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ABOUT OUR COVER

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Paul Carrier

Paul Carrier, a well-known artist and illustrator from Harwinton, has contributed cover drawings for many years. In this issue he does double duty, providing cover artwork that also illustrates his article on the changing status of one of the state's interesting breeding species.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

By Greg Hanisek

State ornithological journals perform a variety of functions. Among the most important is documenting changes in the status of species visiting, passing through or breeding in the state. The seasonal field notes play an important role, but magazines such as ours also offer a chance to synthesize information spread out over time and location. In-depth looks at notable trends help to explain, or at least draw attention to, natural phenomena unfolding around us.

The Connecticut Warbler has noted many times, in a variety of contexts, the broad and decades-long trend toward southern species expanding their ranges northward. Discussion ranges from the very specific (a burgeoning deer herd providing carrion for vultures) to the broad and speculative (the extent and effect of global climate change).

The south-to-north incursion offers many examples, but not every change fits that pattern. On a smaller scale, several primarily northern species have begun to increase and expand their ranges in the state. Magnolia Warbler seems to fit into this scenario, and in this issue's Notes on Behavior, Status and Distribution Dave Rosgen documents the state's first breeding record for Mourning Warbler.

Our feature article spotlights another expanding northerner, the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Paul Carrier, who lives in sapsucker territory, combines first-hand observations with results from census work to outline a recent population surge. He also offers some ideas on factors that may help account for this change.

COA members who contribute field notes help us notice and report on the ups and downs of Connecticut birds.

RECENT BREEDING SUCCESS AND RANGE EXPANSION OF YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS IN CONNECTICUT

By Paul Carrier

Since the summer of 2003, and continuing into the summer of 2005, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus varius*) have shown a noticeable increase in numbers and pairs within their traditional Connecticut breeding range. The species now appears to be a fairly common breeder within this range. We will present data from the Connecticut Summer Bird Counts for the summers of 2000 through 2005, plus offer a range expansion map using observations and sightings of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers during the summer of 2005 at nontraditional breeding areas in the state.

First, we provide a short history and range description of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Connecticut.

From Connecticut Birds:
Rare nester in the northwest hills, south to Litchfield; Harwinton and Kent, and east to Granby, Barkhamsted and Burlington (1990). First confirmed breeding record was in 1893, when two nests were collected in Winsted. A decline was noted from 1965 to 1979 along Breeding Bird Survey routes.

From The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut:
Rare and uncommon nester. All confirmed and probable breeding records were concentrated at higher elevations in northwest Connecticut (1994). Clearly has extended breeding range into Litchfield County. Breeding activity is likely a result of reforestation in state during this century. USGS Quadrangles in Connecticut where Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were confirmed or probable (partial

quadrangles from Massachusetts, dipping south into Connecticut, not named): Sharon, South Canaan, Norfolk, Winsted, New Hartford, Ellsworth, Cornwall, W. Torrington, Torrington, Collinsville, Kent, New Preston, Litchfield, Thomaston. Each quadrangle has six boxes. Confirmed boxes: 38. Probable: 22.

From Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State:
A population spreading out from its former breeding areas in Catskills and Adirondacks (1988). Most records of breeding are at elevations above 152 m (500 feet).

Personal observation notes by author:
Starting in 1993, a pair of sapsuckers has nested in my 1.5-acre yard every subsequent year. They are now fairly common throughout the town of Harwinton in higher elevations, from about 800 feet and above. In spring 2005, two pairs of sapsuckers nested on either side of my lot. Also noted this spring, on a one-acre home lot in north Torrington, no less than four male sapsuckers were seen drumming in succession. Three females were also seen within this acre. In the towns of West Hartland and northern Barkhamsted, sapsuckers, in the months of May and June 2005, were encountered quite often, so much so observers commented on their higher-than-usual numbers. (See Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count results, 2003 to 2005).

Also, in the town of Burlington, which includes part of Nepaug Reservoir, sapsuckers were encountered in higher than usual numbers for 2005. In the Connecticut breeding atlas survey years (1985 to 1989) there were only two confirmed nestings there, with most of this area void of sapsucker sightings altogether. This was also the farthest east they were found confirmed nest-

ing in the state at that time. Recent reports of sightings and nesting sapsuckers from the Canton area north have increased substantially, with some residents even reporting tree damage in their yards from this bird (Jay Kaplan, personal communication).

Some interesting facts about sapsucker sightings from 2000 to 2005:
From The Connecticut Warbler: yearly summer field notes (June 1 through July 31), all from the January issues.
2000: "As an example of the strong Yellow-bellied Sapsucker population in the northern tier, up to 35 breeding birds were present in the Colebrook area (Rosgen)."
2001: "Two survey routes through White Memorial in Litchfield each produced 20 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (Rosgen)."
2002: "Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers continued their recent southward nesting expansion, with nesting confirmed in Southbury and suspected in Woodbury (Naylor). The presence of 17 in portions of White Memorial on June 10 was indicative of the overall strength of the breeding population (Rosgen).
2003: "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 expansion (Naylor). The burgeoning sapsucker population was illustrated by 33 counted at various areas in White Memorial on June 8-9. (Rosgen, Harvey)."
2004: "The southward expansion of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers continues, with three to five pairs noted in Southbury (Naylor). As further evidence of this species' success, the June count in Barkhamsted recorded 214, compared to the following counts of other woodpecker species there: Red-bellied - 37, Downy - 119, Hairy - 59,

Northern Flicker - 82, and Pileated Woodpecker - 33."
From The Connecticut Warbler: yearly spring field notes (March 1 through May 31), all from the October issues.
2001: "Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are extending their breeding range in the state; one giving the species' distinctive territorial drum April 7 in Woodbury was south of traditional nesting areas (Naylor), as was a breeding pair in New Milford (Dimmitt)."
2003: "At River Road in Kent, eight-plus Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were drumming on territory May 19 (Devine)."
2005: "A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was in a yard in Newtown May 10 and again as late as June 6, another indication of this species' southward expansion during the breeding season. (Baade)."
From The Connecticut Summer Bird Count: Respective years' results pertaining to Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
2000 State total = 251
2001 = 242
2002 = 245, showing a stable population.
2003 = 351, a 43% increase over 2002
2004 = 412, a 17% increase over 2003
2005 = 452, a 9.7% increase over 2004

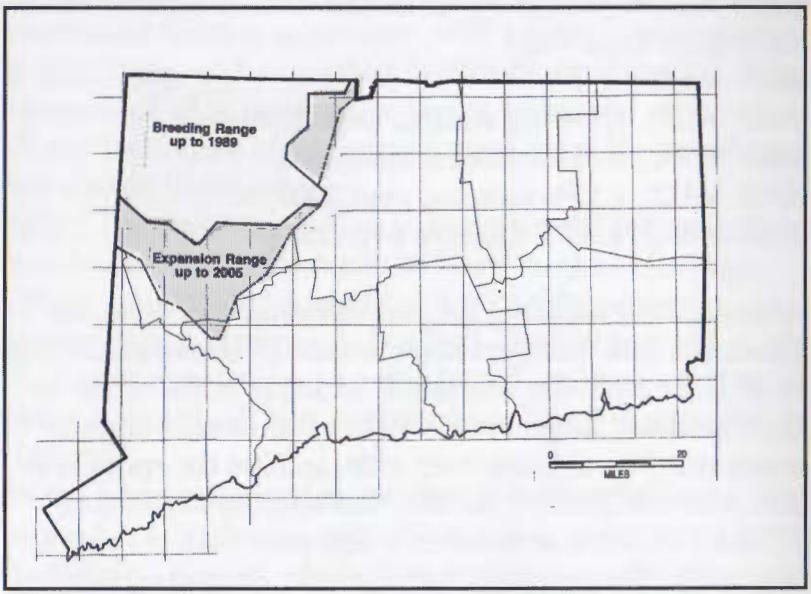
Although not adjusted for possible effects of observer effort, the raw numbers show a sudden increase starting in 2003. In 2005, Barkhamsted, which is in the center of the sapsucker range in Connecticut, showed a slightly lower number of birds over 2004. In 2004 the count was 208, while in 2005 it was 181. This slightly lower total (27 less) could be attributed to less extensive coverage, or possibly fewer young being found, caused by nesting failures due to an abnormally cold May (Dave Rosgen, pers. comm.). However, there was still a total increase of adult pairs on territory in the state for 2005, with

possibly a lower fledging success rate due to adverse weather.

Also, it is speculated by Rosgen that sapsucker pairs might have moved south to attempt a second brood, as shown by the many more than usual nestings for June/July in the Litchfield area. This Litchfield increase might also be a reflection of successful breeding and population density to the north in 2003 and 2004. The numbers of adult pairs in the historical breeding range for May/June 2005 appeared to again be well above average, regardless of the fledging success rate.

Possible reasons and causes for range expansion

Food supply, insects and nectar in the case of sapsuckers, along with habitat quantity and quality, help determine population densities. Sapsuckers prefer certain



This range expansion map is only a rough example to date. Other areas outside of the new range shown could contain nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers that have not yet been detected.

nesting trees, such as aspens, across much of their range, but no studies of nest-site preference have been done in Connecticut. A species' abundance usually increases when more suitable habitat becomes available. As one habitat (such as grassland or scrubland) decreases, another (such as the forests required by sapsuckers) may increase. The accompanying change in the species mix may be at work here as Connecticut's forests mature.

High-quality breeding sites can produce high rates of reproductive success and survival. (Sibley). This seems to be the case with sapsuckers in the Northwest Corner of our state. With high reproductive rates in the traditional range, the overflowing numbers of birds could be compelled to find suitable habitat elsewhere, pushing out into less adequate habitats. In time, these areas might become part of the permanent range. When successful breeding produces enough young to replace the adults that die each year, a permanent expansion of range will occur (Sibley). This leaves us with questions: Is the range expansion being seen now caused by an over-saturation of numbers produced in the historical range? Or is the habitat becoming more suitable elsewhere, and we are now seeing a natural permanent range expansion?

Can competition be a reason for this range expansion? Competition from other bird species is minimal for sapsuckers, because their food requirements are so specialized. In fact a number of other species use the sap "wells" drilled in trees by sapsuckers as a food source. Old nest cavities are also used by other species. The only real competition sapsuckers encounter is from other sapsuckers. This might be the answer to why we are seeing an expansion south and east of the traditional range in Connecticut, caused by recent breeding success

and optimal species saturation as described in the previous section.

Conclusion

Populations do not increase continually but reach an upper limit of species density, which can result in a range expansion. This expansion may or may not be permanent, being subject to how suitable the new habitat is for breeding and sustaining its population. Time will tell if this is a permanent range expansion for the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in our state, but for now, it looks as if the species is doing very well. With the increase of suitable aging forests, Connecticut might be seeing a permanent range expansion.

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NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Breeding Mourning Warbler: A First State Record

After several years of sporadically finding agitated Mourning Warblers at the north end of Barkhamsted Reservoir in Hartland and Barkhamsted, and feeling they must be nesting, I finally found them displaying somewhat more likely nesting behavior on 26 June 2005. This happened while I was censusing for the Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count

I was walking slowly along a woods road, counting a wide variety of birds, including other "northern" species such as Magnolia Warbler, when I spotted a male Mourning Warbler in the path. I stopped instantly and watched him go into a grapevine tangle. He emerged, and became quite agitated. A female then popped up out of a briar tangle about 10 feet away from me. She, too, was agitated. I thought I heard a baby bird twittering in the vine tangle.

Not wanting to disturb birds that I was sure were nesting, I continued a little farther down the road and watched from a distance of 100 feet for about 20 minutes. They disappeared into the tangles, and I didn't see them again. I wanted to continue censusing, so I moved on, vowing to return in a week and spend more time watching them. I did just that on 3 July 2005 at 1:30 p.m. I went back to that spot and was almost instantly rewarded with an agitated male Mourning Warbler. He hopped up off the ground with a caterpillar in his beak, flew into the grapevine tangle with it, and came out a minute later empty-beaked. Then I saw a female go across the road and into the tangle with a winged insect

in her beak. About a minute later she came out with a fecal sac in her beak. Before and during this feeding I heard at least one baby bird twittering from the tangle. During the whole episode the adults chipped agitatedly as I watched them for about 20 minutes at a distance of 20 feet with Bausch and Lomb 10x40 binoculars and my eyes

The observation was then interrupted by a young bull moose, which wandered into the area and kept coming toward me. I had to move down the road to stay ahead of him, and continued to try to watch the Mourning Warblers as I was moving. From about 500 feet away with my binoculars I saw the male flit back and forth across the trail four times during the additional half hour I was there. In each case it appeared as though he was carrying food into the tangle. Another return visit by me on 10 July 2005 produced the agitated pair of birds, but no sign or sounds of young ones. I hope they were fledged by then, and the behavior of the adults seemed to indicate this.

This area is about one quarter mile south of the Hartland town line in the town of Barkhamsted. It is off Route 181, and is owned by the Metropolitan District Commission. The area is off limits to the public, but I work there under a contract/permit from the commission. This area is at an altitude of almost 1300 feet, and is very "northern" in character. It has been logged several times in the past 50 years, and cordwood cutting is currently being done there. The woods road is lined with grapevine tangles, interspersed with patches of blackberries and raspberries. Canopy cover is only about 40 percent. The dominant trees along this road are Black and Yellow Birches (30%), Paper and Gray

Birches (20%), Sugar Maple (15%), White Pine (25%), and other conifers (10%). Winterberry Holly and Highbush Blueberry are the dominant shrubs. Ground cover is nearly 100% in much of this area, except under the White Pines and other conifers. A wide variety of ferns comprise at least 75% of this ground cover. Other species present include ground-running blackberry, Partridgeberry, and various grasses and sedges. The Moose was browsing on these herbaceous plants, and wasn't about to let me get in his way. He finally ambled off into the woods after a half hour of grazing.

Mourning Warbler is well established as a breeder in western Massachusetts and has been considered a likely addition to Connecticut's breeding avifauna for some time.

Dave Rosgen

Northern Goshawk Banding Expedition, 8 June 2005

Walking out to the Northern Goshawk nest at Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center, we come upon a Wood Thrush nest in a beech tree next to the trail. One of the adults is incubating four light blue eggs as we discovered later. As we get nearer the adult flees and we walk by gawking at the nest. If it's an omen, it's a good one.

Once at the hawk nest we set up poles and nets to capture the adults. Our purpose is to band the adults. If successful we will also band the nestlings. As Larry Fischer, a licensed raptor bander, Trevor Becker, a biology teacher at Bethel High School, and their assistants set up the nets, I stand guard and watch as both the male

and female fly back and forth over the treetops "kek-ing." Larry had commented before that it is unusual for Northern Goshawks to fly above the treetops.

As I keep track of the raptors and try to photograph them at the same time, I begin to notice a pattern. The Northern Goshawk will "kek" when it flies by and just before it takes a perch. I interpret that as a kind of warning. It then leaves its perch silently and either takes another perch or swoops at an intruder. Unless the raptors are continually watched and their positions known, an attack from behind can occur. I keep a branch with leaves handy to raise at a moment's notice to ward off any attack. We leave the site after the net is set up.

After lunch Larry and Trevor go back to the nest site. Larry plans to use himself to lure the goshawks to the

Maria Stockmal photo

Larry Fischer poses with the banded female Northern Goshawk.

nets. If that doesn't work, a stuffed Great Horned Owl (provided by Dr. Dwight Smith of Southern Connecticut State University) will be used. As the rest of us wait patiently, the female is caught after it dives at Larry and into the mist net.

It is a young female, suggesting that a previous female had died and the male took a new mate. Larry shows off the raptor after it is banded, measured and recorded. All the cameras come out, and I feel awed that this raptor we fear for its ferocity in the nesting season is now contained and calm. However, it does show off its wingspan and silvery white and blue colors several times.

The male avoids capture and the female eventually must be let go. Both goshawks fly off when the female is released, and we take down the nets in a leisurely but cautious manner, always looking around. The endeavor is over and considered successful. The band will allow tracking of the pair.

As we collect our gear, one of the nestlings peers over the nest, giving us our reward for the day.

Maria Stockmal

From Larry Fischer: This joint research project is the brainchild of Trevor Becker, who did master's degree research on goshawks at Southern Connecticut State University under Dr. Dwight Smith. We are looking at the life histories of individual goshawks at a select number of sites in western Connecticut. We want to see how often individuals are replaced at each "historic" nesting site and look at site fidelity and even pair fidelity. General opinion is that pairs are "pair bonded" for life, but that may not actually be the case.

The mist net was a standard one used for large raptors, but the female hit it so hard she took it down. If the net had stayed up we would have caught the male as well. The female was a third-year bird by plumage and eye color. It was so hot and the female was so excited that I canceled the climb to band the young, as our primary goal is to band the adults. More importantly, as a bander my responsibility is to the health and safety of the birds I handle.

An Oriole's Unusual Meal

On 27 July 2005 while I was working at Connecticut Audubon Society's Coastal Center in Milford, our docent Bev Propen called me into the exhibit area to observe a female Baltimore Oriole. Through a picture window we could see the oriole at the edge of the marsh exhibiting rather unusual behavior.

We all watched while it chased and pecked at a male fiddler crab. Although I was called away, she and others witnessed the oriole kill the crab and start poking at it, taking little pieces and thrashing it around. Eventually it grabbed the crab and flew away with it.

It was not seen whether the oriole finished eating the crab, nor was similar behavior witnessed again. A female oriole did remain in the area.

Frank Gallo

An Organized Dinner

On 10 January 2006, two hours before low tide, we observed about 50 Red-breasted Mergansers fishing coop-

eratively off Calf Pasture Beach in Norwalk. About five groups of eight to 12 birds maintained a line of several hundred yards, apparently diving into the shallow bay behind Spite Island. The birds would fly, then land and dive, come up for air, then take off again, land ten yards ahead and dive again. We were on the beach observing with the naked eye. The closest birds were about 20 yards off shore.

Michele Sorensen

A Slippery Repast

On 23 January 2006 two inches of overnight snow changed to rain in Weston. The sun was out, and the ground free of any traces of snow. We had just pulled up to the Weston Library parking lot. There, on the lowest branch of a tree by the walkway, sits a handsome Red-shouldered Hawk scanning the ground right in front of our car, a mere ten feet away. It shortly flew down to the ground, pecked near a leaf, returned to another branch, and repeated the behavior. We did not see that it got anything at all. It went to another branch, scanned again, flew down and pulled out an earthworm. We could see about four inches of worm that was quickly eaten. The hawk hopped about two feet, and another worm was caught and eaten. We saw four worms consumed. It then flew low across the driveway to the lawn of the town hall. I don't know what surprised me more - a hawk eating worms, or worms at the surface in January.

Carolyn Jackson

Vertebrate Use of Eastern Screech Owl Nest Boxes

By Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith

Introduction

In the mid-1970s we began long-term research of Connecticut raptors. As part of this research, in 1976, we initiated an ecological study of the Eastern Screech Owl (*Megascops asio*). Because the Eastern Screech-Owl is a secretive species with a nocturnal activity pattern and peculiar habit of roosting in tree cavity or dense foliage during daylight hours, one element of our study was to research its roosting and nesting behavior. Therefore, we had nest boxes constructed and then placed the boxes within known screech owl territories previously identified by tape-playback surveys (Devine 1982, Smith et al 1987).

Several long-term studies have confirmed the importance of nest boxes as an effective tool for researchers interested in the breeding ecology of this secretive species (Van Camp and Henny 1975, Devine 1982, Gelbach 1996). Herein we report the results of the nest box study and identify management and maintenance techniques to consider when employing a nest box program for screech owls or similar cavity-nesting raptors.

Methods

Nest Box Construction and Placement

Nest boxes were built to specifications as described in previous studies or nest box literature (Allen 1924, Kalmbach and McAtee 1925). All boxes were painted in muted shades of brown, grayish-brown or greenish-brown and fitted with a latch to secure the hinged-

top in place. Erected in fall or winter months in areas known to harbor Eastern Screech Owls, nestboxes were mainly sited from 1977 through 1982, although several were placed into the late 1980s. Nest boxes were placed in New Haven and Fairfield counties in the towns of Bethany, Hamden, Middlebury, Naugatuck, New Canaan, Orange, Oxford and Westport. Sites were chosen based upon previous visual or vocal observations of screech owls (Smith and Devine 1999). All but three boxes were placed on live trees; one was put on a dead tree, and two others were attached to the sides of barns. Approximately 50% were located at the edge or within one meter of the edge of woodland. About 10% were placed in solitary trees along a fencerow or trees that faced a pond or river, while the remainders were placed in woodlands generally within 10-12 meters of an area of transition between woodland and open area (edge). Nest boxes were placed at heights ranging from 3.5-6.5 meters, depending on location of primary branches and all were placed to ensure unimpeded access to and egress from the entrance. Nearest non-wooded habitats to the nest boxes were agricultural fields (35%), meadows or lawns (51%), or wetlands including rivers, ponds and marshes (14%).

We monitored nest boxes either by climbing the tree and checking the contents or by using a mirror to look inside. Occasionally the owl was at the entrance to the box, thereby eliminating the need to check its contents further. At the end of each breeding season the boxes were checked and cleaned of all debris.

Results and Discussion

Eastern Screech Owl Use of Nest Boxes

Four of the 52 nest boxes placed within Eastern Screech Owl territories were occupied by nesting screech owls for one breeding season (7.7% of total nest boxes), although none were used for two breeding seasons. The owls were successful in fledging owlets from all four nest boxes, with four at a New Canaan site, five at a nest box in Orange, three at a nest box in Naugatuck, and three from a Westport nest box.

At least 18 nest boxes were occasionally used for roosting by screech owls, as evidenced by observations of an owl at the entrance hole or in the box, by food caches or by pellet deposition directly beneath or within the nest box. In addition, we found screech owl feathers in two other nest boxes. Use of some boxes did increase substantially during fall and winter months, especially during periods of extended cold and snow.

Screech owls used at least two of the nest boxes for caching prey, but this behavior was only detected from late fall through winter. Prey individuals, cached intact, were gone on subsequent checks of the nest boxes, suggesting that the owls returned to retrieve their caches.

The combination of usage for nesting, roosting, and caching of prey revealed that 46% of all nest boxes erected were used at least one time by Eastern Screech Owls for some purpose. This represents a minimum percentage of usage, as we were only able to monitor nest boxes as our schedules permitted, thus some use may have gone undetected.

Use of Nest Boxes by Other Animals

Other birds and small mammals, and occasionally insects, used all but one of the nest boxes for roosting or nesting at least some time during the study.

The most common avian species occupying nest boxes was the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), with a minimum of 18 boxes routinely used by this species. In each case the starling pair filled the box nearly to the top with twigs, thereby reducing the size of the opening.

At least two boxes were occupied by nesting pairs of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*).

American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) occupied four nest boxes and all were successful in raising young. One pair located in Orange raised a brood of six young while a pair in Oxford successfully fledged three young. We were unable to determine the exact nesting success of the other two pairs, although fledglings were seen with adults in the immediate vicinity of the vacated nest boxes. Two of the four nest boxes occupied by American Kestrels were within one meter of a woodland edge, one box was attached to a barn, and the fourth nest box was placed on a solitary tree in a field. Immediately adjacent to the boxes used by American Kestrels were agricultural fields, fields that were periodically mowed, and/or old cultivated apple orchards with widely spaced trees.

Certain species of mammals also regularly occupied nest boxes set up for screech owls. Gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) were the most persistent creatures, occupying at least 32 of the nest boxes for roosting or breeding purposes. Southern Flying Squirrels (*Glau-*

comys volans) used three boxes for roosting and shelter and possibly for breeding. Opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) took up residence in one nest box in New Canaan and another in Orange, in both cases, gaining entry by chewing and scratching the wood away from the entrance to enlarge the opening. Opossums typically slept during the day, emerging at night and returning before daylight. A live White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*) was found in a nest box on one occasion. Since this next box had not been used by screech owls for some time we suspect that the mouse was using the box for shelter.

In addition to the vertebrate species, wasps were found to occupy three nest boxes. All three boxes contained elaborately constructed wasp nests that completely filled the nest boxes.

Recommendations for Nest Box Placement and Management

Two species presented habitual problems in terms of keeping nest boxes available for screech owl use. Starlings proved difficult to permanently dislodge, and Gray Squirrels were also troublesome and persistent inhabitants. Both species frequently returned to reclaim nest boxes even after they were evicted and the boxes cleaned out. Van Camp and Henny (1975) were also concerned about starling use of screech owl boxes in Ohio. They noted that starlings often used nest boxes vacated by screech owls, and interfered with nesting attempts by Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*).

We offer the following suggestions and recommendations for effective screech owl nest box management:
1 Place the box to ensure the birds have unimpeded ac-

cess to and egress from the entrance.
2 Place a hinged side or top on the box to allow easy access for maintenance activity.
3 Put a hook or lock on any hinged or removable side/top to deter predators and allow easy access for maintenance or nest check.
4 Erect the box a minimum of three meters (10 feet) above ground level.
5 To discourage predators (e.g., opossums and raccoons) and possibly squirrels place metal predator guards on the bole of the tree above and below the nest box. This practice is helpful in deterring predators, but may have limited use in wooded habitats if nearby trees allow squirrels access by jumping. On a solitary tree in a field or clearing only a lower predator guard is needed.
6 A regular monitoring and maintenance program is necessary to ensure the boxes are intact and in place. Many of our boxes were lost, damaged, or destroyed due to the elements, vandalism, or possibly by larger animals attempting to use the boxes for shelter or while foraging.
7 Nest boxes need to be cleaned regularly in the late summer and winter to remove excess debris left by other species, especially squirrels and starlings.
8 Wasp nests are difficult and dangerous to remove from nest boxes. Do not attempt to remove wasps from an active hive, wait until fall and winter months when the wasps are dormant or dead. To do this safely, you may need to remove the nest box and clean it out on the ground.

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BOOK REVIEW

By Robert Askins

Forest Birds of the Last Green Valley. The Density Distribution, Habitat Ecology, and Conservation of Forest Birds of Eastern Connecticut by Robert J. Craig, Michael Altshul and Kathleen G. Beal (2003, 196 pages, Contribution No. 11, Bird Conservation Research, Inc., 90 Liberty Highway, Putnam, CT 06260).

This book provides a detailed account of the forest birds of eastern Connecticut (which is, as the title suggests, one of the last heavily wooded areas between Washington and Boston). Species accounts are anchored in the results of standardized surveys of birds in numerous large forests east of the Connecticut River. The results will interest anyone who regularly searches for birds in eastern Connecticut, and will be invaluable for conservation planning in Connecticut or other parts of the Northeast.

The scope of the bird surveys is impressive. Birds were counted during both the breeding season and mid-winter on transects along trails and small forest roads in 51 forests. Each transect consisted of 15 widely spaced stations. Birds were counted at each station using the variable circular plot method. This method is superior to the more commonly used point survey method because it accounts for differences in the detectability of different species. This correction can be made if the distance to individual birds is accurately estimated. Although the results provide much better estimates of the density of different species, the variable circular plot method isn't used in most large-scale surveys because it is difficult to train numerous volunteers or students

to accurately estimate the distance to a bird singing in the forest. The variability among observers in estimating distances is so great that the results are often useless. Robert Craig avoided this problem by surveying all 765 stations himself, so we can be confident about the accuracy of both bird identifications and estimates of distance. This was a Herculean task that undoubtedly involved innumerable rapid hikes between stations followed by patient listening and counting at each station.

In order to be representative of a particular region, survey sites should be randomly located. According to the description of methods, the sites used in this study were randomly located within the different regions of eastern Connecticut. Unfortunately, the authors don't describe the original pool of sites from which the study sites were chosen, although apparently it consisted of areas with public access that were large enough to accommodate a 3.2 to 4 kilometer transect. This last stipulation guaranteed that all sites were large forests; nearly all sites contained more than 1200 acres of continuous forest. The conclusions therefore cannot be extended to small, isolated forests, such as the small land trust preserves and nature preserves that are common in many parts of Connecticut. Numerous studies have shown that the density and species diversity of forest birds are substantially lower in smaller forests.

Surprisingly, landscape features such as forest area and proximity to other large forests were not taken into account in the analyses of bird distributions in this study. The abundance and distribution of birds are explained primarily in terms of differences in vegetation. Because all of the sites were large forests, this probably does not

create a major problem, but it would have been interesting to learn whether forest area affects bird communities in a consistent way across the range of forest areas included by this study.

Although forest fragmentation is not considered in the analysis of survey data, it is frequently mentioned as a potential threat for particular species. Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Veery, Wood Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager are accurately described as species that are negatively affected by forest fragmentation. Unfortunately, the sources for this information are not cited for most of these species. Also, some cavity-nesting species are described as threatened by forest fragmentation even though these species generally do well in small, isolated patches of forest. Apparently cavity-nesters such as Great Crested Flycatcher, Downy Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatches have such well-protected nests that the unusually high density of nest predators and cowbirds in small forest fragments has little effect on them.

The lack of careful attention to forest fragmentation does not negate the importance of this study, however. This study demonstrates why we cannot explain bird distributions solely in terms of the size and distribution of forests. Geography and the dominant type of vegetation at a site also heavily influence the abundance of particular species. The importance of geography is clear from maps showing the density for particular bird species in different areas of eastern Connecticut. Pine Warblers are concentrated along the Rhode Island border where there is plenty of dry, coniferous forest.

Worm-eating Warbler is common in southeastern Connecticut, but declines toward the north, while Blackburnian Warbler shows the reverse pattern. This contrast in bird densities between coastal and northern areas is often substantial, particularly in winter, because of differences in climate and the vegetation. Northern forests tend to have a high proportion of conifers, while coastal forests are more likely to be predominately deciduous.

The species accounts provide detailed descriptions of the habitats used by particular species. Many species were restricted to a relatively narrow range of forest types: Yellow-rumped Warblers were in coniferous forests, Prairie Warblers were in forest openings (including recent timber harvests), and Northern Waterthrushes were in wooded swamps. The survey results also suggest how changes in Connecticut forests may affect bird populations. Expanding beaver populations will produce open shrubby areas that provide habitat for Eastern Bluebirds and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. High hemlock mortality due to an introduced insect (woolly adelgid) will probably reduce the populations of bird species that are strongly associated with hemlock stands, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren and Black-throated Green Warbler.

The authors conclude that no single forest will accommodate the full set of forest birds in Connecticut. Even a very large forest would not provide a sufficient diversity of habitats. They argue that it is important to protect large forests in each region of the state because large forests provide a wider range of habitats. Notice that this differs from the argument that large forests are needed because many species of birds decline or disappear in small, isolated patches of forest. Both arguments

are valid; large forests support species that disappear from small forests, and they tend to encompass a greater diversity of successional stages and specialized forest types (such as conifer stands, riparian forest, and swamp forest). Another implication is that different forests should be managed in different ways. Just as it would be a mistake to manage all forests to maximize early successional conditions, it would also be a mistake to manage all forests to maximize mature and old-growth conditions.

The analysis presented in this book complements studies of the effect of forest fragmentation on forest birds. The forest fragmentation studies generally focus on a relatively homogenous region and a single type of forest in order to reveal how birds are influenced by the size of forests and the proximity of other forests. For example, Margarett Jones, David Sugeno, and I surveyed about the same number of sites covered in this study, but all sites were near the coast in southeastern Connecticut, and all of the survey points were in mature, upland deciduous or mixed hardwood-conifer forest (Askins et al, 1987; Biological Conservation 39: 129-152). Consequently, we were able to compare bird populations in large and small forests, but we obtained relatively little information about species such as Chestnut-sided Warbler, Canada Warbler and Winter Wren that require other types of forest habitats. Although preventing forest fragmentation is a valid concern for conservation of forest birds, Robert Craig and his colleagues have shown that sustaining a diversity of forest habitats in different regions is equally important.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES
Summer, June 1 to July 31, 2005

By Greg Hanisek

Connecticut birders enjoyed an exciting summer full of interesting and noteworthy avian events, including the confirmation of a new (but not unexpected) nesting species for the state, Mourning Warbler. Brief visits to the largely inaccessible Rentschler Field tract in East Hartford during a June Bioblitz confirmed that site as perhaps the most significant grassland breeding bird location in Connecticut. In keeping with a developing trend, several pelagic species were found inside Long Island Sound this summer. Less than a decade ago a single individual of any of these species would have been extraordinary. Again we've divided the complex summer season into its several avian components. Details on the birds mentioned above, and much more, can be found under the appropriate headings.

Northbound Migration

Late Northern Gannets were in Long Island Sound to mid-June with up to three reported from Stratford (FM), Stamford (MD, TD), Norwalk (MD, TD) and Greenwich (JZe) from June 15 to 17. The latest was June 27 off Stratford (CB). The only Tricolored Heron was at Barn Island, Stonington, on June 7 (DWa). A Marbled Godwit was easy to find June 11-16 at Milford Point (GN, RB, NC). The last report of Red Knot was two from Sandy Point on June 25 (OW). The latest White-rumped Sandpipers, a species with a late migration schedule, were three on June 16 at Sandy Point in West Haven (MD, TD) and one on June 19 at

Milford Point along with an alternate-plumaged Western Sandpiper, which is rare in spring (KE, PH). Birders missed **Little Gull** in spring, usually the prime time to find this species, but one visited Sandy Point in West Haven June 7 (JH).

The late push of May migrants noted in the spring field notes carried over into early June. Five Common Nighthawks were still over White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield on June 2 (DRo). An Olive-sided Flycatcher turned up at Whittemore Sanctuary in Woodbury on June 6 (SB). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was in Manchester June 3, with two there on June 12 (TA). Of special interest was a Gray-cheeked-type Thrush closely studied on June 12 in Riverside Park, Hartford, and identified by experienced observers as a Bicknell's Thrush (JK, JMe, AZ). Because of identification difficulties, this species' migration schedule in Connecticut is poorly known, but it is likely a late spring migrant. An extraordinary 13 species of warblers on June 1 at the Route 44 power lines in West Hartford included a Nashville Warbler and a Golden-winged Warbler (WS et al.). Another Golden-winged was an unusual find for southeast Connecticut on June 2 in East Lyme (DWi). Mourning Warblers, noted for late movements, produced six reports from June 1 to 9. A Wilson's Warbler was at Goshen Wildlife Management Area June 9 (CB). Late Lincoln's Sparrows were at West Hartford June 1 (JMe) and banded at Milford Point on June 7 (CW).

