

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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ABOUT OUR COVER

By Dorie Petrochko

Dorie Petrochko of Oxford makes her debut as a cover artist with her nestling Mississippi Kites. Dorie is a natural science illustrator and teacher whose interest is bird and botanical illustration. She exhibits her work nationally and has illustrated the mastheads for the White Memorial Conservation Center since 1985. She can be contacted at www.doriepetrochko.com. Although Connecticut's history-making kite nest produced only one fledgling, we're looking forward to double the success this year.

FIRST CONFIRMED NESTING BY MISSISSIPPI KITES IN CONNECTICUT

By John Weeks

Following several years of tantalizing sightings near Great Pond in north Simsbury, a nesting pair of Mississippi Kites was found in that area during the summer of 2008. This marks the first time that the species has been documented as nesting in Connecticut. Remarkably, this discovery coincided with that of two other nests in New Hampshire – the three nests being the first ever found in New England.

I received a call in early August from a fellow birder in Granby, Caroline LeRoux. She said that her sister, Linda Carissimi, reported seeing two Mississippi Kites flying around her neighborhood in Simsbury. Not having the time to check it out herself, Caroline suggested that I do so in her stead. The next morning (Monday, Aug. 4), I went to the site and, barely out of my car, saw a kite gliding almost directly overhead. There was no sign of a second bird at this time. I reported what I saw to Roy Harvey, who notified several experienced birders, among them Jay Kaplan. Within hours, Jay confirmed the presence of one adult kite. I returned the next day, found two adults this time, and informed Roy Harvey. Roy himself visited the site the following day and located the nest, which contained one strapping young bird, obviously well along in its development. Linda later informed me that she photographed one of the adult birds as early as May 31.

At this point, it was decided that the presence of the kites in the general area would be made public, but that the existence of the nest itself would not be announced. The site was especially sensitive – a quiet residential cul-de-sac that could accommodate only a few visitors at a time. Birders were instead directed to Great Pond State Forest, where the adult birds regularly foraged. Whenever it was practical, those who knew about the nest led visitors to the site so that as many as possible could enjoy this historic event. With the



The juvenile kite in the nest before fledging.

Mark Szantyr photo



Tom Sayers photo
The juvenile kite awaits another feeding by its parents.



Jamie Meyers photo
An adult kite feeds the fledged juvenile.



An adult kite brings a large dragonfly to the nest.

Tom Sayers photo



An adult kite works on a Barn Swallow that it captured.

Mark Szantyr photo

birders on their best behavior, the local residents were very welcoming – two young children even regaled the visitors with lemonade!

The young bird fledged just over a week later, on Aug. 14, but remained near the nest for another two weeks. It was regularly seen on a favorite exposed perch, where the adults brought it tasty tidbits, especially cicadas and dragonflies. On one occasion, Mark Szantyr caught an astonishing image of one of the adults, perched in the same tree with a Barn Swallow in its grasp. (See photo, page 3)

The last reported sighting of all three birds was Sept. 17. Given the history of sightings over the last few years, birders will no doubt be hoping to greet this family on its return to the area next spring.

Mississippi Kites apparently had been attracted to the Great Pond area for several years. Previous sightings, which in retrospect presaged the historic nesting, included:

- 2005 - An adult circling Great Pond on 19 August (Scott and Gwen Olmstead). This was one of the first New England sightings outside the traditional spring migration overshoot season.
- 2006 - An adult at East Granby Farms on 16 June (Joe Wojtanowski); an adult on 19 July at Great Pond (Paul Cianfaglione); an adult on 23 July at Great Pond (Len Kendall).
- 2007 – No reports.
- 2008 - Prior to the report of a pair in residence, an adult was seen hunting at Great Pond on 22 July (Paul Cianfaglione).

WHIRLING - A FORENSIC LOOK AT AN ADULT BALD EAGLE BEHAVIOR

By Donald A. Hopkins (1), Michael O'Leary (2),
Julie Victoria (3)

The term whirling is given to the actions when two adult Bald Eagles, while soaring, lock talons and with legs extended and wings spread, fall cart wheeling, and disengage just prior to impact. Whirling has frequently been proposed to be somehow involved with courtship between mated eagles. Here we present what may be called forensic evidence that whirling is most likely an aggressive action, directed at an adult that is not part of the pair.

We look at the reports of this activity in three references. The first is by Brown and Amadon (1968), the second by Stalmaster (1987), and the third by Gerrard and Bortolotti (1988). It should be pointed out that in these accounts the authors do not indicate what initiated this action or what was the result.

Brown and Amadon (1968) describe this whirling display as an extension of the foot touching display, which is common to eagles of the genus *Haliaeetus*. They write of this, "the possibility of confusing this display with actual combat between males must not be overlooked." They say the eagles "engage in various courtship flights which the most spectacular consists of locking talons in mid-air and descending for several hundred feet in a series of somersaults." They are ambivalent as to whether this display is pair bonding or aggression against an intruder.

Stalmaster (1987) has written, after describing the whirling action, "In this nuptial dance...these displays either establish or renew the pair bond and are a precursor to sexual activity." He does not describe any precursor or subsequent event.

Gerrard and Bartolotti (1988) have written: "Whirling may also be seen when a territorial eagle attacks an intruder.... there is much to learn before we can say anything definitive

about it." Also "many people believe this to be part of courtship but it also, perhaps most commonly, appears in aggressive encounters." They are uncertain as to whether this is pair bonding or an aggressive action.

Other observers have reported on whirling of other raptors: Kilham (1981) Red-Shouldered Hawks, Craig et al (1982) Northern Harriers, Clark (1984) Zone-tailed Hawks, Whitt (1992) Black-shouldered Kites, and Dickerman (2003) Red-tailed Hawks. They concluded that this activity is an agonistic behavior, not aerial courtship or pair bonding.

We have not been fortunate enough to witness the whirling display. We have indeed witnessed pair bonding displays including copulation on numerous occasions. We have also witnessed aggressive action by Bald Eagles.

We came upon evidence that whirling may have an aggressive function on May 15, 2008, when we were shown the carcass of an adult female Bald Eagle that had been turned into the Connecticut Wildlife Division for proper disposition. While taking measurements, we noticed that on the tarsus and toes of each leg there were a number of wounds that had penetrated the scutes, drawn blood and formed scabs (Figure 1). The eagle was examined by Dr. Robert F. Giddings, DVM, to see if death was caused by gunshot; he concluded it was not. In his examination he noted "multiple small wounds on both feet." He came to no conclusion as to the cause of death.

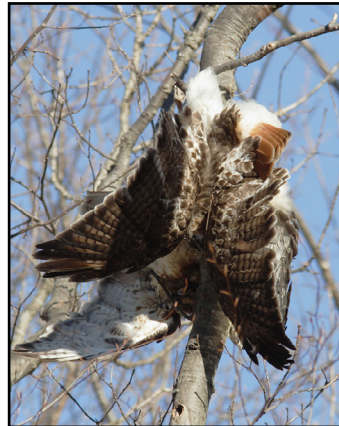
From these wounds we have made the following deductions. First is that Bald Eagles do not normally live in an environment where they could suffer such wounds, except in locking talons with another eagle. There are no known eagle nests in the area (Union, Conn.) where the carcass was picked up, and the time of salvage was in the middle of the breeding season. If locking talons and whirling are related to pair bonding, this instance occurred at the wrong time of year. The number of scars would indicate that the bird was wounded more than once. Some 16 miles north of where this carcass was picked up, in Brookfield, Mass., an eagle nest failed in 2008 due to



Julie Victoria photo
(Fig. 1) Feet of a dead Bald Eagle showing puncture wounds apparently suffered during talon locking.



Paul Fusco photo
(Fig. 3) A close-up of the locked feet of the two Red-tailed Hawks.



Paul Fusco photo
(Fig. 2) Two Red-tailed Hawks that appear to have fallen to their death after locking talons. They were found in Bridgewater in May 2006.

intraspecific interference. This type of action could have been involved there, as could this very eagle. We believe this is the carcass of a non-breeding Bald Eagle that was just wandering.

As further support we offer this incident. In May 2006, the Connecticut Wildlife Division was called to pick up two Red-tailed Hawks that were dead in a tree, with their talons locked together (Figure 2). We suggest that one or both died upon impact, and the tendon latching process kept the talons locked together. This we believe illustrates the possible hazardous consequences of whirling action.

In conclusion, we believe that pair bonding would not have evolved into an action that risks injury to both of the pair. We suggest that locking talons and whirling is an aggressive action, to protect the nesting territory where the risk of injury could be justified, as only one of the nesting pair would be in jeopardy.

This aerial maneuver, which centers on 16 needle sharp talons, is bound to cause damage when they lock together. It is hard to believe such action would have evolved to promote pair bonding.

While the evidence presented here is not conclusive, it strongly suggests that whirling is aggressive behavior rather than pair bonding. More studies will have to be carried out to resolve this question.

Acknowledgements:

We thank G. Krukar, Dr. R.F. Giddings, DVM, P. Fusco, L. Hatstat, D.S. Hopkins, and M. Rubega, who provided comments and suggestions that improved the manuscript.

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BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

Norment, C. 2008 *Return To Warden's Grove. Science, Desire, and the Lives of Sparrows.* xiv+215 pg. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA.

Part way through this charming tome Norment reflects, "Perhaps I was nothing more than a scientific minimalist ...with my main tools being nothing more than a pair of binoculars and a ruler". Well, he is that and much more. At this particular juncture he pondered his "scientific anonymity", achieved after he published several papers derived from the Ph. D. (U. Kansas) dissertation on Harris's Sparrow. But there is a larger picture here and "Return to Walden's Grove" speaks to his fieldwork and many of the intellectual, emotional and personal aspects of a life in science. The latter offer a very different aspect to this book, and make it special. Norment writes about his personal journey through the world of Harris's Sparrow, how he studied them, and what the effort tells about the natural world.

Warden's Grove is in the Canadian Arctic where Norment's first visit was on a six-man 2,200 mile-canoe expedition. The 'Return' of the title encompasses the three seasons of fieldwork that eventually fueled his dissertation. There is nothing unusual in his selection of a study species (Harris's Sparrow over winters in Kansas), the techniques or the methods of analysis. But the book is personal and throughout he emphasizes his deep connection to nature, his fondness for the birds, and the complexities of such an undertaking. There are similarities to the recent "The Feather Quest" by Pete Dunne (1992) and Ken Kaufman's (1997) "Kingbird Highway," both of which relate the author's birding adventures, and the older "Living with Seabirds" (1982) by Bryan Nelson, which charmingly commingles an account of his scientific studies with a biographical narrative.

Norment begins in this genre relating his preparation for, and then travel to, a field site on the Thelon River in Cana-



*Bruce Finman photo
Christopher Norment wrote several papers on the Harris's Sparrow. This
Harris's was photographed in Wilton.*

da's Northwest Territories. In parallel he describes the bird's winter behavior and spring migration. Each chapter includes introductory comments (in italics) along with the main text. The bird's biology, his travels and work, are told with an eye for detail, and a passion for nature. Together the words provide a window into his thoughts, emotions and his enthusiasm for life.

There is more to this book than a simple travelogue or musings on time spent in a small cabin in the arctic. The cabin, by the way, one winter was trashed by bears. Norment is sensitive to the proposition that science alone is not the only path to knowing nature. He reflects that the language used in reporting on science centers largely on uncertainties. It is skeptical because scientists cannot be completely certain about events and causes. Studies are reported in a language of dispassionate observation and measure. He points out that there can in fact be considerable curiosity, emotion, reflection and interpretation during a field season. He finds wonder in the lives of the animals he studied, and he clearly appreciates the gaps between the long hours of data collection, analysis,

contemplation and the requirements of writing in a technical language.

Norment points out that there are at least two phases to a field study. First, are the discomforts and rewards of the hours in the field. Second, is the challenge of analyzing the data in ways that detect recognizable patterns. Graphs and charts are a shorthand to describe the lives of the birds. As an example, he shows a pair of plots, one of which plots the feeding rates of nestling sparrows and ambient temperature over time. The second is the feeding rates of the nestling by the parents over nestling age (in days). The point is that feeding rates are inversely related to air temperature and that the females contribute more to the nestlings than the male, but that the combined rate of the two parents increased over time to accommodate the rapid increase in nestling mass. What these data don't show are the hours put in by the observer to record these patterns of parental behavior that adjust to the rapid nestling growth. There are hours spent to search for and map the nest location. Then the hours spent, day after day, sitting in full sun, exposed to hordes of black flies and mosquitoes, counting and measuring those activities that the birds perform instinctively. Then with hours ahead to organize and analyze the data you realize you are summarizing the lives of individual birds, which flew 1600 miles to nest in this spot, just to shed light on the life history of a single species. The effort might eventually be reported in a scientific journal. Norment contemplates not only on why individuals do this kind of work, but if it has a larger significance in the fabric of the combined knowledge of the genus *Zonotrichia* or perhaps fit into a larger picture such as understanding the troubling decline in numbers of say, wintering birds in the Midwest.

One of Norment's favorite images is "ecotone," the "narrow and fairly sharply defined transition zone between two or more different communities. Ecotones are typically species-rich and the term is appropriate for the interface of forest and fields at Warden's Grove. He also describes the arctic dusk as an ecotone of light and the change of seasons as an ecotonal

moment. He passes through an “emotional ecotone” when the field season ends and he returns to his academic and family life. Finally, he summarizes his experiences as an “ecotonal landscape of measurement and imagination, analysis and desire”. And so it is.

Norment envisions an even more comprehensive picture as he wonders whether his effort connects him in some way to an even greater world experience. He sees his work in the larger sense as a synthetic process that grows out of watching, waiting, listening and seeing birds as they flow through the annual cycle. It is, in his view, how one becomes informed about, and ultimately understands, the animate and inanimate residents of the world. He realizes that the numbers, charts and graphs represent only the surface of things but help provide a connection to nature. It is not just the birds, the other animals, the local vegetation, or the seasonal changes alone that provide understanding. He is not averse to sharing his thoughts on these and other matters, all of which is part of the charm of his writing. “The numbers represent the surface of things, but they also provide a path to the wonders that are carried in the heart and blood of thousands of generations of Harris’s Sparrows.” Something to think about the next time you spot a bird doing what birds do. Indeed, there is more to the world and life that we can imagine (or possibly know).

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

June through July 2008

By Greg Hanisek

The event of the season, without any close contenders, was the confirmation of successful nesting by a pair of Mississippi Kites in Simsbury, a first for Connecticut. An article and photos appear at the front of this issue. It was also an extraordinary season for terns, with nine of the 12 species on the state list reported. As usual, we've broken these complex two months into four components - northbound migration, southbound migration, breeding season and lingerers/wanderers/strays.

Northbound Migration

A large gathering of shorebirds and gulls June 1 at Milford Point included two Whimbrels, six Red Knots and a White-rumped Sandpiper. High counts for that date included several hundred each of Black-bellied Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones and 1000 Semipalmated Sandpipers (FM). There were nine Red Knots at Sandy Point on June 8 (MSt). A Western Sandpiper, rare in spring, was at Sandy Point, West Haven, on June 2 (GH et al.). A Pectoral Sandpiper was at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, on the highly unusual date of June 3 (NB); northbound birds are seldom seen after early May.

Late Black Terns were at Sandy Point June 3 (NB) and June 19 (JHo).

Six American Pipits were still on the move June 2 at Milford Point (TG). A late migrant Northern Parula was far from any likely breeding site June 1 at Milford Point (PDe). Mourning Warblers kept their typical late migration schedule June 1 at Milford Point (NB) and June 7 in Bolton (EH). A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, another late migrant, was seen June 7 in Greenwich (BO).

Southbound Migration

Shorebird firsts for the fall migration included Black-bellied Plover on July 13 at Sandy Point, West Haven

(MSt); Whimbrel on July 16 at Milford Point (CB); four Semipalmated Plovers on July 2 at Milford Point (FG); Lesser Yellowlegs on July 2 at Griswold Point, Old Lyme (HG); six Least Sandpipers on July 2 at Griswold Point (HG); two Semipalmated Sandpipers on July 9 at Milford Point (FM); White-rumped Sandpiper on July 18 at Milford Point (CB); Pectoral Sandpiper on July 16 at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (PR); Stilt Sandpiper on July 23 at Access Road pools, Stratford (FM); and Short-billed Dowitcher on July 8 at McKinney Refuge, Stratford (DV). Semipalmated Sandpipers built to 3000+ by July 26 at Milford Point (FM). Sandy Point held 350 Short-billed Dowitchers July 28 (JHo). The best bird of the southbound flight was a **Wilson's Phalarope** July 23 at the Access Road pools (DV).

Lingerers, Wanderers and Strays

A Northern Shoveler was out of season July 2 in Old Lyme (HG), as was a Greater Scaup June 27 at Short Beach, Stratford (FM). Long-tailed

Duck, a species known to linger in Long Island Sound, produced singles June 20-21, in the Saugatuck River, Westport, (FM) and at East Lyme July 22 (DV). Other late waterfowl included a Bufflehead June 8 at Sandy Point, West Haven, (NB); a Common Goldeneye June 20 in Old Saybrook (JO) and three Ruddy Ducks June 3 at Batterson Pond, Farmington (PCi).

In addition to the usual smattering of Common Loons in Long Island Sound, a Red-throated Loon was at Short Beach, Stratford, on July 15 (FM). A Tricolored Heron summered at Watch Rock in Old Lyme (HG et al.). A Cattle Egret was present June 1-3 in Westport (JHu). An immature Black-crowned Night Heron was an early post-breeding wanderer to Mansfield Hollow Reservoir July 22 (CEI).

A **Brown Pelican** was reported from waters around Falkner I., Guilford, on July 10; (VK fide JCo); there also was a second-hand report from a fisherman June 27 at the mouth of the Housatonic R. (fide FG). Although

Double-crested Cormorants nest at a number locations, the 600 at the mouth of the Housatonic River on June 17 was certainly a feeding aggregation that must have included many non-breeding birds (FM). Single **Black-necked Stilts** were found June 6 at Barn Island, Stonington, (SSt) and June 17-19 at Plum Bank Marsh, Old Saybrook (JO et al.). A banding crew doing fieldwork at Milford Point, including one member familiar with the species, reported four Black-necked Stilts flying across Wheeler Marsh June 18 (KB fide CEL).

An extremely high early season count of 800 Laughing Gulls was made June 16 at Short Beach, Stratford, with 400 on June 9 at Milford Point, (FM); most high counts occur in the post-breeding period. Six Bonaparte's Gulls lingered to June 17 at Short Beach (FM), with singles as late as July 13 at Sandy Point (JHo), July 15 at Short Beach (FM) and July 19 at Long Beach, Stratford, and Milford Point (PCo, DV). Two **Gull-billed Terns** June 7-8 at Greenwich Point represented a fourth state record (TB et al.). Caspian Terns included three on June



*Frank Mantlik photo
This Sandwich Tern appeared at Milford
Point July 9-10.*



*Rollin Tebbetts photo
The photographer and only observer was able
to get this identifiable image of a Scissor-tailed
Flycatcher on June 10 at Bradley International
Airport.*

16 at Short Beach, Stratford, (FM) and singles June 26 at Short Beach (FM) and July 3 at Sandy Point (NB) and Milford Point (SSp). It was a good season for Royal Tern with three at Milford Point on June 22 (FM), and singles June 4-6 & 24 and July 16 - 21 at Milford Point (NB, AR et al.); July 19- 21 at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, (HG) and June 25 and July 19 in Stratford (JMr et al.). A **Sandwich Tern**, representing a fourth state record, was seen and photographed at Milford Point July 9-10 (NB et al.) It was the second year in a row for this species in the state. Up to three Roseate Terns were at Milford Point June 22-July 9 (FM, PCo et

al.), and six were at Griswold Point July 18 (NB). The season's first Forster's Tern was at Milford Point on June 14 (KE).

A Red-headed Woodpecker visited a yard in New Milford throughout the season (KS). A seasonal highlight was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** on June 10 at Bradley International Airport in East Granby (RT). A lone Bank Swallow was far from breeding sites June 17 in Stratford (FM).

Breeding Season

Hooded Mergansers with young were widely reported in Litchfield County (RN et al.). A hen Ruffed Grouse

with four chicks was in West Hartland on June 20 (PCa), and some drumming was heard as late as July 28 in that area (PCa). Pied-billed Grebes attempted to nest at Hesseky Meadows, Woodbury (RN), and a pair fledged two young at Cemetery Pond in Litchfield (RN). A kayak trip through salt marshes in Westbrook July 11 turned up at least 10 Little Blue Herons (PCa). An impressive 170 Black-crowned Night-Herons were on tidal flats in the Compo Beach area of Westport on July 3 (FM), along with 70 Great Egrets, 90 Snowy Egrets and two Little Blue Herons. The lower Connecticut R. valley, a stronghold for Least Bittern, produced one at Whalebone Creek, Hadlyme, on June 22 (CL). Three adult and 14 juvenile Glossy Ibis at Access Road pools in Stratford July 23 was a good count for the western part of the state (FM).

There were active Bald Eagle nests in six counties (New Haven - three; Hartford - five; Middlesex - three; New London - two; Litchfield - one; and Tolland - one) for a total of 14 active pairs. One

pair failed and the remaining 13 pairs fledged 21 chicks (fide JV). A Northern Harrier in the Watch Rock area in June raised hopes of breeding (HG). Every year produces one or two more nesting sites for Sharp-shinned Hawk; this year a family group with fledged birds was seen July 28 in Harwinton (PCa). Peregrine Falcons had active nests in five counties (Fairfield - two; New Haven - two; Middlesex - one; Hartford - two; and New London - two). Of nine active nests, two failed and in two the chick count could not be determined because of inaccessibility. The five accessible nests fledged 18 chicks (fide JV). Waterbury appears to have been added to the state's breeding sites. Adults were seen regularly at Interstate 84 and Route 8. In late July at least one young bird was seen flying in the area with adults (PCo, RP et al.).

The state total of 41 Piping Plover pairs fledged 102 young, compared to 36/69 in 2007 (fide JV). Although unproven as a nester, a pair of Laughing Gulls was seen mating June 6 at Sandy Point, West Haven, (RB). Black

Skimmers were present at the colony site at Sandy Point, West Haven, but did not breed (MSt). As many as 16 were there June 8 (MSt). Up to six visited Milford Point in early June (FG), and four were at Short Beach, Stratford, on June 5 (FM).

A few Common Nighthawks were seen through June in New Haven, perhaps representing one of the few remaining urban nesting sites in the state (MA). One was over a Stratford yard June 27 (SK). Southward-spreading Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported from Naugatuck (PDn) and Middlebury (SB). Whittimore Sanctuary in Middlebury was added to the list of places holding territorial Acadian Flycatchers (SB).

Four Purple Martins were at a birdhouse in the Riverside section of Greenwich June 19 (MSa). A pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets was in nesting habitat June 26 in West Hartland (PCa). An adult Lawrence's Warbler was banded June 26 in Pomfret (ARz). A Northern Parula was at Bent of River Audubon in Southbury on

June 10 and again June 27 (PCo et al.). Two singing males were present in June on Schaghticoke Road in Kent (PDe). A Worm-eating Warbler, a ground nester, performed a broken-wing routine June 1 at Bent of River (DS).

Two Eastern Meadowlarks were at Reservoir No. 3 in Bloomfield on June 12 (PCi), three were at Samuel Wheeler Reed Park in Bloomfield June 20 (PCi), four were in Suffield June 21 (PCi), two were in East Granby June 27 (JW) and five were at the capped New Milford landfill on June 13 (AD). A Vesper Sparrow June 10 at Bradley International Airport was a potential breeder (MSz), although there have been no confirmed nestings in the state in at least 15 years. On June 21, four Grasshopper Sparrows were at a West Suffield location that has been purchased by the state DEP (PCi). A pair of Pine Siskins was present in a Harwinton yard to June 2; on June 5 a third bird believed to be a juvenile was present (PCa).

Observers: Jayne Amico, Mark Aronson, Bill Asteriades, Phil Asprelli, Renee Baade, Jim Bair, Kate Banick, Bill Banks, Tom Baptist, Charlie Barnard, Scott Baron, Nick Bonomo, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Jan Collins (JCI), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Peter DeGennaro (PDn), Angela Dimmitt, Randy Domina, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Bruce Finnan, Frank Gallo, Hank Golet, Tina Green, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris, Roy Harvey, Julian Hough (JHo), Jim Hunter (JHu), Kris Johnson, Vaughn Knowles,

Cindi Kobak, Scott Kruitbosch, Twan Leenders, Chris Loscalzo, Frank Mantlik, John Marshall (JMr), Shaun Martin, John Maynard (JMa), Marty Moore, Don Morgan, Chris Myers, Russ Naylor, Larry Nichols, John Ogren, Ann Orsillo, Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier, Noble Proctor, Arne Rosengren (ARo), Phil Rusch, Andy Rzeznikiewicz (ARz), Meredith Sampson (MSa), John Schwarz, Donna Rose Smith, Kelli Sopko, Charla Spector, Steve Spector (SSp), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Skyler Streich (SSt), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Rollin Tebbetts, Dennis Varza, Julie Victoria, Joe Wojtanowski, Sara Zagorski



Ovenbirds remain widespread forest breeders

Bruce Finnan photo

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION



Bill Banks photo

Another flagged Red Knot

In the Connecticut Warbler of July 2008 (Vol. 28 No. 3) Buzz Devine described a banded and flagged Red Knot observed at Sandy Point in West Haven. Bill Banks took the photo above of a red Knot with a similar flag on 11 June 2007 at Sandy Point. His inquiries revealed the bird was banded in Suriname, but to date he has not received additional details.

Orchard Orioles on the move

Ask any birder from the Hartford area where to find Orchard Oriole, and they will probably mention Northwest Park in Windsor. For years, this has been one of the few places to reliably find nesting birds. But in spring 2008, Orchard Orioles made an impressive push into northern Connecticut. Once thought of as an uncommon and local breeder, the Orchard Oriole had suddenly become an overnight success story.

As an avid birder, I'm very familiar with many locations around town and actively check them on a routine basis. This

year has seen at least 19 sites occupied by Orchard Orioles, with at least four of them having active nests. What are the reasons behind the sudden increase and what does the future hold for these pioneers?

In some areas of the country this species is expanding its breeding range, while others are seeing major declines. Some of the increases in northern Connecticut may be attributed to a regular year-to-year fluctuation in population. These same fluctuations are found in other species whose breeding range generally occurs in the southern part of the state, such as White-eyed Vireo. If the Orchard Orioles' breeding range is expanding to the north, it would probably first be detected in favored habitat along major rivers and agricultural land. This was precisely the case during this year's Hartford spring census and summer bird count.

Some recent trends have already suggested an increase in Orchard Oriole numbers in eastern Massachusetts and extreme southeastern New Hampshire. With ample habitat located along the entire Connecticut River valley, it would come as no surprise to see the breeding boundary move a bit north in the coming years.

An interesting fact about Orchard Orioles is that they spend very little time on their breeding grounds. They nest late, raise only one brood and are usually on their way back to Central America by mid-July. This may cause limited breeding success in our state due to egg predation by Blue Jays and Common Grackles and nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird.

The reason behind this year's colonization remains unclear. To ensure further nesting, we must continue to protect the Orchard Orioles' prime habitat within riparian zones and farmland. The work being done by volunteers with Summer Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys will help track population movements and inform future conservation efforts.

Paul Cianfaglione

Pine Siskins on the move

A major, widespread flight of Pine Siskins occurred from about 12 Oct to 12 Nov 2008, continuing in reduced numbers for about a week after the latter date. The birds were on the move, as is usually the case with autumn flights. Most feeder visits amounted to short fueling stops. As a result, the movement was most apparent at the state's two hawk watches with daily coverage throughout the season - Lighthouse Point in New Haven and Quaker Ridge in Greenwich. Fly-by flocks were a daily feature at both lookouts during this period. At Lighthouse four-digit counts were noted on 10 days during the period, including highs of 5900 on 10 Nov, 2900 on 13 Oct and 2250 on 9 Nov. At Quaker Ridge the flight was less concentrated, with most correspondingly good flight days producing three- rather than four-digit counts. These included more than 700 on both 5 Nov. and 9 Nov (fide Brian Bielfelt). American Goldfinch numbers were modest during the peak siskin flight period but picked up markedly as the siskin flight wane.

Greg Hanisek

Good decision for Bobolinks

The Town of Newington's decision to protect Bobolink nesting and defer mowing at the Youngs Farm pasture until the end of July has paid a handsome dividend. On the morning of July 19 we found that in addition to the five adults (three males and two females) that had been seen at the farm in recent weeks, there were four immature birds as well.

Anita Shaffer & Roy Zartarian

A banded Gray Catbird

A friend of mine here in Washington Depot found a dead Gray Catbird with a band on 18 May 2008. We couldn't read the small inscription, so we sent the band to the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory in Patuxent, Md. I received a Letter of Appreciation with the following information:

The catbird of unknown sex was hatched in 2007 and banded on 15 May 2008 at Island Beach State Park in Ocean County, N.J., by Dr. Robert Yunick.

John D. Babington

An unexpected winter treat

I have a water feature (falls/pond) that I keep running year round at my home in Woodbury. Every few months I open the pump area and clean the filters of leaves, which I did on 14 January 2009. I dumped the leaves out of the filter basket onto the adjacent snow and turned around to put the basket back in. As I did so, an immature Red-shouldered Hawk flew in and took a lethargic frog that was hidden in the leaves about 4 feet from me! It flew to a nearby tree and ate the frog. I searched the leaves and found another frog which, when I looked for it 20 minutes later, was gone. Since it was very sluggish, having been awakened in January, I assume the hawk had dessert. Maybe this was the first time a Connecticut red-shoulder has ever had frog legs in January!

Ed Hagen

Tree-Nesting Ravens

It has been suggested that adoption of tree nests, after nesting only on cliff faces in the past, has helped foster the Common Raven's remarkable increase in the state. After making inquiries on CTBirds, I believe the following response from Patrick Comins represents the first know tree-nest in Connecticut: "In 1998 I found a Common Raven nest about 30 feet up in the crotch of a coppiced White Pine in Freja Park in Bolton, at the foot of Bolton Notch."

Greg Hanisek

DIARY OF A BIRDING GEEK:

Lesser Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis parvipes*) in Connecticut

By Mark S. Szantyr



Figure 1 Lesser Canada Goose, *B. c. parvipes*,
23 March 2008, Storrs, Tolland Co., Connecticut

It seems good things happen when I chase Greater White-fronted Geese. Remember the Taverner's Cackling Goose (Vol. 28 No. 3)? Well, on 23 March 2008, I was trying to get pictures of a beautiful Greenland-race Greater White-fronted Goose, *Anser albifrons flavirostris*, which was offering very confiding views on Mirror Lake, the small pond on the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs. While maneuvering for closer photos, I noticed a very small Canada-type Goose resting on the water with the other geese. Thinking it was a Richardson's Cackling Goose, *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*, I snapped one photo and continued my quest for flavirostris pictures. Only later, while I was processing my images, did I notice something wrong with this identification.

Richardson's Goose, our expected form of Cackling Goose, shows a short, stubby bill that usually appears convex along

the culmen. It sometimes looks rather bumpy and warty (my description, not really in the literature). *Hutchinsii* also shows a square and rather blocky head shape. This bird showed a bill that was smooth and shaped like a smaller version of a Canada Goose bill. It was long and slender, not at all what I am accustomed to seeing on Cackling Goose. The bird was small, though, as small as a Cackling Goose. In plumage, it seemed identical to the other Canada Geese on the lake.

I started wondering what a Lesser Canada Goose, *B. canadensis parvipes*, would look like. A check of on-line images seemed to indicate that this could be what I photographed. I once again sent images to my trio of western goose experts, Steve Mlodinow, Bruce Deuel and Larry Semo. Mlodinow deferred to the other two as they have more experience with this form.

Again, Bruce and Larry confirmed my identification as Lesser Canada Goose, stating that the head and bill shape and size of the bird were much better for this form than for any Cackling Goose.



Figure 2 Lesser Canada Goose (front) with typical Canada Geese showing its smaller size.

Larry Semo states, "Your bird looks like a dead ringer for parvipes to me. Though neck size and head shape could suggest Richardson's, the longer, concave bill and the length of the body relative to the head/neck size/shape would indicate parvipes."

