Greetings, everyone!

I say this with a big smile on my face as summer kicks into high gear. COVID restrictions have been lifted; that dark cloud is dissipating. Let’s rejoice with this newfound freedom. My hope is that we all embrace and respect the freedoms this great country offers us.

As summer progresses, bird songs will be quieting down. Many birds have found their mates and are busy rearing young. There is so much joy in watching their behavior — mating rituals, nest building, incubation, and the daunting task of fledging their young. I didn’t see my bluebirds leave the nest box, but I watched in awe as the parents fed the fledglings with the offered mealworms. Fledglings are very demanding!

June was a very busy month for LHAS volunteers. We’ve held bird walks, nature walks, the Summer Bird Count and CT Bird Atlas surveys, and given out LHAS information at farmers’ markets. We’ve also planted pollinator plants and monitored nest boxes at our sanctuaries. Our forestry work continues at Boyd Woods and Wigwam Brook Sanctuaries. In addition, we’re developing new trails at our Kalmia Sanctuary in Harwinton.

Our Annual Meeting on June 7 was held via Zoom. During the meeting, we announced the two high school graduate winners of our educational scholarships, voted on the new slate of LHAS board officers and directors, and enjoyed a fantastic program on beavers — nature’s “engineers” — presented by Ginny Apple. Thank you to all past and present LHAS board members. Your time and energy have been invaluable to this organization.

I’m happy to announce LHAS will start holding in-person monthly meetings in August when Boyd Woods will host the outdoor picnic with live birds from Sharon Audubon; BYO food and drinks. September’s meeting will take place at our normal, pre-pandemic venue, the Litchfield Community Center.

Enjoy these lazy days of summer!

Marie

LHAS Elects New Board Members

At our June Annual Meeting (held via Zoom), LHAS members elected new board directors to replace the outgoing directors.

We welcome George Stephens to the board, and thank Beverly Baldwin and Vickie Dauphinais, whose first terms expired this year, for agreeing to serve another three-year term. And many thanks to outgoing director Maria Toth.

You can see the full list of officers, directors, and committee chairs on page 2.

Congrats to Our Scholarship Winners!

Also at our Annual Meeting, LHAS President Marie Kennedy announced that we have selected Emerson Rinehart IV from Housatonic Valley Regional High School to receive the $2,000 Paul A. Gros Memorial Scholarship and Carissa Titus from Nonnewaug High School to receive the $2,000 LHAS Scholarship. Emerson has been accepted at a number of schools and has decided to attend the University of Maine, where he will study conservation biology. Carissa will be going to Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, and plans to pursue a career in environmental conservation and marine biology.
LHAS Officers
President Marie Kennedy 914-393-6270
Vice President Diane Edwards 860-309-5139
Treasurer Mia Coats 817-691-2525
Rec. Secretary Karen G. Nelson 860-309-9018
Corresp. Secretary Terri Bianchi 860-806-5793

Board of Directors
Michael Audette 2022 860-388-7874
Keith Johnson 2022 860-618-5720
Irek Rychlik 2022 860-480-6685
Carol Perrault 2023 860-628-1612
Carol Keams 2023 860-307-0807
Rich Martin 2023 860-736-7714
Beverly Baldwin 2024 860-921-7075
Vickie Dauphinais 2024 860-361-9051
George Stephens 2024 860-921-7150

Committee Chairpeople
Boyd Woods Debbie & Rich Martin 860-819-7462
Communications & Digital Media Rich Martin 860-736-7714
Conservation Diane Edwards 860-485-9319
Education Donna Rose Smith 203-706-0474
Facebook Diane Edwards 860-309-5139
Field Trips David Zomick 860-513-8600
Fundraising vacant
Historian vacant
Hospitality Carol Perrault 860-628-1612
Kalma Sanctuary Irek Rychlik 860-480-6685
Membership Outreach Beverly Baldwin 860-921-7075
Membership Records Doreen Orciari 860-307-3102
Newsletter Diane Edwards 860-485-9319
Programs Angela Dimmitt 860-355-3429
Publicity Shirley Gay 860-482-0819
Scholarships Carol Keams & Harry Schuh 860-307-0807
Wigwam Brook Sanctuary John Baker 860-567-8427

Research
Christmas Count Ray Belding 860-605-3244
Summer Count Dave Tripp dtripjr@gmail.com
Nest Box Program Rebecca Purdy 860-485-8530

