



Chickadee Chatter



May/June 2024

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 69/Issue 3

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



Happy new year! No, not *that* New Year. May 1 is the start of LHAS' new fiscal year. That means our **Annual Meeting & Dinner**, with the election of officers and new board members, is coming up: It's set for **Monday, June 3** at the Elks Lodge in Torrington. On page 11 you can read all the details — the timing of events, the menu, and the program. Believe it or not, **the cost to attend this year has gone down**: \$40 instead of \$45. To attend, please fill out the registration form on page 11 and mail it along with a check to LHAS no later than Friday, May 24.

Speaking of our election, the members of this year's **Nominating Committee** are Terri Bianchi, Ann Orsillo, and Marie Kennedy. If there is anyone you would like to nominate as an officer or board member (perhaps you, yourself?), please let one of them know. Terri and Marie's phone numbers are listed on page 2; Ann's is 910-880-1518.

Between May and June, we have a lot more things for you to participate in: eight bird walks, the two-day Summer Bird Count, three paddling trips, and a celebration of spring at Boyd Woods for the LHAS Nature Explorers.

You can also join us at Sharon Audubon's celebration of World Migratory Bird Day on May 11.

And mark your calendar for 4 to 6 p.m. on June 21 for the official open house of The Station (28 Russell Street, Litchfield). The Litchfield Land Trust, LHAS, and the building's three new occupants (Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, the Litchfield Housing Trust, and Friends of the Litchfield Greenway) will celebrate the completion of The Station's historic renovation into a nonprofit hub for Litchfield. Please join us to see our offices and enjoy refreshments and entertainment. You can also check out the The Station's pollinator garden, which was partially funded by a National Audubon grant.

Happy Spring!

See Calendar on pages 6-9 for our
Upcoming Meetings & Field Trips

Join Us for the Summer Bird Count!

Calling all captains, LHAS members, and anyone willing to lend a hand for a great LHAS event, the Summer Bird Count.

This year's count will be held on June 8th and 9th. It can be done on one day or spread over both days. The results are sent to the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

In the past we have had some great results. The 2022 Summer Bird Count Report of the Connecticut Ornithological Association noted:

- "Litchfield Hills had the most species with 132..."
- "Litchfield Hills had a Blue-winged Teal."
- "They also picked up a Pied-billed Grebe and two American Bitterns."
- "Litchfield Hills had a Mississippi Kite, a species that has moved into our area as a nesting species, but for which this is the first SBC record."
- "Litchfield Hills came through with the count's only Golden-crowned Kinglet, a species both rare and difficult to detect in the nesting season."

These quotes are from the Journal of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, *The Connecticut Warbler*, January 2024.

Revisit last year's Summer Count results in the September/October 2023 *Chickadee Chatter* newsletter to gain inspiration to help you out on this weekend. You can read past newsletters online at lhasct.org/newsletter.

If you want to participate this year, send an email to Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.

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	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	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Kalmia Sanctuary	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Membership Outreach	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075
Membership Records	Harry Ainsworth	860-777-8012
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 **July/August** issue is **June 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 Harry Ainsworth, Membership Records Chair

Deborah August Morris
 Judith Belile Lakeville
 Betsy Brown Oakville
 Lisa Butts Bristol
 Mark Cantin Bethlehem
 Ray Conti Sharon
 Irene Cook Torrington
 Denise Correia Litchfield
 Eric & Rita Donlon* Bethlehem
 Lexi Fanning Washington
 Constance Hermann Bristol
 Nancy Hussey Washington Depot
 Karen Ivain Winsted
 David Lee* Pleasant Valley
 Anne MacDonald Salisbury
 Justin Mack New Milford
 Mary Anne McNulty Sharon
 Anne Richardson Lakeville
 Marlene Rowland New Milford
 Christine Sargent Sharon
 Kathryn Taylor New Milford
 Doug Wehman Goshen
 William Wenkert Salisbury
 Penelope White Colebrook

**Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 990.

If your newsletter is addressed incorrectly, send an email to Harry Ainsworth at hla1@me.com.

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!

