel										0%	1	0.1		1
Bobolink		1	5	17	77	40	193	2	335	81%	10	411.4	257	571
Red-winged Blackbird	719	378	218	390	624	342	1029	151	**3851**	96%	10	4010.9	3859	5271
Eastern Meadowlark				**1**	**1**	2	4		**8**	20%	10	40.9	17	81

Rusty Blackbird											1	0.5		5
Common Grackle	1173	495	212	**243**	636	360	673	79	**3871**	89%	10	4360.3	4047	5582
Boat-tailed Grackle			5						5	1100%	3	0.5		2
Brown-headed Cowbird	220	93	32	**32**	**152**	124	215	54	922	82%	10	1123.5	935	1450
Orchard Oriole	30	8		1	13		5		57	148%	10	38.5	21	71
Baltimore Oriole	326	96	37	73	179	106	149	42	1008	112%	10	902.8	837	1192
Bullock's Oriole											1	0.1		1
Purple Finch					3	74	71		148	142%	10	104.0	66	159
House Finch	306	74	22	**22**	173	122	192	34	**945**	55%	10	1727.0	1277	3510
Pine Siskin											4	0.6		3
American Goldfinch	376	166	87	165	325	503	540	123	2285	117%	10	1960.6	1476	3030
Evening Grosbeak											6	1.5		5
House Sparrow	1078	414	254	180	247	262	297	126	2858	100%	10	2861.1	2373	4051
other unidentified/hybrid								11	11	18%	10	60.3	11	385
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	####	8326	4221	4393	**11407**	16136	18876	3293	95394	94%		100957	91346	110978
CD Species	143	134	125	116	**127**	136	139	97	202	107%		189	184	201
CP Species	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0%		1	0	3
DEGREE OF EFFORT:									0					
Party Hours	292.5	####	54.3	44.0	132.0	161.0	179.0	41.8	1008.5	90%		1116	1050	1192
Day Party Hours	281	101	54.3	42	130.5	144	168	41.8	962.5	90%		1068	1015	1130
Night Party Hours	11.5	3	0	2	**1.5**	17	11		46	86%		54	42	65.5
Observers	**47**	26	12	**6**	**25**	26	43	8	193	84%		231	223	257
Parties	28	14	9	4	17	12	13	5	102	87%		117	105	130
Indiv bds per 10 PH	711	801	778	**998**	864	1002	1055	789	874.8	97%		905	805	1057
Ind. bds per Observer	443	320	352	732	456	621	439	412	471.8	112%		421	373	473
% Observers	24	13	6	3	13	13	22	4	100					
% Party Hours	29	10	5	4	13	16	18	4	100					
% Individual Birds	22	9	4	5	12	17	20	3	91.69					

STATEWIDE COUNT TOTALS

Count Dates: June 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, & 29. Reported on Count Days (CD) were 190 Species, with no additional Count Period (CP) species, consisting of 87,382 Individuals. One hundred & ninety-three observers in 102 Parties (Ptys) spent 962.5 Party Hours (PHs) in the field.

INDIVIDUAL COUNT TOTALS

Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

Count Dates: June 28 & 29 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 124 species, 16,136 individual birds, plus 1 CP species. Twenty-six observers in 12 Ptys spent 161 PHs in the field. Since 1992 151 CD species have been recorded and 119 of these have been found nesting, including Northern Parula this year.

Participants: *Jocelyn Baker, Ray Belding, Dan Britton, Ayreslea Denny, Duncan Denny, Angela Dimmitt, Kathy Hall, Nikki Hall, Stan Harvey, Vicki Hester, Jay Kaplan, Brian Kleinman, Vima LeJuene, Jerry Marcellino, Jamie Meyers, Russ Naylor, Ann Orsillo, Carol Parent, Cynthia Phipps, Marianne Piche, David Rosgen (84 Falls Terrace, Apt. D, Oakville, CT 06779), Phil Royer, Sam Slater, Duane Tabak, David Tripp Jr., and Fran Zygmont.*

Weather: 6/28- partly sunny, SW winds 0-7 mph, 59° to 86°F. Night- SW winds 0-3 mph, 86° to 62°F. 6/29- PM- mostly cloudy with scattered thunder showers in the evening; SW winds 0-8 mph, 62° to 88°F. Night- SW winds 0-10 mph, 88° to 66°F. 0.25" rain.

Count (a rectangle, 12 mile east-west by a 17 mile north-south) Center: 41° 55′ N 72° 59′ W. Elevation: 285 to 1457 feet. Area covered: Barkhamsted, Burlington (northern 1/4), Canton, Colebrook (south half), Granby (southwest 1/4), Hartland, New Hartford, Harwinton (northern edge), Torrington (northern 1/4), and Winchester.