By Doreen Orciari, Membership Records Chair

Alice Anderson .............................................. Norfolk
Diane Aubin ............................................... New Milford
Sean Bagley ............................................... New Milford
Cindy Banach ............................................. Harwinton
Robin Bell ................................................ Salisbury
Rosalie Belotti ............................................ Winsted
John Brothers* ............................................ Gaylordsville
David Chu ............................................... Goshen
Lynn Deasy ............................................... Norfolk
Ruth Demaida ............................................ Terryville
Margaret Dillon* ........................................ Litchfield
Jill Drew .................................................. Sharon
Tracie Dzumak ............................................. Torrington
Wayne Farrington ....................................... Canaan
Rosemarie Greco ........................................ Litchfield
Hardcore Sweet Bakery ................................ Watertown
Cheryl Heller ................................. Norfolk
Carroll Hughes .................................. Pleasant Valley
Loren Kahn* ............................................... Watertown
Linda King ........................................... New Milford
Suzanne Levasseur ..................................... Thomaston
Jennifer Lupo ........................................... Litchfield
Nancy Mandeville ....................................... Sherman
James Marx .............................................. New Milford
Lisa Masselle ...................................... Riverton
Penny McEvoy ........................................ Torrington
Nina Mellford ........................................ Morris
Cyril Moore ................................................ Canaan
Barbara Moran .................................. Bethlehem
Ira Morrison ........................................... Bristol
Violette Radomski ..................................... Bristol
Linda Reed ........................................... Bristol
James Riquier ........................................ Terryville
Alicia Roy ................................................ Canaan
Steven Spiegel ........................................ New Milford
Deborah Stevenson ..................................... Bristol
Jeanette Stravitsech .................................. New Milford
Sharon Wilcox ........................................ Torrington
Charles Woodward* ................................ Winsted

* Welcome back

LHAS Membership is at 851.

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.

Condolences: LHAS extends condolences to the family and friends of Adele Taylor, who passed away on May 21 at the age of 93 after a short illness. Adele, who lived in Woodbury, was an LHAS member for many years.
**Boyd Woods Sanctuary Update**

*By Rich Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary Co-chair*

In my Boyd Woods Update in the March/April issue of the *Chickadee Chatter*, I mentioned that a couple of foot bridges needed to be built on the Windy Woods Trail. A sturdy 16-foot-long bridge was constructed and installed this past April in an area along the trail that sees seasonal water run-off and is also a bit treacherous to walk over because it’s steep, narrow, and rocky. I would like to thank Joe Bianchi and his brother Dave Bianchi for their help in accomplishing this project.

One bridge complete and one to go! Joe and I are still contemplating about how this next bridge will be constructed. It’s quite a ways into the woods, so getting the lumber and tools to the site will be a challenge. Hopefully, by the September/October issue of the *Chickadee Chatter* we will have that problem solved and I can report to you that the second bridge project has been completed.

On April 23 I drove out to the Goshen Fairgrounds to pick up 10 native shrubs from the Northwest Conservation District Annual Plant Sale. I was greeted there by none other than LHAS’s Recording Secretary and the Northwest Conservation District’s Program Administrator, Karen Nelson. She gladly helped load my car with these plants before I headed over to Boyd Woods Sanctuary to place them at the Plash area for planting. All 10 shrubs were planted near the bird blind the next day by my wife, Debbie, and me. We look forward to the beneficial fruits and flowers that these plants will provide for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife in the near future.

We completed our work for the NRCS Forest Management Project this spring by contracting with Maple Ridge Logging, from Bantam. They performed a moderate thinning of trees in the conifer areas at both Boyd Woods and Wigwam Brook Sanctuaries. The thinning consisted of removing most of the hardwood trees in the conifer area that were competing with the conifers for space and sunlight along with removing some of the conifers that were crowding each other.

Late this fall or early winter, when conditions are favorable for logging, we will contract with a logger to perform a woodland thinning in a 25-acre area at Boyd Woods. Thinning allows for the continued growth of the healthiest preferred species, such as oak, hickory, and birch, within a woodland stand while removing the suppressed, diseased, and less wildlife beneficial trees that will impede the growth of the entire stand. LHAS’s primary aim is to create and maintain a healthy forest that in turn benefits wildlife.

We’re always looking for help in maintaining the trails at LHAS’s three sanctuaries. If you want to volunteer, please contact Rich Martin at *martins283main@mac.com*.

---

**Spreading the Word About LHAS**

The Litchfield Hills Audubon Society is spreading the word about the many benefits we offer: monthly programs, nature preserves, and bird walks and other outings. We also advocate for the environment and conservation with various projects throughout the year. We will be sharing our information at various farmers’ markets in Litchfield County throughout the remainder of the summer and into the fall. If you would like to volunteer to help spread the word, please contact Beverly Baldwin at *baldwinbesh@gmail.com*. 

