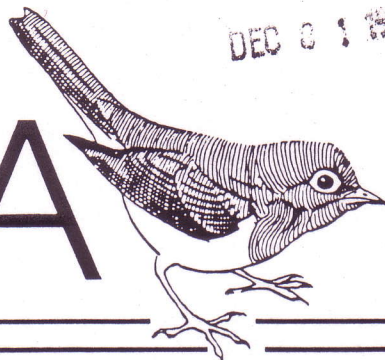


COA



Bulletin

Fall 1994

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Vol 8 No 3

Fall Field Day Sep 24

COA will hold its fifth annual Fall Field Day at the Nature Center for Environmental Activities in Westport on Saturday, September 24. A full day of activities is planned, including a variety of workshops, lectures, and birdwalks.

The day will begin at 7:30 am with registration (open all day for late arrivals) and coffee, followed by birdwalks through the varied habitats of the Nature Center. There will be an ongoing hawkwatch on the property led by Joe Zeranski, as well as field trips to area birding sites. Among these will be trips to Sherwood Island State Park co-led by Richard Soffer and Rob Winkler, to Valley Road in Redding, and to Longshore Club Park.

A number of interesting and informative workshops will be presented concurrent with the field trips. Judy Richardson will present a timely Bird Banding demonstration/talk. A live-bird Avian Rehabilitation workshop will be presented by Nature Center Naturalist, Ed Hiestand. And because it was so popular at last year's Field Day, we have scheduled another Butterfly Identification Workshop for Birders, this time led by Yale lepidopterist, Larry Gall.

COA members and their guests, and non-members as well, are encouraged to attend this once-a year event, which will take place rain or shine. Field Day fees are only \$5.00 per person with advance registration or \$7.00 at the door. Members will receive registration forms and directions in the mail. See you there!

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HOTLINE HIGHLIGHTS

- King Rail South Windsor Jun 4
- Black Vulture Kent Jun 4-12
- Chestnut-collared Longspur Stratford Jun 7
- American White Pelican Westport Jun 17
- Royal Terns Madison Jun 26-30
- Marbled Godwit Madison Jul 26 - Aug 9
- Caspian Tern Old Lyme Aug 3
- Gull-billed Tern Milford Aug 13
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper Stratford Aug 14
- Hudsonian Godwits Westport Aug 22

RARE BIRD ALERT: 203-254-3665

Summer Bird Count

by Joseph Zeranski

Summer Bird Counts (SBCs) are a popular and valuable COA-sponsored activity. The addition of the new Litchfield Hills count brought the number of counts conducted this year to nine, with 230 observers participating. SBCs are conducted on count days in June to census the number of species and individuals found in established Christmas Count circles. Data accumulated during SBCs is essential to identifying the fluctuations in Connecticut's bird populations from summer to winter and from year to year.

This year's summer counts produced 189 species, five more than last year, and 92,402 individual birds, compared to 91,000 last year. Two species — Black Vulture and Peregrine Falcon — were new to the count. Other uncommon birds were American Bittern, Common Moorhen (in two locations), American Coot, Willet, Bonaparte's Gull, Barn Owl (19), Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Raven (11), Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak.

Noticeably increased numbers of Common

Continued on Page 2

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Summer Count . . .

Mergansers, Killdeer, Cuckoos, Chimney Swifts, Cliff Swallows, Marsh Wrens, Warbling Vireos, Black-throated Green Warblers, and Field Sparrows were seen. Declining in number were Turkey Vultures, Northern Flickers, Barn Swallows, Carolina Wrens, Blue Jays, Ovenbirds, and Common Grackles.

One of the great values of continuing studies like the Summer Bird Count is being able to quantify bird population changes which birders may sense but cannot precisely measure. For example, many birders have noted a sharp drop in Carolina Wren numbers after last winter's severe weather. SBC data indicates that this species has declined almost 70 percent — 77 individuals were found this year compared to 242 last year.

Complete details on all of the 1994 SBCs plus summary information and many fascinating tidbits will appear in the next issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*.

Milford Point Trip

More than sixty people attended COA's annual shorebird/gull/tern identification workshop on Saturday, August 27th at Milford Point. The weather was perfect and, because the trip was scheduled to coincide with high tide, the birds were neatly lined up for review on offshore bars within convenient scoping distance. Among more than a thousand Common Terns were a dozen or so Forster's Terns and two Black Terns, as well as 15 species of shorebirds, 4 American Oystercatchers, and a Bonaparte's Gull.

