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ABOUT OUR COVER

Purple Gallinule

by Mark Szantyr

A Purple Gallinule that visited a backyard pond in Stratford proved to be one of 2007's most popular rarities. It posed for many photographs, as well as for this issue's attractive cover artwork by Mark Szantyr..

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF THE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF CONNECTICUT

By Jay Kaplan and Greg Hanisek

In the Twelfth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (see July 2006 Vol. 26 No. 3 of The Connecticut Warbler), it was hoped that the committee's 13th report would appear in the not too distant future. This article is a culmination of these good wishes, adding an additional six species to the Connecticut State Checklist. These species are Ross's Goose, Little Stint, Common Ground Dove, Calliope Hummingbird, Brown-chested Martin and Lazuli Bunting.

Two of these records were accepted by the Committee on the basis of one-observer sightings. In both instances the reports were meticulous in every detail and complete with excellent illustrations. It might be pertinent to explain that reports, voted upon solely by ARCC Committee members, can also be circulated to experts in various ornithological disciplines. Species reports may require testimony from individuals who are able to shed some light on an individual bird found far from home here in Connecticut. The Committee may ask for opinions from veterinarians concerning the health of a bird; from aviculturists who may maintain certain species in captivity; or from other experts in various ornithological-related fields. In the instance of the Brown-chested Martin, the report was sent not only to experts on swallow identification, but also to authorities on tropical American avifauna. Information from outside authorities assists the Committee with the evaluation of reports. Current members 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 Jr.

Over time, Committee members have received numerous inquiries about the voting procedures. It might be useful to

review these procedures, discussed in detail in the ARCC Bylaws. A recent bylaw revision was accepted by the Connecticut Ornithological Association's Board of Directors at its June 2007 meeting. Each member of the Committee must vote on all records, even those that he/she may have submitted. Abstentions are not permitted. Committee members do not discuss records among themselves until after a first voting round. This prevents members from developing any prejudice one way or another toward a record prior to the initial vote. If a record receives more than one vote of "not accepted" on the first circulation, this record is not accepted, although it may be submitted for recirculation. Up to three votes may be taken on an individual record. Five or more "not accepted" votes means that the record is officially not accepted and will not be resubmitted for another round of voting. If on a third round of voting, a record continues to receive more than one negative vote, the record is then officially "not accepted." If, at some future time, an ARCC member believes that new information may have some bearing on a record that has already been decided, that member may request that the record be re-opened for additional discussion. This can occur even for records decided upon many years ago.

While the question of identification is generally straightforward, the question of origin may be more difficult to quantify. Records may be accepted with a question about the bird's origin or may be rejected if it seems more likely that a bird is not of wild origin. For example, waterfowl with non-USFWS bands are generally considered to be escapes from captivity and would be likely rejected on the basis of origin. Readers may note that there are species in the most recent round of voting for which the origin question has not been firmly settled, and these birds will appear for another round of voting at a future ARCC meeting.

Finally, a few comments concerning digital photography are warranted.

Its advent and subsequent improvements to cameras have made it much easier to acquire photographic documentation of rare and unexpected birds. This may have led to an increase in the number of reports received by the Committee over the past year. Although the Committee has recently accepted photo reports with very basic documentation concerning a sighting, full reports with as much detail as is possible are encouraged. This information will provide a broader picture of the circumstances of the sighting including names of additional observers, conditions under which the bird was seen, vocalizations, habits, and other notations concerning the bird's behavior, as well as anything else that may help put the sighting into a larger perspective. This will allow future birders and ornithologists to develop a more complete picture of what may be a developing trend. Please remember that the records of the Committee will serve as a historical record for future amateurs and professionals. We owe it to those who follow us to provide a complete picture of Connecticut's birds.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

The state list now stands at 420 with at least one addition pending. The Committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List (they 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 on 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. After deleting 14 species in the 12th Report, the committee left the list intact this time.

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) preceding the observers 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

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) Two were on the Connecticut River at Enfield from 4-12 Feb 2006 (06-30 Rollin Tebbetts*‡) The birds were with a large gathering of Canada Geese and were seen by many observers. This species was added to the state list based on research as to the likely origin of a single bird in Mansfield in 1998. In keeping with a subsequent ARCC policy decision, the Enfield birds were accepted based on identification only. For birds already on the state list, origin questions will only be considered if concrete evidence exists either for or against natural occurrence.

ROSS'S GOOSE (*Chen rossii*) One was found on 22 Sep 2003 at Caswell Cove in Milford (06-05 Nita Hamilton*, James Bair, Mark Szantyr‡, Frank Mantlik‡). The bird, present through 28 Sep, was clearly identified correctly, but the committee held the record through two rounds of voting while considering questions of origin. At the time of the sighting, the date was somewhat early, and most Ross's Goose records from the Northeast occurred with large flocks of Snow Geese. In the intervening years leading up to the record cited below, the committee noted an increase in eastern sightings and found precedent for both the early date and the occurrence with Canada Geese. This becomes the first state record.

One was found 11 Dec 2006 at Bradley Point, West Haven, with a small flock of Canada Geese and then relocated with a

similar flock 16-29 Dec 2006 in Westport (06-42 E.J. Raynor*, Luke Tiller, Penny Solum, Charles Barnard, AJ Hand‡ Russ Naylor). A fully illustrated account appears in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No 2.

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) One was found and seen by many observers off the Silver Sands section of Old Lyme on the Old Lyme-Old Saybrook CBC on 31 Dec 2006 (06-47 Danny Williams*, Andy Griswold‡, Greg Hanisek). The bird, seen briefly the next day, was the state's first since 1973. The original observer, 15 years old at the time, provided a detailed report that separated the bird from the very similar Clark's Grebe.

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) One was seen flying by the Quaker Ridge hawk watch in Greenwich on 6 Sep 2006 (06-25 Brian Bielfelt*, Michael Warner, Ryan MacLean). While the bird was seen fairly briefly through telescopes, one of the observers had extensive experience with the species in Florida. His report included key field characters and eliminated confusion with other species such as soaring cormorants. The date fit the pattern of Anhinga occurrences in the Northeast.

GREATER SHEARWATER (*Puffinis gravis*) A bird in weakened condition was picked up by boaters in Stonington harbor on 28 June 2006 (06-29 Glenn Williams, Phil Rusch, Margaret Jones, Mark Szantyr‡). It was taken into care but died the same night. The specimen was delivered to the University of Connecticut at Storrs. There are two other specimen records. A photo of the dead bird appeared in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No. 1.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) One consorted with Glossy Ibises 18-20 April 2007 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison for a fifth state record (07-04 Renee Baade*, Greg Hanisek, Paul Fusco‡, Noble Proctor‡, Mark Barriger‡). A photo appeared in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No. 4.

Robert White photo

Wilson's Plover, 11 May 2007, West Haven

YELLOW RAIL (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) One was flushed in a saltmarsh at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington on 17 Dec 2006. (06-44 Phil Rusch*, James Restivo*) The observers' detailed account included a sketch showing the diagnostic wing pattern. It is the first winter record.

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrula martinica*) The bird was discovered 29 Apr 2007 in a backyard pond in Stratford (07-06 Scott Kruitbosch*, Greg Hanisek, Julian Hough‡, Bruce Finnan‡, Mark Szantyr‡). It performed well for many observers through May, but it became hard and then impossible to find as vegetation thickened. It was believed to have left until the homeowner reported a brief sighting on 11 July. He also said it had been present for several days before the April discovery by birders (Jamison Scott).

WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) One visited Sandy Point in West Haven on 11 May 2007 (07-08 Robert White*‡) Although seen by only one observer, he obtained excellent photos that confirmed the identification of a bird in first-year plumage. Many first-years exhibit adult-like plumage after a partial molt in March. Lack of a complete breast band and no obvious blackish feathering in the lores indicate the bird is most likely a female. Although Connecticut has at least 20

records for this southern coastal species, this was the first one documented here since 1989. All but three of the records are in April through June; the others are in September.

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) One made a quick-hit appearance on 13 May 2006 at Longshore Country Club in Westport (06-37 Frank Mantlik*, Roy Harvey‡). A photo appeared in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 26 No 4.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) An adult was observed at Sandy Point, West Haven, on 1 & 5 Aug 2005 (06-12 Julian Hough*). This is a first state record and probably one that was overdue. An adult in worn plumage presented a challenge that fortunately was met by a birder with extensive experience with the species as well as expertise in stint/peep identification. The bird was viewed on two days in direct comparison with Semipalmated Sandpipers and shown to several other birders. A detailed sketch of the bird was provided along with sketches of accompanying Semipalmateds. The key to identification was notation and illustration of a full suite of characters that included fine-tipped bill, throat and ear covert pattern, indistinct supercilium, dark central crown ridge, overall plumage tones, conspicuous mantle "tramlines," scapular markings and lack of flank streaking.

RED-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*) An adult was found 16-23 Jul 2006 at Milford Point (06-38 Nick Bonomo*, Julian Hough‡, Paul Fusco‡). This marked the third state record.

Nick Bonomo photo

Sandwich Tern, 31 Jul 2007, Stratford, third state record

Both of the others also occurred at Milford Point. A fully illustrated account appears in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 26 No 4.

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) One on 13 May 2006 on Lake Whitney in Hamden (06-39 Florence McBride*‡). One on 16 May 2006 in a flooded pasture in Canton (06-40 Jamie Meyers*‡, Steve Ballentine‡). One on 16 May 2006 on Middle Reservoir in Killingly (06-41 Mark Szantyr*). This species had not been documented in the state in more than a decade, but a four-day nor'easter in May 2006 generated a major fallout in southern New England, primarily in Massachusetts but also including the three Connecticut birds. A fully illustrated account appears in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 26 No 4.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) A bird in basic plumage was observed and photographed at the mouth of the Housatonic River in Milford and Stratford on 31 Jul and 1 Aug 2007 (07-09 Charles Barnard*, Nick Bonomo‡). This is the third state record and the first since 1998.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Sterna nilotica*) An adult was found on 24 June 2006 at Milford Point and spent about an hour at the mouth of the Housatonic River (06-28 Nick Bonomo*‡). It was the first record since 1996.

SOOTY TERN (*Sterna fuscata*) An adult was picked up in moribund condition 16 April 2007 from the deck of a home in Southington (07-05 Jayne Amico, Greg Hanisek‡, Bruce Finnan‡). It was taken to a veterinarian but died that day. The specimen was delivered to the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Most records occur in late summer and early fall, often in association with hurricanes. This was a first April record for New England, but it was tied to a powerful nor'easter that also produced sight records of three Sooty Terns in Rhode Island the same day. A photo appeared in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No. 4.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) Imagine the surprise of two top-notch photographers, who came to Ora Avenue in East Haven to photograph birds at a feeding station on 22 Oct 2007, when this little gem, a first state record, appeared in their view finders (07-11 Jim Zipp*‡, AJ Hand‡, Mark Szantyr‡, Dori Sosensky) The bird remained until at least 22 Nov, providing excellent views for birders from throughout Connecticut and from some surrounding states. Based on brief but inconclusive views obtained by Sosensky, who keeps the feeding area stocked, the bird may have been present since at least 20 Oct. Consultation with outside experts suggested this was most likely a male of the eastern race. North of its normal range, Common Ground-Dove has been recorded in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) One called regularly and was occasionally seen at dusk from 20 May until at least 4 June 2006 in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme (06-27 Glenn Williams*). It was the second year in a row that a calling bird appeared at this location.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD (*Stellula calliope*) This gem of a first state record visited feeders at the butterfly garden at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven on 2-7 Dec 2006 (06-35 Dori Sosensky*, Nick Bonomo*, Julian Hough‡, Frank Gallo‡, Tom Sayers‡, Ryan Sayers‡, Mark Szantyr‡, Jayne Amico). A series of excellent color photographs aided greatly in a firm identification, which was confirmed when the bird was banded by Szantyr and Amico on 3 Dec. After consultation with outside experts, Szantyr concluded the bird was best categorized as a female, age unknown. A fully illustrated account appears in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No 3. Amazingly, this was one of two first state records recorded at feeders maintained by Sosensky (see Common Ground-Dove).

Patrick Dugan photo

Ash-throated Flycatcher, 17 Dec 2006, Stamford, third state record

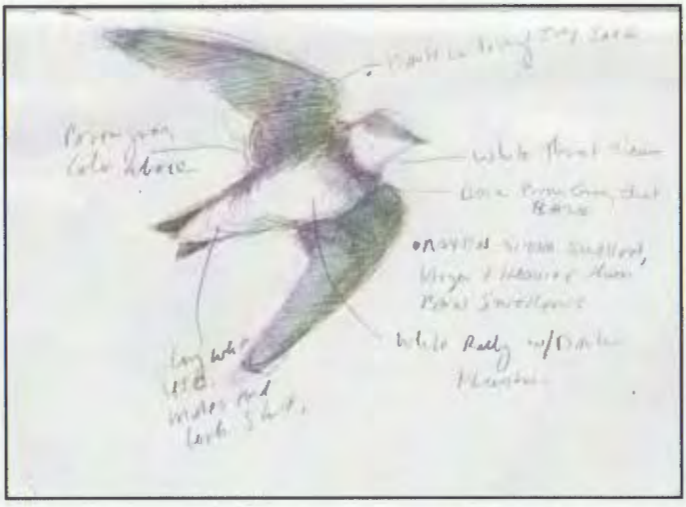
ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) One was found on 17 Dec 2006 on private property in Stamford on the Greenwich-Stamford CBC (06-46 Patrick Dugan*‡, Frank Gallo‡). It was present until at least 20 Dec. It is a third state record, all in winter, and the second for the Greenwich-Stamford CBC.

BROWN-CHESTED MARTIN (*Progne tapera*) One was in flight with other swallows on 1 Jul 2006 at Groton/New London Airport in Groton (06-33 Mark Szantyr*‡) This was a significant state first. It joins the following North American records: Monomoy I., Mass., 12 Jun 1983 (specimen); Cape May, N.J., 6-15 Nov 1997 (photos); Patagonia, Ariz., 3 Feb 2006 (photos); Belle Glade, Fla., 24 Oct 1991 (sight only). Documenting this record hinged on the observer's skills as an artist and observer. He was able to make detailed field sketches that included all salient identification points. This record illustrates the importance of close, detailed scrutiny and documentation. The observer was aware of the other North American records but had no life experience with Brown-chested Martin. He noted several subtle features that proved after the fact to be keys to acceptance. These included

long undertail coverts and a wing-cupping flight style. Size comparison with nearby Barn Swallows eliminated the possibility of Bank Swallow, which also shows a brown chest band. Because of the significance of the record, the committee submitted all the documentation to five experts who have field experience with the species. All agreed with the identification, and three offered detailed written responses. Two, both of whom are authors of books on South American birds, noted the significance of the unique flight style, in addition to the plumage characteristics.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) Two were at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, 18-23 Sep 2006 (06-32 Rollin Tebbetts*‡). They were followed by one at Milford Point on 27-29 Sep 2006 (06-31 Frank Gallo, Julian Hough‡). The birds fall within the strongly established pattern of September occurrence.

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*) A female was found in East Haddam on 17 Dec 2006 (06-45 Clay Taylor*, Russ Naylor) The bird proved very hard to relocate despite many people searching. It was seen again briefly on 19 Dec.



Mark Szantyr field sketch

Brown-chested Martin, 1 July 2006, Groton, first state record

Tom Sayers photo

Harris's Sparrow, 3 Nov 2007, Wilton

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*) A female/immature was found on 16 Dec 2006 at the Agricultural Experiment Station in Hamden on the New Haven CBC (06-43 Andy Brand*, Greg Hanisek, Julian Hough‡, Bruce Finnan‡). It was present until at least 22 Dec. and was the first record since the 1990s.

Jim Zipp photo

Common Ground-Dove, East Haven, 22 Oct 2007, first state record

LAZULI BUNTING (*Passerina amoena*) A first-winter male cooperated for many birders from 4 Jan to at least 12 Feb 2007 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (07-01 Bill Yule*, Frank Mantlik‡, Noble Proctor‡, Julian Hough‡, Bruce Finnan‡, Mark Szantyr‡, Tom Sayers‡, Ryan Sayers‡, Jack Faller‡, Fran Zygmont‡, Stephanie Donaldson‡, B. Richardson‡). After the Brown-chested Martin, this was probably the least expected in the recent string of state firsts, because the species does not have a strong history of vagrancy to the Northeast. However, 2007 produced records from Massachusetts in January and Pennsylvania in March, in addition to the Connecticut bird. Hough spent considerable time consulting with experts and reviewing museum specimens to age the bird and eliminate the possibility of either an Indigo Bunting or a Lazuli X Indigo hybrid. A fully illustrated account appears in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No 2.

HARRIS'S SPARROW (*Zonotrichia querula*) An adult in basic plumage was at Allen's Meadow in Wilton from 3-6 Nov 2007 (07-12 Luke Tiller*, Greg Hanisek, Bill Banks‡, AJ Hand‡, Tom Sayers‡, Bruce Finnan‡) This was a tenth state record but only the second since 1986.

SMITH'S LONGSPUR (*Calcarius pictus*) One was seen by a single observer and photographed 23 March 2007 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (07-03 Larry Flynn*‡). It represents a third state record. The pronounced white lesser-covert wingbar helps age and sex this bird as an adult male in the transition from winter to summer plumage. The extensive amount of white in the coverts shows that this was different from a Smith's that was on Long Island, N.Y., until at least 13 March. A photo appeared in The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No. 4.

ACCEPTED, ORIGIN UNCERTAIN

BARNACLE GOOSE (*Branta leucopsis*) One moved through several locations in Newtown from 30 Nov 2006 until at least early January 2007 (Larry Fischer, Phil Henson‡). The ex-

tensive amount of white on the bird's head raised questions about hybrid origin. The unusual assemblage of geese present, including some hybrids, raised origin questions. After two rounds of voting the committee determined the plumage was within the range of pure Barnacle Goose and decided there was no indisputable evidence of captive origin.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

PACIFIC LOON (*Gavia pacifica*) One was reported off Avery Point, Groton, on 11 Dec 2004 (06-19). One was reported from Enders Island, Stonington, on 3 Jan 2004 (06-23). This species remains perhaps the most troublesome to document, primarily because to date no easily viewable, long-staying birds have made an appearance. In the case of the Groton bird, distance involved in a fairly brief observation led the committee to continue its conservative approach with this species. In the case of the Stonington bird, the observer made an excellent effort to obtain video clips, but again conditions were not ideal. The committee sent the clips to two experts with extensive West Coast experience with Pacific Loon. Both thought the images were inconclusive and Common Loon could not be absolutely ruled out. This no doubt is frustrating for birders who have taken the time to submit documentation, but the committee encourages anyone encountering an apparent Pacific Loon to continue doing so. All reports, accepted or not, become part of the official state archives. An article on page 17 deals in greater detail with loon identification pitfalls. Note that it is illustrated with very clear, close loon images. We really need a Pacific Loon to cooperate like that.

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) One was reported from the Lighthouse Point hawk watch on 10 Oct 2006 (06-26). This was a rather distant telescope view by a single observer. While the description was suggestive of Anhinga, the committee took a conservative approach because of the viewing conditions and a date that was somewhat later than expected for this species.

BLACK RAIL (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) One was reported from Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison on 11 April 2006 (06-11). The observer, who saw the bird briefly at close range, noted some field marks suggestive of this species. Black Rails are notoriously difficult to see for extended periods, and most state records involve birds that were heard singing the species' distinctive song. This bird was silent. It generated extensive discussion over a full three rounds of voting. Initial concern about the early date was dispelled when research showed similar dates in surrounding states, but in the end the very brief observation proved the deciding factor.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) This species was reported in a yard in Norwalk on 5 May 2007 (07-07). As is often the case with records that are not accepted, this contained very little detail about the bird's plumage and other features, other than that it was blue and lacked the orange breast of an Eastern Bluebird. The report did not eliminate Indigo Bunting. There are two records of Mountain Bluebird for the state, both in winter.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) One was reported from South Windsor on 26 Nov 2006. (06-34). The report noted some features consistent with this species but didn't mention other equally significant ones. The habitat and behavior described were not consistent with this species.

ACKNOWLEDMENTS

The committee thanks the following for expert commentary on several records: Luis Bevier, Alvaro Jarramillo, Paul Lehman, Curtis Marantz, Steve Mlodinow, Robert Ridgely. Also see acknowledgments in the previous Connecticut Warbler articles cited in the species accounts for Calliope Hummingbird and Lazuli Bunting.

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Greg Hanisek, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019

FROM THE RECORD COMMITTEE'S FILES: Pacific Loon - Problems and Pitfalls

By Julian Hough

Throughout its consideration of many rare and unusual species, ARCC has flagged several that continue to be difficult to assess. These can be records where detailed written and/or photo documentation exists for the species in question, yet such information, often through no fault of the observer, fails to convey the intricacies to allow acceptance. In some cases, while the committee feels that the identification may be correct, it needs to err on the side of caution to protect the integrity of the historical archives.

In an effort to prevent the loss of these potential records in the future and gain a better acceptance rate, the ARCC hopes to provide some insight into difficult identification problems. It is hoped that through these periodic articles some guidance will be offered on what details the committee is looking for and how observers, when faced with such problem species, can overcome these identification pitfalls.

Pacific Loon, juvenile, Yorkshire, England, January 2007 (Martin Garner) This first documented record for the Western Palearctic was found on a small, inland lake in northern England. A very cooperative individual, it showed the full suite of features of a classic Pacific Loon. Note the spear-shaped bill, dusky ear coverts, dark bridle strap, paler gray hind neck and dark flanks. (Julian Hough)

Are Pacific Loons being overlooked in Connecticut?

Despite several reports, there is only one accepted record of Pacific Loon in the state:
St. John's-by-the-Sea, West Haven , 3 Dec 1992. To put this into context, in Massachusetts for example, multiple Pacific Loons have been reported annually from 1994 to 2005 with birds occurring in every month from January to July and from October to December. Even allowing for observer awareness of this species and accounting for some misidentified or erroneous reports, it is obvious that in the last decade, Pacific Loons have shown an increase in occurrences on the East Coast. Paul Buckley, a veteran New York birder, commented, "I looked hard for Pacific Loon on Long Island from 1950 until my first in 2001 – and have now seen four! This is not an accident, nor is it more and better observers. I cannot conceive of a bird looked for longer and harder by more people on Long Island. They just were not there."

Based on this increase in records, Pacific Loons, although rare, must occur in Connecticut more frequently than the single accepted record suggests. They are most likely being overlooked as well as misidentified.

We believe there are several factors involved. Based on personal field experience, and drawing on submitted descriptions to the ARCC, we believe these hurdles are: the effect of light and distance on plumage; under appreciation of the variability of Common and Red-throated Loons; and an unclear set of identification features for Pacific Loon.

Depending on the time of day, angle of light and distance of observation, assessing the true size of loons can be surprisingly deceptive. Plumage tones also become hard to interpret given light conditions. For example, we know that Red-throated Loons are grayish above, but can appear contrastingly black and white in certain lighting situations. This can be a major pitfall for the unwary. (Photo Challenge No. 57 Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No. 3). Realizing the effect that light may have on the details of observation is important when describing the distribution of light and dark in a bird's plumage.

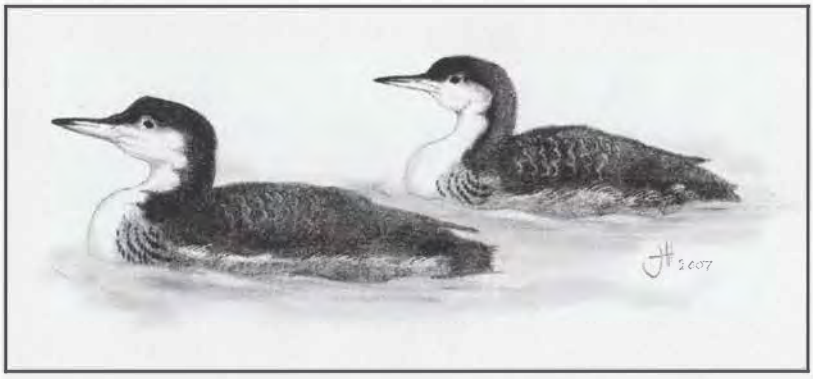
Common Loon, probably worn juvenile, February 2006 (Jim Zipp)
Note the broad-based, slightly upturned bill, lack of bridle strap and obvious pale area around the eye. The peak of the crown is in front of the eye, and the thick neck is typical. Juveniles undergo a partial molt of head and body feathers in February after which they closely resemble adults in winter. (Julian Hough)

This identification issue is not just a problem here. Testimony of experienced observers and other national records committees underscores that the correct identification of Pacific Loon is heavily dependent on experience with both Red-throated and Common Loons in varying field conditions.

The importance of size and shape, or "jizz"

Typical Common Loons are big, bulky birds with deep-based, thick bills. The head shape is often (but not always) rather bulbous, with a forehead bump, and combined with a rather thick neck and chunky body often imparts a bullish look.

Pacific Loons are typically smaller and slimmer than Common Loons, hence the possible confusion with slimmer, daintier Red-throated. They fit in the middle. They often have small bills and a puffy, rounded head shape that combines to give a sleek, "cobra-like" shape to the head and neck. One of the main stumbling blocks are small, juvenile Common Loons that have a more rounded forehead and smaller bill than most adults. At a distance, comparing these birds with the more typical ones, it may be easy to think that you are looking at a different species, albeit briefly. In good condi-



Juvenile Common Loon (left) and Pacific Loon (right) showing basic differences in structure. Note large bill, bulky head and bigger body than Pacific, which is smaller and more serpent-like. Also note the subtle differences in the pattern and distribution of dark and light on the neck sides. (Julian Hough)

tions, where close birds can be scrutinized, a correct identification as Common Loon is usually the end result. However, when such birds are seen at long range, or in harsh light, they can be deceptively Pacific-like. A long time ago, a bird in October in Cape May was initially thought to be this species by its finder, but as we studied it, we realized it was a small, slim-billed Common, but not before our pulses had been racing for awhile.

The pattern of the black on the neck sides is often (but not always) more indented or irregular in Common Loon, whereas in Pacific Loon, it tends to be straighter following the contour of the neck. In some Common Loons the indentations appear as two spurs protruding towards the center of the neck, forming a half-collar.

Head and bill shape

This is one feature that many of us use to identify loons, since bill shape is usually one of the most apparent features on distant birds. Red-throated Loons hold their bills more at a 45-degree angle and have an obvious slight upturn to their bill, which renders them identifiable at long range when no plumage features can be seen. While this will often clue you in to the species, the pitfall is that bill size and shape is variable among individuals. Judging bill shape and size on

distant birds can be problematical. Head shape is also variable and changes if the birds are actively feeding or preening. Actively diving birds often show sleeker contours to the head, making them appear less round, or flatter. Head shape varies a lot in loons, and it is important to bear this in mind when describing this feature, since it can be misleading during the identification process.

Chin straps and vent straps

No, this is not a reference to things found in a masochistic boudoir, but to the dark lines that Pacific Loons show in winter just under the chin and across the vent. The chin strap is more like a bridle, but it is one of the most well-known features to look for on a Pacific Loon. However, a paper by Howell and Reinkling (Western Birds 24:189-196, 1993) showed that only 50% of juvenile Pacific Loons show bridle straps. So, a bird without one does not necessarily rule against the identification. Vent straps are also shown by many Pacific Loons, but this is a feature that is difficult to discern on a bird in the water unless it rolls to preen. Even then, deciding if what you are seeing is a vent strap, and not the legs themselves, can be difficult. It has come to light that occasionally Common Loons can show this feature (M. Reid, pers comm.) but how frequently this occurs is unknown.

The presence of a dark bridle strap is perhaps the most

Pacific Loon, Rye, New Hampshire, July 2004 (Steve Mirick)
Note the classic head shape of this bird - rather puffy and rounded. The short bill and dark chin strap are obvious. Note also the dusky ear coverts, rather smooth division of black along the neck and overall sleek contours of the bird. This individual shows how the flank feathers can fluff up and be visible above the water line – this should not be confused with Arctic Loon's white flank patch. (Julian Hough)

obvious field mark that would indicate that a bird might be a Pacific Loon.

Identification of Pacific Loon

Since we have covered some of the identification pitfalls and problems, we need to summarize what features are important in confirming a Pacific Loon. Since there is no stand-alone diagnostic feature, a definitive identification is most likely the result of a bird that shows a suite of characters.

Size: Pacific Loons are small, sleek birds with contrasting black and white plumage. Their jizz is one reason that they are most likely misidentified as Red-throated Loons, so an accurate size comparison with other loons is important.

Bill: The bill is narrower and pointed, lacking the bulk or broad base shown by Common Loon. The bill can appear short, and in conjunction with a more rounded crown gives Pacific Loon a more demure look.

Head and neck: Usually brownish gray with blackish lores and forehead contrasting with slightly paler gray nape and neck. The ear coverts are dusky, merging into the darker neck sides. The shape of the dark extending down the neck is somewhat variable, but it is often smoother and lacks the irregular indentations and half-collar of Common Loons. In good light, a dark, blackish line separates the white foreneck from the paler gray hindneck.

Bridle Strap: The presence of a "chin strap" or "bridle strap" is indicative of this species, though Howell & Reinkling (1993) note that while this is present in the majority of adults, only 50% of juvenile Pacific Loons show this feature. Thus, any putative Pacific Loon should not be discounted based on the absence of this mark.

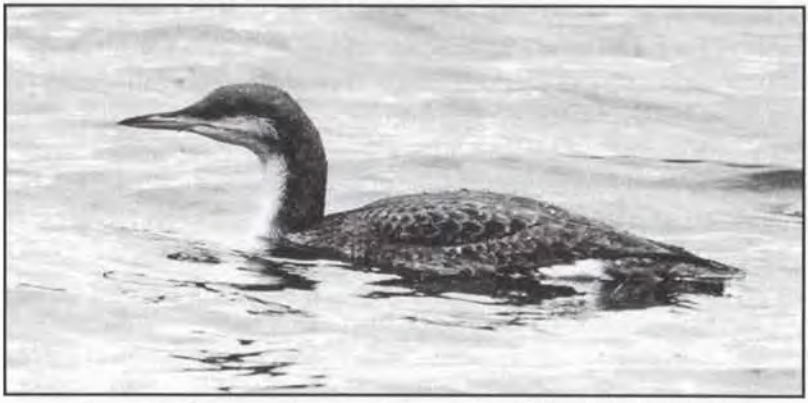
Vent Strap: This is a dark line that crosses the vent but is often obscured by the feet. It may only be visible when the bird roll-preens and excellent views are obtained.

Pacific Loon vs. Arctic Loon

In Europe, the counterpart of Pacific Loon is Arctic Loon (or Black-throated Diver), which is similar in all plumages to Pacific Loon. Primarily more of a problem for West Coast or

European observers, separating these two species is difficult, but is covered here for completeness. This identification problem has never been more topical than in the U.K., where the first Pacific Loon for Britain and Europe (see picture Page 17) was found in January 2007 and then, amazingly, followed by a second and probably a third individual in as many weeks! It is thought that an unusually high influx of Common Loons into the country was responsible for carrying these birds to the UK.

Pacific and Arctic Loons were once considered conspecific, but the general consensus is that they are distinct species and are treated as such by the AOU (1985). In North America Arctic Loon (race *viridigularis*) is restricted to a small breeding population in western Alaska, but it breeds more abundantly in northern Europe. In North America, as expected for a species with a restricted range, there are few records of Arctic Loon away from the breeding grounds. Vagrants to the East would most likely originate from the nominate European race *arctica*. Although Arctic Loon is an unlikely vagrant heret, any Pacific-type loon should be scrutinized to rule out that possibility.