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

Count Dates: June 14 & 15 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 142 species, 20,810 individual birds, plus 1 CP species. Forty-eight observers in 28 Ptys censused during a period of 292.5 PHs. Since 1976 221 CD and 5 CP species have been recorded and 139 of these have been found nesting.

Participants: *Georgia Abbott, John Askildsen, Tom Baptist, Trudy*

Battaly, Joan Becker, Richard Becker, Joe Belanger, Gail Benson, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye, NY 10580), Ioa Byrne, Al Collins, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Debbie Etheridge, Andrew Farnsworth, Ted Gilman, Olivia Giuntini, Andy Guthrie, John Hannon, Carol Hartel, David Havens, Edward Henrey, Jalna Jaeger, Tirsta Malavenda, Ryan McClean, Janet Mehmel, Frank Novak, Conner O'Brien, Jim O'Bien, Anneliese O'Toole, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807), Drew Panko, Matt Popp, Paul Renken, Polly Rothstein, Meredith Sampson, Alice Smith, Bruce Smith, Marybeth Sollins, John Tirpak, Andy Towle, Bill Van Loan Jr. , Bill Wallace, Steve Walter, Lynn Zeltman, and Joe Zeranski.

Weather: 6/14- Fog, heavy mist, overcast, some sun by noon, heavy thunderstorms in PM- 1" rainfall, WNW winds 0-7 mph, 58° to 77°F. 6/15- Sunny morning, scattered clouds, pleasant. N winds 15-7 mph., 62° to 77°F.

Count (a square, 15x15 mile east-west) Center: 41° 05′ N 73° 37′ W. Elevation: sea level to at least 740 feet. Area covered (Connecticut, 65% of area): Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, & Stamford; and (New York, 35% of area) Armonk, Bedford (in part), Port Chester, Rye, and White Plains (in part).

Hartford Summer Bird Count *(founded 1991)*

No data submitted this year.

Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count *(founded 1994)*

Count Dates: June 7 & 8 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 135 species, 18876 individual birds. Forty-three observers in 13 Ptys censused during 135 PHs. Since 1994 162 CD and three CP species have been recorded of which 119 have nested.

Participants: Eric Adam, George Allen III, *Janet Amalavage, Lorrain Amalavage,* Janet Baker, John Baker, *Bob Barbieri (183 Laurel Lane, Harwinton, CT 06797), Ray Belding, George Boynton, Sue Clarkin, E. Cooper, Angela Dimmitt, Dave Emond, John Eykelhoff, Kathy Hall, Nicki Hall, Greg Hanisek, Lukas Hyder, Rich Kania, Marie Kennedy, Jamie Leffler, Gerry Marcellino, Deborah Martin, Patti McCurdy, Marsha McGowan, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Ann Orsillo, Pat Owen, Clarance Parker, Jim Parker, Dave Rosgen, Sam Slater, Darlene Soden, Donna Rose Smith, Nina Stein, Jan Strordevant, Dave Tripp Jr., David Wakefield, Lyle Whittlesey, Dave Winters, Ed Yescott, and Fran Zygmont.*

Weather: 6/7- cloudy AM, rain PM; 60°s to near 70°s F., AM rain. 6/8- mostly cloudy skies; 60°s to near 70°s F.

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 43′ N 73° 14′ W.

Elevation: 450 to 1658 feet. Area covered (in whole or in part): Cornwall, Goshen, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, Sharon, Torrington, Warren, and Washington.

New Haven Summer Bird Count *(founded 1991)*

Count Dates: June 7 & 8 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 134 species, 8326 individual birds, plus 2 CP species. Twenty-six observers in 14 Ptys spent 101 PHs in the field. Since 1991 187 CD species have been recorded.

Participants: *Ralph Amodei, Phil Asperelli, Larry Bausher, Andrew Brand, Steve Broker, Roy Delinger, Sharon Delinger, Richard English, Sherri Grant, Christie Hayes, Dave Holstein, Mike Horn, Pat Horn, Patrick Leahy, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Christopher Loscalzo, Dan Mayo, Steve C. Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524), Florence McBride, Judy Moore, Arne Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Charla Spector, Steve Spector, and Deborah Tenney.*

Weather: 6/7- cloudy AM, steady rain afternoon and early evening, 0.4" rainfall, SW winds 0-10 mph, 55° to 77°F. Nighttime rain to 9 PM, then cloudy, SW winds, 69°F. 6/8- AM cloudy with some low fog early, then drier; W winds 0-5 mph, 60° to 78°F.

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 18′ N 72° 56′ W. Elevation: Sea level to 700 feet. Area covered: Branford (western), East Haven, Milford, New Haven, North Haven, Orange, West Haven, and Woodbridge (in part).