Trip leader Steve Mayo circulated among the participants making sure that as many people as possible saw as many birds as possible and

The Newsletter of the
Connecticut Ornithological Association
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February, May, August, and November.

Please submit materials for the next
issue by November 1, 1994 to
Dwight Smith, Editor,
241 Shepard Ave., Hamden, CT 06515.

pointing out field marks and plumage variations. The group also had an unwanted opportunity to observe hundreds of the birds in flight, when three young ladies landed on the larger of the two bars in a tiny plastic boat and proceeded to flush every single bird there by walking the entire length of the little tidal island — apparently completely oblivious to both the birds and the sixty annoyed birders staring at them through scopes and binoculars from shore.

Unfazed by this interruption, Steve led the group down the beach to continue the workshop from a vantage point opposite the smaller of the two bars, where the angle of light was better anyway. Eventually, the young ladies left and the birds returned, bringing some Oystercatchers with them for good measure. It was a great field trip.

What's a "Big Sit"?

Sedentary birders — and others birders too — will be interested to learn that New Haven Bird Club president John Himmelman has created a new birding competition which requires neither shoe leather nor gasoline. Connecticut birders are invited to try their hand (or some other part of their anatomy) at the second annual Big Sit on October 16th.

A Big Sit is like a Big Day or a Birdathon, except that you make all your observations from within a 17 foot circle, which can be located anywhere in the state. The idea is to tally all species that are seen or heard from the same spot during a twenty-four hour period. Observers can leave the circle and return to it as often as they like. Team efforts are fine, and participants can work in shifts, as long as the same circle is used for the entire Sit.

Last year's inaugural Big Sit, which included only five circles, produced counts ranging from 31 to 65 species. John Himmelman himself was a member of the winning team, which set up shop on the observation platform at Milford Point. John attributes his victory to rigorous conditioning, saying "We owe our success to our vast experience in the art of sitting. I personally sat for hours on end for many months to train for this event. The training was tough, but it paid off."

All COA birders who feel that they are in good

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enough shape to take on this challenge should call John Himmelman at 663-3225 to register their spots before October 14th. All participants will receive a compilation of the results from all circles, and each member of the winning team will receive an "I Sat the BIG SIT" tee shirt. So don't just sit on the sidelines — call John today and sit in a circle.

Director Profiles

by Buzz Devine

Most of the COA directors recently elected to the board for the 1994 to 1997 term are well known to many members. A brief profile of each of the new directors will introduce them to the rest of the membership. Because two directors resigned from the Board during 1993, eight new directors were elected instead of the usual six. Directors who fill vacant positions serve only for the duration of the unexpired term.

Fran D'Amico was elected to the Board to fill a vacancy left by a resigning director. Fran has enjoyed bird watching for 20 years, but really became a serious student of bird study in 1986, after relocating from Indiana to Connecticut. Upon her arrival in the state, Fran became active in the Hartford Audubon Society, serving on the Board of Directors, as well as being the Committee Chairperson for the Wildlife Lecture Series. In addition, Fran is an active member of the Western Connecticut Bird Club. For the past eight years Fran has polished her birding skills by spending a lot of time in the field and traveling extensively throughout the country. Fran is a biologist by training who received an MS degree from Purdue University. Fran is employed by Bristol-Myers Squibb as a Clinical Research Manager and resides in Meriden.

Paul Fusco is employed by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, a position he's held for six years. His duties with the DEP include doing graphic design and photography for the bimonthly publication *Connecticut Wildlife* (formerly called *Scope*). Also, Paul has designed the new wildlife signs placed in various state parks and wildlife reserves (Rocky Neck S.P., Milford Point, etc.). Paul recently began his second term as a member of the COA's Board of Directors. Paul's interest in birds started when he was nine or 10 years old; two of his early avian

memories are of watching Common Nighthawks pursuing insects, and the striking plumage of a dead male American Goldfinch he found by a roadside. Paul's personal interests include wild-life photography and illustration and his work has appeared on the cover of *The Connecticut Warbler*. Paul and family live in Oxford.

