COA



Bulletin

Fall 2001 NEWSLETTER OF THE CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION Volume 16 No 3

President's Message

By: Patty Pendergast

There is no way we can ignore the events of September 11th. We can only wonder at the hatred of those who can justify the deaths of so many, and marvel at the heroes who run in to places that everyone else is running out of. Life seemed to stand still that week and all of us have been touched by the aftermath....

Life did not stand still however. Fall migration went on as part of the earth's ongoing rhythm. Shorebirds, hawks, sparrows all acquiesce to the tilt of the earth and the swiftly waning days. A reminder that our earth is made up of so much more than human tragedies.

December brings the holidays and Christmas Bird Counts. Listed here are all of the counts and the count compiler's contacts. Try to get out and join in as many counts as you have time for. Its not only good for the soul, but adds to our knowledge base.

This winter the COA board will be looking forward to the next field season. Our Conservation Committee has compiled a list of species that need special documentation of their status in state and regionally. We will be looking for the dedicated expertise of COA's field birders to help gather that information for state and federal agencies, colleges, municipal comissions and non-profits.

No other birding organization is regarded more for the cumulative knowledge and expertise of its membership than COA. One of my goals is to build upon our past successes mobilizing birders to lend a hand with different surveys. In this way we will contribute to databases that will help with bird and habitat conservation.

In a world gone awry, as birders we can use our time and passion to do something useful for the good of many.

The best and brightest to you all in the coming year.

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Fall Field Day Report

By: Sylvia L. Halkin

We had a great Fall Field Day at Cove Island Park in Stamford on October 13. The day started with mist-netting by Frank Gallo and his crew, who filled his holding cage with migrants waiting to be released with silver numbered bracelets as demonstrable evidence they'd been in Connecticut. The first walk, led by Patrick Dugan to the "brush dump" area and adjacent woods, turned up a good number of species, including Vesper Sparrow, Purple Finch, Brown Thrasher, Blue-headed Vireo, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Frank gave a demonstration of bird-banding techniques when the group returned, explaining which subtle characteristics he examines to determine ages and sexes of birds in the hand.

We returned to the pavilion for lunch, with many people also visiting displays in the adjacent Sound Waters Center for Environmental Education, where a room of aquaria displays some surprising native species of fish. One group then walked along the park shoreline, spotting hawks flying overhead and a young buck that swam out from a nearby peninsula, headed upstream. A second group found a Clay-colored Sparrow that eventually moved to a lilac bush next to the pavilion, where it hopped in and out for over an hour, giving many good views as it foraged with a Savannah Sparrow. A Merlin flew in and perched in a nearby tree, giving Clay Taylor a great chance to demonstrate the level of detail that can be seen through his Swarovski spotting telescope.

Clay presented a workshop on how to take photographs by mounting a camera to look through the eyepiece of a spotting telescope, and showed samples of some of the great photographs he's taken with his scope + camera setup.

The raffle was held and the lucky winners walked away with beautiful artwork generously donated by Mark Szantyr and Patrick Dugan.

Many thanks to Janet Mehmel for her work in organizing all the logistics, and supplying much-appreciated food and

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102nd Annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count CT Christmas Bird Count 2001-2002 Schedule

By: Stephen P. Broker

Saturday, December 15, 2001

New Haven, CT (NH-CT) Compilers: Stephen P. Broker, 50 Hidden Place, Cheshire, CT 06410-3723, lkbroker@snet.net, 203-272-5192; Chris Loscalzo, 67 Wepawaug Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525, closcalz@optonline.net, 203-389-6508

Storrs, CT (ST-CT) Compiler: Steve Rogers, 75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268, srogers@ellingtonschools.net, 860-429-1259

Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (WR-CT) Compiler: Chris Wood, 6 Orton Lane, Woodbury, CT 06798, 203-263-5331

Sunday, December 16, 2001

Greenwich-Stamford, CT (GS-CT) Compiler: Gary Palmer, 34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807, 203-661-4897