Quinnipiac Valley Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

Count Dates: June 14 & 15 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 105 species, 4393 individual birds. Six observers in four Ptys spent 44 PHs in the field. Since 1992 144 CD species have been recorded; 92 have nested.

Participants: *Marcia Klattenberg, Marty Moore, Nancy Morand, Wilford Schultz (93 Harrison Road, Wallingford, CT 06492), Randy Suhl, and George Zepko.*

Weather: 6/14- S wind, 5-10 mph, 57° to 73°F., 0.75" rain. 6/15- S winds 5-15 mph, 57° to 79°F.

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 28′ N 72° 44′ W (Intersection of routes 68 & 157). Elevation: 30 to 600 feet. Area covered: Cheshire (in part), Durham, Guilford (in part), Killingworth (in part), Meriden, Middlefield, Middletown, North Branford, North Haven, and Wallingford.

Salmon River Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

No data submitted this year.

Storrs Summer Bird Count *(founded 1990)*

Count Dates: June 21 & 22 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 93 species, 3293 individual birds. Eight observers in five Ptys spent 41.75 PHs in the field. Since 1990 125 CD species have been recorded; 65 have nested. American Woodcock is a newly confirmed breeder.

Participants: *Bruce Carver, Carol Charter, Kathleen Demers, Marcis Hughs, Steve Morytko, and Jeff Rogers, Jim Rogers, and Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268).*

Weather: 6/21- cloudy, rain, cool and wet AM, increasing sunshine in PM, then rain again; 0.25" rain, 55° to 75°F. 6/22- cool, heavy rain- torrential at times, 1.5" rain, 54° to 57°F. "Very difficult birding! Our worst weather for a SBC ever".

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 48′ N 72° 15′ W. (Junction of Route 195 and N. Eagleville Road) Elevation: 200 to 750 feet. Area covered: Andover, Ashford, Chaplin, Coventry, Mansfield, Tolland, Willimantic, West Willington, Willington, and Windham.

Trumbull-Bridgeport Summer Bird Count *(founded 1999)*

Count Dates: June 14 & 15(Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 112 species, 4241 individual birds. Twelve observers in nine Ptys counted for 54.25 PHs. Since 1999, 149 CD species have been recorded; 18 species exhibited evidence of nesting. Participants: *Bill Banks, Charlie Barnard, Buzz Devine, Larry Fisher, Tom Kilroy, Chris Loscalzo, Steve Mayo, Tom Sharp (22 Albion Street, 3rd Fl., Waterbury, CT 06705), and Dave Wright.*

Weather: 6/14- overcast, occasional light rain, SW winds 10 mph, 60° to 80°F. 6/15- rain, humid and calm, N winds 10-20 mph, 59° to 80°F.

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 16′ 30" N 73° 13′ 45" W. Area covered: Bridgeport, western Derby, Easton, Fairfield, Milford (in part), Monroe, southern Newtown, S/E Redding, Shelton, Stratford, Trumbull, and Weston.

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

Count Date: June 1 (Sat.)

Totals: 119 species, 11407 individual birds. Twenty-five observers in 17 Ptys spent 132 PHs in the field. Since 1978 177 CD species have been recorded, while 122 species have nested.

Participants: *Renee Baade, Ray Belding, Polly Brody, Maryann Currie, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Seth Harvey, Bob*

Hollister, Ann Kehmna, Carolyn Longstreth, John Longstreth, Jerry Marcellino, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798), Ben Olewine, Allan Root, Dave Rosgen, Fred Schroeder, Darcy Thurrott, Piper Thurrott, Carol Titus, Leigh Wells, Mary Wetherill, Chris Wood, and Dave Zissu.

Weather: heavy rain AM, intermittent and light by midday, PM; cloudy, scattered showers, ENE winds, 55° to 65°F. Two to three inches rain. Weather resulted in "suppression of avian song activity."

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 32′ N, 73° 16′ W. Elevation: 110 to 1060 feet. Area covered: Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Middlebury, New Milford, Newtown, Roxbury, Southbury, Washington, and Woodbury.

BOOK REVIEW

Jamie Meyers

Bird Finding Guide to Western Massachusetts, many authors, (2003, 334 pages, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, $29.95, ring-bound softcover).

A good number of Connecticut birders sport worn copies of the Lane Guide to Eastern Massachusetts in their libraries. That edition, written in tandem by a group of knowledgeable birders from the Boston and Cape Cod areas and culled mostly from individual articles that were first published in The Bird Observer, has served many of us in the Nutmeg State well, as that part of Massachusetts is an attractive and easy to reach travel destination and offers obviously attractive birding opportunities, some of which are simply not as readily available in Connecticut, especially along the Atlantic coast.

