



Chickadee Chatter



July/August 2025

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 70/Issue 4

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

LHAS Awards Scholarships



Carol Kearns and Harry Schuh, co-chairs of our Scholarship Committee, with Marco Napoleone and Gyandev Phinney.

Photo: Rich Martin

Two young men received scholarships from LHAS at our Annual Meeting June 2. Gyandev S. Phinney from Lakeview

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

High School in Litchfield received the Paul A. Gros Memorial Scholarship. Gyandev will be attending the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. His field of study will be agricultural sciences. He is interested in learning about sustainable practices in agriculture.

This year's recipient of the LHAS Scholarship is Marco A. Napoleone from the Forman School in Litchfield. Marco will be attending Paul Smith's College in the Adirondacks. He plans to study fish and wildlife sciences and would like to become a wildlife technician. He is interested in animal behavior and habitat preservation.

LHAS offers two \$2,000 scholarships annually to graduating high school seniors or graduates of a high school in the LHAS area who has been accepted into a college program for environmental or related studies. Applicants focus on the LHAS mission to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats, through conservation, education, research, and advocacy.

LHAS Members Receive Special Recognition

Five LHAS members who have provided outstanding volunteer services to our organization received certificates of appreciation and an award at our 70th annual meeting.

Russ Naylor: Every year, for many years, Russ has led birding trips for LHAS. He always submits entertaining trip reports for our *Chickadee Chatter* newsletter whenever he leads or attends one of our



Russ Naylor.

Photo: Rich Martin

bird outings. Because of his passionate support of conservation, Russ often sends the editor of *Chickadee Chatter* news clippings about environmental topics. He also sends our Program Committee chair ideas for meeting programs.

Vickie Dauphinais: A former board member, Vickie has rejuvenated our Education Committee, recruiting several people to join it. The committee has transformed our former Junior Audubon program into the LHAS Nature Explorers to provide fun outings for families with children. Vickie



Vickie Dauphinais, left.

Photo: Rich Martin

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LHAS Officers

Co-President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Co-President	Janet Baker	860-567-8427
Vice President	Dave Tripp Jr.	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Treasurer	Dave Tripp Jr.	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Rec. Secretary	Karen Nelson	860-309-9018
Corresp. Secretary	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075

Board of Directors

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
Ginny Apple	2028	860-655-0007
Logan Connor	2028	860-806-4336
Lynne Williamson	2028	860-689-5961

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

Chickadee Chatter is published in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submission deadline for the **September/October** issue is **August 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 Ahrens	Winsted
Susan Andros	Thomaston
Berta Andrulis Mette	Litchfield
Michael Baker	Harwinton
Ann Bidou	Falls Village
Rebecca Bodycoat	Colebrook
Lisa Butler	Harwinton
John Charde	Lakeville
Margaret Cheney	New Preston
Honorita Diebold	Roxbury
Maureen Dore	Sharon
Matthew Dyer	Litchfield
Loretta Finck	Sherman
Patricia Fontana	Torrington
Robin Forbes	Cornwall Bridge
Maureen Hales	Lakeville
Kathleen Hammond	Barkhamsted
Brigitte Harney	Lakeville
Carol Hotchkiss	Gaylorsville
Linda Hubbard	Sherman
David Hutchinson	Torrington
Alison Ide-Smith	Torrington
Travis Johnson	Watertown
Jill Jones	Salisbury
Irene Joyell	Bristol
Beverly Keefner	Canaan
Angelika Keil	Lakeville
Lynn Kelly	Watertown
Donald Lafayette	Litchfield
Diane Matulis	Torrington
Phil Mazur	Terryville
James Henry Monroe	Thomaston
Barbara Murphy	Oakville
Robert Norlander	New Milford
Elzbieta Ozimski	Torrington
Betty Palmer	New Hartford
Louis Riva	Canaan
Randall Rock	Watertown
Lorraine Sauer	Sherman
Thomas Sunderland	Sharon
Mark Telford	Riverton
Hazel Thompson	New Milford
Robert Tucker	Bethlehem
Patricia Wangen	Bristol
Nancy Zanderigo	New Hartford
Catherine Zeiser	Cornwall Bridge

LHAS membership is at 1,051.

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

Co-President's Message

By Diane Edwards



Why co-president's, you might be wondering?

