President’s Message

By Marie Kennedy, President

I am honored to serve as Litchfield Hills Audubon Society’s president and to lead this organization that has contributed so much to my own personal enrichment. I have found so much value in my membership over the years. I’ve gained knowledge, expanded my network of peers, pushed myself to go outside my comfort zone (hello, president of the Board!). Along the way I’ve met some treasured friends and mentors.

LHAS is an essential asset to the Northwest corner of Connecticut. As a chapter of National Audubon, we support birds and conservation efforts both locally and nationwide. We would not be able to do this without the help and dedication of our members and supporters. We strive to put on the best programs and events that appeal to and educate our community.

Many thanks to outgoing president, Maria Toth. Maria admirably stepped up to be president when the elected president, Diane Edwards, suffered complications from her surgery. Fortunately, Maria will continue as a director of the Board.

Thank you to Edward Goodhouse, who has resigned after several years of duty as LHAS treasurer. We thank you for your time and dedication. Ed and his wife, Kate, plan to travel around the country. Debbie Martin’s term is up as director. The good news is that Rich Martin is stepping in as her replacement. Thank you, Debbie, for your long-term dedication to the sanctuaries, your many educational walks, and continuing Margery Boyd’s tradition of recording bird sightings at Boyd Woods, making it the No. 1 Birding Hotspot in Litchfield County during Great Backyard Bird Counts!

I’m extremely happy to report that Diane Edwards will be returning as our vice president. Diane has continued to support LHAS through her recovery; she continued producing the newsletter and kept our membership abreast of conservation issues. Welcome back! Karen Nelson will be the recording secretary, and Terri Bianchi is once again our corresponding secretary.

Bob and Doreen Orciari are stepping down as co-chairs of our Kalmia Sanctuary. Many, many thanks, Bob and Doreen, for your many years of caring for Kalmia. Doreen has done a beautiful job creating and maintaining the butterfly garden. And we are extremely grateful that Irek Rychlik has agreed to take over as Kalmia chair.

We are still in need of a treasurer and a fund-raising chair. Any volunteers???

This season many of us — even those of us who aren’t hard-core birders — are turning more toward our yards and gardens. We are noting birds and bird activities we’ve never seen before — not because they’re new but because we may have been too busy to pay close attention.

I’m finding entertainment, solace, even wisdom in watching our feathered friends going about their lives: finding mates, building nests, raising young, resilient and persistent. Birds are hunting, courting, and migrating, raising and defending their young. Birds may have something important to tell us about what it takes to navigate this world, especially under difficult circumstances.

Please come visit our sanctuaries; nature at its finest is there waiting for you.

Happy birding!
**LHAS Officers**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Marie Kennedy</td>
<td>914-393-6270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Diane Edwards</td>
<td>860-309-5139</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rec. Secretary</td>
<td>Karen G. Nelson</td>
<td>860-309-9018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corresp. Secretary</td>
<td>Terri Bianchi</td>
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**Board of Directors**

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<td>Vickie Dauphinais</td>
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<td>Michael Audette</td>
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<td>Keith Johnson</td>
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<td>Rich Martin</td>
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**Committee Chairpeople**

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<td>Donna Rose Smith</td>
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<td>Angela Dimmitt</td>
<td>Programs</td>
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<td>Shirley Gay</td>
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<td>860-482-0819</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Wigwam Brook</td>
<td>860-567-8427</td>
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<td>Ray Belding</td>
<td>Christmas Count</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave Tripp</td>
<td>Summer Count</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dtrippjr@gmail.com">dtrippjr@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Purdy</td>
<td>Nest Box Program</td>
<td>860-485-8530</td>
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**By Doreen Orciari, Membership Records Chair**

