



Chickadee Chatter



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

CALENDAR BRIEFS

Fauna, Flora, & Scenery of New Zealand

July 6
Monday, 6:45 p.m.
Litchfield Community
Center

Paddling the Ban- tam River in Search of Beavers

July 10
Friday, 5 p.m.
White Memorial

Paddling on the Housatonic River

July 14
Tuesday, 9 a.m.
Falls Village

Nature Walk

July 15
Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Boyd Woods

Annual Picnic

August 3
Monday, 6 p.m.
Boyd Woods

Paddling on Long Island Sound

August 25
Tuesday, 9 a.m.
Milford

*For details and more,
go to pages 6 & 7.*

President's Message

By Karen Griswold Nelson



Photo: Rich Martin

Fifty-five LHAS members, friends, and guests attended our 71st Annual Meeting & Dinner at the Elks Club in Torrington on June 1.

After socializing and a wonderful tasty meal, outgoing Co-President Diane Edwards conducted the business of LHAS. As you will see in this newsletter, LHAS members and volunteers were acknowledged with gratitude, a local student was awarded scholarship money for pursuing environmental studies, LHAS officers and board members were elected, and all formal business as prescribed in the bylaws was completed. All was followed by a great presentation by local longtime birder, Chris Wood. A good time was had by all!

As the newly elected president of LHAS, my first and only formal duty at the end of the evening was to call for a motion for adjournment. But, in good faith, I felt compelled to acknowledge my gratitude and admiration for several LHAS members who were my friends and mentors over the years who caused me to embrace the mission of LHAS.

Many thanks to Rich Martin for updating the look of *Chickadee Chatter*!

Without the guidance and unwavering faith of Diane Edwards, John Baker and his family, and my go-to steady “help me” Rich Martin, I could not imagine being in this position. Thank you!

LHAS Awards Scholarship

By Logan Connor, Scholarship
Committee Chair

A local high school graduate was awarded a scholarship at the LHAS Annual Meeting & Dinner on June 1. (A second winner, Margaret Pouder, was unable to attend and will receive her scholarship at an upcoming meeting.)

Anthony Boggio has received the 2026 scholarship in memory of former member Paul A. Gros. Tony has graduated from Lakeview High School in Litchfield, where he was a very active student, athlete, and mentor. Tony was involved in the Wamogo FFA



Anthony Boggio (left) with Scholarship Committee Chair Logan Connor.

Photo: Rich Martin

(Future Farmers of America) agriscience program, with a focus on natural resources. He is an active member of the community,

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LHAS Officers

President	Karen Nelson
Vice President	Logan Connor
Treasurer	Dave Tripp, Jr.
Recording Secretary	Diane Edwards
Corresponding Secretary	Beverly Baldwin

Board of Directors

Mia Coats	2027
Gina Decker	2027
George Stephens	2027
Ginny Apple	2028
Carol Kearns	2028
Lynne Williamson	2028
Vickie Dauphinais	2029
Pam Hicks	2029
Harry Schuh	2029

Committee Chairpeople

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

Research

Summer Bird Count	Dave Tripp, Jr.
Christmas Bird Count	Dave Tripp, Jr.

NEW MEMBERS**By Harry Ainsworth, Membership Records Chair**

Priscilla Ashline	Bristol
Kim Beres	Bantam
Jeff Borghesi	Torrington
Valerie Brower	Bridgewater
Marline Celli	New Milford
Geraldine Clock	Bantam
Candace Combe	Sharon
Robert Destefano	New Milford
Irmgard Dumschoot	Watertown
Andrew Foley	Salisbury
Ronald Garfunkel	Washington
Janet Gran	Gaylordsville
Linda Green	Warren
Cynthia Gordon	Lakeville
Susan Haber	Washington Depot
Phillip Hathaway	Sharon
Kelly Howard	New Hartford
Karen Johnson	New Hartford
Charles Katzenstein	Sharon
Rita Knittel	Riverton
Timothy Kurlick	Winsted
Laurie McCue	Lakeville
William Michaud	New Hartford
Vanessa Millard	Norfolk
Lawrence Nodine	Plymouth
Doug Pfenninger	Winsted
Jonathan Platt	Bristol
Debra Purvis	Bristol
Catherine Racz	Roxbury
Sanita Romano	Goshen
Gail Rothschild	Sharon
Sarah Silamianos	Torrington
Georgianna Sloate	Bristol
Suzanne Tanner	Kent
Philip Trager	Norfolk
Joseph Truini	Roxbury
Rusty Tunnard	Falls Village
Marlene Warren	Watertown
Jennifer Zaccagnini	Oakville

LHAS membership is at 1,008.