I had planned to step down as president after serving three years, but no one else was willing to step up. So Janet Baker,

a former LHAS president, generously offered to share the role with me. I agreed.

However, to do that, our board needed to approve amending our by-laws, which they did. LHAS members present at our annual meeting on June 2 voted to approve our nomination, as well as those of the other officers and three new board members. They are: Co-presidents — Diane Edwards and Janet Baker; Vice President and Treasurer — David Tripp, Jr.; Recording Secretary — Karen Nelson; Corresponding Secretary — Beverly Baldwin; new directors (whose terms expire in 2028): Ginny Apple, Logan Connor, and Lynne Williamson.



Newly elected officers and directors, from left: Logan Connor, Lynne Williamson, Beverly Baldwin, Karen Nelson, Dave Tripp, Jr., Janet Baker, and Diane Edwards. At far right is Vickie Dauphinais, chair of the Nominating Committee. Not pictured: new director Ginny Apple.

Photo: Rich Martin

Many thanks to the board members whose terms expired this year: Marcia McGowan and Jay Coles. (Karen Nelson's term also expired, but she is now our Recording Secretary.)

Members Receive Recognition

(continued from page 1)

and her cadre of volunteers got several companies to donate money for the creation of "birding backpacks," which we donated to 10 libraries and the KidsPlay Children's Museum in Torrington. The backpacks are filled with binoculars, field guides, and other info about getting into birding. Vickie and other committee members have led programs at the libraries to show people how to use binoculars, field guides, and birding apps. Vickie herself researched and created a program showing people why and how to prevent bird window collisions, which she has

presented at an LHAS meeting and meetings of other organizations. An avid gardener, Vickie has also recruited volunteers to plant and maintain pollinator gardens at our sanctuaries. Finally, she was the impetus for our Volunteer Appreciation event at the Litchfield Distillery last November.



Harry Schuh and Carol Kearns, left.

Photo: Rich Martin

Harry Schuh and Carol Kearns: Harry and Carol have co-chaired our Scholarship Committee for 10 years. They

send letters to schools and recruit several other committee members to review applications from students and pick two winners each year. Both of them have served on our Board of Directors, and they have arranged for us to hold our annual meeting at the Torrington Elks Lodge for several years.

Marie Kennedy: Marie has worn many hats over the years. Besides being a board member, she was our treasurer for



Marie Kennedy, left.

Photo: Rich Martin

several years and then trained subsequent treasurers. She was our president for three years and mentored Diane Edwards when she became president. Marie convinced our board that we needed an office and was instrumental in making that happen. She also convinced us we needed a strategic plan to guide our activities, and participated on our Governance Committee to develop one. She recently was our Recording Secretary. Marie leads bird walks and is active with the Education Committee.

Conservation News

Many Sea Turtle Species Doing Better

A study of 48 populations of sea turtles worldwide, published in the journal *Endangered Species Research*, found the turtles are showing signs of recovery in most places where they're found. The researchers looked at how threats such as hunting, pollution, coastal development, and climate change are affecting the sea turtles. The threats are declining in more than half of the areas studied. However, sea turtles in the Atlantic Ocean are doing better than those in the Pacific, and Leatherback Turtles are not doing as well as other species. Conservation measures that have helped sea turtles rebound include the U.S. Endangered Species Act and a ban by Mexico against capturing sea turtles. The turtles continue facing the danger of dying after becoming entangled in fishing gear.



Leatherback Sea Turtle.

Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

From CT DEEP's Wildlife News

New Book a Boon for Bee Conservation

Assessing what species are present and where they occur on the landscape is a critical first step for wildlife conservation. Major progress was recently made for 385 of Connecticut's bee species. A recent publication, *Biodiversity of Bees (Hymenoptera: Apoidea: Anthophila) in Connecticut*, incorporated 18,471 records of bee occurrences from the web platform *iNaturalist.org*. This new publication is a major milestone for bee conservation in Connecticut. Importantly, 39 bee species have been designated State Assessment Priority Species in the forthcoming revision of Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan. This means that more information is needed to understand the status of these bee species in Connecticut. Meanwhile, nine bee species have been designated Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Department of the Interior Weakens Key Migratory Bird Treaty Act Protections

In April the U.S. Department of the Interior revoked a key policy under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which protects birds from avoidable deaths caused by large-scale and

industrial activities. These protections from "incidental take" were successfully implemented by Republican and Democratic administrations for decades and have saved millions of birds, while helping maintain an annual \$279 billion economic impact from birding, a pastime that 96 million Americans partake in every year. This law is vital for the conservation of more than 1,000 species of birds.

