

COA Bulletin

Summer 1991 NEWSLETTER OF THE CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION Vol 5 No 2

New Officers Elected

At its annual meeting in March the Connecticut Ornithological Association elected officers for the 1991 to 1992 term and directors for the 1991 to 1994 term. The membership followed the recommendations of the Nominating Committee, which was composed of chairman Fred Purnell and members George Clark and Neil Currie. A new president and vice president were elected, and the incumbent secretary and treasurer were reelected.

The new president of COA is Frank Mantlik of Norwalk, who has been active in the organization since its founding in 1984 and who served as vice president last year and the year before. Frank is a well-known field birder and trip leader. He has been compiler of the Westport CBC since 1979. In addition to his job with the U.S. Postal Service, Frank manages to find the time to run Avocet Images, a professional nature photography business.

COA's new vice president is Robert Askins of New London, who is Associate Professor and Department Chair of the Zoology Department at Connecticut College. Bob's areas of expertise are ecology and ornithology. He has worked on field projects in West Africa, Guatemala, the West Indies, and Minnesota. Recently, Bob has studied the ecology of forest birds and has published both popular and scientific articles on their behavior and ecology.

Alison Olivieri of Fairfield, who was elected to a third term as COA secretary, is a bird bander who

Features

Wood Sandpiper.....	3
Parrot Probe.....	4
Three Leaders Retire.....	4
Thinking Man's Thrush.....	4
Trips and Events.....	6

HOTLINE HIGHLIGHTS

Sandhill Crane Salisbury Feb 6 - 23
Varied Thrush West Goshen Feb 10 - 18
Northern Shrikes Various locations
Feb 15 - Mar 31
Eared Grebe Old Saybrook Mar 10 - 25
Red-headed Woodpecker Bloomfield
Mar 17 - ??
Yellow-headed Blackbird Branford
Apr 4 - 11
Prothonotary Warbler East Rock Apr 26
Green-tailed Towhee Branford Apr 28

RARE BIRD ALERT: 203-254-3665

skillfully works the mist nets at Birdcraft during the spring and fall migrations. Alison has also been a volunteer naturalist at Connecticut Audubon for a number of years. She is currently studying ornithology at Southern Connecticut State University.

(Continued on page 2)

Record Attendance at Annual Meeting

by Debra Miller

As the outgoing president of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, I want to express my appreciation to the many members who supported the organization by attending our annual meeting. The official attendance totaled 156, with members and guests traveling from New York and Massachusetts as well as from all across Connecticut. Program Committee members Tish Noyes and George Zepko ran a well planned meeting with great attention to detail. Thanks also goes to Dick Noyes who helped with everything and anything that needed to be done at the last minute.

Those attending the meeting enjoyed the surroundings at Quinnipiac College. We are appreciative of Dr.

(Continued on page 2)

COA Bulletin

Officers . . .

Carl Trichka of Fairfield, who was reelected treasurer of COA, has been actively involved with COA since its beginnings. He was the first editor of *The Connecticut Warbler* and was COA president in 1988, and he has also held a number of other positions with the organization. Carl holds a master bird bander's permit and was founder of the banding station at Birdcraft, which operates under his supervision. When he's not studying bird migration patterns or trying to balance COA's books, Carl is an insurance executive.

Six directors were elected or reelected to a three year term. They are Milan Bull, Gene Billings, Jay Kaplan, John McDonald, Mark Mushkat, and Joe Zeranski. A profile of these board members will appear in a future issue of *The Bulletin*.

Meeting . . .

Richard Bernard, Professor of Biology at Quinnipiac, for his assistance in making arrangements with the college and for his support in obtaining waivers of facility fees. The staff at Quinnipiac was professional, efficient and friendly; they provided a welcoming atmosphere for the meeting.

COA depends upon many talented people to develop interesting and informative programs for its meetings. We owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to each person who gave time and energy to preparing and making this year's presentations. The quality of these presentations served to reinforce something that many of us have known for quite some time: Connecticut has a great wealth of amateur and professional ornithologists who not only pursue their interest in birds avidly but are willing to share their knowledge with others. Many thanks to each of the following for a great job!

