



Chickadee Chatter



September/October 2023

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 68/Issue 5

The mission of the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitat, for the benefit of the community, through conservation, education, and research.

President's Message

By Diane Edwards

Can You Lead a Trip or Two?



If you're a member of LHAS, you probably like birds — a lot. You most likely enjoy birding field trips in the company of friends who feel just as enthralled as you do to spot that migrating songbird or soaring hawk. And you've probably learned a lot from the experienced birders who have led those trips.

Well, some of our most reliable and enjoyable trip leaders — who have been guiding us through fields, forests, and seashores for decades — have needed to bow out. If we're to continue offering birding trips and other types of outings, we need a few new trip leaders.

Are you pretty good at identifying birds? Or wildflowers? Or any kind of flora or fauna in our area? Do you enjoy paddling

See Calendar on pages 5-6 for our
Upcoming Meetings & Field Trips

or cross-country skiing, or simply being surrounded by nature? If so, please consider volunteering to lead an occasional field trip for us.



Scoping out ducks on an LHAS Duck Ramble

Even after the fall migration season winds down, there are still many reasons to get out and enjoy nature. If you can lead a trip or two, please contact me at edwardsd68@charter.net or our field trips chair, David Zomick, at dzsurtudo@gmail.com.

Birding Backpacks Now Available at Five Local Libraries

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society hopes to encourage children and families to learn about birds by offering them an opportunity to try a new hobby without the upfront costs. Thanks to generous sponsor donations (see below), the LHAS Education Committee donated Birding Backpacks to five area libraries: Morris Public Library, Thomaston Library, Terryville Public Library, Torrington Library, and New Milford Public Library. Children and their families can check out the backpacks with their library card and try birding. Each backpack is stocked with the essentials for a ready-to-go nature experience: a pair of binoculars, illustrated guides for identifying and learning about birds, nature activities for kids, and

some suggestions for good birding spots. The backpacks are light and adjustable for birders of all ages. Autumn is a perfect time to go out birding when many of our birds are getting ready to migrate to warmer climates. Pack a few layers, some snacks, insect repellent, and sunscreen, and you're ready to go bird-watching!



Many thanks to the Birding Backpacks sponsors: ACE of Litchfield, Litchfield Bancorp, Torrington Savings Bank, and Wild Birds Unlimited of Brookfield.

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President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
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Please email items to appear in the newsletter to **Diane Edwards** at edwardsd68@charter.net or mail them to her at **68 Shingle Mill Road, Harwinton, CT 06791**.

Send other business to the appropriate chairperson at **LHAS, P.O. Box 861, Litchfield, CT 06759-0861** or lhasct@me.com.

NEW MEMBERS

By Doreen Orciari, Membership Records Chair

Cynthia Badenhop Torrington
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Janet Clark Winsted
Kristina Durr Sharon
Norma Dwyer Harwinton
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Marion Olsen Norfolk
Deborah Orelup Lakeville
Susan Patterson Harwinton
Russell Peterson Bethlehem
Robert Ruedemann New Milford

**Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 1,022.

If your newsletter is addressed incorrectly, send an email to Doreen Orciari at doreen.orciari@gmail.com.

Condolences

LHAS extends our sincere sympathy to Dave Tripp, Jr. and his family on the recent death of his brother.

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



Scan the QR code at left with your smart-phone to go to www.lhasct.org.

Follow us on Facebook:
[facebook.com/LitchfieldHillsAudubonSocietyLHAS](https://www.facebook.com/LitchfieldHillsAudubonSocietyLHAS)

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Special thanks to **Doreen Orciari** and **Janet Baker** for proof-reading this newsletter!

Summer Bird Count Results

By Dave Tripp, Jr., Summer Count Compiler

June 10–11 was another great weekend for birding, especially in the mornings. Birds were active, calling and moving around feeding their young. Every year as I compile data, I am grateful to see the hard work done by everyone who covers an area. We wouldn't have a successful count if it weren't for all of the captains and their teams (all listed on page 4) counting and recording their efforts.