"There are practical solutions that uphold the Migratory Bird Treaty Act while also delivering the long-overdue regulatory clarity that industry needs," said Marshall Johnson, chief conservation officer for the National Audubon Society. "Audubon is committed to working with decision-makers on reforms that ensure our nation's birds receive the lasting protections they need to thrive."

Bill Aims to Improve Law Credited with Saving Bird Species from Extinction

Bipartisan legislation was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to reinforce bird protections and improve the MBTA, for birds and for people. According to National Audubon, the new version of the act offers a balanced approach that safeguards vital protections for birds, enhances resources for bird conservation, and makes modern-day updates to the MBTA.

The MBTA's protections have helped save countless numbers of birds, including by reducing the threats of uncovered oil waste pits, upgrading power lines to reduce collisions and electrocutions, and helping birds recover from major oil spills. But without clear legislative policy, they could disappear in the future.

The new bill not only reinforces "incidental take" protections, but also includes the establishment of a new Migratory Bird Recovery Fund and research program, as well as support for an efficient and effective authorization process for incidental take and creates a civil penalty option to improve its implementation.

Severe Drop in U.S. Butterfly Populations

Nationwide, butterfly populations are declining at an alarming rate, according to a 20-year study published March 6 in the journal *Science*. In addition to dramatic declines for individual species, the study concluded that total abundance of butterflies has declined by 22% from 2000 to 2020. Declines were present across all butterfly families.

Conservation News

While a number of studies have previously shown regional butterfly declines, this is the most complete — and concerning — picture of the status of U.S. butterflies. The study found 10 times as many declining species as increasing species. One hundred seven species declined by more than 50%, and 22 species declined by more than 90%. The results of the study are a wake-up call for the need to conserve butterflies and their habitat, said the study authors.

Although overall the news is alarming, some butterfly species had increasing populations. Almost a quarter of the species assessed, including the Gulf Fritillary, were increasing in at least one part of their range, with nine species increasing across their entire range.

Previous research has pinpointed pesticide use, habitat loss, and climate change as the major causes of butterfly declines. Ensuring that host plants for caterpillars and nectar plants for adults are available throughout the entire growing season can help stabilize and improve the chances of butterfly populations bouncing back, as can protecting the spaces butterflies use from pesticides. Access to high quality, pesticide-free habitat can help butterflies and other pollinators be more resilient to climate change. Managing areas to increase habitat can help declining butterfly populations.

The study, called "Rapid butterfly declines across the United States during the 21st century," was completed by the Status of Butterflies in the U.S. working group. Nearly two dozen researchers participated in the group, hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Center for Pollinator Conservation and U.S. Geological Survey John Wesley Powell Center for Analysis and Synthesis.

From CT DEEP's Wildlife News **Coexisting with Coyotes**

Eastern coyotes have expanded their range since first being documented in Connecticut in the mid-1950s and are now common throughout the state. This expansion occurred, in part, due to their ability to adapt to a variety of habitats, including developed areas like wooded suburbs, parks, beach fronts, and office parks. This has resulted in an increase in coyote sightings and related human-coyote conflicts.

Although some coyotes may exhibit bold behavior near people, the risk of a coyote attacking a person is low, and the presence of a coyote in a suburban/urban setting does not warrant its removal. The DEEP Wildlife Division documents reported coyote conflicts and provides information on

resolving conflicts, but only authorizes removal of coyotes in certain circumstances. Staff can also provide referrals to licensed Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators (NWCOs) for possible on-site assistance.

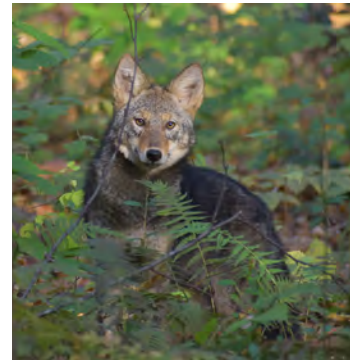
The best ways to avoid conflicts with coyotes is to not allow pets to roam free and unsupervised and never put food outside for any mammals. For more tips, visit portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/nuisance-wildlife/living-with-coyotes.

