



Chickadee Chatter



September/October 2025

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 70/Issue 5

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

Nature Explorers Out and About Pollinator Palooza at Kalmia Sanctuary

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair



A pollinator program for families was held at Kalmia Sanctuary in Harwinton on June 21st. Vickie Dauphinais and Marie Kennedy of LHAS Nature Explorers led the program. Seven children with their parents, along with three other adults, attended the program.

It was a first visit to the

sanctuary for everyone. The group gathered around the colorful butterfly garden to learn about the importance of pollinators for plants, humans, and the whole planet. Bumblebees, beetles, caterpillars, dragonflies, and one Monarch butterfly made an appearance. The kids and adults had fun playing pollinator trivia while enjoying yummy snacks made possible by the work of these amazing creatures. Everyone came away with a new appreciation for pollinators.

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

Families Learn About Predators and Prey

By Marie Kennedy, Education Committee Member



LHAS Nature Explorers presented a family birding program titled "Predators and Prey" at the Oliver Wolcott Library in Litchfield on July 15th. Ann Orsillo and Marie Kennedy led the program. An audi-

ence of 30 adults and children dined on pizza outdoors while Ann educated the group on what a predator is and what is considered prey. The children were very interested and animated about the natural world around them. They learned that most living organisms are prey to others because every living creature needs food for survival. If that food chain is broken, it can disrupt and eliminate many species. After the talk, the kids had a great time playing Predator vs. Prey Tag. In spite of it being 91 degrees, everyone had a super good time and left with a better sense of how the world works.

Co-President's Message

By Diane Edwards



Eyes on the skies! Hawks and other raptors are setting out on their annual southbound migration. To help you identify those soaring silhouettes, see the illustrations on page 4, created by noted birder Paul Carrier for the North East Hawk Watch, a chapter of

the Hawk Migration Association. You can also learn more about raptors and hopefully see them at the hawk watch

we're co-sponsoring with Friends of Topsmead State Forest on Saturday, September 13. LHAS members Ann Orsillo and Donna Rose Smith will help you identify what you see.

Thousands of other birds will be migrating through Connecticut in September and October. You can search for them by joining Pam Hicks and friends for weekday morning bird walks at various birding hotspots.

You can also try an unusual approach to birding: birding by tree! Ken Elkins, director of the Milford Point Coastal Center,

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LHAS Officers

Co-President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Co-President	Janet Baker	860-567-8427
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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	860-361-9051
Facebook	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Field Trips	David Zomick	860-513-8600
Fundraising	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Historian	vacant	
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	vacant	
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

Chickadee Chatter is published in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submission deadline for the **November/December** issue is **October 1**.

Please email items to appear in the newsletter to **Diane Edwards** at edwardsd68@charter.net 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*

Allison Baroni	Kent
Jimmy Barrows	Torrington
Bryan Bonina	Bristol
Susie Clayton	Canaan
Elaine Couture	Bristol
Cynthia Crosby	Bristol
Joanne Debetta	Goshen
Connie Dellacamera	Northfield
D. Fenn	Morris
Mary Francis	New Milford
Clint Gilbert	New Hartford
Chad Haber	Bristol
Brigitte Harney	Lakeville
Joan Hennessey	Riverton
Impact Networking Inc.	Watertown
Anne Kaiser	Goshen
Richard Lacey	Bristol
Aaron Larkin	New Milford
Meghan Link	Norfolk
Stephanie Martin	Sherman
Holly Molinaro	Bridgewater
Melanie Neely	Canaan
Sabrina O'Brien	Falls Village
Giles Reaves	Roxbury
Kathleen Rindos	Torrington
Mary Sarsfield	New Milford
George Schmidt	Canaan
Myra Serrins	Sherman
Katherine Stackelberg	Canaan
Deborah Stanizzi	Winsted
Torrington Savings Bank	Torrington
Timothy Valuckas	Litchfield

LHAS membership is at 1,098.

