

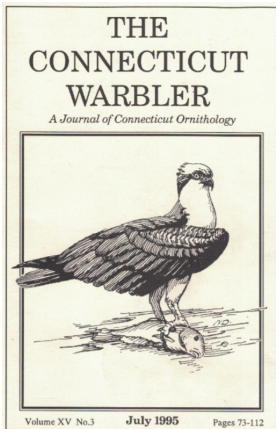
COA Bulletin



Tropical Storm Delivers Tropical Terns Andrew Dasinger

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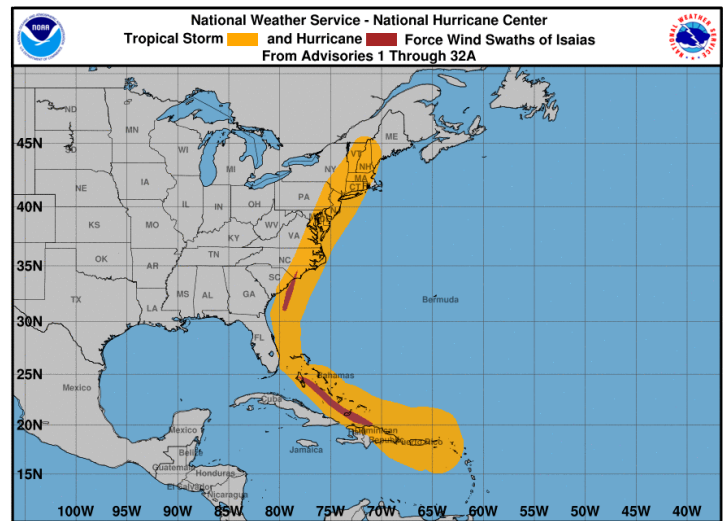
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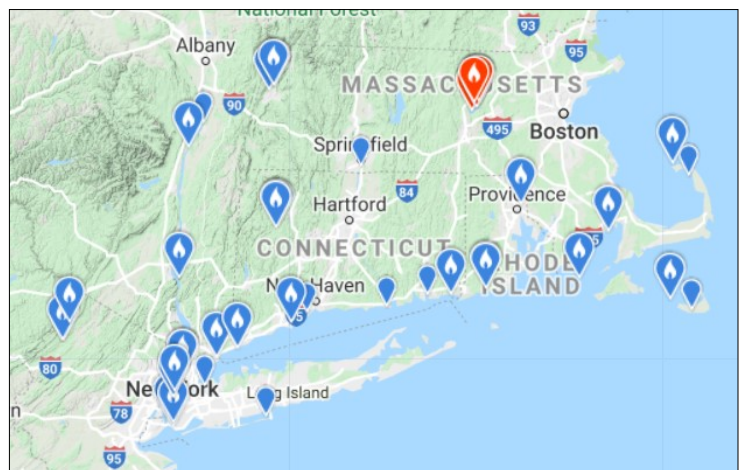
COA is an all-volunteer organization with the mission of promoting interest in Connecticut birds, and collecting, preparing, and disseminating the best available scientific information on the status of Connecticut birds and their habitats. While COA is not primarily an advocacy organization, we work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

Tropical Storm Isaias hit Connecticut hard with near-hurricane force winds, toppling countless trees and knocking out power to many, some of us for up to a week. As the map of the wind swaths suggests, we were on the east side of the track, the place to be for witnessing any storm-driven pelagic species. However, after making landfall in North Carolina, the storm center traced a path that remained over land along the eastern seaboard, making it far from certain that we'd see any significant fallout. A number of intrepid birders were able to get out during or shortly after the storm, however, to check the coast and large inland bodies of water.

The first storm bird sightings were at about 3:30 p.m. An inland report came from Bantam Lake, where 5 Sooty Terns were discovered by Fran Zygmunt and Nicolas Main, who quickly got the word out. At about the same time (3:28 to be precise), Frank Gallo spotted a Sooty Tern at the coast from Shippan Point in Stamford. A handful of other birders were able to navigate their way to Bantam Lake to observe the group of terns again at about 4:30 p.m. Shippan Point produced a second Sooty at 4:22 p.m.; like the first bird it was heading east.



