



Chickadee Chatter



January/February 2022

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 67/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 Marie Kennedy, President



Happy 2022!

Ahhh The busy holiday season is behind us. I truly hope you were able to share good food, special gifts, and libations with family and friends.

I love the beginning of a new year. It's literally a discernible and indisputable moment in time to start again. Yes, we've all made our New Year's resolutions over the years. We try to evaluate our successes and our misses. Fortunately, we have this remarkable opportunity to reset our thoughts; a time to create a fresh attempt at our life's plan. This year I'm assessing my responsibilities to others: family, friends, work, and my community. It is very liberating for me — this year I'll get it right!

The world is still reeling from COVID, but we can find our comfort and strength by putting our attentions to the things that matter greatly to us.

National Audubon recently appointed Dr. Elizabeth Gray as its new CEO. Dr. Gray, who has been acting CEO since May 2021, is the first woman (busted the glass ceiling!) to hold the CEO title in the organization's 116 years. She is a trained ornithologist and has spent three decades as a dedicated conservationist. Before joining Audubon in March 2021 as president and chief conservation officer, she most recently served as global managing director of climate with The Nature Conservancy. Dr. Gray believes birds are a uniting force across the world. As a chapter of NAS, LHAS looks forward to her professional direction.



Dr. Elizabeth Gray

LHAS continues to educate its Board of Directors. We par-

See Calendar on pages 6-7 for our Upcoming Meetings & Field Trips

ticipated in the National Audubon Convention, held every two years (this year through Zoom), to stay informed and connected on the national level. LHAS also attended the chapter leaders meeting for Connecticut and New York. We shared each chapter's ideas, successes, and challenges. Both of these three-day events were educational and enlightening. Board recruitment is a struggle for many organizations. Please contact us if you have an interest in becoming an LHAS board member or would like to volunteer for one of our programs or committees. We can use your help!

Please check out our schedule of field trips and programs, that latter being held via Zoom through February. Also, let us know if you have suggestions for future programs. Our Program Committee works hard to bring you a variety of enjoyable and informative presentations.

Our Annual Appeal is in full swing, so please consider a donation to LHAS. Your support and/or your time is invaluable to us, the birds, and other wildlife in Connecticut. Your tax-deductible donation can be sent to LHAS, P.O. Box 861, Litchfield, CT 06759.

My very best to you and yours in the New Year!

Marie

Great Backyard Bird Count: February 18-21

Count the birds you see in your favorite birding spot anytime during this four-day event. Find out how at birdcount.org.

Or join Debbie Martin for a couple hours of counting at Boyd Woods on February 19. See page 7 for details.

LHAS Officers

President	Marie Kennedy	914-393-6270
Vice President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Treasurer	Mia Coats	817-691-2525
Rec. Secretary	Karen G. Nelson	860-309-9018
Corresp. Secretary	Terri Bianchi	860-489-8821

Board of Directors

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

Committee Chairpeople

Boyd Woods Sanctuary	Debbie & Rich Martin	860-819-7462
Communications		
& Digital Media	Rich Martin	860-736-7714
Conservation	Diane Edwards	860-485-9319
Education	Donna Rose Smith	203-706-0474
Facebook	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Field Trips	David Zomick	860-513-8600
Fundraising	<i>vacant</i>	
Historian	<i>vacant</i>	
Hospitality	Carol Perrault	860-628-1612
Kalmia Sanctuary	Irek Rychlik	860-480-6685
Membership Outreach	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075
Membership Records	Doreen Orciari	860-307-3102
Newsletter	Diane Edwards	860-485-9319
Programs	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Publicity	Shirley Gay	860-482-0819
Scholarships	Carol 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 2022** 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

Ralph Arzoomanian	.....	Roxbury
Elizabeth Aviles	.....	Kent
James Caron	.....	Harwinton
Suzanne Chiovitti	.....	Thomaston
Nancy Deming	.....	Goshen
Caitlin Eaglin	.....	Brooklyn, NY
Jeanette Francini	.....	New Hartford
Kathleen Furman	.....	Thomaston
Anne Gibbons	.....	Goshen
Debra Johnson	.....	Lakeville
Ernest Jung*	.....	New Milford
Melissa Keilty	.....	Bethlehem
James Martinez	.....	New Milford
Shirley McCunn*	.....	New Hartford
Christine Neal	.....	Harwinton
Virginia Smith*	.....	Washington
Thomas Sullivan*	.....	New Milford
Gunnel Wallstrom	.....	Norfolk
Janice Wenzel	.....	Barkhamsted
Bonnie Yandow	.....	Winsted

**Welcome back*

LHAS Membership is at 1,089.

