

Hawk Festival at Lighthouse Point Park

The annual Hawk Festival at New Haven's Lighthouse Point Park was held on Sunday, October 10 (having been postponed due to poor weather on the originally scheduled date of September 18). The Hawk Festival is sponsored by a number of partner organizations, including the City of New Haven's Parks Department, Audubon Connecticut, New Haven Bird Club, Menunkatuck Audubon Society, New Haven Land Trust, Northeast Hawkwatch, Connecticut Butterfly Association and the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

Through its involvement in the festival, COA was the leader of the "Hawks and Birds in Flight Identification" seminar led by experts from its Board. Attending on behalf of COA this year were Board members Greg Hanisek and Steve Mayo. More than 20 people attended the COA seminar, including members of an Adult Educa-

tion Class. They were treated to a good day of hawk watching, thanks to cooperative weather providing a northwest wind, which "pushes" hawks south during their fall migration.

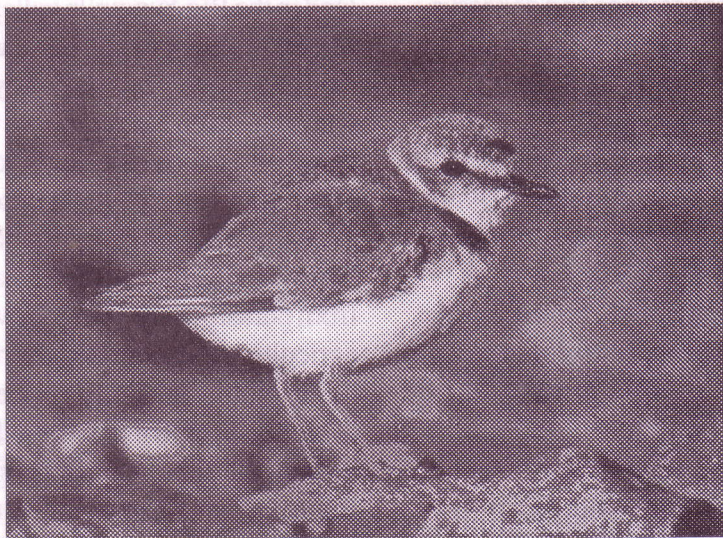
Nearly 400 individual hawks were observed throughout the day, and participants learned how to differentiate one species from another. Identification tips helped the group sort out Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, differences in flight patterns and behavior between accipiters and buteos, and how to interpret silhouette patterns – such as the pointed wings of the falcon family.

In addition to the hawks, the group was treated to three instances of fly-overs from Red-headed Woodpeckers. An uncommon breeding bird in the state, the opportunity to view these birds multiple times in a short time span was

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Snowy Plover at West Haven's Sandy Point, First-ever State Record

Connecticut's first recorded Snowy Plover was discovered at Sandy Point in West Haven on October 1st, 2004 by Julian Hough. A regionally rare vagrant, the bird drew many observers from around the northeast and sparked a very lively discussion concerning its origin. The unusually late date for a northeast occurrence as well as the rather darkish appearance of the individual led to discussions about western US or even Eastern Hemisphere origin. The bird will be reviewed by the COA's Avian Records Committee of Connecticut.



Snowy Plover, Sandy Point West Haven. Paul J. Fusco

A complete write-up of the bird, including detailed identification information and excellent photos will be presented in an upcoming edition of the COA's Connecticut Warbler. Congratulations to Julian for his identification of this bird, a true find for the state. Whether or not you have seen this bird, which was present at Sandy Point for a number of weeks and afforded good views for most visitors, the accompanying photograph by COA Director Paul J. Fusco will let you in on the excitement!

For more information and pictures of the Snowy Plover, please visit the COA website, ctbirding.org.

COA Bulletin

American Bird Conservancy Awarded Major Grant by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

News from Bird Calls, the newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy and Bird Conservation International.

ABC has been awarded a \$2.37 million grant by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation for a new program entitled Conserving Biodiversity in the Tropical Andes. Focused in Peru and Ecuador, the grant will enable ABC to enhance protection for some of the rarest birds in Latin America, such as the Critically Endangered Jocotoco Antpitta, Long-whiskered Owlet, and Ochre-fronted Antpitta, as well as the Marvelous Spatuletail, one of the world's most spectacular hummingbirds.

