



# Chickadee Chatter



March/April 2025

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

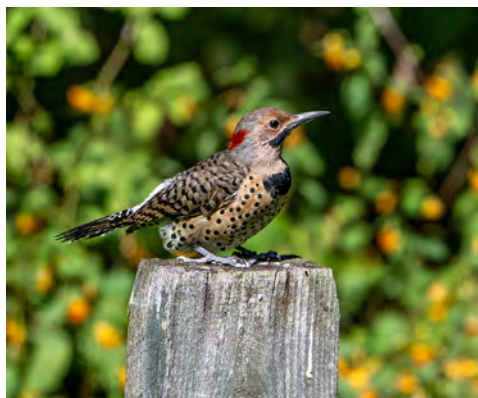
Volume 70/Issue 2

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

## Focus on Birds

### My 'Spark' Bird: The Northern Flicker

By Beverly Baldwin



**Male Northern Flicker.**

Photo: Michael Audette

Years ago, the Northern Flicker sparked my interest in birds. You may or may not remember your "spark" bird, but you probably had one. It was the one species that intrigued and fascinated

**See Calendar on pages 5-6 for our  
Upcoming Meetings & Field Trips**

you. It got you started on your birding journey. Your spark bird could be the Dark-eyed Junco, covered in all shades of gray until suddenly it flew away showing the white on its tail feathers. Or perhaps it is a water bird, such as the American Coot, looking so duck-like until it climbed out of the water and you saw the feet.

I cannot recall the first bird that made me realize there were birds other than the American Robin, but I do know the Northern Flicker sparked my interest. I wanted to learn about the differences among woodpeckers. How could a bird of a different color be the same as all the other woodpeckers living in Connecticut?

To me, the most common woodpeckers in Connecticut look quite similar. Their sizes may be different, but the

*(continued on page 3)*

## President's Message

By Diane Edwards

### Will You Help Lead LHAS?



In June LHAS will hold its 70th Annual Meeting & Dinner. That's when we will elect officers and board members. This year we are looking for a new president (yes, I'm stepping down after three years), vice president, recording secretary, and three board

members.

The **president** runs our monthly general meetings and bimonthly board meetings; works with other officers, board members, and committee chairs to advance our mission and achieve our goals; and handles various administrative tasks.

The **vice president's** main duty is to lead meetings in the absence of the president. The **recording secretary** takes notes at our general and board meetings and uses them to create the meeting minutes. Our **board members**, each of whom serves a three-year term, help guide our organization, voting on issues of importance. The board meets every other month.

If you might be interested in getting involved or can suggest the name of someone you think might be, please contact our Nominating Committee chair, **Vickie Dauphinais, at 860-805-9167 or vdauphinais1@gmail.com.**

Thank you to Vickie and the other members who have volunteered to be on the committee: Tom Zissu and Gina Decker.

**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	860-733-2670
George Stephens	2027	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	860-805-9167
Facebook	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Field Trips	David Zomick	860-513-8600
Fundraising	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Historian	<i>vacant</i>	
Hospitality	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Kalmia Sanctuary	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Membership Outreach	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075
Membership Records	Harry Ainsworth	860-777-8012
Newsletter	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Programs	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Publicity	<i>vacant</i>	
Scholarships	Carol Kearns & Harry Schuh	860-307-0807
Wigwam Brook Sanctuary	<i>vacant</i>	

**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 **May/June** issue is **April 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*

Sage Bachmann	Litchfield
Thomas Battiste	Litchfield
Robin Bell	Salisbury
Virginia Chambers	Watertown
Ann Coletti	New Milford
Douglas Craig	Goshen
Susan Cuinel	Bristol
Deirdre Denny	Torrington
Virginia Erickson*	Bethlehem
Andrea Fancher	Barkhamsted
Diane Field	Bantam
Patricia Freedman	Harwinton
Margaret Gaynor	Litchfield
Lawrence Hendrickson, Jr.	Winsted
Judy Jackson	Roxbury
Peter Kostmayer	South Kent
Priscilla Marshall*	New Hartford
Richard Middendorf	Bridgewater
Eleanor Morris	Kent
Linda Nielsen	Torrington
Margaret Roscoe	Bristol
Devin Stilson	Goshen
Michael Vandreuil	Sherman
Mitzi White	Bantam

\* *Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 1,092.

