

BULLETIN

The newsletter of The Connecticut Ornithological Association

Volume 3, Number 2, Summer 1989

July 14, 1989

Dear COA Members:

In the spring of 1987, the first Bulletin was published chiefly through the efforts of its editor, Todd Weintz. I regret to inform you that Todd has been plagued with illness in his family and other insurmountable problems which have led to his resignation. We owe Todd our deepest gratitude for the tremendous job he has done.

It is our hope that the future will bring better days for Todd and that he will be able to jump back in at a later date. Our best wishes and thanks go to him.

We are working toward setting up a new newsletter staff. Your comments, advice and involvement are invited and would be greatly appreciated. Please give me a call if you are interested.

We thank you all for your patience. There were several problems which needed to be worked out in publishing the journal and the newsletter. We apologize for the long gap between receiving materials from us, but feel confident that we have resolved matters and are back on track.

A great deal has been happening in the past few months, so let's catch up. The annual meeting held on March 11th at Fairfield University was a great success, with 119 people in attendance. The Program Committee, Winnie Burkett, Jay Buss, George Zepko and Debra Miller did a great job of planning for the meeting.

Our thanks goes to the workshop presenters, Robert Askins, Betty Kleiner, Jay Kaplan, Fred Sibley, Louis Bevier, Winnie Burkett and George Clark for all their work. Salvatore Bongiorno and Milan Bull presented the afternoon program, Restoration in Pine Creek Salt Marsh. Dr. Bongiorno discussed the changes to the environment at the salt marsh and Miley showed us some of the birdlife found there. We thank both for their informative presentations, with a special thanks to Miley, who is always there when we need him.

Bill Gaunya generously donated one of his shorebird carvings for a raffle to benefit COA. We thank you, Bill, and so does Miley. (He won the raffle.)

The new slate of officers elected at the annual meeting are as follows: Debra Miller, President; Frank Mantlik, Vice-President; Carl Trichka, Treasurer; Alison Olivieri, Secretary.

Our new directors with terms expiring in 1992 are Gary Palmer, Sam Fried, Jay Buss, Winnie Burkett, Gordon Loery and Fred Purnell. Neil Currie and Fred Sibley will be filling the unexpired terms (to 1990) of Julia Rankin and Chris Wood who were unable to continue. Those directors with terms expiring this year were Robert Askins, Frank Mantlik, Robert Moeller, and Julie Zickefoose. Thank you all.

Louis Bevier assumed the job of secretary of the Rare Records Committee and Milan Bull became the coordinator of the Connecticut Rare Bird Alert to free Frank Mantlik for his duties as vice-president.

The Rare Records Committee, led by George Clark, has completed its work on the checklist. The final version has been submitted to the Board of Directors for publication and distribution. We will fill you in with more details as they develop.

The Membership Committee is looking for a "volunteer". This year we will be working on a new flier, as well as ways to sign up members. If you are interested in helping out, please give me a call.

As always, I invite your comments and participation in COA's projects and publications. I am looking forward to meeting more of you as we work together this year.

Sincerely,

Debra Miller, President

REVIEW LIST FOR UNUSUAL BREEDING BIRDS
Connecticut Ornithological Association
Connecticut Rare Records Committee

Looking for spring and summer adventures? There are a number of bird species whose current breeding status in Connecticut is uncertain, and reports are needed on whether or not these birds are breeding in historically known and/or new localities.

The following is a list of bird species for which the COA Connecticut Rare Records Committee (CRRC) would like to receive information on breeding within Connecticut. The Review List for Unusual Breeding Birds is to be updated periodically by the CRRC.

Any records of breeding by the bird species listed below, or by other unusual breeders, would be most welcome for review by the CRRC and for documentation in the CRRC files. Each such record

should be as thorough as possible, including at least the observer's name(s); address, and phone; date and location of sighting(s); conditions and circumstances of sighting(s); full description of evidence for breeding; and if possible; a field sketch or photograph. Records should be sent to Louis Bevier, CRRC Secretary, P.O. Box 665, Storrs, CT 06268. Official reporting forms are also available from Louis.

