



Chickadee Chatter



May/June 2025

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 70/Issue 3

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

Should We Worry about Bird Flu? And What About Neonics?

By Ann Orsillo, Education Committee Member

People have been asking me and other Audubon members about the outbreak of bird flu (avian influenza), so I thought I would write about the latest information and advice from ornithologists and other experts.

Avian influenza has been around for several years. Sadly its source has been traced to China and the transportation of large flocks of domestic chickens. In our country the disease has resulted in millions of chickens that had to be euthanized. We are all aware of the shortage of chickens and eggs this year. Gradually the domestic population will rebound. Farmers were advised to clean and disinfect their chicken coops and report sick and euthanized birds. Fortunately very few farms in Connecticut were affected.

However several wild birds along the coast died of the disease. It specifically affects ducks and geese that congregate along the coastline in huge flocks. This virus is highly contagious and if wild populations associate with domestic birds, the virus is passed along rapidly.

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

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that the risk to humans is low because humans are not as susceptible.

Should we be worried about the birds in our yards? Songbirds do not seem to be affected by the virus. National Audubon did not recommend that we remove our winter bird feeding stations. However our wild birds could be affected by other maladies, such as salmonella, if their feeding and watering areas are not cleaned regularly. Now that it's spring, though, many of us have stopped feeding birds to avoid attracting bears.

Bird flu is associated with cold weather, and as we move into summer it will gradually run its course.

Another Danger: Neonicotinoids

Birds face many dangers. We can help them by eliminating application of pesticides in our yards. One pesticide that is especially lethal is a group called neonicotinoids — neonics, for short. These have killed many birds. Neonic runoff from

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President's Message

By Diane Edwards

Take Action for Birds and Other Wildlife



We've been hearing so many distressing news items about declining populations of birds, butterflies, honey bees, and amphibians. Many of the declines have similar causes, including habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change, and diseases.

Fortunately, there are things we can do help local wildlife:

- **Avoid the use of neonicotinoid pesticides (see Ann's article, above) and rodenticides.** Neonics poison just about everything. They kill good bugs along with the undesirable ones, reducing a crucial food supply for many bird species, especially in the spring and summer when they're feeding their chicks. Rodenticides don't only kill rodents; they also poison anything that eats rodents — such as hawks and owls, foxes, and bobcats.
- **Turn off unnecessary lights at night during migration times.** Find out more at lightsoutct.org.
- **Remove invasive non-native plants when possible.** See the website of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Work-

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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 *vacant***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 **July/August** issue is **June 1**.

Please email items to appear in the newsletter to **Diane Edwards** at edwardsd68@charter.net or mail them to her at **68 Shingle Mill Road, Harwinton, CT 06791**.

Send other business to the appropriate chairperson at **LHAS, P.O. Box 861, Litchfield, CT 06759-0861** or lhasct@me.com.

NEW MEMBERS

By Harry Ainsworth, Membership Records Chair

Barbara Agresta	Bristol
Francine Aherns	Winsted
Susan Andros	Thomaston
Berta Andrulius Mette	Litchfield
Michael Baker	Harwinton
Margaret Cheney	New Preston
Maureen Dore	Sharon
Matthew Dyer	Litchfield
Patricia Fontana	Torrington
Robin Forbes	Cornwall Bridge
Kathleen Hammond	Barkhamsted
Brigitte Harney	Lakeville
Carol Hotchkiss	Gaylordsville
Linda Hubbard	Sherman
David Hutchinson	Torrington
Alison Ide-Smith	Torrington
Jill Jones	Salisbury
Lynn Kelly	Watertown
James Henry Monroe	Thomaston
Barbara Murphy	Oakville
Elzbieta Ozimski	Torrington
Betty Palmer	NewHartford
Louis Riva	Canaan
Randall Rock	Watertown
Mark Telford	Riverton
Nancy Zanderigo	New Hartford
Catherine Zeiser	Cornwall Bridge

LHAS membership is at 1,101.

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

This newsletter and other LHAS features can be seen **IN LIVING COLOR at www.lhasct.org.**



Scan the QR code at left with your smart-phone to go to www.lhasct.org.

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

Special thanks to **Doreen Orciari and Janet Baker** for proofreading this newsletter!

