

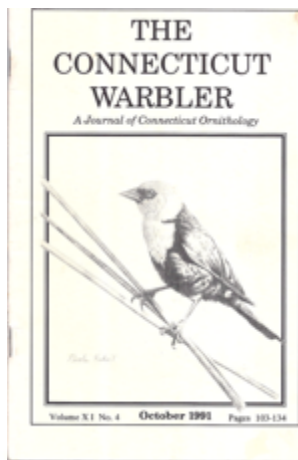
# COA Bulletin



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COA is an all volunteer organization with the mission of promoting interest in Connecticut birds, and collecting, preparing, and disseminating the best available scientific information on the status of Connecticut birds and their habitat. While COA is not primarily an advocacy organization, we work actively to provide scientific information and to support other conservation organizations in the state.



## THE CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2016-2017

### 117<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT An Eclectic Historical Timeline for Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts, Part I:

1900-1901 – The state’s first CBCs were conducted in the inaugural year of North American Christmas Bird Counts at Bristol (7 species and 68 individuals seen by Frank Bruen and R.W. Ford), and Norwalk (5 species and 45 individuals seen by George P. Ells). See *Bird-Lore*, Volume III, Number 1 (January-February 1901).

1906 – Connecticut CBCs expanded to New London (2 different counts), New Haven (7 different counts), Washington, Glastonbury, and South Norwalk, with the Bristol count continuing. See *Bird-Lore*, Volume IX, Number 1 (January-February 1907).

1916 – Aretas A. Saunders reported 12 Bob-white, an adult female Cardinal, and at least 100 Redpolls at the December 25 Clinton and Grove Beach CBC. The lead article in *Bird-Lore*, Volume XIX, Number 1 (January-February 1917) by Major Allan Brooks, entitled *Birds in the War-Zone*, stated “a few notes on the effect of the present unnatural conditions on the bird-life of the war-zone in Flanders may be of interest to the readers of *Bird-Lore*.”

1926 – Members of the Hartford Bird Study Club surveyed Talcott Mountain and vicinity, including covering 5 miles on snowshoes, and they recorded 16 species and 151 individuals. See *Bird-Lore*, Volume XXIX, Number 1 (January-February 1927).

1936 – At South Windsor, Charles W. Vibert and George T. Griswold reported one Northern Shrike and one Migrant [Loggerhead] Shrike. “The shrikes were studied carefully with telescopes to be positive we had both kinds.” See *Bird-Lore*, Volume XXXIX, Number 1 (February 1937).

1946 – The Port Chester, NY CBC (Rye and White Plains to Stamford, CT) tallied 72 species and 6,014 individuals. The lead article for the national count begins, “There seems to be little doubt but that the popular interest in bird study suffered during the war and that it has now risen to a peak unmatched in history.” See *Audubon Field Notes*, Volume I, Number 2.

1956 – The New London CBC reported 72 species and 5,505 individuals, including a Western Grebe [no details-Ed.]. Richard Goodwin (compiler) represented Connecticut College on the count. See *Audubon Field Notes*, Volume 11, Number 2.

(to be continued next year)

## CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2016-2017 SCHEDULE 117<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

### **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2016:**

New Haven, CT (CTNH) Compiler: Chris Loscalzo, 67 Wepawaug Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525  
[closcalz@optonline.net](mailto:closcalz@optonline.net) 203-389-6508  
(New Haven Bird Club)

Storrs, CT (CTST) Compiler: Steve Morytko, 288 Varga Road, Ashford, CT 06278  
[smorytko@yahoo.com](mailto:smorytko@yahoo.com) (M) 860-680-5728  
(Natchaug Ornithological Society)

Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (CTWR) Compilers: Renee Baade, 46 Obtuse Road, Newtown, CT 06470  
[rbaade@juno.com](mailto:rbaade@juno.com) (H) 203-270-9953, and Ken Elkins, Audubon Center at Bent of the River, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury, CT 06488 [kelkins@audubon.org](mailto:kelkins@audubon.org)  
203-405-9113  
(Western Connecticut Bird Club)

### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2016:**

Greenwich-Stamford, CT (CTGS) Compiler: Gary Palmer, 34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807  
203-661-4897 [gejlpalmer@yahoo.com](mailto:gejlpalmer@yahoo.com)  
(Audubon Greenwich)

Hartford, CT (CTHA): Compilers: Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019 [jaybrd49@aol.com](mailto:jaybrd49@aol.com)  
860-693-0263 (days), 860-693-0157 (evenings), and Steve Davis, [stevesuedavis@comcast.net](mailto:stevesuedavis@comcast.net) 860-242-2135.  
(Hartford Audubon Society)

Litchfield Hills, CT (CTLH) Compiler: Raymond E. Belding, 1229 Winsted Road #30, Torrington, CT 06790  
[hoatzin1@optonline.net](mailto:hoatzin1@optonline.net) 860-482-4046  
(Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

Napatree, RI-CT-NY (RINT) Compilers: Shai Mitra, Biology Department, College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314 [mitra@mail.csi.cuny.edu](mailto:mitra@mail.csi.cuny.edu) and Glenn Williams, 221 Pequot Avenue, Mystic, CT 06355 [gswilliams9@yahoo.com](mailto:gswilliams9@yahoo.com)

Oxford, CT (CTOX) Compiler: Roy Harvey, 32 Wanda Drive, Beacon Falls, CT 06403, [rmharvey@snet.net](mailto:rmharvey@snet.net),  
203-888-5757  
(Naugatuck Valley Audubon)

Quinnipiac Valley, CT (CTQV) Compilers: Melissa Baston, 860-995-0656 [mbaston@tgimachine.com](mailto:mbaston@tgimachine.com) and Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, 203-630-9640 [cfolsom-okeefe@audubon.org](mailto:cfolsom-okeefe@audubon.org)  
(Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society)

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2016, continued:**

Salmon River, CT (CTSR) Compiler: Joe Morin, 8 West Street Terrace, Cromwell, CT 06416, 860-635-2786  
[joseph.mor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:joseph.mor@sbcglobal.net)  
(Mattabeseck Audubon Society)

Westport, CT (CTWE) Compilers: Mardi and Townsend Dickinson, 20 Blake Street, Norwalk, CT 06851-3007,  
[mardi1d@gmail.com](mailto:mardi1d@gmail.com) 203-846-0359 and <http://kymrygroup.com>  
(Connecticut Audubon Birdcraft Museum/Kymry Group)

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2016:**

Barkhamsted, CT (CTBA) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 180 Funston Avenue, Apartment 2, Torrington, CT 06790, [dtrippjr@gmail.com](mailto:dtrippjr@gmail.com)  
(Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

Stratford-Milford, CT (CTSM) Compiler: Steve Mayo, 27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524,  
[rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net), 203-393-0694

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2016:**

Bristol, CT (CTBR) Compiler: Jack Swatt, 226 Long Swamp Road, Wolcott, CT 06716, [jswattbirds@gmail.com](mailto:jswattbirds@gmail.com), 203-592-4686

Guilford-Long Island Sound, (CTGL) Compilers: Tom Kelly, [thomask567@aol.com](mailto:thomask567@aol.com) and Louise Kelly, [lkelly0731@yahoo.com](mailto:lkelly0731@yahoo.com)  
(Menunkatuck Audubon Society)

New London, CT (CTNL) Compiler: Robert Dewire, 9 Canary Lane, Pawcatuck, CT 06379,  
[robertdewire9@comcast.net](mailto:robertdewire9@comcast.net), 860-599-3085

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2017:**

Old Lyme-Saybrook, CT (CTOL) Compiler: Barbara Hawes, 310 Boston Post Road, Unit #71, Waterford, CT 06385 860-710-5811, [bhawes71@gmail.com](mailto:bhawes71@gmail.com)  
(Potapaug Audubon Society)

Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY/CT (NYHV) Compilers: Carena Pooth, [carena@prodigy.net](mailto:carena@prodigy.net), and Angela Dimmitt, P.O. Box 146, Sherman, CT 06784, [angeladimmitt@aol.com](mailto:angeladimmitt@aol.com), 860-355-3429

