



Chickadee Chatter



May/June 2022

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 67/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 Marie Kennedy, President



Hello, spring!

I hope all of you are feeling the renewing energy of springtime. The earth's warming breeze, blossoming fruit trees, and green everywhere truly lift the spirit. Who can

resist delighting in the morning's bird chorus or the soothing sound of spring peepers? They're back to find food and a mate; basics of their sustainability.

Some exciting things are happening with LHAS!

Our **Education Committee** has committed to reviving the Junior Audubon program. There will be programs geared for young Audubon members and their families. The first event is scheduled for May 15; see "Celebrating Migratory Birds" on page 7. And keep an eye out for other future events.

"A Place of Our Own"? LHAS, founded in 1955, has been successfully run by an all-volunteer board of directors. That's 67 years of working at our dining tables and in our

A White-breasted Nuthatch outside the blind at Boyd Woods.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



basements! We recently have been presented with an opportunity to have our own office space. Suffice to say, it is a unique opportunity. More to come ...

Speaking of volunteers — thank you, **Janice Jankauskas**, for offering to serve as our fundraising chair! Janice has already been volunteering her time with our Bluebird Restoration Project.

Our **three sanctuaries** are in "business as usual" mode

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

— enhancing pollinator and bird-friendly gardens, forest management, chestnut tree research, bluebird restoration, walks and talks. The bird blind at Boyd Woods is always a great way to watch the birds up close.

We're back to meeting in person at the Litchfield Community Center for our monthly program meetings. I hope more of you will attend; we miss the camaraderie of flocking together.

The flyer for the **LHAS Annual Meeting and Dinner** will be mailed to you soon. This is our first in-person Annual Meeting since 2019. It's when we vote on the slate of officers and new members of the board of directors. Also, we will present two high school graduates with their well-earned Education Scholarships. The Annual Dinner is a way to catch up with friends, meet new people, talk about wildlife, and share great food with members of LHAS. A program about native plants and pollinators will follow the meeting.

LHAS is open to **bringing Audubon to your town**. Contact us if you live in Litchfield County and would like us to do a presentation/program in your town or help with making your town more bird-friendly.

One part of National Audubon's Bird-Friendly Communities initiative is **Lights Out: Providing Safe Passage for Nocturnal Migrants**. Audubon and several other organizations are raising awareness of this important effort as we now know how harmful artificial light pollution is for birds and wildlife. Visit audubon.org/lights-out-program to learn more.

On behalf of the LHAS Board of Directors, I'd like to thank all of you who donated to this year's **Annual Appeal**. With your generous support, we will continue our mission: to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other

(continued on page 3)

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	860-805-9167
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	860-309-5139
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	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	860-309-5139
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 **July/August 2022** 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 Doreen Orciari, Membership Records Chair

Anna Arthur-Sgalia	.....Canaan
Susan Averill	..... Washington Depot
Cynthia Barrett	.....Goshen
Laurel Barron	.....New Milford
Kathi Barrus	.....New Milford
Marilyn Bialek	.....Watertown
William Breg*	.....Watertown
April Brodeur	..... Washington
Susan Clarkin	.....Litchfield
Samantha Colangelo	..... Torrington
David Colbert*	.....Cornwall Bridge
George Coleman*	.....New Milford
Tricia Collins	.....Cornwall Bridge
Keith Donlay*	.....New Milford
Russell Ellis*	.....New Milford
Priscilla Ellsworth	.....Salisbury
Catherine Erhardt	..... West Cornwall
Barbara Fairbanks	.....Salisbury
Daniel Foster	.....Sharon
Sam Fraidin	.....Cornwall Bridge
M. Fuller	.....New Milford
John Gilpin*	.....Roxbury
Maja Gray	..... West Cornwall
Adam Halasi-Kun	.....New Milford
Cynthia Harmon	..... Warren
Barbara Hockstader	..... Lakeville
Henrietta Horvay	.....Goshen
Joanne James	..... Bristol
Jennifer Lehner	..... Lakeville
Shannon LePage	..... Harwinton
Katherine MalancaGoshen
Caleb May Lakeville
Sanela MeehanNew Milford

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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.