Some great birds that are often hard to find in our count circle were American Bittern, Least Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe, Bank Swallow, and Spotted Sandpiper. We had very local-

Birds Tallied

Canada Goose.....	283
Mute Swan	5
Wood Duck.....	84
American Black Duck.....	1
Mallard.....	93
Hooded Merganser.....	19
Common Merganser	20
Wild Turkey.....	48
Pied-billed Grebe	1
Rock Pigeon.....	65
Mourning Dove.....	167
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	30
Black-billed Cuckoo.....	14
Common Nighthawk	2
Chimney Swift.....	42
Ruby-throated Hummingbird.....	40
Virginia Rail.....	17
Common Gallinule	1
Killdeer.....	4
Spotted Sandpiper	1
Least Sandpiper	1
Common Loon.....	1
Double-crested Cormorant.....	27
American Bittern.....	1
Least Bittern.....	1
Great Blue Heron.....	54
Green Heron.....	8
Black Vulture.....	4
Turkey Vulture.....	59
Osprey.....	7
Cooper's Hawk.....	9
Bald Eagle.....	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	43
Broad-winged Hawk.....	20
Red-tailed Hawk.....	36
Eastern Screech Owl.....	2
Barred Owl.....	31
Belted Kingfisher.....	8
Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	61
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.....	128
Downy Woodpecker.....	73
Hairy Woodpecker.....	39
Northern Flicker.....	44
Pileated Woodpecker	35

American Kestrel.....	5
Great Crested Flycatcher.....	88
Eastern Kingbird	82
Eastern Wood Pewee.....	168
Acadian Flycatcher	17
Alder Flycatcher	76
Willow Flycatcher	62
Least Flycatcher.....	58
Eastern Phoebe.....	177
Yellow-throated Vireo.....	116
Blue-headed Vireo.....	46
Warbling Vireo.....	131
Red-eyed Vireo.....	846
Blue Jay.....	123
American Crow.....	208
Fish Crow.....	10
Common Raven.....	33
Black-capped Chickadee	185
Tufted Titmouse.....	222
Bank Swallow	2
Tree Swallow.....	195
No. Rough-winged Swallow.....	19
Purple Martin	17
Barn Swallow.....	242
Cliff Swallow.....	4
Cedar Waxwing.....	255
Red-breasted Nuthatch	11
White-breasted Nuthatch.....	85
Brown Creeper.....	14
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	38
House Wren.....	216
Marsh Wren.....	81
Winter Wren	41
Carolina Wren.....	64
Gray Catbird	552
Brown Thrasher	1
Northern Mockingbird.....	5
European Starling	411
Eastern Bluebird	99
Veery.....	327
Hermit Thrush.....	25
Wood Thrush	184
American Robin	531
House Sparrow.....	166

ized species with specific habitats like Mute Swan, American Kestrel, Acadian Flycatcher, Purple Martins (Lake Waramaug and Little Pond), Cliff Swallow, Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. Golden-crowned Kinglets have returned to their past breeding location after last year's absence. A Common

(continued on page 4)

Downward Trend

It's true: We're seeing fewer birds than in the past. Here are total birds tallied during recent Summer Counts.

2023.....	13,459
2022.....	13,755
2021.....	14,500
2020.....	14,160
2019.....	14,160
2018.....	16,118
2017.....	17,658