The grant for land acquisition and management will be implemented in collaboration with ABC's partners in the region including Fundación Jocotoco (see below) and Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos. These non-governmental organizations, whose mission is to conserve these highly imperiled endemic species and their habitats will own and manage the land, working collaboratively with ABC in developing and implementing the project. The grant will also help strengthen the quality of science and conservation of cloud forest habitats in the southern Andes of Peru and northern Bolivia.

Fundación Jocotoco Founder, Robert Ridgely, was the featured speaker at the March 2004 Annual Meeting of COA. His entertaining talk highlighted the discovery of the Jocotoco Antpitta, the creation of the Fundación, and future efforts for bird conservation through land preservation in Ecuador and surrounding regions.

“The tropical Andes present some of the most intriguing challenges and opportunities in modern biodiversity conservation: incredible species diversity and endemism coupled with a high threat level. Despite constant pressure

from land clearance, the Andes-Amazon region still contains some of the world's most pristine montane and tropical lowland rainforest wilderness areas. We are delighted to partner with the Moore Foundation and national conservation groups to tackle some of the highest conservation priorities for birds and biodiversity in the world,” said ABC President, Dr. George Fenwick. Contact: George Wallace, <gwallace@abcbirds.org>.

Land Purchase Helps Endangered Brush-Finch

The Pale-headed Brush-Finch has always been a rare bird with a tiny range, restricted to two arid, rain-shadow valleys in the Andes of southern Ecuador. In the late 1960s, irrigation opened these dry valleys to agriculture, its always-limited habitat became severely degraded, and the species, not seen for more than 30 years, was feared extinct.

Then, in 1998, with funding from ABC's small grants program, an expedition found a small population, probably no more than 12 pairs, in a 61-acre patch of scrub woodland in the Río Yunguilla valley near Girón. Reacting to this remarkable discovery, Fundación Jocotoco, an Ecuadorian foundation whose primary U.S. partner is ABC, and whose mission is to conserve the habitats of Ecuador's rarest birds, moved quickly to purchase the 61 acres, thus establishing the Yunguilla Reserve. Several years of intensive research revealed that the brush-finch population was suffering not only from habitat degradation, but also from parasitism by Shiny Cowbirds. The spread of agriculture has extended the range of these cowbirds, as it has in North America with the Brown-headed Cowbird. With management of the cowbirds and restoration of the habitat, the population of brush-finches began to increase slowly. As small land parcels adjacent to the reserve became available, they too were purchased by Jocotoco, eventually increasing the area under management to more

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News from Bird Calls

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than 111 acres, and the number of pairs to approximately 61.

Earlier this year, 101 adjacent acres of potential brush-finch habitat were put up for sale by several farmers. A generous benefactor of Fundación Jocotoco and ABC funded the purchase, nearly doubling the size of the reserve. With restoration of the new area, Jocotoco hopes that the brush-finch population will increase by another 50%. For the time being, it seems the Pale-headed Brush-Finch has been saved from the threat of extinction. *Contact:* Robert Ridgely, ABC <rridgely@abcbirds.org>.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act: Should Invasives be Protected?

The US Fish & Wildlife Service has routinely interpreted the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) as applying to only native species and not introduced species. Unfortunately, the Act does not clearly draw this important distinction. Following a lawsuit relating to control of the invasive Mute Swan, a federal court recently ruled that the Act does apply to non-natives. Thus, state and federal wildlife agencies now face significant obstacles in managing non-native species, particularly those that cause ecological damage.

Overwhelming support for the Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act of 2004 (H.R. 4114 and S. 2547) in the House Resources and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committees this Spring was an encouraging sign that the legislation would pass the full House and Senate before the 108th Congress adjourned. Sixty national conservation, ornithological, and wildlife management groups also signed a letter in support of the legislation in July 2004.

H.R. 4114 and S. 2547 would make clear that the MBTA affords protection only to native, migratory bird species whose occurrence in the U.S. results from natural biological

or ecological conditions. The bill would exclude species such as the Mute Swan and Rock Pigeon from protection under the act because they both compete with (sometimes out-competing) native birds, and damage native ecosystems. This would ensure that these introduced birds can be controlled or managed to benefit native birds and other wildlife.

Support for the legislation is not unanimous however. Senator Boxer (D-CA) and Representative Rahall (D-WV) have expressed concerns that the legislation goes too far in removing all non-native species from the Act's protection. In a recent op-ed in the Baltimore Sun, the Fund for Animals characterized the legislation as an effort to gut the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and a threat to international cooperation on a wide range of conservation and environmental issues. These animal-welfare derived concerns have successfully slowed momentum on reforming the Act, and neither the full House nor Senate has scheduled a vote on the legislation.