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.

This newsletter and other LHAS features can be seen at lhasct.org.



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

Many thanks to Janet Baker and Lynne Williamson for proofreading this newsletter.

New Officers, Directors Elected

LHAS members at the 71st Annual Meeting & Dinner on June 1 elected the following officers and directors:

Officers:

President — Karen G. Nelson

Vice President — Logan Connor

Treasurer — David Tripp, Jr.

Recording Secretary — Diane Edwards

Corresponding Secretary — Beverly Baldwin

New Board Members:

Harry Schuh, Pam Hicks, and Vickie Dauphinais. Carol Kearns will complete the two years remaining of Logan Connor's term as a director.



From left: Pam Hicks, Logan Connor, Harry Schuh, Diane Edwards, Dave Tripp, Karen Nelson, and Carol Kearns. (Not pictured: Beverly Baldwin and Vickie Dauphinais.)

Photo: Rich Martin

Volunteers Recognized

Outgoing Co-President Diane Edwards presented certificates of appreciation and thank-you gifts to three outstanding volunteers at the LHAS Annual Meeting:

Janice Jankauskas volunteered to take over as chair of our Kalmia Sanctuary after the former chair resigned. She keeps the trails and parking area in good shape and is now working on removing invasive plants to improve the sanctuary's wildlife habitat. Janice also helped remove items from the Kalmia house and garage after the tenants left. She also serves as our fundraising chair, coordinating our Annual Appeal and Give Local campaigns. And last year, she and Elizabeth Frey-Thomas organized the raffle at our annual meeting.

LHAS Awards Scholarships

(continued from page 1)

having just earned his Eagle Scout rank. In the fall, Tony will attend Clarkson University in Potsdam, NY, with a major in environmental engineering. He hopes to develop ways to use technology to better our planet.

Margaret Poudier will receive the 2026 Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Scholarship at one of our upcoming meetings. Maggie will attend Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, where she has been accepted into the Innovation Scholar Program and will major in environmental science. Maggie has graduated from Shepaug Valley High School, where she proved to be a leader as a student athlete, member of the Shepaug FFA, and many other endeavors. With a passion for fisheries ecology, Maggie hopes to protect and improve aquatic ecosystems through sustainable practices and conservation.

Jim Gillespie often helps out at our sanctuaries, especially with the pollinator gardens, where he helps dig holes for new or transplanted plants, uses his weed whacker, and clears out invasives. A certified forester, Jim volunteered to prune the old apple

trees at Kalmia Sanctuary — something they sorely needed. He also was a big help cleaning out the Kalmia house and garage. Last year he led a walk at his Stony Brook Forest in



From left: Jim Gillespie, Janice Jankauskas, and Diane Edwards. Not pictured: Harry Ainsworth.

Photo: Rich Martin

Sharon and held a "forest bathing" experience there. Back in the early 2000s, he planted trees in the conifer plantation at Boyd Woods.

Harry Ainsworth, a former board member and president, volunteered to take over as Membership Records chair after Doreen Orciari resigned. He also picks up our mail at the post office and brings it to our office. And he coordinates receipt of our Annual Appeal and Give Local donations, including making the deposits and creating reports.

After Diane presented the volunteer awards, Janet Baker came to the podium to present one more certificate of ap-

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Volunteers Recognized

(continued from page 3)



preciation that Diane had not prepared — it was for **Diane Edwards** herself! Janet read the inscription on the certificate, as “it covered everything anyone could say about Diane.”

It read: “Presented

to Diane Edwards by the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society in grateful recognition of your many years of extraordinary leadership and service, and for inspiring others through your dedication, commitment, hard work, and literary talents.”

Diane was LHAS president for three years and co-president, with Janet Baker, for the past year. Diane has been editing this newsletter since 2012. She also serves on our Programs Committee. As president, she oversaw LHAS’ move into our office in 2023. When the former Kalmia chair resigned, Diane volunteered to handle affairs related to the Kalmia house, including the recent clean-out of the house and garage, and the demolition of the house. She is now working on a committee to improve the wildlife habitat at the Kalmia Sanctuary.