Litchfield Hills, CT (LH-CT) Compiler: Raymond E. Belding, 1229 Winsted Road #30, Torrington, CT 06790, hoatzin@optonline.net, 860-482-4046

Lakeville-Sharon, CT (LS-CT) Compiler: Bob Moeller, P.O. Box 1119, Sharon, CT 06069, bob.moeller@snet.net, 860-364-5936

Oxford, CT (OX-CT) Compiler: Tom Sharp, 22 Albion Street 3rd Floor, Waterbury, CT 06705, tsharp01@snet.net, 203-596-1406

Quinnipiac Valley, CT (QV-CT) Compiler: Wilford Schultz, 93 Harrison Road, Wallingford, CT 06492, wqschultz@msn.com, 203-265-6398

Salmon River, CT (SR-CT) Compiler: David A. Titus, 278 Court Street #108, Middletown, CT 06457, dtitus@mail.wesleyan.edu, 860-346-3735

Westport, CT (WE-CT) Compiler: Frank W. Mantlik, 195 Highview Drive, Stratford, CT 06614, avocetfm@aol.com, 203-377-5829; Charlie Barnard,

94 Gray Rock Road, Southport, CT 06490, 203-259-8994; Jim Hunter, Woodside Lane, Westport, CT 06880, 203-227-7253

Saturday, December 22, 2001

Stratford-Milford, CT (SM-CT) Compiler: Steve Mayo, 27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524, 203-393-0694

Sunday, December 23, 2001

Barkhamsted, CT (BA-CT) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 53 Country Lane, Canton, CT 06019-3407, dtrippir@home.com, 860-693-6524

Saturday, December 29, 2001

Hartford, CT (HA-CT): Compiler: Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019, jkaplan@sciencecenterct.org, 860-693-0157

New London, CT (NL-CT) Compiler: Robert Dewire, 9 Canary Lane, Pawcatuck, CT 06379, redewire@snet.net, 860-599-3085

Sunday, December 30, 2001

Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood (EW-CT) Compiler: Marilynn Higgins, Hammond Hill, Hampton, CT 06247, msamh@snet.net, 860-455-0063

Old Lyme-Saybrook, CT (OL-CT) Compiler: Patty Pendergast, 112-1 Main Street, Chester, CT 06412, winterwren@earthlink.net, 860-526-4686

Tuesday, January 1, 2002

Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY-CT (HV-NY) Compilers: Sibyll Gilbert, RR1, Box 236, Pawling, NY 12564, 914-855-3266; Angela Dimmitt, New Milford, CT, BADimmitt@cs.com, 860-355-3429 or 212-628-8348

Upgrading Your BinocularsBy: Jerry Connolly

To a birder, there is no more important tool than the binocular. The quest of putting a name to the bird ones observing requires a clear view of the creature's field marks. Apart from a bird in the hand, one almost always needs to magnify the subject to resolve the detail necessary.

The purchase of optics is usually the single most important investment the bird enthusiast can make. There are a dizzying array of makes and models available, so one must start the process by understanding optical terms and their relative importance. Once you're comfortable with the following terms, it is advisable to try out several different models to find the best fit.

One word of caution, trust your eyes not the numbers or the manufacturer's specs which are often erroneous. A case in point occurred recently, when we received an 8x42 roof prism that advertised a close focus of 16 ft. The close focus turned out to be 40 ft.!

Field of View

A binocular's width of field is usually expressed in feet at 1000 yards or by angular degrees. To convert the former to the latter, divide by 52.45. A full 180° field at 1000 yards is 9441 feet; each degree of field at 1000 yards this equals 52.45 ft. A binocular with a field of view of 368 ft. @ 1000 yrds. would convert to a 7° field. (368÷52.45=7) Birding binoculars should probably fall within the range f 6-8°. Beware of the extra wide field models (9.5° and up) as they tend to be fuzzy optics with considerable distortion on the edge of the field.