Wind swath of Isaias as it tracked up the East coast



Locations of Sooty Tern observations in southern New England, New York and northern New Jersey during and after Tropical Storm Isaias

It made sense to monitor the major rivers for any birds that were making a beeline back to the ocean after being swept inland. This hunch proved fruitful for Frank Mantlik and Linda Olsen, who watched a Sooty Tern coming down the Housatonic River at Knapps Landing in Stratford. One can only wonder if a watch of the Connecticut River would have had a similar outcome. The discovery of a resting Sooty Tern on the bank of the river in Longmeadow, MA, at 8 p.m. the day after the storm (which subsequently flew away from the observer) suggests such a river watch might have indeed proved worthwhile.

Farther east on the Connecticut shoreline, single Sooty Terns were also spotted in Milford (a potential juvenile bird at Trubee Doolittle Park), Old Saybrook (Cornfield Point), and Stonington (Stonington Pint) late in the afternoon and evening.

The jackpot for Sooty Terns was north of CT in the Berkshires, with a high count of 18 birds found at Pontoosuc Lake in Pittsfield, MA, the afternoon of August 4 during the storm's passage. The following day there were a couple reports of just a single bird., then none. Much farther east, Wachusett Reservoir hosted one or two Sooty Terns for an entire week, from August 5 through August 12. This is highly unusual given the propensity of these birds to head for the coast as soon as the winds subside.

Only one Sooty Tern was reported in Connecticut on the day after the storm (according to eBird), in eastern Long Island Sound from the Fishers Island Ferry, suggesting the exodus was swift and complete. It seems that Rhode Island and Massachusetts, however, were the beneficiaries of such post-storm dispersal. On August 5 and 6, the Rhode Island shore, Buzzards Bay, Cape Cod, and Nantucket all hosted Sooty Terns.

Besides Sooty Terns, the only other pelagics of note reported in Connecticut (where any pelagic is a true rarity) included one or more Cory's Shearwaters, a Sooty Shearwater, and a Wilson's Storm-Petrel at Cornfield Point, Old Saybrook, a Great Shearwater at Stonington Point, and some Red-necked Phalaropes (including one flock of 40 at Southport Beach). With 2020 shaping up to be a record breaking hurricane season, who knows, we might even end up with another opportunity this year to see some more tropical terns or other exotic visitors!



Sooty Tern, Knapps Landing (Frank Mantlik, 4 Aug 2020)



Sooty Tern, Stonington Point (Russ Smiley, 4 Aug 2020)



Sooty Tern, Bantam Lake, Litchfield Town Beach (John Oshlick, 4 Aug 2020)

A Connecticut Birding Fixture Migrates North

Jason Reiger

It's a cold Sunday morning in January, and after a long confusing drive (even with Google Maps), you pull into the Quinebaug Valley State Trout Hatchery parking lot. You've signed up for a bird walk at a fish hatchery in Plainfield. You wonder why this fish hatchery is a birding destination and if Plainfield is really a town. And then a friendly, quiet mannered guy walks over to you with an outstretched hand; "Hi, I'm Bob Dixon". A wonderful and informative walk ensues followed by an invite back to the Dixon home for wife Linda's warm hospitality and some incredible feeder watching. This is a familiar experience shared by so many Connecticut birders.



But after many years of leading walks, hosting amazing yard birds and scores of birders, this past January a consummate friend of Connecticut birding migrated north to The Pine Tree State. Bob and Linda Dixon closed on the sale of their long-time home and birding wonderland in Sterling to start a new chapter in Eliot, Maine. Their home at 179 Main Street was not just any house on the block; it was more like a legit bird sanctuary complete with an abundance of native plantings, feeder stations, water features, an assortment of nest boxes, a woodland trail, a bird blind and of course the rooftop platform on the shed to hold vigil for nocturnal flight calls.