Nature Explorers Out and About

LHAS Nature Explorers participated in some fun events this spring.

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair



Family working on a nesting ball at the Barkhamsted Nature Festival.

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

On April 9th, Diane Edwards, Beverly Baldwin, Lynne Williamson, and I joined in the 11th annual Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival at Peoples State Forest. Lots of families took advantage of the nice spring weather and came out to check out the information

booths. Quite a few stopped by our table to get information on our sanctuaries, programs, and outings. The highlight?

Kids and parents had fun filling nesting balls with soft alpaca wool, which they took home for the birds to use in building their nests.

On May 3rd, Josh Szwed and Ann Orsillo led a spring walk at Boyd Woods. It was a cold, windy day. The one family that braved the wintry weather had fun exploring Margery’s Pond for tadpoles and frogs. A bull frog made an appearance!

On May 9th, Justin Mack and I participated in the World Migratory Bird Day Birdfest at Sharon Audubon. The event celebrated birds, bird migration, and how we can all protect them. Many families stopped by our table to learn about plants for birds and bird-friendly window solutions. Kids had fun playing “Guess the Bird Calling” game — an interactive game created by Justin Mack.

Lastly, JoAnn Neddermann and I joined the Winchester Land Trust volunteers on May 28th at Houlihan Woods and Michael Giordano Woods Tribute Area for the Winchester Public School 5th grade annual field trip. After hiking the trails, the children returned to the reserve entrance to have a picnic lunch. Afterwards, there was time to use binoculars to spot flocks of Bobolinks flying over the lovely meadow. The children enjoyed the birds’ acrobatic displays and bubbling song. Many had never heard of Bobolinks — not a bird that hangs around neighborhoods. We shared a few facts about the Bobolinks as the kids skimmed the field for activity. They left with a new appreciation for the white and black birds happily bobbing in and out of the tall grass.



Justin Mack (right) with kids at Sharon Audubon’s Birdfest.

Photo: Rich Martin



Looking for Bobolinks in Winchester.

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

Will We Get a 'Woody' or a 'Hoody'?

Wood Duck Box Installed at Wigwam Brook

By Diane Edwards, Newsletter Editor



Getting ready.

Photo: Paul Edwards

A cool, sunny May day found several LHAS members at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary awaiting the arrival of CT DEEP wildlife biologist Kelly Kubik. Kelly and seasonal technician Teddy Kapinos traveled all the way from eastern Connecticut to install a Wood Duck nest box in the pond at Wigwam. Kelly and Teddy used a very stable kayak-like boat called an AquaPod to paddle across the pond.

Finding a suitable spot, they pounded a metal post into the bottom of the pond, ensuring that it didn't wobble, and attached a second post to the first one. Then they attached one of the two nest boxes that Paul Edwards had made out of rot-resistant cedar.

Back on shore, Kelly told us they sometimes find Hooded Mergansers using Wood Duck boxes. So, he said, "You might get a 'woody' or a 'hoody.'"

LHAS has registered the nest box with the Litchfield "250

Acts of Conservation" initiative, celebrating America's 250th birthday. Thanks to Vickie Dauphinais for the nest box idea!

Many thanks to DEEP for donating Kelly's and Teddy's time as well as the metal posts. And thanks to both of them for their help. They plan to come back in August to install a second box in the pond at Boyd Woods Sanctuary, replacing the existing box, which is deteriorating. And thank you, Paul Edwards, for making the two boxes!



Above right: Kelly finishing attaching the nest box.

Photo: Diane Edwards

Bottom right: Paul Edwards with the nest boxes he made.

Photo: Diane Edwards



Birding at Milford Point, May 19 — Photos by Ann Orsillo



Common Tern.



American Oystercatcher.



Least Tern.



Piping Plover.



Yellow-crowned Night Heron.



Ruddy Turnstone.

LHAS Calendar — Summer 2026

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, **General Meetings** are held on the first Monday of each month. When the first Monday falls on a holiday, the meeting is held on the second Monday. Unless otherwise noted, most General Meetings are held at the Litchfield Community Center, 421 Bantam Road (Route 202), Litchfield. **Board of Directors Meetings** are held the third Tuesday of every other month (beginning with January) at 7 p.m. at 28 Russell Street, Litchfield, CT.