Focus on Birds**Ode to the Baltimore Oriole**

By Vickie Dauphinais, Chair, LHAS Education Committee

On my recent visit to Costa Rica, I spotted a few Baltimore Orioles flitting among the rich green, yellow, pink, and magenta flora along with the resident flycatchers and tanagers. It was hard to miss their vibrant orange and black plumage.

The resident birds were busy collecting nesting material, but the Baltimore Orioles were feasting on small fruits, berries, and insects, getting ready for the long journey to their summer breeding grounds in the Eastern U.S. and as far north as Alberta, Canada. I find it astonishing this small creature, about the size of a robin, will be flying north in the next couple of weeks and arrive in Connecticut by early May to start a family and in three months' time start the journey back to the tropics. Each leg of the journey covers around 2,500 miles!

Francis Stella, a wildlife poet from Michigan, chronicles the Baltimore Oriole journey beautifully in the following verses (condensed from the poem "Baltimore Oriole"):

If in joy you need a tutorial
I suggest the Baltimore Oriole.
April he journeys by night
North from south of the Gulf,
A grueling ordeal by flight
To prove he is worthy of heirs;
And the bird who calls at my door,
Once crossing the Gulf under stars
Follows the Atlantic shelf,
Across six states or more ...

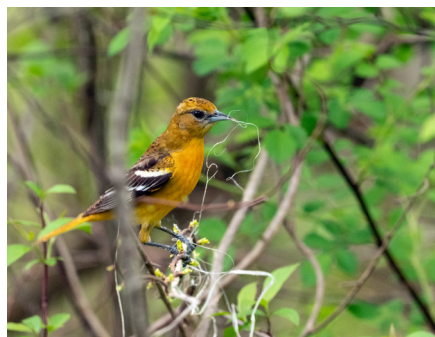


Above: Male Baltimore Oriole.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Below: Female Baltimore Oriole.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



Here are a few suggestions to help our migratory birds reach their destinations safely:

- Turn off all non-essential lights from 11 p.m. to sunrise during migration seasons.
- Make windows visible to birds by applying dots, cords, or tape to the outside surface. Check out abcbirds.org/glass-collisions for more solutions.
- Keep your cat indoors.

Then his first day here has broken
And he's already up and about
Before most others have woken....
And his whistle is calling us out:
Wake up! I'm here! Wake up! I'm back!
That whistle, so bright and clear,
Is brought on by a joy attack.
It's the Maytime anthem of cheer....
And yet how seldom he's seen
Way up in the maples and willows
where the caterpillars he'll glean....

And when he's on the fly
He'll soar as well as sing.
He's laughter to the eye.
He's pumpkin on the wing.

You may spy his one desire
As he rounds from tree to tree,
Though when off without her pair
You may never know it's she,
Light brown with just a flare
Of her partner's orange coal-fire.
Soon she weaves from gathered grass
And even bits of cloth and string
At heights no other birds surpass
And hanging like a netted cheese
A nest you may see gently swing
Way up among the blowing leaves.
Inside she lays and incubates
Up to six new oriole fates,
And he feeds her through her stay,
Then to and from the hungry nest
To feed their new relations....

The last of June will pass unsung,
Without our wakeup call each morning;
And come July our trees are fled,
Without farewell, without forewarning:

(continued on page 4)

Newburyport Trip Report

A Swing of Our Wings Toward Spring

By Russ Naylor



On March 22–25 a merry band of LHAS avian addicts went on Dave Tripp's trip to northeastern Massachusetts for our annual late-winter birding binge. After some showers, it was a real Frostbite Special; officially so, as Mr. Baker wore his long-john silvers. (John Baker usually wears short pants!)

Still, displaying woodcocks and Red-winged Blackbirds heralded the imminent change of seasons. Birding the lower Merrimac River and Joppa Flats brought us two merganser species, Long-tailed Ducks in ardent courtship displays, Bonaparte's Gull, and a precise military-style march of up-river-bound Bald Eagles. Watching these were an island full of basking seals — 21 Harbors and two Grays.

Arriving at the Fairfield Inn, we were met by a hospitality

Baltimore Oriole

(continued from page 3)

The pair and all their able young
 Are tropics-bound between their tarries
 To fill on nectar, fruit and berries;
 Just two brief months upon this Earth
 And by the stars the newly bred
 Must soar the nights for all their worth
 Along a route they've never flown
 To reach a home they've never seen
 And then return when one year grown....