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

**Condolences**

LHAS extends our sincere sympathy to Fran and Liz Zygmunt on the passing of Fran's father, Edward Zygmunt, in January at age 95.

**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).

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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!

## Northern Flicker

(continued from page 1)

Red-bellied, Hairy, and Downy Woodpeckers — and even the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and the magnificent Pileated Woodpecker — are all black and white with some red. They all search for insects and seeds. They will readily come to your bird feeders.

The Northern Flicker, however, is not black and white. It is a medium-size, brown-backed woodpecker with black spots, bars, and crescents. Here in the Northeast it has a gray crown and red nape patch. The underwing and under tail are yellow (making it a yellow-shafted flicker; Western states have a red-shafted subspecies). Males have a black moustache stripe.

The females resemble the males but lack the moustache. They have a black crescent on the breast. How could a bird with such different colors still be a woodpecker?

*"You may find the Northern Flicker hopping on your lawn. . . . The only other woodpecker in Connecticut you might see on the ground would be the Pileated, but only at the base of a tree."*

You may find the Northern Flicker hopping on your lawn, listening and searching for ants! To me, this did not seem like woodpecker behavior. The only other woodpecker in Connecticut you may see on the ground would be the Pileated, but then only at the base of a tree.

The differences between the Northern Flicker and the other Connecticut woodpeckers are mostly in the coloring. They all have beaks designed for pecking to search for food under bark and to help with making nests. Their bodies are designed for climbing straight up and down trees. Their tongues are designed for probing under the wood to search

for insects and in some cases sap. Woodpeckers nest in holes in trees. They peck the wood to make a hole and enlarge the interior. The hole leading into the nest is just big enough for the bird to get in. The flicker



**Female Northern Flicker.**

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

er uses the cavities of dead trees and occasionally a kingfisher's old nest. The other woodpeckers favor live trees with soft bark. Most Connecticut woodpeckers do not migrate, though some Northern Flickers will travel to warmer areas in the winter.

Thus, the Northern Flicker's different colors sparked an interest in learning more about our Connecticut woodpeckers. Birding is so much more than spotting a bird and identifying it. It is learning where the different species live. Are they permanent residents or do they migrate? Where do they nest and breed? What foods do they eat? How has their anatomy evolved to assist in their survival?

What is your spark bird? Will learning about birds make you realize just how important it is that we share our space with them?

## Once Again, It's 'Lights Out' Time

To protect migrating birds this spring, turn off or dim non-essential lights between April 1 and May 31.

As the website of Lights Out Connecticut ([lightsoutct.org](http://lightsoutct.org)) points out, most migrating birds pass through Connecticut at night. That's when air temperatures are cooler, there's less wind, and avian predators are less active. "Landing at daybreak also allows for optimal foraging, as insects become active. Further, science shows that the birds navigate by cues in the night sky, including the light of the moon and stars." Artificial light "can confuse and disorient migratory birds, causing them to circle around for hours until they drop from exhaustion or land in unsafe areas, close to structures where they are at higher risk of building collisions and predation."



**The Golden-winged Warbler is a priority species that can benefit from Lights Out programs.**

Photo: Bettina Arrigoni, Wikimedia Commons



## Trip Report

# A January Thaw Doth Migrants Draw

By Russ Naylor

A joint troupe of LHAS and Western Connecticut Bird Club featherquesters sallied forth on January 26th to visit the Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Observatory and sample the earliest vanguard of northbound migrating birds.