GENERAL MEETINGS

NOTE: The meetings will be in person and on Zoom, unless otherwise indicated. To participate on Zoom, go to the Calendar section of our website, lhasct.org, and click on the link provided in the announcement to be directed to our registration portal. Once registered, you will receive a Zoom link on the day of the meeting. Meeting times, shown below, are when refreshments are available. A short business meeting begins at 7 PM, followed by the presentation.

July 6 The Unique Fauna, Flora, & Scenery of New Zealand. Monday, 6:45 PM

In December 2022, LHAS member Ann Orsillo and her husband, Charlie, spent two weeks on a Sierra Club hiking trip to New Zealand. Ann, an excellent photographer and a member of the LHAS Education Committee, will show and tell us about the unique flora and fauna of the country, featuring endemic species — the Hector's Dolphin, Bellbird, Blue Penguin, and Kea — as well as the beautiful scenery.

August 3 Picnic at Boyd Woods, Plus Presentation on Reptiles & Amphibians Monday, 6 PM

Riverside Reptiles will let you meet eight different species of reptiles and amphibians from around the world! From salamanders, frogs, and toads to turtles, snakes, lizards, and even a crocodilian, this program will introduce you to a wide variety of cold-blooded animals. Learn about their unique adaptations, survival strategies, what they eat, and how they interact with their environments. Along the way, you'll hear about conservation topics and why protecting habitats helps reptiles, amphibians, and people alike. Before the presentation, we'll enjoy a picnic — bring your own chair or blanket, food, drink, and insect repellent. Note: This meeting will not be available on Zoom.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

July 10 Paddling the Bantam River in Search of Beavers Friday, 5 PM

Join Ginny Apple and Diane and Paul Edwards 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. Bring your own canoe or kayak and PFD. Please let us know if you plan to attend by contacting Ginny at 860-655-0007 or harekki@outlook.com or Diane at 860-309-5139 or edwardsd68@charter.net. If you want to, join us afterwards for dinner at The Village Restaurant.

July 14 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 paddle and easy launch. Follow Water Street from downtown Falls Village, cross over the river and turn right on Housatonic River Road. The launch is about a mile up on the right. Bring your own canoe or kayak and PFD. **For more information, contact Pam Hicks at 203-922-2684 or Ann Orsillo at 910-880-1518.**

July 15 Nature Walk at Boyd Woods Wednesday, 9 AM

Donna Rose Smith will lead us as we look for butterflies and dragonflies, and identify wildflowers and ferns along the way. Rain

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Board Meeting: 7 p.m., Tuesday, July 21, at the LHAS office, 28 Russell Street, Litchfield

Calendar

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cancels. *For more information, text Donna Rose at 203-706-0474.*

August 25 Paddling at Charles E. Wheeler Wildlife Area in Milford Tuesday, 9:30 AM

Join Pam Hicks and Ann Orsillo for a gentle paddle through the marsh waters in Milford, on the Long Island Sound. We'll look for shorebirds, Ospreys, and waterfowl while we take in the beautiful waterways. Pack a picnic lunch and bring something to share with others. Meet us at 69 Court Street, Milford. Please bring your kayak or canoe and PFD (life vest). *For more information, contact Pam at 203-922-2684 or Ann at 910-880-1518.*

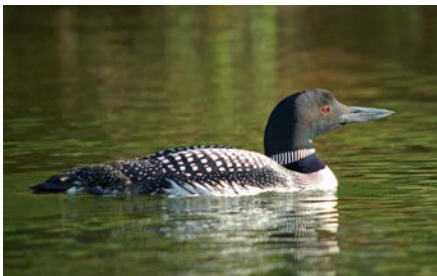
Focus on Birds

The Common Loon: Voice of the Northern Lakes

By Marie Kennedy

The Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) is one of North America's most iconic water birds. With its black head, red eyes, striking black-and-white checkered plumage, and sleek profile, the loon is a wondrous delight for bird and nature enthusiasts alike. The loon has a memorable, haunting call — a series of yodels, wails, and tremolos that echo across the water, especially during the hours of dawn and dusk.