Bob and Linda spent many years of meticulous and steadfast care creating attractive habitat and innovative custom feeder stations. Their endeavors set the table for attracting their well-loved avian guests. And boy did the birds come! They came in great abundance and diversity, and not long after, the birders followed. They hosted many rarities and interesting birds over the years. A Rufous Hummingbird was the first feathered vagrant to put the Dixon homestead in the spotlight, but that was just the beginning. Multiple Yellow-headed Blackbirds, White-winged Doves, and Dickcissels are a few of the more famous visitors of the 174 species Bob has recorded there. Pine Siskin flocks, Black Vultures at the "meat feeder", reliable Whip-poor-will's, and ungodly numbers of cardinals would be regulars listed in Bob's ever popular "STERLING YARD" posts to CT Birds. And his winter feeder birds always included some hardy stayovers. For anyone doing a CT Big January, the fish hatchery walk and Bob's yard was a must. And on top of enjoying the plethora of birds, so many birders would leave the Dixon residence inspired to "bird-scape" and create a welcoming environment for birds in their own yards.

In addition to sharing their ridiculously birdy home with CT birders, Bob also introduced the broader birding community to the Quinebaug fish hatchery - affectionately known as "The Baug". This now well-known birding hot spot was unfamiliar to most birders until Bob put it on the map with his frequent trip reports, January walks, and his annual Big Sit team - The Baug Watchers.

Bob's contributions to the birding community transcended the borders of his local patch. Christmas Bird Counts in the Groton reservoir system with the "Reservoir Dogs", and the annual statewide "Duck Hunt" were always notable events under Bob's leadership. While a longstanding board member of the COA, Bob oversaw the amazing raffle each year at the annual meeting with Linda at his side - a job that required preparations throughout the year. Bob also shared his decades of experience by serving on the CT Avian Rare Records Committee.

A kind and generous friend to all with a constellation of contributions to Connecticut birding, Bob will be sorely missed. Although Connecticut can lament the loss of such a well-loved birding institution, Maine birding will be all the richer. And wouldn't it be fun to be a fly on the wall when the Maine eBird moderators spit out their coffee viewing the lists coming in from the Dixon yard!

Eastern Bluebird History – Woodbury/Roxbury Count Circle – 1973-2020

By Angela Dimmitt

In the Fall 2013 issue of the COA Bulletin, an article appeared tracing the history of bluebirds counted in the Woodbury/Roxbury Count Circle in the Christmas and Summer Bird Counts, from 1973 and 1978 respectively. The chart to the right updates the data through the June 2020 count. What started out as a very promising increase in Eastern Bluebird populations based on this one small count shows it is still largely true for summer breeding birds, which have more or less plateaued, but the winter counts vary enormously, though on a basically downward trend. This is not a scientific study and there are many variables such as effort (i.e. number of participants and time spent in the field) and the weather.

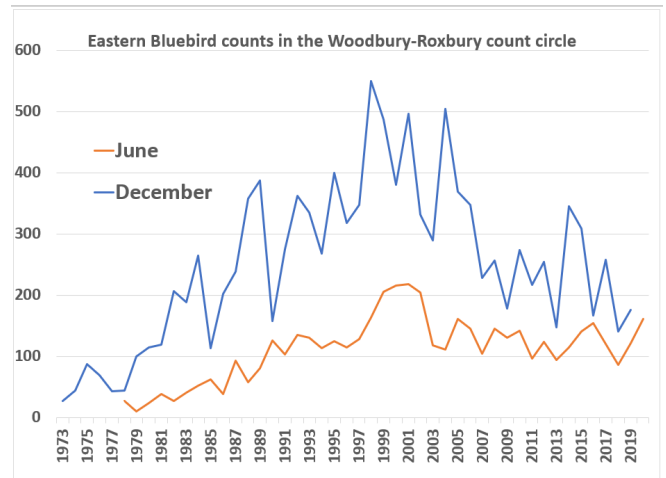


Brief analysis of such effort yields no clear patterns or correlation with the number of birds counted. While the summer count may include fledglings from the first brood, the December count would perhaps be more affected by breeding success that summer, and also the weather leading up to the count and indeed the weather on that particular day, affecting both the birds and the counters. I draw no definitive

conclusion.

The Woodbury/Roxbury Circle was established in 1973 with the Christmas count, now held the first Saturday after December 14. The Summer Bird Count was started in June 1978 and was always held on the first Sunday in June, though relaxed this year to the first weekend in June. The 15-mile diameter circle is centered at the junction of Upper Grassy Hill Road and Rucum Road in Woodbury, and encompasses the towns of Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Roxbury, Southbury and Woodbury, and parts of Brookfield, Middlebury, New Milford and Washington.