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

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

Report: February 19 Great Backyard Bird Count at Boyd Woods

By Debbie Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary Co-chair



Debbie Martin (right) leading the intrepid bird counters for the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Photo: Rich Martin

girl! Snow flurries were in the air as we looped around the frozen pond and headed back toward the feeders. There we added a few more birds to our GBBC for a total of 19 species. Not bad for a 2-hour walk on a blustery February morning.

As I filled the feeders at the bird blind, Rich waited at the Boyd Woods Sanctuary parking lot for participants who would help us count birds for the annual GBBC. Four women arrived and quickly headed downhill, and out of the wind, with Rich, to join me. On this cold (23 degrees!) morning many birds showed up for the abundant spread of seeds, suet, and their favorite — peanuts — that we put out almost daily. Among them were three Tree Sparrows, six Red-winged Blackbirds, and 13 White-throated Sparrows. To keep warm, we quickly hit the trails. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the Saw Whet Owl that had been easily seen the past three days. Also absent was our resident Barred Owl, which was seen almost daily in a tall White Pine. The "best" birds of the day, a Hermit Thrush and two Golden-crowned Kinglets, were spotted by new birder Ashley Fowler. Way to go,



A Hermit Thrush (top) and Dark-Eyed Junco were among the birds counted at Boyd Woods on February 19.

Photos: Rich Martin

Membership

(continued from page 2)

Dennis Moore	Cornwall Bridge
Carol Overby	Canaan
Ilana Peck	Torrington
Arnold Peet*	New Milford
Jeannette Puglio	Bethlehem
Erica Prudhomme	West Cornwall
Jennifer Ramey	New Milford
Douglas Rick	Cornwall Bridge
Patricia Seiflein	Bristol
Lisa Sheble	Salisbury
Mark Smedick	New Hartford
Alden Smith*	New Hartford
John Stamos	Bethlehem
Ilene Tetenbaum	Salisbury
John Verbickas	Torrington
Lauren Wasson	Cornwall
Richard and Robin Weiss	New Hartford
Renee Welner	Roxbury
Lisa White	Goshen
Sharon Yanke	Bristol

*Welcome back

LHAS Membership is at 1,037.

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

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

wildlife and their habitat, for the benefit of the community, through conservation, education, and research.

Be sure to mark your calendars with our program and field trip schedules; see the Calendar on pages 6-8. All are invited to join us for our free outdoor events.

Sincerely,

Marie

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

Feds Propose Listing Bat As Endangered



Northern Long-eared Bat

Photo (cropped): USFWS, Wikimedia Commons

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed reclassifying the **Northern Long-eared Bat** as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. (It is already listed as endangered in Connecticut.) This bat has been one of those hardest hit

by white-nose syndrome, a disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent. You can read more about this at fws.gov/news (scroll down to Press Releases).

Avian Influenza Virus Update

From CT DEEP's Master Wildlife Conservationist News

- The strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus that has been detected across the eastern U.S. was detected in live, wild mallards in Connecticut in February.
- While it is circulating mostly in waterfowl species, Black Vultures, Bald Eagles, terns, gulls, and other species have also tested positive along the East Coast.
- This strain has the high potential to cause mortality events in commercial and backyard poultry. Mortality in wild birds is relatively rare at this time.
- The DEEP has asked individuals to report (to min.huang@ct.gov and laurie.fortin@ct.gov) any mortality events in waterfowl, raptors, and other avian scavengers where birds are exhibiting neurological impairment or found dead, especially near facilities housing domestic birds. Do not touch or have direct contact with these birds.
- Avian influenza viruses are very contagious among birds. These viruses don't always kill or cause illness in their host but can sicken and kill domesticated birds such as chickens, ducks, and turkeys, and in rare cases, infect other hosts like humans, pigs, and horses.
- Do not feed wildlife, and discourage others from doing so. Feeding waterfowl will result in congregating birds

and in unsanitary conditions. Large quantities of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus can be excreted by birds that look healthy, thereby infecting birds at the same location.

- It is unclear if songbirds can carry or transmit the viruses.
- For additional information, visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/Avian-Influenza>.