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

Obituaries: Longtime LHAS members **Lois DeLisle** and **Veronica "Ronnie" Santo** passed away a few months ago. LHAS expresses our sincere condolences to their families. And we recently learned that former board member **Keith Johnson** passed away last year; we extend our condolences to his family as well.

Condolences: LHAS extends our condolences to **Liz Frazier-Zygmunt**, whose father, Philip Frazier, passed away in July at age 92.

Sanctuary Update

Wigwam Brook

Earlier this summer, the American Chestnut orchard was brush hogged to allow easier access to the chestnut trees. Then, over two days in early July, volunteers bagged the female flowers on three chestnut trees in preparation for hand pollination. Volunteers will then head back out to the orchard in a couple of weeks. The bags will be removed, temporarily; the female flowers will be hand pollinated using male flowers (catkins) from other chestnut trees; then the bags will be placed back over the female flowers. Later, volunteers will return to the orchard to remove the bags. The bags can be left in place until harvest in late September.



Bagging the female chestnut flowers to prevent pollination by the male flowers of the same tree.

Photos: Rich Martin

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

will present a program October 6 on trees and shrubs that have an interesting connection to birding. He will also lead a walk on October 11 showing you how to go birding by tree.

Check our Calendar on pages 6–8 to see other ways you can enjoy nature this fall: "forest bathing" to soak up the health benefits of nature; a nature photography walk led by a professional photographer (in conjunction with the Litchfield Community Center), and a late-day paddling trip on the Bantam River to see and learn about beavers, led by Master Wildlife Conservationist Ginny Apple.

Happy Fall!

Volunteers Needed for Trail Maintenance

Volunteers are needed for trail maintenance at LHAS' Boyd Woods and Wigwam Brook Sanctuaries. Between the two sanctuaries there are eight trails.

A couple of options are available: you can adopt a trail to take charge of and to look after on a routine basis, or you can have your name added to an email list to have someone contact you when a trail maintenance work party is forthcoming.

No experience is necessary, although you will need to provide your own tools. For routine trail work during the summer, such as weed cutting and brush trimming, one or more of the following tools will be required: weed whacker or hand sickle, hedge trimmer, loppers, and gloves. For other work, such as fallen trees, a chain saw will most likely be required.

To volunteer please contact Rich Martin via email at martins283main@mac.com, or send a text message to 860-736-7714.

A GUIDE FOR HAWKS SEEN IN THE NORTHEAST

Because many hawks differ in appearance due to age and various dark and light morphs, only the adult of the most common form is illustrated.

KNOW YOUR SILHOUETTES



FALCONS

Streamlined - Long pointed wings; Long compressed tapered tails; Strong rowing wing beats; lose some pointed wing and tapered tail look when not in direct flight.



ACCIPITERS

Short, wide rounded wings; long tails. flap, flap, flap - sail flight.



BUTEOS

Broad wings and broad rounded tails; often seen soaring in wide circles high in the air.



PEREGRINE FALCON

- 14 - 18" length
- Light breast and throat.
- Crow size, falcon shape.
- Quick, powerful wingbeats.



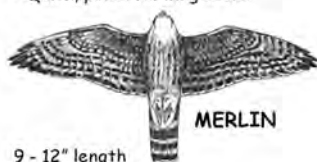
NORTHERN GOSHAWK

- 18 - 24" length
- Pale gray underbody.
- White undertail coverts.
- Larger than crow.



RED-TAILED HAWK

- 17 - 22" length
- Unmarked light to red tail.
- Light breast and dark leading edge to wing.
- Streaked, variably dark belly band.



MERLIN

- 9 - 12" length
- Banded gray tail.
- Dark-looking underside.
- Streaked body.



COOPER'S HAWK

- 14 - 19" length
- Rusty underparts.
- Round tipped, long tail.
- Near size of crow.



RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

- 15 - 18" length
- Black tail with narrow white bands.
- Dark underwing coverts.
- Crescent windows near tip of wing.



AMERICAN KESTREL

- 8 - 11" length
- Tail: rufous-male, barred brown -female
- Light underneath.
- Near size of Blue Jay.



SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

- 9 - 13" length
- Rusty underparts.
- Square or notched tail tip.
- Near size of Blue Jay.



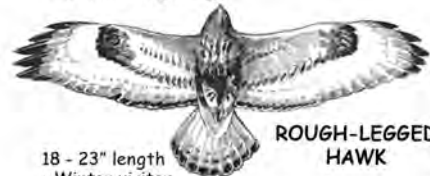
BROAD-WINGED HAWK

- 13 - 17" length
- Smallest Buteo, crow size.
- Equal white and black on tail.
- Whitish wing linings.



GYRFALCON

- 19 - 24" length
- Robust - larger than Peregrine.
- Body uniformly colored-4 color morphs.
- Rare Arctic visitor.



ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK

- 18 - 23" length
- Winter visitor.
- Dark belly, wrist patch and terminal tail band.
- Dark morph: body, wing linings solid dark



SWAINSON'S HAWK

- 17 - 22" length
- Dark chest.
- Light underwing coverts, dark flights.
- Uncommon western visitor in northeast.

Developed by Paul Carrier for the NorthEast Hawk Watch (NEHW)
www.battaly.com/nehw

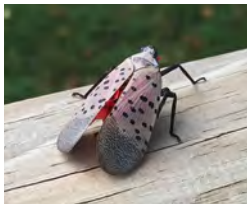
This guide developed by Paul Carrier is the property of the North East Hawk Watch (NEHW), a registered nonprofit volunteer organization established to increase awareness, appreciation, and protection of hawks. NEHW is a chapter of the Hawk Migration Association (www.hawkmigration.org).

Conservation News

Connecticut Environmental Bills Signed

Gov. Ned Lamont has signed several good environmental bills into law. The use of neonicotinoids, which are toxic to birds and pollinators, is banned on turf lawns. The sale of rodenticides, which result in killing birds of prey that eat the poisoned rodents, is restricted. And a climate bill updates the state's key climate goals; supports more renewable energy; provides more opportunities for energy efficiency programs; and promotes the use of heat pumps for residents, schools, and state buildings. The governor has also vetoed a bill that would have allowed towns to overturn environmental rulings issued by CT DEEP.

Look for Hitchhiking Lanternflies



Two views of the Spotted Lanternfly

Photos: Wikimedia Commons

The Connecticut Department of Transportation is asking the public to help stop the spread of the invasive, non-native Spotted Lanternfly. During the months of August through November the adults of this pest may be seen and can attach themselves to or enter vehicles and trailers, "hitchhiking" their way into our state and threatening our crops and trees. ConnDOT wants travelers to check their vehicles for this pest, and if found, take a picture, destroy the insect, and report it to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (portal.ct.gov/caes).

From CT DEEP's 'Wildlife News'

Saltmarsh Restoration Effort at Rocky Neck State Park

Rocky Neck State Park in Niantic has about 82 acres of saltmarsh, which hosts many notable species, including Osprey, Great Egret, Sanderlings, Blue Crab, and the Saltmarsh Sparrow, a state species of special concern. Unfortunately, the marsh and the species that depend on it are being negatively affected by tidal restrictions and rising sea levels.

Recently, the DEEP Wildlife Division restored portions of the saltmarsh. More than 4,600 cubic yards of material were dredged from Bride Brook and placed on the marsh surface in an effort to restore marsh elevation. Then, volunteers from conservation partner organizations planted

three native species of grasses. Over time, it is anticipated these plantings will help stabilize the marsh and increase elevation to keep pace with rising sea levels.

