



BULLETIN

The Newsletter of Connecticut Ornithological Association
VOLUME 1 NO. 4 WINTER 1987

COA BOARD MEETING

The COA board met on November 10th. Among subjects discussed were plans for the upcoming issue of THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER, and reports from various committee heads, including Membership and the Treasurer's report.

Plans for the Annual Meeting were reviewed -- it will be in March and promises to be interesting, entertaining and worthwhile. We'll let you know the exact date in the next issue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

RESERVE YOUR EAGLES EARLY -- In case you haven't gotten the word, you'll need a reservation (made well in advance) to gain entrance to the Shepaug Eagle Observation Area. The State Department of Environmental Protection has -- "imposed incremental modifications" ... designed to:

- "1. ensure the welfare of wintering Bald Eagles using the area; and
- "2. provide a quality education experience to the general public."

Bottom line is: all individuals and groups need a reservation (you'll be asked for your number when you get there) to get in. Call (203) 566-7195 Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm.

WARBLER VOLUNTEER NEEDED -- Betty Kleiner is looking for someone in the Bridgeport/New Haven area who would be willing to pick up the WARBLER at the printer's (four times a year), affix mailing labels and help take it to the Fairfield Post Office. Takes about a half day every three months. Call Betty -- 658-5670.

FIELD NOTES -- Should be sent to: Clay Taylor, Old Lusville Road, Moodus, CT 06469.

RENEWAL NOTICES -- Were mailed in mid-November. If you didn't receive one, call Debbie Miller (617) 520-1289 or better yet drop her a note with a check! If you got yours but haven't renewed yet, don't forget ... your support and interest are as important as your dues payment.

WINTER ROOST SITE INFORMATION WANTED -- Doctor Dwight Smith, Professor of Biology at Southern Connecticut State University is conducting research on winter roosting sites used by Long-eared and Saw-whet Owls. Of about 35 documented sites, 20 are used consistently, 2-6 owls per year. If you discover an owl of either species, please write him at Southern Connecticut State University, 501 Crescent Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06515.

NEW STATE CHECKLIST -- Leon Barkman has published a new booklet Checklist of Connecticut Birds. It covers 400 species, including 190 accidentals. Gives breeding status and period it can be seen in Connecticut. \$2.60 by mail: Leon Barkman, 26 West Street, Newton, CT 06470.

CHOUGH SIGHTING -- A Chough (pronounced CHUFF) was discovered by Buzz Devine near Newtown on the 24th of November. A Chough is a Corvid found on rocky shores of the British Isles, is slightly smaller than our crow and has a blood-red bill and legs. Buzz viewed the bird on two different days and succeeded in photographing it. Subsequent efforts to relocate the bird were unsuccessful. To our knowledge there are no other documented sightings of this species in North America. The bird is not known to wander and has a very restricted range, even within its normal confines, which raises the obvious question of the bird being an escapee from someone's aviary.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

So you know where your Membership Dues go, Carl Trichka has prepared the following brief financial outline for the past two years. It should be noted that Founders Funds are set aside by COA's Charter and are not generally available for operating expenses. Note it was the Founders Fund that bailed us out in '85-'86. While we're solvent for '86-'87, we're not exactly rolling in money, so please keep this in mind when making your renewal payment.

<u>1985-'86</u>	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>EXPENSES</u>
Membership Dues/Contributions	\$2,419.00	Printing \$3,588.00
Founders Fund	3,190.00	Postage (and 934.83
Interest	458.81	other expenses)
	<u>\$6,067.81</u>	<u>\$4,522.83</u>
(Less Founders)	<u>-3,190.00</u>	
	\$2,877.81	
(Less Expenses)	<u>-4,522.83</u>	
	-(\$1,645.02)	Negative Balance

<u>1986-'87</u>	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>EXPENSES</u>
Membership Dues	\$4,723.49	Printing \$2,263.00
Founders Fund	5,059.00	Postage 1,661.03
Interest	450.26	
	<u>\$10,232.75</u>	<u>\$3,924.03</u>
(Less Founders)	<u>-5,059.00</u>	
Working Capital	\$ 5,173.75	
(Less Expenses)	<u>3,924.03</u>	
	\$ 1,249.02	Balance

Our improved financial position for '87 is due in large part to the leadership of Debbie Miller, who whipped our Membership files into shape and made sure renewals were properly handled.

REPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE - DECEMBER 1, 1987

The Connecticut Ornithological Association currently has 333 members in the following categories: Founding - 27; Life - 5; Sustaining - 10; Contributing - 35; Family - 36; Individual - 217; Organizations - 3. Of these, 26 are out of state, ranging from St. John, V.I., to Vermont and California.

There are also 15 exchange subscriptions with other ornithological journals from other countries. These publications are on file at the Bird Craft Museum in Fairfield.

You should have received your renewal notice by now. It was mailed separately this year, not bound into the WARBLER, in the hope of faster response. Your prompt attention to this important matter will be greatly appreciated.

You can also help COA greatly by encouraging friends to join. A newly-prepared membership flyer is available for you to distribute. Christmas Counts are the ideal time to spread the word. Contact: Debbie Miller, 14 Oakridge Drive, Franklin, Mass., (617)-520-1289.

TIME TO MAKE YOUR CHRISTMAS COUNTS PLANS

Here in Connecticut we are fortunate indeed to have widespread support for, and interest in the "traditional" annual Christmas Count. With seventeen recognized counts, we stack up well for a state of our size.

As everyone who has ever participated knows, Christmas Counts are a wonderful mix of serious birding and socializing. Taking part in a count is a marvelous excuse to indulge in your favorite pastime instead of finishing your Christmas shopping or cleaning up the house after holiday houseguests have left.

It's a great time for renewing acquaintances, enjoying a day's birding with friends and contributing in a very real sense, to our knowledge of the birds of the state.

It's also a time when rarities are turned up, and count participants who learn of a "good bird" first are best able to "chase it." Anyone seriously trying to build a state list should take part in as many counts as possible.

Which brings up the point -- many counts are in serious need of more observers.

The New Haven Count is especially looking for extra eyes. Call Stephen Broker. And the Stratford-Milford Count (which is sponsored by the Connecticut Ornithological Association) has made a plea for volunteers. Call Fred Sibley or Neil Currie. There are two new (2nd year) counts, Trail Wood and Barkhamsted, that could also use your support.

The following list of State Christmas Counts has been compiled to encourage Members to take part in new counts. Most of us have "our own" favorite count, but why not get out to a different part of the state? It's a great way to add to your own knowledge of good birding spots, and by taking part in other counts you're making a real contribution to the state records.

So here are seventeen Christmas Counts to consider. All compilers will welcome your call ... they are looking for help!

OXFORD

Sunday, December 20th

Contact: Buzz Devine 888-5161
Mark Szantyr 756-8362

Compilation at: Sam Wheeler's house
8 Mountain Road, Seymour

QUINNIPIAC VALLEY

Sunday, December 20th

Contact: Wilford Schultz 265-6398

Compilation at: 93 Harrison Road
Wallingford

SALMON RIVER

(Mattabeseck Audubon Society)

Sunday, December 20th

Contact: David Titus 635-1544

Compilation at: 376 Main St., Cornwall
Total Species Last Year -- 76

STORRS

(Natchaug Orn. Society)

Sunday, December 20th

Contact: Shirley Davis 429-3219

TRAIL WOOD
(2nd Year!)

Sunday, December 27th
Contact: Shirley Davis 429-3219

STRATFORD-MILFORD
(Official COA Count)

Wednesday, December 30th
Contact: Fred Sibley 453-9345
Neil Currie 426-9861

Compilation at: Milford Point Sanctuary
Total Species 86: 119

COMMENTS: This count is being held mid-week so as not to conflict with other counts, but needs more observers! Even if you can only put in a half-day, call.

Count has the potential to be the highest total in the state with a good mix of species. As an experiment this year, there will be smaller areas, many more captains and a 1 pm compilation which will allow participants to return to the field to chase down rarities seen earlier, to explore other areas, or as compiler Fred Sibley says, "to hang around and tell lies to each other."

WESTPORT

Sunday, December 20th
Contact: Frank Mantlik 838-1694
Ed Hiestand 227-7253

Compilation at: Nature Center for
Environmental Activities
10 Woodside Lane
Westport 06880

Total Species 86: 102 (Normal expect
about 110)

COMMENTS: Highlights from past two years include Bald Eagles (2), Water Pipit, Lark Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Merlin, Tundra Swan, Gr. White-fronted Goose, King Eider. This is the 39th consecutive year for this count.