World Migratory Bird Day Is May 14

This event is officially celebrated on the second Saturday in May (May 14th in 2022) as migratory birds journey to nesting sites and on the second Saturday in October (October 8th in 2022) as they return to wintering areas. In 2022, the impact of light pollution is the focus of World Migratory Bird Day, an annual global campaign that celebrates the migration of birds across countries and continents. According to the website, "Most birds migrate at night. They have been doing this for eons, as a night sky typically means calmer air space and fewer predators. Nocturnally migrating birds include ducks and geese, plovers and sandpipers, and songbirds of all kinds." For more information, visit www.migratorybirdday.org.

'Lights Out' to Help Migrating Birds

Night-time lighting can disorient migrating birds, causing them to crash. Although many people think this is an urban problem because of the huge number of lights in cities, it's a rural problem too: How many of us or our neighbors have outside spotlights or other lights on all night? Audubon's website has an article with interesting things various cities are doing to curb light pollution, some of which can apply to rural and suburban areas too; read it here: <https://www.audubon.org/news/how-bring-lights-out-city-near-you>.

Native, Non-native, Invasive: What's the Difference?

Creating a bird-friendly backyard or garden? You probably know you should choose native plant species over non-native ones, and eliminate invasive ones. National Audubon explains what those terms mean: **Native** plants are those that have existed historically in a particular area. Audubon's Plants for Birds program considers a plant "native" if it was

Conservation News

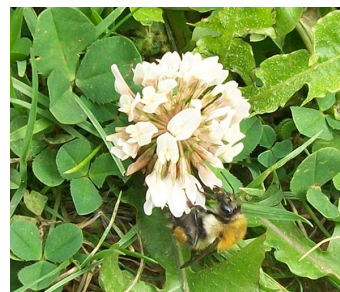
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here before European colonization. **Non-native** plants are species that have not existed historically in an area but have been introduced due to human activities. Non-native plants don't necessarily pose a threat to native plants, but non-natives may not support ecosystem health as well as native plants do. **Invasive plants** are non-native plants whose introduction causes environmental or ecological harm. They root and spread quickly, crowding out native species, because they usually lack predators or other checks on their growth. To read more about this, visit audubon.org/news.

Can Lawns Be More Wildlife-Friendly?

A truly wildlife-friendly yard would have no lawns. But it's probably not practical to eliminate all lawns. So, if you can't or don't want to replace yours, *National Wildlife* magazine (April-May 2022) offers ways to make a lawn more wildlife-friendly:

- Don't use chemical fertilizers, insecticides, or herbicides, even natural ones, because they can kill beneficial plants and insects. Rely instead on organic gardening techniques.
- Use a carbon-neutral push mower or mulching mower.
- Consider replacing turf grasses with native grasses or sedges.
- Mow less often to allow flowers such as clover to grow. Observing "No Mow May" (not mowing for the entire month) can provide food for bees, butterflies, and other insects — which in turn serve as food for birds.



Bees love clover!

Photo (cropped): AnemoneProjectors, via Wikimedia Commons

The Trip that Wasn't to Be, Was

By Russ Naylor

On February 13, Mother Nature perpetrated her usual tricks of late in storming on any bird count, meeting, or field trip we had scheduled. A storm that was supposed to occur that evening and leave but an inch or so of snow instead arrived early in the morning and bloviated into dumping 4–5 inches of snow on our parade, causing the Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Observation Area to be closed for that day. This after 60°F the day before and a spectacular day's birding at Lake Zoar, with Bald Eagles by the dozen, a potpourri of ducks heading up-river (2,133 Common Mergansers in one day!), and a mixture of early migrants winging northwards — Turkey Vultures, robins, hawks, Red-winged Blackbirds, and others.

Not to be so easily stymied, our intrepid group of LHAS and Western Connecticut Bird Club feather chasers forged ahead with our quest. Bent of the River Audubon Sanctuary started us out with our local Pileated Woodpecker and a Myrtle Warbler feeding on the fruit of its namesake. Lake Zoar was most productive — covered with rafts of Common Mergansers with other colorful species mixed in: Ring-necked Ducks, Black Ducks, Mallards, Common Goldeneyes, and other ducks. Hooded Mergansers in full color courted and fed up close, with some birds flying in to visit our group. Bald Eagles were stars of the show — over 25 of these birds fished the

lake and interacted for our pleasure. Although the Shepaug Dam site was closed, we viewed from the entrance 17 eagles cavorting back and forth above and below the dam, practicing aerobatics and playing talon tag. Most were frolicsome immatures. Meanwhile, one visiting pair of adults caught up on some private pre-Valentine's Day trysting.