Exit Pupil

The circular beam of light that exits the binocular to your eye is called the exit pupil. The diameter of the exit pupil is determined by dividing the objective lens diameter by the magnification. A 7x35 has an exit pupil of 5mm; a 7x42 has 6mm from the exit pupil and so on. In theory, a larger exit pupil will deliver more light, but a superior 8x30 can appear brighter than a lesser quality 8x42 because a higher percentage of the available light is delivered by the better optic. Don't buy based on numbers. Trust your eyes.

Roof vs Porro Prism

Porro prisms are the traditional looking binoculars that

feature two right angled prisms in each barrel and objective lenses that are further apart than the oculars (eyepiece lenses). The light is refracted (bent) four times by the prisms. Roof prisms feature an *H* design in which the light is refracted five times. Each time the light hits a surface, a certain amount of dispersion occurs, so the more surfaces the more the light loss. All things being equal (glass quality, coatings, etc.) a porro will deliver more light than a roof prism. Roof prisms have another problem called *phase shifting*, which causes a deterioration of contrast.

However, some manufacturers coat the roof with an expensive anti-phase shifting material. Phase corrected roof prisms dominate the high-end binocular market. Many birders prefer roofs because they are less bulky yet more rugged than the typical porro. They also feature an internal focusing system which are easier to make water and fog proof. Rule of thumb: If you're spending \$300 or less to buy a porro; the similarly priced roof will be no match optically. If you can afford it, treat yourself to a phase-corrected roof prism \$400 and way beyond.

Eye Relief (eyepoint)

Eye relief is the distance a binocular can be held from the eye where one can see the full field of view comfortably. This optimum position is called the eyepoint and the distance from the ocular is the eye relief measure in millimeters.

Long eye relief or high eyepoint provides viewing comfort and is especially important for eyeglass wearers. The amount of eye relief needed by an individual to see full field will depend on the distance their eyes sit from the eyeglass. Most binoculars have either rubber eye cups that fold down or plastic cups that twist or pop down. Doing this will help cut down on the distance between the eyes and the oculars. If you wear eyeglasses, you will need from 16 -20 mm of eye relief to see the whole field.

Close focus

In most birding conditions, a minimum focus of 16 ft. will be adequate. Many models today feature extreme close focus, some as extreme as 4 ft. If you're in to butterflies and dragonflies, you'll want one of these ultra-close focus models. Be sure to check the center focus from *infinity* down to the minimum distance to see how many turns it takes. Some of the ultra-close models are very quick taking less than one full turn. This sounds great but

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Upgrading Your Binoculars

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it can take some getting used to the hyper critical focus, meaning the focus has to be exactly *on* focus or you don't see. Depth of field suffers a bit with critical focusing and it's easier to *overshoot* your subject. I prefer a more fine focus that allows you to *waltz* around the subject a little to get the sharp image. Check to see that the focus is not *crunchy* or stiff.

Ask how the focus does in cold weather. Most of the newer quality models do fine in the cold. While some of the older porros can stiffen considerably. I remember many a winter's day having to place my old Swifts on the windshield defroster to loosen the focus. Make sure you check the actual binocular you're buying before you take it. Close focus and especially focus can vary from individual pairs.

Lens Quality and Coatings

The quality of the glass and the lens coatings play a large role in the selection process. Looking through several models will help you to sort out the contenders. Generally speaking, the denser the glass the better the optic. Multicoatings (multi-films of chemicals) reduce the amount of reflected light resulting in higher light transmission and better contrast. Coatings must be absolutely uniform in thickness and density or unpredictable reflections and other problems occur. Be sure to check for reflection or glare in back lit conditions. Look only at models that are fully multicoated, meaning that all air to glass surfaces are multicoated. That said, one can look at any number of fully multi-coated 8x42's and they will all look different depending on the quality of the lenses and the coatings. TRUST YOUR EYES.