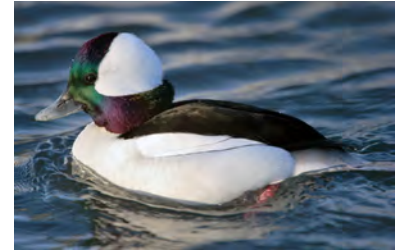
On the way to the site, on River Road, a large adult Bald Eagle stood sentinel in a tree right over the road — an honor guard heralding our arrival.

At the dam, we witnessed a steady trickle of adult Bald Eagles soaring high and northbound as early spring migrants. Meanwhile, a Northern Harrier coursed over Mitchell Farm fields on rodent patrol. The resident Peregrine Falcon put on a magnificent show, swooping and circling low over our heads on scimitar wings, scaring three species of gulls up into prudent retreat. Yet, not one Red-tailed Hawk showed itself on our entire trip — go figure!

We did get to see this season's second major wave of early northbound waterfowl on Lake Zoar. At least 127 Black Ducks, 1,419 Common Mergansers, and four rafts totaling

at least 580 Ring-necked Ducks staged on open water. With them mingled a scattering of Mallards, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, and Hooded Mergansers. Best of all, a lone hen Red-breasted Merganser played "needle in a haystack" amidst her common cousins in a huge paddling below Shepaug Dam.

We were also treated to three Black Vultures, roving bands of robins and bluebirds all foraging, local ravens scouting for edibles, and roadside Savannah Sparrows on our 44-plus species sortie. Even though we were heading into the harshest part of winter, the seasonal pendulum was swinging inexorably from southbound fall/winter movement toward the northbound passage of spring.



Top photo: Bufflehead

Bottom photo: Common Goldeneye

Photos: Wikimedia Commons

## Nature Explorers Out and About

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Chair



Youngsters visiting the LHAS table.

Photo: Marie Kennedy

### Fire and Ice Fest

Ann Orsillo and Marie Kennedy from the LHAS Education Committee participated in the Litchfield Community Center's annual Fire and Ice Fest on January 25th. Despite the cold temperatures, the fest was well attended. Many families stopped by the Audubon table. Ann and Marie shared with them the importance of feeding our winter birds during the chilly winter months.

Visitors were given a sample of Zick Dough with a recipe card and packets of sunflower/safflower seeds to put out for their backyard birds on cold, blustery days. (Zick Dough is bird-feeding treat created by Julie Zickefoose.)



Scoping out an eagle.

Photo: Karen Geitz

### Eagle Viewing at Shepaug Dam

LHAS Nature Explorers went on a road trip to Shepaug Dam in Southbury on Sunday January 26th hoping to catch a glimpse of magnificent Bald Eagles. They were thrilled to see three eagles! They were able to get a great view of an adult through a scope set up by a volunteer. Such a treat! Lots of mergansers graced the water at the bottom of the dam, and a Peregrine Falcon soared above several

times. But the eagles stole the show! All in all it was a great winter day.

# Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

## LHAS Calendar — Winter/Spring 2025



**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 7:15 p.m., followed by the presentation.*

**March 3. . . . . American Kestrels . . . . . 6:45 PM**

Bethany Sheffer from Sharon Audubon has yet another superb presentation for us! American Kestrels are a species of fascination for birders and non-birders alike. Whether due to their small size, distinctive plumage, or their conservation successes in Connecticut, one can't help but find them appealing. The work of a core group of people, beginning with Art Gingert, has achieved much on behalf of America's smallest falcon. Join us in an exciting exploration of the American Kestrel, statewide conservation efforts, and the questions Audubon is asking about this species' long-term survival. Bethany is Sharon Audubon's volunteer coordinator/naturalist and works closely with its Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic. She holds a master's degree in public administration and is a certified environmental educator and beekeeper.

