



Chickadee Chatter



January/February 2024

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 69/Issue 1

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



For some folks, winter might seem like a time to huddle inside. Call me crazy, but I love winter (when properly attired, of course). I find the brisk air invigorating. Plus, snowfall, with its glittering crystals, turns our landscapes into the proverbial winter wonderland. Snow also provides an insulating cover for ground-burrowing creatures and helps protect plant roots, thereby preventing winterburn. When the snow thaws, it replenishes our ground water. Even when there's no snow, there's beauty in our winter landscapes. Without leaves, you can see farther, discovering things that had been hidden in summer — perhaps a pond or the contours of the land.

And so, I invite you to enjoy the outdoors this winter by

**See Calendar on pages 6-8 for our
Upcoming Meetings & Field Trips**

participating in some of the activities we have planned, starting with a First Day Hike at Boyd Woods Sanctuary on January 1, led by Debbie and Rich Martin. Join Debbie again at Boyd Woods for the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 17. (The GBBC is actually a four-day international event; see page 8 for details.)

Perhaps you'd like to watch Bald Eagles roosting in trees or swooping down to snatch fish below the dam in Southbury. Russ Naylor will lead two trips to the eagle observatory there, on January 28 and March 3.

Intrepid birder Angela Dimmitt will be doing a "Big January," heading out on many days to see as many species as she can that month. You might want to hook up with her on one or more of her excursions. *(continued on page 3)*

LHAS Provides 'Camperships' for Kids at Sharon Audubon's Nature Camps

Litchfield Hills Audubon paid the fees so that eight children could attend nature camps at Sharon Audubon last summer.

Photos courtesy of Sharon Audubon Center



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 Tripp Jr.	2025	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Karen G. Nelson	2025	860-309-9018
Rich Martin	2026	860-736-7714
Pam Hicks	2026	smilemysles@yahoo.com
Harry Schuh	2026	860-307-0807

Committee Chairpeople

Boyd Woods Sanctuary Communications	Debbie & Rich Martin	860-819-7462
& Digital Media	Rich Martin	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 **March/April** issue is **February 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

Gail Atkinson*	Harwinton
Elizabeth Bell	Roxbury
Joan Blandino	Torrington
Linda Feivelson	Bristol
Solveig Hayward*	New Hartford
Rodger Hicks	Sharon
Holly Hopper*	Torrington
David Humphreville	Thomaston
Karen Mandy	Thomaston
Kathleen McGuinness	Torrington
Juan Mendez	Litchfield
Kathleen Metz	Sharon
Richard Pearse	Sharon
Holly Peterson	Watertown
Kate Rines	Torrington
Tami Scarborough	Bristol
Lauren Shulman	Plymouth
Maria Schaub-Smith	Bethlehem
Michelle Torelli	Watertown
Andrew Wilson	Sharon
Linda Wolny	Bristol

**Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 1,030.

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

Obituaries

Olaf Soltau, of New Preston and Manhattan, passed away in October 2023. An avid birder who had "observed more than half the world's bird species," according to his obituary, Olaf was an occasional field trip leader for LHAS. We express our sympathy to his family and friends.

Lois M. Aldi of Southington passed away at the age of 99 on November 16, 2023. Her obituary noted that she enjoyed bird watching and was a member of the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society. We extend our condolences to her family.

LHAS received a donation in memory of Lois by Neila Augelli. Thank you, Neila.

LHAS Donates More Birding Backpacks

The LHAS Education Committee donated Birding Backpacks in September to five local libraries. After seeing publicity about the donations, three more libraries requested backpacks to have available for their patrons. Since funds were available, the



committee was able to honor their requests. Oliver Wolcott Library in Litchfield, the Harwinton Public Library, and Beardsley Library in Winsted each received a fully stocked birding backpack. Children and their families can check out the backpacks with their library cards and try out birding right in their backyard or on a hike.

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

If you're up for three days of winter birding, join Dave Tripp for his annual visit to Newburyport and Cape Ann in Massachusetts, February 23–25.

Many Thanks ...

... to our field trip leaders, as well as all of our volunteers. They include our pollinator garden gardeners, our program and education committees, our sanctuary chairs, folks staffing tables for membership outreach, our membership records chair, our annual appeal volunteers, and contributors to this newsletter.