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Bird Flu, Neonics

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our property leaches into bodies of water, which can kill fish as well. Drinking water and eating vegetables containing neonicotinoids can also cause diseases in humans. The Norwalk River was tested last year and the neonicotinoid level far exceeded safe EPA levels. In Connecticut and New York state, only certified professionals may apply them outdoors. Unfortunately extensive neonic use by certified applicants hired to treat lawns, gardens, and golf courses is still rampant. Please, if you hire a landscape professional, ask them to stop using neonics and switch to safer organic alternatives. Check the product label on insecticide products. More information can be found at ct.pesticidereform.org. Other sources can be found at ctaudubon.org or audubon.org.

What to Do If You Find a Dead Bird

The following protocols should be followed if a dead bird is found in our community or around lakes:

1. CT DEEP will test dead wild birds if several birds die at the same location at one time or over several days. You can submit information regarding dead wild birds to the state's Wild Bird Mortality Reporting website (look for a link to this site on the DEEP's bird flu webpage: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/avian-influenza>). This site is constantly monitored and, if wild birds that you report warrant testing, you will be contacted. You can also report wild bird mortality by calling the DEEP Wildlife Division at 860-424- 3011.
2. Do not handle or touch a bird with bare hands. DEEP says to avoid direct contact with any dead or sick wild birds, especially waterfowl and raptors. You can dispose of songbirds, which are not considered to be highly susceptible to bird flu, by wearing gloves or using a shovel to place the bird in a plastic bag. If you do not have gloves, put your hand inside a plastic bag, grab the bird through the bag and pull the bag back over your hand. Tie the bag off, place that bag into a second plastic bag and tie that bag off as well. Spray the outside of the second bag with a 10% bleach solution as well as the area where the dead bird was found, any implements used to collect the bird, and any boots or shoes that were worn while disposing of the dead bird. Double-bagged dead birds should be disposed of in the trash. Always wash hands thoroughly after disposal.

LHAS to Elect Officers, New Board Members at Annual Meeting, June 2

Every year at our Annual Meeting (see page 11), LHAS members present at the meeting vote on our officers and new board members. Here is this year's slate:

- Co-Presidents: Diane Edwards and Janet Baker
- Vice President: vacant
- Treasurer: Dave Tripp, Jr.
- Recording Secretary: Karen Nelson
- Corresponding Secretary: Beverly Baldwin
- Three new directors: Ginny Apple, Logan Connor, and Lynne Williamson. The new directors will replace the directors whose terms are expiring: Jay Coles, Marcia McGowan, and Karen Nelson. Many thanks to these folks for their help on our board!

Please note: If you want to nominate someone else (even yourself!), contact the chair of our nominating committee, Vickie Dauphinais, at 860-805-9167 or fdauphinais@optonline.net.

We're Looking for Raffle Prizes

We plan to raffle off a number of items at our Annual Meeting on June 2 and are looking for donations of new or like-new items — preferably nature related. If you have something to contribute, please contact our fund-raising chair, Janice Jankauskas, at janiceczj@gmail.com or 203-231-2022.

President's Message

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ing Group: cipwg.uconn.edu.

- **Plant native plants.** National Audubon has a database of native plants that you can search using your ZIP code; go to audubon.org/native-plants. The database even tells you which birds are attracted to which plants.
- **Participate in citizen science projects** such as the Christmas and Summer bird counts, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and Project Feeder Watch. The results of these events provide valuable data to scientists.
- **Volunteer to help LHAS manage its sanctuaries.** We have occasional work parties to clean up storm debris, weed our native plants, care for our American Chestnut orchard, and so on. If you're interested, contact me at edwardsd68@charter.net.

LHAS Christmas Bird Count Results

By Dave Tripp, Jr., Compiler

First, I want to thank everyone who participated in the LHAS CBC on December 15. Marie Kennedy arranged this year's compilation at Patty's Restaurant where 18 of us shared the day's stories over a plethora of food.

Waterfowl was represented this year with the open water on Bantam Lake and Lake Waramaug. Unfortunately, an arctic blast froze the mid-size lakes (Woodbridge Lake) and smaller ponds and marshes like Cemetery and Jones' Ponds. The benefit of a quick freeze is it pushes the usually hidden waterfowl onto the bigger lakes in the open. The biggest surprise was the number of Wood Ducks. We were shocked at seeing 24 on Lake Waramaug. John Wagenblatt stopped at Point Folly on Bantam Lake after covering his area and counted 78!

