



# Chickadee Chatter



September/October 2024

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 69/Issue 5

*The mission of the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society is to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats, through conservation, education, research, and advocacy.*

## President's Message

By Diane Edwards



### Can We Lessen Light Pollution?

Artificial nighttime lighting can create havoc with our health and that of birds, moths, frogs, sea turtles, fireflies, and other wildlife. It interferes with our sleep-wake cycles, which are closely aligned with the natural day/night cycle. It suppresses the production of melatonin, a hormone that induces sleep and performs necessary functions in various organs in our body. And glare from outdoor

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

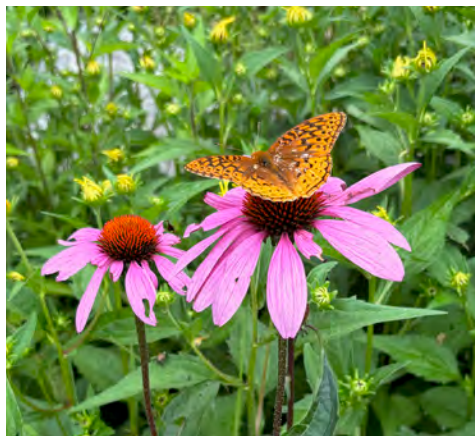
lighting that's not down-shielded can make it harder for us humans to see potential dangers.

Nighttime lights can attract or repel wildlife, often resulting in the creature's injury or death. For example, migrating birds, most of which fly at night, can become disoriented by lights, causing them to fly off course until they're exhausted or crash into buildings. An estimated 1 billion to 2 billion birds are killed by building collisions each year in the U.S., according to Lights Out Connecticut. *(continued on page 3)*

## Pollinator Gardens Abloom at LHAS Sanctuaries

By Vickie Dauphinais

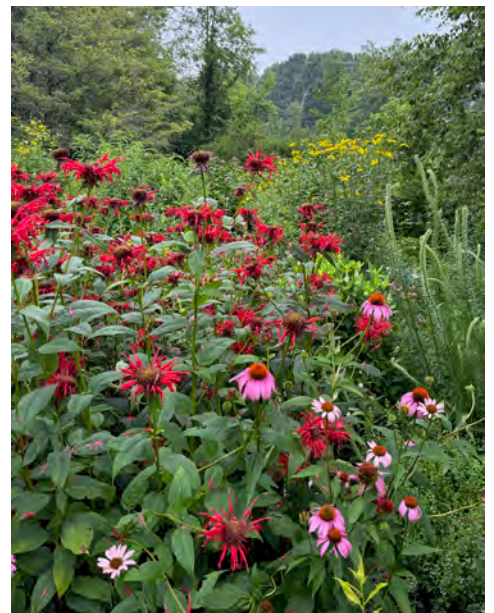
The butterfly garden at Kalmia Sanctuary in Harwinton and the pollinator garden at Wigwam Brook Wildlife Sanctuary in Litchfield are again luscious and providing a pollinator buffet! Lots of bees, moths, beetles, butterflies, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are enjoying the nectar from the nice variety of pollinator-friendly plants at each garden. The regular rain showers and the loving care from the gardening group have helped the plants thrive, and in turn, are helping the pollinators flourish. Take time to visit the gardens and enjoy a little peaceful solitude.



**A fritillary butterfly nectaring on echinacea at Kalmia Sanctuary.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

If you have some expertise or interest in gardening, we would love to have you on board. Send your contact information to me at [fdauphinais@optonline.net](mailto:fdauphinais@optonline.net). You will receive notification when work parties are scheduled.



**A symphony of color in Wigwam Brook Sanctuary's pollinator garden.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

**LHAS Officers**

President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Vice President	Fran Zygmunt	860-689-5001
Treasurer	Dave Tripp Jr.	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Rec. Secretary	Marie Kennedy	914-393-6270
Corresp. Secretary	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075

**Board of Directors**

Jay Coles	2025	203-788-7560
Marcia McGowan	2025	860-274-2089
Karen G. Nelson	2025	860-309-9018
Rich Martin	2026	860-736-7714
Pam Hicks	2026	smilemysles@yahoo.com
Harry Schuh	2026	860-307-0807
Mia Coats	2027	817-691-2525
Gina Decker	2027	860-379-0332
George Stephens	2027	860-921-7150

**Committee Chairpeople**

Boyd Woods Sanctuary Communications & Digital Media	Debbie & Rich Martin	860-819-7462
Conservation	Rich Martin	860-736-7714
Education	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Facebook	Vickie Dauphinais	860-361-9051
Field Trips	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Fundraising	David Zomick	860-513-8600
Historian	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Hospitality	<i>vacant</i>	
Kalmia Sanctuary	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Membership Outreach	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Membership Records	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075
Newsletter	Harry Ainsworth	860-777-8012
Programs	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Publicity	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Scholarships	<i>vacant</i>	
Wigwam Brook Sanctuary	Carol Kearns & Harry Schuh	860-307-0807
	John Baker	860-567-8427

**Research**

Summer Bird Count	Dave Tripp	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Christmas 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 **November/December** issue is **October 1**.