Loons are superb swimmers and divers, capable of plunging more than 200 feet beneath the surface in pursuit of fish. They are powerful underwater hunters due to their webbed



Common Loon in breeding plumage.

Photo: Judy Gallagher, Wikimedia Commons



Common Loon in winter plumage.

Photo: Ano Lobb, Wikimedia Commons

feet and having legs set far back on their bodies. The location of their feet, though, make these birds clumsy on land.

Each spring, loons return from our coastal waters to northern lakes to breed and raise their young. They build their nests close to the water's edge. Although the one or two downy chicks can swim shortly after hatching, they are sometimes seen on their parents'

The Thrilling Call of the Loon

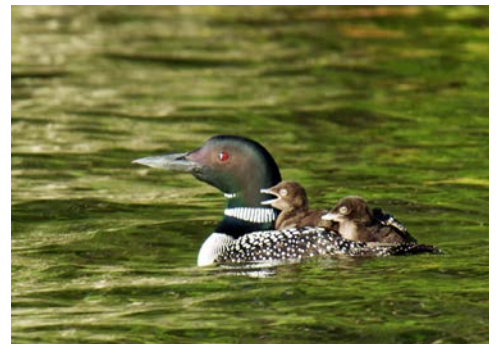
One of the most thrilling bird sounds is the call of a Common Loon. You won't hear it here in Connecticut, because these birds don't breed here. They breed in northern states, including in northern New England, as well as in Canada. If you've never heard a loon, go to the website of the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation: adkloon.org/loon-facts. Enjoy!

backs, protected from predators and cold water. Both parents share in caring for the chicks throughout the summer.

Healthy loon populations are important indicators of clean, healthy lakes.

Boaters, anglers, and lakeside residents can help protect these remarkable birds by respecting nesting areas and keeping a safe distance from families with chicks.

The call of the loon remains one of nature's most treasured sounds — a reminder of the wild beauty and ecological richness of our freshwater lakes.



Common Loon with babies on board.

Photo: Peter Markham, Wikimedia Commons

Bird Walk at the Litwin Property

Many thanks to Peter and Eileen Litwin for allowing us to bird on their property in Litchfield on May 21.



LHAS birders at the beautiful — and birdy! — Litwin property in Litchfield.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



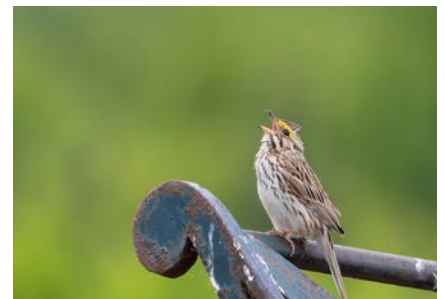
Male Bobolink.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



Female Brown-Headed Catbird.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



Savannah Sparrow.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



Female Eastern Bluebird.

Photo: Ann Orsillo



Red-winged Blackbird.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



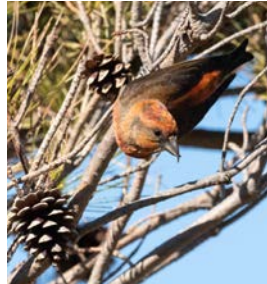
Savannah Sparrow.

Photo: Ann Orsillo

Trip Report**Forensic Featherquesting Ferrets Out Boreal Finches****By Russ Naylor**

On May 22, our LHAS crew joined wildlife “wonderwatcher” Donna Rose Smith on a visit to Mohawk Mountain State Forest for a bird excursion at over 1,000 feet above sea level. In this high-rise habitat we found breeding boreal birdlife such as Dark-eyed Juncos, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Yellow-rumped Warblers plus plenty of Northern Waterthrushes in shady wet spots. Forest and edge species gave us good views while claiming territories and nesting all over — Eastern Towhees, Chipping Sparrows, Veeries, Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, American Redstarts, and Chestnut-sided Warblers. Purple Finches were prevalent, with one pair leading five newly fledged offspring.