The day before, an overnight freezing of Bantam Lake left only a handful of Ruddy Ducks after there had been 500 for weeks including days before the count. The more uncommon

birds, high counts, and areas with "saves" are in bold below in the list. A save is when a common or less common species was found by one area.

A cloudy, cold, and windy day didn't stop 52 people from participating in the field or at feeders. Thank you to all those captains who recruited or took on new volunteers. Their results represented a total of 17,837 individual birds and 79 species. Four additional species were observed three days before the count day. An incredible total of 169.5 hours was spent owling, watching feeders, and in the field via foot and car. These hours covered a total of 722 miles by foot and car, all within a 17-mile-diameter circle.

The 52 participants (c = area captain): John Anderson, Savanna Arcuri, Janet Baker (c), Bev Baldwin, Bob Barbieri (c), Ray Belding (c), Terri Bianchi, Nancy Chere, Jay Coles, Eileen Cooper, Melissa Craig, Vickie Dauphinais, Gina Decker, Angela Dimmitt (c), Michael Doyle, Diane Edwards, Paul Edwards, Kevin Finnan, Karen Geitz, Cathy Glasner, Ed Goodhouse, Carol Grabowski, Mary Guilfoile, Nicki Hall, Carol Hannon, Dennis Hannon (c), Judy Herkimer, Kim Herkimer, Bill Kennedy, Marie Kennedy, Paul Maher (c), Bill Martha,

CBC Species Totals (CW = Count Week. Bold = uncommon birds, high counts, saves, areas.)

Canada Goose	1,674	Mourning Dove.....	230	Gray Catbird	6
Mute Swan	21 (M)	Eastern Screech Owl	6	Northern Mockingbird	3
Wood Duck.....	102	Great Horned Owl.....	8	European Starling.....	2,732
Gadwall.....	3 (M)	Barred Owl.....	20	Cedar Waxwing	134
American Black Duck	164	Northern Saw-whet Owl	12	Snow Bunting	1 (H)
Mallard	882	Belted Kingfisher	3	Pine Warbler	1 (A)
Green-winged Teal	1 (H)	Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	99	Yellow-Rumped Warbler.....	1 (D)
Canvasback.....	cw (M)	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	26	American Tree Sparrow	88
Ring-necked Duck	138	Downy Woodpecker	117	Fox Sparrow	cw (H)
Lesser Scaup.....	7	Hairy Woodpecker	43	Dark-eyed Junco	1,848
Bufflehead.....	88	Northern Flicker	22	White-throated Sparrow	301
Common Goldeneye.....	16	Pileated Woodpecker	17	Song Sparrow	79
Hooded Merganser	444	Blue Jay	430	Swamp Sparrow	16
Common Merganser	1,337	American Crow	620	Eastern Towhee	1 (H)
Ruddy Duck	22	Fish Crow.....	5	Northern Cardinal	180
Wild Turkey	156	Common Raven	29	Red-winged Blackbird	1,622
Common Loon.....	1 (H)	Horned Lark.....	cw (H)	Eastern Meadowlark.....	1 (H)
Great Blue Heron.....	6	Black-capped Chickadee	558	Rusty Blackbird.....	5
Black Vulture.....	1 (H)	Tufted Titmouse	366	Common Grackle.....	202
Northern Harrier.....	1 (H)	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 (J)	Brown-headed Cowbird	134
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1 (J)	White-breasted Nuthatch	196	House Finch	177
Cooper's Hawk	7	Brown Creeper	12	Purple Finch	10
Bald Eagle	15	Winter Wren	11	Pine Siskin.....	23
Red-shouldered Hawk	34	Carolina Wren	52	American Goldfinch	188
Red-tailed Hawk	63	Golden-crowned Kinglet	27	House Sparrow.....	203
Rough-legged Hawk	1 (G)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	cw (M)	TOTAL Individuals	17,837
Ring-billed Gull	73	Eastern Bluebird	153	TOTAL Species.....	79
Herring Gull.....	4	Hermit Thrush	13		
Rock Pigeon.....	191	American Robin	1,785		

Denise Martha, Debbie Martin, Janice Martin, Richard Martin, Michele McDermott, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor (c), Ann Orsillo (c), Kaelynn Palmer (c), Patty Pickard, Gary Pitcher, Sam Slater (c), Donna Rose Smith (c), Carrie Szwed (c), Josh Szwed, David Tripp Jr. (c), John Wagenblatt (c), Lynne Williamson, Tom Zissu, and Fran Zygmunt.