Greg Hanisek recently began his first term on the COA Board, filling a vacancy left by a resignation. Greg relocated from New Jersey two years ago after accepting a position with the *Waterbury Republican-American* as a news editor. Greg is an accomplished birder and serves on the New Jersey Rare Records Committee. For twelve years, Greg was the Records Editor (for the northwest region) for the publication *New Jersey Birds*. He is a dedicated member of the Bausch and Lomb sponsored Big Day team which competes annually in the World Series of Birding. His team held the New Jersey Big Day record for many years. Also, Greg is a new member of the Connecticut Big Day team which holds both the state and the New England Big Day record. In addition to birds, Greg takes an active interest in botany and butterflies. *The Waterbury Republican-American* features a weekly nature column written by Greg. Greg and family reside in Waterbury.

Betty Kleiner, who is returning for her second term on the COA Board, needs little introduction. Betty is a founding member of COA and served as the organization's first vice president. From 1985 to present, Betty has been the editor of *The Connecticut Warbler*. Under Betty's guidance the publication has bloomed and matured into a fine ornithological journal. Betty is actively involved in many conservation and environmental organizations. She is a past president of the Hartford Audubon Society and has chaired, at one time or another, most of its committees. She is the Connecticut Membership Coordinator for the American Birding Association. She also does volunteer work at the Roaring Brook Nature

HOTLINE REPORTS

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

Milan Bull 259-6305 or 255-8837

Jay Hand 434-0213

Frank Mantlik 846-8601

COA Bulletin

Center in Canton. As an avid birder, Betty spends a great deal of time gallivanting around the country with her husband Gil in pursuit of rare and unusual birds; a recent trip took her through the north-central U.S. Betty and Gil live in Simsbury.

Stuart Mitchell resides in Portland with his wife Jan. Stu is no stranger to the board, previously serving two other terms. Stu and Jan have been rehabilitating raptors (hawks and owls) since 1969. What started as a hobby has turned into a full time project — during a normal year the Mitchells care for 100 to 125 birds of prey. Stu is concerned about the welfare of raptors and with Jan's assistance, he has developed two workshop programs. The programs, "Raptors" and "Eagles," are designed to educate and entertain the public, as well as to promote conservation methods for raptor protection. While on the Board, Stu has been a member of the Education Committee. Stu has also been active in various environmental organizations, notably Raptor Research and Hartford Audubon Society.

Alison Olivieri has returned to the board for a second term. She has served as COA Secretary from 1988 to 1992 and has also been the Chair of the Education Committee. Alison is an active member of the Connecticut Audubon Society, and for the last three years she has been Chairperson of the Board of Governors of Birdcraft Museum and Sanctuary. Alison schedules the bird banding sessions at Birdcraft Museum and Sanctuary and is also an active bander. She was casually interested in birds for many years, but became serious about the subject 12 years ago once she started banding. Along with Linda Pearson, Alison is studying the Monk Parakeet colonies in Bridgeport and elsewhere throughout Connecticut. Information collected as a result of their Monk Parakeet research has appeared in articles in the *The Connecticut Warbler* and the *COA Bulletin*. Alison and family reside in Fairfield.

Mark Szantyr was elected to his first term on the COA Board. Mark has been a member of the COA since its inception and served on the Rare Records Committee from 1986 to 1988. Before relocating to Storrs, Mark was an active member of the Western Connecticut Bird Club, serving as president and chairman of various committees. Mark has been interested in birds for 20 years; not only does he enjoy studying birds, but he's an accomplished artist. Mark's illustrations have

appeared on the cover of *The Connecticut Warbler* — a recent issue displayed a pair of Black-throated Blue Warblers. He is currently illustrating a bird finding guide for Connecticut. Other birding interests of Mark's include banding and photography. Mark has written or co-written numerous birding articles appearing in *The Connecticut Warbler*. In 1992, Mark received his MFA Degree from UCONN. He and his wife Gail live in Storrs.