Arctic Loon, juvenile, Lancashire, England, November 1995 (Steve Young)
This confiding juvenile was seen on a local lake near the author's childhood home. Even when seen well, Arctic and Pacific would be difficult to tell apart. The most indicative features of Arctic Loon are the characteristic white flank patch and paler ear coverts. (Julian Hough)

These species are essentially identical, with Arctic averaging slightly larger and longer-billed with a steeper forehead and flatter crown. The most important feature separating them is that Arctic shows a distinct white oval flank patch while Pacific lacks this feature. The patch results from the fact that the proximal feathering of the thigh is white in Arctic and dark in Pacific. Prolonged views are needed to establish the presence and location of any white flank patch, since some other loons can show white along the sides if the belly feathers are visible as they ride high on the water.

One other feature that is noticeable on the Pacific Loon in Yorkshire, UK, is that the pale fringes to the scapulars appear slightly broader and more obvious than on juvenile Arctic (Black-throated Diver) Loon.

If we address the pitfalls mentioned above and arm observers with the knowledge of the most important field marks, I am sure that as this species continues its increase in the East, we will see more solid reports of Pacific Loon in Connecticut waters in the coming years.

Acknowledgements

I thank Rick Heil, Angus Wilson and Marj Rines for information on occurrences in their respective states and to Jim Zipp, Martin Garner, Steve Young and Steve Mirick for supplying photographs. Martin Garner and Killian Mullarney have provided insightful discussion on this topic, as have all the members of ARCC.

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

FROM THE RARITIES COMMITTEE FILES: Hoary Redpoll; Identification Problems & Pitfalls

By Julian Hough

Winter is upon us once more and many immigrants are flooding in from food-scarce Arctic areas. Among seed-eating birds sweeping across the state are those dapper little acrobats, the redpolls.

This little finch has caused intense debate among birders and taxonomists over how to best classify the different species/subspecies. So, do you know which redpolls you are seeing? Is the pale redpoll in the flock a Hoary Redpoll or just a pale Common Redpoll? Hopefully the following article will simplify the current complexity.

Racial identity

All of the species and subspecies are very similar, so let's start by setting out the current subspecies of both Redpoll and Hoary Redpoll found in North America:

Common Redpoll

- Common Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea flammea* (Fenno Scandia, Siberia and N. America).
- "Greenland" Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea rostrata* (Greenland and Baffin Island).

Hoary Redpoll

- "Greenland" Hoary Redpoll, *Carduelis hornemanni hornemanni* (Greenland)
- Hoary Redpoll, *Carduelis hornemanni exilipes* (N. America and N. Eurasia).

Now that we have set out the current taxonomic forms, let's take a look at the identification of the redpoll types. To try to avoid confusion, I will refer to them by their colloquial names throughout the following article.

ARCC Perspective

When confronted with similar and 'hard-to-identify' species pairs, the observer may not be aware of the plumage minutiae that needs to be recorded in writing to document the record. This is especially important in the absence of any photographic evidence. In the case of Hoary Redpoll, since many plumage features overlap to some extent with Common Redpoll, ambiguous descriptions (often made with good intent) of plumage features are often unhelpful and often prove inconclusive. The committee is looking for detailed written description that very specifically details plumage tones and makes direct comparisons with Common Redpoll. It must be apparent in the description that the observer is aware of these subtleties and has tried to specifically record these features so that the committee can put them into context. This may sound rather harsh and daunting, but by following the features outlined below, observers will be aware of the features to key into when writing a field description of any putative Hoary Redpoll.

Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea flammea*)

The nominate race of Redpoll breeding in North America and Northern Europe. A brownish-gray finch streaked blackish above and across the breast and flanks. The bill is short and yellow, set off by a blackish chin and a red "poll" - a small red area on the fore crown. The wings have two buff-white wing bars and the tail is relatively long and noticeably forked. The rump is variably pale, from grayish-white to whitish, but predominantly overlain with fine brown streaks so that the rump is never totally unmarked whitish as in classic Hoary.

The main confusion is with Hoary Redpoll, especially those Commons with lightly streaked flanks and paler rumps. Care must be exercised when identifying these two species.

Adult Male - winter/summer: Adult males look similar year round, with pink tinges to the face, breast and flanks. Red forehead usually very obvious, contrasting with blackish lures and chins. Face and supercilium usually paler. Under-

Hoary Redpoll, Coventry, CT, January 08 (Mark Szantyr). A typical Hoary Redpoll. Small bill, hoar-frosted plumage, prominent white wingbars and lightly streaked underparts are all classic features. The greater coverts show a molt contrast with the inner three greater coverts molted into darker, grayish adult-type feathers making this a first-winter bird (Julian Hough)

parts dirty white, with lightly streaked flanks and pink flush on breast.

Female/first-winter: Non-adult male plumages in winter are very similar and ageing and sexing are difficult. Any bird lacking pink tinges to the breast is a female or first-winter. Duller overall than male, with fawn wash to face and upper breast and noticeable underpart streaking extending along the flanks. Red fore crown often obscure on many young birds. Very variable, but still darker overall than Hoary Redpoll, with clean whitish upper breast and boldly streaked flanks. The ground color to the upperparts is more brown-gray streaked darker, often with whitish tramlines. The facial area is gray-white, with a whiter supercilium and narrowly streaked darker. Some, presumably young females, show a brown-wash to the ear coverts. The wingbars and tertials edgings are often edged grayish-white.

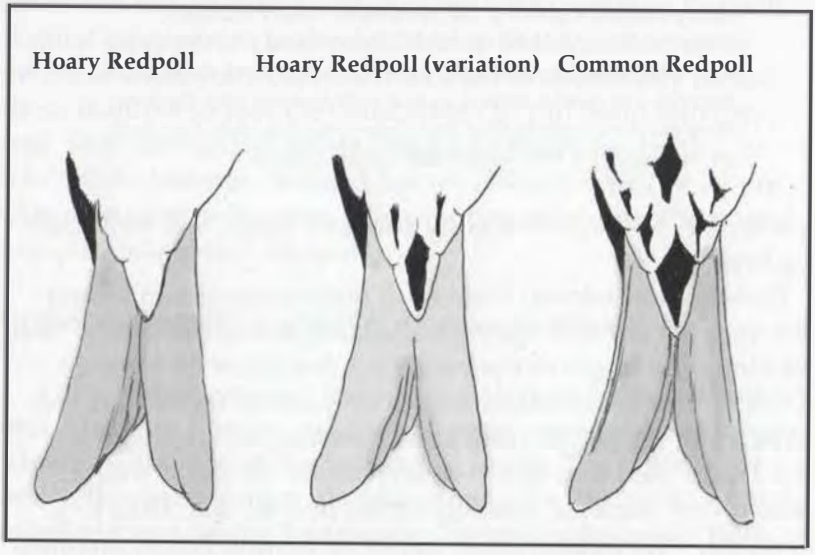
Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni exilipes*)

Most vagrants to New England involve the N. Eurasian and North American form, *exilipes*, which are generally smaller and less strikingly white than the rarer Greenland

form *hornemanni*. This latter form is longer-tailed and bigger-headed than Common or *exilipes* Hoary Redpoll and is the palest of the forms, a veritable 'snowball'.

Exilipes is very similar to Common Redpoll. Since plumage characters overlap between Common and Hoary Redpolls, most of the features on plumage tone and prominence of streaking is quite general, even to the point of rendering some birds unidentifiable.

Finding a frosty bird in a flock of Common Redpolls will lead you to consider Hoary. Unfortunately, a bird, which is frostier-looking than other Commons in the same flock, may



Pattern of undertail coverts in 'classic' Hoary (left) variation in Hoary showing noticeable streaked longest undertail coverts (center) and typical Common Redpoll showing broad and noticeable dark feather centers to the majority of feathers. (Julian Hough)

not necessarily be a Hoary, since male redpolls are paler than females. Inversely, some first-winter female Hoary Redpolls may not be as pale as some Commons!! Now it is easy to understand why Hoary Redpoll is a challenge to identify. Some birds may be quite difficult. I have seen a few birds that have shown quite extensive flank streaking and have rumps that are lightly streaked and have small bills. These

may well have been Hoaries, but I felt the need to err on the side of caution. Considering that in any flock you may have a mixture of adult male and females and first-winter males and females it's no surprise that there is a lot of plumage variation.

Rump pattern: One specific plumage feature which can aid identification in the field is that Hoary Redpolls have a white rump; pure white in males and lightly streaked in females/immatures. While some Commons can show whitish rumps, the ground color is usually grayer overlaid with heavier streaking, especially at the upper and lower end of the rump patch.

Undertail coverts: Common Redpolls show prominent dark streaks on the longest under tail coverts. Many Hoaries have unmarked, pure white undertail coverts. However, some Hoaries can show dark streaks on the longest undertail coverts but they are typically finer than Commons.

Bill: The bill has a straight culmed and is often smaller than Common and gives Hoary a "pushed-in" look. Combined with the smaller bill, the eye often looks small and adds to the "cute" look. On some Hooray's the difference in bill size and shape may not be apparent and other features should be taken into consideration.

Size and structure: Hoaries often appear larger, or bulkier due to their looser feathers. They also look rather bull-necked and are slightly longer-tailed, though the latter feature is hard to determine.

Upperparts: Cold grayish looking, with fine gray-brown streaks and whitish tramlines on the mantle. The paler face and crown often highlight the red cap and blackish lores and chin. Hoaries often are said to show a white "nose band," which is often brown-buff in pale Common Redpolls (Svensson 1992) though this feature is difficult to evaluate on many published photographs. On presumed female/first-winter, there is often a buffy wash to the face and throat which is often quite well demarcated from the whitish breast.

Underparts: Whitish, especially so in the center of the breast. The brown streaking below is often finer and sparser than most Commons.

Hoary Redpoll, Massachusetts, Jan 08 (James P. Smith).
A classic Hoary, showing the gleaming, unmarked white rump, small bill and overall frosty-white appearance.
Note also the 'looser' feathers typical of Hoary Redpoll.

Common Redpoll, New Hampshire, Jan 04 (Jim Zipp/www.jimzipp.com).
The plumage is predominantly brown-toned with buffy, not whitish, wing bars. Although the rump is paler, note it is still overlain with streaks.

Hoary Redpoll, Maine, Feb 05 (Paul Fusco)
This nice shot shows a rather worn bird with the broad white tips to the wing bars and tertial edges worn away. The overall frosty tone to the upperparts and diffuse gray streaks along the flanks are pro-Hoary. Although slightly smaller-billed compared to many Common Redpolls, it is not readily apparent in this shot, but note the relatively straight culmen.

Adult Male: Redpolls are at their palest in winter when all the body feathers have fresh tips, so adult birds in autumn are likely to stand out among even the palest Common Redpolls. Male Hoaries have pink (not red) tinges to the breast, but unlike Commons, have a striking unmarked whitish rump and very sparse streaking on the underparts. Upperparts are gray-brown with whitish fringes and show two white wing bars and tertial fringes. The bill is smallish and bright yellow.

Female/first-winter: Lack any pink on the underparts and are variable in plumage, notably in the density of streaking on the flanks and rump. Some (presumably first-winter males) still show a noticeably whitish rump, streaked lightly along the upper border. Other individuals show more heavily streaked rumps and flanks and may be difficult to pick out in a mixed flock. Typically, young birds show a buff wash to the face and upper breast, which is often demarcated from the whitish upper breast.

To summarize, other than bright, white-rumped males, plumage variation makes the identification of first-winter and female Hoary Redpoll difficult and easy to overlook. The identification of any "pale" redpoll is most likely to be successful if you consider the suite of characters discussed above, namely, proportionately small bill, unmarked, or lightly streaked undertail coverts, sparse streaking on the flanks, relatively uniform white rump and overall whitish wing bars and frost appearance to the upperparts. While *exilipes* is the most common form, any noticeably large, long-tailed and bull-headed individual may be the rarer '*hornemanni*' or Greenland Arctic Redpoll.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to excellent local photographers Paul Fusco, James P. Smith, Mark Szantyr and Jim Zipp who generously provided images that greatly enhanced this article.

NEMESIS BIRDS

By Glenn Williams

All birders – listers or non-listers, beginners or experts, have nemesis birds. The intermediate birder may spend several years before getting a species and then see it every year after that. In the Northeast, birds such as the chat or the saw-whet owl fit that profile for me. I remember the frustration of hearing both species reported at southern New England Christmas count compilations and then going to the locations the next day – only to strike out. Eventually one learns more about the regularly occurring species, and seeing them becomes a more common event.

As a birder progresses in experience and ability, the nemesis birds become the species rare to the area or particularly elusive – boreals, pelagics or strays that the birder has tried for and missed.

My all-time number one nemesis bird is the Black-backed Woodpecker.

I began birding at about the time that I began making annual Columbus Day weekend camping trips to the boreal forests of Maine and New Hampshire. My life Gray Jays hung around a bitter-cold campsite in October in Rangeley.

One by one, the boreal species fell, most with good luck and ease. Spruce Grouse fed like chickens on a logging road in Gulf Hagus, Maine. I drove to the Caps Ridge trailhead in New Hampshire specifically to see Boreal Chickadee and I did! All of these sighting were on the annual camping trips with non-birders. The lure of the boreal forests spurred me to plan birding trips to the Great North Woods. The White Mountains of New Hampshire and Rangeley, Maine, became my favorite destinations in early summer. I was an obsessive year-lister at that point and usually managed to get most of the boreal birds each year – except one. The Black-backed Woodpecker eluded all efforts.

At first, I felt that just being up north gave me a reasonable chance. After a few years of failure, I began to strategically linger in its preferred habitat. I also combed listservs and

regional guide books for specific locations. I e-mailed local birders for tips and information. It became apparent that the best bet was to find out about a nest hole and stake it out. I missed several times by mere days. I once stared at a hole in a spruce on the side of a busy road for an hour and a half on an extremely hot day with my very pregnant wife – refusing to believe that I was late again. There were also the times when knocking could be heard but no bird could be seen. I climbed up a wet and slippery trail to get to good elevation and a reliable site once, only to hear distant knocks. As I waded through sphagnum and muck, the woodpecker worked farther away faster than I could travel. Was it my nemesis? Too many other times, the rapper in the right habitat and high elevation turned out to be a Downy or a Hairy Woodpecker.

The final straw came when yet another nest hole was discovered in an area that I knew well – the famous (to New England birders) Trudeau Road in the northern White Mountain region. Friends were going up to see the Black-backed Woodpecker family. I could not make the trip, but did enjoy hearing about their great looks – and seeing the pictures, too.

In the early summer of 2004, we took a week-long family vacation to the White Mountains. It was another chapter in a strange, lifelong, and sometimes inverse relationship between my luck and the Boston Red Sox. I do not believe in curses, but I love coincidences. That night, Jeter would go face-first into the stands to help the Yankees beat the Sox in heartbreaking fashion. But that morning, I had ended my woodpecker induced torture - sort of.

I drove to the Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge in Jefferson, N.H., in the early morning, leaving my family asleep at the motel. At the small parking lot at the refuge, I was greeted by a persistent swarm of mosquitoes that were not at all deterred by repellant. Suffering many bites, I slung my scope over my shoulder and headed down the trail into the sun. The known nesting site of Black-backed Woodpecker and best place to see them there was several miles away. I questioned if I could make it against the

swarm of insects. A snipe winnowed overhead, temporarily distracting me from the persistent buzzing and biting. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers seemed to be everywhere. A Pileated Woodpecker flew across the path. As I reached a clear-cut area with some snags, I heard the rapping of a woodpecker. Was it THE bird? It was not the distinct tapping of a sapsucker. I hustled toward the sound. It was getting closer to the trail. I froze. A woodpecker was suddenly on a snag by the path. I put my binoculars up to see the bird, backlit by a hazy summer-morning sun. It was as unsatisfying a look as one could get and still identify the bird – a Black-backed Woodpecker! I wanted a better look for a life bird, a nemesis bird, THE nemesis bird. I set up my scope as fast as I could without scaring it. He was still there as I positioned myself behind the scope but I couldn't get the bird in view. A quick glance confirmed the bird was still there, followed by a second fruitless sweep. I looked up again and the bird was gone. No noise, no sign of it anywhere. The whole sequence had been less than a minute. The mosquitoes continued their assault. I waited as long as possible before forging ahead. Somehow, I felt worse than before – not in that "I finally reached my goal, now what?" way. It was that unsatisfying, "I know what I saw but was that a satisfying life look?" The mosquitoes made me turn back little more than halfway from the end of the trail. .

Returning to my family, my wife was surprised how subdued I was about seeing my first Black-backed Woodpecker. I didn't feel like explaining.

Later that year, I was driving alone to a campsite for the annual Columbus Day weekend gathering. As I was lost on a dirt road in the southern White Mountains at dusk, David Ortiz hit his play-off series clinching home run against the Angels. I had to stop the truck and hoot into the woods in glee.

I took the next morning to do some solo birding. I planned out a route and had a nice but uneventful time. I pulled up to my last stop, ready to savor the end of my boreal birding until next summer. (I did not know it at the time, but I would not be able to return to the boreal woods

for almost two years.) I parked on the road at the gate of the famous Trudeau Road. Another car was already there and there was a loud blare of bagpipes coming from the woods. I love the bagpipes as much as the next guy, but why here and now? I was genuinely angry that someone would despoil the quiet of the Great North Woods for their own selfish interest. As I walked down the trail, I was prepared to voice my displeasure at such an etiquette breach. For some reason – either conflict avoidance or the desire not to ruin a nice trip – I decided to do nothing. Standing along the trail was a stocky man in a T-shirt and jeans, jacketless on a very warm fall day. Nearby was a pale-blue car door. Why it was there and why he was next to it were mysteries to me. Among the pines with the mountains in the background, the music really did sound majestic. He stopped as I approached and I told him he sounded great – and meant it. He thanked me in genuine gratitude and then continued to play. I decided to give up hope of seeing anything in the cacophony, but to enjoy the surreal experience. As ravens croaked overhead and the sun filtered through the spruce, I felt as if I could be in Scotland.

In a bog to the left of the trail, I saw some movement. Very close and in excellent light was a female Black-backed Woodpecker. To the eerie drones of the bagpipes, I watched her feed. I watched her preen. I watched her rest. I watched her as long as a slightly hyperactive adult could. I walked away but soon returned. She was still there and the bagpipes still played. Were you allowed to walk away from a nemesis bird – a bird grudgingly added to the life list with a hint of guilt because of a lousy look - a bird that was making up for years of torture with looks of incredible quality and beauty? I decided to stay as long as she would. After ten more minutes, the bagpipes stopped and she flew deep into the forest. On the way back to the car, I looked forward to thanking my minstrel, but he was gone.

I don't think I have ever enjoyed a birding moment more. And the Red Sox won the World Series later that month.

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

Howell, S N G and J Dunn. 2007 Gulls of the Americas. Peterson Reference Guides Series. ix+ 516 pgs. Numerous photographs and maps. Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, NY. $35.00

The species of gulls worldwide show no appreciable sexual variation in plumage or color. But differences in age and molt status often make identification tenuous. Add their propensity for hybridization, rampant geographic variation, and a broad array of environmental factors that both directly and indirectly affect the plumage or its perception and gull identification can range from difficult to impossible. In this massive contribution, Steve Howell and Jon Dunn sort through the tasks and information necessary to facilitate identification in the face of the seemingly continuous nature and intricate combinations of known biological variation. On paper it is a colossal task, and the challenge for the reader is to translate the extensive (but well organized) tabular data into what is seen in the field.

The basics begin with an extraordinarily useful How to use this book and Introduction, which combined runs some 46 pages. It is essentially an instruction manual on how to use the book with annotated sections on variation, both genetic and environmental, plus tips on fieldwork and odd plumage pigmentation. The birds' appearance is presented in excellent labeled photographs directing your attention to relevant plumage features. This section is used by the authors for an extensive introduction to the very knotty problem of the terminology of molts and plumages, and especially their relation to age. It is complicated because molt in many gull species is now known to be an almost continuous process, at least in for the first 2-3 years of life. Further, in adults of some species there may be overlap of timing between different molts. Over 14 pages of text and photos are dedicated to

the presentation of the problem. Along the way some new terminology is introduced based on Howell's earlier studies, especially those of the early plumage cycles of the Western Gull. This can be confusing in places and has generated some controversy in the primary literature.

"Gulls of the Americas" main contents are the Plates (250 pages, each with 4-5 images), the 36 Species Accounts, and smaller sections of Widespread Hybrids (5) and then Rarer Atlantic (6) and Pacific (3) Hybrids. The plates cover almost every conceivable plumage in clear color. Some are repeated to illustrate the effect of age, within-population variation, and almost always include comments on particular features relevant to identification. The captions are brief, informative, and in one case speculative. Species accounts include overall length as an indicator of body size, Taxonomy, Status and Distribution, Field Identification (especially regarding similar species), Habitat and Behavior, and Description and Molt. Distribution maps are clear and instantly readable. The accounts include useful images that emphasize comparisons with similar species (e.g. breeding Franklins and Laughing Gulls). There is also a glossary, a bibliography, and—thoughtfully—a list of photographers whose contributions are essential.

In 1959 Phil Humphrey and Ken Parkes published a radical revision of the nomenclature of avian molts and plumages (Auk 76:1-31, 1959). As a relatively new graduate student at UCLA I was invited to present their arguments to the local chapter meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Society. The received knowledge regarding these issues at the time would have been summarized in a text such as "Fundamentals of Ornithology" (1959, J Wiley & Sons, New York) by Van Tyne and Berger. Humphrey and Parkes (later H-P) claimed to base their system of terminology of molt on homologies, rather than implied function. Howell agrees, and his modifications to the H-P system recognize that birds take different lengths of time and different numbers of molts to reach the adult molt cycle and acquire the adult plumage. Critics posit

that these are not convincing criteria on which to construct a plausible phylogeny of molts and plumage. However, it has been argued that molts and plumages are so variable, even within clades, that it is doubtful that the H-P terminology can reveal phylogenetic homologies even in closely related species. H-P, of course, predates cladistic thinking, but both are based on the establishment of homologies. Nevertheless, the identifying and naming the formative plumages and their relation in the plumage cycle is still difficult in some cases. The relation of molt to other features, such as migration and the occurrence of plumages in the annual cycle, is still debatable in many gull species. Howell and Dunn chose to use the term First Cycle, Second Cycle, etc. to understand molt strategies of increasing complexity (their fig 1, pg 32). While this requires some shift in the naming of molts, it is useful in sorting through the complexities in gulls. It does take some getting use to as it eliminates referring to First Year, Second Year, etc birds. And in these pre-adult stages, more than one can occur in a calendar year.

The detail presented in this book can occasionally be overwhelming, but there is enormous potential here. Identifying gulls, even common species in a particular area, can be a challenge. Howell & Dunn wisely state that "the proportion of unidentifiable gulls never reaches zero". Nevertheless this is the very best current resource for gull identification available. It will be helpful when the local field guide proves inadequate, when you find that one odd bird in a flock, or when your previous experience is inadequate. Careful observation, awareness of the dimensions of variation in both time and space, and adequate notes are essentials in building your skill level. This volume will certainly help.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES
Summer, June 1 through July 31, 2007

By Greg Hanisek

Lingerers, Wanderers and Strays

A Ring-necked Duck was still at Lake Saltonstall, North Branford, on June 10 (SM); a Long-tailed Duck lingered through June at Old Greenwich (CEh et al.); a Black Scoter was off Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) July 4-17 (JBa et al.); and several lingering Ruddy Ducks included one that summered at Batterson Pond in Farmington (PCi). A Red-throated Loon was near Calves Island, Old Lyme, to at least June 12 (HG).

A Tricolored Heron was in Lordship on June 13-17 (FG et al.), with another in Old Lyme June 29-July 21 (CF et al.). An immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Lake Zoar in Southbury through the period was very rare away from the coast (RN). An adult **Mississippi Kite** overhead in Roxbury on June 12 fit into the typical seasonal pattern for this species (JJ). The **Purple Gallinule** discovered in April at a backyard pond in Stratford became hard and then impossible to find as vegetation thickened. It was believed to have left until the homeowner reported a brief sighting on July 11 (JSc). An **American Avocet** made a brief appearance in Milford on June 3 (fide CL). A count of 94 Laughing Gulls June 16 in Fairfield was good for so early in the season (FM). A second-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Oyster River, West Haven, on July 21 (JHo). We have very few mid-summer records. A Caspian Tern was on the Lieutenant River, Old Lyme, on June 5 (CEl). A **Royal Tern** was at Milford Point on June 5 (NB, ER). This has become a very scarce visitor over the past decade. A **Sandwich Tern** was a stellar find on July 31 at Short Beach, Stratford (CB, NB); it was seen later in the day in Fairfield (LT).

A **White-winged Dove**

that arrived at a feeder in February was still visiting sporadically through the season (DL). Red-headed Woodpeckers were photographed in Ridgefield and Darien in June (fide LT). The season's only **Blue Grosbeak** was at the capped landfill in New Milford on July 12 (AD, AK). An unprecedented mid-summer White-crowned Sparrow was photographed at a feeder in Westbrook, where it was present June 19 to at least June 29 (JSw). A pair of Evening Grosbeaks visited a Barkhamsted feeder several times in late May-early June (DPe). One was in Chester on June 13 (SS).

Northbound Migration

A single American Golden Plover was a good find June 1 at HBSP (RD). Sandy Point in West Haven attracted seven Red Knots on June 3 (MSt), and Milford Point had three Red Knots and 250 Semipalmated Sandpipers on June 4 (FM). An excellent 24 White-rumped Sandpipers were at Milford Point on June 5 (NB). Immature Bonaparte's Gulls were at Short Beach, Stratford on June 4 (FM), Sandy Point on June 5 (NB) and at Milford Point to at least June 20 (NB). The latest Olive-sided Flycatchers were in Greenwich (JHa) and Poquonock (JW) on June 10. The latest Mourning Warbler was seen June 10 in Manchester (TA). A Kentucky Warbler sang in a Wilton yard on June 2 (JBe). Two hummingbirds, presumably Ruby-throated, flew past Milford Point on June 1 (FM). The date suggests they were northbound migrants, but they were heading west, the direction traveled by southbound migrants along the coast

Southbound Migration

A Solitary Sandpiper was back in Hartford by June 30 (PCi). The first Whimbrel report came from Sandy Point on July 12 (AR, JMa). Semipalmated Sandpiper numbers reached 5800 by July 25 at Milford Point (FM). Anticipating a good fall flight, the first Western Sandpiper appeared at Grace Salmon Park in Westport on July 14-15 (LT). A Stilt Sandpiper was in Stratford July 14 (FM). A Black Tern visited Little Pond in Litchfield on July 15 (PB); there also

were a few coastal reports. Red-breasted Nuthatches in backyards at two locations in the first week of June were a very early indicator of what developed into a significant flight (EH, NB). An orange variant Scarlet Tanager was in a Mystic yard on July 2; since it wasn't in a breeding location we'll place it here (GW).

Nesting Season

A hen Green-winged Teal escorted at least three young during June at Hessekey Meadows in Woodbury (RN). A female Hooded Merganser with six chicks on June 3 at Aspetuck Reservoir, Easton, was far south in Fairfield County, where nesting has seldom been noted (LT). Pied-billed Grebes raised two young at Hessekey Meadsows (RN, AD).

A calling pair of Least Bitterns at Hatch Pond in Kent in early June was at an unexpected location (JJ). This species was easily found in the state's two strongholds - Station 43 in South Windsor and the coves on the lower Connecticut River (m.ob.). They were also noted at Hessekey Meadows in Woodbury (RN, AD) and in East Granby (BK). A few Black-crowned Night Herons at Lake Zoar and Lake Lillinonah, both in Southbury, fit a recent trend of suspected nesting (RN, LF).

Inland nesting by Ospreys is on a significant upswing. A pair used a light stanchion at a park in New Britain (JMe); at least two nests were built on cell towers in Seymour (RP et al.); and one was on a tower at Stevenson dam, Oxford (RN). Connecticut DEP reported 15 Bald Eagle territories for the season, with 10 pairs producing 16 young (JV). Sharp-shinned Hawks, whose summer presence is on the rise, were in Simsbury June 9 (PCi), West Hartford June 25 (PCi), Windsor June 29 (PDe) and Suffield July 22 (PDe). A Northern Goshawk called briefly June 2 in Nehantic State Forest, East Lyme (DW). Pairs of American Kestrels were noted at East Windsor Hill (PDe), Storrs (TS), Sunny Valley Preserve in New Milford (AD) and at Southbury Training School (RN). A pair of Peregrine Falcons with two fledglings in late June added Westport to the growing list of towns with

confirmed nesting (FM).

A Sora was seen with one chick at Station 43, South Windsor (TS). A Common Moorhen was present June 28 into early July in the Great Meadows area of Stratford, although there was no evidence of nesting (FM et al.). A pair of Barn Owls using an abandoned building in lower Fairfield County raised two young (PCo).

The southward-expanding Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were represented by up to three pairs in Watertown (RN). Single Brewster's Warblers were in West Hartford on June 7 (PCi) and in Woodbridge on June 9 (CLo). The only Lawrence's Warbler report was from Salem on June 24 (F&TH). Northern Parulas were likely breeders in East Granby June 14 (BK). For the second year in a row, a Kentucky Warbler sang on territory, apparently without a mate, at Penwood State Park in Bloomfield in June (NB et al.) Up to three territorial male Eastern Meadowlarks were at Grassy Hill Preserve in Roxbury (RN) and at Sunny Valley in New Milford (AD); there were also a number of reports from eastern Connecticut. A detailed account of the Connecticut Summer Bird Counts appears in the October 2007 issue of The Connecticut Warbler Vol. 27 No. 4.

EXOTICS - A European Goldfinch visited a feeder in Norfolk on June 22 (SH).

Observers - Tim Antanaitis, Jim Bair (JBa), Charles Barnard, Joe Bear (JBe), Nick Bonomo, Patrick Bukowski, Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Patrick Comins (PCo), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Angela Dimmitt, Ryan Douglas, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Cynthia Ehlinger (CEh), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Chris Elphick (CEl), Chris Field, Larry Fischer, Frank Gallo, Ted Gilman, Hank Golet, Greg Hanisek, John Hannon (JHa), Shelley Harms, Ernie Harris, Roy Harvey, Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway, Julian Hough (Ho), John Johnson, Anne Kehmna, Brian Kleinman, Carol Lemmon (CLe), Donna Lorello, Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Frank Mantlik, John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo, Jamie Meyers (JMe), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Dave Pelletier (DPe), Ron Pelletier, Dave Provencher (DPr), E.J. Raynor, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Ryan Sayers, Tom Sayers, John Schwarz (JSw), Jameson Scott (JSc), Sarah Spencer, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Luke Tiller, Dennis Varza, Julie Victoria, Danny Williams, Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, Sara Zagorski, Jim Zipp.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

A soaring raptor appears overhead in a pale June sky. It has long thin wings, a small head, and a tail that is longer than the width of the wings where it meets the body. The rakishness suggests harrier, but even though size is hard to judge, the bird appears smaller and a darker and more uniform than a harrier.

Maybe Peregrine Falcon ... the long narrow wings and tail are suggestive of the species, but the uniformity of the plumage and something else doesn't fit, but we can't put our finger on it.

The pointed wings differ from a Peregrine in that our bird has a noticeably short outermost primary, much shorter than that of a Peregrine and the tail appears too long for that species broadening at the tip and narrow at the base, opposite for the tail pattern and shape of a Peregrine. The uniformity of the bird also rules out Peregrine, since adults would be whitish below with a distinct hooded look and immatures would be noticeably streaked below.