Various migrants winged upstream — mergansers, Bald Eagles, robins, Red-tailed Hawks, and Mute Swans (yes, some do migrate short distances in both their Old and New World ranges). One Savannah Sparrow fed with juncos by the roadside before flitting off.

A stop at the Southbury Training School yielded Wood Duck, American Tree Sparrow, and pigeons patiently waiting for spring.

Back at Bent of the River, we spotted ravens, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, bluebirds checking tree cavities for nesting use, and two Purple Finches amid cardinals at the feeders.

Quite disgruntled by our perseverance, Mother Nature relented ungraciously — snow waning and a feeble sun peeking through dull clouds as we completed our quest. There are times when pertinacity pays off — we tallied 50 species to the tune of spring-awaiting cardinals, House Finches, Mourning Doves, and Carolina Wrens. We hope for spring birding adventures soon — if Mother Nature dislikes this, well tough titmouse to her, we say!

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Spring/Summer 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. 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.

GENERAL MEETINGS

Note: Some of our meetings will be hybrid: in-person and Zoom. If you want to attend via Zoom, go to the Calendar section of our website, lhasct.org, to register.

May 2 **Birds and Mammals in Brazil's Pantanal** **Monday, 7 PM**

Top birder Dave Tripp will entertain us with his pictures of birds and mammals from his trip to Brazil's famed Pantanal region last year. Some say the Pantanal is second to Africa for seeing mammals and is home to the rare Hyacinth Macaws. Dave will recount some of his experiences and stories as he presents the best collection of his photographs. Dave has been with LHAS since about age 12 when he and Fran Zygmunt began birding and he started the Barkhamsted Christmas Bird Count. He has traveled to many countries, including Africa and Venezuela, and continues to lead trips for Litchfield Hills Audubon, among others. He is the founding member of the Connecticut Big Day team, the Raven Lunatics, and is also a member of the Connecticut Ornithological Association's Avian Records Committee of Connecticut. We are in for a treat!

June 6 **Annual Meeting & Program: Creating Pollinator Pathways** **Monday, 6 PM**

The evening will kick off with socializing at 6 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner at 6:30, our Annual Meeting (when we will elect officers and new board members) at 7:15, and the presentation at 7:45. The presentation will let us know how to create and improve habitat in our yards or preserves for pollinators, including birds, bees, and butterflies. It will provide information and resources for both the beginner and experienced wildlife gardener alike. Even if you don't have a large area to work with, you can plant it and the pollinators will come. Also learn how to establish a "pollinator pathway" in your town through simple mapping tools, community organizing, and volunteer engagement. Our presenters are Jim Sirch, education coordinator at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History and a member of the statewide Native Plant and Pollinators Working Group, and John Markelon, president of the Litchfield Land Trust and a recently retired biological and environmental science teacher at Litchfield High School. At LHS, John coached students for many years for the CT Envirothon. **Watch your snail mail for the Annual Dinner flyer and registration form.**

July 11 **Gardening with Frogs and Toads** **Monday, 7 PM**

A garden filled with the peeps, trills, quacks, or croaks from our native frogs and toads is one of the fastest ways to judge the health of your local ecosystem. Learn how to garden to help the amphibian populations in your yard and beyond. Our presenter, Margery Winter, is the assistant director and instructor at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, where she shares her passion for earth science and nature with students of all ages. She manages the Nature Center's native plant gardens and is an advocate for the role of natives in our designed landscapes. She is a Master Landscape Design Consultant. Margery also is chair of the Simsbury Inland Wetland/Conservation Commission, a member of the town's Open Space Committee, and president of the Simsbury Land Trust.

The next Board Meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17. Contact Marie Kennedy at mariekennedy226@gmail.com to see if the meeting will be in person or via Zoom.

BIRDING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

May 4 Wednesday Morning Birding with Ray. Wednesday, time TBD

If interested in attending, send your email address to Ray Belding (turaco3000@gmail.com).