Quoting from the Birds of North America Online account for Canada Goose,

"*B. c. parvipes* (Cassin, 1852); type locality Veracruz, Mexico. Lesser Canada Goose. Breeds throughout boreal regions in widely scattered areas along stream banks, river islands, and beaver (*Castor canadensis*) ponds, from the central interior of Alaska east through n. Yukon, n. Northwest Territories (Mackenzie River delta), s. Victoria I., Queen Maud Gulf, and e. Nunavut, south to n. British Columbia, n. Alberta, n. Saskatchewan, extreme n. Manitoba to nw. Hudson Bay (Am. Ornithol. Union 1957, MacInnes 1963, Salter et al. 1980, Semenchuk 1992, Smith 1996). Analysis of leg-band recovery data (Migratory Bird Banding Laboratory) indicates that small Canada Geese originating from interior Alaska (presumed *B. c. parvipes*) and the North Slope of Alaska (*B. c. taverneri* / *B. c. parvipes complex?*) winter primarily in e. Washington and Oregon, while small Canada Geese originating in far w. Alaska (presumed *B. c. taverneri*) winter primarily in w. Washington and Oregon, and n. California (CRE). Others consider *B. c. parvipes* to winter from w. Washington (Smith et al. 1997) and Oregon (Gilligan et al. 1994) south to extreme n. California (Tule and Lower Klamath Lakes; Small 1994) n. Mexico (Howell and Webb 1995), se. Colorado, ne. New Mexico, nw. Texas, w. Oklahoma (Am. Ornithol. Union 1957, Grieb 1970, Jarvis and Cornely 1988, Small 1994, Jarvis and Bromley 1998). A medium-sized goose, similar in overall shape and color to *B. c. moffitti*, with pale to dusky breast."

As far as I know, Lesser Canada Goose is rarely, if ever, documented in Connecticut and the only other record I am aware of is a sighting by Frank Gallo of a small flock in-



Figure 3 Lesser Canada Goose showing the smooth, long bill and a more concave culmen.

cluding a Richardson's Cackling Goose. I have not seen his photos but they should be examined to try to confirm this record. It is likely that hunters take this form during the goose hunting season and perhaps a search of the DEP Game Division database will provide a better idea of its occurrence in the state.

Again, thanks go to the West Coast Anser-men, Steve Mlodi-now, Larry Semo and Bruce Deuel for their information and support and to the vast number of people who post images on the Web and thereby allow me to spend even more hours chasing birds at the Geek level.

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The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; Retrieved from The Birds of North America Online database: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/>; AUG 2005.

All Photos by Mark Szantyr



Figure 4 Richardson's Cackling Goose showing small, stubby, warty bill and a convex culmen.

SECRET BIRDS

By Glenn Williams

The birding community is generally congenial, but competitive and status driven. Who among us does not occasionally suffer from list-envy, or try to work ourselves into the position of getting to hear about all of the “good” birds. Secret birds are one of the strongest currencies in this hobby. Therein lies their vexing nature.

My first experience with secret birds did not really start out as a secret bird situation. While still a relative novice, I was talking with a birding mentor about owls. Owls held a particular fascination with me at that time (and have become a passion since), as they are so elusive and difficult to see. I was lamenting that an easily viewable Great Horned Owl nest had blown down in the fall and I didn't know where I could see that species anymore. My mentor knew of a likely spot and took me to a grove of pines where some had been heard recently and had nested in the past. We crept quietly about the grove and spotted a pair of Great Horned Owls roosting together. We admired them briefly and then quietly retraced our steps out. I was not told to keep the spot a secret, but I was aware that I was being made privy to a location because I was trustworthy and graduating from novice status.

A month or so later, I was returning to the carpool lot from a winter birding trip. As we lingered around our cars, several friends mentioned that they hadn't gotten any of the owls for their year lists yet. Wanting to pay back my more experienced friends for their help and knowledge (and certainly anxious to show off my insider information), I volunteered to take them to see some Great Horned Owls. A man that I did not know well overheard our conversation and asked to go along. By now, the owls would be nesting, but I didn't foresee any problems. Unfortunately, our larger group caused the owls to flush from the grove. Though we did not

see them well, we decided to retreat before creating further disturbance. The man that I did not know felt he needed a better look and proceeded to chase after the owls. We left after suggesting that he might want to reconsider his actions, though he continued his pursuit. I can only assume that the owls were able to return without real harm to their eggs or young. A valuable lesson was learned, but it took a betrayal of trust on my part and the unnecessary disturbance of sensitive nesters to acquire it.

Attitudes about secret birds vary. One's view probably depends heavily on which side of the secret one lies. Do you get to see the bird or do you have to read about it in your state or local field reports. The noblest view I have heard from a compatriot was, "If I can't tell my friends about a bird then I don't want to know about it either." Most of us are not that selfless.

I am probably with the majority of birders who would rather see the rare bird first then ask questions later. Once that life or state-first bird is in the bag, then we worry about who we can tell. Many times our problems are just beginning. Even if we are asked not to tell anyone, we all know one or two people from whom we will not keep a bird secret. They may be that person that you bird with every Saturday or share a Christmas bird count territory with. There may be a person who has told you about a secret bird or two and you owe them. If you are told that you absolutely cannot tell a soul about a bird, then there may not be a dilemma. If only it were that easy. Each secret bird creates its own situation with its own rules and pitfalls. Many times the noble silent one loses status or insults friends while the big mouth gains points in the birding community. Imagine the following scenario. Two birding friends meet and begin to talk. Each knows about a great bird but has been sworn to secrecy.

After some small talk, Birder One says, "I shouldn't be saying this but a Boreal Owl is roosting in the spruces at the Brown Farm. You're not supposed to go in there, but if you park on Gate Road and walk in, no one will see you."

Birder Two says, "I know. I saw the bird last week."

Which birder would you be more comfortable being? Which birder should be embarrassed? Insulted?

Let's look at a hypothetical situation that illustrates the uglier side of secret birds. Suppose that you are a fairly knowledgeable birder who has a fair reputation within the local birding community and contributes sightings at the state level. You are birding at a popular spot and run into several top birders. You introduce yourself and ask if you may join them. They cordially agree. In the course of birding, one mentions that a (insert extremely rare bird for your state) has been found by someone whom you know casually and have birded with in the past. They discuss the need to gather proper documentation. You casually ask where the bird was found. Your fellow birders mention the general location. You do not want to seem pushy so you refrain from requesting more detail, figuring that you will sort it all out when you go there.

When you arrive home, you send an email to a few of your closest birding friends and then you call someone you know who does some work for the rare records committee and is a great source of information. You dutifully report any "good" birds to him and in turn, you get to hear about rare birds that others find. You are asked how you found out and told that you cannot be told where the bird is, as the finder of the bird has requested that the location remain secret. It is on private property that the finder has permission to bird. You respect that and hang up, but this species would be a life bird for you. You also realize that you have just told other people about a secret bird. What do you do at this point? Do you contact the finder? What do you tell your friends? Do you just go for the bird, discreetly of course, assuming you will find the right habitat and the bird?

You opt for the latter. You know the best and most likely habitat requires entering private land, but once into the woods, you will not be seen. If you encounter the owner, you will respectfully request permission to bird the area and

leave if told that you cannot. Moving undetected into what you believe is the correct spot; you wander aimlessly until you run into the original finder of the bird – the one who requested secrecy. She asks what you are doing and you demurely admit that you are looking for her bird. She asks how you found out. Not wanting to put any of your sources in unflattering light, you mention overhearing some top birders talk about it. You also mention that you requested more detail but were denied. You have not lied and you have not put anyone in awkward positions – until you think about it. You have told this person about “good” birds before and realize that she has not told you about this bird. Was she going to? You have also told other birders about the bird before you knew it was a secret. Trying to view it from another angle, you look at it from the finder’s perspective. She has done everything correctly – reported a rare bird to the proper authorities and requested secrecy. She is respecting the landowners and not betraying the trust given to her. But on this lovely summer morning, you are the proverbial skunk at her garden party.

Thankfully, she accepts your honest explanation and leads you to the bird. It is singing and offers great looks. The awkwardness is worth it and you have seen a difficult life bird. On the way back to the car, you are told that you should not tell anyone else – the owners are very gracious to allow birding on their property but would be furious if a flock of birders descended on their land. You cordially agree, but a pit forms in your stomach as you think of the birders that you told before you were apprised of the situation. Now what?

Again, honesty is the best policy. You explain the situation to your friends, who happen to also be friendly with the finder. Unfortunately, you are doing the finder who has done everything correctly an injustice. If she does not tell the friends that you have told, they will see her as someone who kept a good bird from them. Certainly there are people more worthy of seeing the bird than you. Who gets to know and who doesn’t. The lines are blurred to be sure. That the bird, you find out later, was harassed to obtain a good photo fur-

ther blurs ethical lines. You can justify each step that led you to the bird, but the bottom line is that you still trespassed. To further complicate matters, after all is said and done, another person claims to have seen the bird a week before the “finder”. He told no one, placing the bird’s well-being and private landowner’s rights over documentation. Many people did not get to see the bird and probably could have without disturbing the bird or the landowners. Conversely, once word gets out – even by a trickling word-of-mouth, control of the situation is lost and anything is possible. We all know of cases where this has happened. Agreeable private landowners become victims of rude, unethical, and intrusive behavior. In the case of especially intriguing birds, a hundred or more of the best-behaved birders is a major inconvenience. I have heard homeowners complain that a bird was “on the Internet” and they justifiably felt their privacy had been violated. Everyone with a modem was invited to gawk into their yards if they cared to do so.

The proper handling of each situation is impossible to gauge. We have all been in the position of reading about an exciting bird that was in our vicinity that we did not know about. A particularly enticing vagrant, which will probably not be seen in my state again in my lifetime, was reported in the state ornithological journal. It was coming to the backyard of a private residence and the owners requested that the bird not be reported on the hotlines. Fair enough. The part that hurts is a seemingly harmless sentence in the article. You learn that the bird was advertised by word of mouth and “virtually everyone who wanted to see the bird got a chance to see it.”

Ouch.

Having been on the finding end of a great bird on private property with a group of birders, I was amazed at the range of opinions on what to do. The location was in a private community but the roads were public. At least one person saw no problem with posting the sighting on the Internet. Others suggested a word-of-mouth campaign. One opinion

was to document the bird ourselves and not tell anyone – the bird was on private land and no one was rushing to tell us about such birds in the past. Let others read about a good bird after the fact for a change. By consensus, we agreed to tell others but ask them to keep it to themselves. People were brought to the bird in small groups after alerting the local security. Eventually we opened it up to a thorough word-of-mouth situation – everyone could tell whomever they wanted. The danger of a mob was passed. There was never a problem and as neighbors became aware of the situation, they took pride in being hosts. The small groups and individuals were welcomed. The only drawback was that some birders probably never got to see the bird, despite it remaining for several months. They were left out of the loop by the whimsical nature of a word of mouth campaign. I sympathize. I've been there. I did hear that some birders were insulted that, though they did get to see the bird, they did not hear about it quick enough. Not one of those people had ever called me or my friends about a bird. Such is the nature of secret birding.

I happen to enjoy owling and was lucky to learn an incredible amount from some very experienced and knowledgeable owlers – Phil Rusch and Ti Crossman. I learned invaluable lessons on habitat, timing, which tapes are effective, and the different owl signs and sounds (not all respond in the classic voice). Etiquette was an important part of the learning process. My owling mentors loved owling above all other birding, yet reserved it for Christmas counts or breeding bird surveys. Self-serving lists were not important and owling was restricted to official reasons only. Birds were not bothered beyond what was needed for identification and smaller owls were not bothered too much, lest they become food for bigger owls. Christmas counts and breeding bird surveys can be marathons. The owlers are out for hours before the other birders are even awake. Some of us have been in the field five or six hours before the rest of the crew begins. Much scouting time is required and fruitless, uneventful nights are the norm.

Every owler experiences the same thing – they go to the compilation and report some interesting owls. After the tallying is complete, they are approached by the year listers who want to know where to go for their year Northern Saw-whet or Long-eared Owl. You do not want to seem rude, but you do not want to see the owls disturbed again so soon. You realize that each person whom you tell will go and use tapes at different times, perhaps each telling one other person who does the same. You will be putting the birds that you love in jeopardy. If these people really wanted to see owls, they could have gotten up at 1:00 a.m. with you and seen them then. If they really cared about owls, they wouldn't bother them beyond an official count. Why should someone get to bother a sensitive species with minimal effort after you have logged many hours to find the prime locations for these birds? I have told others about locations and felt guilty. I have also said no to requests and felt like a self-righteous jerk. At least I have never kept a bird a secret for competitive reasons.

Ask any birder for their most frustrating bird story and it will inevitably be of the “you should have been here five minutes ago” variety. Ask them for the story that makes them angriest and it will involve a secret bird. The best advice – find your own birds. If there is some reason that they cannot be made public, all you have to do is keep the bird's best interests in mind, as well as the general public's. Also notify the proper record keeping authorities and the friends that you can trust to be discreet. Don't forget to tell those who have let you in on secret birds in the past. What about those birders who have not reciprocated with you yet? Do you leave them out this time, exacting a bit of birding justice but insuring that you will never hear about any birds from them? Don't forget top birders not involved with documenting rare birds. Garnishing their favor can prove valuable to you in the future.

It's that easy.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Mark S. Szantyr

It's the second week of October. Yard work has you outside, preparing for the inevitability of winter, daydreaming about the warmth of the waning summer. You fill the bird feeders and glance at the hummingbird feeder, wondering if you should fill it one last time before you take it in for the season. The last Ruby-throated Hummingbird was at your feeder about three weeks ago. Maybe it's time.

Then, suddenly, from the back of the yard, a bird. A hummingbird! It zips past you and hovers at the feeder for a moment before perching to feed. You grab the binoculars resting on the picnic table and take a look. You think, "It's late for a hummingbird. Those articles published in the Warbler say that I should think about one of those western hummingbirds. Yeah! This could be a Rufous!"

You study the little gem that is guzzling what's left of the nectar in your feeder. It seems small. The bill looks short.



Maybe its straighter than I remember a Ruby-throat's to be. Oh Man! You start getting excited.

The bird has darker, maybe buffy, flanks. It looks vested! It is not reddish and there is no red in the tail (that you could see). You debate the increasingly expected Rufous Hummingbird but it just doesn't look right. Then you remember the discovery of a Calliope Hummingbird at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven a few years ago. Calliope! That's what it must be. Short, straight bill! No obvious red in the tail. Stippled throat! Your blood races as you run into the house for your Sibley guide. Hmmm. You notice that the guide shows some diagnostic head markings, a black comma before the eye with white just ahead of the eye for Calliope. You did not see that. It did have a white mark behind the eye, though. Sibley says the tail should be as long as or shorter than the wings. You make a note to check that when you get back outside. What else? What else! You glance at Ruby-throated. Nah! It's too late! But what about Black-chinned? There are no records for Connecticut. You could be the first!

What does David say about Black-chinned! Long-billed. Grayer crown and dorsal elements than Ruby-throated. You are not sure.

You rush back outside and the bird is gone. Frantically you search the yard. There it is, perched on an exposed branch over your head. Hmmm. The tail is obviously longer than the wings. It's not a Calliope. It drops back to the feeder and gives you a good, long look. The crown is dark with some greenish coloration. The bill still looks short. It's not a Black-chinned. The primaries look pointed. Sibley says that Black-chinned should have blunt, club-ended primaries. Nope, these are long and straight.

Then you notice the small red feather at the base of the gorget. Could it be? Yup, it's a Ruby-throated. It seems to match the illustration of a first-year male in Sibley fairly well.

Young hummingbirds often appear shorter-billed than adults. The pattern of gorget feathers, when they show

red, helps to separate males from females. Females show a roundish red spot surrounded by white on the throat feather. Males show an all red feather. This bird shows a gorget feather that appears all red.

Expect the expected. This is good advice. It does not mean that you can assume an identification because that is what it "should" be. It is important to identify every bird. You do not know what you might find. But when you find something you think is a rarity, it is a good practice to ask yourself, "Why isn't it the expected species?"

This young male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was photographed by me in my Ashford yard in the fall of 2007 while I was filling feeders and bemoaning the onset of another winter.



Photo Challenge No. 64

MORE CONNECTICUT BIRDS



Frank Mantlik photo
This American Avocet visited Milford Point on May 18.



Hank Golet photo
This Royal Tern rested at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, on July 19.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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

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

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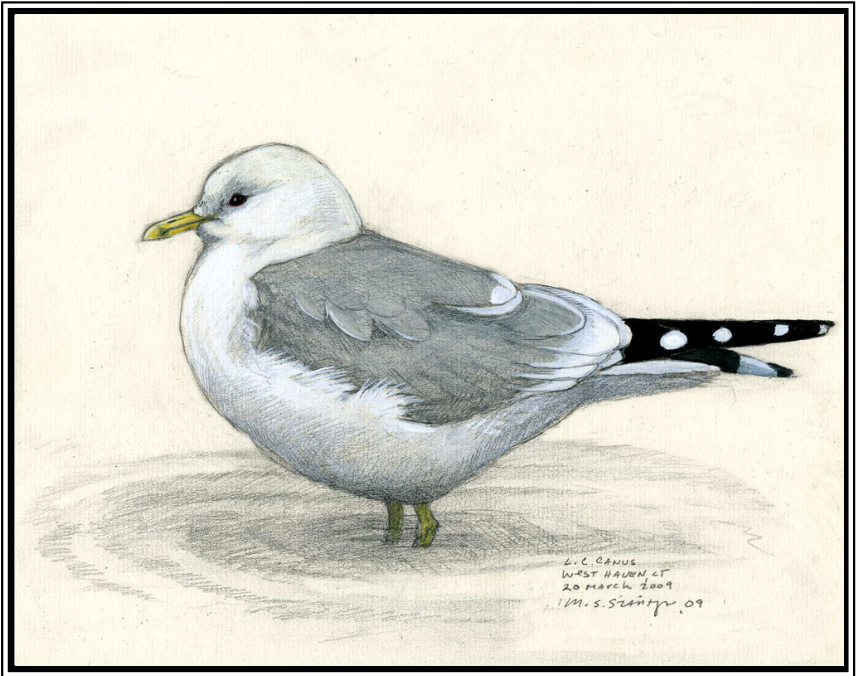
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THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



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ABOUT OUR COVER

MEW GULL

Mark Szantyr composed this color image of a Mew Gull that was found in late March in West Haven. There wasn't time to present documentation to the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut to include in its 14th report, which appears in this issue. However, more will be heard about this excellent find in upcoming issues of the magazine.

REMEMBERING BETTY KLEINER

A Dedication

This issue of The Connecticut Warbler is made possible through a generous grant from The Hartford Audubon Society, now celebrating its 100th anniversary year.

The issue is dedicated to the memory of Betty Kleiner, who served as editor from April 1986 until July 2004, a span of some 18 years and 74 issues. Under Betty's leadership, the Warbler grew from 12 to 40 pages with some issues reaching 56 pages! During her tenure, photographs were added



to the text, original artwork graced the front cover, and the Photo Challenge and an annual Summer Bird Count Report became staples of the publication. By the time Betty stepped down, the Warbler had become a respected journal boasting subscribers throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, England and Germany.

While Betty was active in numerous conservation-related organizations, her first love

was birds. She was a past president of the Hartford Audubon Society and a founding member of COA. An active field birder, she was one of the first Connecticut birders to reach 700 birds on her North American life list. Perhaps Betty's greatest contribution to Connecticut's birding community was her penchant for providing encouragement to new birders. A number of this current generation of Connecticut birders counted Betty Kleiner as a mentor and a friend.

Jay Kaplan

FOURTEENTH REPORT OF THE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF CONNECTICUT

By Jay Kaplan and Greg Hanisek

In the Thirteenth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (see January 2008 Vol. 28 No.1), mention was made of advancements in digital photography. This relatively new technology has provided birders with all levels of expertise an opportunity to make significant contributions to Connecticut ornithology.

A fine example was the discovery of a striking male Broad-billed Hummingbird that appeared last summer at a Montville feeder but for a single day. A quick thinking member of the household, recognizing an unusual hummingbird, was able to document its occurrence, providing a first Connecticut record for this species of the American Southwest. In past years, this sighting might have been received as a single observer report by a beginning birder without the benefit of photo documentation.

A second addition to the Connecticut State List was the discovery of not one, but two, Slaty-backed Gulls at the Windsor-Bloomfield Landfill this past winter. Both were seen by more than a handful of birders, and both were well-described through written and photographic documentation. Again, photographs played a role, enabling the Committee to differentiate between these two individuals.

The third addition to the state list detailed in this report, "Western" Flycatcher, was separated in large measure from other look-alike members of the *Empidonax* genus through a series of sharp, full-frame digital images.

For future reference, please note that photographs do not have to be of the quality that one might find in Audubon or Birder's World magazines. Birds simply need to be recognizable, and any and all photographs should be accompanied by reports that include, minimally, the name of the bird, the observer, the date observed, and the location where the bird

was found. A full-written description is always sought by the Committee, because in some cases photos alone may not prove sufficient.

At this time, there are some changes to the composition of the Avian Records Committee. Buzz Devine, a long-standing member, has resigned effective this spring. The Committee thanks Buzz for his 18 years of service. A new member of the Committee is Nick Bonomo of Orange. Nick has made his presence known to the Connecticut birding community with his thoughtful posts on the CTBirds listserv. Nick has provided numerous well-documented review-list records over the past several years, including the aforementioned first record for Slaty-backed Gull. Members who evaluated and voted upon these reports, in addition to the authors, are Buzz Devine, Frank Gallo, Ed Hagen, Julian Hough, Frank Mantlik, Janet Mehmel, Nick Bonomo, Dave Provencher, Mark Szantyr and Dave Tripp.

As mentioned in the Thirteenth Report, if an ARCC member believes that new information may have some bearing on a record that has already been decided, the member may request the record be re-opened for additional discussion. This occurred at the Committee's last meeting as old records for Barnacle Goose, Mew Gull and Eurasian Jackdaw will be re-opened at the request of various current Committee members. These records will be discussed at a future meeting.

This report, as well as this entire issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*, is dedicated to the memory of Betty Kleiner. Betty was the long-time editor of "The Warbler," and it was through her efforts that these reports first became part of this publication.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

The state list now stands at 423. 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 Check-

list 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 keeping the list intact in the Thirteenth Report, the Committee decided this time to return Tufted Duck and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Both were removed in the past because of an increase in records, but that trend has now reversed itself for both species. These actions are in addition to adding any first state records to the list.

FORMAT

This report continues the format of previous reports. In the case of accepted records, only observers who submitted reports are listed, with the original finder listed first 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

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) A juvenile was found on 19 Aug 2008 at Fourteen Acre Pond in Norwalk (08-20 Larry Flynn*‡, Bruce Finnan‡, Greg Hanisek). It remained until at least 13 Sep, providing excellent viewing opportunities for many observers.

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) One appeared on 6 Jun 2008 at Barn Island, Stonington (08-12 Skyler Streich *‡). One appeared on 17 Jun 2008 at Plum Bank Marsh in Old Saybrook (08-25 John Ogren*, Noble Proctor‡). The latter was seen by many observers through at least 19 Jun. These are the fourth and fifth accepted records since 2003 for what appears to be an increasing visitor.

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*) The state's second adult was found on 12 Dec 2008 at Windsor-Bloomfield landfill in Windsor (08-26 Nick Bonomo*‡). The observer obtained a series of digital images that showed the bird in direct comparison to Herring Gulls and illustrated key features such as the dark eye, bright yellow bill with yellow-green base and bright pink legs. He also provided a sketch of the wing tip pattern based on observation of the bird in flight. The same landfill produced records of two different first-cycle Thayer's



Patrick Comins photo
This first-cycle Thayer's Gull visited the Windsor Bloomfield landfill on 20 Feb 2009.

Gulls, one on 23 Dec 2008 (08-29 Nick Bonomo*‡, Julian Hough‡, James P. Smith‡) and one on 20 Feb 2009 (08-28 Patrick Comins*‡). Multiple digital images of each bird confirmed the difficult identification and showed that different individuals were involved. A detailed account of identifying this age-class appeared in Vol. 18 No. 4 (October 1998) in an article by Julian Hough on the state's first photo-documented Thayer's Gull. The three accepted in this report bring the state total to six.

SLATY-BACKED GULL (*Larus schistisagus*) The state's first was found on 28 Nov 2008 at Windsor-Bloomfield landfill in

Windsor (08-22 Nick Bonomo*‡, Mark Szantyr‡, Sam Fried‡). It was also seen on 29 Nov and 1 Dec. This ranks as probably the most thoroughly documented first-state record for Connecticut. NB provided a model for detailed description and investigation in his report to ARCC, which included images illustrating all aspects of the individual by MS and NB. He also thoroughly analyzed the possibility of hybrid origin. The depth of scrutiny took on international dimensions when a discussion of the bird's mantle color, and then a more wide-ranging exchange on the extent of mantle color variation shown by this species, emerged on the Frontiers of Identification listserv. NB elicited the critical information favoring the Slaty-backed identification from the Japanese researchers most familiar with this eastern Asian species on its breeding grounds.

Remarkably, the state's second appeared at the same landfill less than two months later, when a sub-adult bird was found and well-photographed on 9 Feb 2009 (09-01 Patrick Dugan*, Frank Mantlik*‡, Frank Gallo*‡). It was seen through at least 13 Feb, and what appeared to be the same bird showed up along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts later in the month.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Sterna nilotica*) Two were seen on 7-8 Jun 2008 at Greenwich Point on the Greenwich-Stamford June Bird Count for a fourth documented state record, although there are also several uncorroborated sight records. (08-27 Tom Baptist‡). This follows one on 24 Jun 2006 at Milford Point, which was the first in a decade.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) One appeared on gravel bars at Milford Point on 9-10 Jul 2008 (08-17 Nick Bonomo*‡, Frank Mantlik‡). This is a fourth state record but the second in as many years at this general location. (A photo appeared in Vol. 29 No.1 January 2009).

DOVEKIE (*Alle alle*) One was found by two observers on the ramp to Interstate 395 in Putnam on 16 Dec 2007. It was taken to Tufts University's wildlife rehabilitation center in Massachusetts where, despite care, it died on 20 Dec 2007 (07-17

Robin Shearer‡, Julian Hough).

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) The second of two birds observed at a feeder in Branford made a half-hour appearance on 20 May 2008 (07-10 Donna Lorello*‡). For details on the committee’s deliberations on both birds, please see the account later in this report of the second bird, a long-stayer, under the category Records Accepted, Origin Uncertain.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD (*Stellula calliope*) The second state record of this little jewel involved a long-staying individual from mid-Oct until at least 21 Dec 2008 at the Battos feeder in Simsbury (08-21 Suzanne Battos*, Jay Kaplan‡, Sam Fried‡, Bruce Finnan‡, Mark Szantyr‡). It was identified to species in mid- Nov after JK investigated the homeowner’s report of a lingering hummingbird at her feeder. The first record had occurred less than two years earlier.

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD (*Cynanthus latirostris*) One was seen for one day only on 13 Aug 2008 at the Seddon feeder in the Oakdale section of Montville (08-19 Kathleen Seddon*, Samantha Seddon‡). This stunning first state record owes its presence on the state list to a digital camera and the quick-thinking daughter of the feeder’s owner. Despite its brief presence, the bird was beautifully documented in color images. For the record, a single Broad-billed Hummingbird appeared at a feeder on Cape Cod, Mass., shortly after this observation and remained for several months.



“WESTERN” FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax difficilis/occidentalis*) An individual of the species pair Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher was found on

Donna Lorello photo
This photo shows the undamaged bill of a White-winged Dove visiting a Branford feeder that also has hosted another bird of this species with a damaged bill and feet.

1 Dec 2007 at Osbornedale State Park in Derby. It was very cooperative through at least 7 Dec (08-10 Roy Harvey*, Mark Szantyr‡, Bruce Finnan‡, Julian Hough‡, Paul Fusco‡, Greg Hanisek, Brian O'Toole). A series of very detailed photographs along with call notes heard on a few occasions allowed for elimination of other Empidonax species, but the species-distinctive male positional call was not heard. For a more detailed account of this first state record, see a color-illustrated article by Frank Gallo in Vol. 28 No. 3 (July 2008).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus forficatus*) One bird was seen briefly on 10 June 2008 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (08-24 Rollin Tebbetts *‡). The adult bird could not be relocated despite intense searching by numerous observers, but the finder got a clearly identifiable photo. (See Vol. 29 No. 1 January 2009). The occurrence falls in the typical spring-early summer time frame for this species in the Northeast.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*) Two were viewed briefly but both photographed on 22 Dec 2007 on Housatonic River Road in Falls Village. The description included a rendering of the calls in comparison to Cedar Waxwings (08-15 Nick Bonomo*‡). One was found with a flock of 12 Cedar Waxwings on 14 Mar 2008 in Harwinton (08-05 Paul Carrier*‡). One was photographed brilliantly on 13 Apr 2008 on the UConn-Storrs campus (08-08 Mark Szantyr‡). Although this report was the only one received for this species from the Storrs campus, up to six were seen there 9-19 Apr 2008 (m.ob.). One was seen briefly but well-described from a scope view obtained while it perched with a flock of Cedar Waxwings on 31 Oct 2008 at Lighthouse Point, New Haven (08 23 Dana Campbell*).

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*) One was seen briefly on 16 Jan 2008 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. It was relocated on 21 Jan and was seen by many observers through 15 Feb (08-13 Carole Harrington*, Greg Hanisek, Noble Proctor‡, Ryan Sayers‡, Tom Sayers‡, Julian Hough‡). A photo appeared in Vol. 28 No. 3 July 2008. An

adult male visited a feeder in Hampton on 3-8 Jun 2008 (08-30 Marilyn Higgins*, Steve Morytko *‡).

LARK BUNTING (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) A female was seen briefly and photographed 22 May 2008 at Hammonas-set Beach State Park in Madison (08-14 Nick Bonomo*‡, Dori Sosensky). This is the second fully documented record, following one banded and photographed in Oct 1978. The image was obtained by "digibinning" - using a digital camera through binoculars. (See Vol. 28 No. 4 October 2008).

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*) One cooperated for many observers 25 Mar-7 May 2008 at the feeders of the Schaefer residence in Canaan village, North Canaan (08-09 Ingrid Schaefer*, Tom Schaefer*, Mark Szantyr‡, Jim Dugan‡, Nick Bonomo‡). Bullock's Oriole is once again on the increase in the East. This oriole, a beautiful bright plumaged bird, was thought by many West Coast birders to be too orange over most of its plumage to be a normal Bullock's. While the bird appeared to be a young male, this extreme amount of orange led some to consider that it might be an older female of the species, as this age/sex class often takes on male characters as estrogen levels fall. The plumage anomalies and the lack of conclusive age/sex determination gave rise to speculation that the bird was a hybrid. The next question was a hybrid with what. Observers from the mid-continent contact zone between Bullock's and Baltimore Oriole advised the committee that the Canaan oriole looked similar to some adult female hybrids between these two species. The closest species to Bullock's Oriole is not Baltimore Oriole, however, but Streak-backed Oriole, *Icterus pustulatus*, a bird from the extreme Southwest and Mexico that has been recorded in several Western states and as far east as Wisconsin. Several characters on the Canaan bird, including dorsal streaking that to some appeared extreme for Bullock's and similar to the symmetrical, orderly streaking of Streak-backed, were not inconsistent with Streak-backed Oriole. This bird caused extensive discussion from coast to coast. Ultimately, after conferring with several experts including plumage authority Peter Pyle, and critically analyzing all aspects of the bird's

structure and plumage, the committee judged the bird to be within the range of Bullock's Oriole, and likely a young male, though age / sex is still in question. *Mark Szantyr*

HOARY REDPOLL (*Carduelis hornemanni*) The winter of 2007-08 saw a major irruption of Common Redpolls into the state, primarily in the northern tier. Unlike most of these events, this one included a flurry of Hoary Redpolls. Online discussion groups and identification sites helped facilitate the identification challenges presented by the species pair. The increased use of digital photography also played a key roll in the acceptance of the following records:

An adult male on 22 Dec 2007 in Barkhamsted, on the Barkhamsted Christmas Bird Count, (08-31 Russ Naylor*). One first-winter bird on 3-6 Jan 2008 at a feeder in Coventry, where it was seen by a number of observers (08-07 Don Morgan*, Glenn Williams, Mark Szantyr‡). One male on 4 Jan 2008 at a feeder at Woodridge Lake, Goshen (08-02 Kevin Finnan). One female on 6 Jan 2008 at a feeder in Canton (08-01 Paul Cianfaglione*, Jay Kaplan). One on 6 Jan 2008 at a feeder in Barkhamsted (08-03 Fran Zygmunt*, Dave Tripp). One male on 20 Feb 2008 at a feeder in Harwinton (08-04 Paul Carrier*‡). A color- illustrated article on redpoll identification by Julian Hough appeared in Vol. 28 No. 1 (January 2008). All appear to be of the smaller and less frosty North American subspecies *C. h. exilipes*, rather than the nominate subspecies from Greenland.