'Business Plan' Helping to Save American Oystercatchers

An article in Audubon's Summer 2025 magazine (audubon.org/magazine) states: "In the early 2000s, ... scientists noticed oystercatchers' namesake food source was disappearing — and the shorebirds were following suit. Oyster reefs where the birds forage were receding, while development and rising seas threatened important coastal nesting habitats. By 2008 surveys found the species' main populations along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts had dropped by 8% in five years." Since then, the American Oystercatcher Working Group, which includes National Audubon, has been implementing a "business plan" to focus on "efforts that would get the most bang for their buck." The goal was a 30% increase in oystercatchers over 10 years. Conservationists have been putting the plan into action, especially by controlling cats, foxes, and raccoons that prey on eggs — the most common source of nest failures. They have also used a variety of techniques to keep nests above water and built new oyster reefs. Two years ago, scientists counted more than 14,000 American Oystercatchers throughout the East, a stunning 43% increase from their low point, bucking the trend of decline among most North American shorebirds.

Audubon Offers Bird-Friendly Forestry Training and Forester Endorsement

The National Audubon Society provides an official Audubon endorsement to foresters who have completed the society's bird-friendly forestry training curriculum. Audubon assists consulting, agency, industry, and procurement foresters in meeting these land management objectives through its Audubon Forester Training and Endorsement Program, active in Connecticut, New York, Vermont, and Pennsylvania. The content of this training can be applied to private and public land and is compatible with many objectives, including timber production, water quality, recreation, and carbon sequestration. To learn more, visit www.audubon.org/connecticut/projects/audubon-forester-training-and-endorsement-ct.

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Summer/Fall 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, to register. You will be sent the login link. The meeting times shown below are when refreshments are available. A short business meeting begins at 7 p.m., followed by the presentation.

September 8 . . . Everything You Wanted to Know About Black Bears in CT. Monday, 6:45 PM

Join Master Wildlife Conservationist Ginny Apple as she talks about black bears, focusing on their natural history in Connecticut, an overview of their habitat, diet, behavior, reproduction, and current research efforts. She also provides practical recommendations for optimum co-existence with our black bear population. She will also bring black bear artifacts to share with the audience. Ginny, newly appointed board member of LHAS, is familiar to us from many wonderful presentations on the wildlife of Connecticut. Living in a house surrounded by People's State Forest, she has supplied a wealth of field notes and photographs to the DEEP on bears and other wildlife. Ginny is chair of the Barkhamsted Conservation Commission and on the boards of several like-minded organizations, including Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forests (FALPS) and Friends of Connecticut State Parks.

October 6. Birding by Tree Monday, 6:45 PM

Ken Elkins will talk about learning to identify some of the trees and shrubs of our area with an interesting connection to birding. Some birds and trees have unique relationships that you may not learn about in a field guide, but these patterns will help you find some of our most sought-after birds if you've taken a moment to "read the leaves." Ken is director of the Connecticut Audubon Society's Coastal Center at Milford Point. He is a former president of the Connecticut Ornithological Association and was also education program manager at the Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury. He created a nationally recognized therapeutic program called "Bird Tales," which uses birds to engage people with dementia. (Ken will also lead a Birding by Tree walk on October 11; see page 8 for details.)

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

September 6 . . . Fall Photography Walk at Boyd Woods Saturday, 2-4 PM

Bring your smartphone or camera to join photographer and instructor Thad Kubis for a walk at Boyd Woods Sanctuary. Meet in the parking lot on Route 254. This is a joint event with the Litchfield Community Center; please sign up by going to the center's website: thecommunitycenter.org (click Calendar, go to date and click name of event). Rain date is Friday, September 19, 8-11 AM.

