



# Chickadee Chatter



March/April 2026

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

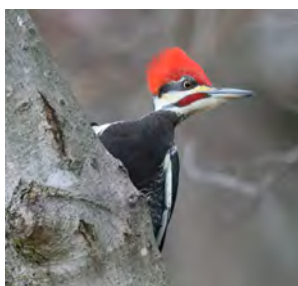
Volume 71 / Issue 2

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

## FOCUS ON BIRDS

### The Pileated Woodpecker — Carpenter Ant Connoisseur

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair



**Male Pileated Woodpecker.**

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker is the most flamboyant and striking bird we can see in our woods. It's the largest woodpecker in North America, nearly three times taller than the petite Downy Woodpecker. The bird is native to southern Canada, the Pacific Northwest, and the eastern United States. Pileated Woodpeckers are non-migratory; they typically

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

remain in their established territories year-round. Historically, pairs have required large tracts of woodland, up to 300 acres, to support their nestlings. More recently, there have been pairs raising young on fewer than 150 acres, a sure sign the species is adapting to a changing landscape. They prefer deciduous and coniferous forests with large, old-growth trees. Snags or standing dead trees serve as the birds' home, nursery, and cafeteria. So, leave your dead or dying trees standing if they don't threaten your home.

#### Easy to Spot and Hear

The Pileated's large size, flashing black-and-white wings, and brilliant red crest, forehead, and "mustache" make it easy to

*(continued on page 3)*

## Co-President's Message

By Diane Edwards

### Inspiring 250 Acts of Conservation



In honor of America's 250th anniversary, LHAS is partnering with several other Litchfield-based environmental organizations to inspire people in Litchfield to engage in a cumulative 250 acts of conservation. We're inviting individuals or groups to complete acts of conservation throughout the town

and share them at **#250ActsOfConservation**. The goal is to reach 250 different acts by July 4th, 2026 — America's official 250th birthday. (Other organizations are planning history-related events; go to [www.a250litchfield.org](http://www.a250litchfield.org).)

Here are some ideas:

- Plant native trees, grasses, or flowers or a pollinator gar-

den. Not sure what's native to our area? Enter your Zip Code into the database at [audubon.org/native-plants](http://audubon.org/native-plants).

- Convert part of your lawn into wildlife habitat. Google the topic to find articles and videos.
- Help LHAS maintain the pollinator garden at our Wigwam Brook Sanctuary.
- Put up and maintain bird nest boxes, but make them as predator-proof as possible. For information on how to do that, visit [nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses](http://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses).
- See page 7 in this issue of *Chickadee Chatter* for more details about the Litchfield 250 Conservation Challenge.

**Note:** Since most LHAS members live in other towns besides Litchfield, we hope you will consider doing something either at one of our sanctuaries or attending an event organized by one of our partners: America's 250th in Litchfield, CT; Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy; Friends of Topsmead State Forest; White Memorial Conservation Center; Litchfield Land Trust; and the Litchfield Community Greenway.

**LHAS Officers**

Co-President	Diane Edwards
Co-President	Janet Baker
Vice President	Dave Tripp Jr.
Treasurer	Dave Tripp Jr.
Rec. Secretary	Karen Nelson
Corresp. Secretary	Beverly Baldwin

**Board of Directors**

Rich Martin	2026
Pam Hicks	2026
Harry Schuh	2026
Mia Coats	2027
Gina Decker	2027
George Stephens	2027
Ginny Apple	2028
Logan Connor	2028
Lynne Williamson	2028

**Committee Chairpeople**

Boyd Woods Sanctuary	Debbie & Rich Martin
Communications	
& Digital Media	Rich Martin
Conservation	Diane Edwards
Education	Vickie Dauphinais
Facebook & Instagram	Breanna Fleet
Field Trips	David Zomick
Fundraising	Janice Jankauskas
Historian	<i>vacant</i>
Hospitality	Angela Dimmitt
Kalmia Sanctuary	Janice Jankauskas
Membership Outreach	Beverly Baldwin
Membership Records	Harry Ainsworth
Newsletter	Diane Edwards
Programs	Angela Dimmitt
Publicity	<i>vacant</i>
Scholarships	Logan Connor
Wigwam Brook	
Sanctuary	<i>vacant</i>