If your newsletter is addressed incorrectly or if you fail to receive one, please send an email to Doreen Orciari at doreen.orciari@gmail.com.

Condolences

Lyle Whittlesey passed away in November 2021 at the age of 91. He was a member of LHAS for more than 30 years and shared his beautiful photographs at many LHAS meetings. Our condolences go out to his family. He will be missed. LHAS thanks those who have donated to us in Lyle's honor.

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)

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

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

Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Update

By John Baker, Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Chair

The 2021 growing season ended, so the pollinator garden will have to await spring weather.

The chestnuts were inoculated again for blight resistance, and 54 were marked for removal, then cut down, chipped and trucked away — as we did last year.



The beavers have been very active repairing their dams and building new ones, and building new lodges, too. There are six dams now, but only two beavers have been located; where have they all gone? When everything freezes up, Debbie Martin will try to solve the disappearance problem. There must be more beavers with all the activity in this “beaver haven” — get out the apples!

Forester Andrew Bosse has finished the spruce grove thinning and the invasives control until next spring. Jonathan Remeika finished the grass/weed controls (mowing). We still need to work on the invasives along the trails, prune the chestnuts, and move some bird boxes.

The new signs Rich Martin put up look great. Thanks for everyone's help.

Pileated Woodpecker Encounter of the Slithery Kind

By Donna Rose Smith

Years ago, when I was working at the Bent of the River Audubon Center, the seventh-grade class from the local middle school was there for a program and the release of trout they had raised in the classroom into the Pomperaug River.

The area's riparian forest is full of very old and large sycamore trees that are a favorite of nesting birds, including Wood Ducks, Warbling Vireos, and woodpeckers. As the group entered the forest, someone spotted a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers that were quite agitated. Upon further investigation, the reason for the ruckus was not the students invading the woods but a large Black Rat Snake (also known as the Eastern Ratsnake) very, very high up on the trunk of one of the huge sycamores.

Being middle schoolers, anxious to release the trout and maybe “accidentally” fall into the river, most continued on to the river. The students who paused to look were rewarded with a view of what happens when a rat snake gets too close to a Pileated Woodpecker nesting area.



Black Rat Snake.

Photo: Paul J. Fusco, CT DEEP

The male and female birds took turns diving at the 6-foot-long snake. They successfully knocked the snake from the trunk of the tree. From a height of about 20 feet, the large snake fell with a thud to the ground. Can a snake fall from this height, you may ask, without being hurt? I was very curious too. The snake was seen slithering away from the tree seemingly unharmed by the assault and fall. The woodpeckers and Wood Duck nests were safe that morning.

Avoiding Bird Window Collisions

LHAS board member Vickie Dauphinais, right, gave a presentation on Making Windows Safer for Wild Birds at a meeting of the Sharon Women's Club on October 21, 2021. Here, Vickie talks with a club member. You can see the same presentation at LHAS' general meeting on March 7; see page 6 for more information.



Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

Stratford Salt Marsh Restoration Has Begun

By summer 2022, Great Meadows Marsh will be a haven for people and wildlife, rather than a home for mosquitoes and invasive plants, says Audubon Connecticut. Construction began in November to restore up to 33 acres of salt marsh



Saltmarsh Sparrow

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

and other important coastal habitat at the marsh, a Globally Important Bird Area and a part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. Great Meadows Marsh contains the largest block of unditched salt marsh remaining in Connecticut. Once more than 1,400 acres,

the marsh is now less than 700 acres and portions of it no longer function properly due to dredged soils brought in as fill, colonization by non-native plants, and sea-level rise. Local birders, fishermen, and wildlife enthusiasts know the site well, as a special place to spot the rare Snowy Owl or catch Striped Bass. It is also important habitat for Horseshoe Crabs and Blue Crabs, the beautiful and endangered Marsh Pink flower, the Saltmarsh Sparrow and other migratory birds, and fish like Atlantic Silverside and Menhaden. The \$4.1 million project is a partnership among Audubon Connecticut, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. You can read more about this at ct.audubon.org/news.