As anyone who has spent any time in the western part of the state knows, though, there are pastures and forests of plenty in there as well. Where the Lane guide extended westward to the wilderness of Quabbin Reservoir, it ignored an area of the Bay State nearly the size of Connecticut, one that gets little attention yet is still rich in birding opportunities and has been birded very actively for generations. Despite a couple of previously published low-budget local guides that served their purpose well, this new volume is the first comprehensive effort devoted exclusively to western Massachusetts, and as such fills a niche that's been wanting for some time.

To say that this was a cooperative effort is an understatement; some sixty or so authors and nine editors and regional editors are given credit for their contributions to this volume. Many of the names appearing are well-known veteran birders sharing the wealth of their experience. The coverage is also widespread; there are an impressive eighty-three chapters devoted to birding spots west of the Worcester area, many of which cover multiple locations in mini-loops that can be birded together. Most are in the Berkshires and the Connecticut River basin, which are the areas that have been least covered in other past publications. There is

significant overlap with the Lane Guide when it comes to the rich Quabbin area. Still, the information given here differs from that offered in the older volume, though most of it was penned by the same author. Next time I head up that way I'll carry both guides and use them both, as the chapters and maps from each complement the other well.

The editorial job on a project with so many authors must have been difficult. To that end, the editors did a commendable job crafting the various essays into a single, coherent package that reads uniformly well. Differences in writing styles are only occasionally apparent, and are fairly unimportant even when they're noticeable. The well-played advantage of the multi-authored approach is that one gets a good deal of local knowledge directly from a nice pool of regional experts, which is a definite plus.

One difference between the style of this guide and that of its more famous eastern cousin is that the individual sections aren't as lengthy. I was surprised that Bartholomew's Cobble, a large, prime reservation for migrants and nesters in the southern Berkshires that covers many hundreds of acres near the Connecticut border, was written up in just over two pages, including the map. Most sections are as economical, but to their credit they manage to convey a good amount of information in a brief amount of space. In a lot of cases, while the text is more sparse than the site-guide birder might be accustomed to, the focus is exactly where it should be - on what spots are best to check for those species that might be most interesting to a serious birder. There isn't a lot of idle chitchat in the treatments nor references to common species, neither of which are missed. We all know where to find chickadees!

To me, nothing is more frustrating in a site guide than confusing maps that could get a birder hopelessly lost. The maps included here look to be easy to follow and are well presented. Those that accompany sections of the state that most I'm familiar with are accurate and rendered in such detail so that a stranger can easily find his or her around but they're not so busy so as to be totally confusing.

The Connecticut birder might find this guide to be useful for a number of reasons. There are a handful of more northerly nesting species such as Mourning Warbler, Swainson's Thrush and Wilson's Snipe in the region. While these species of course pass through our state annually and are quite findable at the right time and place, there are obvious attractions in experiencing them on their nesting grounds. List-minded nutmeggers looking to build a nice checklist in the Bay State will find a wealth of information

here on a whole range of species' occurrences that wasn't previously well available. That said, though, one disappointment I had with this volume, especially when compared to the Lane guide (which I have to keep comparing it to since those have become the standard in modern bird finding guides), is that there is no section that highlights where individual species might most easily be found. If one were searching specifically for Winter Wren in western Massachusetts, for instance, one would have to thumb through the index then read and investigate out to each page reference, which is definitely tedious. The lister in me finds this to be a drawback, though that might not be as important to other birders.

In terms of other aesthetics, the artwork ranges from top-notch to surprisingly awkward. All of the art except for the nice cover art is rendered in black and white, and while the single artist who contributed all the sketches is a veteran with an indisputable talent for bird renderings that are generally well-practiced here, the landscape scenes aren't the most satisfying I've seen.

From another, less strictly birding point of view but one that is just as important, the non-site specific text is very heavily focused on conservation issues, which is commendable. It discusses various conservation challenges facing the bird life of the region and lists organizations that are involved in active conservation efforts. In this day and not so gentle age and even more so with the current political climate, I believe that no site guide that is aimed at a fairly wide range of nature enthusiasts should shirk such a focus.

All told, anyone interested in birding in this previously least-documented part of southern New England will find this guide to be a satisfactory addition to their bookshelves. I wouldn't go birding in the region without it.

JAMIE MEYERS, 4 Sexton Hollow Rd., Canton, CT 06019

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

SPRING, MARCH 1 THROUGH MAY 31, 2003

Greg Hanisek

After a cold and snowy winter, spring weather proved unremarkable. Signal events for the season included a massive fallout of Red-necked Grebes; wide-ranging reports of a White Ibis and a group of Sandhill Cranes; a smattering of other rarities; and a satisfying warbler migration. The following report employs a revised systematic order that follows the new 44th Supplement of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list. Both waterfowl and gamebirds have been moved up, and a species we seldom comment on — Rock Dove — has been renamed to Rock Pigeon.