Speaking of the Annual Appeal ...

You should already have received our Annual Appeal mailing, which went out in December. The appeal (along with rental income from the house at Kalmia) is our main source of funding. I hope you will be as generous as possible so we can continue pursuing our mission. Thank you!

Happy New Year!

Duck Ramble Report

An Afternoon Ambulation in Search of Ducks

By Russ Naylor

On November 19, about 35 LHAS feather enthusiasts turned out for our puddle-paddler extravaganza, led by web-foot-whisperer Fran Zygmunt.

Starting at White Memorial and through our entire trip, we bore witness to steady late-fall migration by robins, Ring-billed Gulls, and juncos passing through our region. Bantam Lake hosted scattered groups of staging Canada Geese, Mute Swans, and Mallards. Our stop at Cemetery Pond brought Pintails and Green-winged Teals. The Sandy Beach area of Bantam Lake held the first of many Bufflehead seen, two Horned Grebes in winter dress, one local resident Bald Eagle, plus an immature eagle hovering Osprey-fashion in search of fishy fare. A side sortie to Jones Pond brought forth a feeding site chock-full of Black Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks, and Buffleheads by the dozen feasting on a plentitude of aquatic vegetation.

Bantam Lake's south end harbored napping Ruddy Ducks, the second resident Bald Eagle, and a deep-diving hunk of a

studly male mink, trying to show off his machismo by fishing out a whopper.

Point Folly yielded mixed paddlings of Black Duck, Bufflehead, and both Hooded and Common Mergansers bulking up for passage south, as a Common Loon in partial breeding plumage preened for our perusal.



Photo: Celeste Echlin

Our last stop during a mariner-friendly sunset at Litchfield Town Beach ended our day with both Horned Grebes seen in twilight silhouette — an aesthetic treat to finish our pre-Turkey Day perambulation.

As always, many thanks and a hearty hats-off to Fran for a well-quacked tracking of web-footed wonders!

Focus on Birds

The Eastern Bluebird

By Marie Kennedy

“The bluebird carries the sky on his back.”

— Henry David Thoreau

North America has three species of bluebirds, but only one resides east of the Mississippi River, the Eastern Bluebird. These bluebirds are charming year-round residents of Connecticut. Their vibrant blue backs, red breasts, and their habit of perching in open spaces captivates the watcher.

After Europeans colonized North America, Eastern Bluebirds flourished here due to large-scale changes to the land, when forests were converted to fields, pastures, and orchards. The birds were beneficial to the colonists by controlling insects. However, in the mid 19th century, European immigrants imported and released thousands of House Sparrows; years later the European Starling was introduced. Both foreign species are cavity nesters — as are bluebirds — and are brutally competitive for nesting space. Thus, the bluebird’s decline began due to harsh competition and the reversion of fields, meadows, and pastures back to forest after the decline of agriculture.



Male Eastern Bluebird.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

The good news is that bluebirds have adapted very well to conservation groups’ efforts to install manufactured nest boxes. The groups — including Litchfield Hills Audubon Society — monitor the boxes throughout the nesting season, removing invasive sparrow and starling nests. The recovery has been a huge team effort over the past 50 years.

Bluebirds are omnivorous thrushes, meaning they switch their diets from invertebrates to wild fruit and berries throughout the year. Bluebirds will perch to look for insects and spiders on the ground. They prefer open land with low ground cover and scattered trees to find their food.

The male and female bluebirds stay with each other for life. They start nesting early and can have multiple broods in a season. The male plays a vital role in the success of each clutch. It has been observed that the fledglings also help feed and raise the later broods. They are delightful to watch. You can entice them to your yard year-round by growing native shrubs with berries, and providing nest boxes, a water source, meal worms, and suet.

LHAS has been monitoring nest boxes at our sanctuaries for more than 30 years. You can observe their activity during the breeding season, but it is important to keep a good distance away so as not to disturb them.

Bluebirds bring me happiness; I hope they will for you.