LHAS Christmas Bird Count 4Kids

By Josh Szwed, LHAS Education Committee Member



Searching for birds from White Memorial's deck.

Photo: Karen Geitz

birding, with a chill in the air, but the sun shining brightly!

After a brief introduction to Connecticut wintering birds, basic binocular use, and a crash course in the Merlin bird

On Sunday, December 15th, 2024, members of the LHAS Education Committee hosted our 3rd annual Christmas Bird Count 4Kids at White Memorial Conservation Center in Litchfield. The weather couldn't have been better for

ID and eBird apps, the group was ready to depart from the A.B. Ceder Room. As we circled around the White Memorial Museum back deck, we heard and spotted a multitude of species at the feeders and in the surrounding shrubs and trees. Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, chickadees, juncos, and White-throated Sparrows abounded, with a special sighting of a pair of Common Ravens flying overhead, broadcasting their presence loudly!

As we next headed on the trail around Ongley Pond, we "chased" a group of White-throated Sparrows and juncos just ahead of us. We were also startled by a very unusual, "alien spaceship" noise echoing across the frozen pond. It took the group a minute to realize the noise was being made by the ice itself; expanding in what is sometimes called "ice singing" or "ice booming."

After completing the pond circuit and spotting even more birds including a Northern Cardinal, American Goldfinches, and a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, we all warmed back up in the Ceder Room with some hot chocolate, pizza, apple cider, and delicious cookies made by LHAS Education Committee member and expert baker Beverly Baldwin.

The final tabulation showed 45 total birds and 15 species. These data were forwarded to Carrie Szwed, White Memorial area leader for the adult Christmas Bird Count, to be added to the overall count total. We were pleased to see several families returning from last year's bird count, and hope this event becomes a growing tradition for young birders and their families for years to come!

News from Audubon's Seabird Institute

Helping Gannets in Atlantic Canada

The avian influenza outbreak of 2022 decimated Northern Gannet colonies in Atlantic Canada. Gannets nest very close together, in a somewhat geometric pattern, with nests just a beak's length apart from each other. These high-density nesting environments make the species especially prone to highly pathogenic avian influenza. Because gannets are long-lived seabirds that only lay one egg each nesting season, high mortality events, like avian flu and oil spills, have long-lasting impacts on their population.

A project to restore this species, along with Common Murres, to nesting sites in Atlantic Canada is taking flight with some help from Audubon's flock. In the fall, Mad River Decoy by Audubon received its biggest order to date! Led by "Seabird Sue," volunteers and seasonal staff worked throughout the winter to fulfill an order of 420 Northern Gannet and 120 Common Murre decoys. These

social attraction tools will be deployed to nine different sites across Newfoundland, Quebec, and the Bay of Fundy. Later this spring, Sue will travel to some of the locations to share

expertise on how to deploy social attraction systems, which include audio systems, for maximum impact.



A small part of a gannet colony on Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Spring/Summer 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 in May and July will be in person and on Zoom. To participate on Zoom, go to the Calendar section of our website, 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.

May 5 **The Wonders of Bird Migration** **Monday, 6:45 PM**

Fran Zygmunt, a longtime avid birder with a keen interest in bird migration, will tell of travels of migratory birds to and from their wintering grounds. Why do birds undertake these long journeys and what challenges do they face? What tools do we have to study their movements? Fran will answer these questions and explain how weather plays a part in migration. He will also reveal some amazing facts you'll hardly believe.