RECORD ACCEPTED, Origin uncertain

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) A bird showing damage to its bill and toes appeared at a Branford feeder on 20 Feb 2007 (07-02 Donna Lorello*‡, Greg Hanisek, Mark Szantyr‡, Bruce Finnan‡). It has visited the feeder sporadically since then, up to and including winter 2008-09. Acceptance in this category represents full acceptance. The category was created to deal with those species, primarily waterfowl, where evidence points strongly to wild origin but the possibility of captive origin cannot be absolutely ruled out. The bill and foot abnormalities were interpreted by some experts

consulted as evidence of time spent in a cage. However, in general, this species has undergone such a strong and widespread northward range expansion, with numerous records at latitudes north of Connecticut, that barring the abnormalities the record would probably be accepted with minimal debate. In fact, the second White-winged Dove, (noted as Accepted earlier in this report), was seen in photographs to have a normal bill and feet. It appeared at a time when the homeowner had heard the long-staying bird calling, suggesting the second bird might have been attracted by the vocalizations. In the end key factors in acceptance of the long-staying bird were: the species' recent history of strong northward expansion; reports from experts that White-winged Doves are not popular among dove fanciers; and photos of individual White-winged Doves found at latitudes north of Connecticut that show bill and foot damage attributed to frostbite, rather than cage wear. The bird's willingness to stay in the area was not out of keeping with a species undergoing a rapid range expansion.

NOT ACCEPTED, Origin uncertain

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) One appeared in mid- Jun 2008 outside flight cages containing this species at the Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Sanctuary in Litchfield (08-16 Ian Gereg*, Mark Szantyr†). The free-flying bird appeared healthy, and its appearance coincided with a flurry of reports of presumably wild Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in the Northeast. The species overall is in the midst of a northward range expansion. However, on 20 June MS was able to obtain photos that clearly show a yellow plastic leg band of the type affixed by keepers of wildfowl. At about the same time it was reported that two individuals of this species escaped from an aviculturist in New York state. Nonetheless the owner of this duck was never determined, and it was eventually taken into the pens at the Ripley facility (fide MS).

MANDARIN DUCK (*Aix galericulata*) A stunning male was seen 20-21 Mar 2008 in a stream in West Hartford (08-06 Terri



Mark Szantyr photo
This Bullock's Oriole that spent much of spring 2008 at a Canaan feeder raised questions about plumage variation.



Mark Szantyr photo
The state's second Calliope Hummingbird visited a Simsbury feeder for two months in autumn 2008.

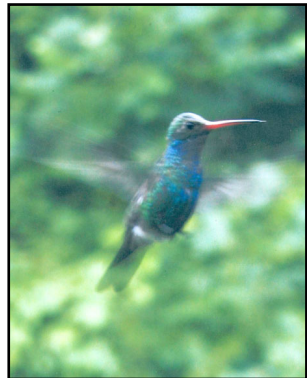


*Mark Szantyr photo
The state's first Slaty-backed Gull, shown here with a Herring Gull, was seen for three days at Thanksgiving 2008 at the amazingly productive Windsor-Bloomfield landfill.*



*Steve Morytko photo
This male Western Tanager was a May 2008 visitor to a feeder in Hampton.*

*Samantha Seddon photo
The state's first Broad-billed Hummingbird made a surprise one-day visit to a feeder in Montville on 13 Aug 2008.*



O'Connell*). This handsome Asian species is often held in captivity. It has been recorded a number of times in Connecticut and always considered an escape or release. It has not been recorded as naturally occurring in North America.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

PACIFIC LOON (*Gavia pacifica*) The problems with documentation of this species have been spelled out in detail in past reports. As has usually been the case, this report from Sherwood I. State Park, Westport, on 20 Oct 2007 (07-16), involved a single observer and no photographs. In two rounds of discussion it was noted that some features described could be attributed to Arctic Loon, a possibility the observer himself had entertained. An illustrated article on loon identification by Julian Hough appeared in Vol. 28 No. 1 (January 2008).

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) A single bird was seen by three observers on 1 Oct 2008 as it flew by at Cove Island Park in Stamford (08-18). One observer submitted a good account but was unable to see some critical field marks from his vantage point. Lacking reports from the other observers, the committee believed the short observation was insufficient to document a first state record. There is also a report on file of two White-tailed Kites from 26 April 2002 in East Hartford. This was not accepted in large part because of the brevity of the observation. It should be noted that multiple reports are greatly desired in cases where more than one observer is involved. Cases on point include a fly-by Anhinga at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich (three reports submitted) and the first state record of Sooty Shearwater (three reports submitted). Both involve difficult identifications that were solidified by the depth of detail provided by multiple observers.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides arcticus*) Two were reported from a yard in East Haven on 24 Jun 2007 (07-14). The date and the presence of two birds both were outside expectations for this species, which has not been documented in the state for more than 20 years. The description provided was scant, but the one plumage detail offered - "black backs with white specks" -was not consistent with this species.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks the following for expert commentary on several records: Luis Bevier, Alvaro Jarramillo, Paul Lehman, Curtis Marantz, Steve Mlodinow, Sebastian Patti, O&M Ujihara. Also see acknowledgments in the previous Connecticut Warbler articles cited in the species accounts for Pacific Loon and Hoary Redpoll.

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2008 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

By Neil Currie with Brian Bielfelt and Steve Mayo

In this report I am joined by Brian Bielfelt and Steve Mayo. Brian is the counter/compiler at Quaker Ridge, the National Audubon Society's Sanctuary in Greenwich. He's been there for three years after watching and counting hawks in Texas. Steve is the coordinator/compiler at Lighthouse Point in New Haven, having succeeded Ron Bell in this job this year.

After 25 years of hawk watching in Connecticut, the general pattern of the migration is well understood. Inland sites (Table 1), manned in mid-September, pick up the hawks, about 90% Broad-wings, as they pass to the southwest along a broad front toward the southwestern corner of the state. Because the lookouts are scattered (Table 1), and because the hawks are moving on a broad front, the numbers seen at these lookouts are only a part of the number actually passing.

Another narrower front of migrating hawks is along and near the coastline. As hawks move to the southwest across the state they "bump up" against Long Island Sound, which most will not cross. Some of this group passes over Lighthouse Point in New Haven (Tables 1 and 2), a concentration point. As they move westward from Lighthouse to the southwest they spread out over a broader front. Along the way, they are joined by more hawks moving in from the northeast. As the flow moves westward the numbers increase. On most years Broad-wings are not part of this long pathway. On an occasional year they may become part of it from New Haven westward, and their numbers can be spectacular.

In the fall of 2008 at the inland sites (Table 1) the sightings and numbers of hawks were about as expected, but there was a surprise. In mid September there were two big days (Maurice Broun at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary called these Red Letter Days), Sept. 16 and 18. On those two days thousands of Broad-wings, accompanied by small numbers of other hawks, were migrating.

Noteworthy in 2008 was the increased number of Black Vultures, some now even wintering in Connecticut. Bald Eagles were seen at almost all the inland lookouts, and their numbers continue to increase. Rough-legged Hawk counts, small but greater than usual, hinted at the good numbers we would see in Connecticut this winter. As always Northern Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon were uncommon at all inland sites.

Quaker Ridge and Lighthouse Point are two major hawk watching sites. Both are concentration points for migrating hawks. They provide easy access for watching sites and facilities for education. Quaker Ridge is located on the National Audubon Society's sanctuary next to its nature center. At Lighthouse programs for children are conducted by the New Haven Park Department and by private groups.

At Quaker Ridge the watch/count period runs from Aug. 20 to Nov. 20. As hawk watchers know, the migration can be different from year to year, from day to day and from hour to hour. In 2008 at Quaker Ridge, Broad-wings made their best showing since 1995. This was highlighted during the Sept. 18 flight, when 13,025 were counted (Tables 1 and 2), 12,236 of them during three hours in the afternoon. Since 1971, when



*Julian Hough photo
An immature Red-shouldered Hawk at Lighthouse
Point.*

counts began at Quaker Ridge, there have been only four other days on which Broad-wing numbers were greater than those on Sept. 18.

And there were other exciting days. The following morning watchers had close looks at an immature dark-morph Swainson's Hawk as it lifted off with other raptors. The Swainson's Hawk is a western bird and is rarely seen in Connecticut. There were record days for three species: 88 Cooper's Hawks on Oct. 6, 91 Red-shouldered Hawks on Nov. 2, and six Golden Eagles on Oct. 30. For a second year more than 150 Bald Eagles passed the lookout. September is the Bald Eagle month and late October-early November features Golden Eagles. Worth noting is the reopening in 2007, just six miles north of Quaker Ridge, of the Chestnut Ridge lookout in Katonah, N.Y. The combined Quaker-Chestnut Broad-wing count was 28,000, with more uncounted hawks crossing between these sites. The fall 2008 season at Quaker Ridge produced the highest count of all East Coast hawk watching sites.

At Lighthouse Point the watch/count period ran from August 27 to December 6. In contrast to Quaker Ridge, the total count there was the lowest in eight years and the second lowest in 25 years (Table 2). Contributing to this were the lowest counts ever of Sharp-shinned Hawks and American Kestrels. The population status of the American Kestrel in eastern North America is already of great concern. There was good news, however, for some species. There were record numbers of Turkey Vultures (720), Bald Eagles (155), Peregrine Falcons (183) and Ospreys (1,810), their best showing in 11 years.

After seeing reports in the Connecticut Warbler for 18 years, readers are aware by now that species counts for single years by themselves don't tell us much about the population status of each species. However, the data we have accumulated gives a picture of where in Connecticut we may see these great birds. It is the sight of hundreds of migrating hawks, whirling groups of Broad-wings at inland sites and at Quaker Ridge, and long lines of Sharp-shins or Ospreys trailing by at

coastal sites, that provide real excitement.

At inland sites and Quaker Ridge (and sometimes at Lighthouse) the Broad-wings are the stars of the show. To see a flight of one to two thousand of them is exciting, but more exciting is the hour or two in which the bulk of the day's flight may appear. Referring again to the heavy migration of Broad-wings on Sept. 18 : at Chestnut Hill in Litchfield there were 1766 with 1102 in one afternoon hour, at Botsford Hill in Bridgewater there were 1611 with 1079 in two hours at noon, at Flat Hill in Southbury there were 2623 with 2065 in one afternoon hour, and at Quaker Ridge there were 13,025 with 7961 between 3 and 4 p.m. It is the prospect of a day such as those that brings us to the lookouts.

Besides the accompanying tables, a complete set is available on the COA web site, www.ctbirding.org. Even more detail is available on the Hawk Migration Association web site, www.hawkcount.org.

The following birders were counters at our Connecticut lookouts in 2008: Lois Aldi, Ralph Amodie, Renee Baade, David Babington, Bill Banks, Dan Barvir, Steve Beal, Ray Belding, Ron Bell, Gail Benson, Brian Bielfelt, Nick Bonomo, Polly Brody, Tom Burke, Tom Burns, Dana Campbell, Paul and Seth Carrier, Al Collins, Neil Currie, Ayreslea Denny, Randy Domina, Angela Dimmett, Karen Dixon, Jim Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, and Dick English.

Larry Fischer, David and Ann Fiske, Steve Foisey, Frank Guida, Tony Hager, Greg Hanisek, John Hannon, Phil Hanson, Martin Harris, Tom Hook, Julian Hough, Lynn James, Elsbeth Johnson, Anne Kehmna, Carolyn Longstreth, Lisa Lozier, Ryan MacLean, Hugh Martin, Stefan Martin, Shaun Martin, Steve Mayo, Robin McAllister, Ken Mirman, and Ken Merrifield.

Don Morgan, Judy Moore, Marty Moore, Russ Naylor, Brian O'Toole, Janet Petricone, Matt Popp, Mike Reese, Olaf Saltau, Meredith Sampson, Donna Rose Smith, Dori Sosensky, Judith Stevens, Maria Stockmal, Carol Titus, Tony Tortora, Ben Van Doren, Mike Warner, Win Williams, Joe Wojtanowski and Joe Zeranski.

Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 2008

Site	Town	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW
Booth Hill	W. Hartland	10			6	7		17	1			1873
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	71			44	18	4	133	23		1	3545
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	53			29	10	3	53	3			3681
East Shore Park	New Haven	0										
Flat Hill	Southbury	47	7		20	13	6	20	3	1		3027
Flirt Hill	Easton	96			8	8	23	63	28			56
Huntington S.P.	Redding											
Johannycake Mt.	Burlington	40	3		48	30	4	95	12	1		4370
Lighthouse Point	New Haven	612	2	720	1810	155	342	4229	1160	3	176	401
Middle School	Torrington	81			15	3	4	51	20	1	6	4482
Peak Mountain	East Granby	124			22	7	11	17	13		9	61
Poquonock	Windsor Locks	348	1	70	21	21	19	57	29	5	30	1275
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich	611	29	1178	723	155	182	3258	572	6	284	18706
Taine Mountain	Burlington	7			8	1		7				12
Waveny Park	New Canaan	30			44	6	1	34	6		1	376
White Memorial	Litchfield	24	5		26	14		12	10			1700

Total	2154	47	1976	2817	447	599	8046	1880	17	507	43565
	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW
Lighthouse Point	612	2	720	1810	155	342	4229	1160	3	176	401
Quaker Ridge	611	29	1178	723	155	182	3258	572	6	284	18706
All Others	931	16	78	284	137	75	559	148	8	47	24458
	2154	47	1976	2817	447	599	8046	1880	17	507	43565

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 raptor

Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 2008

Site	Town	Hours	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	2008	2007
Booth Hill	W. Hartland	10			2	2	1			1909	4083
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	71			29				16	3813	3492
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	53			12				16	3807	3519
East Shore Park	New Haven	0									230
Flat Hill	Southbury	47			11	1			3	3112	1888
Flirt Hill	Easton	96	36		294	24			3	543	1134
Huntington S.P.	Redding										418
Johannycake Mt.	Burlington	40			20	2	3			4588	1452
Lighthouse Point	New Haven	612	757	1	4	855	326	183	262	11386	13596
Middle School	Torrington	81	2	1		6	2		17	4610	2914
Peak Mountain	East Granby	124	19		7	3	1		8	178	1775
Poquonock	Windsor Locks	348	111	5	1	21	4	11	19	1700	
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich	611	384		14	457	73	29	153	26203	18603
Taine Mountain	Burlington	7		1						29	386
Waveny Park	New Canaan	30	11		15	2	2	2	6	504	836
White Memorial	Litchfield	24			7	2	2			1778	67

Total	2154	1320	8	19	1736	441	232	503	64160	54393
	Hours	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	TOTAL	
Lighthouse Point	612	757	1	4	855	326	183	262	11386	
Quaker Ridge	611	384		14	457	73	29	153	26203	
All Others	931	179	7	1	424	42	20	88	26571	
	2154	1320	8	19	1736	441	232	503	64160	

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 raptor

Broad-winged Hawk Flights - Fall 2008

September

Site	Town	Hours	-10	10	11	12,13,14	15	16	17	18	19	20,21,22	23	24+	Total
Booth Hill	W. Hartland	10				40				1833					1873
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	71	1	10	102	2	9	511	1046	1611	250	3			3545
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	53		97	68		111	1252	337	1766	50				3681
East Shore Park	New Haven	0													
Flat Hill	Southbury	47	1		15	40	183	141		2613	34				3027
Flirt Hill	Easton	72	3	8			44							1	56
Johnycake Mt.	Burlington	40			81		130	367		3391	387	14			4370
Lighthouse Point	New Haven		22	18	10			16	262	13	3	5	52		401
Middle School	Torrington	81	13	13	177	22	46	2428	214	927	404		236	2	4482
Peak Mountain	East Granby	124	61												61
Poquonock	Windsor Locks			124	37	1		2	50	982	51	9	15	4	1275
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich		130	988	25	12	479	1760	1196	13025	767	23	224	77	18706
Taine Mountain	Burlington	7									12				12
Waveny Park	New Canaan	30		20		2	249	68	30	7					376
White Memorial	Litchfield	22		12			22	451		1189	12	14			1700

Lighthouse Point, New Haven - Fall 2008

Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
17			23	4	9	6	3		1			2			8	1	1	1	59
195			1128	56	119	1599	375	18	371		40				352	140	57	60	4402
226	2	432	653	84	160	2351	699	69	30		280			2	493	158	99	158	5670
171		200	6	11	53	272	81	3	88		431		1	2	2	26	25	39	1240
4	1				1	1	2				4					1	1	3	14
613	2	720	1810	155	342	4229	1160	3	176	401	757	1	4	855	326	183	261		11385

Quaker Ridge, Greenwich - Fall 2008

Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
77	2		74	25	9	12	3		2	55					6	2		3	193
205.5	5	19	503	76	84	1516	140	5	18624		24				216	32	12	65	21321
222	16	1048	142	45	66	1570	385	3	96	27	142			9	234	31	15	75	3904
107	6	111	4	9	23	160	44	3	181		218			5	1	8	2	10	785
611	29	1178	723	155	182	3258	572	6	284	18706	384			14	457	73	29	153	26203

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

D.W. Mock. 2004. **More Than Kin and Less Than Kind**. The Evolution of Family Conflict. 267 pgs. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA.

The subtitle of Doug Mock's book indicates the scope. Inside, he deals with topics from reproductive biology to resource management. While these are complex systems with complicated interactions essential to species survival, Mock discusses them with charm and wit. He presents a careful dissection of how investigators examine the interactions between theory and field work, and presents the reader with examples from a wide range of species.

His approach is built around the elemental fact that reproductive success is an essential element of survival. Yet many bird species lay more eggs than nestlings are fledged. Is this wasteful? Because the entire enterprise occurs in a world with limited resources, conflicts may develop between the parents and the siblings in the nest. Hence, family conflicts. Mock deals with the origins and resolutions of these conflicts, that occur in many species, not just birds. His own work involves mainly herons and egrets where he introduces the associated seemingly counter productive behaviors such as infanticide or siblicide. The question of whose interests are served is of overriding interest. The entire suite of behavior patterns involved in nesting represents intrafamilial competition with significant consequences for fitness. Competition emerges as the lens through which reproductive success is viewed.

Definitions and jargon are kept to a minimum as Mock considers two patterns of competition: scramble and interference. In a scramble, for example, in mice where the mother has more pups than teats, the pup that gulps down the minuscule serving from one nipple may be able to get a second helping at another. The key to success is clearly drinking speed, much like the Easter egg hunt for toddlers. The scramble is for access to the source. In birds, and other

nonlactating species, where the food comes from an entirely predictable direction, stronger siblings may be able to monopolize a key position by aggression and physical domination. For example, the clutch in a kingfisher's burrow. Mock points out that this type of interference competition is cost-effective, the stronger, often the first-hatched chick, survives. The examples are many and in no way limited to birds. The processes involved, their interactions and consequences are what much of the book is about. Essentially, the problem of where demand by the chicks exceeds the parental supply capabilities is what the text is about. It is the clever framing of the problems based on observation, testing and retesting that draws and holds your attention. All the cases are taken from the natural world, many are delightful—despite the seriousness of the consequences—and all are relevant.

There is plenty of drama here including sibling rivalry, parental neglect, sexual conflict, and parent-offspring neglect. The experiments with nestling herons and egrets document the dynamics of both positive and negative elements. Mock demonstrates the role of the extended family in the evolution of altruism (forces other than kinship to promote cooperation). He points out the close connection between life history traits and behavioral adaptations. Taken together, his work and that of his students, is a benchmark in behavioral ecology. This is a worthwhile read, but the plates, all photographs, could be less murky.

One of the pleasures of this book is Mock's writing. The tone of the text is conversational and in places it feels as if he was explaining his observations and sharing his enthusiasm directly with the reader. I was especially fond of the Epilogue, where Mock relates how his interest in biology developed and, perhaps more importantly, the many unexpected things about research itself. He allows that moments of discovery and exhilaration are rare, that much of the work is tedious and time consuming. Nothing unique here! But it is the process of making proposals (hypothesis) and then testing them to find the best explanation that fascinates him. He sees

biology split between workers (theoreticians) who focus on generating the ideas for testing and those (empiricists) who do the testing. For Mock, a self-proclaimed empiricist, the duality works best where the models address problems rooted in the rich world of fact and that offer testable possibilities on how the natural world might work. The empiricist works "by paying attention to what the theoreticians propose, but then letting the animals make the call." His data test specific predictions from the models but do not always come out as predicted. This "being wrong has one great virtue, especially with complex puzzles: it forces you to think harder." The threat, when data do not match prediction, permeates all of Mock's work. Nevertheless, he ends by stating, "The mix of theory and data put together in this book is up to date at the time of its writing, but much is doomed to eventual obsolescence. Scientific knowledge is nothing if not ephemeral, and only nonscientists misinterpret that as a flaw." Indeed.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

August 1 through November 30, 2008

By Greg Hanisek

Connecticut's fall seasons are long and always productive. This one had to rate as one of the best, with two new state records, four species of hummingbirds, a smorgasbord of Arctic geese, lots of late warblers and bold-faced birds scattered throughout this report. A noteworthy movement of northern finches provided the capper.

Geese through Ibis

A flight of 233 Snow Geese in five flocks passed over Lighthouse Point, New Haven, on Oct. 6 (GH et al.). Quaker Ridge in Greenwich logged 40 Snow Geese and 60 Brant the same day (BBi), and it also recorded the season's high count of 700 Snow Geese on Nov. 12 (BBi). On Nov. 9 a **Barnacle Goose** appeared at Mackenzie Reservoir in Wallingford (WS). It remained in the area through the end of the month in a large aggregation of Canada Geese that also included at least one Cackling Goose, a Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose, a Brant and nine neck-collared Canada Geese that were banded in West Greenland (RBk, m.ob.). Other Greater White-fronted Geese were at Ram's

Pasture, Newtown, starting on Oct. 6 (RBA) and on the UConn Storrs campus in late November (MSz et al.). The first five southbound Brant were early Sept. 18 at the Johnnycake Mountain hawk watch in Burlington (PCa).

The first four southbound American Wigeon were at Short Beach, Stratford, on Sept. 14 (FMA). Unusual inland was a drake Eurasian Wigeon at Bishop's Pond, Meriden, from Oct. 4 on (JBA). A good early season count of eight Blue-winged Teal was at Lords Cove, Old Lyme, on Aug. 18 (HG). Little Pond, Litchfield, held 13 on Sept. 20 (DRo). Also in good numbers for an early date were eight N. Shovelers at Greenwich Point on Sept. 4 (BBi, CR). The only Redhead reported was a drake at Sea-

side Park, Bridgeport, Nov. 8-16 (GH et al.). Chestnuthill Reservoir, Wolcott, held 120 Ring-necked Ducks on Oct. 26 (RP).

A female **King Eider** was at Milford Point on Nov. 27 (NB). A flock of 33 **Common Eider** assembled at Eastern Point, Groton, on Sept. 7 (PR). Black Scoters were noted at three inland locations on Nov. 1, including 50 at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (MSz). A flock of 36 dropped onto Lake Winnemaug, Watertown, on Nov. 13 (GH). Eleven Long-tailed Ducks were on Bantam Lake in Litchfield on Nov. 16 (RN, ADi). The compensating reservoir in Barkhamsted held 240 Hooded Mergansers on Nov. 25 (PCa). A Common Merganser, a widespread breeder in the northern part of the state, was out of place Aug. 13 at Griswold Point, Old Lyme (HG). Bristol Reservoir No. 7 held 250 Ruddy Ducks on Oct. 10 (PCa).

Nine reports of Ruffed Grouse all came from the northwestern part of the state (LH, RJ et al.). The Point Folly area of Bantam Lake held five Red-necked Grebes on Oct. 30 (DRo), and Batterson

Pond, Farmington, had two on Nov. 7 (PCi). An alternate-plumaged adult **Eared Grebe** was a great find Aug. 17 at Crystal Pond, Eastford (DTr). Although rare at any time, this species has produced other records in early fall, when Horned Grebes are not normally present. The first Northern Gannet, an adult, was at Milford Point on Oct. 12 (FG et al.). An **American White Pelican** soared over Cove Island Park, Stamford, on Oct. 11 (PDu et al.). The season's first Great Cormorant appeared off Cove Island, Stamford, on Sept. 9 (PDu); one was inland at Bishop's Pond, Meriden, on Oct. 6 (BDe).

An American Bittern and a Least Bittern produced an unusual eastern Connecticut bittern daily double on Aug. 29 at Hale Marsh in Pomfret (DM). A Snowy Egret was still at Stamford harbor on Nov. 19 (FG). An unusually high count of 10 Little Blue Herons were at Plum Bank Marsh, Old Saybrook, on Aug. 11 (JO); the number reached 13 on a kayak trip on the Menunketesuck River in Westbrook on Aug. 29 (CC), and 14 were still there on Sept. 21 (MA). An adult



*Mark Szantyr
photo
The adult
male Rufous
Hummingbird
arrived at
a Middle
Haddam
feeder in mid-
November.*



*Tom Sayers photo
This Dickcissel, one of at least
25 reported during the fall
season, showed off its colorful
plumage at Allen's Meadow in
Wilton on Oct. 4.*



*Bruce Finnan photo
This immature White Ibis enjoyed an extended stay in Norwalk.*

was an unusual late fly-by at Quaker Ridge, Greenwich, on Nov. 1 (MW et al.). The season's only Cattle Egret was in Wallingford Nov. 15-16 (JBa et al). A juvenile **White Ibis** was found on Aug. 19 at Fourteen Acre Pond in Norwalk. It remained until at least Sept. 13 (LF et al.).

Vultures through Shore-birds

A Turkey Vulture roost in Willimantic held at least 150 birds on Nov. 15 (MSz, BH). The pair of **Mississippi Kites** that nested near Great Pond, Simsbury, was present with its one fledgling until at least Sept. 17 (JWe, m.ob). Quaker Ridge in Greenwich logged 13,025 Broad-winged Hawks on Sept. 18 (BBI et al). (See a full report on the state's fall hawk watches elsewhere in this issue). A late



*Bruce Finnan photo
This Cattle Egret in Wallingford was the only one for the season.*

Broad-winged Hawk was in Mansfield on Nov. 20 (MSz). A dark morph immature **Swainson's Hawk** passed Quaker Ridge on Sept. 19 (BBi, RMc). A total of seven Golden Eagles were reported away from the hawk look-outs (RN, MMr et al.).

The first report of a migrant Sora was an adult on Aug. 25 at Access Road in Stratford (FMa). A boat trip through the marsh at Milford Point at high tide Sept. 17 yielded 12 Soras (MBu), and one was an unexpected find Oct. 9 at Hatch Pond, Kent (JD). A juvenile **Common Moorhen** was at Mud Pond in Gaylordsville on Sept. 1-4 (ADi et al.), and one was at Southbury Training School farm on Oct. 14 (RBA). A **Sandhill Crane** flew by Sept. 16 at Cove Island, Stamford (PDu); four were fly-bys at Allen's Meadow, Wilton, on Oct. 8 (LT); and three were in the Canaan area in mid-November (ADe).

Milford Point held 220 Black-bellied Plovers on Aug. 24 (FMa). The first American Golden Plover was reported from Rocky Hill Meadows on Aug. 22 (BA). Three Semipalmated Plovers were still

present Nov. 28 in Stratford (CB). Following a good breeding season in the state, two Piping Plovers were at Compo Beach, Westport, a non-breeding area, on Sept. 12 (FMa). It was only the second time the observer had seen them there in 25 years.

Two Upland Sandpipers dropped in at Ferry Lane, South Windsor, on Aug. 20 (RMA). A flock of 10 Hudsonian Godwits on Aug. 30 at Sandy Point, West Haven, was an unusual number for the state- but not unprecedented (MA). One was still at Sandy Point Sept. 3 (DV), and two Marbled Godwits were there Sept. 17 (DV). A gathering of 3,500 Semipalmated Sandpipers on Aug. 3 at Milford Point included the season's first juvenile (FMa). Grace Salmon Park in Westport held 2,500 on Aug. 4 (FMa), and Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme, which gets little attention during shorebird migration, held 300+ on Aug. 17 (PDn). Up to four adult Western Sandpipers were at Milford Point from Aug. 5-16 (CB). The first juvenile was at Rocky Hill Meadows Aug. 16 (PCi). Five White-rumped Sandpipers were still at McKinney NWR,

Stratford, on Nov. 7-8 (GH et al.); and one lingered to Nov. 26-27 at HBSP (SMr, RT, CM). A flock of four Baird's Sandpipers made a brief appearance at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) on Aug. 31 (JHo). The only other reports were of singles Sept. 3 at Cove Island (PDu, FG) and Sept. 10 at Sandy Point (NB).

The high count of Pectoral Sandpipers was 14 on Sept. 6 at Sandy Point (JHo), followed by 12 at Rocky Hill meadows Sept. 8 (PCi, BT) and 12 at HBSP on Oct. 2 (JCo). The first southbound Dunlin was at Milford Point on Aug. 28 (CB); an alternate-plumaged bird at Sandy Point on July 28 was harder to place on a time schedule (NB). Three Stilt Sandpipers was a good total Sept. 27 at HBSP (HG); one was inland Oct. 1 at Rocky Hill meadows (TL). Ten Buff-breasted Sandpipers for the season began with four at HBSP on Aug. 29 (FMc et al.). The best count of Short-billed Dowitchers was 190 at Milford Point on Aug. 3 (DV), and the first report of a Long-billed Dowitcher came from Stratford marina on Aug. 27 (DV).

Gulls through Woodpeckers

About 2,000 Laughing Gulls, mostly juveniles, assembled at Milford Point on Sept. 10 (FMa, LM). A late one was at Stamford harbor on Nov. 19 (FG). The state's much-anticipated first **Slaty-backed Gull**, an adult or near-adult, was a terrific find Nov. 28 at Windsor Bloomfield landfill in Windsor (NB, m.ob.). It was also present Nov. 29 and Dec 1, offering an opportunity for many state birders to see a species that has gone from off the eastern North American radar to rare but regular in a remarkably short period of time. A Glaucous Gull was early Oct. 18 at Lighthouse Point (JHo).

Two Caspian Terns were at Cove Island on Sept. 12 (PDu), with singles at Milford Point the next day (JBr) and Sandy Point on Sept. 21 (JHo). Two were on the beach at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 9 (MSt). A Royal Tern appeared at Cove Island on Sept. 6 (PDu), and five were at HBSP on Sept. 7 (FG et al.). In conjunction with Tropical Storm Hannah, an excellent count of 68 Forster's Terns was at Lord's Cove, Old Lyme, on Sept. 7 (HG),

along with nine at Shippan Point, Stamford, (FG, PDU). Four Black Terns were seen the same day heading out of Long Island Sound along with three Forster's Terns and c 2,000 Common Terns during a dawn vigil at Cornfield Point, Old Saybrook, (NB, AGr et al). Sept. 7 also produced two Black Terns at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford (PCa). Griswold Point held four Black Terns on Aug. 30 (NB). A flock of 22 Black Skimmers visited Milford Point on Sept. 26 (FG), with 16 present the next day at Short Beach, Stratford (FMA).

A Barn Owl was seen at least two nights in early August in Torrington (TL); others were at Milford Point on Oct. 12 (PDU) and at Lighthouse

Point on Oct. 23 (DM). Four or more Eastern Screech-Owls calling back and forth from an Enfield yard on Sept. 13 probably represented a family group (JF). A good fall for Snowy Owls started with a fly-over at Lighthouse Point on Nov. 1 (MSt); other reports came from Norwalk Islands beginning on Nov. 3 (LF); Stratford Point beginning on Nov. 5 (TL); Compo Beach, Westport, in mid-November (TG et al.); at least one in Old Lyme - Old Saybrook, on Nov. 23-25 (HG, TH); and one at Seaside Park, Bridgeport, on Nov. 25 (CB). The exact number involved remains undetermined.

The best counts of Common Nighthawk were 200+ on Aug. 28 in Kent (JJo), c 400 on Aug. 17 in Granby (BK),



*Larry Flynn photo
A Snowy Owl flight included this one on the
Norwalk Islands.*

440 on Aug. 28 in Mansfield (DM) and 500+ on Aug. 30 in Hamden (JZi). A late one was at Quaker Ridge on Oct. 5 (JZe). A Whip-poor-will called in a Guilford yard on Sept. 3 (JMh), offering one of our infrequent fall records.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds staged a major flight on Sept. 15 at Lighthouse Point when 270 were logged during the hawk watch (GH, BBa). It was only the second triple-digit day ever at the site, following an incredible 450 on Sept. 4, 2006. An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** present from mid-October through the end of the season at a feeder in Middle Had-dam was the only confirmed report (fide MSz). A **Calliope Hummingbird** at the Bat-tos feeder in Simsbury from mid-October through the end of the period was a second state record (JK et al.). The bird of the season (and probably the year) was the adult **Broad-billed Hummingbird**, a state first, photographed at a feeder in Oakdale on Aug. 13 only (KS, SSe). It's worth noting that shortly thereafter one appeared at feeder on Cape Cod, Mass., and stayed for months. The season's only Red-headed Wood-

pecker was a juvenile visiting a suet feeder in Stamford on Nov. 9 (KG). For the second year in a row none was recorded at Lighthouse Point, which historically gets several multiple-bird days in the fall.