Southbound Migration

Sandy Point already held 18 Semipalmated Plovers by July 13 (FG). Milford Point hosted 10 Black-bellied Plovers July 28

(FG). Two Greater Yellowlegs were at Access Road pools in Stratford June 22, probably more likely coming than going (FM). The first returning Lesser Yellowlegs, a species that clears out quickly by mid-May, was at Milford Point July 9 (FG). A Whimbrel dropped in at HBSP on July 15 (JMa). The first two Ruddy Turnstones were at Sandy Point July 3 (PDe), and the first Red Knot appeared there July 28 (GN). The month's best count of Sanderling was 24 on July 28 at Milford Point (FG). Milford Point held 12 Least Sandpipers July 10 (FG); that multiplied to 300 on July 23 and 600 on July 28 (FG). A Western Sandpiper was at Sandy Point July 17 (JH). Watch Rock in Old Lyme held two Stilt Sandpipers July 18 (HG). The first Short-billed Dowitcher reached Sandy Point by July 13 (FG), with two identified as the *hendersonii* race there on July 17 (JH). It's hard to pin a seasonal category on a Black Tern more than two miles out into the Sound off Stamford on June 26 (AC). Another Black Tern in mid-Sound off Norwalk July 24 seemed more clearly southbound (FM).

Until proven otherwise, a July 14 Olive-sided Flycatcher in West Hartland belongs in this category (PCa), but the area holds nesting potential. The first migrant Tree Swallows, a group of eight, passed Milford Point July 20 (FG). Red-breasted Nuthatches staged one of their periodic early movements, with the first ones reported July 16 from Greenwich (BO) and July 24 from Windsor Locks (PDe). Yellow Warblers, noted for their early departures, were on the move with three at Milford Point on July 21 (FG). A Northern Waterthrush was southbound in Milford on July 31 (PDe).

Lingerers, Wanderers and Strays

Unexpected were a male American Wigeon to at least June 6 at Warehouse Pool in Stratford (FM) and a Northern Pintail on June 14 at Mondo Ponds, Milford (DV). A male Long-tailed Duck was on the Housatonic River off Short Beach, Stratford, on July 14 (FM). A Red-breasted Merganser, a regular summer lingerer, was at Long Beach, Stratford, on June 30 (FMa). A few Common Loons always summer in Long Island Sound, but an alternate plumage bird through spring and summer on the Mystic River in Stonington was unusual (GW). So was one in basic plumage from July 15-31 at the foot of Shepaug dam in Southbury (RN). A July 10 trip to mid-Long Island Sound produced two **Manx Shearwaters** off Norwalk and an unidentified shearwater off Westport (MD, TD). It was another good summer

Larry Flynn photo

Part of large group of Wilson's Storm-Petrels found in Connecticut waters off of Norwalk in July.

for **Wilson's Storm-Petrels**. The first two were reported from mid-Long Island Sound off Norwalk on June 12 (TD), then two were seen from shore off Shippan Point, Stamford, on June 15 (PDu), followed by seven off Greenwich Point (BO) and 12 off Shippan (PDu) the next day. Good numbers continued throughout the season with highs of 22 off Stamford June 22 (PDu) and 40+ off Norwalk and Westport July 10 (MD, TD). These were all topped by 90+ off Norwalk, including rafts of 25, 25 and 40, on July 12 (LF). Similar numbers persisted to at least July 17 (LF). A **Brown Pelican** was seen in flight July 18 in Stratford (CL), which is the first record since 2002.

Two Cattle Egrets visited a farm in Lyme on June 16 (JG). A few Black-crowned Night Herons wander up the Housatonic River each summer, but 11 below the dam at Derby was an unusually high number (RH). Inland Ospreys in June rank as wanderers until proven otherwise. That's where we'll put one on June 24 at Goodwin dam in West Hartland (PCa et al.). Same for one that summered at Shepaug dam in Southbury (RN). After spring's ultra-cooperative **Swallow-tailed Kite**, a one-observer report of a briefly seen bird June 18 in Roxbury fell back into the more typical pattern (SeH). A first-summer **Mississippi Kite** made an exciting fly-by June 9 at Connecticut Audubon's Fairfield Center (MB). The bird apparently did some wandering, assuming the same individual accounted for sightings June 17 at Trout Brook Valley in Easton (LT, CB) and June 22 at Greenwich Audubon Center (TB).

The first report of Forster's Tern came from Milford Point on June 13 (GN). The overshooting

Chuck-will's-widow present during May in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme remained until at least June 11 (m.ob.). Single Red-headed Woodpeckers made typically enigmatic appearances June 25 near Hadlyme (JR), July 4 in Wallingford (MM) and July 12-14 at White Memorial in Litchfield (DRo et al.).

Breeding Season

Five broods of Common Mergansers on the Pomperaug River in Southbury totaled about 40 young (RN). A Pied-billed Grebe was on Cemetery Pond in Litchfield, a potential breeding location, on June 12 (DRo). Away from prime breeding areas in the Connecticut River Valley, a Least Bittern was at Little Pond in Litchfield June 11 (RN). A pair of Ospreys was observed bringing sticks to a light stanchion at an athletic stadium in New Britain on June 6 (JMe). The effort did not persist, but inland nesting attempts are almost unknown in the state. The state's only known Northern Harrier nesting site, at the Stratford Great Meadows, held a nest with five young on June 6 (fide CB). Territorial Northern Goshawks were reported on June 6 in Southbury (DRo) and June 12 in Morris (DRo). A Sharp-shinned Hawk displayed nesting behavior in July in Ellington (CE). Potentially nesting American Kestrels included a pair in Storrs July 7 (TS) and a female in Suffield July 17 (PDe). Up to four Upland Sandpipers were at Rentschler Field in East Hartford on June 3 (FG). The state's recently formed Black Skimmer colony at Sandy Point, West Haven, held 25 adults and three young on July 15 (GN).

At least two Monk Parakeet nests with birds entering and exiting have been established on light

stanchions at a stadium in New Britain, far from the nesting stronghold on the southwest coast (JMe). A Long-eared Owl, one of the state's most elusive nesters, was heard calling in mid-July in Bethlehem (RN). Territorial Whip-poor-wills were reported from Lyme (m.ob.), two Wolcott locations (JSw), Somers (JSt), Nepaug (PCa) and Stonington (HM). South of historic breeding areas, two pairs of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in Woodbury (RN) and two to three pairs were near Lake Zoar in Southbury (RN). While sapsuckers and most other woodpeckers prosper, Northern Flicker appears to be in decline. The 10 to 15 reported from White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield for the season were an all-time low (RN).

Acadian Flycatchers were territorial in Naugatuck State Forest (SB) and East Hartford (FG) on June 5 and Trout Brook Valley in Easton on July 27 (FG). There was a good concentration of five White-eyed Vireos in the Flanders area of Woodbury in early June (FZ). How widespread have Common Ravens become? They're apparently yard birds in Canton, where four visited a property on June 6 (PCi). The Cliff Swallow colony at Shepaug dam in Southbury held 112 birds on June 5 (DRo). The bulk of the state's breeding population is on bridges and dams along the Housatonic River, but a colony of eight was discovered on a commercial building in Canton on July 4 (PCi). Nepaug Reservoir dam in New Hartford held 12 on July 16 (JB). West of the Housatonic six were at Easton Reservoir dam on June 5 (DV) and 10 were at Hemlock Reservoir in Redding June 23 (DV).

A female Golden-winged Warbler, first noted in spring in West Hartford, was found in early June to be mated to

a Blue-winged Warbler (JMe, JK). A Lawrence's Warbler was at Walden Preserve in Salem on June 4 (HG). A Northern Parula appeared territorial in late June in Colebrook (RN). Optimistically placed in this category, based largely on potential, May's **Prothonotary Warbler** at Nehantic State Forest in Lyme was present until at least June 14 (m.ob.). After several years of suspicions, an observer confirmed a pair of Mourning Warblers attending nestlings in Barkhamsted in July for a first state breeding record (DRo). Another Mourning, singing for at least three days in early June in West Hartland, also raised breeding suspicions (PCa, DCa). Hooded Warbler appears to be expanding and prospering throughout the state. A June count of 35 to 40 in Woodbury-Southbury was seen as an increase and range expansion in that area (RN et al.) They also turned up at rarely birded areas such as Sprague Reservoir in Baltic (JMe). Yellow-breasted Chat appeared territorial through June in Woodbury (FZ). Others were at the Kitchell Preserve in Old Greenwich June 12-16 (MSa et al.), in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme in June (m.ob.) and at Little Pond in Litchfield July 3 (PR).

Following the report of a male **Blue Grosbeak** on June 1 at Northwest Park in Windsor (FM), a pair was seen there on June 4 (JMa et al.) The birds were present into mid-July and apparently attempted breeding. Although no young were seen, a second male was reported on July 13 (JMh et al.). This is the second time this species has attempted nesting at Northwest Park. **Dickcissel**, which also has nested at Northwest Park, was represented this summer by singing males on June 10 at Rentschler Field in East Hartford (PCi) and on June 17 at Trout Brook Valley in Easton (LT, CB).

The Rentschler observer went there after hearing about the Bioblitz bonanza, which on June 3 yielded: a singing **Clay-colored Sparrow** (a potential nester that is spreading eastward), 25 Grasshopper Sparrows, 12 Savannah Sparrows and seven Field Sparrows (FG, PDu). Other Grasshopper Sparrow reports came from Northwest Park (TA et al.) and Perimeter Road in Granby (PM, MC). At least two Vesper Sparrows were singing at Northwest Park in Windsor in mid-July in appropriate breeding habitat; there are no recent confirmed nestings anywhere in the state (RB.). Also present at Rentschler were "many Bobolinks" and six Eastern Meadowlarks (FG, PDu). Those species were also found in June at West Thompson Lake field dog training area (SF). A yellow variant House Finch was in East Hartford in July (DCm). Mounting evidence suggests the following Evening Grosbeak reports may belong in this category: four to five from June 22 to July 26 in Barkhamsted (DP), two on June 24 in West Hartland (PCa et al.), a pair on July 9 at Winchester Center (BE), a pair July 12 in Falls Village (GH, MSz) and a female carrying food July 17 in Cornwall (RN).

Observers: Tim Antanaitis, Bob Askins, Renee Baade, Jim Bair, Bill Banks, Tom Baptist, Charles Barnard, Scott Baron, Miley Bull, Jay Carlisle, Dana Campbell (DCm), Douglas Carrier (DCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Seth Carrier, Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Al Collins, Margaret Crombie, Neil Currie, Paul Desjardins (PDe), Mardi Dickinson, Townsend Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Bill Eichner, Carl Ekroth, Ken Elkins, Larry Flynn, Sam Fried, Frank Gallo, Brad Garber, John Gaskell, Hank Golet, Ted Gilman, Greg

Hanisek, Roy Harvey, Seth Harvey (SeH), Simon Harvey (SiH), Phil Henson, Julian Hough, Jay Kaplan, Andy Krofina, Christopher Lovell, Frank Mantlik, Patsy Mason, John Maynard (JMa), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Marty Moore, Harold Moritz, Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Brian O'Toole, Dave Pelletier, James Restivo, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Paul Rubino, Dean Rupp (DRu), Maryann Rupp, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Tom Sayers, Arthur Shippee, Donna Rose Smith (DSm), Dori Sosensky (DSo), Steve Spector, Jerry Stage (JSt), Peter Stephan, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Will Storz, Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Clay Taylor, Luke Tiller, Dennis Varza, Linda Vegliante, Dorothy Wadlow (DWa), Charlotte Weston, Danny Williams (DWi), Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, Olive Wysocki, Roy Zartarian, Anthony Zemba, Joe Zeranski (JZe), Jim Zipp (JZi), Fran Zygmont.

Larry Flynn Photo

A Wilson's Storm-Petrel dances over Long Island Sound off Norwalk in July.

Photo Challenge: American Golden Plover

By Julian Hough

This month's challenge bird is sitting quietly, nestled in among some rocks. It is obviously a shorebird and the combination of obvious dark eye and distinct spangling identify it as either a Black-bellied or American Golden Plover.

In late autumn, large flocks of Black-bellied Plover congregate along the shores. This is a good time to look through them carefully in hope of finding the smaller and more delicate American Golden Plover hiding among their ranks. However, no plumage clues or handy size comparisons can help us. It is alone, so size is hard to judge. Is it Black-bellied or American Golden Plover??

In fresh plumage, juvenile Black-bellied and American Golden Plovers are very similar, and for the experienced it's the nuances of "jizz" - size, shape and structure - that often yield a correct identification rather than plumage minutiae.

Our bird looks rather slim and long-winged. Black-bellieds are rather robust shorebirds with a more solid-looking body and a stout bill. Our bird doesn't seem to be as chunky as we remember Black-bellieds, and has kind of a "cute" look to the face. If we identify the bird as an American Golden Plover just on these features, we would be right!

American Golden Plovers, compared to Black-bellieds, typically look smaller, longer-legged and more attenuated due to their long primary tips, which extend

noticeably beyond the tail. When active, they often appear to have a bulbous head on a longish neck, rather different from the more thick-necked and compact Black-bellied.

The fresh plumage with lack of any remnants of patchy summer feathers on the underparts and face age it as a juvenile. Juvenile Black-bellieds, in real-life Technicolor, are overall grayish and thus colder in tone than most American Golden Plovers. In fresh juvenile plumage, American Goldens are a delicate suffusion of greys and warm browns.

When seen together, American Golden Plovers are often apparent just on size and color. At a a distance they often look smoky, with their uniform plumage offset by a more contrasting whitish supercilium. However, the pitfall is that there are often two color variations found in juvenile Black-bellieds. While many juveniles are grayish, some Black-bellieds can appear warmer and more golden-brown. It's these more warm-plumgaed juveniles that can cause initial confusion.

Julian Hough Photo

Black-bellied Plover *American Golden Plover*

The statements relating to structure still apply, but there are a few plumage features to compare on the two photos here:

1 Black-bellieds tend to have a deeper bill
2 The eyes are proportionately larger
3 The underparts are more distinctly streaked
4 The primary tips do not extend beyond the tip of the tail as much as American Golden
5 The legs are thicker and shorter

On our bird the slender bill, fine notching and spangling to the upperparts, the mottled (not streaked) breast and clearer pale supercilium all support our identification as American Golden Plover.
Both photos were taken at Sandy Point, West Haven by myself in September 2005.

Photo Challenge Number 52

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

Black-crowned Night Heron

Andrew Dasinger, a member of the COA board, debuts as a cover artist in this issue. Andrew's subject, looking rather sinister, plays a part in our article on Least Tern monitoring at Sandy Point in West Haven.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

By Greg Hanisek

You'll find something different in this issue. We hope you'll also find it enjoyable and worthy of continuation. Two pages are devoted to photographs of some of the fall season's most interesting birds in color.

This isn't the first time The Connecticut Warbler has added color to its pages (actually it's the second), but expense, always a concern for an all-volunteer organization, has seldom allowed us to consider it. Some technical advances appear to have opened a window of opportunity for us to use color more often, especially if we can generate some fairly modest donations targeted specifically for this purpose.

COA thanks the Republican-American of Waterbury for a grant that helps defray the cost of color in this issue.

We also have our usual selection of interesting articles. The account of a second year of monitoring at the Sandy Point Least Tern colony, by Jennifer Healy and Sylvia Halkin, spotlights a conservation initiative undertaken by our organization.

Don Hopkins' article on Bald Eagle nesting behavior illustrates the value of careful, consistent observation and note-taking in understanding the lives of birds. Efforts such as those of Don and the Bald Eagle Study Group have played a significant role in bring this species back from the edge of the abyss.

LEAST TERN COLONY AT SANDY POINT BIRD SANCTUARY:

Comparison of Sources of Disturbance in the Summers of 2004 and 2005

Jennifer L. Healy and Sylvia L. Halkin

Introduction

In summer 2004 Jennifer Healy studied the Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) colony at the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary to determine sources of disturbance and mortality to the nesting terns, with a particular focus on the effect of different human activities. This research was reported in the April 2005 Connecticut Warbler (Healy and Halkin 2005). The 2004 breeding season was an unusually productive one for this colony. A follow-up study was conducted in 2005, when recommendations for decreasing sources of disturbance to this colony had been implemented, and the weather was quite different than in 2004. Here we report data for the 2005 breeding season, with a focus on comparisons to the 2004 breeding season, evaluation of the effectiveness of steps taken to decrease levels of disturbance, and further recommendations for effective management of this colony.

Methods

The site where the Least Tern colony is located has been referred to by different names. These include Sandy Point (which has also been used to designate the sandy spit to the north of the colony, as in the 7.5 minute series of topographic maps for Connecticut); Morse Point; and the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary (as on the Connecticut DEP Coastal Access Guide website, as of October 2005). We will use this latter name to refer to this site; it is the same place we called "Sandy Point" or "near the tip of the Sandy Point complex" in Healy and Halkin (2005).

Jennifer, Jack, and Sandy Healy made the observations for this study. Jennifer Healy made observations for all aspects of this study during 131.5 hours in the periods 7-22 May, and 25 June - 13 August, 2005. Jack (3 weekends) and Sandy Healy (1 weekend) counted people and birds in the vicinity of the colony during 22.5 hours between 28 May and 19 June 2005. Least Terns were first seen at the colony on 14 May. Observations were made on most Fridays, all Saturdays and Sundays, and also on two Mondays and one Wednesday. Observations usually extended over 5-6 hours, starting between 8 and 9 a.m., and ending between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m., to include the times when people were most likely to be in the area. The colony was also observed for two hours before dawn on four days, and on four nights for periods of 2.5 hours from 8:30-11 p.m.

The colony was surrounded by a fence consisting of string wrapped around thin wooden posts that were about 1-1.25 m tall and 5-6.5 m apart (farther apart than in 2004). In 2004, the fenced area was an oval with a long axis of about 70 m and a short axis of about 50 m. In 2005, the peninsula on which the colony is located had become longer and had lost topographic relief (the highest points were closer to sea level). The fenced area was extended at both ends, by ~5 m toward the tip of the peninsula, and by an area approximately 15 m long and 10 m across on the landward (SW) side. In accordance with recommendations from 2004, thick (~12.5 mm) yellow synthetic rope was wrapped around the posts at a height of ~1 m above the ground along most of the southeast side of the colony, which receives the most human traffic; most terns also nest in the southeast half of the colony. The northwest side of the colony, and a small portion of the southeast side adjacent to

the landward extension, still had ~1.5 mm thick black synthetic string wrapped around the posts. The landward extension had white cotton kite string, also ~1.5 mm thick, wrapped around the posts. Flagging was not used in 2005, except for some remnants from 2004 on the northwest side of the colony.

Each day the observer began by walking around the fenced area, at a distance between 10 cm and 3 m from the fence, to make any necessary repairs to the fence posts and string, take an initial count of people present in the vicinity, and count Least Terns, Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*), Black Skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*), Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*), Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliates*), Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*), Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis maculata*), and any other shorebirds, egrets, or herons that were present. The methods for counting terns were different from those used in 2004, because the vegetation at the colony site was taller and denser, and the tern chicks were less mobile and more difficult to see. Unlike 2004, the terns also appeared to be disturbed when a spotting telescope was used, so spotting scope use was avoided. Tern ages were classified as in Healy and Halkin (2005), with the addition of the "prefledgling" stage, which had not been distinguished from the "chick" stage in 2004. Chicks became prefledglings when the predominantly white down on their bodies was replaced by predominantly brown and gray feathers.

Once a trip around the fenced area had been made, the three observers proceeded differently to record additional birds arriving at the colony, and to look for eggs or young that had been missed on the first count. Jack Healy continued to walk around the perimeter of the

colony. Sandy Healy sat outside the fence at a location where she could observe much of the colony. Jennifer Healy (JLH) sat sequentially in four different locations outside the fence on the southeast side of the colony, by areas where the terns were most concentrated, and made observations from each area for approximately an hour, using 8 x 40 binoculars; usually she started at the landward end of the colony, but occasionally she started at the end toward the tip of the peninsula. At the end of the day, she also walked along the northwest side of the colony, and then made a final circuit of the colony before leaving. All observers also noted the times of arrival and departure and activities of each person seen on the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary peninsula.

Night (including pre-dawn) sessions were conducted purely to observe activity of potential predators of terns within the colony, as individual Least Tern adults and chicks were extremely hard to see at night. Nights were often lighter than in 2004, so Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) and Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) could be seen with the naked eye or binoculars; a night scope was used to discriminate between these two species. To avoid disturbing the colony or predators, the observer sat at or walked around the very tip of the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary peninsula, staying approximately 6-10 m from the closest nesting pair of birds. All potential predators were noted, and their behavior was described. The nocturnal activities of people on the peninsula were also noted.

Results

For adult birds, there were daily maxima of 300 Least Terns, 300 Common Terns, 29 Black Skimmers, 12 Piping Plovers, four Willets, four Oystercatchers, and two

Spotted Sandpipers in the colony in 2005. The corresponding daily maxima for adults in 2004 were 200 Least Terns, 150 Common Terns, 12 Black Skimmers, 20 Piping Plovers, four Willets, two Oystercatchers, and four Spotted Sandpipers. All of these species fledged at least some young in the colony in both years, with the exception of Willets and Spotted Sandpipers, which fledged young in 2004 but not 2005. Numbers of young fledged in 2005 were lower for Least Terns, higher for Common Terns, probably higher for Black Skimmers (though young were still unable to fly when data collection ended), and lower for Piping Plovers and Oystercatchers.

The high maximum numbers of adult Least Terns in 2005 may be due to first-year birds from the very successful 2004 breeding season returning to their natal colony. However, numbers of Least Terns started to decrease in early July, and by mid-July only 150 remained. The decrease in numbers of Least Terns at the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary coincided with an increase in Least Tern numbers at Pleasure Beach, about 60 km away. The numbers of adult Common Terns approximately doubled during July in both 2004 and 2005. We know that in 2005, the increase in the Common Tern population at the colony coincided with a drop in the Common Tern population at Falkner Island, about 20 km away.

Figures 1a and 1b show the number of people participating in different types of activities on the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary peninsula. Overall, there were a total of 1197 human visits to the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary in 2004, but only 339 in 2005. The fewest people visited on rainy or very hot and humid days. In both years, fishermen were the most frequent visitors, followed by walk-

ers (including people with dogs). Numbers of both of these categories of visitors in 2005 were only 1/3 as high as in 2004, likely due to the very hot and humid weather in 2005. The next most common visitors in 2004 were sunbathers, followed by birders; in 2005, there were more birders than sunbathers. Numbers of sunbathers in 2005 fell to about 1/5 as many as in 2004, while the number of birders only decreased to about half the number in 2004. The "Others" category includes runners and shell collectors in 2005, while people flying kites, kayakers, jet skiers, clammers, and a person picking up garbage on the beach were also present in 2004; the "Others" numbers in 2005 were less than 1/10 of those in 2004. The number of visits by dogs was also far lower in 2005: single dogs visited on 25 June and on 16 and 29 July, 2005, compared to 24 dog visits spread over

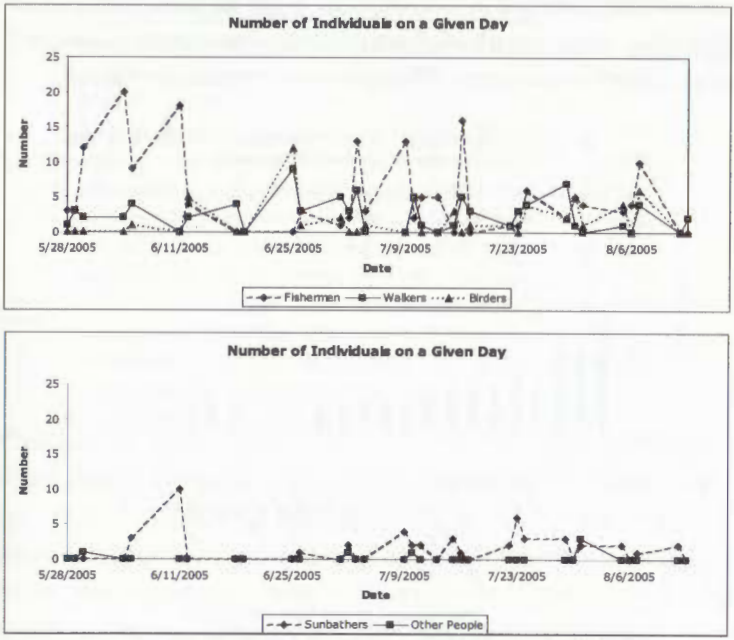

Figure 1: Numbers of people visiting the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary peninsula. Labeled dates are Saturdays.

11 days in 2004.

In both 2004 and 2005, when Least Terns were disturbed, the majority of the adults in the colony flew up as a group, and returned as a group when the disturbance was gone. When disturbances occurred in 2005, Common Terns usually left first, followed by Black Skimmers and then Least Terns; in 2004, Black Skimmers were often the first to leave, and terns took longer to leave after the Black Skimmers had taken flight. In both years, Piping Plovers, Oystercatchers, and Spotted Sandpipers rarely flew from disturbances, but sometimes ran away. Willets responded mainly by calling.

In Figure 2, the average amount of time for which each kind of disturbance caused the majority of Least Terns to leave the colony is shown, as well as the number of times that each kind of disturbance occurred; data are plotted for both years. There were a total of 349 dis-

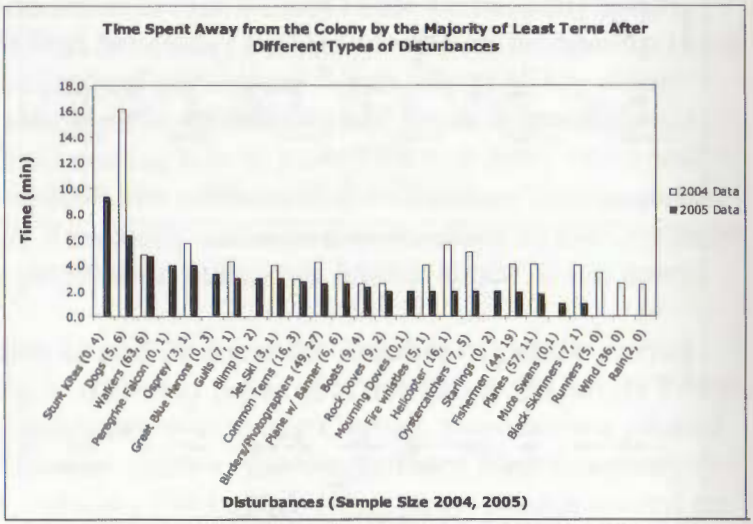

Figure 2: Average amount of time for which each type of disturbance caused the majority of Least Terns to leave the colony, and number of times that each type of disturbance occurred.

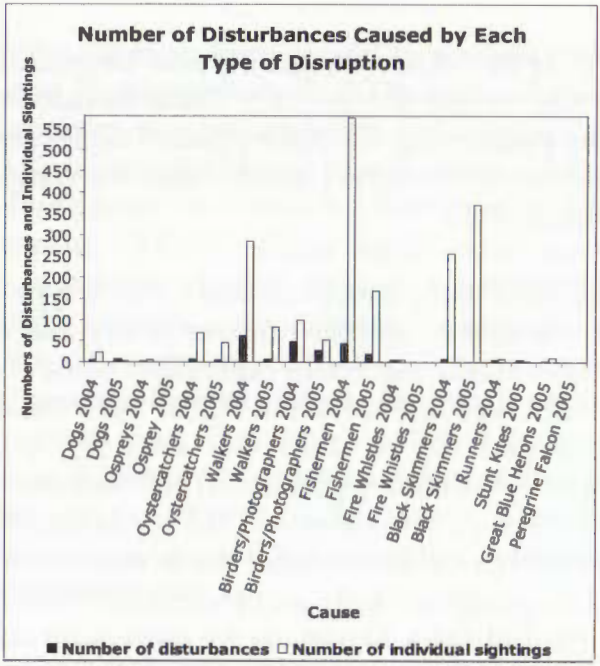

Figure 3: The number of disturbances caused by each type of disruption, and the number of sightings of potentially disrupting individuals of each type. Note that if a group of individuals caused a disturbance, each individual was counted separately, but only one disturbance was recorded as having occurred. On the other hand, a single individual could cause multiple sequential disturbances. For counts of total numbers of individuals, each individual was counted once for each day on which it was seen (for example, if the same fisherman was seen on 18 different days, he would add 18 to the total count of fishermen). Only adult birds caused disturbances, and only adult birds are included in these counts.

turbances in 2004, but only 109 in 2005. The longest disturbances in both years were caused by unleashed dogs; the longest dog disturbance in 2005 lasted 28 minutes, when an unleashed dog ran on the beach next to the fence; in 2004, a 30-minute disturbance was caused when an unleashed dog ran through the colony. Leashed dogs caused shorter disturbances, bringing down the average. Stunt kites flown from the sandy

spit north of the colony caused the next longest disturbances: four on one day in 2005. Other disturbances caused by people near the colony lasted an average of 1.9-4.7 min in 2005, slightly shorter than the range of 3.8-4.8 min in 2004.

The number of disturbances caused by each type of daytime disruption, and the number of daytime sightings of individuals that could potentially cause disruptions of each type, are shown in Fig. 3. Individuals were counted on each day on which they were observed on or flying over the colony peninsula, between the landward (SW) colony boundary and the peninsula tip; the summed counts are shown here. Note that in the corresponding graph in Healy and Halkin (2005), for Oystercatchers and Black Skimmers we used daily maxima, rather than summed season-long counts; summed season-long counts are presented here for all sources of disturbances.

Several types of disruptors had high numbers of disturbances relative to the number of sightings. In 2005, three dogs caused seven disturbances, two stunt kites caused four disturbances, and the single Osprey, fire whistle, and Peregrine Falcon each caused a disturbance; every fire whistle in 2004 also caused a disturbance, and the four Ospreys in 2004 caused three disturbances. Runners caused the next highest proportion of disturbances. Three disturbances were observed during 10 sightings of Great Blue Herons. All of these types of disruption, however, were relatively rare.

Birders and photographers (including monitors working at the colony) also caused high numbers of disturbances relative to the number of sightings; in each year, most

of these disturbances were caused by a small subset of birders and photographers. In 2004, many of these were due to monitors making necessary fence repairs, erecting exclosures around Piping Plover nests and counting eggs in those nests, or examining dead terns to determine the cause of death. Fence repairs, egg counts, and a few examinations of dead terns were conducted by JLH in 2005, but only a few terns in the immediate area took to the air; no observations in 2005 were made while Piping Plover nests were visited. In 2005, birders and photographers most commonly disturbed the colony by pointing long telescope or camera lenses at the colony; the colony did not respond in this way in 2004, and we do not know what caused the difference in response between the two years.

Walkers mainly caused disturbances when they walked right along the fence line. Fishermen were the most common human visitors in both years, but relative to their numbers, caused very few disturbances. Oystercatchers and Black Skimmers also caused no disturbance most of the times they were seen. Some groups shown in Fig. 2 were not included in Fig. 3 because total numbers of sightings without disturbances were not recorded.

Unlike 2004, there was evidence of significant predation on the colony. The main predator for 2005 was probably one or more Black-crowned Night-Herons, first seen on 25 June. Night-Heron-sized tracks were seen near tern nests on about 10 days; a Black- crowned Night-Heron feather was also found near the tracks on one day. Often nests with eggs near the tracks had been deserted, or eggs or chicks were missing from those nests. On two separate nights a Black-crowned Night-

Heron was observed entering the fenced area. The first was sighted in the middle of the Least Tern colony: It arrived at the peninsula at 8:30 p.m., and entered the colony after darkness had completely fallen (sometime after 9:30 p.m.). The second was observed entering the fenced area on the tip of the peninsula. In each case, the Black-crowned Night-Heron was observed repeatedly lowering its head and then raising it as if it were swallowing something. Terns near the Black-crowned Night-Herons flew up; it is not known how long they stayed away from their nests, and terns elsewhere in the colony stayed on their nests. Groups of up to five additional Black-crowned Night-Herons were observed feeding in the water around the tip of the peninsula and/or on the sandy spit north of the colony, on these and two other nights among the eight night sessions. A Black-crowned Night-Heron was also seen in the colony at 6 a.m. on one day; it flew out of the colony right after JLH saw it. One or two Black-crowned Night-Herons were occasionally seen feeding at low tide in the lagoon between the colony peninsula and the sandy spit during observations between 8 and 10 a.m.

In 2005, at least from the end of June onwards, incubation appeared to take much longer than in 2004. Although systematic data on the duration of incubation periods were not taken, in 2004 most eggs seemed to hatch within three weeks of the start of incubation at a nest. In 2005 approximately 15 nests were observed from the start of incubation. Eggs in most of these nests took 4-6 weeks to hatch after the adults were first seen sitting on the nest for prolonged periods during the day.

Great Blue Herons flying over the colony during the day elicited strong mobbing responses (3/3); Least Terns did

not respond to Great Blue Herons on the ground during the day (7), or to the two Great Blue Herons seen one night on the sandy spit north of the colony. Other potential predators such as raccoons, crows, and domestic cats were not observed in summer 2005; a few had been observed around the colony in 2004, but did not seem to be preying upon terns. Unlike in 2004, Common Terns did not take fish from adult or young Least Terns on the ground in the colony, and much more rarely pursued Least Terns with fish in the air.