After what seems an eternity but is only a few seconds, we realize the bird's characteristic shape fits only one species - Mississippi Kite. When plumage features are not obvious, the general impression and shape, "giss," tells the tale. This is an adult bird, evidenced by the onset of molt of the inner primaries. The uniformly gray underbody contrasting with a darker wing tip and teminal tip to the tail are likely to be the most obvious features in the field. The pale gray trailing edge to the wing is only apparent on the upper side, a feature obviously not apparent on this view.

Mississippi Kites are recorded nearly annually in the state from mid-May to August and generally involve briefly observed individuals. It's only a matter of time until one bird hangs around for more than a few minutes. In those few minutes, the distinctive shape above, combined with a "nighthawk"-like flight are likely to be your only visible clues.

This adult Mississippi Kite was photographed by me in South Carolina in August 2007.

Photo Challenge No. 60

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Editor

Greg Hanisek - 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708
(203) 754-4401 email: ghanisek@rep-am.com

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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.

Connecticut Ornithological Association
314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.ctbirding.org

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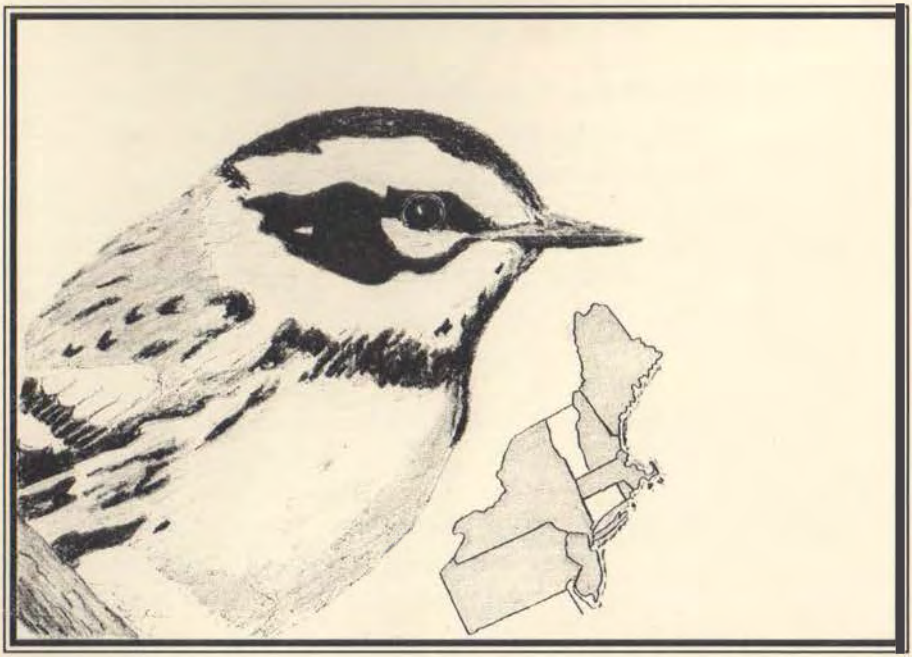

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ABOUT OUR COVER

By Andrew Dasinger

For our article on Connecticut's next 15 birds, Andrew Dasinger created this portrait of No.1 on the list, Townsend's Warbler. The inset map tells why our panel of experts rated it No. 1. Of the nine closest states, only Connecticut and Vermont lack this western species on their state lists.

2008 MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD

The prestigious Wright award was presented to MilanG. Bull by COA President Steve Mayo at the annual meeting in March at Middlesex County Community College in Middletown. Following are Steve Mayo's remarks:

Nature essayist and author Mabel Osgood Wright was a pioneer in the American conservation movement. She was also founder in 1914 of Birdcraft, the nation's first private bird sanctuary, located in Fairfield, Conn. The COA created the Mabel Osgood Wright Award to recognize people who have made significant contributions to Connecticut ornithology and bird conservation. This year's recipient is not only deserving of this award, but he has remarkably close ties to the heritage of Birdcraft.

In 1979 (or so) a small group of bird banders realized the need for a periodic journal of Connecticut ornithology. Among them was Milan Bull, who along with Carl Trichka, Fred Sibley, and very few others, created The Connecticut Warbler, which was initially published by Connecticut Audubon Society. Milan served as technical editor of this important new publication.

A couple of years later, Milan was among those who in 1981 founded this great new organization, the Connecticut Ornithological Association. Over the years, he has served ably on many of its committees, including publications, rare records, and most recently he served as president.

But Milan is certainly best associated with Connecticut Audubon Society. To date, his 36-year career began as a sanctuary manager, field trip leader and naturalist. Along the way, he initiated studies of the state's colonial nesting waterbirds on the Norwalk Islands and other coastal locations. For many years, he single-handedly fenced off nesting sites of Piping Plovers and Least Terns. Who else would have slogged through salt marsh muck to run video cable for an

Osprey-cam? During his long tenure, he has served as the director of several CAS facilities including Birdcraft Museum, the Larsen Center at Fairfield and the Coastal Center at Milford Point. Miley is currently senior director of science and conservation. As such, he is editor-in-chief of the annual Connecticut State of the Birds, a report that provides comprehensive conservation recommendations for our declining Connecticut birds. When one thinks of Connecticut Audubon Society, it's difficult not to think of Miley as "Mr. Connecticut Audubon."

He has also been active in many official state conservation efforts. He has served on the DEP Endangered Species Advisory Committee. He has chaired the DEP Citizen's Advisory Council and the Connecticut Migratory Bird and Conservation Stamp Committee. He has been a member of the Partner's in Flight Working Group, and of the Northeast Colonial Waterbird Working Group.

What, you may ask, does Miley do in his spare time? Yes, he's an avid outdoorsman and birdwatcher. His accounts and stories of his experiences could fill an entire evening. But many days and evenings he also can be found volunteering his time in countless town halls or state buildings, eloquently providing testimony to help preserve the state's and the country's nature, specifically birds and their habitats. How many of us can claim that?

Miley is also an accomplished leader of nature and birding tours worldwide. His excellent leadership skills, affable personality, and sense of humor explain why so many nature buffs and birders are repeat customers of his tours to all seven continents.

What do you call a man...

- who is a champion of bird and wildlife habitat conservation
- who is an architect and builder of important nature organizations?
- who is an indefatigable spokesman for the environment?
- who is a seasoned, appreciated tour leader and educator?
- who is a dear friend, an easy-going, likeable guy?

You call him Milan G. Bull. Please join me in welcoming this year's recipient of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award, Milan G. Bull.

Mark Szantyr photo

Milan Bull's efforts at Milfrd Point and elsewhere have benefited Connectciut's endangered breeding population of Least Terns.

CONNECTICUT'S NEXT 15 BIRDS

By Nick Bonomo

The autumn/winter of 2006-07 brought a great run of rarities to Connecticut, from Western Grebe to Painted Bunting to Ross's Goose. It was as if the birds had mistaken our fair state for the likes of Massachusetts or New Jersey, two states that seem to yield more vagrants annually than Britney Spears does rehab stints. This extraordinary rash of sightings will be remembered by birders for years to come. Among the throngs of rare birds were two species that had never before been recorded in Connecticut: Calliope Hummingbird and Lazuli Bunting. These first state records got several birders to thinking...what's next?

If you're like me, you think about this every time you take to the field in search of birds. But even if you aren't this obsessive, the thought has probably crossed your mind at least once during your birding career. Thirteen experienced Connecticut birders attempted to answer that question by submitting their Top 10 Lists in which they ranked the ten most likely species to next appear in Connecticut.

The guidelines for such a list were fairly straightforward. Each person was to submit a list of ten species not yet recorded here, according to the state list provided by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut. These ten birds were to be ranked from most likely (worth 10 points) to least likely (1 point). The results were then sorted in two ways: 1) by number of Top 10 List appearances out of 13, and 2) by number of points received. A total of 47 species were listed (Table 1); this article focuses on the Top 15 overall. Many of the participants found the task to be more challenging than anticipated. There are just so many possible species that it was difficult to narrow the list down to ten.

Since the lists were submitted in 2007, two first state records have already been found: Common Ground-Dove and "Pacific Slope/Cordilleran" Flycatcher. The dove received just one

vote (nice pick Gallo!), and the flycatcher failed to materialize on a single list. This goes to show how difficult it is to predict the future. The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, we are attempting to compile a list of the most likely candidates to be added to Connecticut's list of avifauna in order to alert birders to their possible future occurrence. Keeping these species fresh in our minds will only increase the likelihood of their discovery. Second, we just love the excitement of finding rarities and wanted to put our thoughts and ideas into written form.

I would like to thank our panel for putting much time and effort into compiling their lists. Some folks even submitted comments to support their choices, and these thoughts were put to use in the paragraphs below. The panel consisted of these thirteen birders: Nick Bonomo, Milan Bull, Frank Gallo, Greg Hanisek, Julian Hough, Jay Kaplan, Frank Mantlik, Edward James Raynor, Dori Sosensky, Mark Szantyr, Daniel Williams, Glenn Williams, and Joseph Zeranski.

1
Townsend's Warbler *Dendroica townsendi*
(13 lists, 117 points)

Greg Hanisek put it best: "So far past due its name ought to be changed to Metro North."

This highly migratory western warbler was the only species to appear on all 13 lists, making it the clear-cut No. 1 favorite. This comes as no surprise, as there are numerous records from surrounding states. New York has at least 18 records by itself. Vermont and Connecticut are the only two New England states yet to record this species. (Hector Galbraith, pers. comm.). At least one Townsend's Warbler is reported in the Northeast most years, anytime from October through May. Most birders think of late autumn as the time to find this bird in Connecticut, and rightfully so, but keep this one in mind when you're walking the trails at East Rock Park or River Road in May. It may surprise one to learn that there are many

spring records for the Northeast, so learn that song!

Identification of this species should be straightforward given good views, but a birder could easily pass off a Townsend's as a Black-throated Green or Blackburnian Warbler if he or she isn't aware of this species' history of vagrancy. To further complicate things, Townsend's Warbler commonly hybridizes with Hermit Warbler where their breeding ranges overlap in the Pacific Northwest. Any suspected Townsend's Warbler should be checked for Hermit-like features.

2

Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii*
(11 lists, 68 points)

There are several characteristics of Swainson's Warbler that make it a difficult species to identify when out of range. First, it has a very plain brown-and-white plumage without any eye-popping field marks. Second, its song can be confused with that of the locally common Louisiana Waterthrush. On top of that, any birder considers himself lucky to actually see this species even where it is common in the southeast U.S. It is infamous for lurking in the shadows of wet, swampy thickets. When a Swainson's Warbler is finally found here, it will probably be a bird that overshot its breeding grounds during spring migration, anytime from mid-April through May, which happens to be one of the most popular times of the year for birding. This is the same mechanism that brings us other southern breeders such as Summer Tanager and Prothonotary, Yellow-throated and Kentucky Warblers in the spring. New York and Massachusetts each have multiple records of this drab skulker, and it has been recorded in Ontario.

3

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*
(10 lists, 70 points)

Rounding out the Top 3 is this Ruby-throat look-alike.

Hummingbirds of the genus Archilochus (Ruby-throated and Black-chinned) are notoriously difficult to separate. Despite this problem, this species received a whole lot of votes. Why is that? Well, there are three good reasons. First, there is precedent. Black-chinned Hummingbird is a regular vagrant to the eastern United States. Second, increased awareness about rare hummingbirds has led to more reports of strange hummers from backyard feeders. Third, and most convincing in my book, is Mark Szantyr. Mark is a licensed and dedicated hummingbird bander who annually zig-zags across Connecticut and beyond to capture, band, identify and release late-season hummingbirds. So if you have an unusual hummingbird at your backyard feeder, Archilochus or not, please give Mark a call...because if he hears one more anecdotal reference like "you should have been here when the big green hummer was around," he just might lose it folks...Tom Cruise style.

Julian Hough photo

Little Egret

4

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
(6 lists, 39 points)

Little Egret has been on the minds of Connecticut birders for nearly two decades now. A spate of East Coast records began with the first U.S. documentation of this species at Plum Island, Mass., in 1989. Since then, Little Egret has appeared in such states/provinces as Nova Scotia (several), Delaware (multiple), New Hampshire (multiple), Rhode Island, and again in Massachusetts (Denny Abbott pers.comm.). Many expect an upward trend in sightings, as this Old World species began to colonize Barbados in the mid 1990s. It has been hypothesized that the Little Egrets appearing in the Northeast are birds that migrate north from the Caribbean with Snowy Egrets. Identification can be described as tricky at best. This has recently been complicated by the regional appearance of birds identified as either 'Little x Snowy' hybrids or abnormal Snowy Egrets. These confusing individuals have one or two long nuchal plumes, a field mark consistent with alternate-plumaged Little Egret. In order to nail this identification, one has to become familiar with the structural differences between the two species. If we are diligent in scrutinizing each and every apparent Snowy Egret we see, we should turn up a Little Egret sooner or later.

5

California Gull *Larus californicus*
(6 lists, 28 points)

California Gull edged out Slaty-backed as the first gull on the list. As with most medium-to-large gulls, identification of this species is something many birders shy away from. Gulls are notorious for their plumage variability, especially in young birds, so a firm knowledge of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls is key to finding this species in Connecticut.

California Gull breeds no closer to Connecticut than the Dakotas and Manitoba, and they head southwest to winter mainly on the west coast. Yet individuals reach the Northeast

Julian Hough photo

California Gull

each winter with most records coming from the Great Lakes. For example, New York has over 30 records, mostly along the Niagara River. Massachusetts and New Jersey each have multiple accepted records. The prospect of finding this species is a fine reason to comb through every gull flock, especially during the colder months.

6

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
(6 lists, 19 points)

The range of this widespread Old World species includes much of Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. While it is quite rare on our continent, sightings in North America increased during the 1980s and 90s. Several regional states and provinces have records, and New York has five records including one bird that attempted to nest with a Black Tern. Since then, the frequency of sightings has leveled off. The last regional White-winged Tern occurred in Maine in 2003. If we could go back 10 years, White-winged Tern probably would have appeared higher than No. 6 on this list. Those birders who did include it in their Top 10 generally stuck it toward the bottom of their lists. In fact if we had ranked the species by points alone, it would have placed tenth overall. Still, every suspect-

ed Black Tern should be double-checked for this species. This should be a fairly easy task for Connecticut birders, as Black Tern is an uncommon bird in its own right!

t7

Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus sasin*

(5 lists, 29 points)

When glancing at this species' range map, one might not consider it a likely taxon to appear in Connecticut. Allen's Hummingbird breeding range is restricted to western California and southwest Oregon. However, this close relative of the Rufous Hummingbird has appeared in both New Jersey (three times) and Massachusetts. It has been increasing in frequency in the southeastern states, though this could be partially due to improved banding coverage. Here is where Mark Szantyr comes into play, again. Separating Archilochus hummingbirds seems like a walk in the park when compared to the Rufous/Allen's problem. In order to confidently identify an out-of-range Allen's Hummingbird, the bird should be caught and measured in-hand. This is the second of four hummingbird species to receive votes, and several more are very possible. So be sure to keep up those sugar-water feeders through the Christmas Bird Count season or longer!

t7

Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii*

(5 lists, 29 points)

Speaking of identification problems...separating the western Empidonax flycatchers takes careful study to say the least. Not only must our own Least Flycatcher be cautiously eliminated when considering a Hammond's, but other western species such as Dusky Flycatcher are incredibly alike. If you're lucky enough to find an Empidonax flycatcher after October 1, you should first ask yourself why it isn't a western species. In addition to overall coloration, focus on such subtle features as primary projection, eye ring shape, bill shape and color, and call note.

New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania each have two accepted records and Rhode Island has one. If recent regional sightings are any indication, this is probably the most likely flycatcher to next appear here, and our panel of voters agrees. Your best chance of pinning down one of these would be to bird woodland edges from October through December, that special time of year that brings us so many western vagrants.

9

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*
(4 lists, 30 points)

If this article was written five years ago, this bird may not have received a single vote. Thanks to a rash of sightings in the Northeast over the past few winters, Slaty-backed Gull actually received the fifth most points overall. Hard to believe for a species that was not recorded in New England until 2003!

Mark Szantyr photo

Slaty-backed Gull

Slaty-backed Gull breeds in northeast Asia and is regular in western Alaska. It was first seen in the lower 48 states in the winter of 1983-4, when an adult was documented in Missouri. Scattered records began to increase in frequency through the 1990s, with most reports coming from British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest. Rochester, N.H., got New England's first Slaty-backed in 2003. (Stephen Mirick, pers. comm.). Things really began to change in January 2005 when California birders began to find this species with regularity at a large gull roost near San Francisco.

This species is showing no signs of slowing down if the winter of 2006-7 was any indication, as New York and New Hampshire each recorded two individuals. During this past winter (after our Top 10 lists were submitted) things really got interesting. Massachusetts got into the act when it recorded its first in the form of three different birds on the same day, December 23, 2007! Ontario and New York each held a Slaty-back, which Tom Johnson astutely recognized as the same bird at both locations, weeks apart. Another one in Pennsylvania may have even been that very same individual. (Tom Johnson, pers.comm.).

It should be noted that many of the Slaty-backed Gulls from the past two years have yet to be reviewed by avian records committees. This is especially important in regards to Slaty-backed Gull because it has been known to hybridize with Glaucous-winged and Vega Gulls in its normal range. As adults, these hybrid offspring should possess a paler mantle color than typical mature Slaty-backs. The experts have yet to determine with certainty what is within the range of a pure Slaty-backed Gull, so the identification of any paler individuals may prove to be controversial. That being said, most Slaty-backed Gulls of recent years have been typical dark-backed adults.

The likelihood of this species being found in Connecticut relies heavily on the presence of sizeable gull concentrations. Most regional records have been of birds that forage at

landfills with several thousand other large gulls. The Windsor-Bloomfield Landfill fits the description of such a location; up to 4,000 large gulls have been observed there at one time. However, this landfill may only have another year or two before it reaches capacity and must be closed. Smaller concentrations have been noted in Waterford and in the greater Hartford area.

10

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

(4 lists, 18 points)

This bird undoubtedly strikes fear into the hearts of ARCC members. If/when this species is sighted in Connecticut, expect a heated debate regarding wild versus captive origin. A pattern has developed over the years, with most sightings in North America falling between April and June. This consistency suggests that these birds are indeed wild. Early autumn birds may simply be overlooked due to the difficulty of separating eclipse-plumaged teal from one another. Garganey records have been accepted in Massachusetts (four), Maine, Vermont, New Jersey, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Look for this bird anywhere teal gather in numbers. Milford Point is as likely a spot as any.

11

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

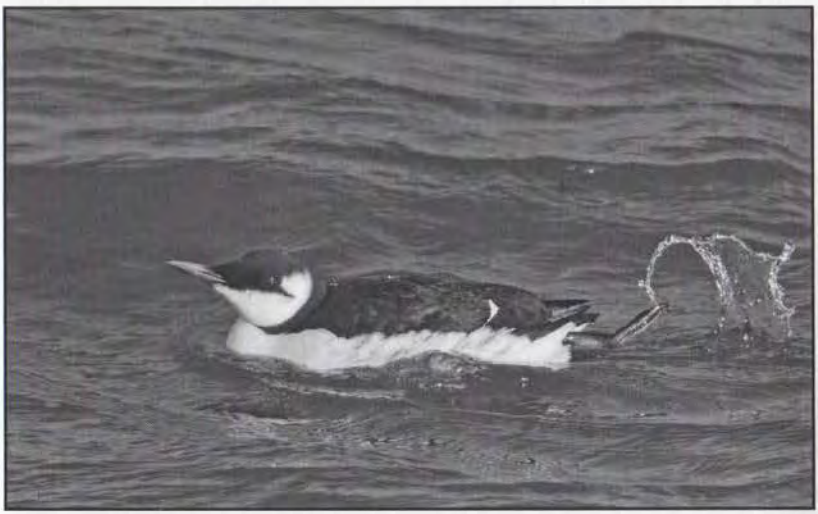
(4 lists, 15 points)

This striking and vocal Eurasian shorebird should be looked for during late fall and winter, when few people have shorebirds on their minds. Northern Lapwing is a bird of fields, pastures, meadows and marshes. This preferred habitat is not unlike that of our Killdeer, and not surprisingly lapwings will associate with this species after straying to North America. If one is going to be found in Connecticut, it will most likely occur at a place with this sort of open habitat, such as Rocky Hill Meadows or Hammonasset Beach State Park. Several Atlantic states and provinces have recorded

Northern Lapwing, but it should be noted that most Canadian records resulted from major Atlantic Ocean storms in December 1927 and January 1966. Newfoundland is the only location in North America where this species occurs somewhat regularly. There are very few recent regional sightings, and only three New England records exist (Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island). New York, however, has four accepted records, two of which occurred in the 1990s.

12
Common Murre *Uria aalge*
(3 lists, 26 points)

This ranking comes as a bit of a shock. I had Common Murre pegged for a top 5 vote-getter, yet only three birders included it on their lists! Of the species not yet on the Connecticut state list, no other migratory bird's normal range comes closer. How close, you ask? Try a mere 40 miles! For example, mid-winter fishing boats out of Rhode Island regularly tally double-digit numbers. (Carlos Pedro and Scott Tsagarakis, pers.comm.).



Jim Zipp photo

Common Murre

Perhaps the most promising news comes from the north shore of Massachusetts, where Common Murre has undergone a drastic increase. Prior to 1998, the state's maximum tally was of merely eight birds. A few double-digit counts were recorded in 1999. (Marjorie Rines, Pers.comm.). Then on December 12, 2002, Richard Heil recorded 420 Common Murres from Andrew's Point in Rockport. Since then numbers have remained high, with two counts of 200+ and several over 25 from this location. (Richard Heil, pers.comm.). Numbers have also increased slightly from Cape Cod seawatches. (Blair Nikula, pers.comm.). A New York pelagic in February 2008 produced 49 murres, a new state high. A trend seems to be developing.

So why did ten voters decide to exclude Common Murre from their lists? A vicious cycle is at work here. First of all, only a handful of people regularly watch Long Island Sound during winter coastal storms, which is when this species is most likely to be seen from land. Pelagic birds of any kind are of relatively rare occurrence in the state, so very few people put the time and effort into looking for them. With few observers weathering these storms, even in eastern Connecticut, many of the seabirds that do occur are probably never seen by birders. With our lack of "Sound-watching" and winter boating, I can see why several voters found 10+ species more likely to be seen and documented in Connecticut. Still, you'd think one would wash up on a beach somewhere…

13
Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
(3 lists, 17 points)

This species, formerly considered conspecific with American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*), presents another difficult identification that is based largely on voice and structure. There are few local records of this species, but the identification did not receive the attention it deserved before the two species were split in the mid 1990s. Consequently, most eastern records have come over the past 10 years. Here

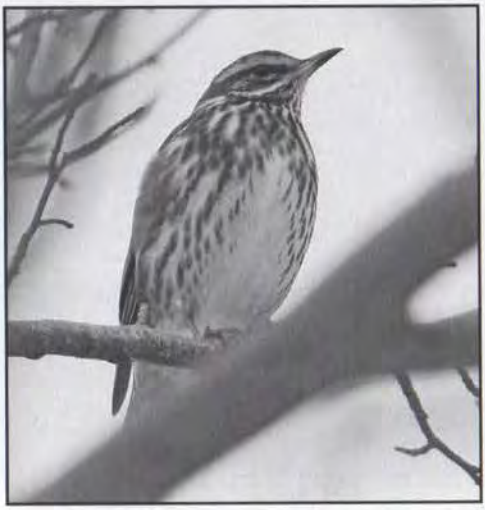
is a quick summary of those sightings: Maine (1911), New Jersey (2001), Massachusetts (2002), New York (2003), Rhode Island (reported 2007, under review).

The Pacific Golden-Plover breeds on the Siberian tundra eastward to Alaska, where it overlaps slightly with American Golden-Plover. The heart of its winter range lies in southern Asia and Australia, with smaller numbers wintering along the United States' west coast. While studies suggest that interbreeding does not occur between fulva and dominica, a probable hybrid has been recorded in New Jersey. This just goes to show that while hybridization in shorebirds is quite rare, all possibilities should be considered, especially with out-of-range birds.

14

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*
(3 lists, 13 points)

The Redwing is an abundant Eurasian thrush closely related to our American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). It breeds from Greenland east to Siberia and winters in southern Eurasia and northern Africa. The Greenland population is currently small but apparently just established in the 1970s,



Bruce Mactavish photo

Redwing

indicating westward expansion. Since there have been only about a dozen accepted records in North America, Redwing is a red letter bird anywhere on our continent. Many of those sightings have occurred over the past five years in northeastern states and provinces, perhaps reflecting the recent range expansion. The most likely time to find this species in Connecticut is between December and early April. Not surprisingly, Redwings often associate with robins when seen on this side of the Labrador Sea. So be sure to sort through every robin in search of this "mega" and, for that matter, Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*), which received one vote by the panel.

15

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*

(3 lists, 9 points)

Taking a glance at the Top 15 vote-getters, it shouldn't take one very long to realize that our panel comprises several "larophiles," a masochistic group of birders who spend hours at landfills sorting through gull flocks in search of nearly unidentifiable rarities. Black-tailed Gull is the third gull to make the list (that's one-fifth of the entire Top 15!), and it happens to be the most easily identifiable gull on the list. It is also unique in that it may appear in any month of the year, whereas most rare gulls are seen exclusively during the winter months. More good news: you may not have to stand among heaps of trash to find Connecticut's first. Keep an eye out for this species anywhere along the coast where it may be seen with other medium-sized gulls such as Ring-billed Gulls.

Regional records of Black-tailed Gull include the following: Nova Scotia (May-June 1997), Vermont (Oct 2005), Massachusetts (July 2004), Rhode Island (summer 1995), New York (Jan-Feb 1999 and Jan 2001), and New Jersey (Dec 1998).

The Tropical Storm: A Wild Card

No single weather event gets an East Coaster's blood pumping more than the threat of a hurricane or tropical

storm. The devastation and destruction that can accompany such a ferocious cyclone is certainly enough to keep us from wishing for landfall. Yet nobody can argue the fact that these storms give us an exceptional opportunity to glimpse seabirds that we would otherwise never see from land in Connecticut. While I am not going to delve into the dynamics and strategies of hurricane birding (let's save that for another day), our next tropical storm has the potential to deliver several first state records in a single day. Consider the possibilities. Band-rumped Storm-petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird, South Polar Skua, Great Skua. How about Herald Petrel, Red-billed Tropicbird, Brown Booby, Masked Booby, and Brown Noddy? None of these species are on the state list, yet all are possible in the wake of a hurricane.

Each of the birders on the panel is well aware of this possibility, but only Brown Booby received a vote. Glenn Williams probably summed up everyone's thoughts with, "I left off the southern 'hurricane birds' because of the infrequency of hurricanes and Connecticut's pelagic limitations. But if and when another one hits, it may bring multiple state firsts with it."

Table 1. Complete Rankings

Rank		Votes	Points
1	Townsend's Warbler	13	117
2	Swainson's Warbler	11	68
3	Black-chinned Hummingbird	10	70
4	Little Egret	6	39
5	California Gull	6	28
6	White-winged Tern	6	19
t7	Allen's Hummingbird	5	29
t7	Hammond's Flycatcher	5	29
9	Slaty-backed Gull	4	30
10	Garganey	4	18
11	Northern Lapwing	4	15

12	Common Murre	3	26
13	Pacific Golden Plover	3	17
14	Redwing	3	13
15	Black-tailed Gull	3	9
16	Shiny Cowbird	2	16
17	Western Meadowlark	2	14
18	Rock Wren	2	13
19	Reddish Egret	2	12
20	Vermillion Flycatcher	2	11
21	White-tailed Kite	2	9
22	Lesser Sand-Plover	2	7
23	Yellow-legged Gull	2	6
t24	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	2	5
t24	Sage Thrasher	2	5
26	Lewis' Woodpecker	2	4
27	Great-tailed Grackle	2	2
28	Inca Dove	1	9
t29	Long-billed Murrelet	1	8
t29	Trumpeter Swan	1	8
t31	Black-throated Sparrow	1	7
t31	Common Ground Dove	1	7
t31	Lesser Nighthawk	1	7
34	Anna's Hummingbird	1	6
t35	Fieldfare	1	5
t35	Western Wood-pewee	1	5
t37	Gray Jay	1	4
t37	Western Reef-heron	1	4
39	Eurasian Kestrel	1	3
t40	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	1	2
t40	Cassin's Sparrow	1	2
t40	Clark's Grebe	1	2
t43	Brown Booby	1	1

t43	Common Chaffinch	1	1
t43	Common Ringed Plover	1	1
t43	Mountain Plover	1	1
t43	Violet-green Swallow	1	1

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21ST CENTURY BREEDING-SEASON BIRDS OF ATON FOREST

By Shelley E. Harms, Roland C. Clement and John P. Anderson, Jr.

Aton Forest is a 1,100-acre preserve in Norfolk and Colebrook, Conn., at the Massachusetts border, centered on 42.01 degrees N, 73.08 degrees W. At elevations of between 1250 and 1655 feet, it is part of the Berkshire Plateau, and the northern character of its hardwood forests is quite unusual in Connecticut.

Over a seven-year period, we have developed a list of birds known to occur at Aton Forest during the breeding season. These are Aton Forest's "breeding-season birds of the 21st century." We used three different methods to develop the list. Our methodologies and the different results obtained by each may be of interest to other large landowners interested in determining what birds are using their property.

The Aton Forest breeding bird list includes 94 species (Table 1). The three methods used to create the list are as follows:

- First are confirmed sightings by researchers at Aton Forest, in particular bird observations recorded by Roland Clement when he spent two summer months in 2001 at the Aton Forest research cabin. Clement's observations were concentrated on a large beaver pond and the meadow and "edge" habitats surrounding the cabin. Clement observed 40 species, and other researchers have added two more to the list.
- In 2002, Shelley Harms and John Anderson established a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) station at Aton Forest near the beaver pond. The MAPS station contains two habitat types, one of the northern hardwoods - red oak, yellow birch, beech and sugar maple with a floor of ferns; the other a higher and drier habitat dominated by hemlock, with sparse ground cover. The MAPS methodology involves seven mornings at the site, from June – August, during which Harms and her interns

monitor 12 mist nets. The birds captured are banded and measured, and all bird species seen or heard at the station during the 7 hours of each session are recorded. In six years at the MAPS station, 69 species have been observed and individuals from 37 of these species have been captured.

- Also in 2002, Harms and Anderson began doing point counts covering large portions and all habitat types of Aton Forest. Three transect lines crossing Aton Forest were established, known as the North, Middle and South lines. A total of 31 points were established at 200-meter intervals along the lines. By mapping these points on a forest cover/age map, Anderson has shown that the points are located in 11 different habitats: Red Oak/Mixed Hardwoods of three different ages, White Pine/Hemlock/Mixed Hardwoods of two different ages, Mixed Hardwoods age 60-80+ years, Open Water/Marsh/Shrub/Swamp, Northern Hardwoods of two different age classes, Hemlock age 60-80+ years, and Hemlock/Northern Hardwoods, age 40-60+ years. Harms and Anderson traversed these lines at least once each year from 2002 – 2006, and recorded the birds seen or heard during 10-minute intervals at each point. In 2007, John Anderson traversed these lines and recorded the birds with Robert Mueller. In seven years of point counts, 84 species have been observed.

Obviously, the sum of the three methods is greater than any one of them. None accounts for all 94 species of birds observed at Aton Forest during the breeding season over the past six years.

Point counts, which cover the greatest variety of habitats, come closest to the total, with 84 species. Limitations of point counts are that they have generally occurred only early in the season, and only in the morning hours. Also, the point count methodology only allows the observer to remain stationary for 10 minutes, while the other methods allow more sustained time periods for observation. The advantages of point counts are that this type of study does yield the most species, and it allows us to determine relative abundance and

habitat utilization.