---

**The next LHAS Board Meeting will be on Tuesday, July 20, at 7 p.m. in the Litchfield Community Center.**
Give Snakes a Break!

Now that the weather is warmer and Connecticut residents are spending more time outside, there is an increased likelihood of coming across a snake, notes the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Wildlife Highlights e-newsletter. Unfortunately, snakes are often misunderstood and wrongfully killed out of fear, DEEP says. "The reality is that the snakes of Connecticut are generally harmless and would prefer not to be bothered by people. Connecticut is home to 14 species of native snakes (two of which are venomous — the Northern Copperhead and Timber Rattlesnake), but snakes only bite to capture food or in defense. If you encounter a snake in your yard or while out recreating this season, observe and enjoy it from a distance and allow it to go on its way. If left alone, snakes pose no threat to people," DEEP says. The agency encourages you to learn how to identify Connecticut's snakes and to learn about the role these important reptiles play in our ecosystems. Visit https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/Learn-About-Wildlife/Snakes-of-Connecticut.

Vineyard Wind Project Gets OK — But Must Mitigate Bird Impacts

The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in June OK'd the Vineyard Wind I project off the coast of Massachusetts, meaning the project is approved to move forward. When completed, it will be the largest offshore wind project in the U.S., providing 800MW of energy to up to 800,000 homes. Importantly, the approval requires that the project take steps to reduce impact to migratory birds, according to an Audubon news release.

Audubon says BOEM is requiring Vineyard Wind to develop a monitoring program that includes pre- and post-construction bird surveys, installation of radio telemetry receivers within the project area, the deployment of radio transmitter backpacks to species of concern that may interact with the project, and the use of additional monitoring technologies as they become available. The results of this monitoring program will be made publicly available to better understand impacts and to inform best practices at future developments.

The project is well-sited to avoid the most important offshore habitats for marine birds, based on the best available science, according to Audubon.

More about Audubon's policy on wind power and birds can be found at www.audubon.org/news/wind-power-and-birds.

Senators Re-introduce Forage Fish Conservation Act

In April, Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Roy Blunt (R-MO) re-introduced the Forage Fish Conservation Act, which will help protect forage fish — small fish like herring that serve as the primary food source for seabirds, larger fish, and other marine life. This bill will amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the primary law that governs ocean fish management in U.S. federal waters, to recognize the important role that forage fish serve in the ecosystem.

Seabirds are in crisis — their populations have dropped by 70% since 1950, due to threats like overfishing and climate change, according to Audubon. The forage fish they rely on are not adequately included in our federal fisheries management. Without proper management, forage fish face a risk of being overfished, meaning less food for seabirds and other marine life.

"Birds in Long Island Sound like Common Terns and Ospreys depend on forage fish to survive and raise chicks," said Robert LaFrance, policy director for Audubon Connecticut. "But forage fish populations are declining and shifting in range, which threatens birds and people that depend on them. The Forage Fish Conservation Act is essential to protecting wildlife and recreational fishing industry jobs, in Connecticut and beyond."

Sen. Blumenthal previously introduced this bill during the last congressional session. Prior to that, a companion bill in the House was introduced in April 2019. The House bill saw
overwhelming bipartisan support from House members as well as a variety of organizations including Audubon, the American Sportfishing Association, the National Wildlife Federation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

**West Haven Wins Audubon's First 'Share the Shore' Award**

In 2013, Audubon Connecticut put out a call for volunteers to teach beachgoers about keeping a safe distance from nesting birds and chicks. The City of West Haven provided space for volunteer training, and a local resident offered up her garage for storing materials. This one effort was so successful that after two years, the bulk of visitors to Sandy Point, an Audubon designated Important Bird Area, had learned how to protect vulnerable species like Piping Plovers.

"The city understands the importance of sharing the shore, and we congratulate them on a well-deserved award," said Dennis Riordan, president of the Menunkatuck Audubon Society, like LHAS, a chapter of National Audubon.

"Thanks to the City of West Haven's interest in improving habitat for birds and other wildlife, Menunkatuck Audubon Society has been able to install eight Osprey platforms in the marshes of Old Field Creek, Cove River, and Oyster River. Working with the West Haven Watershed Restoration Committee and the Wildlife Guards, we have removed invasive plants and replaced them with native ones. This past winter we were able to install monofilament fishing line recycling bins at seven locations along the shore. The bins will help prevent birds from dying after becoming entangled in discarded fishing line," Riordan said.