One Least Tern chick was found dead during the course of the summer; the cause of its death was not apparent. Four Least Tern eggs were stepped on by people. One egg was punctured; five eggs were found with their shells pulled apart and most of their contents missing. In 2005, more eggshells were found along the tideline, and at the edge of the fenced area, than in 2004. These looked like shells of eggs from which terns had hatched.

In 2005, most of the Least Tern nests built in May were located outside the initially fenced area, at the tip and landward ends of the colony. The fencing was moved to include all of these. The first round of nests of Least Terns, Common Terns, and Piping Plovers was washed out by a Northeastern storm at the end of May before any eggs had hatched. Many Least Terns re-nested, with 18 nests built outside the fence. The fence could not be moved to include these nests because it would have extended below the high tide line, but these nests were marked at a distance of ~12 cm from their centers with 2-6 sticks or other pieces of wood or broken fishing pole, either laying on the ground or stuck upright in the ground around the nest. These markers ranged from 10–60 cm long and 1-8 cm in diameter. If there

was a shortage of markers, they were placed on the side of the nest with the most human traffic. These markers seemed to be very effective in keeping people away; no marked nests appeared to have been disturbed by people. After the re-nesting, two Least Tern nests were washed away by high tides.

The counts of chicks, pre-fledglings, and fledglings on each day in 2005 are shown in Fig. 4. In general, total numbers increase over the count period, until 13 August, the last day of observations, on which many fledglings were observed flying away from the colony. The apparent dip in numbers on 6 August is probably an artifact of counting late in the day. Only one dead chick was found in 2005, on 1 July.

It was more difficult to count chicks in 2005 than in 2004. This was in part due to more, taller herbaceous vegetation around nests, and in the area that the colony occupied in general, in 2005. Chicks tended to hide in the vegetation.

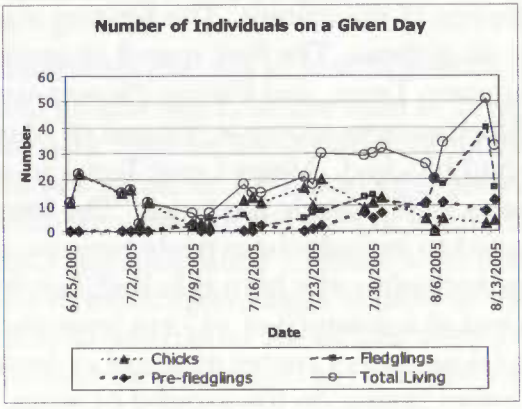

Figure 4: Counts of chicks, pre-fledglings, fledglings and total living young observed on each day. Labeled dates are Saturdays.

As in 2004, on the nights of 3 and 4 July, fireworks were visible and audible from the beach. However, unlike 2004, these did not cause disturbances at the colony. On 4 July, people on the sandy spit north of the colony set off sparklers that stayed on the spit, and caused some Common Terns on that side of the colony to move around on the ground and fly up for less than a minute. Unlike 2004, there were no aerial fireworks that exploded over the colony.

Discussion and Restoration Recommendations

In 2005, weather and predation had major negative impacts on the colony. The first nesting was completely wiped out by a storm, and only some birds re-nested. Before the departure of fledglings on 13 August, a maximum of 40 fledglings were observed, compared to a maximum of 168 fledglings in 2004. The total maximum number of young was 51 in 2005, compared to 215 in 2004. In addition to the storm that wiped out the first nesting, the weather in 2005 was very hot and humid.

Although predation did not appear to be a significant problem in 2004, Black-crowned Night-Heron predation was a problem in 2005. Black-crowned Night-Herons fed in the water near the edge of the colony in both years, but in 2005, a Black-crowned Night-Heron was seen apparently eating chicks on two nights, and a Black-crowned Night-Heron was also seen in the colony early one morning. Eggs and chicks had disappeared from nests with apparent Night-Heron tracks nearby, and nests with eggs were also found abandoned with apparent Night-Heron tracks nearby. Other researchers have reported that Common Terns may abandon nests at night in response to visits by owls, and that incubation periods may therefore be extended by about a week

(Wendeln and Becker 1999, Nisbet and Welton 1984). Shealer and Kress (1991) note that Common Terns abandoned nests during the night in response to visits by Black-crowned Night-Herons. When Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen in the colony at night, terns did leave nearby nests.

Most Black-crowned Night-Herons do not eat eggs or young birds; however, a few individuals seem to specialize on this resource, and may return to a colony in successive years (Kress 2000). Black-crowned Night-Heron predation has had a severe negative impact on Roseate Tern reproduction at Falkner Island, off Guilford, Connecticut, with Night-Herons often arriving in small groups, suggesting that initial visitors may recruit conspecifics (Spendelow 2002, Spendelow and Kuter 2004, and Jeffrey Spendelow, personal communication). We recommend immediate coordination of removal efforts whenever a Black-crowned Night-Heron or its tracks are seen among the tern nests in the colony.

In 2004, Common Terns often harassed adult and young Least Terns that had fish. In 2005, Common Terns rarely pursued adult Least Terns that had fish and gave up chase after the fish was presented to a chick.

Unlike 2004, fireworks were not launched into the colony in 2005, perhaps in part because a police officer was stationed in the parking lot in 2005. DEP personnel sat at the entrance to the beach area, but were harassed by people wanting to walk into the Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary area to set fireworks; it would be better to have an actual police officer also patrolling the beach area.

Changes to fencing were helpful. The bright yellow

string was much easier to see, and seemed to be effective in preventing human incursions into the colony: no people were observed entering the colony over the 339 human visits to the area, compared to five people that entered the colony on three different days over 1197 human visits to the area in 2004. No terns flew into the string in 2005, and in fact, Common Terns often sat on the string. The white kite string was easier to see than the black synthetic string, but also broke and needed to be replaced more often. Storms and vandalism caused minor damage to the fence, which was relatively easily repaired: in particular, the yellow string was maintenance-free, and we recommend that it be used around the entire colony area in the future.

Signage still needs work. Better signage will help to educate visitors to the beach and minimize colony disturbance. A large sign fully explaining the purpose of the fenced area should be placed near the parking lot or where people first approach the fenced area. This sign should include information such as natural histories and threats to both Least Terns and Piping Plovers. By having this much information on the sign, people may be more motivated to avoid disturbing the colony. Connecticut D.E.P signs were better spread around the colony perimeter than in 2004, but more signs would be an improvement. It would be a good idea to follow recommendations of Kress (2000), given in Healy and Halkin (2005), for sign and post characteristics. A new "No Dogs Allowed" sign was placed at the beginning of the beach, but was vandalized during the course of the summer and needs to be replaced. The signs near the parking lot are still extremely faded and hard to read. Perhaps due in part to the very hot weather and lower level of human visitation, there were only three dogs

(two leashed, one unleashed) recorded for the summer on the beach, but people with dogs were sometimes seen leaving the area as the observer arrived. In 2005, unlike in 2004, unleashed dogs on the sandy spit north of the colony peninsula sometimes seemed to disturb the colony.

Least Terns prefer to nest in "open areas largely free of vegetation" (Thompson et al. 1997, p. 12). While tall herbaceous vegetation at the colony site provided some cover for chicks in 2005, if succession is allowed to continue the peninsula will become unsuitable for nesting terns. Management of vegetation should be considered.

It would be helpful to continue monitoring the colony at Sandy Point Bird Sanctuary. Regular monitoring, including nocturnal observations and track hunts during the day, will be necessary to determine whether Black-crowned Night-Heron(s) have returned. The impacts of further management measures should also be assessed. Interest in the colony from people visiting the beach continued to be high in 2005, and fishermen informally helped to monitor and protect the nesting birds.

Acknowledgments
We thank the New Haven Bird Club, the University of Connecticut Sea Grant Program, the Connecticut Ornithological Association, and the Richardson Foundation for funding this study. Milan Bull's guidance is gratefully acknowledged. Kevin Waugh and Jack and Sandy Healy helped with observations and kept JLH company; Maria Stockmal also contributed useful information from her observations. Julia Victoria and Jennifer Belanger provided logistical support. Chris Elphick provided the night scope. We thank Jeffrey Spendelow

for useful information on Black-crowned Night-Heron predation on terns. Discussions with the Board of the Connecticut Ornithological Association were helpful in developing recommendations for restoration.

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DEPARMENT OF BIOLOGY, CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY, NEW BRITAIN, CT 06050.

FALL

Bruce Finnan photo

Welcome back: Fall flights of Evening Grosbeaks have become quite uncommon. A good movement this season included this flock at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield.

Julian Hough photo

Behind schedule: The past few years have produced good flight s of Yellow-billed Cuckoos. This decidedly late fall migrant was in East Haven on Nov. 12.

GALLERY

John Schwarz photo

Surprisingly reliable: November flights of Cave Swallows have become a regular feature. This one stopped for a rest at Lighthouse Point in New Haven on Nov. 19.

Julian Hough photo

Feeling right at home: This Yellow-throated Warbler arrived at a feeder in East Haven in November and stayed through the winter.

PHOTO

Mark Szantyr photos

A bird in hand: This female Rufous Hummingbird buzzed around a feeder in Simsbury. It was trapped, banded and released on Nov. 13.

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

A Banded Glaucous Gull

A banded first-winter Glaucous Gull was first observed on 7 February 2005 at Caswell Cove in Milford by Nita Hamilton. No information was available on the specific type/color of band at that time. Subsequently, on 9 February, a Glaucous Gull was seen standing on a rock jetty at Long Beach in Stratford by Charlie Barnard and Buzz Devine. Devine noticed a few minutes later that the gull was banded.

Upon closer examination Barnard was able to note the types and colors of the bands and the two last numerals on the lower one, which was a standard metal type band. The upper band was of red plastic and not numbered. Both bands were on the right leg.

An electronic report was sent to the Bird Banding Office of the Canadian Wildlife Service. Five days later a reply was received from Tony Gaston, a research scientist specializing in marine birds in the Eastern Canadian Arctic, whose team had been involved in the banding project. Gaston said that the Glaucous seen in Stratford (odds are that this was the same individual first observed at Caswell Cove) was one of 14 nestlings banded on Coats Island, Nunavat, toward the northern end of Hudson Bay in the summer of 2004. This is 62° N and 82° W. Coats Island is also home to a substantial nesting colony of Thick-billed Murres. Research is carried out on them as well as other nesting species on Coats, such as Northern Fulmar and Black-legged Kittiiwake.

Mr.Gaston also remarked that in 14 years of color banding gulls, this was only the second return of a Glaucous that he had received. The first return was from the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Charlie Barnard

Deducing Ducks' Origins

On 4 October 2005 Mark and Ann Shapiro discovered a male and two female Cinnamon Teal at Fisher Meadow Park in Avon. The birds were on a muddy pond edge with a small flock of Mallards. One male and one female wore bands.

The narrow, bright red leg bands indicate that those two birds were of captive origin. Although the third bird was unbanded, it was learned that several Cinnamon Teal were released unbanded by a local waterfowl fancier in mid-summer. This bird is likely from that release.

Connecticut has one accepted record of Cinnamon Teal, an adult male that was founding November 1994 at Milford Point and was later shot there by a duck hunter. This was the first bird placed by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut in a new category: Accepted, Origin Uncertain. The category encompasses birds that the committee believes are more likely wild than escapes, although origin cannot be proven with absolute certainty.

Jay Kaplan, Jamie Meyers

Grotesque but Effective

Mark Szantyr photo

Birds, like all organisms, can exhibit an array of physical abnormalities. Malformed bills, such as this one, are reported occasionally. This Herring Gull, photographed on 15 August 2005 at the Stratford boat docks, would appear to face a difficult time foraging, but looks can be deceiving. The plumage indicates this is a second-year bird

AN INTERPRETATION OF BALD EAGLE NESTING BIOLOGY IN CONNECTICUT

By Donald A. Hopkins

Since 1992, when the first Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nest in about 40 years was reported in Connecticut, the number of active breeding territories has increased to at least nine, with more expected in coming years. This is indeed good news, but with it come problems, often in the form of harassment by an uninformed and/or uncaring public that encroaches upon the nesting territory. To protect the eagles during the sensitive period of nest construction, incubation and brooding, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bald Eagle Recovery Plan, attempts to secure a buffer zone around each nesting tree, usually a 330-foot radius. Anyone violating this zone could face arrest and/or fine for harassment of eagles under the federal Endangered Species Act.

As a deterrent, I offer the following interpretation of the eagle's nesting activity. While remaining outside the buffer zone, with the aid of a telescope of 25 power or more and using this article as a guide, one should gain a fair understanding of the nesting biology of the eagles, with little or no impact on them.

I will start with a description of a typical eagle's nest (Figure 1). This was constructed in an oak tree. White pine and eastern cottonwood are also used in Connecticut. The nest is built by placement of sticks in a crotch formed by multiple limbs. The tree is usually a super-canopy tree rising above surrounding trees, thus providing a clear flight path into the nest. The sticks are gathered from the ground or broken from the limbs of

nearby deciduous trees. Once a foundation of sticks has been constructed, grasses and fine plant material along with dirt are added forming a bowl, which is below the rim of sticks around the edge of the nest. The dirt comes in on the roots of the grasses. The material forming the bowl is referred to as a "duff" and in it, the eagle forms an egg cup just prior to laying. The loose latticework of the rim serves to prevent newly hatched chicks from falling out. The tree chosen for the nest is usually within a few hundred feet of a watercourse, but can be a quarter of a mile from water.

The adults are ready to start a new nesting season after the previous season's young have fledged and moved out of the nesting territory. Usually, in October or November, the adult pair will start making repairs to the nest or construct a new one. The winters in southern New England are less severe than those to the north, so the eagles are able to remain on their nesting territories with open water, where they can forage within a short flight from their nest. Eagles that nest on or around reservoirs may reap an extra advantage of deer going

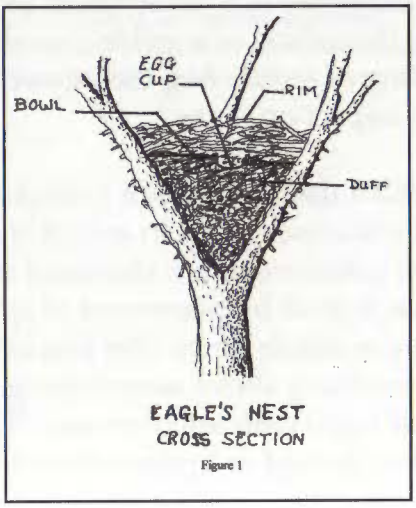


Figure 1

down as winter kills on the ice. By not having to migrate the eagles save energy and defend their nesting territory.

During the late fall and through the winter, resident eagles are often active around their nests, usually making visits in the morning. They will arrange the sticks and bring in new ones. They will bring in green sprigs of white pine, which could be an indication to other birds that this nest is occupied. They also sit at a distance and observe the nest. As the egg-laying time approaches, the number of visits to the nest increases each day, the time in the nest increases and the number of new sticks brought in increases. In Connecticut, the egg-laying date can vary from the second week in February until the last week in March. Just prior to egg laying one of the pair of eagles will spend a considerable amount of time sitting in the nest. I have recorded them doing this for as long as one to four hours. This is done with no eggs in the nest and is called pseudo-incubation. It can lead to the false assumption that eggs have been laid. This can be avoided, as we shall see below.

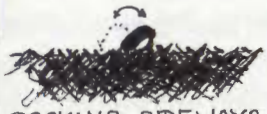
Copulation usually takes place at the nest tree. It can take place up to three weeks prior to laying eggs and if unsuccessful continues for a month after the normal laying date. Usually an egg can be laid three days after a successful copulation.

Once the egg(s) have been laid the incubating activities become very predictable. Both adults share incubating duty, split into about four hour shifts. While sitting on eggs, the posture of the eagle is such that the head is barely visible and the wing can be just seen at the rim of

the nest (Figure 2). Approximately every 40 minutes the eagle will stand up and reach down with its beak and turns the eggs. This keeps the eggs' internal membrane moist on all sides, preventing it from sticking to the inside of the shell, and rotating the eggs' cooler side up allows for the more efficient heat transfer from the adult's body. You can now see the reason for the egg cup, to keep the egg(s) in the center of the nest. Once done rotating the eggs the adult will appear to dive head first into the nest, slowly settle its back end down, then rock sideways six or more times and is now ready to resume incubation. The adult assumes a different orientation across the nest after each egg rolling. The large number of rocking motions help position the egg(s) under its feathers, up against the brood patch, which is on the lower part of its body. Turning the egg(s) and the rocking motion are definitive indications that there are eggs in the nest. This behavior does not occur during pseudo-incubation. I will come back to the number of rocking motions again (Figure3).

When a change over occurs, the incoming adult will step into the nest with its toes balled up, so the talons do not puncture the egg(s). As this is a very unstable way of moving, the adult will raise its wings for balance. This display is readily visible to an observer. In the meantime, the relieved adult will have jumped out of the nest to a nearby branch or tree to preen for about an hour or more before flying away to hunt or feed. After approximately four hours, the other adult will return for another shift. Occasionally upon returning, the incoming adult will bring in a stick to add to the rim of the nest. In all, this routine will go on for the 35 days that it takes for an egg to hatch.


SITTING ON EGGS
Figure 2


ROCKING SIDEWAYS
Figure 3


BROODING CHICKS
Figure 4

As the hatching date approaches the adults will bring food to the nest. This usually occurs the day before the chick(s) hatches. It takes a day or two from the start of pipping until the chick breaks free of the eggshell. Thus with pipping the adults have noticed hatching is imminent. The first day the chick is out of the shell it is not fed; by the second day the adult will start to feed the chick. The adult does this by grasping the food in its talons and tearing off small pieces of food with its beak. Holding the food in its partially opened beak, the adult turns its head horizontally and reaches down to present the food to the chick. The chick will pluck the food from the adult's beak. Should the adult tear off a piece that's too large for the chick, it will swallow the piece itself. If there is more than one chick in the nest, the adult will alternately reach in different spots in the nest with food. This can be used as an early indication of the number of chicks. It will be approximately two weeks before the chicks grow large enough so that their heads are visible above the nest rim when reaching for food.

When hatched the chick(s) is down-covered, but is not large enough to thermoregulate its body temperature, so an adult has to constantly brood the chick(s) for the first three weeks. Brooding is done by the adult setting down on the chick, back end first and then rocking

less than five times while lowering its breast down into the nest. The number of times the adult rocks is definitive, more than five times signals that there are eggs in the nest, five or less times means there are chicks in the nest. There is an exception to this. The eggs hatch sequentially, three days apart, thus for three to six days (two or three eggs) the rocking and posture of the adult is ambiguous. Normally, while brooding, the adult sits erect with the head and portion of the body clearly visible above the rim (Figure 4). The adult will occasionally stand up and look down at the chicks and feed them or just sit back down, again rocking. There does not appear to be any specific time interval associated with this.

The adults continue their rotation of four hours each of brooding. The adult returning to the nest usually brings in a fish or a stick. After three weeks of constant brooding the adult will spend some time sitting on the edge of the nest or on a limb near the nest. For the next few weeks the adults will brood only during inclement weather and at night. After six weeks the chicks can take care of themselves.

When the chick is a couple of days old it is able to drag itself to the edge of the nest and facing inward will defecate either over or through the rim. An observer can usually see the resulting white stream. Should this be seen more often than once an hour it would indicate another chick in the nest.

When the chick is about three weeks old, flight feathers start to emerge on the wings and tail. At this time, the adults can be seen biting into the duff of the nest and shaking the material loose. This may be to soften the bowl of the nest, thus reducing the wear on the new feathers of the chick as it drags itself about.

The adults feed the chick(s) as it demands. In the early weeks the chick(s) spends most of its time sleeping. When it wakes up it is fed. The time spent feeding is usually about 15 to 20 minutes. There are usually one or more fish in the nest at all times. At about the age of four weeks the chick(s) is able to grasp and tear at the food and feed itself. At this stage the adults merely bring food to the nest, drop it and leave, to avoid being mobbed by the chick(s).

As the weeks go by physical activities increase, progressing from walking around the nest to flapping, jumping and flapping and jumping together. When the chick(s) is ready to fledge it can jump, flap and hover above the nest for a second or two. This activity can go on for a couple of days. By the eleventh week the chick(s) is capable of flying from the nest, thus fledging.

The fledgling's first flight is usually short and it's landing is clumsy. Over the next few weeks it continues to fly back and forth in the vicinity of the nest. Occasionally it will revisit the nest. During this time the adults continue to bring food to the fledgling(s) either at the nest or to the nearby shoreline.

By September the fledgling(s) has developed enough flying and hunting skills so that the adults can wean it. Once the fledgling(s) is independent the adults can start their next breeding cycle.

The above interpretation is based on 12 years of personal observations of nesting Bald Eagles in Connecticut and monitoring Northeast Utilities web-cam at Barton's Cove, Mass. (www.nu.com/eagles)

CONNECTICUT'S 2005 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

By Neil Currie

This report includes tables that summarize the fall 2005 hawk migration. Table 1 includes counts from all Connecticut lookouts and a grand total for the state. Table 2 is a summary of the day-by-day Broad-winged Hawk flight in September. Why not summaries for other species? Two reasons: Broadwings make up close to 90 percent of the hawks seen at inland sites and about two thirds of the fall total. Also the Broadwing migration period is among the most compact, thus easier to cover in a single table. Lighthouse Point and Quaker Ridge get special attention in Tables 3 and 4 because they operate throughout the season. This year a Table 5 has been added that covers the entire 15 years that this report has appeared in the Connecticut Warbler. This table is an attempt to give an overall picture through the years. The picture can't be entirely accurate since hawks counted at lookouts to the north may also be counted by lookouts to the southwest. But since duplications must occur every year, the annual totals can be compared.

The tables cover pretty much the entire migration story for fall 2005. They don't show the surprises, the special days, the excitement and the questions that arise from the Connecticut data.

Almost all of our lookouts are now recording Bald Eagles, with state totals greater each year. Record Bald Eagle counts were set at both Quaker Ridge (106) and at Lighthouse Point (137). Ten Golden Eagles tied a record at Lighthouse Point. Twenty one Goldens were recorded

in the state, close to the 1995 record of 23. A record 140 Peregrine Falcons passed over Lighthouse Point. On the low side of the ledger only two Rough-legged Hawks appeared statewide, not far different from other years. These two birds passed the lookout at Peak Mountain, East Granby, in December. This December observation at an inland site is a story in itself. None of our inland watchers are at their lookouts past the end of September (end of Broadwing season), but this year Joe Wojtanowski was at Peak Mountain for 302 hours, 106 of them in October, November, and December. In those 106 hours he recorded 544 hawks. This effort is a first for inland lookouts.

Statewide there were several 3,000-plus days - one at Quaker Ridge on Sept. 21, one at Peak Mountain on Sept. 24, and another at Johnnycake Mountain in Harwinton on Sept. 24. The 24th turned out to be the big Broadwing day, about a week later than expected, so late that many watchers had given up hope and were no longer watching. Also there were several 2,000-hawk days, one at Quaker Ridge on Sept. 18, one at Taine Mountain on Sept. 24, and one at Middle School in Torrington on Sept. 24. At Lighthouse Point there were three days on which more than 1,000 hawks passed the lookout. The year's lone Swainson's Hawk appeared at Lighthouse on the morning of Oct. 17. On Nov. 7 three Golden Eagles passed that lookout. A lone Black Vulture made a first ever appearance at Lighthouse and 64 were counted in the state. Since they are now seen regularly and are present during the winter, it's possible that some of the 64 were not migrants. At Flirt Hill in Easton Larry Fischer discovered a surprising number (160) of American Kestrels migrating in October.

Not shown in the tables are new developments. A common question involves how a particular species' population is doing. For example, there is more than just a feeling that American Kestrel numbers have been falling for several years. Table 5 reveals this decline. But a 15-year period, or an even longer one, may not be enough to measure a real change. Hawk Migration Association of North America, along with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Hawk Watch International, have established a Raptor Population Index (RPI) with the idea of monitoring counts and answering questions about population changes. HMANA members from all over the country and as far away as Panama are reporting their hourly counts electronically into a national HawkCount database. Lighthouse Point, along with Hawk Mountain, Cape May Point and a few other sites, has been selected as part of a pilot study. All of the Lighthouse counts are now stored in the database, and all of the year counts from Botsford Hill have been entered. We hope eventually to have all of our Connecticut data entered.

I can't finish here without mentioning two of our hawk watching friends who died in 2005. Most of you knew Gerry Mersereau. Gerry spent a lifetime working with hawks. He studied and banded hawks at Hawk Mountain, Cape May and in Connecticut after he moved here in 1960. Among his many accomplishments was work with the Osprey, playing a large part in the rebound of its population in Connecticut and the rest of New England. Gerry was one of the founders of the New England Hawk Watch and was a leader in the birth of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. HMANA is now a thriving organization nationwide. Gerry was active in the Bald Eagle Study Group, the Connecti-

cut Ornithological Association, and Hartford Audubon. He was the first recipient in 1983 of HMANA's Maurice Broun Award. With all of this he was a great guy and a great friend.

Major Steven Reich died when the helicopter he was piloting on a rescue mission in Afganistan was shot down. As a young man at Shepaug High School in Washington, Steve, through the inspiration of Mike Harwood, became a hawk watcher. He took part with Mike on many hawk watch days in Washington. He also joined Mike and myself in a project to the east of Lighthouse Point in which we counted the hawks moving towards the Point. Steve was also a baseball pitcher, playing for Shepaug High and in American Legion baseball. He was accepted as a cadet at West Point and became the academy's all time leading pitcher. Although few of the hawk-watching clan knew him, I mention Steve because of my brief acquaintance with him and because his death last year received great amounts of media attention in Connecticut.

The following birders took part in the hawk watches last fall:

Bill Asteriades, Richard Allaire, Neils Augelle, Lois Aldi, Eric Adam, Ray Belding, Ron Bell, Bill Banks, Tom Bravo, Renee Baade, Polly Brody, Leon Barkman, David Babington, B. Barbieri, Dan Barvir, Tom Baptist, Debbie Bishop, Tom Burke, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier, Al Collins, Mike Culhane and Neil Currie.
Ayreslea and Duncan Denny, Paul Desjardins, Angela Dimmitt, Patrick Dugan, James Dwyer, John Eykilhoff, Cynthia Ehlinger, Larry Fischer, Steve Foisey, Jeff

Greenwood, Frank Guida, Tony Hager, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris, Liam Hegarty, Art Hankey, Kim and Judy Herkimer, Orlando Hidalgo, Lynn James, Tait Johansson, Buck Jenks, Elsbeth Johnson, Anne Kehmna, Marie Kennedy, Maria Kaprielan, and Gil and Betty Kleiner.

Carolyn Longstreth, Lisa Lozier, Bill and Jane Low, Jerry Marcellina, Hugh Martin, Steve Mayo, Stefan Martin, Robin McAllister, Ryan MacLean, Jim Moore, Tom Meyer, Marty Moore, Keen Merrifield, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer, Janet Petricone, William Picard, Matt Popp, Al and Betty Root, Mike Reese, Tom Rennie, David Rosgen, Gail Roberts, Jeri Ross, Benedict Salmon, David Salmon, Merideth Sampson, Fred Schroeder, Donna Rose Smith, Judith Stevens, Dierdre Silbbstein, Carol Titus, Mike Warner, Bill Wallace, Jim Westlake, Joe and John Wojtanowski, David Wright, Ed Yescott, Joe Zeranski, Jim and Carol Zipp, and Chris Zimmerman.

TABLE 1: ALL CONNECTICUT SITES -FALL 2005

SITES		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	2005 Total	2004 Total	2003 Total
BOOTH HILL	11			14	1		45	2			1031					8	2		5	1108	417	255
PEAK MOUNTAIN	302	2	112	89	12	29	258	38	5	24	4538		187	2	1	63	23	17	21	5421	150	
TAINE MOUNTAIN	9			13			26				3122									3161	258	86
JOHNNYCAKE MT.	24			37	8	3	92	4	1		6437				2	37	2	3	1	6627	934	175
MIDDLE SCHOOL	80		6	26	8	4	98	13		4	3940		3			24	7		24	4157	2059	1771
CHESTNUT HILL	43			32	5	4	29	7			1827					10	1		7	1922	1606	420
WHITE MEMORIAL	16	6		3	3		10	8	1	1	432					2	1			467		
BOTSFORD HILL	50	2		16	4	4	57	2		5	828		2			17	1		22	960	1567	215
BRIGGS HILL	15	5		5	4		2	2		1	297		1			4			2	323	97	171
FLAT HILL	31	3		5	3	1	32	8			650		2			10	1	1	26	742		
HUNTINGTON S.P.	19	1		7		1	14				440		3		1	5				472		
FLIRT HILL	87		144	16	6	31	92	27	1	8	45		64		2	160	8	5		609	644	348
LIGHTHOUSE POINT	669		388	1130	137	413	6208	1292	11	136	735	1	298		10		595	140	343	13845	16500	15460
EAST SHORE PARK	27		76	34	7	5	291	40		1	96		20			44	8	3	55	680	1690	815
WAVENY PARK	35			48	8	1	38	13	1	1	445		14			26	2	3	9	609	1159	102
QUAKER RIDGE	542	45	511	691	106	114	3072	398	6	217	8378		371		5	405	76	32	164	14591	13187	4545
TOTAL		64		2166	312	610		1854	26	398		1	965	2	21		727	204	679	55694	40268	24363

TABLE 2: BROAD-WINGED HAWKS - FALL 2005

Dates		Pre														Post	
Sites		10	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	21	22	23	24	27	27	Total
BOOTH HILL	11								1018					13			1031
PEAK MOUNTAIN	302	60	258	191	1	16		2	137	6	60	24	310	3456		17	4538
TAINE MOUNTAIN	9								656					2466			3122
JOHNNYCAKE MT.	24							35		1040	473	70		3839	980		6437
MIDDLE SCHOOL	80	3		238	17	4	1	3	905	301	79	64		2233	92		3940
CHESTNUT HILL	43		180	19				3	357	649	123	29		467			1827
WHITE MEMORIAL	16		173					4		97		8		150			432
BOTSFORD HILL	50		89	3		3		16	172	297	248						828
BRIGGS HILL	15								32	52				213			297
FLAT HILL	31				3			8	263	134	234				8		650
HUNTINGTON S.P.	19		72	7					361								440
FLIRT HILL	87															44	44
LIGHTHOUSE POINT	669	6	3	1		1			1		2		2	24	647	48	735
EAST SHORE PARK	27														91	5	96
WAVENY PARK	35				1				137	289	18						445
QUAKER RIDGE	542	110	312	97	2	46	3	4	2025	1467	3168	9	189	106	467	373	8378
TOTAL	1960																33240

Table 3: Lighthouse Point, New Haven

MONTH	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
August	24			14	3	5	5	1		2			1			6	5	2	6	50
September	214		66	751	57	129	1257	171		9	698		22			697	98	53	125	4133
October	231		249	357	60	207	4561	995	3	77	37	1	143		3	1260	415	71	180	8619
November	195		62	8	17	67	378	117	7	42			108		6	45	75	13	30	975
December	5		11			5	7	8	1	6			24		1		2	1	2	68
Total 2005	669		388		137	413	6208		11	136	735	1	298		10	2008	595	140	343	13845
Total 2004	583		598		86	329	6662	823	9	162	3693		890	5	2	1445	344	75	323	16500
Total 2003	623	1	462		47	724	7715		30	153	427	6	928	4		1724	355	90	355	15460

Table 4: Quaker Ridge - Fall 2005

Month		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
August	56		1	18	6						22					1			1	49
Septem-ber	232	27	6	544	62	47	961	114		11	8223		7			227	41	12	74	10356
October	182	11	431	127	36	58	2001	267	5	180	133		263		5	174	34	20	84	3829
Novem-ber	73	7	73	2	2	9	110	17	1	26			101			3	1		5	357
Total 2005	543	45	511	691	106	114	3072	398	6	217	8378		371		5	405	76	32	164	14591
Total 2004	655	27	591	619	82	153	3274	342	11	251	6654	1	384		4	570	89	24	111	13187
Total 2003	492	7	475	313	30	152	1434	206	2	64	1044		255	1	4	343	41	17	164	4552

Table 5 - 15 Years of Connecticut Hawks

Years		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	TOTAL
2005	1955	64	1237	2166	312	610		1854	26	398		1	965	2	21	2823	727	204	679	55694
2004	1765	27	1405	2243	272	543		1360	27	449		1	1421	5	12	2539	462	121	631	49236
2003	1683	23	968	2012	124	954		1554	36	250	4881	6	1348	7	9	2481	418	119	605	25938
2002	1707	36	1043	2796	226	705		1276	24	171		4	846	3	15	3257	411	82	563	63267
2001	1606	7	811	2094	145	697		1057	20	270			762	1	10	2591	397	117	376	59820
2000	1584	18	582	2019	174	553	7234	1117	25	210		1	701	2	7	2490	330	59	330	61318
1999	1374	5	661	2739	200	849	9575	1291	48	218			1418	8	10	3523	518	83	384	48046
1998	1561		683	3135	199	1197		1247	30	167			569	5	12	4268	430	78	310	65696
1997	1550	3	900	3284	160	648		1417	32	216		3	589		3	2988	370	89	385	62803
1996	1511	3	612	2416	208	365	9091	897	34	245			816	1	9	2777	279	98	304	78439
1995	1450	4	970	2435	123	808		1029	24	335			1628	1	23	3507	396	76	397	75359
1994	1628		718	2737	123	1105		1298	8	207			731		13	6626	276	56	756	100690
1993	1398		910	4248	173	1294		2575	37	232			683	2	15	6530	1072	84	1313	166433
1992	1279		746	2624	63	599		2142	26	240			1073	3	3	4711	496	68	1177	58923
1991	1316		694	3825	37	488		2038	45	581		2	1054	4	6	5480	828	61	1453	49003
TOTAL		190			2539				442	4189		18		44	168		7410	1395	9663	
AVERAGE 1558		17*	863	2718	169	761		1477	29	279		1	974	3	11	3773	494	93	644	68044
		11*																		

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Autumn, August 1 through November 30, 2005

By Greg Hanisek

The season produced another exciting array of rarities and an impressive list of late lingerers. Most noteworthy, however, was a mid-October onslaught of migrants moving on cold fronts that followed a protracted period of rain. This weather event brought a major fallout of sparrows and other passerines throughout the state beginning Oct. 16. Following are comments and numbers.