Because re-authorization of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, with increased funding from the current \$5 million to \$15 million, is also an integral part of H.R. 4114 and S. 2547, efforts to strengthen this important Act have also slowed. Although there is still potential for Congress to pass the legislation before the end of the 108th session, it is more likely that efforts at passage will begin anew with the 109th Congress in January, 2005. *Contact:* David Fischer, ABC, <dfischer@abcbirds.org>.

The Newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association is published quarterly in February, May, September, and December. Please submit materials for the next issue by January 15, 2005 to Manny and Teri Merisotis at manny@merisotis.com or at 93 Ripley Hill Rd., Coventry, CT 06238

COA Bulletin

105th ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2004-2005 SCHEDULE

Compiled by
Stephen P. Broker

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2004:

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

New Haven, CT (NH-CT) Compiler: 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, climbrogers@charter.net 860-429-1259

Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (WR-CT) Compiler: Ed Hagen, 47 Sycamore Avenue, Woodbury, CT 06798, elhagen55@hotmail.com, 203-263-0618

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2004:

Greenwich-Stamford, CT (GS-CT) Compiler: Gary Palmer, 34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807. Direct e-mail to Brian O'Toole, otoole29@yahoo.com

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

Litchfield Hills, CT (LH-CT) Compiler: Raymond E. Belding, 1229 Winsted Road #30, Torrington, CT 06790, hoatzin1@optonline.net, 860-482-4046

Napatree, CT-RI Compiler: Shai Mitra, mitra@mail.csi.cuny.edu

Oxford, CT (OX-CT) Compiler: Roy Harvey, 32 Wanda Drive, Beacon Falls, CT 06403, rmharvey@snet.net, 203-888-5757

Quinnipiac Valley, CT (QV-CT) Compiler: Wilford Schultz, 93 Harrison Road, Wallingford, CT 06492, wilfordschultz@sbcglobal.net 203-265-6398 (Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society)

Salmon River, CT (SR-CT) Compiler: Joe Morin, 8 West Street Terrace, Cromwell, CT 06416 morinjor@aol.com, 860-635-2786; Contact: Alison Guinness, 418 Tater Hill Road, East Haddam, CT 06423, 860-873-9304

Westport, CT (WE-CT) Compiler: Jim Hunter, 19 South Bulkley Avenue, Westport, CT 06880, Wstkingbrd@aol.com, 203-227-7253.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2004:

Barkhamsted, CT (BA-CT) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 53 Country Lane, Canton, CT 06019-3407, dtrippjr@comcast.net, 860-693-6524

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2005:

Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY-CT (HV-NY) Compilers: Carena Pooth, 22 Brothers Road, Poughquag, NY 12570, carena@prodigy.net, 845-724-3236; Angela Dimmitt, 48 Candlewood Mountain Road, New Milford, CT 06776, angeladimmitt@aol.com 860-355-3429

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

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2005:

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

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

COA Bulletin

Connecticut Warbler: Coming in January Connecticut Birds By The Season

The January issue of the Connecticut Warbler will be a special edition devoted to seasonal occurrence of Connecticut birds. The centerpiece will be a complete set of bar graphs charting the frequency over the course of a year of each species that has occurred in Connecticut.

The graphs will be based primarily on the status of birds since 1990, the year of publication of the last full treatment of the state's birds, "Connecticut Birds" by Joseph Zeranski and Thomas Baptist.

The issue is designed to serve as a resource that can be studied, kept in the car or even carried in the field.

Greg Hanisek

Hawk Festival

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a welcome part of the day.

The COA leads workshops throughout the year in addition to the Hawk Festival. In the past, these have included a fall sparrow workshop, an annual shorebird and tern identification seminar in August and birding by ear in June.



2004 Hawk Festival Photo by Steve Mayo

Please look for these workshops for 2005, and join us for a great day of birding in the field.

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Computer skills Events Field Trips Finance Workshops Science

Membership Category Individual \$18 Family \$25 Contributing \$30 Sustaining \$50

Send this application with your check or money order to:
Connecticut Ornithological Association, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430

**COA does not release its membership list to other organizations. Dues are tax deductible as allowed by law.*

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