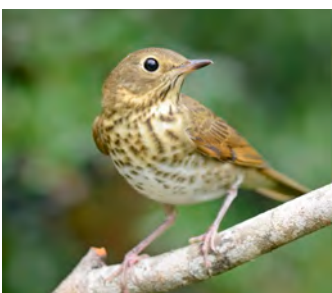
Bird Species Named After People Will Soon Get New English Names

The American Ornithological Association has announced it will be changing all English-language names of birds within its geographic jurisdiction that are named directly after people, along with other names deemed offensive and exclusionary, focusing first on those species that occur primarily within the U.S. or Canada. The AOS will establish a committee to oversee the assignment of all English common names

for species; this committee will include people with expertise in the social sciences, communications, ornithology,

The Swainson's Thrush is one species likely to get a new English name.

Photo: Wikimedia Creative Commons



gy, and taxonomy. The AOS will also involve the public in the process of selecting new bird names.

Since 1886, the AOS and its predecessor, the American Ornithologists’ Union, have maintained a list of official English-language names for birds in North America (and more recently, South America). These English names are often updated as scientists discover new information about the ecology and evolution of these birds.

Scientific names will not be changed as a part of the AOS English bird names initiative, but they are regularly reviewed and updated by the AOS’s North American and South American classification committees in response to new scientific research and following the naming rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

Find more information at americanornithology.org and [@AmOrnith](https://www.instagram.com/AmOrnith) on major social media platforms.

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

DEEP Launches Fisher Study

The DEEP Wildlife Division, with the assistance of Central Connecticut State University, has launched a new research project to learn more about the state's fisher population. The fisher is a large member of the weasel family that typically inhabits large tracts of coniferous or mixed hardwood-softwood forests containing large trees for denning. Despite having very suitable habitat in Connecticut, the fisher population has been gradually declining, and this study will help wildlife biologists better understand why. Through live-trapping, biologists are fitting select fishers with lightweight, GPS collars to track their movements on the landscape. The information collected from the collars will give biologists a much better understanding of fisher habitat use, den selection, reproduction rates, and mortality.

Out West, 'Invasive' Barred Owls Threaten Spotted Owls

Who doesn't love a Barred Owl? Believe it or not, these birds have "invaded" western forests from their historical range in eastern North America, threatening the long-term survival of spotted owls and impacting a variety of native

wildlife species that compete with Barred Owls for the same food resources, says the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The FWS has issued a draft environmental impact statement and draft Barred Owl Management Strategy that addresses the threat of the non-native and invasive Barred Owls to native Northern and California Spotted Owls. Populations of the Northern Spotted Owl, which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, are rapidly declining due to habitat loss and competition with Barred Owls.



Northern Spotted Owl.

Photo: U.S FWS

The draft Barred Owl Management Strategy recommends actions to reduce Barred Owl populations in certain areas of the Northern Spotted Owl's range and focuses on limiting Barred Owl expansion into the range of the California Spotted Owl. Widespread implementation of Barred Owl management is necessary for the conservation of spotted owls, according to the FWS.

See a Gray Fox? Please Report It to DEEP

While the Red Fox is widespread and abundant in our state, the Gray Fox is not as common and not often observed due to its reclusive nature and more nocturnal habits, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. In addition to its grizzled-gray coat, the Gray Fox is somewhat stout and has shorter legs than the Red Fox. The DEEP Wildlife Division is increasing its monitoring efforts of Gray Fox to better understand the species' distribution and abundance throughout Connecticut. If you see a Gray Fox, please report your sighting at portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/Report-a-Wildlife-Sighting#grayfox.



Gray Fox.

Photo:Wikimedia Commons

Salt Marsh Restoration at Hammonasset

Audubon Connecticut is receiving \$618,110 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Long Island Sound Study National Estuary Program, courtesy of a grant awarded to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). The funds will help kick-start a major salt marsh restoration project, starting with assessments and design development for a living shoreline and culverts to accommodate sea level rise. In addition to American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, and Saltmarsh Sparrows, Audubon's work in this Globally Important Bird Area will benefit migratory landbirds, shorebirds, and raptors.

Ospreys Are Thriving in Connecticut

Ospreys had at least 688 active nests and 881 fledglings in 2023 — the most ever recorded by Connecticut Audubon's Osprey Nation project. (This was the 10th year of the program.) Observers also found 111 nests that had not been mapped previously, which probably indicates the population is growing and the range is expanding, says Connecticut Audubon. (Note: Connecticut Audubon is an independent nonprofit and is not affiliated with National Audubon. National's office in our state is Audubon Connecticut.)