The MAPS study observations closely parallel the point counts. Only one species, Spotted Sandpiper, was observed during MAPS but not during point counts. The total number of species observed during the MAPS study, 69, is less than the number observed during point counts, probably because the MAPS station covers two habitats as opposed to the point counts' 11. However, the MAPS study has the advantage of certainty, particularly when a bird is captured. The interplay of MAPS with the point counts has helped us refine and verify our list of breeding-season birds. MAPS also yields more detailed information for confirming that a species is breeding at Aton Forest (e.g., presence of a brood patch, capture of juveniles, etc.). Furthermore, the MAPS data we collect becomes part of the continent-wide MAPS study that contributes larger-scale knowledge to the field of ornithology.

Clement and other researchers contributed eight species not observed in either MAPS or the point counts. Clement in particular, with 40 recorded species, observed six species not included in either the MAPS or point count studies. Clement's observations were more sustained, and included observations during afternoon and evening hours that were not covered by MAPS or the point counts. This, along with the fact that he spent more time on a wetland, may account for the fact that Clement recorded birds such as Great Horned Owl, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser and Green Heron that have not been observed during either MAPS or point counts. Clement also noted observations of breeding and other behavior. Thus, the value of the reliable observer cannot be overstated.

In addition to recording the presence of a species of bird, each type of monitoring study helps to add to our knowledge of which birds are actually breeding at Aton Forest, which birds use which particular habitats, what is the relative abundance of each species, and more. As the years

progress, we will be able to monitor trends. Our list of birds will continue to grow and become more nuanced as the 21st century progresses.

Table 1. Aton Forest breeding-season birds and methods of detection.
* = captured in mist net

Aton Forest Birds	Source		
	Clement & Researchers	MAPS	Point Counts
1. Canada goose	X	X	X
2. Wood duck	X	X	X
3. Mallard	X	X	
4. American black duck			X
5. Common merganser	X		
6. Hooded merganser	X		
7. Ruffed grouse	X		
8. Wild turkey		X	X
9. Great blue heron	X	X	X
10. Green heron	X		
11. Turkey vulture	X	X	X
12. Cooper's hawk	X	X*	X
13. Northern goshawk	X		
14. Red-shouldered hawk			X
15. Broad-winged hawk			X
16. Red-tailed hawk		X	X
17. Spotted sandpiper		X	
18. American woodcock	X		X
19. Mourning dove	X	X	X
20. Black-billed cuckoo		X	X
21. Yellow-billed cuckoo			X

22. Great horned owl	X		
23. Barred owl		X	X
24. Chimney swift			X
25. Ruby-throated hummingbird	X	X*	X
26. Belted kingfisher	X	X	X
27. Red-bellied woodpecker	X		
28. Yellow-bellied sapsucker	X	X*	X
29. Downy woodpecker		X*	X
30. Hairy woodpecker	X	X*	X
31. Northern flicker	X	X	X
32. Pileated woodpecker		X	X
33. Eastern wood pewee	X	X*	X
34. Acadian flycatcher			X
35. Alder flycatcher			X
36. Willow flycatcher			X
37. Least flycatcher		X*	X
38. Eastern phoebe	X	X*	X
39. Great crested flycatcher		X	X
40. Eastern kingbird	X	X	X
41. Yellow-throated vireo	X	X	X
42. Blue-headed vireo	X	X*	X
43. Warbling vireo			X
44. Red-eyed vireo	X	X*	X
45. Blue jay		X*	X
46. American crow		X	X
47. Common raven	X	X	X
48. Tree swallow	X	X	X
49. Barn swallow			X
50. Black-capped chickadee		X*	X
51. Tufted titmouse		X*	X
52. White-breasted nuthatch		X*	X
53. Brown creeper	X	X*	X

54. Winter wren		X*	X
55. Blue-gray gnatcatcher			X
56. Veery		X*	X
57. Hermit thrush		X*	X
58. Wood thrush		X*	X
59. American robin	X	X*	X
60. Gray catbird		X*	X
61. Cedar waxwing	X	X	X
62. Blue-winged warbler			X
63. Nashville warbler	X		
64. Northern parula			X
65. Yellow warbler		X	X
66. Chestnut-sided warbler		X*	X
67. Magnolia warbler	X	X	X
68. Black-throated blue warbler		X*	X
69. Yellow-rumped warbler		X*	X
70. Black-throated green warbler		X*	X
71. Blackburnian warbler		X*	X
72. Black and white warbler		X*	X
73. American redstart		X*	X
74. Worm-eating warbler		X	X
75. Ovenbird		X*	X
76. Northern waterthrush			X
77. Common yellowthroat	X	X*	X
78. Canada warbler		X	X
79. Scarlet tanager		X*	X
80. Eastern towhee		X*	X
81. Chipping sparrow		X*	X
82. Song sparrow	X	X*	X
83. Swamp sparrow		X*	X
84. Dark-eyed junco		X	X
85. Northern cardinal		X	X

86. Indigo bunting			X
87. Rose-breasted grosbeak	X	X	X
88. Bobolink	X		X
89. Red-winged blackbird	X	X	X
90. Common grackle	X	X	X
91. Brown-headed cowbird	X	X*	X
92. Baltimore oriole	X	X*	X
93. Purple finch		X	X
94. American goldfinch	X	X	X

Shelley E. Harms is a licensed bird bander who has conducted MAPS and point count studies at Aton Forest from 2002 - 2007.

Roland C. Clement is a former vice president of the National Audubon Society and the author of several books about birds. Clement was also the first president of COA.

John P. Anderson, Jr. is the executive director of Aton Forest, Inc. and the Aton Forest Research Fellow.

All three are members of the Board of Directors of Aton Forest, Inc. The help of bird bander Ronald V. Harms, Aton Forest, Inc. Director Robert Mueller, and interns Caroline Becker, Katharine Becker, Kai Reed, Janice Becker, and Daniel Torrey is gratefully acknowledged. Researchers who are interested in learning more about Aton Forest and opportunities for study should contact Anderson at contact@atonforest.org.

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

Peterson, Roger Tory 2007 All Things Reconsidered. My Birding Adventures. Xii+354 pg. Houghton Mifflin, New York. $14.95 (pb). ISBN 9-780618-926152.

This volume is a collection of essays RTP* wrote for Birder Watchers Digest and is edited by Bill Thompson III. It includes essays published from 1984 to 1996. Peterson died in 1996 so some presumably were published posthumously, but they cover aspects of his entire life and career. They are historically significant as considerable autobiographical material is included. There are very few images, which showcases Peterson's capacities as a writer. The text is lively, the topics diverse and the contents rich. The book is fascinating and fun to read, in great measure because it feels so personal. The tales weave their way through RTPs very public life and produce the sense of his pleasure in recounting events and various people who influenced his life. History accentuates his accomplishments. He was clearly more than one of the world's leading birdwatchers. By the way, Chapter 2 presents his taxonomy of the categories of those who enjoy this delightful activity (e.g., ornithologists, twitchers, listers, etc.). Thompson has carefully selected essays representative of RTPs broad contributions and his adventures with the famous and the not-so-famous. The collection manages to demonstrate his contributions to field identification, art, conservation, and as a photographer and educator. RTP traveled broadly and graphically recounts many of these adventures, especially regarding birds and birders. There is no mention of a life list, but he does recount how he became involved in art. While famous for his inventiveness in field guide art, he was a world-class wildlife artist and he recounts his indebtedness to many of the major bird artists of the 20th century.

Two biographies of Peterson have appeared. The first in 1977

The World of Roger Tory Peterson—An Authorized Biography, by John Delvin & Grace Naismith was published by NYTimes Books (ISBN 0-8129-0694-2) and the more recent (2007) by Douglas Carlson Roger Tory Peterson: A Biography published in the Mildred Wyatt-World Series in Ornithology (ISBN 978-0-292-71680-3). The material in All Things Reconsidered nicely bridges the gap between the two. More importantly, it is in Peterson's own words, which provides insights into his personality not otherwise available. The essays, organized chronologically, reflect a broad view of his life. He writes with verve and humor about his youth, growing-up, becoming an artist, his adventures and especially the folks he knew. This makes the book both informative and entertaining.

For a good part of his life RTP was a Connecticut resident. In "An Update from the Cedars" he reminisces about life here and begins with the question "Why do I live in Connecticut?" The reasons, of course, are many. Some significant, some mundane. He does take time to describe many of the changes in the local wildlife over the 40 years or so he was in residence. The effect is telling, as his words are so relevant to the awareness of conservation that dominated his life. RTP was from the school that captured birds with binoculars, not with a gun. But he was rooted in the old school of birders who wanted to spend time with one bird, rather than identify it, mark the list, and begin looking for the next one. He observed intensely as he transformed the field identification of birds.

Peterson published his first field guide in 1934. This event enabled people without special training to identify birds, and as a consequence he popularized bird-watching and nature study. A Field Guide to the Birds, a phenomenon for Houghton Mifflin, now is a series with over 50 titles. On the order of 20 million copies have been published. Peterson used his painting and writing to support efforts in conservation, increase public awareness of wildlife, and advance various efforts that have yielded new information on bird

distribution, times of occurrence, populations and habitat. He died just at the start of the widespread public awareness of global climate change. Nevertheless, he was well aware, and involved with, the effects on bird numbers of DDT, ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect, and habitat change. Clearly a spokesperson for conservation, in one of his essays RTP recounts seeing an Ivory-Billed Woodpecker in May 1942. He was in the Singer Tract only a few months after Tanner's notable study and probably saw the same birds. No photos were mentioned.

This book was a pleasure to read. I met Peterson only once. He was chair at the session of the annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union when I gave my first paper at a national meeting. I don't think I impressed him, but then I never asked. What is important is his ability to express feeling the 'gestalt' of being in the field; or wondering why birds do what they do and where they do it: and then capturing it elegantly in a painting.

* These initials are used here as that seems to be the way most folks referred to him. It in no way is meant to be disrespectful.

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

A Predator By Any Other Name

Herons are best-known for their ability to catch fish, frogs and other creatures of wetland habitats, but like most predators they are superb opportunists. Paul Fusco knew a good opportunity when he saw one as well. He quickly snapped the photograph above when an American Bittern arose from the marsh grasses at Hammonasset State Pak in Madison on 24 Aug 2007. That's a large vole in its bill.

A Piece of the Migration Puzzle

On 15 Aug 2007 Frank Mantlik observed a color-banded shorebird that he identified as a Semipalmated Sandpiper at Grace Salmon Park along the Saugatuck River in Westport. The upper left leg had a lime green flag with the nota-

tion PK3. The upper right leg had an aluminum band. After inquiries he directed a report to Lesley-Anne Howes , a bird banding biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service. She was able to learn from Patti Hodgetts, a research associate with New Jersey Audubon Society, that the bird was banded on 3 June 2007 at Money Island, N.J., on Delaware Bay near Fortesque.

Unusual Northern Shrike Feeding Habits

The winter of 2007-08 was one to remember for finches. Another species that made an invasion was the Northern Shrike. In Hartford County, shrikes seemed to be found in every farm field along the Farmington and Connecticut rivers. Shrikes were even found in residential neighborhoods and golf courses. This winter's invasion allowed me to closely observe and learn about this species' interesting hunting habits.

Typically perched atop a tall tree or shrub, the Northern Shrike always appears to be harmless and non-predatory. But when a small bird or rodent moves into striking range, it will reveal its true nature and pursue prey in a relentless fashion. This season, I had the opportunity to observe two shrike kills involving an American Goldfinch and American Tree Sparrow. Both of these birds were captured after an intense chase. Shrikes reportedly grab birds in flight with their powerful feet and kill their prey by biting through the nape.

There were other times that I found shrikes to be hunting in a more uncharacteristic manner. One morning while birding in the Farmington Meadows, I came upon a large thicket that I thought might be good for sparrows. I didn't find any sparrows, but I did hear a bird buried deep in the tangles that sounded like a Carolina Wren or Northern Mockingbird. To my surprise, the songster in the bush turned out to be a Northern Shrike! I have since learned that shrikes can navigate a thicket quite easily by hopping on the ground or among branches for small birds or mammals. They will even

Paul Fusco photo

Here's an immature Northern Shrike that was part of the invasion.

use wing flashes to flush prey from cover just as mockingbirds do. The shrike that had just popped out of the tangle in front of me quickly flew to another thicket a hundred yards away and disappeared into it. I was starting to realize that shrikes hunt just as easily from within a thicket as they do from the top of one.

I also noted an adult shrike catching voles at my backyard feeder and another bird picking at a road killed gray squirrel. There was even a kestrel-like moment in South Windsor when one shrike hovered over a field for a few moments as it looked for food.

The Northern Shrike's ability to adjust to different hunting situations makes it one of North America's most proficient predators. This year I found the shrikes' hunting habits to be much more versatile than I had ever imagined.

Paul Cianfaglione

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Autumn, August 1 through November 30, 2007
By Greg Hanisek

Geese continue on a boom cycle. There were nine Greater White-fronted Goose and six Cackling Goose reports for the season. A **Barnacle Goose** returned to Newtown on Nov. 2 (LBr). The first two Blue-winged Teal were noted Aug. 17 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (FM); high counts were 10 on Aug. 29 at Lord Cove in Old Lyme (HG) and 12 in Meriden on Sept. 29 (ABa). A Redhead visited Bristol Reservoir No. 7 on Oct. 27 (PCa). Seven Common Eider for the season included three that flew by Cove Island Park in Stamford on Oct. 8 (PDu). Six Surf Scoters dropped in at Bantam Lake in Litchfield on Oct. 11 (MD). A White-winged Scoter was unseasonable Sept. 9 at Sandy Point (JHo). A nice flock of 41 Black Scoters hit Batterson Pond, Farmington, on Oct. 25 (PCi). A male Barrow's X Common Goldeneye hybrid was found Nov. 25 off Seaside Park, Bridgeport (BF). Bristol Reservoir held c. 560 Ruddy Ducks on Oct. 30 (PCa).

Bruce Finnan photo

A hybrid goldeneye, Nov 25 at Seaside Park, Bridgepoert.

A walk through woods in Barkhamsted and Hartland on Aug. 13 flushed four Ruffed Grouse, a species in steep decline in the state (PCa). A flight of 150 Common Loons on Oct 9 over Lighthouse Point in New Haven also included 220 Double-crested Cormorants (BBa); 940 Double-crested Cormorants passed Lighthouse on Oct. 26 (DC). A staging flock of 25 Pied-billed Grebes was on North Farms Reservoir, Wallingford, on Oct. 30 (SG). The first of just five Red-necked Grebes for the season was at Bantam Lake, Litchfield, on Oct. 6 (JE). An adult **American White Pelican** was seen flying over the Saugatuck River in Westport on Aug. 8 (BG) and again the next day flying over Cockenoe Island, Westport (AH).

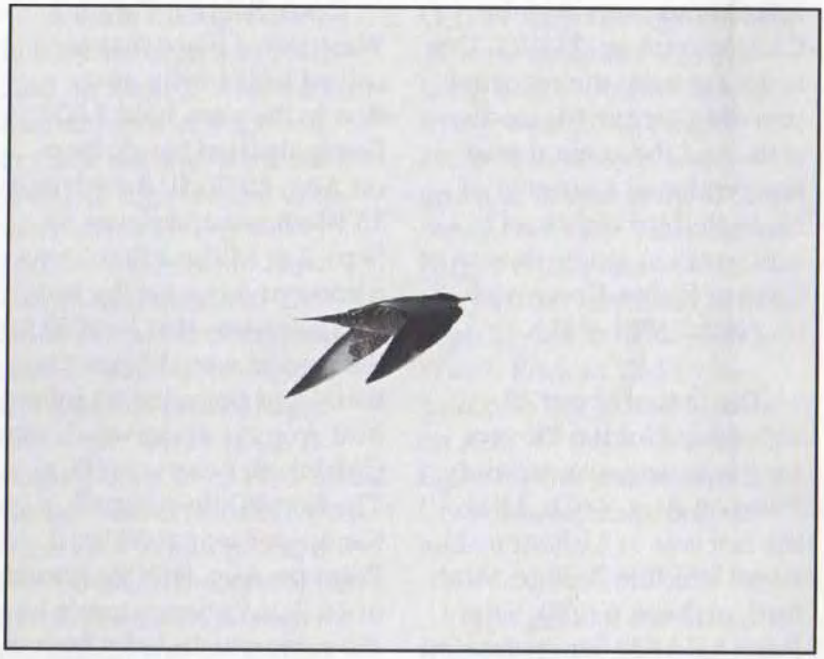
American Bittern reports numbered 14 for the season. We continue to do well with this species in fall and winter, when there seems to be significant use of coastal marshes. A late Least Bittern was in Old Lyme on Oct. 31 (HG). A major flight of 212 Great Blue Herons passed over Lighthouse Point on Oct. 9 (BBa); the night before 34 were observed leaving Long Beach, Stratford, and flying west (FM). Single Little Blue Herons were unusual inland at the UConn campus in West Hartford on Aug. 8 (DLu) and at Cemetery Pond, Litchfield, from Sept. 21-Oct. 6 (DRo et al.). Watch Rock in Old Lyme held two Tricolored Herons on Aug. 17 (HG). One Cattle Egret for the season was at Cove Island, Stamford, on Nov. 4 (DV).

The peak of the Broad-winged Hawk flight was Sept. 16, when Quaker Ridge in Greenwich had 4,800 (BBi). A full account of the statewide hawk flight will appear in a future issue. A good concentration of at least 16 American Kestrels was at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks on Sept. 15 (RTe). At least 25 Soras were seen and more heard Sept. 27 in coves in the lower Connecticut River (HG), with 15 the same day at high tide at Milford Point (MB). The earliest report was from Stratford on Aug. 13 (RPe). The season's only Common Moorhen was at Station 43 on Oct. 14 (JK). Four **Sand-**

hill Cranes were seen in Canaan on Aug. 23 (JR). This is not far from the reported breeding area in Massachusetts, and the general area has produced a number of multiple-bird sightings in recent years. A single flew over Quaker Ridge, Greenwich, on Nov. 7 (BBi et al.).

The first of about 20 American Golden Plovers for the season was at Sandy Point on Aug. 7 (CL, LBa); the last was at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, on Nov. 6 (CB). Sandy Point held 350 Semipalmated Plovers on Aug. 6 (TA), and 350 were at McKinney on Aug. 20 (FM). Migrant Upland Sandpipers appeared at Sherwood Island on Aug. 8 (LT) and at Rocky Hill Meadows on Aug. 13 (PCi). Five Whimbrel flew by Sandy Point on Sept. 11 (NB). Single Hudsonian Godwits were at Sandy Point on Sept. 3 (BA et al.), a fly-by at Cove Island in Stamford Sept. 10 (PDu) and a lame bird at HBSP on Nov. 11-12 (ER et al.). Marbled Godwits were at Milford Point on Aug. 5 (NB) and at Sandy Point from Aug. 9-19 (BD, PF et al.).

Grace Salmon Park in Westport, a place that received little birder attention in the past, held 2,500 Semipalmated Sandpipers on Aug. 15 (FM). A high of 15 Western Sandpipers on Sept. 2 at Milford Point was a good number for the state (FM); reports of at least 35 for the season were higher than usual and included an inland bird Aug. 11 at drawn-down Colebrook Reservoir (PCa). The first White-rumped Sandpiper was at Milford Point on Aug. 5 (NB). A total of 16 Baird's Sandpiper's for the season included a high of five on Sept. 12 at Rocky Hill Meadows (JSz) and late ones at McKinney Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, on Oct. 21 (JHo) and at HBSP on Oct. 23(JSz). Rocky Hill Meadows held 16 Pectoral Sandpipers on Aug. 11 (PCi). Two Dunlin were inland Oct 11 at Station 43 in South Windsor (DM). A Stilt Sandpiper, one of seven for the season, was a good inland find Sept. 11 at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford (PCi). Rocky Hill Meadows attracted the first of 15 Buff-breasted Sandpipers for the season on Aug. 22 (ER), with a high of six on Sept. 8 (JH, PCo). A good flight of Short-



Mark Jankura photo

An immature Parasitic Jaeger, Oct. 12 at Lighthouse Point.

billed Dowitchers in early August produced unusually high counts, including 350 at Milford Point on Aug. 4 (LT). This group included at least six of the *hendersoni* subspecies. A juvenile was inland Aug. 29-30 at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (TA). A half-dozen reports of Long-billed Dowitcher included one inland bird on Oct. 3-6 at Great Pond in Simsbury (JMe et al.).

Three **Parasitic Jaegers** for the season solidifies this species' trend from less-than-annual to rare-but-regular in Long Island Sound: one harassing Laughing Gulls off Greenwich Point on Sept. 10 (BO); an immature off Lighthouse Point on Sept. 12 (DB, MJ et al.); and one passing Shippan Point, Stamford, on Oct. 25 (PDu). About 700 Laughing Gulls were off Shippan Point on Nov. 3 (GH). A juvenile Bonaparte's Gull made an early inland appearance Aug. 10 at Batterson Pond, Farmington, (PCi). An adult Caspian Tern trailed by a begging juvenile flew by Cove Island, Stam-

ford, on Sept. 7 (PDu), and two were at HBSP on Sept. 25 (GN) and Oct. 6 (JCo). A **Sandwich Tern** found July 31 at the mouth of the Housatonic River was still present Aug. 1 at Short Beach, Stratford (CB et al.). The best count of Roseate Terns was eight on Aug. 4 at Griswold Point, Old Lyme (NB). Eight late Common Terns were with 36 Forster's Terns off Stamford on Nov. 3 (PDu), and two were in Westport Nov. 8 with 60 Forster's Terns (LT). Black Tern generated just five reports, all in August and all coastal. A late Black Skimmer was at Greenwich Point on Oct. 21 (SB)

The **White-winged Dove** that first appeared in February at a Branford feeder was still present Sept. 16 (DLo). A **Common Ground-Dove**, a first state record and easily the bird of the season, was identified and photographed Oct. 22 at a feeding station set up in an industrial area/landfill in East Haven (JZi, DS et mult. al.). It was present to at least Nov. 22. A late Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Millstone Point, Waterford, on Nov. 5 (DP), and a cuckoo sp., probably Black-billed, was at Lighthouse Point on Nov. 9 (LJ et al.). The only Barn Owl report came from Lighthouse Point on Oct. 27 (RDo). Five reports of Short-eared Owl included one inland at Southbury Training School on Nov. 12 (RB, NC). Migrating flocks of Common Nighthawks were reported throughout the state Aug. 24-28. The largest flocks reported were in the 100-to-150-range, unlike recent years when a number of bigger flocks were noted. We have very little information about the back end of Whip-poor-wills' presence in the state, so one calling Sept. 5 in Somers was worth noting (GG).

The best count of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds was 41 on Sept. 4 at Lighthouse Point (GH). A sub-adult Rufous Hummingbird first seen on Oct. 8 in Mystic eventually settled in at a feeder and remained into February (GW). Single Selasphorus were seen in Willington in mid-October (CEl) and in Tolland in early November (MSz). An unidentified hummingbird in Thompson was last seen on Nov. 24 (JA). Only four Red-headed Woodpeckers for the season

statewide was far below normal. Lighthouse Point, which usually records a number of multiple-bird days, had an amazing zero birds for the entire autumn. Bluff Point in Groton recorded 400 Northern Flickers on Sept. 24 (FM)

The first of seven Olive-sided Flycatcher reports came from Greenwich Audubon Center on Aug. 13 (TG). The first of 11 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers was at Bakerville Swamp in New Hartford on Aug. 20 (PCa); five were in a morning flight at Bluff Point on Sept. 1 (GW et al.). **Western Kingbirds** were at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 20 (DB) and at Bakerville Swamp Nov. 4-14 (BD et al.). In a significant movement with swallows on Aug. 26, a count of 240 Eastern Kingbirds was made at Greenwich Point (MSa). A late individual was at Barn Island, Stonington, on Oct. 28 (NB). A good Northern Shrike flight, beginning with one on Oct. 24 in Litchfield (RBe), produced at least 16 reports.

Hidden in plain sight among the massive six-figure Phragmites roost of Tree Swallows in August and early September in the lower Connecticut River is a significant concentration of Purple Martins. HG has been observing the birds coming in at dusk for several years and took GH out in a boat on Aug. 6 in an attempt to quantify them. From an anchored vantage point near the roost, they estimated 300 to 400 martins. HG's additional visits suggest the peak number may approach 1,000. A Northern Rough-winged Swallow was found at the sewer plant next to East Shore Park, New Haven, on the late date of Nov. 10 (NB). The number gradually grew to four, which stayed there through the end of the period (m.ob.) and deep into winter.

The first two **Cave Swallows** appeared on Nov. 7 at Milford Point (DV). Lighthouse Point birds were: one on Nov. 9 (DC), one on Nov. 11 (SMa), three on Nov. 16 (DS), one on Nov. 19 (GH) and one on Nov. 23(DC et al.). Three settled in at the sewer plant next to East Shore Park, New Haven, on Nov. 10 and stayed through the period (NB et al.). Others included one in Southport on Nov. 17 (ER); one in East Haven on Nov. 23 (DS); and

two at HBSP on Nov. 23 (JHo et al.). A Barn Swallow was seen on Nov. 9 at HBSP (NB).

A good Black-capped Chickadee fight brought 350 to Bluff Point on Sept. 24 (FM), 300 to Lighthouse Point on Oct. 1 and 840 to Lighthouse on Oct. 2 (BBa). A flurry of Red-breasted Nuthatch reports Aug. 13-15 marked the beginning of what developed into a major flight, with birds reported from all parts of the state and settling in at feeders. In early September, morning flights at Bluff Point produced several counts in the 20-to-40 range (GW et al.). A very heavy pre-dawn flight of Veeries was reported Aug. 16 from Woodbury (RN). There were c. 30 reports of Swainson's Thrush and 18 of Gray-cheeked (sp) Thrush. A Wood Thrush was on the late side Oct. 8 at New Canaan Nature Center (FG).

The only Golden-winged Warbler detected on migration was at Greenwich Point on Sept. 12 (JWe). Four reports of Orange-crowned Warblers came from Winchester on Oct. 7 (DRo), Cove Island, Stamford, on Oct. 21 (PDu), East Haven on Oct. 22 (JZi) and Quaker Ridge on Oct. 28 (BO). Just three Cape May Warblers were reported: Aug. 24 in Winchester (DRo), Aug 27 in Harwinton (PCa) and Sept. 13 at Lighthouse Point (ER). The only Kentucky Warbler report came from a Bolton yard on Aug. 20 (EHr). The first of six Connecticut Warbler reports was from Cove Island on Sept. 13 (PDu). The first of seven Mourning Warbler reports came from Milford Point on Aug. 11 (CW). Notable flights at Bluff Point included: Sept. 13: more than 1,000 warblers of 18 species including 114 Am Redstarts (CEl); Sept. 16: more than 1,000 of 16 species (NB); and Sept. 24: c. 700 of 10 species including 30+ Blackpoll Warblers (FM).

Bluff Point recorded 45 Scarlet Tanagers on Sept. 24 (FM). **Clay-colored Sparrow** produced easily the highest seasonal total ever for the state, with at least 15 reported. The first was on Sept. 5 in Greenwich (BBi); all were singles except for two on Oct. 5 at Maricostas Preserve in Washington (PSt) and two at Lighthouse Point on Nov. 6 (DB). The first two Savan-

nah (Ipswich) Sparrows were at Milford Point on Nov. 10 (FG). Three Grasshopper Sparrows for the season were noteworthy for a species seldom detected away from breeding areas; singles were at Keeney Cove, Glastonbury, on Sept. 29 (ADa et al.); at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on Oct. 8 (CB); and at Silver Sands State Park, Milford, on Oct. 23 (ER, JCa). The first Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was at Long Beach, Stratford, on Sept. 18 (CB), with a high of 20 there on Oct. 24 (PCo). A state-record 25 Lincoln's Sparrows were in Glastonbury Meadows on Sept. 30 (ADa).

An adult **Harris's Sparrow** was found Nov. 3 at Allen's Meadow, Wilton (LT et al.). It was present through Nov. 6 and well-photographed. An adult White-crowned Sparrow of the western *gambelii* race was found Oct. 10 in

Walter Duncan photo

A gambelii White-crowned Sparrow, Oct. 10 in Wilton.

Wilton (LT), with another reported the next day in New Haven (MA). There was a very heavy and widespread movement of White-crowneds Oct. 15 -25, including 30 at one site in East Haven on Oct. 17 (DS). Three Lapland Longspurs were early arrivals Sept. 29 at Milford Point (DV). Five **Blue Grosbeaks** for the season were singles at Allen's Meadow in Wilton on Sept. 7 and on Oct 26 (LT), Smith Richardson Sanctuary in Westport on Oct. 9-13 (ER et al.); Cove Island, Stamford, on Oct. 19 (PDu), and HBSP on Nov. 4, a record late date (CT). Nine reports of Dickcissel were below recent totals, mainly because fewer were noted as flyovers at the hawk watches. Bobolink flights at Lighthouse Point included 835 on Sept. 9 (SMa). A post-breeding group of 20 Boat-tailed Grackles was at Stratford Great Meadows Aug. 20 (FG). By early September the flock totaled 28 birds (m.ob.).

One **Pine Grosbeak**, a herald of a good winter flight, was in Goshen Nov. 18 (NB, DS). By mid-September migrating Purple Finches were widespread and conspicuous. The peak flight days at Lighthouse Point were 600+ on Oct. 15 and c. 500 on Oct. 22, with several days of 200+ into early November (GH et al.). House Finch numbers seem to be recovering after the population crash tied to conjunctivitis. Lighthouse Point is one of the few places where movements of this species are easily detected: 750 were noted on Oct. 15 followed by 1,400 on Oct. 22 (GH et al.). The precursor of a flight that built into December, an immature **Red Crossbill** visited a feeder in Stratford Aug. 31-Sept. 1 (LM). A total of 27 were reported at scattered locations, primarily in November. The only **White-winged Crossbill** reported was in Barkhamsted on Nov. 4 (FZ). Beginning Nov 12, a significant Common Redpoll flight brought flocks to all parts of the state, including a few in the 50 to 100 range. Many flocks numbered 20 to 40. The first Pine Siskin was reported Sept. 23 in Barkhamsted (FZ), followed by a steady flight involving small flocks and feeder visitors through the season. The first Evening Grosbeak was reported Sept. 16 in

West Hartland (PCa). The flight built though the season with reports of at least 100 in primarily single-digit-sized flocks. The largest flock reported was 15 on Nov. 30 in West Hartland (PCa).

Mark Szantyr photo

Purple Finches staged a major autumn flight.