**Research**

Summer Bird Count	Dave Tripp
Christmas Bird Count	Dave Tripp

**NEW MEMBERS**

*By Harry Ainsworth, Membership Records Chair*

Jennifer Anthony-Bogue	.....	New Preston Marbledale
Lindsay Babon	.....	New Hartford
Charlene Barbacci	.....	Litchfield
Diane Calabrese	.....	Colebrook
Jason Calabrese	.....	Watertown
Mark Caufield	.....	Torrington
Amy Ciesco	.....	Bristol
Susan Coggins	.....	Winsted
Andre Fischer	.....	Torrington
Dale Genovese	.....	Washington
Amanda Grenier	.....	Bristol
Holly Hall	.....	New Hartford
Kathy Johnson	.....	Bristol
Dan Lufkin	.....	Washington Depot
Michael McCabe	.....	Sharon
Karen Mera	.....	Lakeville
Jonathan Meyer	.....	New Milford
Margaret Nelligan	.....	Colebrook
Susan Nelson	.....	Harwinton
Robert Nickson	.....	Sharon
Alan Parker	.....	Sherman
Joseph Pawelczyk	.....	Bristol
Lynne Phillips	.....	Morris
Joanne Robinson	.....	Canaan
Larry Rousseau	.....	Torrington
Rick Simmons	.....	Torrington
Donna Stefanisko	.....	Salisbury
Caitlin Turosky	.....	Kent
C. Archer Woodward	.....	Winsted
Irene Zajac	.....	Terryville

LHAS membership is at 995.

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

**Condolences**

LHAS expresses sincere condolences to the family of **Elaine Turri**, who passed away in January. Elaine was a member of LHAS for many years. Over the years, she attended our meetings, walks, and also volunteered — for example, she helped with the original pollinator garden at our Kalmia Sanctuary.

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

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

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

## Pileated Woodpecker

(continued from page 1)



**Female Pileated Woodpecker. Note the black forehead and mustache.**

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

spot without binoculars — great for beginner birders! The female is similar to the male, except she has a black forehead and mustache. The bird's call is so loud and distinctive it's hard to miss. The shrieks can travel up to half a mile; you can hear these birds before you see them. Their drumming is also distinctive, loud, and powerful, befitting their size. It consists of a burst of 11-30 taps delivered in less than a second. Woodpeckers drum all year long, but there is a definite uptick in the spring. Drumming serves many of the same functions songs do for songbirds — it advertises a bird's territory and helps attract mates.

### Finding Food

Pileated Woodpeckers eat primarily insects; carpenter ants are their favorite. Ants can constitute up to 97% of the birds' diet. Wood-boring beetle larvae (grubs) are another important food source for them. They also consume caterpillars, beetles, and termites. Pileated Woodpeckers forage on snags and fallen woody debris where these insects thrive. They are very good at extracting the insects by using their chisel-like bills to excavate deep, rectangular holes and their long, barbed tongues to lap up the prey. By excavating decaying wood and controlling insect populations, these woodpeckers help maintain the health of the forest. They may supplement their diet with fruits, nuts, and berries during the winter and visit backyard suet feeders during harsh winter conditions.

### Raising Young

Pileated Woodpeckers are monogamous birds, forming long-term bonds with their mates. They work together to excavate a tree hole for a nest in early spring. They make a circular hole, about 4 inches wide and 30 inches deep, 15-70 feet off the ground. It takes about six weeks of hard work to complete the nursery. The female lays 3-5 eggs. Both parents

take turns incubating the eggs for 12-16 days and later feeding the chicks. The chicks may take a month to fledge. They usually remain with the parents 2-3 months as they learn survival skills and how to forage on their own. Once the pair is done with their nest, it is left for other birds or mammals to use — a great way of promoting biodiversity in the forest.