**April 7. . . . . Build a DIY Mini Bog in Your Front Yard! . . . . . 6:45 PM**

Barbara and Peter Rzasa will show us how to build something truly remarkable in our own gardens! Many beautiful native wetland plants can be found growing in Connecticut's bogs and fens. These include eastern pitcher plant and sundew, cranberry, arrowhead, marsh St. Johnswort, rose pogonia, and grass pink orchids. Because bogs are very low in nutrients, pitcher plants and sundews evolved into carnivorous plants, able to capture insects in their pitcher-like leaves and to extract nutrients from them. Viewing such plants in the wild can be difficult because they can be elusive and inaccessible in their wetland areas. Learn how to build your own do-it-yourself mini bog measuring less than four square feet and grow several easily observable wetland plants! Barbara and Peter are local historians and nature photographers who give presentations on Connecticut's historical structures, as well as topics like trees, lichens, and wildflowers, with the goal of encouraging people to look closely at the wonders of our natural world.

### EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

**March 2. . . . . Eagle Viewing at Shepaug Dam, Southbury . . . . . Sunday, 9 AM**

Join Russ Naylor to view our national bird in suitable habitat at the Shepaug Dam at Lake Zoar in Southbury. We'll also be likely to view Common Ravens, displaying Common Mergansers and American Black Ducks, a resident Peregrine Falcon, and other visiting winter birds. As a bonus, we might be treated to a live birds of prey presentation by a raptor rehabilitator. Meet at the junction of Routes 6 (Main Street North) and 47 outside the Canfield Corner Pharmacy in Woodbury. *If you plan to go, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779 and leave a message. He will make a reservation for the group.*

*(continued on page 6)*

**The next Board Meeting will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 18 at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.**

## Calendar

(continued from page 5)

### **April 12. . . . . Bird Walk — Early Migrants at the Bent. . . . . Saturday, 8 AM**

Start the spring migration season at the Bent of the River Audubon Center as we sight Wood Ducks, Eastern Phoebes, Tree Swallows, various sparrows, and other returning birds. Meet at the Bent's visitor parking lot at 185 East Flat Hill Road, in Southbury. *For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779 and leave a message.*

### **April 22. . . . . Garden Clean-up at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary, Litchfield. . . Tuesday, 10 AM-Noon**

The Red-winged Blackbirds will be arriving to announce spring! Time to start thinking about getting the gardens ready for the migrants and other pollinators. Mark your calendar for this clean-up event. We will cut down dead plants and grasses, and remove visible weeds and other plant debris. We can also decide on new perennials needed to complement the existing plants. Bring gloves, your favorite gardening tools, spray for ticks, and lots of energy! *To sign up, email Vickie Dauphinais at vdauphinais1@gmail.com or call her at 860-805-9167.* Rain date: April 23, same time.

### **April 22. . . . . Earth Day Event: 'Wings Over Water' Screening. . . . . Tuesday, 6:30 PM**

For details, see back page.

### **April 24. . . . . Garden Clean-up at Kalmia Sanctuary, Harwinton . . . . . Thursday, 10 AM-Noon**

See April 22 for details. Rain date: April 29, same time.

## **LHAS Nature Explorers — Family Fun!**

### **March 22 ..... Tour of Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy.....Saturday, 12:15 PM**

Meet at the Conservancy entrance, 55 Duck Pond Road in Litchfield.

**Tour Highlights:** This is a special guided tour lasting 60-90 minutes. It will be led by one of the Ripley Conservancy's aviculturists. Participants will see and learn about the 101 species that live at the Conservancy. At this time of year the birds are in beautiful breeding plumage and the males are performing their courtship displays.

