

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



Volume 35 No. 3

July 2015

Pages 81-120

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July 2015

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ON THE COVER

Common Nighthawk

It's almost time to start scanning the sky for southbound Common Nighthawks. These graceful insect-eaters, shown on our cover in a typical perching posture by Paul Carrier of Harwinton, can appear anywhere in the state, sometimes in large, swirling flocks as they feed on the move.

THE 2014-2015 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Stephen P. Broker

"It is not many years ago that sportsmen were accustomed to meet on Christmas Day, 'choose sides,' and then, as representatives of the two bands resulting, hie them to the fields and woods on the cheerful mission of killing practically everything in fur or feathers that crossed their path – if they could."

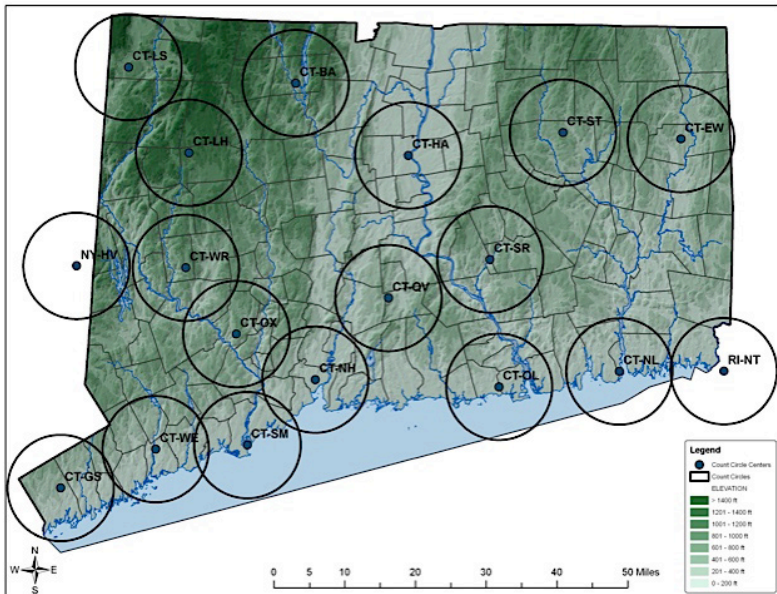
These were Frank M. Chapman's introductory words in the article, "A Christmas Bird-Census," published in the December 1900 issue of *Bird-Lore* (Volume II, Number 6). Chapman was editor of the fledgling *Bird-Lore* (the first volume appearing in 1899), the Audubon Societies' "Bi-monthly magazine devoted to the study and protection of birds." Chapman continued, "These exceptional opportunities for winning the laurels of the chase were termed 'side hunts,' and reports of the hundreds of non-game birds which were sometimes slaughtered during a single hunt were often published in our leading sports journals, with perhaps a word of editorial commendation for the winning side." Chapman then issued an invitation:

"Now *Bird-Lore* proposes a new kind of Christmas side hunt, in the form of a Christmas bird-census, and we hope that all our readers who have the opportunity will aid us in making it a success by spending a portion of Christmas Day with the birds and sending a report of their 'hunt' to *Bird-Lore* before they retire that night. Such reports should be headed by the locality, hour of starting and of returning, character of the weather, direction and force of the wind, and the temperature; the latter taken when starting. The birds observed should then be added, following the order in which they are given in the A.O.U. (American Ornithologists Union) 'Check-List,' with, if possible, the exact or approximate number of individuals of each species observed."

Many birders responded to Chapman's call for a Christmas

bird census, and individuals and small groups headed afield to count, not shoot, birds in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Louisiana, Colorado, California, and also in New Brunswick and Toronto, Canada. The two Connecticut bird censuses that inaugural year were held at Bristol and Norwalk. Frank Bruen and Royal Ford submitted results of seven species and 68 individuals at Bristol, and George Ells observed and identified five species and 45 individuals at Norwalk.

The first Christmas Bird Count was judged a success, prompting Chapman to write a year later (*Bird-Lore*, November-December 1901, Volume III, Number 6), "The interest aroused by *Bird-Lore's* Christmas Bird Census last year suggests a repetition of this modern development of the 'Side Hunt,' on December 25, 1901." The Bristol census was conducted for a second year (11 species, 102 individuals), and Edgewood Park, New Haven, was a new entry as Aretas A. Saunders reported 10 species and 29 individuals. The first



decade of the Christmas Bird Count saw new counts initiated throughout Connecticut, including South Norwalk, Washington, New London, Glastonbury, Hartford, Middletown and Waterbury. The counts were conducted on or about Christmas Day. Fred Sibley nicely summarized and analyzed these earliest years of the Christmas Bird Count in his Connecticut Warbler article, "Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts 1900 to 1909, The First Decade" (see *TCW*, Volume II, pages 5-7, January 1982 at the [ctbirding website: Publications>The Warbler>PDFs of Back Issues](http://ctbirding.com/Publications/TheWarbler/PDFs_of_Back_Issues/)).

This year's 2014-15 Christmas Bird Count marks the 115th consecutive year that the 'Side Hunt' has been held, making it the longest continuous wildlife census in the world. The rules for conducting a Christmas Bird Count were formalized over the course of the first half of the 20th century. They have included birding within the limits of a 15-mile diameter circle of defined center and spending sufficient time afield for adequate coverage of the area to qualify as a representative measure of the avian life within that count circle. Connecticut has conducted 18 different counts since the mid-1980s, most of these count circles completely within our state borders but several extending into neighboring New York and Rhode Island.

A statewide total of 718 field observers and 92 feeder watchers counted 172 species of birds and 321,636 individual birds in 2014-15. These totals were produced through a combined 2,100 party hours and 8,385 party miles by foot, car and boat. There were twice as many species recorded at new 30-year high levels than at 30-year lows. The new high counts included dabbling and diving ducks (Northern Pintail, Lesser Scaup, Common Eider, Bufflehead), diurnal raptors (Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon), woodpeckers (Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker), a corvid (Common Raven), a wren (Carolina Wren), and a grassland sparrow (Vesper Sparrow).

The new 30-year low counts included several waterfowl spe-



Steve Broker photo

Good Common Raven numbers on the Christmas Bird Counts reflect this species' meteoric increase over the past decade.

cies (Snow Goose, Mute Swan, Canvasback), a plover (Killdeer), a sandpiper (Wilson's Snipe), two gulls (Bonaparte's Gull, Herring Gull), and Brown-headed Cowbird. Ruffed Grouse, a species in serious decline statewide over the past two decades, was missed on the Connecticut CBC for the first time in at least 70 years. One species, American White Pelican, was new to the statewide 30-year list as a Count Day bird, having been sighted at Westport. The previous record for American White Pelican was a Count Week bird in 2005-06, also at Westport. Count Week birds are those species missed in a given count circle on Count Day but seen within the three-day period before or after the designated Count Day. Listing Count Week species gives us added information on the presence of typically rare or unusual species at Christmas Count season.

Statewide rarities in 2014-15 included Pacific Loon at Napatree (seen in Rhode Island waters), Snowy Egret at Stratford-Milford, Little Blue Heron at Old Lyme-Saybrook, Black-legged Kittiwake at Napatree and New London, Black Guillemot at Napatree (also seen in Rhode Island waters),

Rufous Hummingbird at Stratford-Milford, Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Hartford, and Black-and-white Warbler at Oxford. A King Eider at Napatree also is worthy of mention. A total of 23 species and one form (Savannah 'Ipswich' Sparrow) were seen on just one count.

Hartford once again recorded the highest species total of the six northern counts, with 96 Count Day and two Count Week species. Hartford's excellent Count Day total is the third highest reported there in the last 30 years. Litchfield Hills reported 85 Count Day and five Count Week species. Barkhamsted's 76 Count Day species total is this northern count's second highest since the count was established in 1985-86. Lakeville-Sharon benefited from 35 field and feeder observers (highest in 17 years) due to their investment of a record high 114.5 total party hours.

The Quinnipiac Valley mid-state count had the greatest species total with 94 Count Day and one Count Week species. Woodbury-Roxbury recorded 89 Count Day species and five Count Week species with a 30-year low total of 16 field observers. Oxford's 83 Count Day species were a 30-year high for this mid-state count. New 30-year high totals for Quinnipiac Valley's field observers (37), total observers (45), and total party hours (189) produced a near-record 94 Count Day species and serve as fitting tribute to the organizational efforts of co-compilers Melissa Baston and Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe.

Along the coast, New Haven reported 128 Count Day species, with the next highest species totals shared among Napatree (121 CD), Westport (120 CD + four CW) and New London (120 CD + 1 CW) species. Westport's species total was the highest in 30 years, attributable in part to a 12-year high of 39 field observers. Total species observed on any given count are correlated directly with numbers of field observers, total party hours and total party miles, and several of our state counts would benefit from recruitment of additional participants eager to put in the time and go the extra mile.

