



Chickadee Chatter



November/December 2023 Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter Volume 68/Issue 6

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



I recently saw a funny meme on Facebook: Happy HalloThanksMas! It does indeed seem that the holidays merge into one long celebration these days. Once Halloween has come and gone, it seems that time compresses. Besides holiday shopping, there's so much else to do: put our gardens to bed for the winter; get out the snow shovels; stock up on bird seed and thoroughly clean the bird feeders before hanging them out. (See the back page for advice on how and why to do that.)

Speaking of bird feeders: November 1 kicks off **Project Feeder Watch**, a citizen science program of the Cornell Lab

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

of Ornithology and Birds Canada that runs through the end of April; go to feederwatch.org for more information.

As for cleaning up your garden, the U.S. Department of Agriculture advises that you "**leave the leaves.**" According to the agency's website (usda.gov): "Leaves create a natural mulch that helps to suppress weeds while fertilizing the soil as it breaks down. The leaves also serve as a habitat for wildlife including lizards, birds, turtles, frogs, and insects that overwinter in the fallen leaves. These living creatures help keep pests down and increase pollination in your garden, so

(continued on page 3)

Boyd Woods Sanctuary — 2023 Year-end Report

By Rich Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary Co-chair

As 2023 draws to an end, I would like to reflect on and share with you the highlights of some of the events and activities that took place this year at LHAS' Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary.

- First Day Hike, January 1, led by Rich and Debbie Martin
- Great Back Yard Bird Count, February 18, led by Debbie Martin
- Welcome Spring Walk, March 20, led by Debbie Martin
- Annual Woodcock Walk, April 15, led by Debbie Martin



Photo: Rich Martin

- Celebrate Spring Walk, May 7, led by Vickie Dauphinais
- LHAS' Annual Picnic, August 7, with a raptor program by Sharon Audubon
- Experience the Spooky Side of Nature family event, October 29, led by Vickie Dauphinais.
- Woodland thinning of 56 acres as part of the Forest Stand Improvement project partially funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Clear-cutting of approximately 2.5 acres to re-establish the early-successional habitat area that was originally cut and established in 2006.



Photo: Rich Martin

(continued on page 3)

LHAS Officers

President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Vice President	Fran Zygmunt	860-689-5001
Treasurer	Mia Coats	817-691-2525
Rec. Secretary	Marie Kennedy	914-393-6270
Corresp. Secretary	Terri Bianchi	860-489-8821

Board of Directors

Beverly Baldwin	2024	860-921-7075
Vickie Dauphinais	2024	860-361-9051
George Stephens	2024	860-921-7150
Michael Audette	2025	860-388-7874
Dave Trip Jr.	2025	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Karen G. Nelson	2025	860-309-9018
Rich Martin	2026	860-736-7714
Pam Hicks	2026	smilemys@yahoo.com
Harry Schuh	2026	860-307-0807

Committee Chairpeople

Boyd Woods Sanctuary Communications & Digital Media	Debbie & Rich Martin Rich Martin	860-819-7462 860-736-7714
Conservation	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Education	Vickie Dauphinais	860-361-9051
Facebook	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Field Trips	David Zomick	860-513-8600
Fundraising	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Historian	<i>vacant</i>	
Hospitality	<i>vacant</i>	
Kalmia Sanctuary	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Membership Outreach	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075
Membership Records	Doreen Orciari	860-307-3102
Newsletter	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Programs	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Publicity	<i>vacant</i>	
Scholarships	Carol Kearns & Harry Schuh	860-307-0807
Wigwam Brook Sanctuary	John Baker	860-567-8427

Research

Christmas Bird Count	Dave Tripp	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Summer Bird Count	Dave Tripp	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Nest Box Program	Rebecca Purdy	860-485-8530

Chickadee Chatter is published in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submission deadline for the **January/February** issue is **December 1**.