Angela Dimmitt is on the Board of the COA; is President of the Western Connecticut Bird Club (founded in 1978 by a group who previously participated in the Christmas count), and a member of Litchfield Hills Audubon Society. She is an area captain for the Woodbury/Roxbury count circle, also co-compiler of the Pawling/Hidden Valley Christmas Count and compiler of the New Milford/Pawling Summer Bird Count. She lives in New Milford.



Upcoming Events

Connecticut Bird Atlas Volunteer Appreciation Event

October 27th, 7 - 8 PM

This will be an online Zoom meeting. We will send details at a later date.

There will be a brief presentation on the data collected, status, concerns, trends, and projections.

We will discuss how the project will move forward with Covid considerations.

Most of the time will be for Questions and Answers.

We hope you can join us.

The CT Bird Atlas Project Team



CIPWG Invasive Plant Symposium

Wednesday, October 7th, 8 AM - 3:45 PM

Cosponsored by COA, the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group's 2020 symposium Realistic Solutions to Managing Invasive Plants takes the form of a full-day webcast, open to all; Wednesday, October 7, 2020 (with recordings of sessions available to registered attendees post-symposium). Sessions include a variety of techniques for management of terrestrial invasives in different situations, aquatic invasives, and native alternatives. CEU's for 11 organizations and Pesticide Recertification Credits are available. Registration \$50 (\$65 after Sept. 7; \$25 Students). Symposium information can be found on the CIPWG website at <https://cipwg.uconn.edu/2020-symposium/>.



Amazing Eggs!



Killdeer nest, Chester (Mark Aronson, 31 May 2020)



Black Vulture nest site, Oswegatchie Hills, East Lyme (Glenn Williams, 5 May 2020)



American Woodcock nest, Prospect Mt. Road (Marie Kennedy, 12 Apr 2020)



Field Sparrow nest with eggs (one Brown headed Cowbird) at Shangri La Preserve (John Correia, 21 May 2020)



Purple Martin nest with eggs at Sherwood Island State Park (Tina Green, 9 Jun 2020)



Hermit Thrush nest, Cornwall (Benjamin Van Doren, 26 June 2020)

(All photos are from eBird checklists)

Patient Parents on the Nest



Ruby-thr. Hummingbird, Ashford Lake, Eastford (Steve Morytko, 9 Jul 2020)



Bald Eagle at nest, Oxford (William Banks, 29 Apr 2020)



Yellow-crowned Night Heron at nest, Wilcox Park, Milford (Stephen Spector, 3 May 2020)



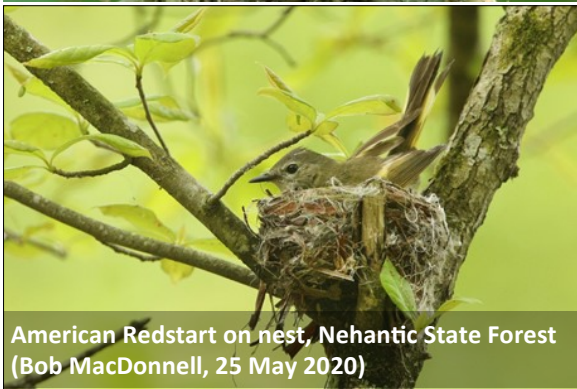
Northern Raven at nest on Main Street, Stratford (Frank Mantlik, 25 Mar 2020)



Wood Thrush on nest, Roosevelt Forest (Frank Mantlik, 25 May 2020)



Acadian Flycatcher on nest, Nehantic State Forest (Bob MacDonnell, 18 Jun 2020)



American Redstart on nest, Nehantic State Forest (Bob MacDonnell, 25 May 2020)



Ovenbird on nest, Cornwall (Benjamin Van Doren, 30 May 2020)

No time to rest, they're out of the nest!