**Who:** Children ages 5 and up accompanied by an adult. This tour is limited to 12 participants including children. Since space is limited **you must sign up** for this event with the number of people attending in your family. **Sign up by March 15.** If you must cancel, **please notify us** as soon as possible so that we can fill the space with a family on the waiting list. *Sign up by contacting LHAS at lhasjunior@gmail.com.*

### **April 27 ..... Exploration of Pond Life at Boyd Woods Sanctuary.....Sunday, 1 PM**

In spring it's often the arrival of birds and the budding vegetation that captivate us. But nature is on the move underwater too. Join the LHAS Nature Explorers at Boyd Woods to look for all the aquatic critters coming to life in the ponds and streams. Catch a glimpse of frogs and spotted salamanders. Listen for spring peepers and wood frogs. Maybe spot a Jack-in-the-Pulpit or a lovely trillium. Avid naturalists Ann Orsillo and Josh Szwed will lead participants through the fascinating metamorphosis going on in the pond. Come ready to get your hands dirty. Wear waterproof footwear for pond exploration. FUN! Appropriate for kids and adults. Meet at the Boyd Woods parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. *Pre-registration is appreciated at lhasjunior@gmail.com. For questions, call Vickie Dauphinais at 860-805-9167.* Heavy rain cancels.

## **Bird with LHAS on Weekday Mornings**

Join us for weekly jaunts to birding hotspots this spring. 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 or 203-922-2684.*



## Denizens of My Garden — December 2024–January 28, 2025

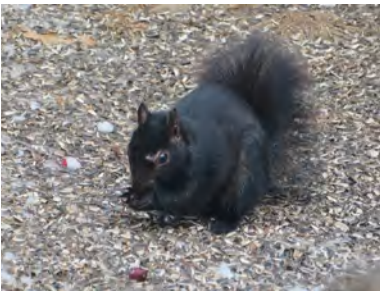
By Angela Dimmitt

Yesterday a House Finch was singing so sweetly, perhaps mistaking the snow for desert sand? Not much is happening with the garden now of course, beautifully covered as it is with a fresh coat of snow, but birds and animals have been busy, as their tracks attest. Though few deer are around, a friend reported a bear knocked down feeders last night in Woodbury. Can spring be far behind? Here are some of the more unusual recent denizens of my garden — I now carry a camera in my pocket just in case I see something!



**Bobcat:** My “Big Bruiser” — I believe it’s a male because of his size, like a small golden retriever. He is a frequent visitor to my garden as evidenced by lots of tracks in the snow and several sightings (this photo taken at 7:53 a.m.). I also saw him disappear-

ing around the corner of the house, having hugged the wall where the snow had receded. I saw him again at dusk down near the stream.



**Black Squirrel:** This beauty has come to feed under the bird feeders three times, in May, December, and today. In a reversal of the norm, it chases the gray squirrels away! It has a beautiful glossy black coat with

hints of rich brown; very bright eyes. Apparently it’s simply a color morph of the gray squirrel. They are becoming more common in Connecticut.



**Red Fox:** This handsome fellow is absolutely gorgeous, looks in the prime of health. Twice it has run across my back lawn from the woods down to the stream, which it follows until there’s an easy crossing place.

Footprints on the bridge (along with the bobcat’s) indicate it would rather not get its feet wet.



**Unusual birds:** A Belted Kingfisher comes almost every day to a bend in the stream, which never freezes — twice I’ve watched him (it is an “unbelted” male) catch a little wriggling fish. A Great Blue Heron flies over quite often, heading upstream towards the swamp or back, heading perhaps

between the Housatonic River and Candlewood Lake. And yes, he sometimes stops at the same bend as the kingfisher. A pair of Hooded Mergansers checked out the stream recently. Red-tailed Hawks — a pair is already doing its “spring thing,” flying and soaring together. Yesterday an adult Cooper’s Hawk scared all the birds from the feeders. A big flock of robins were down in the swamp; one day more than 20 came and ate all the purple berries from a small callicarpa bush.

And have you noticed the recent sunrises and sunsets? Often very pretty, sometimes dramatic.

Photos: Angela Dimmitt

### Give Local: April 29-30

Once again, LHAS is participating in the Connecticut Community Foundation’s Give Local campaign. This 36-hour event begins at 7 a.m. on April 29 and ends at 7 p.m. on April 30. We hope you will select us as one of the organizations you choose to support!

Thanks to generous sponsors — including presenting sponsor Ion Bank Foundation — nonprofits like LHAS have the chance to earn bonus dollars for every dollar in donations they receive and have an opportunity to vie for cash prizes.