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Winter 2024



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.

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!

February 5 Celebrating 50 Years of Project Puffin — from Maine to the World! . . Monday, 7 PM

In the late 1800s, puffins were almost eliminated from the Maine coast. In 1973 an experiment to bring them back to their former nesting island of Eastern Egg Rock was begun. Years of effort resulted in a thriving colony there now, and the social-attraction methods developed on this small island have been adopted by bird restoration projects around the world. From our small outpost in Maine, Audubon's Seabird Institute ships decoys and sound systems to areas in places as far-flung as New Jersey, the Netherlands, and Mauritius. Our Maine seabird islands are protected and monitored each year. The information the institute's researchers learn about their diet, survival, and movements over the sea are valuable to assess fish stocks and site offshore windpower. From humble beginnings, the future of Audubon's Seabird Institute becomes ever more relevant in this changing world. This program will be presented by "Seabird Sue" Schubel, assistant sanctuary manager, decoy project manager, outreach educator, and general "seabird celebrant" for Audubon's Seabird Institute, based in Bremen, Maine.

March 4. Chimney Swifts: Mystery and Magic Revealed Monday, 7 PM

In her talk, Bethany Sheffer from Sharon Audubon answers the conundrum: Bats? Birds? Minions of the Underworld? If you have found strange-looking birds in your fireplace or heard a deafening cacophony of sounds from inside it, congratulations! You likely have Chimney Swifts! Once numerous, these birds have experienced sharp declines in their range across the eastern U.S. due to habitat loss during the last century. Tonight we unravel the mystery behind these unique and fascinating birds while giving you behind-the-scenes footage of Sharon Audubon's work with them through its Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic. Bethany Sheffer, Sharon's Audubon's volunteer coordinator/naturalist, holds a master's degree in public administration and is a certified environmental educator and beekeeper. She also served as an AmeriCorps member as an environmental educator.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

January 1 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

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

Woods Audubon 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.**

January Birding with Angela During Her Big January Times and Dates TBD

Once again, Angela Dimmitt will be doing a Big January — to the shore, hot spots inland, often on the spur of the moment depending on the weather and bird reports. *If you're interested in a little cold-weather birding, contact Angela at 860-355-3429 or angeladimmitt@aol.com.*

January 13 An Introduction to Creative Nature Journaling Saturday, 1-3 PM

See below.

(continued on page 8)

An Introduction to Creative Nature Journaling

If you ever thought about starting a journal as a way to preserve thoughts and memories, the written word probably came to mind. As an artist who loves nature and color, Debbie Martin fills her "little books" (her journals) with not only hand-written experiences, but also with natural materials, stickers, clippings from old nature guides, rubber stamp impressions, and so much more. Colored pencils and pens, and water-color paints also add color to her pages. In 2016 Debbie received an LHAS scholarship to attend the week-long Arts & Birding Workshop at Audubons' Hog Island Camp in Maine. There, close observation of the natural world and the practice of journaling (writing, drawing, painting) were taught and stressed as a way to preserve the details of interesting nature discoveries.

Debbie looks forward to sharing with you the fun and rewarding experience of creative nature journaling and will bring along several of her own little books for you to peruse. The class will be held January 13 from 1-3 p.m. indoors at the LHAS Office (28 Russell St., Litchfield), and is **limited to 10 attendees**. Although this may seem like "a gathering for ladies," men are encouraged to join the fun and creativity, too. No previous art or writing experience is required to attend. Participants need bring nothing. Each will receive a nifty little book to keep. The use of a variety



of colorful writing instruments, decorative ephemera, and adhesives will be demonstrated and will be available for your experimentation.

This is the first of three sessions. At a second class (late February date to be decided by participants) we'll discuss student progress, or problems with technique or materials that may have arisen. When the weather warms up we'll head outdoors for a third class, a field trip!