Surprises of the trip came at the Black Spruce Bog. Here we savored eye-to-eye contact with a courting pair of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Even better, while tracking down Purple Finches, Donna Rose sleuthed out odd song notes from cone-bearing Black Spruces, which revealed a feeding flock of Red Crossbills — very unusual this far south so late in the spring. We saw at least three adult pairs, accompanied by at least two



Male Red Crossbill.
Photo: Diane Friend Edwards (taken at Hammonasset)

Fun Crossbill Facts

Crossbills (genus *Loxia*) are unusual members of our “winter finch” group (siskins, Redpolls, Evening Grosbeaks, etc.) typically found in subarctic evergreen forest habitats in Canada and the northern U.S. Their curved and crossed bill tips are adapted to opening conifer cones to extract the seeds — their main food source. Every so often, these birds engage in southward irruptions out of their usual boreal haunts in response to regional cone crop shortages and will show up in Connecticut from fall to spring. A few might stay in our area in spring to summer, sometimes to breed in suitable habitat. As eaters of conifer seeds, in years of cone seed abundance, crossbills may breed at almost any time of year, even in midwinter — truly cold-hardy avians!

— Russ Naylor

recently fledged youngsters — streaky, fresh-feathered, with shortish, not quite fully grown crossed bills. The youngsters were self-feeding but still being fed by attentive parents. This was an intimate glimpse into the life of a Northwoods nomad rare at our latitude.

Lastly, a climb to the open summit provided scenic views, including the path of an ancient glacial valley among adjoining hills, as we tallied Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers in hilltop shrubs for the day’s list.

A hearty huzzah and compliments to Donna Rose for providing a birdaholic’s high in more ways than one!

Trip Report**Let the Breeding Binge Begin****By Russ Naylor**

Our May 15 Appalachian Trail trek in Cornwall Bridge was a wonderland of courting and nesting birdlife amid a plentitude of passerines just back from the tropics. A Pine Warbler led off the show in song as nesting birds tended to domestic duties — Tree and Cliff Swallows, Rock Pigeons, American Crows, a purposeful Bald Eagle, and quite a few nest-seeking or brooding Common Mergansers. Two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers did a witty amorous ditty dancing before us.



Northern Waterthrush.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

All over, songsters held forth

in virtuoso volume — Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Veeries, Wood Thrushes, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Towhees, and sundry others. Among them waxed an abundance of warblers — Common Yellowthroats, American Redstarts, Yellows, Blue-winged, “Butterbutts” (Yellow-rumped Warblers), and both waterthrushes (Northern and Louisiana). Other birds — Common Ravens, Turkey Vultures, Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds — added spice to our hike.



Louisiana Waterthrush.
Photo: Iwolfartist, Wikimedia Commons

As always, kudos to Donna Rose Smith for drawing us into a fantasia of birdy pageantry as we celebrated a month of migration magic!

Chestnut Orchard Dedicated to John Baker

On June 6, Jack Swatt, president of the Connecticut Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, dedicated the experimental chestnut orchard at LHAS' Wigwam Brook Sanctuary in honor of the late John Baker. A new sign outside the orchard's fence says, among other things, that John "planned, planted, and cared for the trees in this orchard from its beginning in 2010 until his passing in September of 2024." John was a long-time member of LHAS and CT-TACF.



Janet Baker, far left, with other LHAS members, family, and friends awaiting the dedication.
All photos: Rich Martin



CT-TACF President Jack Swatt talked about John's extensive involvement with the chestnut orchard before he unveiled the new sign dedicating the orchard to John.



The sign outside the chestnut orchard.



Janet Baker (second from right) with her son, daughter, and granddaughters.



Planting a new tree in the orchard after the dedication ceremony.

Conservation News

Audubon to Design Coastal Resilience Plan for East River Marsh in Guilford

Breeding Saltmarsh Sparrow, Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, and other birds could benefit

More than half of Connecticut's salt marshes have been lost due to human intervention, but there is a growing movement to restore these habitats. The National Audubon Society in Connecticut has received a \$460,917 grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to develop a restoration design plan for the Guilford Salt Meadows Audubon Sanctuary.

The sanctuary is a vital segment of the East River Marsh, a brackish and salt tidal marsh. Currently more than 40% of its previously vegetated marsh area is stressed, degraded, or has been lost. The restoration plan will focus on restoring native vegetation and creating high-marsh habitat to



Marsh Wren.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

strengthen the marsh's resiliency to sea level rise.