Truly amazing!

committee of two dapper turkey toms greeting guests while gleaning seeds and insects stuck on car tires and grills — most resourceful birds indeed!



Red-breasted Merganser.

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

Plum Island gave us first looks at an obliging American Bittern, while Salisbury Beach had a Long-eared Owl.

The next day's outing along the lower Merrimac River brought us diverse ducks, Bonaparte's Gull, and a flight of Bald Eagles on migratory maneuvers — watched by lazily loafing seals on a mid-river island. Further downriver, our crew witnessed a powerful incoming tide surging against a strong river outflow. A Red-necked Grebe had to fly to get upriver! Here, another rocky island full of seals offered comic relief as 56 Harbor and 12 Gray Seals jostled, stretched, and squalled for space.

Next, our stop at Plum Island delighted all with a Northern Shoveler drake, an accommodating American Bittern posing for photos, Horned Larks, a small flight of skulking Hermit Thrushes, and no less than four Short-eared Owls patrolling hunting territories.



White-breasted Nuthatch.

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

Our third day covered the Gloucester–Rockport area amid foam-spattered, wave-lashed boulders. On the way there, our first Great Cormorant ushered us across the mighty Merrimac — others stationed themselves on offshore rocks like shadowy sentinels. Also on the way, we chuckled at the sight of a Black Bear — one of Winnie the Pooh's lazier cousins — sitting beside the road, arms akimbo, legs sprawled out with indolent bliss as the bemused bruin soaked up morning sun.

At Eastern Point's wind-whipped breakwater, we saw gale-tossed gannets, a Black-legged Kittiwake, Black Guillemots,

(continued on page 5)

From Sharon Audubon:

Rodenticides may not target birds, but they do kill them

By Audubon Staff

Rodenticides are poisons that are set out to bait and kill rodents. The rodent will consume the bait and go back to its nest in the wild. Over a period of days, they frequently return to the station and ingest more poison until lethal levels build up in the body.

It can take days for the rodent to die from the poison, making it an easy meal for a predator — like an owl or a hawk. In the meantime, second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) prevent the clotting mechanisms in blood, eventually causing fatal internal bleeding.

Rodenticide affects far more than just the rats and mice it is put out to kill. While raptors and other predators are non-target species (not the intended animal to be poisoned),

Newburyport

(continued from page 4)

and a Razorbill racing downwind at dizzying speeds. Less able to handle strong gusts, at least 70 Purple Sandpipers sheltered on the lee side of a massive stone breakwater.

The Gloucester Elks Club drew two Bald Eagles flying over, plus a massive Glaucous Gull. All along the coastal surf, Harlequin Ducks shone resplendent within sunlit whorls of wind-churned waters. At Halibut Point, Fran Zygmunt called up an Eastern Towhee and Gray Catbird into camera range — well done!

On our last day, Salisbury Beach held three White-crowned Sparrows, while the lens-bearing birdwatchers among us joined another flock of shutterbugs in rapt worship of a most photogenic celebrity — a Long-eared Owl — sleeping on the job while humoring the paparazzi. Two nearby Newburyport maple hollows hosted sunbathing Screech Owls, one rufous, one gray. A Barrow's Goldeneye rounded out our bird list at 83 species.

Once again, hats off to Dave for giving us birdaholics a dose of natural habitat!



Eastern Screech Owl.

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

secondary poisoning is an all-too-frequent occurrence. And, because SGARs can stay in a raptor's body for nearly 3.5 months, it can take time for the amount of ingested rodenticide to reach lethal levels in these non-target species. Vitamin K therapy is available, but treatment takes several months.

Those birds admitted into rehabilitation are often too far gone to be helped. This is a sad reality that wildlife rehabilitators see all the time. Flaco, the famous Eurasian Eagle-Owl that lived in Central Park after escaping his enclosure in the Central Park Zoo, was found upon his death to have been exposed to four different SGARs that are commonly used for rat control.