### Rebounding Population

Today, Pileated Woodpeckers are fairly common, but their population experienced a huge decline in the 18th and 19th centuries due to habitat loss from deforestation. The population started to recover in the 1920s with state and federal protection and the woodpeckers' ability to adapt to suburban and urban areas. Numbers have increased steadily since the 1960s to an estimated 2.6 million today — a remarkable rebound, but threats remain. Let's continue to advocate for sustainable forest management.

As you wander the woods this spring, keep your eyes and ears open for this remarkable bird. There is a pair living at our own Kalmia Sanctuary in Harwinton.

### References

[Audubon.org/field-guide/bird/pileated-woodpecker](https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/pileated-woodpecker)

[Audubon.org/magazine/10-fun-facts-about-pileated-woodpeckers](https://www.audubon.org/magazine/10-fun-facts-about-pileated-woodpeckers)

[Allaboutbirds.org/guide/pileated\\_woodpecker/lifehistory](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/pileated_woodpecker/lifehistory)

[Birdful.org](https://www.birdful.org)



**Paul Edwards marvels at the size of these Pileated Woodpecker holes!**

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



**Savoring suet.**

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

## Thank You, Scholarship Chairs!

LHAS thanks Harry Schuh and Carol Kearns for their many years of co-chairing our Scholarship Committee. They have decided to step down from that role.

And we thank Logan Connor, one of our board members and a past scholarship recipient, for volunteering to be the new chair!



## LHAS Christmas Bird Count 4Kids

By Josh Szwed, LHAS Education Committee Member



**LHAS Education Committee members Vickie Dauphinais (left) and Josh Szwed help a child spot birds with binoculars.**

Photo: Justin Mack

On Sunday, December 14th, 2025, members of the LHAS Education Committee hosted our 4th annual Christmas Bird Count 4Kids at White Memorial Conservation Center in Litchfield. There was a chill in the air and fresh snow on the ground, but a group of six “hardy souls” geared up to spot birds around the feeders and trails in the late morning.

After a brief introduction to Connecticut wintering birds and tips on basic binocular use, the group was ready to depart from the A.B. Ceder Room. Our first stop was

the museum back deck, where 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 weren’t shy, and gave some of our youngest birders an up-close look! We even spotted Veronica — the “legendary” Red-tailed Hawk that’s been visiting White Memorial for years — perched at the top of a spruce tree!

As we next headed to the trail around Ongley Pond, we followed a group of curious Dark-eyed Juncos along the shore. After completing the pond circuit and spotting even more birds, including Northern Cardinals, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, American Robins, and White-breasted Nuthatches, we all warmed back up in the Ceder Room with hot chocolate, pizza, donuts, cookies, and cider!

The final count for the Christmas Bird Count 4Kids this year was 39 total birds and 14 species! The numbers were forwarded to Carrie Szwed, White Memorial area leader for the LHAS Christmas Bird Count, to be added to the overall count total. We were pleased to see some new families join us for this year’s bird count. Though our numbers weren’t high, our spirits were soaring, and all enjoyed the camaraderie of the Christmas Bird Count!

**Editor's Note:** The results of the adult Christmas Bird Count will appear in the May/June issue of Chickadee Chatter.

## A Frigid but Fun Fire and Ice Fest

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

LHAS Nature Explorers again joined in this fun winter event at the Litchfield Community Center on Saturday, January 31. Despite the frigid temperatures, the event was attended by close to 100 people. Debbie Mane and I manned the very busy table. Children and adults stopped by to learn about the importance of feeding our feathered friends during the cold winter months. Children made apple feeders to take home and each family took a sample of the famous “Zick” suet dough (named for bird-er and author Julie Zickefoose) along with a recipe card to make in their own kitchens. Each family also received a list of what and what not to feed backyard birds. It was nice to see some familiar faces as well as gain new names to add to our email list.



**Vickie Dauphinais (right) shows a family how to make an apple bird feeder.**

Photo: Debbie Mane

LHAS Calendar — Winter/Spring 2026



**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.

**March 2. . . . . Spring Wildflowers of Connecticut. . . . . Monday, 6:45 PM**  
Join naturalists Barbara and Peter Rzasa for a presentation highlighting their photographs of native spring wildflowers. After our long, cold winter, we think you will enjoy viewing Connecticut spring beauties. These unique flowers will lift your spirits and encourage a walk through Connecticut forests. This will be a great way to review your ability to identify these spring blossoms. Stories and flower folklore of our native spring wildflowers will be shared.