In Pristine Amazon Rainforest, Birds Show Signs of Climate Change

For about four decades, researchers collected and measured 77 species of birds at forest camps in an intact area of Brazil's Amazon rainforest. The most recent measurements show that every species had, on average, lower body weight than in the 1980s, which the researchers say has no other explanation than climate change. Nearly a third of the species, meanwhile, had longer wings. The only changes in the birds' environment were climate related: higher temperatures, plus more rain during the wet season and less during the dry season. The study findings were published November 12, 2021, in the journal *Science Advances*.

California's Monarchs Are Back — Sort Of

In late 2020, the number of western Monarch butterflies overwintering in California reached a record low — fewer than 2,000 — according to an annual winter count by the Xerces Society. The 2021 count, though, found more than 100,000 Monarchs — a huge relief, but still vastly lower than the millions that once overwintered along the Pacific coast from California to Baja California in Mexico. The population of western Monarchs has dropped 99% since the 1980s (eastern populations have declined about 80% since the mid-90s). Experts attribute the declines to climate change — which affects the butterflies' spring migration that is synched with the timing of wildflower blooming — as well as destruction of milkweed habitat from housing construction and pesticide use. The persistent Western drought has also hurt the insects' food sources. The Monarch butterfly is now a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.

At Kalmia Audubon Sanctuary

Kalmia Sanctuary Chair Irek Rychlik plants daffodil bulbs that were generously donated by Marie and Bill Kennedy. Come springtime, we should enjoy seeing the jaunty yellow blooms at the sanctuary, located on Laurel Road in Harwinton.

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais



Welcome to Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary

By Rich Martin

I'll start by wishing everyone a very happy and healthy new year!

The Boyd Woods Sanctuary was just that, a sanctuary for many this past year and a half, if not more, as we plugged our way through this dreaded COVID-19 pandemic. It was nice to see the parking lot full with cars and trucks and folks using, enjoying, and respecting our trails. I would like to share with you some comments our visitors left in the small notepad available at the kiosk. Thank you all for visiting Litchfield Hills Audubon Society's Boyd Woods Sanctuary and for leaving such wonderful feedback. It's an inspiration for all.



6/18/20

Not many birds about due to heat. Heard a Red-eyed Vireo, saw Tree Swallows. We liked the observatory built by the pond, and the tree stump steps. A wonderful place for solace in these troubled times.



7/5/20

Best kept secret in Litchfield County. We'll be back to enjoy this sanctuary.

8/15/20

Saw a black bear from a distance. 1st one I've seen while hiking. Won't forget the experience.



Great trails :)

9/20/20

My daughter & I had a lovely walk by the bird pond and around the Brook Trail. We got back to the blind near the pond & saw a bear. It ran away, thankfully.



10/14/20

1st ever visit. Best time of year. Happy to see benches along the trails. I grew up on the next hill over, was a walk down memory lane. I will be back.

10/22/20

Took my elderly parents here. It invigorated them! We owe you our gratitude. Look forward to more.

3/27/21

Thank you. I love this place so so much.

Hannah - 8 years old

5/16/21

Rose-breasted Grosbeak male @ the feeders. Lovely little nest full of eggs in the blind! Be kind and don't linger too long, but long enough to appreciate the view!

LOVE THIS PLACE

9/15/21

Very tranquil place to be with no man-made sound pollution disturbing the wildlife or balance. Saw a few birds & chipmunks scurrying around along with some beautiful butterflies. I wish whoever reads this peace and happiness in life, as I have found here.

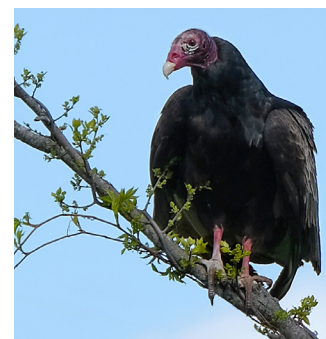
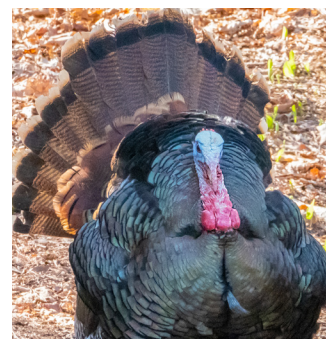
9/27/21

Beautiful Place!