May 8 Morning Bird Walk at White Memorial. Sunday, 8 AM

Join Angela Dimmitt in the museum parking lot to leave at 8 a.m. SHARP! We might wend our way down to Little Pond, passing through woods full of newly arrived warblers and other migrating songbirds, all singing, full of the joys of spring. Or we might meander down past Ongley Pond and through the woods to Bantam Lake. Depends on our mood and people's wishes! **Questions? Contact Angela at angeladimmitt@aol.com or 860-355-3429.**

May 10 Bird Walk on the Appalachian Trail in Cornwall Bridge. Tuesday, 8 AM

Donna Rose Smith will lead a walk on the Appalachian Trail along the Housatonic River to look for spring migrants. **Directions:** Navigate to the junction of Route 4 and Route 7 in Cornwall Bridge; drive over the bridge toward Sharon. Then take the first right onto River Road (enter 1-99 River Road, Cornwall Bridge into your navigation device). We will meet under the bridge and carpool to the end of the road, as parking is limited.

May 11 Wednesday Morning Birding with Ray. Wednesday, time TBD

If interested in attending, send your email address to Ray Belding (turaco3000@gmail.com).

May 15 "Celebrate Migratory Birds!" A Boyd Woods Family Walk Sunday 11 AM

They're back! Mark the return of many fine feathered friends as we celebrate World Migratory Bird Day with an educational talk and hike for families at the Boyd Woods Sanctuary. On this walk, led by Kent Center School Science Teacher Josh Szwed and LHAS President Marie Kennedy, we'll learn about migration flyways, marvel at some migratory champions, and learn how you can help give returning birds a warm welcome! We'll meet at the parking lot off Route 254 in Litchfield, make our way to the bird blind, and learn about the theme for this year's World Migratory Bird Day. We'll look for returning and year-round birds on a short hike, then send you on your way with some "home-work" for the birds! After a water break, we'll head back out for those who want to hike and bird some more! No dogs. **For more information, contact Marie Kennedy at 914-393-6270 or mariekennedy226@gmail.com.**

May 17 Bird Walk on the Appalachian Trail in West Cornwall. Tuesday, 8 AM

Donna Rose Smith will lead this walk along the Housatonic River along Lower River Road in West Cornwall to look for spring migrants. **Directions:** *From the east* take Route 128 into West Cornwall; just before you get to the covered bridge, turn left onto Lower River Road. Continue on Lower River Road past Trinity Retreat Center to the end where there is a small parking area. *From the south* take Route 7 north and turn right toward West Cornwall; cross over the covered bridge. Take the first right onto Lower River Road and follow directions from the east, above.

(continued on page 8)



Photo (cropped): U.S. Department of Agriculture, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Junior Audubon Redux: Activities for Children and Families

LHAS' Education Committee has begun planning to resurrect the Junior Audubon program (possibly with another name) to interest children in birds and nature. The first event, a family walk at Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary, is set for May 15. See the calendar listing above for details. And if you have any ideas for activities, please **contact Vickie Dauphinais at 860-361-9051 or fdauphinais@optonline.net, or Josh Szwed at realjoshswzed@gmail.com.**

Calendar

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May 18 Wednesday Morning Birding with Ray. Wednesday, time TBD

If interested in attending, send your email address to Ray Belding (turaco3000@gmail.com).

May 22 Chimney Swift Swirl Sunday, 7:30 PM

At dusk, Chimney Swifts by the hundreds pour from the sky into large chimneys to roost for the night. Come witness this spectacle at Mitchell School in Woodbury. Meet leader Russ Naylor outside the Canfield Corner Pharmacy at the intersection of Routes 6 and 47 in Woodbury. **For more information, call Russ at 860-841-7779.**

May 25 Wednesday Morning Birding with Ray. Wednesday, time TBD

If interested in attending, send your email address to Ray (turaco3000@gmail.com).

June 1 Wednesday Morning Birding with Ray. Wednesday, time TBD

If interested in attending, send your email address to Ray (turaco3000@gmail.com).

June 4 Botany and Birds at White Memorial Saturday, 8 AM

LHAS member and avid birder Ann Orsillo and her friend Eileen Cooper are leading this special walk. Eileen is a retired educator, writer, artist, and knowledgeable botanist. Here is your chance to learn about the spring birds and flora. We will meet in the White Memorial museum parking lot. Bring water, insect spray, binoculars, and wear long pants and a hat. **Please notify Ann if you plan on attending in case of any changes to the plan; contact her at 910-880-1518 or spoonbill@optonline.net.** Rain date: June 5.