Magnification

Magnification is usually the first thing people consider when purchasing binoculars. I saved it for last because a working knowledge of the above terms will greatly aid in choosing a magnification. They are all related. Birding (or any other activity requiring hand-held use) magnifications range from 7x to 10x. To understand magnification, think of an object 100 yards away. Using the 7x bins, the theoretical level of detail will appear as if it was 14.3 yards away from the naked eye (100÷7=14.3) 8x12.5 yards; 9x11.1 yards; 10x=10 yards. So why don¹t we all have 10x bins???

Gains in magnification don¹t come without an optical price. Using the popular 42mm objective lens in diameter with 7x, 8x and 10x models for the same line, we find that a depth of view, eye relief and light transmission while increasing handshake. The decrease in field is probably less problematic as long as it's at least 6° (315 ft@1000 yards). The reduced light we can also live with, assuming that we're upgrading to a fairly high quality optic where a higher percentage of light reaches our eyes. The depth of view, though is especially important for quick recognition and getting on a bird quickly.

If you're a beginner and don't want to be one of those people who, at the end of a field trip complain that they saw 20 birds while the leader saw 40 species, stick to a 7x or 8x. The increased handshake can be very hard to overcome by some. The mortal enemy of resolution is shake. No matter how wonderful or expensive the optics, if you can't hold them comfortably steady you won't get the detail. AND detail in birding is the name of the game.

Conclusion

If you've made it this far, you might be a bit confused. Not to worry. It's nice to know what all this stuff means, but for most of it, you can simply trust your eyes. Don't buy based on numbers. Use the numbers as general guides.

Here's a simple review:

- Field of View: 6-8° (or 315-430 ft @ 1000 yards) Extra wide fields are usually suspect optically.
- Exit Pupil: No less than 3.75mm (8x30); in other words any full size bins; trust your eyes.
- Roof vs Porro: Under \$300 buy a porro; but those \$1000 phase-corrected water, fog, and shock-proof roofs sure are sweet!
- Close Focus: 16 feet minimum. Try the actual pair you are purchasing. Check for differences in close focus and focus fell.
- Eye Relief: 16 20mm for eyeglasses whatever it takes to see the whole field.
- Quality: Fully multi-coated, then trust your eyes.
- Magnification: The true level of detail will depend more
 on the quality of binocular and the ability of the user to
 hold it steady, than on the magnification.

Jerry Connolly and his wife Janet have owned the Audubon Shop in Madison for 15 years. An optics expert, Jerry was the only retailer invited to serve on Swarovski Optik's Birding Advisory Council. jjconn@ix.netcom.com

Trips & Events

Connecticut Audubon Society

EcoTravel

Call 1-800-996-8747 for reservations and a detailed itinerary on these special trips

Wednesday, December 5, 2001, Museum of Cultural and Natural History at Harvard University

Ware Collection of Baschka Glass Models of Plants, popularly known as "The Glass Flowers." Commissioned by renowned artisan, Leopald and Rudolf Baschka, the collection still serves as an adjunct to teaching biology, while also attracting worldwide public interest. Participants will enjoy a privately guided tour of the collection and have time to visit the rest of the museum. The morning and lunchtime will be spent at Quincy Market.

March 9 - 16, 2002, Baja Whales and the Sea of Cortez Tour.

Travelers venture out into the Gray Whale bredding lagoons by smaller Zodiacs, encounter whales at water level, and share a perspective of these massive, gentle creatures that is a rare privilege in the natural world. Fees for this nineday tour vary depending on cabin selection and start at \$2,9000. Escort is Richard Julian, Resident Naturalist at the CT Audubon Coastal Center.

March 9 - 21, 2002, Grand Costa Rica Tour

This will be bird watching in paradise. Andrew Griswold, CT Audubon Director of Eco Travel, will be joined by Carlos "Charlie" Gomez, Costa Rica's premier naturalist guide, who specializes, in birds and general natural history. Limited to 14 participants. Fee is \$2,995 plus air.