House Finch.....	99
Purple Finch.....	22
American Goldfinch	274
Chipping Sparrow.....	256
Field Sparrow	21
Dark-eyed Junco	7
Savannah Sparrow.....	3
Song Sparrow.....	480
Swamp Sparrow	165
Eastern Towhee	115
Bobolink.....	154
Eastern Meadowlark	3
Orchard Oriole.....	4
Baltimore Oriole.....	93
Red-winged Blackbird	619
Brown-headed Cowbird.....	85
Common Grackle.....	204
Ovenbird.....	534
Worm-eating Warbler	10
Louisiana Waterthrush.....	43
Northern Waterthrush.....	19
Blue-winged Warbler	13
Black-and-white Warbler	126
Common Yellowthroat.....	377
Hooded Warbler	10
American Redstart.....	445
Cerulean Warbler.....	8
Northern Parula.....	9
Magnolia Warbler	11
Blackburnian Warbler.....	57
Yellow Warbler.....	392
Chestnut-sided Warbler.....	214
Black-throated Blue Warbler	36
Pine Warbler	129
Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	19
Prairie Warbler.....	2
Black-throated Green Warbler	63
Canada Warbler	16
Scarlet Tanager	151
Northern Cardinal.....	164
Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	88
Indigo Bunting.....	64

Boldface = good or uncommon bird

Summer Bird Count

(continued from page 3)

Gallinule and Least Sandpiper were the two most uncommon birds on this year's list. Frustrating misses from the list were American Woodcock and Great Horned Owl (second year in a row).

Our 13 parties of counters tallied more than 13,459 individual birds, represented by 130 species. Here is the effort it took to count and find that many: 150.5 hours of birding in the daylight and 11.75 hours of birding in darkness.

Many thanks to the participants (C signifies captains): Joann Archer, Janet Baker, John Baker (C), Marcia Barker, Jay Coles, Melissa Craig, Angela Dimmitt (C), Eileen Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Cathy Glaser, Ed Goodhouse, Judy Herkimer, Allen Herkimer III, Pam Hicks, Bill Kennedy, Marie Kennedy (C), Debbie Martin, Rich Martin, Russ Naylor (C), Ann Orsillo (C), Sam Slater (C), Donna Rose Smith (C), David Tripp Jr. (C), John Wagenblatt (C), and Fran Zygmunt (C).



Wood Duck ducklings photographed during the Summer Bird Count

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

News from National Audubon

Meeting Clean Energy Needs While Protecting Birds

As Climate Impacts Loom, Audubon Calls for Rapid Expansion of Well-Sited Clean Energy Transmission

The National Audubon Society in August released a report that addresses the importance of rapidly expanding electric transmission to meet climate goals while also protecting wildlife habitat. The report, "Birds and Transmission: Building the Grid Birds Need," outlines the urgent need for additional transmission capacity, as well as the current scientific understanding of solutions to minimize risks to birds.

By broadly identifying high-priority areas where transmission development and bird impacts overlap, the report suggests how collaborative planning efforts can responsibly upgrade the clean energy transmission grid to help protect birds and people from climate threats.

An earlier Audubon report, "Survival by Degrees," found that two-thirds of North American bird species will be vulnerable to extinction if global temperatures continue to rise at the current rate. To achieve a clean energy future where birds and people can thrive, the U.S. will need to effectively double or even triple transmission capacity to connect the volume of renewable energy facilities needed to reach emission goals.

In the new report, Audubon highlights some of the ways to

reduce transmission risks to birds based on a well-established and robust scientific knowledge base.

More about Audubon's position on transmission policy can be found at audubon.org/news/transmission-lines-and-birds.

New Features Added to Audubon's Bird Migration Explorer

Get ready for fall migration by checking out some of the updates and enhancements to the Bird Migration Explorer, available at explorer.audubon.org. All Audubon chapters are now searchable under the "Locations" tab, along with all National Audubon centers, sanctuaries, and offices. Another cool feature is the secondary location search, which lets users see which birds (if any) connect any two places in the western hemisphere. Other additions include:

- A Learning Resources section offering tips and tutorials for visitors.
- New Featured Species section of the Bird Species explore panel with four of the best maps highlighted.
- Seasonal ranges now available to toggle on or off while visiting a species' Conservation Challenge map.