To participate, please go to [GiveLocalCCF.org](http://GiveLocalCCF.org).



## Conservation News

### State to Study Wild Turkeys

In the coming months, the DEEP Wildlife Division will begin a Wild Turkey research project. Staff biologists are seeking observations of Wild Turkeys so they can live-trap birds to research hen, nest, and poult survival, harvest rate, and disease prevalence. Please submit your sighting(s) at <https://arcg.is/191C1m1>.

### CT Pesticide Reform News Release: Insecticides in CT Waters Threaten Aquatic Ecosystems and Human Health

A University of Connecticut study combining two decades of data with recent tests reveals widespread contamination of the state's surface and groundwater by an insecticide linked to falling populations of bees and birds. The study, by UConn's Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering, adds to the growing body of research and evidence that neonicotinoid insecticides (often called neonics) are finding their way into streams and rivers from turf grass, including lawns and golf courses, as well as from agricultural uses. In addition to the connection to pollinator and bird declines, neonics also pose a health risk to humans.

The study recommends that Connecticut enact stronger regulations to further restrict the use of neonics in the state.

Titled "Neonicotinoids in Connecticut Waters" ([ctpesticide-reform.org/about/news/press-release](http://ctpesticide-reform.org/about/news/press-release)) it presents a comprehensive analysis of data collected by the U.S. Geological Survey starting in 2001 and data from last year by the Clean Rivers Project. It was commissioned by Connecticut Pesticide Reform, a grassroots coalition of individuals and conservation organizations in Connecticut (including Audubon Connecticut) united to advocate for a massive reduction in dangerous pesticides.

### New Grant Will Help Protect Coastal and Island Nesting Sites in Long Island Sound

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund has announced a \$677,700 grant to the National Audubon Society's Connecticut and New York Office to reduce disturbances to birds that are attempting to nest and raise chicks on beaches and islands across the Long Island Sound.

During the 2025 and 2026 breeding seasons, Audubon will monitor 70 coastal and island sites across Connecticut and

New York where at-risk species like the federally threatened Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Least Terns are nesting.



**Least Tern and chick.**

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Key outcomes will include implementing best management practices at 34 sites; hiring 86 WildLife Guards (high school students), interns, and young professionals to help drive the work; and engaging 700 volunteers in project activities.

Beach- and island-nesting birds of the Long Island Sound face a multitude of threats. These birds are losing the habitat they need to survive as coastal areas become more populated, overdeveloped, and impacted by storms and flooding.

This project will help reduce threats to nesting shorebirds through hands-on stewardship — erecting fencing around nesting areas, installing predator exclosures around nests, and educating beachgoers with handouts and signage — at 34 coastal sites. The project's successes will be turned into a template that others can use all along the Atlantic coast.

### New US Law Supports Wetlands and Bird Conservation

Vital programs for conserving bird habitats and ecosystems across the country have been reauthorized by the bipartisan **America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act** — also known as the ACE Act. The law reauthorizes funding for programs to conserve wetlands across the country and North America, conservation efforts in the Chesapeake Bay region, and partnerships to protect fish habitats.

### Land Added to Cape May National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Coast Guard have announced the transfer of 532 acres from the Coast Guard to Cape May National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey, conserving vital habitat for a wide variety of migratory shorebirds such as Rufa Red Knot, Piping Plover, and American Oystercatcher. The acquisition will allow the FWS to



## Conservation News



**Rufa Red Knot**

Photo:Wikimedia Commons

conserve an additional 0.75 miles of Atlantic beachfront with intact dunes and maritime forest habitat.

The land is located immediately south of the refuge's Two Mile Beach Unit.

Conservation of this

property will protect some of the only remaining undeveloped beach and dune habitat in the area.

This land transfer also allows the FWS to evaluate opportunities for off-season recreation uses such as birding and surf fishing.