Stay Safe & Healthy everyone.

Don't Worry

Be Happy



Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Winter 2022



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. Due to continuing concerns about COVID-19, meetings will be held via Zoom until further notice. **Board of Directors Meetings** are held the third Tuesday of every other month at 7 p.m.

GENERAL MEETINGS

Note: Our monthly meetings will be held via Zoom only; no in-person meetings due to continuing concerns about the COVID pandemic as well as winter weather.

January 3 Wildlife and Connecticut's Changing Landscape Monday, 7 PM

This presentation by Paul Coburn provides a brief natural history of Connecticut. It addresses the current state of wildlife in Connecticut, including a discussion of major species, factors affecting their habitats, and challenges we face in managing them, and provides suggestions for what people can do to make a difference. Paul is a graduate of the Connecticut DEEP's Master Wildlife Conservationist Program and is a certified Master Wildlife Conservationist.

To register for this Zoom meeting, visit LHAS's website, lhasct.org/meetings.html.

February 7 Climate Change Monday, 7 PM

Robert J. Klee, Ph.D., J.D., a lecturer at the Yale School of the Environment and the Yale Law School and a former commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, will talk to us about climate change — the biggest threat to our birds, says National Audubon. To combat the problem, Audubon says we need to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and offset what we cannot eliminate, for instance by maintaining healthy forests or supporting sustainable agricultural practices. *To register for this Zoom meeting, visit LHAS's website, lhasct.org/meetings.html.*

March 7 Making Your Windows Safer for Wild Birds Monday, 7 PM

Wild birds, our closest neighbors, provide a multitude of ecosystem services to improve and support human life. These precious creatures face many deadly threats in the human landscape that jeopardize their survival. Vickie Dauphinais will discuss the deadly threat birds face in our own backyards and explain how widespread the problem is. She will review what can be done to mitigate the problem, including easy, economical approaches we can use on our homes and places of business. Vickie is a board member of LHAS. She has been an active LHAS member for the past six years. Vickie enjoys hiking and birding with her Audubon friends. Since retirement from healthcare, she is planning on getting more involved in fulfilling the LHAS mission to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on wild birds and their habitats. *To register for this Zoom meeting, visit LHAS's website, lhasct.org/meetings.html.*

BIRDING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

January 1 First Day Hike at Boyd Woods Saturday, 10 AM

Start the year with a hike at Boyd Woods Sanctuary. We'll stop to view the birds at the feeders then continue on the trails through woods, meadows, and along a flowing stream. It will be a good way to start your 2022 bird list or just enjoy nature and friends! It will be a fairly moderate hike, lasting about 2 hours. Wear sturdy shoes and dress for the weather. Meet in the Boyd Woods parking lot off Route 254 in Litchfield, about 1.5 miles south of the intersection of Routes 254 and 202. *For more information, contact Marie Kennedy at mariekennedy226@gmail.com or 914-393-6270.*

January 9 Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Trip Sunday, 8:30 AM

We'll visit the Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Observatory in Southbury to see our national bird in action, plus Black Ducks, Common Mergansers, ravens, and other winter birds. Group size limited to 5-6 people due to COVID protocols. First come, first served. Meet at the Canfield Corner Pharmacy at the junction of Routes 6 & 47 in Woodbury. **Contact Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message expressing your interest and your phone number.**

January 9 Shorebirding for Waterfowl and Rarities Sunday, 8:30 AM

January is always full of surprises — once again, let's see what unusual birds are showing up at the shore. We will meet in Stratford (exit 30 off I-95 north) at the Dunkin Donuts on Route 113/Lordship Boulevard at the corner of Honeyspot Road. We will check out the local birding hotspots, including Long Beach, where the ice piles up in huge mounds on the sand; Stratford Point (if open) to watch for gannets and maybe even alcids out on the Sound; and the Birds-eye Boat Launch. Let's hope for Snowy Owls! King Eiders? Harlequin Ducks? It probably will be cold and windy, so come prepared! **To register or for more information, contact Angela Dimmitt in advance: 860-355-3429 or angeladimmitt@aol.com.**