Here at our Sharon Audubon Center Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic, a big, gorgeous female Great Horned Owl was brought in laying down, unable to stand or even lift her head. She was experiencing neurological symptoms like body tremors and dilated pupils. Her chest was well muscled, indicating a healthy, robust body condition, but the same muscles showed dark, purple, and bruised under her skin due to blood pooling. Also incredibly upsetting, blood was draining from her sinus cavity out her nostrils and into her mouth. Her internal bleeding was caused by SGARs and represent classic symptoms of rodenticide poisoning in birds of prey.

We attempted to heal her, but there simply wasn't enough time. It is absolutely devastating to see these gorgeous, and healthy birds of prey being killed slowly and painfully after just trying to eat a meal.

While there are obvious symptoms in raptors with rodenticide poisoning, the impacts are often invisible. Wildlife rehabilitation centers have done studies, testing birds who come in to their clinic for rodenticides, even if they are not displaying symptoms. A study published in 2020 by Tufts Wildlife Clinic at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine showed that 100% of the Red-tailed Hawks admitted into their clinic tested positive for the presence of rodenticides.

Adding insult to injury, symptoms of rodenticide can present as many other illnesses when SGARs are below lethal levels. Diagnostic tests are expensive and not always accessible for all rehabilitators who care for raptors, so we can conclude there are far more poisoned birds coming into rehabilitation clinics than are officially confirmed.

Please note that putting poison in traps where rodents cannot escape causes secondary poisoning risks if not properly disposed of as toxic waste. Throwing these sealed rodent traps into the garbage will contaminate waste sites/dump sites, putting the scavenger species (like vultures and eagles) that frequent those locations at risk if those boxes break or leech.

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Spring/Summer 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 May 6 and July 1 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.

May 6 Wood Warblers in Connecticut — and Elsewhere Monday, 6:45 PM

Chris Wood will give a presentation on one of our favorite bird families, the wood warblers. Photos and descriptions will highlight the presentation, which will offer tips for finding and identifying the colorful and engaging warblers that nest here in Connecticut or that visit during migration periods. Chris will also illustrate some of the warbler species from the western U.S. and the neotropics to emphasize the fantastic diversity among the 111 species that make up the *Parulidae* family. Chris has been an active birder for over 45 years and has traveled around the U.S. as well as several Central and South American countries. He is currently president of the Connecticut Ornithological Association. He is a regular contributor to COA's journal, *The Connecticut Warbler*, and contributes photographs and commentaries to birding and conservation organizations.

June 3 Annual Meeting & Dinner; American Chestnut Restoration Monday, 6 PM

What has changed since the Wigwam Brook Wildlife Sanctuary orchard was planted? Jack Swatt, president of the Connecticut chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, will give a brief review of the American chestnut history, the blight, and the foundation's backcross breeding program. He will also tell us about the progress that has been made using genetic testing of trees to refine the program, and will also discuss how transgenics may help in breeding a truly blight-tolerant American chestnut tree. **Note: This program will be preceded by our Annual Meeting and Dinner. The evening will kick off with socializing at 6 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner at 6:30, our Annual Meeting at 7:15, and the presentation at 7:45. To register, see page 11.**

July 1 An Intro to Shorebirds, Their Migration, and Identification Monday, 6:45 PM

Nick Bonomo, one of Connecticut's leading birders and well-known to many, will share his knowledge of shorebirds with us — from the basic question "What is a shorebird?" through different types of shorebird, where they migrate, when and where to view them in Connecticut, and of course how to identify them. They are some of the most numerous (in their thousands in migration along the shore) and most challenging birds that nest in or pass through our state. Nick is an accomplished photographer, and his presentation will help us to enjoy and identify these fascinating birds. A birder since the age of 13, Nick was born and raised in Connecticut, where he now practices orthopedic surgery as a physician assistant. He spends much of his free time traveling the globe in search of birds. He currently sits on the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, and he loves to share tips and tricks in the field.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

May 3 Birding Along River Road in Cornwall Bridge Friday, 7:30 AM

Look for spring migrants while walking along the Housatonic River on the Appalachian Trail. This walk has a greater

Board Meeting: 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 21 at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.

diversity of habitat types than River Road in Kent. We usually walk for 2 1/2 hours all the way downriver to the large fields, but participants can follow the well-worn trail back at any time. **Directions:** River Road is at the junction of Route 7 North and Route 4 West. Traveling west on Route 4, turn right immediately after crossing the bridge. We will meet under the bridge to carpool to a parking area at the end of the road, as parking is limited. **For more information, contact Donna Rose Smith at drsmith006@sbcglobal.net.**

May 4 Bird Walk at White Memorial. Saturday, 7:30 AM
 Meet at the White Memorial museum parking lot for a casual walk to view spring birds. **Contact Ann Orsillo at spoonbill@optonline.net if you plan to attend.**

May 5 LHAS Nature Explorers Celebrate Spring at Boyd Woods. Sunday, 11 AM
 See article below.