Joe Zeranski, who recently returned for a fourth term on COA's Board of Directors, is a well known birder in the state. He collaborated with COA President Tom Baptist to write "Connecticut Birds," published in 1990 — a valuable and comprehensive reference to the state's avifauna. Joe is the Chairman of the COA By-laws Committee and a member of the Rare Bird Alert Committee. For the past few years, Joe has coordinated the state's Summer Bird Counts which includes compiling count data and writing an annual summary for inclusion in *The Connecticut Warbler*. He has been birding for 32 years. Joe, a resident of Greenwich, is very active in local environmental and conservation projects. He is a member of the Conservation Committee, Shellfish Commission and the Greenwich Point Committee. Joe is currently working with Brian O'Toole on compiling a bird list for Greenwich Point Park.

Sports Birding

by Carl Trichka

I consider myself a birder of sorts and also something of a sports nut, so it's no surprise that the two go together, even when watching sports on television. Have you ever been watching the golf tournament at Pebble Beach, California and noticed the variety of shorebirds that line the fairway near the eighteenth hole? How many times during a baseball or football game or another televised sporting event have you heard a bird singing or seen one flying through the picture? Although usually the bird in question is a Rock Dove or a Starling or some species of gull, you never know what might show up at a sports event.

On Saturday night, August 27, 1994, I watched the New York Giants play the Chicago Bears at Soldier's field in Chicago. Near the end of the first quarter, the Giants were kicking to the

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Bears when a cameraman grabbed a shot of a bird standing in the end zone. Rusty coloration, large yellow bill, a trace of black markings around the bill and throat — could it be a Sora Rail? The next shot of the bird showed its tail cocked up like an agitated wren, and then the director gave viewers a tight head and chest shot that confirmed the identification.

Wow! Who would ever expect to see a Sora Rail on a football field, even if the field was natural grass? I've had enough trouble finding one in a salt marsh. Imagine seeing one standing around on a football field — in the middle of a game no less. During the third quarter, John Madden, the color commentator, said that a viewer had phoned in and told the booth that the bird was a Sora Rail. Madden even commented on the fact that the bird had very large feet.

So, birders, we have a new game in town! Those of you who keep various kinds of bird lists can try your TV set when the birding around your area is dull. It's like attaching your scope to a communications satellite. You never know what will show up on your favorite channels. If you want to be rigorous about it, the broadcast should be live — no reruns or taped programs. Or you might set up a listing category for birds you identify on taped shows like "Nature" before the narrator tells you what they are. Now there's a challenge!

If you find yourself rained or snowed out on a weekend when you planned to go birding, grab a bag of chips and your favorite drink and go channel surfing for live sporting events. Who knows? You might pick up a life bird on television.

New Bulletin Editor

by Jay Knox

I'm happy to announce that, beginning with the next issue, Dwight Smith will become the editor of the *COA Bulletin*. Dwight is a tenured professor of biology at Southern Connecticut State University and is a well known Connecticut birder. He is a past editor of *The Connecticut Warbler* and has written extensively about birds for both popular and professional publications, including *Birdwatcher's Digest*, *The Wilson Bulletin*, and *The Journal of Raptor Research*. COA is fortunate to have Dwight as its new *Bulletin* editor. Contributors to the *Bulletin* can reach

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) 979-3070
Northern New Jersey (908) 766-2661
Cape May, New Jersey (609) 884-2626

Dwight at work at 397-4621 or at home at 248-1934. Articles should be sent to Dwight at the address which appears in the masthead box on page 2.

Since this is my last issue as editor, I want to thank all the COA members who have helped me produce this publication over the past three and a half years by contributing information, articles, advice, and constructive criticism. Among the many people who have helped out, there are three who deserve special mention.

The first is Alison Olivieri, who has a wonderfully buoyant writing style and who was always willing to do yet another article for the *Bulletin*, even when I didn't discover until the last minute that some birding story needed to be covered. Alison also worked hard every issue to track down the material which appears in "Trips & Events."

Then there is my wife, Lynne Robbins, who is not only a lightning-fast typist but also used her meticulous, English teacher's discipline to ferret out garbled syntax, convoluted logic, and plain old typos (not her own, of course).

Finally, I want to thank Frank Mantlik, who wrote many articles, compiled the "Hotline Highlights," and did the final check of every issue before it went to the printer. In addition to his vast knowledge of birds and of Connecticut birding, it turns out that Frank is an eagle-eyed proofreader. Every time I finished an issue of the *Bulletin* and faxed it to Frank for checking, I would be confident that there were no errors for him to find, but he always found some anyway. This is my fourteenth and last issue, so maybe I'll be able to sneak this one past him, but I doubt it.