June 2. **70th Annual Meeting! Program: "Banding Together for Purple Martins" .. Monday, 6 PM**

Finding volunteers to conduct field work on birds, and then ensuring the data submitted is accurate, can be a challenge for researchers. Our presenter, Laurie Doss, accomplished her goal by using a partnership between The Marvelwood School and Kent Land Trust as a model. This partnership has helped to restore populations of Purple Martins in the Northwest Corner. Laurie has been with Marvelwood School since 1987. She is chair of the Science Department and a co-advisor for the school's Envirothon team. She holds a B.A. in biology and an M.S. in special education. Laurie is on the Board of Directors for the Kent Land Trust and the Purple Martin Conservation Association. She has received numerous conservation, educator, and volunteer awards during her tenure. Laurie, her students, interns, and volunteers from the Kent Land Trust have worked for nearly two decades to restore inland populations of Purple Martins. *Note: This program will be preceded by our Annual Meeting and Dinner. The evening will kick off with socializing at 6 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner at 6:30, a short business meeting (including awards and a raffle!) at 7:15, and the presentation at 7:45. To register, see page 11.*

July 7. **Building a Backyard Wildlife Habitat.** **6:45 PM**

Chris Ferrero, an eloquent and enthusiastic gardener, will tell us how to attract birds, butterflies, and other wildlife to make our yards more enjoyable while doing our part to restore natural habitat. It all starts with what you plant. This program will help you qualify your yard as a Certified Wildlife Habitat by National Wildlife Federation. Chris trained as a Cornell Master Gardener in New York where for 10 years she led demonstration garden teams, plant propagation workshops, alternatives-to-invasives work groups, and children's programs. She has designed gardens that are recognized by Pollinator Pathways and the National Wildlife Federation.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

May 3 **Spring Walk at Stony Brook Forest in Sharon** **Saturday, 8:30-11 AM**

Join forester Jim Gillespie for a spring stroll at his forest in Sharon. Stony Brook Forest is nestled across 100 acres of

The next Board Meeting will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, July 15 at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.

early successional forest (less than 30 years old). There is also a stand of older trees (130+ years) on the property, making it a thriving haven for birds and other wildlife. Over 43 bird species call this forest home. Jim will lead a walk on woodland trails pointing out a variety of native trees and plants. We will listen and look for migrant birds along the way. The Ruffed Grouse, a threatened species, is present and we may get to hear its drumming! Meet at 54 Herb Road, Sharon. Driveway to the left with cedar gate entrance. GPS takes you before the driveway, so keep driving. It's about a mile down Herb Road. **Please let Jim know if you plan to attend by calling 860-689-5455.**

May 10 World Migratory Bird Day Celebration at Sharon Audubon . . . Saturday, 10 AM-1 PM

Join us in celebrating the return of our migratory birds! This year's theme is Shared Spaces: Creating Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities. Sharon Audubon, along with partnering organizations, will offer bird walks, presentations, fun activities for the whole family — all connected to improving our shared spaces with birds. Stop by the LHAS table. We will have practical tips on how to address threats from window collisions and light pollution. There will be games and cool prizes for kids. Location: Sharon Audubon Center, 325 Cornwall Bridge Road (Route 4), Sharon.

May 10 Celebration of Life for John Baker Saturday, 3-5 PM

Join John's family and friends to celebrate his life at the Litchfield Community Center. There will be light refreshments. To honor John, everyone is invited to wear shorts! **Please let Janet Baker know if you will attend by contacting her at berryledges@gmail.com or 860-567-8427.**

May 11 Swift Swirl Sunday, 7:30 PM

Come see newly arrived Chimney Swifts gather to roost at Mitchell School in Woodbury on their return from winter sojourn in Brazil. We'll enjoy this spectacle to an evening chorus of robins and other birds, accompanied perhaps by nearby singing Gray Tree Frogs and Spring Peepers. Meet at the Canfield Corner Pharmacy, at the junction of Route 6 (Main Street North) and Route 47 in Woodbury. **For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.**

May 17 Hike Around Grannis Pond in Bantam Saturday, 8:30 AM

Join Marie Kennedy for a walk on the loop trail around Grannis Pond off Prospect Mountain Road to search for warblers and other spring migrants. During the walk, you will be able to listen and look for birds as they sing to establish their territory and search for a mate. We might continue the walk along Prospect Mountain Road. Please wear sturdy shoes. Meet at the Dallas Hoops Trailhead at 248 Prospect Mountain Road, Bantam. **For more information, contact Marie at 914-393-6270 or mariekennedy226@gmail.com.**