May 10 Birding Along River Road in West Cornwall. Friday, 7:30 AM
 This walk has the river on one side and open, shrubby habitat near the railroad track a short distance away. Expect to find woodland species and edge specialists such as Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and more. **Directions:** From Route 7 North, turn to go over the covered bridge and turn right onto Lower River Road. Parking is past the Trinity Retreat Center. **For more information, contact Donna Rose Smith at drsmith006@sbcglobal.net.**

May 11 Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day at Sharon Audubon . . . Saturday, 10 AM-1 PM
 LHAS will have a table with bird info and kids' activities at Sharon Audubon's event. World Migratory Bird Day is a global event that brings attention to the phenomenon of bird migration. Each year has a theme that seeks to generate conservation actions on behalf of migratory birds, whether that's the importance of unpolluted water (last year's theme) or of the availability of insects (this year's). An artist is chosen each year to bring the theme's priority bird species to life. This year's focal species include two that Sharon Audubon works with at the center: American Kestrel and Wood Duck. Sharon Audubon staff also work with Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts, both of which are entirely dependent on insects for their survival.

May 12 Spring Swift Swirl Sunday, 8 PM
 Come see newly arrived Chimney Swifts as they return from winter sojourns in South America, to enter a well-known spring roost site (and recognized Important Bird Area, or IBA) at Mitchell School in Woodbury. This is a spring/fall staging roost site for migrants as well as an established nesting site for these masters of aerial living. Other sky-feeding wayfarers, such as Night Hawks and swallows, plus the occasional bat, are also possible visitors. Meet at the Canfield Corner Pharmacy at the junction of Route 6 (Main Street North) and Route 47 in Woodbury. **For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.**

May 13 Birding at Bent of the River Audubon Center Monday, 7:30 AM
 Bent of the River has open meadows and riparian and woodland habitats, where we will look for migrants and nesting species. The landscape is managed for shrub-land nest species such as Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers and Field Sparrows. Indigo Buntings are common here. Meet at Bent of the River's parking lot at 185 East Flat Hill Road in Southbury. **For more information, contact Donna Rose Smith at drsmith006@sbcglobal.net.**

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LHAS Nature Explorers

Celebrate Spring at Boyd Woods Sanctuary, Sunday, May 5, 11 AM

Join LHAS Nature Explorers for a hike at Boyd Woods Sanctuary to enjoy all that spring has to offer. The sanctuary with its mix of conifers, shrubland, open fields, and forest habitat is a great place to see and hear migrating birds, such as warblers, vireos, orioles, towhees, and others. The ponds and the bordering brook on the property will offer a glimpse of all the critters and plants coming to life. Listen for toads and frogs calls. Maybe spot a Jack-in-the-Pulpit or a lovely Trillium. Come ready to get your hands dirty. Wear waterproof footwear for pond exploration. Fun! Appropriate for kids and adults. Meet at Boyd Woods parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. **Pre-registration is appreciated at lhasjunior@gmail.com. For questions, call Vickie Dauphinais at 860-805-9167.** Heavy rain cancels.

Calendar

(continued from page 7)

May 25 Warbler Walk Saturday, 8:30 AM

Join Marie Kennedy for a walk on Prospect Mountain Road to search for warblers. During the walk, you will be able to listen and look for birds as they sing to establish their territory and search for a mate. The walk is easy and takes place on the road, and we will also take the pond's loop trail. Please wear sturdy shoes. The meeting point is at the Grannis Pond Kiosk, located at 133 Prospect Mountain Road, Bantam. **For more information, contact Marie at 914-393-6270 or mariekennedy226@gmail.com.**

May 26 Beginning Birder Walk at White Memorial. Sunday, 7:30 AM

Join Fran Zygmunt for a beginner bird walk. No experience necessary. Fran will go over some of the basics about bird watching and share his knowledge about what to look and listen for. There will be ample opportunity to ask questions and to see a variety of birds. Meet at the White Memorial museum parking area and bring your binoculars. Rain will cancel. **For more information contact Fran at fzygmunt@charter.net.**

June 8 Litchfield Marketplace Arts & Crafts Fair. Saturday

Visiting the fair? Stop by at the LHAS table on the Green.