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TRIPS & EVENTS

COA Field Trips

COA field trips are geared for birders of all levels of experience, from novice to veteran. The trips are led by a group of top field birders who have a talent for education. Trips are open to all and take place rain, snow or shine. We often bring a snack or a bag lunch. For information, call COA Field Trip Chairman Steve Mayo (874-1860) or Frank Mantlik (846-8601). The following trips are scheduled for upcoming months.

FALL FIELD DAY on Saturday, September 24th. A full day of birdwalks, workshops, and lectures. See the article on Page 1 for details.

STATION 43 on Saturday, October 1 at 8:00 am. A half-day trip to a famous wetland hotspot. From I-91, take Exit 35 and cross the Bissell Bridge (I-291) to Route 5 North. Proceed about 1.5 miles and take the fourth left onto Newberry Street. Park one block beyond, at the corner of Newberry and Main Streets.

WATERFOWL IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP on Sunday, November 27 at 8:00 am. Get ready for Christmas Counts by learning the secrets of waterfowl identification. Beginners are encouraged to take part in this half-day trip which will cover the mouth of the Connecticut River in search of returning loons, grebes, and ducks. Meet at the commuter lot off Exit 70 of I-95 in Old Lyme.

Fall Hawk Migration

The great bulk of the fall hawk migration through Connecticut takes place between the middle of September and the end of October. Broadwings move through first (most of them between September 10th and 20th), followed by accipiters, falcons, and Ospreys from late September to mid October, and the flights conclude with the passage of buteos and eagles toward the end of October. For general information about hawk watching, to volunteer, or to get reporting forms or directions to sites, call Neil Currie at 426-9861. Hawk watches listed below welcome visitors.

LIGHTHOUSE POINT in New Haven. Staffed daily into November. Ospreys and accipiters are the stars here; also Kestrels, Cooper's Hawks, and Harriers. For information, call Anne Rosengren at 248-2903 or Dan Barvir at 562-4241.

QUAKER RIDGE in Greenwich. Staffed daily until late October. Broadwings predominate in September,

plus all other hawks throughout the season. This lookout usually has the largest number of broadwings in the state. For information, call Canny Clark at 531-4857.

WEEKEND WATCHES are staffed on September weekends only: Beelzebub Street in South Windsor, Botsford Hill in Bridgewater, Chestnut Hill in Litchfield, East Shore Park in New Haven, Huntington State Park in Redding, Johnnycake Road in Harwinton, New Canaan Nature Center in New Canaan, and Whip-poorwill Hill in Newtown.

Hawk Watch Weekend

A weekend of hawk watching and related activities is scheduled for the height of the Broadwing migration. There will be films, hawk identification seminars, and live birds of prey.

QUAKER RIDGE at the Greenwich Audubon Center on Saturday, September 17 and Sunday, September 18 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, rain or shine. No registration necessary. For more information call Jackie Bruskin at (914) 378-2254(W) or (914) 667-3928(H) or Brian O'Toole at 629-1027.

Connecticut Audubon

CAS announces the following trips and has generously offered to extend its member rate to COA members. For more information on these trips and others, call Lauren Brown at 481-0377 or 259-6305.

CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY from Friday, September 30 to Sunday, October 1. See the peak of the fall migration with leaders Milan Bull and Greg Hanisek. \$295 price includes meals, hotel, and transportation from Fairfield or Glastonbury. Limit 40.

THIMBLE ISLANDS on Sunday, October 23 from 10:00 to 12:00 am. Boat trip in search of early winter ducks. Leader Milan Bull. \$22.00. Limit 25.

Hartford Audubon

Noble Proctor will give a slide presentation on Connecticut's changing bird populations on Tue, October 18 at 8:00 pm in West Hartford. For information, call Fran D'Amico at 286-6129.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COA encourages local bird clubs to send announcements of field trips and events to Dwight Smith, Bulletin Editor
241 Shepard Ave, Hamden CT 06515

COA Bulletin

Fall Field Report

Observations by COA birders form the basis for the seasonal reports on the status of resident and migrating birds in the state which appear in *The Connecticut Warbler* and *American Birds*. All COA members are encouraged to report their sightings by filling in Species Report Forms, which are available in convenient pads from Betty Kleiner by calling 658-5670. Betty will also send detailed reporting instructions..