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

Susan Allaire Bristol
 Doris Bauer..... New Milford
 Deborah Benjamin..... Goshen
 Marvin Bianchi Bristol
 Carlos Canal Washington Depot
 Donna Czertak Bristol
 Laura Davis..... Bethlehem
 Margo Derry..... Torrington
 Sheridan Franklin..... Litchfield
 William Garfinkel Watertown
 Lillian Giacoia Bristol
 Philip Goulet*..... Terryville
 Jessie Grecke New Milford
 Noele Gugliemetti.....Oakville
 Daniel Harpin..... Litchfield
 Verilee Herpich..... Goshen
 Robert Hopkins..... Roxbury
 Leila Javitch Norfolk
 Joan Laurendeau..... Terryville
 Pieter Lefferts Sharon
 John Liberati..... Barkhamsted
 Rose Lopez Canaan
 Richard Marcus..... New Hartford
 Shirley McCallum East Canaan
 Dorothy Monaco..... New Milford
 Molly Morgan..... West Cornwall
 Linda Nacinovich South Kent
 Lisa Quint Thomaston
 Lynn Reifsnnyder Salisbury
 Paddy Rossbach Salisbury
 J. Sawyer-Rejcha..... Roxbury
 H. Claude Shostal West Cornwall
 Lisa Shuchter*..... Plymouth
 Robert Smith Oakville
 Matia Stevenson* Watertown
 Barbara Stolarik Torrington
 Daniel Szinyei Torrington
 Deborah Szoldra..... Terryville
 Burton Welte Goshen
 Jim & Terry Zagryn Harwinton
 Joann Zanavich Oakville
 Rick Zavattaro Winsted

**Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 988.

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

Family Nature Day at White Memorial

Right: Ann Orsillo (right in photo) helps a woman identify bird photos in our "Name That Bird" challenge.

Photo: Diane Edwards

Far right: Youngsters enjoyed making paper butterflies.

Photo: Karen Geitz



President's Message

(continued from page 1)

having a habitat for them in the fallen leaves can help to keep them around when you need them the most."

Getting back to the topic of birds, peak fall migration ends around November 15, so please keep "lights out" at night at least until then. According to [LightsOutCt.org](https://www.lightsoutct.org), "Artificial light emitted by buildings, street lights, bridges, and other structures can confuse and disorient birds, causing them to land near buildings, crash into windows, and/or circle around for hours until they drop from exhaustion. This can be made worse by weather patterns that force them to fly lower, closer to buildings."

There are more things to note in November and December: Registration for Hog Island Audubon Camp's 2024 sessions begins at noon on November 7. The camp, based in Bremen, Maine, offers bird and nature programs for adults, families, and teens. (Note that programs tend to fill up quickly.) Find the pertinent information at hogisland.audubon.org. *FYI: LHAS can offer camperships of half the program fee for up to two LHAS members; contact Harry Schuh or Carol Kearns at 860-307-0807.*

On November 19, Fran Zygmunt will lead our **Annual Duck Ramble** to help us identify the various ducks and other birds on Bantam Lake and nearby locales. Our **Christmas Bird Count**, as well as the **CBC4Kids**, will take place December 17. See page 6 for details.

On behalf of the LHAS Board of Directors, I wish you Happy Holidays and much happiness in the new year!

Best wishes,

Diane

Boyd Woods

(continued from page 1)

- Rerouted a number of trails due to the ruts caused by the heavy equipment used during the woodland thinning. Approximately 3.5 miles of trails were maintained throughout the year.
- A new 3/4 mile trail was created at the 4-acre woodland that was donated to LHAS a few years ago by the Litchfield Land Trust. The area borders the west side of Wigwam Brook. At this time, the area can only be accessed when the brook is quite low. A name for the trail is being considered along with trail blazes and a safer way to cross the brook to access the trail. Next year's projects.
- Hungry bears looking for easy pickins took a toll this year on the bluebird nest boxes. The boxes will most likely be removed as a result of this activity, which seems to get worse every year and has affected LHAS' other sanctuaries.