WATERFOWL THORUGH GREBES

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found March 15 in South Windsor (PC, MH) and two were at Fisher Meadows in Avon April 13 (JCl, LC), with one still present April 30 (BT). Fisher Meadows held 120 Snow Geese April 6 (BK, JMe). A gray-bellied type Brant was found March 17 at Shippan Point in Stamford (MSz); a form showing the gray-bellied characteristics occupies a very limited breeding range on Melville Island in the Canadian Arctic and winters mainly in Puget Sound, but this taxon remains little-known and it is possible that birds of hybrid origin could show similar plumage characteristics. A probable **Tundra Swan** flew by Lighthouse Point in New Haven April 27 (SL) for the season's only report. Away from traditional wintering spots, a **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Stratford Great Meadows April 13 (GH, EAs et al.). A Pintail x Mallard hybrid was reported March 29 in Southbury (RN). The best count of Blue-winged Teal was 17 on April 6 at Milford Point (TD); two were at Little Pond in Litchfield, a possible breeding spot, May 4 (BDe). A late Northern Shoveler was in Watertown May 27 (RN).

A pond at the CIGNA campus in Bloomfield held four Redheads March 17 (JMe). A Lesser Scaup lingered to May 27 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (JE). Shippan Point in Stamford

turned into a waterfowl hotspot when a female **Harlequin Duck** was found March 8 (NC), joining a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** reported there March 2 (PDu). Birders looking for the Harlequin found an immature male Barrow's later in the day March 8 (PDu). All were present until mid-March. A female Harlequin Duck that turned up April 24, and stayed to the record late date of May 15 at Greenwich Point, could well have been the Stamford bird (MSa). A drake Common Goldeneye lingered to the late date of May 26 at Stratford Great Meadows (FMa, LM). A typical May staging of sea ducks produced a count of 70 Surf Scoters, one White-winged Scoter and three Long-tailed Ducks May 12 off Madison (FG). The only Black Scoters reported were singles off Stonington Point May 26 (DP) and Milford Point May 27 (NB). A Long-tailed Duck visited Bantam Lake in Morris April 10 (DRo). A pair of Hooded Mergansers was on a pond in Naugatuck State Forest May 10 (JBa), indicative of breeding. Common Merganser numbers peaked at 350 April 9 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (JE). An inland sighting of three Red-breasted Mergansers occurred April 23 at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (MSz); a single turned up inland at Taunton Pond in Newtown April 12 (JMe).

A Red-throated Loon made one of its infrequent inland appearances April 6 at Lake Bethany in Bethany (JMe), with another at Witek Park in Derby April 13 (MSt); 22 represented a good late fallout May 12 off of Madison (FG), with a single as late as May 26 at Greenwich Point (CRe). A major fallout of Red-necked Grebes, related at least in part to frozen conditions on the Great Lakes and other waters to the north, began in late February but peaked in March. This event, noted both inland and along the coast, really started to catch birders' attention March 2-3. Birds were present at widespread locations from then until the end of the first week of April, with scattered reports of a few birds after that. There were reports of at least 60 individuals on the coast and 20 inland from March 2 to April 8. These mostly involved one to three birds, but there was a coastal high of 11 at Niantic Bay in East Lyme on March 16 (DP) and an inland high of seven at Middletown on the Connecticut River on March 15 (JMe). The reports came from 21 different coastal locations, as well as eight inland locations on the Connecticut, Housatonic, and Farmington rivers. Two **Eared Grebes** for the season consisted of one March 22-23 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (GW, FN) and one in full alter-

nate plumage that dropped into Cat Den Swamp in Eastford on April 23 (MSz). This continues a recent upward trend for this species.

STORM-PETRELS THROUGH CRANES

Stormy weather May 26 resulted in an extraordinary count of about 100 Wilson's Storm-Petrels off Stonington Point (DP). A Great Cormorant was late and well inland May 14 in Cromwell (AW, JF). An American Bittern, seldom reported from the northeastern corner, was at West Thompson Lake in Thompson April 14 (RD); the species was first noted April 12 at Little Pond in Litchfield (BS, DRo et al.); one was at Station 43 in South Windsor April 13 (TA) and singles appeared May 3 and 17 in Milford (SS, TD et al.). Ponds in Sharon held at least three on May 19 (FB). A heronry in Kent had six Great Blue Herons visible on nests April 11 (AD). A Great Egret on the Farmington River in Collinsville March 17 was early for an inland location (DT), and one on March 25 over the UConn campus was an early record for the Storrs area (MR). The first Little Blue Heron appeared March 27 in Westport (FMa), and up to three adults were at Hammonassett Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) in Madison on May 12 (FG). A Tricolored Heron turned by April 21 in Branford (MW). A Black-crowned Night Heron was well up the Housatonic River at Stevenson dam in Newtown March 25 (SHa); one was far inland at Little Pond in Litchfield on April 25 (DRo). Reports that apparently involved one wide-ranging **White Ibis** began May 12 at HBSP (CRa). The next sighting was a flyby May 18 over an East Greenwich soccer field (LJ), followed by observation May 21-22 at Barn Island in Stonington (BDw et al.). A Glossy Ibis turned up far inland in Ellington May 15 (MO, DH).