Flycatchers through Warblers

The first Olive-sided Flycatcher was in Goshen Sept. 8 (PCa). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were at Bakerville swamp, New Hartford, on Aug. 23 (PCa); in a Stratford yard on Aug. 26 (SK); at HBSP on Aug. 26 (JC) and at both Greenwich Point (MSa) and Bakerville (PCa) on Sept. 7. A migratory movement brought 65 Eastern Kingbirds to Lighthouse Point on Aug. 20 (BBa). The only Northern Shrike was an adult



*Julian Hough photo
Cave Swallows staked out the sewer
treatment plant in New Haven.*

Nov. 27 in New Hartford (FZ). A record-late Yellow-throated Vireo on Nov. 21 in Naugatuck was singing and catching insects (PDn). Vireos are noted late singers. At the other end of the season, the first migrant Philadelphia Vireo was reported from Bluff Point, Groton, on Aug. 20 (GW). A flock of 35 Common Ravens soared over Johnnycake Mountain before heading south on Sept. 17 (PCa).

The amazingly consistent **Cave Swallow** show did not disappoint: 10 on Nov. 8 at Long Beach, Stratford (FMa); 20 on Nov. 10 at Lighthouse Point (GH); five on Nov. 10 at Stratford Point (TL); 30 on Nov. 11 at Lighthouse Point (BBa); 14 on Nov. 11 at Cove Island, Stamford (PDU); 12 on Nov. 11 at Sherwood Island S.P., Westport (LT); 14 on Nov. 12 at Lighthouse (LJ); seven on Nov. 14 at Lighthouse (DC); 10 on Nov. 14 at Greenwich Point (MSa); 30 on Nov. 16 in Westport (LT); 20 on Nov. 17 at the sewage plant next to East Shore Park, New Haven (m.ob.) and present to the end of the season; 28 on Nov. 18 at Lighthouse (BBa); and 18 on Nov. 24 at Lighthouse

(GH). Two Barn Swallows were present at the East Shore sewage plant until at least Nov. 27 (FMa et al.).

Bluff Point in Groton logged 120 Golden-crowned Kinglets on Oct. 5 (GW, PR). Migrant Marsh Wrens were at Greenwich Audubon Center on Sept. 26 (BO), Sperry Pond, Middlebury, on Oct. 1 (GH), and Crookhorn Road, Southbury, on Oct. 21 (GH). The season's only **Northern Wheatear** was right on this species' remarkably consistent schedule Sept. 10 at Rocky Hill meadows (SFo). The first Gray-cheeked-type Thrush was at Lighthouse Point on Sept. 10 (FMa); there were about 10 reports for the season. The only confirmed Bicknell's Thrush was a bird banded at Birdcraft Museum, Fairfield, in the last week of September (KV). Single American Pipits were early Sept. 2-3 at Great Island in Old Lyme (HG) and Sept. 3 at Cove Island (DV). The high count was 220 on Oct. 25 at Ferry Lane, South Windsor (PCi). A **Bohemian Waxwing** traveling with a small flock of Cedar Waxwings landed at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 31, allowing scope views (DC).

A record late Blue-winged Warbler was at Boothe Park, Stratford, on Nov. 4 (CB, SK). There were multiple November reports of Tennessee Warblers from East Shore Park, New Haven, including two on Nov. 10 (JCa) and the latest on Nov. 29 (JWr). The first southbound migrant was at Greenwich Point on Aug. 28 (CR). Two Orange-crowned Warblers on Oct. 17-19 at Allen's Meadow (LT) and three on Nov. 15-16 at Cove Island (MMo) were among 12 for the season. There were multiple November reports of Nashville Warbler from East Shore Park through end of month (m.ob), and the five November reports of Northern Parula included two from East Shore. The park's incredibly productive late-warbler micro-climate also held a Chestnut-sided Warbler Nov. 19 (MSz); several Blackpoll Warblers through the end of the period, including four in one tree on Nov. 4 (NB et al.); several reports of single Black & White Warblers through the end of period (MSz, FMa et al.); and both an American Redstart and a Wilson's Warbler on Nov. 21 (GH). Also getting

in on the late stays was an Ovenbird Nov. 22 in Colchester (PHo). There were five reports of Cape May Warblers for the season. A Prothonotary Warbler, more often seen in spring than fall, was in a Pawcatuck yard on Aug. 19 (BDw). The season's only Kentucky Warbler was at Bent of the River Audubon in Southbury on Sept. 9 (PCo). The first of seven Connecticut Warbler reports came from Barkhamsted on Sept. 11 (FZ). A Hooded Warbler on Oct. 4 was a first for Lighthouse Point Park (PDe). There were 11 reports of Yellow-breasted Chats for the season.

Sparrows through Northern Finches

A very late Scarlet Tanager was found dead in a yard in Bozrah on Nov. 27 (RG fide BO). The first of seven **Clay-colored Sparrows** for the season appeared at Cove Island on Sept. 28 (PDu et al.). An early Vesper Sparrow caught the attention of hawk watchers on Sept. 8 at Bent of the River Audubon in Southbury (DS), followed quickly by one at Rocky Hill Meadows on Sept. 11 (PCi). Three **Lark Sparrows** for the season

were at Cove Island Sept. 6 (PDU), at Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford, on Oct. 12 (CC) and at Norwalk High School on Oct. 12 (JJ et al.). The first two "Ipswich" Sparrows were reported on Oct. 23 from Griswold Point, Old Lyme, (HG) and Smith-Richardson Sanctuary in Westport (FMA), the latter a very rare occurrence out of coastal dune habitat.

Three Grasshopper Sparrows for the season were at Glastonbury meadows on Sept. 20 (ADA), at Allen's Meadow on Oct. 10 (LT, PHe) and at Greenwich Point on Oct. 17 (MSa). We get very few migrants. The season's first migrant Nelson's Sparrow appeared Sept. 20 at Long Beach, Stratford (CB); at least 25 were seen during a canoe tour of the salt marsh at Milford Point on Oct. 14 (FMA, CB). The first two Fox Sparrows were a bit early Oct. 8 at Waterbury-Oxford Airport in Oxford (GH) and in Shelton (CB). The first White-crowned Sparrow report came from Woodbridge on Oct. 3 (CLo). Oct. 23 produced the first three Lapland Longspurs of the season at Milford Point (FG), followed by the first five Snow Bun-

tings the next day at HBSP (DRu). About 100 Snow Buntings passed Lighthouse Point on Nov. 10 (GH).

Two **Blue Grosbeaks** were at Allen's Meadow, Wilton, on Sept. 30 (LT). Singles were at Glastonbury meadows Oct. 4 (ADa) and Smith-Richardson Sanctuary in Westport on Oct. 23 (FMA). The first of about 25 Dickcissels for the season flew over Bluff Point, Groton, on Aug. 20 (GW). A late Bobolink turned up on Nov. 9 at Ora Avenue, East Haven (NB). The best count of Eastern Meadowlarks was 14 at Great Island, Old Lyme, on Nov. 23 (HG). The season's first three Rusty Blackbirds were at Cemetery Pond, Litchfield, on Oct. 3 (DRo). Heavy icterid flights during the first half of November at Lighthouse Point included c. 90,000 Common Grackles on Nov. 11 (BBa). An evening roost of Boat-tailed Grackles on Aug. 27 in Stratford held 40+ birds, a record high count (FMA). A single male was at Lighthouse Point on Nov. 7 (DC).

What developed into a significant flight of **White-winged Crossbills** began with two small flocks (7-10

each) flying over Ashford on Sept. 8 (MSz). A single appeared at Lighthouse Point Oct. 13 (GH), but the real movement didn't begin until November: six fly-overs Nov. 11 at Quaker Ridge (MR); 18 on Nov. 12 at Bent of River Audubon Sanctuary, Southbury, feeding in hemlocks (PCo); two fly-over flocks of 12+ on Nov. 16 in Sharon (MR); four on Nov. 19 in Bolton (EH); 18 on Nov. 22 at HBSP (RD); at least 12 on Nov. 23 at HBSP (JHi); and three in Wilton on Nov. 27 (LT). Two **Red Crossbills** were at Roosevelt Forest, Stratford, on Nov. 22 (BW).

The first five Common Redpolls in a modest flight were in Hartford on Nov. 28 (PCi).

A major widespread flight of Pine Siskins swept through the state from about Oct. 12 to Nov. 12, after which they continued to move in reduced numbers. At Lighthouse Point, four-digit counts were noted on 10 days during that period including highs of 5900 on Nov. 10, 2900 on Oct. 13 and 2250 on Nov. 9 (GH, BBa, SMA et al). Much smaller numbers of American Goldfinches accompanied the siskins, but as the siskin numbers waned Lighthouse logged 8000 goldfinches on Nov. 17 (GH) and 3700 on Nov. 18 (BBa). A flock of eight fly-by Evening Grosbeaks in Norwalk on Nov. 12 were the only ones for the season (JZi).



Mark Szantyr photo
Pine Siskins were headliners for the fall season.

Observers - Jayne Amico, Mark Aronson, Phil Asprelli, Bill Asteriades, Reene Baade (RBa), Jim Bair (JBr), Bill Banks (BBa), Charlie Barnard, John Barriger (JBa), Mark Barriger (MBA), Joe Bear (JBe), Richard Becker (RBk), Ray Belding (RBe), Brian Bielfelt (BBi), Nick Bonomo, Steve Broker, Milan Bull (MBu), Dana Campbell, Jay Carlisle (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Jan Collins (JcN), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Neil Currie, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Peter DeGennaro (PDn), Ayreslee Denny (ADe), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Randy Domina, Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDU), Carl Ekroth, Richard English, Jeremy Faucher, Chris Field, Bruce Finnan, Larry Flynn, Steve Fox (SFo), Sam Fried (SFr), Frank Gallo, Kathy Gellman, Art Gingert (AGi), Hank Golet, Tina Green, Andy Griswold (AGr), Rick Guenard, Lorraine Gunderson, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris, Roy Harvey, Seth Harvey, Ted Hendrickson, Phil Henson (PHe), Brian Hiller, John Himmelman (JHi), Pam Holden (PHo), Tom Hook, Julian Hough (JHo), Lukas Hyder, Jalna Jaeger (JJa), Lynn

James, John Johnson (JJo), Roger Johnson, Kris Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Brian Kleinman, Scott Kruitbosch, Dave Lawton, Twan Leenders, Carol Lemmon (CLE), Gary Lemmon, Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Ryan MacLean (RMc), Rick Macsuga (RMA), Frank Mantlik (FMA), Linda Mantlik, John Marshall (JMr), Shaun Martin (SMr), John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo (SMa), Flo McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMH), Chris Meyers, Jamie Meyers (JMe), Mike Moccio (MMo), Marty Moore (MMr), Don Morgan, Russ Naylor, John Ogren, Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier, Mike Reese, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dean Rupp (DRu), Phil Rusch, Cameron Rutt, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Tom Sayers, Wilford Schultz, John Schwarz, Kathleen Seddon, Samantha Seddon (SSE), Donna Rose Smith, Penny Solum (PSo), Steve Spector (SSp), Peary Stafford (PSt), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Luke Tiller, Brian Toal, Richard Trepp, Dave Tripp (DTr), Diane Tucker (DTu), Kathy Van Der Aue, Dennis Varza, Mike Warner, Brian Webster, John Weeks (JWe), Glenn Williams, John Workman (JWr), Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Joe Zeranski (JZe), Jim Zipp (JZi), Fran Zygmont.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

Just offshore, in a large concentration of gulls feeding in the surf, your eyes are drawn to a pale bird with pale wingtips and a dark-tipped bill. A little bit of adrenalin surge awakens you to the possibility that the bird is one of the “white-winged” gulls. In New England, it is then a choice of either an Iceland (race *kumlieni*) or Glaucous Gull, the only two large gulls with white-wings. Although a slight misnomer, since some ages, particularly in Iceland Gull, can be rather dark buff, “white-winged” serves as a useful distinction from Herring Gulls. It narrows the identification process down to two species.

Glaucous Gulls are rather scarce in Connecticut, compared to the more regularly encountered Iceland Gulls. They are definitely the big cousin, the veritable Tonka toy of large gulls, some birds matching Great-black-backed Gull in size (see picture on facing page of a hefty bird taken in Florida). They are bulky and broad-winged when compared to the smaller, more slim-winged Iceland Gulls.

However, our bird is alone, so size is hard to judge, and since





the bird is sitting on the water, any wing to body proportions are useless in giving us any additional “jizz” clues.

The dark eye, plus dark markings to the wing coverts and under tail coverts identify this bird as a first-winter (or first-cycle).

So, what useful features can be seen on this bird that may offer a correct identification? The bird doesn’t have a large feel to it – it has a longish neck, smallish bill with a rather high rounded crown. The slim shape, rounded head and rather streamlined shape of the bird on the water fit Iceland Gull rather than the rather flat-headed, brutish-looking Glaucous Gull. If you logically chose Iceland Gull, then unfortunately you’d be wrong!

Ugh? Nobody should feel bad about identifying this bird as an Iceland Gull, especially from this photo. The one solid feature of this first-year bird that identifies it as a Glaucous Gull is the bill pattern (not size or shape). That clean-cut “dipped-in-ink” bill is diagnostic of Glaucous Gull vs. Iceland Gull at that age. Iceland Gulls in their first year have a dark bill, which gradually turns paler so that in second-winter plumage, they have a bill similar to our bird with the dark tip becoming gradually paler towards the base, but it is

not clean-cut. These second-winter Iceland Gulls can be separated from first-winter Glaucous Gulls often on their smaller size and shape and the fact that, like most gulls, the iris has turned pale. This bird has a rather small bill for a Glaucous Gull, but the pattern alone identifies it. Also, Glaucous Gulls tend to have a proportionately smaller eye placed a little further back on the head, which combined with an often flat-crown gives them a fierce, beady-eyed look. Our bird, in this photo, doesn't impart that at all, and does look very Iceland Gull-like overall.

The other feature that is reliable, but subject to overlap, is that Glaucous Gulls have a shorter wing point that projects only a short way past the tail. Iceland Gull often shows a longer primary projection that extends farther past the tail tip. On many Glaucous Gulls, the tertials seemed to be more bunched and form a fuller back end, not the more streamlined shape often seen in Iceland Gull. Also, first-year Glaucous Gulls do not vary as much in plumage tone as do Iceland Gulls, and the primary tips are almost invariably white as opposed to the varying color and pattern shown by Iceland Gulls.

I found and photographed this bird at Long Beach, Stratford, in late December 2008. This individual hung around and was confiding for most of the winter.



Photo Challenge No. 65

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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

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ABOUT OUR COVER

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER

As this issue of The Connecticut Warbler arrives in the mail, southbound shorebirds are on the move. American Golden Plovers, like this basic-plumaged bird by Mark Szantyr, are among the more sought-after species. The state's birders will be on the lookout along the coast, but also in the case of this species at short-grass areas such as airports and sod farms.

SUMMER AND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DATA

A COMPARATIVE BIODIVERSITY ANALYSIS

By Joseph Belanger

Introduction

Connecticut displays a network of Christmas and summer bird count circles that is arguably as complete as any in the nation, providing an impressive database for biodiversity analysis. In this review standard biodiversity indexes are applied to this database, assessing not only the number of species found on a count but also their relative proportions. Underlying biodiversity theory maintains that a well-balanced ecosystem is an equally proportioned one, capable of losing numerous individuals before its diversity can be materially impacted.

By way of example, the use of such indexes is applied here to five hypothetical ecosystems. Each of these systems has exactly five species and a total of thirty individuals, but in significantly differing proportions.

Biodiversity Index Example				
Key:		<u>System A</u>	<u>System B</u>	<u>System C</u>
Species	1	6	10	22
S = # of species	2	6	8	2
N = # of individuals	3	6	6	2
P(i) = S/N	4	6	4	2
Ln = natural log	5	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals		30	30	30
Species Richness (R) = (S - 1)/Ln N:		1.18	1.18	1.18
Inverse Simpson Index (1/D) = 1/sum [P(i)²]:		5.00	4.09	1.80
Shannon-Wiener Index (H) = -sum [P(i) x Ln P(i)]:		1.61	1.49	0.95
Evenness (E) = H/Ln S:		1.00	0.93	0.59

System A is perfectly proportional. Each of the five species has six individuals.

System B is a more realistic proportional gradient (such as ten robins and two wrens).

System C is dominated by one species (such as Canada Geese covering a small pond).

The **Species Richness Index** reflects only the number of species in an ecosystem, producing exactly the same result for all three systems above.

The **Inverse Simpson Index** reflects the number of species and their proportionality, with perfect proportionality equal to the number of species (see System A).

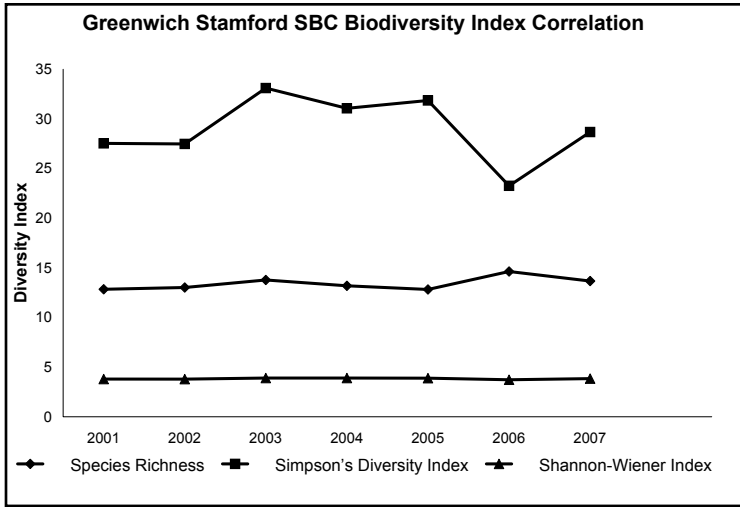
The **Shannon-Wiener Index** functions in a manner similar to Inverse Simpson, but tends to be less volatile. It is the most commonly used index for measuring biodiversity.

The **Evenness Index** is strictly a measure of proportionality, with perfect proportionality equal to 1.0 (see System A). It relies upon an accurate Shannon-Wiener index.

Greenwich-Stamford Summer Bird Count

The following table and graph reflect Greenwich-Stamford SBC data from 2001-2007 (Year 1 = 2001). The species richness index spiked strongly during 2006, when several transient individuals wandered their way onto the count. It is noteworthy that the inverse Simpson and Shannon-Wiener indexes, which were specifically designed to quantify such events in an appropriate manner, showed no such peaks during 2006. Rather, these indexes peaked during 2003 and 2004.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
# of Species	129	133	138	133	127	147	140
# of Individuals	21,374	25,231	20,858	22,142	18,616	21,651	26,029
Species Richness	12.84	13.02	13.78	13.19	12.82	14.63	13.67
Simpson's Diversity Index	27.54	27.48	33.11	31.07	31.86	23.26	28.68
Shannon-Wiener Index	3.8	3.79	3.9	3.9	3.89	3.73	3.84
Evenness	0.78	0.77	0.79	0.8	0.8	0.75	0.78



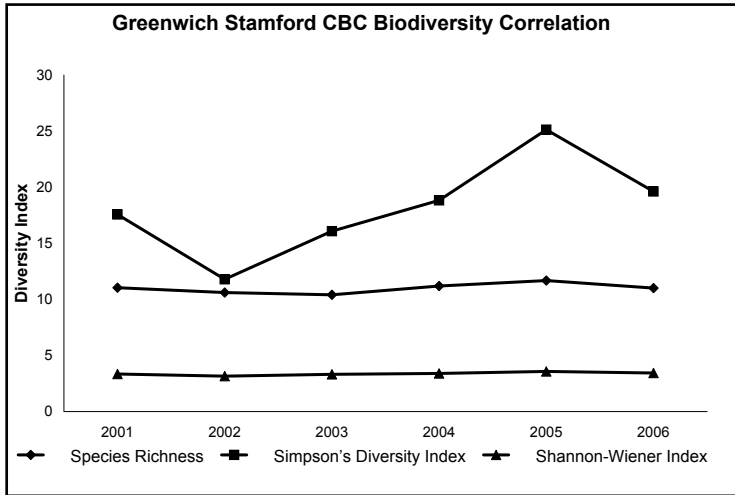
Graph One

The scientific validity of the summer bird count data collected over this period is strongly supported by the consistent data ranges exhibited in the table and graph above. This validity is also supported by a strong correlation between the inverse Simpson and Shannon-Wiener biodiversity indexes. In contrast to the high species count and richness spike recorded in 2006, biodiversity over this period actually peaked during 2003 and 2004.

Greenwich Stamford Christmas Bird Count

The following table and graph reflect Greenwich-Stamford CBC data from 2001-2006 (2007 data was not available at the time of writing). The species richness index shows a low point in 2003 that was the direct result of a major winter storm, which probably impacted birders far more than the area's birds. However, neither the inverse Simpson nor the Shannon-Wiener index showed a corresponding low point for 2003, indicating that the birders who braved the elements on that day managed to bring in typically proportional results. Once again, the inverse Simpson and Shannon-Wiener indexes correlated well with identical high (2005) and low (2002) points.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
# of Species	116	110	99	115	120	113
# of Individuals	33,346	28,983	12,312	26,580	26,566	26,058
Species Richness	11.04	10.61	10.41	11.19	11.68	11.01
Simpson's Diversity Index	17.57	11.79	16.08	18.83	25.13	19.62
Shannon-Wiener Index	3.35	3.16	3.32	3.4	3.58	3.44
Evenness	0.7	0.67	0.72	0.72	0.75	0.73



Graph Two

While somewhat more erratic than summer results, the Greenwich-Stamford CBC data reflected in the table and graph above nevertheless continue to reflect strong range consistencies and solid index correlations. In this instance, biodiversity reached its maximum during 2005, coinciding with the peak species and richness measures.

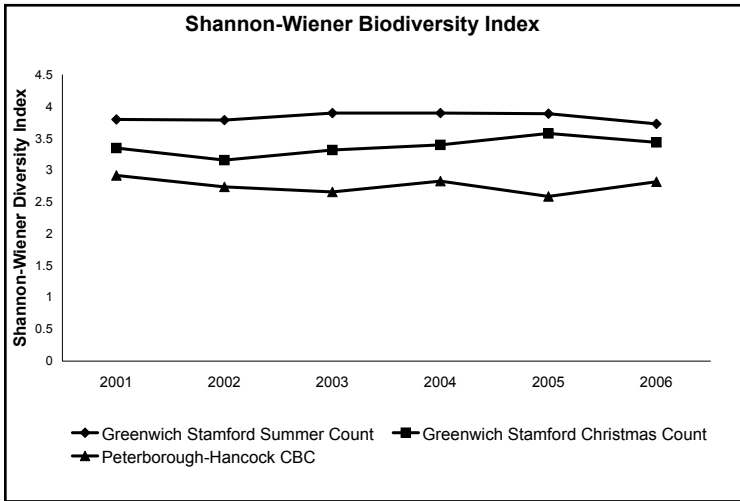
Comparison of Count Circle Biodiversity

The table below introduces the Peterborough-Hancock (New Hampshire) Christmas Bird Count, providing us with an ecosystem from northern New England for comparative purposes. A comparison of this data with the Greenwich-Stamford CBC reveals that the New Hampshire count falls far

short in almost every respect, and to a degree that is startling. Comparative summer data is lacking, unfortunately, because there is no Peterborough-Hancock summer count.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
# of Species	52	40	45	42	43	49
# of Individuals	3,464	3,369	3,899	3,890	3,769	4,642
Species Richness	6.26	4.8	5.32	4.96	5.1	5.69
Simpson's Diversity Index	11.31	10.5	9.11	10.07	8.29	10.76
Shannon-Wiener Index	2.92	2.74	2.66	2.83	2.59	2.82
Evenness	0.74	0.74	0.7	0.76	0.69	0.72

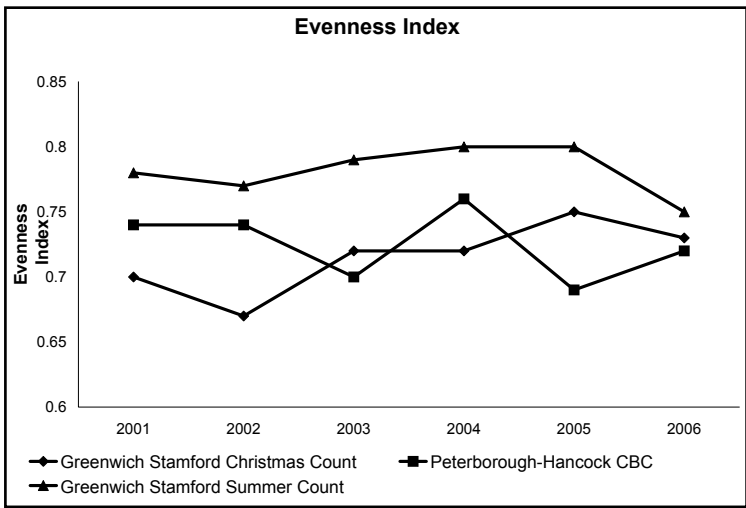
The following graph shows the Shannon-Wiener index for the Greenwich-Stamford SBC and CBC, as well as the Peterborough-Hancock CBC. These indexes follow a consistent pattern for all three counts, with Greenwich-Stamford summer biodiversity reasonably higher than that of winter. Such a pattern reflects the typical avian reproductive cycle, in which territorial behavior prompts uniform dispersal patterns during the summer. This pattern breaks down with the post-breeding aggregation of migratory and wintering flocks. Further, the degree to which Greenwich-Stamford CBC biodiversity exceeds the Peterborough-Hancock CBC is significant.



Graph Three

Comparison of Count Circle Evenness

The next graph shows a comparison of the Evenness index for the same three counts, resulting in a predictable pattern for the Greenwich-Stamford SBC and CBC profiles. Summer data clearly exceeds that of winter, once again due to territorial summer dispersal patterns. However, there is a strong overlap of Greenwich-Stamford CBC and Peterborough-Hancock CBC data, despite otherwise pronounced differences in their underlying biodiversity. This suggests that avian species distribute themselves in a predictably proportional manner during winter, regardless of their relative abundance.



Graph Four

Peterborough-Hancock Summer Biodiversity

In the absence of a Peterborough-Hancock summer count, comparative summer biodiversity must be inferred from other sources. While there is no easy substitute for a summer count circle, the available literature strongly suggests that breeding biodiversity in this area meets or exceeds that of the Greenwich-Stamford area. The Peterborough Breeding Bird Survey has recorded 120 historic breeding species,

and research at the nearby Saint-Gaudens National Historical Site resulted in a Shannon-Wiener index in excess of 4.0% (Faccio 2003). The same index for the Greenwich-Stamford SBC is consistently below the 4.0% level (Graph 3). Broader geographic research also supports a high level of breeding biodiversity in the Peterborough-Hancock area, identifying it as part of an unusually high reproductive region (Short 1979).

Conclusions

The validity of the data collected during the Greenwich-Stamford SBC, Greenwich-Stamford CBC and Peterborough-Hancock CBC is strongly substantiated by biodiversity analysis. Standard biodiversity indexes applied to this data produce results that follow very consistent patterns, even when the raw data appears sharply skewed by weather or other factors. These results speak for themselves, reflecting one of the most continuous and highly skilled volunteer efforts in natural history. Of particular importance is the baseline that such data provides for long-term ecosystem monitoring.

Greenwich-Stamford demonstrates summer and winter biodiversities that, while never overlapping, remain in remarkable proximity to one another (Graph Three). This area is a component of the temperate central hardwood forest, consisting primarily of oak and hickory. Peterborough-Hancock, in contrast, shows a substantial divergence between its summer and winter biodiversity capacity. This circle lies within the northern hardwood forest belt, a transitional zone just south of the spruce-fir biome, and is dominated by beech, birch, maple, pine and hemlock (McNab and Avers 1994). Anyone who has participated in the Peterborough-Hancock CBC can readily testify to the bleakness of this terrain in winter, which often appears devoid of life at any distance from a well-stocked birdfeeder. Conversely, the literature indicates that this region exhibits a high level of breeding biodiversity, particularly with regard to several warbler species.

Simply put, if Peterborough-Hancock is a summer bird

factory, then Greenwich-Stamford is a year-round nursery. Indeed, the Greenwich-Stamford CBC typically produces higher numbers of individual birds than does the Greenwich-Stamford SBC (refer to tables). Clearly, in terms of basic ecosystem function, these two areas exhibit significant (and probably interrelated) ecological differences.

The Evenness index deviates in a significant manner from the other biodiversity measures in this review. In terms of seasonality, this index follows a predictable pattern in which Greenwich-Stamford SBC data consistently exceeds Greenwich-Stamford CBC data. However, despite pronounced differences in their databases, this index reveals a strong overlap for Greenwich-Stamford CBC and Peterborough-Hancock CBC data. This suggests that, despite material biodiversity differences, avian species consistently distribute themselves in a similar manner during winter. It would be interesting to see, and important to note, if other circles support this basic pattern.

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BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

The Jehol Fossils. The Emergence of Feathered Dinosaurs, Beaked Birds and Flowering Plants. M-m Chang (editor-in-chief). 2008. 208 pgs. Academic Press, New York (translated from the Chinese edition published 2003.)

By age-old tradition, feathers have defined birds. The 150-million-year-old *Archaeopteryx* with its long tail, reptilian skeleton and teeth was considered the earliest bird because the body was covered with feathers and the hands bore primary feathers specialized for flight. As a matter of first, the first evidence for its existence was a single, isolated feather from the Solnhofen Formation in Germany. Shortly after its discovery TH Huxley correctly identified *Archaeopteryx* as something between a dinosaur and a modern bird. By the mid-20th C, biologists understood feather development, growth, and molt and by the end of the century various investigators using molecular techniques had shown that feathers were only distantly related to reptile scales. Feathers appeared to be an evolutionary novelty, closely related to the emergence of birds. However, there remained gaps in the fossil record, as there was no evidence of the emergence of feathers themselves. No one knew what a primitive (or basal) feather looked like, or what bird ancestor bore it.

Imagine then the excitement when small, bipedal dinosaurs turned up in China with hair-like epidermal structures that for all intents and purposes were a very simple feather. Single, unbranched, hollow filaments, very much like those found on modern birds! Here was solid fossil evidence for the origin of feathers and, even better, evidence for the dinosaur origins of birds. These specimens, plus much more, are the treasures described in "The Jehol Fossils." The bonus is the lavish production, the brilliantly reconstructions and the 270 color plates, line drawings, and inserts throughout. Everything is in high resolution and in colors very true to the actual slabs.

The Jehol Biota is in western Liaoning Province, an overnight

train trip to the northeast from Beijing. Many of the fossils discussed in the book come from beds not far from the city of Beipiao. The beds are in an area of low, rolling hills. In the late Mesozoic this was an area of lakes and moist forest, which saw increasing amounts of volcanic activity into the early Cretaceous. These were ideal conditions for preserving high quality fossils. Besides the 'feathered dinosaurs' and early birds, plants, snails, insects, shrimp, spiders, mollusks, pterosaurs, fish, amphibians, turtles, lizards and more are preserved in spectacular abundance and exquisite detail. The text, written by a team of experts, details the history and significance of the material.

One of the more amazing finds is the birds of the genus *Confuciusornis*. These birds have a beak, but no teeth, and a pygostyle, rather than a long tail, both features found in *Archaeopteryx*. The skeleton shows that they were strong flyers. They were also present in large numbers; over 1000 specimens have been recovered. Most of the specimens have complete plumages and the males have elongated central tail feathers, evidence of early sexual dimorphism.

I found the chapters on dinosaurs and birds remarkable. There are some places where there may be disagreement with the author on points of interpretation, but the presentation of the material and its significance is outstanding. The reconstruction and composite picture are imaginative and are themselves worthy of extensive study. They bring to life the material preserved in the stone. Minor problems are the lack of an index, some repetition of background material in various chapters (hard to avoid in a multi-authored volume), and a scattering of inadequate translations, clumsy sentences and teleological thinking. Still, this is the very best way to view and enjoy an absolutely remarkable example of ancient biodiversity and evolution.

For two recent books see:

Bones of Contention: *The Archaeopteryx Scandals*. Paul Chambers. 2002. xiv+270 pgs. John Murray, London (Murray was also the publisher of Darwin's books.)

Taking Flight. *Archaeopteryx and the Origin of Bird Flight*. Pat Shipman. 1998. 336 pgs. Simon & Schuster, New York.

DIARY OF A BIRDING GEEK:

Black Brant, *Branta bernicla nigricans*, in Connecticut

By Mark Szantyr

For a state with a coast line, Connecticut offers its birders very few good looks at Brant, *Branta bernicla hrota*. While they can number in the thousands along the shores of Long Island Sound and in the major river estuaries, most of the looks we get are of birds bobbing in the waves or feeding against the various rock jetties that punctuate the shore. Sometimes we see large skeins migrating high overhead.