### **Audubon News Release:**

### **In Research, Ignoring Female Birds Harms Scientific Understanding**

A newly published study by several Audubon scientists shows that improving identification and observation of female birds can help scientists conserve birds and their habitats more broadly. The study, published in *IBIS* (an international journal of avian science), identifies ways in which failing to observe female birds in favor of their flashier male counterparts has resulted in erroneous findings, and offers recommendations for improving data collection.

"As a field, ecology has historically misunderstood, overlooked, or assumed female organisms are similar enough to males," said Brooke Bateman, senior director of climate and community science at the National Audubon Society and co-author of the study. "This results in potentially dangerous gaps in scientific understanding."

The study found that, counter to traditional assumptions, reproductive roles are more balanced between males and females. For example, in many species, both sexes take on offspring-rearing. Females also produce birdsong, contrary to previous thinking that only male birds sing as a function of sexual selection. Following sociobiological biases, sex roles and behaviors where females are socially dominant or aggressive are also underreported.

"There is so much more that we can learn about birds, and

about ecology in general, that we miss when we only focus on males, or assume that females are similar enough to males," said Joanna Wu, Ph.D. candidate at UCLA and the study's lead author. "That's why it's so critical that we encourage sex-specific questions in research."

Survival rates tend to be studied at a species level, even though female birds have lower survival than males. This is especially relevant for species that are at risk of population decline due to a lack of females. Female birds can also have different migration patterns, which can be especially critical in light of climate change, as changing temperatures could result in a mismatch of arrivals at breeding grounds.

Females may also not inhabit the same places as males. For example, female Golden-winged Warblers inhabit lower elevations than males in the non-breeding season. They have lost twice as much of their habitat than males due to logging. Balanced research can help inform conservation efforts.

Additionally, same-sex and multi-sex mating systems have been documented in birds, meaning that relying just on data representing a male-female binary excludes a broader spectrum of reproductive roles.

This study had its genesis with a group of birders, scientists, and ornithologists who decided to focus on identifying female birds. Calling themselves the Galbatross Project, the group founded Female Bird Day, encouraging observation and appreciation of female birds.

The report recommends improving female identification instruction, capturing birds during migration season rather than breeding season to increase the likelihood of observing females, and including options to record sex-segregated data in apps like eBird, which inform major ornithological institutions.



**Female Golden-winged Warbler**

Photo:Wikimedia Commons



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 861  
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## Celebrate Earth Day! Watch 'Wings Over Water'

On Earth Day, April 22, come to the Bantam Cinema and Arts Center to be entertained and enlightened by the stunning documentary "Wings Over Water."

The film, which will be shown at 6:30 p.m., focuses on the prairie wetlands in the heartland of North America. These water highways remain an oasis for wildlife, from the bison that still roam part of the Great Plains to the swaying grasslands, wildflowers, and vital honeybees that pollinate our crops, and especially for the millions of magnificent birds that migrate along these "flyways."

Narrated by award-winning actor Michael Keaton, the film tells the compelling story of three amazing bird species — the Sandhill Crane, the Yellow Warbler, and the Mallard Duck — with extraordinary footage of their fascinating behaviors. You will be captivated by the triumphs and challenges of these remarkable creatures that defy all odds and soar across mountains, deserts, cities, and forests as they head home to raise their young.



The evening will conclude with a brief series of talks by two local experts in the fields of wildlife and conservation: Ken Elkins, director of Connecticut Audubon's Coastal Center at Milford Point, and Lisa Turoczi, a landscape architect who co-founded the Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery in Woodbury. You will learn how to make your own property a welcome mat for migrating birds, butterflies, and other creatures!

The six partner organizations presenting the film and talks are White Memorial Conservation Center, Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Steep Rock Association, Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, Bent of the River Audubon Center, and Litchfield Land Trust. The evening is being sponsored by Gallagher Insurance.

The cost to attend is \$10 per person. You must buy tickets in advance by going to the calendar page on White Memorial's website at <https://whitememorialcc.org/calendar>.