Oct. 16, COA Sparrow Workshop, Silver Sands State Park, Milford, (FM et al.): "Birds, especially sparrows, were everywhere. Northwest winds kept building all afternoon." Eleven species of sparrows, including 800 Savannah Sparrows and 200 Song Sparrows. Bluff Point, Groton (GW): 1,600 warblers of 10 species.

Oct. 20, Sherwood Island S.P., Westport, (FM): "Major fallout of feeding sparrows, warblers, kinglets. nine species of sparrows." Included 400 Song Sparrows, 40 Field Sparrows. "This fallout was obvious all day throughout the town of Westport, even in yards, lots, everywhere." Silver Sands (SS): "Major fallout of sparrows, warblers and kinglets" 1,000+ combined Song and Savannah Sparrows, 50 Swamp Sparrows, 20+ White-crowned Sparrows. Storrs (CEl): "Literally hundreds of sparrows on the UConn campus and nearby areas." Greenwich Point, (MSa): "Hundreds of sparrows of seven species." Cove Island, Stamford (PDu): "Ten sparrow species total with a very high number of birds."

Oct. 21, Bluff Point, Groton (JR): "Hundreds of sparrows, mostly White-throated." Silver Sands (SS): "Still large numbers including 8 Vesper Sparrows." Cove Island (PDu): Similar to previous day.

Geese through Cormorants

Single **Greater White-fronted Geese** were in Somers on Nov 4 (CEk), in Farmington Nov. 6 & 15 (PCi) and from Nov. 25 on in Newtown (NC et al.). An unbanded **Barnacle Goose** appeared Nov.25 at Newtown (NC, LF) and remained into December with a large flock of Canada Geese and one of the above-mentioned Greater White-fronted Geese. This flock at various times also included two groups totaling up to eight hybrids of uncertain parentage (m.ob.) Two **Cackling Geese** were reported Nov. 30 in a Canada Goose flock in a field near Kent (ADi), and a goose small enough to be this species was in a flyover flock of Canadas Oct. 20 in Granby (JWo). A flock of 25 Brant flew down the Connecticut River at South Windsor on Oct. 21 (CEk) and one was inland Nov. 10 in Farmington (PCi).

A surge of Blue-winged Teal brought 10 to Little Pond, Litchfield, on Sept. 29 (DRo), 12 to Konold's Pond, Woodbridge, on Oct. 1 (SBr) and six to Quinebaug Fish Hatchery, Plainfield, on Oct. 2 (RDi). A flock of 12 Northern Shovelers was unexpected Oct. 12 on Lake Winnemaug, Watertown (GH). The first three Green-winged Teal arrived at Milford Point Aug. 13 (FG), and a flyover of 89 green-wingeds on Sept. 17 at White Memorial was unusually large for the date (DRo). The usual scanty Redhead reports comprised two on Bantam Lake in Litchfield from Nov. 10 on (DRo, m.ob); and three on Nov. 14 at Andover Lake (CC). A Common Eider was off Stratford Point Sept. 14 (FM) and a female was off Lighthouse Point, New Haven, on Nov. 2 (GH). The top inland scoter reports were: nine Surf Scoters on Bantam Lake Oct. 28 (MDo); six Black Scoters on Nepaug Reservoir, Canton, on Nov. 2 (PCi); 15 White-winged

Scoters on Bantam Lake on Oct. 6 (EA); and a flock of 20 white-wingeds flying over Station 43, South Windsor, on Oct. 9 (CEk). Several inland reports of Long-tailed Duck were topped by a flock of 10 on Nov. 11-12 at Bantam Lake (RBl et al.).

Four Hooded Mergansers Oct. 1 in South Windsor and one Common Merganser Oct. 23 at Batterson Pond in Farmington were the earliest arrivals at non-breeding locations (PDe). Three Red-breasted Mergansers were inland Oct. 17 at Batterson Pond, Farmington (PCi). A good Ruddy Duck flight brought reports of 230 on Oct. 20 at Marsh Pond, Bristol; 200+ on Nov. 5 at South Cove, Old Saybrook; 150 on Nov. 9 at Nepaug Reservoir, New Hartford; 60+ on Amston Lake in Lebanon on Nov. 19 (BS); and 62 on Bantam Lake on Nov. 23 (RN).

A Horned Grebe was out of season Sept. 5 at Milford Point (MA). A Red-necked Grebe was off West Haven Oct. 30 (PDe), with two at Milford Point Nov. 5 (PDe). An **Am. White Pelican** showed

Hank Golet photo

This American White Pelican was present 13-15 November on the Connecticut River at Essex.

itself both on the water and in the air Nov. 13-15 at Lords Cove, Essex, (HG, AG, JR et al.), then was last seen flying by Lighthouse Point later on Nov. 15 (CZi, RBe). The first report of Great Cormorant came from Groton on Sept. 22 (FM).

Herons through Shorebirds

Observers reported eight American Bitterns, mainly along the coast (CB et al.). A count of 22 Great Blue Herons on October 16 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) represented a good coastal concentration (PDe). A salt panne in Stratford held 60 Great Egrets and 55 Snowy Egrets on Sept. 14 (FM). Fifty Great Egrets were an unexpected sight passing high over Lighthouse Point on Oct. 15 (DSo). The only inland Snowy Egret report came from Riverside Park, Hartford, on Aug. 11 (PCi). HBSP held six Little Blue Herons Sept. 11 (GN). The only Tricolored Heron report came from Milford Point on Sept. 25 (RN). A Cattle Egret appeared on Sept. 12 in Sharon (JJ), followed by one Nov. 11-12 in New Milford and then two there Nov. 13-18 (ADi). A Green Heron was very late Nov. 10 at Bantam Lake, Litchfield (DRo).

The high count among many reports of Black Vulture was 40 on Nov. 27 in Bridgewater (GH). This was a uniform flock (with no Turkey Vultures) on a deer carcass. The mid-October cold fronts sparked flights of hawks as well as sparrows. As skies cleared and winds picked up on Oct. 15, Lighthouse Point saw a flight of 750 raptors in the afternoon. The next two days at Lighthouse brought 1,300 raptors including 200 Merlins on Oct. 16 and 1,400 raptors including 300 Am. Kestrels on Oct. 17 (RBe et al.). An adult **Mississippi Kite**, observed foraging and apparently catching a frog, was at Great Pond in Simsbury on Aug. 19

(SO). Away from the hawk watches, 10 Northern Goshawks were reported (m.ob.). The season's only **Swainson's Hawk** was a light juvenile on Oct. 17 at Lighthouse Point (GH, TC). Golden Eagles were at Greenwich Point on Oct. 17 (MSa), in New Milford on Oct. 26 (ADi), at Silver Sands on Nov. 6 & 11 (SS) and in Lyme Nov. 12 (HG).

An exhausted Virginia Rail was found at dawn Oct. 24 on a road at Lighthouse Point, providing a migration date for this elusive species (TC). The best count of American Coot was 80 on Nov. 23 at Bantam Lake (DRo). A **Sandhill Crane** was a Sept. 25 fly-by in Guilford (DSo). In addition, four were at Little Pond in Litchfield on Nov. 9 (RBl); with the group seen leaving Little Pond early on Nov. 10 (JMa). Later on Nov. 10 all four were seen flying over Quaker Ridge, Greenwich (BO).

An American Golden Plover lingered to Nov. 11 at HBSP (CEk). **American Avocets** made an unprecedented showing with singles at Sandy Point, West Haven, on Aug. 8 (FG) and again on Sept. 8 (AR). Then two showed up at Milford Point from Sept. 9-29 (FG et al.). During this period one appeared at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, on Sept. 24 and stayed to Oct. 8 (RS, FM et al.). Because of overlap in observations, the two at Milford Point and the one at Sherwood were different birds. It's hard to tell about the earlier ones. Two Whimbrel were in both Guilford on Aug. 8 (GN) and at Milford Point on Aug. 20 (LTi). An unusual fallout Oct. 9 produced a total of nine Hudsonian Godwits at three locations: seven at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, (ER et al.), one at Milford Point (FM et al.) and one at Rocky Hill meadows (MB). Three were still at Sikorsky the next day (NC et al.). A single Hudsonian was at HBSP Sept. 18 (RH). A Marbled Godwit

cooperated for the COA Shorebird Workshop Aug. 13 at Sandy Point (JBa et al.), and singles were at Milford Point on Aug. 8 (BO) and at HBSP on Aug. 20 (LTu). Two Red Knots were unusual flyovers Oct. 27 in Harwinton (PCa); the last three were at Long Beach, Stratford, on Nov. 12 (EH).

A Western Sandpiper visited a sewage pond at Riverside Park, Hartford, on Sept. 13 (PCi). A flurry of inland White-rumped Sandpipers included singles Aug. 1-4 at White Memorial in Litchfield (DRo), Aug. 28 at Nepaug Reservoir (PCa), and Sept. 20 at MacKenzie Reservoir, Wallingford, (MM); four at Mansfield Hollow Dam, Windham, Sept. 11-18 (CEl et al.); and two at both Station 43 on Aug. 19 (SO) and at Rocky Hill Meadows Sept. 16 (CEk). A Pectoral Sandpiper was late and inland Nov. 1 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DRo). Two Stilt Sandpipers were at both South Windsor on Aug. 28 (TA) and at Mansfield Hollow Sept. 11 (CEl et al.); singles were at Sandy Point on Aug. 8 &25 (GN, FG), South Glastonbury Sept. 5 (ADa) and in Stratford Aug. 6-7 (FM) and Oct. 3-5 (ER et al.). Two Baird's Sandpipers were at South Glastonbury Sept. 5 (ADa), and singles were at Access Road, Stratford (FM) and Riverside Park, Hartford (PCi), both on Aug. 28. Buff-breasted Sandpipers were at Silver Sands on Aug. 30 (S&CS), HBSP on Sept. 4 (AR), and Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, on Sept. 15 (MDi). Two Long-billed Dowitchers were at Stratford marina on Nov. 13 (CB) and one was at Milford Point Nov. 5 (fide FG).

Jaegers through Woodpeckers

A juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger**, rare but apparently increasing in Long Island Sound, was off Stratford Sept. 20 (FM). The very rare **Pomarine Jaeger** passed over Quaker Ridge hawk watch, Greenwich,

Scott Olmstead photo

The season's only Royal Tern was at Sandy Point on August 17

on Sept. 18 (BO). A gull roost at the Housatonic River mouth in Stratford held 1,000 Laughing Gulls Sept. 20 (FM). The adult Lesser Black-backed Gull that has wintered for several years at Holly Pond, Stamford, returned on Oct. 1 (PDu) and the equally reliable adult at Burying Hill Beach, Westport, was first reported Sept. 28 (ER). **Black-legged Kittiwake**, rare in Long Island Sound, produced reports of three about 1.5 miles off Stamford Oct. 21 (AC) and an immature showing a bill injury was reported from HBSP on Oct. 10 (NM).

The season's only Caspian Tern was at Sandy Point Sept. 7 (DRo), and the only Royal Tern was there on Aug. 17 (SO). A late concentration of 17 Common Terns was in Norwalk harbor Oct. 23 (PDu et al.). A flock of 35 Forster's Terns passed over Bluff Point on Oct. 21 (JR, FN) and the last two were reported from Harvey's Beach, Old Saybrook, on Nov. 13 (JO). Three Black Terns were at Sandy Point Aug. 13 (DSo) and Sept. 2 (JHo). The thriving Black Skimmer colony at Sandy Point held 29 juveniles on Sept. 18 (PF); nine juveniles were still present Nov. 8 (GN).

A **Thick-billed Murre** was found alive on a roadside in north Stamford on Nov. 30 and brought to Greenwich Audubon Center (BO).

The best bird of a very good season was a **White-winged Dove** that was especially cooperative, giving four observers close views for 20 minutes at Lighthouse Point on Nov. 4 (BB et al.). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was very late Nov. 12 in East Haven (JHo). The season's only Snowy Owl showed off from the roof of a house in Hartford on Oct. 25 (fide JK). A Long-eared Owl was in Westport on Nov. 12 (JHu). There were six reports of Short-eared Owl, all coastal in the latter half of the season (m.ob). A flurry of double-figure flocks of Common Nighthawks in late August was topped by 350 to 500 moving over Barkhamsted on Aug. 28 (FZ). In perhaps the most unusual encounter of the season, am employee at the Millstone nuclear generating station in Waterford heard and saw a **Chuck-will's-widow** in circling flight Sept. 1 during a heavy passage of nocturnal migrants (DP). A late Chimney Swift flew over Milford on Nov. 11 (S&CS). **Rufous/Selasphorous Hummingbirds** remain a rare but regular fall feature. A female believed to be a Rufous visited a North Guilford yard Sept. 22 (CK); a female Rufous was banded Nov. 13 in Simsbury (MSz); and one to at least Nov. 22 in Madison was thought to be a sub-adult male Rufous (HA fide JC). The latest report of Ruby-throated Hummingbird came from Mystic on Oct. 18 (GW). The coastal Red-headed Woodpecker flight was down from last year's heavy movement. One was inland on Oct. 15 in Winchester (VH).

Kingbird through Warblers

The only **Western Kingbird** was inland Oct. 1 at White Memorial in Litchfield (DRo). Reports

of 14 Olive-sided Flycatchers included a late one Sept. 22 in New Hartford (PCa). The latest report of Eastern Wood-Pewee was Oct. 10 at Lighthouse Point (PDe). A seasonal total of 10 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers included four in Manchester on Sept. 3 (TA). Northern Shrikes were reported Oct. 29 in Bloomfield (PCi), Oct. 28 (DRo) & Nov. 26 (ND, RDo) in Litchfield, and Nov. 11 & 27 in Granby (PCi). Reports of 25 Philadelphia Vireos ranged from Aug. 20 to Sept. 23 (m.ob.). A Red-eyed Vireo, very late and in a weakened condition, was at HBSP on Nov. 26 (GW, PR).

The annual Tree Swallow roost at Essex on the lower Connecticut River held c. 350,000 birds on Sept. 25, viewed by Connecticut Audubon's "swallow cruise" (FM et al.). The now annual and predictable **Cave Swallow** flight arrived on Nov. 11, when there were 44 at Lighthouse Point (BB et al.), c. 20 in the HBSP area (NP), three at two locations in Westport (EH), and two in Milford (SS). On Nov. 12 there was one at Sherwood Island (JHu), four at Milford Point (FG), two at Silver Sands (SS), three at Shippan Point, Stamford (AC), six at HBSP (JC), and three at Cove Island (PDu). Additional Lighthouse Point reports were 20+ on Nov. 12 (JHo et al.), one on Nov. 13 (BB), two on Nov. 18 (BB), and one on Nov. 19 (GN). Two late Barn Swallows were in Milford Nov. 12 (FG, SS) and three were at Cove Island the same day (PDu). A staging group of 460 was over Little Pond, Litchfield, on Aug. 25 (DRo).

Black-capped Chickadees staged an October movement, with 400+ at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 24 (GH). A late House Wren was in South Windsor Nov. 6 (PDe). A Ruby-crowned Kinglet was an early arrival Sept. 11 at Bluff Point (PDe). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was on the late side Nov. 23 in Wethersfield (SK). Meager

reports of single Gray-cheeked (type) Thrushes came from North Granby on Sept. 12 (JWo) and New Hartford on Oct. 2 (PCa). The latest reports of Swainson's Thrush were from Allen's Meadow, Wilton, on Nov. 3 (LTi, JBe) and Nov. 8 in Woodbridge (JMo). The best count of American Pipits was 125+ on Nov. 5 at Bradley Airport in Windsor Locks (PCi).

Always tough to find in fall, a Golden-winged Warbler also was a little late Sept. 18 in Windsor (PDe). Six Orange-crowned Warblers ranged from Sept. 4 at Bluff Point (JC) to Nov. 27 in Stratford (CB). The latter was accompanied by a late Nashville Warbler (CB). A Black-throated Green Warbler lingered to Oct. 29 in Hamden (JZ). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** arrived Nov. 12 at a suet feeder in East Haven and remained into winter on a diet of mealworms (MDr et al.). A late and weakened Blackpoll Warbler was at HBSP on Nov. 12 (JBa). A late Black-and-White Warbler was at Milford Point on Nov. 8 (FG). American Redstarts typically dominate the early-season flights at Bluff Point, as illustrated by 100+ there in a flight of 200+ warblers on Sept. 2 (JR). A low total of four Mourning Warblers was reported, compared to reports of 14 Connecticut Warblers ranging from Sept. 7 to Sept. 21. Migrant Hooded Warblers were at three widely scattered locations on Aug. 23 (SO, PS et al). The latest of seven Yellow-breasted Chats was seen Nov. 27 at Milford Point (M&TD).

Sparrows through Finches

An excellent seven **Clay-colored Sparrows** were reported from Allen's Meadow, Wilton, Sept. 13 (LTi et al.), Plainfield Oct 2 (RDi), Glastonbury Oct. 1-2 (ADa), Cove Island Sept. 30, Oct. 20-21 & Nov. 7 (PDu), and HBSP on Nov. 25 (RM). It was an especially good fall for Vesper Sparrows, with

reports of 40+ individuals including 12+ on Oct. 23 at Allen's Meadow (LTi, JBe). It was a good season for **Lark Sparrow**. Reports came from Bloomfield Sept. 14-18 (PCi et al.), Stamford Oct. 1 (PDu), Allen's Meadow Oct. 23 (JBe et al.) and Lighthouse Point, Nov.1 & 2 (LJ et al.). Plumage indicated the Lighthouse birds were different individuals. The first Ipswich Sparrow was at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, on Oct. 25 (HG). The first reports of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow came from Barn Island, Stonington, (GW) and Sherwood Island, both on Oct. 2 (PH.) The only report of Grasshopper Sparrow came from Cove Island on Oct. 23 (BO et al.) One of the state's less-than-annual **Henslow's Sparrows** was discovered Nov. 8 at Greenwich Point (PDa). White-crowned Sparrows again concentrated at Southbury Training School farm, with c. 20 there Nov. 13 (EH).

The season's only **Blue Grosbeak** turned up on Sept. 9 in Greenwich (JD). Away from Lighthouse Point, where they are regular flyovers, 11 **Dickcissels** were reported. A late Bobolink was found on Nov. 6 in East Haven (JHo). The season's only report of **Yellow-headed Blackbird** came from New Milford on Oct. 26 (ADi). The best count of Rusty Blackbirds was 200 at White Memorial on Oct. 20 (DRo). Peak Boat-tailed Grackle counts were 27 at Milford Point on Aug. 4 (FG) and 23 on Oct. 10 at Long Beach, Stratford, (FM) where at least 22 were still present Oct. 29 (CB).

A heavy flight of Purple Finches peaked at 800+ on Oct. 17 at Lighthouse Point (GH). Pine Siskins staged a modest flight in November, but one at a feeder in Canton on Aug. 14 was unexpected (PCi). Evening Grosbeaks produced a noticeable movement, something we haven't had in years. There were 12 reports totaling about

70 birds, almost all in November. One on August 10 in Winchester was more likely related to the sightings reported in the summer season field notes (DRo).

OBSERVERS - Eric Adam, Tim Antanaitis, Helen Antwerp, Mark Aronson, Robert Askins, Renee Baade, James Bair (JBa), Bill Banks, Charlie Barnard, Scott Baron (SBa), Mark Barriger, Joe Bear (JBe), Ray Belding (RBl), Ron Bell (RBe), Nick Bonomo, Steve Broker (SBr), Paul Carrier (PCa), Tom Carrollan, Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Linda Clancy, Al Collins, Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly, Carrie Crompton, Annette Cunniffe, Neil Currie, ML Dahl, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Peter Davenport (PDa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Towny Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Natasha Domina, Randy Domina (RDo), Mike Doyle (MDo), Melody Drinan (MDr), Patrick Dugan (PDu), James Dwyer, Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), John Eykelhoff, Tom Fiore, Larry Fischer, Sam Fried, Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Hank Golet, Andy Griswold, Lorraine Gunderson, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHa), Roy Harvey, Seth Harvey (SeH), Simon Harvey (SiH), Ted Hendrickson, Phil Henson, Vicki Hester, John Himmelman (JHi), Julian Hough (JHo), Jim Hunter (JHu), Lynne James John Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Marie Kennedy, Brian Kleinman, Cindi Kobak, Steve Kotchko, Dave Lawton, Gordon Loery, Carolyn Longstreth (CLn), John Longstreth, Chris Loscalzo (CLs), Chris Lovell (CLv), Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik, John Marshall (JMa), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Judy Moore (JMo), Marty Moore, Nancy Morand, Russ Naylor, Dave Norris, Fred Norton, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, John Ogren, Scott Olmstead, Brian O'Toole, Noble Proctor, Dave Provencher, Edward Raynor, Mike Resch (MRe), James Restivo, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dean Rupp (DRu), Maryann Rupp (MRu), Phil Rusch, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Patty Scott, Arthur Shippee, Donna Rose Smith (DSi), Richard Soffer, Dori Sosensky (DSo), Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Jerry Stage, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Beth Sullivan, Mark Szantyr (MSz), Luke Tiller (LTi), Brian Toal, John Triana, Dave Tripp (DTr), Diane Tucker (DTu), Louise Tucker (LTu), Dennis Varza, Christine Wallstrom, John Weeks (JWe), Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanoski (JWo), Ed Yescott, Chris Zimmerman (CZi), Carol Zipp (CZp), Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmont.

Photo-Challenge: Caspian Tern

By Julian Hough

It's a hot, August day on the shore. As you walk down the beach you just happen to glance up at the large gull flying overhead. Something about the bird looks strange, and as you raise your glasses you see a large bird, with long pointed wings, a dark cap and that bill! It's not a gull flying away but a large, bulky tern!

There are only two 'large' terns that occur in Connecticut – Caspian and Royal Tern. Both are annual visitors to the state, but rather unpredictable in appearance

and location. Individuals are often seen on passage and only rarely hang around.

Identification should be straightforward when seen well, even in flight. Let's recap the features of the mys-

tery tern. It is flying away, but all the main features of the bird can be seen – heavy, thick bill, dark cap, black legs and long pointed wings with dark undersides to the primaries.

The two can be separated by bill color and bill shape, and it is often this feature, as on many species, that the eye is naturally drawn to. On Royal Tern, the bill is rather long and carrot-orange, while Caspian Terns have a darker, blood red or scarlet-red bill that never appears orange. In addition to these color differences, the base of the bill is deeper on Caspian Tern and the culmen of the upper mandible may appear slightly curved. Combined, this results in Caspian Tern having a shorter but more powerful and proportionately more massive bill than Royal Tern.

In the picture, the bill is broad-based and the culmen looks curved, but looking more closely, we see another feature visible in the photo.... a dusky tip. This is typical of Caspian and not seen in Royal Tern.

My experience of Caspian Tern in the state is restricted to a handful of birds I've seen at Sandy Point in August and September. While bill-color is a great way to differentiate between both species, most individuals were brief fly-bys and views were not often prolonged. In these instances, the second most invaluable plumage feature differentiating the two is the color of the underside of the primaries – wholly blackish on Caspian and wholly whitish (with a restricted blackish trailing edge) on Royal. This is especially visible and easy to see in the photo and quickly confirms even the most distant large tern as a Caspian.

I photographed this adult-summer Caspian Tern at Point Reyes, California, in June 2004.

Photo Challenge Number 53

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

Spotted Towhee

Mark Szantyr, one of our state's most gifted bird artists, has the honor of creating The Connecticut Warbler's first color cover. Fittingly for an issue containing a report by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, this illustration, based on a field sketch of a Spotted Towhee, represents a first state record.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

By Greg Hanisek

Documentation.

If one word had to be chosen to elucidate the mission of The Connecticut Warbler that would be the word I would choose. No other publication documents the identification, status, distribution and behavior of Connecticut's birds as thoroughly and enthusiastically as our magazine.

The topic is particularly apt, because this issue contains the Twelfth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut. The work and purpose of records committees can be difficult things to convey to the general birding public. The idea of submitting a report on a bird sighting to a panel of experts - some would say self-appointed and self-important experts - can be intimidating. It causes some observers to mumble (or loudly grumble), "I know what I saw. Why should subject myself to unneeded scrutiny?"

This grows out of a mistaken notion, a notion that's very hard to eradicate. It's the idea that a records committee's decision determines what can and can't be included in people's personal lists. Personal lists are just that. They reflect whatever the observer, in good conscience (or for that matter with total lack of conscience), considers an acceptable sighting. The personal variables that come into play in deciding what to "count" run the gamut.

In my opinion, the work of records committees should remain as divorced from listing and counting as is humanly possible. Their mission is about one thing:

Documentation.

ARCC's primary function is to maintain a historical record of the state's avifauna that stands the test of time. Rare and unusual sightings need to be documented in such a way that anyone studying them in the distant future can reliably ascertain the species involved.

Talk of the future can glaze over eyes pretty quickly, but I've seen this concept at work first hand. When I was a member of the New Jersey Bird Record Committee, we undertook the review of all rare and unusual records ever published about New Jersey birds. One long-standing record of which we were all aware (and all assumed was correct) was of a Sprague's Pipit. When we went looking for the evidence we ended up grasping at mist. There was no description, no details. Just a published line saying this species had been seen at a certain place on a certain date by a certain observer.

Ever hear the finder of a rare bird say, "I know what a Red-guzzled Such-and-Such looks like. You know I know it. Why do I have to write a description?" In the case of the Sprague's Pipit reporter, half a century after the fact no one had any recollection of his skill or reputation. A field sketch or field notes would have outlived both, but there was none to rely on. Based on current knowledge we knew that field guides of the pipit observer's day were inadequate to the task, relying almost solely on what had proven to be an unreliable feature, leg color.

For lack of field notes, Sprague's Pipit was removed from New Jersey's avifauna.

But enough with the cautionary tales. The Twelfth

ARCC Report celebrates an array of birders who took the time to document their auspicious finds in words and pictures. This carries over to the field notes as well, where documentation includes commoner birds in unusual places or unexpected seasonal contexts.

So, take a look at the photo of the Scarlet Tanager accompanying this article. It's not great, certainly not by the standards of avian portraiture we're privileged at times to publish. But it's important. The observer, Ben Oko of Ridgefield, knew a Scarlet Tanager in his yard in December was unusual ... and he documented it. Read more about just how rare it was in the Winter Season Field Notes in this issue.

Ben Oko photo
Scarlet Tanager, December 2005 in Ridgefield

And when you get the chance, help us with the never-ending effort of documenting Connecticut birds. We can't save and conserve what we don't know and understand.

TWELFTH REPORT OF THE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF CONNECTICUT

By Jay Kaplan and Greg Hanisek

The Twelfth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC) of the Connecticut Ornithological Association adds six species to the Connecticut State Checklist. These birds are Cackling Goose, Sooty Shearwater, Snowy Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Collared Dove and Spotted Towhee. All, with the exception of Cackling Goose, were added as the result of careful documentation of exciting finds by a number of diligent birders. The Cackling Goose, which appears annually in small numbers, is added by virtue of its split from Canada Goose by the American Ornithologists' Union.

The report continues an ongoing effort to maintain an accurate record and historical archive of Connecticut's avifauna. Current members of the committee who evaluated and voted on these reports, in addition to the authors, were Buzz Devine, Frank Gallo, Ed Hagen, Julian Hough, Frank Mantlik, Janet Mehmel, Dave Provencher, Mark Szantyr, and Dave Tripp. Former members who voted on some of the records include Chris Wood, John Gaskell and Richard Sofer. Mark Szantyr has stepped down as the ARCC secretary after many years of outstanding work, but he will remain a committee member. Under his leadership the committee stayed abreast of developing trends in identification, status and distribution, and in some cases broke new ground in handling difficult records. Mark's work with Old World geese and Selasphorus hummingbirds has been recognized by records committees in other northeastern states. The committee hopes to have a new secretary on board in

the near future. Jay Kaplan is the new chairman, succeeding Dave Provencher, who also remains a committee member.

In assessing records, the committee urges birders submitting reports to carefully detail the bird's physical appearance, calls or songs, and behaviors, as well as the habitat and conditions under which the bird was seen. The enormous growth of digital imagery has been most helpful in providing photographic documentation for a number of species. In fact, much of the committee's work can now be done electronically. It is anticipated that this will eventually streamline the process and the bylaws are now being rewritten to reflect these new technologies. It is hoped that revised bylaws can be presented to the COA Board at its fall meeting.

ARCC reports become part of a historic archive, and accepted reports must stand the test of time so that a future generation of birders might reach the same conclusion with respect to the bird's identity. This permanent record may be re-opened at any time in order to consider new information, including additional observer reports, newly recognized field characteristics or changes in status and distribution. Unaccepted records, as well as accepted ones, become part of the archive. It has recently been recommended that ARCC reports be archived at the University of Connecticut's Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department and also at Yale University's Peabody Museum. ARCC members are currently working to make this a reality.

Finally, there has been some concern regarding the efficacy of the committee with respect to its review of unusual sightings within the state. The committee fully

recognizes that there has been a longer than necessary delay between this report and the prior one found in the July 2002 edition of The Connecticut Warbler. The committee is taking steps to improve its efficiency, but it must also be noted that reports of unusual birds are not always submitted to the committee. Many of the reports submitted over the past several years have come from ARCC members, even though other persons made the initial discovery. There may be a perception that submissions are unnecessary if enough birders view a rare bird, or that if an ARCC member sees a bird a report is not required. Nothing is further from the truth, and it is hoped that the thirteenth report of this committee will be put to paper, complete with more new state records, in the not-too distant future.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

The state listed now stands at 414. The committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List (these are species marked with an asterisk on the COA Checklist plus any species new to the state). The most recent State List and Review List can be viewed at the COA Web site at www.ctbirding.org. Submit written reports, along with documentary material, to Jay Kaplan, ARCC chairman (address below).

The committee periodically revises the Review List to reflect the latest information on the status of the state's birds. In addition to adding the new state records listed in this report, the committee has removed the following species because the number of sightings has increased: Eared Grebe, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, American White Pelican, King Eider, Mississippi Kite, Swallow-tailed Kite, Swainson's Hawk, Ruff, Parasitic Jaeger, Razorbill, Rufous Hummingbird, Cave Swallow, Varied Thrush

and Black-throated Gray Warbler.

We thank the following observers who submitted reports of these species prior to their removal from the review list. All are now officially accepted:

Eared Grebe, 16 Jan 2003 in Groton (Dave Provencher); 22-23 March 2003 at Harkness State Park, Waterford (Glenn Williams); 23 April 2003, Cat Den Swamp, Eastford (Mark Szantyr); **American White Pelican**, 2 on 3 Nov 2003 at Lighthouse Point, New Haven (Greg Hanisek); Nov. 13-15 2005, Essex (Hank Golet); **Swainson's Hawk**, 23 Sep 2002, Lighthouse Point, New Haven (Greg Hanisek); 1 Nov 2002, Caswell Cove, Milford (Nita Hamilton); **Parasitic Jaeger**, 15 Sep 2002, Eastern Point, Groton (Rickard Ignell); **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, 12 Oct 2000, New Milford (Angela Dimmitt). In addition, Mark Szantyr banded and provided details and photos on four **Rufous Hummingbirds** visiting feeders in Simsbury, North Branford, Darien and Guilford from 2002 to the present. Photos of apparent Rufous Hummingbirds were submitted by Cindi Kobak from North Guilford and Jerry Connolly from Madison, both in 2005.

THE GOOSE QUESTION

Few birding conundrums become as contentious as the origins of unusual waterfowl. The committee has addressed the problem by creating a special category - Accept, Origin Uncertain. This allows acceptance of a species when the preponderance of evidence suggests wild origin, even though it can't be proven with absolute certainty. This category was used for the first time in the eleventh report to add Barnacle Goose to the State List. In the tenth report, both Pink-footed Goose and Cinnamon Teal were accepted, based on the prepon-

derance of evidence, in the traditional Accept category. However, the discussions about those two species led to creation of the Accept, Origin Uncertain category. It acknowledges that in most cases absolute certainty isn't possible. The evidence used to accept a first state record for each of those species is spelled out in the Tenth (Pink-footed Goose and Cinnamon Teal) and Eleventh (Barnacle Goose) ARCC reports. Having established all three species as valid additions to the state's avifauna, the committee has decided that, in most cases, it will not address questions of origin raised by subsequent records of those species. All of them can occur as either escapes or wild vagrants. One hundred percent certainty will never be achieved unless banding information establishing point of origin can be obtained. That was the case with the banded Cinnamon Teal acted upon in this report. The committee still encourages reports on rare waterfowl, such as the two Pink-footed Geese seen in Enfield and Suffield in January 2006, to establish correct identification and for inclusion in the historical archives. To date, no one has submitted a report on those birds, although there are photographs. The Accept, Origin Uncertain category will still be used when applicable to establish first state records, as was the case with the Eurasian Collared Dove in this report. Garganey, anyone?