National Audubon Society stipulates that all Christmas Bird Counts be conducted no earlier than Dec. 14 and no later than Jan. 5. These dates annually encompass three complete Saturday/Sunday weekends. In this 2014-15 CBC season, Dec. 14 fell on a Sunday, so the Connecticut count got underway on the 14th at Greenwich-Stamford, Hartford, Lakeville-Sharon, Litchfield Hills, Oxford, Quinnipiac Valley and Salmon River. The following Saturday, Dec. 20, New Haven, Storrs and Woodbury-Roxbury held their counts, and thus these ten counts kept with long-standing tradition if not originality. Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT once again held its count on the traditional Jan. 1, while New London (Jan. 3) and Old Lyme-Saybrook (Jan. 4) adhered to their last weekend count dates. In between, Barkhamsted, Stratford-Milford, and Westport went afield on Sunday, Dec. 21 (thank you, Westport!), and Napatree exhibited more free spirit with a Sunday, Dec. 28, date.

In the months preceding Christmas Bird Count season, New York and Connecticut experienced above normal rainfall in July but memorably clear, dry days through the rest of summer – a standout summer for weather. Numerous days of rainfall kicked in during October, November, and December with record high stretches of rain in each of these months. Many of us enjoyed the post-CBC snowfall in January, but winter began to wear out its welcome as the snows piled up in driveways and roadways through February, March, and even into April. We began the Christmas Bird Count season with favorable weather conditions prevailing on Sunday, Dec. 14, for all seven counts. Temperatures ranged from a low of 23 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of 48 degrees Fahrenheit, and all counts took place under morning and afternoon clouds but with no rain or snow. Still water and moving water were open or mostly so, northernmost Lakeville-Sharon being the one exception with still water partly frozen. On Saturday, Dec. 20, the New Haven and Storrs counts experienced temperatures in the low 20s to the 30s (a greater temperature range occurring at Storrs), cloudy skies, and no rain or snow. Woodbury-Roxbury saw clear morning skies, followed by temperatures dropping to the low teens

and afternoon light snow, in places accumulating to as many as three inches. Light snows continued into the next day at Barkhamsted and Westport, the weather system expressing as light rain at Stratford-Milford. Cloudy skies continued, and still water was partly open. Light morning rain slowed birding a bit at Napatree on Sunday, Dec. 28, while temperatures ranged from 36 degrees to 48 degrees F and all water systems remained open.

New Year's Day at Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT saw clear morning and afternoon skies, partly frozen water bodies, and temperatures ranging from a chilly 16 degrees to 37 degrees Fahrenheit. New London's Jan. 3 count had temperatures hovering below freezing (27 to 32 degrees F) and consequently partly frozen still and moving water under partly cloudy to cloudy skies. Old Lyme-Saybrook completed the Connecticut CBC season the next day with a dusting of snow on the ground, foggy conditions and light rain throughout morning and afternoon, still water partly frozen, and temperatures sliding up from 33 degrees F to a balmy 50 degrees F. Wind velocity was a factor on many of our counts, with gusts up to 10-15 mph and, most notably, to 25 mph at Pawling/Hidden Valley. Hold onto your hats! Now, let's take a look at the 2014-15 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count results in current American Ornithologists Union order (again, hold onto your hats). I'll try to avoid arm-waving as much as possible, preferring to introduce some research questions for birders of a younger generation.

Waterfowl. Ducks, geese and swans, with a few exceptions, are maintaining robust populations or are expanding their populations in the state in early winter. In addition to the record high numbers of Northern Pintail, Lesser Scaup, Common Eider and Bufflehead noted above, Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Brant, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Black Scoter, Hooded Merganser, and Common Merganser all were counted in near record high numbers. This may be due in part to generally open still and moving waters in the state this CBC season. One can't ignore apparent trends, however. In the late 1980s, we counted 100-300 Brant, and

in recent years Brant CBC totals have ranged from 2,000 to nearly 4,000 individuals along the coast. Is this the result of changing wintering localities? That's a question worth pursuing. Twenty-five and 30 years ago, Hooded Merganser never topped 1,000 individuals on Connecticut's CBCs, but its numbers have ranged from 2,250 to nearly 3,350 individuals in 7 of the last 8 years. Ruddy Duck shows some fluctuation from year to year, but the overall trend is a substantial increase from the late 1980s and early 1990s to today. Young birders of an academic ilk, get busy.

We can thank Napatree and its Atlantic Ocean shorelines for introducing big numbers of Common Eider and Black Scoter to the statewide total since the first Napatree CBC was held in 2002-03. Eurasian Wigeon continues in single digit numbers, but this is a species that anyone now can see during the course of a winter season. The few waterfowl exceptions this year include Snow Goose, Mute Swan and Canvasback, and of these three, Canvasback is the most worrisome. From a high count of 2,167 in 1986-87, Canvasbacks over the last decade have approached disappearance from the statewide list – Stratford-Milford reporting a single Canvasback in the current CBC year. Prairie potholes continue to give way to agricultural fields in the Midwest. Let's hear it for no net loss of wetlands. Single Snow Geese were reported at northern, mid-state and coastal regions of the state. As for Mute Swans, do control efforts continue apace for this exotic introduction that claims the Connecticut coastline as its North American focal point?

Phasianids to Herons and Egrets. The introduced Ring-necked Pheasant continues to be dependent on restocking efforts by hunt clubs, and the hunting tradition seems to be fading fast. The average number of pheasants for the past five years is a mere 20% of the average for the period 1984-85 through 1988-89. Ruffed Grouse populations have tumbled dramatically as the result of habitat loss, with no grouse reported on this year's statewide CBC. For the first ten years of the 30-year review period used in this analysis Ruffed Grouse numbers topped 100, and they once exceeded 150

individuals on a mid-1980s count. Wild Turkey is observed on Christmas counts with a certain amount of luck, but their numbers continue to be well above those of the pre-1987 period, indicating that the restocking effort for this species has been a long-term success. As for Northern Bobwhite, it's gone and nearly forgotten. Again, habitat loss looms large in the decline of this species in Connecticut. Red-throated and Common Loons continue to be present in abundance in winter along our shorelines and at inland lakes. One Pacific Loon seen at Napatree marks the fourth time this species has been counted in the last 30 years.

Horned Grebes were at a record high total, thanks largely to solid numbers along the entire coastline and very big numbers at Westport. An inland Red-necked Grebe at Barkhamsted was a welcome addition to that count. Napatree provided the bulk of Northern Gannets for this year's count. Double-crested Cormorants were well represented, but Great Cormorants took a dive this year. Thirty years ago, the prevailing view was that Great Cormorants displaced Double-crested along the coast, and the few Double-crested remaining in Connecticut would be seen at inland lakes. This year, Double-crested Cormorants nearly equaled Great Cormorant totals statewide. American Bittern certainly qualifies as a rare and elusive marsh bird. Two American Bitterns at Stratford-Milford provided the statewide total this year. With plenty of open water inland and especially along the coast, Great Blue Heron exceeded last year's total by 20 per cent. Four counts reported Great Egret this year, and a Snowy Egret at Stratford-Milford made for the sixth occurrence of this species in the state in the last 30 years. Not to be outdone, Old Lyme-Saybrook reported a Little Blue Heron, again the sixth statewide occurrence in 30 years. Black-crowned Night-Herons lurked in below average supply.

Diurnal Raptors to Rallids. Black Vultures were counted on the high side this year, while Turkey Vultures slipped to their lowest total in 12 years. Is this evidence of interspecies competition at work? The statewide spreadsheet shows 30 Osprey reported on Connecticut CBCs in the 30-year period



Paul Fusco photo
Merlins now easily outnumber the declining American Kestrel on Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts.

1985-86 through 2014-15, and this year Oxford was the one count circle to report Osprey. Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon continue splendid recoveries from such human-caused indignities as organochloride poisoning and 19th Century hunting. Cooper's Hawk is an Accipiter that has expanded its breeding range in Connecticut, and this is reflected in its record high early winter numbers. Red-shouldered Hawk is a Buteo species that was counted this year at 25% above the previous high total. Recent lively ctbirding discussion of growing Red-shouldered Hawk numbers in the eastern part of the state is borne out by a close look at the statewide distribution of this species on Christmas counts. We also this year counted more than 150 early winter Bald Eagles statewide. State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) field observations note increasing territorial and nesting pairs in Connecticut. The same is true of Peregrine Falcons, with new pairs establishing territories on our cliffs, bridges and buildings not just in the Central Valley Lowlands but also in western and eastern highlands and the Coastal Plain. The current, 2015 breeding season gives evidence of being



*Mark Szantyr photo
Killdeer was one of the species found in numbers below
the 30-year average on the 2014-15 Christmas Bird
Counts.*

an extremely good one for peregrines. Peregrine Falcon has been downgraded from endangered to threatened on the DEEP Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern species list. Three dozen Merlins were counted as this falcon species surges past American Kestrel on our data sheets. (Notice how I slipped the falcons into this section of the review in spite of their closer affinity with parrots?) On the other hand, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Northern Goshawk (reported count day or count week in four count circles) continue their reduced numbers on CBCs. American Kestrels rebounded slightly from last year's low total, but they are being counted at no more than 10% of early 1980s totals.

Among rallids, Clapper Rails were detected at New Haven, Stratford-Milford and Westport, and Virginia Rails were heard at four of the seven coastal counts. American Coots surged to a 15-year high total. New Haven could not

produce King Rail as it did in the previous year, and Sora (missed again this year) has been reported just four times in the last 20 years.