We look forward to another year filled with activities and projects, starting with a First Day Hike, on Monday, January 1, 2024, led by Rich and Debbie Martin.

Happy New Year and we'll see you at Boyd Woods Sanctuary!

Rich Martin and Joe Bianchi came up with the idea of creating a Great Blue Heron sculpture for Boyd Woods. Joe made it out of scrap metal. (Thank you, Joe!) The bird now watches over the Plash, near the bird blind.

Photo: Rich Martin



Wine and Weed Garden Party

By Vickie Dauphinais

Our gardens at Kalmia and Wigwam were resplendent in color this summer. With all the rain, there was little need to do any watering. The flowers' bright colors and elaborate shapes attracted many pollinators, including butterflies, birds, and bees to enjoy the flowers' delicious nectar.



From Left: Fabienne Audette, Lynn Williamson, and Jay Coles.

The extra-wet summer was great for the weeds too. We all know how quickly unwanted weeds can take over our beautiful flower beds. Gratefully, the weeds were kept under control by our dedicated volunteers. Everyone pitched in by helping with mulching and regular visits to hand pull weeds before they got too established. In August, a few of us showed up for the first "Wine and Weed" gathering at Kalmia and Wigwam. The weather was perfect for weeding. We got a lot accomplished. It was great sharing gardening tips and enjoying the camaraderie of the group. Everyone agreed, the wine and munchies made it extra special. Let's do it again next year!

Many thanks to the gardening volunteers: Fabienne Audette, John Baker, Jay Coles, Celeste Echlin, Corinne Flokos, Karen Geitz, Jane Golding, Judy and Kim Herkimer, Michael Hodorski, Mary Magnoli, Debbie Mane, Ann Orsillo, Lynn Williamson, and Dave Zomick.



Above: Left to right: Corinne Flokos, Fabienne Audette (partially hidden), Vickie Dauphinais, Debbie Mane, and Mary Magnoli.

Editor's Note: A huge thank-you to Vickie for organizing the work at our pollinator gardens!

Be Seen and Safe During Hunting Season

In Connecticut, the firearms deer hunting season on designated state lands begins November 15 and ends December 5. (There are earlier seasons for archery and turkey hunting with firearms.) If you want to visit a public hunting area then, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection strongly encourages you to wear fluorescent orange to improve your visibility. Avoid wearing gray, brown, tan, or white. It's also a good idea to put a bright orange vest on your dog. As always, dogs must be kept on leashes no longer than 7 feet while on DEEP

properties, unless the dog is in the act of hunting or training for hunting.

Note: LHAS' Kalmia Sanctuary in Harwinton abuts the state's Roraback Wildlife Management Area, where hunting is permitted. One of the Kalmia trails (in the back corner of the sanctuary) continues onto Roraback property. We are planning to post a sign there alerting Kalmia hikers that they're about to leave sanctuary property. We have never had a hunting-related problem, but it's better to be safe than sorry!

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Fall/Winter 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.

November 6 . . . "Rays of the Sun — A Hummingbird Sampler" Monday, 7 PM

Chris Wood, avid birder, traveler, and photographer extraordinaire, has visited several neotropical regions and the southwestern U.S., in addition to our own backyard in Connecticut, collecting observations and photographs of hummingbirds. Of the 360 or so species of hummingbird occurring in the Western Hemisphere, only 15 are regularly seen in the United States. Chris has seen 111 different hummingbirds and photographed 94 of them. An active birder and bird photographer for 45 years, Chris is currently president of the Connecticut Ornithological Association and is a founding member of the Western Connecticut Bird Club.

December 4 . . . All About the Christmas Bird Count, with Dave Tripp Jr. Monday, 7 PM

Want to help LHAS count birds as part of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count this year? Come hear Dave Tripp, Jr., give a presentation on the history of the CBC and how to do a bird count.