WOODBURY-ROXBURY

Saturday, December 19th
Contact: Aldro Jenks 263-2613

Compilation at: Woodbury Community House

COMMENTS: 1986 highlights include: 12 Bald Eagles, 202 Bluebirds, 177 Golden-crowned Kinglets.

BARKHAMSTED

Sunday, December 27th
Contact: Dave Rosgen 567-5281
Dave Tripp 379-7011

Compilation at: Roaring Brook Nature Center

COMMENTS: Second year for this count, which needs your support.

GREENWICH-STAMFORD

Sunday, December 20th
Contact: Tom Baptist (914) 628-1118
Gary Palmer 661-4897

Compilation at: Audubon Center of Greenwich

COMMENTS: 1986 total - 116. Highlights include Red-necked Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Turkey Vulture, Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, Gr. Yellowlegs, Yellow-breasted Chat, Snowy Owl, N. Oriole.

HARTFORD

Saturday, January 2nd (Snow Date January 3rd)

Contact: Jay Kaplan 693-0263
Steve Davis 242-2135
Bill Atlmann 643-7117

Compilation at: Westmor Park, Flagg Road,
West Hartford

COMMENTS: 1986 total - 91. 1987 promises to be a good count -- two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted this fall at the Hartford dump. Start the New Year right!

HIDDEN VALLEY

Saturday, January 2nd

Contact: Jeane Kaufman 355-1688
Sibil Gilbert
Rt. 1, Box 236, Pawling NY 12564

Compilation at: Patterson/Pawling Town Hall

LAKEVILLE-SHARON

Sunday, December 20th

Contact: Bob Moeller 364-5936

Compilation at: Northeast Audubon Center

COMMENTS: 1986 total - 68, including 14 Saw Whet Owls.

LITCHFIELD HILLS

Sunday, December 20th

Contact: Ray Belding 485-1368

Compilation at: Litchfield Grange Hall, Rt. 202

COMMENTS: 1986 total - 67, including an Iceland Gull at Litchfield Landfill. Count circle has been moved slightly to avoid overlap with Roxbury.

NEW HAVEN BIRD CLUB

Saturday, December 19th

Contact: Stephen P. Broker 387-0798

Compilation at: James Auditorium
Conn. Agriculture Experiment Station
123 Huntington St., New Haven

COMMENTS: This count needs your help. The stores will be crowded that Saturday, so enjoy a day outdoors instead!

NEW LONDON

Saturday, January 2nd

Contact: Bob Dewire (W) 536-1216
(H) 599-3085

Compilation at: 7 Mary Butler Drive, Waterford

COMMENTS: 1986 total - 112, including Bald Eagle, Merlin, Cooper's Hawk, 2 Chats.

OLD LYME-SAYBROOK

Sunday, January 3rd

Contact: Jay Hand 434-0213
76 Sill Lane, Old LYme 06371

Compilation at: Essex Town Hall

NOTE: There is a glitch to all of the above. The new fee charged by National Audubon Society this year, if you wish your name to appear in AMERICAN BIRDS as a participant, is \$4.00 for your first count, \$3.50 for a second and \$3.00 for a third. Of course you can participate in a count as an observer without paying the fee, you just won't get to see your name in print unless you pay.

WHAT ARE YOUR MOST WANTED STATE BIRDS?

More and more people (your Eidtor included) are coming to the realization that state listing is "where it's at."

If you are a casual birder, keeping a state list can add to your enjoyment of getting out, and it certainly will expand your coverage of the state. If you are an aggressive/compulsive type lister, state listing affords you an outlet without all the expense of "red-eye" plane trips to McAllen, Tucson or wherever the latest accidental has appeared. Connecticut is a manageable size geographically, and the latest state checklist prepared by George Clark lists 361 species with an additional 38 hypotheticals, plenty to keep you busy!

Both as a matter of interest to readers and as a possible aid to tracking down your most sought after species, the BULLETIN is going to compile a "most-wanted" list.

Use the enclosed form to mail in the birds you would most like to see in Connecticut (let's keep it within the realm of at least "remotely-possible").

Your wish lists will be tallied and in the next BULLETIN we'll publish the results so you can see how you compare with your fellow listers.

Also at the bottom of the form you will notice a space for reporting your current state total. If enough people mail back the form with their state count, we will publish a special supplement of names and lists a la ABA. (What happened to their 1987 Supplement?) Honor system of course! This is for fun and not an "official COA list."