Fig. 1 A typical adult Brant, *B. b. hrota*

Still, I have been looking for a Black Brant for years, hoping against all odds to see one of these western birds mixed in the flocks. It hasn't been easy.

On 10 April 2009, Nick Bonomo, doing the work of an active and skilled field birder, located an adult Black Brant off the coast of Short Beach in Stratford, Fairfield County. This bird was with a thousand or so Brant that had been frequenting the jetties and mud flats at the mouth of the Housatonic

River. The weather was deteriorating when he found it late in the day, and the light was fading fast. The next day was even worse with a mixture of sleet and cold rain making observation a chore at best. I relocated the bird on 11 April 2009 in the same general area Nick found it the day before. It was with a few hundred Brant about 300 yards offshore. I managed a few poor digiscoped images before the bird flew around into the mouth of the river and eventually reappeared on the sandbars off of Milford Point, New Haven County.



Fig. 2 Black Brant, *B. b. nigricans*, 11 April 2009 Stratford

This bird was a typical Black Brant, showing the bold white collar that nearly encircled the neck, unlike the small broken collar of eastern Brant. On the water, it showed a bright white area in the rear flanks that contrasted with a very dark back and chest.

Out of the water, the dark, nearly blackish neck joined the dark breast, creating an all-dark look to the front of the bird. This darkness continued down under the bird between its legs and to the lower belly, stopping at the white undertail area. The Black Brant seemed more robust than the other Brant present.



Fig. 3 Black Brant, left, with Brant, 11 April 2009 Stratford



Fig. 4 Black Brant in Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy collection, Litchfield

Looking back through my records I found a very poor image of a brant I digiscoped off of Shippan Point, Stamford, Fairfield County, on 17 March 2003. This bird was tentatively identified as Gray-bellied Brant, *Branta bernicla* ?, a form whose range includes the high arctic and Melville Island that winters in Puget Sound. This form is not fully understood. It may be a fourth subspecies of Brant (along with Brant *B. b.*

hrota, Black Brant *B. b. nigricans* and Dark-bellied Brant *B. b. bernicla*) or part of a hybrid population between Black Brant and Brant. There are a few recent records from Long Island that may pertain to Gray-bellied Brant. (See www.oceanwanderers.com for a discussion of Brant subspecies identification and of Gray-bellied Brant)



Fig. 5 Possible Gray-bellied Brant, *B. bernicla* (?), Stamford, 17 March 2003.

While similar to Black Brant, this bird showed more contrast between the breast and the black neck stocking and showed a smaller white patch at the sides of the neck and not the nearly complete bold collar of Black Brant. The white at the rear flanks was not as crisp as appears on Black Brant. The bird was significantly darker below than should be shown by eastern Brant, *hrota*.

All photos are by Mark Szantyr.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter, Dec. 1 2008 through Feb. 28 2009

By Greg Hanisek

It was the Year of the Pine Siskin. After a massive fall flight best observed at the state's hawk watches, a second wave of the irruption brought unprecedented numbers to feeders throughout the state. The significant flight of White-winged Crossbills was dwarfed by the tidal wave of siskins. Rough-legged Hawks also arrived in numbers, and the fall trove of late warblers at East Shore Park in New Haven spilled over into December. Read about these events and more in the following seasonal summary:

Eleven reports of **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season included a family group of five, three of them juveniles, at a small pond in Willimantic on Feb. 28 (BH). The Mackenzie Reservoir area in Wallingford proved again to be a goose hotspot, with a Greater White-fronted and up to four **Cackling Geese** present in December (JS), along with a **Barnacle Goose** that extended its November stay until at least Dec 10 (m.ob.). Single Cackling Geese were in Newtown until at least Dec. 16 (RBa), in Orange on Dec. 18-19 (NB), on the Connecticut River at Enfield on Feb. 21 (PCi) and at Wooster Park Pond, Stratford, on Feb. 28 (FM et al.).

Eurasian Wigeon produced a fairly standard seasonal total of four. A **Eurasian Teal** was at Bruce Pond in Stratford on Jan. 30- Feb. 3 (FM et al.). The best flock of Canvasbacks was 115 at Smith Cove, Waterford, on Feb. 1 (HG). Two Redheads were at Captain's Cove, Bridgeport, on Feb. 17 (DV, FM), along with 200 Lesser Scaup (CB). Hidden Lake in Ridgefield held a good late count of 150 Ring-necked Ducks on Dec. 15 (TGr). A female **King Eider** appeared Dec. 22 at Shippan Point, Stamford (PDU, FG), and a first-winter male settled in for more than a month there beginning Jan. 7 (PDU). A female Common Eider was at Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford,



Frank Mantlik photo
*The season's only Eurasian Teal was found at Bruce Pond,
Stratford.*



Tom Cruickshanks photo
This Eurasian Goldfinch visited a feeder in Windsor in Mid-January.

on Dec. 18 and remained into January (NB et al.). White-winged Scoters occurred in unusual numbers in Long Island Sound. A boat survey of the Norwalk Islands on Dec. 27 yielded 1,136 (LF). A flock estimated at 2,600 to 3,000 assembled off Stratford Point in late January and remained into late February, when numbers built to as high as 5,000 (TL, FM et al.). Two were inland at Twin Lakes, Salisbury, on Dec. 14 (FB).

Single Long-tailed Ducks were inland at Barkhamsted Reservoir on Dec. 3 (DRo) and at Candlewood Lake, Danbury, on Dec. 10 (WD); the boat survey of the Norwalk Islands recorded 847 on Dec. 27 (LF). Another survey of the islands produced 1,000 C. Goldeneyes on Feb. 2 (LF). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at Shippan Point, Stamford, on Dec. 19 (PDu); perhaps the same female was at Greenwich Point on Jan. 15 (SMr et al.). A drake was found Jan. 4 at Groton Long Point (GW) and presumably the same bird appeared Jan. 12 at Mason's I., Mystic (GH et al.). A male that appeared Jan. 19-Feb. 5 off Brazos Road, East Haven, may also have been this individual

(BA). Surely different was a male on the Connecticut River in Enfield on Feb. 2 (RT). Bantam Lake in Litchfield held 120 Hooded Mergansers on Dec. 1 (DRo), and more than 200 were on the Mystic River in Stonington on Dec. 28 (BH). Bantam Lake held an unusually high inland count of six Red-breasted Mergansers on Dec. 2 (DRo).

Of special interest was a group of four Ruffed Grouse that wintered in Watertown. The observer believed them to be an adult female and offspring from a 2008 brood (RN). There were just three other reports of single birds. A Red-throated Loon was at Barkhamsted Reservoir on Dec. 3 (DRo). A Pied-billed Grebe was unusual for both time and place Jan. 9 on the Farmington R. in New Hartford (RBl). Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford held a Horned Grebe on Dec. 7 (PCi). A Red-necked Grebe was in Niantic Bay, Waterford, on Jan. 14 and remained into February (DP); one was at Ender's Island on Jan. 28 (GW). It's interesting that the best place for Great Cormorant is not on Long Island Sound but a few miles up the Connecticut River, mainly

from Essex to Chester. The Connecticut River Museum eagle boat tour out of Essex logged c. 70 on Feb. 7 (BY).

At least one American Bittern was a conspicuous winterer at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison (hereafter HBSP). The latest Great Egret was in Stratford, on Jan. 6 (FM). An immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was late Dec. 28 in Stratford (RN). A flock of 21 Black Vultures on Jan. 6 in Norwalk was a good count for lower Fairfield County (PH). An Osprey lingered to at least Dec. 25 on the Lieutenant River in Old Lyme (HG). A dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, extremely rare in Connecticut, was found in Wallingford on Feb. 21 (DC). It was seen a few more times through the end of the period (CF et al.). A heavy movement of Rough-legged Hawks brought a flurry of reports on a Dec. 22 cold front (NB et al.). They were widespread thereafter with at least 50 reports for the season. An immature Golden Eagle was a fly-over on Jan. 3 in Lakeville (DMi), an adult was over I-95 in Madison on Jan. 10 (JMe), one was in Canaan on Jan. 17 (JWa) and an adult

was over Norwich on Feb. 25 (DP). American Kestrels remained very scarce, with just five reports for the season, compared to 10 reports of Merlins.

Two Virginia Rails were in Waterford as late as Jan. 6 (CC). Semipalmated Plovers stayed amazingly late; with two present at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, to Jan. 13 and one last seen Jan. 19 (BBa, BV et al.). Two lingered in the same area to Dec. 23, 2007. On Dec. 11 Long Beach, Stratford, held 600 Sanderlings and 120 Dunlin (FM). An American Woodcock on Dec. 27 along the Lieutenant River in Old Lyme may have been attempting to winter (HG). One was trying even harder Jan. 6 in Roosevelt Forest, Stratford (CB).

Unusual for time and place were five Laughing Gulls at the Windsor-Bloomfield landfill on Dec. 3 (FG). A single Bonaparte's Gull made a brief and probably nervous stop among the big guys there on Dec. 1 (JWa). A **Black-headed Gull** wintered at East Shore Park, New Haven (TD et al.). An adult **Thayer's Gull** was at



Steve Morytko photo

This Dovekie was picked up on Dec 21 after being grounded in Lebanon.

Bloomfield-Windsor landfill on Dec. 12 (NB), followed by different first-cycle birds there on Dec. 23 (NB, JHo, JS) and February 20 (PCo). During this time frame there were two other reports of first-cycle birds, possibly one or both of these, from the landfill and the nearby Connecticut River (PCi). After the state's first record of **Slaty-backed Gull** (a fourth cycle/adult) in late November at Bloomfield-Windsor landfill, another bird (second or third cycle) was found there on Feb. 9 (PDu et al.). It was seen by numerous observers and was well-photographed (FM et al.). It was present to at least Feb. 13. What appeared to be the same bird

turned up along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts later in the month (JS). The season produced at least 15 reports of Iceland Gulls, eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls and an above average 10 Glaucous Gulls, including one far up the Housatonic River in New Milford on Dec. 20 (GH).

Dovekies had not made a splash in decades, so the events of Dec. 21-22 amounted to a major fight. On Dec. 21, two were reported swimming just off the beach at Long Beach, Stratford (JHi, SHi) and one was picked up alive inland in Lebanon (fide SMO). Then three were reported flying past

Compo Beach, Westport, on Dec 22 (DRa). In addition, two were seen from the Fisher's Island ferry on the New London CBC on Jan. 3 (fide BD). Single **Razorbills** were at Ender's I., Mystic, on Dec. 26 (NB) and Jan. 1 (JBa) and at Shippan Point, Stamford, on Jan. 7 (PDu). Two were seen from the Fisher's Island ferry on Jan. 10 (PR et al.) and four from the ferry on Feb. 28 (GW, PR). The long-staying **White-winged Dove** reappeared at a Branford feeder on Dec. 17 and was seen sporadically thereafter (DLo). Partygoers in Cheshire greeted the New Year by listening to an

Eastern Screech-Owl at 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1 (RDo). Repeated observations of Snowy Owls, most of them between Stratford and Fairfield, may have involved as many as eight different birds (m.ob.) There were no confirmed inland reports. It was a good season for Short-eared Owls, with about a dozen reports.

The fall season's **Calliope Hummingbird**, the state's second, remained at a Simsbury feeder to at least Dec. 17 (fide JK). An Eastern Phoebe made it until at least mid-January in Old Lyme (HG). A late flurry of Northern Shrikes produced singles in Norfolk on Feb. 18 (SHa),



Meredith Sampson photo
This Varied Thrush visited the Meinhold feeder in Wilton on Dec. 9-10.

in Watertown on Feb. 23 into March (GH et al.), and at Wyndham Land Trust in Pomfret on Feb. 25 (RDi). There was also one on the Barkhamsted CBC on Dec. 27 (DTi). A late-January flock of Horned Larks in Mansfield numbered at least 480 (CEI). A flock of 15 **Cave Swallows** that spent late November at the sewage treatment plant adjacent to East Shore Park, New Haven, lingered into December. At least 12 were present on Dec. 3, at least seven on Dec. 5 and at least four on Dec. 15 (m.ob.). The season's only House Wrens were on the Stratford-Milford CBC on Dec. 28 (fide SMA) and the New London CBC on Jan. 3 (fide BD). At least one Marsh Wren was present as late as Jan. 19 at Proto Drive, East Haven (SBr). A **Varied Thrush** visited a feeder in Wilton Dec. 9-10 (JMn).

Orange-crowned Warblers were at East Shore Park, New Haven, on Dec. 1 (DMo), in Bridgeport on Dec. 22 (TGr), on the Greenwich-Stamford CBC Dec. 14 (BO) and two on Stratford-Milford CBC. The fall array of warblers in the East Shore Park microclimate carried over into De-

ember, with the following late dates recorded: Tennessee Warbler - Dec. 13 (JBa); Nashville Warbler - Dec. 13 (JBa); Pine Warbler - Dec. 7 (GH); Blackpoll Warbler - Dec. 1 (JMh); and Black-and-White Warbler - Dec. 7 (GH). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** wintered at a feeder in Greenwich (BO, m.ob.). A Wilson's Warbler visited a yard in Milford on Dec. 14 (BPe). The usual complement of wintering Yellow-breasted Chats numbered seven for the season, including three on the New London CBC.

Winter Chipping Sparrows have been on the increase for several years, with at least eight reported this season. One of Stratford Point's two fall-season **Clay-colored Sparrows** wintered (TL, BW et al.), and one was found in New Milford on Dec. 20 (GH). Greenwich-Stamford CBC also logged one. A Lincoln's Sparrow, rare in winter, was found at a feeder in Watertown on Feb. 4 and was seen a few times thereafter (GH et al.). The season's only **Dickcissel** was at HBSF on Dec. 12 (EH). Up to three Eastern Meadowlarks were at Proto Drive, East Haven, in January (SBr), and one lin-

gered at Stratford Point (TL). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** visited an Old Lyme feeder on Feb. 2 (fide HG). The best counts of Rusty Blackbird were 50 each on Feb. 15 & 23 in a Hamden yard (C&JZ). A spectacular flock of c 700,000 Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds rolled through the Station 43 area on Feb. 17 (PCi). The winter Boat-tailed Grackle roost at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, held 36 birds on Jan. 6 (FM).

White-winged Crossbills were widespread in primarily small flocks. The largest were c 50 at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport (RBa), and c. 40 at Greenwich Point (SBe), both on Jan. 15, and 30 at Bent of the River Audubon, Southbury, on Jan. 30 (PCo et al.). Unexpected in a season dominated by the other crossbill species, c 50 Red Crossbills were feeding in larches in East Lyme on Jan. 20 (DWi). A flock of nine was at White Memorial in Litchfield on Feb. 1 (DMo). The Pine Siskin invasion is best described in numbers: 700 on the Barkhamsted CBC on Dec. 27 (DTi); backyard

counts of up to 100 routine from late December onward; up to 350 at a Barkhamsted feeder on Jan. 31 (FZ); at least 350 in a Coventry yard on Jan. 24 (DMo); 300 in a Harwinton yard but 600 total in the immediate neighborhood on Feb. 3 (PCa); and 325 in a Hamden yard on Feb. 16 (JZ). Common Redpolls occurred in a widespread moderate flight. The only triple digit flock reported was c 100 on Jan. 25 in Norfolk (ADe). In addition to a few scattered individuals, a flock of 13 Evening Grosbeaks visited a Guilford feeder on Jan. 7 (LG) and 15 paid a brief visit to a Hamden yard on Feb. 1 (J&CZ).

Exotics -A female Mandarin Duck was on a pond in Shelton on Jan. 8 (DV). A Chukar, a non-native gamebird released at times by gun clubs, was in Chester Dec 14 (TR). A Black-hooded Parakeet was in Ansonia Dec. 14 (fide RH). A Eurasian Goldfinch was first seen at a Windsor feeder on Jan. 18 and was photographed on Jan. 21 (TC).

Observers - Mark Aronson, Phil Asprelli, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade (RBa), Dave Babington, Jim Bair (JBa), Bill Banks (BBa), Tom Baptist, Charlie Barnard, Scott Baron (SBa), Aaron Barriger, John Barriger (JBr), Mark Barriger (MBA), Fred Baumgarten, Larry Bauscher, Steve Beal (SBe), Joe Bear (JBe), Richard Becker (RBe) Ray Belding (RBl), Brian Bielfelt (BBl), Bob Bitondi (BBi), Nick Bonomo, Steve Broker (SBr), Milan Bull (MBu), Kevin Burgio, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Jan Collins, Patrick Comins (PCo), Tom Cruickshanks, Annette Cunniffe, Neil Currie, Peter DeGennaro (PDn), Ayreslea Denny (ADe), Bob Dewire, Mardi Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Carole Donagher, Turk Duddy, Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Walt Duncan, Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Dennis Elphick, John Eykelhoff, Karen Fiske, Larry Flynn, Corrie Folsom, Frank Gallo, Shari Gaurino, Ted Gilman (TGi), Hank Golet, Tina Green (TGr), Lorraine Gunderson, Ed Hagen, Tony Hager, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHn), Shelley Harms (SHa), Roy Harvey, Phil Henson, Jim Hiatt (JHi), Sharon Hiatt (SHi), Brian Hiller, Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway (THo), Tom Hook (THk), Julian Hough (JHo), Mark Jankura,

John Johnson, Kevin Jensen (KJe), Kris Johnson (KJo), Jay Kaplan, Brian Kleinman, Cindy Kobak, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Scott Kruitbosch (SKr), Twan Leenders, Dave Lawton (DLa), Carol Lemmon (CLE), Gary Lemmon (GL), Donna Lorello (DLo), Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Frank Mantlik, Shaun Martin (SMr), John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo (SMA), Janet Mehmel (JMH), Jim Meinhold (JMn), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Don Mitchell (DMi), Judy Moore (JMo), Marty Moore, Don Morgan (DMo), Steve Morytko (SMo), Russ Naylor, Chris Nevins, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, John Ogren (JOg), Scott Olmstead, John Oshlick (JOs), Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier, Beverly Perkins (BPe), Bev Propen (BPr), Dave Provencher, Darryl Rathbun (DRa), EJ Raynor, Tom Rhindress, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dean Rupp (DRu), Phil Rusch, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Wilford Schultz, James P. Smith, Steve Spector, Mark Szantyr (MSz), Peary Stafford, Rollin Tebbetts, Luke Tiller (LTi), Dave Tripp Jr. (DTi), Diane Tucker (DTu), Louise Tucker (LTu), Benjamin Van Doren, Dennis Varza, Dorothy Wadlow (DWa), John Wagenblatt (JWa), Brian Webster, Jack Wells (JWe), Danny Williams (DWi), Glenn Williams, Bill Yule, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmunt.

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION



*Paul Fusco photo
A Ring-billed Gull at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison on
23 June 2009, showing the wing tag used in the Massachusetts study.*

The Source and Travels of Wing-tagged Gulls

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR) has been tagging winter gulls in the area of the Wachusett and Quabbin reservoirs to better understand the wintering gull population in those areas. Part of that program is to attach brightly colored numbered tags to the wings. A dumbbell-shaped tag is folded over the leading edge of the wing, and a small hole is punched through the patagium and tag, just behind the wing chord. This is similar to getting an ear pierced. Then two washers and a rivet make the attachment.

The researchers asked anyone sighting these tags, including the Connecticut birding community, to report the tag color and number along with the location and date of the sighting. I reported several sightings to them, some taken from post-

ings to CTBirds and others made by myself or others when I was present. For each report I received a response with data on when and where the bird was tagged and any earlier sightings.

Even among the few tags I have information on (listed below), there are points of interest. All involved Ring-billed Gulls.

Tag A47: attached 3 Oct 2008 in Worcester, Mass., sighted in Oxford on 14 Dec 2008 (72 days later), and then four more times in Derby over the next two months (12 Jan 2009, 2, 18 and 28 Feb).

Tag A96: attached 30 Dec 2008 in Palmer, Mass., sighted in Old Lyme on 5 Jan 2009 (7 days later) and West Haven on 20 Mar (74 days).

Tag A100: attached 5 Nov 2008 in Worcester, Mass., sighted in Millbury, Mass., on 25 Nov, Worcester, Mass., on 1 Dec, and finally in Bridgeport on 6 Apr 2009 (152 days).

Tag A117: attached 26 Feb 2009 at the Turners Falls dam in Turners Falls, Mass., sighted 3 & 18 Mar still at the dam, then in West Haven on 20 Mar. After three reports over 20 days in the same place, it moved approximately 96 miles to be seen in Connecticut just two days later. This is the most extraordinary in the group.

Tag A122: attached 17 Nov 2008 in Westborough, Mass., sighted in Northborough, Mass., on 15 & 28 Dec, Framingham, Mass., on 10 Jan 2009, and finally in Branford on 3 Mar (52 days).

Tag A133: attached 23 Mar 2009 in Springfield, Mass., sighted 30 Mar in Bridgeport (7 days).

Tag A203: attached 10 Mar 2009 in Worcester, Mass., sighted in Madison on 16 Mar 2009 (6 days), and twice in Stratford and Milford on 30 Mar (14 days).

Tag A209: attached 10 Mar 2009 in Westborough, Mass., sighted in West Haven on 20 Mar (10 days).

In addition, Paul Cianfaglione saw a first-cycle Herring Gull with Tag K5 on 11 Feb 2008 at Riverside Park in Hartford. It was tagged two days earlier at a Kmart parking lot in Holyoke, Mass.

The MA DCR web site, <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/water-Supply/watershed/study/index.htm> has more about the banding program. If you have sightings that you have not yet reported you can send them to Ken.Mackenzie@state.ma.us and Dan.Clark@state.ma.us.

Roy Harvey



Mark Szantyr photo

A Mysterious Goose

This western Greylag Goose appeared around Thanksgiving 2008 at Mackenzie Reservoir, Wallingford. A free-flying wild-type bird, it showed the sleek form and agile, free-flying maneuvers that easily separated it from the heavy, dumpy domestic Greylags present in the area. The unbanded bird, found at a spot with a history of attracting wild geese from Greenland, is a candidate for a wild vagrant, but at present there is only one accepted record of this species for North America, an individual that landed on an oil rig off Atlantic Canada. The Avian Records Committee of Connecticut is in the process of assembling as much information as possible about the status of this species in Greenland and Iceland, as well as in captivity. It's possible that the presence or absence of future North American records may ultimately provide the best answer to this bird's status.

More On Bald Eagle Whirling Behavior

In the January 2009 Connecticut Warbler, Vol. 29 No. 1, Donald A. Hopkins et al. wrote an article on the raptor behavior called "whirling," in which two members of the same species, such as Bald Eagles or Red-tailed Hawks, lock talons in mid-air and tumble before disengaging.

Hopkins, who had been watching a Bald eagle nest north of Hartford with other observers in winter-spring 2008-09, submitted the following observation by Steven M. Ross:

"On March 4, 2009, at approximately 2:45 p.m., I along with my coworker Greg Rose were observing an eagle's nest in the north end of Hartford. There were three eagles circling above the river just east of the nest. At this time the female eagle was returning to the nest coming in from the south by the landfill. As soon as she landed on the nest the male dove out of the nest and flew right at the three other eagles. He positioned himself in the middle of three. Two eagles were above

him and were circling but moving east. The eagle below him was still circling but moving west toward the nest. The male eagle dove into the eagle and locked talons and began spinning toward the ground. I thought they hit the ground, but they didn't. The male flew to a tree and the other flew to the east."

Hopkins said, "The sighting supports our contention that whirling is not pair bonding but aggressive behavior by eagles defending their nesting territory.

Shortly after reading the original Hopkins et al. article, Greg Hanisek made the following observation: On April 5, 2009, I was birding at Long Meadow Pond in Middlebury when I heard overhead screams of Red-tailed Hawks. I looked up and saw four birds in the air in fairly close proximity. Suddenly, two of them engaged talons and did one full whirl before disengaging. The tenor of the interaction among four birds led me to believe these were two pairs engaged in an aggressive encounter.

NEMESIS BIRDS - REDUX

By Glenn Williams

Nemesis birds come in many varieties and circumstances. I will never forget the exhilaration from fantastic looks at a Black-backed Woodpecker, my all-time, number one nemesis bird. But there are always more. Some you eventually see, some still await. Some are very rare birds, but you paid penance with long, fruitless vigils at sites. Some were just missed on several occasions. Others are not particularly difficult to see, but somehow you never do.

When I was a novice birder, I had spent much time going to locations where chats and saw-whet owls were reported without even a hint of the target bird. I wondered if I would ever see these elusive species. I hadn't yet known that saw-whets were notorious for being invisible and chats, despite their orange-yellow chests, were expert at skulking and disappearing into thickets. I finally saw my life Yellow-breasted Chat in Massachusetts, over 100 miles from my home. The bird was coming to orange halves in a private yard during mid-winter. A stake-out with a friend got me acceptable looks.

My first Northern Saw-whet Owl was a different experience entirely. I had not yet learned the art of taping and recognizing proper habitat. I was among a line of five walking a wooded trail during my third or fourth Christmas count. The diminutive owl was at face level in a bare cedar to the right of the path. It was our long-shot target at the end of a long day. I conceitedly admit that there is nothing like finding your own life bird. I had spent much time looking under pine trees to reach that moment. About a hundred Christmas Count saw-whets later, it is the only roosting saw-whet that I have seen without aid of scolding passerines.

Despite a respectable regional list and a few good finds to my credit, I have seen only two Clay-colored Sparrows. This is

an annual bird in every New England state and most year-listers get one each year. My only birds were over winterers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. They were guarantees for anyone who wanted to see them. For some reason, I waited a long time before pursuing either bird. I do not have one in my home state of Connecticut. It seems impossible. Do I go blind every fall?

Another interesting species that I have finally seen is the Varied Thrush, a rare but semi-regular vagrant to New England. Over the years, I staked out several feeders, including one in a trailer park in southern New Hampshire. I drove many miles to Quabbin Reservoir in central Massachusetts with my oldest daughter in midwinter. After four hours, we had to return home. I read an Internet post the next day that revealed that the bird was seen as we were leaving the parking lot. I remember seeing the man climbing over plowed piles of snow to where he reported it from.

On a New Year's Eve, my wife and I decided to do a birding sweep across southern New Hampshire to try for a number of interesting birds that had been reported. We saw our life Hoary Redpoll in Keene (several actually) before heading east to look for a Varied Thrush coming to a backyard feeder. The yard was not visible from the road but the homeowners were very amenable to letting people see it. As we pulled up to the mouth of the driveway, my wife refused to take part in disturbing someone's New Year's Eve. The possibility of seeing this nemesis bird that I had spent many hours searching for propelled me to inconvenience not only the homeowners, but my wife who remained steadfast in the car. I knocked, explained my intentions, and asked if I could stand in their yard. They insisted that I come in and watch from their kitchen. They went out and put more seed down, explained the bird's habits (it had been seen that morning), and offered me food and drink. I waited self-consciously while the friendly couple went about their business with a stranger in their house on the last day of the year. I just wanted to see the bird, express my gratitude, and leave them alone. They showed me pictures and told me about all of the

people that had been to their house. They also told of people who had waited and finally left without luck, only to have the bird appear right after their departure. This only fueled my desire to stick it out, hoping my wife was taking a nap or had found something good on the radio to pass the time. After almost two hours, I could not inconvenience anyone any longer. I left after expressing my thanks and offering a Happy New Year. My wife was less angry than I expected. Every birder should be blessed with a spouse as understanding as mine.

On Valentine's Day of the new year, I headed to the Storrs area of Connecticut to chase Bohemian Waxwings by myself. No luck, but I was halfway to Quabbin from my house so I decided to keep going and give my nemesis one more shot, as it was still being reported. I drove into the same large parking lot where I had missed the bird by minutes previously and parked in front of where the bird was being regularly seen. I noticed a car parked along the woods on the other side with the driver peering with binoculars into the trees. I decided to drive over and investigate. The birder motioned and I crept over to his window.

"It's right there." He pointed but I could not see anything. Finally I found the Varied Thrush perched motionless. I got great looks. The bird didn't move, even when the other birder drove off. After studying the bird for a long time, it flew deeper into the woods and disappeared. I doubt that I would have found it on my own.

The strange connection of Red Sox moments and birds continued in my life, as that night at a Valentine's Day party, I found out that the hated Yankees had traded for Alex Rodriguez, stealing him from under the Red Sox' noses. It does not sound like a big deal now, but it was devastating hot stove news at the time. Thank goodness for the Varied Thrush.

It seems a little vain to consider the very rare Boreal Owl to be a nemesis bird, but I do. I was a day late for a “one day wonder” at Hammonasset Beach State Park on my first chase for this rarity. On three separate occasions, I drove to Boston to see a “guaranteed” Boreal Owl without luck. The bird spent the entire winter in the city. The first time that I was going to make the long drive to Boston from my Connecticut home, it began to snow, so my wife and I decided against it. It was roosting in the reported spot that day. On our first trip to the location a week later, a resident of the apartment building showed me the empty roost outside his entry, replete with whitewash and a few feathers. No bird. It was seen the day before and the day after. Several years later, a Boreal Owl was being seen in New York’s Central Park. A friend was going to see it with his family, led by his brother-in-law who knew the city well. I promised my family that I would spend the weekend with them after the long Christmas Count season and they did not feel like driving to the city. Of course, the bird was seen. Someday I will enjoy getting this bird. I am rooting for one on a Christmas bird count while doing one of my owl routes. A fellow can dream, can’t he?

By the spring of 2007, I had seen seven skuas. Neither of the reasonably possible New England species was on my life list. Seven skua sp. – I have enjoyed each one and am sure that the tally is one Great and six South Polar. I cannot be 100% positive on any of them. Five were on one August pelagic trip in Massachusetts waters on a boat out of Galilee, Rhode Island. One flew over the boat, but with the sun behind it. Two others were backlit and a little further away. One skua was not picked up until it was flying directly away from the stern of the boat. I watched it, waiting for it to circle back, but it was moving without a hint of deflection. Amazingly, it was joined in the same binocular view by a larger, browner skua. Both nemesis species were in the same binocular view, but not enough evidence was seen to claim a positive identification for either. I am glad to say that two South Polar Skuas put on a great show on a pelagic trip to Cox’s Ledge in May of 2007 and I had exciting looks at a Great Skua in late Sep-

tember of the same year while on the Bay of Fundy. Sometimes you pay your dues and actually reap the dividends.

I was on another spring Rhode Island pelagic, a cod boat trip, when a small passerine was trying to land on the lower deck. A fisherman reached out to grab it. The bird dipped back out over the ocean and then began to circle the boat. I got a view looking down at the bird as we all raced around the upper deck of the fishing boat. I noticed that it was uniformly greenish yellow from above and short-tailed. Without thinking, I yelled "Oporornis." The bird continued to circle and almost flew into a birder on the starboard side before heading toward the bow. I raced to the front, temporarily held up by the captain on the narrow deck to the right of the wheel house, before getting a side view. I saw a dark eye with black behind it. I contemplated immature or female Hooded Warbler or Common Yellowthroat. The bird turned away and headed toward a nearby trawler, dipping dangerously close to the waves. It probably never made it. Several of us exchanged ideas before the birder who had the bird fly right at him yelled "It was a Kentucky Warbler."

Of course it was, but I couldn't be 100% sure myself. I called Oporornis, but dismissed it as wishful thinking. It was definitely not a Common Yellowthroat, and a Hooded Warbler would have shown white in the tail. I really couldn't claim a life bird under those circumstances. I blew a life Kentucky Warbler on a pelagic trip. That would have been something. Ironically, I had been discussing Kentucky Warbler minutes before its appearance on the pelagic. I lamented that it was a long overdue nemesis, relating several fruitless chases from the past. I joked that it was my target bird for the day. How could I not have been prepared under those circumstances, despite the unlikelihood? Thankfully, I got great looks at a singing male the next spring – from land.

I have chased and missed White Ibis, a pretty rare New England bird, several times. I was leaving work one afternoon hopefully to see one discovered not far from my house. My boss stopped me on the way out and asked if we could meet

with some people spontaneously. I'm a high school teacher. Sparing details, I can only say - disruptive student, angry parents in denial. It was a painful and pointless hour wasted. I missed the bird by ten minutes. After waiting for an hour and a half, I had to return to work for an evening obligation. The bird flew by 15 minutes after I left. After several other misses, I'll get one soon, says this angry birder in denial.

I have made only one trip out west during my birding life, to Southern California. I was to be the best man in a wedding, but first thing first. I heavily birded San Diego, the mountains, the desert, and the Salton Sea. I got 75 life birds on that trip. My number one target bird was the Greater Roadrunner. I was told that if I spent enough time in the desert, I would see one. I ran into a British birder at Yaqui Well who said one was hanging around her hotel. Why stake out a hotel when there were so many birds to see in the desert, plus I was going to see one eventually. I boarded the plane to head back to Connecticut with many great memories and one regret. I had seen several coyotes, but sans ACME products or roadrunners. Exhausted from getting up at four in the morning for a week and then staying up late with non-birding friends, I decided to purchase headphones and relax to music and a movie. After plugging in the headphones, I went through the channels to find some desirable songs. To my amazement, the rock channel was playing a familiar song by Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers – a song I had never heard outside of my own album or college radio. The song? It was "Roadrunner", of course.