**The Benefits of Mimicking a Natural Disturbance in a Forest**

Disturbance is a natural part of our native ecosystems, says CT DEEP. Blowdowns create a gap in the tree canopy that allows new seedlings to grow densely in full sunlight. The increased sunlight also means an uptick in insect activity, which in turn increases opportunities for insect-feeding birds.

Forest management on DEEP land is intended to mimic disturbance to diversify forest age classes and resilience, and to favor wildlife species that require habitat other than closed-canopy older forest. Clearcuts can simulate major disturbances, such as a wildfire or hurricane. The resulting large area of young forest is invaluable to birds and other wildlife that are dependent on this vanishing habitat. A strip cut resembles impacts caused by a downdraft or tornado. Small group selection openings or even thinnings are akin to microbursts.

In an aging, closed-canopy forest, the only way to diversify habitats on the landscape is to create areas of disturbance similar to those that have naturally occurred in the past. Since it is often not reasonable to let wildfire spread unchecked, forestry operations can help replace the impacts and benefits, provide forest products to society, and increase forest age class diversity and resilience.

To learn more on the importance of forest management, visit [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/forestry/Why-manage-flyer/Forest_Mgmt_In_CT_Booklet-Web.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/forestry/Why-manage-flyer/Forest_Mgmt_In_CT_Booklet-Web.pdf).

**Rebuilding Oyster Reefs While Helping Pandemic-Hit Oyster Farmers**

Talk about making a silk purse from a sow’s ear: A new program is buying more than 5 million oysters from farmers unable to sell them to restaurants during the pandemic and will use them to restore 27 acres of imperiled native oyster reefs at 20 sites. The Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) initiative, a program of The Nature Conservancy in partnership with the Pew Charitable Trusts, will provide economic relief for shellfish farmers while significantly accelerating restoration projects.

Oyster reefs provide many benefits, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), including creating habitat for hundreds of other marine species; filtering and cleaning the surrounding water; providing a safe nursery for commercially valuable species; and serving as barriers to storms and tides, thereby preventing erosion and protecting productive estuary waters.

Despite the many benefits they provide, oyster reefs are among the most imperiled marine habitats on Earth. Globally, over 85% of oyster reefs have disappeared due to over-harvesting, introduced diseases, and habitat modification.
Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Summer 2021

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, General Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at the Litchfield Community Center, 421 Bantam Road (Rt. 202), Litchfield, CT. When the first Monday of the month falls on a holiday, the meeting is held on the second Monday. Refreshments are served at 6:45 p.m. The business meeting starts at 7:15 p.m. and the program follows. The April and October meetings are Potluck Dinners starting at 6:30 p.m. The June meeting is the Annual Meeting and Dinner held at a local restaurant; it begins at 6 p.m. Our August meeting is the annual Picnic at Boyd Woods Sanctuary; it begins at 6 p.m. Board of Directors Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every other month at 7 p.m. in the Learning Center at the Litchfield Community Center.

GENERAL MEETINGS

July 5 ...........Wildflower Folklore (Zoom meeting) .................. Monday, 7 PM
Ken Elkins from Bent of the River Audubon Sanctuary in Southbury is back with another exciting presentation! Flowers are everywhere around us. We admire them for their beauty, their colors, and their symbolism. From strange and often dangerous herbal "cures" to black magic and wonderful legends of love, it all constitutes "wildflower folklore."

August 2 ........Picnic at Boyd Woods and Presentation on Birds of Prey ........... Monday, 6 PM
Following a picnic and very short business meeting, Sharon Audubon staff will display various species of live hawks and owls to demonstrate their beauty, power, and connection with the natural world. Similarities and differences of these amazing birds of prey will be discussed, and several props will be on hand for viewing. Through this program, the audience will understand why raptors and their environment should continue to be protected and respected. Bring a chair or blanket, your picnic supper and eating utensils, and insect repellent. Picnic begins at 6 p.m., followed by a short business meeting at 6:30, and then the presentation. Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary is located on Route 254, about 1.5 miles south of the intersection with Route 118 in Litchfield. Rain cancels.