Please email items to appear in the newsletter to **Diane Edwards** at [edwardsd68@charter.net](mailto: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](mailto:lhasct@me.com).

**NEW MEMBERS**

*By Harry Ainsworth, Membership Records Chair*

Agostino Galluzo Trust.....	Lakeville
Evelyn Andrus.....	New Milford
Kathryn Arduini.....	Bristol
Gretta Basile.....	Washington Depot
Alan Brennan.....	Litchfield
Annette Brunoli.....	New Hartford
Kathleen Carter.....	New Milford
William Colbert.....	Roxbury
Elaine Cote.....	Terryville
Jill Fattig.....	Harwinton
Patty Findlay.....	Salisbury
Lynn Laskowski.....	Bristol
Janet Marlow.....	Litchfield
Nettie McKenna.....	New Milford
S. Posey.....	Sharon
Gail Sangree.....	Watertown
Rahul Sevani.....	Sharon
Cynthia Slekis.....	Watertown
T. Sobota.....	Bristol
Rachel Tantri.....	Lakeville
Robert Winters.....	Lakeville
David Yewer.....	Kent

LHAS membership is at 1,058.

*If your newsletter is addressed incorrectly, send an email to Harry Ainsworth at [hla1@me.com](mailto:hla1@me.com).*

**This newsletter and other LHAS features can be seen **IN LIVING COLOR** at [www.lhasct.org](http://www.lhasct.org).**



Scan the QR code at left with your smart-phone to go to [www.lhasct.org](http://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** for proofreading this newsletter!

**President's Message**

*(continued from page 1)*

That's why we urge everyone to turn off unnecessary outdoor lights during peak migration times. In the fall, that's from August 15 through November 15.

Birds aren't the only wildlife affected by light pollution. "Research into the ecological consequences of artificial night lighting is revealing numerous connections between light pollution and disruption to myriad species in almost all taxa," according to the website of the National Park Service (nps.gov). "A naturally dark environment is a vital resource to all living things."

**What Can Be Done?**

Since 2022, Lights Out Connecticut (of which LHAS is a "strategic partner") has been urging people, businesses, and municipalities to turn off unnecessary outdoor lights. Last year they helped to pass Public Act No. 23-143, the "Lights Out CT Bill," which requires all unnecessary exterior lights to be shut off at state-owned buildings from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. year-round. More recently, Lights Out Connecticut has devel-

oped "Model Outdoor Lighting Regulations for Connecticut," aimed at helping communities safely reduce light pollution at little or no cost. They're based on the Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting developed by Dark Sky International and lighting laws in Connecticut towns like Greenwich and Canton. You might want to let your town leaders know the model regulations can be downloaded at no cost at [lightsoutct.org](http://lightsoutct.org).

**Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting**

**1 Useful**  
Use light only if it is needed  
All light should have a clear purpose. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and their habitats.

**2 Targeted**  
Direct light so it falls only where it is needed  
Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.

**3 Low Level**  
Light should be no brighter than necessary  
Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions, as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.

**4 Controlled**  
Use light only when it is needed  
Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.

**5 Warm-colored**  
Use warmer color lights where possible  
Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed.

**Education Committee Update**



**Ann Orsillo tells kids about bird migration.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

Cornwall Public Library is the latest library to receive a birding backpack for patrons to borrow and try out birding. In June, Ann Orsillo and Vickie Dauphinais from the LHAS Education Committee were invited to give a program on migration in conjunction

with the backpack as part of the library summer camp activities. Twelve children,

ages 7-12, participated. Ann gave a short presentation on migration. The children asked a lot of thoughtful questions.



**Ann explains how to use binoculars.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

Afterward, they enjoyed walking outside around the library to practice spotting birds, butterflies, bees, and other insects with the binoculars. They also got to identify a few bird calls and songs with the help of the Merlin app.

## Summer Bird Count Results

By Dave Tripp, Jr., Summer Count Compiler

June 8th and 9th marked another summer bird count in the books. Most areas and the time birding were documented on the 8th. Rain was predicted for the 9th and did arrive as forecasted. Birds were actively calling at dawn to near silence mid morning. Red-eyed Vireos do not stop calling and a Carolina Wren is not shy, occasionally belting out its "tea kettle" series.

I am grateful for the hard work done by everyone who participates. Some weathered through the Sunday showers and rain; it did clear around 2 p.m. We wouldn't have a success-

ful count if it wasn't for all of the captains and their teams, all listed on page 5, counting and recording their efforts.