**April 6. . . . . New England Cottontail Restoration. . . . . Monday, 6:45 PM**  
In 2011 Lisa Wahle helped us launch a New England Cottontail (NEC) restoration project at Boyd Woods Sanctuary, creating what we referred to as "rabbitat." Here she will talk about the initiative, lessons learned along the way, other species that have benefitted, and new directions for conservation and research. She will highlight the habitat work that was conducted and recognize the land stewards who shepherded this project. Lisa is a retired wildlife habitat biologist who worked with the CT DEEP, the Wildlife Management Institute, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Connecticut landowners to restore populations of the imperiled NEC and other young-forest and shrubland-dependent species. She represented Connecticut on the regional NEC Technical Committee and provided assistance to DEEP for statewide NEC project planning and implementation, as well as population monitoring and reporting. Lisa chairs the Chester Conservation Committee and is on the board of the Connecticut Botanical Society.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

**March 1. . . . . Shepaug Dam Bald Eagles . . . . . Sunday, 9 AM**  
Weather permitting, join Russ Naylor for a trip to witness late-winter staging/migration by our national bird at the Shepaug Dam Bald Eagle Observatory in Southbury. We will also see Black Ducks, Common Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, and other waterfowl. Some other possible avian treats: Great Blue Heron, ravens, Red-tailed Hawks, blue-birds, and other Housatonic River birdlife. Meet at the Canfield Corner Pharmacy at the junction of Main Street North (Route 6) and Route 47 in Woodbury. *For details, call Russ at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.*

**March 29. . . . . Woodcock Welcome at the Bent . . . . . Sunday, 7 PM**  
Come visit the North Meadow at Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury to see and hear American Woodcocks in courtship display performing their "timberdoodle" tunes as a herald of spring. We'll meet at 7 p.m. to walk the meadow seeking early spring migrants — Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Eastern Phoebe, American Robin, and others — before witnessing the comical concert of the woodcocks. Meet at the North Meadow visitor parking lot, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury. *For details, call Russ at 203-841-7779; leave a message for a return call.*

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**Board Meeting: 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 17, at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield.**

## Calendar

(continued from page 5)

### **April 18. . . . . Annual Woodcock Walk at Boyd Woods Sanctuary . . . . . Saturday, 7 PM**

Our walk will begin with a check of Margery's Bird Pond, where the wood frogs should be out and about (and very noisy!). Next, we'll head to the Monarch Meadow to await "the dance of the woodcock." Year after year, the woodcocks (sometimes as many as seven or eight) have performed their mating ritual overhead and are easily viewed from this vantage point. Also, close by, we're likely to hear our resident Barred Owls hooting back and forth. If there's enough interest, we can walk through the nearby conifers with the hope of seeing them. Sanctuary managers Rich and Debbie Martin will guide you on this walk. Bring a flashlight. Wear boots, as trails are soggy in spring. Dress warmly. No dogs allowed! Meet at the Boyd Woods Sanctuary parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. **For additional information, contact Debbie Martin at barnowl524@hotmail.com or 860-819-7462.**

### **April 21. . . . . Birding at Hammonasset Beach State Park . . . . . Tuesday, 8:30 AM**

Join us for a trip to the shore. Hammonasset contains diverse coastal habitats, providing excellent birding. A combination of walking/driving to different areas of the park. Meet outside the park at the Shoreline Greenway Trail parking area (east of the main entrance road) on Boston Post Road (U.S. Route 1), Madison. If you would like to carpool, meet at the commuter lot off of Route 8 north (new exit 46; old exit 42) on Route 118 in Harwinton at 7:15 a.m. Pack a lunch to enjoy with the group after seeing some cool shorebirds. **Let us know if we can count you in by texting Pam Hicks at 203-922-2684 or Celeste Echlin at 860-485-2567.** Birding duration about 3 hours. Scopes welcomed!