Nemesis birds have a way of taunting you in so many unexpected ways.

ADULT BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS, *TRYNGITES SUBRUFICOLLIS*, IN CONNECTICUT

By Mark S. Szantyr



Figure 1 Adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Rocky Hill, Hartford Co., CT. 8 September 2007.

On 8 September 2007, I ventured out to the Rocky Hill meadows. These meadows, a series of sod fields near to the Connecticut River, were drawing a good number of less-common shorebirds. Buff-breasted Sandpiper, *Tryngites subruficollis*, Baird's Sandpiper, *Calidris bairdii*, and American Golden Plover, *Pluvialis dominica*, had been noted there during the previous week. Motivated by the opportunity to add three birds to my Hartford County list and with hope of getting a few photos, I made my way there and arrived at about 0900 hrs. Several birders were already on site and quickly pointed out my three target species as I set up my scope. I made an

attempt to count the individuals of each species present, and then set to the task of studying the birds. I half-heartedly mentioned that one of the Buff-breasts looked different than the others. To my eye, it did not show the neatly scalloped dorsal aspect typical of juvenile Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Overall, it seemed less richly colored than the other birds present. Luckily, it was also the closest of the birds. It gradually made its way to the far limit of where I would



Figure 2 Adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper, same as above.

attempt photographs. The sun was strong and harsh and there was a copious amount of dust in the air from both passing vehicles and the farm equipment working the sod field. The bird worked marginally closer and offered good views in many postures. It raised its wings at a passing Killdeer and I was able to capture an image of the open under-wing.

At home, I studied my images and confirmed my belief that this was, in fact, an adult-plumaged Buff-breasted Sandpiper, only the second I have ever confidently identified in this plumage.

Buff-breasted Sandpipers nest in the high Arctic and migrate predominantly through the middle of the country. In the fall, we occasionally get some of these birds passing through Connecticut. The vast majority of them are in juvenal plumage,

showing crisp white edging to the uniform, rather rounded, mantle feathers.



Figure 3 Juvenal plumaged Buff-Breasted Sandpiper at Rocky Hill, Hartford Co., CT on 8 September 2007, photo by Walt Duncan.

The shape of these feathers and the neat edging cause these birds to have a very scalloped appearance dorsally. Adult birds show feathers of mixed age, often showing the adult feathers with buffy not white edging and with some of the scapulars being elongated and pointed. The bird at Rocky Hill showed mixed age mantle feathers. This lack of clean and uniform feathering tended to make this bird appear marginally paler than the others in the flock, especially at the great distance from which we were observing them.

The adult bird at Rocky Hill also showed some scapulars that

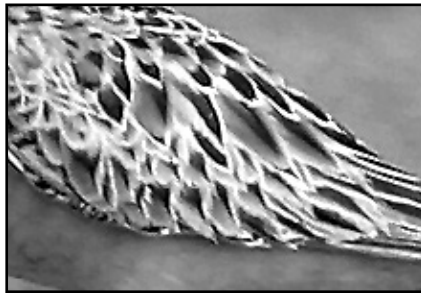


Figure 4 Detail of scapulars of adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper showing mixed age and long, pointed adult scapulars.

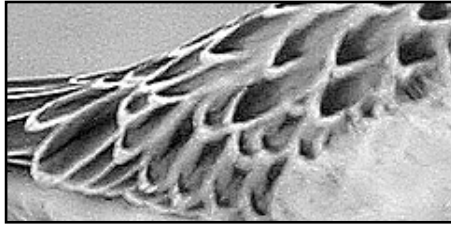


Figure 5 Detail of scapulars of juvenal-plumaged Buff-breasted Sandpiper showing short, rounded scapulars of a uniform age.

were quite a bit longer than the newer feathers and these feathers were distinctly more pointed than the other white-edged mantle feathering.



Figure 6 Same adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper, showing adult under-wing pattern.

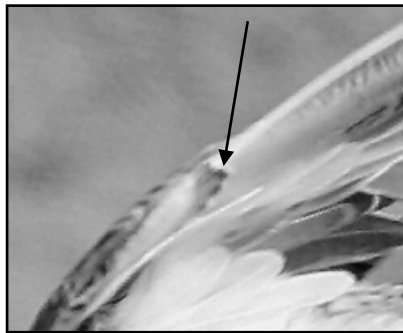


Figure 7 Detail of above. Arrow indicates the crisp black spots that form the dark under-wing comma.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

It's May in central Connecticut and feeding on the path in front of us is an obvious *Catharus* thrush. Hmmmm... the choices would be Swainson's, Veery, Hermit, Gray-cheeked and possibly Bicknell's. Since the latter is virtually impossible to separate from Gray-cheeked under normal field conditions (let alone a black and white photo!) we'll lump it under Gray-cheeked. For all intents and purposes they share the same field marks, which help separate these two taxa from their similar cousins.

The view is largely close and unobscured – a small thrush with tail raised slightly above the wings, a rather well-marked upper breast and pale area around the eye. The blackish spots reaching up to form a well-defined malar stripe are too prominent for Veery, which is more muted in these areas. The pale area around the eye is a little more obvious than we expect on Gray-cheeked, so we quickly eliminate that and move onto Swainson's and Hermit Thrush

We're doing well. Two-down, two-to go.

Swainson's has nice buff "spectacles" joined to a buff supra-loral line that often look prominent in the field and give Swainson's a rather characteristic surprised look. The upper breast spotting on all *Catharus* thrushes can be variable, but generally smaller spots are present in Veery and Gray-cheeked and are confined to the upper breast. On Swainson's



and Hermit Thrush, they tend to be slightly darker and rounded and extend further down on to the belly and upper flanks, becoming dappled gray on the flanks.

On Swainson's they are overlain, especially in young birds, with a warm buff wash. The bird has a pale eye ring, but it doesn't look particularly thick and lacks the pale adjoining line between the eye and bill. The only other *Catharus* thrush with such a prominent eye ring is Hermit Thrush. Hermits also have rather large, round blackish spots that often coalesce to form distinct spots on the upper breast. These merge to form a noticeable malar stripe. The slightly raised tail is slowly lifted and cocked as the bird feeds – another character of Hermit Thrush compared with its congeners, which do not do this to the extent Hermit Thrushes do. Hermit Thrushes are rather warm brown with buff-brown (not grayish) rear flanks and a contrasting rufous tone to their tails. Tail color is one of the better characters to identify this species.

However, under the dark forest canopy this feature can be decidedly subtler, so it pays not to rule out Hermit Thrush too quickly even if a thrush appears to lack a rufous tail. At range, Hermit Thrushes appear quite long legged and long-billed compared to other *Catharus*, and the bases to the primaries are often a paler bronze, forming a subtle contrasting "panel" on the wing.

This confiding Hermit Thrush was photographed by myself in May in East Rock Park, New Haven.

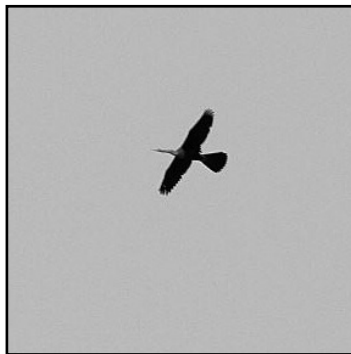


Photo Challenge No. 66

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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

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

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ABOUT OUR COVER

PINE SISKINS

Following a major fall and winter irruption, a number of Pine Siskins remained in Connecticut to breed in 2009. Our cover portrait of a siskin was done by Paul Carrier of Harwinton, a regular contributor of cover art.

THE 2009 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

By Joe Zeranski and Patrick Comins

Introduction

This year 183 count day species were recorded, similar to last year's 186 and slightly below the average of 188. No additional species were recorded in the count period. Two hundred and fifty-four species have been recorded on the SBC since its inception in 1992, including two new species added this year; 144 species have been recorded on all of the 18 counts since 1992. There were 252 observers, in 136 parties, which is slightly down from the record high level of observers (257) in 1997 for the number of participants, but matching the record from 2006 for the number of parties; 1316 party hours were tallied, with 1262.5 being daylight hours and 53.5 night hours.

There were 112,304 individual birds recorded, 110% of average, and a new all-time high. The ten most abundant species were, in descending order: **American Robin, European Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Gray Catbird, Canada Goose, House Sparrow, Red-eyed Vireo, Song Sparrow** and **Mourning Dove**. Nine out of ten of these repeat from last year's list with Red-eyed Vireos replacing American Crows (#12 this year). These are the same species that made up the top ten in 2007.

Thirteen species were represented by a single individual: **Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Little Blue Heron, Merlin, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, White-rumped Sandpiper, Common Nighthawk, Swainson's Thrush** and **Nashville Warbler**.

There were 21 species recorded on the count days that do not regularly breed in Connecticut and can be considered either late migrants or non-nesting visitors: **Brant, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed**



Mark Szantyr photo

The counts found only one Little Blue Heron.

Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Merlin, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush and Blackpoll Warbler. The underlined species are potential nesters, but in the absence of additional supporting evidence they will be considered non-nesting visitors. Additionally, **Northern Bobwhites** no longer have a self-sustaining breeding population and are reliant upon annual stocking for their persistence in the state.

The most noteworthy from this group was the **Merlin** found on the Barkhamsted count, a first SBC record. The other noteworthy records from this group include: The second SBC record of **White-winged Scoters** (5), the second SBC

record for **Red Knot**, both from Greenwich/Stamford, and the first **Horned Grebe** for the Litchfield Hills count (4th SBC record). A **Common Tern (SC)** was recorded on the Hartford Count, and while this species regularly nests along the shore, it is unusual inland. This bird almost certainly was a non-nesting visitor.

Notable misses among non-nesting species include **Semipalmated Plover**, which had been recorded in nine of the last ten years, **Greater Yellowlegs**, which had been recorded in eight of the last ten counts and **Mourning Warbler**, which had been on seven of the last ten.

Notable Nesting Species

A **Hooded Merganser** was recorded in Storrs, which isn't unusual in the western uplands, but is an uncommon species for that count. Two **Least Bitterns (T)** were recorded in Hartford and another individual was found in Litchfield Hills. While not at all uncommon on the coast, a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was notable inland on the Woodbury/Roxbury



A Hooded Merganser was a good find on the Storrs SBC.

Bruce Finnan photo

count and could represent an inland nesting or simply a wandering bird. Three **Upland Sandpipers (E)** were recorded on the Hartford Count, undoubtedly at Rentschler Field. A '**Lawrence's Warbler**' was recorded in Greenwich/Stamford and a '**Brewster's Warbler**' in Hartford. Woodbury/Roxbury's **Nashville Warbler** was a great find and would represent an unusual nesting occurrence; there are historic nesting records of this species in CT as far south as New Haven and Bridgeport, so nesting again is certainly a possibility. Two **Grasshopper Sparrows (E)** were found on the Hartford Count, again in all probability at Rentschler Field, while another one found on the Woodbury/Roxbury Count was an especially good find for that area.

Perhaps the two biggest stories for nesting birds this year were the record number of **Pine Siskins** and **Northern Parulas (SC)**. Fifty siskins were recorded, which is an all time high. To put this in perspective, the previous high count was three and this year's number is 16,000% of the ten-year average for this species. This year's historic breeding event was on the heels of a historic winter invasion, and siskins are known to set up shop in far flung reaches after invasion years. Most of the siskins were thought to have left the Northeast after early nesting attempts here and then headed to western Canada, where they may have tried a second nesting for the year. Parulas, not an uncommon nester locally in the state's wooded wetlands up to around 1920, were also recorded in record numbers, with seven out of the nine being on Woodbury/Roxbury (most if not all at the Audubon Center at Bent of the River.)

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 course measurement of breeding bird populations. The nature of the SBC makes it difficult to quantify increases or decreases.



Mark Szantyr photo
Gray Catbird was one of the 10 most common birds on the Summer Bird Counts for 2009.

Good or bad weather on count period days greatly influence the total numbers recorded. Additionally, since the routes taken are not proportionate to the amount of habitats present, observers cover habitats unevenly. But it should be noted that the areas and habitats covered are largely consistent from year to year. This year, despite the rainy spring and early summer, the weather was nice on most of the count days, which may explain in good part the high numbers that were recorded for so many species this year.

Species Recorded in Above Average Numbers

Brant numbers came in at an all-time high, which isn't so surprising as this species appears to be lingering though June in increasing numbers each year, but 235 greatly exceeds the previous high of 32, which occurred last year. Three hundred and seventy-five **Great Blue Herons** is also an impressive total, shattering the previous record of 295 birds seen last year and continuing a general upward trend for this species.

The 2009 record of 113 **Green Herons** was bucking a recent downward trend. **Ospreys** continue their meteoric recovery with a new all-time high of 129 and notably were present on every count except New Milford/Pawling. Osprey was not the only raptor with record high numbers; new highs were turned in for **Bald Eagle** (30), **Sharp-shinned Hawk (E)** (18), **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and surprisingly **American Kestrel, (T)** (21) as well as **Eastern Screech-Owl** (59). **Spotted Sandpiper** also was at an all time high with 63 reported. Seven hundred eighty three **Chimney Swifts** were also a record, which may be good news for a species that is declining at the continental scale. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** continues its upward trajectory with a new high of 220 birds, along with two species of woodpeckers, **Red-bellied Woodpecker** (750) and **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (541).

Species Recorded in Below Average Numbers

Only two **Gadwalls** were recorded, a new low count and only 25% of the average for this uncommon nesting species. **Ruffed Grouse** also came in at a new low number with four birds, 18% of average. **Least Tern (T)** had a horrible year throughout the state because of several high tide events, and this was reflected by the SBC results, with only 13 recorded, a new low and only 6% of its average. Both **Black-billed** and **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were scarce, with their numbers only 35% and 28% of their averages, and a new low count of 11 for Yellow-billed. Only one **Common Nighthawk (E)** was recorded, but this is a very rare nester; as many of the birds picked up on Summer Bird Count are late migrants, this new low is more reflective of a lack of late migrants rather than any worsening of the already bad state of affairs for this nester. Only seven **White-eyed Vireos** were recorded, a new low and 33% of its average. Two other shrubland nesting species, **Blue-winged** and **Prairie Warblers**, which have been consistently experiencing new lows in recent years, rebounded a bit off last year's record low numbers but are still showing declining trends overall. **Cliff Swallow** came in at 59% of its average and recorded a new low number.

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 (NDDDB) Project. This will ensure that the best available information can be taken into account in land-use decisions.*



Bruce Finnan photo
The counts missed Semipalmated Plover, which had been recorded in nine of the last 10 years as a non-breeder.

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs			CT			Upland SBCs:					2009 State Totals		% of 99-08 average	# yrs obs	1999-2008			
	GS	NH	Valley	Hfd	Mid-state		Northern			St	Totals	Ave	Low			High			
					WR	NM/P	Ba	LH											
Wilson's Storm-petrel														1	0%	1	0.3	3	
Northern Gannet														CP	#DIV/0!	0	0.0	0	
Double-crested Cormorant	487	219		9	5	10	4	12	4		750			10	94%	10	794	574	977
Great Cormorant														1	0%	1	0.1	1	
American Bittern														9	0%	9	2	1	6
Least Bittern														9	120%	9	3	1	7
Great Blue Heron	22	20		2	53	33	78	16		3				10	181%	10	208	151	295
Great Egret	147	73		65	1	1				375				10	79%	10	282	188	376
Snowy Egret	44	57				1				222				10	88%	10	116	70	153
Little Blue Heron	1									1				8	71%	8	1	1	3
Tricolored Heron														2	0%	2	0.2	1	1
Green Heron	40	20		34	3	3	12	1		113				10	155%	10	73	59	86
Black-cr Night-Heron	116	50			1					167				10	53%	10	314	165	458
Yellow-cr Night-Heron	4									4				10	71%	10	6	1	21
Glossy Ibis		8								8				6	667%	6	1	1	4
Black Vulture	1	1			5	5	3	7		22				10	134%	10	16	4	26
Turkey Vulture	36	57		22	51	45	60	68	9	348				10	107%	10	327	270	382
Osprey	51	67		6	1	1	1	2	1	129				10	166%	10	78	33	101
Bald Eagle					4	1	16	3		30				10	189%	10	16	10	22
Northern Harrier														6	0%	6	1	0	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	2		3	1	1	4	5		18				10	189%	10	10	7	15
Cooper's Hawk	9	4		4	6	1	11	8	2	45				10	135%	10	33	21	45
accipiter species															#DIV/0!		0.0	1	1
Northern Goshawk	1	1					4	1		7				10	175%	10	4	2	7
Red-shouldered Hawk	4	15		6	22	1	19	12	3	82				10	184%	10	45	32	57
Broad-winged Hawk	5				2	1	20	27	5	60				10	104%	10	58	45	66
Red-tailed Hawk	75	34		50	52	13	27	50	7	308				10	115%	10	268	219	341

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs			CT			Upland SBCs:					2009 State Totals	% of 99-08 average	# yrs obs	1999-2008		
	GS	NH	Hfd	Valley		Mid-state	Northern			Ave	Low				High		
				WR	NM/P		Ba	LH	St								
Short-billed Dowitcher													0%	2	1	3	8
Wilson's Snipe													0%	1	0.1	1	1
American Woodcock						3		2	5	1			73%	10	15	8	24
Laughing Gull	37	6	<u>1</u>									44	113%	10	39	1	111
Bonaparte's Gull													0%	1	0.1	1	1
Ring-billed Gull	60	217	42				1	5			327	69%	10	477	311	795	
Herring Gull	297	351	7			1	2				658	80%	10	818	532	1096	
Glaucous Gull													0%	1	0.1	1	1
Great Black-backed Gull	162	51	2			0					215	80%	10	270	213	414	
Least Tern		<u>13</u>									13	6%	10	202	50	334	
Gull-billed Tern													0%	1	0.1	2	2
Caspian Tern													0%	2	1	2	3
Black Tern													0%	3	0.1	1	1
Common Tern	321	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>								334	119%	10	280	84	547	
Forster's Tern	2										2	100%	6	2	1	7	
Royal Tern													0%	1	0.1	1	1
Black Skimmer													0%	10	9	2	26
Rock Pigeon	174	441	250			<u>33</u>	24	<u>45</u>	<u>134</u>	53	1154	101%	10	1142	898	1415	
Mourning Dove	503	459	<u>563</u>			<u>322</u>	189	318	<u>342</u>	153	2849	109%	10	2612	2334	2897	
Monk Parakeet	6	68									74	75%	10	99	26	288	
Black-billed Cuckoo	1							1	2	1	10	35%	10	28	12	69	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	6							1	1		11	28%	10	39	11	144	
cuckoo species												0%		0.1	1	1	
Eastern Screech-Owl	18		2			24	3	1	4	<u>7</u>	59	147%	10	40	27	57	

Great Horned Owl	13	3	1	2	2	15	1	35	123%	10	29	10	38
Barrred Owl	8	2	11	2	42	24	4	93	120%	10	77	57	131
Northern Saw-whet Owl									0%	9	2	1	7
Nighthawk, Common	1				9	2		1	8%	10	12	2	77
Whip-poor-will								11	65%	10	17	5	25
Chimney Swift	123	88	109	43	156	94	67	783	117%	10	672	554	771
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	31	13	16	21	56	45	29	220	159%	10	138	83	179
Belted Kingfisher	12	10	14	7	35	13	6	118	113%	10	104	70	145
Red-headed Woodpecker									0%	1	0.1	1	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	239	84	124	36	64	77	31	750	140%	10	535	426	657
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			48	12	272	209		541	155%	10	348	242	494
Downy Woodpecker	190	71	80	79	135	186	55	889	124%	10	715	501	905
Hairy Woodpecker	62	26	24	15	57	66	8	274	120%	10	228	189	286
Northern Flicker	179	78	47	28	47	72	19	590	105%	10	564	481	694
Pileated Woodpecker	22	4	14	5	32	30	7	118	104%	10	114	80	144
Olive-sided Flycatcher			3					3	333%	7	1	1	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	129	57	69	37	126	188	33	719	116%	10	619	510	797
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher									0%	5	1	1	5
Acadian Flycatcher	3		16	2	1	7		30	141%	10	21	7	31
Alder Flycatcher	1	1	1		14	58	1	77	77%	10	100	75	138
Willow Flycatcher	56	51	25	22	26	76	2	315	124%	10	255	226	293
Least Flycatcher			2	13	30	72	5	143	102%	10	141	98	166
Epidonax species			1				2		0%		0.1	1	1
Eastern Phoebe	66	43	171	59	190	215	65	860	117%	10	735	496	907
Great Crested Flycatcher	68	53	84	16	65	95	21	458	105%	10	436	360	529
Eastern Kingbird	77	45	100	34	92	114	28	520	92%	10	567	486	683
White-eyed Vireo	4	1				1	1	7	33%	10	22	9	49
Yellow-throated Vireo	13	3	49	25	28	61	28	214	92%	10	233	176	276
Blue-headed Vireo			18	5	108	52	1	185	119%	10	156	100	227

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs			CT			Upland SBCs:						2009 State Totals	% of 99-08 average	# yrs obs	1999-2008		
	GS	NH	Hfd	Mid-state			Northern			St	#	Ave				Low	High	
				WR	NM/P	Ba	LH											
Warbling Vireo	172	84	168	148	50	37	125	41	825	10	632	517	767					
Red-eyed Vireo	219	94	68	332	147	1077	927	128	2992	10	2517	2048	2888					
Blue Jay	400	241	172	151	76	352	216	41	1649	10	1493	1328	1729					
American Crow	426	245	180	380	283	415	531	108	2568	10	3107	2202	4456					
Fish Crow	21	42	20	6	7	14	12	1	123	10	74	54	99					
Common Raven	9	6	7	11	6	53	18	6	116	10	61	37	110					
Horned Lark			2						2									
Purple Martin	30								40	10	32	14	54					
Tree Swallow	203	113	217	158	117	424	606	128	1966	10	1689	1245	2176					
Northern Rough-w Swallow	135	102	53	49	38	69	45	13	504	10	392	326	540					
Bank Swallow	2	24	214	24	19	52	26	19	380	10	279	148	404					
Cliff Swallow	38	3	20	59	34	17	10		181	10	308	218	420					
Barn Swallow	339	263	96	229	148	262	350	122	1809	10	1589	1339	1843					
Black-capped Chickadee	229	89	91	177	124	559	462	85	1816	10	1845	1602	2064					
Tufted Titmouse	387	162	111	295	91	416	337	89	1888	10	1771	1478	2269					
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0	1		1	2	9	2		15	10	35	7	81					
White-breasted Nuthatch	109	45	50	51	28	153	127	35	598	10	530	349	626					
Brown Creeper	2			2	1	21	45		71	10	78	41	130					
Carolina Wren	144	47	51	43	24	22	27	10	368	10	308	215	463					
House Wren	257	78	81	183	83	193	233	35	1143	10	851	544	1016					
Winter Wren	3		1	6	3	20	10		43	10	47	13	88					
Marsh Wren	24	90	13		1	90	35		253	10	98	52	167					
Golden-crowned Kinglet						8	6		14	9	7	4	16					

<i>Ruby-crowned Kinglet</i>	32	2	4	98	15	43	98	29	321	0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</i>	48	7	18	131	51	98	200	23	576	130%	10	248	193	308
<i>Eastern Bluebird</i>	168	19	22	249	154	775	738	73	2198	102%	10	563	441	793
<i>Veery</i>										131%	10	1674	1371	2119
<i>Bicknell's Thrush</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Swainson's Thrush</i>										167%	5	1	1	2
<i>Hermit Thrush</i>	203	87	143	8	4	157	95	44	264	132%	10	200	147	243
<i>Wood Thrush</i>	2194	1009	1244	209	67	311	243		1307	102%	10	1277	1065	1503
<i>American Robin</i>	880	358	361	703	416	868	900	249	7583	126%	10	6035	4750	7163
<i>Gray Catbird</i>	116	135	97	485	319	801	995	134	4333	116%	10	3743	3140	4219
<i>Northern Mockingbird</i>	27	5	2	57	26	15	19	27	492	89%	10	555	403	754
<i>Brown Thrasher</i>				14		1	7		56	118%	10	47	26	77
<i>European Starling</i>	920	1514	750	440	402	401	597	529	5553	90%	10	6200	4766	8852
<i>Cedar Waxwing</i>	294	223	277	254	144	471	542	116	2321	156%	10	1485	1181	2387
<i>Blue-winged Warbler</i>	69	52	20	58	12	34	56	17	318	89%	10	355	271	475
"Lawrence's Warbler"	1									0%		0.1	1	1
"Brewster's Warbler"										#DIV/0!				
<i>Golden-winged Warbler</i>										0%	4	0.4	1	1
<i>Tennessee Warbler</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Nashville Warbler</i>										77%	5	1	1	7
<i>Northern Parula</i>	CP									176%	10	5	1	11
<i>Yellow Warbler</i>	431	183	266	204	176	174	671	90	2195	109%	10	2005	1791	2207
<i>Chestnut-sided Warbler</i>	7	1	9	50	20	268	287	10	652	102%	10	640	553	738
<i>Magnolia Warbler</i>										108%	10	99	67	139
<i>Black-throated Blue Warbler</i>										116%	10	193	160	243
<i>Yellow-rumped Warbler</i>										103%	10	126	97	169
<i>Black-thr Green Warbler</i>	5	1								104%	10	341	272	436
<i>Blackburnian Warbler</i>										117%	10	183	139	243

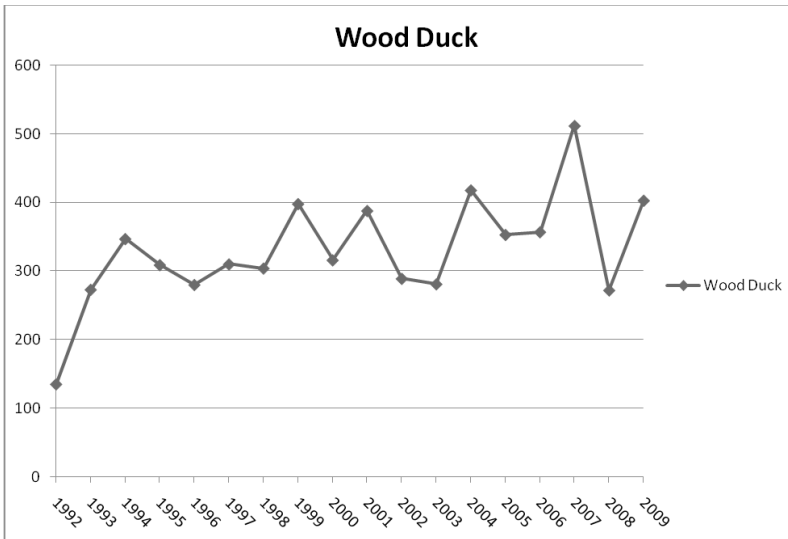
SPECIES	Coastal SBCs			CT			Upland SBCs:						2009 State Totals		% of 99-08 average		# yrs		1999-2008			
	GS	NH	Hfd	Valley			Mid-state			Northern			Ba	LH	St	Totals	State	ave	obs	Ave	Low	High
				WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St														
<i>Pine Warbler</i>	54	23	17	38	173	106	24	435	115%	10	379	310	435									
<i>Prairie Warbler</i>	34	10	17	32	2	2	4	111	82%	10	135	80	234									
<i>Bay-breasted Warbler</i>									0%	1	1	5	5									
<i>Blackpoll Warbler</i>	1		1	2	1	1	5	5	104%	9	5	1	11									
<i>Cerulean Warbler</i>									97%	10	9	4	16									
<i>Black-&-White Warbler</i>	25	26	11	64	228	235	8	617	118%	10	524	417	639									
<i>American Redstart</i>	49	11	85	158	428	525	37	1382	121%	10	1142	896	1320									
<i>Prothonotary Warbler</i>									0%	1	0.1	1	1									
<i>Worm-eating Warbler</i>	28	15	3	20	2	7	19	100	78%	10	129	75	201									
<i>Ovenbird</i>	84	48	24	151	623	599	73	1667	119%	10	1404	1245	1647									
<i>Northern Waterthrush</i>									101%	10	47	22	59									
<i>Louisiana Waterthrush</i>	33	5	2	72	29	37	6	196	128%	10	153	84	194									
<i>Kentucky Warbler</i>									0%	3	0.3	1	2									
<i>Mourning Warbler</i>									0%	7	1	1	4									
<i>Common Yellowthroat</i>	206	84	116	189	588	614	59	1974	114%	10	1735	1516	1993									
<i>Hooded Warbler</i>	1	1	1	21	3	3		34	98%	10	35	11	72									
<i>Wilson's Warbler</i>									0%	1	0.1	1	1									
<i>Canada Warbler</i>	1			1	23	42		67	125%	10	54	39	75									
<i>Yellow-breasted Chat</i>									0%	5	1	1	2									
<i>Scarlet Tanager</i>	95	51	36	135	239	198	45	825	115%	10	715	569	839									
<i>Eastern Towhee</i>	65	39	45	83	103	146	23	549	77%	10	595	446	705									
<i>Chipping Sparrow</i>	390	96	145	388	782	486	174	2601	124%	10	2097	1701	2449									
<i>Field Sparrow</i>	36	7	24	42	11	14	4	156	113%	10	138	82	203									
<i>Savannah Sparrow</i>		7	44	11	5	13	11	92	189%	10	49	21	74									

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs			CT			Upland SBCs:						2009 State Totals	% of 99-08 average	# yrs obs	1999-2008		
	GS	NH	Hfd	Valley			Mid-state			Northern						Ave	Low	High
				WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Ba	LH	St							
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	22,627	13,472	11,972	11,775	6,990	18,929	21,501	5,035	112,286	110%	236	101983	87,437	110,963				
<i>CD Species</i>	141	121	183	131	121	125	137	104	182	98%		188	180	191				
<i>CP Species</i>	1									0%		2	0	6				
DEGREE OF EFFORT:																		
<i>Observers</i>	49	30	52	22	20	20	50	9	252	107%		235	193	257				
<i>Parties</i>	29	14	32	17	12	13	14	5	136	112%		121	102	136				
<i>Party Hours</i>	307.5	126	169	122	88	190	259.5	54	1316	111%		1187	1009	1349.75				
<i>Day Party Hours</i>	288.0	125	169	114	85.5	180	250	51	1262.5	111%		1132.7	962.5	1290.5				
<i>Night Party Hours</i>	19.5	1	0	8	2.5	10	9.5	3	53.5	99%		54	42	69.5				
<i>Indiv. birds per 10 PHs</i>	736	1069	708	965	795	996	829	932	853									
<i>Indiv. birds per Observer</i>	462	449	230	535	350	946	430	559	446									
<i>% SBC Observers</i>	19	12	21	9	8	8	20	3.6										
<i>% SBC Party Hours</i>	23.4	9.6	12.8	9.3	6.7	14	20	4.1										
<i>% SBC Individual Birds</i>	2.0	1.2	1.1	1.0	6.2	1.7	1.9	4.5										

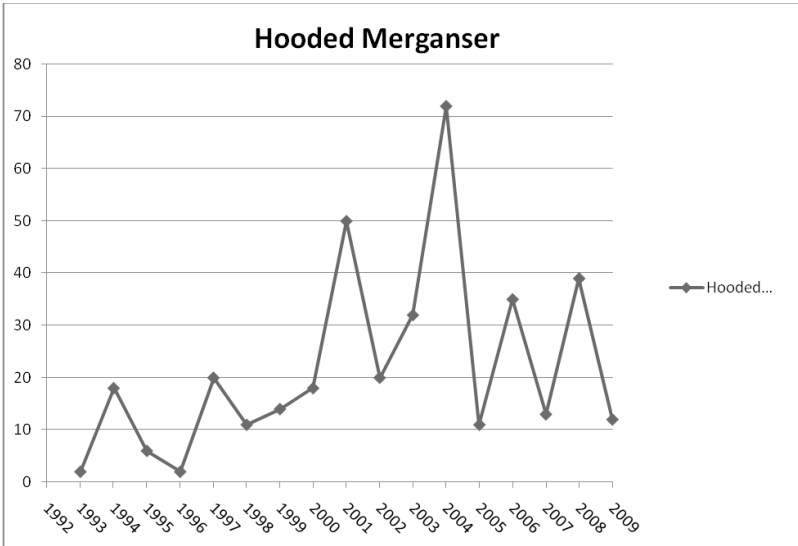
Trends

The following graphs were chosen to illustrate some Summer Bird Count data trends. Please see the disclaimer about using SBC data to estimate trends and consider these illustrations as just one piece of evidence of how bird populations are changing in the state. For clarity, all graphs use overall number rather than totals corrected for party hours. For most species the two graphs have similar appearances and overall trends.