Species seen in only one or two areas were Mute Swan, Green-winged Teal (a SBC first), Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, Spotted Sandpiper, American Bittern, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Eastern Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, Fish Crow, Purple Martin, Cliff Swallow, Brown Thrasher, Pine Siskin, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Hooded Warbler, Northern Parula, and Prairie Warbler. Golden-crowned Kinglets were not recorded in their prior years' locations.

Our 14 parties of counters tallied more than 14,000 individ-

*(continued on page 5)*

### Birds Tallied

Canada Goose.....	326	Acadian Flycatcher.....	6	Field Sparrow.....	22
Mute Swan.....	3	Alder Flycatcher.....	85	Dark-eyed Junco.....	9
Wood Duck.....	105	Willow Flycatcher.....	83	Savannah Sparrow.....	3
Mallard.....	57	Least Flycatcher.....	45	Song Sparrow.....	544
<b>Green-winged Teal.....</b>	<b>2</b>	Eastern Phoebe.....	194	Swamp Sparrow.....	159
Hooded Merganser.....	7	Yellow-throated Vireo.....	125	Eastern Towhee.....	87
Common Merganser.....	4	Blue-headed Vireo.....	37	Bobolink.....	187
Wild Turkey.....	82	Warbling Vireo.....	124	Eastern Meadowlark.....	5
Rock Pigeon.....	64	Red-eyed Vireo.....	683	Orchard Oriole.....	3
Mourning Dove.....	197	Blue Jay.....	110	Baltimore Oriole.....	81
Yellow-billed Cuckoo.....	8	American Crow.....	279	Red-winged Blackbird.....	720
Black-billed Cuckoo.....	3	Fish Crow.....	10	Brown-headed Cowbird.....	158
Chimney Swift.....	46	Common Raven.....	58	Common Grackle.....	255
Ruby-throated Hummingbird.....	36	Black-capped Chickadee.....	188	Ovenbird.....	516
Virginia Rail.....	33	Tufted Titmouse.....	187	Worm-eating Warbler.....	5
Killdeer.....	3	Tree Swallow.....	292	Louisiana Waterthrush.....	21
Spotted Sandpiper.....	2	No. Rough-winged Swallow.....	32	Northern Waterthrush.....	28
American Woodcock.....	1	Purple Martin.....	24	Blue-winged Warbler.....	18
Double-crested Cormorant.....	3	Barn Swallow.....	304	Black-and-white Warbler.....	103
American Bittern.....	1	Cliff Swallow.....	5	Common Yellowthroat.....	413
Great Blue Heron.....	50	Cedar Waxwing.....	203	Hooded Warbler.....	5
Green Heron.....	9	Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	15	American Redstart.....	386
Black Vulture.....	14	White-breasted Nuthatch.....	89	Cerulean Warbler.....	7
Turkey Vulture.....	78	Brown Creeper.....	28	Northern Parula.....	2
Osprey.....	4	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.....	18	Magnolia Warbler.....	10
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	2	House Wren.....	190	Blackburnian Warbler.....	42
Cooper's Hawk.....	7	Marsh Wren.....	67	Yellow Warbler.....	510
Bald Eagle.....	5	Winter Wren.....	14	Chestnut-sided Warbler.....	210
Red-shouldered Hawk.....	44	Carolina Wren.....	72	Black-throated Blue Warbler.....	23
Red-tailed Hawk.....	37	Gray Catbird.....	608	Pine Warbler.....	93
Eastern Screech Owl.....	2	Brown Thrasher.....	3	Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	15
Barred Owl.....	35	Northern Mockingbird.....	4	Prairie Warbler.....	2
Great Horned Owl.....	4	European Starling.....	374	Black-throated Green Warbler.....	65
Belted Kingfisher.....	7	Eastern Bluebird.....	166	Canada Warbler.....	11
Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	55	Veery.....	453	Scarlet Tanager.....	144
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.....	105	Hermit Thrush.....	21	Northern Cardinal.....	180
Downy Woodpecker.....	59	Wood Thrush.....	131	Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	70
Hairy Woodpecker.....	43	American Robin.....	603	Indigo Bunting.....	50
Northern Flicker.....	49	House Sparrow.....	178		
Pileated Woodpecker.....	38	House Finch.....	132		
American Kestrel.....	7	Purple Finch.....	27		
Great Crested Flycatcher.....	90	American Goldfinch.....	278		
Eastern Kingbird.....	84	Pine Siskin.....	10		
Eastern Wood Pewee.....	139	Chipping Sparrow.....	309		

**Boldface = good or uncommon bird**

## Conservation News

### CT Revising List of Species of Greatest Conservation Need

The list includes birds, fish, mammals, herps (reptiles and amphibians), invertebrates, and plants. Some of the birds listed as Most Important on the draft list include Blue-winged Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark, Prairie Warbler, and Saltmarsh Sparrow. To see the complete list, go to [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/deep/wildlife/pdf\\_files/swap/publicdraftsgcnlist.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/deep/wildlife/pdf_files/swap/publicdraftsgcnlist.pdf).