Adults only. Registration is required. **Contact Debbie Martin at barnowl524@hotmail.com.**

Calendar

(continued from page 7)

January 28 Shepaug Bald Eagle Observatory. Sunday, 9 AM

Come visit the observatory in Southbury to see our national bird in its native element, plus Black Ducks (a species of special concern), Common Mergansers, Ravens, Eastern Bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks, and other wintry wildlings. With luck, we might even be visited by something rarer — a peregrine, Iceland Gull, or Golden Eagle. As a bonus, we might see a conservation program showing live raptors, put on by wildlife rehabbers. Meet at the junction of Route 6 (Main Street North) and Route 47 in Woodbury outside Canfield Corners Pharmacy. Snow or rain cancels. **For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.**

February 17 Great Backyard Bird Count at Boyd Woods Saturday, 9-11 AM

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) has been a fun annual event at our Boyd Woods Sanctuary for many years. We never know what unusual bird species we might find ... and we have discovered some really exciting ones! Please join Rich and Debbie Martin to participate in this important citizen science event. We'll be sure to see many birds from our wonderful bird blind at the well-stocked feeding station, but we'll also venture out to explore the woodlands, fields, and pond habitats as we look for different species. Meet at the Boyd Woods Sanctuary parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. Bring binoculars, dress warmly, and wear appropriate footwear for slippery, snowy trails if necessary. Snow or rain cancels this walk. Please no dogs. **For more information, contact Debbie Martin at barnowl524@hotmail.com or 860-819-7462.**

February 23-25 . Birding Around Newburyport and Cape Ann, MA. Friday-Sunday

Dave Tripp will once again escort LHASers around the Newburyport, Amesbury, and Salisbury areas in search of wintering northern birds. In the past, this trip has seen rare birds like Great Gray Owl, Boreal Chickadee, Varied Thrush, Townsend's Solitaire, and Harris' Sparrow. Other uncommon birds encountered in the past are Short-eared Owls, "white-winged" gulls, Barrow's Goldeneye, Rough-legged Hawks, and Northern Shrike. An added bonus is a day trip to Gloucester and Rockport on Cape Ann, which may add Razorbills, Thick-billed Murres, Harlequin Ducks, Black Guillemots, and more gulls and waterfowl. **If you are interested in going, email Dave at dtrippjr@gmail.com.** We will stay at the Fairfield Inn in Amesbury; check websites like kayak.com or hotels.com to find the best rate.

March 3 Shepaug Bald Eagle Observatory. Sunday, 9 AM

Come visit the observatory in Southbury to see our national bird in its native element, plus Black Ducks (a species of special concern), Common Mergansers, Ravens, Eastern Bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks, and other wintry wildlings. With luck, we might even be visited by something rarer — a peregrine, Iceland Gull, or Golden Eagle. As a bonus, we might see a conservation program showing live raptors, put on by wildlife rehabbers. Meet outside Canfield Corners Pharmacy at the junction of Route 6 (Main Street North) and Route 47 in Woodbury. Snow or rain cancels. **For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.**

Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19

"Let birds bring you closer to nature and to each other by spending four days in February with us!" — birdcount.org

Besides joining Debbie and Rich Martin at Boyd Woods on February 17, you can participate in the full four-day event wherever you enjoy watching birds. To take part, you watch and count birds for as little as 15 minutes a day, then report your findings at birdcount.org or by using eBird or the Merlin app. Your observations will help scientists better

understand global bird populations, making you a citizen scientist!

Through the birdcount.org website you can also upload photos, see a world map light up as observations come in from around the world, and explore last year's data.

The GBBC is a partnership of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon, and Birds Canada.

Cape May Report**Trippin' in the Rain***By Russ Naylor*

Our Cape May wayfaring into that mecca of migration at the southern tip of New Jersey was a wet and windy adventure under the wing of our peerless leader, Dave Tripp. Rains and contrary winds brought most avian passage down to a trickle of its usual volume — we missed several likely species, and “tweety bird” traps like Higbee Beach were a bust. But we all winged indefatigably onward.

A Bald Eagle welcomed us to Galloway Township, and a peregrine’s military flyover performance heralded our arrival at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (aka Brigantine). An American Bittern flew by us as we began the drive around pools and marshes deeply full with water. So began a gratifying dive into the whirl of fall migration.