**MONDAY, JANUARY 2, 2017:**

Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood Sanctuary, Hampton, CT (CTEW) Compiler: Sue Harrington, 28D Anton Road, Storrs, CT 06268, [hoopoe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hoopoe@sbcglobal.net), 860-429-6257  
(Natchaug Ornithological Society)

**Check with CT-LS compiler for this date:**

Lakeville-Sharon (Trixie Strauss CBC), CT (CTLS) Compiler: Robert Moeller, Post Office Box 1119, Sharon, CT 06069, Sharon Audubon Center/National Audubon Society, 325 Cornwall Bridge Road, Sharon, CT 06069, <http://sharon.audubon.org/>, 860-364-0520  
Sean Grace, [sgrace@audubon.org](mailto:sgrace@audubon.org)  
(Housatonic Audubon Society)

(compiled by Steve Broker)

## The Big Sit, Milford Point, 2016

### By Frank Mantlik

We knew it would rain, but not like this! Despite the awful weather - wind-driven rain - we stuck it out at our position. And this is supposed to be fun. We birders are a dedicated bunch.

It was Sunday, October 9, and that was the day our birding team decided to conduct our annual “The Big Sit!” at Milford Point. Members were captain Frank Gallo, Patrick Dugan, Tina Green, Tom Murray, and yours truly. Perennial team member, Jim Dugan, had to take a pass due to another commitment.

“The Big Sit!” is a friendly national/international birding competition whereby teams try to count as many species of birds they have identified from within a 17-foot diameter circle at a site of their choosing during the course of a calendar day. The brainchild of John Himmelman, a noted Connecticut naturalist, this event began in autumn of 1993. Initially sponsored by The New Haven Bird Club, it now is hosted by Bird Watcher’s Digest (<http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/bigsit/about.php>). Some have called it “a tailgate party for birders”. Let the birds come to us.

Our team, the “B.W. Surf Scopers”, have been “sitting” at Milford Point every year since the start, save one. This day, we met at the Connecticut Audubon Society’s Coastal Center at 4:30am, hours before sunrise, with the intention of hearing calling night-migrating passerines and secretive marsh dwellers. Unfortunately the cool, rainy, windy conditions prevented any migration this night. We heard nothing, nada, zip. We spent the time wondering why we got up so early, and got caught up with each other’s lives. It’s a great comradery. It’s also a major fundraiser for the Coastal Center, with people donating money based on how many species we find.

It’s not like we’re protected from the elements. Our designated count circle is on the outer observation platform on the dune of Smith’s Point, beyond the last beach house. No roof, no shelter. This exposed site was selected based on the 360-degree view we have of a variety of habitats: salt marsh, river, sand dune, bay, tidal mudflats, Long Island Sound, thickets, woods. It wasn’t until the gloomy dawn at 06:58 that we recorded our first species: Double-crested Cormorant. With daylight, there was an initial flurry of new bird species such as Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Great Egret, American Black Duck, American Oystercatcher, Herring Gull, and Tree Swallow.



(L) Bald Eagle (adult); (R) Hudsonian Godwits in migration flight (“Wow, were we pumped!”)  
Photos by Frank Mantlik.



The forecast was for rain only in the early morning, but it would prove to be with us most of the day. Our raingear eventually soaked through, and the chilly north wind resulted in near hypothermia conditions. But our collective spirit to stick it out prevailed. A couple good birds helped as well. Lesser Black-backed Gull on the sandbars, American Golden Plover and Red Knot among the many Black-bellieds, White-rumped Sandpiper seen and heard.

About 09:25, while I was crouching under the platform to try to stay a little drier, the others started yelling, “Hey, What are these?! Get on these birds!” A flock of large shorebirds were migrating west over the beach in front of us. “Godwits! ... Hudsonian!” I grabbed my wet camera and started shooting. Photos proved them to be 17 Hudsonian Godwits; no rare Black-tailed among them. What a thrilling sighting! This is a species that breeds in the arctic tundra, and winters in southern South America. Cornell’s All About Birds states: “Its remote breeding and wintering grounds have kept it one of the least well known of American shorebirds.” And, “it apparently makes nonstop flights of several thousand miles.” This is one of the largest flocks of this species recorded in recent history in CT. Wow! Were we pumped!