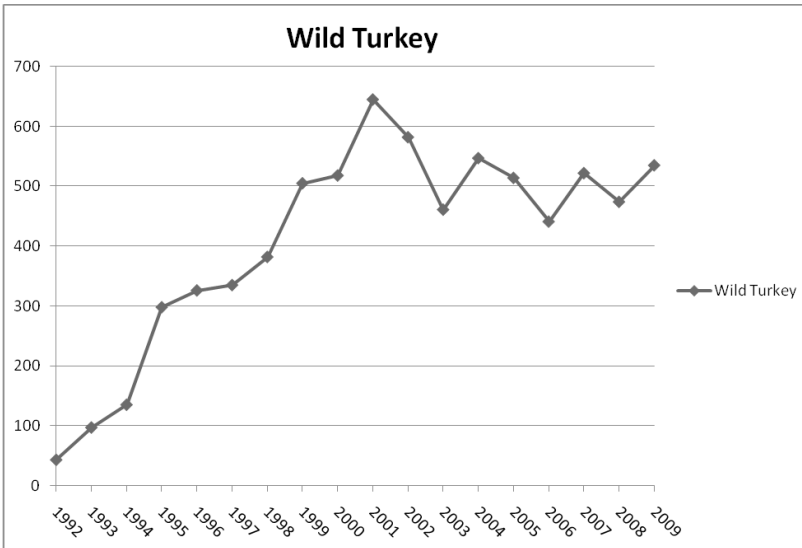
Apparent increasing trends



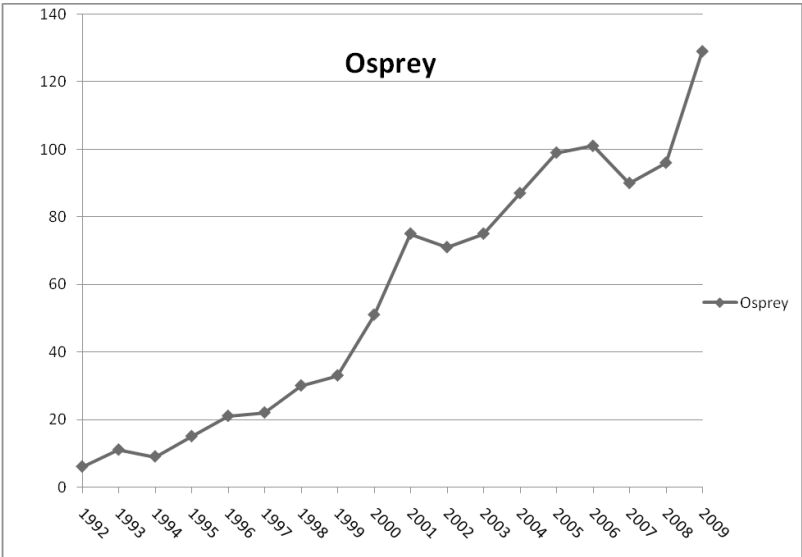
There is much year to year eccentricity in the numbers of Wood Ducks recorded, but overall there appears to be a general increasing trend.



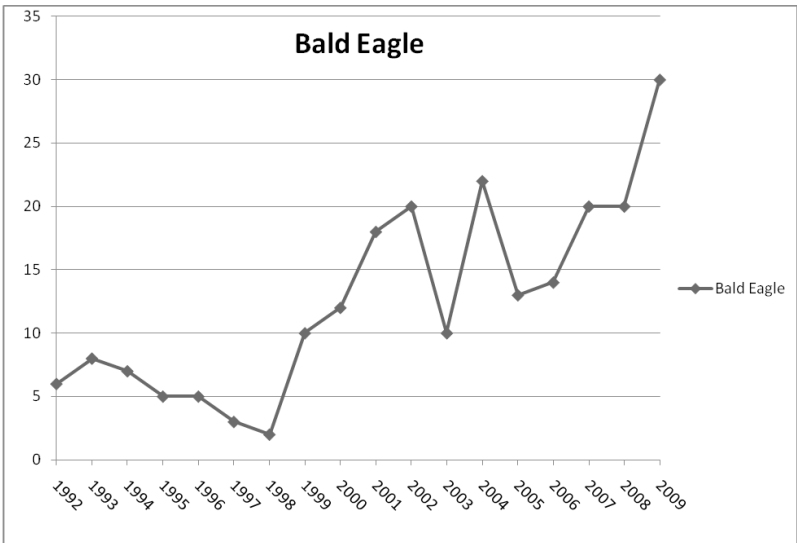
Hooded Mergansers show even more variability in their numbers from year to year, perhaps due in part to whether or not juvenile birds were observed in a given count year.



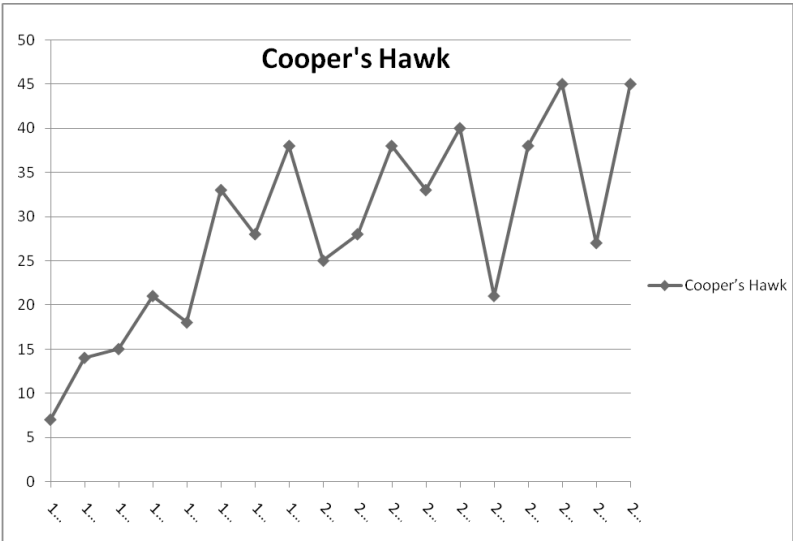
Wild Turkey numbers were clearly on the increase between 1992 and 2001, but have hovered around 500 statewide since that time.



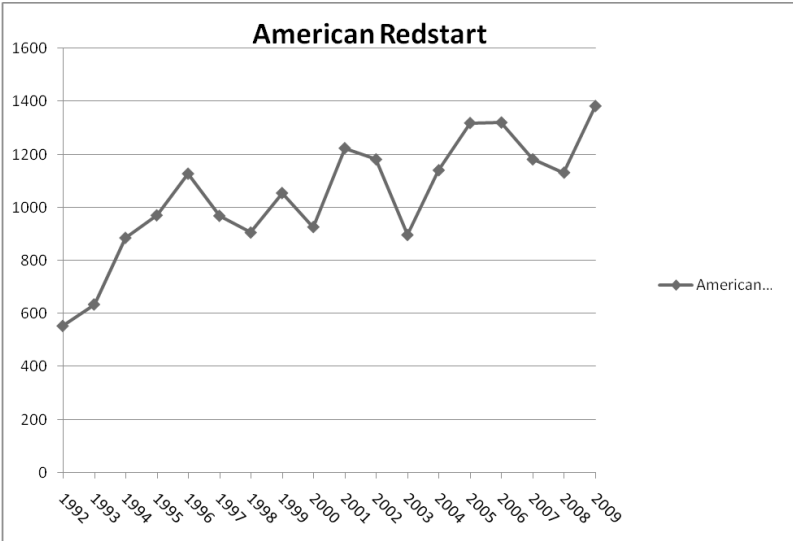
The clear and continuing upward trend in Osprey numbers is not surprising, considering the conservation success story around this species, the banning of DDT in the US in the 1970s and increased efforts to provide nesting platforms.



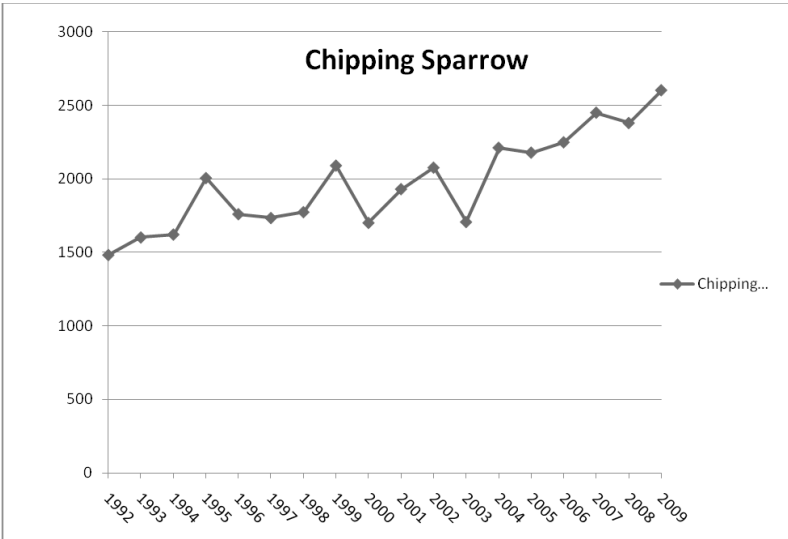
Bald Eagles have also made an amazing comeback as a nesting species in Connecticut.



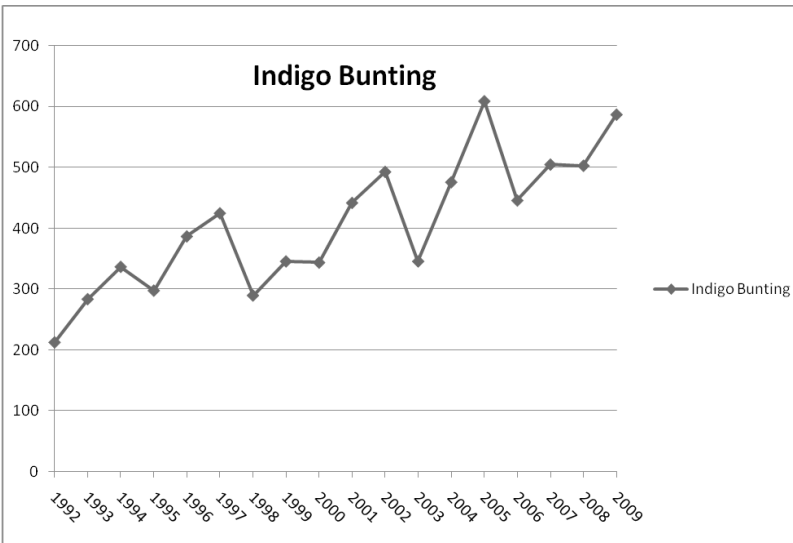
There is quite a bit of year-to-year variability in the number of Cooper's Hawks recorded, but there appears to be an upward trend.



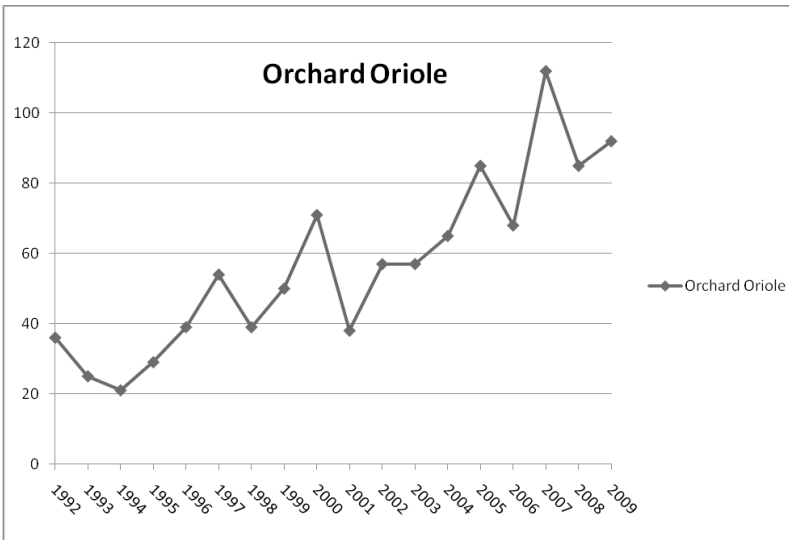
This year's record high number of American Redstarts strengthens the case for an increasing trend for this species.



Chipping Sparrows came in at an all time high and appear to have a clear upward trend.

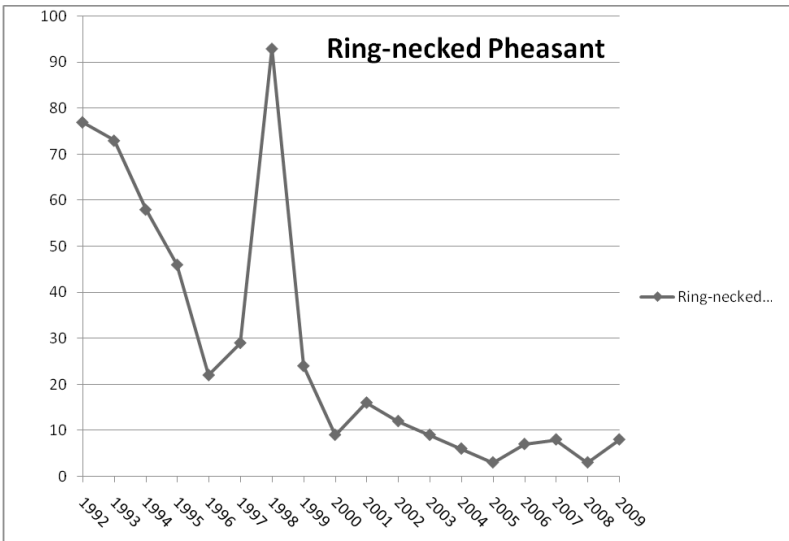


This year's count of Indigo Buntings comes close to the record high of over 600 in 2005, which is triple the number from 1992.

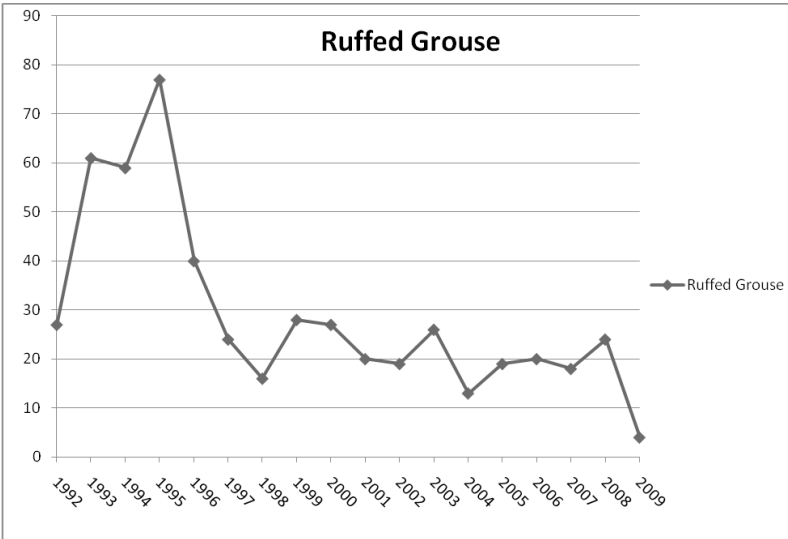


There also appears to be a solid upward trend in the number of Orchard Orioles.

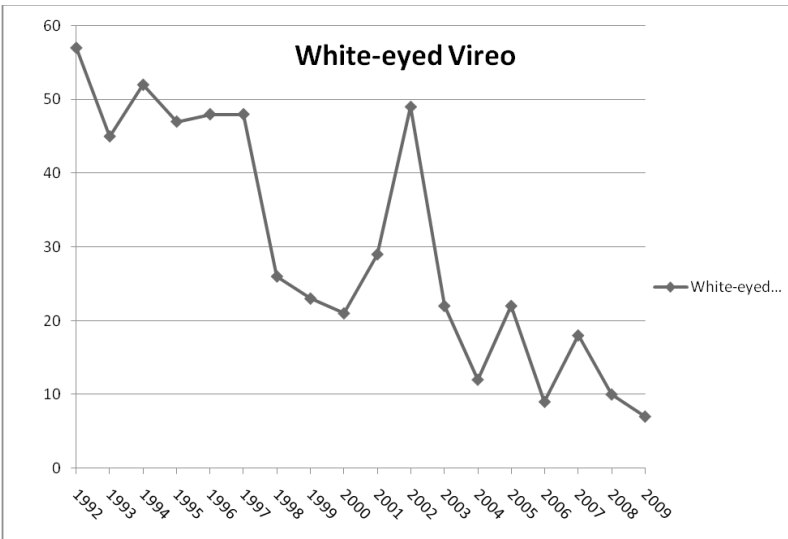
Apparent Declining Trends



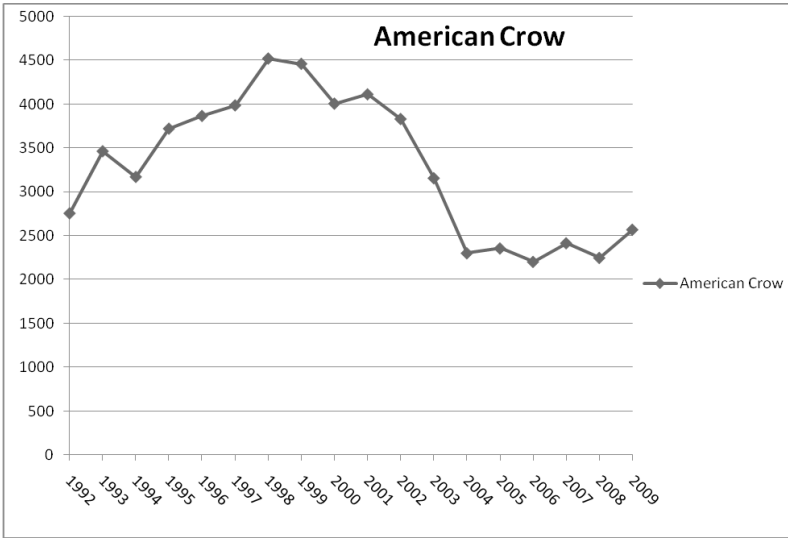
The peak in 1998 muddies the waters a bit, but there have been far fewer Ring-necked Pheasants in recent counts than were recorded in the 1990s.



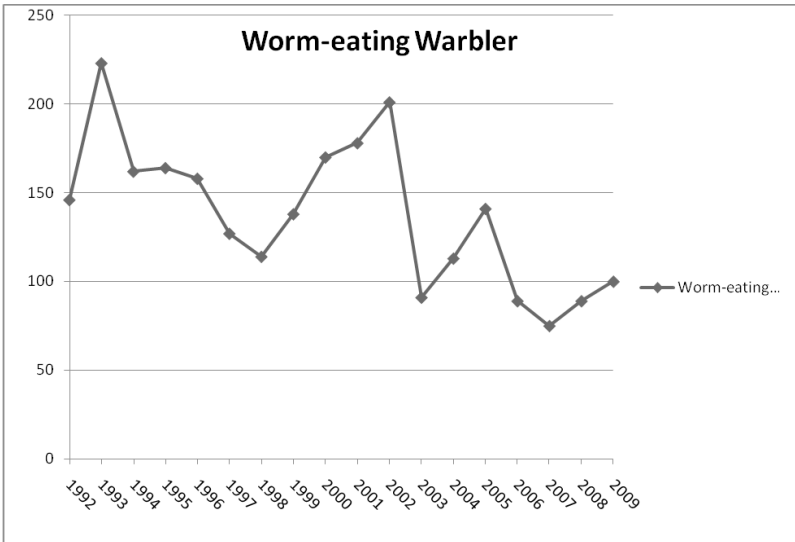
There has been much discussion on the dearth of Ruffed Grouse in Connecticut and this year's record low count adds evidence that the species is getting to be much less common in the state.



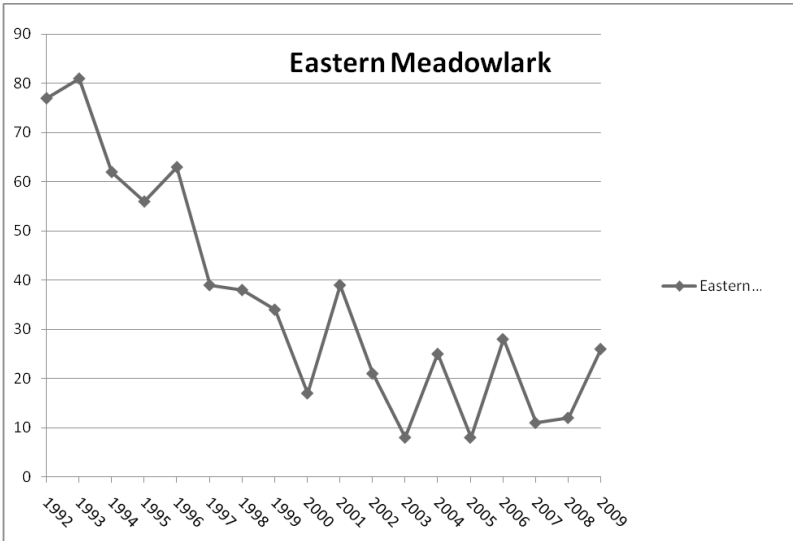
White-eyed Vireo is another species that requires early successional habitat. While there is much year-to-year variability, the overall downward trend is reasonably clear.



The overall trends for American Crow numbers are somewhat ambiguous without external context, but an apparent sharp decline in the first part of this century does roughly correspond to the introduction of West Nile virus to our region.



Year to year eccentricity in Worm-eating Warbler numbers makes it difficult to definitively say there is a declining trend, but these data suggest we should focus attention on this species to determine if populations may be declining.



While there is year-to-year variability, there are clearly fewer Eastern Meadowlarks being reported than in the earlier years of the count.

2009 CONNECTICUT SUMMER BIRD COUNT

STATEWIDE COUNT TOTALS

Count Dates: June 7, 13-14, 20-21, and 27-28.

Reported were 182 species on Count Days (CD), consisting of 112,286 CD individuals. Two hundred & three observers in 107 parties spent 1008.5 party hours (PHs) in the field. Merlin, Upland Sandpiper, and Horned Lark were added to those reported during the previous ten years.

Since its inception in 1991, 254 species have been reported during count days[CD], another two birds during count periods alone, while in the last ten years 236 species have been seen on CD, plus the three species seen this year.

LOCAL COUNT TOTALS

Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count (*founded 1992*)

Count Dates: June 27 & 28 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 125 species, 18839 individual birds, including one hybrid. Twenty observers in 13 Parties spent 190 PHs in the field. Since 1992 157 CD species have been recorded.

Participants: Ray Belding, Douglas Carrier, Paul Carrier, Ayreslea Denny, Angela Dimmitt, Gerri Griswold, Nikki Hall, Dennis Hannon, Seth Harvey, Vicki Hester, Jean Hurbut, Leona LeJeune, Rhonda Marchand, Russ Naylor, Carol Parent, David Rosgen (121 Laurel Way, Winsted, CT 06098-2534; dave@whitememorialcc.org), John Shugrue, Sam Slater, Ed Yescott, and Fran Zygmunt.

Weather: 6/27- extremely wet from previous week; S winds 0-10 mph., 62° to 79°F., Night, S winds 5 mph., 79° to 61°F. 6/28- SE winds 0-8 mph. 61° to 74°F., night- SE winds 4 mph., 74° to 60°F.

Count (a rectangle, 12 mile east-west by a 17 mile north-south) Center: 41°5'N 72°59'W. Elevation: 285 to 1457 feet. Area covered: Barkhamsted, Burlington (northern 1/4), Canton, Colebrook (south half), Granby (southwest 1/4), Hartland, New Hartford, Harwinton (northern edge), Torrington (northern 1/4), and Winchester.

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

Count Dates: June 13 & 14 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 141 species, 22627 individual birds, plus one count period species. Forty-nine observers in 29 Parties observed for 307.5 PHs. Since 1976, 228 CD species have been recorded, 140 of these have been found nesting

Participants: John Askildsen, Shawn Asslein, Pat Bailey, Tom Baptist, Marty Barris, Joe Belanger, Gail Benson, Kelli Bochnik, Michael Bochnik, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye, NY 10580; tom.burke@rsmi.com), Al Collins, Max Collins, Annette Cunniffe, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Andrew Farnsworth, Larry Flynn, Kathy Gellman, Ted Gilman, Arthur Green, Carolyn Hartel, David Havens,

Jalna Jaeger, Paul Lewis, Berna Lincoln, Stan Lincoln, Shaun Martin, Ken Mirman, Frank Novak, Jim O'Brien, Mary Ann O'Leary, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807; gejlpalmer@yahoo.com), Matt Popp, Renee Recker, Rex Recker, Steve Ricker, Polly Rothstein, Meredith Sampson, Jonna Schaffer, Bob Shriber, Richard Trepp, Marvin Turner, Benjamin Van Doren, Bill Van Loan jr., Bill Wallace, Mike Warner, Jill Yolen, and Adam Zorn.

Weather: 6/13- 66° to 72°F., cool, total cloud cover, heavy overcast late PM; 6/14- 62° to 70°F., rain early, heavy mist and fog, clearing in PM,

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

Hartford Summer Bird Count (*founded 1991*)

Count Dates: June 13 & 14 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 115 species, 11,972 individual birds. Fifty-two observers in 32 Parties covered over 169 PHs. One hundred fifty-seven CD species have been documented since 1992.

Participants: Bill Asteriades, Steve Ballentine, Rob Ballinger, Dana Cambell, Mona Cavallaro, Paul Cianfaglione, Jan Collins, Maxson Comins, Pamm Cooper, Andrew Dasinger, Paul Desjardins, Ben Egan, Peter Egan, Chris Elphick, Patrice Favreau, Dee Hanson, Eric Hanson, Ernie Harris, Matthew Hoyte, Denise Jernigan, Jay Kaplan (71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT. 06019; jaybrd49@aol.com), Gil Kleiner, Steve Kotchko, Larry Lunden, Alan Lurie, David Lyons, Alberta Mirer, Rob Mirer, Larry Nichols, Synch Ofiara, Marianne Piche, Mark Pawshuk, Ann Pinto, Roger Preston, Anita Shaffer, Margaret Schuster, Susanne Shrader, Diego Sustaita, Brian Toal, Joe Valenti Jr., Joe Valenti Sr., Jon Ward, Brian

Webster, Debra Wheeler, Judy Whittlesey, Mike Whittlesey, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Anthony Zemba, and David Zomick.

Weather: 6/13- sunny start, then clouded over, wind: 0-5 mph. 59° to 80°F., sunny start, then clouded over,. 6/14- N wind, 5-10 mph., 57°-72°F., 0.8" rain AM, then slowly clearing,

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

Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count (*founded 1994*)

Count Dates: June 13 & 14 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 137 species, 21,501 individual birds. Fifty observers in 14 Parties accumulated over 259.5 PHs. Since 1994, 174 CD species have been observed, with Horned Grebe a new addition this year.

Participants: Susan Ainsworth, Janet Baker, John Baker, Robert J. Barbieri (29 Evans St., #1, Torrington, CT. 06790; 1 860 482-0033), Marcia Barker, Cindy Barrett, John Barrett, Ray Belding, Patti Clarke, Rich Clarke, Mike Doyle, Max Ehrman, Dee Eykelhoff, John Eykelhoff, Cathy Felton, Eileen Finnan, James Fisher, Corrinne Folsom, Eileen Frost, Mary Gendron, John Grabowski, Gerri Griswold, Nicki Hall, Lukas Hyder, Daren Jacklin, Roger Johnson, Joan Lang, Gordon Loery, Caitlin MacGintie, Debbie Martin, Donna McLean, Bill Moorhead, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Ann Orsillo, Claranne Parker, Jim Parker, Cynthia Phipps, Patty Pickard, Dave Rosgen, Ronnie Santo, John Shugrue, Donna Rose Smith, Dave Tripp, and Fran Zygmunt.

Weather: "Sunny and warm"

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

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

New Haven Summer Bird Count (*founded 1991*)

Count Dates: June 13 & 14 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 121 species, 13,472 individual birds. Thirty observers in 14 Parties spent 126 PHs in the field. Since 1991, 199 CD species have been confirmed with Pine Siskin a new addition this year.

Participants: Marion Aimesbury, Ralph Amodei, Mark Aronson, Phil Asperelli, Larry Bausher, Nick Bonomo, Steve Broker, Louisa Cunningham, Sharon Dellinger, Natasha Domino, Randy Domino, Stacy Hanks, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Chris Loscalzo, Steve Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524; rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net), Bob Mitchell, Frank Regusa, Nancy Ragusa, Craig Repasz, Nancy Rosenbaum, Arne Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Nancy Specht, Carla Spector, Steve Spector, Maria Stockmal, Debbie Tenney, and Pete Vitale.

Weather: 6/13 - NNE winds 7 mph, 65° to 74°F., cloudy, afternoon winds shifting to SE, night – SSE winds, 7 mph, 67° to 68°F.; 6/14 - NNE winds 7 mph., 57° to 74°F., winds shifting to SE in northern parts of area.

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

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

Count Dates: June 20 & 21(Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 121 species, 6990 individual birds. Twenty observers in twelve parties spent 88 PHs in the field. Since 2003, 148 CD species have been noted, with the additions this

year of Ring-necked Duck, Ruffed Grouse, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Northern Parula, and Pine Siskin.

Participants: Pat Bailey, Barbara Butler, Bob Cartoceti, Angela Dimmitt (PO Box 146, Sherman, Ct. 06784; angladimmitt@aol.com), Jim Dugan, Larry Fischer, Eileen Frost, Sibyll Gilbert, Rich Guthrie, Linton Hamilton, Carol Hartel, David Hopkins, Janet Hopkins, Anne Kehmna, Bill Liedlich, Nancy Liedlich, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Sally Spence, Nick Thold, and Bill Wallace.

Weather: 6/20- Overcast AM, drizzle, rain PM, 60° to 72°F., Night: Cloudy, no wind, 60°F.,

6/21- Rain PM, 66° to 70°F.,

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

Storrs Summer Bird Count (*founded 1990*)

Count Dates: June 20 & 21 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 104 species, 5035 individual birds. Nine observers in five Parties accumulated 54 PHs in the field. Since 1990, 134 CD species have been counted; 66 are nesters.

Participants: Christopher Demers, Kathleen Demers, Tom Grasso, Sue Harrington, Tom Harrington, Steve Morytko, Maura Robie, Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268; climbrogers@charter.net), and Phil Rusch.

Weather: 6/20- Foggy, trace of rain, partly sunny AM, then mostly cloudy, NW winds 0-10 mph., 63° to 74°F., 6/21- light rain (0.1"), overcast, very windy, NNE winds 10-

30 mph., 61° to 70°F.,

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

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

Count Date: June 7 (Sun.)

Totals: 130 species, 11,775 individual birds. Twenty-two observers in 17 Parties counted during 122 PHs in the field. Since 1978, 244 CD species have been recorded, while 122 species have nested.

Participants: Renee Baade, Dave Babington, Ray Belding, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Ken Elkins, Sharon Feeley, Larry Fisher, Dennis Hannon, Seth Harvey, Lori Heavens, Tom Hook, Anne Kehmna, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798, 1 203 263-2502), Nancy Nickols, Dorie Petrochko, Barbara Saverman, Fred Schroeder, Darcy Thurrott, Leigh Wells, Tom Zissu, and Francis Zygmunt.

Weather: WSW Winds, 10-15 mph., fog AM, partly cloudy and mild with evening showers, 50° to 80°F.,

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

THE GOSHAWK AND THE GREAT HORNED OWL

By Maria Stockmal

I stepped out onto the path that leads to the Northern Goshawk nest. It was March and I wanted to see if the Goshawk would return to the Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center and nest. It nests there on and off, and last year was an off year.

The year before last it nested in the park, and when a nesting season is over I always look for the empty nest. But, that year it was gone. I remember some severe weather and strong winds. It's possible that it was destroyed or blown out of the tree. I searched the grounds but never found it.

Last year, I met the goshawk on a bird walk. Since it was March and the hawk had not set up nesting yet it left me alone. I walked right by in front of it. I expected it to nest, and it looked like it built a grand nest for itself not far from the previous nest. Excited at the prospect, I waited another month to check on it again and expected to be chased or hopefully just kerked at.



*Photos by Maria Stockmal
An adult Great Horned Owl on the nest.*

It didn't happen. The goshawk was gone. The nest it might have used was empty and no one at the center knew anything. We were all stumped. The beautiful nest remained empty all summer.

So this year I went out to see if the goshawk would return, and as I walked up to the suspected nest, there, sitting in the nest was a Great Horned Owl. In plain view. I was shocked. I knew the goshawk and owl were competitors for nests. Many ideas ran through my mind. Did the Great Horned Owl kill the goshawk, was it roosting in the nest or was it nesting? I walked there once a week and continued to see the owl until one day I saw some white protruding from the nest next to the owl. It was an owlet.! The Great Horned Owl was nesting.