In addition, on the Homepage map, you can now select a single track to further explore the journey made by an individually tracked bird.

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Summer/Fall 2023



NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, **General Meetings** are held on the first Monday of each month. When the first Monday of the month falls on a holiday, the meeting is held on the second Monday. Meetings are held at the Litchfield Community Center, 421 Bantam Road (Route 202), Litchfield, and/or via Zoom.

Board of Directors Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every other month at 7 p.m. at 28 Russell St., Litchfield, CT.

GENERAL MEETINGS

Note: The following meetings will be in person and on Zoom. If you want to participate on Zoom, go to the Calendar section of our website, lhasct.org, to register. You will be sent the login link.

September 11 . . "Murmurations of the Heart: Swallows and Other Birds that Swarm" . . Monday, 7 PM

Mark Seth Lender will show us the fantastic forms of a murmuration, something that has fascinated humanity for thousands of years. What holds a murmuration together? What forces design and initiate its form? Mark will share his answer to these questions with his photographs of our much beloved Connecticut River Tree Swallow Funnel. (See the swallow cruise on September 22 described below.) Mark is a producer for wildlife content and the Explorer in Residence for the Public Radio program "Living on Earth." He conducts original fieldwork, does his own photography, and writes and edits copy to present on air. He and his wife created the children's books, *Smeagull the Seagull*, *A True Story*, and *Smeagull's Guide to Wildlife*.

October 2 Nowhere Is a Place: Patagonia Monday, 7 PM

Spend some quality time with Gerri Griswold as she shares breathtaking images from this ethereal travel destination tucked along the tail of the Andes near the bottom of the world. Meet the people, animals, and numerous microclimates that define this mythical place. Gerri is the director of administration and development at The White Memorial Conservation Center. She is a wildlife rehabilitator and educator who is licensed to keep and exhibit non-releasable bats and porcupines for education. In 2010 she launched a travel company, Krummi Travel LLC, which takes small groups of adults on trips to Iceland and Chilean Patagonia.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

September 22 . . Swallow Spectacle Cruise on the Connecticut River Friday, 5:30 PM

In the fall, American Tree Swallows preparing to migrate gather by the thousands to swirl in balletic murmurations as dusk falls. See this spectacle by joining us for a sail on the Onrust sailboat. The Onrust is a re-creation of the vessel Dutch explorer Adriaen Block built in 1614. The boat departs from the dock at the Connecticut River Museum at 5:30 but *please arrive at least 30 minutes before*. **Directions:** Put the Griswold Inn in your GPS; when you get to Essex, drive past the inn to the dead end where the museum is located. **Cost:** \$45 per person. **To reserve your space, call 860-767-8269 or go to ctriverquest.com.**

September 23 . . Visit Our Table at White Memorial's Family Nature Day . . . Saturday, 11 AM-5 PM

Bring the kids or grandkids to visit our table at this fun annual event. Besides activities for the kids, we will also have displays and information about our sanctuaries and activities for nature lovers of all ages.

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The next Board Meeting will be at 7 p.m., Tuesday, September 19 at the LHAS office located at 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.

Calendar

(continued from page 5)

September 30 . . Walk at Hidden Valley Preserve, Washington Depot Saturday, 9 AM

Join Ann Orsillo for a walk on a flat trail that follows the bank of the Shepaug River, crosses two foot bridges, and leads through a mature mixed forest and meadows. We many encounter migrating birds, mushrooms, lichens, mosses, and fall flowers. Plus, there are great views of the river! **Directions:** From the north take Route 202 to Route 47 toward Washington. From the south take Route 47 from Woodbury into Washington. Address: 116 Bee Brook Road, Washington Depot. There is parking on both sides of the bridge. Meet at the northern entrance next to a small wooden bridge. **For more information, contact Ann Orsillo at spoonbill@optonline.net or 910-880-1518.**