### **April 22. . . . . Wigwam Brook Pollinator Garden Clean-up . . . . . Wednesday, 10 AM-Noon**

Skunk cabbage blooming, wood frogs quacking, Mourning Cloaks fluttering about — all harbingers of spring and a reminder that it's time to prepare the gardens at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary for another season of pollinator activity. We'll cut down dead plants and grasses, removing visible weeds and other plant debris in the garden. In honor of Earth Day, we'll also pick up litter in the parking lot and trim invasives along the entrance trail. Bring gloves, your favorite gardening tools, spray for ticks, and lots of energy! **To sign up, email Vickie Dauphinais at vdauphinais1@gmail.com.** Rain date: April 23, same time.

### **April 26. . . . . Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival . . . . . Sunday, 12:30 PM**

Visit our table at the 11th Annual Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival at Matthies Grove, Peoples State Forest, 106 East River Road, Barkhamsted. We'll have fun activities for kids as well as info for adults on native plants, birds, and other nature topics. The event runs from 12:30 to 4 p.m., followed by a birds of prey show at 4:15. The festival is sponsored by the town of Barkhamsted and Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forests (FALPS).

### **April 28. . . . . Kalmia Sanctuary Pollinator Garden Clean-up in Harwinton . Tuesday, 10 AM-Noon**

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

### **May 19 . . . . . Birding at Milford Point Coastal Center . . . . . Tuesday, 8:30 AM**

Meet at the Audubon Coastal Center parking lot, 1 Milford Point Road, Milford. If you would like to carpool, meet at the commuter lot off of Route 8 north (new exit 46; old exit 42) on Route 118 in Harwinton at 7:15 a.m. Pack a lunch to enjoy with the group after seeing some cool shorebirds. **Let us know if we can count you in by texting Pam Hicks at 203-922-2684 or Celeste Echlin at 860-485-2567.** Birding duration 2-3 hours. Scopes welcomed!

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

Beginning in mid-April, 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.**



# THE LITCHFIELD 250 CONSERVATION CHALLENGE

Let's honor America's 250th by caring for the land and wildlife that sustain us—together.

## ➔ What Is It? - Community Conservation!

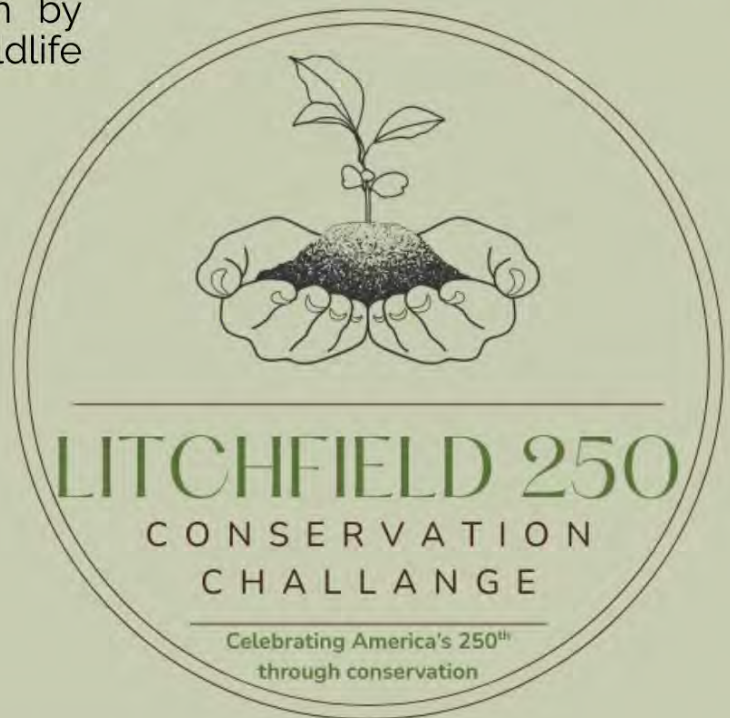
Be a part of the Litchfield 250 Conservation Challenge, a community effort launched by Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy and its partner organizations to complete 250 acts of thoughtful, responsible conservation in 2026 for America's 250th birthday.