Robert Askins, Associate Professor of Zoology at

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

Please submit materials for the next
issue by July 15, 1991 to
Jay Knox, Editor,
43 Bridge Road, Weston, CT 06883.

Connecticut College, discussed evidence of population declines of migratory songbirds during the past forty years.

Gonzalo Castro, Program Manager of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network based at the Manomet Bird Observatory, presented a program of the Conservation and Ecology of Migratory Shorebirds.

George Clark led a workshop which elicited a great deal of interest in and support for COA Research Committee projects. (These projects are described elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Winnie Burkett, assisted by Joe Zeranski, asked for participants to join in organizing summer bird counts, the results of which will be published in *The Warbler*. The response was enthusiastic and encouraging.

Louis Bevier provided an update on "The Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas" and fielded questions on its publication.

Julie Zickefoose, Julie Victoria, and Jeff Spindel reported on three species of birds that have been identified as being adversely affected in Connecticut for a variety of reasons. These species were discussed in the following presentations: "Creative Management: Turning the Tide for Piping Plovers" by Julie Zickefoose; "Osprey Status in Connecticut" by Julie Victoria; and "Conservation and Management of the Endangered North Atlantic Breeding Population of Roseate Terns" by Jeff Spindel.

Miley Bull challenged us with a quiz on ducks. If it quacked and waddled a bit, it was a duck! But what kind? Miley showed us how to sort them out.

Award Presented

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the first annual Mabel Osgood Wright Award to Ann Gaylord of Niantic. Award Committee chairman Roland Clement presented the award, which the COA has created to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to Connecticut ornithology. Award Committee member Julie Zickefoose described Ann Gaylord's many contributions to ornithology; Julie's remarks appear in the April, 1991 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*. Kathleen Anderson from Manomet Bird Observatory in Massachusetts and Dr. and Mrs. Charles Smith from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in New York were special guests who joined with us in honoring Ann Gaylord.

In the afternoon, editor Betty Kleiner did the honors by cutting a cake to celebrate the tenth anniversary of

COA Bulletin

Meeting . . .

The Connecticut Warbler, COA's widely respected journal of ornithology. It was a special way to mark the occasion and to recognize Betty's contributions and leadership in guiding the publication for the last six years.

The day concluded with a raffle of donated items, with a spotting scope given by The Audubon Shop of Madison as the top prize. Thanks to all contributors and to everyone who helped make the meeting such an informative and memorable one.

Field Studies

Research Committee field studies on the following species are getting underway, and there is still time for COA members to participate. To receive detailed information on these research projects, contact Research Committee chairman, Robert Askins, or contact individual project advisors directly.

FOX SPARROW Study of migration routes. Advisor: Gordon Loery, White Memorial Conservation Center, Box 368, Litchfield, CT 06759; Phone 567-0857.

MARSH WREN Status of breeding populations in interior marshes. Advisor: Louis Bevier, PO Box 665, Storrs, CT 06268; Phone 450-0336.

NIGHTHAWK Survey of breeding populations. Advisor: George Clark, Box U-433, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-3043; Phone 486-4459.

SWAMP SPARROW Status of intertidal breeding populations. Advisor: George Clark (see above).

WHIP-POOR-WILL Survey of breeding populations. Advisor: George Clark (see above).

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT Study of status in Connecticut. Advisor: Robert Askins, Department of Zoology, Connecticut College, New London, CT 06320; Phone 439-2149.

FOREST BIRDS Monitoring populations in state forests and parks. Advisor/Southeastern CT: Robert Askins (see above). Advisor/Western CT: Gordon Loery (see above).

Wood Sandpiper

A Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) was discovered last November at the Marshlands Conservancy in Rye, New York by COA member Tom Burke. After the sighting was announced on local and then national

hotlines, over a thousand birders rushed to view the rarity during its five-day stopover.