On land, swirling streams of Tree Swallows flowed and eddied all about us, while Yellow-rumped Warblers greeted us everywhere. The water teemed with ducks in fall colors, mixing with roving bands of shorebirds, puffy Pied-billed Grebes, and a stately stalking of herons and egrets. Offshore moved scoters, terns, gulls, and a scattering of gannets. Each birding spot offered some treats. North Wildwood had a

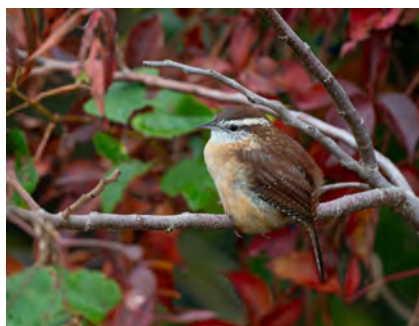
**Carolina Wren.**

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

calling Winter Wren amid inshore rocks. Nummy Island and Stone Harbor held Brant and Oystercatchers galore mixed in with Caspian Terns, Marbled Godwits, Bald Eagles on fishing vigil atop marshland posts, and a Salt-marsh Sparrow doing a wide-legged A.B.A. split (do not attempt

this at home lest you fracture your taxonomy!).

The Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor hosted over 40 Western Willets plus a Pectoral Sandpiper. South Cape May Meadows had Stilt Sandpiper. Cape May Point brought us Eurasian Wigeon, an Eared Grebe (new to our Tripp list), coots and a Common Gallinule, plus lots of mockingbirds. (Yes, some truly northern “mockers” dash down to Dixie for the winter!)

We also scored a hatrnick of turtles — Red-bellied, Red-eared, and Diamondback. Cape May Point’s shore gave us



passing gannets and loons, plus breaching dolphins and a marlin leaping after menhaden dinner. Lily Lake held Green Heron, both Kinglets (Ruby- and Yellow-crowned) up close and an escapee Muscovy Duck.

Our departure from Cape May was acknowledged by a flyby Bald Eagle as we peregrinated back to Brigantine. Our second rounding of Brigantine’s birdy dikes yielded Wood Ducks amid a kaleidoscope of fall foliage, a pair of Redhead (also new to the Tripp list) escorted by Lesser Scaup, Black-crowned Night Herons, more than 40 Boat-tailed Grackles, and two playful peregrines. At the end of our route we entertained a mass audience of more than 1,000 Ruddy Ducks — more than most of us have seen in a lifetime of birding! They must have enjoyed the steady stream of visitors passing by on the

**Green Heron.**

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

**Northern Mockingbird.**

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

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Cape May

(continued from page 9)

roads — including the variety of lens-bearing bird buffs and shutterbug bird catchers they could all add to their life lists.

Kudos once again to Dave for a birding trip most gratifying for all of us perambulating aviphiles!

Editor's Note: For me, the highlight of the trip was the White Ibis flyby overhead at the Cape May Lighthouse parking lot!



White Ibises flying overhead.

Photo: Michael G. Audette

Photos below, left to right: Yellow-rumped Warbler, by Ann Orsillo; Great Blue Heron, by Michael G. Audette; and Wood Duck drake, by Paul G. Edwards



Jays, Bluebirds Usher in Mid-Fall

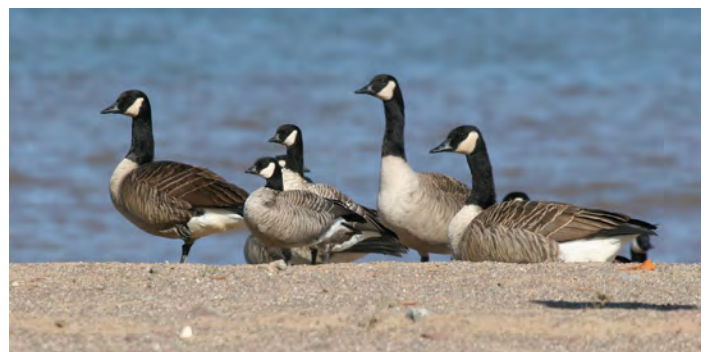
By Russ Naylor

On October 8, our Sparrow Stalk participants saw a blue wave of migrant jays and bluebirds on the move, heralding the arrival of mid-autumn. They were ubiquitous winging southward. Our jaunt began with two skeins of Canada Geese in passage, each one trailing in its wake a Cackling Goose, as a hatch-year Turkey Vulture observed morning vigils from the roof of a nearby church. Wherever we went also appeared flickers, robins, phoebes, and Cedar Waxwings, plus Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Amid this mix of migrants moved a stealth of sparrows — Song, Swamp, White-throated, Field, and Chipping.