### Seabirds Will Benefit from Bill to Update Federal Fisheries Law, Says Audubon

In July a bipartisan group of U.S. Representatives introduced the **Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act of 2024**, which reauthorizes the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), our nation's primary federal fisheries law. The bill introduces stronger protections for seabirds, which rely on healthy forage fish populations to survive.

Forage fish are not yet included in federal fisheries management, leaving them vulnerable to overfishing. Large fish, whales, and dolphins also feed on forage fish, making them essential for the commercial and recreational fishing industries as well as ecotourism.



**Atlantic Puffin with forage fish.**

Photo: Martin Mecnarowski, via Wikimedia Commons

The Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act adds new provisions to the MSA, like accounting for the needs of seabirds and other predators when deciding how many forage fish can be caught. The bill also factors climate change into the fisheries management process, prevents seabirds and other wildlife from becoming hooked or entangled by fishing gear, and provides better protections for coastal habitats like seagrass beds that serve as nurseries and feeding grounds for both birds and fish.

### Summer Count

(continued from page 4)

ual birds, represented by 127 species. The hours of effort it took to count and find that many: 134 hours of birding in the daylight (lower than last year due to rain) with an additional 20 hours of birding in darkness.

Many thanks to the participants (C signifying captains): John Anderson, Janet Baker, John Baker (C), Robert Barbieri (C), Jay Coles, Melissa Craig, Buzz Devine (C), Angela Dimmitt (C), Kevin Finnan, Ed Goodhouse, Nicki Hall, Pam Hicks, Janice Jankauskas, Bill Kennedy, Marie Kennedy (C), Paul Mahler (C), Debbie Martin, Rich Martin, Michele McDermott, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor (C), JoAnn Neddermann, Ann Orsillo (C), Lisa Roberge, Sam Slater (C), Donna Rose Smith (C), David Tripp Jr. (C), John Wagenblatt (C), and Fran Zygmunt (C).

### Bird Checklist Changes for 2024

The American Ornithological Society issued its annual checklist changes in July. Here are some of the most interesting changes, according to an article on the Audubon website (go to [audubon.org/menu/news](https://www.audubon.org/menu/news) to read the entire article):

- Common Redpolls and Hoary Redpolls are now one species, **Redpoll** (*Acanthis flammea*).
- Cory's Shearwater is now two species, **Cory's Shearwater** (*Calonectris borealis*) and **Scopoli's Shearwater** (*Calonectris diomedea*).
- The Siberian subspecies of the **American Pipit** (*Anthus rubescens*) is now considered a separate species, **Siberian Pipit** (*Anthus japonicus*).
- Barn Owl has been split into three species. The one in the U.S. is now the **American Barn Owl** (*Tyto furcata*).
- House Wren has been split into seven species, six of them in the tropics. Ours is now the **Northern House Wren** (*Troglodytes aedon*).
- Cattle Egret is split into two species and moved to a different genus. The bird in the Americas, Europe, and Africa is the **Western Cattle-Egret** (*Ardea ibis*).

## Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

### LHAS Calendar — Summer/Fall 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 meetings below will be in person and on Zoom. To participate on Zoom, go to the Calendar section of our website, [lhasct.org](http://lhasct.org), to register. You will be sent the login link. The meeting times shown below are when refreshments are available. A short business meeting begins at 7 p.m., followed by the presentation.*

### September 9 . . . "Birds & Beyond: the Biodiversity and Benefits of Grasslands" . . . . . 6:45 PM

Bobolinks: we all know they are in trouble (their worldwide population has declined 75% in the last 40 to 50 years). Tanya Bourgoin will give us a spirited talk about the importance of grasslands to Bobolinks and other birds and critters; why grasslands are the fastest disappearing ecosystems in the world; the benefits they provide, and ways to advocate for stronger conservation efforts. Tanya, born and bred in Connecticut, attended Colorado State University and has been involved with nature since she was 6. She is president of the Friends of Machimoodus and Sunrise State Parks and on the board of Connecticut State Parks. She also chairs the Sustainability Team in East Haddam, her town, of which she is also a selectman. She loves to share her knowledge and opinions about our natural resources and how to protect them. This presentation was created with help from the Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter's Wildlife Committee, of which Tanya is chair. In her "free time" Tanya likes to be outdoors with her husband, dogs, ducks, and goats!