If a coyote is behaving abnormally or exhibiting unusually bold behavior (approaching people for food, attacking leashed pets that are with their owners, chasing joggers or bikers, etc.), report these incidents to your local animal control officer or DEEP's 24-hour Dispatch Center at 860-424-3333.

From CT DEEP's Wildlife News **Bats Count! Livestream Cameras Offer Up-Close View of Big Brown Bats**

Two years ago, the Wildlife Division and The White Memorial Conservation Center in Litchfield established a "bat cam" in a barn where female Big Brown Bats give birth to and raise their young. Bats Count! is a community science project that allows participants to observe bats throughout the day and as they enter and exit the barn each evening. Last year, viewers of the Bats Count! bat cam were able to witness the live birth of a Big Brown Bat pup!

If you are interested in participating in this long-term monitoring program, you can help staff collect data on the bats while viewing the livestream. Participating is easy and fun. Simply review the online user guide and enter your data into the datasheet while enjoying an up-close view of these remarkable mammals. Go to portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/wildlife-in-connecticut and find the Bats Count! link in the Featured Links column.



Eastern Coyote

Photo: John Stockla, via Wikimedia Commons

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — 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 July and September 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 time shown below is when refreshments are available. A short business meeting begins at 7 p.m., followed by the presentation.

July 7. Building a Backyard Wildlife Habitat. Monday, 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 the 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.

August 11. Picnic at Boyd Woods; Presentation: Wildlife Outside Our Windows . Monday, 6 PM

Carrie Szwed, the education director at White Memorial Conservation Center, will present Wildlife Outside Our Windows, in our Backyards. Carrie's enthusiasm about our natural world is contagious. She is bringing some reptiles we can expect to find sharing our backyards with us. You do not need to travel any farther than your own natural area. Come to the picnic, bring your own chair or blanket, food, drink, and insect repellent.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

July 2. Boats, Birding, and A Brew Wednesday, 10 AM

Join Pam Hicks and Vickie Dauphinais for a trip to Branford for a Thimble Island Boat tour followed by some Osprey viewing at Stony Creek Brewery. Meet at City Dock in Branford. The boat tour (45 minutes) is \$18.00. We will then meet over at Stony Creek Brewery, 5 Indian Neck Ave., Branford, where we can observe nesting Ospreys, have lunch, and enjoy a cold beer. **Let Pam or Vickie know if you would like to attend: Pam — 203-922-2684; Vickie — 860-805-9167.** Rain will cancel. Note: We could meet for carpooling if interested.

July 15. Paddling on Hall Meadow Brook Reservoir in Torrington Tuesday, 9 AM

Meet at Hall Meadow Brook Reservoir Dam. This is the large dam on the right, north of Stillwater Pond on Norfolk Road (Route 272) in Torrington. If you have wheels for your kayak bring them. We have a little walk to the launch. Don't forget your supplies and binoculars. **Questions: Pam Hicks (203-922-2684) or Ann Orsillo (910-880-1518).**

August 12. Paddling on the Housatonic River in Falls Village Tuesday, 9 AM

Meet at the boat launch north of the Great Falls on Housatonic River Road. We will paddle north up the river. This is an easy launch site from the parking area. Bring snacks or a lunch. **Questions: Pam Hicks (203-922-2684) or Ann**

The next Board Meeting will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, September 16 at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.

Orsillo (910-880-1518).

August 16. Paddling on the Bantam River In Litchfield Saturday, 9 AM

Diane and Paul Edwards will lead this paddling trip on the Bantam River at White Memorial. Meet at the parking lot by the put-in off Whites Woods Road. Bring your kayak or canoe, PFD (personal flotation device, aka life vest), sunscreen, bug spray, water shoes, water, and lunch. We'll eat at a picnic table near White Memorial's main parking lot. **Please let Diane know if you will attend: edwardsd68@charter.net or 860-309-5139.** Heavy rain or a thunder storm cancels. August 16 Paddling on the Bantam River Saturday, 9 AM

Nature Explorers Out and About

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

Pond Exploration at Boyd Woods



Exploring a pond at Boyd Woods Sanctuary.

Photo: Pam Hicks

Education Committee members Josh Szwed and Karen Geitz led a Pond Exploration Walk at Boyd Woods Sanctuary on April 27. It was a cool day with little sun. The small group, dressed for the weather and armed with buckets and nets, started at the Plash and immediately spotted a frog. It was camouflaged well in the murky water but the bulging eyes gave it away. Josh was able to catch the frog with a long-handled net so it could be identified.