May 24 Bird Walk at Topsmead State Forest in Litchfield Saturday, 7:30 AM

We should see many Bobolinks since the Topsmead fields are managed for their benefit. We may also encounter American Kestrels since they have nested in boxes provided for them. Meet in the parking lot. The entrance to the lot is off of Buell Road. **Please sign up by contacting Ann Orsillo at spoonbill@optonline.net or 910-880-1518.**

June 7-8 Summer Bird Count Saturday-Sunday

Calling all captains, members, and anyone willing to lend a hand for a great LHAS/COA event, the Summer Bird Count. The count can be done on one day or spread over both days. The results are sent to the Connecticut Ornithological Association. Here are some quotes from the January 2024 issue of the Journal of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, *The Connecticut Warbler*. The quotes refer to the 2022 Summer Bird Count Report: "Litchfield Hills had the most species with 132." "Litchfield Hills had a Blue-winged Teal." "They also picked up a Pied-billed Grebe and two American Bitterns." "Litchfield Hills had a Mississippi Kite, a species that has moved

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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.**

Calendar

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into our area as a nesting species, but for which this is the first SBC record." "Litchfield Hills came through with the count's only Golden-crowned Kinglet, a species both rare and difficult to detect in the nesting season." ***If you want to participate this year, send an email to Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.***

June 11 Paddling on Mohawk Pond Wednesday, 9 AM

Ann Orsillo and Pam Hicks will lead this paddling trip in Mohawk State Forest. Meet at the state boat launch on Camp Road in Cornwall. There are many birds and unusual plants around the pond. ***Please sign up by contacting Ann at spoonbill@optonline.net or 910-880-1518 or Pam at smilemysles@yahoo.com or 203-922-2684.***

June 14 Birding and 2nd Annual Picnic at the Shepaug Dam Saturday, 9 AM

Join Russ Naylor and Vickie Dauphinais for birding followed by a picnic at the Shepaug Dam in Southbury. Bring a snack or two and join us as we visit the dam to see edge-habitat birds (Indigo Bunting, Field Sparrow), field-loving species (Chipping and Savannah Sparrows, Tree Swallows), aquatic birds (Spotted Sandpiper, Common Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant), and other birds visiting Lake Zoar and its environs. We will see Cliff Swallows nesting on the dam; perhaps hear Prairie, Pine, and Blue-winged Warblers; and visit riparian specialists such as Warbling Vireo, Orchard Oriole, and Osprey. If we're lucky, we might even see a Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, or the resident raven clan with recently fledged young. Join us for a leisurely outing and convivial company in one of Southbury's best birding areas. Meet in Woodbury outside the Canfield Corners Pharmacy at the junction of Route 6 (Main Street North) and Route 47. ***For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.***

Conservation News

DEEP's Fisher Research Project Update

DEEP Wildlife Division biologists are currently tracking 33 adult fishers fitted with GPS collars. The collars have a breakaway mechanism designed to break down over time, allowing biologists to retrieve the collars at the end of the study. The data collected from the collars will provide biologists with important information, including fisher habitat preference, den selection, reproduction rates, and mortality. The primary goal of the project is to better understand why the fisher population is gradually declining despite having suitable habitat in Connecticut. Residents can report fisher sightings to the Wildlife Division at ct.gov/deep.

U.S. Bird Populations Continue Alarming Decline, New Report Finds

The 2025 U.S. State of the Birds report (available at www.stateofthebirds.org/2025) reveals continued widespread declines in American bird populations across all mainland and marine habitats, with 229 species requiring urgent conservation action. More than one-third of U.S. bird species are of high or moderate conservation concern. According to the report, bird populations in almost every habitat are declining. Most notably, duck populations, which have been

a bright spot in past State of the Birds reports, have trended downward in recent years.

While the report is cause for alarm, it's also cause for hope, said Jeff Walters, the conservation committee co-chair at the American Ornithological Society. "Public interest in birds and the economic benefits from birding are at unprecedented levels, as is the information available about the status of each and every one of our bird species."

The report emphasizes that conservation efforts can succeed when adequately supported. Projects such as conservation ranching, coastal restoration, forest renewal, and seabird translocation show how concerted efforts and strategic investments can recover bird populations.