FORMAT

This report continues the format of previous reports. In the case of accepted records, only observers who submitted reports are listed, with the original finder listed first followed by an asterisk. Observers who submitted a photo are acknowledged with ‡ following their names. Hyphenated numbers (e.g. 02-01) following the observ-

ers are the ARCC file numbers. The species are listed in order according to the AOU Checklist. Multiple records of a particular species are listed chronologically. Months of the year are shortened to their first three letters.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Puffinus griseus*) A lone bird was seen at close range from a boat near Falkner Island off Guilford on 8 Jul 2004 (06-22 Patrick Comins*, Peary Stafford, Daniel Donn). All three birders were familiar with the species and all three submitted reports, an excellent effort for which the committee is grateful. This provided strong documentation for a first state record. In addition to good descriptions, one observer offered a careful analysis of how the bird was separated from similar species. This exercise is especially important with pelagic species, which can be wide-ranging and show up in unexpected places. It is worth noting that this record adds to the recent trend toward pelagic and offshore species entering Long Island Sound in greater numbers and variety.

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) An immature was seen at close range from a fishing boat near the New York-Connecticut border in eastern Long Island Sound on 5 Sep 2001 (02-01 Mike Horn*). The observer's familiarity with nautical charts assured that the bird was seen in Connecticut waters. Four observers found an immature sitting on a jetty at the mouth of the Housatonic River off Milford Point on 1 Aug 2002 (02-34 Dori Sosensky, Lynne James).

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) An adult was observed at

Barn Island in Stonington on 21 May 2003 and seen by several observers (06-13 Nick Bonomo ‡). A silver band was observed on the bird's right leg just above the foot, but the inscription could not be made out.

YELLOW RAIL (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) The observer flushed the bird several times while mowing a field near Mitchell Pond in Salem on 4 Nov 2004 (06 15 David Bingham*). The field is managed for grassland birds, which accounts for the late (and fortuitous) mowing. This species is believed to be a regular migrant through Connecticut but is almost never seen because of its secretive ways.

SNOWY PLOVER (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) A bird discovered 1 Oct 2004 at Sandy Point in West Haven constituted a first state record and only the second for the coastal northeast (06-02 Julian Hough* ‡). It remained until at least 7 Nov and was seen by many observers. This is a wide-ranging species with races occurring from the United States across Europe to Japan. Assigning it to a geographic race, as well as to an age and sex class, proved problematic. For a more detailed account see The Connecticut Warbler, Vol. 25 No. 2.

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) An adult male was found 21 Jun 2003 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison at the newly created shorebird scrape (06-03 William & Claudia Ahrens*). An adult male was seen and well-described by a single observer on 30 May 2004 at Sandy Point in West Haven (06-04 Maria Stockmal*).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) A shorebird survey at Harvey's Beach, Old Saybrook, on 18 April

2001 proved spectacularly productive when the surveyor found this first state record (02-26 Dennis Varza* ‡). The bird could not be found by other observers, but photographs and a written description clinched the identification. This observation underscores the importance of field notes, even when photos have been taken. The photos were distant, but the field notes provided critical details, including the presence of a dark rump, which allowed assignment of the bird to the Asiatic race *baueri*. The addition of this bird to the state list was probably overdue, considering that Massachusetts has at least 14 records. It has also been recorded in New York and New Jersey.

POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) A group of five observers on land had the good fortune to see a single bird fly directly overhead at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison on 11 May 2002 (02-33 Dori Sosensky*). The description and a sketch indicated the bird was an adult.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) From a boat off of Stamford the observer saw a group of three in first-winter plumage on 21 Oct 2005 (06-06 Al Collins*). Sightings appear to be increasing in Long Island Sound but to date few reports have been submitted.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) One appeared briefly in a yard in Sterling on 10 Sep 2001 (02-15 Linda Dixon*). The observer provided details that separated the bird from Mourning Dove. The same yard produced the first state record for this species on 18 May 1997!

CHUCK-WILL'S WIDOW (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) A bird first heard calling on 28 April 2005 in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme continued to be heard, and occasionally seen, until at least 11 June (06-18 John Gaskell, * Glenn Williams). Most records have involved short-staying birds heard by a limited number of people. This species, perhaps the same individual, was present at the same location in May 2006 (GW et al.).

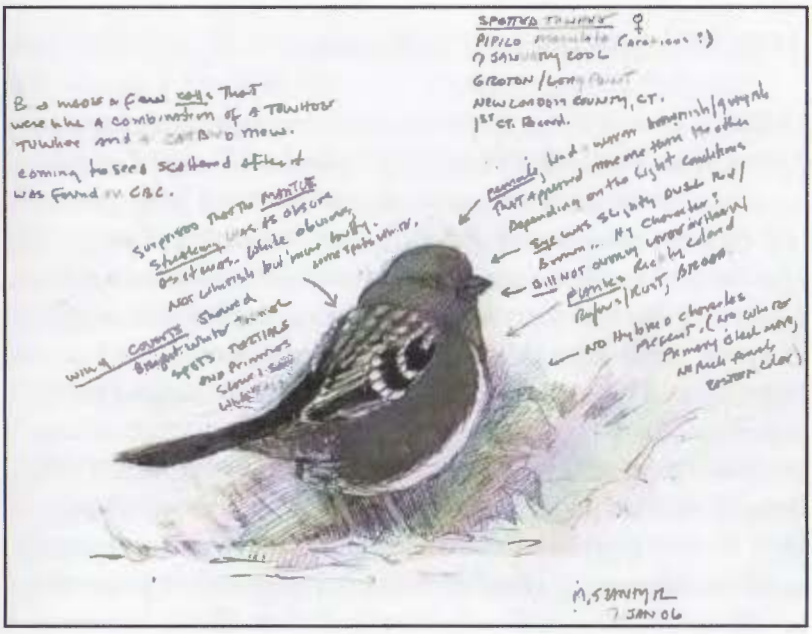
FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus savana*) One, the state's second record for this spectacular Southern Hemisphere species, made a brief appearance on 12 Aug 2003 in Stonington (06-21 Glenn Williams*). The observer made detailed notes that not only established the species but also suggested this may have been the same individual seen later in the fall in Rhode Island. The flycatcher didn't stay long, but the observer was able to show it to his family and one other birder who lived near by.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) One was discovered on 22 Jan. 2006 at Sleeping Giant State Park in Hamden. On 28 Jan it became apparent that two Solitaires were present (06-09 Kristof Zyskowski* ‡ Julian Hough ‡). They were last reported on 22 Feb after being seen and heard singing by many observers.

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (*Oporornis tolmiei*) One, representing a second state record, was found in a thicket at Silver Sands State Park on 12 Jan 2002 (02-27 Buzz Devine*). Despite a fairly brief look at the bird, the observer's experience allowed him to home in on key features needed to distinguish this bird from similar species. The date of occurrence fit the seasonal pattern for this species but not for other Oporornis warblers.

This discovery followed close on the heels of the first state record, a bird found on 15 Dec 2001 in New Milford (see Eleventh Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 22 No.3).

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) A first state record for this recently split species was established when one was found on 31 Dec 2005 at Groton Long Point on the New London Christmas Bird Count (06-08 Scott Tsagarakis*, Mark Szantyr ‡, Ryan Sayers ‡). It was seen my many observers until at least mid-February. Plumage details ruled out the identification as a hybrid with Eastern Towhee and suggested the bird was a first-year female of the Great Plains race *arcticus*.



HENSLOW'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus henslowii*) This elusive species, which formerly bred in Connecticut, was found at Greenwich Point on 8 Nov 2005 (06-17 Peter Davenport*, Meredith Sampson ‡).

HARRIS'S SPARROW (*Zonotrichia querula*) An apparent adult wintered at a feeder in Bloomfield from 21 Nov 2002 to 28 April 2003 (06-01 Cathy Schlude*, Jay Kaplan, Mark Szantyr ‡). This was the ninth documented state record but the first since 1986.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) One was found on 10 Nov 2002 at the old airport in Waterford (02-38 Dave Provencher*). The observer's careful description of the bird's structure and its call notes were critical in establishing the identity of a species easily confused with the regularly occurring Rusty Blackbird.

ACCEPT - ORIGIN UNCERTAIN

EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) One appeared in the Waterbury yard of David Coutu on 2 May 2004 and was photographed on 4 May, the last day it was present (06-07 Mark Szantyr ‡, Greg Hanisek). This is a first state record for a species with a fascinating history. After spreading westward across Europe, it colonized Caribbean islands, jumped to Florida and has since dispersed widely through North America. Two issues arose with this observation - identification and origin. Eurasian Collared Dove is superficially similar to Ringed Turtle Dove, a common cage bird. In the past committee members have investigated several reports of possible collared doves that proved on close examination to be turtle doves. Close observation, field notes and photos allowed positive identification of this individual. Key points included dark under-

tail coverts and the tricolored effect of the folded wing (warm buffy brown secondary coverts, gray secondaries and dark primaries). Photos were shown to experts from areas where the species is well-established, and they confirmed the identification. The origin question arises because the possibility of captive individuals exists. However, Eurasian Collard Doves have been undergoing a rapid and wide-ranging natural expansion in North America. The bird's arrival in conjunction with a May storm fit natural dispersal patterns. The committee accepted it in the Origin Uncertain category, which gives it full status on the state list while acknowledging that it is impossible to assign origin with absolute certainty.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable

PACIFIC LOON (*Gavia pacifica*) One was reported off Mystic on 1 Jan 2001 (01-11). This remains a difficult species to document in Connecticut. In this case observers noted some features indicative of Pacific Loon, but distance and unfavorable lighting conditions raised concerns for committee members. It is worth noting, as evidence of the difficulties this species continues to provide, that an experienced observer submitted a report of a different individual but later withdrew it after researching identification challenges.

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) One was reported soaring high over New Milford on 22 April 2001 (02-03). The observer provided several details suggestive of this species, but the committee continues to struggle with reports of Anhinga because of persistent difficulty in separation from soaring cormorants, even by experienced observers. Following the pattern of Pacific Loon,

an experienced observer reported two in high soaring flight but after further field work with soaring cormorants reconsidered his original identification.

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) Two birds believed to be an adult and an immature were reported from East Hartford on 26 April 2002 (02-31). While details were suggestive of this species, the committee believed the observation from a car without binoculars was too brief to confirm what would have been a first state record.

GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*) A report of a possible white Gyrfalcon on 16 Mar 2005 in West Suffield (06-16) did not address the possibility of leucistic Red-tailed Hawk, which was known to be in the area.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Cepphus grylle*) One was reported off Stratford on 23 March 2001 (02-05). The committee considered the rather brief look at a fly-by bird insufficient to confirm a species for which there are no recent records and only a handful overall. However, this observation serves as a good illustration of the importance of all reports, accepted or not. With the general increase of birds formerly rare in Long Island Sound, along with increasing reports of this species at other Northeast Coast locations, the anomalous nature of this record could change over time.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides arcticus*) One was reported from Stamford on 3 May 2005 (06-20). Although there are more than 30 state records, including at least three from May, this species' periodic invasions have failed to materialize for several decades. Most of the records date to major incursions in the 1920s

and 1950s. The observer reported an all-black back and lack of yellow on the head, which could be indicative of a female arcticus, but the report lacked other details such as the malar pattern, flank barring and tail pattern. Observers should attempt to note as many details as possible when documenting a rare species.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, origin questionable

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*) A drake bearing a red leg band was in West Hartford on 25 March 2006 (06-10). The colored band indicates captive origin. This was probably one of up to three Cinnamon Teal, one male and two female, seen from Avon to West Hartford starting in fall 2005. See Connecticut Warbler Vol. 26 No. 2 for additional information on their possible origin.

Chuck & Marilyn Lorenz photo

A male Cinnamon Teal at Cornerstone Pool in West Hartford on 25 March 2006. The bird has a red tag on its right leg

Ryan Sayers photo
Spotted Towhee, first state record, Groton Long Point, January 2006.

RARE

Julian Hough photo
Townsend's Solitaire, one of two at Sleeping Giant State Park, Hamden, January 2006.

Mark Szantyr photo
Eurasian Collared Dove, first state record, Waterbury, May 2004

PHOTO

RECORDS

Mark Szantyr photo
Harris Sparrow, private feeder, Bloomfield, winter 2002-03.

Julian Hough photo
Snowy Plover, first state record, Sandy Point, West Haven, October 2004

GALLERY

Meredith Sampson photo
Henslow's Sparrow, Greenwich Point, November 2005.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD (*Netta rufina*) A male and a female were at Bantam Lake in Litchfield on 19 Nov 2000 (06-14). This species breeds in southern and eastern Europe, is kept in waterfowl collections and has no history of trans-Atlantic vagrancy.

NUTMEG MANNIKIN (*Lonchura punctulata*) One was seen on 18 Sep 2002 in a yard in Sterling (02-28). This southeastern Asiatic species has established populations in the Los Angeles area and in southeast Florida. It is a common cage bird, and this individual was clearly an escape.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks Blair Nikula and Louis Bevier for helpful comments on the Bar-tailed Godwit and Eurasian Collared Dove, respectively.

Paul Fusco photo

American Avocet was removed from the review list in 2002. These two at Milford Point in September 2005 were part of a flurry that illustrates the increase in sightings.

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NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Peregrine Falcon Chasing Grasshoppers on Ground

On 7 October 2005 at 7:30 a.m., while scanning a newly formed, drought-produced grassy island at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford for shorebirds, I saw something totally unexpected. Three feet from the water's edge was a Peregrine Falcon.

My first reaction was - What was this bird doing and why? I followed its actions for about five minutes. It appeared the bird was trying to catch something it was scaring up from the grass. Careful concentration and focusing of 10X binoculars showed what the falcon was

trying to catch. Several grasshoppers were seen jumping away from the bird.

Were they what this fastest of flying predators was pursuing on the ground? Apparently the falcon was having some luck. Twice it showed results by lowering its head to one foot and consuming the morsel it caught. (See picture). After about five minutes the falcon seemed satisfied with its insect meal and flew off over the water to the south, disappearing over a distant mountain.

The bird appeared to be a second-year tundra race (*Falco peregrinus tundrius*) of this worldwide species. It was blue-gray on top with a clear unmarked breast. The head showed a large white cheek patch and dark narrow moustache. It had retained a bit of the light patch above the beak, one indication that it might be a second-summer tundra bird. I believe it was a wild migrating Peregrine Falcon rather than one of the birds of mixed derivation that have been reintroduced into many areas.

In searching the literature for references to Peregrines hunting insects on the ground, I found the following in The Falcons of the World:

"Young peregrines usually launch their first aerial attacks at flying insects such as dragonflies, cicadas, butterflies and beetles, deftly snatching them up in their feet and eating them on the wing. Adults occasionally catch insects as well."

Also, "Sometimes peregrines will land on the ground after a bird has put into cover to escape, and they stalk about exploring with their feet in an attempt to flush the quarry out. They apparently also hunt this way for fledgling passerines and shorebirds on the tundra, and

probably also for lemmings and voles. Young peregrines are more apt to hunt on the ground than older birds" (S.K. Sherrod).

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Paul Carrier

Common Grackle Acting Like a Hawk

On 11 Jun 2006 a Common Grackle was observed attacking and killing a House Sparrow at bird feeders in a yard in Portland. The grackle then proceeded to pluck and eat the House Sparrow. It then flew off with the remains in its mouth.

Common Grackles eat a wide variety of food. Their predatory behaviors aren't often observed, but they are well-documented in the ornithological literature. John K. Terres, in The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds, lists under Feeding Habits: "...chases and catches mice on the ground, bats in the air; eats eggs and young of smaller birds; kills adults, especially House Sparrows."

Arthur Cleveland Bent, in his Life Histories of North

American Blackbirds, Orioles, Tanagers and Their Allies, presented the 1914 observations of Nelson Gowanlock of Winnipeg, Canada, who watched a grackle visit all the homes of an entire block at regular intervals every four or five days. The grackle "entered the nests of English sparrows built in the corners, and, after eating the eggs or young, would emerge, stand a moment or two ignoring the throng of distracted sparrows, and then fly on to the next house where the scene would be repeated..."

Bent also quoted Charles W. Townsend (1920): "I once found a grackle holding down the freshly killed body of a Bicknell's Thrush while it pecked out its brains."

Also, "K. Christofferson (1927), Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., saw a grackle kill two Pine Siskins, benumbed by cold, by pecking on the birds' head. The brains were devoured, leaving only a part of the skull. He also saw a grackle kill a young Barn Swallow."

Observation by Laurence Nichols Jr.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THIS BY NOW

:

What I Learned About Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers from the British.

By Mark S. Szantyr

I have been birding for more than 30 years. Mostly, I do a good job. I pay attention to the common birds, chase the uncommon ones, and go buck-nutty over the real rarities. I can identify both Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers. Yup, I can even separate them in the field... most times. I was out birding with a well-known Connecticut import from the motherland, Julian Hough, and I heard him mention the diagnostic differences in the facial pattern that separates these two birds. I said, "Huh?"

Like most birders, I relied primarily on the difference in bill length to tell Downy from Hairy. That and the differences in vocalizations made it a cake walk... usually. I have noticed that, sometimes, the bill is very hard to assess. Some Downy Woodpeckers show a larger bill. Some Hairy Woodpeckers show a smaller bill. Sometimes I could not really see the bill at all. Sometimes they are silent.

Swallowing my pride, I asked Julian about this face pattern comment and, lo and behold, there is a difference that holds true in most observations I have made since my re-education.

Below, I will run through the array of characters that makes separating these two species do-able under most field conditions. Again, sometimes even with common

birds, you have to say "I don't know" and hope for a better look.

Bill Length

Hairy Woodpecker is much bigger than Downy Woodpecker. Likewise, it has a longer, heavier bill. This can be hard to assess as we often don't have both together. This is where you need to LOOK at the bird. There is a fairly consistent difference in ratio of bill length to head length between the species. Downy shows a bill approximately ½ the length of the head excluding the bill, that is, when measured from the base of the bill rearward. Hairy shows a bill approximately the same length as the head using the same measuring methods. In figures 1 and 2, compare A to B and a to b.

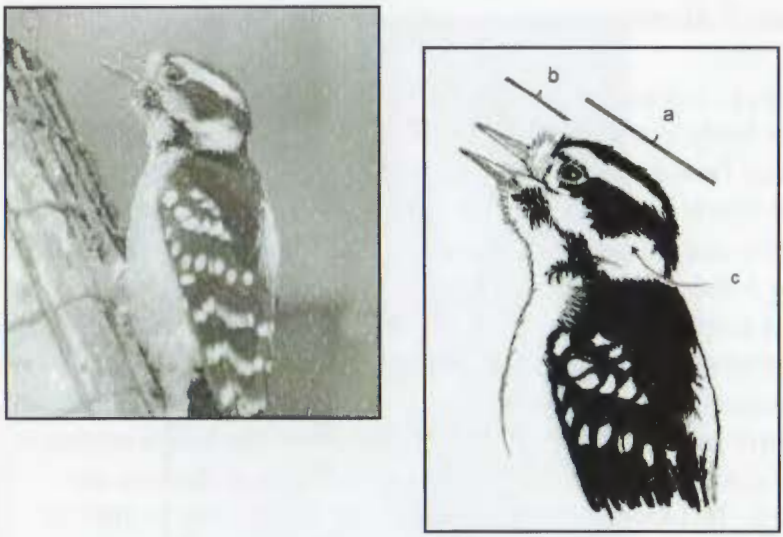

Figure 1 Female Downy Woodpecker

Figure 2 Female Hairy Woodpecker

Face Pattern

I never noticed this until Julian opened my eyes. There is a fairly consistent difference in the facial patterns of these two similar woodpeckers caused by the shape of the black auricular stripe. Downy Woodpecker shows a black auricular stripe that widens behind the eye, causing a more distinct ear patch. Hairy Woodpecker shows this auricular stripe to remain fairly even and straight bordered, resulting in a black straight line. The difference in the shape of the auricular stripes causes the white malar line, the white line below the black auricular stripe, to be shaped differently behind the eye as well. In Downy Woodpecker, this white line seams to well up rearward of the auricular patch, looking almost spot-like. In Hairy Woodpecker, this line remains even and straight, paralleling the black auricular stripe above

it. These differences cause a very different head pattern, and it has proven to be surprisingly consistent during field-testing. Compare C to c in figures 1 and 2.

Outer Tail Feathers

This next character is mentioned in the books. Downy Woodpecker shows black bars across the outer tail feathers, Hairy shows all white outer tails feathers. This is well illustrated in figures 3 and 4. This is fairly consistent but not foolproof. Some Hairy Woodpeckers can show partial black bars that appear very similar to the tail pattern of a Downy Woodpecker. I am not sure if these bars are ever absent in Downy, unless said outer tail feathers are absent... it could happen!

Figure 3 Downy Woodpecker showing barred outer tails feathers.

Figure 4 Hairy Woodpecker showing plain white outer tail feathers.

A Lot To Learn

You learn something new every day, and that is a good thing. Paying attention, even to the birds that spend every day at your feeders, can reap great rewards in the field. Bird watching is rich and rewarding when we all take the time to notice what is right in front of us. Thanks, Julian… now how about that redshank!

Photos and drawings by Mark Szantyr

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

Identify Yourself. The 50 Most Common Birding Identification Challenges. 2005 Bill Thompson and the editors of Bird Watchers Digest. Illustrations by Julie Zickefoose. xxiv+392 pgs Houghton Mifflin & Co., Boston.

Fifteen years ago Ken Kaufman wrote and illustrated A Field Guide to Advanced Birding. It was part of the Peterson Series and I have no idea how well it sold, but it was a revelation to many birders. In 34 chapters, each dedicated to a particular assemblage, the book presented an immense number of clues and insights on difficult identification problems. Examples included winter loons, dowitchers, gulls (actually four chapters, no one said these were easy!), fall warblers, etc. The results were extraordinarily helpful in demystifying the local avifauna and in providing lessons that could be useful anywhere. Most birders have spent hours trying to sort out at least one or two of these groups and Kaufman rendered a valuable service.

In Identify Yourself Thompson and four of the editors of Bird Watchers Digest revisit the same general problem but include numerous bells and whistles. The birds are still difficult. The book has more pages and a larger page size than Kaufman, and Julie Zickefoose has contributed extremely attractive color images (Kaufman's were black and white). Thompson uses a less dense text and more subheadings to guide the user. The writer's voice is breezy, reflecting that in the Digest. It lacks range maps and voice spectrograms, but these topics are not overlooked in the text.

Identify Yourself is focused on North American birds. The 50 challenges in Peru would be quite different. There are differences in the groups covered in the two books. Kaufman includes sapsuckers, Thompson does not. Identify Yourself includes Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Kaufman does not. Many of the passages in Identify Yourself were taken from articles in the Digest, which explains the very informal tone and perpetual encouragement. The passages on swallows (pg 219) are typical. The basics are presented followed by a section on Green Swallows, one on Rusty Swallows, and one on Drab Swallows. The terms are helpful, but lack taxonomic cache. The text is telegraphic in style and individual paragraphs separated by headers in a different type face and color. Illustrations are abundant, carefully executed, and well-proportioned. There is no indication of scale, but birders at this level are certainly aware of the generally small size of swallows. Besides being small, swallows fly very fast and erratically, almost always into the sun, and are rarely close by. My own identifications are much more dependable when the bird is perched.

Identify yourself early on gives "Top 20 Rules of the Bird Identification Game". These are a good thing. If possible also read Kaufman's "Basic Rules of Field Identification". The reason is that much of this is hard to do and some of it is very hard to do. No doubt it gets easier with experience, but the road to success is full of pitfalls. There is great value in saying "I don't know". There will always be judgment calls. To figure out that juvenal plumages of two sandpiper species differ because one "shows a little more contrast in the face" (Kaufman p86) is definitely a challenge. Or maybe it's the differences in shape and size of the tails in Sharp-shinned and

Coopers Hawks, species which both differ in overall size and also are sexually dimorphic. That provides at least three variables, each of which occur in at least two states to sort out when the bird flashes by, with trees all around and nothing else near to give an indication of relative size. And that's not taking the stage of molt into consideration!

The take home message is that on any given day, in any give place, you may not identify every bird seen. For whatever reason, for any particular sighting, this is acceptable, even to be expected. Don't be too hard on yourself if you can't be sure. There are innumerable reasons for this; it is not a major system failure. Birds by nature are variable. They change with age and season, visibility can be compromised due to weather and other distractions, distance is always a factor, or it may be a species unknown to you. Regardless, persistence is a virtue and either of these books could help sort out the problem. Of course, the best solution is simply spending more time looking.

CONNECTICUT FIELDS NOTES

Winter, December 1, 2005 through February 28, 2006
By Greg Hanisek

The season's weather was again moderate, with snow in early January followed by a number of days with temperatures reaching the 50s. Modest flights of some boreal species occurred, but most of the excitement centered on an interesting array of geese and a couple of major rarities. Perhaps the most remarkable records are those of wintering attempts by species normally long-gone from Connecticut at this season.

Geese through Ducks

Ten **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season included two in an aggregation of 5,000+ Canada Geese on the Connecticut River between Enfield and Suffield that drew birders from long distances. The stars were two **Pink-footed Geese** present Feb 4-12 (MOl, RT et al.). The state's only other record, and one of the first for the lower 48 states, was in Mansfield March 21-25, 1998. (See additional comments on this species in the Twelfth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut in this issue). In addition, a few Snow Geese and two **Cackling Geese** were reported by various observers there through Feb. 13 (JSm et al.). Another Cackling Goose was photographed on Jan. 12 at Mirror Lake, Storrs (FG). The Barnacle Goose found in November in Newtown was still present in early December, as was one of the Greater White-fronted Geese (LH, DBr et al.). A late movement of Snow Geese resulted in reports of 100 over Greenwich on Dec. 3 (BO'T) and 75 over Canton on Dec. 5 (PCi). Those were dwarfed by c. 500 that landed briefly on Bantam Lake in Litchfield

Rollin Tebbetts photo

Two Pink-footed Geese at Barnes Boatlaunch, Enfield, on 7 Feb 2006.

on the morning of Dec. 8 (CM). Flocks of that size are usually seen only as fly-overs. An unusually large mid-winter flock of 20 was in East Windsor on Jan. 9-13 along with another of the Greater White-fronted Geese (JW, JK et al.)

In addition to the usual locations, drake Eurasian Wigeons were at Scotts Cove, Darien, on Dec. 12 (JMh), at Lighthouse Point, New Haven, on Dec. 24 (JMe) and at Morgan Point, East Haven, on Feb. 4 (RN et al.). Among scattered reports of Northern Shovelers were four on Feb. 21 at Merwin Point in Milford (FM). A flock of five Green-winged Teal were at a pond in Orange on Jan. 12 (NB). Five Redheads were unexpected in an impoundment at Barn Island, Stonington, on Dec. 18 (JR), and a single was at Fargeorge Preserve, New Haven (RA). As Greater Scaup flocks began to build in New Haven harbor, three Redheads were found off West Haven on Jan. 28 (FN). The number built to eight on Jan. 30 (FM) and ten on Feb. 10 (CE).

An adult male **King Eider**, an age class seldom seen in the state, was off East Haven Feb. 3-10. (MDr et al.). A **Common Eider** was a flyby on Jan. 1 at HBSP (ER, BZ), and one was near Shippan Point, Stamford, on Jan. 4-6 (PDu, JMh et al.). A repot from Greenwich Point on Jan. 6 could have involved the same bird (MSa). A female was at Stonington Point on Jan 10 (FN) and Enders Island, Mystic, on Feb. 4 (FN). Duck hunters reported, but did not shoot, a drake **Harlequin Duck** on Dec. 17 at Sunken Island off Fairfield (JCy fide CB).

A Long-tailed Duck was inland on Lake Waramaug in New Preston on Dec. 12 (EAs). A pair of White-winged Scoters was unexpected on the Connecticut River at Enfield on Feb. 19 (fide SKe). Four Black Scoters appeared Jan 31 off Shippan Point, Stamford (PDu). The season's five Barrow's Goldeneyes were a male on Dec 18 on the Pawcatuck River, Stonington, (JR); a female on Jan. 2 at Long Beach, Stratford (JCa); a female on Jan. 24 at Lighthouse Point, New Haven, (CF); a male Jan. 29-31 at Long Beach, Stratford (JR et al.) and a male on Feb. 19 on the Con-

Frank Gallo photo

A Cackling Goose dwarfed by Canada Geese at Mirror Lake, Storrs, on 12 Jan 2006.

necticut River in Enfield (fide SKe), once the most reliable place in the state for this species. A bird believed to show characteristics of a Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye hybrid was in the Sound at East Haven on Feb. 5 (PDu). A Red-breasted Merganser, uncommon inland, was at Bantam Lake in Litchfield Dec. 1-3 (DR). The high count of Common Mergansers was 550 on Dec 6 at Bantam Lake (EAd).

Loons through Alcids

The only inland Red-throated Loon was at Bantam Lake in Litchfield on Dec. 1, along with two Horned Grebes (DR). A Horned Grebe was unusual inland in mid-winter at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford (PCa). A Red-necked Grebe was in New Haven harbor on Dec. 21 (AR, JMa) and two were off Sherwood Island State Park in Westport on Dec. 28 (LJ). Singles were off Seaside Park, Bridgeport, on Jan. 2 (JCa) and off Shippan Point, Stamford, on Jan. 3 (PDu) with up to three there Jan. 5-6 (FG et al.). Jan. 6 also produced two off Greenwich Point (MSa), and one was at HBSP on Jan 12 (GN). The only American Bittern reported was one that wintered at Frash Pond in Stratford (BD et al.). Late lingering herons included a Snowy Egret to Jan. 10 in Stratford (PCs, m.ob) and a Little Blue Heron to Dec 13 in Stamford (PDu). This winter's high count for the ever-expanding Black Vulture was 38 over downtown Watertown on Feb. 4 (JMr). A good coastal concentration of eight was at Sherwood Island on Dec. 30 (FG). An immature Osprey was found on the Pomperaug River in Southbury on Dec. 17 and remained on the river in Southbury and Woodbury until at least Jan. 17 (RN, BJ). This fits a recent pattern of this species lingering into the winter season. Eight reports of Northern Goshawk included an immature seen by many

wintering at HBSP (GN et al.) A modest seven Rough-legged Hawks were reported. Two or three Golden Eagles wintered in the usual area along the lower Connecticut River from Lyme to Chester (m.ob.), and one was reported from North Branford on Dec. 22 (SW). Reports of small falcons followed the recent trend, with Merlins outnumbering American Kestrels by ten to four.

An unprecedented mid-winter report of Spotted Sandpiper came from Johnson's Point, Branford, on Jan 21 (RE). One (quite possibly the same bird) was at Milford Point on Dec. 26 on the Stratford-Milford CBC (KE). The high count of Purple Sandpipers was 36 seen from a canoe on rock outcroppings off Cosey Beach, East Haven, on Dec. 15 (SB). An American Woodcock that apparently became a bit disoriented was seen flying down Church Street in New Haven at 10:30 p.m. on Dec. 9 (CD). The season produced 15 reports of Iceland Gull and ten reports of Lesser Black-backed Gull. Five Glaucous Gulls for the season included singles at Riverside Park in Hartford on Dec. 22 (PCi), at Windsor landfill on Jan. 21 (PCi), and at Bloomfield Reservoir No. 3 on Feb. 25 (DL). Two were at Batterson Pond in Farmington on Feb. 20 (PCi et al.). A bird believed to be a Glaucous x Herring hybrid (known as Nelson's Gull), was at Windsor landfill Jan. 21 (PCi). An adult Black-headed Gull was first seen Dec. 12 at Wethersfield Cove on the Connecticut River, where it remained all winter (PCi et al.). Another was in Bridgeport on Dec. 26 at the Stratford-Milford CBC (DV). Single **Razorbills**, now annual, were at Ender's Island, Mystic, on Dec.5 (HG); at Niantic on Dec. 22 (DL); at HBSP on Dec. 25 (ER); and off Shippan Point, Stamford, on Jan. 3-6 (PDu et al.). Numbers then started to pick up with three at

Greenwich Point (BO'T) and two at Mystic (JO), both on Jan. 8.

Owls through Tanagers

Three to five **Snowy Owls** for the season were all coastal. The first one at Penfield Reef off Fairfield on Dec 18 (CB, MBu) was followed by multiple reports from Milford Point and Seaside Park in Bridgeport (m.ob.). These reports may have involved from one to three individuals. Others were reported from the Fenwick section of Old Saybrook on Dec 31, sitting on an Osprey platform (TH), and at Carolina Creek, East Haven, on Jan. 2-4 (MDr, DSo). A Long-eared Owl was at HBSP on Dec. 8 (GN) and singles were in the Pine Creek area of Fairfield on Dec. 15 (CB) and Jan. 12 (FM). Reports of at least seven Short-eared Owls were all coastal with the exception of one on Jan. 27 in Enfield (JW).

An Eastern Phoebe made it as deep into winter as Jan 22 in East Haddam (FD); hardier still was one on Feb. 11 in Westport (MDi, TD). Six Northern

Kristof Zyskowski photo

There were two Townsend's Solitaires in Hamden so here's a second photo.

Shrikes for the season were in Norfolk on Dec. 2 (SHr), in Roxbury on Dec 17 (DBa), at Little Pond in Litchfield Dec 18-31 (RN et al.), at Farmington Meadows on Dec. 23 (JMe), in Woodbury Dec. 23-25 (RN), and in Bloomfield Feb. 25 (DL). Common Ravens were once confined to the state's far-northern reaches. Now they're so widespread that the high count, 10+ individuals, came from well down the Connecticut River Valley at Cockaponsett State Forest in Haddam (SR). A lingering Marsh Wren was found on Jan. 4 at HBSP (TA) and this species also attempted to winter at the Morris Creek marshes in East Haven (SB, BM), where up to three were present in mid-January. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was found on Jan. 22 at Sleeping Giant State Park in Hamden (KZ). The discovery attracted many birders, and on Jan. 28 it became apparent that two Solitaires were present. They were last reported on Feb. 22.