June 11-12 Summer Bird Count Saturday-Sunday, times TBD

Our count averages about 130 species each year. The count can be done on one day or spread over both days. All of the results are sent to the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) and compiled for statewide results. If you are interested in participating in the Summer Count, **send an email to Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.**

June 18 Birding by Ear at Aton Forest Saturday, 7 AM

Join Fran Zygmunt at Aton Forest for a birding-by-ear workshop. Learn how to identify migrant and breeding birds by their songs and calls. Aton Forest is home to many of the northern Connecticut breeding birds, including Winter Wren, Ruffed Grouse, Hermit Thrush, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. We also might see or hear Common Loon and Sandhill Crane. We will spend about 30 minutes for a brief lecture then go into the field for identification opportunities. Bird identification by ear is an important skill to have when birds are located in leafed, wooded areas where a visual identification is very difficult. Learn the nuances in this identification workshop and test yourself.

Meet at the Aton Forest headquarters at 7 a.m. Aton forest is located at 270 North Colebrook Road, Norfolk. **Contact Fran at fzygmunt@charter.net for questions.**

Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Update

By John Baker, Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Chair

The grounds are awakening; the beavers are out repairing their lodges and dams, and the pollinator garden is under development. The chestnuts are budding, and 54 non-resistant trees are being removed. The bluebird houses are being repaired and replaced. Forester Andrew Bosse is going after the invasives and doing some tree thinning.

Come on out. Get involved and enjoy the camaraderie of beavers, birds, nature, and friends.

2021 XMAS Bird Census Results

By Ray Belding, Compiler

The count was conducted on December 19th. I had sent out an email to all captains explaining that, like the previous year, we would not be doing a compilation at White Memorial's Carriage House. Captains would mail the results to me, by either email or snail mail. However, a splinter group was unofficially formed by those wanting to go back to the tradition of getting together to share results. As a result, half of the captains sent me their results and half met at Patty's Restaurant in Litchfield to share their lists. Patty's provided food. I understand that it was very nice. Perhaps we can go back to our tradition next year. Until then, blame Covid.

The participants: Michael & Fabienne Audette, Janet & John Baker, Bob Barbieri, Marcia Barker, Ray Belding, Terri Bianchi, Eileen Cooper, Jay Coles, Michelle & Doug Craig, Vickie Dauphinais, Angela Dimmitt, Mike Doyle, Kristi Dranginis, David Emond, Eileen & Kevin Finnan, Jamie Fisher, Evelyn Gelerter, Cathy Glassner, Ed Goodhouse, Nicki Hall, Judy Herkimer, Kim Herkimer, Dennis Hannon, Lucy Hudock, Marie Kennedy, Nic Main, Betsy Mark, John Marshall, Debbie Martin, Gail Melanson, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor, Nancy Noelle, Ann Orsillo, Patty Pickard, Ronnie Santo, Susanna Shirlock, Sam Slater, Donna Rose Smith, Carrie & Josh Szwed and Phoebe, Dave Tripp, John Wagenblatt, Fran Zygmunt.

CBC Species Totals

Canada Goose	1,668	Pileated Woodpecker	12	House Finch	149
Mute Swan	21	Blue Jay	221	American Goldfinch	187
Black Duck	76	American Crow	1,067	House Sparrow	187
Mallard	211	Common Raven	22		
Ring-neck Duck	57	Black-capped Chickadee	458	The following species are less common	
Hooded Merganser	145	Tufted Titmouse	333	or least expected:	
Common Merganser	1,981	Red-breasted Nuthatch	12	Snow Goose	2
Bald Eagle	18	White-breasted Nuthatch	164	American Coot.....	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Brown Creeper	7	Pine Siskin.....	2
Cooper's Hawk	8	Carolina Wren	123	Great Blue Heron.....	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	3	Winter Wren	5	Ruddy Duck	25
Red-tailed Hawk	23	Golden-crowned Kinglet	19	Common Goldeneye.....	9
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	Eastern Bluebird	122	Bufflehead	103
Wild Turkey	29	Hermit Thrush	10	Wood Duck.....	6
Ring-billed Gull	93	American Robin	1,476	Turkey Vulture (CW)	1
Herring Gull	3	Gray Catbird	2	Black Vulture (CW).....	
Rock Pigeon	184	Northern Mockingbird	3	Common Redpoll.....	3
Mourning Dove	213	Eurasian Starling	2,180	White-crowned Sparrow	1
Eastern Screech Owl	6	Cedar Waxwing	90	Pied-billed Grebe.....	1
Great Horned Owl	2	American Tree Sparrow	73	Norther Harrier	1
Barred Owl.....	10	Song Sparrow	90	Fox Sparrow	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	9	Swamp Sparrow	11	Field Sparrow	1
Belted Kingfisher	5	White-throated Sparrow	261	Pine Siskin.....	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	66	Dark-eyed Junco	999	Common Loon	4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	9	Northern Cardinal	105	Red-breasted Merganser	1
Downy Woodpecker	123	Red-winged Blackbird	700	Greater White-fronted Goose.....	1
Hairy Woodpecker	29	Brown-headed Cowbird	937	Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	1
Northern Flicker	15	Purple Finch	9		