Shorebirds to Alcids. It's become a challenge to find Black-bellied Plovers on the coastal counts. The 21 seen this year are poor representation for this plover species. Killdeer were few and far between, recorded on most coastal counts, Count Week at Hartford, Count Day at Storrs, and on no mid-state counts. Ruddy Turnstone also has become a difficult-to-find species. Purple Sandpiper failed to grace our rocky shores in satisfying numbers. Wilson's Snipe (single birds at Old Lyme-Saybrook and Westport) tied a 30-year low count. No shorebirds were counted in particularly high numbers. Among alcids, the Razorbill score: Napatree 38, New London 1. Napatree also produced one Black Guillemot for the third time in its 13-year history. Dovekies and Murres did not figure in this year's census.

Gulls. Two cheers each for Napatree and New London for locating Black-legged Kittiwakes. Bonaparte's Gulls at Napa-



Steve Broker photo

It was a slow season overall for shorebirds, but this Purple Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone offered two for the price of one on Dec. 20, 2014, for the New Haven Christmas Bird Count.

tree and New London were joined by an unusual occurrence at Litchfield Hills (new to this count). Napatree was the only count to observe Black-headed Gull, while Old Lyme-Saybrook reported the only Laughing Gull. The three more common gulls (Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-backed) have experienced significant population reductions with the closing of landfills, and Herring Gull achieves a 30-year low total – now under 10,000 individuals as compared with greater than 50,000 individuals 30 years ago. Iceland Gull appeared at Hartford, Woodbury-Roxbury and New Haven (uncommon for this count), and no Glaucous Gulls were reported statewide. Iceland Gulls are nearly four times more likely to be found on a Connecticut CBC than are Glaucous Gulls.

Pigeons and Doves to Hummingbirds. eBird now lists “Rock Pigeon (Feral)” for all regions where the species is introduced and is, well, feral, and that pattern is adopted here. Let’s not wring our hands, but Rock Pigeon was counted in third lowest totals in 30 years. Do we have an active, growing peregrine population to thank for that news bite? Mourning Doves fared somewhat better this year, in spite of the fact that doves also are a special culinary treat for peregrines. No count circle found a Barn Owl in 2014-15. In the 1990s, this species had a chance of being found at the abandoned incinerators in New Haven opposite I-91 Exit 8 or at Milford Jai Alai. Rat poison seems to have done in the New Haven Barn Owl population. The 25-year experiment with jai alai in Connecticut ended in retirement in late 2001. Eastern Screech-Owls were in below average supply, as were Great Horned Owls. Stratford-Milford reported the only Snowy Owl, and it should not be unexpected that just one bird was present and observed in the year following the greatest irruption of Snowy Owls in United States annals of ornithology. Barred Owls, however, were very well represented, as were Long-eared Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls. Crepuscular Short-eared Owls were seen at Greenwich-Stamford and Stratford-Milford. Rufous Hummingbird now makes irregular but somewhat less jaw-dropping appearances on Connecticut’s Christmas Bird Count, and one was seen at

Stratford-Milford this year (new to the count circle).

Woodpeckers to Parrots. The 2014-15 Connecticut CBC can be described reasonably as the year of the woodpecker, with Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers setting new 30-year high counts. Previous CBC narratives have noted that Red-bellied Woodpecker is the fastest growing wood products species in the state, and this year only bolstered that view with another 7% increase in statewide numbers. Downy Woodpecker increased by 14% over the previous high count, and Hairy Woodpecker jumped a remarkable 26% from the previous high. All three geographic regions of the state (northern, mid-state, and coastal) submitted record high totals for these two species. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers did not achieve their record-setting highs of a year ago, but this was the second highest total for sapsuckers in the history of the Connecticut CBC. Northern Flickers were well represented (peregrines also have a sweet tooth-notch for flickers), and nearly 150 Pileated Woodpeckers statewide represented a second highest total for Woody. (For falcons, see above.) Several hundred Monk Parakeets brightened our skies and startled our ears, with biggest colonies at New Haven and Stratford-Milford strongholds.

Tyrant Flycatchers to Wrens. Eleven Eastern Phoebes distributed across eight different count circles made for the second highest total of this species, trailing only 1995-96, when 13 were reported. Salmon River found a Northern Shrike teed up and looking sharp. Hartford's roost of 16,000 American Crows represented 60% of the statewide total. Record high numbers of Fish Crows were reported on northern and mid-state counts as this species expands its territory up our river valleys. Speaking of expansion, who would have predicted 30 years ago that we would be counting nearly 200 Common Ravens in a single CBC year? The first raven sighting on a Connecticut Christmas Count was a single bird at Barkhamsted on Dec. 28, 1986. The West Rock Ridge (Woodbridge) Common Ravens recently fledged four young this current nesting season, a typical output for this breeding pair. If other nesting pairs throughout the state have similar

success, we'll be observing far more ravens in the years to come.

Northern Rough-winged Swallows made their 4th CBC appearance in eight years, with four individuals counted at Hartford. Tree Swallows were not seen this year, nor were the rare late fall and early winter migrant Cave Swallows. Black-capped Chickadees rebounded from last year's low numbers, while Tufted Titmouse squeaked to its second highest total ever. This was not an irruption year for Red-breasted Nuthatch, but the 3,000 White-breasted Nuthatches exceeded their previous record high total by 6%. Brown Creepers were equally well represented, with their highest count in 24 years. Quinnipiac Valley and Woodbury-Roxbury had single inland House Wrens. This was another big year for Winter Wren, with record or near record high totals reported from all three regions of the state. The 2013-14 count year exceeded this year's Winter Wren total by no more than a dozen individuals. Of the 12 Marsh Wrens reported in the state, Hartford's single individual was the most noteworthy. This is the third year in a row that Hartford has found the species, which is known to survive in Connecticut's suitable marsh habitat at least until mid-February. Maybe not this past winter, however.

Kinglets to Buntings. Golden-crowned Kinglets were poorly represented this early winter, while the far less common Ruby-crowned Kinglets were in more typical numbers. Over the past 30 years of Connecticut CBCs, Golden-crowned Kinglet has outnumbered Ruby-crowned by a factor of 16:1. The widespread use of bluebird nest boxes has brought Eastern Bluebird back to good levels in the state, now reaching four times the numbers reported on mid-1980s counts. Hermit Thrushes were counted in above average numbers. American Robin is among the most variable of species observed from year to year, and this year robins dipped to 25% of last year's total. Northern Mockingbirds have shown declining numbers for the past decade, so an increase by 60% over last year's low count is to be applauded. Once again, all Brown Thrashers reported this year were found near the



Mark Szantyr photo

Not that anyone is wringing hands, but European Starlings continue to be recorded in significantly declining numbers.

coast. European Starling continues greatly reduced numbers of recent years, a mere 35,000 being reported this year. Multiply this total by 5, 6, or 7 to get starling numbers of the mid-1980s and earlier. American Pipits were best seen at Quinnipiac Valley, New Haven and Westport. Cedar Waxwings were, as with American Robins, less evident this year. Single Lapland Longspurs were rare or noteworthy at Storrs and Woodbury-Roxbury. Napatree and Stratford-Milford counted the highest numbers of Snow Buntings.

Wood-Warblers to Sparrows. It was quality over quantity for Wood-Warbler finds this year. A Black-and-white Warbler at Oxford was the most significant discovery and marked the fifth time that the species has been seen in 30 years. Three Orange-crowned Warblers along the coast were well appreciated, and a rare Common Yellowthroat at Quinnipiac Valley joined four along the coast for a nice statewide total. Palm Warblers showed well along the coast, and New Haven reported the only Pine Warbler of the count. Yellow-rumped Warblers have fluctuated in numbers for the past 10 years. Last year's strong numbers were followed by 87% fewer individuals this year. In 30 CBC years we have re-

ported a remarkable 21 different wood-warbler species in Connecticut.

Eastern Towhee proved far more challenging to find this year than last. American Tree Sparrow has been counted in reduced numbers for the last 10-12 years. Oxford found a Clay-colored Sparrow, a species that now has been reported in the state the last four years. Field Sparrows share declining numbers with American Tree Sparrows for the last decade. Vesper Sparrows at Oxford (2) and Woodbury-Roxbury join the 7(!) at New Haven for a record high statewide total. The 294 Savannah Sparrows included high numbers at Hartford and on four coastal counts for a near-record total. Westport was the only count to report Savannah 'Ipswich' Sparrow. Fox Sparrows dropped 67% below last year's numbers. Melodious Song Sparrows exhibit some fluctuation in their annual numbers – last year up, this year slightly down. A melancholy Lincoln's Sparrow made an appearance in New Haven. Swamp Sparrows maintain fairly uniform numbers from year to year, approximately 50% occurring on coastal counts. The big year for White-throated Sparrow occurred six winters ago, with more typical numbers this year. Two White-crowned Sparrows at Barkhamsted and three at Greenwich-Stamford were nice finds. Abundant Dark-eyed Juncos made for a fine Snow-bird winter.

Cardinals to Old World Sparrows. For a fundamentally southern species, Northern Cardinal has settled in to southern New England quite successfully since the 1950s. This year's cardinal count of 4,000 individuals is the third highest on record. New London located a Dickcissel, a species that winters in the Gulf Coast, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela, and "locally in small numbers also in coastal lowlands from southern New England south to Florida" (AOU Check-List. 1998). Connecticut reports Dickcissel every three years or so. Three coastal counts reported Eastern Meadowlarks, yet another grassland species in decline in the East.