Following that, new species for the day trickled in. Northern Harrier, Black-capped Chickadee, Blackpoll and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Song Sparrow. Then there was a real lull. No new birds. No improving weather. Yuk. Time for a cold sandwich to go with the lukewarm tea. The rain continued, and the wind increased from the north at 22 mph, with gusts to 30. BRRRR! Finally we surrendered and retreated to the shelter of our nearby cars. We were thankful that a local resident granted us permission to park at the end of the private road. Car heaters on full blast. Dry out our clothes and our optics. Patrick’s mate, Wendy, delivered hot chili to us. Ahhhh!

While contemplating calling it a day, a check of the radar showed a break in the rain approaching. We returned to our platform, and finally the rain ceased at 3:15pm. Birds were aloft, and we added a bunch of new species: Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle, Turkey and Black Vultures. Our measly day’s bird list was getting a much-needed boost.

The sun finally broke through the clouds at 6pm, creating a spectacular rainbow. The golden Spartina marsh grass glowed in the late day sunlight. Soon the sunset was spectacular. Our hardcore team, cold and wet, prevailed. We tallied 69 species (in 12 hours), a respectable total given the weather, but nowhere near our record of 117, set in 2014. It was good enough for 9<sup>th</sup> place overall, among 161 teams worldwide. Our cumulative “Big Sit” list for this site is a whopping 190 species. To view the day’s complete eBird list, click here:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S31968407>



(Left) Tom Murray, Patrick Dugan, Tina Green, and Frank Gallo.

(Right) Selfie!

Photos by Frank Mantlik.



## COA WORKSHOPS (CHRIS LOSCALZO, CHAIR)

Photos by Steve Broker



Chris Loscalzo provides an introduction to the COA sparrow workshop at Bauer Farms, Madison, October 8 2016. The second stop was at Hammonasset Beach State Park.



Frank Mantlik, co-leader of the COA workshop, adds comments about the habitat preferences of sparrows expected in the fall at Bauer Farms.



Middle Row, Left: one group of birders focuses on actively moving sparrows at Bauer Farms.



Middle Row, Right: Bill Batsford (COA board member) and John Coggins (long-time friend to COA with our annual meetings at Middlesex Community College, Middletown) enjoying the birds of Bauer Farms.

Below Right: Bauer Farming Project: “Building soil, food and community.”





**RECENT SIGHTINGS – THIRD RECORD IN CONNECTICUT**

Say's Phoebe, Trout Brook Valley Conservation Area – Aspetuck Land Trust Wilton, September 18, 2016. Photo by Nick Bonomo. The two previous records are a specimen collected at Gaylordsville on December 15, 1916 and a sight record at Shelton on October 12, 2012.

**RECENT SIGHTINGS – FIRST STATE RECORD**

Pending approval by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC)



Sprague's Pipit, Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, October 23, 2016. Photo by AJ Hand.  
"Found primarily on native prairie of the Northern Great Plains" (Birds of North America Online).

### RECENT SIGHTINGS – FALL SPARROWS



Savannah Sparrow, Silver Sands State Park, Milford. Photo by Frank Mantlik.



Grasshopper Sparrow, Stratford Point, Stratford, September 28, 2016. Photo by Townsend Dickinson.



Middle Row Left: Nelson's Sparrow. Middle Row, Center: Saltmarsh Sparrow. Middle Row Right: Grasshopper Sparrow. Bottom Row Left: Swamp Sparrow. All four of these photos taken at Silver Sands State Park, Milford. Bottom Row Right: Dark-eyed Junco at Stratford. Photos by Frank Mantlik.





**RECENT SIGHTINGS – FALL RARITIES and more common species**



American Bittern, Watch Rock, Old Lyme, September 18, 2016. Photo by Hank Golet.