September 13 . . Hawk Watch at Topsmead Saturday, 10-11:30 AM

LHAS and the Friends of Topsmead State Park will conduct this hawk watch (rain date is Sunday, September 14). Donna Rose Smith and Ann Orsillo will talk about hawks followed by a watch on the north lawn behind the Chase

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

Bird with LHAS on Weekday Mornings

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

house. After entering Topsmead State Park in Litchfield, the parking lot is on the right after the entrance driveway. There will be a short walk uphill to the lawn behind the house. Bring a chair and binoculars. Hawks are part of a group known as raptors. Many raptors begin migrating south in September. Broad-winged Hawks are one of the most spectacular gatherings. If there are north-northwest weather fronts, the hawks take advantage of these ideal windy conditions. They can be seen circling in large groups before they continue their migration. We hope to witness that event and also to see other migrants such as the Northern Harrier and Coopers and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Ospreys and Bald Eagles might also be seen. LHAS has supported official hawk counting sights in our area for the last 39 years. Chestnut Hill Road in Litchfield and the fields at Torrington Middle School are popular sites where dedicated members observe and contribute data to the Hawk Migration Association Raptor Database.

September 20 . . Swallow Spectacle River Cruise Saturday, 5:30 PM

The swallow migration over the Connecticut River is one of nature's magnificent displays. Hundreds of thousands of swallows gather to swirl, undulate, and form amazing patterns in the sky before funneling down into the reeds. We will be cruising September 20 at 5:30 on River Quest. Please see their website, ctriverquest.com, for details on booking your spot. Act quickly as this cruise often sells out weeks in advance. P.S. If there is no availability when you book, you can try for a different day to go on your own.

September 27 . . Visit Our Table at White Memorial's Nature Day!. Saturday, 11 AM-5 PM

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

September 28 . . . Paddling the Bantam River Sunday, 4:15 PM

Join Ginny Apple for a paddling trip on the Bantam River to Bantam Lake and back again. We will probably see beavers and all kinds of birds. Along the way, Ginny will talk about the beavers, their lodges, their dams, their scent mounds, and so on. Meet at the main launch area on White Woods Road, next to the bridge.

October 4. Forest Bathing — No Soap Needed!. Saturday, 10 AM-Noon

Come to Sharon Connecticut for "forest bathing"! Forest bathing invokes almost every sense: aromatherapy from the plants; the sounds of trees rustling, birds chirping, or water rushing; visual stimulation from the flora and fauna; and

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LHAS Nature Explorers — Family Fun!

September 27 Visit Our Table at White Memorial's Nature Day.....Saturday, 11 AM-5 PM

Bring the family to visit our table at this annual celebration of nature! Besides interactive nature crafts for kids, we will also have displays and information about our sanctuaries and activities for nature lovers of all ages.

October 26 Experience the Spooky Side of Nature.....Sunday, 2 PM

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

Calendar

(continued from page 7)

tactile sensations of the soft soil under your feet or the leaves in your hand. These experiences can reduce stress, improving physical health as well as psychological well-being. The trees themselves contain phytoncides, antimicrobial organic compounds known for a host of benefits, including boosting immune cells. Attendance is limited to 10 people. **RSVP to Jim Gillespie via text to his cell phone: 860-689-6455.** We will follow a marked trail with moderate terrain along Stony Brook and sit by a waterfall. Location: 54 Herb Road, Sharon, about 1 mile from the intersection of South Ellsworth Road and Herb. Note: GPS takes you to 40 Herb, so keep driving!

October 11 Walk: How to Go Birding by Tree Saturday, 8–10 AM

Ken Elkins will lead this walk to bring to life the ideas of his talk on Monday, October 6. He'll focus on learning and practicing tree identification — by leaf shape, leaf colors, and a few by bark patterns. As we find birds, we'll hopefully observe some of the bird-tree relationships discussed at his program on Monday. This walk will be gentle, following the edges of the meadows near the Pomperaug River, with a short venture up the Pootatuck Road trail. Meet in the visitors parking lot at Bent of the River Audubon Center, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury. **To register, please contact Angela Dimmitt at 860-355-3429 or angeladimmitt@aol.com.**