Just as robins and waxwings are highly variable in their numbers from winter to winter, so too are blackbirds, grack-

les and cowbirds. While 18,000 Red-winged Blackbirds were reported on the 2013-14 Connecticut CBC, a mere 2,500 were seen this year. New London had the corner on the Common Grackle market with 8,000 counted. Brown-headed Cowbirds were at a record 30-year low, one-third the number reported last year. In New Haven, the Lighthouse Point Park/Tweed-New Haven Airport team (known as Area C) ends each count perched on an asphalt mound at Ora Avenue/Proto Drive in East Haven as flocking birds stream into the Morris Creek Marshes from the east. Every year, several thousand blackbirds, grackles and cowbirds are counted in a matter of five to ten minutes of pandemonium. This year, the flight never materialized. Picture yourself on an asphalt mound next to a landfill, an industrial site, and a degraded wetland in failing light, and you can imagine the chagrin that set in. On the bright side, Rusty Blackbirds were present statewide in a second consecutive year of good numbers. Salmon River hosted the only Baltimore Oriole seen on this year's count.

Purple Finch rebounded somewhat from lower numbers of recent years, while House Finch continued its reduced numbers of the last 20 years. No crossbills were seen, but two northern and one coastal count located Common Redpolls. This was a good year for Pine Siskins as they invaded our region in highest numbers for the last six years. Siskins continued to be seen at feeders throughout the state well into subsequent weeks of winter. American Goldfinches also appeared in abundance. One Evening Grosbeak was spotted flying from a farm field in Moodus for the Salmon River CBC. In the category of introduced species and their changing fortunes, House Sparrows rebounded 35% from their low numbers of a year ago.

Acknowledgements. Thanks go to the Christmas Bird Count compilers who organize and conduct their counts and to the many area captains who also recruit field observers and feeder watchers. The count compilers are as follows.

Northern Counts – Barkhamsted (Dave Tripp Jr.); Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood (Sue Harrington); Hartford (Jay Kaplan and Steve Davis); Litchfield Hills (Ray Belding); Lakeville-Sharon (Robert Moeller); Storrs (Steve Morytko).

Mid-State Counts – Oxford (Roy Harvey); Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT (Carena Pooth and Angela Dimmitt); Quinipiac Valley (Melissa Baston and Corrie Folsom-O’Keefe); Salmon River (Joe Morin); Woodbury-Roxbury (Ken Elkins and Renee Baade).

Coastal Counts – Greenwich-Stamford (Matt Fry and Gary Palmer); Napatree (Shai Mitra and Glenn Williams); New Haven (Chris Loscalzo); New London (Bob Dewire); Old Lyme-Saybrook (Barbara Hawes); Stratford-Milford (Steve Mayo); Westport (Mardi Dickinson and Townsend Dickinson).

Thanks also go to Manny Merisotis for his work with the CBC tables.

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Christmas Bird Count 2014-2015

| SPECIES | NORTHERN COUNTS | | | | | MIDSTATE COUNTS | | | | | COASTAL COUNTS | | | | | STATE TOTAL | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|--|
| | BA 12/21/14 | EW 01/04/15 | HA 12/14/14 | LH 12/14/14 | LS 12/14/14 | ST 12/20/14 | OK 12/14/14 | PA 01/07/15 | OV 12/14/14 | SR 12/14/14 | WR 12/20/14 | GS 12/14/14 | NA 12/28/14 | NH 12/20/14 | NL 01/03/15 | OL 01/04/15 | SM 12/17/14 | VE 12/17/14 | TOTAL | |
| Shore White-fronted Goose | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | |
| Goose | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3049 | |
| Canada Goose | 740 | 1078 | 8317 | 2199 | 10258 | 918 | 1026 | 1778 | 2703 | 603 | 2327 | 3858 | 2095 | 4569 | 2547 | 1395 | 1818 | 1681 | 49710 | |
| Mute Swan | | | 15 | 6 | 21 | 8 | 7 | 35 | 36 | 23 | 7 | 36 | 163 | 60 | 174 | 52 | 29 | 35 | 727 | |
| Wood Duck | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 18 | | | 2 | 2 | 11 | 9 | 32 | 42 | 73 | 883 | |
| Cerulean Wigeon | 3 | | 4 | | | | 1 | 4 | 18 | | | 284 | 119 | 182 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 779 | |
| American Wigeon | 2 | | 5 | 67 | 65 | 24 | 55 | 3 | 14 | 86 | 51 | 82 | 165 | 12 | 4 | 303 | 169 | 414 | 4061 | |
| American Black Duck | 51 | 4 | 287 | 483 | 292 | 272 | 411 | 1402 | 818 | 157 | 307 | 1151 | 521 | 1289 | 368 | 885 | 358 | 414 | 12996 | |
| Mallard | 322 | 194 | 1190 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 9 | | | 3 | 3 | | 4 | 22 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 13 | |
| Hybrid | 5 | | 23 | 23 | 10 | | 1 | 9 | 19 | 6 | 13 | 1 | | CW | 2 | 15 | 25 | 1 | 104 | |
| Northern Pintail | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 31 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 112 | |
| American Green-winged Teal | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 7 | |
| Redhead | | | | 4 | | | 2 | 2 | | 9 | 4 | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Ring-necked Duck | 29 | 5 | 44 | 249 | 208 | | 83 | 249 | 19 | 9 | 4 | 119 | 100 | 258 | 67 | 52 | 128 | 1630 | 6533 | |
| Greater Scaup | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | 377 | 80 | 2935 | 241 | 12 | 113 | 28 | 12 | |
| Lesser Scaup | 2 | | | | | | 18 | 73 | 1 | 3 | | 21 | 30 | 5 | 200 | 5 | 5 | 28 | 615 | |
| King Eider | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Common Eider | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1114 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 2008 | |
| Surf Scoter | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | 66 | 47 | 22 | 14 | 85 | 151 | 151 | |
| Lesser Scaup | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 10 | 3 | | | | 14 | 14 | |
| Black Scoter | | | | | | | | | | | | 81 | 3 | 6 | 10 | | | 84 | 84 | |
| Long-tailed Duck | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 30 | 6 | | | | 30 | 47 | |
| scoter, species | | | | | | | | | | | | 287 | 25 | 124 | 13 | | | 185 | 390 | |
| Common Goldeneye | 20 | 6 | 4 | 57 | 4 | 36 | 1 | 7 | 22 | 13 | | 155 | 32 | 107 | 67 | 301 | 229 | 1024 | 1653 | |
| Hooded Merganser | 130 | 11 | 87 | 135 | 182 | 47 | 27 | 153 | 99 | 76 | 27 | 326 | 199 | 475 | 718 | 177 | 120 | 211 | 3003 | |
| Common Merganser | 139 | 8 | 89 | 3195 | 151 | 122 | 13 | 296 | 70 | 51 | 106 | 1628 | 36 | 55 | 102 | 38 | 55 | 55 | 6180 | |
| Ring-billed Gull | | | | | | | | | | | | 325 | 267 | 372 | 137 | 74 | 71 | 734 | 1734 | |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | 21 | 3 | 3 | 61 | 148 | 65 | 1 | 121 | 31 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 38 | 6 | 134 | 63 | 2 | 16 | 16 | |
| Ruffed Grouse | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| Mid Turkey | 80 | 75 | 32 | 204 | 117 | 64 | 3 | 60 | 100 | 101 | 168 | 78 | 80 | 31 | 34 | 37 | 27 | 1291 | 1891 | |
| Pacific Loon | | | | | | | | | | | | 44 | 65 | 10 | 26 | 28 | 7 | 9 | 151 | |
| Common Loon | | | | | | | | | | | | 66 | 159 | 42 | 120 | 66 | 18 | 36 | 517 | |
| Pied-billed Grebe | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 27 | 27 | |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | | | | | | | | | | | | 35 | 9 | 50 | 28 | 47 | 93 | 344 | 344 | |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | | | | | | | | | | | | CW | 4 | 2 | | | | 2 | 2 | |
| Northern Gannet | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 44 | 2 | | | | 52 | 52 | |
| Double-crested Cormorant | | | | | | | | | | | | 16 | 45 | 7 | 29 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 106 | |
| Great Cormorant | | | | | | | | | | | | 41 | 20 | 11 | 38 | 6 | 3 | 123 | 123 | |
| American White Pelican | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| American Bittern | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Great Blue Heron | 1 | 9 | 19 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 17 | 9 | 9 | 22 | 30 | 18 | 32 | 23 | 25 | 241 | 241 | |
| Great Egret | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | |
| Snowy Egret | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 13 | |
| Little Blue Heron | | | | | | | | | | | | CW | 15 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 13 | 13 | |
| Turkey Vulture | | | | | | | | | | | | 55 | 43 | 22 | 79 | 1 | 13 | 20 | 20 | |
| Osprey | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Bald Eagle | 5 | 2 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 29 | 6 | 8 | 17 | 7 | 1 | 13 | 10 | 10 | CW | 3 | 153 | |
| Northern Harrier | 2 | 1 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 3 | 16 | 10 | 4 | 86 | |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 3 | 2 | 23 | 11 | 6 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 16 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 86 | |
| Cooper's Hawk | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 15 | 10 | 6 | 13 | 181 | 181 | |