### October 7. . . . . Dave Tripp's Trip to the Pantanal and the Amazon . . . . . 6:45 PM

Dave will show his fabulous photos from a trip he and several other LHAS members took to South America's Pantanal and the Amazon, featuring birds, of course, as well as jaguar and other animals.

## EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

### September 14 . . Hawk Watch at Topsmead State Forest . . . . . Saturday, 8:30 AM

Learn about raptor migration and then get your binoculars ready to scan the skies for any soaring hawks, eagles, or other raptors. LHAS birders Ann Orsillo and Donna Rose Smith will be on hand to help you identify any birds you see. We are collaborating with Friends of Topsmead State Forest to present this event. Meet at the tent behind the Welcome Center at Topsmead. Refreshments will be available.

### September 28. . Visit Our Table at White Memorial's Family Nature Day. . . . Saturday, 11 AM-5 PM

Bring the kids or grandkids to visit our table at this fun annual event. Besides activities for the kids, we will also have displays and information about our sanctuaries and activities for nature lovers of all ages.

### October 5. . . . . Bird Walk Through Forester Jim Gillespie's Acreage in Sharon . . Saturday, 8:30 AM

Jim has a 123-acre tree farm in Sharon. About 90 acres is in early successional forest (14 to 30 years old), an age class that is sorely lacking in Connecticut. His forest was the first in the "Foresters for the Birds" program being im-

**The next Board Meeting will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, September 17 at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.**

**LHAS Nature Explorers — Family Fun!****October 27 . . . . Experience the Spooky Side of Nature! .....Sunday, 2 PM**

If you dare, join the LHAS Nature Explorers for a guided walk on a trail and encounter spooky spots with spiders, crows, owls, and more. Do an activity at each spot. Wear your costume, if you like. If you make it back to where you started, you can enjoy cider and donuts. Free for kids of all ages! Meet at the Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. Rain cancels. Pre-registration appreciated at [lhsjunior@gmail.com](mailto:lhsjunior@gmail.com). For questions, call Vickie Dauphinais at 860-805-9167.

plemented by the Sharon Audubon Center. There are several miles of walkable trails, and Stony Brook, a class 1 trout stream, runs through it. **Directions:** From the Goshen rotary at the intersection of Routes 63 and 4, go west on Route 4 toward Cornwall (about 9 miles). At the Route 7 intersection continue west on Route 4 toward Sharon (about 2 miles), then go left on Northrup Road (large boulder) and go about 1 mile (bear left at Kings Hill Road/construction business) to South Ellsworth Road and take a left. In half a mile take right fork onto Herb Road. Go about 1 mile to #68 B on left. Go up the driveway a quarter mile to shed. (**Note:** GPS takes you to the beginning of the road about a mile away so follow the directions here.)

**October 6 . . . . Hawk Watch at Lighthouse Point . . . . .Sunday, anytime after 8 AM**

Hawk watchers at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven typically tally more birds than those at any other reporting site northeast of Cape May, NJ, says National Audubon. Thousands of other migrating birds — plus Monarch Butterflies — pass the point too, many of them stopping to rest and feed in the nearby woods and marsh. Join Angela Dimmitt for a day of watching this annual migration spectacle. **If interested, please contact Angela at 860-355-3429 or [angeladimmitt@aol.com](mailto:angeladimmitt@aol.com).** **Directions:** Take I-95 north through New Haven to Exit 50 and turn right on Woodward Avenue. At the end, past Nathan Hale Park, turn right on Townsend Ave. Watch for signs to Lighthouse Point Park and turn right on Lighthouse Road. Continue into the park; park in the parking lot or drive up to the hawk watch on the hill in front of the lighthouse. **Note:** There might be a non-resident parking fee, but it used to be waived if one said one was going to the hawk watch.

**October 18-20. . Fall Birding in and around Cape May, NJ . . . . . Friday-Sunday**

Cape May is one of the most well known East Coast birding destinations. We will go to some well-known and not-so-well-known birding sites throughout the county and stop at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on the way home to net around 130 species. On past trips, we have seen some great birds and had some great experiences. Ten rooms have been reserved for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights at the Hyland Motor Inn in Cape May Courthouse; cost: TBD (last year for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights was \$304). We will begin birding early Friday morning. This year's trip coincides with the Cape May Bird Observatory Fall Bird Festival, so we will make an attempt to visit the birding expo. Deadline to RSVP and register: September 27th. **To reserve a room, share a room, line up a ride, get a basic itinerary and/or payment instructions, contact Dave Tripp at [dtrippjr@gmail.com](mailto:dtrippjr@gmail.com).**

**Bird with LHAS on Weekday Mornings**

Join us for weekly jaunts to birding hotspots during September and October. Depending on birder schedules and the weather, you will be notified of the day, meeting place, and time. If you would like to participate, contact Pam Hicks with your email or texting number at [smilesmyles@yahoo.com](mailto:smilesmyles@yahoo.com) or 203-922-2684.