June 8-9 Summer Bird Count Saturday-Sunday

The count can be done on one day or spread over both days. The results are sent to the Connecticut Ornithological Association. If you want to participate, **send an email to Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.**

June 15 Bird Walk at Goshen Land Trust Saturday, 7:30 AM

Join Ann Orsillo for this walk. **Directions:** From Pie Hill Road opposite the Goshen fairgrounds on Route 63 north: Drive 1 mile to the bridge on Pie Hill Road. Bring binoculars, water, bug repellent, hat, sunscreen and sturdy hiking shoes. **Please contact Ann at spoonbill@optonline.net for additional information and directions if needed.**

June 21 Join the Celebration at The Station's Open House. Friday, 4-6 PM

Enjoy refreshments and entertainment while checking out the offices at The Station, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield. The Litchfield Land Trust recently completed the renovation of the building, which now houses their offices, as well as those of LHAS, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, the Litchfield Housing Trust, and Friends of the Litchfield Greenway.

June 30 Birding and Picnic at Shepaug Dam. Sunday, 9:30 AM

Join us for a birdwalk and picnic at Southbury's Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Viewing Area. Grassy areas offer Savannah Sparrows, plus bird houses with bluebirds and Tree Swallows. Powerline cuts and shrubby edges harbor Field Sparrows, Indigo Buntings, Prairie Warblers, and perhaps a towhee or two. Lake Zoar (above the dam) has breeding Common Mergansers, Spotted Sandpipers, Orchard Orioles, and other treats — Great Blue Herons, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, and Black-crowned Night Herons. Shepaug Dam hosts a thriving Cliff Swallow colony as well as resident ravens and a Peregrine Falcon. Above it, Gulls, Ducks, and Cormorants hold forth. Other birds we might see in this mix of habitats: Black Duck, Pine Warbler, Carolina Wren, Black Vulture, and various hawks. **For the picnic:** Bring your own food, beverage, and utensils. Be ready for a brief uphill walk to the picnic area above the dam. **Meet** at the visitor parking area below Shepaug Dam on River Road. **Directions:** Since the usual River Road access is closed due to washout, we

Paddling Trips

Pam Hicks and Ann Orsillo have planned the following paddling excursions:

- Tuesday, **June 25 at Mohawk Pond** in Cornwall at 9 a.m.
- Tuesday, **July 30 at Wood Creek Pond** in Norfolk at 9 a.m.
- Wednesday, **August 14 at Burr Pond State Park** boat launch in Torrington at 9 a.m.

Please contact Ann at 910-880-1518 or Pam at 203-922-2684 for additional information and directions if needed.

Bring your own kayak or canoe, PFD, water, snacks, binoculars, sunscreen, and a towel.

need to go this way: Take Route 6 to Route 67 in Southbury; turn right onto Route 67. Go about 3 miles and turn left onto Route 122 (South Britain Road). Pass Southbury Training School and continue into South Britain. At the South Britain General Store, turn right onto East Flat Hill Road and follow it past Bent of the River Audubon Center. Stay on East Flat Hill Road to its end at Purchase Brook Road (about 2 miles). Go left on Purchase Brook Road, pass Waldo State Park, and go all the way to the end at River Road near Mitchell Farm. Turn right on River Road to the visitor parking area below the dam inside the entrance gate.