## ➔ Why It Matters - Protect!

A healthy environment means a healthier community for all. Responsible conservation—safe, ethical, and locally focused—protects habitats, supports species, and preserves resources for the future.

## ➔ Who Can Join? - Everyone!

Families, schools, clubs, businesses, or community groups. Bring your own idea or join an event—Ripley and our conservation partners will offer plenty of challenge-worthy programs.



## How to Participate - It's Easy!

1. Do it - Join an event or create your own act.
2. Document it - Take photos and write a short description.
3. Submit it - Upload to count toward the Litchfield 250 Conservation Challenge Submissions.
4. Share it - Inspire others by sharing your efforts. Use **#250ActsofConservation** to get the movement going!

## Here are some ideas - Act!

- **Plant** Native trees, grass, flowers, or a pollinator garden.
- **Wildlife:** Build and maintain nest boxes, create a wildlife habitat on your property.
- **Water & Land:** Clean a park, trail, stream, or pond.
- **Community & Education:** Take part in programs by Ripley and our partners designed to support the Litchfield 250 Challenge.

## Celebrate Together - Connect!

- Receive a special certificate of achievement—a keepsake to mark your role in this historic celebration!



## Chickadee Researcher Extraordinaire

By Ann Orsillo

**Editor's Note:** The January/February issue of Chickadee Chatter included an article about the Black-capped Chickadee. We didn't have room in that issue for the following, so we're including it here.

It's hard to imagine anyone knowing more about Black-capped Chickadees than Gordon Loery, past president of LHAS, from 1958 to 1965. As the research director at White Memorial Conservation Center, Gordon was instrumental in banding birds, especially the Black-capped Chickadee, on the White Foundation property for 50 years. The volume of data he compiled was scientifically rare. For the same researcher carrying out the same work at the same location for 50 years was unprecedented. As a result of his efforts, and in conjunction with statisticians from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Station in Virginia and North Carolina University, three peer-reviewed publications on Black-capped Chickadee population dynamics were printed in the journals *Ecology* and *The Auk*.

Interesting results from his studies yielded the fact that the number of Black-capped Chickadees dropped as the number of Tufted Titmice rose. One of the returning birds he had banded was a 12-year-old Black-capped Chickadee — a rare old age for this bird, according to Gordon.

Gordon was always willing to share his knowledge of any natural history topic, including forestry, insects, amphibians, and reptiles in addition to his main interest: ornithology.

Gordon died at the age of 96 in 2021.



**Gordon Loery holding a chickadee.**

Photo: Courtesy of White Memorial Conservation Center

## 70 Years Ago — LHAS Gained Its Current Name

The following is an article that appeared in the first newsletter of the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, submitted to *Chickadee Chatter* by Rich Martin.

*Newsletter to Members No.1 — Summer 1956*

*Notes and News*

By Sam Lincoln Jr.



*At the Annual Meeting of the Litchfield County Audubon Society our membership voted to change our name to the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society. The reason being the newly formed Housatonic Valley Audubon Society was also in the Litchfield County, therefore we could not rightly call ourselves a County Society. This change was first suggested by Mr. Carl Buchiester, vice-president of the National (Audubon) Society, and was readily accepted by our board and members.*

*Just like the duckling on the cover of this issue, the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society News Letter has just been hatched. We have felt the need for such a periodical for quite some time. At the last meeting of your Board of Directors the OK was given to go ahead and publish a quarterly bulletin and you are now reading the results. We look forward to hearing your comments and trust you will have suggestions — there is always room for improvements. We have a need for articles, nature*

*news, field notes, announcements, anything of interest to our members. We will be glad to answer questions pertaining to our society and its activities. Send all correspondence to Sam N. Lincoln, 69 Stumpf Ave., Thomaston. (The Editors)*

## Hog Island Audubon Camp Now Offers 'Ornithology Online'

Can't make it to Hog Island in Maine this year? This Audubon camp's new online program, "Ornithology Online," is a great place to start for beginning birders or anyone who wants to deepen their identification skills and bird knowledge.