May 4 – 6, 2002, Famous Gardens Tour

Discover the brilliance of the Brandywine River Valley by touring the outdoor gardens and indoor conservancies of Longwood Gardens and Winterthur. The \$425 fee includes transportation from Connecticut, hotel, most meals, entry fees, and guide tours. Leaders are Mary Dowdell, CT Audubon EcoTravel Assistant, and Bob Kuchata, an accomplished botanist and photographer.

Hartford Audubon Society

Field Trips

Sunday, December 2, Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison, CT

Meet at the park entrance at 8:00 A.M. to begin a search for Lapland Longspurs, owls, Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and other winter species. Dress warmly for this morning trip. Leader: Louise Tucker, (860) 749-8968

Saturday, December 22, Gulls of Hartford County

A beginner's approach to gull identification. We will search for large concentrations of gulls in the greater Hartford area. Iceland and Glaucous Gulls are both possible. Meet at Wethersfield Cove parking lot at 7:30 A.M. Leader: Paul Cianfaglione (860) 521-7204

Saturday, January 5, Station 43, South Windsor, Beginners Walk

The second in the series of beginners walks at the above location. Bring along your cold weather gear and join us in search of some the winter specialties at this great location. Don't forget warm, waterproof boots. Meet at the corner of Newberry Road and Main Street at 9:00 A.M. Leaders: Len Kendall (860) 658-7952 and Roger Preston (860) 658-5010

Saturday, January 12, Essex and East of the River An all day search for eagles, ducks and other winter visitors. Dress warmly and bring lunch. Meet at the Goodspeed Opera House lot at 8:30 A.M. Leaders Patsy Mason (860) 673-3713 and Louise Tucker (860) 749-8968

Saturday. February 2, Shepaug Dam/ Bent of the River

We will start off at the Eagle watch at Shepaug Dam in Southbury and then it's on to Bent of the River, a National Audubon sanctuary, to look for Purple Finch, Kinglets and other wintering birds. Meet at the commuter parking lot at exit 37, Route 84, Fienemann Rd. at 8:30 A.M.

Monthly Meetings

Held at the Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Ave., West Hartford. For directions call Stephanie Lovell (860) 521-2621 or www.hartfordaudubon.org

Tuesday, December 11, Potluck Supper and Meeting, 6:30 A.M., Potluck supper, bring a dish to share and your

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In Memory of Carl J. Trichka

By: Milan Bull

On September 13, 2001, the Connecticut birding community lost a great friend and dedicated bird bander, and COA lost a founder and loyal supporter.

Carl J. Trichka had been putting his unique brand of detailed organization on banding and hawk watching records since the 1970's, shortly after he and his family moved to Fairfield.

I met Carl in those early days when he came to Connecticut Audubon to ask about forming an Audubon troop for the Boy Scout Explorers Program. Carl had always been involved with BSA and nature and was looking to form what turned out to be a wonderful partnership. After a field trip or two to Hawk Mountain with the kids, Carl was sold on raptors and soon took an active interest in hawk counts and bird banding.

Always a stickler for details and organized reports (reinforced by a stint in the Army), Carl was a natural for the Bird Banding Lab's report sheets and acronyms. With his love of birds and record keeping, it was a perfect fit. By the mid-seventies, Carl, Dennis Varza and I had a permanent bird banding station operating at Connecticut Audubon's Birdcraft museum that is still going strong. We were bird banding "maniacs" with mist nets, canopy nets, and traps all over that small, "vest pocket" sanctuary. Not many migrants moved through Birdcraft Sanctuary without wearing aluminum bracelets... on their left leg, numbers always facing up (thanks, Carl!).

Eager to contact other banders in Connecticut to compare notes and share war stories, Dennis contacted the Banding Lab to see just how many other banders were operating in the State. We were astounded to learn that there were over 60 other people doing the same thing!