Observers - Jayne Amico, Ralph Amodei, Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade, Jim Bair (JBa), Bill Banks (BBa), Leon Barkman (LBr), Charles Barnard, Aaron Barriger (ABa), Dan Barvir, Larry Bauscher (LBa), Steve Beal, Joe Bear (JBe), Ray Belding (RBe), Brian Bielfelt (BBi), Joan Becker (JBk), Richard Becker (RBk), Nick Bonomo, Andy Brand (ABr), Milan Bull, Kevin Burgio, Dana Campbell, Jay Carlisle (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Linda Clancy, Jan Collins (JCl), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Neil Currie, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Buzz Devine, Paul Desjardins (PDe), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Mike Doyle, Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Les Ernhout, John Eykelhoff,

Bruce Finnan, Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Shari Gaurino, Rich Gedney, Bob Gerbe, Ted Gilman, Ken Goldsmith, Hank Golet, George Grant, Lorraine Gunderson, Ed Hagen (EHa), A.J. Hand, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris (EHr), Roy Harvey, Ted Hendrickson (THe), Phil Henson, Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway (THo), Julian Hough (JHo), Jim Hunter (JHu), Lynn James, Mark Jankura, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Brian Kleinman, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Scott Kruitbosch (SKr), Donna Lorello (DLo), Chris Loscalzo, Don Lukaszek (DLu), Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik, Linda Mantlik, John Marshall (JMr), Shaun Martin (SMr), John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo (SMa), Flo McBride, Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Mike Moccio (MMo), Marty Moore (MMr), Don Morgan, Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, John Ogren, Ann Orsillo, Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier (RPe), Roger Preston (RPr), Bev Propen, Dave Provencher, EJ Raynor, Jared Riva, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dean Rupp (DRu), Phil Rusch, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Tom Sayers, John Schwarz (JSz), Penny Solum (PSo), Dori Sosensky, Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Peary Stafford (PSt), Jerry Stage (JSt), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Marty Swanhall (MSw), Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Clay Taylor, Rollin Tebbetts (RTe), Luke Tiller, Brian Toal, Richard Trepp (RTr), John Triana, Dennis Varza, Charlotte Weston, Mike Warner, Jack Wells (JWe), Danny Williams, Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanowski (JWo), Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Joe Zeranski (JZe), Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp (JZi), Fran Zygmont.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

It's September, and creeping around a vegetated ditch, a small rail runs out into the open. Oblivious to your presence it shows no fear and skittishly goes about it's business. With good views of such a secretive species, it takes a few seconds for the bird to sink in.

The small, stubby bill and cocked tail with whitish vent (underside of tail) eliminate all the long-billed marsh rails – King, Clapper and Virginia. The pale mottling on the upper parts and relatively pale breast rule out juvenile Common Moorhen and leave us to consider one of the smaller crakes, Sora or Yellow Rail.

In life, the whitish mottled upper parts, overall yellowish-buff ground color and rather pale bill all suggest Yellow Rail rather than Sora. It is then that you realize you're not sure

what features on which to concentrate. Firstly, adult Soras sport their nice black face patch, yellow bill and gray breast year round, so we must be dealing with a juvenile Sora or an adult or juvenile Yellow Rail (which look essentially similar in both plumages).

In September, young Soras have a rather yellowish-brown juvenile plumage which is quickly replaced through the post-juvenile molt from around October onwards. After this molt, the juvenile looks darker, more gray, and some appear similar to adults but less striking. The rather white random speckling on the upper parts and wing coverts and diffuse vertical bars on the flanks are all features of juvenile Sora, not Yellow Rail.

Yellow Rails, as their name implies, are paler and buffier and show distinct yellowish "tramlines" across the whole of their upper parts and flanks The dark stripes in between these pale ones have narrow white transverse edgings, quite unlike the pattern shown by our mystery bird. Yellow Rails also have a stubbier bill and show darker ear coverts behind the eyes. If you get to see these features in the field you are indeed a very lucky individual. If you get to see the features in Connecticut, you are even luckier than the person above!

Habitat is another clue – Soras are much more likely to be seen out in the open areas around shallow, reed-fringed pools, whereas Yellow Rails are secretive and inhabit dense marshy areas and prairie grass. Yellow Rails are annual migrants through Connecticut; it's just that their habits and choice of impenetrable habitat make recording them difficult to say the least. Yellow Rails (based on a few sight records and records from surrounding states) appear to migrate through Connecticut a little later than September. Most likely, a Yellow Rail will be chanced upon as it is flushed, and the diagnostic white patch at the base of the secondaries will be obvious.

I have still to see a Yellow Rail in Connecticut or anywhere else for that matter. Frank Gallo and others were stunned to have one fly in off the sea and land in a bush at a Milford Big Sit in October 2005. After his excited phone call alerting me to it's presence "in the bush right in front of me... NOW!" I arrived, complete with a nice big speeding ticket, to find ten people looking at an empty bush. Still owe me that one Frank!

This juvenile Sora was photographed by myself at South Cape May Meadows in September.

Photo Challenge No. 61

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Editor

Greg Hanisek - 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708
(203) 754-4401 email: ghanisek@rep-am.com

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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.

Connecticut Ornithological Association
314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.ctbirding.org

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ABOUT OUR COVER

By Paul Carrier

Northern finches dominated birders' thoughts in winter 2007-08, as reports in our Field Notes section of this edition show. A star attraction, and the subject of our cover drawing by Paul Carrier of Harwinton, was the Pine Grosbeak.

DIARY OF A BIRDING GEEK:
Taverner's Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii taverneri*) in Connecticut

By Mark S. Szantyr

Editor's Note: This article is the answer to the Photo Challenge in the April issue. Please see the next Photo Challenge on the last page of this issue.

It was my birthday. Nov. 30, 2007. I was going to spend it birding to see what fortune this day had to offer. After killing my battery trying to photograph Horned Larks at Hammonassett Beach State Park in Madison and spending too much time trying to persuade a state park employee to jump my battery (I was finally successful though it took an amazing amount of pleading), I decided to head inland to the Lyman Farm Orchards and pond in Middlefield to see and photograph a Greater White-fronted Goose reported earlier in the week Well, my luck was holding. The White-fronted Goose was nowhere to be found.

Just before leaving, I was scanning a flock of Canada Geese and noticed a small-billed goose. Thinking I had found the Richardson's Cackling Goose, *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*, that had also been previously reported, I attempted to get photos. I was amazed at how difficult it was to keep track of this goose. Normally this smaller form sticks out from the larger Canada Geese. This bird, while smaller, was not really small. Richardson's Geese often appear frostier in the field and stand out from the darker Canadas. This bird did not. I noticed it was darker-breasted as well. Typically, Richardson's Cackling Goose is the palest breasted of the Cackling Goose forms.

This bird also showed a white collar between the black neck stocking and the darker breast. While most of the forms

of Cackling Goose can show this, I have never noted it on any Richardson's Goose I have seen. I kept studying the bird as I took photos (I would end up with about 200 images!!!). I noticed that the head was shaped differently from what I expect in Richardson's Goose. Rather than appearing square-headed with a steep forehead angle where the stubby little bill meets the head, this bird's profile was more rounded. The forehead seemed to continue from the slope of the bill. The neck seemed longer as well. The rounded head on this longer neck gave me a very different impression of this bird compared to the many Richardson's Geese I have seen.

One more thing seemed strange. I got glimpses of the underside of the bird's head as it fed, and I thought I saw a smudgy looking dark stripe from the base of the bill to the back of the white patch in the throat. This gular stripe is present in most Taverner's Geese and some other forms of

Figure 1 Richardson's Cackling Goose, B. h. hutchinsii Branford, New Haven Co., January 2007

Figure 2 Taverner's Cackling Goose, B. h. taverneri, Middlefield, Middlesex Co., 30 Nov 2007

Cackling Geese. I have never noted one on a Richardson's Cackling Goose.

On the way home I started thinking about what this bird could have been other than a weird Richardson's Cackling Goose. I remembered somewhere in the dusty archives of my memory that Taverner's Goose, which I know primarily from its appearance in the British pages at Surfbirds.com, shows a sloping head shape. Not having the proper references with me, I made good use of my hands-free cell phone adapter and called Nick Bonomo, as we had recently been discussing this form of goose. After our conversation and after returning home to check references, I was more sure of my ID as Taverner's Goose. I sent the images to three West Coast experts on the Cackling Goose complex. I asked Steve Mlodinow, Bruce Deuel and Larry Semo to comment on my images and written description. These guys bird the West Coast and Rocky Mountain West and have an opportunity to see all the forms of Cackling Geese and all the smaller forms of Canada Geese. In fact, I had been collaborating with Steve

Mlodinow by supplying images for an upcoming article he is doing on the identification of the forms of Cackling Geese. All of them responded that they were sure this bird was *Branta hutchinsii taverneri*, or Taverner's Cackling Goose. All of their analyses cited the bill and head shape, the size and neck length, plumage coloration, the darker breast with collar, and the dark gular stripe as being very supportive of this identification. Richardson's Cackling Goose was eliminated in the same ways, and Lesser Canada Goose, *B.c. Parvipes*, was similarly eliminated.

Figure 3 Taverner's Cackling Goose (right) with Canada Geese, 30 Nov 2007, Middlefield

Interestingly, in October 2007 a Taverner's Cackling Goose was identified and photographed in Amherst, Mass., by James P. Smith. That bird appears very similar to the Connecticut bird, and questions can be raised if in fact it is the same individual. To my knowledge, this is the first documented record of this subspecies for Connecticut, possibly the first record of any sort.
I am quoting from "The Birds of North America Online" account for this subspecies:

"*B. c. taverneri* Delacour, 1951; type locality Colusa, CA. Taverner's (or Alaska) Goose. Breeds in low tundra vegetation along shorelines of major rivers and small braided streams, shorelines of small tundra ponds, and on islands in tundra ponds and lakes of Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, AK; breeding on the delta restricted to inland areas beyond the influence of tides, and extending inland to the north slope (Johnson et al. 1979, Jarvis and Bromley 1998). ..

Figure 4 Richardosn's Cackling Goose showing square, blocky, head shape.

Figure 5 Taverner's Cackling Goose showing sloped forehead and rounded head shape.

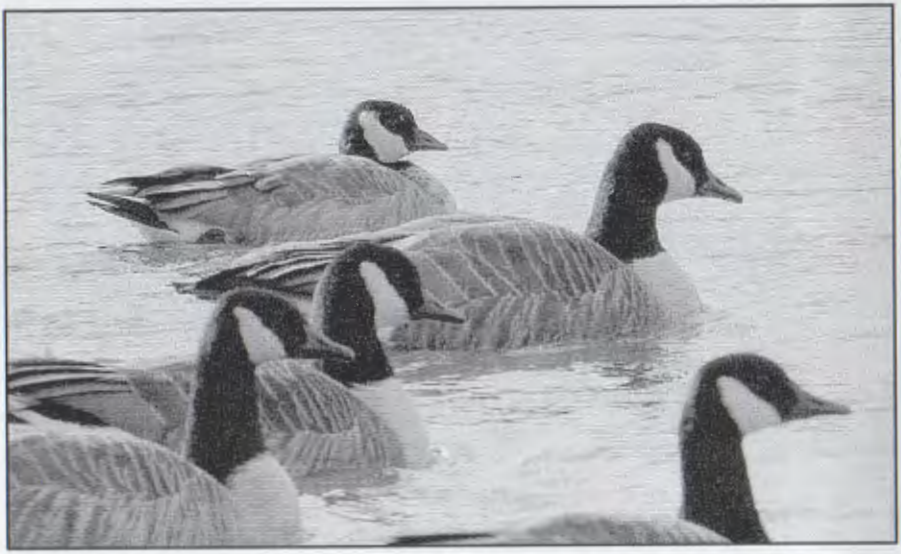

Figure 6 Richardson's Cackling Goose (rear) with Canada Geese showing small size, pale breast, short-necked appearance, stubby bill, and frostier overall plumage than Canada Geese.

Figure 7 Taverner's Cackling Goose (left) showing smaller size than Canadas but not as small as Richardson's Goose, rounded head, stubby bill, longer-necked appearance, and plumage similar in coloration to Canadas but with a darker breast.

Figure 8 Richardson's Cackling Goose showing pale breast.

Figure 9 Taverner's Cackling Goose showing darker breast and hint of white neck collar.

Figure 10 Taverner's Cackling Goose showing incomplete dark gular stripe.

...Winters primarily in Willamette River valley of w. Oregon, lower Columbia River valley of n.-central Oregon and s.-central Washington, and n. California (Johnson et al. 1979, Gilligan et al. 1994, Jarvis and Bromley 1998, CRE)."

This account includes the Cackling Geese as tundra-form Canada Geese. *Branta canadensis taverneri* is now considered *Branta hutchinsii taverneri* in a recent split by the American Ornithologists Union (AOU).

I want to thank Nick Bonomo for answering his cell-phone and wondering along with me, Steve Mlodinow, Larry Semo, and Bruce Deuel for their work in sorting out this very tough ID question, and that unidentified park employee for finally agreeing that jumping my battery was not a crime.

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BOREAL OWL FOOD AND FORAGING IN SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

By Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith

The Boreal Owl is a circumpolar species normally occurring as a resident in the northern boreal forest of North America and Eurasia (Voous 1988, Johnsgard 2002). It is sometimes nomadic and irruptive during severe winters and disperses well south of its normal winter range into southern New England (Devine and Smith 1994). On 12 January 1992, a Boreal Owl was discovered by AD while conducting an owl survey at Sperry Park in Middlebury (Devine and Smith 1994). We report observations of the hunting behavior, diet and caching behavior.

Methods

Based on its location at the same roost site for much of the observation period, we assume that all of our observations were of the same individual. The owl was observed for 33 days from 12 January through 24 February 1992. We recorded roost site departure on nine days and hunting activity until darkness on three days. Food habits were determined from pellets collected beneath the roost sites at regular intervals. Pellets were placed in plastic bags, labeled, and stored for analysis. Prior to dissection, pellets were air dried for 30 days, weighed on a Mettler digital balance, and measured by taking the maximum length and width to the nearest 0.5mm. Broken pellets were counted as fragments.

Standard protocol as described by Marti (1976) was used for pellet analysis. Whole pellets were dissected using forceps to separate bones, feathers and fur. Mammal and bird remains were identified to species using taxonomic keys and/or reference specimens. In some cases, prey remains could only be identified to family or genus. Animal remains (e.g. skulls, mandibles, feet, bills) were grouped to tabulate the number of individuals in each pellet. Mammals were assigned as adult or subadult based on tooth wear.

Results

Time of Departure from Roost Tree. The Boreal Owl departed its roost site nearly a half hour after sunset (average = 29.9 minutes, range 2-53 minutes) in the late twilight hours or very nearly full darkness. Departure times were two and three minutes after sunset on overcast or cloudy days. Although Boreal Owls typically hunt during the night observers have commented on their ability to extend their hunting into daylight hours, particularly along the northern part of their range during short summer nights (Hayward 1994, Korpimaki.1987).

Behavior immediately prior to departure included a preening sequence that started with the bird attending its breast, then belly, and under-tail coverts. Preening bouts lasted three-six minutes and were followed by wing-stretching, bobbing, and short, lateral movements along the roost branch.

Foraging Behavior

Three episodes of hunting behavior were observed. Two observations were of short duration, each about five minutes in length but on February 18, 1992, we observed the owl foraging for approximately 40 minutes from a distance of three to six meters.

The owl initiated each foraging episode using the sit-and-wait method. For example, at 1725 hrs on 18 February the bird began its nightly activity from its daytime roost located 5.4 m high in a conifer with a short hop to a lower branch. From this perch it leaned forward and scanned the ground and nearby tree line where a gray squirrel had moved through several minutes earlier. After five minutes (1730 hrs) the owl jumped to a still lower branch. It remained on this perch for another minute, than flew to another perch three meters from the roost tree and two meters above the ground. It moved its head from side to side while intently studying the ground below. After three minutes it briefly returned to

perch on the roost tree. Again, it switched to several perches ranging from 0.6 to 2.4 meters high in nearby shrubs and saplings. It remained at each perch from one to three minutes, leaning forward to scan the ground before moving to the next perch. At 1740 hrs the owl pounced to the ground but did not capture anything, than returned to one of the low perches used previously. After a few seconds it flew in a tight circle over the immediate strike area before returning to another low perch. The owl concluded this foraging bout by again pouncing to the ground and rummaging through the leaf litter for one minute, but again was unsuccessful capturing prey.

We observed five additional instances of foraging amongst the leaf litter. Two of these began following an unsuccessful strike, but in three instances the owl flew to the ground and started foraging through the leaf litter. One of these bouts lasted three-four minutes while the owl walked and hopped in a semicircle frequently stopping to use its bill and talons to brush aside the leaf litter. Short hops averaged about 30.5 cm (one foot) in length and were from 5-20 seconds apart. Longer hops of approximately one meter were made using its wings for assistance. After each foraging episode the owl flew to a low perch about one meter above the ground. Norberg (1970) observed Tengmalm's Owl, the European name for *Aegolius funereus*, foraging from low perches in the dense conifer forests of southern Finland but did not mention foraging through the leaf litter in search of prey.

Food.

A total of 26 pellets was collected and dissected during this study. Pellets averaged 23.6 mm in length (range 14.5-39.5), 14.0 mm in width (range 8-16 mm), and 0.94 gm in weight (range 0.21-2.54 gm). Bone weight in pellets averaged 0.26 gm (range 0.09-0.56 gm).

The 26 pellets yielded 28 prey individuals for an average of 1.08 prey individuals per pellet. Two pellets contained two individuals and 26 pellets each contained a single indi-

vidual. Pellets containing two individuals were larger in all measurements taken.

The 28 prey items were all small mammals, consistent with the food habits of this species recorded elsewhere in its range (Hayward et al. 1994). Seven species were recognized (Table 1) and another five could only be listed as unidentified shrews and rodents. Cricetid mice comprised most of the prey but shrews were also important. The White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*) was the most common prey item (33%) followed by the Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*). Other insectivores included the Masked Shrew (*Sorex cinereus*) and an unidentified *Sorex*.

Of 18 prey remains 10 were subadults showing little tooth wear and eight were adults with considerable tooth wear. The incidence of subadult individuals suggests that this age group contains the most vulnerable members of a prey population.

The dietary emphasis on small prey that we describe has been observed in other studies of the Boreal Owl. Bent (1938), Catlin (1972), Norberg (1970), Mikkola (1983), Hayward et al. (1993), Korpimaki (1987), and Sonerud (1986) have all recorded a preponderance of small mammals. Food in Finland studies was dominated by voles but other animals included shrews, lemmings, mice, bats, birds, frogs, and beetles (Mikkola1983).

Food Caching:

Food caching of the Boreal Owl has not been described for eastern North America but is well covered for the Tengmalm's Owl in Europe by Korpimaki (1987), mostly cached in nest boxes, and in parts of western North America by Hayward et al. (1993) and others.

On 31 January 1992 and 18 February 1992 we observed the Boreal Owl feeding on cached prey. Both prey items were larger rodents: an Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

and a Southern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*). The Gray Squirrel was cached about 0.5 meter distant from the owl's perch but on a lower branch. The Southern Flying Squirrel was cached next to the owl.

On 31 January at 1625 hrs we observed the owl jump from its diurnal roost to the cache site and start consuming the Gray Squirrel. It fed until 1640 hrs then returned to a roosting posture. In the second instance, the owl started feeding on the Southern Flying Squirrel at 1400 hrs and continued picking at the prey until our departure at 1415 hrs. Later in the afternoon (1700 hrs), the bird was still at the roost and the only sign of the Southern Flying Squirrel was a piece of its hindquarter lying on the ground beneath the roost. This was the same evening that the owl was observed hunting for 40 minutes.

Neither of the cached sciurids observed has previously been recorded as prey of Boreal Owls although Mikkola (1983) reported Flying Squirrels (*Pteromys volans)* as food of Tengmalm's Owl in Finland and Hayward et al (1993) recorded Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*) in Idaho.

Conclusions and Summary

Our observations affirm the importance of sit-and-wait hunting technique in Boreal Owls. The ground foraging that we observed has not previously been documented in this owl but has been described by Devine and Smith (2002) as the sit-strike-rummage technique in the Eastern Screech Owl (*Megascops otus*). Food consisted primarily of small rodents and insectivores, consistent with previous studies. Two species that we list, the cached Gray Squirrel and Southern Flying Squirrel, have not previously been recorded as prey of this owl.

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Table 1. Food of a wintering Boreal Owl in southern Connecticut. [a]

Species	No. Individuals	No. Adults	No. Subadults
Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*)	5	2	
Masked Shrew (*Sorex cinereus*)	2		
Unidentified Sorex	1		
White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*)	9	2	7
Red-backed Mouse (*Cleithrionomys gapperi*)	2	1	1
Pine Mouse (*Microtus pinetorium*)	1	1	
Woodland Jumping Mouse (*Napeozapus insignis*)	1	1	
House Mouse (*Mus musculis*)	3	1	2
Unidentified Rodent	4		
Totals	28	8	10

[a] 18 of 28 prey remains could be classed as subadult or adult based on tooth wear.

A "WESTERN" FLYCATCHER MAKES IT TO CONNECTICUT

By Frank Gallo

Flycatchers of the genus *Empidonax* (Empids) are, for the most part, very similar in appearance and often a challenge to identify by plumage characteristics alone. Many birders rely heavily on voice to separate the species. There are 11 *Empidonax* that breed within the U.S., five in the East and six in the West. Some, such as Willow and Alder in the East, and Cordilleran and Pacific Slope in the West, represent species pairs that are so similar in appearance that each pair was once considered a single species.

Identification of individuals of these pairs on the breeding grounds is often based on voice, behavior and habitat. Although voice is usually the most reliable way to separate these pairs in the field, there is call/song overlap, and identification of any individual may not always be possible, especially outside the breeding season/range. Unidentified individuals of the Willow/Alder complex are known collectively as "Traill's" Flycatchers, and those of the Cordilleran/Pacific Slope complex as "Western" Flycatchers.

If it can be difficult to identify *Empidonax* flycatchers on the breeding grounds when voice, behavior and habitat can aid in identification, what can be done to identify an Empid found out of season, when they are often not vocal, and habitat and behavior are of more limited value?

Fortunately, there are structural and plumage differences between the species. However, many of these physical identification criteria are subtle, so careful attention to detail is important. Empids range is size from 5-5.25" (Buff-breasted/Least) to 6" (Gray), with most 5.5-5.75", with head and back color either a shade of gray, brown or green. Under parts vary from white through gray to buff/cinnamon, yellow or

even olive, especially across their breast.

After an overall impression of color and size of the bird is ascertained, structural details such as bill length and width, primary projection and tail length must be noted. Head shape can be a subtle character, useful in tandem with other characteristics, but is subjective (changes with the angle of view) and can be manipulated by the bird. Most have eye-rings, the thickness and shape of which can be an aid to identification. All have wing bars, either buff or white, variable in thickness, sometimes due to wear, and again are characters to be noted. Color of the primaries, a very subtle and subjective character, can also be an important clue to identification. All Empids flick their tails up (and occasionally their wings), but Gray Flycatcher dips its tail down slowly, so behavior is always worth noting.

Most *Empidonax* flycatchers leave the U.S. by early fall and spend the winter in Mexico, Central, and South America. Western species tend to winter from Mexico to northern Central America, eastern species farther south. Some molt just before departing in late summer; others retain their worn summer feathers and molt on the wintering grounds; so feather-wear, especially in autumn, can help to make correct identification possible.

In the East, most of our Empids are gone before the first week in October. It was a great surprise to Roy Harvey, then, when he encountered an *Empidonax* flycatcher on December 1, 2007, at Osbornedale State Park in Derby. The bird was feeding low in the bushes at the side of an open field. It appeared greenish above, yellow below, with yellowish breast and throat. Its size, shape and yellowish throat suggested one of three species, Yellow-bellied, Pacific Slope or Cordilleran Flycatcher. But which species was it? Other birders were alerted, and careful notes and photographs were taken.

The amount and type of detail needed for such a sighting is well illustrated in Greg Hanisek's report to the Avian Rare

Mark Szantyr photo
Note the eyering that tapers to a point at the back and becomes very thin below and especially above the eye.

Mark Szantyr photo
The extensive yellow underparts, particularly the throat, eliminated most Empidonax flycathcers.

Mark Szantyr photo
This side view shows the bird's slightly crested look. Body molt is visible on the head in all three photos

Records Committee, where he described the bird as follows:

"Description: This was a small flycatcher with wing bars and an eye ring indicative of the genus Empidonax. Even from a distance the bird showed strong yellow tones below. Overall the bird was olive-brown on the head, back and tail, with a hint of yellowish suffusion into the nape and upper back. The wings were a darker brown. The eye ring was almond shaped, thinnest above the eye and extended behind. The head appeared relatively small in proportion to the body and in many postures presented a noticeably crested appearance. The under parts were completely suffused with yellow. The two wingbars were prominent against the brown color of the wings, which showed a rather short primary projection. The tail was relatively long, and that in combination with the small head gave the bird a somewhat lanky appearance for an Empidonax. The lower mandible was orange. Voice: The bird was heard on several occasions to give a slightly wheezy *zeeet* call reminiscent of a White-throated Sparrow. No other vocalizations were reported by any observers during the bird's stay.

Behavior: The bird favored the edge of an open field, where it usually foraged within a few feet of the ground. It sometimes dropped to the ground. It occasionally perched higher in trees along the field edge, but spent most of its time working low along edge. At times it vigorously flicked its wings and tail."

The fact that there are no North American winter records for Yellow-bellied Flycatcher would suggest that it is likely one of the other species. The almond-shaped eye ring, rather crested look, brown rather than black wings and short primary projection also support the "Western" pairing.

Greg goes on to point out that: "Behavioral traits favoring "Western" over Yellow-bellied included the active foraging low to the ground in open areas (whereas Yellow-bellied is a more demure forager favoring shaded perches). Physical fea-

tures in support included the lanky rather than compact appearance (including small head with crested look) and brown rather than black wings. These features are shared by Pacific-slope and Cordilleran, known collectively as "Western" Flycatcher. The strongest feature supporting ID as "Western" was the *tseet* call note, which is given by both members of the species pair. The male positional call, considered diagnostic in separating the two, was never heard. Suggestive of an ID as Pacfic-slope was an instance in which Nick Bonomo played recordings of the two species. The bird reacted (non-vocally) by responding in an agitated manner when the Pacific-slope tape was played. It did not react strongly to the Cordilleran tape."

Photographs of the bird show some molting head feathers. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers generally molt before leaving for the wintering grounds and complete their molt in October. "Western" Flycatchers usually molt on the wintering grounds. Adults complete their molt from August to November. Hatch-year birds complete a partial molt from September to December. Given the timing, the molting feathers on the head again support the identification as a "Western" Flycatcher, and suggest a hatch-year individual.

There are eastern records for the "Western complex" and for Pacific-slope (but no Cordilleran) clustered from November to early January in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia and North Carolina. Although Cordilleran Flycatcher nests farther to the east than Pacific-slope, reaching west Texas and southwestern South Dakota, Pacific-slope breeds farther north, into Alaska. There is some precedent for species from the far Northwest to occur as vagrants in the East. Although circumstantial evidence suggests that the bird is a Pacific-slope Flycatcher, without careful in-hand measurements, the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut at its June 2008 meeting felt there was not enough information to safely identify the bird to species. It was unanimously accepted as Connecticut's first "Western Flycatcher," and we're happy to have it!

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NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Hank Golet photo

Life In The Penthouse

Everyone has seen typical Canada Goose nests on the ground. Occasionally one might command a modest view from the top of a muskrat lodge. But this Canada Goose, brooding eggs in spring 2008 on Otter Rock Drive in Old Lyme, clearly was moving up in the world.

A Banded Red Knot

On 9 Aug 2007, Seth Harvey and I were scanning a flock of shorebirds at Sandy Point, West Haven, when we noticed a solitary Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) foraging along the mud flat. We observed a silver band on the right leg, and on the

left leg an orange band and a white band. The orange band was inscribed with the letters "LYK."

Afterward I asked Jenny Dickson of the state Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division, for information on shorebird banding programs involving Red Knots. She provided a contact (Karen Bennett, program manager) in the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife (DDFW), whose group is involved in shorebird studies. Ms Bennett informed me via email that the colored band is called a "flag" because it sticks out away from the leg and looks like a flag. The color code indicates where the bird is banded: a lime-colored flag represents a United States band, a blue flag indicates a Brazilian marker, red means a Chilean marker, white designates a Canadian origin, and orange specifies an Argentinean band.

Ms Bennett contacted Kevin Kalasz, wildlife biologist, DDFW, who subsequently sent me an email and forwarded a copy to William Pitts, New Jersey DEP Endangered and Nongame Species Program, for additional information. Shortly thereafter, I received an email from Patricia Gonzalez, wetland program coordinator of Inalafquen Foundation, San Antonio Oeste, Argentina. Ms. Gonzalez's reply indicated the Red Knot was banded on 10 Nov 2006 in Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. She thanked me for the information andsaid she would appreciate any other information on orange flagged shorebirds.

Kevin Kalasz, DDFW, said an international group of scientists and volunteers are involved in a cooperative research project to study migratory shorebirds. Much of the focus is on Delaware Bay, the last and most important spring stopover for many shorebird species. In addition to Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) and Sanderlings *(Calidris alba)* are being marked with inscribed flags. New Jersey Audubon also marks Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*) with inscribed flags. The color-coded leg flags are easy to detect, and DDFW encourages observers to report sightings of marked birds from along the Atlantic flyway.

The information is used to assess annual survivorship and determine yearly migratory patterns and timing, which contribute to our knowledge of migratory shorebird biology and ecology.

Mr. Kalasz and Mr. Pitts would appreciate any information on these flagged birds including location, date(s), flock size, and any other pertinent data. They can be contacted at kevin.kalasz@state.de.us or William.Pitts@dep.state.nj.us. For more information on the Delaware and New Jersey Shorebird Projects visit www.fw.delaware.gov/Shorebirds/ or www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/shorebird_info.htm.

Buzz Devine

Parsing Red Crossbill Calls

The species we currently know as Red Crossbill may in fact consist of up to nine good biological species in the United States and Canada. Types 1 through 4 are known to occur in the East. In December 2008 I was able to get my hands on a mini-recorder and a shotgun microphone (thanks to Noble Proctor), and I recorded crossbills on three occasions:

Dec 2 - East Shore Park, New Haven, two birds (both Type 4)

Dec. 7 - Hammonasset Beach State Park, 42 birds (one Type 3, the rest Type 4).

Dec. 8 - Hamonasset, about 30 birds (one or two Type 3, the rest Type 4).

Computer analysis revealed the call types. I moved the tape from the mini-recorder to a home stereo system. I then used an audio cable with 1/8-inch minijacks on each end to connect the stereo to my computer (from the headphones jack on the stereo to the line-in jack on my laptop). Using the free software Audacity, I transferred the audio from the stereo to the computer and saved the file in a .wav format.

At this point you have a .wav file with a bunch of flight calls interspersed throughout. Then I used the software Thrush-x (also free) to automatically detect the bird calls from my audio file. This software also breaks the larger file into many smaller files that each contain one or more bird calls.

Next the software GlassOFire (free) produces a sonogram for each small file. These "sound maps" are instrumental in positively identifying each flight call. For more information on this process, visithttp://oldbird.org/

Once you have the recordings and sonograms, it's time to identify them to type. I've used two resources. The Evans and O'Brien "Flight Calls of Migratory Birds" is available at the Web address above and from some bird stores. The crossbill audio visual guide (find it at http://research.amnh.org/ornithology/crossbills) provides information on Types 1 through 7.

Nick Bonomo

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

Restall, R, C Rodner, and M Lentino. 2007 Birds of Northern South America. An Identification Guide. Vol 1: Species Accounts, 880 pgs; Vol 2: Plates and Maps, 654 pgs. Yale University Press, New Haven. (Published in 2006 by Christopher Helms, an imprint of A&C Black Publishers, London).

In the early 1980s I was giving informal lectures on natural history and especially birds to small groups traveling in the Peruvian Amazon. With the help of a locally generated checklist and resident guides I was also responsible for finding and identifying birds. There were no field guides for the area available at the time, so it was not an easy task. One afternoon in early 1985, the Explorama Lodge, where we were staying, was visited by an even smaller group that included Ted Parker. Ted was well-known as a birder in tropical South America. He had in his possession some page proofs for the soon-to-be published book, *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, by Steve Hilty. He had only the galleys of the plates that were painted by Guy Tudor. It was an incredible resource, literally a treasure trove of information. No distribution maps, no discussion or species descriptions, just 56 numbered color plates. Galleys are printed as double page width and were ungainly to hold. These were quite shopworn. But there they were like manna from heaven!