A shout of thanks to Patty's Restaurant for the nice spread for those who chose to go to a compilation. A great big THANK YOU to all the captains and participants. Without your volunteerism there would not be a Christmas Bird Census.

Editor's Note: And a huge thanks to Ray Belding for compiling the CBC for the past 45 years!

Wetlands: Essential Bird Habitat

By Diane Edwards, *Chickadee Chatter* Editor and LHAS Vice President

We've all heard the mantra "location, location, location" — from a bird's perspective, that perfect spot could well be a wetland. Swamps, marshes, and other types of wetland provide essential habitat for many hundreds of bird species, at least for a part of the year. Some bird species' very existence depends on wetlands; without them, they would become extinct. Wood Ducks, for instance, are dependent on forested wetlands.

What's so wonderful about a wetland for birds? For one thing, wetlands serve as sources of drinking water and food for many birds. Just think about all the edibles — fish, amphibians, snakes, insects, and aquatic plants — that abound in a marsh or swamp. A Great Blue Heron might spear a fish with its sharply pointed beak. A Green Heron might catch a frog. Mallards might munch on plant stems and leaves, insects, tadpoles, or small fish. Tree Swallows can scoop up hordes of mosquitoes and other flying insects that swarm above a wetland.

Wetland vegetation can shelter birds from predators. One bird that takes advantage of this is the American Bittern, whose vertically striped breast blends in perfectly with reeds and marsh grasses. Wetland vegetation also can protect birds from wind, precipitation, and cold weather.

The food, water, and shelter wetlands afford make them very desirable breeding grounds. Up to one-half of North American bird species, including ducks, geese, woodpeckers,



Wood Duck hens and ducklings rest in a marsh.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

hawks, wading birds, and some songbirds, nest or feed in wetlands, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Coastal and inland wetlands provide resting, feeding, breeding, or nesting grounds for millions of migratory waterfowl.

Among the bird species inhabiting Connecticut's inland wetlands are Black Duck, Wood Duck, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Canada Goose, Green Heron, Great Blue Heron, Least Bittern, American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Sora, Spotted Sandpiper, Marsh Wren, Red-winged Blackbird, Tree Swallow, Acadian Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Swamp Sparrow, and Woodcock.

Birds such as Clapper Rail, Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Willet, and Seaside Sparrow nest in our coastal salt marshes. Other birds such as Marsh Wren, Pied-billed Grebe, herons, Glossy Ibis, and egrets also feed and nest in Connecticut's coastal wetlands.



A bittern's stripes help it hide among the reeds.

Photo: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren, Wikimedia Commons



A Green Heron finds a frog for lunch.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

In My Garden — A Journal — March 2022

By Angela Dimmitt

This month flew by, as did February. I was gone for two weeks in January, birding in western Mexico, and if you asked me to recall the weather this year, other than that it was really terrible while I was away, I would not be able to — except to say that it snowed a little and there was ice, but it was not very cold so I never got to burn the firewood I'd been hoarding in case of a power outage, and it's all a bit of a blur! I know I was very busy watching birds but not doing my usual sprints to the shore. Instead I watched them at my feeders, hoping for rarities which never came, wondering why they did not eat more of the assorted seeds and suet, all hanging on a high wire out of the reach of the bear — which also never came.