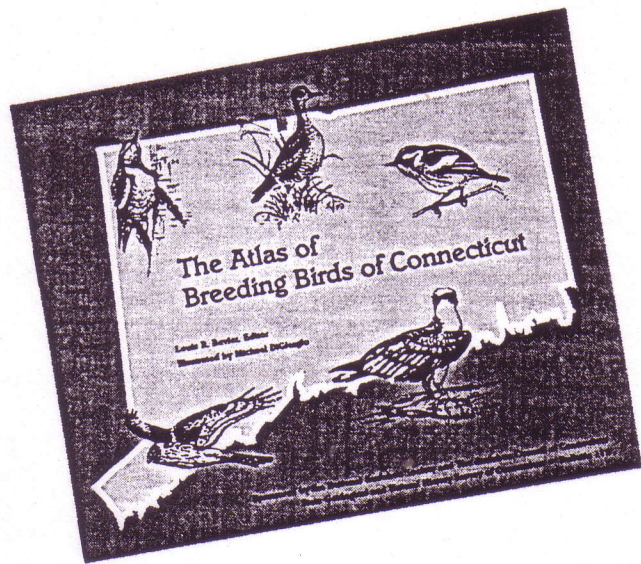
The Fall Field Report period runs from August 1 to November 30th, and all reports should be submitted by December 10 to Betty Kleiner. Contributors should complete one or more separate forms for each species observed. Before submission, the forms should be sorted into phylogenetic order, using the COA *Connecticut Field List* as a guide. Detailed descriptions should be given 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. Comments are welcomed.

Joining COA

The Connecticut Ornithological Association welcomes new members. COA is the only statewide organization devoted exclusively to birds and birding, and its members range from beginning birders to professional ornithologists. Joining COA is guaranteed to improve your knowledge of Connecticut birds and increase your enjoyment of Connecticut birding.

Membership costs as little as \$10.00 per year and includes this quarterly newsletter, a quarterly journal devoted to Connecticut birds, and invitations to COA events and field trips. Membership dues also support COA's rare bird hotline, conservation initiatives, and research projects. New members receive a list of the ten best birding sites in Connecticut, an official *Connecticut Field List* and a COA decal.

To join, send a check for \$10.00 to the Connecticut Ornithological Association, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.



The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut

Edited by Louis R. Bevier
Illustrations by Michael DiGiorgio

Cloth bound hard cover; 461 pages, 184 maps, 190 illustrations

\$29.95 until October 31st, 1994 (\$36.95 thereafter)

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DEP Publications
79 Elm Street
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Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-7719

AMERICAN WILSON PHOENIX

Turkey Vulture
Cathartes aura

The Turkey Vulture is an omnivorous to partly omnivorous breeding species in the state with nesting requirements varying as to site. It is a fairly common bird in open, wooded, and rural areas. It is a very common bird in rural areas and is often seen in the vicinity of farm buildings and the nesting population has increased substantially in the past decade. It is a very common bird in rural areas and is often seen in the vicinity of farm buildings and the nesting population has increased substantially in the past decade.

Map of Connecticut showing the distribution of Turkey Vultures. The map is divided into counties and includes a legend for breeding status: 'B' for breeding, 'N' for nesting, and 'O' for observed. The distribution is concentrated in the western and central parts of the state.

EUROPEAN PHOENIX

Turkey Vulture

Discovered—While well-documented and numerous, the Turkey Vulture was only discovered in New America during the 1600s and became a permanent resident of the state in the mid-17th century. It is a very common bird in open, wooded, and rural areas. It is a very common bird in rural areas and is often seen in the vicinity of farm buildings and the nesting population has increased substantially in the past decade.

Illustration of a Turkey Vulture in flight, showing its wings and tail feathers. The bird is depicted in a dynamic pose, soaring through the air.

- Includes 189 species accounts with current status through 1993
- Details the habitat requirements of these species in Connecticut
- Presents population trends from the Breeding Bird Survey data for 1980–1989
- Chapter on "Interpreting Distributions of Breeding Birds" by George A. Clark, Jr.
- Also includes an annotated bibliography of references on Connecticut birds

COA Bulletin

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Secretary Andrew Brand, 59 Brooksvale Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518 230-1718

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