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Tricolored Heron | Golden-crowned Kinglet |
| Blue-winged Teal | Ruby-crowned Kinglet |
| Bald Eagle | Swainson's Thrush |
| Northern Harrier | Loggerhead Shrike |
| Peregrine Falcon | Northern Parula |
| Black Rail | Prothonotary Warbler |
| King Rail | Vesper Sparrow |
| American Coot | Henslow's Sparrow |
| Common Snipe | Red Crossbill |
| Black Skimmer | White-winged Crossbill |
| Long-eared Owl | Pine Siskin |
| Short-eared Owl | Evening Grosbeak |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | Dickcissel |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher | Common Raven |
| Sedge Wren | |

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Roseate Terns are being colorbanded at several colonies in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine as part of a cooperative study of the population dynamics of this endangered species. Chicks are being given a Fish and Wildlife Service incoloy (stainless steel) band on one leg and a colored plastic band denoting their natal colony on the other leg. Adults are receiving an incoloy band and three colorbands (two bands per leg) in a unique combination for recognition of individuals. The nine colors being used are black, brown, dark blue, dark green, light green, orange, red, white and yellow. Please note the color of the upper and lower band on each leg and report observations to JEFFREY A. SPENDELOW, USFWS, Patuxent Wildlife Center, Laurel, MD 20708 (310-498-0373) and to the Bird Banding Laboratory at the same address.

A FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT

Ornithology has become a complex science, like most others, but there remain many questions about birds, or bird-plant interactions, that only field work can clarify.

If therefore you have enough curiosity and can devote some time and careful observation to the task, Leslie J. Mehroff, who is staff naturalist for the Connecticut Geological and Natural

History Survey at the University of Connecticut, in Storrs, would appreciate your collaboration.

He is trying to establish which birds help distribute the seeds of a series on non-native plant species (weeds in ordinary parlance). Get to know these plants and watch them from season to season, record which birds feed on them in what season and report to Les after you have accumulated enough data. The species of interest are:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Berberis thunbergii | Japanese Barberry |
| Rosa multiflora | Multiflora Rose |
| Toxicodendron radicans | Poison Ivy |
| Celastrus orbiculatus | Asiatic Bittersweet |
| Euonymus alatus | Winged Euonymus |
| Elaeagnus | Autumn Olive |
| Solanum dulcamara | European Bittersweet, or Climbing Nightshade |
| Lonicera japonica | Japanese Honeysuckle |
| Lonicera spp. | Honeysuckle |

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR COLLARED SWANS!!!

Don't pass your glasses over the mute swans - "just huge white starlings" - and forget them. Several research projects can benefit from your observations.

If the swans is wearing a yellow collar with black alphanumeric lettering, it was collared in Wisconsin, and the sighting (with the collar number) should be reported to:

Robert Dumbke
c/o William Wheeler
1210 North Palmatory
Horicon, WI 53032

If the collar is black with a white inscription, the bird was marked in Maryland or Virginia, and the sighting should be reported to:

Bill Sladen
P.O. Box 177
Centreville, MD 21617
(301) 556-6642

Mute swans wearing yellow wingtags that bear black numberals were marked in Ontario in 1982, and a sighting of one of these should be reported to:

Harry Lumsden
144 Hillview Road
Aurora, Ontario L4Q 2M5
(416) 727-6492

THE LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) is a six-year research and management project that began in 1985 as part of the National Estuary Program, a recent addition to the federal Clean Water Act created to protect estuaries of national importance. The LISS is a cooperative effort involving research institutions, regulatory agencies, marine user groups, and other concerned organizations and individuals. The purpose of the study is to produce a management plan for the Sound that will be administered by the three major LISS partners, the Environmental Protection Agency and the states of Connecticut and New York.

To get involved in the study, or for more information, contact: The New York Sea Grant Extension Program, Dutches Hall, SUNY, Stony Brook, NY 11795, Tel. (516) 632-8737; or The Connecticut Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, 43 Marne Street, Hamden, CT 06514, Tel. (203) 789-7865.

A NOTE ON FISH CROWS By Roland C. Clement

One usually has to work for one's Fish Crow's (Corvus ossifragus) when birding the Connecticut shore, even though they are permanent residents here. The reason, as most of us have learned is that their smaller size will not suffice as a diagnostic field mark. Flight also, which is more buoyant in a smaller bird will not suffice because the somewhat larger, more numerous American Crow (C. brachyrhynchos) is so agile that it often amazes us with its buoyancy and acrobatics.

If one can actually compare the two species, almost side by side, the size difference -- in body length and bill thickness -- is fairly obvious, but the birds have their own pursuits in mind, so such opportunities for comparison are rare events. Voice therefore remains the safest criterion. However one describes their notes, they don't caw. The call is higher pitched, more nasal, more abrupt, a sort of expletive "bah"! But frustratingly again, the Fish Crow is much less loquacious than the American Crow. The consequence is that one can be sure of but a mere fraction of the Fish Crows one probably sees.

It was therefore a real surprise, and all the more satisfying, to find a tight flock of forty-five Fish Crows at Sherwood Island State Park, in Westport, on August 28, 1988. I had gone, alone, to spend a morning checking on shorebird migration and sketching whatever birds allowed sufficiently close approach. My sketchbook was enriched by a nearly adult Great Black-backed Gull and a trio of graceful, transient Whimbrels. I also enjoyed five trim Pectoral Sandpipers, one of which was brighter golden brown than

any I can remember, or could match in any of the illustrations in my library.