Above, Top Right:  
Common Eider, Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford, November 26, 2016. Photo by Hank Golet.

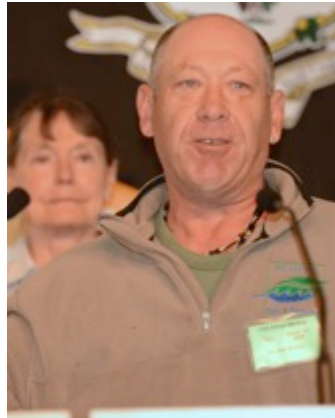
Above, Bottom Right:  
Forster's Tern, Lord Cove, Lyme, September 20, 2016. Photo by Hank Golet.



Below, Left:  
Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison, December 9, 2016. Photo by Steve Broker.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**COA Mini-Grants Available:** The COA Mini-Grant committee is now accepting applications for its 2017 awards. The purpose of COA Mini-Grants is to help fund and support initiatives within the state of Connecticut which specifically benefit the avian wildlife in our state. It has always been part of COA's mission to reach out to all of those in Connecticut who appreciate our state's birds and support bird management/conservation initiatives whenever possible. The total amount available is \$2,500, and the deadline for submission is January 15, 2017. Complete information and application forms can be found on the COA website at <http://www.ctbirding.org/minigrantguide.htm>



2016 Mini-Grant Organizations: (Left) Ansonia Nature Center, represented by Alison Rubelmann. (Center) New Haven Department of Parks, Recreation, and Trees, represented by Dan Barvir. (Right) White Memorial Foundation, represented by Carrie Szwed.

### Young Birder Scholarship 2017:

The Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) is pleased to announce that we are offering one Young Birder Scholarship in 2017 to nurture interest in bird study and conservation among young birders. The 2017 scholarship covers the full cost (\$1,295.00) of the Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens program at [National Audubon's Hog Island camp](#) during the week of June 18-23, 2017. The cost includes housing, boat travel, and all meals. The scholarship recipient is responsible for the cost of transportation to and from the camp.

Applicants must be a Connecticut resident, ages 14-17, and must submit a [written application](#) and two letters of reference. Preference will be given to applicants with individual or family COA membership. To be considered a member, an applicant may join the club at the time of application.

Completed applications and references must be received by the COA by January 15, 2017.

**COA Annual Meeting - Save The Date:** The coming year's COA Annual Meeting is being held on Saturday, March 18, 2017 at Middlesex Community College, Middletown, CT. Our featured speakers are as follows: In "The Trade Off", John Kricher, Professor of Biology at Wheaton College, contrasts the lives, ecology, and natural history of long-distance migrant passerine birds with passerines that are permanent residents of lowland tropical forests. Focusing on the seldom seen "Water Babies: Young & Adult Birds of Wetlands", naturalist, writer, and photographer Bill Burt gives a slide presentation on the downy young of ducks, grebes, gallinules, shorebirds, herons, and other birds of wetlands. Author and illustrator David Sibley talks about the long but enjoyable journey from idea to finished book, including his *New York Times* best seller, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*.

The Annual Meeting also features the presentation of COA awards, the Association's business meeting, and election of officers and board members, vendor exhibits, and the ever-popular COA Raffle. Watch for details on the COA website, in the Spring 2017 *COA Bulletin*, and in your membership renewal letter, coming soon.

**COA Calendar for Connecticut birding events!** <http://www.ctbirding.org/calendar.htm>





## Twenty-Five Years Ago in The Connecticut Warbler Compiled by Steve Broker Volume XI, No. 4 (October 1991)



### The 1991 Summer Bird Count, by Joseph Zeranski.

Nineteen ninety-one ushered in COA sponsored Summer Bird Counts (SBCs) for Connecticut. Modeled on and resembling Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), except for their balmy days and singing birds, these counts are much more fun.