I continued to walk weekly and watched the one owlet become two owlets. No one knew they were there. The staff at the center knew the owl was nesting in the park, but they couldn't find it in its normal spot in the pines, as I found out later. I told my family members and they enjoyed seeing the owls on a walk.

I started to photograph the owls after the third week or so and each time the weather was rainy, overcast, or too sunny being in the early afternoon. The last time I took my camera out to photograph the owls I was hoping to get photos of the birds in transition to adult feathers.

It was morning. The weather was perfect. The sun was streaming through the trees at good angles. I saw one of the young birds roosting in a tree near the nest. I set my camera. I fumbled a little. I was just about to shoot when a goshawk flew in. It rested on a branch near the owl and kekked. My adrenaline rose. Did the bird also know I was there? Would it come after me? What if I had to choose between my camera and myself? I stood frozen waiting to see what would happen. The goshawk kekked again and started to move its feet in a pattern I know so well when it's beginning to fly off. It went after the owlet and chased it away from the nest.



*Photos by Maria Stockmal
A Great Horned Owl chick.*

Was the goshawk competing for that nest? If the goshawk did build that nest last year, did it want it back? It was late April. Would it have time to begin a nest there? Would the goshawk and the Great Horned Owl share the nest as if to take turns?

I began to walk backward quickly in case the bird would come back but then heard it kek again at a further distance. In the back of my mind I always felt the goshawk was more concerned about the owl and probably did not notice me. I waited a few minutes and rather than double back, I decided to continue on the trail. I didn't meet the birds again.

A week later I walked out again and both owlets were sitting in the nest. So much for sharing. The Great Horned Owls remained in the beautiful nest and resided there until May. Then they were gone. The goshawk did not return to the nest. It was spotted in the area, but I have not been able to find out where it nested. But, I suspect it to be nesting somewhere near. A later check on July 1 yielded no activity around the grand nest. It should be interesting next spring.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring, March 1 through May 31, 2009

By Greg Hanisek

The season produced first state records of Mew Gull and Western Meadowlark (pending Avian Records Committee of Connecticut review). Perhaps the most noteworthy seasonal event was the surge of neotropical migrants in late April, carrying over into early May. This flight was associated with a major flow of southern air following unfavorable migration weather in mid-April. Note the following first-arrival dates in that period, with many species arriving in numbers:

April 25 - Chimney Swift, White-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Wood Thrush, Magnolia, Prairie and Cerulean Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Orchard Oriole

April 26 - Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Wood Thrush, Blue-winged, Nashville, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Ovenbird and Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, many Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Seaside Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sparrow

April 27 - Least Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Marsh Wren, Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Indigo Bunting

April 28 - Swainson's Thrush, two very early reports in Naugatuck (PDe) and Stratford (SKr), followed by more starting May 2; Worm-eating Warbler

April 29 - Veery, Tennessee and Blackpoll Warbler

April 30 - Kentucky Warbler in Storrs (KB, BH), Lincoln's Sparrow

May 1 - Bay-breasted Warbler

May 2 - Cape May and Canada Warbler

May 3 - Acadian Flycatcher in East Haddam (PDe)

May 5 - Eastern Wood Pewee

May 6 - Common Nighthawk

Species that usually show in the second half of the month also made early first arrivals, with Mourning Warbler on May 11, Olive-sided Flycatcher on May 13 and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher on May 15.

Following is a list of first-arrival dates for a variety of regularly occurring species:

Blue-winged Teal - March 13 in Stonington (BD); Pied-billed Grebe - March 10 in Kent (JJo); Northern Gannet - March 21 in West Haven (FMa); Double-crested Cormorant - March 14 in Essex (BY); Great Egret - March 20

in Greenwich (MSa); Snowy Egret - March 28 in Milford (DSo); Little Blue Heron - April 1 in Stratford (TL); Green Heron - April 15 in New London (CC); Yellow-crowned Night Heron - March 30 in Westport (FMa); Glossy Ibis - April 2 in West Haven (JRu); Osprey - March 6 in Guilford (LG); Broad-winged Hawk - April 4 in Lyme (BY); Clapper Rail - April 22 in Westport (TA); Piping Plover - March 15 in Old Lyme (THe); American Oystercatcher - March 10 in Westport (FMa); Spotted Sandpiper - April 19 in South Windsor (GH); American Woodcock - March 7 in



*Hank Golet photo
This Olive-sided Flycatcher stopped by the Eight Mile River in
Salem on May 20, 2009.*

Greenwich (TG_i), Washington (PS), and Fairfield (JRa); Whip-poor-will - April 10 in Lyme (DP); Eastern Phoebe - March 20 in Greenwich (MSa); Blue-headed Vireo - April 16 in Barkhamsted (ND); Purple Martin - April 7 in Clinton (JaCo); Tree Swallow - March 12 in Essex (BY); N. Rough-winged Swallow - April 2 in New Haven (PA); Barn Swallow - April 8 in Essex (CM); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - April 12 in Lyme (DP) and Derby (RH); Gray-cheeked Thrush - May 11 in Lyme (BY) and Stratford (BW); N. Parula - April 20 in Mansfield (DM); Black-throated Green Warbler - April 22 in Stratford (SKr); Pine Warbler - March 8 in Branford (MSt); Palm Warbler - April 8 in Southbury (PCo); Black-and-White Warbler - April 16 in Hamden (KB); Louisiana Waterthrush - April 9 in Bolton (EHr). Chipping Sparrow - April 4 in Farmington (CD).

Ten **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season included a family group of five first noted in late February in Willimantic. They were still present in the Storrs area until mid-March (MSz, CEI

et al.). Singles were at Durham Meadows on March 8 (RP), in Newtown March 12 (RB, NC), at Lyman Orchard in Middlefield on March 14 (JBr), and at Fisher Meadows, Avon, on March 14 (PCi). Cackling Geese were found on March 8 at Trap Falls Reservoir in Shelton (CB et al.) and at Lyman Orchard in Middlefield on March 12 (JBr). A **"Black" Brant**, a first state record of this western subspecies, was found April 10 at Short Beach, Stratford (NB). It stayed until April 13 (m.ob). About 1,000 Brant were off Seaside Park, Bridgeport, on March 17 (DV), and the Bridgeport-Fairfield shoreline held c 3,000 on March 28 (DV).

Two Gadwall, uncommon inland, were in Harwinton on March 20 (PCa). Another two were seen March 23 at Station 43 in South Windsor, which has produced some recent reports (PCi). A typical complement of four Eurasian Wigeon was reported for the season. Two Blue-winged Teal were late enough on May 24 to be possible breeders in Stratford (FMa). The high count of Northern Shovelers was eight on



Bruce Finnan photo
The state's first "Black" Brant made an appearance at Short Beach in Stratford.

March 10 at Station 43 (DM). At least three **Eurasian Teal** for the season were singles at Milford Point on March 14 (SS) and at Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, on March 19 (FMA), followed by two together at Milford Point on March 22 (NB)

The only Redheads were singles March 13 at Frash Pond, Stratford, (BW) and March 14 at Milford Point (JD), plus a pair on Bristol Reservoir No. 7 on April 14 (PCa). A raft of c. 8,000 Greater Scaup was off Seaside Park, Bridgeport, on March 17 (DV), and about 6,000 were off Stratford Point on March 19 (TL). An excellent count

of 190 Lesser Scaup were in New Haven harbor on March 24 (NB). A subadult male **King Eider** found May 17 off Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) was present through end of period (GW et al.). White-winged Scoters formed a large raft off Stratford Point starting March 19, when c 3,000 were present (TL). Three Black Scoters were off HBSP on April 11 (JeCo), and two were at Shippan Point, Stamford, on May 6 (PDu)

A boat survey of the Norwalk Islands on March 8 produced 550 Long-tailed Ducks (LF), and 500 were off Bridgeport on March

7 (DV). Inland, Barkhamsted Reservoir held nine on March 28 (PCa), and three pairs were still present off Compo Beach, Westport, on May 22 (TGr). Five Buffleheads lingered at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, Stonington, on May 9 (PCo). A Barrow's X C. Goldeneye hybrid was at Milford Point on March 2 (NB). A pair of Hooded Mergansers nested in a Wood Duck box on a small backyard pond in Norfolk (SHr). The annual staging flock of Common Merganser at Lake Waramaug in New Preston peaked at 6,000 on March 25 (RBe). The March 8 boat survey of the Norwalk Islands produced 350 Red-breasted Mergansers (LF), and a flock of 14 off Stratford Point on May 11 represented a good late count (SKr). A late inland bird was at Hogback Reservoir, West Hartland, on May 22 (PCa).

Single Red-throated Loons were late May 9 at Barn Island (PCo) and May 21 at the Guilford town boat launch (PCo et al.). A group of 16 Common Loons dropped onto Bantam Lake, Litchfield, on May 4 (GH). A Red-necked Grebe was off the Stratford seawall on

March 28 (GH), and one was off Shippan Point, Stamford, on April 5 (WM&MMc); the latter site held three on May 6 (PDu). A good spring concentration of 60 Northern Gannets was plunge-diving off Stratford on March 30 (FMa). A single observer saw two **American White Pelicans** fly by along the Five Mile River in Rowayton on May 27 (MMr). A good description was provided. A strong early flight of Double-crested Cormorants brought 55 to the Norwalk Islands on March 25, a little more than a week after the season's first report (LF). A heavy movement on April 23 saw 308 pass Stratford Great Meadows in four separate flocks (BW).

An unusual concentration of 24 Great Blue Herons was at Wethersfield Cove on May 17 (SKo). A Tricolored Heron was at Barn Island, Stonington, on April 12-25 (JRe et al.). Others were at Sherwood Island on April 22 (TGr), at McKinney NWR on May 16-17 (JOs) and at HBSP on May 23 (JBl). Two Cattle Egrets were at Haddam Meadows State Park in Haddam on April 29 (AP), and one was at Harkness

Memorial State Park in Waterford on May 18-20 (MD). A flock of 19 Glossy Ibis fed at the Anderson Ave. marsh in Milford on April 18 (NB), and 22 were at Sachem Head marsh in Guilford on April 23 (JMh).

Following last year's state-first nesting in Simsbury, an adult **Mississippi Kite** was at Christensen Pond in North Granby on May 12 (JW) and an immature was seen May 22 in Simsbury (JK). A pair present in Simsbury during the last week in May strongly suggested last year's nesting would be repeated. Two reports of Rough-legged Hawks for the season were a light morph on March 16 in Watertown (C&JZ) and a dark morph March 30 at Seaside Park, Bridgeport, (GH et al.) A migratory flight deposited a group of six American Kestrels to a small section of perimeter fence at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, on April 7 (AD).

A King Rail called from a marshy area at Mansfield Hollow dam on May 16 (BBa), and one was at Station 43, South Windsor, on May 26-31 (AD et al.). Two Virginia Rails were extremely

early (and very noisy) March 21 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DRo). A Sora arrived at Cove Island, Stamford, on April 26 (SZ et al.). Single fly-over Sandhill Cranes were reported from Woodbridge on May 30 (SMA) and from South Kent on May 31 (SA).

Up to five Upland Sandpipers visited a pond at Cabela's in East Hartford in the second half of May (SZ, JV et al.). The first Whimbrel appeared April 21 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (GH et al.). A Marbled Godwit was at McKinney NWR on April 25 (TGr et al.). At Milford Point on May 29, a collection of 2,000 shorebirds of 12 species included two Red Knots (FMA), with three there May 31 (SZ, TGr). The first report of White-rumped Sandpiper came from the marsh restoration area at McKinney on May 5 (CB). The first Pectoral Sandpiper report was somewhat late April 17 at Barn Island (CC). A Dunlin was inland at Rocky Hill Meadows on May 17 (JK); up to two were at Cabela's pond, East Hartford, on May 23-26 (JCl et al.). A Stilt Sandpiper was at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, on May 16-21 (PCo, BO et al.). A

female-type **Ruff** was well-described April 20 at Barn Island, Stonington, (DW). The date is a typical one for this rare Eurasian visitor. Durham Meadows held 38 Wilson's Snipe on April 11 (KFs). American Woodcock made a widespread arrival March 7-8 (m.ob.). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was at HBSP May 28-29 (JCI), a typical appearance time for this rare visitor from the West.

Two **Little Gulls** for the season were singles at the Oyster River mouth in West Haven on March 20 (MSz) and at Southport Beach on April 4-5 (FMa, TGr et al.). Single **Black-headed Gulls** were at Oyster River in West Haven/Milford on March 22 (DV) and March 27 (JOs); at Shippan Point, Stamford, April 5-8 (PDu), with possibly the same bird at Holly Pond, Stamford, on April 16 (PDu); and at Southport Beach on April 10 (FMa). The best concentration of Bonaparte's Gulls was 1,000 to 2,000 off Southport Beach from April 2-10 (CB, FMa et al.). The long-awaited first state record for **Mew (Common) Gull** was an adult March 20 (one day only) at Bradley Point, West Haven,

at a time when there was a major movement of gulls through Long Island Sound (NB). Doing periodic counts from his office window at Stratford Point on that day, Leenders put gull numbers at 3,000 to 7,500 per hour passing in a steady stream for at least five hours. At least 6,000 were off Milford Point as well (SS). Iceland Gull numbers have held up well despite the loss of landfills, with at least 17 reported for the season. Despite some very high counts in nearby states, Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers remain modest here with about seven reported for the season. Numbers for both Iceland and Lesser Black-backed are probably conservative because of the difficulty in determining how many visit the highly productive Windsor-Bloomfield landfill. An unusually high count of nine Glaucous Gulls for the season included one first-cycle bird that remained through May at Long Beach, Stratford (m.ob.). Caspian Terns are always scarce, and one on April 10 at Short Beach, Stratford, was present on an unusually early date (NB). Four Black Terns were off Shippan Point, Stamford,



*Photo by Tom Sayers
One of two Prothonotary Warblers at
East Rock Park in New Haven displays
its brilliant plumage.*



*Photo by AJ Hand
The state's first Western Meadowlark
reveals its tail pattern at Sherwood
Island State Park in Westport.*



*Photo by Mark Szantyr
The state's first Mew Gull wades in Long Island Sound at Bradley Point,
West Haven.*

on May 7 (PDU, JD). A Black Skimmer flew past Cove Island, Stamford on May 15 (PDU), followed by 11 at Short Beach, Stratford, on May 16 (FMA). Ten were at the mouth of the Farm River in East Haven on May 31 (CL).

The long-staying **White-winged Dove** was seen several times during the season in Branford and was heard calling March 14 (DLo). Two Monk Parakeets on April 6 in Bristol added to a recent increase in sightings in inland cities (JBa). The first report of Yellow-billed Cuckoo came from Mansfield Hollow State Park on May 8 (DM). The first Black-billed Cuckoo was in South Kent on May 9 (JJo). Total reports were sparse with 10 of the former and only four of the latter. It was getting late for a Snowy Owl on April 8 at Long Beach, Stratford (NC). A **Chuck-wills-widow** was singing May 3 at Barn Island, Stonington (PR, GW). Whip-poor-will arrived a bit early on April 10 in Lyme (DPr). Other reports away from the southeast stronghold came from Waterbury, Southington, Glastonbury, Hamden and Somers. To

date we've had no spring records of the increasing **Rufous Hummingbird**, but a male was reported making two visits to a feeder in New Canaan on May 28 (RK). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was drumming April 29 at Osbornedale State Park in Derby, indicative of this species' southward spread as a breeder (RH).

The season's first of 10 Olive-sided Flycatcher reports was from East Rock Park, New Haven, on May 13 (MSc). The first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was in Goshen on May 15 (KFi), followed by just two other reports May 22 in West Hartford (BT, SZ) and at HBSP on May 30 (PDe). In addition to the early record cited above, Acadian Flycatchers were in East Hampton on May 19 (LN) and Mohawk State Forest in Cornwall on May 24 (BV). Three Northern Shrikes for the season were one that remained to at least March 11 in Watertown (JMr et al.), one in Wethersfield on March 18 (DCa) and one at Little Pond in Litchfield on March 27 (DRo). The season's first White-eyed Vireo report came from Merwin Meadows, Wilton, on April

25 (MW). A Philadelphia Vireo was at HBSP on May 31 (MH).

A steady migration of Blue Jays was observed on April 27 crossing Long Island Sound and making landfall at Stratford Point before continuing north (TL). As Fish Crows continue to increase in the state, their migratory movements can sometimes be observed, such as 45 calling and flying east at Silver Sands S.P., Milford, on March 7 (FMa). One that flew over Sessions Woods in Burlington on March 16 was unexpected (PF). A Common Raven nest was found within 200 yards of Long Island Sound in Waterford (DP), and a pair was on eggs March 8 in Woodbridge (SB). A deer carcass on the ice at Barkhamsted Reservoir on March 9 attracted 38, along with an adult Bald Eagle and two Coyotes. (DRo). About 1,000 Tree Swallows were on the Connecticut River at Essex on March 31 (BY). A House Wren was an early first arrival April 5 in Danbury (SC). An early brood of Eastern Bluebirds hatched in a box in Hamden on April 16 (JZ). There were just six reports of Gray-cheeked (type)

Thrushes, compared to 35 for Swainson's Thrush. A **Varied Thrush**, a rare visitor from the Pacific Northwest, visited a Bristol feeder during the first week of March (LM).

Now rare as a migrant, single Golden-winged Warblers were seen May 16 at East Rock Park, New Haven, (BD) and in East Granby (PCi). A "Brewster's" Warbler visited a power line in Harwinton May 9 (PCa). Single "Lawrence's" Warblers were at Greenwich Audubon Center on May 7 (BBi), East Granby Farms on May 10 (ND), Bent of the River Audubon in Southbury on May 12 (PCo), Nehantic State Forest in Lyme on May 23 (CL) and at Walden Preserve, Salem, on May 25 (JCI). Seldom seen but easily overlooked in spring migration, an Orange-crowned Warbler was reported from Goshen on May 12 (KFi). There were six reports of Cape May Warblers, always a sought-after species. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was singing April 26 in Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown, at the same place where a singing male made an extended stay last spring (BD). A second turned up at John Read Middle School

in Redding on May 9 (LT, JBe et al.). A Palm Warbler was somewhat late on May 10 in Woodbury (EHa). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was found May 5 at East Rock Park, the most reliable spot in the state for this southern species (BPr et al.) Then a second one was found there May 7 (RH et al). Kentucky Warblers were in Hamden on May 8 (CZ) and in Bolton on May 13 (EHr). The first of 11 Mourning Warbler reports came from East Rock Park on May 11 (FMc). In addition to the early Yellow-breasted Chat on April 25 in Barhamsted (FZ), singles were at Barn Island on May 7 (BD), in Hamden on May 21 (ABr) and at Lighthouse Point, New Haven, on May 25 (FW).

A tanager sweep included a male **Summer Tanager** reported from Edgewood Park, New Haven, on April 11 (DSc) and a female **Western Tanager** reported from HBSP on May 8 (fide JeCo). A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, more common in fall, was singing at Good Hill Farm Preserve in Woodbury on May 16 (PCo). The first Vesper Sparrow was on schedule April 14 at Allen's Mead-

ows, Wilton (LT). An early Grasshopper Sparrow was at Cove Island, Stamford, April 18-23 (Pdu et al.); we don't see many aside from those on territory. A Lapland Longspur lingered to April 11 at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport (LT), and a Snow Bunting was still present April 1 at Griswold Point, Old Lyme (HG). Single **Blue Grosbeaks** were in a yard in Greenwich on May 9 (AC) and at Saugatuck Falls Natural Area in Redding on May 23-24 (MW). The search for a Yellow-headed Blackbird turned up a **Dickcissel** April 8-16 in Milford (RH et al.).

A first documented state record for **Western Meadowlark** involved a well-watched, well-heard and well-photographed bird April 21-24 at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, where it was found by TGr, and its call notes were recorded by NB. An adult male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** visited feeders in a Milford neighborhood April 5-15 (SHa, SS et al). Seven double-figure counts of Rusty Blackbirds were received, including a high of 46 in a Hamden yard on March 6 (JZ). Away from the Stratford breeding

colony, a Boat-tailed Grackle appeared April 18 at HBSP, where breeding was attempted in 2008 (PDe), and one was at Sherwood Island on April 21-23 (GH et al.). A Baltimore Oriole was a bit early April 5 in Shelton (MJ).

Following a good winter flight, there were reports of about 30 **White-winged Crossbills**, including one flock of 12 on March 1 in Norwalk (JJa). The latest was one found dead on April 10 at Greenwich Audubon Society (BO). Common Redpolls appeared in small numbers primarily in mid- to late March. The massive winter incursion of Pine Siskins continued deep into spring. The Great Backyard Bird Count had 451 checklists with this species totaling 5,800 birds. Triple-digit feeder counts included 165 in Hamden on April 16 (JZ), 130 in Sterling on April 22 (RDi) and 110 still at the latter site on April 27. Jamie Meyers, who has been keeping lists for each Connecticut town for a number of years, was able to record siskins in all 169 towns by the time spring was over! At least 14 instances of nesting behavior were recorded throughout the state, ranging

from the collection of nesting material to confirmation in Canotn (JK), Greenwich (TB, TGi), Goshen (KFi), Meriden (PCo) and Sterling (RDi). The only Evening Grosbeak report was of a female at a feeder in Milford on April 25-26 (BPe).

Exotics - A Ruddy Shelduck was seen at several lower Fairfield County locations in May (var. obs.). Two Eurasian Goldfinches were in Riverside Park, Hartford, on May 9 (RBe).

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DeGennaro (PDe), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Bob Dewire, Mike Dewire, Angela Dimmitt, Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Carole Donagher, Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Ken Elkins, Carl Ekroth (CEk), Chris Elphick (CEl), Karen Fiske (KFs), Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan (KFi), Larry Flynn, Corrie Fulsom, Paul Fusco, Ted Gilman (TGi), Hank Golet, Tina Green (TGr), Lorraine Gunderson, Ed Hagen (EHa), Mahlon Hale, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHa), Shelley Harms (SHr), Ernie Harris (EHr), Jim Harris (JHa), Roy Harvey, Ted Hendrickson (THE), Brian Hiller, Thomas Hook, (THo), Julian Hough (JHo), Brenda Inskeep, Jalna Jaeger (JJa), Mark Jankura, John Johnson (JJo), Kris Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Russ Kinne, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Scott Kruitbosch (SKr), David Lawton (DLa), Twan Leenders, Donna Lorello (DLo), Chris Loscalzo, Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik (FMa), John Marshall (JMr), John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo (SMA), Flo McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Chris Meyers, Jamie Meyers

(JMe), Lisa Michaud, Rob Mirer, Mike Moccio (MMc); Wanda Moccio, Judy Moore (JMo), Marty Moore (MMo), Michelle Moore (MMr), Don Morgan, Steve Morytko (SMo), Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, John Ogren (JOg), Maryann O'Leary, John Oshlick (JOs), Brian O'Toole, Ron Pelletier, Beverly Perkins (BPe), Annie Perko, Bev Propen (BPr), Dave Provencher, James Randall (JRa), James Restivo (JRe); Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Joanna Rubino (JRu), Phil Rusch, Dean Rupp (DRu), Maryann Rupp, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Diane Scarponi (DSc), Mark Scott (MSc), Anita Shaffer, Donna Rose Smith (DSm), Dori Sosensky (DSo), Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Peary Stafford, Jerry Stage, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Andy Thiede, Luke Tiller, Brian Toal, Dave Tripp, Joe Valenti, Benjamin Van Doren, Dennis Varza, Mike Warner, Dorothy Wadlow, Brian Webster, John Weeks, Glenn Williams, Frank Wilson, Bill Yule, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmont.

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

S. Nicholls. 2009. **PARADISE FOUND**. Nature in America at the Time of Discovery. x+524 pgs. U. Chicago Press, Chicago, IL

P. Coats 2006 **AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRANT AND INVASIVE SPECIES**. Strangers on the Land. x+256 pgs. U. California Press, Berkeley, CA

Both Nicholls and Coats have a finely honed talent for capturing nature. Nicholls holds a PhD in entomology and Coats is an environmental historian. Both deal convincingly with sweeping, relevant issues. Coats' approach is a broad perspective on invasive species that includes both a social context and the biological implications. Nicholls' view is a historical one on the changes in biodiversity in North America since the arrival of Europeans in the closing years of the first millennium.

In "American Perceptions..." Coats argues that our dealing with alien, invasive, or otherwise "unwelcome immigrants" has significant social overtones as well as ecological consequences. He provides some illustrative examples where the two overlap. In his discussion of "The Alien Menace" he points out how, over the past 200 years, the term *alien* has become "the standard appellation" for human immigrants as well as introduced plant and animal species. The narrative becomes increasingly enlightening as he touches on the use of 'culturally loaded language' in describing "foreign species". It is refreshing to appreciate the social history of immigrants as a process in comparison with invasive (non-human) organisms. The first, with strong social and political overtones, the latter with unforeseen unintended biological consequences.

All this is brought into focus for birders in Chapter 2, 'The

Avian Conquest of a Continent', as Coats develops an extremely readable recounting of the story of the House Sparrow in America. The social history of the birds (both hated and admired by humans) is intertwined with the ecological consequences and the connection of its spread to technological advances (when cars replaced horses as power for transportation in large cities). All of this, of course, evolved from the purest of esthetic reasons on the part of the folks who imported the birds here. Subsequently, the spread of non-native species has often led to unintended consequences, another topic well treated. The ways in which the social implications and racial overtones are woven into the ecological history are mesmerizing.

. Other chapters include 'Plants, Insects, and Other Strangers to the Soil' and 'Arboreal Immigrants'. The latter especially allows Coats to deal with "Natural Beauty and Foreign Beauty", always a topic to raise environmentalists' eyebrows. I found the part on eucalypts (The Universal Australian) the most telling. The tale has been a continuously varying love-hate relationship among city planners, conservationists, the public, politicians, various Chambers of Commerce, and native plant enthusiasts, to name just a few. While the story spins out in California, there are consequences that involve fire hazards, landscape planning, plans for remedial action and restoration ecology. The book ends with a discussion of "The Nature of the Alien Nation." Coats points out that "immigrant species, in short, are everywhere, part and parcel of ecological communities that are fundamentally 'recombinant' (composed of species from multiple origins)". The primitive condition, a pristine native world, is unattainable. While the equivocal, messy, and unpredictable nature of "strangers on the land" is now history, it is critical that we concentrate on managing and coexisting with invasive exotics.

Nicholls, to extend the analogy, deals with only a single stranger on the land: humans. America was not pristine even before Columbus when the first Norse arrived, but a conglomerate of nations that lived pretty much in balance in with the land. Nicholls' goal is to describe the world the first

Europeans encountered, reconstruct their reactions to it, and explore the reasons for their broad impact. The reconstruction of the landscape and its biodiversity is laudable particularly in his use of eyewitness accounts, records of commercial endeavors (e.g. the Chesapeake oyster fisheries), fishing and whaling ports, government sponsored settlements, and numerous unexpected historical sources. Ultimately, colonists and early settlers resculptured the landscape. East of the 100th meridian this resulted in the extinction of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, and Bachman's Warbler.

From as early as the early 1700s fish populations in the North Atlantic were at risk. In the West, great populations of salmonoid fish, sea otters, and forest and water resources were challenged. Nicholls invokes "Christian Capitalism," the attitude that "free markets backed by a conviction that the natural world was made for human benefit alone" as the driving force behind these changes. The perception that abundance is infinite, that a resource is unending, or that there will be another to replace it, was rampant. It is the view that an unowned resource will inevitably be overexploited. Similar to the "tragedy of the commons" introduced 40 years ago which holds that it makes no sense for one to conserve sustainably a common resource, only to see a neighbor benefit by taking a larger share.

Expansion across America was unhindered, became governmental policy, and seemed to be confined only by mechanisms that could be controlled. However, over fishing, overgrazing, over harvesting, erosion, and pollution all took a toll. What Nicholls brings to the table is a new, extensive view of what was here as the transformation began. This was the time before insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers and largely unlimited population growth and expansion. He weaves together across time and space the underlying threads common to all these examples and suggests that a free market, while good at setting prices, is poor at recognizing environmental costs. Nicholls ends with a phrase he and poet Steve Turner coined: "History repeats itself. It has to; nobody listens."

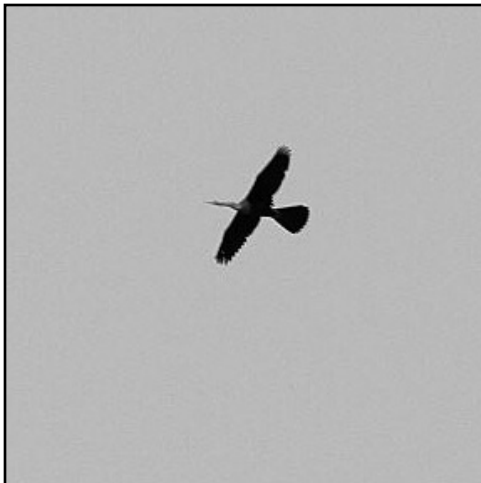
PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

It's a nice late summer day. You're out mowing your lawn, when by chance you look up and notice a dark bird soaring high overhead. The dark plumage, thin neck and large-fan-shaped tail are obvious and you wonder, half-jokingly, what on earth is a Wild Turkey doing soaring that high. Incredulously, you realize the bird is - holy moley- an Anhinga!

There's not even a niggling doubt that this might be a cormorant as you grab your bins from the nearby car. It's drifting higher and further away, but you are able to get nice, distant views of the bird as it slowly soars in circles, never once flapping. The neck is outstretched, but due to the distance, it's almost difficult to make out the head and neck at all, but what is obvious is the long, fan-shaped tail, which is proportionately long compared to the length of the body. When it catches the sun, the underside of the neck is buffish, which makes it a female (males are all dark-necked).

Wow..that was a cake id! Often this is the case when the bird is a real Anhinga. The only issue now, without a photo,





is how to get it accepted by the understanding folks on the ARCC! Anhinga is a species that is often confused with soaring Double-crested Cormorant, the default doppelganger for claimed Anhinga reports in Connecticut. Double-crested Cormorants, when they are up high riding thermals like hawks, can superficially recall Anhinga, and I've done my share of double takes in the past. Once you experience seeing cormorants soaring this way, the chance of creating a ruckus at a hawk watch becomes less and less, and those high-flying cormorants just get the once-over treatment they deserve. The Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC) has always struggled with reports of soaring Anhinga (an extreme state rarity) because of the general similarity in soaring flight to Double-crested Cormorant. The problem is compounded if the observer is unaware of the cormorant's ability to soar up to speck level, and doesn't even consider it as a possibility when making the Anhinga identification. When you see a real Anhinga, you realize that it's a classic case of "you'll know one when you see it" because they are distinctive creatures.

Compared with cormorants, Anhingas in flight have a very large, fan-shaped tail, which is often held fanned out and looks very pinched at the base. It's 28% of the body in Anhinga and only accounts for 19% in cormorants. Due to the dif-

ferences in morphology, Anhingas use their tail as a type of rudder and may move it in flight, which cormorants don't do. The wings are held out straight out, and head-on the wings are straight, not slightly bowed as in Double-crested Cormorant. When Anhingas are climbing, they make short, shallow flaps on stiff wings - the glide is of longer duration than the flaps. The overall effect is similar to that of a Cooper's Hawk. Double-crested Cormorants typically flap more continuously in non-soaring flight, much different than Anhingas.

In the accompanying photo, I've added in a young Double-crested for a basic comparison. You can see the shorter tail and obvious thicker neck of the cormorant. In Anhinga, because the neck is thinner and the head so small, the head becomes difficult to discern at long range.

Once the basic shape difference is analyzed, other differences become rather secondary. The wingtips of Anhinga often look more "fingered" like a hawk's, and the trailing edge of the wings

often look more serrated since the tips of each feather are rounded. In cormorants the wingtips often (but not always) look rather pointed and the trailing edge to the wing is smoother. At that stage, if you see one long enough and close enough to note such details, it means you really are trying to rub it in a little! Also, Anhingas, because of their biological differences from cormorants, do not make water-landings, so best to exclude any such behavior in your description to the ARCC!

To quote our illustrious and experienced Editor from a previous on-line forum:

"The best thing to bear in mind - if you see a soaring bird like this in Connecticut, it SHOULD be a D-c Cormorant. And if you see more than one together, they REALLY should be D-c Cormorants. If you think it's an Anhinga, take very detailed notes, make a sketch (emphasizing dimensions) and snap, snap, snap if you've got a camera."

I've seen the "anhinga test" given a few times on the hawk watch platform at Cape May. Someone finds a high soaring

bird and tells someone else to look at the "Anhinga." Often others enthusiastically endorse this ID. If you're ever the test-taker, here's a good answer:

"Where is it in relation to the cormorant?"



Photo Challenge No. 67

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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

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

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