Betsy Antonucci* ........................................... Bantam
Steve Ardussi ............................................. Bantam
Kate Beatty ................................................. Sharon
Diane Beebe ............................................... Pleasant Valley
Frances Casale* .......................................... New Milford
Robin Decaro ............................................... Sherman
Gina Decker ..................................................... Winsted
Christopher Dennis ....................................... Litchfield
Nancy Domoff* ............................................. New Milford
Stephen Dull* .............................................. Gaylordsville
Wendy Eichmann ............................................ Canaan
Eileen Eliot .................................................. Torrington
Christine Engel* .......................................... New Preston
Carole Finn .................................................... Torrington
Linda Fueterer ............................................. Torrington
Ilona Gundlash .............................................. Norfolk
Susan Jackman ............................................... New Hartford
Michelle Keller ............................................. New Milford
Kate Kerrick ....................................................... Bethlehem
Eliza Klose ..................................................... Sharon
Leo Kulinski* ............................................... Litchfield
Raymond Lodge ............................................... Watertown
D'Arcy Lovetere ............................................... Winsted
Linda McManus ............................................... Torrington
Linda Mendicino ............................................... Watertown
Mary Ann Mullins .......................................... Oakville
Ann & Jim Murdica .......................................... Morris
Laura Murphy ................................................... New Milford
Norbrook Farm Brewery ..................................... Colebrook
Douglas O'Connell .......................................... Winsted
Katherine Oligny ............................................ Torrington
Carole Orsillo ............................................... Watertown
Gloria Perret* ............................................... Torrington
Audrey Phelan ................................................... Barkhamsted
Sharon Richardson ......................................... Bristol
Dawn Ridley ..................................................... Bristol
Richard & Rachel Robbins .................................... Sharon
George Seabourne ............................................. Thomaston
Adele Shiffer ................................................... Watertown
Janet Theroux .................................................... Torrington
Joan Tillman .................................................... Sharon
Joan Wallace .................................................... Salisbury
Arete Warren ..................................................... Sharon
Laura Wichman ....................................................... Litchfield

* Welcome Back

LHAS Membership is at 866.

If your newsletter is addressed incorrectly or if you fail to receive one, send a postcard to LHAS, P.O. Box 861, Litchfield, CT 06759-0861 or send an email to Doreen Orciari at doreen.orciari@gmail.com.

(continued on page 3)
**Thank You, Donors!**

The LHAS Annual Appeal, which began in November 2019 and ended April 30 (the close of our fiscal year) raised a record amount — $11,112! And the Give Local campaign in April resulted in a total of $1,864.56, including matching funds.

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Two recent high school graduates have each received a $2,000 scholarship from LHAS. The Scholarship Committee selected Samantha Barnes from Litchfield High School to receive the Paul A. Gros Scholarship and Danielle Gorat from Housatonic Valley Regional High School to receive the LHAS Scholarship. Samantha will attend Villanova University and plans to major in environmental science. Danielle will attend the State University of New York - Cobleskill; her goal is to obtain a degree in wildlife management and to pursue a career as a game warden (environmental conservation — EnCon — police officer).

This year we received 10 scholarship applications from seven of the 16 schools in our area. One scholarship application was received from a college student.

Thank you to our Scholarship Selection Committee: Janet Baker, Ray Belding, Carol Kearns, Harry Schuh, and Jeanne Woolley. The committee worked approximately 18 hours.

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**Member News (continued from page 2)**

**Condolesnces**

LHAS extends sincere condolences to the families and friends of the following members who have recently passed away:

- Ency Richardson — Ency, who lived in Harwinton, was 79 when she succumbed to cancer in May.
- Len Tutolo — He and his wife, Marie, and their children were very active with LHAS until about 10 years ago. They were the ones who built the bridge at Boyd Woods. He was 88 and died after a battle with ALS.