After looking at field marks, the group decided it was a Green Frog, a species common in our area. Once everyone had a chance to get a close look, the frog was gently placed back in the pond.

The kids and parents were delighted to see and hear song birds at the bird blind and as we walked along the Magenta Trail. Song Sparrows, White-breasted Nuthatches, Chipping Sparrows, Mourning Doves, robins, and Eastern Towhees all made an appearance.

As we walked the trail down to Margery's Pond, we spent time looking at all the spring growth, including skunk cabbage, cattails, and spicebushes. Everybody had fun locating a capped acorn and made a wish before throwing it in the vernal pool. As we approached Margery's Pond, we were greeted with the Spring Peeper's chorus — a new experience for one of the parents! We found no frog eggs or tadpoles in the pond, but we did find a dragonfly nymph at the edge of

the water. Josh took the opportunity to share its life cycle with the group. Afterwards, the group made their way back to their cars. A good time was had by all!

Spring Migration at Harwinton Library

Karen Geitz, along with Vickie Dauphinais and Beverly Baldwin, presented a program on spring bird migration to a group of school-aged children and their parents at the Harwinton Public Library on April 30. The group was treated to a short film on bird migration and then went out to spot birds on the library grounds. They had a chance to practice using binoculars by first spotting fake birds on a stick and then spotting real birds as they flew around among the brush and trees.

It was challenging for them as the birds moved pretty quickly. Some got a close look through the binoculars at a Turkey Vulture circling overhead. Most of the children were able to see an up-close view of the Chipping Sparrows and robins foraging for worms in the grass.



Karen Geitz, left, helps kids spot birds outside the Harwinton library.

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

As we gathered back by the library entrance, we spotted a little brown bird carrying nesting material

to an open space under the roofline of the building. The bird quickly flew away as the group approached; no one got a good look but likely it was an Eastern Phoebe, as they are known for building their nests in covered overhangs. Before leaving for home, each child shared something new they learned about birds. The parents were most excited to learn about the Merlin bird identification app.

Trip Report**Bobolink Morning***By Ann Orsillo*

The bird walk at Topsmead State Forest on May 24 featured the display of dozens of Bobolinks. Thirteen people enjoyed the fluttering flight and cheerful bubbling song of this black and white grassland species. With sunshine illuminating their yellow napes, Bobolinks are a striking member of the blackbird family.

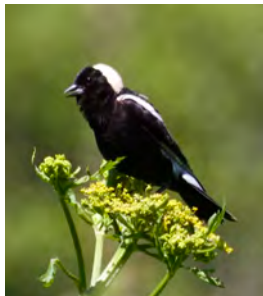
**Male Bobolink.**

Photo: Ann Orsillo

A resident raven flew low over the field chased by the many Red-winged Blackbirds who nest along the field edges. We also spotted or heard several other species. Black and White, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, and Chestnut-sided Warblers; Song, Chipping, and Savannah Sparrows; Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos; Eastern Towhee; and Great-crested Flycatchers were among the residents. A friendly Eastern Bluebird perched on a sign and flew down right in front of us. Looking up into the blue sky revealed a Red-tailed and a Broad-winged Hawk and a gorgeous mature Bald Eagle.

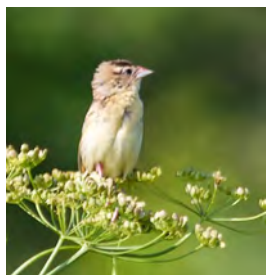
**Female Bobolink.**

Photo: Ann Orsillo

The Topsmead hayfields are harvested in August after the Bobolinks have fledged. They will gather in flocks in a nearby wetland, build up their reserves and begin their 12,500-mile flight to winter in South America. They face many dangers in migration and on their wintering grounds. We will look forward to their return in early May next year.

It was a great day for birdwatching in spite of the cool weather.

Topsmead does a fantastic job in managing the property for the Bobolinks and maintaining the beautiful grounds. Our group was thrilled to experience the birdlife and the park.