Bent of the River Audubon Center added House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Purple Finch, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Blackpoll Warbler to the melange, witnessed by local Pileated Woodpeckers and Common Ravens. The Southbury Training School farm added Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrows, plus a show of fall raptors. A Cooper's Hawk flew through, heckled by kestrels unwilling to serve as breakfast, followed by a low-flying young Bald Eagle offering close

views. A distant peregrine briefly perched before powering off on swift scimitar wings, ere a winged bullet of a Merlin ricocheted through the fields. No fewer than seven American Kestrels hovered and hunted the fields, keeping all sparrows close to cover.

Lastly, a stop at the Southbury Training School pond served up a young Great Egret wading the shallows after fishy dinner — a graceful finale to the excursion. Overall, we tallied some 55 species of feathered friends.



A Cackling Goose amid much larger Canada Geese.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

In My Garden — A Journal — November 2023

By Angela Dimmitt

November is the saddest month — leaves falling, falling, falling, last flowers dying, green turning to brown and gray. Every year we complain there are more leaves than ever! And it's true — there are more — trees have grown more branches and twigs! (Although this year's storms did bring down a lot of trees, even live ones with shallow roots). Should one clear flowerbeds of leaves as well as dead stalks? Leaves are nature's mulch — but they also provide cover for mice and voles which eat plants' roots. And some beneficial insects lay their eggs in plant stalks. Tough choice for gardeners!

It rained a lot. My garden flooded — not from the stream but from rain causing trickles down the hills to become streamlets and the spring by the old farm pump to rise again. Lake Dimmitt was awash, Little Lake Dimmitt now measures 20 x 10 feet, and The Pond in the Woods is substantial.

The stream rose alarmingly a few times, the water black, murky, and evil-looking. I've tracked that down to a swamp in Sherman where debris clogs a culvert under the road. The town says it's caused by beavers, but I see no sign of their activity. The pile of muck by the road is manmade and the dirty water flows a mile down through my garden in New Milford and into the Housatonic River.

Birds! The last Ruby-throated Hummingbird came very late, on October 11. Now, my local titmice, chickadees, etc., are attacking the feeders on the high wire like there's no tomorrow — I'm waiting till December 1 to put up the pole feeder, hoping the bears have finally gone to bed. Can't say "hibernate" as the males really do not, though the females with their cubs usually stay put till spring. I've had smaller numbers of White-throated Sparrows and juncos than usual, and no unusual visitors beyond a couple of Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Hermit Thrush, Purple Finches, a Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a gorgeous male towhee. And three turkeys flew past over the treetops; yes really!

Mammals? Deer have been pruning shrubs; a mangy coyote wandered through. That's it.

Star, my poor little Star! He had such fun being an outdoor cat this summer, never straying far from the house and sleeping a lot under a certain hydrangea. He'd come running

flat out over flowerbeds and leaping the stone wall to the porch when I called at dusk. Alert: In 7.5 years, this half-blind cat has never caught a mouse, vole, or bird — I swear! He has trouble catching the rabbit-on-a-string we play with, and certainly not the chipmunks whose holes he watches in the stone wall. Each morning now at first light he howls to be let out — then immediately howls to be let in again.



Star

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

"What, you expect me to stay out in that cold! Are you out of your mind? I'm not stupid!" Then 3 or 4 minutes later, "Well, perhaps I was mistaken. Out

again, please!" And once more, much twitching of tail as he comes in, trying to be dignified. So we play with the rabbit or the velvet snake — he can leap quite high to try to catch it but usually misses, preferring to lie on the floor scuffing the toy. Or licking — the snake's head is almost bald.

Today is sunny and bright, the few red oak and beech leaves standing out in the sun, the stream sparkling. I still have a few bulbs to plant; this has to be the day!

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

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Feeders near the bird blind at Boyd Woods Sanctuary.

Photo: Rich Martin