September 13 . .Phantasms and Fallacies: Problems and Pitfalls in Bird ID ............Monday, 6:45 PM
Why can a large group of birders look at one species and all will misidentify it? Why do certain people consistently find an inordinate amount of rare birds? Why are some birders seemingly able to identify birds from far away on brief view with Ninja-like ability? These questions and more can be answered by looking at the psychology of how we look at birds. Our presenter, Julian Hough, takes a look at the subconscious workings of our brain — and how often it can fail us when birding. Originally from Lancashire, England, Julian has been birding since the age of six, having spent much time around the British Isles in pursuit of rare birds. He worked at the Cape May Bird Observatory counting neotropical migrants, and now moonlights as a professional bird guide to exotic places for Sunrise Birding. With a background in design and marketing, Julian is also a talented artist, photographer, and published writer. He lives in New Haven. NOTE: This and subsequent monthly meetings, unless otherwise specified, will once again be held at the Litchfield Community Center, our pre-pandemic venue.

MEETING CHANGES OR CANCELLATIONS

Bad weather? Meeting and event cancellations or postponements are broadcast on WFSB TV Channel 3 in Hartford and on radio station WZBG at 97.3 FM. Notices are also emailed to members on our email notification list; if you want to be added to our email list, send an email to lhasct@me.com.
BIRDING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

July 11........... Birding at Wimisink Preserve in Sherman .............. Sunday, 7:30 AM
Join Angela Dimmitt for waterfowl birding, including nesting Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers, Common Mergansers, Green Herons, Belted Kingfishers, and possibly American Bitterns, Least Bitterns, and Soras. Also land birds and warblers. Wimisink Marsh is protected by the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (formerly the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust and Naromi Land Trust). It is also an Audubon designated Important Bird Area, or IBA.
Directions: From Route 7 in New Milford or Kent, go north or south, as appropriate, to Gaylordsville. At the bridge over the Housatonic, take Route 55 West to Sherman (toward New York state) for 1 mile. Turn left onto Route 39 south to Sherman. Parking is shortly on the right. For more information, contact Angela in advance at 860-355-3429 or angeladimmitt@aol.com.

July 18........... Robin Dynda Memorial Paddle on Wood Creek Pond ............ Sunday, 9:15 AM
Meet at the Wood Creek Pond parking lot on Ashpothag Road in Norfolk. Bring water, sunscreen, PFD, binoculars (Eastern Kingbirds and other flycatchers and swallows are possible), and containers to pick some blueberries (hopefully ripe by then!). Also bring lunch for a picnic on-site after the paddle. Directions: From Route 44 in Torrington, go north on Route 272, then right onto Ashpothag Road; take first left to the launch. PLEASE register in advance with David Zomick if you want to join the fun: email dzsurtudo@gmail.com; home phone 860-584-2824; cell phone 860-513-8600.

August 1........ Shorebirding at Milford Point with Frank Mantlik .............. Sunday, 7:30 AM
Join one of Connecticut's leading shorebird experts at the height of the season at Connecticut Audubon's Coastal Center at Milford Point. Watch a variety of nesting terns, Ospreys, Oystercatchers, Semi-palmated Sandpipers galore, and other returning and residential birds, plus land birds in the garden. Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 because it will get HOT! Bring a scope if you have one, as well as water, sunscreen, bug spray, snacks, etc. There is a portapotty. Address: 1 Milford Point Road, Milford, CT 06460. For further information and to register (attendance is limited to 12–15), contact David Zomick at 860-513-8600 or dzsurtudo@gmail.com.

August 20...... Kayak the Charles Wheeler Salt Marsh. Carpool from Thomaston: Friday, 8:30 AM
Kayak the Charles Wheeler Salt Marsh with Pamela Hicks and David Zomick. Steeped in local history, the marsh offers an abundance of birds and other wildlife, beautiful vistas, and a chance to paddle and unwind. Wind and weather may cause the water trip to be canceled, even on sunny days. If water conditions are not safe, we will simply enjoy nature, walk, and picnic. We will meet promptly at 8:30 a.m. at the commuter parking lot off of Route 8 exit 39 in Thomaston, on Route 6 across from the Dunkin Donuts to ensure a put-in at 10 a.m. If you would like to meet at the Charles Wheeler Salt Marsh, here are the directions: From U.S. 1 northbound in Devon, turn right onto Naugatuck Avenue. Then turn right onto Milford Point Road. Next, turn right onto Court Street. Follow until the end. We would expect to be there at 9:30 a.m. Visit ct.usharbors.com for a map of the Charles Wheeler Salt Marsh. Bring your kayak or canoe, a life jacket, water, a snack, bug repellent, and wear shoes that can get wet. Also, if you would like, bring a lunch for a picnic after the paddle, when we will head to the Audubon Coastal Center at Milford Point. Please contact David Zomick in advance to let him know if you will be joining them and whether you will meet at the put-in or at Milford Point. Contact David at 860-513-8600 or dzsurtudo@mail.com.
**Trip Report**

**A Jaunt to Bent of the River**

*By Russ Naylor*

**Mayday, mayday, folks — we have a spring fallout!**

The month of May swept in with a splendor of newly arrived neotropical migrants surging in from southerly climes on tempestuous winds. In response, a wave of feather-hungry LHAS and Western Connecticut Bird Club ornithophiles descended upon Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury on May 2 in a fallout of their own to see and hear a diverse array of winged treasures.

