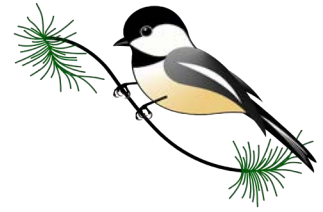




Chickadee Chatter



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

**Birds & Wildlife of
Argentina &
Patagonia**
September 14
Monday, 6:45 p.m.
Litchfield Community
Center

**Hawk Watch at
Lighthouse Point**
October 4
Sunday, anytime after
8 a.m.
New Haven

**Primal Africa —
Gorillas to Apes**
October 5
Monday, 6:45 p.m.
Litchfield Community
Center

**Birding Around
Cape May, NJ**
October 15–18

**LHAS Nature
Explorers: The
Spooky Side of
Nature**
October 25, 2 p.m.
Boyd Woods Sanctu-
ary, Litchfield

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

President's Message

By Karen Griswold Nelson



As I write this, the dog days of summer are waning. This 40-day period from July 3 to August 11 has lived up to its expectations of peak summer heat

and humidity. Despite this, and the addition of smoky skies from wildfires and torrential rains and wind, I wake up to the sound of neighborhood birds outside my open windows at daybreak, greeting the day as normal.

While corn, tomatoes, and squash flood farm stands for our nutritional needs, food for migrating birds is quietly ripening on the many bushes, trees, and vines that will nourish our birds as they migrate.

As days grow shorter, I would encourage all of us to assess the lighting on our properties that we need for safety, and make changes that can create safer travel paths for birds to reach their winter destinations. (See lightsoutct.org for info on “lights out” during migration season.)

Catalogs for next year's plants are already in the mail. If you're planning to buy plants, consider native ones that support birds and pollinators. Also, think about a different way to manage leaves and garden and yard debris, as studies show that better practices can create food for birds in the spring. Many insects that birds rely on in

the spring and summer overwinter under leaf litter.

And lastly, I encourage you all to become partners with not only LHAS but our many birding and wildlife partners to make changes. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” — *Margaret Mead, original Earth Day supporter.*

Lights Out for Birds — And Moths — And People

By Diane Edwards, Editor

By now you've probably heard it many times: During peak bird migration times, turn off or dim lights at night if they're not needed for safety. Most birds migrate at night, when artificial lights can disorient them, causing them to fly off course or crash into buildings. Peak fall migration is from August 15 to November 15.

But artificial lights cause havoc with other creatures too — including us! According to DarkSky International's website (darksky.org), “Light pollution disrupts wildlife, impacts human well-being, wastes money and energy, contributes to climate change, and blocks our view of the universe.”

For billions of years, all animals and

continued on page 4

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

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Education	Vickie Dauphinais
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Field Trips	David Zomick
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Research

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

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

Theresa Bettencourt	Watertown
Ann Brenker	Litchfield
Judy Brown	Sherman
Rita Carroll	Watertown
Ruth Chartier	Bristol
Hugh Cheney	Cornwall
Timothy Clement	Sharon
Elizabeth Dunn	Falls Village
Grayson Egan	Bethlehem
Nancy Felice	Terryville
John Funchion	Norfolk
John Grabowski	Bristol
Janet Green	Gaylordsville
Ann L. Hume	Lakeville
Michael Johnston	Colebrook
Rita Knittel	Riverton
Kathy McCann	South Kent
Pat Merati	Torrington
Martha Mullins	Norfolk
Michael Nathanson	Morris
Linda Needham	Bristol
Donald Olmsted	Northfield
Joseph Quartiero	Torrington
Joan Richards	Harwinton
Jane Sadowski	New Milford
Frank Seibert	Bristol
Lilly Simons	Sharon
Leonard Stein	Goshen
Jen Wening	Salisbury
Kim Widener	Roxbury

LHAS membership is 1,027.

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

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.

Chickadee Chatter was printed by **Photo Arts Printing Company**, Torrington. Special thanks to **Janet Baker** and **Lynne Williamson** for proofreading this newsletter.

In Memoriam — Ray Belding



Many of us at LHAS were very saddened to hear of the passing on July 29th of longtime member Ray Belding, aged 84. I think it's fair to say Ray was one of our most loved members, who frequently led birding trips — including his very popular Wednesday Morning Bird Walks — and regaled us with his humor and knowledge of birds.

Ray was a past president, recording secretary, and board member of LHAS. He was our compiler for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count for more than 40 years, only relinquishing that role in 2022.

Here are some memories of Ray shared by his daughter and several LHAS members.

“My dad, Raymond Belding, passed away ... after a steady decline over the past year. It was his time and yet our hearts still break. He was one of a kind for sure. A lover of many things: the outdoors, birds, double IPAs, family, friends, walks, driving his car, cribbage, good food, travel, music, singing, and nature. The list goes on and on. He was a man who loved deeply and was deeply loved. We will miss you, dad!”