Since then the avifauna of Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, Costa Rica, Chile and many of the Caribbean island nations has received encyclopedic treatments. And there is a yet-to-be-completed four-volume set by Ridgely illustrated by Guy Tudor of the entire South American avifauna. Robert Ridgely was also author of the volumes on Panama and Ecuador. Slowly, but surely, the "bird continent" is being covered

country by country. Now Robin Restall, who is associated with the Phelps Ornithological Collection, in collaboration with Clemencia Rodner and Miguel Lentino, have taken a regional approach and produced the "Birds of Northern South America". The volumes treat a broad eco-geographical area across political boundaries. This is truly an intellectually weighty contribution, to say nothing of the combined mass of roughly 8 pounds and 3.5 inches of shelf space. But it covers 2,308 species in 13 countries, and spans over 30° of longitude. Most unusual in this day and age is that the authors report that they received no institutional or governmental support, paid for their own travel, and had access to the Phelps as grateful, but unpaid volunteers.

Volume 1 includes, listed by family, species descriptions with occasional B&W drawings of particular details relevant to identification. Accounts are organized with paragraphs dedicated to Identification, Subspecies (if any), Habits, Status, Habitats and Voice. The combined material gives a thumbnail sketch of behavior, numbers in different places, preferred localities, and song and singing behavior. Molt is barely mentioned nor are the complications of migration. The book is intended "to provide as comprehensive a visual guide as possible" for the species covered, so some topics of basic avian biology are only touched upon lightly. As much of the information in Vol.1 is gleaned from the available field guides, now grown greatly over the past 25 years, it is almost background to material in Vol 2.

Vol 2 includes the plates and maps. There are 306 plates each with multiple images for a total that makes some 6,388 total figures, all conceived and executed by Restall. This does not include the maps, which usually appear on the left hand of the plates (the even- numbered page) as well. The maps show the species distribution and include information on altitude, major physical features and political boundaries. The plates are nothing less than stunning, a brilliant example being Plt 68: Large Macaws. Each of Restall's plates attempts to illustrate all the species recorded in the region plus "almost every

distinct subspecies and plumage variation." The authors mention almost in passing that the entire effort took 10 years to complete. The plates are laid-out in an accessible format in a "strictly comparative style." It is easy to note plumages variation although at somewhat ritualized poses. All individuals on a plate are drawn to the same scale (with absolute size given with the map) for easy comparison. Nevertheless, some plates appear crowded, i.e., Plt 59 includes 10 species of gulls, with 39 individual plumages illustrated. By comparison the 5 plates of Woodcreepers are spacious enough for the reader to ponder the puzzle of these elegant species whose plumages are frustratingly similar, but whose beaks illustrate a wonderful tale of adaptative radiation. Restall gives great attention to subtleties of color and I found the treatment of bare parts, especially Plt 26: Vultures, elegant.

Taxonomically BONSA follows the AOU Checklist and incorporates endemic South American families. But the book is not designed as a taxonomic reference and the authors have chosen to recognize many subspecies or geographic populations as species. This, of course, raises the number of taxa, e.g., they are 'splitters', but with the caveat that their goal is the *visual* appreciation of taxa. The reader, or lister, should be aware that this is the case and some of the splits are not recognized by the AOU or the ABA. Generally the authors conform to accepted nomenclature practice. The book is not hard to navigate and includes an extensive bibliography and index.

But wait, there's more! One of the more unusual features (Vol 1, pg 778) is a Discography. Compiled by Shaun Peters it gives the titles of 54 sources for songs and sounds of the species covered in the plates. Mapped by species, one is directed to the location in the sound library for each species where records exist. Species are listed by English and scientific name followed by a numbered reference and a specific location. Given this information you could download to your MP3 player a unique list for the particular locations you plan to visit.

While physically cumbersome, the book is easy to use. The area covered makes it too large to be used on any particular jaunt. For example, while Trinidad & Tobago are included, it would be over kill to carry Restall et al., along. However, it may prove invaluable in trying to ID a specific plumage variant or rare sighting at any given locality. There is no doubt that the artwork is exceptional. How accurately the colors of any particular study skin would match the painted image is probably not as important as to how useful the image is in identifying the specimen. Ambient light in the field will never match precisely the colors on the page. But the image will certainly present clues as to the identity of the specimen. And it is, after all, Restall's intent to provide a means to identification.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter, December 1, 2007, through February 29, 2008
By Greg Hanisek

Birders enjoyed a busy season highlighted by a stellar incursion of all the rarer northern finches, along with some other boreal species. This was punctuated by the now-expected handful of western rarities and an unexpected late lingerer. Three alcid species would have been a real treat if one hadn't succumbed after "wrecking" near a highway and the other hadn't revealed itself to just one well-placed observer. A cumulative total of 167 species of birds were reported by many observers during January (fide DP).

Fourteen Greater White-fronted Geese for the season included a high of four in Newtown Dec. 1-14 (LFi, RN). A major overhead movement of Snow Geese on Dec. 1 produced reports of 1,000 over Norwalk (LT), 800 over Derby (GH et al.), 550 over East Granby (JWo), 500 over Goshen (KF), 400 over Trumbull (CLv) and 200 over Litchfield (CP). Seven Cackling Geese for the season included one identified as the race *taverneri* first seen on Nov. 30 and present a few days thereafter in Middlefield (MSz). Single **Barnacle Geese** were in Newtown Dec. 1-14 (LFi, RN), in Enfield on Dec 8 (PCi) and in Moosup on Dec. 30 (CEl).

Four reports of Eurasian Wigeon were about average. Fourteen Redheads for the season included three on the Housatonic River in Derby on Dec. 7 (PCo) and three at the West Haven boat launch on Jan. 4 (CEk). The highest count of Greater Scaup was 5,000 off Silver Sands State Park, Milford, on Feb. 8 (SS). Captain's Cove in Bridgeport held 150 Lesser Scaup Jan. 26-30 (LT et al.). Four female/immature **King Eiders** appeared off Shippan Point, Stamford, Dec. 6-9 (PDu); a record high count for the state. Thereafter one remained through the season. Five reports of Common Eiders involved a total of eight individuals, all on the coast from Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison

(hereafter HBSP) eastward. A male **Harlequin Duck** flew by HBSP on Dec. 3 (FM et al.). A boat trip through the Norwalk Islands on Feb. 17 turned up 525 Long-tailed Ducks (LFl). A drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at a traditional location on the Connecticut River in Enfield from Feb. 3-10 (PDe et al.). Staging Common Mergansers topped 3,000 on Feb. 17 at Lake Zoar in Southbury (RN).

Ten reports of Ruffed Grouse were high by recent standards. Three Red-throated Loons represented a good inland count Dec. 3 at Bantam Lake, Litchfield (JE), as did three Horned Grebes on the Barkhamsted CBC. Three Red-necked Grebes were at Enders I., Mystic, on Dec. 29 (CT), with one at Shippan Point, Stamford, Jan. 6 (JD). An excellent late-season flock of 80 Northern Gannets was at Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford, on Dec. 16 (DW); the latest report was of one on Jan. 13 off Stamford (PDu).

High counts of Black Vultures, scattered across the state, were 31 on Dec. 9 in New Milford (ADi), 28 on Jan. 22 over Canaan (SO) and 29 over Waterford on Feb. 21 (RA). A good winter for Northern Goshawks produced 14 sightings. An adult Golden Eagle was at Fort Hale Park, New Haven, on Dec. 6 (MMo), and an immature was reported in North Branford on Dec. 28 (SW). Rough-legged Hawks generated c. 20 reports from all around the state. A Virginia Rail called from Lieutenant River marshes in Old Lyme on Jan. 7 (GH et al.). The season's lone **Sandhill Crane** visited a field in Ellington on Feb. 4 (CCh fide CEk).

Four late Semipalmated Plovers lingered to Dec. 22 in Stratford (JHo) with two still present on Dec. 23 for Stratford-Milford CBC. Single Red Knots were at Long Beach, Stratford, on Dec. 12 (CB) and on Greenwich-Stamford CBC on Dec. 15 (BO). Winter reports have now become quite rare. Three tightly spaced **jaeger** reports came from Niantic Bay on Dec. 12 (DP), from HBSP the next day (DW) and from the New Haven CBC on Dec. 15. Seasonal context favors Pomarine Jaeger, the species suggested by the observer of the Niantic bird. The season produced

c 20 reports of Iceland Gull, including nine on Jan. 16 at Windsor-Bloomfield landfill (NB). It was a good winter for Glaucous Gulls with the following reports: Dec. 11 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PCi), Dec. 21 and Feb. 2 at Windsor-Bloomfield landfill (NB), Dec. 26 at Hartford Riverside boat launch (PCi), Dec. 29 at Milford Point (DLa), Dec. 30 in both Moosup (CEl), and Wethersfield (SKo), and Jan. 6 at Hanover Pond, South Meriden (MB). A Nelson's Gull (Herring x Glaucous hybrid) was at the landfill Feb. 2 (NB). There were 10 Lesser Black-backed Gulls for the season.

A grounded **Dovekie,** the first one confirmed in the state in more than 30 years, was found by two observers on a ramp to Interstate-395 in Putnam on Dec.16, a day that produced rain, sleet, snow and northeast winds. It was taken to Tufts Rehab Center in Massachusetts, where despite care it died on Dec. 20 (RSh fide JHo). Single Razorbills were at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford on Dec. 16 (DW) and Jan. 11 (NB); at Millstone Point, Waterford, Dec. 27 (DP), at Enders I., Mystic, Dec. 29 (CT); and at Shippan Point, Stamford, Jan. 28 (FM, PDu). A first-year **Black Guillemot** flew by Shippan Point at close range on Feb. 2 (PDu). There is one specimen record and no well-documented records since 1934.

A Barn Owl was seen hunting late in the day in Stratford, Jan. 26 (FM). About a half dozen reports of Long-eared Owls indicated a good season, given that most information on this species is closely guarded. Eight Short-eared Owls for the season included inland birds at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, on Jan. 10 (RT) and at Walden Preserve, Salem, on Jan. 13 (DBi). Three were at Great Island, Old Lyme, on Dec. 28 (HG). N. Saw-whet Owls were widely reported. The CBCs did very well: three on Greenwich-Stamford on Dec. 15; eight on Woodbury-Roxbury on Dec. 15; 11 on Barkhamsted on Dec. 22; and 19 on Litchfield Hills on Dec. 23. The Hartford CBC recorded a **Rufous Hummingbird** on Dec. 15 (fide JK), and an adult male wintered at a feeder in Mystic, where it was present through Feb. 11 (LCa). A Red-headed Wood-

David Bingham photo
This N. Saw-whet Owl in Salem was one of many noted for the season.

pecker that wintered in a yard in Ashford was present since Oct. 7 (SMo). The only other report was one on Jan. 28 in Canaan (RBe)

Easily the bird of the season, a **"Western" Flycatcher** offered spectacular views and photo opportunities Dec. 1-7 at Osbornedale State Park in Derby (RH, m.ob.). For more information on this first state record, see article on page 109. The latest Eastern Phoebe was Jan. 19 at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield (JMe). A good flight of Northern Shrikes, extending back well into the fall season, produced about 45 reports during this period. It was the biggest incursion since the mega-flight of 1995-96, in which 67 were recorded on CBCs alone. Four Northern Rough-winged Swallows shattered previous late records by lingering into mid-January at the New Haven sewage treatment plant (NB et al.). Two were last seen Jan. 23 (LK, RPr). A House Wren lingered to Dec. 5 at Veterans Park, Wallingford (GH), and a Marsh Wren called Jan. 12 in Lieutenant River marshes in Old Lyme (BA). In a modest year for half-hardy species by recent standards, Ruby-crowned Kinglet was reported more frequently than normal with at least ten records.

A **Varied Thrush** appeared at a feeder in Kent in late December and stayed through the season (fide FB). A nice count of 160 Cedar

Waxwings on Dec. 19 at the UConn campus in Storrs (CEl) underscored the careful scrutiny this common species received. That's because **Bohemian Waxwings** staged one of their infrequent moves south of Massachusetts. The following sightings were noted: three on Dec. 22 in Canaan (PCa); two the same day in Falls Village (DS, RH, NB); 10+ on Dec. 24 in Norfolk (JHo); one on Dec 25 in Norfolk (CLr), three on Dec. 27 in Riverton (PCa); six on Jan. 7 in Norfolk near the Mass. line (PCa); and two on Jan. 26 in Winchester Center (PCa). There were even more to come in the spring season. An Orange-crowned Warbler found on Jan. 25 at HBSP remained until at least Feb. 16 (BF et al.) A Palm Warbler was at East Shore Park, New Haven, as late as Jan. 16 (RDi). Yellow-breasted Chat produced nine reports, all along the coast, including a very cooperative one wintering in thickets along the Lieutenant River in Old Lyme (m.ob.). A bird believed to be a **Western Tanager** was reported tentatively from HBSP on Jan. 16 (CH fide HG), but searching over the next couple days was unsuccessful. Then on Jan. 21 the bird's presence was confirmed (GH et al.). It remained until at least Feb. 15 (m.ob).

Single Vesper Sparrows were in Norwalk on Dec. 11-13 (SMa), on New Haven CBC, and at Ferry Lane, South Windsor, through most of the season (RM et al.). Two Seaside Sparrows on Dec. 20 at Long Beach, Stratford, (ER) were late. The season's only Lincoln's Sparrow, a winter rarity, was at Milford Point on Jan. 4 (AC). A single White-crowned Sparrow of the western *gambelii* race visited feeders at Proto Drive in East Haven Dec. 17-20 (ER, NB). An adult male **Oregon Junco** was present at a feeder in New Hartford from Dec. 13 until mid-January (fide DTr); a first-winter female found Jan. 14 in Ashford remained for several weeks (MSz). The high counts for Snow Buntings were c. 100 at Macricostas Preserve in Washington on Jan. 1 (PSt), 120 in Mansfield on Jan. 5 (RR) and 115 at Station 43, South Windsor, on Feb. 9 (PCi). Lapland Longspurs were regular at HBSP, and there were four inland reports.

Tom Sayers photo
This Oregon Junco visited a feeder in New Hartford.

It was a good winter for lingering Baltimore Orioles with nine for the season that included one wintering at a feeder in Old Lyme (HG). The season's only **Yellow-headed Blackbird** appeared in a large mixed flock of icterids on Feb. 1 at Station 43 in South Windsor (MSz). Scattered reports of Rusty Blackbirds included 45 visiting feeders near Konolds Pond, Woodbridge, in early December (GH), 22 in Woodbury on Jan. 7 (RN) and up to 20 wintering at White Memorial in Litchfield (m.ob.). A group of up to 30 Boat-tailed Grackles wintered in the Stratford-Bridgeport area (GH, FM et al.)

Despite some excellent rarities, northern finches stole the show for the majority of the state's grateful birders. The highlight was a major flight of very cooperative **Pine Grosbeaks**. Top counts included 107 on Barkhamsted CBC on Dec. 22 and a high individual total of 53 in Norfolk on Jan. 1 (FM, JBe). Birds were present through the season, primarily in northern Litchfield County, with some in western Hartford County. The only outliers to the east were one bird in Storrs on Dec. 27 (SMo) and six in Pomfret on Dec. 30 (SMo). After a heavy fall flight, Purple Finches were quite scarce, but no one

was complaining. A strong flight of **Red Crossbills** saw birds present all winter, mainly along the coast, which is the normal pattern. Flocks frequented small pine stands in conspicuous public places, such as HBSP, making them easy to find. Inland birds were no doubt more spread out in large tracts and tougher to find. Many flocks in the teens and 20s were encountered. The high count was 42 on Dec. 7 at HBSP (NB). **White-winged Crossbills** included one at Lake Zoar, South bury, on Dec. 14 (RN); singles at HBSP on Dec. 9 (FH) and Jan. 4 (CEk); three on Dec. 13 in Norfolk (PCa); and one on Jan. 9 in West Hartland (PCa). Most unusual was a flock of 35 reported from Woodbury on Dec. 29 (RN). Common Redpolls staged a major, widespread flight, with birds reported from all parts of the state. Barkhamsted CBC had 270 on Dec. 22. Other high counts included 105 at a Coventry feeder in December (DM); c 175 in birches at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport on Dec. 2 (ER); 115 in Winchester on Dec. 24 (DRo); 100+ at a Goshen feeder on Jan. 13 (KF); 190+ on Feb. 8 in Harwinton (PCa); and 100 in Hartland on Feb. 16 (PCi). A single bird believed to be of the larger *rostrata* race was seen on Dec. 27 in Goshen (NB et al.). The big flight brought with it a long-awaited movement of **Hoary Redpolls,** which were state birds for most birders able to catch up with them. Singles were reported on Dec 22 in Winsted (RN), on Jan. 3-6 in Coventry (DM); on Jan. 4 in Goshen (KF); on Jan. 6 in both Canton (PCi) and Barkhamsted (FZ); and on Feb. 2 in Harwinton (PCa). Pine Siskins were scattered in small numbers. There were nine reports of Evening Grosbeaks involving 42 individuals, including 15 on the Barkhamsted CBC.

Observers - Jayne Amico, Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Robert Askins , Phil Asprelli, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade (RBa), Dave Babington (DBa), James Bair (JBa), Bill Banks (BBa), Tom Baptist, Leon Barkman, Charlie Barnard, Scott Baron (SBa), Mark Barriger, Fred Baumgarten, Ray Belding (RBe), David Bingham (DBi), Bob Bitondi (BBi), Nick Bonomo, Joe Bear (JBe), Andy Brand, Steve Broker (SBr), Kevin Burgio, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier (PCa), Les Case (LCa), Carolyn Charter (CCh), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino (CCi), Linda Clancy (LCl), John Clancy (JCl), Alex Coffey,

Mark Szantyr photo
A Red Crossbill at Hammonasset Beach State Park on Jan. 8, 2008.

Mark Szantyr photo
This Orange-crowned Warbler had a mouthful on Feb. 3, 2008, at Hammonasset.

Bruce Finnan photo
Pine Grosbeaks, like this brilliant male in Norfolk, were a highlight of the winter.

Julian Hough photo
Hammonasset was a hot spot thanks to this Western Tanager.

Mark Szantyr photo
This Red-headed Woodpecker wintered in a yard in Ashford.

Jan Collins (JCn), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Neil Currie, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Mardi Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Chris Elphick (CEl), John Eykelhoff, Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Tom Fiore, Larry Fischer (LFi), Larry Flynn (LFl), Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Rick Gedney, Ted Gilman, Hank Golet, Andy Griswold, Shari Guarino, Val Guarino, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Shelley Harms (SHa), Carol Harrington, Roy Harvey, Scott Henckel (SHe), Ted Hendricksen (THe), Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway (THo), Pam Holden, Julian Hough (JHo), Jim Hunter (JHu), Marshall Iliff, Lynn James, Denise Jernigan, Kris Johnson, Sarah Johnston, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Brian Kleinman (BKl), Bill Kobak (BKo), Cindy Kobak, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Scott Kruitbosch (SKr), Dave Lawton (DLa), Donna Lorello (DLo), Chuck Lorenz (CLr), Marilyn Lorenz, Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Chris Lovell (CLv), Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik, Shaun Martin (SMa), John Marshall (JMr), John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo (SMy), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Mike Moccio (MMc), Judy Moore (JMo), Marty Moore (MMo), Don Morgan, Steve Morytko (SMo), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, Fred Nowak, Steve Oresman, Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier (RPe), Cynthia Phipps, Roger Preston (RPr), Noble Proctor, Grace Profatilov. Bev Propen, Dave Provencher, EJ Raynor, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Ron Rozsa, Dean Rupp (DRu), Ed Sadowski, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Ryan Sayers (RSa), Tom Sayers, Robin Shearer (RSh), Olaf Soltau, Penny Solum (PSo), Dori Sosensky, Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Peary Stafford (PSt), Jerry Stage (JSt), Bruce Stevenson, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Clay Taylor, Rollin Tebbetts, Andy Thiede, Luke Tiller, Brian Toal, John Triana, Dave Tripp (DTr), Diane Tucker (DTu), Dennis Varza, Christine Wallstrom, Mike Warner, Danny Williams, Glenn Williams, Sarah Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, Olive Wysocki, Sara Zagorski, Anthony Zemba, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmont.

Photo Challenge No. 62

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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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Connecticut Ornithological Association
314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.ctbirding.org

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ABOUT OUR COVER

By Paul Carrier

Although Connecticut's grassland birds are under tremendous pressure from loss of habitat, the Savannah Sparrow, painted beautifully by Paul Carrier of Harwinton, was logged at a 10-year high on the 2008 Summer Bird Count. You can peruse all the count details in this issue.

THE 2008 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

By Joseph Zeranski and Patrick Comins

Introduction

This year 186 count day species were recorded, similar to last year's 189 and very close to the average of 187.5 birds. The total number of count day species has ranged from 179 in 1992 to 202 in 1998 Only one additional species was recorded in the count period. The SBC has recorded 233 species since 1997, with three new species added this year. There were 250 observers, in 116 parties, down a bit from the record high level of participation last year; 1184 party hours were tallied, with 1124 being daylight hours and 60 night hours.

There were 99,201 individual birds recorded, 97.1 % of the previous ten years' average, down by more than 6,700 over last year's results. The ten most abundant species recorded were, in descending order: **European Starling**,**American Robin**, **Common Grackle**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Canada Goose**,**Gray Catbird**, **House Sparrow**, **American Crow**, **Mourning Dove** and **Song Sparrow**. This is very similar to the last three years' top ten lists, with nine of the ten species returning and differing slightly in order. American Crows replaced Red-eyed Vireo to regain a spot on this list after an absence of several years.

Twelve species were represented by a single individual: **Snow Goose**, **Northern Bobwhite**, **Least Bittern** (T), **King Rail** (E), **Sora**, **American Coot**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Dunlin**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Mourning Warbler** and **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow**. Most of these are migrants or non-nesting visitors. Additionally, individuals of both hybrid combinations of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers were reported, a **Brewster's Warbler** (the dominant combination) in Hartford and a **Lawrence's Warbler** (the very rare recessive combination) in Greenwich/ Stamford (hereafter Greenwich). Only one species was recorded within the count period but not on the count, an

Olive-sided Flycatcher (SC) in Greenwich.

There were 27 species recorded on the count days that do not regularly breed in Connecticut and can be considered either late migrants or non-nesting visitors: **Snow Goose, Brant, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Common Loon** (SC), **King Rail** (E), **American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Wilson's Snipe, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Olive-sided Flycatcher** (SC), **Blackpoll Warbler, Mourning Warbler** and **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.** The underlined species are potential nesters, but in the absence of additional supporting evidence they will be considered non-nesting visitors.

The most noteworthy from this group were the two **Gull-billed Terns** photographed near Greenwich Point Park, the first SBC record and one of only a handful of documented sightings of this species in the state. The other noteworthy records from this group were also all from Greenwich and include a **Snow Goose**, third record for this species on the count; a **King Rail** (E), likely a migrant at this particular location; as well as a **Dunlin,** the first **Purple Sandpiper** ever on any SBC; and the only **Wilson's Snipe** reported in the previous ten years. The three (!) **Caspian Terns** were a very good find. The **Mourning Warbler** was undoubtedly a late, non-nesting migrant as it would not be expected to nest so far south. **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** does not nest south of New Hampshire or perhaps northern Massachusetts but is known to be a late migrant.

Greater Scaup was missed for the 4th year in a row after having been recorded in each of the ten previous years, perhaps reflecting the reduced winter numbers of this species on Long Island Sound. **Sanderling** was the only species that had been recorded on at least seven of the past 10 years of the count that was not observed this year.

Notable Nesting Species

Four **American Bitterns** (E) were recorded in Litchfield Hills and an additional individual was found in Barkhamsted. A single **Least Bittern** (T) was recorded in Hartford. Two **Little Blue Herons** (SC) were found, one in Greenwich and an unusual inland record from New Milford/Pawling, the first ever for this area. A total of five **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** (SC) were recorded in Greenwich and New Haven. Three **Glossy Ibis** (SC) were recorded in New Haven, again seemingly under-represented for its abundance in the state, but the population center for this species in eastern coastal Connecticut is not covered well by SBC.

Sora are increasingly hard to locate, but one was found in Litchfield Hills. New Haven recorded five **Black Skimmers** and Greenwich one. The only known nesting population in the SBC area lies within the New Haven circle. Barkhamsted turned up a single **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (SC) and single **Common Nighthawks** (E) were reported in Greenwich, New Haven and Woodbury/Roxbury, with the New Haven report continuing an annual record possibly representing a nesting bird. Nighthawk activity was reported in New Haven throughout the nesting season on the CTbirds list. While **Alder Flycatchers** are not uncommon in northern counts, the birds reported from Greenwich and New Haven are noteworthy. Careful attention should be paid to potential Alder Flycatcher songs south of traditional nesting areas as Willow Flycatchers can sing a very similar song and are visually identical. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** are easily overlooked and three were reported from Barkhamsted and more impressively one was found in the Greenwich Circle (just over the border in NY).

Two **Nashville Warblers** were found in Barkhamsted and three **Northern Parulas** (SC) in Litchfield Hills, both species being good finds for Connecticut. Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** (E) were found in the Hartford Circle. We would not

be surprised to see this species disappear from the count entirely. Finally, **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows** (SC) were found in Greenwich and New Haven. This species' core range isn't covered by SBC and can be easy to miss even where they are common.

Geographical Variation

This year we present a table of the 50 most common species statewide and their ranking in each of our count areas, based on 10-year averages. The presence of species reflects not only the relative location from coastal to the northwest highlands, but such environments as the degree of urbanization, suburbanization, farming, and the amount of woodland present. Some species are widespread while others are more local and often dependent on limited habitats.

Some of the distinctions are obvious, such as Herring Gull's absence from inland counts (except Hartford where there is a semi-active landfill), or that Chestnut-sided Warbler is negligible along the coast. Others are less so but give us insight into more subtle differences among the count areas.

The table on the following page ranks the species in decreasing order of statewide abundance. The columns provide the rankings in each count area (the lower the number the more abundant the species was relative to others.) To underscore differences and similarities some of the more local totals that seemingly differ noticeably from other SBCs are underlined, while groupings of similar abundance rankings, are shown in gray.

Statewide	Ranking of SBC Species	Coastal Gr-St	Coastal NH	Mid-state NM/P	Mid-state R-W	Valley Hft	Northern Bark	Northern L-H	Northern St
1	**European Starling**	4	1	4	2	1	5	**11**	1
2	**American Robin**	2	3	1	1	2	1	2	3
3	**Common Grackle**	1	2	7	4	4	8	**16**	6
4	**Red-winged Blackbird**	8	4	11	3	5	2	**17**	2
5	**Canada Goose**	3	5	2	5	6	12	20	24
6	**Gray Catbird**	6	9	3	7	9	4	3	8
7	**House Sparrow**	5	6	12	13	8	21	22	**4**
8	**American Crow**	9	9	5	6	11	6	10	15
9	**Mourning Dove**	10	7	15	10	7	20	21	5
10	**Song Sparrow**	14	18	9	9	12	7	9	16
11	*Red-eyed Vireo*	30	33	18	12	37	3	**1**	19
12	*American Goldfinch*	17	17	10	11	10	13	7	7
13	*Mallard*	7	13	33	27	3	33	**48**	36
14	*Chipping Sparrow*	19	**54**	8	8	23	18	8	10
15	*Yellow Warbler*	13	22	19	14	15	9	29	18
16	*Black-capped Chickadee*	25	29	21	18	24	16	5	14
17	*Tufted Titmouse*	15	23	14	16	25	23	18	11
18	*Common Yellowthroat*	33	38	22	21	30	11	**6**	27
19	*Northern Cardinal*	16	19	17	15	14	26	26	13
20	*Tree Swallow*	38	35	23	26	16	15	12	12
21	**Veery**	43	75	16	20	70	10	**4**	22
22	**Barn Swallow**	22	16	13	17	26	22	27	**9**
23	**Blue Jay**	19	29	19	25	18	30	19	28
24	**Cedar Waxwing**	35	21	24	24	19	19	15	26
25	**Ovenbird**	**45**	31	30	28	**57**	17	13	23
26	**Wood Thrush**	26	36	29	22	28	25	23	29
27	**House Finch**	23	25	20	19	17	32	40	20
28	**American Redstart**	71	**93**	31	30	44	14	14	50
29	**Rock Pigeon**	21	**8**	52	55	18	57	60	21
30	**Brown-headed Cowbird**	27	27	26	29	20	31	38	**17**
31	*Baltimore Oriole*	20	26	28	23	21	37	49	25
32	*House Wren*	28	**50**	34	34	35	40	37	32
33	*Herring Gull*	11	15	*	*	27	*	*	*
34	*Double-cr Cormorant*	12	12	*	88	58	*	*	74
35	*Eastern Phoebe*	50	**74**	38	35	46	29	33	30
36	*Downy Woodpecker*	31	52	32	58	34	46	42	38
37	*Scarlet Tanager*	49	70	45	37	52	36	28	41
38	*Chimney Swift*	51	37	37	36	32	49	44	31
39	*Chestnut-sided Warbler*	*	*	50	49	79	**24**	**24**	75
40	*Warbling Vireo*	44	**65**	40	31	33	44	**73**	34
41	**Eastern Wood-Pewee**	47	**59**	49	43	43	34	50	35
42	**Eastern Towhee**	55	56	35	41	41	41	46	40
43	**Eastern Kingbird**	57	61	43	42	38	39	45	44
44	**Northern Flicker**	34	51	54	62	31	58	64	43
45	**Eastern Bluebird**	62	**95**	27	32	42	42	47	39
46	**Northern Mockingbird**	40	29	51	44	**22**	76	72	37
47	**Red-bellied Woodpecker**	32	50	46	48	36	66	71	52
48	**White-breasted Nuthatch**	42	**80**	41	59	47	51	41	33
49	**Wild Turkey**	53	63	48	53	56	43	35	48
50	**Black-&-White Warbler**	69	76	56	47	78	35	32	58

Disclaimer on Interpreting Trends from SBC

Year-to-year count fluctuations and lack of standardized data collection protocols call for a large degree of caution when interpreting the SBC results as long-term population trends. However, SBC can be an early detection system for broad-scale population changes, and does provide a valuable coarse measurement of breeding bird populations. The nature of the SBC makes it difficult to quantify increases or decreases. Good or bad weather on count period days greatly influence high or low species counts. Additionally, since there are no standardized routes, observers may cover certain habitats well and others may have poor coverage. Evidence of this came this year from the Hartford count, where Warbling Vireos outweigh Red-eyed Vireos. It is unlikely that Warbling Vireos were the more common species, and more likely it can be explained by preferential coverage of riparian habitats and relatively reduced coverage of deciduous woodland habitat.

Species Recorded in Above Average Numbers

Double-crested Cormorant numbers came in as a 10-year high, but long term data show much eccentricity and reveal no real trend in the population. **Great Blue Herons** also show an all-time high as well as a clear increasing trend. **Black-crowned Night-Herons** come close to an all-time high, with more than double the number reported this year over last. This species appeared to have a major drop-off between 2002 and last year, but are back to the near record numbers of 2000. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** (E) came in at a 10-year high, but we should not read too much into this, as SBC isn't a reliable way to track such a secretive woodland bird. New Haven turned in a 10-year high number of **Piping Plovers** (T) and good numbers of **Least Terns** (T); while encouraging, one should not interpret one year of one circle's results as a recovery. The all-time high count of **Common Terns** (SC) is mostly from Greenwich and is a very small percentage of the Long Island Sound population of this species, which is heavily concentrated at Falkner (CT) and Great Gull (NY) Islands.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers came in at an all time high, continuing an apparent clear upward trend as they continue to extend their range to the northeast. **Warbling Vireo, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren** and **Savannah Sparrow** also had 10-year highs, but with year-to-year trends being more difficult to interpret. **Northern Cardinals** came in with an all time high and may have a shallow increasing trend but were only at 114% of their 10-year average.