Now I'm hanging some feeders on a four-arm pole, bringing them in at night. And yes, there is finally some interesting activity as well as a strong post-dawn chorus around 6:45 when I get up. Among the pleasures: Fox Sparrows (one of my favorites), vocal Pileated Woodpeckers, Brown Creepers singing so sweetly, juncos trilling, White-throated Sparrows calling for Old Sam Peabody, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Carolina Wrens varying their loud insistent song. Goldfinches finally returned to the feeders after a long hiatus (although you could hear them in the tree-tops, eating birch buds), and also bluebirds began to scout out territories, hopefully to return later.

To me, one of the first real signs of spring (I don't count blackbirds) is to hear a phoebe singing — March 16 this year, and that same day I flushed a woodcock up at Sherman's Wismisink marsh, where I also saw the first Wood Duck, a lonely male. I returned the next evening and heard five woodcock peenting in four locations on Route 39 North, one of them also winnowing, doing its courtship display — what a thrill! On the 18th, that rarest of rare treats, a Winter Wren singing, a new "yard bird" in my garden; the next day too, tinkling and trilling somewhere near the stream! I tried to record him but the Merlin app would not let me. Perhaps some things are sacred, best remembered in one's mind.

On the 23rd, an unusually large flock of 22 White-throated Sparrows had a feeding frenzy around 5 p.m. — there are usually only four or five — and on the 24th the first-of-year Chipping Sparrow arrived. Robins, which showed up on my stream periodically through the winter, seem to have come

and gone again, moving north with the mild weather. The phoebe is hanging around the barn where last year it successfully reused the previous year's nest.

Yesterday, March 26, a big surprise was a tom turkey with nine hens; then today, one tom with three hens, the girls scratching in the leaf litter,

tom displaying. On the back lawn, he started displaying to his reflection in the kitchen glass door while the hens found corn under the feeders (when I

approached to toss some, they walked away but when one saw me throwing the seed, she came running — I wonder who's been feeding them!). At 6:15 p.m. it is snowing hard and tom's still at it!

The other real first sign of spring is of course the appearance of daffodils — there are a very few on the south wall, together with a couple of crocuses. But a nice surprise is some fuzzy pink pussy willows! Several years ago, I bought two little plants which the deer decided were absolutely yummy: now for the first time they have grown tall enough to be able to flower — a soft pink, followed by gold. Not exactly native to Connecticut but irresistible — and I saw some miniscule bees feeding on their pollen! Lilac leaves are beginning to open, surely a little early but so encouraging, telling one it's time to start spring clean-up.

My cat, Star, is still spending chilly days under the bedspread, but he is demanding to go out before breakfast — sometimes he scoots back in again, others he runs over to the same patch of grass near the feeders old Lucy loved to eat. He is now somewhat bored with the toy snake, preferring a couple



A Wild Turkey tom hoping to win the heart of one of the hens in Angela's garden.

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

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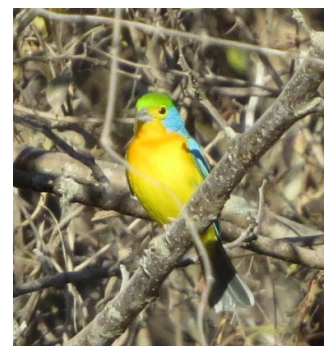
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Journal *(continued from page 11)*

of feathers on the end of a twitch. Luckily, he has difficulty catching it, which is why he has never caught a bird (not that he chases them: I'd keep him housebound if he did) — it means his bad right eye prevents him from focusing on prey.

Mexico? Ah that was a fantastic trip, climbing to over 9,500 feet in the west coast mountains, exploring the lowlands, and boating a river! We saw so many wonderful birds, including a good number of endemic species, plus many of "our" Connecticut birds over-wintering there. On one scrubby hillside, we found this extraordinary little bird, a very lo-

cal endemic, an Orange-breasted Bunting! Nowhere was touristy, and we were happy to find the people very Covid-conscious — one could not enter a hotel or restaurant without a mask and even people in the street all wore them. And the food was extraordinary — a delicious surprise and no relation whatsoever to Tex-Mex! I highly recommend western Mexico for birding Somewhere Different!



Orange-breasted Bunting

Photo: Angela Dimmitt