January 8 Birds, Flora & Fauna of the High Andes in Northwest Argentina Monday, 7 PM

Join Angela Dimmitt in another birding adventure, high in the Andes — flamingos (three species!) and hummingbirds, Burrowing Owls, and Burrowing Parrots. Her photos will also show us llamas and vicunas, a few flowers and plants, and of course views — mountains, deserts, rocks, and rivers. Wow!

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

November 4 . . . Walk at Hidden Valley Preserve, Washington Depot Saturday, 9 AM

Join Ann Orsillo for a walk on a flat trail that follows the banks of the Shepaug River, crosses two foot bridges, and leads through a mature mixed forest and meadows. We may 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.*

November 19 . . . Annual Duck Ramble Sunday, 1 PM

Noted birder Fran Zygmont will lead LHAS' Annual Duck Ramble to help us identify the various ducks and other birds on Bantam Lake and nearby locales. Meet at the White Memorial museum parking lot. Note that we're starting an hour earlier this year to take better advantage of daylight! Rain/Snow Date: November 26. *For more information contact Fran at fzygmont@charter.net.*

(continued on page 6)

The next Board Meeting will be at 7 p.m., Tuesday, January 16 at the LHAS office located at 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.

Calendar

(continued from page 5)

December 17 . . . Christmas Bird Count Sunday, time variable

See below for details about this year's count.

December 17 . . . CBC 4 Kids Sunday, 11 AM-12:30 PM

See below for details.

January 1, 2024 . First Day Hike at Boyd Woods Sanctuary Monday, 10:30 AM-Noon

Looking forward to a fresh start in 2024? Celebrate the new year in the outdoors with a First Day Hike at Boyd Woods Sanctuary. Kids and adults are invited to join our leaders, Rich and Debbie Martin, for a fun, invigorating hike through the woods. They will point out hidden treasures along the way. We never know what awaits us, perhaps a Saw-whet Owl, Red-shouldered Hawk, a Pileated Woodpecker? The hike is about two miles. The terrain is moderate in difficulty. Wear sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather. Bring water and a snack, if you like. Meet at the Boyd Woods parking lot off Route 254 in Litchfield. Heavy snow or rain cancels. **For information or questions, contact Debbie Martin at barnowl524@hotmail.com.**

Christmas Bird Count 2023

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in our area this year will take place December 17. **If you want to help, contact Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com** and he will put you in contact with the captain for your area. At the end of the day, we will gather at a local restaurant to compile our results and enjoy a meal.



Begun more than a century ago, Audubon's CBC is the longest-running wildlife census in the Western Hemisphere. This citizen-science event provides vital information about bird populations and trends, data that alerts Audubon to environmental threats not only to birds but to the larger ecosystems we all depend on.

According to Audubon's website, each count takes place

in an established 15-mile-diameter circle and is organized by a count compiler. (Our circle's compiler is Dave Tripp.) Count volunteers follow specified routes, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally — all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

Birders of all skill levels are involved in the CBC. If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with Dave Tripp, the count compiler.

For more information about the CBC, **visit www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count** or join Dave at LHAS' monthly meeting on December 4 when he will give a presentation on the history of the CBC and how to do a bird count.

LHAS Nature Explorers ... Family Fun!

December 17 . . . CBC 4 Kids!11 AM-12:30 PM

LHAS Nature Explorers will sponsor our second Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids. Children and parents are invited to experience this wholesome family-centered citizen science adventure. We will meet at the White Memorial Carriage House, across from the museum, for a brief orientation. Then we will walk to the feeders outside the museum and around Ongley Pond to count birds by sight, using binoculars, and sound, using the Merlin app. Afterward, we will gather in the Carriage House to tabulate the results and enjoy pizza and cookies. Wear warm jackets and boots. Binoculars will be provided. Bring your own, if you have a pair. **Any questions, call Vickie Dauphinais at 860-805-9167. Pre-registration is appreciated at lhasjunior@gmail.com.**

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

Report Fisher Sightings to CT DEEP

The fisher is a large member of the Mustelidae (weasel) family that prefers large tracts of coniferous or mixed hardwood-softwood forests.