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**A Masked Matinee of Swifts Aswirl**

*By Russ Naylor*

On May 31 a small crew of feather fanatics from the Western Connecticut Bird Club and LHAS gathered *en masque* (not *en masse* and following social distancing protocols!) to witness the evening roosting ritual of spring-time Chimney Swifts at Mitchell School in Woodbury, led by me — a long-time roost observer. At first just the local breeding birds entertained us with courtship displays — circling atwitter about their airspaces in aerial chases; flying side-by-side in pairs with wings dihedral or else bowed downward in closely synchronized duets; dipping in and out of nest chimneys as if inspecting nest sites.

But as dusk deepened, the flocks gathered from all around to swoop and swirl to and fro in a show of aerobatic agility. Swifts rode the wind, scooping up flying insects prior to retiring for the evening. This twittering spectacle climaxed in a veritable whirlwind of swifts circling the main roosting chimney as more birds swept in to join the throng. After a restless whirl of high-velocity flight around the roost site, with birds teasing our eyesight by chimney tag, the winged host poured down into the chimney in a fluid choreography of fluttering wings, until the twilight was silent and empty of master aerialists.

The curtain came down upon this performance’s finale when we were greeted by a local Red Fox, ushering in the night shift while foraging to feed a litter of five rambunctious kits.

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"Share the Shore" with Nesting Birds

If you or your friends or family members go to the beach this summer, Audubon Connecticut tells how you can "Be a Good Egg" to protect shorebirds, such as Piping Plovers, Least and Common Terns, and American Oystercatchers:

- Keep your distance from shorebird habitats.
- Leash your pet.
- Take your trash with you.
- Properly dispose of fishing line.
- Don’t feed wildlife.
- Avoid noisy activities near nesting areas.

For more details about being bird-friendly at the beach, go to ct.audubon.com/bird-friendly-at-the-beach.

Participate in the Annual Wild Turkey Brood Survey

Connecticut DEEP’s Wildlife Division invites state residents to participate in the annual Wild Turkey Brood Survey from June 1 to August 31. During this time, volunteers record all of the hens and poult (young turkeys) observed during their normal travel. Observations of male (tom) turkeys are not requested. Results from this survey allow biologists to determine turkey productivity and reproductive success by estimating the average number of turkey poult per hen statewide. To participate, volunteers should use the Wild Turkey Observation Form (available at ct.gov/deep; use the search box to locate the form) and submit a tally of results to the Wildlife Division shortly after the end of the survey period (June 1–August 31).

CT DEEP’s Wildlife Updates

DEEP’s Master Wildlife Conservationist News (May 2020), an e-newsletter sent to Master Wildlife Conservationists, had several tidbits of information of interest to LHAS members:

- In 2019, breeding eagles in Connecticut set records for active territories, successful nests, and chicks produced. Of the record 64 active territories, 13 were brand-new territories for 2019. Five of those territories were “territorial,” meaning nest building was observed but no eggs were laid. This is often a behavior associated with young and inexperienced pairs. With luck, these pairs will lay eggs in future years, and 2020 will be even more productive. Since DDT was banned, Connecticut nests have produced at least 639 chicks.

- The 2019 Wild Turkey brood survey information indicates that Wild Turkeys had poor productivity in Connecticut last year. The 2019 spring weather was wet and cool throughout Connecticut, creating unfavorable conditions during both nesting and brooding periods. The Wild Turkey Brood index was 1.6 young per adult for all hens observed and 3.6 young per adult for hens observed with at least one poult.

- The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is compiling a list of the wild bees in Connecticut. To date, they have records of 347 species in seven families. The plans are to develop a checklist of bees for Connecticut that hopefully will help identify which species may be of conservation concern.

Industries to Get Free Pass for Bird Deaths from Industrial Hazards

According to National Audubon, the Department of the Interior is fast-tracking efforts to strip away critical protections in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Proposed changes in its recent Draft Environmental Impact Statement would make permanent the bird-killing policy the agency adopted in 2017, which overturned decades of bipartisan precedent and gives companies a free pass for bird deaths from industrial hazards such as open oil pits and power lines. You can find out more and send a letter directly to your member of Congress through Audubon’s Action Center: http://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/f7KGDIYb40WGTI_7m1voyg2?ms=emshare_ty.