Two Black Vultures, still unusual near the coast, were at Bluff Head in Guilford April 15 (HG); one over the Merritt Parkway in Orange on May 3 also was south of usual haunts (FMa, CB) as were two on May 17 at East Rock Park in New Haven (DSo). A pair of Ospreys were working on a nest on a tower in Assekonk Swamp in North Stonington, about a dozen miles from the coast, on April 15 (JMe). A very early Broad-winged Hawk, an adult seen under good conditions, was in East Hampton March 13 (MSz). The state's first spring report of a **Swainson's Hawk** came from Preston May 11 (DP). A Rough-legged Hawk was at Short Beach, Stratford, March 8 (FMa). A Connecticut Audubon Society boat trip on the Connecticut River out of

Essex found two Golden Eagles March 14 (BY), and one was eating a Common Mergansers on river ice March 16 at Essex (BY); a single was in Somers April 14 (JS). A pair of American Kestrels were in breeding habitat April 27 in Newtown (PB). A Merlin provided a late inland record May 23 at White Memorial in Litchfield (EAd).

The high count of 16 Virginia Rails was at Little Pond in Litchfield May 17 (DRo et al.). A Sora was reported May 9 in Ellington (CEk), and a dead one was found high on a hill under a power line the same day in Bloomfield (SF). The season's only Common Moorhen was in Stratford May 27-29 (NC, NB). Three **Sandhill Cranes**, a species on the upswing, were reported March 22 as flybys at Old Greenwich (MSa), prompting another observer to note he had seen a possible single in flight at Seymour the same day (TK). The crane front remained quiet until three — quite likely the same ones — turned up in a field in Mansfield March 28 (MR et al.). They stayed through March 30, then were found April 2 in a cornfield in Lebanon (DRt).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

An Upland Sandpiper made a migratory stopover April 30 at HBSP (CWe et al.). The latest of a small number of Whimbrel reports came from an island off Stamford May 25 (JBk, RBe). A Pectoral Sandpiper March 1 at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford set an early arrival record for a species that regularly appears in the Northeast in late March (BK, GK); as an interesting aside, three very early Pectoral Sandpipers were reported from Patuxent River, Maryland, March 2 (fide Maryland-D.C. RBA). An excellent staging flock of 60 Purple Sandpipers fed on the Menunketesuck flats in Westbrook May 3 (JMe); although this species winters in the state, the largest numbers appear during the northbound movement in May. A group of 40 Short-billed Dowitchers represented a good late count May 27 at Barn Island in Stonington (DP). Durham Fairgrounds held 17 Common Snipe March 27 (JMa), with numbers building to an astounding 70+ on April 12 (SHr).

A good season for **Little Gulls** brought the following reports: two April 6 at Holly Pond in Stamford (PDu) and singles at Holly Pond March 23 (PDu), Oyster River in West Haven March 29 (FMa), Stratford on March 31 (FMa), Greenwich Point on April 9 (MSa), Long Beach in Stratford on April 13 (GH et al.) and Southport on April 14 (JHu). An adult **Black-headed Gull** was at Oyster River on March 29

(FMa). An immature Bonaparte's Gull lingered to May 26 at Stonington Point (DP). An Iceland Gull was a good Litchfield County find April 7 at Bantam Lake (DRo); the latest report was May 10 from Compo Beach in Westport (FMa). Forster's Terns are usually seen here during post-breeding dispersal, so singles were good spring finds May 4 at Shell Beach in Guilford (JHo, DSo) and May 24 at Lord's Cove in Old Lyme (HG). Black Terns appeared at Cockenoe Island in Westport May 30 (AH) and Shippan Point, Stamford, May 31 (PDu). Sandy Point in West Haven, a breeding site, held five Black Skimmers May 26 (NB). After winter's outstanding flight, two **Razorbills** were at HBSP March 16 (DZ).