The fisher's long, slender body, short legs, and elongated bushy

tail are usually dark brown to nearly black. The tail, rump, and feet are darker in contrast to the head and shoulders, which are lighter in color and often grizzled in appearance, especially in males. Some individuals have a white chest patch. Fishers have 5 toes on each foot and semi-retractable claws, which contribute to their ability to climb trees. Males typically weigh 8 to 14 pounds and measure 36 to 40 inches in length. Females weigh 4 to 6 pounds and measure 30 to 36 inches long. Connecticut is also home to the mink, a close relative of the fisher. Although both species look somewhat similar, fishers are larger on average, and mink are typically spotted near aquatic habitats. To report a fisher sighting, go to <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/Report-a-Wildlife-Sighting#fisher>.



Fisher

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Bill in Congress Drastically Cuts Programs Important to Birds and People

According to a National Audubon news release, in July the U.S. House Appropriations Committee advanced a spending bill that would slash the budget of crucial programs and agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, and the Bureau of Land Management. The bill also includes anti-environmental and anti-wildlife riders, including one that would prohibit listing species as endangered, even if science indicates the need.

"Many of the cuts in this budget proposal would further decimate programs that are already woefully understaffed and underfunded," said Felice Stadler, National Audubon's vice president of government affairs. "We cannot begin to address the climate, public health, and biodiversity threats we are facing with the budget passed by the House Appro-

priations Committee. We strongly urge Congress to reject this package as it moves forward."

Bipartisan Coastal Protection Bill Flies through Senate Committee

More news from National Audubon: In September the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works voted to advance the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2023. This bipartisan legislation will update and modernize the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, a law that for more than 40 years has protected undeveloped beaches, wetlands, and other coastal areas while saving taxpayers billions of dollars.

"Birds and people urgently need more protection on our coasts from storms and flooding. This bill meets that challenge by extending the benefits of the Coastal Barrier Resources Act to more areas along the coast," said Portia Mastin, coastal conservation policy manager at National Audubon Society. "It will also identify the areas where marshes and beaches can naturally migrate inland as sea levels rise. Without this, we risk losing many of our wetlands, our birds, and the buffers that protect our coastal communities."

Bird Diversity Lower in Cities than in Suburbs

City-dwelling wildlife, including birds, display "Urban Traits Syndrome," according to a Cornell Lab of Ornithology news release about a study that includes data from 379 cities on six continents, with the largest data set coming from the eBird program. City birds tend to be smaller, eat a wider variety of foods, and produce smaller clutches than their rural counterparts. "The most common dietary strategy for birds in urban areas is to be a generalist—in other words they'll eat a variety of different foods instead of specializing. You see this clearly among such common city birds as the Rock Pigeon, European Starling, and House Sparrow. The specialists gradually disappear," said study co-author and researcher Frank La Sorte at the Cornell Lab. As the dietary specialists disappear, biodiversity goes down in cities around the world, and the species mix becomes increasingly homogenized. Yet biodiversity is what keeps an ecosystem healthy. LaSorte suggests that urban ecosystems could be improved by expanded parks and green spaces or by supplying artificial nesting resources as ways to partially compensate for habitat lost to city expansion.

Focus on Birds**Northern Saw-whet Owl — Wicked Cute!***By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair*

The Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) is the smallest owl in Connecticut and one of the smallest in eastern North America. The male is about the size of an American Robin, the female a little bigger.

Adults are mottled brown birds with a whitish facial disk and

white-spotted head without ear tufts. Their eyes are yellow and the beak is black. Like other owls, the Saw-whet can look straight back over its shoulders. Juveniles look vastly different from their parents. They are dark brown with a creamy yellow breast and belly.