In My Garden — A Journal — March 2024

By Angela Dimmitt

No-one has solved the riddle “Why did God make cockroaches?” but squirrels, that’s a different matter — clearly the Maker intended them to spread acorns! But have you noticed how few squirrels there were at your birdfeeders this winter? That is because there were no nuts last fall, no oak nor maple nor hickory. Also, fewer deer, same reason — it was a tough winter for them, however mild it may have seemed for us humans. Coyotes probably did all right — in fact I’ve seen one walking through my woods a few times recently. (I’m told it is mating season and he is on the hunt for a gal.) I have not seen the bobcat in a long while, but suspect ‘twas he or she who dispatched the bunnies last summer. No shortage of chipmunks though — probably due to a nice snug stone wall adjacent to the bird feeders and a good stash of sunflower seeds.

But isn’t March wonderful — just when you were getting really tired of winter, here comes March — this year in like a lamb, which certainly explains why it is roaring like a lion into April! But meanwhile

The big flocks of robins moved on through, but a phoebe sings every morning. Bluebirds checked the boxes, then moved on, hopefully to return and nest as usual.

we have enjoyed the slightly early pleasure of snowdrops and crocuses, and now daffodils emerging and actually flowering early. Lilac buds are showing green! Viburnum buds are shaping up nicely! The moss on the rocks is a true Emerald Isle green for Saint Patrick! Yesterday two pairs of resplendent Wood Ducks were dabbling on my stream! A Phoebe has arrived, also Red-winged Blackbirds and (alas) Brown-headed Cowbirds; the Pileated Woodpeckers are flying around checking out the many dead trees in my woods. Unpleasantly, two ticks have found me and got under my clothes (why are ticks here except perhaps to feed turkeys and other birds?). In the warmer parts of Connecticut, along the shore, shorebirds are arriving, along with some warblers — not up here in Litchfield County yet, but soon. Anything’s possible!

And the bears are out! Mom and three big cubs came out of

the woods — they could smell the hanging feeders (out of reach) and knocked down the pole with empty ones (new design — not sunk in the ground, just pinned; they knock it over and eat the goodies, but the pole is not broken). Not finding more than a morsel, the cubs began playing — even-



Not-so-little bear cubs.

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

tually all three climbed a tree and chased around in it. Mom ignored them and scuffed in the leaves for yummy worms and such. She looked plump, her coat glossy — the cubs however not so good; one was quite scrawny, presumably not having fattened up enough in the fall. One of them walked around on its hind legs! Not just standing under the feeders, actually walking around — of course I did not think to video it.



Hellebores

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

The cold and rain of the last few days has put pause to the early spurt of growth this month. Many daffodils have no buds showing although the leaves are tall. Hellebores are glorious, however, and a

(continued on back page)

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

Precipitous Drop in Monarchs Wintering in Mexico

The annual census of monarch numbers at the overwintering sites in central Mexico revealed that in just one year, the presence of monarch butterflies in their Mexico wintering grounds dropped by more than half, from 2.2 hectares to 0.9 hectares. This makes 2023-24 the second worst year ever recorded, noted the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. The lowest year was in 2013-14 when only 0.67 hectares were occupied. The annual survey, led by World Wildlife Fund-Mexico, measures the area of forest in which monarch butterflies hibernate each winter, providing a reliable indicator of the migratory eastern monarch's overwintering population status. Monarchs across North America face significant challenges, including habitat destruction, pesticide exposure, and extreme weather exacerbated by climate change.

Unfortunately, a bill in the Connecticut General Assembly that would have helped monarchs and other pollinators

— An Act Concerning the Use of Neonicotinoids (a class of herbicides) — failed in the Environment Committee.

FWS Restoring Protections for Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced new rules governing the implementation of the Endangered Species Act, restoring some protections that were removed under the previous administration and strengthening conservation for threatened species.

"When it comes to conservation of birds and other wildlife, we support leading with science," said Jon Hayes, vice-president at the National Audubon Society and executive director of Audubon New Mexico. "We appreciate the good work of the Fish and Wildlife Service to use the best science available to make these changes. In the face of threats like climate change and habitat loss, it is critical that we act to ensure the survival of species in decline for decades to come."

Bluebirds Sing and Fling Us Into Spring

By Russ Naylor

Our LHAS crew visited the Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Observatory in Southbury on March 3 to the tune of bluebirds singing while pairing up with prospective mates. Joining them in chorus were cardinals, Carolina Wrens, and other songsters. An adult and an immature Bald Eagle capered in aerial play before us as a juvenile migrated overhead. A few Common Mergansers, Black Ducks, and gulls of three species shared fishing time with the eagles. At the same time, the local raven pair worked on nest building at two sites ere choosing the final haven for this year's eggs.