October 7. Hawk Watch at Topsmead Saturday, 9-10:45 AM

This is a joint event of LHAS and Friends of Topsmead. LHAS birder Ann Orsillo will give us an overview of raptors and migration, and then will help us identify hawks, eagles, ospreys, and other raptors that might be soaring high above a Topsmead meadow. Bring binoculars, a chair, and insect repellent. Meet at the Topsmead Welcome Center. **Register for this free program at www.Friendsoftopsmead.org. Email Friendsoftopsmead.org or call 860-307-4183 for further information.**

October 8. Sparrow Search Sunday, 8 AM

Russ Naylor will be our leader as we check out Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury and the Southbury Training School farm for migrant sparrows. Russ will give us tips on how to identify different species. We're also likely to see other autumnal birds migrating through the area. Rain or storm cancels. Meet at the Canfield Corner Pharmacy at the junction of Routes 6 (Main Street North) and 47 in Woodbury. **For more information, call Russ at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.**

October 20-22. . Fall Birding in Cape May, NJ Friday-Sunday

Cape May, NJ, is one of the most well known East Coast birding destinations. We will go to some well-known and not-so-well-known birding sites throughout the county and stop at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on the way home to net around 130 species. On past trips, we have seen some great birds and had some great experiences. Ten rooms have been reserved for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights at the Hyland Motor Inn in Cape May Courthouse; cost: \$321. We will begin birding early Friday morning. This year's trip does coincide with the Cape May Bird Observatory Fall Bird Festival, so we will make an attempt to visit the birding expo. Deadline to RSVP and register: September 26. **To reserve a room, share a room, line up a ride, get a basic itinerary and/or payment instructions, contact Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.**

October 25. New York Botanical Garden Wednesday, 8 AM

This National Historic Garden Landmark, comprising 250 acres, is the largest in any city in the United States. Join Pamela Hicks and Vicky Dauphinais as we enjoy the fall garden. We will carpool, departing from the Litchfield Community Center (421 Bantam Road, Litchfield) at 8 a.m. Admission to the gardens is free before 11 a.m. The conservatory and tram are an additional cost. Please let us know well in advance if you are interested. **Contact Pamela at smilesmyles@yahoo.com or Vickie at fdauphinais@optonline.net.**

LHAS Nature Explorers ... Family Fun!

October 29 . . . Experience the Spooky Side of Nature! Sunday, 2 PM

If you dare, join the LHAS Nature Explorers for a guided walk on a trail and encounter spooky spots with spiders, crows, owls, and more. Do an activity at each spot. Wear your costume, if you like. If you make it back to where you started, you can enjoy cider and donuts. Free for kids of all ages! Meet at the Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. Rain cancels. Pre-registration appreciated at lhasjunior@gmail.com. For more information contact Vickie Dauphinais at 860-805-9167.

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

From CT DEEP

Why Are Bears Commonly Seen in Residential Areas?

A common misconception about black bears in Connecticut is that bears are being seen more around residential areas because people have developed or altered their habitat to the point where there is nowhere else for the bears to go and not enough natural food for them to survive. Simply put, this is not the case. In fact, Connecticut's forests have a wealth of natural foods and places for black bears to live, and because there is plenty of suitable habitat, the black bear population is expected to continue to grow.

The reason bears are often seen near homes is because they are looking for easily accessible food sources like garbage, bird feeders, and unprotected livestock, such as backyard chickens. Data collected from GPS-collared female bears show that in many instances, these bears are choosing more developed areas over more rural, forested areas because of the presence of these human-associated food sources.

Although present in the region when the colonists arrived, black bears actually disappeared (were extirpated) from Connecticut by the mid-1800s due primarily to the loss of forests to farmland. However, over time, with a change in land use and a decline in farming, our forests grew back, thus providing perfect habitat for bears to return. Seeing the bear population expand into more parts of the state is a conservation success story, not one of bears losing their homes in the 21st century.

Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp Program Celebrates 30 Years

Since its creation in 1993, the Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp Program, which is the only dedicated source of funding for wetland protection in Connecticut, has restored or protected over 3,800 acres of critical wetland habitat. These wetlands provide homes for more than 100 of our Species of Greatest Conservation Need and for other more common wildlife, including turtles, salamanders, and birds such as Great Blue Herons and American Black Ducks. Protection and enhancement of these wetlands were only made possible by the supporters and contributors to the Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp Program.

Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamps can be

purchased by hunters, collectors, conservationists, and others for \$17 each wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold. Stamps can also be obtained by sending your address and a check for \$17 to DEEP License and Revenue, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Stamps ordered will be sent through the mail.

Conservation Success: Project Puffin Turns 50!

In 1973 a young biologist named Stephen Kress hatched a plan to bring Atlantic Puffins back to Maine. He not only succeeded but he also revolutionized seabird restoration efforts in Maine and elsewhere.



Once plentiful in the Gulf of Maine, Atlantic Puffins had been extirpated from the area by the mid-1800s. In 1973, Kress, with the blessing of U.S. and Canadian officials and experts, transported five pufflings from Newfoundland to Eastern Egg Rock, a small island about 6 miles off the coast of Maine. Over the following years, Dr. Kress and his cadres of volunteers created artificial burrows, in which puffins could breed. But puffins are social birds and tend to breed where there are other puffins. So Dr. Kress and his teams realized they needed to employ "social attraction" techniques to encourage puffins to colonize Eastern Egg Rock and eventually other Gulf of Maine islands. They deployed puffin decoys — and eventually real puffins returned to the islands to mate. Now about 1,300 pairs breed on five Maine islands. What's more, Kress's social attraction techniques have been used on seabird nesting islands around the world.

Read more online about this fascinating project at audubon.org or seabirdinstitute.audubon.org.

Focus on Birds

Broad-winged Hawk — “Sit-and-Watch” Hunter

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

Last summer a large family of crows invaded my backyard. They provided daily entertainment, and I learned a lot of interesting facts about them. This summer several Broad-winged Hawks took up residence in the wooded areas surrounding the backyard. In mid-June I began hearing their high-pitched whistle calls around six o'clock in the morning and intermittently throughout the day, usually until dusk.

At first, I had trouble locating them in the dense foliage, but



Broad-winged Hawk

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Merlin confirmed their identity. Eventually, two showed themselves, perched high on a snag. I quickly ran in to grab my binoculars to get a closer look. They patiently waited for me, posing and even called a couple times. They were small, similar to a crow, a bit chunky, rusty chest, curved beaks, piercing eyes. I assumed they had a nest in one of the trees. In mid-July, I started hearing and seeing only one hawk. It called incessantly throughout the day. The hawk perched on trees close to the

house or on the edge of the roof. A few times it flew directly in my line of vision, sat on a low branch and stared me down. I felt a little sorry for him. Was he trying to tell me something or perhaps looking for food? Maybe he was calling for his mate or was he a juvenile calling for his parents? My knowledge of Broad-Winged Hawks was limited. So, I set out to learn a bit more with a little help from Google.

Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*), the smallest of the buteos, are very common in Connecticut but not very noticeable during the breeding season. This small hawk has a wingspan from 33 to 38 inches. The males are 14 inches in length; the females 18 inches. The color of the adult hawk is dark brown to gray brown, barred with rusty color below. The tail has three grayish-white bars. Immatures are similar, but sparsely spotted or blotched below, tail bands less distinct. They are great soarers thanks to their broad wings and fan-like tail.

Broad-wings hang around the edges of forests. Once mated, they settle down to nest within the forest canopy (where it can be difficult to detect them), usually close to a water

source. Both the male and the female build a rather crude nest of sticks and tree sprigs, usually in the crotch of a deciduous tree. The female lays two to four eggs and incubates them for about a month; her mate supplies food while she's on the nest. Once the chicks hatch, the parents care for them for another month.