Wood Sandpipers winter in southern Africa, India and northern Australia, and they migrate north to breed in Siberia and Scandinavia. Because their migration route is on the opposite side of the globe, they are most unlikely to show up in the United States. In fact, the Wood Sandpiper at Rye was only the second North American record, outside of Alaska. Speculation on how the bird got so far off course ranges from its being caught in a storm to its mistakenly joining a group of shorebirds in Scandinavia which headed west over the Atlantic instead of south toward Africa.

The Wood Sandpiper's visit, together with the invasion of birders who came to see it, caught the attention of the national media, and stories on the event appeared in *The New York Times* and *Sports Illustrated*, among other publications.

New Bird Log at Hammonasset SP

A new bird-sightings log for Hammonasset State Park in Madison will soon be in operation. Menunkatuck Audubon will maintain the log in cooperation with park supervisor Mark Rickert and the State DEP. The log will be located at or near the Meig's Point Nature Center, which is located in the park.

Menunkatuck Audubon has recently refurbished, replaced, and added nest boxes for a variety of species and has erected two Osprey platforms. A trail map available at the nature center shows numbered locations for the nest boxes. Birders are encouraged to note any nesting activity in the log, giving both the type of activity and the nest site number when applicable.

Funding for the nest boxes, platforms, and bird log was furnished by Menunkatuck's Charles Workinger Memorial Fund.

HOTLINE REPORTS

To report sightings of rare, unusual, or migrating birds, call one of the following:

Milan Bull 259-6305 or 255-8837

Tom Rochovansky 222-7777

Frank Mantlik 838-1694

COA Bulletin

Parrot Probe

The colony of Monk Parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*) which seems to be thriving in Bridgeport is being studied by two COA members, who would like to receive reports of sightings, foraging areas, and the locations of other colonies. One other colony has been found at Bridgeport University, and a few nests exist in scattered locations in Fairfield.

By the end of this summer, the COA team hopes to have completed an accurate census, as well as maps of foraging ranges and colony locations, including nests and nest holes.

Reports of any sightings, even flybys, would be valuable. Reports of feeder visits would be very helpful, as would, of course, any reports of other colonies. Please call Alison Olivieri at 259-7725 or Linda Pearson at 254-0879; both phones have tapes.

Three Leaders Retire from Board

by Debra Miller

It is difficult to imagine COA without three outstanding, dedicated gentlemen who have contributed to our group from the very beginning -- Roland Clement, George Clark and George Zepko. They have been such an integral part of the Board of Directors and the committees which have benefited from their hard work that their presence at board meetings will be sorely missed.

Roland Clement served as the first president of COA, guiding us through the early years and providing a solid foundation for future successes. Roland served diligently as an editor and advisor to the journal and on the Publicity, Membership, Conservation, and Award Committees. Many of Roland's articles have appeared in the newsletter as well as the journal. In his spare time, Roland created artwork which accompanied articles and graced the cover of *The Connecticut Warbler*.

George Clark provided leadership and direction to the Rare Records Committee in its difficult task of reviewing the state's ornithological records in order to produce an authoritative list of Connecticut's birds. This effort underlies the rare record reports that appear in the journal as well as the publication of the *Connecticut Field List*. It was a monumental task that George

approached in a scholarly, judicious manner, and he succeeded in producing work that will stand the test of time. Although no longer a member of the COA board, George will continue to serve as chairman of the Rare Records Committee and as a member of the Research Committee, and, behind the scenes, George continues to perform final edit duties for the journal.

George Zepko's patience and meticulous attention to detail proved crucial in establishing a formula for successful COA meetings. At a time when it had become clear that major changes were needed in our meeting format, George stepped into the breach and taught us to focus on a theme, plan, anticipate the "what-ifs" and then plan some more. George has contributed to COA in so many ways that a director, upon hearing that George would be retiring from the board this year, exclaimed, "That's impossible! George *is* COA!"

Thinking Man's Thrush Insight Learning in a Hermit Thrush

by Roland C. Clement

The question of intelligence in birds is still much debated, but "insight learning" is often taken as rather persuasive evidence that intelligence is involved. Christopher Leahy -- in that pleasant and informative 1982 book, "The Birdwatcher's Companion" -- describes insight learning as "the ability to put two and two together without any previous experience with four."