REGULAR NEW FEATURE

Based upon the composite "most-wanted list," we plan to introduce a regular new feature to appear in each quarterly issue of the BULLETIN. We'll do our best to offer suggestions on where are the most likely spots and times to search for the species you want to see in the upcoming three-month period.

For example if, as we expect it might, Snowy Owl proved to be a "wanted" bird, we'll endeavor to give you a run-down on where the most frequent occurrences have been -- Milford Point, Todd's Point in Greenwich, etc., etc.

We hope to persuade long-time state birders to contribute on a regular basis to this feature. The current article on "Winter Birding" by Mark Szantyr is a good start.

What's more, since this is your newsletter, you are invited and encouraged to send in your own "secret" spots and little-known areas where you may have discovered a rarity. Your suggestions could be for "hot birds" on the most wanted list or for just good all-around birding areas that are not generally known.

You'll get more out of the BULLETIN and out of your COA Membership if you begin using the newsletter as a means of sharing birding information. So let's go! I hope to begin hearing from Members.

Send whatever you have to the Editor:

Todd Weintz - (W) 50 Water Street, S. Norwalk, CT 06854
(H) 40 Northwood Lane, Stamford, CT 06903

MOST-WANTED STATE BIRDS

Help the BULLETIN compile a comprehensive list of Members' most sought after birds so we can bring you birding suggestions on where to look for the birds you'd like to see. Please limit your list to species known to have occurred previously in the state.

The following are the species I would most like to find in Connecticut. (Please use common names and list in order of desirability.)

- 1) _____ 11) _____
- 2) _____ 12) _____
- 3) _____ 13) _____
- 4) _____ 14) _____
- 5) _____ 15) _____
- 6) _____ 16) _____
- 7) _____ 17) _____
- 8) _____ 18) _____
- 9) _____ 19) _____
- 10) _____ 20) _____

OPTIONAL (BUT APPRECIATED) INFORMATION:

Name _____

My state list (total ABA species identified by me) is _____

I have been birding (total) _____ years. In Connecticut _____ years.

COMMENTS (On COA Membership, WARBLER, BULLETIN, Gripes, Wishes):

MAIL TO:

TODD WEINTZ
50 WATER STREET
NORWALK, CONN. 06854

YOUR FIRST WINTER AS A BIRD WATCHER or
THINGS THAT YOU KNOW BUT MIGHT HAVE FORGOTTEN

By Mark S. Szantyr

It's getting colder. The days are getting shorter. You might start to think your options as a bird watcher are becoming limited. Don't despair! Don't put those binoculars away! These next four months, December through March, can provide some of the most exciting birding you are likely to get in Connecticut.

Winter dictates a certain type of birding; birding predicated on a knowledge of food sources and habitat types. It is fitting, then, that winter opens with that grandfather of bird watching events, the Christmas Bird Count. This activity, like no other, points out the need to know the where, when, and why of food and habitat for the bird species that spend the holidays with us.

A Christmas Bird Count is a marathon, twenty-four hours (or somewhat less for the sensible among us), census of the bird life in a specific geographic location. These counts are done all over the globe during the three week period in December. The count circle is scoured by teams of birders and their totals are compared and compiled over tales and toddies. This event pairs beginners and experts, providing each with ample opportunity to teach and learn. These counts are a great time and you should get involved with one if you can.

Now that you've spent the day with your expert, and he or she has pointed out the intricacies of feeding stations, cedar groves, apple orchards, farm fields, corn stubble, open water, grass fields, pine plantings, landfills (the riper the better), hedge rows, saltmarshes, sheltered bays ... you get the point, you are ready to venture out on your own.

Bird feeders play a large role in winter bird watching. Feeding stations are responsible for the range expansion, both winter and breeding, of a number of traditionally southern species, into our area. Think of a Christmas without Cardinals and Titmice! Feeders also provide a great opportunity to study birds in a relaxed way, allowing you to get a good, familiar feeling about some of the more common species. With any one of the more popular field guides in hand and a decent pair of binoculars, a Saturday morning at the breakfast table nursing a relaxed cup of coffee, can be more educational than a trip to the Everglades. Things to be aware of are relative sizes of the birds, feeding behaviour (what they eat and where they eat it), color of the bird and where the color is located on the bird, and what sound the bird is making.

Take ample notes! Especially note any bird that you find to be different from the others. Be prepared to see a lot of common birds. Rarities are named rarities because they are!