Stars of the show were warblers, vireos, and both orioles — vivacious angels showering their blessings on pandemic-plagued birders hungry for both avian adventure and in-person flocking with their own kind. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks flashed song and color at feeders along with their cardinal cousins. Tree and Barn Swallows dazzled us with aerobatics alongside Chimney Swifts. Broad-winged Hawks passed overhead, joining larger buteo hawks aloft, as Turkey Vultures teetered in blustery breezes. Song, Field, and White-throated Sparrows serenaded our group as we studied Savannah Sparrows stopping by for seedy snacks.

Our merry band tracked tiny gnatcatchers flitting in arboreal foliage. We enjoyed Common Mergansers seeking high-rise nest hollows — one bird escorting a Wood Duck drake out from her real estate, another flying as honor guard beside a Bald Eagle scouting the Pomperaug River for fish.

Speaking of Bald Eagles, our group was thrilled by a flyover of five young national birds soaring overhead toward Lake Zoar — perhaps these were an honor flight paying due homage to the presidents of both LHAS and the Western Connecticut Bird Club, both of whom graced our flock this day.

As charms of goldfinches sang paeans of joy, a Wild Turkey hen claimed her share at full feeders, keeping the squirrels back, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, awaiting their turn.

As an extra treat, butterflies flitted by — Spring Azures, Mourning Cloaks, Tiger Swallowtails, and others — into a world abloom with wildflowers. We all reveled in celebration of spring’s rebirth of biota as we undergo a renaissance of normal life. Let life burgeon and flourish anew!

---

**Protect Birds by Reducing Pesticides**

*By Vicki Dauphinais, LHAS Board Member*

According to the National Audubon Society, 67 million birds are killed by pesticides annually. Pesticides used by homeowners kill 7 million birds each year. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates homeowners use up to 10 times more chemical pesticides per acre on their lawns than farmers use on crops.

Let’s strive to protect our birds by using fewer — or no — pesticides around our homes. Here are some examples of bird-friendly recipes I have used successfully to control “pests” in my garden and yard.

**Garlic Spray**

The pungent aroma of garlic is delectable to some but repellent to others. It can knock out insect infestations in the garden and keep deer from munching on your flowers and shrubs.

Add to blender: 4 cloves of garlic, 2 tsp. vegetable oil, 2 cups hot water, and a squirt of Dawn dish liquid soap. Emulsify and let sit overnight. Add to a gallon of water and spray on plants. Best to apply in morning or evening. Repeat application after rain.

**Neem Oil Spray**

Neem oil is extracted from the seeds of the neem tree. It is an effective, natural insecticide and fungicide. I have used it on my fruit trees and grapevine with good results. To use it, follow the instructions on the bottle.

**Epson Salt/Vinegar Spray**

Kills weeds in the cracks of sidewalks, driveways, patio stones, rocks. Works great!

Mix 1 gallon vinegar, 2 cups Epson salt, ¼ cup Dawn original dish liquid soap. Best if sprayed on a sunny day in the afternoon.

**Baking Soda Spray**

Great for powdery mildew, cheaper than neem oil. Spray at first sign of mildew on leaves.

Mix 1 tbsp. baking soda, ½ tsp. Dawn dish liquid soap, 1 tbsp. vegetable oil, 1 gallon of water. Apply in early morning or evening.

Happy gardening!
Trip Report

Annual Woodcock Walk

By Debbie Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary co-chair

Despite temperatures in the 40s, 15 people came out to Boyd Woods Sanctuary for the April 17 “Woodcock and Woodland Wonders” walk. The woods were quiet on this cool evening as we ventured out to the vernal pool (a Boyd Woods tradition: make a wish at the pool, toss an acorn into the water, and hope your wish comes true) and then on to the “Happy Tree.” As we passed Margery’s Pond, Scott Mills was the first to hear the “peent” of a woodcock. Eventually, as our group lined up in the hayfield, everyone got to see and hear the woodcocks (probably four of them) performing their courtship dances overhead.