The sunnier side of a large dog pen in our back yard has a good tangle of Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) whose large, purplish berries attract and hold migrant thrushes every October for a couple of weeks -- until they have exhausted the berry crop. I claim some degree of intelligence for having had the insight not to clear out this tangle of weedy growth when the urge to manhandle the vegetation of my acre of territory wells up in me every spring.

More to the point, however, is the behavior of a Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) I observed closely a few Octobers ago. I was splitting oak on a large rock behind the house, and returning to my task after a brief absence, I found a thrush picking up the white grubs I had exposed. Puzzled that this bird should come so far from cover to take advantage of this unexpected and temporary food supply, I split a few more lengths of wood and again absented myself, though this time I

COA Bulletin

Thrush . . .

immediately went to a window from which I could watch the scene of this natural experiment. Sure enough, in a few moments the thrush returned to my wood pile to scout out more grubs! It did this three different times, coming a distance of 15 meters from a shrubby covert to the wood pile, each time rewarded by a few fat grubs.

How did it know about the availability of these juicy grubs? A three-quarter-inch long white grub is discernible at a distance of about 30 meters by my eye, but perhaps only when I know what I am looking for. Perhaps the eye of a Hermit Thrush has twice the acuity of my eye? Perhaps it had prior experience of the conjunction between freshly split wood and the grubs that inhabit it? Oak wood has a strong odor, which I sometimes detect from as far away as this thrush hid itself, but so far we know very little about the olfactory sense of small birds.

Whatever clues this Hermit Thrush combined to know enough to come feed on the grubs my work exposed, it seems to me a clear case of putting two and two together. It ate more than four grubs without being able to count up to four. Happy thrush.

Association of Field Ornithologists

The Association of Field Ornithologists is dedicated to the study and conservation of birds and their habitats and to the dissemination of information about them. One of four major ornithological societies in North America (together comprising the Ornithological Societies of North America, or OSNA), AFO provides the following membership benefits:

- The Ornithological Newsletter* (bimonthly)
- The Journal of Field Ornithology* (quarterly)
- Resident Bird Counts* (annual supplement)
- Annual Meeting invitation
- Discounts on mist nets

AFO will be meeting jointly with the American Birding Association at Connecticut College, New London in October of 1992. To join AFO, send \$21 to AFO, c/o Allen Press, Inc., PO Box 1897, Lawrence, KS 66044. For more information, contact Debra Miller at (508) 520-1289.

REGIONAL HOTLINES

Connecticut (203) 254-3665
Rhode Island (401) 231-5728
Eastern Massachusetts (617) 259-8805
Western Massachusetts (413) 253-2218
Vermont (802) 457-2779
New Hampshire (603) 224-9900
Maine (207) 781-2332
New York Metro (212) 832-6523
Northern New Jersey (201) 766-2661
Cape May, New Jersey (609) 884-2626

New Book on Owls

COA member Julio De La Torre of New Canaan and photographer Art Wolfe of Seattle, Washington have collaborated on an exquisite book on owls, entitled "Owls: Their Life and Behavior," published by Crown Publishers and priced at \$35.00. The photographs are breathtaking, and the text is a joy to read. Anyone who has had the opportunity to speak with Julio will recognize his turn of phrase and flowing way with words.

Two COA Jobs Open

COA president Frank Mantlik would like to hear from members who are interested in chairing either the Membership Committee or the Field Trip Committee. These committees perform important functions for COA, but neither one requires a heavy investment of time. This is an excellent opportunity to become more active in the organization, so please give Frank a call at 838-1694 to find out about what these jobs involve.