| SPECIES | NORTHERN COUNTS | | | | MIDSTATE COUNTS | | | | COASTAL COUNTS | | | | STATE TOTAL | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| | DA 12/21/14 | EA 01/04/15 | HA 12/14/14 | LA 12/14/14 | IA 12/14/14 | SA 01/01/15 | VA 12/14/14 | WA 12/20/14 | CA 12/14/14 | MA 12/20/14 | PA 12/20/14 | VA 12/20/14 | NC 01/04/15 | SC 12/21/14 | GA 12/21/14 | FL 12/21/14 | |
| Northern Goshawk | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Accipiter, sp. | 10 | 2 | 11 | 10 | 42 | 8 | 13 | 30 | 1 | 6 | 26 | 17 | 4 | 9 | | 3 | |
| Red-shafted Hawk | 44 | 11 | 146 | 69 | 43 | 105 | 67 | 70 | 62 | 15 | 72 | 30 | 17 | 21 | | 302 | |
| Buteo, sp. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Rough-legged Hawk | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Golden Eagle | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Golden Oriole | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Virgata Rail | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| American Coot | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 8 |
| Black-bellied Plover | | | 106 | 103 | 10 | 77 | 123 | | 10 | 211 | 26 | 20 | 10 | 22 | | 2 | 6 |
| Greater Yellowlegs | | | | | | | | | 7 | 2 | 7 | 5 | | | | | 1 |
| Ruddy Turnstone | | | | | | | | | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | | | | | 3 |
| Sanderling | | | | | | | | | 6 | 9 | 2 | 5 | | | | | 8 |
| Punin Sandpiper | | | | | | | | | 6 | 11 | 25 | 12 | 12 | | | | 34 |
| Wilson's Snipe | | | | | | | | | 3 | 26 | 11 | 483 | 82 | 354 | | | 11 |
| American Woodcock | | | | | | | | | 3 | 26 | 13 | 11 | 202 | 570 | | | 11 |
| Razorbill | | | | | | | | | | | | 17 | 17 | | | | 2 |
| Jaeger | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Black-legged Kittiwake | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | 6 |
| Black-headed Gull | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | 3 |
| Bonaparte's Gull | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | 2 |
| Ring-billed Gull | 216 | 4 | 1026 | 270 | 541 | 441 | 881 | 2155 | 978 | 219 | 1908 | 188 | 770 | 2359 | | | 14275 |
| Iceland Gull | 7 | 4 | 188 | 18 | 113 | 13 | 20 | 31 | 92 | 64 | 1915 | 1769 | 535 | 1791 | | | 822 |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Common Black-backed Gull | 2 | 2 | 53 | | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 17 | 2 | 104 | 102 | 67 | 82 | | | 81 |
| Rock Pigeon (Feral) | 288 | 172 | 1074 | 216 | 502 | 255 | 540 | 241 | 63 | 374 | 213 | 834 | 156 | 444 | | | 384 |
| Mourning Dove | 389 | 89 | 1016 | 315 | 459 | 227 | 431 | 226 | 660 | 231 | 613 | 263 | 282 | 269 | | | 335 |
| Great Horned Owl | 4 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 12 | 4 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 1 | | | 6 |
| Snowy Owl | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Barred Owl | 7 | 3 | 13 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | 2 |
| Short-eared Owl | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl | 9 | | | 7 | | 4 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 3 | | | 45 |
| Common Nighthawk | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Belted Kingfisher | 7 | 1 | 22 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 15 | 18 | 28 | 8 | 10 | 1 | | | 174 |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 77 | 22 | 172 | 99 | 64 | 91 | 92 | 119 | 59 | 71 | 139 | 57 | 61 | 39 | | | 1592 |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 9 | 18 | 9 | 6 | 1 | 30 | 14 | 3 | 29 | 10 | 20 | 14 | 11 | 1 | | | 18 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 19 | 40 | 20 | 262 | 10 | 29 | 13 | 13 | 33 | 11 | 62 | 10 | 12 | 20 | | | 316 |
| Northern Flicker | 153 | 8 | 112 | 25 | 21 | 28 | 46 | 14 | 50 | 18 | 18 | 10 | 10 | 12 | | | 108 |
| Pileated Woodpecker | 8 | 1 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 21 | 7 | 24 | 57 | 34 | 16 | 22 | | | 652 |
| American Kestrel | 15 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 21 | 5 | 23 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | 147 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| Monk Parakeet | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 30 |
| Eastern Phoebe | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Blue Jay | 361 | 120 | 611 | 454 | 352 | 350 | 371 | 490 | 37 | 2 | 148 | 1 | 2 | 87 | | | 307 |
| American Crow | 288 | 59 | 1600 | 1148 | 1822 | 330 | 953 | 429 | 726 | 130 | 541 | 260 | 348 | 175 | | | 6444 |
| Fish Crow | | | | | | | 6 | CW | 362 | 132 | 2225 | 515 | 149 | 280 | | | 26381 |
| Crow, sp. | | | | | | | | | 187 | 85 | 195 | 48 | 14 | 39 | | | 626 |
| Common Raven | 18 | 3 | 7 | 20 | 51 | 6 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 1 | 18 | 2 | 5 | 3 | | | 167 |
| Horned Lark | | | | | | | 44 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 20 | 30 | 49 | 7 | | | 1441 |
| N. Rough-winged Swallow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 872 | 189 | 688 | 1187 | 471 | 765 | 476 | 350 | 942 | 496 | 607 | 662 | 500 | 185 | | | 10576 |

| SPECIES | NORTHERN COUNTS | | | | MIDSTATE COUNTS | | | | COASTAL COUNTS | | | | STATE TOTAL | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | BA 12/26/14 | EW 01/09/15 | HA 12/17/14 | LH 12/15/14 | LS 12/15/14 | ST 12/20/14 | OX 12/17/14 | PA 01/16/15 | QV 12/17/14 | SR 12/16/14 | WR 12/20/14 | GS 12/16/14 | NA 12/23/14 | NH 12/20/14 | NL 01/03/15 | OL 01/04/15 | SM 12/27/14 | WE 12/27/14 |
| Tree-toad | 320 | 103 | 431 | 389 | 190 | 400 | 374 | 419 | 393 | 373 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 365 | 24 | 24 | 10 |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 7 | 5 | 12 | 12 | 180 | 127 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | CW | 4 | 4 | 4 | 36 | 2 | 5 | 63 |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 203 | 50 | 248 | 301 | 127 | 215 | 134 | 205 | 121 | 163 | 214 | 394 | 70 | 198 | 131 | 142 | 36 | 55 |
| Brown Creeper | 13 | 3 | 20 | 20 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 14 | 34 | 9 | 23 | 8 | 1 | 8 | 195 |
| Winter Wren | 15 | 1 | 17 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 25 | 25 | 11 | 15 | 4 | 7 | 16 | 177 |
| Marsh Wren | 52 | 17 | 112 | 21 | 11 | 53 | 51 | 48 | 52 | 55 | 78 | 136 | 133 | 80 | 112 | 109 | 49 | 51 |
| Carolina Wren | 33 | 9 | 15 | 21 | 23 | 17 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 32 | 36 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 30 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 130 | 68 | 84 | 210 | 99 | 242 | 146 | 257 | 177 | 147 | 345 | 103 | 48 | 57 | 42 | 65 | 9 | 109 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 10 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 11 | 11 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 24 | 15 | 16 | 19 | 20 | 9 | 5 | 6 |
| Hermitt Thrush | 166 | 195 | 484 | 318 | 454 | 485 | 174 | 143 | 141 | 4 | 426 | 1006 | 284 | 280 | 235 | 164 | 100 | 11 |
| American Robin | 9 | 8 | 86 | 6 | 13 | 22 | 33 | 30 | 44 | 9 | 21 | 109 | 34 | 85 | 46 | 40 | 38 | 35 |
| Northern Mockingbird | 1371 | 1154 | 2156 | 1672 | 1594 | 3051 | 1067 | 1170 | 4449 | 645 | 2413 | 1971 | 3457 | 2936 | 1151 | 2828 | 1128 | 35182 |
| European Starling | 88 | 25 | 24 | 277 | 72 | 101 | 94 | 150 | 52 | 9 | 217 | 46 | 47 | 40 | 27 | 59 | 3 | 1453 |
| Cedar Waxwing | | | | | | | | | | | | CW | | | | | | 8 |
| Lapland Longspur | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 145 |
| Snow Bunting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| White-throated Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 11 |
| Common Yellowthroat | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10 |
| Palm Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Pine Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 109 |
| Yellow-headed Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 49 |
| American Tree Sparrow | 75 | 20 | 399 | 225 | 94 | 45 | 1 | 261 | 104 | 69 | 274 | 25 | 52 | 220 | 81 | 149 | 51 | 2251 |
| American Tree Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 16 |
| Clay-colored Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Field Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 105 |
| Vesper Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10 |
| Savannah Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 284 |
| Savannah Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10 |
| Song Sparrow | 1 | CW | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 284 |
| Fox Sparrow | 42 | 38 | 298 | 76 | 34 | 90 | 295 | 128 | 167 | 93 | 284 | 9 | 13 | 11 | 3 | 20 | 2 | 66 |
| Indigo Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3514 |
| White-throated Sparrow | 140 | 131 | 398 | 196 | 114 | 241 | 492 | 462 | 344 | 225 | 651 | 682 | 472 | 854 | 429 | 358 | 169 | 9 |
| White-crowned Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 101 |
| Sparrow, sp. | 915 | 476 | 1785 | 874 | 927 | 1803 | 776 | 1515 | 814 | 672 | 2029 | 1308 | 277 | 882 | 413 | 177 | 424 | 15278 |
| Eastern Starling | 244 | 102 | 355 | 177 | 106 | 207 | 195 | 325 | 212 | 145 | 300 | 395 | 202 | 315 | 270 | 224 | 121 | 4011 |
| Dickcissel | 16 | 7 | 456 | 6 | 66 | 15 | 1 | 74 | 27 | 5 | 191 | 4 | 51 | 73 | 1452 | 13 | 8 | 2512 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 403 |
| Rusty Blackbird | 34 | 9 | 1198 | 48 | 20 | 3 | 2 | 2 | CW | 1 | 56 | 4 | 2 | 42 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 9590 |
| Common Grackle | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 661 |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 |
| Baltimore Oriole | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| House Finch | 88 | 39 | 328 | 249 | 78 | 186 | 90 | 161 | 166 | 147 | 285 | 30 | 7 | 23 | 1 | 119 | 3 | 136 |
| Common Redpoll | 14 | 14 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 38 | 1 | 147 | 7 | 14 | 11 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 123 | 39 | 3097 |
| Pine Siskin | 191 | 51 | 568 | 491 | 167 | 215 | 311 | 300 | 358 | 216 | 610 | 716 | 144 | 361 | 169 | 86 | 128 | 503 |
| Common Goldfinch | 375 | 320 | 1172 | 815 | 439 | 494 | 359 | 296 | 287 | 289 | 284 | 1186 | 479 | 1373 | 1550 | 555 | 1046 | 9486 |
| Evening Grosbeak | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10861 |
| House Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 657 |