Species Recorded in Below Average Numbers

Wood Duck came in at a 10-year low, as did **Broad-winged Hawk, American Woodcock,** and **Chimney Swift**. None of these species show any clear trend, but there is conservation concern because of other indicators for the latter three species. Only one **Northern Bobwhite** and three **Ring-necked Pheasants** were reported and both of these species rely nearly entirely on stocking for their persistence in the state. **Monk Parakeets** were way off of their recent record high in 2005, with only 20% of that number recorded this year. **Northern Flickers**, while not a record low, are at 84% of the 10-year average and there appears to be a steady downward trend. Other species with 10-year lows include **Eastern Kingbird, Tree Swallow, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Towhee** and **Swamp Sparrow**. Of these, **Prairie Warbler** and **Eastern Towhee** show the clearest downward trends and were also at all-time lows. **Winter Wrens** were reported at all-time-low levels, with only 13 reported (25% of the 10-year average), all but one from more northern count areas.

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.

Note: *Any evidence of nesting by state-endangered (E), threatened (T) or special concern (SC) species should be reported to the COA Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) Project.*

2008 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

Species known to nest recently within Connecticut are shown in italics. The high/low/rare statistics below are given for local SBCs at least ten years old. For SBCs held for fewer than 10 years (NM/P) only new Count Day species are noted. Stats under **State Totals** pertain to the prior ten SBCs.

"**Rare**"- noted on fewer than five years during previously censused 10 years [outlined box]	=	XX
New **Count Day**[CD] species; not recorded on previously censused 10 years[darkened outlined box]	=	XX
More birds were tallied than were on any of the previously censused 10 years [underlined number]	=	XX
Fewer birds were tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 year [boldfaced number]	=	**XX**
Not recorded on CD 2008, but recorded on all the previously censused 10 years [boldfaced zero]	=	**0**
A new all-time record, starting from the first year of each count [double line below the number]	=	

SPECIES	*Coastal SBCs*		*CT Valley*	***Upland SBCs:*** Mid-state		Northern			**2008 State**	**% of 98-07**	**# yrs**	**1998-2007**		
	GS	**NH**	**Hfd**	**WR**	**NM/P**	**Ba**	**LH**	**St**	**Totals**	**average**	**obs**	**Ave**	**Low**	**High**
Snow Goose	1								1	500%	2	0.2	1	1
Canada Goose	1562	445	**298**	446	601	311	489	1	4153	97%	10	4286	3585	5197
Brant	32								32	262%	10	12	2	29
Mute Swan	72	78		4	34		8	2	198	64%	10	307	165	462
Wood Duck	72	45	19	35	22	38	36	5	**272**	75%	10	364	281	535
Gadwall		13							13	191%	7	7	3	15

American Wigeon										0%	4	0	1	1
American Black Duck	38	14	1						53	76%	10	70	30	120
Mallard	**456**	141	607	69	140	86	173	42	1714	76%	10	2261	1460	3022
MallardxAm Black Duck				1		5	5			0%	1	1	6	6
Blue-winged Teal										0%	2	1	1	8
Northern Shoveler										0%	2	0	1	2
Northern Pintail										0%	1	0	0	1
Green-winged Teal										0%	5	1	1	4
Ring-necked Duck										0%	4	0	0	1
Greater Scaup										0%	6	1	0	4
Lesser Scaup										0%	2	0	1	1
White-winged Scoter										0%	1	0	0	1
Long-tailed Duck										0%	6	2	1	4
Bufflehead	2								2	182%	6	1	1	4
Common Goldeneye										0%	4	1	0	6
Hooded Merganser				5	14	16	4		39	141%	10	28	11	72
Common Merganser				32	9	62	33		136	105%	10	129	102	196
Red-breasted Merganser	1	1							2	95%	10	2	1	7
Ruddy Duck	4	1							5	217%	5	2	1	10
Ring-necked Pheasant	3								3	16%	10	19	3	93
Ruffed Grouse				1		15	8		24	117%	10	21	13	28
Wild Turkey	69	38	22	42	70	134	**69**	30	474	92%	10	516	382	645
Northern Bobwhite	1								1	36%	9	3	1	6
Red-throated Loon										0%	5	1	0	8
Common Loon	CP	2							2	40%	9	5	0	9
Pied-billed Grebe							4		4	250%	6	2	0	7
Horned Grebe										0%	2	0	1	2
Red-necked Grebe										0%	1	0	0	1

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT Valley	Upland SBCs: Mid-state		Northern			2008 State Totals	% of 98-07 average	# yrs obs	1998-2007 Ave	Low	High
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Manx Shearwater										0%	CP	0	0	0
Wilson's Storm-petrel										0%	1	0	0	3
Northern Gannet										0%	CP	0	0	0
Double-crested Cormorant	672	261	9	2	27	3	1	2	977	126%	10	773	574	964
Great Cormorant										0%	1	0	0	1
American Bittern						1	4		5	250%	9	2	1	6
Least Bittern			1						1	40%	10	3	0	7
Great Blue Heron	35	10	52	34	25	77	59	3	295	158%	10	187	88	248
Great Egret	283	61					1		345	128%	10	269	188	376
Snowy Egret	71	17							88	68%	10	130	70	232
Little Blue Heron	1				1				2	125%	8	2	1	4
Tricolored Heron										0%	2	0	0	1
Cattle Egret										0%	1	0	0	4
Green Heron	28	9	17	9	2	5	5		75	104%	10	72	59	86
Black-cr Night-Heron	409	39		1					449	146%	10	308	165	458
Yellow-cr Night-Heron	4	1							5	94%	10	5	1	21
Glossy Ibis		3							3	300%	5	1	1	4
Black Vulture		1		7	14		2		24	170%	10	14	1	26
Turkey Vulture	26	26	8	64	57	52	54	5	292	91%	10	322	251	382
Osprey	47	42	2	1			3	1	96	135%	10	71	30	101
Bald Eagle		2	2	4		11	1		20	142%	10	14	2	22
Northern Harrier										0%	6	2	0	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	CP		4	4	4	2		15	160%	10	9	7	14

Cooper's Hawk	5	1		6	3	7	4	1	27	81%	10	33	21	45
accipiter species											1	0	1	1
Northern Goshawk		2				1			3	73%	10	4	2	7
Red-shouldered Hawk	6	2		22	4	12	8	1	55	131%	10	42	29	57
Broad-winged Hawk	4			3	3	19	14	2	**45**	78%	10	58	48	66
Red-tailed Hawk	84	20	44	46	23	**20**	42	4	283	110%	10	257	177	341
American Kestrel		1		3	3		1	1	9	80%	10	11	3	18
Peregrine Falcon	1	2	2						5	139%	10	4	1	7
Clapper Rail	7	4							11	97%	10	11	2	21
King Rail	1								1	250%	3	0	0	2
Virginia Rail			1				19		20	72%	10	28	15	51
Sora							1		1	91%	8	1	1	3
Common Moorhen										0%	2	0	0	2
American Coot	1								1	143%	5	1	1	3
Black-bellied Plover	3								3	94%	6	3	1	9
American Golden Plover										0%	1	0	0	1
Semipalmated Plover	2								2	32%	6	6	1	35
Piping Plover		24							24	195%	10	12	6	24
Killdeer	61	19	61	22	19	24	19	7	232	94%	10	248	158	351
American Oystercatcher	46	11							57	143%	10	40	29	60
Spotted Sandpiper	4	6	22	5	2	6	4	1	50	145%	10	35	26	49
Solitary Sandpiper				1					1	125%	6	1	1	2
Greater Yellowlegs	1								1	42%	9	2	0	5
Willet	2	10							12	135%	8	9	4	24
Upland Sandpiper										0%	CP	0	0	0
Ruddy Turnstone	6	3							9	150%	8	6	0	16
Red Knot										0%	2	0	1	3
Sanderling										0%	7	5	1	21

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT Valley	Upland SBCs: Mid-state		Northern			2008 State Totals	% of 98-07 average	# yrs obs	1998-2007 Ave	Low	High
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Western Sandpiper										0%	1	0	1	1
Semipalmated Sandpiper		10							10	11%	9	87	2	349
Least Sandpiper										0%	5	7	1	30
White-rumped Sandpiper										0%	4	2	1	6
Purple Sandpiper	3								3	0%	0	0	0	0
Dunlin	1								1	56%	4	2	1	11
Short-billed Dowitcher										0%	3	2	3	8
Wilson's Snipe	1								1	0%	0	0	0	0
American Woodcock	1			3		2	2		**8**	50%	10	16	9	24
Laughing Gull	76	8							84	267%	10	32	1	111
Bonaparte's Gull										0%	1	0	0	1
Ring-billed Gull	108	231	64		2		6		411	83%	10	494	311	795
Herring Gull	798	177							975	122%	10	800	532	1096
Glaucous Gull										0%	1	0	1	1
Great Black-backed Gull	283	56	**3**						342	124%	10	276	213	414
Least Tern	2	332							334	163%	10	204	50	355
Gull-billed Tern	2								2	0%	0	0	0	0
Caspian Tern	3								3	1500%	1	0	2	2
Black Tern										0%	2	0	0	1
Common Tern	460	87							547	198%	10	277	84	527
Forster's Tern	5	1							6	429%	4	1	1	7
Royal Tern										0%	1	0	1	1
Black Skimmer	1	6							7	77%	10	9	2	26

Rock Pigeon	275	308	162	48	32	55	55	118	1053	82%	10	1291	898	2543
Mourning Dove	580	296	490	369	228	300	266	93	2622	102%	10	2573	2237	2897
Monk Parakeet	12	38							50	52%	10	96	19	288
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	2		4	1	2	3	1	14	51%	10	28	8	69
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	8	1		11		1	4		25	68%	10	37	4	144
cuckoo species	1				4									
Eastern Screech-Owl	14		2	9	7		2		34	87%	10	39	25	57
Great Horned Owl	6	1		11	1	3	13	1	36	125%	10	29	10	39
Barred Owl	13	1		14	4	34	17	1	84	114%	10	74	48	131
Northern Saw-whet Owl						2			2	87%	9	2	1	7
Nighthawk, Common	1	1		1					3	23%	10	13	2	77
Whip-poor-will				1		7	2		10	58%	10	17	5	25
Chimney Swift	93	57	83	108	35	**93**	**64**	21	**554**	81%	10	681	576	771
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	20	7	7	15	14	43	47	4	157	120%	10	131	83	179
Belted Kingfisher	16	16	9	20	9	13	9	**0**	92	83%	10	111	70	166
Red-headed Woodpecker										0%	2	0	0	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	293	54	61	99	45	44	57	4	657	130%	10	504	347	640
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				35	33	205	114		387	119%	10	326	162	494
Downy Woodpecker	183	90	51	72	85	127	92	15	715	100%	10	713	501	905
Hairy Woodpecker	51	23	17	22	29	57	40	5	244	112%	10	219	154	286
Northern Flicker	210	53	48	40	37	45	49	7	489	84%	10	581	481	694
Pileated Woodpecker	27	3	4	17	12	36	27	2	128	117%	10	109	80	144
Olive-sided Flycatcher	CP								CP	0%	6	1	0	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	122	43	29	115	26	105	141	11	592	98%	10	606	463	797
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher										0%	6	1	1	5
Acadian Flycatcher	3			9	1	**0**	3		16	68%	10	24	7	39
Alder Flycatcher	2	1		9	4	17	**49**	2	84	85%	10	99	74	138
Willow Flycatcher	49	27	19	20	38	32	68		253	99%	10	255	226	293

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT Valley	Upland SBCs: Mid-state		Northern			2008 State	% of 98-07	# yrs	1998-2007		
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals	average	obs	Ave	Low	High
Least Flycatcher	1		4	26	11	39	61		142	102%	10	139	98	166
Epidonax species		1	2		1									
Eastern Phoebe	73	45	23	122	49	181	185	16	694	94%	10	737	496	907
Great Crested Flycatcher	97	34	21	99	27	60	112	7	457	107%	10	426	352	529
Eastern Kingbird	78	39	30	94	40	97	101	7	486	86%	10	568	489	683
White-eyed Vireo	5	1		2	1			1	10	43%	10	23	9	49
Yellow-throated Vireo	27	7	1	51	24	33	52	11	206	90%	10	230	169	276
Blue-headed Vireo				16	8	121	60		205	143%	10	144	81	227
Warbling Vireo	190	62	102	186	67	35	112	13	767	126%	10	607	517	740
Red-eyed Vireo	250	84	34	363	162	1088	661	50	2692	112%	10	2412	1640	2888
Blue Jay	383	172	107	181	80	339	156	24	1442	96%	10	1499	1328	1729
American Crow	393	140	91	440	334	398	420	31	2247	67%	10	3334	2202	4516
Fish Crow	26	37	4	14	8	3	7		99	140%	10	71	54	94
Common Raven	1	2		8	4	58	20		93	168%	10	55	36	110
Purple Martin	26	6							32	99%	10	32	14	54
Tree Swallow	176	70	84	156	72	422	247	18	1245	71%	10	1751	1422	2176
Northern Rough-w Swallow	100	47	32	78	39	90	21		407	104%	10	393	326	540
Bank Swallow	2	27	33	53	4	53	1		173	58%	10	299	148	404
Cliff Swallow	35	4		78	73	23	5		218	71%	10	306	198	420
Barn Swallow	354	119	67	252	178	241	183	112	1506	95%	10	1591	1339	1843
Black-capped Chickadee	228	95	49	255	105	574	307	10	1623	87%	10	1869	1602	2064
Tufted Titmouse	505	108	76	323	207	321	274	46	1860	107%	10	1740	1478	2269
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0	1		1		4	1		7	17%	10	41	14	81
White-breasted Nuthatch	127	37	29	57	50	163	76	12	551	107%	10	515	349	626

Brown Creeper				3		25	26		54	67%	10	81	41	130
Carolina Wren	221	42	52	63	29	26	22	8	463	169%	10	274	126	420
House Wren	293	57	58	165	74	165	150	18	980	118%	10	832	544	1016
Winter Wren	1					7	5		13	25%	10	53	14	88
Marsh Wren	24	11	4		2	1	34		76	77%	10	99	52	167
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1					3			4	55%	9	7	4	16
Ruby-crowned Kinglet										0%	1	0	1	1
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	43	2	12	68	23	47	42	20	257	107%	10	239	173	308
Eastern Bluebird	36	8	13	145	78	63	95	7	445	77%	10	574	441	793
Veery	115	10	13	227	156	766	371	40	1698	103%	10	1642	1371	2119
Bicknell's Thrush										0%	1	0	1	1
Swainson's Thrush										0%	6	1	1	2
Hermit Thrush				12	3	155	55		225	118%	10	190	127	243
Wood Thrush	178	72	103	174	79	277	166	22	1071	84%	10	1278	1065	1503
American Robin	2352	766	1026	803	518	864	636	88	7053	119%	10	5923	4750	7163
Gray Catbird	849	252	225	624	293	777	450	68	3538	94%	10	3748	3140	4219
Northern Mockingbird	134	103	68	55	36	23	20	9	448	79%	10	570	403	754
Brown Thrasher	10	4	4	10	1		7		36	72%	10	50	26	77
European Starling	1478	909	1027	627	537	364	210	223	5375	83%	10	6480	4766	8852
Cedar Waxwing	194	82	93	173	113	324	248	7	1234	81%	10	1519	1181	2387
Blue-winged Warbler	59	41	14	72	22	27	46	6	287	76%	10	378	271	504
"Lawrence's Warbler"	1													
"Brewster's Warbler"			1											
Golden-winged Warbler										0%	5	1	1	1
Tennessee Warbler										0%	2	0	1	1
Nashville Warbler						2			2	182%	4	1	1	7
Northern Parula							3		3	59%	10	5	1	11
Yellow Warbler	512	119	146	306	175	168	415	27	1868	93%	10	2016	1791	2207

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT Valley	Upland SBCs: Mid-state		Northern			2008 State	% of 98-07	# yrs	1998-2007		
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals	average	obs	Ave	Low	High
Chestnut-sided Warbler	6	3	2	92	21	295	199	2	620	97%	10	640	553	738
Magnolia Warbler				1		96	10		107	111%	10	96	67	139
Black-throated Blue Warbler			1	8		159	49		217	117%	10	185	143	243
Yellow-rumped Warbler					1	65	32		98	77%	10	127	97	169
Black-thr Green Warbler	6	5		44	3	164	126	17	365	111%	10	329	239	436
Blackburnian Warbler				7	2	101	73		183	103%	10	178	133	243
Yellow-throated Warbler										0%	1	0	1	1
Pine Warbler	67	24	13	25	9	166	92	2	398	110%	10	360	207	435
Prairie Warbler	2	11	8	51	6	1	1		80	55%	10	145	92	234
Bay-breasted Warbler										0%	2	1	1	5
Blackpoll Warbler	2			4			1		7	159%	9	4	1	11
Cerulean Warbler				1		1	2		4	44%	10	9	2	16
Black-&-White Warbler	25	30	4	72	21	137	139	4	432	81%	10	532	417	639
American Redstart	46	10	34	226	80	353	380	2	1131	101%	10	1119	896	1320
Prothonotary Warbler										0%	1	0	1	1
Worm-eating Warbler	36	15		21	6	2	6	3	89	68%	10	131	75	201
Ovenbird	88	67	13	190	79	577	345	39	1398	102%	10	1375	1112	1647
Northern Waterthrush	2			3	4	10	25	2	46	99%	10	47	22	59
Louisiana Waterthrush	17	3		53	16	22	28	6	145	95%	10	153	84	194
Kentucky Warbler										0%	3	0	1	2
Mourning Warbler	1								1	67%	7	2	1	4
Common Yellowthroat	201	63	69	221	118	605	407	22	1706	98%	10	1742	1516	1993
Hooded Warbler	2	1		15	13		3		34	100%	10	34	11	72

Wilson's Warbler										0%	1	0	1	1
Canada Warbler				5	1	22	29		57	104%	10	55	39	75
Yellow-breasted Chat										0%	5	1	1	2
Scarlet Tanager	99	43	**15**	144	42	224	132	16	715	103%	10	696	533	839
Eastern Towhee	47	48	20	**67**	50	100	**103**	11	**446**	72%	10	620	511	705
Chipping Sparrow	459	111	82	445	198	673	341	70	2379	117%	10	2036	1701	2449
Field Sparrow	8	9	9	36	13	12	13	**0**	100	68%	10	147	82	203
Savannah Sparrow		5	27	23	3	2	**2**	12	74	162%	10	46	21	63
Grasshopper Sparrow			2						2	77%	9	3	1	6
Nelson's Sh-tailed Sparrow	1								1	200%	5	1	1	1
Saltm Sharp-tailed Sparrow	**4**	1							**5**	34%	10	15	9	26
Seaside Sparrow	2	1							3	88%	5	3	1	11
Song Sparrow	608	216	258	**333**	306	598	**438**	50	2807	110%	10	2545	2093	3133
Swamp Sparrow	3	2	**13**	11	18	61	**135**	2	**245**	74%	10	331	252	457
White-throated Sparrow					1	3	1		5	56%	10	9	2	15
White-crowned Sparrow										0%	1	1	0	8
Dark-eyed Junco						**24**	11		35	82%	10	43	29	59
Northern Cardinal	494	160	165	314	191	297	258	46	1925	114%	10	1683	1452	1892
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	62	36	22	95	56	102	112	13	498	122%	10	410	351	509
Blue Grosbeak										0%	1	0	1	1
Indigo Bunting	78	39	11	146	84	74	61	10	503	117%	10	430	290	609
Dickcissel										0%	1	0	1	1
Bobolink	1		37	126	65	50	**127**	1	407	86%	10	471	335	571
Red-winged Blackbird	833	445	631	**570**	657	441	664	172	4413	98%	10	4518	3851	5271
Eastern Meadowlark			2		8		**0**	2	12	52%	10	23	8	39
Common Grackle	2101	509	576	525	260	329	**400**	45	4745	99%	10	4801	3871	5487
Boat-tailed Grackle										0%	4	1	0	5
Brown-headed Cowbird	257	134	97	195	126	**99**	195	26	1128	98%	10	1152	922	1403

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT Valley	Upland SBCs: Mid-state		Northern			2008 State	% of 98-07	# yrs	1998-2007		
	GS	NH	Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals	average	obs	Ave	Low	High
Orchard Oriole	34	9	6	27	8		1		85	132%	10	64	38	112
Baltimore Oriole	382	118	105	185	101	104	153	11	1159	108%	10	1078	892	1400
Purple Finch			1	9	6	98	54		168	113%	10	149	101	197
House Finch	218	93	126	142	121	140	110	21	971	77%	10	1258	945	1470
Pine Siskin										0%	4	1	0	3
American Goldfinch	381	176	267	263	269	509	273	61	2199	88%	10	2495	2171	3030
Evening Grosbeak										0%	3	1	0	2
House Sparrow	1025	482	362	297	195	318	199	167	3045	92%	10	3320	2816	4051
other unidentified/hybrid		8							8		9	25	11	77
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	25024	9778	8843	13295	8565	17593	13996	2129	99201	97.1%		#####	87437	#####
CD Species	148	130	95	124	112	120	132	85	186	98.4%		189	180	202
CP Species	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	52.6%		2	0	6
DEGREE OF EFFORT:														
Observers	55	34	35	25	19	17	63	2	250	107%		233	193	257
Parties	32	19	16	15	12	10	10	2	116	96%		121	102	136
Party Hours	318.5	123.0	99.0	136.0	94	184.0	203.5	26.0	1184	101%		1176	1009	1350
Day Party Hours	293.5	123	99	125.0	92	174	191.5	26.0	1124	100%		1122	963	1291
Night Party Hours	25	0	0	11	2	10	12	0	60	110%		54	42	70
Indiv. birds per 10 PHs	786	795	893	978	911	956	688	819	853	98%		871	743	992
Indiv. birds per Observer	455	288	253	532	451	1035	222	1065	537	123%		437	397	498

LOCAL COUNT TOTALS

Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count *(founded 1992)*

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

Totals: 120 species, 17592 individual birds, plus one hybrid. Seventeen observers in 10 Ptys spent 184 PHs in the field. Since 1992, with the addition of Marsh Wren this year, 151 CD species have been recorded.

Participants: *John Baker, Bob Barbieri, Ray Belding, Douglas Carrier, Paul Carrier, Ayreslea Denny, Angela Dimmitt, Nikki Hall, Seth Harvey, Vicki Hester, Russ Naylor, Carol Parent, Cynthia Phipps, David Rosgen (121 Laurel Way, Winsted, CT 06098-2534; dave@whitememorialcc.org), Sam Slater, Ed Yescott, and Fran Zygmont.*

Weather: 6/?- AM: Partly cloudy, very humid, I thunderstorm, 0.2" rain; SSW winds 0-10 mph., 58° to 86°F., Night- Cloudy; very humid, I thunderstorm, SSW winds 0-6 mph., 86° to 67°F. 6/?- Cloudy; very humid, I thunderstorm, 0.8" rain; SSW winds 0-8 mph. 67° to 85°F., Night- Partly cloudy, very humid, I thunderstorm, 0.2" rain; SSW winds 0-7 mph., 85° to 63°F.

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

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

Totals: 148 species, 25042 individual birds, plus two count period species. Fifty-five observers in 32 Ptys censused for 318.5 PHs. Since 1976, 228 CD species have been recorded, with the additions this year of Purple Sandpiper and Mourning Warbler; 140 of these have been found nesting

Participants: *Alan Alterman, Shawn Aslein, Shawn Aslein jr., Tom Andersen, Pat Bailey, Tom Baptist, Trudy Battaly, Joan Becker, Richard Becker, Joe Belanger, Gail Benson, Michael Bochnik, Jacqueline, Bruskin, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye, NY 10580; tom.burke@rsmi.com), Ioa Byne, Al Collins, Diane Collins, Annette Cunniffe, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Debbie Etheridge, Andrew Farnsworth, Jay Gartner, Kathy Gellman, Ted Gilman, Frank Guida, Melissa Hamilton, Carolyn Hartel, David Havens, Jalna Jaeger, Kelli Jewell, Margaret Lechner, Berna Lincoln, Stan Lincoln, Shaun Martin, Ken Mirman, Mike Moccio, Frank Novak, Connor O'Brien, Jim O'Brien, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807; gejlpalmer@yahoo.com), Drew Panko, Matt Popp, Steve Ricker, Polly Rothstein, Meredith Sampson, Jonna Schaffer, Andy Towle, Matt Tozer, Richard Trepp, Jim Utter, Bill Van Loan jr., Bill Wallace, Mike Warner, and Adam Zorn.*

Weather: 6/7- NE winds 1-8 mph, 53° to 72°F., 0.03" rain, overcast, mostly cloudy; 6/8- SE winds 0-4 mph., 62° to 71°F., 0.12" rain, overcast, mostly cloudy,

Hartford Summer Bird Count *(founded 1991)*

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

Totals: 95 species, 8843 individual birds. Thirty-five observers in 16 Partys censused over 99 PHs. One hundred sixty-three CD species have been documented since 1992.

Participants: *Bill Asteriades, Steve Ballentine, Rob Ballinger, Joe Budrow, Mona Cavallero, Paul Cianfaglione, Jan Collins, Frances D'Amico, Andrew Dasinger, Paul Desjardins, Ben Egan, Beth Egan, Peter Egan, Mark Flaherty, Marjorie Haley, Ernie Harris, Millie Harris, Denise Jernigan, Jay Kaplan, (71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT. 06019; jaybrd49@aol.com), Gil Kleiner, Steve Kotchko, Donald Lukaszek, Patsy Mason, Adrian Nichols, Donna Nowak, Fred Nowak Fred Nowak Jr., Marianne Piche, Daria Protopova,, Zellene Sandler, Peg Schader, Mike Whittlesey, Sarah Winer, Roy Zartarian, and David Zomick.*

Weather: 6/14- AM becoming overcast, muggy, then thunder storms, 68° to 81°F. 6/15- Rain early AM, then cloudy, clearing,

Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count *(founded 1994)*

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

Totals: 132 species, 13,996 individual birds. Sixty-three observers in 10 Ptys censused over 203.5 PHs. Since 1994, 183 CD species have been observed, 170 in the prior ten years.

Participants: Susan Ainsworth, Janet Baker, John Baker, *Robert J. Barbieri (124 Hoffman St. 1st floor., Torrington, CT. 06790)*, Marcia Barket, *Cindy Barrett, John Barrett, Ray Belding, Debbie Bishop, Donna Boynton, George Boynton, Chris Craig, Ayreslea Denney, Angela Dimmitt, Curt Edgat, Max Ehrman, John Eykelhoff, Eileen Finnan, Kevin Finnan, James Fisher, Mary Gendron, Evelyn Gelestner, Gylli Griswold, Lukas Hyder, Daren Jacklin, Judy Juliano, Joan Lang,, Gordon Loery, Deborah Martin, Caitlin MacGinitie, Patti McCurdy, Marcia McGowan, Scott Mills, Joyce Mowrey, Russ Naylor, Ann Orsillo, Clarance Parker, Jim Parker, Cynthia Phipps, Dave Rosgen, Donna Rose Smith, Claire Tromas, and Kristin Wallstrom.*

Weather: "Sunny and hot", 6/7- 80°F., 6/8- 87°F.

New Haven Summer Bird Count *(founded 1991)*

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

Totals: 130 species, 9779 individual birds, plus one CP species. Thirty-four observers in 19 Ptys spent 123 PHs in the field. Since 1991, 207 CD species have been confirmed with Forster's Tern added this year.

Participants: Marion Aimesbury, *Tony Appell, Mark Aronson, Larry Bausher, Phyllis Bausher, Nick Bonomo, Andrew Brand, Steve Broker, Ken Cohen, Linda Cohen, Roy Dellinger, Sharon Dellinger, Natasha Domino, Randy Domino, Ken Elkins, John Farley, Stacy Hanks, Mike Horn, Pat Horn, Bernice Lattanzi, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Steffanie Liskey, Chris Loscalzo, Steve Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524; rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net), Florence McBride, Bob Mitchell, Martine Richards, Nancy Rosenbaum, Arne Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Nancy Specht, Maria Stockmal, and John Triana.*

Weather: 6/?- SSE winds 0-10 mph, 63° to 71°F.; 6/?- ESE winds 0-8 mph., 56° to 66°F.

New Milford/Pawling Summer Bird Count *(founded 2003)*

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

Totals: 112 species, 8565 individual birds. Nineteen observers in twelve Ptys spent 94 PHs in the field.

Since 2003, 140 CD species have been noted, with the additions this year of Little Blue Heron; 98 have been confirmed nesting.

Participants: *Pat Bailey, Ray Belding, Don Breeger, Ioa Byrne, Bob Cartoceti, Angela Dimmitt (PO Box 146, Sherman, Ct. 06784; angladimmitt@aol.com), Jim Dugan, Larry Fischer, Sibyll Gilbert, Linton Hamilton, Carol Hartel, Seth Harvey, Marge Josephson, Bill Liedlich, Nancy Liedlich, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Sally Spence, and Nick Thold.*

Weather: 6/14- Sun/clouds, thunderstorms, 60° to 82°F., 6/15- sun/clouds, 66° to 79°F., Night: fog, mist, 66°F.,

Storrs Summer Bird Count *(founded 1990)*

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

Totals: 85 species, 2129 individual birds. Two observers in two Parties spent 26 PHs in the field. Since 1990, 133 CD species have been counted; 66 are nesters.

Participants: *Steve Morytko and Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268; climbrogers@charter.net),*

Weather: 6/21- Foggy until 7:30 AM then mostly sunny, SW winds 0-10 mph., 56° to 83°F., 6/22- mostly cloudy; local showers and thunderstorms, SW winds 5-10 mph., trace of rain, 62° to 81°F.,

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

Count Date: June 1 (Sun.)

Totals: 129 species, 13,289 individual birds. Twenty-seven observers in 20 Parties spent 121.5 PHs in the field. Since 1978, 180 CD species have been recorded, while 122 species have nested.

Participants: *Terry Amalavage, Elliott Ashe, Renee Baade, Dave Babington, Bob Barbieri, Ray Belding, Polly Brody, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Larry Fisher, Ed Hagen, Seth Harvey, Anne Kehmna, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798), Sandra Overton, Dave Rosgen, Fred Schroeder, Donna Rose Smith, Carol Titus, Dave Tripp Jr., Terry Weaver, Leigh Wells, Mary Wetherill, Joe Zegall, Tom Zissu and Francis Zygmont.*

Weather: SSW Winds, 5-10 mph., Sunny AM, Overcast PM, 65-80°.

2007 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

By Neil Currie

Connecticut can be proud that a small group of its birders, joined by others across the country, were the spark that led to the formation of hawk watching groups throughout the East and across the country.

One of these groups , the New England Hawk Watch, was organized in 1971. In the first report Don Hopkins and Jerry Mersereau wrote, "The idea of a hawk watch has become fairly common in the past decade. At known points of concentration, Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania, Hook Mountain on the Hudson River in New York, Montclair in New Jersey and Duluth, Minnesota, daily observations are carried on during the fall migration. In New England Mount Tom is a concentration point for migrating hawks."

After 1971 a system evolved in which about 15 sites operated each fall. Now two of these, Lighthouse Point in New Haven and Quaker Ridge in Greenwich, conduct daily counts throughout the fall. Other inland sites are manned for only about ten days in mid-September for the Broad-winged Hawk flight.