New *Bulletin* Editor

by Jay Knox

When Frank Mantlik talked to me about becoming the editor of the *COA Bulletin*, he said he thought that the publication needed a new look -- a format which would be more inviting and easier to read. Although I'm a computer consultant, most of my work involves database design and programming, so I knew I'd have to improve my desk-top-publishing skills to produce the new format Frank wanted. I hope COA members like my first effort, and I would welcome comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

COA Bulletin

Trips & Events

Alaskan Adventure

COA Vice President Dr. Robert Askins will be co-leader of the Mystic Marinelife Aquarium's trip this summer through Alaska's fabled Inside Passage. The one-week voyage aboard the 138-passenger *Yorktown Clipper*, which begins August 10, will explore coastal wilderness areas which are largely bypassed by conventional cruise ships.

The small, highly maneuverable *Yorktown Clipper* can slip into the byways of the sheltered Inside Passage and closely approach Puffins, Kittiwakes, and other seabirds, which nest by the thousands in the crevices of sheer fjord walls. While Bald Eagles soar overhead and whales breach from the clear, icy waters below, the thunder of calving glaciers can be heard in the distance.

As the *Yorktown Clipper* has only 69 cabins, early reservations are suggested. For detailed information about this Alaskan Odyssey, call the Aquarium's Membership Office at 536-4200.

Conservator Sails Again

Having been upgraded to meet current Coast Guard certification standards, the good ship *Conservator* will be ready this summer to take nature, environmental and birding groups to the Norwalk Islands. These islands, which comprise a major part of the McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, are rich in birdlife.

The *Conservator* is now owned by and departs from The Maritime Center at Norwalk. The Saugatuck Valley Audubon Society has reserved six dates for the use of the craft by related organizations at a special rate of \$220 for 16 passengers. The dates, which are all Sundays, are June 9 & 23, July 14 & 18, and August 11 & 25. Reservations should be made through Marcia Hegeman of SVAS at 846-4181.

Greenwich Audubon

The Greenwich Audubon Society (GAS) announces the following field trips and invites COA members to participate. For more information, contact Betty Grossman, GAS field trip chairperson, at 637-2208.

MILFORD POINT with Steve Potter. Saturday, August 3. Departure time depends on the tide.

FAIRCHILD GARDENS with Tom Burke. Saturday, September 7, 8:00 - 10:00 am. Meet at garden parking lot.

Connecticut Audubon

The Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) announces the following field trips and has generously offered to extend its member rate to COA members. For more information, contact Lauren Brown, CAS field trip coordinator, at 259-6305.

SALT MEADOW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE with Steve Haydock. Saturday, June 8, 8:00 - 10:30 am. Focus on summer nesters, including Ovenbirds, Bluebirds, and Osprey.

FALKNER ISLAND with a government research biologist. Wednesday, June 26, 6:00 - 9:00 pm. Sunset cruise to observe thousands of nesting Common and Roseate Terns.

NORWALK ISLANDS with COA board member Milan Bull. Tuesday, July 2, 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Supper cruise to a fabulous bird breeding habitat in the midst of a megalopolis.

MONOMOY ISLAND with Milan Bull. Friday mid-day, August 23 - Sunday, August 25. Study the shorebird migration at close range on this beautiful, undeveloped island off Cape Cod.

MILFORD POINT with Milan Bull. Saturday, August 31, 1:00 - 3:00pm. Expect the unexpected as a great variety of migrants funnels through this special sanctuary.

Manomet Bird Observatory

The Manomet Bird Observatory is offering the following programs this summer. For more information, write to Box 936, Manomet, MA or phone (508) 224-6521.

PLYMOUTH BEACH with Barbara Hamilton. Monday, July 8.

INLAND WOODS AND SHORE HABITATS with Mike Serio. Sunday, July 21.

BIRDS AND BEACHCOMBING with Dr. Betsy Brown. Saturday, August 3.

BIRDS OF MARSH AND BEACH with Stuart Parsons. Saturday, August 10.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COA encourages local bird clubs to send announcements of field trips and other events to the Bulletin at
314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430

COA Bulletin

Summer Field Reports

Please tear off the form which appears below, and use it to submit your Summer Field Report. List noteworthy sightings on separate sheet(s) of lined paper, giving species, date, number of individuals, and location. Use abbreviations when possible; for example, five Common Loons seen at Sherwood Island State Park on Feb. 26 should be entered as "Com. Loon 2/26 (5) SISP."