Once you are satisfied that you know your feeder birds, head a bit farther afield. A walk through the neighborhood can add new and exciting species to your winter's tally. The crab apple planting by the old library might harbor a dozen or so hearty Robins, a Mockingbird or two, and in those wonderful "winter finch years," six or eight Pine Grosbeaks! You notice a cavity in the large maple tree on the corner. One cold, clear morning a soft, grey face and two yellow eyes peer back at you! Eastern Screech Owl! Great! A quick stop at your local landfill and three species of gulls join your list. With each new species, your confidence grows.

At about the time that you run out of local birds, your heart tells you it's time to gas up and search for the "class" birds of winter. But where do you go?

A good place to begin is by calling the Rare Bird Alert. In Connecticut, simply dialing 254-3665 can provide more than enough places to go and birds to see. Your ears ring with reports of Snowy Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, Long-eared Owls, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, a plethora of Waterfowl, Bald Eagles, a Raven or two and on and on and on.

Checking a road map, your winter route begins to develop. You head to Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. By driving the park roads and scanning the various parking areas, you pick up Snow Buntings, Longspurs and Horned Larks. Brave the cold winds and carefully scope the offshore waters. Loons, Grebes, and a variety of Sea Duck species seem to pop up from the depths. Before heading out of the park, check the cedars at the end of Willard's Island and along the entrance road to the park. In past years, Long-eared, Saw-whet, Barn and Great Horned Owls have spent the cold months roosting in these trees by day. Be sure to look at the ground while walking through these trees. The best sign of an owl's presence is the splash of "whitewash" beneath a preferred roost branch.

Heading east from the park, you go to the Town Docks in Essex. From this vantage point, study the skies for any of the birds of prey that spend the winter at this, the mouth of the Connecticut River. Numbers of Bald Eagles of all ages frequently are seen perched along the river or flying overhead in their search for fish or ducks or the carcass of some poor unfortunate deer that might have met his end in the river valley. Rough-legged Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers and many other raptors can also be seen here most winters. Again, duck numbers are good and the species are varied so that there is never a dull moment.

Going back to the west, your next stop is New Haven Harbor. More ducks and grebes are seen and gulls by the thousands await your perusal. Keep your eyes open for the Iceland and Glaucous Gulls that occur each year. You will recognize them by their lighter coloration and the lack of black in the outer wing.

Farther west still, Merwin Point in Milford gives up more Sea Ducks and if you are a little bit lucky, the annual flock of Purple Sandpipers. These dark, medium-sized shore birds with their two-toned bills tip-toe their way along the Point's rocky shore. Look carefully! They are easy to miss!

While in Milford, a trip at any season is not complete without a visit to Milford Point Sanctuary. This long, delicate point of land juts out into the mouth of the Housatonic River and has produced some of the best birds ever to be found in Connecticut. By walking out to the end in winter, a birder may find Snowy Owls, Short-eared Owls, the "Ipswich" variety of Savannah Sparrow (recognized by its overall lighter appearance and larger size), Horned Larks and, who knows, maybe another Gyrfalcon will zip by.

Another area worth a check is the Sikorsky Airport/Lordship Marsh area in Stratford. Snowy Owls, Short-eared Owls, various Hawks and other winter specialties often turn up here.

Inland, the northwest corner of the state can be a great place to find some of the more northern species that come to Connecticut to enjoy the sun and fun of this "temperate" climate. Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, both Crossbills and all of the Finches are annually reported. Good years provide us with Common Redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks. A good year is when the northern cone crop fails and the species that rely on this food source must venture south in search of nourishment. Northern Ravens are also seen in this area of the state. A fairly recent addition to the state list, these large, dark spirits can do a lot to warm a rather bleak day.

This is only a very brief list of the many spots that can provide great winter birding in Connecticut. By becoming associated with a bird club or by checking a few of the published sit guides out of your local library (Remember! Check those crab apples!), Connecticut becomes a gold mine of places to go and things to do in your pursuit of birds.

Before you know it, March is here. You're back at home after a great day in the field. You are warm, both because of the hot cider in your cup and because of the adult male Snowy Owl you saw moments ago, perched on the wind blown dune at Milford Point. You check your bird feeder. This is where our story began. You notice something different. The ground beneath it is not the dirty white of a winter past its prime, but is the rich black of a Blackbird flock! They're back! Where did winter go? Oops! Here come the Warblers!

-- Mark Szantyr

COA DIRECTORY

COA OFFICERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

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