The restoration work will provide habitat for marsh birds experiencing population declines, like the Saltmarsh Sparrow. Surveys conducted in 2025 detected only Clapper Rail and Marsh Wren at the sanctuary. The restored habitat will potentially support other tidal marsh-dependent birds including the Seaside Sparrow and Willet.

Forage Fish Species Changing in Gulf of Maine

As part of their courtship ritual, terns offer their mates small forage fish. This behavior gives researchers a glimpse into the terns' diet and what prey are available this year. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99% of the world's oceans. This means the availability of forage fish seabirds rely on is shifting rapidly in this region. Herring and hake, staples of terns' diets, are shifting northward as the waters warm, while historically mid-Atlantic species are becoming more common. By recording the species of fish terns bring to shore, researchers gain a unique glimpse into how climate change and other factors are affecting seabirds. Learn more about The Seabird Institute at audubon.org/seabird-institute.

Trip Report

Roving Redstart Row with Ramblin' Donna Rose

By Russ Naylor

On May 29 our LHAS team took a tour of Lower River Road in West Cornwall, a birdy hotspot along the Housatonic River favored by Donna Rose Smith in her series of spring bird outings. Common Mergansers and a Double-crested Cormorant fished there. We had no hatch of aquatic insects, so swallows were few, though we did see grackles harvesting midges at water's edge. On arrival, we were greeted by a brilliantly rufous Red-shouldered Hawk that checked us out before gliding back to business on a quest for tasty crawdads and amphibians.

Stars of the day were American Redstarts in abundance. All along the trail were singing males showing off musically diverse repertoires, hens eagerly rushing in to pick mates among the singers. A plethora of migrants of all ages and stages added to the mix, including quite a few yearling "yellowstart" males practicing their own amatory auditions.

At least 10 other warbler species mingled amidst the redstarts — photogenic Yellow Warblers in sparkling morning sunlight, Louisiana Waterthrushes, a Northern Parula, two Magnolia Warblers, Ovenbirds, and others.

Red-eyed Vireos also presented a mix of migrants and pairing breeders, as did Veeries, with much chasing, territorial clashing, and nest-building all around us. Some other tweety treats were tapping sapsuckers, bright Baltimore Orioles posing for portraits, nesting phoebes blending songs with Eastern Wood-Peepees, robins stuffing young mouths with food, and eager songfests from both Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireos.

Three cheers for Donna Rose in gratitude for finding 57 species to end the month of May.



American Redstart.
Photo: Dennis Jarvis, Wikimedia Commons



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Inc.
P.O. Box 861
Litchfield, CT 06759-0861

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Trip Report

A-wingin' and A-swingin' in the Rain

By Russ Naylor

Our spring Swift Swirl on May 16 proved to be more than just that. In sprinkles of rain, as local ravens croaked goodnights to their family and a Red Fox vixen started her nightshift with light “mousework,” the latest swift flight came sweeping in about 8 p.m. to put on an airborne show par excellence.

Swirling in great undulations from Main Street to Woodbury Middle School, they practiced a magnificent range of aerobatic exercises. Circling widely and narrowly, sometimes fast and sometimes slow, with sudden changes in pace or direction, they swept about in great loops or circles, seeming to play tag with their roosting chimney, sometimes descending in aerial “waterfalls”; other times dashing apart and zigzagging about as a flock in practice maneuvers designed to evade attacking raptors. Slowed-down flights at a sedate tempo would at times explode into surges of frenetic energy as if the birds were scattershot out of a cannon — expressions of migratory hyperactivity. German ornithologists have a word for it: Zugunruhe, or migratory restlessness.

As time passed, the circling swarm enlarged as newcomers

poured in from all directions, until the swift flight became a swirling dervish of birds. This went on until about 8:20 p.m., when a few birds entered the roost. Then, in a seven-minute interval, about 250 swifts wheeled and poured into the roosting chimney. Only two birds that went into the south chimney and three birds heading west to roost at the middle school did not join this collective entry flight. After that, a trickling of late stragglers silently swept in to bring the total to about 280 birds.



Chimney Swift.

Photo: Adam Jackson, Wikimedia Commons

As the swift flight went on, it was briefly joined by other aerial feeders on less hasty schedules — one Bank Swallow and two leisurely flitting Common Nighthawks (both declining species).

It was a delight to eye and ear to witness the twittering return of our chimney cohabitants, arriving safely from winter sojourns in Brazil.