February 19 . . . Great Backyard Bird Count at Boyd Woods Sanctuary Saturday, 9-11 AM

Boyd Woods continues to be one of the best hotspots in Litchfield County for bird species counted over the four-day period of the Great Backyard Bird Count. Please join Rich and Debbie Martin at the sanctuary to participate in this important annual 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 a variety of other habitats as we search for unusual 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. **For more information, contact Debbie Martin at barnowl524@hotmail.com or 860-819-7462.**

February 25-27 . Birding Around Newburyport and Cape Ann, Mass. 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.



Harlequin Duck, photographed during LHAS' 2018 Newburyport trip.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

The next LHAS Board Meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, January 18. Contact Marie Kennedy at mariekennedy226@gmail.com to see if the meeting will be in person or online via Zoom.

Trip Report, October 22–24**Cape May Foray — Wingin' on a Prayer***By Russ Naylor*

To paraphrase New Jersey's own Jon Bon Jovi, our stalwart steward and firefighting chief Dave Tripp fanned our avio-philic flames when he led a crew of LHAS wing nuts on a plunge into the madcap whirl that is fall migration at Cape May. Some early trippers headed down to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Thursday, scoring raven, Black-crowned Night Heron, and Snow Goose. But when Tripp and his tribe really got underway on Friday, things ran hot and heavy. Starting at Hidden Valley/Higbee Beach, we found a guild of Northern Flickers. Everywhere we went,

migrants abounded in a rich mélange of avians — paddlings of water-fowl; egrets by the score; kettles of raptors and vultures; secretive sculkings of sparrows and warblers; overhead wayfarings of everything from loons to kinglets.



Russ Naylor, left, and Dave Tripp outside a bird blind in Cape May.

Photo: Paul G. Edwards



Above: LHAS birders at Cape May Point.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Below: Sanderlings take flight.

Photo: David Tripp, Jr.



At the end of Cape May Point, we spotted Chimney Swifts, Brown Pelicans, and Northern Gannets while surrounded by a Disneyesque flight of Monarch butterflies — a scene right out of the Magic Kingdom's "Fantasia"! One beach yielded up a photogenic Black Skimmer amid no less than eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Two camera-happy shutterbugs (Michael Audette and Paul Edwards) competed to see who could snap the most freeze-frame avian images in one weekend! (Michael "won" with more than 1,800 shots!)

At South Cape May Meadows, we coaxed out a skittish Sora in a marsh, then craned our necks to track an American Anhinga passing overhead — a southern bird not normally found that far north. A secret woodland hideaway harbored a near-total of woodpecker species, including a brilliant Red-headed Woodpecker in full sun.

Sunset Beach netted us two tardy Northern Rough-winged Swallows. At Cape May Bird Observatory, we took a break to watch and hear groupings of Gadwall, widgeons, and pintails putting on courtship performances (waterfowl select their mates in autumn) while we surveyed kettles of raptors sweeping by overhead.

Back at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR, we scored Snow Goose, Red-throated Loon, Barn Swallow, plus Saltmarsh and Seaside Sparrows. Every area lent us an honor guard of Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons in good numbers — in fact, our final departure onto the New Jersey Turnpike was seen off by resident Bald Eagles plus a flyover Pileated Woodpecker.

Let accolades go out to Dave Tripp for a 141-species birding binge (a record for LHAS' trips to Cape May) — well done!

(more photos on page 10)



Above: Yellow-rumped Warbler

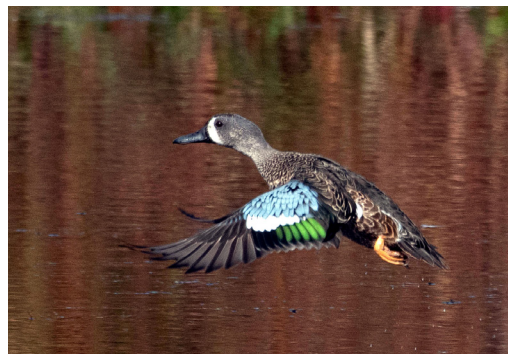
Photo: David Tripp, Jr.