Earth Day Clean-up at Wigwam Brook and Kalmia Sanctuaries*By Vickie Dauphinais*

During Earth Week in April an enthusiastic group of volunteers gathered for the annual spring clean-up of the pollinator garden at Wigwam Brook and the pollinator

**Spring clean-up at the pollinator garden at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

and butterfly gardens at Kalmia. In honor of Earth Week, litter in the parking lot at Wigwam was picked up and overgrown invasives were cut away from native shrubs on nearby trails. The gardens got a gentle clean-up as not to disturb the insects that were still sheltering in their winter spots. Dead stalks and grasses were trimmed; visible weeds and debris were cleared away to make room for new growth. Most plants

**Sprucing up the butterfly garden at Kalmia Sanctuary.**

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

appeared to have survived the winter so there's no need to purchase more perennials for this year. We will need to refurbish the mulch at Kalmia as the temperatures warm up.

A big *Thank You* to the following volunteers who showed up and helped get the gardens ready for another season of beautiful flowers to attract and support the bees, beetles, butterflies, and, of course, the birds: Joann Neddermann, Pam Hicks, Beverly Baldwin, Debbie Mane, Barbara Kleb, Julie Andring, Jim Gillespie, Jay Coles, Mia Coats, Jane Golding, Janice Jankauskas, and Celeste Echlin.

Trip Report*By Russ Naylor***If April Showers Bring May Flowers, What Do April Flurries Bring? ...**

April birdies, of course, and their Eastertime eggs!

Our foray to Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury on April 13 had to move from Saturday to Sunday to avoid spring slush from belated wintry wetness. But we still enjoyed sublime success.

Our sextet of dedicated featherquesters found a thin but steady movement of migrating birds afoot — Black Ducks, Ospreys, flickers, sapsuckers, phoebes, Ruby-Crowned Kinglets, and sparrows. Pine and Palm Warblers quietly started off the parade, but it was the ongoing breeding activity all around us that made the day. Local residents tended to nesting and territorial maintenance — Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, ravens, Pileated Woodpeckers, Barred Owls, cardinals, and Carolina Wrens. Recently returned migrants joined them in song, courtship, and claims to real estate — robins, Ospreys, Field Sparrows, and atop bird boxes all over, pairs of bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

**Eastern Bluebird**

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

As turkey hens strolled the neighborhood in search of errant toms, a number of drake ducks waited on mates in nests — Mallards, Common Mergansers, and a resplendent Hooded Merganser in full plumage. Wood Duck pairs weaved among the trees along the river shopping for connubial lodgings.

**Female Common Merganser**

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Cold conditions kept our Louisiana Waterthrushes silent, but they patrolled riverside territories on swift wings. Cowbirds perched

overhead gurgling whimsically comical love ditties to reluctant sweethearts.

We witnessed an Eastertime renaissance of birdlife begetting a new generation, with future promises of more flamboyant procreativity waiting in the wings. Stay tuned, folks!

Trip Report**A Swishing of Swifts Sublime***By Russ Naylor*

Our May 11 visit to Mitchell School in Woodbury witnessed the arrival of that day's sweep-in of Chimney Swifts, newly returned from southerly realms. More than 35 birds swirled in to stage at the school's roosting chimney, demonstrating aerial agility par excellence ere swooping off to other roost sites. A minority of birds whisked into their usual north chimney roost site, while a trio of local breeders whirled about in an exuberance of heady courtship flight, twittering ardent endearments to each other, then dropping into their south chimney nesting site. This was a prelude to larger spring flights and more breeding activity to come.

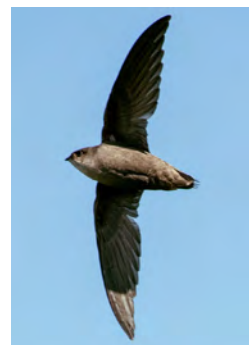
**Chimney Swift.**

Photo: Adam Jackson, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

As a bonus to our Chimney Swift homecoming, we were treated to a fine sunset at the rising of a nearly full moon. At this time our local Red Fox came by carrying provender for her half-grown kits, while nearby an enormous striped skunk whose entire back was enrobed in white performed community service by clearing the school grounds of lawn-damaging grubs. (This was Rev. Porky LePew, known to end all his services with the request, "Brethren, now let us all spray!")

Thanks to all who came out to witness this blessing of wildlife living among us in adaptive symbiosis, birds and beasts alike! The more the merrier!