It was dark when we walked back to our cars, and we were extremely thankful for the sturdy footbridge that had recently been built by Rich Martin and Joe Bianchi over a rocky, wet gully on the trail. We were also delighted to see the beautiful arrangement of solar lights that Terri Bianchi had artistically placed along the hayfield trail for our safety and guidance.

How Fares the Whip-poor-will?

By Rich Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary Co-chair

LHAS is participating in a new Eastern Whip-poor-will study. Graduate students, through a collaboration with the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), are undertaking a study to determine the extent of decline of the Whip-poor-will. The students are placing small recording devices in certain areas from North Carolina to Maine hoping to capture Whip-poor-will activity.

Graduate student Jeffrey Larkin and his associate visited the LHAS Boyd Woods Sanctuary in late May to deploy a couple of the recording devices.

We are eager to learn the results of this study. We probably won’t know anything until later this year, but Jeffrey assured us that he would provide us with his findings.

My wife, Debbie, and I suggested they also deploy a recording device at LHAS’s Kalmia Sanctuary, where Whip-poor-wills have been heard frequently in the past. Unfortunately, all the recording devices the students had in their SUV (they had many recording devices) were already spoken for. Jeffrey did say that he would be doing another survey next summer and will definitely add Kalmia to his list of target sites.

This newsletter and other LHAS features can be seen IN LIVING COLOR at www.lhasct.org.

Scan the QR code at left with your smartphone to go to www.lhasct.org.

Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/LitchfieldHillsAudubonSocietyLHAS

Chickadee Chatter was printed by Photo Arts Printing Company, Torrington, CT.

Special thanks to Janet Baker and Doreen Orciari for proofreading this newsletter!
IN MY GARDEN — AND BEYOND!

A Journal — May 2021

By Angela Dimmitt

What an incredible month! I have spent a lot of time at the Wimisink marsh in Sherman, hoping to hear unusual marsh birds like Sora, Virginia Rail, Least and American Bittern — so far neither bitters, but always lots of activity and excitement. How about a Green Heron with a fish? Or a large Green Frog gleaming in the duckweed? Female Wood Ducks, Hooded and Common Mergansers checking the duck boxes? Sometimes an Osprey, ravens, Cedar Waxwings, Baltimore Orioles, kingfishers chattering, various swallows swooping past or sitting on dead branches warming their tummies in the early morning sun? Beavers and Muskrats and all the usual birds one would expect around a marsh? In the cold wind and rain on May 29, I saw 37 species, including a mother Wood Duck with seven fluffy babies. And one baby bunny.

Yes, it was an incredible month! Yesterday my garden was a blaze of color with rhododendrons, azaleas, deutzia (a member of the hydrangea family), and kolkwitzia (beautybush) all in full bloom, as well as bearded and Japanese irises, clematis, columbine, wild geraniums, dame’s rocket, Solomon’s seal, false Solomon’s seal, and some very early fragrant yellow daylilies. We really needed rain and last night we got it, over 2 inches and rising. Lake Dimmitt is emerging. Everything has grown so fast; the only weeds visible are in open spaces. Hostas are opening magnificently, dozens of varieties (I adore them!), and heucheras are stellar too, some arching their coral bells already.

My sodden little female hummingbird keeps coming to the feeder this morning, taking a long drink; the male is here too after a few days’ hiatus. She must be nesting, but I’ve not seen where she flies to. Oh, now there are two females! Birds — again, an incredible month! Slow to start, they finally poured in, and on Saturday, May 15, I had no fewer than 44 species in my garden! Over the weekend, another 10 came through, for a total of 54! This included Common Mergansers flying over; two Barred Owls calling, a kingfisher visiting the stream for its favorite crayfish, and only five warblers. Nothing unusual except one late White-throated Sparrow — the rest will probably nest around here.

Of course, a bear struck again, but this was different: Last month a mother and two cubs came and brought down the feeder pole (I’d been bringing the feeders in at night), but the other day a different female (I think) with only one cub knocked it down again and was walking up the lawn towards the woods. When I yelled at her, instead of going into the bushes as usual, she turned and charged at me — she ran so fast I could hardly get my foot back in the kitchen door. I grabbed a saucepan and lid and banged loudly and, horrors, she charged again.

There are houses with children in the woods around me, so I do worry that something had happened to make her that aggressive. The CT DEEP said not to worry, “it’s only a threat charge” and “they usually stop well short of you” — huh?

My sodden little female hummingbird keeps coming to the feeder this morning, taking a long drink; the male is here too after a few days’ hiatus.
I just don’t want to be the exception to that rule! Remember though: “Never run from a bear”!