Broad-winged Hawk

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

After fledging, the young Broad-wings stay close to their parents, which continue to supply them with food for up to eight more weeks. Broad-winged Hawks are carnivorous; their diet includes small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, and birds. They are very beneficial to farmers since they prey on small animals injurious to their crops. They hunt by watching for prey from a perch, usually located along the edge of woods or near water. When prey is spotted, the hawk swoops down to capture the creature in its talons. Broad-winged Hawks are solitary during nesting, but as the season draws to a close, they join large groups and form kettles — circling up into the sky — to make the long migration to Central and South America. They wow us with a massive spectacle of migration as they leave the northern forests for the Neotropics. These kettles ride on thermal air currents (updrafts) to save energy for their long trip. They are able to travel 70 miles per day! Migration season occurs late August to November, but peak period is September to October. In Connecticut, the top places to view the migration are Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch at the Greenwich Audubon Center; Lighthouse Point in New Haven, and Chestnut Hill in Litchfield. A good flight day is the day of or day after a cold front passes, bringing with it winds from the north.

After all the research, my guess is that my hawk visitor is an immature left by his parents to learn survival skills. I did not get a good look at the tail, but the chest was streaked brown. The behavior, however, was what gave him away. The hawk did not fly away when approached, rather curiously stared back, used low tree branches to perch on, flew low among the trees. A few times, I observed him on the lawn picking at something, probably insects. I have not seen any squirrels, chipmunks, or snakes since the hawks' arrival. So, they were either scared away or eaten. I am grateful. At first, I worried

(continued on page 9)

In My Garden — A Journal — July 2023

By Angela Dimmitt

Did ever a month fly by — can't believe it's now August! Once the Summer Bird Counts were over (there was one every weekend in June), I relaxed from intense birding and turned to my somewhat neglected garden. It is rather large, surrounded by woods, and to the south where Bullymuck Brook flows through, it is a swampy jungle inhabited by deer and other critters. I recently saw a handsome buck with 10 points, four large plus one small one on each side, all velvety. Today a red fox trotted through. Some nocturnal animals — raccoons? — are very vocal now, and the Barred Owl which had been silent since early June has called a couple of times. Dare I say the b---r has not been around lately? With all this heavy rain, his paw prints still have not washed off the kitchen and dining room windows — I leave them there to scare off other intruders.

I have kept a couple feeders up on the high wire, and the birds have been taking full advantage, teaching their young bad habits. The House Wrens are still playing musical nest boxes — three had babies at one time; now one is left with very vocal young. A pair has again been building in the straw hat on the back patio, but I don't believe they're actually nesting. The Carolina Wrens are back, having nested elsewhere.

Incredibly the Wood Thrush is still here, singing at first light and dusk, also during much of the day. Pure joy! A second has sometimes joined in a duet from deeper in the woods, and a female has been clucking but I never see the birds — one can be singing close by but it's impossible to see. This has been exciting as no Wood Thrush has stayed here through the summer in a few years. One is singing now (midday) while the garden is otherwise silent. I hope they nested successfully!

Broad-winged Hawk

(continued from page 8)

the young hawk might be sick but by the end of July, he was spending more time in the wooded canopy, not calling as much during the day. He only announced his presence in the morning and early evening with the pweeeeeee calls. He was not seen during the day, but occasionally, I would hear the whistle calls deep in the wooded area, likely because he was practicing his hunting and soaring skills. Migration season is approaching, and he'll need to be ready for the long journey ahead.

The Dawn Chorus has been waking me recently (now 5:15) — in typical order: first the Wood Thrush, then cardinal, Veery, catbird, House Wren, goldfinch, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Song Sparrow, hummer, chickadee, Red-shouldered Hawk, Carolina Wren, and eight others — 20 locals before 6 a.m.!