At the time the New England Hawk Watch formed, the Hawk Migration Association of North America came into being. Since then daily counts from across the country, including Connecticut, have become part of a data base stored at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Today, instead of reporting hourly and daily counts on paper, we are posting these count electronically. By turning to www.hawkcount.org the counts from all sites are available. Also summaries of the fall counts in Connecticut are on the COA web site, www.ctbirding.org.

The accompanying table summarizes the 2007 flight. See additional tabes ar the COA Web site noted above.

Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 2007

Site	Town	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
Bald Peak	Salisbury	3	4		1			10	1		1	335		3				1			356
Bearhouse Hill	Madison	17		19	24	2	2	271	31			17					70	15		52	503
Booth Hill	West Hartland	21			9	8	3	69		1		3988					3	2			4083
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	80			58	11	18	183	17			3128				1	46	3	2	25	3492
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	46			25	4	1	52	5			3409					14			9	3519
East Shore Park	New Haven	5		1	13	1	4	89	11			102					2		1	6	230
Flat Hill	Southbury	34	8		17	8	5	59	4			1766		1		1	7	1		11	1888
Flirt Hill	Easton	165			24	7	87	205	52	2	7	1		64	6	2	641	28	2	6	1134
Heritage Village	Southbury	7			3	1		13				950					3				970
Huntington S.P.	Redding	9						9	2		1	404					2				418
Johnnycake Mt.	Burlington	16			13	14	2	61	3			1320					33	5	1		1452
Lighthouse Point	New Haven	628		435	1137	75	658	6275	1309	18	174	488		736	4	7	1249	515	114	402	13596
Middle School	Torrington	85	7	11	42	9	6	72	28	1	5	2645		10	1		43	10	3	21	2914
Peak Mountain	East Granby	381	2	159	75	16	95	378	57	12	37	448		313	2	4	91	32	17	37	1775
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich	632	40	582	780	173	307	4876	655	28	356	9327		368	2	11	718	124	58	198	18603
Taine Mountain	Burlington	9		1	4			15				363								3	386
Waveny Park	New Canaan	51			54	10		162	7		3	493		3		1	87	2	2	12	836
Winchester, Ct.	Winchester	4				1		3	3		3	713							1		724
																			201		
Total		2193	61	1208	2279	340	1188	12802	2185	62	587	29897		1498	15	27	3009	738	201	782	56879

		Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	2007
Lighthouse Point		628		435	1137	75	658	6275	1309	18	174	488		736	4	7	1249	515	114	402	13596
Quaker Ridge		632	40	582	780	173	307	4876	655	28	356	9327		368	2	11	718	124	58	198	18603
All Others		933	21	191	362	92	223	1651	221	16	57	20082		394	9	9	1042	99	29	182	24680
		2193	61	1208	2279	340	1188	12802	2185	62	587	29897		1498	15	27	3009	738	201	782	56879

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

DIARY OF A BIRDING GEEK:

A Swan Showing Bill Characters Possibly Intermediate Between Whistling Swan, *Cygnus columbianus columbianus*, and Bewick's Swan, *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, in Goshen, Litchfield Co.

By Mark S. Szantyr

On 30 March 2008, I stopped by a small farm pond near Route 4 in Goshen to check for Tundra Swans that had been reported there. I immediately located three swans, an adult and two immatures.

On closer inspection of the birds, and I was struck by how much yellow was present on the bill of the adult. A few days prior, I observed four Tundra Swans on a small pond in Eastford, Windham Co. While the birds were distant, I made notes as to how difficult it was to make out any yellow on the bill. This bird's yellow patch stood out remarkably well.

I had a discussion with Greg Hanisek, Louis Bevier and Nick Bonomo about the amount of yellow this bird showed. We discussed the possibility that this could be a Bewick's Swan, the Asian subspecies corresponding to the North American Whistling Swan. Tundra Swan comprises two subspecies, Bewick's Swan and Whistling Swan. Bewick's is best distinguished from Whistling Swan by the large yellow patch at the base of the bill, often covering the entire basal third of the upper mandible. Whistling Swan typically shows a small patch of yellow just ahead of the eye on the upper mandible. This patch is small and often difficult to see in the field. Occasionally, there is no yellow present. We all agreed that there was more yellow than we usually see but certainly less yellow than is shown by typical Bewick's Swan.

Mark Szantyr Photo

Figure 1 Tundra Swan, one of three present on a small pond in Goshen, Litchfield Co., on 30 March 2008.

Mark Szantyr Photo

Figure 2 Enlargement of the bill showing unusually large yellow marking.

In July 2008, I was re-reading an old issue of North American Birds and noted a photograph of Tundra Swans from Washington. These birds showed a similar amount of yellow to the March Connecticut bird. In the text, reference was made to an article published in the Auk, the Journal of the American Ornithologist's Union, wherein a method of quantifying the yellow in the subspecies of Tundra Swans was described. This article also discussed the hybridization of these two subspecies at their natural contact zone. The authors captured a large number of each subspecies and took profile photographs of the bills. They then traced the upper mandible, delineating the yellow area from the black. This tracing was laid over graph paper, and the number of yellow squares was compared to the black squares.

Their findings showed that the mean amount of yellow in Whistling Swans was 3.1%. Three percent of their sample of Whistling swans showed no yellow at all and 4.3% had more than 10% yellow on the bill. The largest amount of yellow in a known Whistling Swan was 15.8%.

Bewick's swans were divided into three bill-types: *Dark*, showing a pattern similar to the Goshen bird (17.9% of their sample), *Pennyface*, with the central black surrounding a yellow spot (19.1% of their sample), and *Yellow Neb*, the basal third of the upper mandible all yellow (63% of their sample). The mean amount of yellow on the dark-type Bewick's Swan bills was 31.5%. The darkest known Bewick's Swan bill was 22.9% yellow.

I decided to try this method on photos of the Goshen bird. The best photo I had showed the bird in near profile, and I admit that this could build in inaccuracy to my measurement. I enlarged the photo and made a tracing. I laid this over graph paper to quantify the yellow compared to the black. The details of the procedure described in the Auk were lacking, so I had to decide how to count squares that showed both yellow and black. I decided to count them as both, feeling that this would eliminate any judgment on my part

and make them neutral in the results. (I don't know if this is accurate mathematically but it seemed to work for me).

I counted 38 squares of yellow (including yellow and black) and 135 squares of black (including yellow and black). If any square at the edge of the mandible contained black, it was counted as a black square. If any square contained yellow and was against the white of the face it was called yellow. These numbers worked out to a bill that was 21.96% yellow and 78.03% black. This fell into what the authors described as an intermediate area.

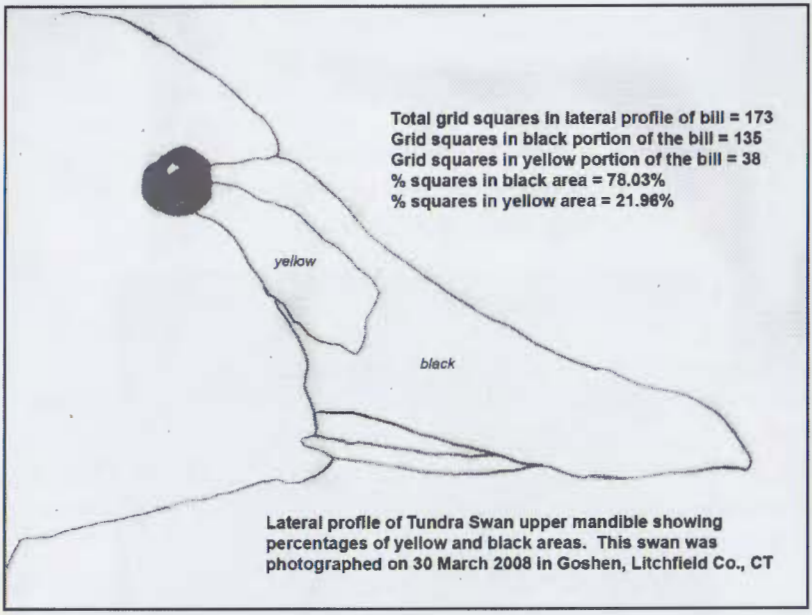

Figure 3 Tracing made from photo in Figure 1 diagramming the distribution of black and yellow on the upper mandible.

Troubled by the assumptions built into my methods, I consulted with Louis Bevier. He told me of a computer program that quantifies an area electronically. This program, NIH Image, was installed on his computer and I forwarded him my photograph. On his three attempts he got

measurements of 18.2%, 18.7%, and 18.9% for the amount of yellow. Using his 18.7% as a working average, my square-counting method was only 3.26% off. The measurements Louis secured are still in the intermediate range between the two subspecies.

So what does all this mean? The authors of the article in the Auk believe that, using these methods, out of range Tundra Swans can be reasonably assigned to a subspecies. Birds falling in the intermediate range may pertain to intergrade swans, swans from the contact zone between Bewick's and Whistling. The authors cite wild-occurring family groups with each adult belonging to different subspecies.

The Goshen bird, likely a Whistling Swan, showed more yellow than was known from the experience of several long-time eastern birders and a few West Coast birders as well. One birder in the West said that a small percentage of the Whistling Swans he sees every year in the northwestern United States show a similar amount of yellow to the Goshen bird. Are these intergrade swans... swans with both Whistling and Bewick's genetics? Geographically, it would seem possible. There is no way to be certain, but the work of Evans and Sladen published in the Auk seems to suggest that this is a real possibility.

The Goshen bird? There is not enough yellow to call it a Bewick's Swan. Is there enough yellow to eliminate a pure Whistling Swan? I am not sure. Certainly, the amount of yellow as quantified by the various methods puts the bird in the intermediate range. If I could have had the bird in a perfect profile I might be more ready to make that type of determination. I guess I would just call it really interesting.

Remember when, while back in school, you said you didn't think you'd ever need math in the real world?

Figure 4 Whistling Swan with a typical amount of yellow on bill. Photo courtesy of Ian Gereg, Avian Director, Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, Litchfield, CT.

Figure 5 Typical Bewick's Swan Bill pattern. Some can show significantly less yellow than this. Photo courtesy of Ian Gereg, Avian Director, Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, Litchfield, CT.

I would like to thank Louis Bevier, Steve Mlodinow, Dave Shealer of the Waterbird Society, R. Michael Erwin of the USFWS, and Roland Limpert of the Maryland Wildfowl Trust for their help in discussing the identification question, Louis for being a bigger geek than me as he actually owned the quantification software, Ian A. Gereg, Avian Director, Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, for images of both subspecies, and Joy Mark, Associate Professor of Mathematics, for showing me the errors of my "gazzinta's".

Literature Cited

Evans, Mary E. and William J. L. Sladen, A comparative Analysis of the Bill Markings of Whistling and Bewick's Swan and Out-of range Occurrences of the Two Taxa., The Auk 97: 697-703, October 1980

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring, March 1 to May 31, 2008
By Greg Hanisek

Following are first arrival dates for some regularly occurring spieces:

N. Gannet: March 20 in Stratford (FM); Osprey: March 14 in Branford (GL); Green Heron: April 21 in South Windsor (PCi); Piping Plover: March 16 in Milford (TZ); Killdeer: March 7 in Farmington (PCi); Spotted Sandpiper: April 12 in Milford (CS, SS); Willet: April 12 in Old Saybrook (JO); Least Sandpiper: April 19 in Westport (FM); Common Tern: May 6 in Stamford (ACo); Whip-poor-will: April 22 in Wolcott (JSw); Common Nighthawk: May 10 in South Windsor (RMi); Ruby-throated Hummingbird: April 20 in Southington (SG); Great Crested Flycatcher: April 27 in Stratford (FM); Eastern Kingbird: April 22 in Westport (FM); White-eyed Vireo: April 7 in Stratford (SK); Yellow-throated Vireo: April 25 in Washington (DB); Blue-headed Vireo: April 12 in Wilton (LTi); Warbling Vireo: April 26 in Bridgeport (NB); Purple Martin: April 13 in Southport (DV); Tree Swallow; March 10 in Easton (THk); N. Rough-winged Swallow: April 1 in Hartford (PCi); Bank Swallow: April 18 in Kent (JBa); Cliff Swallow: April 15 in Watertown (RN); Barn Swallow: April 11 in Storrs (CEl).

House Wren: April 19 in Greenwich (GP); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: April 12 in Stratford (HK); Wood Thrush: April 23 in Chester (TE); Blue-winged Warbler: April 12 in New Haven (BBa); Tennessee Warbler: May 5 in Watertown (RN); Nashville Warbler: April 26 in Bridgeport (NB); Yellow Warbler: April 11 in Storrs (KB); Black-throated Green Warbler: April 25 in Meriden (PCo); Black-and-White Warbler: April 16 in Lyme (DP); Worm-eating Warbler: April 19 in Lyme (DP); Ovenbird: April 26 in Chester (TE); Northern Waterthrush: April 14 in East Hampton (PDf); Louisiana Waterthrush: April 10 in Washington (PS); Scarlet Tanager: April 21 in Mystic (BW); Chipping Sparrow: April 8 in Middlefield (KFi); Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: May 5 in Old Saybrook (JO); Rose-breasted Grosbeak: April 20 in

Colchester (PH); Orchard Oriole: April 23 in Wethersfield (PCi); Baltimore Oriole: April 20 in Greenwich (ACu); Eastern Meadowlark: March 15 in Woodbridge (CLo).

A Greater White-fronted Goose was in Storrs in mid-March (BH et al.). A flock of 250 Snow Geese, including 2 dark morphs, dropped into a corn field in Litchfield on March 28 (IG, OS, KFi); 230 including 6 dark morphs were at Sandy Point, West Haven, on March 30-April 2 (MSt, FM). A Cackling Goose was at Stearns Farm in Mansfield March 16-17 (MSz et al.). A single **Tundra Swan** found March 1 at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford stayed into early April (RPe et al.). It was a precursor to an unusually robust flight that included: three in a cornfield in Hamden March 12 (ABr); two in fields in Simsbury March 13 (LK); three in North Haven March 14 (RDo); two in a pond in Suffield March 15-17 (MO); four in Natchaug State Forest in Eastford March 20-23 (MSz, DM); and three at a pond in Goshen on March 23-27 (JZ).

A Eurasian Wigeon at Southport Beach March 27 was away from usual wintering spots (DV); two were at Milford Point on April 24 (KE, FG). The largest flock of Northern Pintails was 32 on March 10 at Station 43, South Windsor (ADa). Single Redheads were seen in early March at Cove Island, Stamford, (MM), at Lake Waramaug in New Preston (LE), and at AspetuckReservoir in Easton (ABa). Twin Lakes in Salisbury held 700+ Ring-necked Ducks on March 26 (PCa).

A male and three female Common Eiders were at Avery Point, Groton, on May 12 (GH et al.). A female **Harlequin Duck** was found April 19 at Greenwich Point (TBa); it remained until May 11. Four Black Scoters dropped into Nepaug Reservoir in Canton on March 21 (PCa), and 65 White-winged Scoters migrated north over HBSP on May 22 (FM). Female **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were off Stamford on March 6 (PDu) and at Milford Point on March 13 (KE); a male was reported from Indian

Cove, Guilford, March 27-30 (CR et al.). Lake Waramaug held 1600 Common Mergansers on March 23 (AG).

A Ruffed Grouse had begun drumming by March 25 in Storrs, an early date (KB); three were drumming at a camp in Norfolk on April 27 (J&AO). A Red-throated Loon was well up the Housatonic River at Derby on March 21 (MSt). A good count of 109 Horned Grebes was made off West Haven on April 5 (NB). Red-necked Grebes were at Nepaug Reservoir, New Hartford, on April 2 (DR). A site in Portland held 120+ Great Blue Heron nests, many of them active, on March 21 (ADa, BA). A Little Blue Heron was a good inland find April 21 in Canton (CM). A Tricolored Heron made an early appearance April 7 in Stratford (GH et al.); another was at Watch Rock, Old Lyme, on May 6 (HG). Yellow-crowned Night-Heron continues at its eastern breeding outpost in Mystic (GW). A **White Ibis** was seen briefly but well May 7 in Clinton (GS).

An almost completely white Turkey Vulture was an arresting sight March 6 in Montville (DP). A Golden Eagle was on the lower Connecticut River in the Chester area March 2 (KE). A King Rail was a good find April 27-May 2 at Station 43, South Windsor (TA et al.). A large rail giving a King Rail call was at the Stratford railroad trail May 14 (FG). Four Soras were at Station 43 on May 22 (PCi). A Sandhill Crane wandered in the Canaan-Cornwall area in May (AG et al.), and five adults were seen in a field in Sharon on May 20 (JHa).

An American Golden Plover, uncommon in spring, was at HBSP April 5- 9 (TA et al.). An **American Avocet** visited the outer bars at Milford Point on May 18 (FM). A very heavy movement of Solitary Sandpiperss brought 21 to Rocky Hill Meadows (PCi) and 22 to Glastonbury Meadows (ADa), both on May 10, and 30 to Wethersfield Meadows on May 12 (PCi). The first two Upland Sandpipers were at Bradley International Airport on April 23 (RTe); migrants stopped at HBSP on May 2 (TA), and Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, and Sherwood

Island State Park, Westport, both on May 3 (FM). A Western Sandpiper, rare in spring, was at Milford Point on May 25 (KE et al.). A White-rumped Sandpiper made an early appearance April 26 at HBSP (TA). The first Pectoral Sandpiper appeared at McKinney NWR, Stratford, on April 12 (FM). A **Ruff** in basic plumage, believed to be a male based on size, was found on flats on the Saugatuck River in Westport on April 18 (FM). It was present until at least May 7. An early Short-billed Dowitcher appeared March 24-27 at Milford Point (BBa, FG). A **Wilson's Phalarope** enlivened a trip to Barn Island, Stonington, on May 17 (PFa et al.)

A light morph **Parasitic Jaeger** flew across Millstone Point, Waterford, on May 9 (DP). Black-headed Gulls were in Westport March 8 (FM), Milford March 17 (GH), Holly Pond, Stamford, March 20-26 (DV et al.), and Southport Beach March 22 (NC). **Little Gulls** were in Southport March 15 (DV) and Milford March 17-18 (GH et al.). About 10 Lesser Black-backed Gulls for the season included six at HBSP on April 28 (CT). A

Meredith Sampson photo
This Ruff was a long-stayer on the Saugatuck River in Westport.

first-winter Glaucous Gull was at Batterson Pond, Farmington, on March 26 (PCi). Milford Point and Griswold Point, Old Lyme, both held a Caspian Tern on May 24 (FG, GW et al.). A Royal Tern was off Great Captain I., Greenwich on May 27 (SMa) and one was seen off Stratford May 31 (fide FM). Inland Black Terns graced Station 43 in South Windsor on May 3 (PFa) and Barkhamsted Reservoir on May 9 (PCa). Black Skimmers first arrived May 11 at Sandy Point, when four were present (NB).

The **White-winged Dove** first seen in February 2007 returned to the same Branford yard April 3 (DLo). A **Eurasian Collared Dove** was reported May 22-23 at HBSP (MDi, NP, PDu). It would be a second state record if accepted. The first of 15 Yellow-billed Cuckoo records was May 7 in Glastonbury (DC), and the first of eight Black-billed Cuckoo records was May 9 in Ellington (CEk). A Short-eared Owl was still present April 15 at Great Island in Old Lyme (TA). Whip-poor-wills were reported from eight widely scattered locations. A Chimney Swift was early April 12 in Milford (NB). A Red-headed Woodpecker that wintered in Ashford remained through the season (SMo), and one visited a feeder in Southbury in early May (JBt).

The first of 12 Olive-sided Flycatchers was at Greenwich Audubon on May 17 (TG). An Eastern Wood-Pewee was early May 2 in Stratford (RBa). The first report of Acadian Flycatcher came from Redding on May 10 (LTi et al.). Alder Flycatcher, the latest arriving of our regular nesters, was a bit early May 14 at White Memorial in Litchfield (DR). Willow Flycatchers, which usually arrive first, were widely reported the next day (GH et al.) The first of eight Yellow-bellied Flycatchers was in Litchfield on May 21 (DR). The only Philadelphia Vireo reported was May 18-19 in Ashford (MSz). The latest of eight Northern Shrike records was April 8 in Simsbury (LK).

There were about 40 Swainson's Thrush reports, beginning with one May 8 in Waterbury (GH), compared to 15 Gary-cheeked (type) Thrush records. A **Bohemian**

Waxwing appeared in a flock of Cedar Waxwings March 14 in Harwinton (PCa), followed by two on March 23 in Barkhamsted (FZ) and one on the UConn campus in Storrs April 9-15 (m.ob). Then on April 15-16 an additional six birds were seen on the campus, with the latest report of one on April 19 (CEl et al.).

A migrant Golden-winged Warbler was in Pomfret May 15 (DM), and singles were in West Hartford May 16 (JR) and on territory in Naugatuck State Forest in late May (BDe et al.). Brewster's Warblers were reported from four locations. Lawrence's Warblers were in Harwinton on May 4 (RBe), Watertown May 6 (RN) and Fairchild Garden, Greenwich, on May 10-18 (BO et al.). Cape May Warblers were in Glastonbury May 6 (DC), East Rock in New Haven May 10 (SMa), Waterbury May 11 (GH), Bolton May 15 (EHr) and West Hartford May 16 (JR). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** found April 26 in Pachaug State Forest in Voluntown stayed until at least May 11 (BDw et al.). The first of 14 Mourning Warblers was reported from Greenwich Point on May 21 (MSa). A Yellow-breasted Chat was at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, on March 30 (LTi et al.)

An adult male **Western Tanager** visited a feeder in Hampton May 2-4 (MH et al.). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was present May 18 through the end of the period in Naugatuck State Forest (BF). Rocky Hill Meadows held 90+ Savannah Sparrows on May 10 (PCi). The bird of the season, a female **Lark Bunting,** made a brief appearance May 22 at HBSP for a third state record (NB, DS). A Grasshopper Sparrow turned up at Cove Island, Stamford, on April 19 (MM, WM). An "Oregon" Junco was found at the Connecticut Audubon Society Christmas tree farm in Westport on April 5 (LTi). **Blue Grosbeaks** were at East Rock on May 17 (SMa, RTr), in Westbrook May 19 (TT) and at an East Hampton feeder May 9-15 (MC).

A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Stonington Country Club on May 31 (JU). At least three Boat-tailed Grackle (one male, two females) were discovered April 26 at HBSP (PFu).

Nick Bonomo photo
This Lark Bunting showed itself just long enough to be "digi-binned" at Hammonasset.

The male was extremely territorially aggressive, and two females were seen carrying nesting material on May 4 (GH et al.). This represents the first known attempt by this species to break away from its only New England breeding colony on the Stratford Great Meadows. An apparent first-year male **Bullock's Oriole** arrived at the Schaefer feeder in Canaan on March 25 and stayed until May 7 (IS, TSc). A series of excellent photos were taken, but the bird, which has generated extensive discussion among experts about possible hybrid status, remains under review by ARCC.

Some Pine Grosbeaks persisted well into March. The latest report was of two on April 13 in Winchester (DR). The high counts were 16 on March 2 in Simsbury (CLo). Heavy Purple Finch movements are often detected in the fall, but spring migration is less well-known. This year the state's e-mail list, along with feeders kept full for Redpolls, allowed detection of a marked northbound flight April 12-16. A juvenile Red Crossbill surprised observers May 1 at HBSP (PCo et al.). The highest March count of Common Redpolls was

160 at a Harwinton feeder on March 4 (PCa), but good numbers were widespread throughout the month. The same Harwinton feeder hosted a **Hoary Redpoll** March 28 (PCa). Scattered Pine Siskins were reported deep into May. Single Evening Grosbeaks were in Winchester March 30 (DR) and Waterbury April 18 (RN); three flew over Harwinton April 6 (PCa) and two were in Harwinton April 26 (PCa).

Observers: Ralph Amodei, Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Phil Asprelli, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade (RBa), Dave Babington, Jim Bair (JBa), Steve Ballentine (SBa), Bill Banks (BBa), Tom Baptist (TBa), Charles Barnard, Aaron Barriger (ABa), Joe Bear (JBe), Ray Belding (RBe), Joe Bette (JBt), Brian Bielfelt (BBl), Bob Bitondi (BBi), Nick Bonomo, Andy Brand (ABr), Steve Broker (SBr), Todd Brooks (TBr), Milan Bull, Kevin Burgio, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier (PCa), Mona Cavallaro, Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, John Clancy (JCl), Linda Clancy, Al Collins (ACo), Jan Collins (JCn), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe (ACu), Neil Currie, Fran D'Amico, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Mike DiGiorgio (MDi), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Carol Donagher, Mike Doyle (MDo), Pat Dufour (PDf); Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Les Ernhaut, Tammy Eustis, Patrice Favreau (PFa), Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan (KFi), Karen Fiske (KFs), Paul Fusco (PFu), Frank Gallo, Rich Gedney, Ian Gereg, Ted Gilman, Art Gingert, Hank Golet, Shari Guarino, Lorraine Gunderson, Ed Hagen (EHa), AJ Hand, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris (EHr), Jeff Haydock (JHa), Scott Henckel, Marilyn Higgins, Brian Hiller, Pam Holden, Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway (THo), Tom Hook (THk), Julian Hough (JHo), John Johnson, Kris Johnson, Len Kendall, Brian Kleinman, Harold Kruitbosch; Scott Kruitbosch, Carol Lemmon (CLe), Gary Lemmon, Donna Lorello (DLo), Chris Loscalzo

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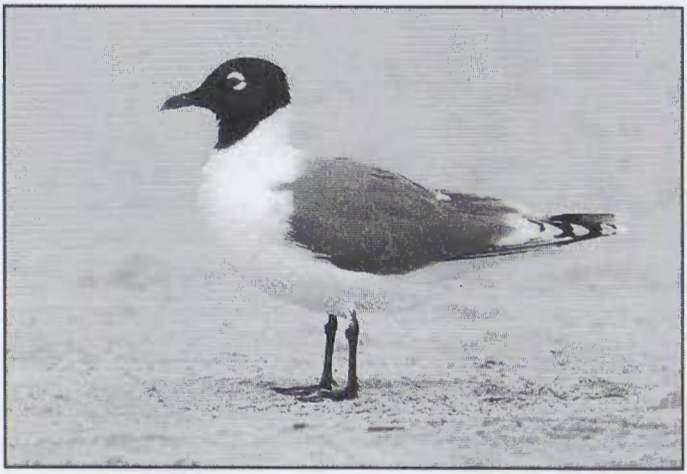
PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough



This month's gull challenge is no laughing matter. Or is it?

Dark legs, dark gray above with a black-hood and white eye-crescents identify the bird as either a breeding-plumaged Laughing or Franklin's Gull. One occurs commonly in Connecticut and the other doesn't! At a quick first glance, these two species in their dapper summer garb are quite similar, and aside from one or two consistent plumage differences, we have to look for other, more subtle clues to separate them.

In identifying any vagrant species, a solid grounding in variation of commonly occurring species is the best weapon in your arsenal, especially when it comes to gulls.

Laughing Gulls do not breed in the state, but in late summer and early fall birds from nearby breeding colonies (Long Island being the closest) begin to filter into coastal areas. Franklin's Gulls are an abundant breeding gull of the midwestern prairies. They undertake a long-distance

migration to wintering grounds in South America. As a result of the westerly bias to their migration, they are a rare species in New England. To put it into context, they are a more regularly recorded in northwestern Europe (e.g. the UK) than they are on the eastern seaboard. It seems rather absurd that I've seen two Franklin's Gulls close to my childhood home in England - two more than I've seen here in the East, and I've not lived in the UK for close to 15 years! This phenomenon is most likely explained by birds that stray east across the Atlantic from South American wintering grounds, and then head north into Europe in spring.

Laughing Gull is a rather rakish bird, with long, pointed wings that extend well past the tail, giving a rather attenuated look. It sports a rather long and slightly drooping bill. Compared to other Laughing Gulls present, out mystery bird looks rather compact and short-legged. This is enhanced by a weak bill and rather short wings. Getting excited, we note the eye-crescents. While similar to a Laughing Gull's, they appear to be a little more swollen, lending the bird a rather more "surprised" or "clownish" look (Olsen et al. in litt.) rather than "mean." That fits...but what else would make it a Franklin's rather than the more expected Laughing Gull? What other points do we need to look at to clinch the ID?

The primary pattern! In flight, Laughing Gulls have black primaries that blend right into the gray wings and small white primary "mirrors." Franklin's have black-wingtips that are isolated from the gray wings by a white band and have large white "mirrors." This difference can be seen on the ground. The paler areas of the outer primaries are visible as pale shafts and the white primary tips are obvious.

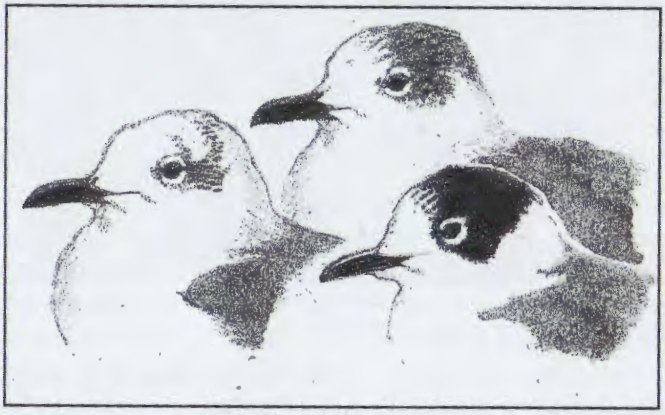
As if on cue it takes flight briefly, revealing more clearly the very distinctive wingtip pattern, but also note the broader white trailing edge to the wing. It really is a Franklin's!! Before you pat yourself on the back, rush to find your cell phone and call me immediately!

Adult summer Franklin's Gull. Note the broad trailing edge and distinctive wing-pattern – visible from above and below.

It's not always that easy. Outside of adult summer, Franklin's Gulls are best separated from Laughing Gulls by the fact that in winter they retain a nice black "helmet" that contrasts with the prominent eye-crescents. It is in non-breeding plumages that the identification becomes fraught with pitfalls. Molting adult Laughing Gulls can show a rather varied head pattern of black and white, and even adult winter birds can show much individual variation in the dark hood, often making the eye-crescents look rather pronounced. It is these "Franklin's-like" birds that are misidentified and cause an initial panic.

In early fall, adult Laughing Gulls are also molting in new primaries, so they may appear short-winged, and at rest may show a wing pattern that may superficially appear to have more white showing. These birds can be eliminated by assessing the true pattern of the wings in flight, along with overall assessment of the bill shape and leg length. Aside from plumage features, Laughing Gulls in flight have droopy bills, long, narrow wings and long, narrow bodies, quite unlike the dainty, small-billed, compact shape and rather rounded wings of Franklin's. Those features are useful distinctions at any age.

Franklin's Gulls, when they do show up in the East, occur randomly, almost in any given month, so it pays to check all the flocks of Laughing Gulls whatever the season. Also, Franklin's Gulls are unique in that (after the partial post-



Winter head patterns of typical Laughing Gull (left), darker-hooded Laughing Gull (back) and typical Franklin's Gull (front). Note the difference in bill size, eye crescents and shape of the dark hood, especially that in Franklin's the area is rather solid black and extends obviously down below the eye. (sketch by Julian Hough)

juvenile molt into first-basic) they are the only gull to have two complete molts per annum. As a result, Franklin's Gulls north of their South American wintering grounds (where the molt takes place) tend to look neat at any time of year.

I photographed these adult Franklin's Gulls in Corpus Christi, Texas, in April 2008

Photo Challenge No. 63

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Editor

Greg Hanisek - 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708
(203) 754-4401 email: ghanisek@rep-am.com

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Connecticut Ornithological Association
314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.ctbirding.org

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