Left: Lesser Yellowlegs

Right: Blue-winged Teal

Photos: David Tripp, Jr.



Left: Snow Goose

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Right: Brown Thrasher

Photo: Michael G. Audette



Below: White Ibises

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



Below: Sora

Photo: Michael G. Audette



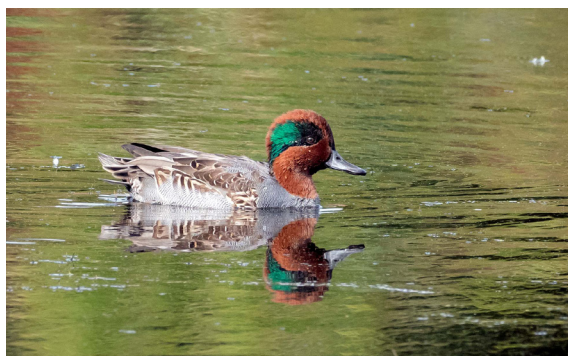
Cape May

(continued from page 9)

More Images from Cape May!

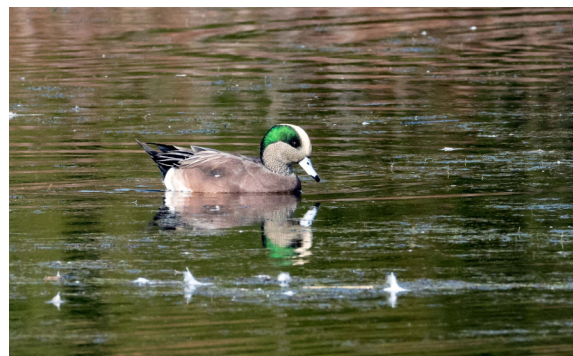
Back row, from left: Russ Naylor, David Zomick, Sarah Faulkner, Tom Zissu, Michael Audette, Fran Zygmunt (holding up an empty ball cap!), Shakar Herskovitz, John Baker, Brett Sherman.

Front row: Paul Edwards, Carol Perrault, Fabienne Audette, Diane Edwards, Marie Kennedy, Janet Baker, Dave Tripp.



Left: Green-winged Teal

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

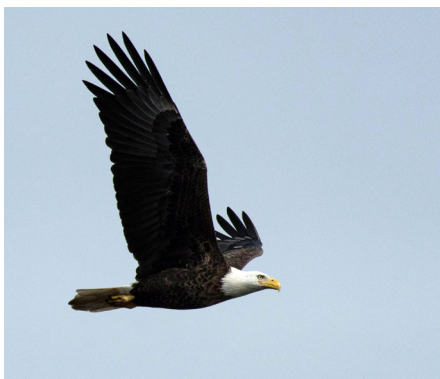


Right: American Wigeon

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Right: Saltmarsh Sparrow

Photo: Michael G. Audette



Left: Bald Eagle

Photo: David Tripp, Jr.

Right: Dunlin

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



IN MY GARDEN — AND BEYOND!

A Journal — November 2021

By Angela Dimmitt

Remember how the Ancients used to think swallows dived into the sea in the autumn to spend the winter safely there, emerging again in spring? Well, I am beginning to think bears do the same here. There's a lovely cave in a pile of rocks down in my woods, just the right size for a sow and her cubs, or a big male for that matter. I checked it again the other day — it was warmed by the sun, dry, sheltered, perfect, but nobody has used it yet. The reason I checked it was a few days ago an enormous male sauntered across my back lawn, quite close to the house. I photographed it from the kitchen, then the dining room, then dashed into the den — and it had vanished! I could see deep into the woods ahead and left, and clear down to the stream —

absolutely no bear anywhere! No tree or rock it could have hidden behind even. So I concluded that what it had done was run swiftly down the hill and dived into the stream, disappearing beneath the swirls and ripples. And I'm going to put my pole feeder up since the birds are telling me it's time.

Star is driving me nuts! Every morning when we get up, he whines and moans to be let out. Back in. Out again. Back in. Out again — three's the limit. Then he eats a little breakfast and starts whining and moaning again, this time for A Game. Recently my daughter gave him a present, a 5-foot red and black fleece snake with googly eyes and feathers in its mouth. He dotes on it, playing alone with it (it wanders round the house at night), but of course much more fun if I stand jerking it around, making him leap in the air (his half-blind eye makes it hard for him to focus and catch it, a relief to me — makes it unlikely he will catch a bird outside), then bites and scuffs it. As I write, he is behind me, sitting on it whimpering; now he's rolled over into suppliant tickle-my-tum-tum mode. Meoooo! How can a Mommy resist!