Overhead, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks hovered and sky-danced their mate-bonding and territorial displays.

Overhead, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks hovered and sky-danced their mate-bonding and territorial displays. Two Black Vultures arose above the dam on their own nuptial flight. Coming by in passage were Killdeer, Turkey Vultures, robins, and blackbirds — another sure indicator of the season's change.

A bonus trip to Cassidy Road and Southbury Training School Farm turned up all four local corvid species, Song Sparrows and mockingbirds staking out territories, and Rock Pigeons preening their marital partners. The Training School pond brought us Bufflehead, Common Mergansers, Mute Swans, and Killdeer mingling with winter's last big flock of about 700 Canada Geese staging briefly prior to winging north.

As a final salute, an adult Bald Eagle led our group back along Route 67 on our return trip from our 41-species sortie as an "honor guard" for visiting his confreres at Shepaug Dam.

On this trip into spring-like activity, we heard the season's first Spring Peepers and Wood Frogs calling, while we enjoyed spring's first blooms: skunk cabbage, snowdrops, early crocuses, speckled alder, and a Lilliputian herb called whitlow grass.

It seems Punxatawny Phil and Connecticut's Chuckles were right on the money in forecasting an early spring!



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society's 69th Annual Meeting & Dinner



Monday, June 3, 2024

At Torrington Elks Lodge
70 Litchfield Street, Torrington, CT

6 p.m. Social • 6:30 Buffet Dinner • 7:15 Annual Meeting • 7:45 Program

Menu: Pork Tenderloin, Citrus Salmon, Penne Vodka, Asparagus, Mixed Apple Salad, Rolls, Coffee/Tea, and Cookies/Brownies.

PROGRAM

American Chestnut Restoration

What Has Changed Since the Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Orchard Was Planted

Presenter: Jack Swatt, President, CT Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation



After a brief review of the American chestnut history, the blight, and the Chestnut Foundation's backcross breeding program, Jack will tell us about the progress that has been made using genetic testing of trees to refine the program. He will also discuss how transgenics may help in breeding a truly blight-tolerant American chestnut tree.

Jack has been a member of The American Chestnut Foundation since 1993. He received a B.S. in Biological Sciences from UConn in 1983, an M.S. in Chemistry from CCSU in 1992, and graduated from the Albany Medical College Physician Assistant Program in 1996. He is currently retired but was previously employed by The Hospital of Central Connecticut as a Physician Assistant in Hospitalist Medicine. He is also an active volunteer for the CT DEEP (monitoring wintering eagles and Whip-poor-wills), Audubon CT, CT Audubon, NH Audu-

bon, the Loon Preservation Committee and the Society to Protect New Hampshire Forests (aka the Forest Society). He is also a life member of the Wolcott Fire Dept. Co. #2 and the New Haven Bird Club.

Make your reservations now! The deadline is Friday, May 24th.

Please clip and mail this form with your check to LHAS - AGM, P.O. Box 861, Litchfield, CT 06759.

LHAS June 3, 2024 Annual Meeting & Dinner Registration

Total Number of Reservations ___ @ \$40 per person = **Total enclosed: \$**_____

Your name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____ **Email Address:** _____

For name tags, please list each attendee's name:



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Journal

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few primroses are flowering. The big flocks of robins moved on through, but a phoebe sings every morning. Bluebirds checked the boxes, then moved on, hopefully to return and nest as usual. The stream flooded March 22 but spared the bridge this time. (It still needs some repairs from being washed away in January; the work involves big boulders, as well as stones and gravel.) The whole lower lawn was covered in huge puddles from the 3+ inches of rain having nowhere to go, the ground still being frozen. Water drained down the hillside forming a new pond in the woods as well

as enlarging Lake Dimmitt, which subsequently refroze to skateable size. Yup, the wettest March on record! And now we have high wind and more reports of trees pulling down power lines — Eversource cut down a gazillion trees and still they fall.

The groundhog promised an early spring — let's hope April brings it to us! Anyway, House Finches are singing their sweetest songs, dreaming about the deserts they left behind and thinking about nesting.