Stranger than fiction: One afternoon, I was weeding and heard a very odd noise behind me — from the stream, a Canada Goose scrambled up onto the lawn. How on earth did it get there? Honking and very agitated, it waddled around and finally flew off. Then I pulled up a tuft of grass and a large Leopard Frog jumped out from a hole it had made, almost hitting me in the face.

And is this possible? Bluebirds nested in their favorite box; six babies hatched April 24. A couple of weeks later, I thought they had fledged and gone, but then heard a little noise in the box. A week later, this being long past their usual 12–14 days to fledge, I decided to peek in: two midsize babies. Parents continued feeding. On day 25, I saw Dad flying into a tree with a little brown one following, so decided to check the box again. Sadly, one dead, fully feathered baby in a nasty mess of nest. Could it be the original six fledged, but Mom had laid a further two eggs, which the babies helped to incubate? Two days later, the male was back on the (cleaned) box with straw in his beak, singing plaintively, and after two more days, a female joined him, still here yesterday, hopefully starting another family.

Finally, summer is here along with nesting birds and my amazing garden; I am just so happy to have survived another year and once again resolve not to waste a single day, a single moment, of this beautiful season with its constant new surprises. Life is very good!

---

**Trip Reports**

*By Russ Naylor*

**Listen to the Mockingbird — He Sings a Boogie-Woogie Beat!**

On April 10, a posse of bemasked LHAS birding bandits rode into town at Milford Point, deputized by "sheriff" Angela Dimmitt to round up some spring migrants. Our arrival was heralded by a fanfare of Carolina Wrens and Northern Mockingbirds tuning up atop song posts. The birding was spectacular!

Nell’s Island marshes hosted legions of Brant, Black Ducks, and Green-winged Teal feeding on a rising tide, along with Gadwalls and a loose dabbling of Northern Shovelers resplendent in full spring regalia. Ospreys galore staked out nest sites or winged by on migration. A pair of Oystercatchers saluted us overhead in song flight. A flyby Merlin and three Monk Parakeets allowed but brief glimpses.

Near the main building, a foraging raven described food sources as “evermore” in guttural voice. Out on the sandbars, American Oystercatchers and Piping Plovers danced, sang, and bowed to spouses-to-be, sometimes in impressive song flights. Farther offshore, Long-tailed Ducks played in the waves, a Horned Grebe showed off brand-new breeding plumes, Red-breasted Mergansers held private trysts, and a pair of Common Loons in vibrant spring plumage engaged in courtship song-and-dance duets a bit ahead of migration to northern lakes. Great Egrets exhibited high breeding condition in both plumes and pigmentation, as Tree Swallows checked out “rental” space in Purple Martin gourds.

All told, we roped in some 61 species unfurling a melodious and multicolored diversity of melody and feather to titillate the eye and ear.

Bravissimo, as always, Angela!

**Look What the Breeze Blew In!**

On May 23, a combined group of LHAS and Western CT Bird Club members gathered to see the incoming roost flight of over 280 Chimney Swifts at Mitchell School in Woodbury, part of a recognized Audubon Important Bird Area, a major chimney swift roost and nest site.

In cool evening breezes after a hot summer-like day, the swifts swept in to roost by the dozen, agilely scooping up insects on the wing before nimbly fluttering down into their chimney in adroit vertical descents. As the last swifts went to roost, a Common Nighthawk swept in between us so closely we could feel the wind from its wings — flying low to the ground to capture emerging moths and beetles.

Not to be outdone, the night-shift aerialists then swept by — one apparent Big Brown Bat that has been sharing the roost space with the swifts. Then two ruddy-furred Eastern Red Bats with their characteristic swift and dashing maneuvers after fast-flying insects — a fitting end to an airborne show enjoyed by all!
The morning was cool and cloudy as 11 of us started out on our “Birds and Blooms” walk at the Boyd Woods Sanctuary in May. It didn’t take long for rain showers to begin, but thankfully it was just on-and-off sprinkles for our 2-hour stroll on the Windy Woods Trail. We heard or saw 31 bird species, many of which were migrants that had recently arrived in the area (Yellow-throated Vireo, Wood Thrush, Louisiana Waterthrush). It was wonderful to hear their lovely songs. We observed 30 different spring flowers beside the trail. Many of them were different types of violets. One of them, though, had unusual arrow-shaped leaves and was a species that I had never seen before: a Northern Downy Violet. You never know what you might find at the amazing Boyd Woods Sanctuary!