National Ocean Monument in Northeast to be Opened to Commercial Fishing

In June, President Trump announced that the Atlantic

(continued on page 5)
Boyd Woods Sanctuary Report
By Rich Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary Co-chair

There has been quite an uptick of activity these past two months at our Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary. On a perfect weekend, when the sun is shining and the temperature is warm and comforting, the parking lot is close to capacity, as people venture out for some fresh air and exercise. Most visitors that I have seen during these times are visiting to get a good workout by walking the perimeter loop trails, which total nearly 3 miles. Others, especially family groups, are at a slower pace enjoying and observing the diversity of the sanctuary and what nature has to offer. There are so many things to see at this time of year. Birds are everywhere. Some are migrating through the area, stopping for a few days to replenish their food stores before moving on to their final breeding destination, while others will remain here throughout the season where the sanctuary provides them with the perfect breeding habitat. There is also an abundance of wildflowers that can be seen. In May alone there were nearly 35 flowers, if not more. Don’t forget to bring your camera. It certainly is a great time of year to be outdoors.

The trails at Boyd Woods Sanctuary are well marked and maintained, but occasionally, after a heavy rainstorm, with wind gusts, a tree or two ends up falling and blocking a trail. Just recently a large cherry tree uprooted and fell across the trail leading to one of the popular spots at the sanctuary, Margery’s Bird Pond. My wife, Debbie, was on it in no time after hearing about it. With a hand saw she removed many branches that were making it difficult to walk around and to get back onto the trail. With some of the branches removed, hikers could now easily and safely navigate around the tree. The following day, Joe Bianchi and I headed out with a couple of chainsaws to finish what Debbie had started. The cherry tree was a great specimen, with a long straight clear section suitable for lumber, and possibly could have been used to make furniture. We hated to have to cut it up, but we had no other choice at the time. Some of the larger logs were sliced up, like a loaf of bread, to use as stepping blocks in mucky areas along the trails. A couple of the larger logs were carried over to the pond to be used as seats.

The Eagle Scout bird-blind project is coming along nicely. Scout Lucas Oles has secured all the necessary funding needed to purchase the material for the project. The majority of the funding was provided by The Home Depot in New Hartford. Additionally, a small grant was awarded. (continued on page 6)

Cherry tree stepping blocks.
Photo: Rich Martin

Conservation News
Continued from page 4

Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument — a vital source of food for seabirds and the wintering place of Atlantic Puffins — would be opened to commercial fishing. President Obama had declared the area a monument in 2016. Since then, commercial fishing as well as mining and drilling have been banned.

According to an article on National Audubon’s website (at audubon.org/news), "Each year, millions of juvenile fish migrate from the canyons to coastal waters to feed on plankton. There, they serve as sustenance for breeding Atlantic Puffins, Roseate Terns, Razorbills, and other seabirds that require prodigious amounts of food to raise healthy chicks."
Boyd Woods (continued from page 5)

About the Birding Incident in Central Park, New York

You may have heard by now about a recent incident that happened to New York City Audubon board member Christian Cooper in New York’s Central Park, when a white woman called 911 and said “an African American man” was threatening her after he asked her to keep her dog on a leash per park regulations. Chris recorded part of the incident on his phone, and his sister shared it on Twitter, where it now has more than 30.7 million views. After reaching out to Chris and to NYC Audubon, National Audubon issued the following statement to media:

“Black Americans often face terrible daily dangers in outdoor spaces, where they are subjected to unwarranted suspicion, confrontation, and violence,” said Audubon SVP for State Programs Rebeccah Sanders, who is white. “The outdoors — and the joy of birds — should be safe and welcoming for all people. That’s the reality Audubon and our partners are working hard to achieve. We unequivocally condemn racist sentiments, behavior, and systems that undermine the humanity, rights, and freedom of Black people. We are grateful Christian Cooper is safe. He takes great delight in sharing New York City’s birds with others and serves as a board member of the New York City Audubon Society, where he promotes conservation of New York City’s outdoor spaces and inclusion of all people.”
IN MY GARDEN
A Journal — May 2020
By Angela Dimmitt