Like most owls, Saw-whet Owls are nocturnal creatures. They are hard to see, but they can be heard with their distinctive, penetrating call, “too-too-too-too,” that can go on for quite a while. The call sounds like a blade being sharpened with a whetstone, thus the name “Saw-whet” Owl. The owls spend their day roosting, camouflaged in dense vegetation, typically just above eye level and near the trunk in evergreen trees, hidden from predators. They sit silently until dusk, when hunting begins.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Dr. Kevin J. McGowan refers to owls as hunting machines. Their keen eyesight, exceptional hearing, powerful talons, and silent flight makes them excellent hunters. The Saw-whet Owl is no exception: by day, it sits quietly, hidden away; by night it is a fierce, silent killer. It eats small mammals such as mice and voles, sometimes small birds, and large insects. A Saw-whet Owl will often catch a mouse during the night, carry the prey to its daytime roost, and stand on the prey until the following evening before eating it. It is known to cache extra food.

During the breeding season, males call incessantly to protect their territory and attract a mate. Saw-whet Owls nest in



Northern Saw-whet Owl at the Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary

Photo: Rich Martin

tree cavities, woodpeckers' holes, and nest boxes. The female does all the incubation and brooding while the male hunts. Incubation is 27-29 days. When the young are 18 days old, the female departs, maybe to find another mate, and the male looks after the young for another month. Interestingly, while the female is taking care of the nestlings, the nest is kept very clean. After she leaves, things get messy. By the time the young leave, the nest cavity is filled with prey parts, feces, and pellets. Yuck!

Early in the 1900s it was believed Saw-whet Owls were rare and non-migratory. Today we know from banding operations that Northern Saw-whet Owls are fairly common and they do migrate. Some remain all year on their breeding range, while others move south in autumn. Migration is at night. Remember the female Saw-whet found in the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree in 2020? Experts suspected she either travelled nestled in the tree down from Oneonta, New York, to the city or, perhaps, flew down to roost in the tree while migrating south. The charming owl with its big, cartoonish eyes captured the hearts of millions.

Saw-whet Owls have been spotted around Connecticut. One of our astute birders, Debbie Martin, discovered one right in our own Boyd Woods Sanctuary! I was fortunate to get a close-up look at the little gnome sitting still on a branch nicely camouflaged in the conifers. Wicked cute for sure!

Tips to Spot a Saw-whet Owl

First listen. Do you hear monotonous whistles at night, especially in late winter or early spring? That gives you a clue to a Saw-whet's location. If you hear alarming calls from chickadees or agitated nuthatches, it might signal that an owl is around. Those little birds know they could become a Saw-whet's dinner!

To spot the owl look around, especially at the base of coniferous trees. Check the ground for pellets — non-digestible fur and bones the owl regurgitates. Also look for chalky poop, white droplets on the ground. You might see a trail of it on branches; if so, look up and voila, there the tiny owl sits!

You might also quietly peep into small cavities. Saw-whet Owls are unique in allowing humans to come quite close before flying away. But approaching closely definitely will stress the bird, so stay back and enjoy.

In My Garden — A Journal — September 2023

By Angela Dimmitt

Summer is over! Fall is here! Thank goodness, some would say, after this weird “summer” — July the hottest on record, September the wettest (16-3/8 inches in my garden!). Good news — very few bugs! Bad news — not good for the birds (and fewer caterpillars, so fewer butterflies). No mosquitoes till September, when they bit with a vengeance. No moths at night when driving — remember years ago driving through a snowstorm of assorted bugs at night and scraping them off the headlights? No nasties on the screens at night this summer, or on the ceiling above the light at night as one read in bed.