Honey Bee Colonies Could Decline Up to 70% in 2025

Commercial honey bee colony losses in the U.S. could reach 60 to 70% in 2025, according to entomologists at Washington State University. Over the past decade, annual losses have typically ranged between 40 and 50%. Possible causes include nutrition deficiencies, mite infestations, viral diseases, and possible pesticide exposure during the previous pollinating season. To read more, go to wsu.edu/news.

Newburyport Trip Report

An Uproariously Plumaged Peregrination

By Russ Naylor

Our February sortie to Essex County in Massachusetts wasn't exactly frigid, but we encountered lands and waters solidly



A frozen Joppa Flats.

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

sheathed in ice, the result of an all-too-prolonged late winter. Yet, raven pairs engaged in graceful courtship flights, waterfowl displayed and postured to prospective

mates, and songsters struck up tunes in response to lengthening daylight. Even we birders felt the onset of spring fever. Winter weariness waxed pandemic. But this didn't distract our merry band from getting down to business and starting up a fortu-

ous roll of the birding dice. An obliging homeowner and his Carolina Wren pair rolled out the welcome carpet for us as we viewed a Western Tanager and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.



The hardy group.

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

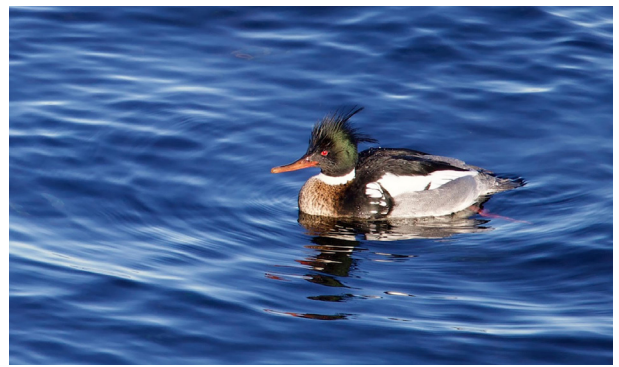
Salisbury Beach held American Tree Sparrows plus a highly photogenic Long-eared Owl preening for a fan club of paparazzi, as five Bald Eagles on the far side of the marsh scrapped over tide-tossed carcasses.

At Jodrey State Fish Pier in Gloucester we enjoyed Fish Crows, loons, and sea ducks alongside fellow feather buffs from Rhode Island Audubon Society and a western Massachusetts "flock" out of Amherst. As birders, we are family

(continued on page 10)



Top left: Swainson's Hawk.



Top right: Red-breasted Merganser.



Bottom right: Common Mergansers with an eel.



Bottom Left: Harlequin Ducks.

Photos: Dave Tripp, Jr.

Newburyport

(continued from page 9)

more than ever.

Eastern Point produced Black Guillemot and Lesser Scaup, napping with Ring-necked Ducks.

Gloucester gave us great flyby views of an errant Swainson's Hawk. Next, while staking out a reclusive Spotted Towhee, we enjoyed other winged tidbits — Merlin, Gray Catbird, Hermit Thrush, Red-necked Grebes, and a close flyby "gray ghost" (a male Northern Harrier).

Rockport's old granite pier held Brant, Razorbills, a lone Purple Sandpiper, and a gorgeous reception committee of Harlequin Ducks that set cameras awlrr. Another protected cove hosted six pintails plus a misimprinted Wood Duck pairing with a rather reluctant Black Duck X Mallard hen.

Plum Island gave us one-on-one views of a Rough-legged Hawk, a Green-winged Teal, and a Snowy Owl with two ravens cavorting in the background. We scored Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser on the mighty Merrimac River. On the side, we witnessed a fishy food fight among three Common Mergansers battling for possession of a whopper-sized trout almost too big to swallow, and another between two Bald Eagles where the angler escaped with the prize.

On the way home, while some of us tallied Turkey Vultures and other migrants, two birders went so wild trading safari stories that they loosed a whole box of animal crackers free in the van, such were the effects of cabin mania and spring fever! Still, we finished our trip with a Newburyport trip record 82 species.

As always, Dave Tripp's trip earned high accolades for bird-worthiness. Well done!



Top: Long-eared Owl.

Bottom: Western Tanager.