October 17–19 . . Birding In & Around Cape May Friday–Sunday

Cape May is one of the most well known East Coast birding destinations. We will go to some well-known and not-so-well-known birding sites throughout the county and stop at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on the way down (Thursday afternoon) and the way home to net around 130 species. On past trips, we have seen some great birds and had some great experiences. Ten rooms have been reserved for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights at the Hyland Motor Inn in Cape May Courthouse; cost: \$304/room (not per person). We will begin birding early Friday morning. This year's trip coincides with the Cape May Bird Observatory Fall Bird Festival, so we will make an attempt to visit the birding expo. Deadline to RSVP and register: September 29th. To reserve a room, share a room, line up a ride, get a basic itinerary and/or payment instructions, **contact Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.**

October 25 Visit Our Table at Watertown Lions' Wildlife Day Saturday, 10 AM–2 PM

The Watertown Lions Club is hosting a family wildlife day October 25 at Veterans Memorial Park, 570 Nova Scotia Hill Road. Besides visiting the LHAS table, you can listen to animal rehabbers, DEEP wildlife presenters, White Memorial animal ambassadors, and others.

Trip Reports

By Ann Orsillo

Mohawk Pond Paddle

On June 11 seven LHAS members paddled around the beautiful Mohawk Pond. This pond is a prime example of a glacial kettle. When the Mohawk area was overrun by glaciers eons ago, large chunks of the glacier broke off from the main glacier. Covered in sediment and rocks, these chunks sunk deep into the earth. When the area warmed, the ice melted into the depressions and a kettle or glacial lake was formed.

In this unique setting our explorations yielded many unusual plants such as the Sheep Laurel. This laurel features narrow drooping leaves with a beautiful pink flower (not terminal as in the Mountain Laurel) surrounded by newer upright

leaves. Insect-eating plants such as the Pitcher Plant and

(continued on page 9)



Jim Gillespie, foreground, takes a selfie with the group!

Photo: Jim Gillespie

Mohawk Pond Paddle

(continued from page 8)



Sheep Laurel

Photo: Ann Orsillo

Round-leaved Sundews, were also present. All these plants require acidic and wet soils. Pam Hicks discovered a beautiful pink orchid called Rose Pogonia. This orchid usually blooms later in June so we were lucky to see this early bloomer.

As we rounded the east side of the pond, we encountered a Great Blue Heron dressed in his breeding finery. He posed for photos and was unfazed by our slow and quiet move-

ments as we glided closer. It never ceases to amaze us that we can kayak closer to wildlife than if we were walking.

We sighted or heard 26 species of birds. A flock of 10 Black Vultures circled over the mountains with a pair of Turkey Vultures. Every year we sight more Black Vultures in the Mohawk area. An Eastern Towhee was especially loud as he sang for the entire two hours of our paddle.

Mohawk Pond never fails to delight. Geology, fauna, and flora are there to observe. For our first paddle of the season, it was a memorable one.

Stillwater Pond Paddle

Our second paddle of the season brought us to Stillwater Pond in Torrington. Aptly named, this pond was smooth and reflected the blue sky and the puffy white clouds of July 15. This very hot day sent us scurrying for the tree-shaded east side of the pond. Nary a breeze disturbed the water.

Only a few birds were singing, some from the coolness of the shrubs and trees along the shoreline. Cedar Waxwings flew out from overhanging branches to catch their breakfast. A Belted Kingfisher and an Osprey flew by. Three Great Blue



Paddling the very calm Stillwater Pond.

Photo: Jim Gillespie

Heron were sighted as they flew across our bows from one shoreline to the other.