For common species, please record dates and locations of first, last, and maximum sightings. Rare and uncommon species, for which reports of all sightings are needed, are listed below. The compilers would greatly appreciate receiving your report with species listed in phylogenetic order; use the COA *Connecticut Field List* as a guide. Note: Detailed descriptions should be submitted for any species on the Field List which is denoted by * (rare) or # (hypothetical) or for any species not on the *Field List*. All reports will be preserved. Editorial commentary is welcomed.

JOINING COA

The Connecticut Ornithological Association welcomes new members. Membership is only \$10.00 per year and includes this quarterly newsletter, a quarterly journal, and invitations to COA events. To join, send your name and address and a check to COA at 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

COA Fall Field Day

Program Committee chairwoman Debra Miller has announced that COA will hold its second annual Fall Field Day at the Audubon Center in Greenwich on September 21st. Over 80 members and guests enjoyed the workshops and field trips at last year's field day at the White Memorial Foundation in Lithfield. Details on this upcoming event will appear in the next edition of the *Bulletin*. Save the date!

COA Field Report Form for June 1 to July 31, 1991

Name: _____

Phone: _____

(Please correct address label on other side if necessary.)

How often have you birded this season?

1) Just around my yard 2) 1-6 days 3) 7-12 days 4) 13 or more days

Which species impressed you as being more common this year?

Which species impressed you as being scarce this year?

Species for which we would like all records:

Summer Season

Both Loons	Northern Harrier	Black Skimmer	Sedge Wren
All Grebes	American Kestrel	Barn Owl	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Great Cormorant	Peregrine Falcon	Long-eared Owl	Loggerhead Shrike
Both Bitterns	King Rail	Short-eared Owl	Yellow-throated Warbler
Tricolored Heron	Common Moorhen	N. Saw-whet Owl	Prothonotary Warbler
Cattle Egret	Migrant shorebirds	Common Nighthawk	Kentucky Warbler
Snow Goose	Bonaparte's Gull	Chuck-will's-widow	Connecticut Warbler
Brant	Lesser Black-bk Gull	Whip-poor-will	Mourning Warbler
Both Teal	Caspian Tern	Red-head. Woodpecker	Yellow-breasted Chat
Lingering puddle ducks	Royal Tern	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Grasshopper Sparrow
Any sea ducks	Forster's Tern	Horned Lark	Pine Siskin
Bald Eagle	Black Tern	Common Raven	Evening Grosbeak

Submit report to Betty Kleiner, 5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT 06050 by August 10, 1991.

COA Bulletin

COA OFFICERS

President Frank Mantlik, 17 Seabreeze Place, South Norwalk, CT 06854 838-1694
Vice President Robert Askins, CT College/Biology, New London, CT 06320 447-1911 x7444
Treasurer Carl Trichka, 65 Glover Street, Fairfield, CT 06430 259-2623
Secretary Alison Olivieri, 184 Fair Oak Drive, Fairfield, CT 06430 259-7725

COA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Bylaws Joseph Zeranski, 163 Field Point Road, Greenwich, CT 06830 661-9607
Conservation Tom Baptist, 103 Sunset Hill Road, Redding, CT 06896 938-8078
Finance Jay Buss, 272 Knollwood Drive, Fairfield, CT 06430 259-6768
Nominating Debra Miller, 14 Oakridge Drive, Franklin, MA 02038 (508) 520-1289
Program Debra Miller, 14 Oakridge Drive, Franklin, MA 02038 (508) 520-1289
Publications Betty Kleiner, 5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT 06050 658-5670
Rare Records George Clark, Biology Box U-43, UCONN, Storrs, CT 06268 486-4459
Research Robert Askins, CT College/Biology, New London, CT 06320 447-1911 x7444

**THE CONNECTICUT
ORNITHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**
314 Unquowa Road
Fairfield, CT 06430

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Fairfield, CT
Permit Number 275

STEPHEN P. BROKER
915 0032
76 Diamond St.
New Haven, CT 06515-1313