Well east of the state's densest Monk Parakeet populations, a nest was found in May in Old Saybrook (DM). Reports of about 30 Yellow-billed Cuckoos and 30 Black-billed Cuckoos for the season, all in May, indicated a strong migration (m.ob.). In addition to the Snowy Owl that wintered at Long Beach, Stratford, one was seen March 18 at Milford Point (KH). A Short-eared Owl was a bit late April 19 at Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport (CB). The Little Pond area at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield hosted a flock of 140 Common Nighthawks May 29 (DRo, JE), with 30+ present the next day (BDe). A Whip-poor-will was heard from a Southington yard May 1 (JA). A Red-headed Woodpecker that wintered in Newtown was still present April 18 (RBa). Single Red-headed Woodpeckers were at Keney golf course in Hartford April 18 (BT), Penwood Park in Bloomfield May 3 (JCl, LC), a Canton yard May 5 (DT) and an Ellington yard May 14 (CEk). At River Road in Kent, 8+ Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were drumming on territory May 19 (BDe).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

There were at least 10 reports of Olive-sided Flycatchers, with an early one May 8 at Westport Nature Center (MSw). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were at Thomaston dam May 14 (BDe), Mohawk State Forest in Cornwall May 25 (KF) and Greenwich Audubon Center May 27 (TBa). Alder Flycatcher, probably our latest arriving migratory breeder, wasn't noted until May 27 at its White Memorial stronghold (DRo). A good concentration of eight Least Flycatchers was in a small area at Mohawk State Forest, Cornwall, on May 7 (PDe). The season's only Northern Shrike was singing April 8 at Bantam Lake (DRo, FZ). The season's two reports of Philadelphia Vireos came May 12 in Chaplin (MSz) and May 15 in Stamford

(MM).

Fish Crows returning inland were first noted March 19 in Collinsville (DT). An April 19 flight produced a count of 50 Ruby-crowned Kinglets at Little Pond, Litchfield (DRo et al.). The season's first Gray-cheeked (type) Thrush was reported May 17 at East Rock Park (JMa); May 29 produced reports from Killingly (MSz) and New Haven (DSo). The best counts of Swainson's Thrush on the ground were at least seven at a cemetery in Hartford May 14 (PDe) and at least four May 15 at East Rock (BDe). An early one was reported April 30 in Southbury (PB). A very dark American Robin, possibly of the declining Maritime Canadian race *nigrideus*, was seen April 1 in Morris (MSz).

The warbler migration was consistently good, with especially widespread and consistent sightings of Blackburnian and Wilson's Warblers. As early as May 3, tallies of 14 to 16 species were made at sites across the state, from River Road in Kent to East Rock in New Haven and Nehantic State Forest in Lyme. By May 7, counts at coastal sites ranged from 17 to 19 species, followed by a May 8 fallout that brought 25 species to East Rock (DSo). May 12 also produced widespread reports, topped by 24 species at East Rock, and 18 species were still found there May 25. Following are species-by-species warbler highlights: Away from established breeding sites, a Golden-winged Warbler was in Barkhamsted May 19 (SOl). A Brewster's Warbler was reported May 3-9 from Lyme (CRa, SR et al.); one was in Sharon May 21 (AD). A Tennessee Warbler was a bit early April 27 at East Rock Park in New Haven (DSo, MSc). Orange-crowned Warblers, always a good find in spring, were at Cove Island Park in Stamford May 2 (MM, JMh et al.) and in New Milford May 11 (EAs). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was a good find April 30 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (JMe), with a second turning up in the big fallout May 8-9 at East Rock Park in New Haven (BS). A third, making an excellent spring total, was at Barn Island in Stonington May 17 (BDw). A Blackpoll Warbler was early April 29 in Ellington (MO). **Prothonotary Warblers** appeared in the state's prime spot for this southern species, East Rock Park in New Haven, on April 29 (CD) and in the May 8-9 fallout (DSo, JBa); two others were reported: at Birdcraft Museum in Fairfield May 10 (TBr) and Connolly Parkway in Hamden May 30 (FMc). East Rock Park held single Kentucky Warblers May 25 (MSc) and May 30 (MSc); another was at River Road in Kent May 25-30 (NHa, TD et al.). There were a dozen

reports of Mourning Warblers ranging from May 7 to May 31 (m.ob.). A Wilson's Warbler April 27 at Cove Island Park, Stamford, represented a good early arrival date for that species (MM, PDu). A Hooded Warbler was an early arrival April 19 at Greenwich Point (MSa), and a migrant visited a Hartford cemetery May 14 (PDe). A Yellow-breasted Chat appeared April 30 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PC).