As we paddled toward the northern end of the pond, a very large brown bird was spotted perched on a dead tree limb close to the water's edge. The squawks of this bird echoed across the pond. Pam Hicks picked up the sound on Merlin, which identified this bird as a Bald Eagle. Could it be? YES, it was! We silently paddled closer. The bird had brown plumage with patches of white under those huge wings when it fluttered, confirming the sighting. As we snapped photos, another juvenile eagle flew up from below to a higher tree limb. A mature Bald Eagle that we assumed was the parent of these juveniles was perched high in a nearby tree. A three Bald Eagle day was declared by the four of us. Thrilled at our close encounter, we joyously paddled back to the boat ramp. We eagerly look forward to our August paddle on the Housatonic River.



Juvenile Bald Eagle

Photo: Ann Orsillo

Once Again, It's Time for Lights Out!

A reminder: With fall migration now underway, please remember to turn off any unnecessary lights from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. and make sure any needed lights are down-shielded. Peak fall migration is from August 15 to November 15. Most birds that migrate do so at night when air temperatures are cooler, there's less wind, and avian predators are less active, according to lightsoutct.org. "Landing at daybreak also allows for optimal foraging, as insects become active. Further, sciences shows that the birds navigate by cues in the night sky, including the light of the moon and stars." But artificial lights can disorient birds, causing them to fly off course or crash into buildings.

Trip Report, June 15, 2025

Father's Day Featherquesting Follies

By Russ Naylor



Searching for birds below the dam.

Photo: Paul G. Edwards

Our Father's Day Shepaug Dam bird walk and picnic at Lake Zoar in Southbury was an outing for the birds and birders despite overcast skies. Our arrival was heralded by singing warblers — Ovenbird, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Blue-winged Warbler, and lots of Prairie Warblers. A Scarlet Tanager exchanged food with his mate in midair. Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and one House Wren held forth at nest boxes as Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos serenaded us. A shier songster, an Eastern Wood-Pewee, whistled from within shady woods.

Dozens of Cliff Swallows swarmed about the Shepaug Dam nesting colony. Above and about the dam we encountered a number of fishing birds on anglers' vacation at their favorite piscatorial paradise — Great Blue Herons, Double-crested Cormorants, Common Mergansers, an Osprey, and no less than three magnificent non-breeding adult Bald Eagles.

Other residents checked us out — Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, and Common Ravens — as we scouted the area for breeding activity.

Below the dam, a charm of goldfinches harvested a new crop of grass seeds, but the local nesting pair of Spotted Sandpipers laid low — heard but not seen.

Later, a stop at the overflow pond on River Road revealed two Wood Duck hens with peeping young, loafing Mallards,

and a number of basking turtles.

Downriver floated a raft of Canada Geese near a Mute Swan pair escorting plushy-downed cygnets. Riverside sycamores housed a flashy pair of Baltimore Orioles, plus a char-treuse-hued female Orchard Oriole that was a state and life bird for three of our passerine pursuers. (We were eight in all.)

Our last stop ended with a virtuoso performance by a Wood Thrush — a classical master musician bringing down the curtain on the day's concert.

Kudos are due to Vickie Dauphinais for gathering us together to experience this Audubon adventure. Well done!

(Editor's note: And thanks to Russ for the bird identifications!)



Bald Eagle

Photo: Paul G. Edwards



Great Blue Heron

Photo: Paul G. Edwards



Female Scarlet Tanager

Photo: Paul G. Edwards



American Robin

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

In My Garden — A Journal — July 2025

By Angela Dimmitt

Not a particularly eventful month unless you count the baby birds fledging, flowering plants and shrubs hitting their peaks — and then the weather. Nuf said about that. So, three things:

1. I stopped using rodent bait traps because the chemicals kill the rodents, which may then be eaten by and kill our raptors. There is a better mouse trap! Tomcat makes one that is really easy to use — Press 'N Set. You cannot get your fingers caught unless you deliberately stick one into the trap once it is set! Put a little peanut butter in the pot, put the trap on the ground, and push the lever back. To release mouse, just open lever and drop. Easy peasy!
2. Lots of hummingbirds including young ones! They are feeding on many different flowers — and also coming to feeders, males flashing their gorgettes. Don't forget to clean and refill feeders every couple of days in this heat!
3. Bears! I had one week with six sightings in my back garden alone with at least four different bears. Nothing for me to be afraid of! The "panting" bear had been chased by a much bigger one, returning later to sit and rewind. Next day #3, the Baby, showed up, weaving and looking lost — its mouth working as if crying for its mother. #4, Standing Bear, was dancing quite rhythmically and,

having worked up an appetite, went to check on the compost bin. And then last week, "Charlie" saw me raising a camera and fled fast into the bushes with a little whimper — maybe #5?

4. Well, four things — I also have two adorable bunnies, one big and one a baby — they seem happy eating clover in the lawn, though I expect they will sample my flower beds before long.

Lots of baby birds now. Why do some just vanish? House Wrens screaming their heads off in the nest one day, the next gone, silent. I really miss being woken by dad singing outside my bedroom window at 5 a.m. Catbirds have also stopped their dawn chorus. Babies fledged, duty done — August they relax.

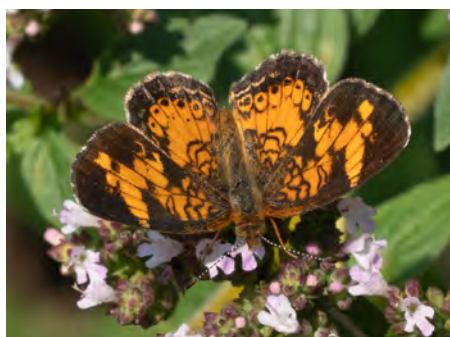


Checking out the compost bin!

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

Pollinators: Build It and They Will Come

By Vickie Dauphinais



Pearl Crescent Butterfly at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary's pollinator garden.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

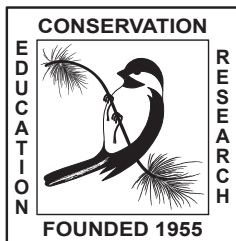
As I write this in July, the pollinator and butterfly gardens at Wigwam Brook and Kalmia Sanctuaries are in full bloom. The occasional rain showers and the continued dedication of the gardening group are helping the gardens thrive. In turn, this supports

flourishing pollinator populations. There is an abundance of colorful blossoms for the bees, moths, butterflies, and hummingbirds to feast on!

On a recent visit to Wigwam, I saw lots of bumblebees collecting nectar from the mountain mint and the coneflowers (*Echinacea*) and buzz pollinating the flowers at the same time. Several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds flitted among the large patch of Scarlet Beebalm (*Monarda*) enjoying its nectar. There's lots of space for them to flit around so no need to squabble. Birdsongs from robins, catbirds, bluebirds, and Song Sparrows added to the magic.

Feel free to visit the gardens and take in all the wonderful sights and sounds of nature.

Maintaining these gardens requires ongoing care and attention throughout the growing season. If you have gardening expertise or simply love working with plants, we'd welcome you to join our team. It's a great way to get your hands in the soil and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow volunteers. Send your contact information to me at fdauphinais@optonline.net. You will be notified when work parties are scheduled.



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LHAS Donates Birding Backpacks in Memory of Dot Szczesniak

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

LHAS Nature Explorers donated two birding backpacks to KidsPlay Children's Museum in Torrington in memory of the late Dot Szczesniak, a long-time member of LHAS. She spent many years supporting the LHAS mission through various fundraising activities. Dot loved the outdoors and birds. She took great pleasure in sharing her love of nature with children. The birding backpacks, one of which has information in Spanish, will honor her memory by giving children and families at KidsPlay Children's Museum the opportunity to venture outdoors and experience the wonders of birds and other wildlife.



From left: Vickie Dauphinais, Kristin Ercoli, a museum manager, and Dot's daughter, Tamara Christensen, at KidsPlay Museum in Torrington.