Photos: Dave Tripp, Jr.

Trip Report — Bald Eagle Observatory

Winter Lingered, But the Birds and Birding Went On!

By Russ Naylor

March came in like a purring kitten, then cold-shouldered us with Siberian tiger-like arctic blasts. Yet our avifauna, and those who pursue them, still pressed onwards toward an impending spring epiphany. On our March 2nd visit to the Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Observatory in Southbury, a pertinacious team of hardcore birders experienced this onward movement firsthand. (To all those faint-hearted no-shows who missed this outing, read our results and weep!)

Bald Eagles fished and played with wing maneuvers in frigid winds, while soaring north toward boreal breeding haunts. All around us, Canada Geese, robins, Cedar Waxwings, juncos, and various blackbirds flocked and foraged in hurried transit, filling the air with songs of courtship while passing through. Those singing Red-winged Blackbirds are indeed a true sign of spring!

At the Shepaug Dam, a pair of ravens completed finishing touches on their nest. The local Red-tailed Hawks sky-danced their aerial choreography to celebrate winter's ending. Nine overwintering Great Blue Herons lined up in statuesque posture to bask in a strengthening sun, ere four of them winged up to Lake Lillinonah (above the dam) for morning fishing.

But it was the "quacker crowd" that stole the day's show. Black Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks, and Common Mergansers thronged below the dam, engaging in riotous courtship splashing and displaying before prospective mates. Others flew up and over the dam in a steady procession of migratory flocks bound for breeding ranges, with new arrivals winging in as fast as others departed — a miniature version of Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. We counted at least 50 Black Ducks, 350 Ring-necked Ducks, more than 1,550 Common Mergansers, plus a smattering of others — bobble-heading Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, and both scaups — among this downy-plumaged multitude. That celebrated an end to winter's doldrums.

As a bonus, we finished our 50-species birding jaunt with a visit to Janie Pierce Park in Woodbury to see our overwintering Red-headed Woodpeckers, still hoarding acorns like misers counting coins — a colorful finale to our day.



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society's 70th Annual Meeting & Dinner



Monday, June 2, 2025

At Torrington Elks Lodge

70 Litchfield Street, Torrington, CT

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

Special Events: Election of Officers and Board Members • Scholarships • Awards • Raffle

Menu: Baked ham, salmon, vegetable lasagna, apple salad, asparagus, cake, ice cream, coffee and tea

PROGRAM

Banding Together for Purple Martins

Presenter: Laurie Doss, board member of Purple Martin Conservation Association and Science Department Chair at the Marvelwood School



Finding volunteers to conduct field work on birds, and then ensuring the data submitted is accurate, can be a challenge for many researchers. Our presenter tonight, Laurie Doss, accomplished her goal by using a decades-long partnership between The Marvelwood School and Kent Land Trust as a model. This multi-generational collaborative partnership has helped to restore inland populations of Purple Martins in the state's Northwest Corner.

Laurie has been with Marvelwood School since 1987. She is chair of the Science Department and a co-advisor for the school's Envirothon team. She holds a B.A. in biology and an M.S. in special education. Laurie is on the board of directors for the Kent Land Trust and the Purple Martin Conservation Association. She has also received numerous conservation, educator, and volunteer awards. Laurie, her students, interns, and volunteers from the Kent Land Trust have

worked for nearly two decades to restore inland populations of Purple Martins.

Make your reservations now! The deadline is Monday, May 26th.

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

LHAS June 2, 2025 Annual Meeting & Dinner Registration

Total Number of Reservations ___ @ \$45 per person = **Total enclosed: \$**_____

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

Address: _____ **Email Address:** _____

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



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Help Us Celebrate Our 70th Anniversary at our Annual Meeting, June 2!



Purple Martins

Photo:Wikimedia Commons

We'll enjoy a tasty buffet dinner, special 70th anniversary cake, and a cash bar. Three volunteers will receive recognition awards. You can participate in a raffle of new and like-new treasures. Two young people will receive scholarships for environmental studies. And members present at the event will vote on our slate of candidates for officers and new board members.

Oh yes — and you'll learn about a very successful partnership that's helping to increase inland populations of Purple Martins in the state's Northwest Corner.

See page 11 for more details and the registration form.