## Trip Report

# A Humid Forenoon Farewell to June

By Russ Naylor

On June 30, Education Chair Vickie Dauphinais led a group of LHAS bird buffs to visit Shepaug Dam in Southbury to see habitat managed by First Light utility and Connecticut Audubon for meadow and shrub-edge birds. The birds did not disappoint despite hot, humid conditions.

On arrival, we were greeted by a Carolina Wren in full song, plus a flyby of Black Vultures. Walking up to the eagle viewing area, our path was crossed up close by a male Blue-winged Warbler. We were serenaded by Prairie, Pine, and Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, as well as Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos.

Joining the chorus were Baltimore Oriole, Chipping Sparrow, and a medley of Indigo Buntings hoping to attract the female bunting we saw up close. At the eagle viewing area and the dam, bluebirds took a break from nesting duties, letting the House Wrens have their turn at the nest boxes. Turkey Vultures sunned on utility poles, Red-tailed Hawks flew by overhead, and a Cooper's Hawk patrolled the area on House Sparrow control duty. We had one Ring-billed Gull above the dam.

Stars of the show were the local Peregrine Falcon perched atop the dam for good views and at least 80 Cliff Swallows, the latter of which were

*At the eagle viewing area and the dam, bluebirds took a break from nesting duties, letting the House Wrens have their turn at the nest boxes.*



**Enjoying a picnic lunch. From left: Lynn Williamson, Russ Naylor, Gina Decker, Jay Coles, Tom Zissu, and Jim Gillespie.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

either lining up creches of fledglings along utility wires for flight training or else tending nests on the dam.

Venturing back below the dam, we heard a young raven calling, then took in water birds — a Mallard loafing with a dozen vacationing Common Mergansers and a bouncy Spotted Sandpiper, while a pair of Belted Kingfishers led forth the last-fledged of their current brood.

A bonus bird was a locally hatched young Bald Eagle in immaculate juvenile plumage, on her first exploratory sortie away from nesting territory. She bathed at water's edge, sunned a while, flew to a tree to preen, then tried to land on a tiny birch sapling. Too thin to bear her weight, the tree bent down, leaving the fledgling hanging by her feet, head and right wing hanging downwards. The flight skills were good, but landing maneuvers needed some practice! Dropping free, the eaglet next winged to a shrubby perch next to the dam, to eye the water for alewife appetizers.

Taking this cue, we stopped for a light picnic in the shade to the tune of Warbling Vireos in riparian trees — a sweet ending to a 64-bird excursion. Kudos to Vickie for conceiving and implementing this delightful idea for our members.



**Searching for birds in the meadow, led by Russ Naylor.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais



**Focus on Birds****Cliffs Notes: An Encounter with Cliff Swallows**

By Josh Szwed, LHAS Education Committee Member

While on lunchtime recess duty at Kent Center School this May (I work there as a science teacher), I was surprised to see and hear a pair of agile birds chattering aggressively and swooping down over some of the students playing by our school building. Upon closer inspection, I realized the reason for this aggressive bird behavior: a swallow nest had been constructed under the walkway roof! Having seen many Tree and Barn Swallows on our campus over the years, my mind jumped immediately to a Barn Swallow nest, familiar to me from the pairs nesting in our carport when we lived in Kentucky a few years back. Even the orange and blue coloration of these birds made me think of Barn Swallows, but where were the sharply-forked tail feathers? These birds had flat-edged tails! Later on, when I could get a look through binoculars from a safe distance, I noticed a striking, pale-colored patch just above the bill. These birds were in fact Cliff Swallows!

The Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) is one of seven swallow species that can be found in Connecticut, in addition to Bank, Barn, Cave (a rare migrant), Northern Rough-winged, and Tree Swallows as well as Purple Martins. Its genus name *Petrochelidon* means “rock swallow,” and its species name *pyrrhonota* means “flame-colored back,” although its former species name was *albifrons*, meaning



**Cliff Swallow nest.**

Photo: Josh Szwed



**Note the straight-edged tail on this Cliff Swallow.**

Photo: Channel City Camera Club from Santa Barbara, via Wikimedia Commons

“white forehead.” I personally think that *albifrons* describes one of this bird’s characteristic field marks much better. The pale patch above the adult bill and flat tail certainly help distinguish this species from the similarly-colored Barn Swallow.

Cliff Swallows are much more common

in the western part of North America, sometimes nesting in colonies containing as many as 6,000 gourd-shaped, mud nests! These large colonies have been the subject of many studies on colonial bird behavior, as Cliff Swallows are one of the most social land bird species (see more on this research at the end of this article). As their name implies, they naturally nest on cliff faces in western mountain ranges, but they have also adapted to many human-built vertical structures including



**Cliff Swallow parent and chick.**

Photo: Ashley and Brennan Wilkins

buildings, bridges, and highway overpasses, allowing them to expand their original range eastward.