Focus on Birds

Meet the Eastern Phoebe, Small but Mighty

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

We all have our favorite local birds. Perhaps you like to watch the bright red cardinals among the green foliage, the antics of the titmice and chickadees at feeders, or listen to the sweet songs of robins as they forage for worms. One of my favorite spring and summer birds is the Eastern Phoebe. It sports drab, brownish-gray and white plumage, but its personality makes up for the drabness.



Eastern Phoebe.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

In early spring, I find it heart-warming to hear the raspy, repetitive “fee-bee” call as it announces the arrival of a new season. And how cool, a bird that says its own name! No need to look for field marks. The lively tail bobbing as it sits on branches and the fearless aerodynamic maneuvers as it catches insects mid-air are amazing to watch! They enjoy coexisting with us humans by building their nests close to our homes. But there is much more to appreciate about the phoebe beyond its charming personality.

Physical Characteristics

The Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis Phoebe*) is a small insect-eating songbird measuring around 7 inches in length and weighing between 0.4 to 0.6 ounces. Despite its small size, the Eastern Phoebe is a hardy bird that can tolerate a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. It belongs to the boisterous and bossy family of Tyrant Flycatchers. It is not as aggressive as most of the Tyrant Flycatchers, but it is still territorial during breeding season and fiercely defends the nesting ground.

Phoebes are loners outside of the breeding season, foraging and roosting by themselves. Eastern Phoebes are migratory birds, spending the winter months as far south as Mexico. They are one of the first to return to the breeding grounds up north and the last to leave in late fall.

Breeding Behavior

You can easily spot Eastern Phoebes at the edge of woods near water where there are plenty of flying insects for their hungry chicks. Today, they nest almost exclusively on man-

made structures such as eaves of buildings, overhanging decks, and bridges, all with the goal to protect their nest from the elements and predators.

Eastern Phoebes are socially monogamous. Females select one male with which to form a mating bond. The bond typically lasts for multiple breeding seasons. While the male sits guard, the female builds a nest out of mud, moss, and leaves mixed with grass and animal hair, creating a surprisingly sturdy structure. This spring, while on a walk with a few Audubon friends at Stony Brook Forest in Sharon, I got to see one of their sturdy nests with five small eggs. Truly special! It brought the Eastern Phoebe’s nesting behavior to life for me. The eggs will hatch in a little over two weeks. The nestlings will stay in the nest for two to three weeks before fledging. Both parents participate in collecting food for their young, removal of fecal waste from the nest, and keeping predators away. Their one mission is to keep the chicks fed with lots of caterpillars, moths, dragonflies, beetles, and bees. No time for singing! Usually, the mating pair produces a second clutch of eggs after the first brood becomes independent. Quite a feat for a pair of small birds!



Eastern Phoebe with nestlings.

Photo: Paul Danese, via Wikimedia Commons

Conservation Status

Because Eastern Phoebes coexist well with people, their numbers are stable with an estimated population of 35 million, according to Cornell Lab, All About Birds. However, they do face threats from natural predators as well as humans. Natural threats include other birds, mammals, and snakes. They are frequent targets of Brown-headed Cowbirds. Cowbirds are brood parasites. They often eject phoebe eggs from the nest and lay their own eggs, leading to a reduction in the number of phoebe chicks that survive. Some of the human threats phoebes must contend with include outdoor cats, pesticides, and habitat loss. We can continue to coexist with these charming songbirds by providing a bird-friendly backyard for them. We can increase native plants in our gardens to support all the insects the baby birds need, avoiding the use of pesticides, keeping our cats indoors, and providing a source of clean water. Adding a perch near the garden can also help, as phoebes like to fly from perch to perch in search of insects.

In My Garden — A Journal — May 2025

By Angela Dimmitt

May is the most magical month of the year! At least to a birder or a gardener and to one who is both, every moment is precious, full of new happenings, new arrivals, growths, surprises.

This May however came in like a lion and left like a lion, with a little sun in the middle. It's been cold and rainy but there was no frost. Lots of wind; the rain — over 6 inches in one week — flooded the garden but it didn't seem to mind. Big storm today (31st) as a send-off to the month with high wind and pelting rain. Plants grew rapidly. Incredibly, the good stuff grew faster than the weeds. Weeds are probably lurking under their petticoats, but I don't feel any panic to seek them out: instead I am spending time just wandering around admiring and enjoying, savoring the moment when everything is fresh and green, with some wildflowers flowering and a few "garden flowers" thinking about it.