Savannah Sparrow

| SPECIES | NORTHERN COUNTS | | | | | MIDSTATE COUNTS | | | | | COASTAL COUNTS | | | | | STATE TOTAL | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--|
| | BA 12/21/14 | EW 01/04/15 | HA 12/4/14 | LH 12/4/14 | LS 12/4/14 | ST 12/20/14 | OX 12/4/14 | PA 01/07/15 | QV 12/14/14 | SR 12/14/14 | WR 12/20/14 | GS 12/14/14 | NA 12/28/14 | NH 12/20/14 | NL 01/03/15 | OL 01/04/15 | SM 12/1/14 | WE 12/1/14 | STATE TOTAL | |
| TOTALS | 9342 | 5155 | 42337 | 17276 | 20616 | 13072 | 9082 | 14444 | 16778 | 6433 | 17439 | 25944 | 16082 | 32884 | 28410 | 11485 | 20473 | 14884 | 321636 | |
| Total Individuals | 76 | 61 | 96 | 85 | 73 | 77 | 83 | 81 | 94 | 81 | 89 | 112 | 121 | 128 | 120 | 101 | 107 | 120 | 172 | |
| Total Count Day Species | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | |
| Total Count Week Species | 23 | 8 | 106 | 50 | 32 | 29 | 23 | 38 | 37 | 35 | 16 | 74 | 24 | 80 | 43 | 36 | 25 | 39 | 718 | |
| Total Field Observers | 32 | 1 | 7 | 10 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 92 | |
| Total Feeder Watchers | 90 | 41.5 | 113 | 60 | 35 | 37 | 24 | 43 | 45 | 21 | 83 | 24 | 84 | 49 | 37 | 27 | 42 | 810 | 2100.48 | |
| Total Parity Hours | 471.5 | 306.1 | 506 | 869.25 | 319.5 | 522.25 | 446.3 | 635.35 | 537.15 | 378 | 570.05 | 734.47 | 230 | 546 | 420 | 319 | 363 | 205.47 | 6385.39 | |

Northern Counts
 BA = Barkhamsted
 EW = Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood
 HA = Hartford
 LH = Litchfield Hills
 LS = Lakeville-Sharon
 St = Storrs

Mid-State Counts
 OX = Oxford
 PA = Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT
 QV = Quimpiac Valley
 SR = Salmon River
 WR = Woodbury-Roxbury

Coastal Counts
 GS = Greenwich-Stamford
 NA = Napatree, RI/NY/CT
 NH = New Haven
 OL = Old Lyme-Saybrook
 NL = New London
 SM = Stratford-Milford
 WE = Westport

Legend
 CW = Count Week (Count Period)
 XX = New 30-Year High Count
 XX = New 30-Year Low Count
 XX = New Species for Count
 XX = Rare Species for Count
 0 = First Time Not Seen, 30 Years

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

New Falcon on the Block



*Steve Broker photo
This “floater” Peregrine Falcon shows off the bands that revealed its history.*

A “floater” Peregrine Falcon was observed and photographed on May 1, 2014 at West Rock Ridge State Park in Woodbridge. The peregrine was perched at a cliff top on the abandoned quarry face overlooking Konold’s Pond and was looking down intently at the scrape ledge of the resident West Rock peregrine pair during the observation. I was able to approach to within eight feet without flushing the bird. As seen in the photo, the left leg carries color band black/green 31/AE. Reading a color band in the field can lead to extensive life history information about a peregrine. Tom French, assistant director of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, provided the following information about this bird’s history:

The right leg has the silver “service band” 1947-02317 (the

first seven digits having been read in the field). The bird was banded in its hatch nest by Tom French on May 18, 2012 on the clock tower of the New Balance Shoe Co. building, Lawrence, Essex County, Mass. Also present in the nest were a male sibling (black/green 92/AB) and two unhatched eggs. The parents of these two nestlings were an unbanded female and a tiercel (male) color banded black/green 6*/4*, meaning 6 lying on its side over 4 lying on its side, with service band 2206-59866. The tiercel parent had been banded by Chris Martin of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire on June 7, 2001 on the New Hampshire Tower Building, Manchester, N.H., 25 miles north of Lawrence, Mass. One of its offspring, the West Rock "floater" 31/AE, was known to have fledged from the New Balance Building on June 6, 2012 at 7:35 A.M. There had been no previous reports of the whereabouts of this peregrine away from its hatch nest prior to the West Rock report.

Steve Broker
Cheshire

A Gathering of Waterfowl

The discovery of a female Tufted Duck in February 2015 at Captain's Cove Marina put a birding spotlight on this protected locale in Bridgeport's Black Rock Harbor. Birders flocked to the marina to see the rare duck, and in so doing they recorded a large and diverse collection of waterfowl and other waterbirds using this location during a cold and snowy month. There were often more than 400 geese, swans and ducks crowded into the area, and the highest daily species count reported was 16. Overall at least 18 waterfowl species were recorded, along with Horned and Pied-billed Grebes. Of special interest was the presence of six species of the duck genus *Aythya* – all of the regular North American species (Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup and Lesser Scaup) plus the Tufted Duck. A Eurasian Wigeon also was there occasionally. Almost 100 individual checklist entries in eBird recorded the Tufted Duck, either at Captain's Cove or nearby St. Mary's-by-the-Sea. Many of the ducks moved between those locations, with four-digit rafts

comprising mainly scaup in the open waters of Long Island Sound off the latter spot.

It's worth noting that the date of the Tufted Duck's discovery – on Feb. 22 – was within a few days of the Feb. 19, 2000, discovery of the state's last Tufted Duck, just around the corner in Black Rock Harbor. When another female Tufted Duck turned up at North Cove in Old Saybrook on March 29, 2015, there was also a sense of *de jevu*. An adult male had been found there in February 1997.

Compiled from eBird reports

Hermit Thrush Stuck to a Holly Bush

On February 21, 2015, my daughter and I paid a visit to the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton to check on the condition of a sick House Finch. The finch was discovered in our yard, suffering from an eye disease called conjunctivitis. Before heading home for the night, we decided to spend a few minutes at the nature center feeders, enjoying the comings and goings of all the hungry birds. To our delight, we were able to see a number of different species including a Pine Siskin.

In addition to the offering of seeds, birds were seen feeding on berries from various plants and shrubs, including a nearby American Holly bush. In the middle of all this bird activity, I noticed something unusual moving in the lower part of the bush. I walked over to the holly and knelt down beside it, peering under the lowest branch. To my surprise, a Hermit Thrush was there, caught by its tail on the spine of a holly leaf. The thrush hung straight down like a Christmas tree ornament, frantically beating its wings in distress. In an effort to help, I decided to reach over slowly and touch its tail. It was at that moment that the bird broke free. It quickly flew to the nearest branch and began pumping its tail up and down, as if to make sure that everything was still in working condition and in its proper place.

Jay Kaplan, director of the Roaring Brook Nature Center, e-

mailed me a couple days later to say that the Hermit Thrush was still around the feeders and that the House Finch was well on its way to recovery. A little awareness and compassion, even in the dead of winter, can sometimes make a big difference in a bird's life.