It was a good season for half-hardies, as exemplified by a record 37 Gray Catbirds on Woodbury-Roxbury CBC, shattering the previous record of ten. The largest flock of American Pipits was 18 on Dec. 29 at Sherwood Island (LTi). A Black-throated Blue Warbler was very late on Dec 26 in Guilford, where it visited feeders for several days (DSu fide JCo). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** that arrived in November at a feeder in East Haven remained throughout the winter eating mealworms and suet (MDr). Last year's Pine Warbler invasion wasn't repeated, but one wintered in a Stamford yard (MOy). Two Palm Warblers were in North Stonington on Dec. 7. A very late Scarlet Tanager, a molting male, was present to Dec. 6 (and photographed) in Ridgefield, eating dogwood berries (BOk). There is only one other December record.

Towhees through Finches

The find of the season was the state's first **Spotted Towhee**, a bird discovered on Dec 31 at Groton Long Point on the New London CBC. It remained until at least mid-February (ST et al.). Two Chipping Sparrows were deep into winter on Jan. 30 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 1 (PCi). Three Vesper Sparrows on River Road in Southbury to at least Dec. 17 was a high number for so late in the season (RN, DR). One was at Milford Point on Dec. 23 (DR). In the unexpected category, a Grasshopper Sparrow was discovered Jan. 29 at Greenwich Point and remained through the season, for a first state overwintering record (BO'T et al.). The previous late record, and only January record, was Jan. 1, 1968 (Zeranski and Baptist). A late Lincoln's Sparrow was in Southbury on Dec. 17 (DR). Fields at the Southbury Training School Farm again hosted the state's largest concentration of White-crowned Sparrows,

Ron Pelletier photo

This Baltimore Oriole at HBSP in mid-November 2005 may have accounted for reports there in December and as late as 2 Jan 2006.

Rob Pierpont photo

A Chukar, presumably a gun club release, visited a yard in Wolcott on 1 Jan 2006.

with up to 30 wintering (LF, MSz et al.). A first-year male **Dickcissel** turned up Dec. 1 in a community garden in Hartford (PCi). Rusty Blackbirds were on the move by Feb. 10, when 17 were present at White Memorial (BS), followed by ten at a South Kent feeder two days later (JJ). The wintering flock of Boat-tailed Grackles in the Stratford area numbered at least 14 in early January and could be found going to roost in Phragmites near Sikorsky Airport (FM). A Baltimore Oriole was at HBSP on Dec. 10 (FD, JMo) and possibly the same bird was still present on Jan. 2 (JR). Another wintered at a feeder in Woodbury eating suet and fruit (RN) and one was reported from New Haven on Jan. 2.

In a season lacking in the rarer northern finches, a single adult male Pine Grosbeak was at White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield, on Dec. 17 but not seen again (BS). Much more cooperative was a single sub-adult male White-winged Crossbill that spent the winter in an

evergreen grove at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport. Many birders enjoyed it after its discovery on Dec. 25 (MDi, TD). Common Redpolls were scattered in small numbers, with a noticeable flurry of reports from 15 locations Jan. 12-27. The biggest flocks were nine each on Jan. 12 in Barkhamsted (FZ) and Jan. 21 in Windsor (PCi). Pine Siskins were also sparsely distributed, with the best count a flock of 26 in Barkhamsted on Jan. 21 (FZ). A flock of eight Evening Grosbeaks was at White Memorial on Dec. 1 (DR) and 15 were in West Hartland the same day (PCa, DC). The only other report was a flock of about six on Jan. 15 in Guilford (LG).

Exotics - A Mandarin Duck was at a marina in Stamford on Dec. 10 (MOy). A Chukar surprised a family in Wolcott in early January when it showed up in their yard.

Correction - The photo of the Rufous Hummingbird in the hand in the Fall Photo Gallery in the April issue was taken in North Guilford, not Simsbury.

OBSERVERS - Eric Adam (EAd), Jayne Amico, Ralph Amodei, Tim Antanaitis, Elliott Ashe (EAs), Renee Baade (RBa), Dave Babington (DBa), Jim Bair (JBa), Charlie Barnard, Bill Banks, John Barriger (JBr), Mark Barriger (MBa), Larry Bausher (LBa), Joe Bear (JBe), Ray Belding (RBe), Nick Bonomo, Andy Brand, Don Breeger (DBr), Steve Broker, Linda Broker (LBr), Miley Bull (MBu), Jay Carlisle (JCa), Douglas Carrier, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cashman (PCs), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), John Clancy (JCl), Linda Clancy, Al Collins (ACo), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe (ACu), Neil Currie, John Cyrus (JCy), Fran D'Amico, Chris Dalton, Peter Davenport (PDa),

Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine, Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Towny Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt, Randy Domina, Melody Drinan (MDr), Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth, Ken Elkins, Richard English, Debby Ethridge, Chris Field, Tom Fiore, Bruce Finnan, Larry Fischer, Sam Fried, Frank Gallo, Val Gaurino, Ted Gilman, Hank Golet, Jeff Greenwood, Lorraine Gunderson, Daniel Hageman, Linton Hamilton, Greg Hanisek, Shelley Harms (SHr), Roy Harvey, Simon Harvey (SHa), Ted Hendickson, Phil Henson, Julian Hough (JHo), Katy Hubbard, Jim Hunter (JHu), Lynn James, Buck Jenks, John Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Seth Kellogg (SKe), Marie Kennedy, Brian Kleinman, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Dave Lawton, Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Chris Lovell (CLv), Chip MacDonald, Frank Mantlik, Linda Mantlik, John Marshall (JMr), John Maynard (JMa), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Bob Mitchell, Jim Moore (JMo), Marty Moore, Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, Fred Norton, John Ogren, Ben Oko (BOk), Maryann O'Leary (MOy), Mike O'Leary (MOl), Scott Olmstead, Brian O'Toole (BO'T), Bev Propen, Larry Reiter, Ed Reneson, James Restivo, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen, Scott Roxbrough, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Ryan Sayers, Tom Sayers, Will Schultz (WSc), Mark Scott (MSc), Mary Sharkey (MSh), Arthur Shippee, James P. Smith (JSm), Dori Sosensky (DSo), Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Jerry Stage (JSt), Bob Stanowski, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Will Storz (WSt), Dan Sullivan (DSu), Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Clay Taylor, Rollin Tebbetts, Luke Tiller (LTi), Scott Tsagarakis, Diane Tucker, Louise Tucker (LTu), Dennis Varza, Kristine Wallstrom, Scott Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, Ed Yescott, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Betty Zuraw, Fran Zygmont, Kristof Zyskowski.

PHOTO CHALLENGE: BLACKPOLL WARBLER

By Julian Hough

While attending a banding demonstration in September, this bird is shown to you. The bander asks those gathered for any guesses as to its identity. At such close range, the identification is not immediately obvious. The bird is compact, not overly large or small, a "medium" bill and short tail. The most obvious feature is the two white wingbars.

Rolodexing through your brain, fall warblers that fit this bird's overall size and structure with two broad wingbars include: Cerulean, Blackburnian, Pine, Blackpoll and Bay-breasted.

In fall plumage, Cerulean Warblers resemble our mystery bird, but show a more marked supercilium and

have a deep-based bill. Blackburnian? Blackburnian Warblers in all plumages have darker auriculars and are well streaked on the mantle, which has characteristic, creamy-white tramlines in between the dark streaks.

The bander, aware that the bird is puzzling, prompts, "Look at the wings and tertials, the shape and length of the primaries. See that not only are the wingbars white, but also the tertial edges and the tips to the primaries have prominent white edges..

Pine Warblers, while superficially similar, lack the white tips to the remiges shown by our mystery bird and have proportionately shorter wings and longer tails. Judging by the amount of primaries visible beyond the longest tertial, our bird has quite long primaries – a clue in itself. Long distance migrants typically have longer wings to aid their long flights. Both Blackpoll and Bay-breasted Warblers are long-distance migrants, wintering in northern South America. Both of these species have long primaries and have white wingbars in an otherwise rather 'bland' appearance.

"Is it a Bay-breasted?" you nervously ask the bander. "Getting warmer," he replies. Offering another clue, "Typically this species has more marked streaks on the mantle and breast than does this individual here, so this is a tricky one."

Superficially similar, Bay-breasted and Blackpoll are often difficult to separate in some circumstances and hence the term "Bay-poll" Warbler – a name coined when views are insufficient to allow the separation of these two species on plumage.

Separating the two is based on a suite of subtle colors and density of streaks on the upper and underparts. Blackpolls are dingy, olive-toned above with a pale lemon yellow throat contrasting with a paler whitish belly and vent. While there is individual variation, Blackpolls generally show some blurry streaks on the upper breast that become broader at the breast sides and fade toward the center.

Bay-breasteds tend to be less heavily-marked on the mantle and are clean-breasted, somewhat similar to our bird and hence your educated guess for Bay-breasted. "It is in fact a Blackpoll Warbler," states the bander, "albeit a rather poorly-marked individual. If you look closely, you can see indistinct streaks on the breast and a few hair-like streaks on the mantle. The wingbars on Bay-breasted often look broader, especially the lower one which is of even width along its entire length, the white tips extending to the innermost greater coverts, whereas Blackpolls, like this one, tend to taper off slightly."

This Blackpoll has a rather 'blank' look and lacks obvious upper and underpart streaking more suggestive of Bay-breasted, and makes for a more difficult than normal identification. Other subtle clues , in the presence of a color photograph, would be the brighter green (less olive-toned) upperparts in Bay-breasted and the uniform, creamy-buff underparts and vent.

I photographed this Blackpoll Warbler in Cape May, New Jersey, in October 2004.

Photo Challenge Number 54

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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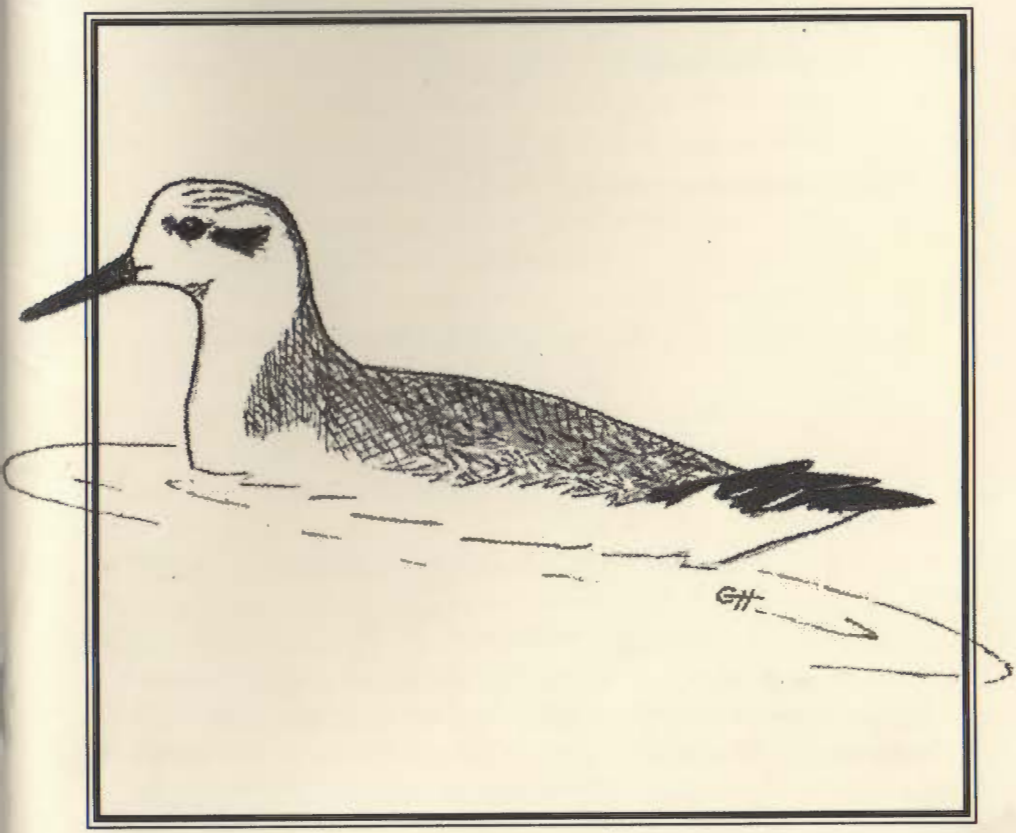

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Red Phalarope

Only color photographs can do justice to a Red Phalarope in breeding plumage. We've got two of them in this issue. The cover lends itself better to the bird in basic plumage, as depicted on our cover by Greg Hanisek. It's no wonder the British call this species Gray Phalarope.

THE 2006 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

By Joseph Zeranski and Patrick Comins

Introduction

This year 181 count day species were recorded, down from last year's 188. Six additional species were recorded in the count period. There were 243 observers, in 136 parties. The overall number of observers is down a bit from last year, but the number of parties is a new 10-year high, meaning that birders took the field in smaller groups than in past years; 1293.5 party hours were tallied, down from last year's record high of 1329.

There were 99,624 individual birds recorded, 98.6% of the previous ten years' average. The ten most abundant species recorded were, in descending order: American Robin, European Starling, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, Canada Goose, Gray Catbird, House Sparrow, Red-eyed Vireo, Song Sparrow, and Mourning Dove. This is very similar to last year's top ten list, with each of the ten species retuning from last year, only differing slightly in order.

Fifteen species were represented by a single individual: American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, American Bittern, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Sora, American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Nashville Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and Wilson's Warbler.

The six species recorded within the count period but not on the count days were: Blue-winged Tea, Lesser

Scaup, Red-throated Loon, Horned Grebe, Glossy Ibis, and Semipalmated Plover. As was the case last year, all were from Greenwich-Stamford. Of those, only the teal and ibis would be considered potential breeders.

There were 24 species recorded on the count days that do not breed in Connecticut and can be considered either late migrants or non-nesting visitors: Brant, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler. The underlined species are potential nesters, but in the absence of additional supporting evidence they will be considered non-nesting visitors.

Noteworthy from this group include the two Caspian Terns sighted in Hartford, an especially exciting find for inland, and the first appearance anywhere in the state on the SBC. Also worth noting are the 23 Sanderlings and 30 Least Sandpipers recorded in New Haven, with each being a new statewide high total. White-rumped Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher and Wilson's Warbler were new species for Greenwich-Stamford. Swainson's Thrush was a new species for Litchfield Hills and while it can be a late migrant, evidence of breeding should be carefully documented if encountered in suitable nesting habitat.

Greater Scaup and Greater Yellowlegs were missed for

the second year in a row.

Notable Nesting Species

Green-winged Teal made its fourth appearance in a row and fifth in six years, this time in New Milford-Pawling, a new species for that area. Northern Bobwhite, a species heavily dependent upon captive-raised birds, was also recorded for the first time in New Milford-Pawling. Three Pied-billed Grebes and an American Bittern were recorded in Litchfield Hills. A Little Blue Heron and a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, both particularly hard to find in western Connecticut, were recorded in Greenwich-Stamford. Northern Harriers were recorded in Greenwich-Stamford and Woodbury-Roxbury, but these may represent non-breeding visitors. Only one Sora was recorded, coming from Woodbury-Roxbury. Three Northern Saw-whet Owls were recorded, two from Woodbury-Roxbury and one from Greenwich-Stamford (nesting just over the state line in Westchester County),

Mark Szantyr photo
Brown Thrasher was at a 10-year low on the survey.

the first such record from G-S. Nesting in the extreme southwest part of the state would be notable, but it does nest in southeast New York and in New Jersey. Two Common Nighthawks were recorded, one from New Haven and the other from Woodbury-Roxbury, the first record for W-R. This is the third year in a row for the New Haven area and may represent evidence of a remnant breeding population. Four Golden-crowned Kinglets, a species easy to miss in the nesting season, were recorded from Barkhamsted and Litchfield Hills. The Nashville Warbler, recorded for the second year in a row in Litchfield Hills, is particularly noteworthy being a species that nests primarily to our north. An uncommon edge of range species from the other extreme, Kentucky Warbler, was recorded in Greenwich-Stamford and New Milford-Pawling, the first such record for the latter count. Two Mourning Warblers were again recorded in Barkhamsted. Two Grasshopper Sparrows were recorded in Hartford again this year.

Seventeen species that nest in Connecticut were not recorded, but each is an uncommon to rare and/or localized nester and can easily be missed: Blue-winged Teal, Least Bittern, Glossy Ibis, King Rail, Common Moorhen, Upland Sandpiper, Roseate Tern, Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Seaside Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Boat-tailed Grackle, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak. Least Bittern was the only species that has been recorded in each of the last ten years that was not recorded on the 2006 SBC.

Ten-year high counts

New high counts of individuals for the period 1996-2005 were recorded for the following species: Osprey,

Red-shouldered Hawk, Sanderling, Least Sandpiper, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Veery, American Robin, American Redstart, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Chipping Sparrow.

Ten-year low counts

New low counts of individuals for the period 1996-2005 were recorded for the following species: American Black Duck, Snowy Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Great Horned Owl, Northern Flicker, White-eyed Vireo, American Crow, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Yellow Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Eastern Towhee.

The following graphs illustrate some of the more significant population changes that the Summer Bird Counts

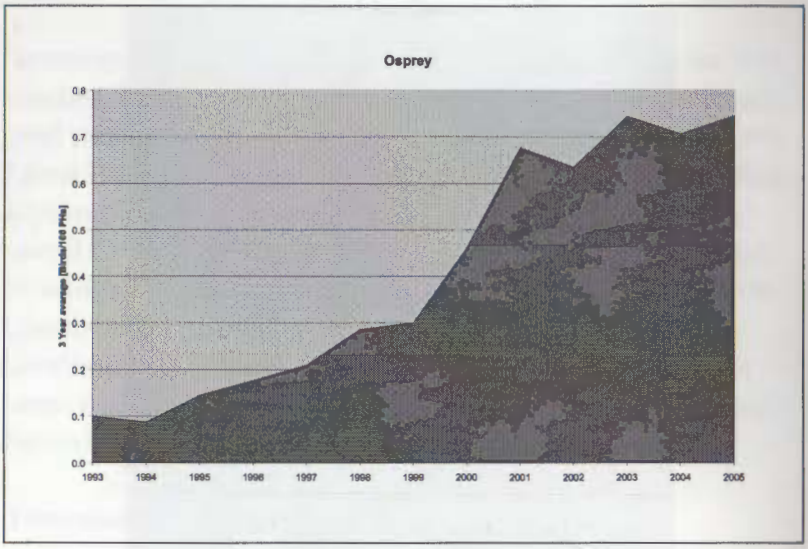
Mark Szantyr photo

Song Sparrow was one of the 10 most-numerous species on the survey.

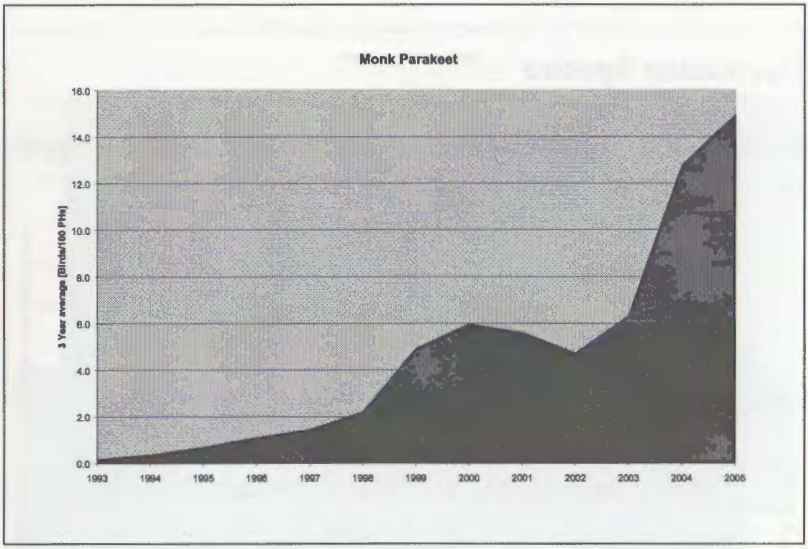
have documented. These graphs show the three-year averages of birds recorded per 100 party hours. Three-year averages are used to smooth out year-to-year variability that can result from such factors as yearly weather conditions. See below notes for discussion of when these numbers may differ substantially from three-year averages.

Increasing Species

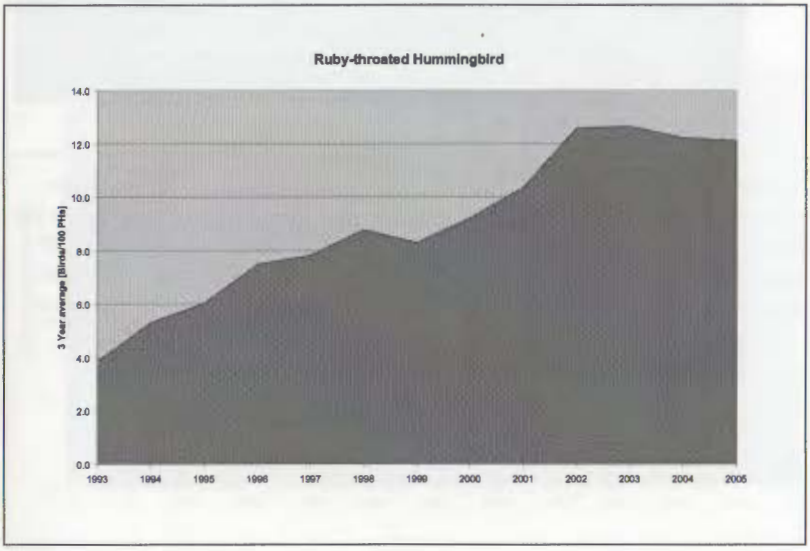
While many of the above mentioned species could be classified as having increasing trends indicated, further examination of the data sends a mixed signal. Many species that had a clear increasing trend seem to have leveled off, or even begun to decline from peak numbers since ~2000. Below are graphs of some representative species that appear to have a clear and continuing increasing trend.



Osprey have a clear and continuing upward trend, including a new high count in this year's results.



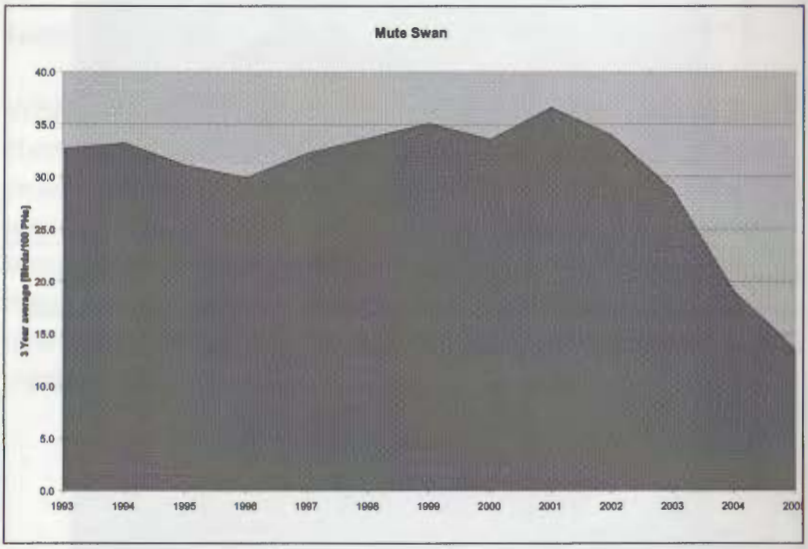
Monk Parakeets appear to still be on the increase. A down-tick this year over last year accounts for the apparent leveling off of the increase in the above 3-year rolling average graph.



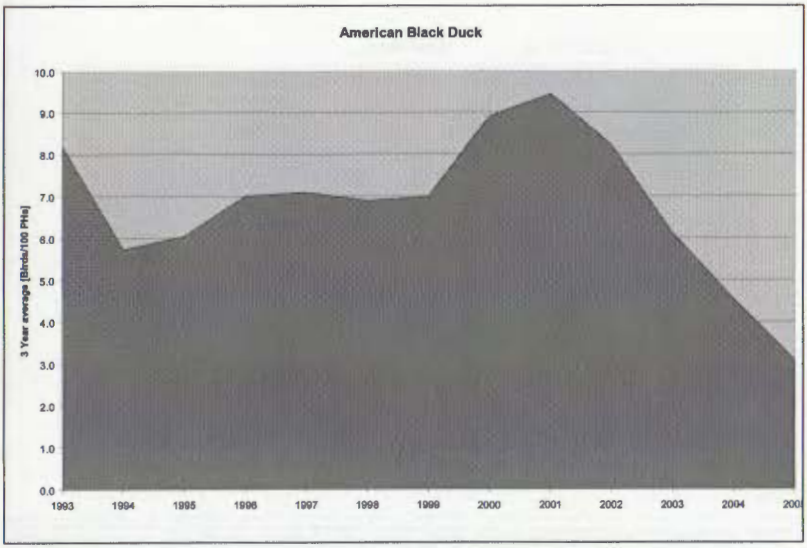
While there is a new high for individual Ruby-throated Hummingbirds recorded, when party hours are taken into account, there does appear to be a plateau since about 2002.

Decreasing Species

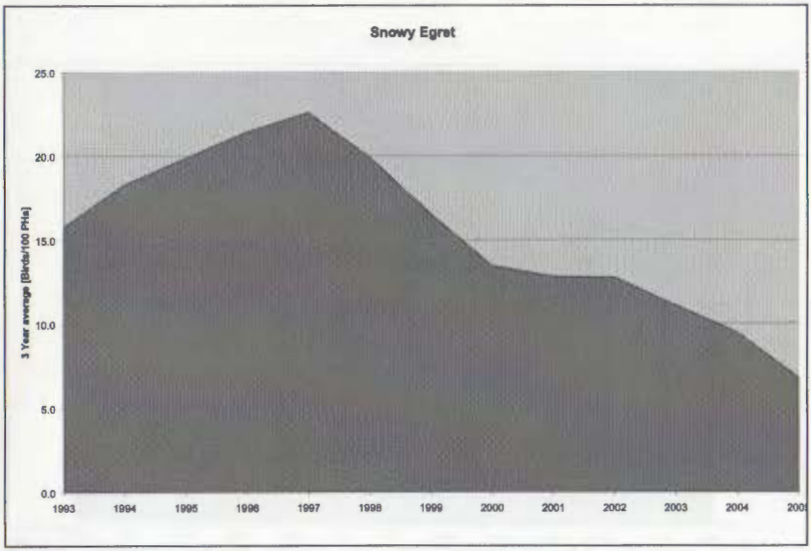
Below are graphs representing some representative species that appear to have a clear decreasing trend.



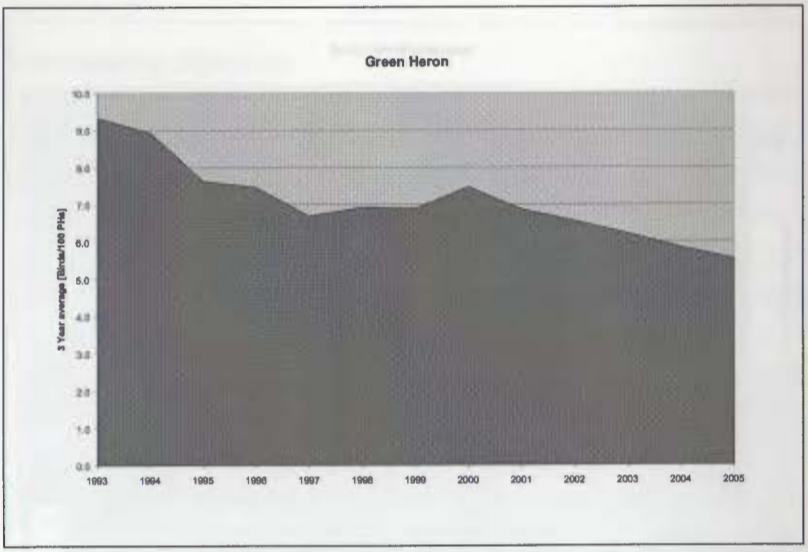
There has been a dramatic decline in the numbers of Mute Swans recorded per party hour since the peak of 2002. Certainly one major factor in this decline is the loss of the Salmon River count, which was a stronghold for this species and was last held in 2002. Harsh winters over the last few years could have also affected winter survival for this species, which requires open water for foraging purposes.



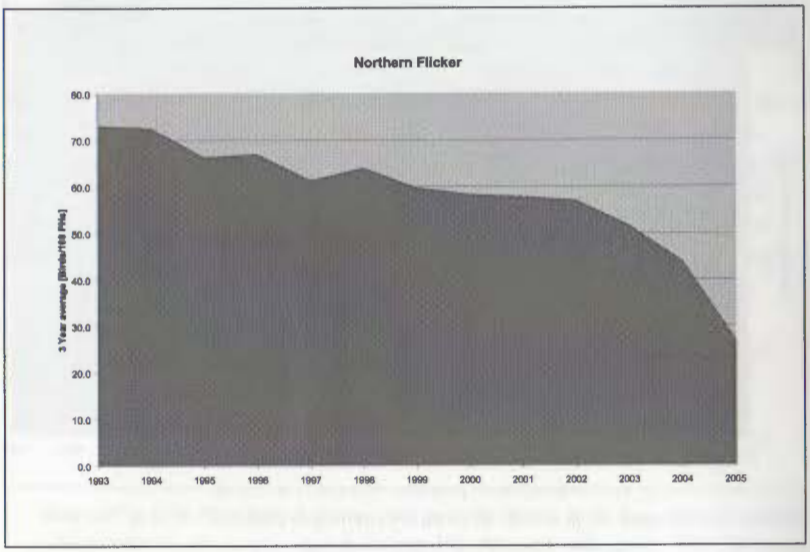
It is tempting to blame the recent decline of American Black Ducks on interbreeding with Mallards, but in light of the recent decline of Mallards, other factors should be investigated as a potential cause.



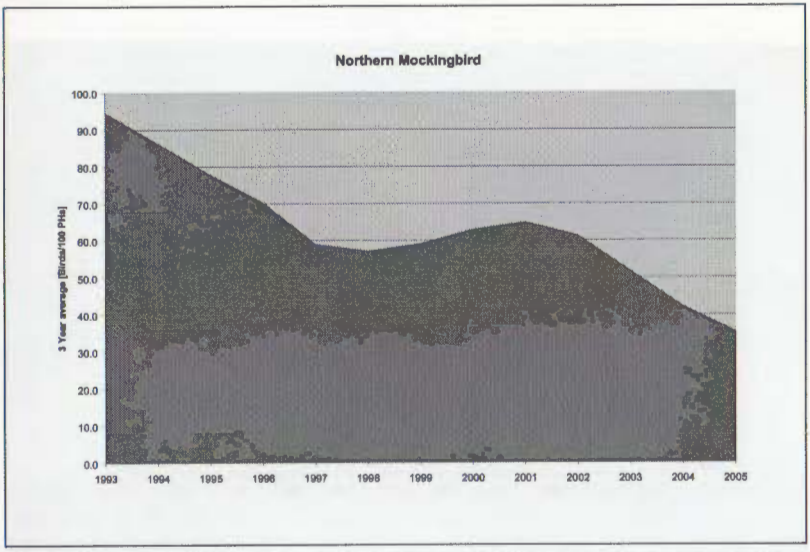
Snowy Egrets came in at a new all-time low, which is just over 20% of the peak count of 1997. Since this is a state-threatened species and there are other indications of a population decline regionally, additional studies are warranted to determine the reasons behind this trend and if there is anything that could be done to reverse it.



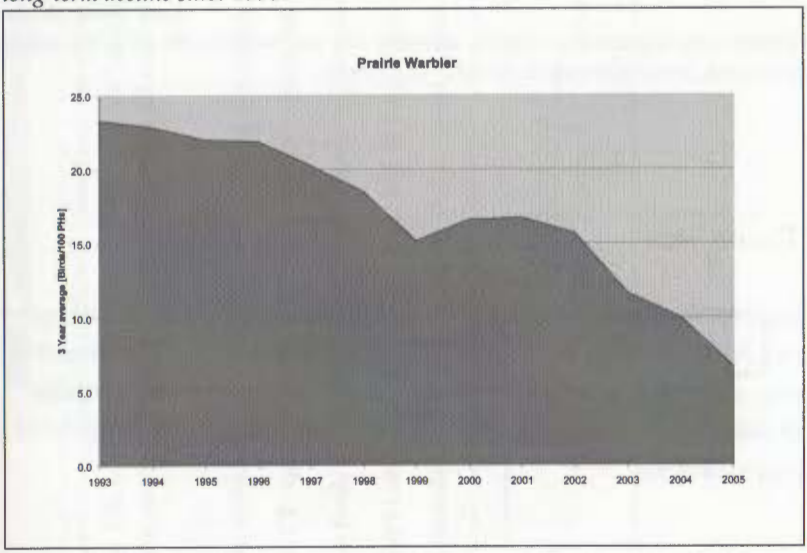
A clear downward trend is indicated for Green Herons since 1993, the reasons for which are as of yet unclear, but perhaps the loss of shrubby habitat is impacting their numbers.



Northern Flickers continue to be recorded in lower numbers, reaching a new low this year.



Much attention has been given to the long-term decline of Brown Thrashers, but this trend is also apparent in another early successional mimic thrush, the Northern Mockingbird. This year is a new low for the species that is consistent with a long-term decline since 1993.



Prairie Warblers, reached another new low this year, which is consistent with the apparent trends since 1993. Like many early-successional specialist species, factors such as the maturation of our habitats and development are taking a toll on its population. Much fewer than half as many birds were recorded this year than were in 1993, and with the exception of one good year in 2001, the downward trend has been quite constant.

Hank Golet photo
This Snowy Egret has a healthy appetite, but the Summer Bird Count raises questions about the species' health as a nester.

Thank you

In conclusion, on behalf of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, we would like to thank all of the observers, captains and compilers. The data that you provide is critical for understanding our changing breeding bird populations.