Wild Turkey poults at Sandy Point, West Haven (Gillian Smits, 12 Jul 2020)



American Oystercatcher chick at Milford Point (Stephen Spector, 1 Jul 2020)



Piping Plover chick at Milford Point (Brendan Murtha, 21 Jul 2020)



Hooded Merganser ducklings and 2 adopted Mallard ducklings, Kelley Pond, Middlebury (Chris Wood, 7 Jun 2020)



Clapper Rail young at Pine Creek, Fairfield (Jim Jacques, 18 Jul 2020)



Herring Gull chicks on Calf Island, Stuart B. McKinney NWR (Oliver Patrick, 2 Jul 2020)



Fledgling Barred Owl at nest site in Easton (Kristof Zyskowski, 11 May 2020)



Recently fledged Eastern Kingbirds in Colchester (David Mathieu, 21 Jul 2020)

Selected Late Spring and Summer Rarities



Franklin's Gull at Griswold Point, Old Lyme (Dave Provencher, 5 Jun 2020)



Black-necked Stilt at Barn Island, Stonington (Dave Provencher, 30 May 2020)



American Avocet, Plum Bank Marsh, Old Saybrook (Dave Provencher, 21 Aug 2020)



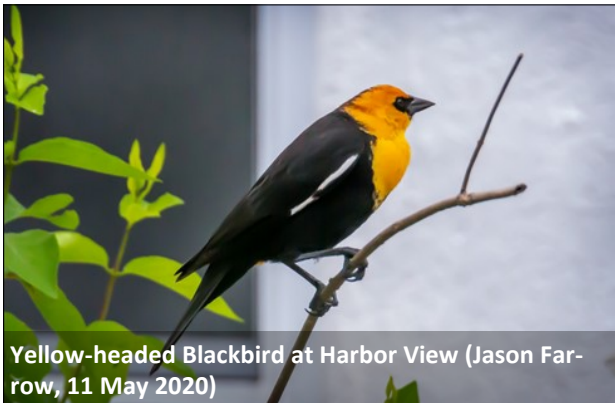
Kentucky Warbler at Bent of the River Sanctuary, Southbury (Chris Wood, 30 May 2020)



Prothonotary Warbler at Edgewood Park, New Haven (William Batsford, 29 May 2020)



Summer Tanager at Colchester residence (Sharon Dellinger, 16 May 2020)



Yellow-headed Blackbird at Harbor View (Jason Farrow, 11 May 2020)

Twenty-Five Years Ago in *The Connecticut Warbler* **Compiled by Steve Broker**

Volume XIV, No. 3 (July 1994)

Human-Induced Flight in Breeding Connecticut Ospreys, by John P. Roche

Although Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) are less affected by human activity than some other raptors (ref. given), they will fly from the nest when approached by humans. Quantifying the amount of time spent in human-induced flight by Ospreys breeding in suburban areas provides an important addition to our understanding of their activity budgets and allows us to assess the potential energetic effects of human disturbance. In this paper I examine the percentage of time Ospreys were observed to spend in human-induced flight at nests in southeastern Connecticut. [Ed's Note: the author devoted more than 325 hours of field observations of four Osprey nests in Stonington, Groton, and Madison. He notes that "although Ospreys are rebounding in numbers in the eastern U.S. since the banning of DDT in this country", the birds remain vulnerable to human disturbance, habitat alteration, changes in availability of prey species, and pollution. Key references cited include papers by Alan Poole and Paul Spitzer.

Christmas Counts - 1970-1994: A 25 Year Comparison, by Fred C. Sibley and Stephen P. Broker

Each year for many years the authors have tried to find meaning in the leftovers from the great annual party called the Christmas Bird Count. Long after your friends have tired of hearing how you and you alone paused to pursue a strange twitter in the reeds and came up with the first ever Yellow-backed Strange Twitter, the compilers are still counting one towhee, two towhee, three towhee, four. The compilers are also refusing to answer their phones, mail and requests from friends to finish the count. As a result your authors have unlimited time to concoct fanciful theories while waiting for that last count to arrive. Steve extracted "The 1994-95 Conclusion(s)" for the last issue of "The Warbler." This article is some of what didn't fit in the last issue.