Paul Cianfagione
Canton

A 5-Year-Old Glossy Ibis

On May 14, 2015, I observed a banded Glossy Ibis in Clinton and reported the band information. At the end of June I heard back from the bander at NYC Audubon, who has informed me that the bird was banded as a chick at Jamaica Bay, N.Y., on June 17, 2010.

Nick Bonomo
Wallingford

Osprey Catches a Meadow Vole

There once was a time, not long ago, that the Osprey was seen only as a migrant through the Greater Hartford area. Osprey sightings these days are quite common in Hartford, with nests being found both north and south of the downtown city limits. My encounters with this raptor are usually along the Connecticut River, where it hunts for its favorite food item, fish.

On July 8, 2015, I had another encounter with an Osprey, this time on Vibert Road in the South Windsor Meadows. I had just completed a short bird walk to a local wetland, where out in the distance I spotted an Osprey circling high over the river. As I observed this beautiful bird in flight, I noticed that it was starting to drift towards me and over some nearby farm fields.

I expected the Osprey to continue along its way, taking a land route to another fishing site. But instead, the raptor became fixated on the farm fields, peering down as if something had caught its eye.

With a steady descent, the Osprey flew remarkably close to the planted crops, continuing to circle the fields. It made one quick pass, hovered for a second, and then dropped harrier-like into a row of newly planted corn. The Osprey quickly grabbed a Meadow Vole with its right talon and flew back in the direction of the Connecticut River, and most likely to a neighboring nest.

I for one have never seen an Osprey hunt on land before, so I consulted my online subscription to *The Birds of North America* to see how unusual this behavior really was.

Live fish make up 99% of the prey items recorded in almost every published account. There are only anecdotal observations of Ospreys feeding on non-fish prey, some of which include birds, snakes, voles and squirrels.

The ease and precision with which the Osprey caught a Meadow Vole clearly demonstrates a hunting ability that is utilized more often than not. I have to wonder, do Ospreys who nest at inland locations regularly supplement their growing chick's diet with small mammals and birds?? I don't know if there is enough evidence to support this idea, but it's something to seriously consider. The lack of interest in birding during the breeding season may also continue to keep us in the dark regarding this and other types of rare behavior.

Despite this species' reputation as being a strict fish-eater, it was nice to discover for the first time, the Osprey's versatility as hunter of both land and sea.

Paul Cianfaglione
Canton

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter, December 2014 through February 2015

Greg Hanisek

The season started out wet and ended with a cold and icy flourish. Except for an abundance of Pine Siskins and a few Common Redpolls, northern finches were in short supply. There were a couple of reliable Snowy Owls, but nothing to match last winter's remarkable descent from the Arctic. A good season for waterfowl included the first Tufted Duck (a very cooperative one) in 15 years. A Mew Gull, on the other hand, returned for a second consecutive year. Rufous Hummingbirds continued to be a regular winter feature, but overall late lingering birds were in short supply. For additional insight into the season, see Steve Broker's analysis of the Christmas Count season elsewhere in this issue.

Eight Greater White-fronted Geese for the season was a typical count for a species that used to be an extreme rarity. A flock of six Snow Geese was at Durham Fairgrounds on Dec. 16 (MD), and seven were at Farmington Meadows on Dec. 24 (SB), later than multiple birds are normally seen. A Brant was a good inland find Dec. 30-Jan. 3 at Goodwin Park in Hartford (RZ et al.). Two **Barnacle Geese** were found Jan. 23 in a large Canada Goose flock on the Connecticut R. in Enfield (FMa et al.). They were present to at least Jan. 29, continuing a recent

streak of annual appearances. Four Cackling Geese were reported, but evaluating numbers is difficult given the identification problems involved.

Eurasian Wigeons were reported from five locations. A Blue-winged Teal wintered for the second straight year at 14 Acre Pond in Norwalk (FG et al.). The best counts of Northern Shovelers were six on Dec. 2 at Stanley Quarter Park in New Britain (DS) and four on the Mystic River in Stonington on Jan. 1 (TT). A nice flock of 14 Northern Pintails was at Keeney Cove in Glastonbury on Dec. 15

(BA), and 24 were at Broad Brook Pond in East Windsor on Dec. 17 (PDe). Ten were at Riverside Park in Hartford on Jan. 7 (PCi). Canvasbacks were in short supply, with double-digit counts at only two locations, Captain's Cove Marina in Bridgeport, with a high of 20 on Feb. 27 (TG), and Frash Pond in Stratford, with a high of 12 on Jan. 3 (WB). Redheads were more widespread than usual by recent standards, with single-digit reports from 12 locations, including a high of eight at Captain's Cove Feb. 27-28 (FG et al.) A flock of 510 Ring-necked Ducks was at Lake Manasco in Ridgefield on Dec. 19, a late date for such a large number (AW); 320 were still there on Dec. 22 (AL). A female **Tufted Duck** found Feb. 22 at Captain's Cove remained into March and drew attention to an impressive collection of waterfowl in this protected area (TG, m.ob. See a detailed account elsewhere in this issue).

The remarkable increase in Common Eiders on the southeast coast over the last decade was well illustrated by a total of c. 210 at four locations from Waterford

to Stonington on Dec. 13 (PR). On Dec. 26, the count at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford had reached 500 (BM), and the number in state waters on a Jan. 3 ferry trip out of New London was 650 (FMa et al.). A few singles also were reported in the western end of Long Island Sound. A female Black Scoter was a good find on the Connecticut River in Enfield on Dec. 1 (PDe). Another upriver scoter, a White-winged Scoter, was at Riverside Park, Hartford, on Dec. 15 (PCi). A female **Harlequin Duck** off Stamford on Dec. 1 was seen the next day off neighboring Greenwich (PDU, SMA). An adult male was at Sunken I. in Fairfield from Jan. 21- Feb. 14 (TG). A Long-tailed Duck was unexpected inland in Ashford on Dec. 21 (SMo), as were three on Dec. 30 at Highland Lake in Winsted (PCa) and one at Charter Oak Landing in Hartford on Feb. 26 (PCi). A **Barrow's Goldeneye** on the Connecticut River in Enfield on Dec. 12 was at a place that has hosted a number of them over the years (PDe et al.). Sightings continued into February, and two females were off Stamford on Feb. 23 (SMA).



Russ Smiley photo

This Little Blue Heron, seen here on Dec. 20, 2014, at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, made a rare foray into January before disappearing.

In addition to a few reports inland and along the coast, two Red-necked Grebes that crashed on a Burlington roadside and in a Torrington backyard on Feb. 28 were brought to Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton and later released in Long Island Sound (JK). An **Eared Grebe** off Stonington Point on Dec. 29 was one of the season's top finds (FMa, TG). An unusually large mid-winter concentration of 11 Double-crested Cormorants was at Long Wharf in New Haven on Jan. 6 (JO). Great Cormorants were conspicuous well up the Connecticut River,

with six noted at Rocky Hill on Feb. 16 (SKo). An **American White Pelican** surprised two observers at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport when it flew by on Dec 21 (TG, AH).

Two American Bitterns were seen on Dec. 22 at Birds-eye boat ramp in Stratford, where at least one wintered (RS et al.). Singles were at Barn I. in Stonington on Jan. 3 (BM) and at Milford Point on Jan. 11 (FG), along with the usual scattered sightings at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, hereafter HBSP. Of seasonal interest



Mark Szantyr photo

This Grasshopper Sparrow made an unusual wintering attempt at Hammonasset Beach State Park but apparently didn't make it through the brutal February weather. It was last reported Jan. 17, 2015.



Frank Gallo photo

This Sandhill Crane split time in January 2015 between these fields and a shallow bay in Stonington, offering many observers a chance to see it.



Russ Smiley photo
This Yellow-breasted Chat, seen here on Jan. 2, rewarded patient observers at Hammonasset Beach State Park in December 2014 and early January 2015.



Dave Gumbart photo
This White-throated Sparrow seen on Jan. 4, 2015, in Clinton offers an especially attractive example of the aberrant plumage known as leucism.

were 23 Great Blue Herons, apparently returning migrants, at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield on Feb. 14, seen by observers on snowshoes (RD, LD). A Snowy Egret was still present Dec. 18-26 in Stratford (FMa et al.), and a Little Blue Heron lingered to Jan. 4 at HBSP (JCa et al.). Three Clapper Rails were detected in the Milford Point area on Dec 21 (NB). This season's **Sandhill Crane** reports included one in a cornfield in Preston on Dec. 5 (BKe). Possibly the same bird settled into a pattern of moving back and forth from fields to a shallow bay in Stonington starting on Jan. 14 through Jan. 31 (m.ob).

A Black Vulture roost in Derby held an impressive 50 birds on Dec. 28 (PF), and 28 in Norwich on Feb. 16 represented a good count for the southeast (RD). A lingering Osprey was a surprise find Dec. 14 along the Naugatuck R. in Naugatuck (TG). Presumably the same bird was even more surprising on Jan. 28 along the same river in Thomaston (TG). The stretch of river between these two points had open water associated with sewage treat-

ment plants and has hosted Osprey wintering attempts in the past. Cold weather concentrated Bald Eagles on the lower Housatonic River, with at least 16 noted on Feb. 18 between Caswell Cove in Milford and the Merritt Parkway bridge (FMa). A Broad-winged Hawk, reported with extensive details, was an extraordinary early record Feb. 27 in Middletown (MSz). More than two dozen reports of Rough-legged Hawks included two each at Suffield Wildlife Management Area on Dec. 12 (JWe) and the East River marshes in Guilford on Jan. 26 (KM). Single Golden Eagles were in Southbury on Jan. 10 (PR); at Pawcatuck on Jan. 15 (RD); and at Caswell Cove on Feb. 23 (TG).