The program allows you to follow along at your own pace with lectures, readings, and quizzes brought to you by ornithologist Dr. Stephen Kress, founder of Project Puffin. You'll also have access to five live Q&A sessions where you can gather with your classmates and ask Dr. Kress all of your burning questions about birds!

The program, which costs \$125, consists of 60 lessons and 9.5 hours of video. Topics covered include winter land birds, water birds, raptors, migrant land birds, and helping birds.

Are you ready to open your mind to the world of ornithology? Learn more at [hogislandaudubon.thinkific.com](http://hogislandaudubon.thinkific.com).



## Conservation News

### CT's New Wildlife Action Plan Approved

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan for 2025-2035.

Wildlife Action Plans are blueprints for the conservation of biodiversity. They identify species of greatest conservation need and the habitats and actions needed to protect those species. Wildlife Action Plans also enable state fish and wildlife agencies to receive critical funding for wildlife conservation through State and Tribal Wildlife Grants from the federal government.

The new plan identifies 1,088 Species of Greatest Conservation Need or State Assessment Priority Species. The former are defined in the plan as "a native species with declining populations or vulnerabilities expected to benefit from conservation attention." The latter are "species for which more information is needed to fully understand status and trends to determine the level of conservation concern."

The Species of Greatest Conservation Concern are rated as Most Important, Very Important, or Important. Overall, 242 species are considered Most Important, including 20 bird species:



**Male Northern Goshawk.**

Photo: Andrey Gullivanov, Wikimedia Commons

Northern Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Eastern Screech Owl, Upland Sandpiper, Piping Plover, American Woodcock, American Bittern, Pied-billed

Grebe, Clapper Rail, Roseate Tern, Least Tern, Grasshopper Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Horned Lark, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, and Blue-winged Warbler.



**Clapper Rail.**

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

To read the Wildlife Action Plan, go to [portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/ct-wildlife-action-plan](https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/ct-wildlife-action-plan).

### CT Bird Atlas Data Released

The DEEP Wildlife Division has announced an initial data release of the second Connecticut Bird Atlas, available at [draft.ctbirdatlas.research.uconn.edu](https://draft.ctbirdatlas.research.uconn.edu). Encompassing four years of data collection and three years of data analysis, the second Connecticut Bird Atlas provides current information on all of Connecticut's breeding birds and critical details on winter bird distribution statewide.

Having a better understanding of how bird populations have changed over the past three decades since the first Connecticut Bird Atlas was released (1994) will help inform how we protect birds in the future.

This initial data release is the first of a series, which will culminate in a comprehensive "Birds of Connecticut" website.

### Once Again, It's 'Lights Out' Time to Help Migratory Birds

To protect migrating birds this spring, turn off or dim non-essential lights from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. between April 1 and May 31. As the website of Lights Out Connecticut ([lightsoutct.org](https://lightsoutct.org)) points out, most migrating birds pass through Connecticut at night. That's when air temperatures are cooler, there's less wind, and avian predators are less active. "Landing at daybreak also allows for optimal foraging, as insects become active. Further, science shows that

the birds navigate by cues in the night sky, including the light of the moon and stars." Artificial light "can confuse and disorient migratory birds, causing them to circle around for hours until they drop from exhaustion or land in unsafe areas, close to structures where they are at higher risk of building collisions and predation."

Lights Out CT's January 2026 e-newsletter notes that birder Sarah Kuchta-Humphrey, from New Haven, has written and performed a song, "Turn All the Lights Out." Here is the YouTube link: [youtu.be/8TdDQfKL-XE](https://youtu.be/8TdDQfKL-XE).



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Inc.  
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Litchfield, CT 06759-0861

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**GiveLocal** Greater Waterbury  
& Litchfield Hills

**April 21-22, 2026**

Once again, LHAS is participating in the Connecticut Community Foundation's Give Local campaign. This 36-hour event begins at 7 a.m. on April 21 and ends at 7 p.m. on April 22. We hope you will select us as one of the organizations you choose to support!

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

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