So, one autumn evening in a motel room near Hawk Mountain, after watching thermals filled with raptors all day, we had the bright idea to develop a newsletter for Connecticut bird banders. The newsletter could be a discovery source and information outlet for banders and others who were interested in bird life. I could provide some start-up funding through Connecticut Audubon and

we would solicit articles and information from others. We named the newsletter the Connecticut Warbler and the rest is history.

Carl's dedication to bird banding and COA never faltered. Who else would even consider a 20-year stint as organization treasurer! He inspired a whole new generation of banders who carry on his legacy, as well as touching the lives of many young people who have gone on to become State Senators, post-doc ornithologists and herpetologists. Although he was a quiet, unassuming man, Carl had a quick sense of humor, a big heart and a lending hand. Although he is sorely missed by all of us who knew him, his spirit lives on. Thanks, Carl!

Field Trips

(Continued from page 5)

own table setting. The Hospitality Committee will supply beverages. Members are encouraged to bring up to a dozen slides for show and tell. Information about the upcoming Christmas Count will be given. Don't forget to bring something for the Chinese Auction.

Sharon Audubon Society

February 22-24, 2002, Audubon in Sharon will present Winter Wildlife Weekend (WWW) 2002
This event will be held at the Interlaken Inn and Conference Center in Lakeville, CT and is a celebration of birds and other wildlife through art and education.

The main highlight of WWW 2002 will be a wildlife art show and sale showcasing over 25 regionally and nationally known artists, carvers, sculptors and crafters.

Also featured at WWW 2002 will be ongoing wildlife exhibits, wildlife art and photography workshops and a keynote wildlife show at 1:00 and 2:30 Saturday and Sunday. For information call Sharon Audbon (860) 364-0520.

The Newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November.

Please submit materials for the next issue by January 1, 2002 to Manny and Teri Merisotis at tmerisotis@earthlink.net

Or at 93 Ripley Hill Rd., Coventry, CT 06238

Fall Field Day

(Continued from page 1) coffee. Georgia Abbott provided Janet, temporarily disabled by recent ankle surgery, with vital assistance in setting everything up. In addition to those mentioned above, Patty Pendergast, Neil Currie, Patrick Comins, Greg Hanisek, Carol Hartel, and I helped with varied and appreciated aspects of making sure things ran smoothly and were fun. The total counts for the day included 63 species of birds (8 of which were sparrows), and 22 attendees in addition to all the helpful volunteers.

The Connecticut Warbler

The Connecticut Warbler publishes field notes on a quarterly basis. The reporting periods are:

Spring - March-May, with a reporting deadline of June 10

Summer - June and July, with an August 10 deadline

Autumn - August-November, with a December 10 deadline

Winter - December-February, with a March 10 deadline

Send field notes to Greg Hanisek, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708. E-mailed field notes can be sent any time to Greg at ghanisek@rep-am.com

Joining COA

The Connecticut Ornithological Association welcomes new members. COA is the only statewide organization devoted exclusively to birds and birding. Joining COA is a great way to expand your knowledge of Connecticut's birds and birding. It is also a great way to get involved with COA research and conservation.

Membership includes a copy of *The Ten Best Birding Sites in Connecticut*, the highly respected quarterly journal *The Connecticut Warbler*, the quarterly *COA Bulletin*, and invitations to COA events such as field trips and field days. Membership dues also support COA's rare bird hotline, conservation initiatives, and research projects. New members receive a copy of the official *Connecticut Field Checklist* and a COA decal. Present COA members may use the form below to renew. Check the mailing label on this Bulletin to see if your membership is current. If not please renew today!

JOIN COA FOR THE BEST OF BIRDING IN CONNECTICUT!

New Member []	Renewal [] Gift []	Please Print or Type
Name(s)		 Sparrow. A Michaellew in difference the Physics Services of the Physics of the Phys
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Membership	Category Individual \$12 [] Far	mily \$18[] Contributing \$25[] Sustaining \$40[]
Co		your check or money order to: on, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430

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COA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Bulletin

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Robert Askins, CT College, New London, CT 06320 (860) 439-2149

CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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