Ah well! Today, October 2, is a glorious early fall day, leaves turning, golds and browns; many maples have lost their leaves already, lying curiously crinkled on the ground. My dogwood is maroon, berries all eaten. Goldenrods and asters resplendent. Two very late daylilies, a couple of pink phlox. Grass as green as spring. I’m starting to cut down foliage, and have found several leopard frogs. Rain knocked the last tomatoes to the ground; heritage bean pods are drying on the vine, once again saving the seeds for next year. It’s hard to work when everything cries out for one to walk around the garden, admiring and noticing small things like a tiny white aster hugging the ground, the bluest of blue wild asters, and the crimson berries of False Solomon’s Seal. A white rhododendron is flowering again as it does every October. A rare perennial begonia is also flowering again after the deer nosed it a month ago. A pair of Turkey Vultures circle overhead — soon to head south for the winter, to be replaced by their black cousins. A Red-shouldered Hawk screams insistently — the resident male still proclaiming his territory, or a young one still hoping Mom will come and feed it?

The lawn is spongy, as Friday’s 5 inches of monsoon rain still have not drained away — the stream overflowed its banks, flooding much

White-throated Sparrow

Photo: Diane Edwards



of the lower lawn. It reached almost to the top of the bridge, roaring against it, forming great whirlpools, making terrifying gurgling noises. Mercifully it did not crest over — I had evacuated the car to the barn just in case! Huge puddles formed from rivulets coming down the hill; Lake Dimmitt and Little Lake Dimmitt swelled joyfully.



Pink phlox

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

Three big trees have come down, their existence apparently compromised by the summer’s weather. An old oak lost the top 70 feet of one trunk, leaving a jagged 30 feet standing. Then a 90-foot poplar fell across the meadow, flattening that but incredibly leaving a bird box standing (wrens had fledged from it two weeks before!).

This morning I saw a big bobcat trotting fast down the drive, and recently a red fox visited. Three rabbits spent the summer nibbling the grass, two adults and one baby — thought they had gone, but yesterday as I was weeding, one streaked past, followed by my cat, Star — he actually stopped when he saw me!

September 30th: Three hummingbirds drank hungrily from feeders and various flowers following the monsoon, then left that night. Not many migrating birds — it’s been slow. Today I saw a House Wren, a parula, a phoebe, and the first White-throated Sparrow of fall. Blue Jays pass through, screaming their presence. A Barred Owl is living across the road — he calls around 4 or 5 most afternoons. This is a lovely day to remember!

September 30th: Three hummingbirds drank hungrily from feeders and various flowers following the monsoon, then left that night. Not many migrating birds — it's been slow.



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 861
Litchfield, CT 06759-0861

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 30
Torrington, CT 06790

Like Us On Facebook!

www.facebook.com/LitchfieldHillsAudubonSocietyLHAS

Visit Our Website!

www.lhasct.org

Follow Us On Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/litchfield_hills_audubon/



Printed on Recycled Paper

DATED MATERIAL — PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

How and Why to Keep Your Bird Feeders Clean

Feeding backyard birds entertains us birders — and undoubtedly delights our feathered friends too. But if the feeders are not cleaned regularly, they can become infected with mold and sicken birds.

Sharon Audubon's website (sharon.audubon.org) offers advice on how to keep birds safe by cleaning your feeders:

- Empty the feeder, then wash it — including perches and holes — with warm, soapy water.
- Then soak the feeder in a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water for about 15 minutes. Rinse thoroughly and allow to completely dry.
- Alternatively, you can soak it in a solution of 1 part white vinegar and 1 part water.
- Besides cleaning feeders, regularly remove droppings and seed debris beneath them to help prevent the spread of illness and mold growth.

How often should you clean bird feeders? At least every other week, or more often in case of very wet weather or if you

see sick birds at your feeders. Signs of illness include swollen, crusty, squinty, or closed eyes. Other signs are lethargy, uncoordinated movements, bright green droppings, or if the bird doesn't fly away when approached. If you observe any of these signs, immediately take down and clean your feeders and wait a few days before hanging them back up.

One final tip: Minimize the possibility of bird-window strikes by placing feeders either within 3 feet of a window or at least 30 feet away.



White-breasted Nuthatch

Photo: Diane Edwards