The early spring ephemerals were glorious — violets of several varieties in many shades, from white to yellow and blues to purple. Red trilliums, blood roots, and trout lilies everywhere and many tiny wildflowers I cannot name. This last week in May is the most glorious with several different azaleas blazing, rhododendrons at their peak (lilacs, crabapples, cherries, and redbuds brightened our lives earlier in the month). But also much sadness — something different in this winter's weather killed my 50-year-old-plus rhododendrons. Half of them are quite dead — rusty brown leaves curled and hanging. Some are flowering, beautiful as ever, and some are showing signs of new growth at the base, but it is a horrible sight. The azaleas, however, are outrageous in their brilliant oranges, reds, and pinks. There are banks of irises and the first scented yellow daylilies; hostas are outdoing themselves, and peonies are opening — such joy in their exquisiteness!

And the birds — the dawn chorus waking me at 6, then 5:30: Carolina Wren, House Wren, robin, Wood Thrush, Veery, catbird, all except the Carolina Wren arriving this month, sometimes first heard in the morning, others singing first in the evening. The Wood Thrush's haunting song in the still of twilight is truly breathtaking. The catbird at dawn with its amazing repertoire and variety is a pleasure to be woken by outside one's window. And the first time you hear the House Wren's warble, you know spring is here and all is right with

the world. At least you can hope for a moment it is, because that little bird is so happy to be here, at last, in a garden with lots of nifty places to nest, singing its head off and checking everything out — perhaps he was here last year and wanted to return!



Red-shouldered Hawk nestlings.

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

Then one morning a Yellow-throated Vireo is calling, next a Red-eyed Vireo singing on and on in the tree tops; then one afternoon, "creeeep," Great Crested Flycatcher; "pee-a-weeee," a peewee. A Scarlet Tanager, sounding like a hoarse robin, an incredible color but often impossible to see. The oh-so-sweet song of the first Rose-breasted Grosbeak, often next seen at the feeder! The female arrives a couple of days later and then they often move on again. Not many warblers in this garden — a redstart may stay here for the summer, ditto a Common Yellowthroat. Finally heard an Ovenbird the evening of May 30, but sadly the Louisiana Waterthrush seems to have moved on, though they have been here every year since forever. A Tennessee Warbler was here briefly May 10, also a Blackpoll — it was World Migratory Bird Day, great timing. This evening at dusk a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher checked out the lilac outside my computer window, sweetest little thing.

Bluebirds are nesting in their usual box, robins in the kolk-witzia bush, catbirds in a rhododendron, House Wrens in another box, and chickadees in one usually used by the wrens. The Carolinas seem to have moved away, although I hear the male singing every day and sometimes they come to the feeders. They started to nest in the "straw hat" but changed their minds and now, horrors, House Sparrows have arrived and are checking that out — I bang the den wall to try to deter them but the male keeps returning. Meanwhile they have nested in a box on the barn by the road, one I cannot reach. Oh well. Across the road, the Red-shouldered Hawks are raising two fluffy gray babies, their back feathers already showing some red but their faces still fluff with beady black eyes. And a Bald Eagle is nesting not terribly far away, a new nest, great excitement!

Yes, spring is here — I treasure every fleeting moment of it!

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LHAS Turns 70!

Sixty members and friends helped us celebrate our 70th anniversary at our annual meeting and dinner on Monday, June 2.

A special thanks to the following members who helped make the event a big success: Harry Ainsworth, Janet Baker, Terri Bianchi, Vickie Dauphinais, Diane Edwards, Elizabeth Frey-Thomas, Janice Jankauskas, Carol Kearns, Debbie Martin, Rich Martin, Karen Nelson, Harry Schuh, and Dave Tripp, Jr.

And many thanks to everyone who donated or solicited items for our raffle:

The Audubon Shop in Madison, The Bake House, Janet Baker, Briarwood Nursery, Vickie Dauphinais, Angela

Dimmitt, Laurie Doss, Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery, Diane Edwards, Paul Edwards, Elizabeth Frey-Thomas, Janice Jankauskas, Holly Johnson, Ann Orsillo, Dave Tripp, Jr., Fran Zygmunt, and a member of the Harwinton Garden Club.



Thank you, Janet Baker, for getting the delicious cake!

Photo: Rich Martin