2006 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

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

XX = **Rare**; noted on fewer than five years during previously censused 10 years [outlined box]

XX = **New CD species**; not recorded on previously censused 10 years[darkened outlined box]

XX = **More birds** tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 years [underlined number]

XX = **Fewer birds** tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 years [boldfaced number]

0 = **Not recorded CD**, but recorded on *all* the previous censused 10 years [boldfaced zero]

SPECIES	Coastal		CT	*Upland Counts*					2006	% of	1996-2005			
			Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	96-05	yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Snow Goose									0	0%	3	0	0	1
Canada Goose	1358	488	485	376	369	175	398	94	3743	83%	10	4489	3585	5197
Brant	8	4							12	105%	9	11	0	29

SPECIES	Coastal		CT	*Upland Counts*					2006	% of	1996-2005			
			Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	96-05	yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Mute Swan	65	53	17	12	15		10		172	52%	10	328	165	462
Wood Duck	134	11	21	66	16	26	65	18	357	107%	10	334	280	418
Gadwall	1	4							5	68%	7	7	0	15
American Wigeon	1								1	250%	4	0	0	1
American Black Duck	28	1					1		30	39%	10	76	32	120
Mallard	599	119	464	101	114	71	173	38	1679	69%	10	2429	1460	3022
MallardxAm Black Duck		1			2	2			5					
Blue-winged Teal	CP								CP		4	1	0	8
Northern Shoveler									0	0%	2	0	0	2
Northern Pintail									0	0%	3	0	0	1
Green-winged Teal					1				1	125%	4	0	0	4
Ring-necked Duck									0	0%	4	0	0	1
Greater Scaup									0	0%	8	1	0	4
Lesser Scaup	CP								CP		2	0	0	1
Common Eider									0	0%	1	0	0	2
White-winged Scoter									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Long-tailed Duck									0	0%	6	2	0	4

Bufflehead	2								2	200%	5	1	0	4
Common Goldeneye									0	0%	4	1	0	6
Hooded Merganser	1			7	9	2	16		35	140%	10	25	2	72
Common Merganser				25	3	73	1		102	83%	10	124	72	196
Red-breasted Merganser	1								1	53%	8	1	0	7
Ruddy Duck	1								1	56%	5	1	0	10
Ring-necked Pheasant	1				5		1		7	31%	10	22	3	93
Ruffed Grouse						4	16		20	86%	10	23	13	40
Wild Turkey	40	30	22	54	49	126	142	18	481	100%	10	482	326	645
Northern Bobwhite					5				5	192%	9	2	0	6
Red-throated Loon	CP								CP		5	1	0	8
Common Loon	1					1	1		3	64%	9	4	0	8
Pied-billed Grebe							3		3	136%	7	2	0	7
Horned Grebe	CP								CP		2	0	0	2
Red-necked Grebe									0	0%	2	0	0	1
Manx Shearwater									0		CP	0	0	0
Wilson's Storm-Petrel									0	0%	1	0	0	3
Northern Gannet									0		CP	0	0	0
Double-crested Cormorant	363	163	15	17	13	12	3	12	598	80%	10	749	574	964
Great Cormorant									0	0%	1	0	0	1
American Bittern							1		1	71%	8	1	0	3

SPECIES	Coastal		CT Valley	Upland Counts: Mid-state		Northern			2006 State Totals	% of 96-05 aver	1996-2005 yrs obs	Ave	Low	High
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St						
Least Bittern									0	0%	10	2	1	7
Great Blue Heron	25	3	20	25	32	66	53	14	238	148%	10	161	88	248
Great Egret	211	45							256	100%	10	256	168	376
Snowy Egret	45	25							70	42%	10	165	95	261
Little Blue Heron	1								1	45%	9	2	0	5
Tricolored Heron									0	0%	2	0	0	1
Cattle Egret									0	0%	1	0	0	4
Green Heron	32	3	7	8	8	2	8	2	70	95%	10	74	59	86
Black-cr Night-Heron	255	7		2					264	81%	10	324	165	458
Yellow-cr Night-Heron	1								1	19%	10	5	2	21
Glossy Ibis	CP								CP		5	0	0	4
Black Vulture	1			9	3		4		17	147%	9	12	1	26
Turkey Vulture	45	39	21	56	54	53	86	9	363	118%	10	309	251	382
Osprey	39	54		1	1	2	3	1	101	179%	10	56	21	99
Bald Eagle	2					8	4		14	122%	10	12	2	22
Northern Harrier	1			1					2	133%	6	1	0	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1				1	3	3		8	87%	10	9	5	14

Cooper's Hawk	4	2		8	8	4	11	1	38	126%	10	30	18	40
Northern Goshawk		2				2	1		5	102%	10	4	2	9
Red-shouldered Hawk	3	4	12	13	3	9	4	3	51	139%	10	37	25	47
Broad-winged Hawk	8	1		4	4	18	18	6	59	104%	10	57	46	66
Red-tailed Hawk	111	14	32	42	37	24	54	7	321	132%	10	243	177	341
American Kestrel		1		4	4	1	5	3	18	153%	10	12	3	20
Peregrine Falcon	2	3							5	179%	10	2	1	6
Clapper Rail	9	0							9	82%	10	11	2	21
King Rail									0	0%	4	0	0	2
Virginia Rail	CP	1		6	18		7		32	112%	10	28	15	51
Sora				1					1	67%	8	1	0	3
Common Moorhen									0	0%	3	0	0	2
American Coot	1								1	143%	5	0	0	3
Black-bellied Plover	1								1	34%	6	2	0	7
American Golden Plover									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Semipalmated Plover	CP								CP		6	7	0	35
Piping Plover		15							15	118%	10	13	6	24
Killdeer	48	34	49	38	23	12	16	21	241	93%	10	258	158	351
American Oystercatcher	23	6							29	85%	10	34	11	57
Greater Yellowlegs									0	0%	9	2	0	5
Solitary Sandpiper									0	0%	6	0	0	2

SPECIES	Coastal		CT	*Upland Counts*					2006	% of	1996-2005			
			Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	96-05	yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Willet	1	8							9	98%	8	9	0	26
Spotted Sandpiper	5	6	14	4	2	8	2		41	115%	10	36	26	49
Upland Sandpiper									0		CP			
Ruddy Turnstone	3								3	52%	9	5	0	16
Red Knot									0	0%	2	0	0	6
Sanderling		21							21	778%	6	2	0	9
Semipalmated Sandpiper	3								3	5%	8	64	0	349
Least Sandpiper		30							30	3857%	4	1	0	3
White-rumped Sandpiper	1								1	83%	2	1	0	6
Dunlin									0	0%	4	1	0	4
Short-billed Dowitcher	3								3	250%	2	1	0	8
Common Snipe									0	0%	1	0	0	1
American Woodcock			5	3	1	3	8		20	126%	10	16	9	24
Laughing Gull	15	2							17	87%	10	20	1	48
Bonaparte's Gull									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Ring-billed Gull	82	332	50			2	4		470	91%	10	519	311	795
Herring Gull	499	84	0	4	1		1		589	66%	10	896	532	1229

Glaucous Gull									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Great Black-backed Gull	154	46	7	9					216	73%	10	298	216	414
Gull-billed Tern									0	0%	1	0	0	2
Caspian Tern			2						2			0	0	0
Royal Tern									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Roseate Tern									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Common Tern	99	118							217	94%	10	232	84	518
Forster's Tern	2								2	222%	2	0	0	7
Least Tern	2	205							207	83%	10	250	50	560
Black Tern									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Black Skimmer	CP	26							26	441%	8	5	0	17
Rock Pigeon	260	259	159	66	96	63	53	85	1041	79%	10	1316	898	2543
Mourning Dove	447	218	346	385	247	218	338	226	2425	97%	10	2490	2236	2896
Monk Parakeet	43	129							172	230%	10	75	14	288
Black-billed Cuckoo	2	3		5		3	4		17	53%	10	32	8	69
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	4		4	9	4	3	5	3	32	84%	10	38	4	144
Eastern Screech-Owl	13			6	10				29	73%	10	40	25	57
Great Horned Owl	2					2	5	1	10	33%	10	30	18	39
Barred Owl	4			5	3	20	25	4	61	83%	10	74	48	131
Long-eared Owl									0	0%	1	0	0	2
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1					2			3	125%	9	2	0	7

SPECIES	Coastal		CT Valley	Upland Counts: Mid-state		Northern			2006 State	% of 96-05	1996-2005 yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Nighthawk, Common		1			1				2	14%	10	15	2	77
Chuck-will's-widow									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Whip-poor-will				2		17	3		22	122%	10	18	11	25
Chimney Swift	90	145	95	106	48	114	74	33	705	103%	10	685	576	771
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	13	15	7	14	15	51	40	24	179	159%	10	113	71	146
Belted Kingfisher	17	3	8	16	2	23	9	1	79	67%	10	118	71	166
Red-headed Woodpecker									0	0%	2	0	0	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	160	37	38	77	46	48	47	53	506	108%	10	469	347	593
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				19	18	162	138		337	125%	10	270	130	432
Downy Woodpecker	208	44	54	104	66	115	114	37	742	111%	10	668	424	905
Hairy Woodpecker	58	14	15	23	17	45	63	8	243	122%	10	200	141	239
Northern Flicker	163	38	67	65	33	37	71	31	505	82%	10	617	508	694
Pileated Woodpecker	12	4	3	19	4	30	28	3	103	99%	10	104	80	126
Olive-sided Flycatcher									0	0%	7	0	0	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	94	31	30	107	48	106	163	63	642	113%	10	569	441	797
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher			1						1	71%	6	1	0	5
Acadian Flycatcher	1			9	4	4	4		22	94%	10	24	7	39

Alder Flycatcher			1	3	3	22	69	3	101	111%	10	91	58	138
Willow Flycatcher	42	20	28	36	27	25	71	9	258	102%	10	254	215	293
Least Flycatcher	1		1	19	20	43	61	13	158	108%	10	146	98	223
Epidonax species			4						4					
Eastern Phoebe	70	14	21	142	80	125	220	77	749	106%	10	706	496	907
Great Crested Flycatcher	63	26	26	60	23	38	109	44	389	90%	10	434	352	529
Eastern Kingbird	59	25	32	77	53	112	114	29	501	86%	10	584	489	683
White-eyed Vireo	6			1	1		1		9	30%	10	30	12	49
Yellow-throated Vireo	16	1	4	52	35	35	62	29	234	105%	10	223	169	276
Blue-headed Vireo	1			13	4	109	58	2	187	159%	10	118	76	159
Warbling Vireo	134	21	72	182	65	40	100	68	682	116%	10	587	517	725
Red-eyed Vireo	192	54	38	366	246	1001	751	154	2802	126%	10	2230	1640	2888
Blue Jay	315	85	112	215	104	315	186	58	1390	92%	10	1514	1328	1729
American Crow	310	107	122	380	324	354	505	100	2202	60%	10	3657	2300	4516
Fish Crow	25	10	3	10	6	3	5		62	95%	10	65	39	94
Common Raven		5		4	6	27	14		56	130%	10	43	14	73
Purple Martin	16	3			3				22	59%	10	37	17	54
Tree Swallow	228	61	101	199	192	407	446	131	1765	103%	10	1715	1422	2176
Northern Rough-w Swallow	118	69	26	81	41	58	14	10	417	110%	10	378	294	540
Bank Swallow	3	9	59	139	22	29	8	36	305	100%	10	301	202	404
Cliff Swallow	94	6		114	98	49	4		365	129%	10	283	190	420

SPECIES	Coastal		CT	*Upland Counts*					2006	% of	1996-2005			
			Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	96-05	yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Barn Swallow	313	144	88	226	215	133	262	161	1542	100%	10	1545	1339	1843
Black-capped Chickadee	229	59	67	259	175	651	412	125	1977	109%	10	1818	1598	2064
Tufted Titmouse	321	71	74	307	193	320	313	173	1772	106%	10	1672	1389	2269
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	1				12	3		17	34%	10	50	14	81
White-breasted Nuthatch	104	17	18	86	76	131	74	95	601	134%	10	447	303	583
Brown Creeper	5		2			21	40	5	73	92%	10	79	41	130
Carolina Wren	113	20	30	64	35	11	12	14	299	140%	10	214	49	420
House Wren	170	28	19	194	97	136	156	71	871	108%	10	808	544	1016
Winter Wren	4			10	1	39	18		72	145%	10	50	14	88
Marsh Wren	19	12	7		1		13		52	53%	10	99	51	167
Golden-crowned Kinglet						1	3		4	52%	9	7	0	16
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	30		2	45	9	32	43	32	193	82%	10	235	169	308
Eastern Bluebird	55	7	7	146	58	81	108	26	488	87%	10	561	319	793
Veery	73	14	7	323	306	502	603	122	1950	131%	10	1489	1247	1733
Bicknell's Thrush									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush							2		2	333%	5	0	0	2
Hermit Thrush			1	16	1	121	45	2	186	109%	10	170	109	243

Wood Thrush	165	46	52	269	123	243	274	83	1255	98%	10	1285	1065	1503
American Robin	1923	401	893	763	602	621	1014	439	6656	118%	10	5621	4750	6354
Gray Catbird	692	136	229	639	426	634	710	223	3689	100%	10	3699	3140	4219
Northern Mockingbird	94	45	51	94	52	17	15	35	403	65%	10	621	469	757
Brown Thrasher	7	3	1	4	4	3	5		27	43%	10	63	36	94
European Starling	2043	710	1219	490	456	313	622	622	6475	100%	10	6478	4766	8852
Cedar Waxwing	310	75	75	164	98	272	277	57	1328	89%	10	1494	1181	2387
Blue-winged Warbler	44	28	18	60	35	41	52	18	296	66%	10	450	271	716
Golden-winged Warbler									0	0%	7	0	0	2
Tennessee Warbler									0	0%	3	0	0	2
Nashville Warbler							1		1	75%	4	1	0	7
Northern Parula						2	1		3	63%	10	4	1	11
Yellow Warbler	378	80	163	288	153	178	423	128	1791	86%	10	2085	1896	2352
Chestnut-sided Warbler	3	3	4	77	34	202	232	15	570	86%	10	665	553	761
Magnolia Warbler	1		1		1	74	22		99	112%	10	88	67	117
Cape May Warbler									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Black-throated Blue Warbler		2	2	3	1	120	40		168	101%	10	167	105	219
Yellow-rumped Warbler				2	3	76	26	3	110	86%	10	127	97	169
Black-thr Green Warbler	7	1	1	45	3	122	79	14	272	87%	10	311	204	436
Blackburnian Warbler				10		60	68	1	139	81%	10	172	107	243
Yellow-throated Warbler									0	0%	2	0	0	1

SPECIES	Coastal		CT	Upland Counts					2006	% of	1996-2005			
				Mid-state		Northern			State	96-05	yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Pine Warbler	78	17	18	22	9	144	93	18	399	124%	10	322	202	435
Prairie Warbler	5	5	15	44	8	3	5	7	92	52%	10	175	101	249
Bay-breasted Warbler									0	0%	2	0	0	5
Blackpoll Warbler				1					1	17%	8	6	0	11
Cerulean Warbler						4	2	3	9	102%	10	8	2	16
Black-&-White Warbler	18	16	7	73	30	134	129	10	417	76%	10	550	453	639
American Redstart	38	3	27	199	97	398	520	38	1320	123%	10	1074	896	1318
Prothonotary Warbler									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Worm-eating Warbler	27	18	2	17	7	2	5	11	89	62%	10	143	91	201
Ovenbird	79	52	14	186	112	389	426	75	1333	100%	10	1331	1112	1556
Northern Waterthrush	2			2	12	19	24		59	125%	10	47	22	61
Louisiana Waterthrush	26	4	3	58	19	42	31	11	194	137%	10	142	84	189
Kentucky Warbler	1				1				2	200%	3	1	0	7
Mourning Warbler						2			2	125%	7	1	0	4
Common Yellowthroat	145	49	64	180	189	611	452	76	1766	100%	10	1768	1516	2061
Hooded Warbler	3			27	18	1	2		51	170%	10	30	11	72
Wilson's Warbler	1								1	450%	1	0	0	2

Canada Warbler				2	3	17	**16**	1	**39**	67%	10	58	41	83
Yellow-breasted Chat									0	0%	5	1	0	2
Scarlet Tanager	90	23	19	128	57	180	137	46	680	101%	10	673	533	839
Eastern Towhee	**42**	**19**	22	93	79	91	125	40	**511**	78%	10	654	554	847
Chipping Sparrow	321	49	75	412	219	506	434	232	2248	117%	10	1916	1701	2211
Field Sparrow	6	CP **0**	6	58	22	**3**	12	1	108	68%	10	159	82	203
Savannah Sparrow			22	4	5	1	11	14	57	143%	10	40	12	63
Grasshopper Sparrow			2						2	63%	9	3	0	7
Nelson's Sh-tailed Sparrow									0	0%	5	1	0	1
Saltm Sharp-tailed Sparrow	5	5							10	74%	10	13	5	26
Seaside Sparrow									0	0%	6	4	0	11
Song Sparrow	336	111	269	420	303	529	591	125	2684	109%	10	2465	2093	2915
Swamp Sparrow	1		3	19	35	50	144		252	77%	10	327	238	457
White-throated Sparrow	1			1	2	2	1		7	64%	10	11	2	17
White-crowned Sparrow									0	0%	2	0	0	8
Dark-eyed Junco						36	7		43	104%	10	41	29	53
Northern Cardinal	**308**	**88**	**112**	355	174	224	246	142	1649	101%	10	1638	1452	1844
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	40	18	33	62	59	**67**	100	29	408	99%	10	414	351	509
Blue Grosbeak									0	0%	1	0	0	1
Indigo Bunting	55	16	13	98	82	86	68	28	446	107%	10	416	290	609
Dickcissel									0	0%	1	0	0	1

SPECIES	Coastal		CT	Upland Counts					2006	% of	1996-2005			
			Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	96-05	yrs			
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NMP	Ba	LH	St	Totals	aver	obs	Ave	Low	High
Bobolink	3		25	135	50	17	230	16	476	101%	10	473	335	571
Red-winged Blackbird	776	297	518	742	685	347	927	325	4617	104%	10	4422	3851	5271
Eastern Meadowlark			2	5	14		1	6	28	96%	10	29	8	63
Rusty Blackbird									0	0%	1	0	0	5
Common Grackle	2355	287	444	608	361	289	559	158	5061	108%	10	4697	3871	5396
Boat-tailed Grackle									0	0%	4	1	0	5
Brown-headed Cowbird	279	55	91	219	116	193	209	119	1281	110%	10	1161	922	1403
Orchard Oriole	31	3	1	23	5		5		68	123%	10	56	38	85
Baltimore Oriole	385	88	108	242	104	137	183	111	1358	129%	10	1050	892	1400
Purple Finch	1			3	3	77			146	112%	10	131	80	167
House Finch	257	45	114	227	186	119		131	1240	93%	10	1339	945	1657
Pine Siskin									0	0%	4	1	0	3
American Goldfinch	311	133	180	325	244	504		163	2272	96%	10	2365	1736	3030
Evening Grosbeak									0	0%	4	1	0	5
House Sparrow	894	262	356	346	202	277	295	259	2891	88%	10	3287	2858	4051
other unidentified/hybrid								18	18					

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	21651	7034	8316	13946	9486	15234	17063	6259	**99624**	**99%**		101014	80860	110978
CD Species	147	114	99	123	124	126	135	95	**181**	**102%**		**177**	**167**	**191**
CP Species	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**6**	**500%**		**1**	**0**	**3**
DEGREE OF EFFORT:														
Party Hours	348	110	100	148	90	218	213	68	1294	114%		1130	1008	1329
Day Party Hours	330	106	99	140	86	212	201	67	1243	114%		1094	962	1275
Night Party Hours	18	3	0	8	3	6	11		50	91%		55	42	69
Observers	62	25	34	29	18	24	43	8	243	105%		231	193	257
Parties	40	15	17	16	11	17	14	6	136	115%		118	102	130
Indiv bds per 10 PH	622	642	832	942	1054	699	803	927	770	88%		872	743	992
Ind. bds per Observer	349	281	245	481	527	635	397	782	410	98%		420	341	498
% SBC Observers	26	10	14	12	7	10	18	3	100					
% SBC Party Hours	27	8	8	11	7	17	16	5	100					
% SBC Individual Birds	22	7	8	14	10	15	17	6	100					

Statewide Count Totals

Count Dates: June 10, 11, 17-19, 24 - 28. Reported on Count Days (CD) were 181 species (with all but twenty-five species presumably nesting), with six additional Count Period (CP) species, consisting of 99,624 CD Individuals. Two hundred & forty-three observers in 136 Parties (Ptys) spent 1243.5 Party Hours (PHs) in the field.

Individual Count Totals

Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count (founded 1992)

Count Dates: June 24 - 28 (Sat. & Sun. into Wednesday)

Totals: 126 species, 15234 individual birds, plus one hybrid. Twenty-four observers in 17 Ptys spent 218 PHs in the field. Since 1992, 159 CD species have been recorded, 156 in the last ten years, while120 have been confirmed as nesting. Rainy weather necessitated an additional 3 days to cover the territory.

Participants: Bob Barbieri, Cheryl Barker, Loretta Blair, George Boynton, Douglas Carrier, Paul Carrier, Ayreslea Denny, Duncan Denny, Angela Dimmitt, Nikki Hall, Seth Harvey, Cheryl Hebert, Joshua Hebert, Vicki Hester, Vima LeJeune, Russ Naylor, Carol Parent, Cynthia Phipps, David Rosgen (121 Laurel Way, Winsted, CT 06098-2534; drosgen@optonline.net), Sam Slater, Bob. Stanowski, Duane Tabak, Nicholas Tabak, and Fran Zygmont.

Weather: "Every day was mostly cloudy and very humid, with frequent showers, thunderstorms and downpours." 6/24- AM: SSW winds 0-10 mph., 66° to 75°F., (1.35" rain.), Night- S winds 0-12 mph., 70° to 55°F. some rain, 6/25- SSE winds 0-10 mph. 64° to 68°F. (0.95" rain), Night- SE winds 0-8 mph., 68° to 65°F., 6/26-28- featured similar conditions with an additional 1.75" 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 10 & 11 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 147 species, 21651 individual birds, plus eight CP species. Sixty-two observers in 40 Ptys censused for 330 PHs.

Since 1976, 229 CD species have been recorded, with the additions this year of Northern Saw-whet Owl (nesting) and Wilson's warbler; 140 of these have been found nesting

Participants: Tom Andersen, John Askildsen, Jeff Asselin, Shawn Asselin, Pat Bailey, Tom Baptist, Trudy Battaly, Joan Becker, Richard Becker, Joe Belanger, William Belanger, Gail Benson, Andrew Block, Michael Bochnik, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye, NY 10580; tom.burke@rsmi.com), Ioa Byrne, Al Collins, Alex Collins, Diane Collins, Patrick Comins, Annette Cunniffe, Peter Davenport, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Debbie Etheridge, Andrew Farnsworth, Frank Gallo, Kathy Gellman, Ted Gilman, Andy Guthrie, Richard Guthrie, John Hannan, Carol Hartel, David Havens, Jalna Jaeger, Kelli Jewell, Valentina Kravchuk, Berna Lincoln, Stan Lincoln, Patricia Lindsay, Shaun Martin, Janet Mehmel, Shai Mitra, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807), Drew Panko, Dan Parker, Eileen Patrick, Matt Popp, Paul Renken, George Roussey, David Salmon, Meredith Sampson, Deirdre Silberstein, Andy Towle, Robby Towle, Richard Trepp, Bill Van Loan Jr., Bill Wallace, Steve Walter, Jill Yolen, and Joe Zeranski.

Weather: "Quite windy both days. Generally overcast with slight drizzle Sat. AM and clearing mid-day Sun." 6/10- WNW winds 16-36 mph, 54° to 65°F., night: WNW winds 14-30 mph, 53° to 57°F. 6/11- WNW winds 14-29 mph., 54° to 68°F., night: WNW winds 15-30 mph, 50° to 54°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)

Count Dates: June 10 & 11 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 99 species, 8316 individual birds. Thirty-four observers in 17 Ptys censused over 100 PHs. From 1991 through 2005 157 CD species have been documented, with Caspian Tern and Black-throated Blue Warbler new additions this year.

Participants: Gina Alfieri, Tim Antanaitis, Elizabeth Baumbach, Wendy Cane, Paul Cianfaglione, Pam Cooper, Andrew Dasinger, Natasha Domina, Randy Domina, Beth Egan, Peter Egan, Jim Ford, Siva Gopalharayanan, Jay Kaplan, John Karpinski, Len Kendall, Betty Kleiner (5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT 06070; CTWarbler@cs.com), Gil Kleiner, Steve Kotchko, Caroline LeR-

oux, Stephanie Lovell, David Lyons, Patsy Mason, Jamie Meyers, Marianne Piche, Roger Preston, Mary Rudeck, Ann Shapiro, Mark Shapiro, Shirley Smigel, Brian Toal, Judy Whittlesey, Mike Whittlesey, and Alice Anne Wormald.

Weather: 6/10- Rain until about 9 AM, some drizzle until noon, windy PM, NW winds 5-10 mph., 53° to 70°F. 6/11- Mostly sunny; NN/W winds 10-20 mph., 53° to 65°F.,

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 46′ N 72° 40′ W. (Old State House), Elevation: 40 to 640 feet. Area covered: Bloomfield, East Hartford, Farmington (in part), Hartford, Manchester (in part), Newington (in part), Rocky Hill (in part), South Windsor, Wethersfield, and Windsor.

Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count (founded 1994)

Count Dates: June 10 & 11 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 138 species, 17698 individual birds. Forty-three observers in 14 Ptys censused over 212 PHs. Since 1994, 177 CD species have been observed, 175 in the prior ten years.

Participants: Susan Ainsworth, Lorrainne Amalavadge, Bob Barbieri (Kalmia Sanctuary, 183 Laurel Lane, Harwinton, CT 06791), George Boynton, Angela Dimmitt, Bill Donaldson, Helen Donaldson, Mary Donaldson, Curt Edgat, Frank Errico, John Eykelhoff, Cathy Felton, Eileen Finnan, Jeff Greenwood, Nikki Hall, Greg Hanisek, Lukas Hyder, Richard Kania, Joan Lany, Gordon Loery, Deborah Martin, Rich Martin, Patti McCurdy, Muriel McGowan, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Ann Orsillo, Cynthia Phipps, Linda Potter, Andrew Rohrback, Dave Rosgen, Margaret Sellers, Thomas Sellers, Sam Slater, Donna Rose Smith, Dave Tripp Jr., David Wakefield, Terry Weaver, Dawn Wilkes, Dale Winters, Don Woods, David Zomick, and Fran Zygmont.

Weather: "Sunny and hot",

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 10 & 11(Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 114 species, 7034 individual birds, plus one CP species. Twenty-five observers in 15 Ptys spent 109.5 PHs in the field. Since 1991, 204 CD species were confirmed with Black-throated

Blue Warbler added this year.

Participants: Ralph Amodei, Phil Aspereli, Larry Bausher, Steve Broker, Sharon Dillinger, Richard English, Stacy Hanks, Mike Horn, Lynn James, Patrick Leahy, Gary Lemon, Christopher Loscalzo, Steve C. Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524; SMayo@sikorsky.com), Bob Mitchell, Judy Moore, Linda Rediker, Craig Rapacz, Nancy Rosenbaum, Arne Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Maria Stockmal, John Triana, Mariane Vahey, Peter Vitali, and Betty Zuraw.

Weather: 6/10- Cloudy with steady rain (0.4"), clearing PM, day: WN/W winds 6-16 mph, 56° to 67°F.; Night: WN/W winds 12-14 mph., 60°F to 63°F. 6/11- Clear, WN/W winds 9-14 mph., 53° to 73°F. Night: N/W winds 8-10 mph., 65°F to 66°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).

New Milford/Pawling Summer Bird Count (founded 2003)

Count Dates: June 17 & 18(Sat. & Sun., with a NM Dump visit Monday 6/19)

Totals: 124 species, 9486 individual birds. Eighteen observers in eleven Ptys spent 66.5 PHs in the field.

Since 2003, 135 CD species have been noted, including Green-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Northern Bobwhite, Common Nighthawk, Purple Martin, Kentucky Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow, additions this year; 98 have been confirmed nesting.

Participants: Marc Audette, Pat Bailey, Ray Belding, Jackie Bruskin Robert Cartoceti, Angela Dimmitt (PO Box 146, Sherman, Ct. 06784; BaDimmitt@AOL.com), Larry Fischer, Sibyll Gilbert, Anne Kehmna, David, Liedlich, Nancy Liedlich, William Liedlich, Carolyn Longstreth, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Dave Rosgen, Bill Wallace, and Tom Zissu.

Weather: 6/17- Clear at dawn, rain by 10:30, PM clearing to sunny, no wind, 52° to 73°F., 6/18- mostly sunny with light breeze, 72° to 92°F., night 63°F., 6/19- clear, very gentle breeze, SW winds, 70° to 85°F.,

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 32′ N 73° 34′ W (Intersection of routes 68 & 157). Elevation: 30 to 600 feet. Area covered (Connecticut, 1/3 of area): Sherman, New Fairfield, New Milford (west of route 7), and portions of Brookfield & Danbury; and (New York, 2/3 of area) Patterson, Pawling, Putnam Lake,

Carmel, southern Wingdale, and Poughquag.

Storrs Summer Bird Count (founded 1990)

Count Dates: June 17 & 18 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 95 species, 6259 individual birds. Eight observers in six Ptys spent 67.5 PHs in the field. Since 1990, 133 CD species have been counted; 66 are nesters.

Participants: Denise Anamani, Carol Charter, Kathleen Demers, Sue Harrington, Tom Harrington, Steve Morytko, Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268; climbrogers@charter.net), and Roxane Steinman

Weather: 6/17- AM Sunny, mostly cloudy PM with sprinkles (0.1") followed by heavy rain, NW winds 0-15 mph., 56° to 82°F. 6/18- Sunny, hazy, hot, and humid, calm winds, 64° to 84°F.,

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

Woodbury-Roxbury Summer Bird Count (founded 1978)

Count Date: June 4 (Sun.)

Totals: 122 species, 13,946 individual birds. Twenty-nine observers in 16 Ptys spent 148 PHs in the field. Since 1978, 179 CD species have been recorded, while 122 species have nested.

Participants: Lorraine Amalavage, Renee Baade, Dave Babington, Ray Belding, Charles Brody, Pete Brody, Polly Brody, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Larry Fisher, Dave Gropper, Seth Harvey, Anne Kehmna, Carolyn Longstreth, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798), Nancy Nichols, Linda Potter, Allan Root, Dave Rosgen, B. K. Stafford, Peary Stafford, Judith Stevens, Darcy Thurrott, Carol Titus, Terry Weaver, Leigh Wells, Jon Zaneski, Tom Zissu and Francis Zygmont.

Weather: Cloudy AM, Scattered showers, partial clearing PM, 55-75°.

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.

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Red-necked Stint at Milford Point

As I was combing through the peep flock at Milford Point on the afternoon of 16 July 2006, flock after flock of Semipalmated Sandpipers filtered in from the marsh and landed on the sandbars. The cluster of birds had easily built to more than a thousand.

I had only been scouring the flock for about 15 minutes when one peep caught my eye. What attracted my attention was a reddish lower throat bordered below by a brown necklace - it had to be a Red-necked Stint! Having seen several in faded alternate plumage in Australia, I felt confident in the identification just based on throat color and the bird's size. One other feature that

Julian Hough photo

Red-necked Stint, Milford Point, 22 July 2006.
By late July, many adults are in various stages of worn alternate plumage. Typically for this time of year, this individual retained a distinctive brick-red bib and chestnut fringed scapulars, contrasting with plainer wing coverts, which enabled it to be easily located among the large flocks of Semipalmated Sandpipers.(Julian Hough)

was immediately obvious was the bird's short, straight, thin bill. Semipalmated Sandpipers are quite variable in their bill shape, but they average longer-billed than Red-necked Stint with a slightly thicker tip. This feature by itself is not enough to eliminate Semipalmated Sandpiper, but it serves as a useful supporting character. When viewed at close range, a few very thin streaks were visible down the bird's flanks. This appears to be a regular feature of alternate adult Red-necked Stints, yet it is rarely mentioned or depicted in the literature. Everything added up to an exciting conclusion: Red-necked Stint.

Charlie Barnard soon arrived and we continued to study the bird. What followed was a rush to digiscope, take notes and call other birders to alert them to the discovery.

Paul Fusco photo

Figure 1. Red-necked Stint, Milford Point, 22 July 2006.
Note the uniform, red lower throat bordered by a nice necklace of dark streaks that don't intrude into the reddish bib. Also the color extends up onto the lower throat and chin, whereas Little Stints always have a white chin and throat. The short, fine-tipped bill is also a good character for Red-necked, which doesn't show the variation noted in Little Stint.(Julian Hough)

Stint identification can be a difficult process, because the differences between the small calidrids, especially Little Stint, are often very subtle. Careful study is needed to validate such a sighting. Luckily the bird was on the move, which allowed us to view it from several different angles in a short period as it weaved in and out of the maze of Semipalmated Sandpipers. The worn condition of the plumage and uneven arrangement of the upperpart feathers told us that this bird was an adult. In mid-July, this was the expected age, since no juvenile peeps occur in our region until early August. We also noted rufous-edged scapulars, but the wing coverts and tertials were plain brown. This is a key field mark when separating Red-necked Stint from Little Stint. An alternate-plumaged Little Stint would show rufous fringes to the wing coverts and tertials in addition to its scapulars. It should also be noted that although alternate-plum-

Dave Roemer photo

Figure 2. Little Stint, Louisville, Kentucky, 17 August 2006. *This is a rather bright individual given the time of year. Many Little Stints are much more subdued and inconspicuous at this date. The bright white chin and throat are obvious and contrast with the rufous washed breast. Note that, unlike Red-necked Stint, the rufous coloration is not uniform but overlain by the breast streaks. The scapulars and wing coverts are both dark-centered with pale fringes and lack the contrast shown in Red-necked Stint. (Julian Hough)*

aged Western Sandpipers show some rufous in the scapulars, they differ from other peep in that they have longer, slightly decurved bills, a more front-heavy structure, and extensive streaking on the sides and flanks.