This species is now widespread in North America, breeding from Alaska across Canada, all through the West down into Mexico, and into the Northeast, but only seen in migration through the Southeast U.S., Caribbean, and Central America. Cliff Swallows winter in South America. In Connecticut, many Cliff Swallow breeding pairs have been found in the Northwest Corner near rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, but also along the

shoreline. This makes sense, as most of the Cliff Swallow’s diet consists of insects caught on the wing near water. Northbound migrants arrive starting in April, nests are most active in May through early July, and southbound migration begins in late July and August. Nesting pairs are often solitary in this part of their range.

According to Connecticut Summer Bird Count data, Cliff Swallow sightings have been steady since 1993, averaging from around 300 to 600 sightings per year. eBird maps show most Connecticut sightings occur near bodies of water, with nests being reported on bridges, culverts, and buildings, including at least three school buildings in our region.

Though the conservation status of Cliff Swallows is considered “secure” and of “least concern,” threats to individual swallows include nest ectoparasites, human removal of

(continued on page 10)

## Weekday Bird Walks Follow in Ray Belding's Footsteps

The Wednesday morning bird walks formerly led by Ray Belding for so many years have continued to be successful in the number of participants and the number of birds sighted. David Zomick and Pamela Hicks have continued the tradition by scheduling several walks this past spring. A great group of enthusiastic birders elevated themselves to naturalists as they identified trees, shrubs, ferns, and even a toad and a snake. The Merlin app that has improved immensely was used by the group as an aid in identifying bird songs.

The final walk of the season culminated with a walk at the Roraback Wildlife Management Area in Harwinton. The group was thrilled with good looks of Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting. After the walk we proceeded to Patty Pickard's house for a delicious brunch. We were all pleased to see our "maestro," Ray Belding. We are grateful for his leadership skills and for founding our group. May we keep the tradition

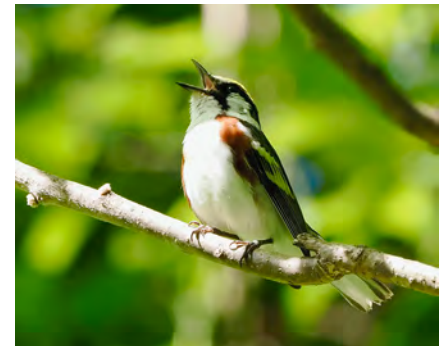


**Birders enjoying a weekday walk.**

Photo: Ann Orsillo

of great birding and the comraderie of discovery.

*The walks will continue this fall; see page 7 for more info.*



**Left to right: Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, and Chestnut-sided Warbler, all seen during the weekday walks.**

Photos: Ann Orsillo

## Cliff Swallows

*(continued from page 9)*

pesticides, and in the Northeast, House Sparrow competition for old swallow nests. As Cliff Swallows will reuse their old nests upon their return to their breeding sites, studies have shown that removing these old nests during the winter discourages House Sparrows from using them, and allows Cliff Swallows to persist by building new nests each season.

One of the first North American bird species described by the Spanish in Utah in 1776, Cliff Swallows were also the species of fame known for their long-time, annual return to Mission San Juan Capistrano in California each year on March 19th (though reforestation of the area has led to the Cliff Swallows no longer nesting at the mission despite

efforts to entice them back). It's amazing that in just a few centuries of eastward expansion, we now get to enjoy them each year in Northwest Connecticut as well. I hope they will continue to nest at Kent Center School, so I can visit with these "cliffhangers" each spring! Be sure to check [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) for recent sightings if you want to get to know this amazing bird a little better.

*Special thanks to Laurie Doss, Science Department Chair at Marvelwood School in Kent, for sharing her photos and resources with me. Laurie worked in Nebraska as a research intern back in 1984 with Dr. Charles Brown, one of the leading researchers on Cliff Swallows in the world. To find out more about Dr. Brown's research — *The Cliff Swallow Project* (which has been ongoing for 43 years!) — visit [cliffswallow.org](http://cliffswallow.org) or check out Dr. Brown's book *Swallow Summer* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998).*

## In My Garden — A Journal — July 2024

By Angela Dimmitt

Today I overslept. It's instinctive — it's raining. Stay in bed — no point going out to slay a dinosaur for breakfast; they'll be staying in their caves as well. Even the dog has not gone out to hunt a small Compsognathus which he could have shared with us, and the cat barely opened an eye when a mousasaur peaked out of its hole. It's quiet too — no Archaeopteryx calling.