My garden — oh dear, so much still to do! The storms of the past weeks have brought down almost all the leaves, just a few oaks left, so the back lawn needs raking yet again, and now the flower beds really need to be cleared, a horrid job but otherwise the mice and voles will nest under the leaves and feast on roots and favorite plants. Some people leave them there as mulch, to be cleared in the spring, but I find soggy wet leaves and mouse nests much more work when one is looking for snowdrops, crocuses, and maybe even an

early daffodil. This month I've been busily clearing the beds, cutting down all but a few seed-bearing stems like cone-flowers and goldenrod; the deer noshed hostas and daylilies down, saving me a lot of cutting. Now I need to swathe certain azaleas and holly in burlap to prevent Bambi from feasting on them this winter. The vegetable garden is a total mess; never seen so many weeds as kept sprouting up this fall. A friend gave me a fruit cage just big enough to cover two blackcurrant bushes, and finally I enjoyed some berries. It took a genius (said friend, not me!) to get it up; now I must take it down again. No blueberries thanks to catbirds, and no raspberries — due to deer and possibly weather. With so many farmers' markets around, why does one bother? Guess there is a deep need in this Brit's soul to grow stuff!

The stream is sparkling today — the kingfisher visited recently; *illex berries are waiting for the robins which are around — I hear them clucking and scolding, flying around the swamp looking for bittersweet berries and rosehips.* *"*illex berries are waiting for the robins which are around — I hear them clucking and scolding, flying around the swamp looking for bittersweet

berries and rosehips. Sixteen turkeys, hens and young, ate their way across the back lawn a couple of weeks ago — I threw out some corn but they've not returned. Only two squirrels so far under the feeders, and not so many birds — four or five White-throated Sparrows, three or four juncos, one Song Sparrow, 16 Mourning Doves yesterday (none today), the usual Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, two Blue Jays, chickadees, titmice, two nuthatches and six House Finches. Fun birds: Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, a couple of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, flickers. But missing at the feeders are goldfinches — others have commented on their absence — I have seen and heard them in the treetops, so there must be plenty of natural food, but this is unusual. Also, cardinals have disappeared, those most familiar residential



Brown Creeper (this one photographed during the LHAS Cape May trip).

Photo: Michael G. Audette

(continued on back page)



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LHAS Duck Ramble

From Swans to Shovelers to Scoters — An Avian Admixture

By Russ Naylor

On November 20, 27 LHAS featherquesters followed ace birder Fran Zygmunt into our annual ducky digression around Bantam Lake. Our flock was not disappointed.

Litchfield Town Beach brought us a Bald Eagle, Ring-billed Gulls, and the first of four Great Blue Herons. Point Folly hosted Buffleheads, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, coots, and a male White-winged Scoter. A few Canada Geese and a restless band of Mute Swans gathered closely and flew about, goaded by the urge to migrate before freeze-up. Morris Town Beach was quiet, but Jones Pond in Morris was aflutter with activity of seven duck species. We admired Gadwall, Black Ducks, Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Northern Shovelers (including a full-plumaged adult drake resplendent for his ladies), and a bunch of boisterous Buffleheads in a rowdy riot of courtship display. A few land birds added spice to our 44-species day — Common Raven, Yellow-bellied Sapsuck-

er, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and a steady wave of robins streaming through.

A hearty huzzah goes out to Fran for a birdy excursion into fall's grand finale!

Journal *(continued from page 11)*

birds. Very odd. And the Carolina Wrens are gone from my house, though I've heard one singing in the distance. I also hung a peanut feeder — big mistake — titmice LOVE peanuts! There are six titmice and they empty the feeder in under two hours. I counted 45 visits in a couple of minutes — apparently they do stash food away, so I am looking forward to lots of peanut plants next spring, maybe even a cash crop, 'coz this is expensive!

Blue sky, high wind, chilly, snow forecast. Next month we have the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts — yea — winter is here!