[Ed's Note: Fred Sibley wrote the intellectual part of this article, while I did much of the initial data crunching. His opening paragraph rings true to me now twenty-five years later. Fred's perceptive analysis includes: descriptions of bird species recovering from DDT decline (Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk); introduced species (Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Monk Parakeet, House Finch); species showing an increase in population (eight listed, including Brant, Gadwall, Ring-billed Gull, and Northern Saw-whet Owl); species with higher Christmas Count totals - cause unknown; southern species moving north (Turkey Vulture, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren); opportunistic late lingerers; lost non-hearty species (discussion of warblers); half-hearty species, and; declining species (including Canvasback and Evening Grosbeak). Appendix I lists top ten species 1970-94. Appendix II lists 67 species that have shown two-fold, three-fold, four-fold, or five-fold increase in average yearly counts from 1970-74 to 1990-94. Appendix III shows 37 species that have experienced decreases in numbers to 1/2, 1/3rd, 1/4th, and 1/5th earlier levels over this same 25-year period. Along the way, Fred writes with a remarkable depth of knowledge of changing bird populations and with a wonderful sense of humor. His inspired writing is particularly important for examination of the subsequent twenty-five years of CBC data and in light of the current Connecticut Bird Atlas project (2017-2021/22) with its breeding, wintering, and migration components.]

Mortality of Connecticut Birds on Roads and at Buildings, by Nancy A. Codoner

Historically, shooting and habitat destruction have been major human causes of avian mortality. However, technological advances have created additional sources of mortality, including houses and motor vehicles. In 1975 (it was estimated that) in the United States about 3,500,000 birds die from window strikes each year and 57,179,000 birds are killed by vehicles each year. Although the percentage of birds killed by vehicle strikes or

window strikes is not very high relative to estimates of all sources of mortality, it is unknown whether or not these kinds of mortality have increased in recent decades. Vehicle strikes would be a cause of mortality which did not exist before this century, and window strikes would have risen throughout this century parallel to the increasing number of buildings.

[Ed's Note: With extensive experience in wildlife rehabilitation, Nancy Codoner used two data sets for her analysis of bird mortality. A total of 321 bird specimens from the University of Connecticut study skin collection were known to have been killed by vehicle and window strikes from the early 1960s to the early 1990s. In addition, data were examined for 229 window and vehicle injured birds that had been brought to The Nature Center for Environmental Activities in Westport, Connecticut for potential rehabilitation some of which survived and were released back into the wild, while others expired. Two of five tables presented list species and bird families most frequently involved in car strikes and window strikes. This is an important study drawn from museum specimens and wildlife rehabilitation efforts.]

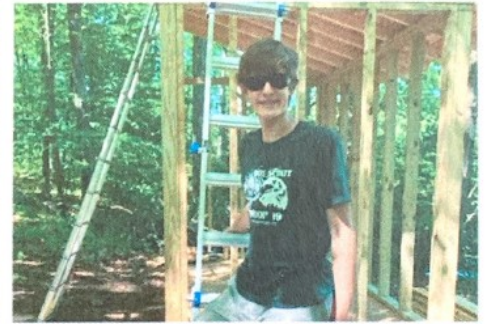
[Ed's Note: See also the book review by Wayne R. Petersen on *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut*. 1994. Louis R. Bevier, editor. Illustrated by Michael DiGiorgio; Mark Szantyr's call for written reports of birds that appear on the COA list of review species ("All of us, observers, reporters, photographers, and [avian records] committee members, are creating an historical record and we must recognize the responsibility that accompanies such an endeavor"); *Connecticut Field Notes*, December 1, 1994-February 28, 1995, by Greg Hanisek. Cover art of *Osprey with fish* is by Michael DiGiorgio. The July 1995 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* can be seen in its entirety at the following link to the COA website. Download Volume 15, and scroll down to pages 73-112.].

<http://www.ctbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTWarblerVolume15.pdf>

A taste of winter ... in June, July, and August



Words of appreciation from one of COA's mini-grant recipients



Dear COA Members,

I am sending this card with pictures of the bird blind I was able to build for the Litchfield Audubon Society at Boyds Woods in Litchfield. Thank you again for your generous support. I am hoping that birders and nature lovers will enjoy the bird blind for many years to come. I appreciate being a recipient of your mini grant.

Yours truly,
Lucas Oles

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Great Backyard Bird Count	Patrick Comins
Mini-Grants	Kathy Van Der Aue

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 November 1, 2020 to the editor at amdasinger@gmail.com