So I staggered to the kitchen which was — oh joy! — filled with the scent of a huge bowl of phlox picked last evening, a dozen different colors from all over the garden. This is their time! Last week daylilies were in their prime, again dozens of different ones, the "old-fashioned" ones with small, simple flowers, often scented, planted in this garden at least 50 years ago; and the fat sassy "modern" ones with their audacious in-your-face colors. I am besotted by daylilies — and hostas (never met one I didn't want) — they too were in their prime, flowering blue, lavender, and white, each cluster of leaves doing its thing to look wonderful. Yes, I do spray against the deer — a home-made brew of eggs, hot sauce, and Wilt Stop (by Bonide) which needs to be applied at least once a week now — but it does not smell like the commercial sprays and seems to work for me, at least most of the time. The deer are here — they have occasionally nibbled other plants, but so far only minor damage. Crossing fingers tight!

Now hydrangeas are coming into their prime — several beginning to turn from white to pink, round florets, pointed ones. Huge, pure white Annabelles are weighted down by their sheer size, as are the really old Macros up by the road (at least 50 years old), which flower only after a very mild winter, every 10 years or so — they are covered with hundreds of blossoms, blue, pink, white, and everything in between (sadly not their usual deep blue — but who's complaining!). I have never seen such a profusion from these old Macros — but after the rain they are all lying flat on the ground, their new

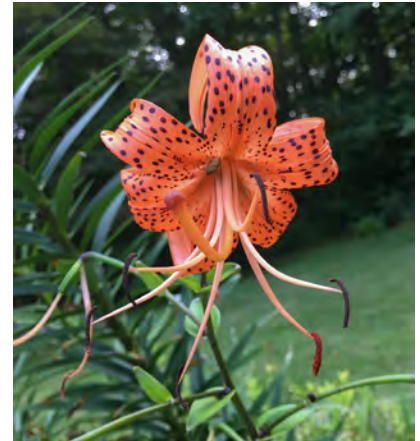


**Cottontail Rabbit**

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

wood just not strong enough to support the prodigious weight.

More scents in the garden — Star Gazers — too gorgeous to be real (note to self: must get more!). Tiger lilies, 6-7 feet tall, do not smell though look as if they should be breathing fire. They are amazing! A simple little rose that my late husband, Bud, planted back in the 90's has just reap-



**Tiger lily**

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

peared after I thought it was quite dead — wondrous deep red. The first bud was eaten but more are appearing. There should be more scented flowers like our parents wrote about — my very early, clear-yellow daylilies are scented, and there's one deep gold one now, but most do not smell.

*Birds are suddenly rather quiet, as the dawn chorus from 5:30 to 6 has lost the Wood Thrush, Veery, robin, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, even House Wren ...*

Birds are suddenly rather quiet, as the dawn chorus from 5:30 to 6 has lost the Wood Thrush, Veery, robin, Red-eyed and

Yellow-throated Vireos, even House Wren — now only a catbird and maybe a Carolina Wren serenade me. Two pairs of House Wrens were raising broods at the same time, one in the straw hat on the patio, the babies making their usual constant racket demanding food. They all disappeared the day after fledging — why do many birds do this, quickly move away from their territories? Young Song and Chipping Sparrows are coming to the feeders, also Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and hordes of House Finches. I often see or hear a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers, but they have no offspring yet. A kingfisher has returned to the stream for its favorite crayfish, and a Great Blue Heron often flies over. And hummingbirds apparently nested successfully — two babies are visiting the feeders, a male with hints of streaks on his throat, and a little female, as well as their parents. They also visit flowers — particularly salvias and bee balm. The window feeder is only 3 feet from where I sit at the computer — they don't seem to mind me!

A pack of coyotes lives here or across the road. The pack howls most evenings, very unnerving. Star (my cat) does not seem to react — just hope he can climb a tree if he meets them. It's 8 p.m. — they just howled. The only other sounds are crickets and a katydid. High Summer!



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 86 I  
Litchfield, CT 06759-086 I

Address Service Requested

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

**Like Us On Facebook!**

[www.facebook.com/LitchfieldHillsAudubonSocietyLHAS](https://www.facebook.com/LitchfieldHillsAudubonSocietyLHAS)

**Visit Our Website!**

[www.lhasct.org](http://www.lhasct.org)

**Follow Us On Instagram**

[https://www.instagram.com/litchfield\\_hills\\_audubon/](https://www.instagram.com/litchfield_hills_audubon/)



Printed on Recycled Paper

**DATED MATERIAL — PLEASE DO NOT DELAY**

## Picnickers Enjoy Seeing Raptors at Boyd Woods

Our annual picnic at Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary on August 5 was a huge success, with about 70 adults and children in attendance. The draw, of course, were the stars of the show: Sharon Audubon's Bethany Sheffer with "Bob" the American Kestrel (below, left) and "Mandy" the Red-tailed Hawk (not shown).



Photos: Rich Martin