But the Fish Crows were the order of the day. I sat in my car about one hundred meters out in the large unpaved parking lot northeast of the pavilion, and the crows were in the tops of a clump of tall maples near the pavilion. Twice in fifteen minutes they circled out over me at tree-top height or a littler more; excitedly, like a flock of Jackdaws sallying from some abbey tower in southern France, all the while "talking" in their flat-voiced way, and then returned to the same maple loft. They were mostly in ragged plumage, in late summer molt, with short new feathers or none at all in various slots of wings and tail. Having rather obviously enjoyed this social ritual, they then left my ken, scattering eastward.

The Fish Crow remains one of our least-studied birds, so a subsequent search of the literature did not enlighten me much. The plumage is said to be more uniformly glossy than in the American Crow, and unlike that bird it often nests in loose colonies. Thomas D. Burleigh, in Georgia Birds (1958) says that the Fish Crow nests a full two months after the commoner American Crow. This is something more of us will have an opportunity to investigate because the Fish Crow has extended its range inland in our region, as attested to by the recent atlasing work which helped refocus attention on breeding birds after a generation of neglect of this important aspect of ornithology.

Please mark your calendars with the following Hawk Watch dates:

Inland Broad Wing dates, September 9-10, with September 16-17 the prime weekend, and September 23-24.

Shoreline Watch dates, September 30-1, and October 7-8.

Watch for large Buteos, November 4-5.

For the Spring of 1990, mark the weekends of April 22-23, and April 29-30 for return flights.

For more information call Neil Currie (426-9861), or Don Hopkins (688-4119).

COA thanks Julie Zicekfoose, freelance artist, writer and naturalist for designing a COA patch depicting an Osprey. They are available for \$3.00 each by writing to COA, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430. These colorful patches will be quite noticeable in the field and should help us to identify COA members on the run.

The Connecticut Rare Bird Alert, co-sponsored by the COA and the Connecticut Audubon Council, provides a tape-recorded message

that informs interested birdwatchers of recent sightings, giving details and directions to the birds. The phone number is (203) 254-3665 and is in service 24 hours a day.

We need dates for Christmas counts. Please send them to Debra Miller, 14 Oakridge Drive, Franklin, MA 02038 by September 15th so we can get them into the next issue of the newsletter.

Update: July 20, 1989

The Newsletter Committee met last night. In attendance were Jay Hand, Jim Mockalis, Janet Mitchell, Tom Baptist, George Zepko and Debra Miller. Ginger Bladen and Tish Noyes will be participating on this committee but were unable to make the meeting.

Some of the topics discussed for future newsletters were ornithological pieces of a historical nature, avian rehabilitation, bird banding, conservation issues, unusual field observations (behavior), birding experiences (otherwise known as tall tales), news about members, requests for information and so on.

We would like to hear about your special projects, courses you may be teaching or books you may be writing. If it is of interest to you, it may be of interest to the rest of us. Drop us a line.

The tone of the newsletter will be very informal. Notes of a couple of lines or paragraphs are most welcome.

Do you have a question about something you have seen. Remember, no question is stupid, if you don't know the answer. So ask us and we will try to get an answer for you. For instance, I (Debra Miller) would like to know if anyone has seen where White-eyed Vireos get those little chips of wood they use on the outside of their nests. Has anyone come across a reference on this or seen them building a nest? I'm curious.

We are setting up a publication schedule so it will be easier for you to send in news and announcements. The deadline for submission of items for the next newsletter is September 15, 1989. As we get more organized, we will give you a full year's schedule.

At the meeting, Jim commented that, ideally, the newsletter should be a forum for the membership and that most of the items should come from the membership. So keep those cards and letters coming.

Hope the rest of your summer is filled with great birds and good friends.

Please check your mailing label. Under your name you will find a double digit number and a letter. This gives you your current membership status, i.e. 89M. If your label does not have an 89 beside the letter (excluding Founder [FL] and Life Members [Li]), you are not a member in good standing.

If you have any questions regarding your membership, please contact us. If you have yet to send in your 1989 dues, please take a moment to renew your membership. We need you!

1989 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Individual.....\$10.00 per year Sustaining.....\$30.00 per year
Family.....\$15.00 per year *Life (Individual).....\$300.00
Contributing.....\$20.00 per year *Life (Husband & Wife).....\$450.00

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
BIRD CLUB AFFILIATION _____

Please make check payable to The Connecticut Ornithological Association and mail to 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.
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