A Spotted Sandpiper was an out-of-season surprise Jan. 1 in Westbrook (CL). It's becoming increasingly clear, based on scattered sightings in late December and January, that a small number of American Woodcocks winter along the Connecticut coast annually. A trip on the New London-Orient, N.Y., ferry produced two **Black-legged Kittiwakes** on Jan. 3 (FG, FMa et al.). Bonaparte's Gulls have become increas-

ingly scarce in Long Island Sound in winter, so one up the Connecticut River at Chester on Jan. 1 was a surprise (PDe). An adult **Mew (Common) Gull** returned for a second year to a large gull concentration on the Housatonic R. below the Shepaug Dam in Southbury Jan. 3 – 8 (NB et al.). The demise of the state's landfills so far has not resulted in the predicted decline in wintering white-winged gulls. This winter Iceland Gulls were reported from about 20 locations, with as many as eight in the large gull concentration in Southbury (m.ob), and the scarcer

Glaucous Gull was reported as singles in at least eight locations. Lesser Black-backed Gulls remain rather scarce, considering large numbers regionally, with reports from just five locations. A Great Black-backed Gull was observed killing a Clapper Rail Jan. 23 at Milford Point (CBe, BB). A widespread regional grounding of **Thick-billed Murres** included a bird picked up in Putnam on Feb. 10 and taken into rehab (LBo). Single birds were seen Feb. 12 at HBSP (FG) and at Stratford Point (PCo). Razor-bills were present in modest numbers, with six reports



Russ Smiley photo

This Northern Shrike found Haddam Meadow State Park in Haddam a desirable wintering ground, where it resided from late November 2014 through at least the end of January 2015.

totaling just 10 birds.

Single Snowy Owls were found on Dec. 6 at Milford Point (BN) and Greenwich Point (FMo). Throughout the season many reports of single Snowy Owls came from the Stratford-Milford area, and there were a few reports of single birds in Greenwich in mid-January. Silver Sands State Park in Milford proved to be an owl hotspot. Early in the season up to two Short-eared Owls were reported to be active at dusk, resulting in a lot of attention from birders. It soon became apparent that a Long-eared Owl also showed itself at dusk, and later in the season there were confirmed identifications of at least two Long-eareds. Both species were reported from a few other locations as well. A female **Rufous Hummingbird** first noted at a Stratford feeder in mid-November was present to at least Dec. 19 (JM, m.ob.). Another visited a feeder in Trumbull from at least Dec. 3 to Jan. 14 (ND et al.). A long-staying Red-headed Woodpecker visited a Simsbury feeder in January (GK). A **Gyrfalcon** was reported passing over the Stamford coast on Jan. 10 (MM). Monk

Parkeets have been harder to find in recent years, but 40 in one tree in Stratford on Jan. 1 were noteworthy (FMa, LM).

A late Blue-headed Vireo was at HBSP on Dec. 1 (TM). A Northern Shrike found in late November at Haddam Meadow State Park in Haddam remained through January (HS et al.). Another was in Winchester on Jan. 8 (DRs). Four Northern Rough-winged Swallows found safe harbor Dec. 6 – Jan. 10 at the East Hartford sewage treatment plant, a place where this species has lingered into winter in the past (BA et al.). An exceptionally large flock of 400 Horned Larks was at Rocky Hill Meadows on Jan. 11 (BA). With an increase in urban Fish Crow roosts, a flock of 150 in New Haven on Feb. 7 was not unexpected (RH). A flock of about 18 American Pipits was at River Road in Southbury in early January (GH et al.). The only other double-figure reports were from early December.

An Ovenbird, a species that has wintered at least twice, was a non-fatal window strike Jan. 15 in Fairfield (PK). Reports of about six Orange-crowned Warblers

for the season included two on Jan. 1-2 at a green-way along the Housatonic River in Stratford, where one stayed until mid-month (SKr, CBa et al.). A Black-and-white Warbler was reported from Osbornedale State Park in Derby on Dec 14 (MSt). A very late Black-throated Blue Warbler turned up in Easton on Dec. 2 (RK). There were reports of three Palm Warblers and five Pine Warblers lingering beyond December. Single Yellow-breasted Chats were at HBSP Dec 1-Jan. 3 (JCr et al.), in Old Lyme Dec. 13-30 (PDe et al.) and in Voluntown on Dec 26 (TC).

An exceptional concentration of six Vesper Sparrows was in North Haven on Dec. 20 (ABr). A Grasshopper Sparrow, rare in winter, was found Dec. 28 at HBSP (TG et al.). It remained to at least January 17. An adult male **Painted Bunting**, discovered in October at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford, was relocated on Dec. 22. It then went missing until Jan. 2 and remained into mid-March (PDu, DW et al.). Single **Dickcissels** were feeder visitors, primarily in January, in Waterford (LW et al.), in Westbrook (MK) and

in Stamford (DW).

Significant blackbird roosts surveyed in January were in Groton (8000 Common Grackles, 1435 Red-winged Blackbirds - GW) and in Windsor (14,300 Common Grackles and 2300 Red-winged Blackbirds - JWo). After scattered reports of small groups of Rusty Blackbirds throughout the season, the flock at a feeder in Hamden that hosts them annually had built to c. 90 by Feb. 12 (JZ). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** visited a Salem feeder Jan. 24-Feb. 9 (PT). Eight Eastern Meadowlarks, increasingly hard to find at any season, were at Great I. in Old Lyme on Dec. 20 (HG). Five were at a trash transfer station in Groton on Jan. 3 (GW), and three were at Windham Airport in North Windham the same day (PR). There were two reports of Baltimore Orioles in December and two in January.

In a season lacking in most northern finches, single **White-winged Crossbills** were a good finds on Dec. 21 in Goshen (KF) and Jan. 1 at Aspetuck Reservoir in Easton (WH, JN). In a season

with few redpolls, a flock of 20 Common Redpolls on Jan. 11 in New Milford (EA) and 22 on Feb. 10 in Goshen (RB) were noteworthy. The best feeder count was 30+ in Barkhamsted in late January (FZ). The same feeder held a flock of 117 Pine Siskins on Feb. 5 (FZ), and 75 were at Bent of the River Audubon on Jan. 21 (PCo). A flock of 200 siskins were feeding on birch cones along with at least 10 Common Redpolls on Feb. 19 in Milford (FMA). A Stratford feeder held 90 American Goldfinches on Feb. 26 (FMA).

Observers: Elliott Ashe, Bill Asteriades, Charles Barnard (CBa), Scott Baron, William Batsford, Larry Bausher (LBa), Ray Belding, Bill Bevan, Cindy Bevan (CBe), Nick Bonomo, Linda Bowen (LBo), Andrew Brand (ABr), Alex Burdo (ABu), Jay Carlisle (JCr), Jim Carr (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Patrick Comins (PCo), Tom Cordock, Nancy Deluca, Paul Desjardins (PDe), Mike Di Giorgio, Barb DiRienzo, Linda Dixon, Robert Dixon, Turk Duddy, Patrick Dugan (PDU), Morris Finkelstein, Kevin Finnan, Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo,

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PHOTO CHALLENGE



It's big and powerful-looking. It's got a long tail. It's well-streaked below. It all adds up to an immature Accipiter. Since it's really big and powerful-looking with a pale supercilium, there's a big and powerful urge to call it a Northern Goshawk. But with immature Accipiters it always pays to take a deep breath and reassess everything. Back pattern is important, but we can't see that. We can see the underparts and here is where some doubt begins to creep in. Typical immature goshawks are very heavily and extensively marked below, with the streaking on a buffy background. This individual has a pale ground color to the breast and belly, and the streaking thins out on the belly. Cooper's Hawk is typically the most lightly marked of the Accipiters in this area. Still, this bird's bulk seems to exceed what one would expect on even the biggest female Cooper's Hawk. Immature Cooper's can also show a noticeable but usually short supercilium. This bird's supercilium is very prominent.

Is there another feature here that helps tip the scale toward goshawk? Look very closely at the tail. The tail bands are

somewhat offset from feather to feather, giving the banding a goshawk's zigzag look. This is noticeable but not necessarily obvious on this bird because of the way the individual rectrices are being held, but look at each dark horizontal band. Each has a thin but sharp white edge – a real goshawk feature. The pale belly isn't typical, but the heavily illustrated raptor guides show examples of the occasional lightly marked immature goshawk. This majestic immature Northern Goshawk was photographed in Goshen by Kevin Finnan.



Photo Challenge No. 90

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler (ISSN 1077-0283) is devoted to the study of birds and their conservation in Connecticut and is published quarterly (January, April, July, and October) by the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

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

Printed at Yale University

– Address Service Requested –

Volume 35, No 3, 2015

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