When we lost sight of the stint for a few moments, I took time to make a couple phone calls. Later that evening with several birders in attendance, the stint was refound on the larger, eastern sandbar and observed until dusk. The stint remained reliable until the final sighting on July 23. It was seen by people from as far away as Florida, Michigan and Maine. It even attracted the attention of the local media in the form of newspaper articles and television news stories.

Nick Bonomo, 77 Grannis Road, Orange, CT 06477

Julian Hough, on behalf of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, writes, "This adult Red-necked Stint, in fading alternate plumage, would constitute the third accepted record for the state. (It has not yet been officially reviewed by ARCC). The two previous records, also from Milford Point, were on 29 July and 3 August 2000. Plumage differences suggested two different birds were involved in those sightings. Unlike the previous individuals, the 2006 bird was a long-stayer and predictable in its appearance on the rising and falling tides. It often performed at close range for the appreciative crowds. This was a great find for Nick Bonomo, one of our state's sharpest young birders, and a just reward for his many hours in the field.

Red-necked Stints breed in Arctic Siberia and are rare, but almost annual, along the eastern Atlantic seaboard. This individual fits into the general pattern of this species' appearance in the Northeast, occurring in

mid-late July with flocks of southbound Semipalmated Sandpipers. The month of July (particularly the last two weeks) is the best time to look for both Red-necked and the rarer Little Stint in Connecticut. Any sharp-eyed observer would do well to concentrate their efforts during the latter two weeks at places such as Sandy Point in West Haven and Milford Point, which regularly hold good numbers of peeps.

The identification of Red-necked Stint and Little Stint can be difficult, but given reasonable views, a correct identification should be straightforward. This is assuming of course that Sanderling has first been eliminated. This is a very real pitfall for the unwary. They are similarly bright brick red on the head and throat and can often startle even the most experienced birder when searching through large flocks of peeps. Sanderlings are much larger and bulkier by comparison, so a careful assessment of size is a key starting point when identifying any putative stint. Close views of a Sanderling will also reveal the diagnostic absence of a hind-toe – a feature unique among sandpipers.

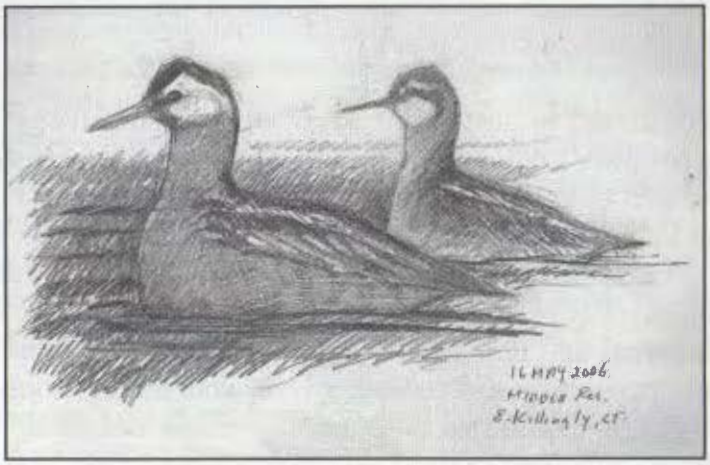
Compared to Little Stint, Red-necked Stints are generally brighter brick-red on the lower throat and breast, bordered below with a fine necklace of dark chevrons/streaks. The key feature is that the brick-red color of the throat is uniform and not overlain by streaks as in Little Stint (see Fig.2). Careful study of shape and structure will reveal that Red-necked Stints have shorter, more fine- tipped bills and comparatively shorter legs than Little Stint. Combined with an attenuated 'rear end,' it gives them a long-bodied and rather flat-backed look (see Fig 1).

Finally, this bird showed a feature I find useful when identifying Red-necked Stints, and one not often stressed in the literature. They have long central tail feathers that project noticeably beyond the wingtip at rest".

Julian Hough, 80 Sea Street, New Haven, CT 06519

Overview of Spring Red and Red-Necked Phalaropes

Many of us will remember unusually rainy and raw conditions during mid-May 2006 that resulted in widespread and severe flooding. Even so, our experience paled in comparison to the pounding that eastern New England took. In the shoreline corridor from Boston north to Portland, Maine, a four-day nor'easter dropped between 7 and 15 inches of rain at its peak, representing the second largest four-day rainfall there in recorded history, spanning some 125 years. Heavy rainfalls were the case in Connecticut as well, with 5 to 8 inches typi-



Field sketch by Mark Szantyr
Red and Red-necked Phalaropes on Middle Reservoir, Killingly, 16 May 2006

Julian Hough photo

Red Phalarope in Hamden, 13 May 2006.

cally reported, especially in northern and eastern sections of the state.

Steady northeast winds off the ocean accompanied this deluge and produced significant fallouts of Red and Red-necked Phalaropes along the storm track, as northbound birds migrating along their usual pelagic paths were pushed westward. While the record shows that spring sightings of these two pelagic phalaropes occur on an annual basis, albeit sporadically, in coastal Massachusetts, especially on Cape Cod and the outer islands

Steve Ballentine photo

Red Phalarope in Canton, 16 May 2006.

(Veit and Peterson), the occurrence of both in Connecticut is far thinner at any season, especially during spring (Zeranski and Baptist). In fact, no Red Phalaropes and only two Red-necked Phalaropes were reliably reported from the state in spring from 1982 through 2005 (Connecticut RBA reports, Connecticut Warbler field notes). The Red-neckeds were on 19 May 1999 in New Canaan and 18-19 May 2000 in Morris.

Against that backdrop, the three Red Phalaropes reported from the state in mid-May represent an intriguing number. The first was found in Hamden on May 13. The other two were discovered in Canton and Killingly on the rainy morning of May 16, the Killingly bird in the company of a Red-necked Phalarope (See Spring Field Notes in this issue). These occurrences coincide well with remarkable numbers of both species that rain-soaked birders to our east experienced and fall perfectly into the four-day window that represented the peak of the storm.

In Massachusetts, birders noted both species in excellent numbers from traditional coastal locations from Cape Cod to Cape Ann, but there were also a number of reports from inland locations. Most of these were east of Worcester, in locations such as the Merrimack River in Haverhill and several oft-birded reservoirs there. More Red-necks than Reds were noted, mostly due to one report of 85 Red-necks from Haverhill, but otherwise the numbers were fairly similar and totaled about two dozen individuals for each species on or about the peak of May 14. A few individuals were noted north of there in inland New Hampshire, mostly on May 15.

While the storm's effects were significant in Connecticut, it's clear that we were on the fringes of an

event that was focused to our north and east. Yet, the phalaropes that did occur here were of keen interest to local birders seeking to add them to their state or life lists, which in itself is a measure of how seldom seen they are in the state. Both the Hamden and Canton birds were enjoyed by numerous birders during their brief stays.

Brevity was one common factor of phalarope sightings everywhere along the storm track. None of the Connecticut birds remained for longer than a day, and from the reports I've reviewed, that was the case in all but possibly one of the inland New Hampshire birds. (Coastal reports from eastern New England are more difficult to quantify due to the more transitory nature of birds there). Despite continued wet weather, the Hamden bird was a one-day wonder, as were most of the inland birds from eastern New England on the following day. The three birds noted from Connecticut on May 16 should not have been expected to remain, since a strong front from the south pushed through the state late that afternoon, and they didn't. A Red-necked Phalarope photographed in Deerfield, Mass., was a latecomer on May 18, by which time the weather had turned more spring-like and the phenomenon was mostly complete.

As noted above, Red and Red-necked Phalaropes are seldom found in Connecticut in spring. Historical records show 70 Red Phalaropes at Stonington on 9 May 9 1962, and a staggering 500 to 1,000 Red-necked Phalaropes from East Haddam on 3 May 1929 (Zeranski and Baptist). For the latter report, the literature suggests a possible connection to a major spring storm that occurred on April 16, but given the quickly transitory nature of all the birds reported from New England during spring 2006, and the apparent lack of reports between

the storm and that report, I would not draw that same conclusion. Despite the obvious connection between the weather and the relative abundance of phalaropes in New England during 2006, I also would not claim that these species occur in Connecticut only after extreme nor'easters; the Morris and New Canaan Red-neckeds were not the result of such storms nor were large numbers of either species reported regionally at those times. Both birds were found in the aftermath of violent thunderstorms from other directions (Arnold Devine, Frank Gallo, personal comments) that logically would have impeded their northbound journeys. The Morris bird, it should be noted, remained on the small pond there for a second day in continued foul weather, but all others were only present for a single day.

While a sample size of six birds in 20-plus years is not huge, the common denominator is that each occurrence featured a storm-driven component, whether it be a nor'easter or a spring thunderstorm. When the skies turn gray and winds shift off the Atlantic for an extended period in springs to come, or when other violent storms rumble through, who knows where or when the next pelagic phalarope might find temporary respite on its northbound journey? In 2006, a flooded farm field in Canton did the trick. In Hamden and Killingly, larger bodies of water played host. Where might the next one appear?

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BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

UNEARTHING THE DRAGON. The Great Feathered Dinosaur Discovery. Mark Norell 2005.254 pg.+ numerous illustrations by Mick Ellison. Pi Press, New York, NY.

Easily one of the most exciting fossil finds of the later 1990s are the Jehol beds near Beipiao in Liaoning, China. The beds date from the early Cretaceous and contain extraordinarily well-preserved plant and animal material. For anyone interested in the origin of birds, the finds are monumental. Among the abundance of specimens are dinosaurs with feathers. Not 'feather-like" structures or "protofeathers", but feathers; albeit in some cases structures that are quite primitive compared with the diversity of feathers on modern birds. The material represents the first paleontological evidence for the evolutionary history of feathers. Yes, the older (later Jurassic) Archaeopteryx, often called the first bird, displayed feathers identifiable as contour or flight feathers, which are complex structures of a more derived nature and diverse functions. The body cover structures on Sinosauopteryx are simple, tubular, filamentous feathers.

The Liaoning specimens facilitated placing modern bird origins in dromaeosaurian dinosaurs and provided important clues to the origin of feathers. Mark Norell was deeply involved in much of this work and writes here of the excitement, implications and controversy of it all. The book is lavishly illustrated with both photographs and drawings by Mick Ellison (also at the American Museum of Natural History) of fish, frog, flower, leaf, spider and crayfish fossils from the beds. Much of the

text revolves around the traditional definition of birds as vertebrates with feathers: All birds have feathers and only birds have feathers. Furthermore, the received knowledge was that feathers had somehow evolved from reptilian scales. Well, work in the 1980s demonstrated that the scale-to-feather scenario is just not the case, but that at the genomic and molecular levels feathers were an evolutionary novelty. While there was a detailed understanding of the development of feathers during individual growth, there was no direct fossil evidence for the evolution over evolutionary time. China's Feathered Dinosaurs has changed all this.

Norell, a paleontologist, writes about the fossils and their setting. He describes life in the field, in the laboratory, and in the somewhat tortuous intellectual milieu of their interpretation. Information on the existence of feathered dinosaurs first came to the attention of western science in bits and pieces. Few doubted the importance of the findings, but they were mired deeply in internal politics. Authentication and attribution was intertwined with institutional reputation and personalities. Norell writes, "Science is not always a genteel world of polite discourse," and it actually holds regardless of which hemisphere one refers to! The excitement of these discoveries meant re-evaluating many dearly held beliefs regarding the origins of both birds and feathers. Norell was a major player in the processes who mixes the paleontology well with observations on the personalities involved, and the social and scientific interactions with various Chinese institutions. The story is a dramatic one. The findings have reshaped thinking on the origins of birds and the evolution of feathers. It is fascinating science and an extremely good read.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring, March 1 to May 31, 2006
By Greg Hanisek

Following recent trends, the season produced a number of early records, including an extraordinarily precocious Indigo Bunting in late March. The most significant weather event was a prolonged nor'easter in mid-May. See details in this column and in a separate article by Jamie Meyers on its delivery of pelagic phalaropes to the delight of many birders. The storm also stalled passerine migration, resulting in some good flights late in the month. These included 18 species of warblers in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme on May 20 and 18 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison on May 24. A nice array of rare and scarce species added some spice to the mix.

The following are first arrival dates for some regularly occurring migrants:

Blue-winged Teal: March 6 in Milford (KE); Great Egret: March 23 in Westport (FMa); Snowy Egret: March 29 in Stratford (ACu); Little Blue Heron: March 12 in Madison (JL); Broad-winged Hawk: April 2 in Stamford (ACo); Piping Plover: March 16 in Milford (S&CS); Willet: April 21 in Darien (JMh); Least Sandpiper: April 25 in Madison (JR); Common Nighthawk: May 17 in Manchester (TA) and Windsor (JWo); Chimney Swift: April 25 in New Milford (ADi); Ruby-throated Hummingbird: April 16 in Stonington (CA); Eastern Kingbird: April 29 in Bloomfield (J&LC); Purple Martin: April 8 in Madison (CR); Tree Swallow: Kent, Deep River, South Windsor on March 11 (m.ob.); Northern Rough-winged Swallow: April 1 in Thomaston (JMe);

House Wren: April 15 in Canton (JK); Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher: April 12 in East Granby (JWo); Wood Thrush: April 18 in Hamden (BB); Blue-winged Warbler: April 26 in Hamden (JZ); Northern Parula: April 25 in Southbury (PCo); Yellow Warbler: April 25 in New Haven (BB); Black-throated Green Warbler: April 15 in New Hartford (PCa); Pine Warbler: March 27 in Hartford (SO); Palm Warbler: April 5 in Greenwich (MSa); Prairie Warbler: April 25 in Meriden (RSl); Black-and-White Warbler: April 14 in East Lyme (JR); Ovenbird: April 25 in New Haven (BB); Northern Waterthrush: April 25 in New Haven (BB); Louisiana Waterthrush: April 5 in Greenwich (MSa); Common Yellowthroat: April 29 in New Haven (KFs); Scarlet Tanager: April 19 in Wallingford (MMo); Rose-breasted Grosbeak: April 22 in Voluntown (JLu); Indigo Bunting: April 25 in Darien (JMh); Eastern Meadowlark: March 14 in East Granby (JWo); Chipping Sparrow: April 1 in Litchfield (DRo); Seaside Sparrow: April 26 in Stonington (EK).

Waterfowl

Four **Greater White-Fronted Geese** for the season included one on the Connecticut River at Suffield on March 2 (JWo); one in Durham March 20-25 (JMa et al.) and two at North Farms Reservoir, Wallingford, on March 28-29 (JMa et al.). Two **Cackling Geese** were seen and heard calling March 6 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PCi). A **Barnacle Goose** joined Canada Goose flocks at Southbury Training School March 15-28 (CH, NC). Brant numbers built to 1,000 at Sandy Point, West Haven, on April 8 (MSt). A flock of 25 made an unexpected inland stop at Colebrook Reservoir on April 10 (PCa). A swan, believed to be a **Trumpeter Swan**, was

seen briefly at Beardsley Park, Bridgeport (DV). To date individuals of this species whose origins have been determined have proven to be escapes.

An American Wigeon was late May 7 in Cromwell (LN). In addition to locations reported in the winter, a **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Middle Beach, Madison, on March 6 (BD). High counts for dabbling ducks included 20+ Northern Pintails March 17-20 at Station 43, South Windsor, (CEk, TA) and 10 Blue-winged Teal at Cemetery Pond, Litchfield, on March 10 (DRo). A good season for Northern Shoveler produced reports of at least 40, with a high count of 14 on March 11 at Merwin Point, Milford (NB). One was still present May 28 at Birdcraft Museum in Fairfield (MDi). Two **Eurasian Teal** for the season consisted of one to at least April 1 at Milford Point (KE) and one at Stratford Great Meadows April 12 (ACu). A hybrid Eurasian X Green-winged Teal was at Milford Point March 11 (NB et al.). Two Redheads were at Bantam Lake, Litchfield, on March 9 (MDo) and a female was on a pond in North Canaan March 23 (PCa). Fourteen Lesser Scaup were at Bantam Lake March 21 (DRo). An adult male **Common Eider** appeared March 4 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, hereafter HBSP (GNi), and one was reported there again on May 20 (GP). Two **Barrow's Goldeneyes** for the season were females March 8 at HBSP (NB) and March 12-15 at Shippan Point, Stamford (PDu, MMc). Two Red-breasted Mergansers were inland at Batterson Pond, Farmington, on April 8 (PCi).

Grouse through Raptors

Amid concerns about the species' decline, it was good to receive about 10 reports of Ruffed Grouse from around the state. A Pied-billed Grebe appeared territorial in late May at Wimisink Marsh

in Sherman (ADi). Five Horned Grebes dropped in at Batterson Pond on April 24 (PCi). A Red-necked Grebe was on Bristol Reservoir No. 7 in Bristol on March 5 (BD), and two were at Bantam Lake March 25 (MDo). Five Northern Gannets March 14 off Stratford were the first reported for the season (FMa). Single American Bitterns were reported on April 18 at both Fairchild Gardens in Greenwich (TG) and in Wimisink Marsh in Sherman, where it later became apparent that a pair was present (HB, ADi). Others were at Cemetery Pond in Litchfield on April 20 (JMr), at Milford Point on May 13 (FMa), in Waterford on May 14 (CEl) and at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport on May 18 (MDi). A Least Bittern was in the Quinnipiac River Marshes in North Haven on May 28 (FMa). Seven Great Blue Herons were back on nests March 17 in Kent (ADi). Single Cattle Egrets included one that frequented the lawns at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport May 11-21 (PSo et al.), one at HBSP on May 14 (F&TH) and one on May 20 at Beardsley Park, Bridgeport (FG). An early Glossy Ibis appeared March 16 at a skating pond in Durham (JWa et al.). Yellow-crowned Night Herons nested again in Mystic, the eastern-most site in the state (GW).

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** flew over Deep River on April 28 (JWi). This is the site where one put in an extended stay last spring, but we got just the more typical quick flyby this time. An April 18 flight in New Hartford produced 120 Broad-winged Hawks (PCa), and 100+ were at Rabbit Hill in Warren on April 21 (RB, NC). Rough-legged Hawks were reported March 3 in Wallingford (NM), March 5 Essex (JHi) and March 26 in East Granby (JWo). A Golden Eagle was over Durham on March 8 (JWa) and two were seen on the Connecticut Audubon

eagle cruise March 18 at Deep River and Hamburg Cove (KE). One passed Peak Mountain in East Granby on March 28 (JWo). A pair of American Kestrels was observed copulating in Bridgeport on March 30 (DV) and one was seen carrying food on May 20 in Stratford (FG). At least 12 were staging during migration April 10 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (RT).

Rails through Shorebirds

Perhaps the season's most intriguing report was of a **Black Rail** seen briefly on April 11 at HBSP (LG, GL). The details provided were indicative of this species. The date is earlier than expected based on our small number of records, but this secretive species' migration schedule in Connecticut is poorly known. A Clapper Rail that may have wintered was near a feeding station at Milford Point Coastal Center March 1-3 (KE). The boardwalk at White Memorial's Little Pond in Litchfield yielded 14 Virginia Rails on April 20 (DRo). An unusual flurry of **Common Moorhens** included one present at Cemetery Pond, Litchfield, April 17-28 with a second seen on April 26 (DRo, BD.); one in Goshen on May 5 (MSz); and one in Hamden May 13 (FMc). An American Coot lingered late into the season May 27 at Lords Cove in Lyme (HG). Six **Sandhill Cranes** (four adults and two juveniles) were first noted March 18-25 in North Canaan and adjacent New Marlborough, Mass. (WJ et al.). On March 26-27 and on April 4 the two young birds were present. This is the same place where two were seen last summer and fall. Also, two were seen overhead on May 17 in New Haven (CD)

Two Semipalmated Plovers were inland May 23 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DRo). A **Black-necked Stilt** made a quick-hit

Mark Szantyr photo

This Common Moorhen on May 5 in a marsh in Goshen was one of four for the season, an unusually high number by recent standards.

appearance on May 13 at Longshore Country Club in Westport (FMa et al.). A farm pond in Ellington held nine Solitary Sandpipers on May 8 (CEk). Two Upland Sandpipers were new arrivals April 10 at Bradley International Airport (RT). Milford Point attracted three Whimbrels on May 19 (KE), and two were at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport the same day (FMa). The first White-rumped Sandpiper was at HBSP on May 7 (FN), and the only Stilt Sandpiper was there on May 24 (GNi). The first of just a few Pectoral Sandpipers was at HBSP on April 3 (GH, NC). In addition to many double figure counts at various locations, 100+ Wilson's Snipe were noted April 8 at Durham Fairgrounds (SHa). One was struck by a car March 3 in Middletown and brought into rehab (JA). A good concentration of c. 20 American Woodcock was in fields at Haley Farm, Groton, on March 11 (GW). As part of a northeastern "wreck," Connecticut enjoyed single

Red Phalaropes on May 13 in Hamden (FMc et al.) and May 16 in both Canton (JMe et al.) and at Middle Reservoir in Killingly (MSz). The bird in Killingly was accompanied by a **Red-necked Phalarope** (MSz). It had been 15 years since we'd had a Red reported in the state at any season.

Gulls through Thrushes

No Little Gulls were reported. Seven **Black-headed Gulls** for the season included an unusual group of four on April 3 at Old Saybrook (JO). Others were singles March 1 at Wethersfield Cove (EH), March 22 in Old Saybrook (PCa) and April 10 at Seaside Park, Bridgeport (GH, NC). A Glaucous Gull was in West Haven April 8-14 (JHo et al.). Two Caspian Terns visited Sandy Point in West Haven May 14 (JBr). The only **Royal Tern** was at Milford Point on May 16 (KE). A Black Tern was at Sandy Point on May 28 along with 20+ Black Skimmers (L&MA).

The first Yellow-billed Cuckoo appeared May 4 in Darien (CBo), and

Roy Harvey photo
This Black-necked Stilt made a brief appearance on May 13 in Westport. This is the third record in the past four years.

more than 30 reports were received thereafter. There were more than 20 reports of Black-billed Cuckoo. Barn Owl seems to hanging on by a thread, with one known to be in a building roost in Bridgeport this spring (DV). A Snowy Owl was still at Milford Point March 6 (NB). Two Short-eared Owls were at Stratford Point March 6 (NB). The high count for Common Nighthawk was 165 on May 27 at White Memorial (DRo). The season's first Whip-poor-will was calling April 15 in Ellington (DH). Other reports came from Cornwall, New Hartford, East Granby, Southington, Portland, Killingworth, Wolcott and Lyme, which shows them to be well-distributed across the state. A **Chuck will's-widow** was present from May 20 through the end of the period in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme (GW et al.). This is the same place where one made an extended stay last spring. The only Red-headed Woodpecker report was of an adult on May 6-7 at Elizabeth Park, West Hartford, a place where the species has made prolonged stays in the past (MSd).

Nine Olive-sided Flycatchers were reported, with the first two on May 24 in Southbury (CL) and Redding (LTi). An Eastern Wood Pewee was early on May 8 in Windsor Locks (PDe). Seven reports of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher ranged from May 23 through the end of the period, including two on May 25 in West Hartford (TA et al.). Alder Flycatcher, usually the last of the regular breeders to arrive on territory, showed up May 25 at White Memorial (DRo) and in East Windsor (JMe). One Northern Shrike for the season was at Allens Meadow in Wilton on March 8-12 (LTi et al.). A Barn Swallow on March 16 in Essex was early (JR). An unusual concentration of 1,000 Tree Swallows, normally an early-migrating species,

was on Bantam Lake on the late date of May 18, just after the nor'easter (DRo). A pair of Carolina Wrens began nest-building March 14 in Sherman (ADi). Swainson's Thrushes were widely reported May 13-14 (m.ob.). The only Gray-cheeked (type) Thrush reported was in Stratford on May 16 (FMa). A **Varied Thrush** visited feeders at a home in New Hartford from March 1 to April 1 (PA).

Warblers through Finches

A Golden-winged Warbler was in West Hartford May 25 (PCi). Single Lawrence's Warblers were in Norwich on May 6 (DP), at Veterans Park in Bridgeport on May 17-21 (NB, JBa) and in Avon on May 20 (PCa). Single Brewster's Warblers were at Greenwich Point on May 7 (BO) and in West Hartford on May 15 (PCi), with two at the latter location on May 27 (ER). The only Cape May Warbler reports

Mark Szantyr photo

This Varied Thrush visited a feeder in New Hartford from March 1 to April 1.

came from East Rock Park in New Haven on May 15 (ER), Veterans Park in Bridgeport on May 13 (NB) and West Hartland on May 25 (PCa). Migrant **Yellow-throated Warblers** were at East Rock on May 5 (DS) and in Mystic on May 27 (GW). The bird that wintered at East Haven lingered into early April (MDr).

Single **Prothonotary Warblers** were in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme, a regular location, on May 7 (DW) and at Newgate Wildlife Management Area in East Granby on May 8 (JWo). A Kentucky Warbler sang in Nehantic on May 8 (DP), and singles were in Manchester May 16 (TA) and at HBSP May 24 (GNi). One discovered May 20 at Penfield State Park in Bloomfield (MDi et al.) remained deep into the summer. Observers reported nine Mourning Warblers from May 20 through the end of the season. A Canada Warbler was a bit early April 25 in West Hartford (RSl). A Yellow-breasted Chat was territorial in Nehantic State Forest from May 18 on (AG et al.), and a migrant appeared at Greenwich Point on May 27 (MSa).

The season's only **Summer Tanager** excited observers May 8-10 in Wilton (LTi et al.) A remarkable record of a male Indigo Bunting molting into alternate plumage, from March 24-30 in Old Lyme, is about a month and a half early but is supported by photographs (DJ). The season's first two Vesper Sparrows were at White Memorial in Litchfield on April 15 (DRo) with two at Allens Meadow in Wilton the following day (LTi). The Grasshopper Sparrow that wintered at Greenwich Point remained until at least March 24 (BO et al.). The species is hanging on around heavy commercial development in Mansfield, where one shared a field on Pleasant Valley Road with a shopping cart May 14 (TA). The season produced two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds,**

a male March 8 in Somers (JC) and a female April 28 to May 2 in Windsor (JWo). The largest group of Eastern Meadowlarks was seven on March 26 in East Granby (JWo). A rails-to-trails area in East Granby held 40+ Rusty Blackbirds on April 1 (PCi). Orchard Orioles staged a widespread arrival on April 27, when three were seen in Darien (JMh) and singles were in Greenwich (BO) and two locations in New Haven (DB, MSt). The wintering White-winged Crossbill was seen to at least March 5 at Sherwood Island (JBr). A few Common Redpolls lingered into early March. Pine Siskins lingered much longer, with two on May 13 in Goshen (KFi) and one in West Hartland on May 18 (PCa). An Evening Grosbeak visited a yard in Barkhamsted on April

Diana Johnson photo

This molting male Indigo Bunting was very early March 24 in Old Lyme.

9 (FZ) and two were at feeders in Sherman until at least April 26 (HB).

OBSERVERS: Sharon Abner, Eric Adam, Lee Aimesbury, Marion Aimesbury, Jayne Amico, Peter Anderhegger, Carol Ansel, Tim Antanaitis, Renee Baade, James Bair (JBa), Bill Banks, Charlie Barnard (CBa), John Barriger (JBr), Dan Barvir, Fred Baumgarten, Nick Bonomo, Chris Bosak (CBo), Hunter Brawley, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), John Clancy, Linda Clancy, Al Collins (ACo), Jan Collins, Patrick Comins (PCo), Annette Cunniffe (ACu), Neil Currie, ML Dahl (MDl), Chris Dalton, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Frances D'Amico, Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine, Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Mike Doyle (MDo), Melody Drinan (MDr), Patrick Dugan (PDu), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan (KFi), Tom Fiore, Karen Fiske (KFs), Jim Ford, Sam Fried, Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Shari Gaurino, Val Gaurino, Hank Golet, Ted Gilman, Andrew Griswold, Lorraine Gunderson, Don Haight, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris, Chris Harrison, Roy Harvey, Seth Harvey (SHr), Simon Harvey, John Himmelman (JHi), Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway, Julian Hough (JHo), Jalna, Jaeger, Wayne Jenkins, Diana Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Erin King, Cindi Kobak, Steve Kotchko, David Lawton, George Lemieux, Jim Link (JLi), Carolyn Longstreth, Joanne Lupi (JLlu), Frank Mantlik (FMa), John Marshall (JMr), John Maynard (JMa), Flo McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Mike Moccio (MMc), Marty Moore (MMo); Nancy Morand, Gretchen Nareff (GNa), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol (GNi), Larry Nichols, Fred Norton, John Ogren, Scott Olmstead, Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier, Giles Pettifor, Beverly Propen, Dave Provencher, Charlie Rafford, E.J. Raynor, James Restivo, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Libby Ross, Dean Rupp (DRu), Michael Sadlon (MSd), Meredith Sampson (MSa), Ryan Sayers (RSa), Tom Sayers, Will Schultz (WSc), Mark Scott (MSc), Arthur Shippee, Susan Shrader (SSh), Robert Slabinski (RSl), Penny Solum (PSo), Dori Sosensky, Charla Spector, Steve Spector (SSp), Peary Stafford (PSt), Jerry Stage, Bob Stanowski, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Will Storz (WSt), Jack Swatt, Mark Szantyr (MSz), Rollin Tebbetts, Luke Tiller (LTi), Diane Tucker, Louise Tucker (LTu), Dennis Varza, Linda Vegliante, John Wagenblatt (JWa), Kristine Wallstrom, John Wilder (JWi), Danny Williams, Glenn

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

It's late October and sparrows abound. Driving along the road at a coastal state park, you notice a small bird feeding unobtrusively on the grass verge with a flock of Horned Larks. The subdued coloration, small sparrow-like bill and lightly marked head and upper parts leave you a little perplexed as to its identity.

The only sparrow species likely to be feeding out in such open grassy areas would be Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow and maybe one of the Ammodramus sparrows, such as Grasshopper Sparrow. In the latter group the head is brightly marked. The upper parts are bright and fringed white, giving the back a scaly look. That doesn't fit with our bird.

Savannah Sparrows, while variable, show finely streaked crowns and upper parts. The crown sides immediately above the pale supercilium are dark brown and contrast with a pale median crown stripe, particularly visible when they habitually raise their crown

feathers. So Savannah is out based on head pattern.

Vesper Sparrows are rather large, long-tailed sparrows with prominent white outer-tail feathers, a small pink bill (similar to our mystery bird) but have a conspicuous white eye-ring - their most noticeable and eye-catching feature. The lack of this feature on our bird instantly rules out Vesper Sparrow.

The bird's behavior is also not typically sparrow-like. It shuffles along in the grass, keeping low and horizontal, and has rather furtive movements, much like the accompanying larks. It suddenly dawns on you that the bird is not a sparrow at all, but probably a longspur... but what species??

In Connecticut, three species of longspur have been recorded. Lapland Longspur is a scarce, but regular winter visitor primarily to coastal areas. Two other species from the West, Chestnut-collared Longspur (three times) and Smith's Longspur (twice), have also been recorded as vagrants. Since there are also several records of these species from surrounding states, we need to consider all three species.

In fall or non-breeding plumage, all longspurs are superficially similar. They are rather long-bodied, relatively long-tailed, show prominent, pipit-like white, outer tail feathers and have a small, conical, pale bill.

The key to separating longspurs lies in the subtle differences in head pattern, overall ground color and the length and spacing of the primary tips. Both Smith's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs in fall are drab and sparrow-like. Smith's generally are uniform-buff toned underneath (including the vent) and have whitish throats

and submoustachial stripes and often a noticeable pale eye-ring. There is a fine necklace of streaks across the breast, and together with the pale plumage it may suggest American Pipit. Chestnut-collared is similar but has slightly more blurry streaks on the breast and, unlike Smith's, has a buffy colored throat and submoustachial stripes and a whitish vent. The primary projection past the tertials is rather short compared with either Smith's or Lapland Longspur.

Lapland Longspur is more dull overall, with olive-buff tones to the head an upper parts and heavier, irregular black streaks on the breast and flanks. The dark, blackish-brown wing feathers with narrow pale fringes create a relatively dark look and one which doesn't gel with the buffy appearance we should expect if the bird was a Smith's.

Referring to our bird, Smith's Longspur can be eliminated on overall plumage color and head pattern – no pale submoustacjial stripes, no pale eye ring and blackish streaks on the flanks (barely visible in the photo). Similarly, Chestnut-collared can be eliminated by the same features, and by the fact that the bird has a very long primary projection, a feature of Lapland Longspur.

In combination with what we can see of the bird's head pattern and the long wings, we can safely identify at as a Lapland Longspur. Other typical features of Lapland Longspur are the two dark triangles framing the ear coverts on an otherwise rather plain-looking head. As a result, they often look "beady-eyed." One of the best features to concentrate on is the center of the greater coverts, that is the area sandwiched between the two narrow white wingbars. On Lapland, these feather centers are rust or chestnut-colored and stand out as a

richer-colored panel on the closed wing. The tertials are also often warmer fringed than either Smith's or Chestnut-collared.

By elimination, the bird is a Lapland Longspur, the expected species, but it pays to be mindful of the two vagrant longspurs, especially if you come across one that looks pale, streaky and buffy!

I photographed this individual at Hammonasset State Park in October 2005.

Photo Challenge #55

Color In The Warbler

Our ability to use color in recent issues of the magazine has been aided greatly by generous donations from Richard English, Ryan Sayers and Bruce Finnan. Their support is appreciated.

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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