The first CBC type census during the breeding season was conducted in Captree, Long Island in 1972. Beginning with the Greenwich-Stamford Count in 1976, Connecticut completed a season-high three SBCs during 1990. This year, COA coordinated a statewide program to promote, organize and publish summer bird counts, and five SBCs were held. The Storrs count experienced its second year, while Hartford and New Haven were initiated this year. Well on the way to establishing their own distinctive patterns of bird distribution are the Greenwich-Stamford Count and the Woodbury-Roxbury Count. Two other SBCs did not progress beyond the planning stage, although there are hopes for 1992. COA is committed to encouraging the counts, believing they will become popular and invaluable research tools, but it will take a few years before SBCs achieve the consistency of their winter counterparts.

One hundred sixty-nine species were reported on Count Days (CD) in 1991. Of these, 147 are considered current or recent nesters, two potential nesters, two regular summer visitors and eighteen late migrants (see table in article). Three species, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Nighthawk and Yellow-breasted Chat, occurred only as Count Period (CP) birds this year. Counts averaged 30 observers, 12,828 individual birds, about 118 species (coastal – 132, inland – 109) and 125 party hours (PH). Three new species, Piping Plover, Common Black-headed Gull and Monk Parakeet, were added to the 213 seen from 1976 through last year.

[Ed's note: In Joe Zeranski's Acknowledgements section, he states, "a strong word of appreciation is due Winnie Burkett, whose enthusiasm initiated this imaginative undertaking. Her regrettable move to Texas has left a large hole in COA ranks and she will be sorely missed." Also, see the individual count summaries, including participants, and the complete SBC results for 1991. Ruddy Turnstone winter photo by Steve Broker.]

### Aquatic Foraging, by Paul Carrier.

I have always assumed that a Swamp Sparrow forages for seeds produced by the grasses and sedges found in its damp environment. On 25 May, 1990, I observed an unusual behavior that challenged this assumption. While waiting in a dense swamp for some warblers to venture closer, I noticed a beautiful Swamp Sparrow deep within some grasses. It was looking for food at the water's edge when it suddenly jumped onto some grass stalks well out from the swamp edge, and proceeded to walk down the stalk to the surface of the water. It then lowered its entire head into the water and appeared to turn over submerged leaves in search of something. (Water bugs, perhaps?)

Returning home I turned to my Bent Life Histories for some clues. Bent states that the Swamp Sparrow is much more insectivorous than the Song Sparrow. In winter, its diet consists of 84 per cent or more grains. In summer, grains make up only 12 per cent of the sparrow's diet. Bent continues, that beetles, ants and other hymenoptera are the Swamp Sparrow's chief insect fare. Behavioral notes state that the Swamp Sparrow wades in shallow water and picks insects and seeds from the surface, but there is no mention of the bird feeding under water. In fact, Bent goes on to explain that E.T. Seton claimed the bird showed great fear of getting wet! Was my observation a new, or at least an undocumented behavior for this species? [Swamp Sparrow photo by Frank Mantlik.]

[Ed's note: See also the important article, "Published Photographs of Birds in Connecticut", by George A. Clark, Jr.. These and other articles from the October 1991 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* may be seen in their entirety at the following link to the COA website. Download Volume 11, and view pages 103-134.]

<http://www.ctbirding.org/Warbler/CTWarblerVolume11.pdf>



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## CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Annual Meeting	Tina Green, Bob Dixon, Maureen Wolter
Avian Records	Jay Kaplan
Awards	Steve Mayo
Conservation, Refuge Relations	Patrick Comins
Electronics	Gina Nichol, Scott Kruitbosch
Finance	Paul Wolter
Membership	Larry Reiter
Mini-Grants	Kathy Van Der Aue
Nominating	Tina Green
Publicity	Lynn Jones
Research	Tom Robben
Workshops	Chris Loscalzo
The Connecticut Warbler	Greg Hanisek
COA Bulletin	Steve Broker
Christmas Bird Count Compiler	Steve Broker
Summer Bird Count Compilers	Joe Zeranski & Patrick Comins
Great Backyard Bird Count	Patrick Comins

The COA Bulletin is the quarterly newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, published in February, May, September, and December. Please submit materials for the next issue by January 15, 2017 to Stephen P. Broker  
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