Well this was an extraordinary month bird-wise! We kept hearing of all kinds of exciting birds arriving along the coast, but nothing was happening in Litchfield County, at least not in New Milford, in my garden. The locals were busy at the feeders and indeed nesting — bluebirds, cardinals, and titmice unfortunately all lost their first broods (but are on their seconds now). I had a wonderful morning at River Road in Kent, always a special place full of surprises — yes, there were Cerulean Warblers. The annual Sunny Valley Farm survey on International Migratory Bird Day (May 10) was almost a bust (no flycatchers, no swallows, few warblers), but that evening orioles and tanagers appeared in my garden, to be followed by a phenomenal week when everything poured through in a rush — Rose-breasted Grosbeaks gorged at feeders; Indigo Buntings, Veeries, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, warblers (Northern Parula, Louisiana Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Yellowthroat, Redstart, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted — first in years!); a White-crowned Sparrow and a Common Nighthawk, both rare in my garden!

And great excitement at the Wimisink Preserve marsh in Sherman — three or possibly four Soras calling from different parts, and Least Bitterns were seen a-courting again — last year was not a fluke! Virginia Rails also called; Hooded Mergansers were seen using the Wood Duck nest boxes — Wood Ducks were everywhere. Green Herons flew back and forth, making their weird noises, and fished in front of us on dead snags. Even an Osprey came for a week, owning a dead tree, competing with the kingfishers. Finally, a Marsh Wren sang out near the boardwalk. Unusual “land” birds included a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and a Wilson’s Warbler. Baltimore Orioles, Cedar Waxwings, and Eastern Kingbirds are nesting. So much activity! On May 31, I counted about 30 Wood Ducks — five hens with chicks of various ages, males hanging around on a favorite log; and the Hooded Merganser with five ducklings (merplings?)

This is indeed a year for rarities to show up — a Kentucky Warbler at Bent of the River Audubon Sanctuary in Southbury is still visible in a clearing, singing his heart out loud and clear, but a mate is doubtful — still, he may get lucky, who knows! A Black-billed Cuckoo passed through my garden; the kingfisher comes most days for his favorite crayfish in the stream with masses of little trout. I am woken most mornings at about 5:15 by a catbird, nesting right below my bedroom window — now about to hatch — the male waking me with his sort-of-musical song (she grunts from the nest if he’s neglecting her), along with the Carolina Wren and two competing House Wrens nesting in bluebird boxes on the lawn. A Barred Owl has been calling in the afternoon and at night — I must climb Candlewood Mountain and search in case the babies are out of their nest. And a hen turkey which came to the feeders and actually ran towards me when I threw seed (semi-tame?) showed up with a brood of tiny fluff balls so small I could not count them.

My garden, meanwhile, is suddenly spectacular — rhododendrons, various azaleas, deutzia, weigela, beauty bush, native honeysuckle; irises bearded and Dutch, very early daylilies, huge orange poppies, wild ragged robin, solomon’s seal, scented dame’s rocket, false hellebore — the first vases of flowers filling the house with scent and pure pleasure. The little gravel garden by the front door is adorable with pink dianthus, sedums and hen-&-chicks. My beans, peas, and potatoes are shooting up. Wow! There is one positive side to our awful situation now — forced to stay at home, people are working on their gardens as never before and finding a whole new joy and meaning to life! Stay safe and well — enjoy your gardens and go birding often — but mostly, wear that mask, stay distant, safe, and well!
Socially distanced and masked birding at Sunnybrook State Park in Torrington in early June.

Photo: Gus Molitano