The garden! This weird summer has been kind to gardens until the recent extreme heat caused a little stress, but the quantity of rain has promoted good growth. Trees, however, may be showing stress from too much rain. Seemingly healthy trees are suddenly keeling over — hidden wounds or rot? One afternoon, it was still and quiet, no wind, nothing — I was sitting on my patio and watched the top 70 feet of a 100-foot-plus leafy oak fall at the edge of my woods, luckily falling parallel to the lawn. Horrifying! Lying on the ground, it showed a long scar and interior rot — result of a lightning strike perhaps.

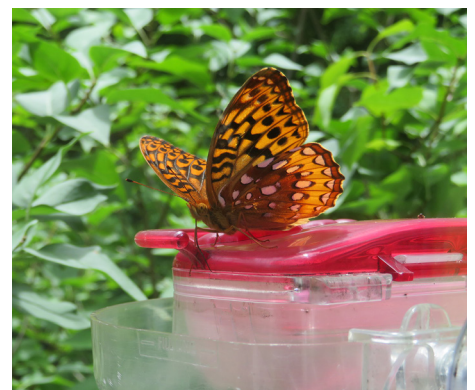
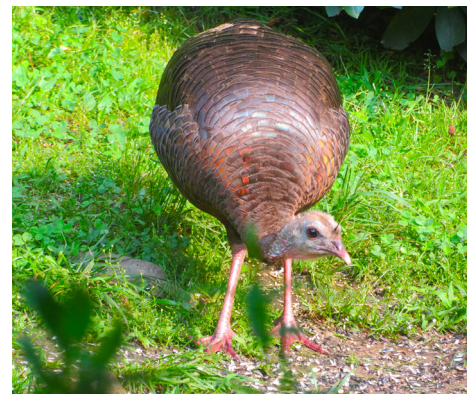
Plants! My direction now is native plants, shrubs, and flowers (including some that I haven't planted, so-called "volunteers,"

that have popped up everywhere). But I indulge in hostas and daylilies and this year both have been spectacular. I

spray once or twice a week against the deer — a chore, but it is very pleasant to wander round the garden in the evening and check on everything (the brew I make doesn't smell much). But ... tis the season for mosquitos and they are hungry. And beware yellow jacket nests — tis the season for them too. Ah, the joys of a garden!

Garden visitors: a hen Wild Turkey and a Great Spangled Fritillary

Photos: Angela Dimmitt





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July 19th Trip Report

Wood Creek Pond Paddle

By Ann Orsillo

We were greeted at the entrance road to Wood Creek Pond by the song of the American Redstart. Veeries, Red Winged Blackbirds, and Gray Catbirds were also singing and frolicking. An Ovenbird made a brief appearance, looked us over, and disappeared into the forest.

At the boat ramp a welcomed cool breeze wafted over the pond creating gentle ripples in the water. The quietness and

Eastern Towhee

Photo: Ann Orsillo



peacefulness of the area surrounded us as we paddled toward the west shore. We picked wild blueberries, ate some, and gathered a few to take home.

A beautiful Eastern

Towhee teed up, opened his beak and treated us to his classic “drink your tea” song. The light was perfect for a few photos of him. Numerous Tree Swallows buzzed by our heads and around our vessels. We managed to identify a few Barn and Rough-winged Swallows among the frenzied mass. Cedar Waxwings were plentiful as they hawked insects.

We admired their beautiful plumage when they perched briefly on overhanging limbs. The group decided that the waxwings were the favorite birds of the day.

White waterlilies covered almost the entire pond. A beautiful tall pink spire flower adorned a rocky section. Art Potwin identified it as Steeplebush (*Spirea tomentosa*). Evidences of beaver were all along the shoreline, and a large beaver lodge appeared around a bend. We stopped for a silent moment in remembrance of our late friend Robyn Dinda, who led many LHAS trips to Wood Creek Pond.



Steeplebush

Photo: Ann Orsillo