The season's only **Summer Tanager** was reported May 5 from Fort Wooster Park in New Haven (SL). A Chipping Sparrow March 30 in Woodbury was probably a very early migrant (RN), but one present March 9 in Hamden more likely wintered somewhere in the Northeast (RA). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** showed up May 13-14 at Northwest Park in Windsor (PDe); this species is more often seen in fall but its spring appearances usually occur in May. A Vesper Sparrow, always a good find in spring migration, was at Thomaston dam April 18 (BDe), a typical arrival date. Another was at Ferry Road in South Windsor May 18 (PDe); this site supports appropriate breeding habitat for a species that hasn't been proven breeding in the state in a number for years. At least two Grasshopper Sparrows were at Northwest Park, a breeding site, May 14 (PDe), and one was in breeding habitat in Griswold May 17 (BDw). A search in New Milford May 10 revealed three Lincoln's Sparrows on their typical migration schedule (RN). Feeders at the Kellogg Environmental Center in Derby held 10 Fox Sparrows March 13 (RL). A nice run of **Blue Grosbeaks** involved singles April 25 at the new grassland preserve at Stratford Point (ES), in a Preston yard April 30 (SC fide DP) and in a New Milford yard May 8 (EAs). During the May 12 migratory fallout, four male Indigo Buntings dropped into a backyard in Mystic (GW). May 10 was the late date for Rusty Blackbird at White Memorial (DRo). Three male **Boat-tailed Grackles** appeared on territory in Stratford Great Meadows March 28 (CB); away from this well-established breeding area, a female visited Sandy Point in West Haven May 4 (TA).

Following is a list of first-arrival dates for a sampling of regular migrants:

Osprey — March 22 in West Haven (CEk); Virginia Rail — April 19 in Litchfield (DRo); Piping Plover — March 17 in West Haven (FG); Lesser Yellowlegs — March 22 in Madison (JCo); Willet — April 25 in Stratford (GH); Spotted Sandpiper — April 19 in Litchfield (DRo); Least Tern — May 1 in Stratford (CB); Ruby-throated Hummingbird — April 20 in Southbury (RN); Acadian Fly-

catcher — May 10 in Lyme (HG); Eastern Phoebe — March 16 in Stratford (JZi); Eastern Kingbird — April 27 in Stamford (PDu); Blue-headed Vireo — April 22 in Watertown (RN); Tree Swallow — March 25 in Branford (FG); Bank Swallow — April 19 in Litchfield (DRo); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher — April 21 in Southbury (GH); Blue-winged Warbler — April 30 in New Canaan (FG); Nashville Warbler — April 30 in New Canaan (FG); Northern Parula — April 25 in Litchfield (DRo); Blackburnian Warbler — April 29 in New Milford (EAd); Pine Warbler — March 22 in Sterling (RD); Prairie Warbler — April 19 in Madison (JHi); Cerulean Warbler — April 29 in East Lyme (LV); Black-and-White Warbler — April 20 in Southbury (RN); American Redstart — April 29 in New Haven (DSo); Louisiana Waterthrush — April 13 in Lyme (HG); Eastern Meadowlark — March 22 in Cornwall (AD); Orchard Oriole — April 30 in New Haven (SS) and Greenwich (JBe).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 145 Farmington Ave., Waterbury, CT 06710) if they are to be included in the field notes].

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PHOTOCHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 44

Judging by the bill and long tail it is obviously a bunting or sparrow, but we are adrift in a sea of confusion as to which one. Most of the upperparts are obscured by shadow, and leg color is certainly not helpful in this photo. What we can see, is that the head pattern is bland and the bill is strong and robust. Judging the size against the hand, it is also a fairly sizeable bird, ruling out all the smaller Spizella sparrows. On first glance, it looks superficially like a female House Sparrow. That species would show a darker loral area and more sullied underparts. The larger Zonotrichia sparrows (White-crowned, White-throated) show more marked head patterns. Harris's Sparrows are large, with a pale bill and bland head pattern, but these show sparse, but prominent streaks on the breast sides and flanks.

The Ammodramus sparrows are generally shorter-tailed than our bird. Grasshopper Sparrow, the most likely contender, shows some dark border to the rear ear-coverts.Through a process of elimination, we come to a dead-end conclusion.

Stumped? Okay, even I didn't know what species it was from the picture published in the July issue.

The bird is a Dickcissel! Of course, in glorious Technicolor and right in front of our eyes, it would have been an easier identification. However, the monochrome picture offers few clues to its identity. Standing back, the faint streaks on the upper breast are a good fit for Dickcissel, as would the chestnut lesser coverts if we could see the bird in color.

Dickcissels are large sparrow-like birds, with a strong bill, long tail and long buffish supercilium. Most often detected overhead on migration by virtue of their metallic "brzzzt" call, Dickcissels are not often seen "on-the-deck".

This difficult quizbird was photographed by Jay Kaplan at Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven in 1979.

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Photo Challenge 45 Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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