— Alison Mackey, Ray's daughter

“Ray was a wise, big-hearted, affectionate birder guru for me. Every Wednesday for the last 20 years he let Ronnie Santo and me go birding with him. It was a day of belly laughs, great storytelling, and luscious sandwiches and beer. Plus we learned. He set a grand example for us humans.”

— Patty Pickard

“Ray taught me the meaning of what a true friend is, and what it means to be a friend in return. Ray, you are and always will be my friend.”

— Scott Mills

“A mentor and good friend to me who shared laughs and a love for birds. R.I.P., Bud!”

— Fran Zygmunt

“Ray was my birding mentor when I joined LHAS. I fondly remember owling in the snow for the Christmas Bird Count and pilowing into his Subaru to go birding on the coast for the day.”

— Donna Rose Smith

A Recollective Requiem for Ray Belding

By Russ Naylor

Vaya con Dios por siempre, buen amigo mio!

Hearing of your passing, Ray, we are left a legacy of decades of memorable field trips and camaraderie in your company, whether here or abroad, from Cape May and Cape Ann to far-flung birding frontiers.

We will never forget all those LHAS Christmas Count compilations where you kept errant area captains on task as we savored the rivalry between the teams covering lakes Waramaug and Bantam.

You now migrate to new habitats to bird with the late Gordon Loery, Neil Currie, John Baker, and many more such rare “birds. May the angels you view bear plumage as resplendent as the quetzal you loved and its hummingbird hosts.



Ray Belding, left, on one of his bird walks.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Travels with Ray — His ZONA-CAP Tours!

By Angela Dimmitt

As a school social worker back in the '80s, Ray took the long summer vacations to go backpacking in South and Central America. In 1986 he decided to invite a few LHASers to join him on a trip to Costa Rica. Not backpacking, but fairly basic — we often had no electricity or running water. Our guide was Ray's friend Richard Garrigues, an American who had served in the Peace Corps there, married, settled, and started Costa Rica Expeditions. He also wrote the first *Birds of Costa Rica*. The trip was such a success that we returned in 1988 — a bit fancier (hot showers!). Ray took a bigger group again in 2008, the "Famous Chacabobo Tour." How the country had changed — resorts, tourists, zip lines! And another big tour in 2014 to western Panama with guide Beny Wilson. In between, a smaller group, six of us, went to Arizona, southeast Texas, and also Big Bend in southwest Texas, all orchestrated by Ray. Never to be forgotten. Ray got me hooked on birding travel ever since. Ray was a most excellent guide and travel companion. I miss him!

Lights Out

(continued from page 1)

plants have relied on predictable day and night rhythms. These rhythms affect reproduction, feeding, sleep, and protection from predators. As DarkSky states, “Scientific evidence suggests that artificial light at night has negative and deadly effects on many creatures, including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects, and plants.” For example, nocturnal animals need darkness to avoid prey. Moths, most of which fly at night, can become disoriented by light (just as many migrating birds do), leaving them exhausted and potentially more vulnerable to predators.

Our own circadian rhythms also suffer the consequences of light pollution. It messes with our internal clocks, which can lead to sleep disturbances. Exposure to light at night can suppress the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps us sleep. There’s even some scientific evidence that light pollution might affect our genes.

It’s probably wise to limit outdoor lighting, not just during bird migrations, but all year long.

Tribute to Sandra Slemmer

By Ann Orsillo

LHAS has lost longtime member Sandy Slemmer, who passed away in April. Sandy was an avid birder who participated in many LHAS bird walks. She was an advocate for the conservation of the natural world. Sandy was active at the Sharon Audubon Center, where she volunteered in bird rehabilitation and was a member of the Stewardship Board. She also helped at their fundraisers and special events. Sandy also participated in LHAS paddle trips. She enjoyed watching birds and was knowledgeable in identifying plants, flowers, and other flora. Sandy will be missed as a friend and supporter of LHAS.



We extend our sincere condolences to her husband, David, and other family members.

Paddlers Learn About Beavers

By Diane Edwards

LHAS board member Ginny Apple led a paddling trip on the Bantam River on July 10. The nine other folks attending learned all about beavers, including their lodges, food sources, scent mounds, and more. A few beavers did make an appearance!



A beaver in the Bantam River.

Photo: Ginny Apple



Ginny Apple (far right) talks about beavers.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards



Enjoying a perfect evening paddling trip.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Focus on Birds

The Tufted Titmouse — Small Bird, Big Personality

By Justin Mack, Education Committee Member

As a relatively new birder with a lot to learn, I find myself focusing my attention on those backyard birds that visit my feeders. I am always struck by how much personality comes out in those interactions, especially from one of my favorites, the Tufted Titmouse.

The Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) is one of Connecticut's most familiar year-round songbirds. About six inches long, this energetic little bird is easy to recognize by its soft gray plumage, prominent crest, large dark eyes, and rusty-colored flanks. Although its colors are subtle compared to those of many backyard birds, its inquisitive nature and cheerful presence make it one of my favorites to watch around the feeder.

Tufted Titmice are found throughout the eastern United States in deciduous and mixed forests, wooded neighborhoods, and suburban backyards. Their range has expanded steadily northward over the past century, likely aided by warmer winters and the widespread popularity of backyard bird feeders. Today, they are permanent residents across Connecticut and can be enjoyed in every season.

One of my first clues that a Tufted Titmouse is nearby is its voice. Its clear, whistled "peter, peter, peter" rings through my backyard. Like many members of the *Paridae* family (which includes chickadees), titmice also produce a surprising variety of softer calls used to communicate with mates and flock members. During the fall and winter, they frequently join mixed feeding flocks of other woodland birds.

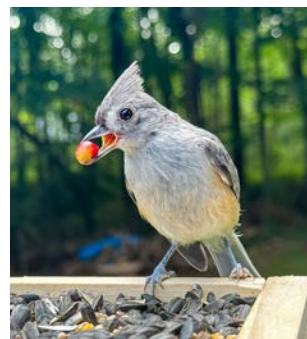


Tufted Titmouse.

Photo: Justin Mack

Despite their small size, Tufted Titmice are bold and resourceful. They practice an important survival strategy known as caching. Throughout the fall and winter, they hide seeds in bark crevices, under lichens, and among clusters of leaves, creating hundreds of tiny food stores they can return to later. Their remarkable spatial memory helps them relocate many of these hidden treasures when food becomes scarce.

During the breeding season, Tufted Titmice nest in natural tree cavities or abandoned woodpecker holes. They will also readily accept appropriately sized nest boxes. The female builds a soft, cup-shaped nest using moss, grasses, leaves, bark strips, and animal hair. Researchers have found all types of hair from old nests including hair from raccoons, opossums, woodchucks, livestock, pets, and even humans. The female usually lays five to eight eggs, and both parents work tirelessly to feed the hungry nestlings until they fledge about two and a half weeks after hatching.



Tufted Titmouse.

Photo: Justin Mack

I find one of the most endearing qualities of the Tufted Titmouse is its curiosity. These birds often seem just as

interested in watching me as I am in watching them. They perch only a few feet away, cocking their heads from side

to side as if studying every movement. Their expressive crest seemingly rises and falls with their mood, giving them an almost animated appearance that I find fascinating to watch.

I think the Tufted Titmouse offers a reminder that some of our most rewarding birding experiences come from species we see every day. Take a few extra moments to watch one the next time it visits. Listen for its unmistakable whistle, notice its fearless curiosity, and appreciate the remarkable adaptations packed into one small bird!

Some sources:

allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tufted_Titmouse

audubon.org/field-guide/bird/tufted-titmouse

LHAS Historian Needs Help!

LHAS has been without a Historian for about six or seven years, so we have a lot of material that needs to be reviewed and catalogued. As the new Historian chair, Janet Baker is looking for committee members to volunteer to help with this project. Please call her at 860-567-8427, email her at berryledges@gmail.com, or text her at 860-307-7933 if you are willing to help.

LHAS Calendar — Summer/Fall 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.

September 14 . . Birds and Wildlife of Argentina and Patagonia Monday, 6:45 PM

This program will highlight Dave Tripp's visits to Argentina in 2022 and 2025, specifically the Patagonia region. His Argentina bird list tops 300 species, 235 of which he has photographed and entered into eBird. Dave will entertain us with stories and adventures as well as his spectacular photos of the Patagonia avifauna. Dave has been birding since he was 12, when he went on an LHAS bird walk with his sixth-grade teacher at White Memorial in Litchfield. He has been hooked on birding ever since! He currently serves as the treasurer of LHAS and compiles two Christmas Bird Counts and a summer count. He also is a board member of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, for which he has spent 25 years on the Avian Records of Connecticut Committee and founded the Connecticut Big Day team — the Raven Lunatics, who hold the state record of 192 species in a 24-hour period. He has traveled worldwide and leads trips to Central and South America, especially Brazil, as a hobby.

October 5 Primal Africa — Gorillas to Gazelles. Monday, 6:45 PM

An Africa safari offers a powerful nature experience. To be surrounded by megafauna in a setting that embodies the origins of humankind is unique. For Tom Blagden, Africa provides the ultimate photographic immersion, which he shares with us through his words and images. Tom has been a nature and conservation photographer for over 50 years and is a Fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers. He has published numerous books; his last three on Acadia and Grand Canyon National Parks each won national book awards. In addition to many publications and exhibits, his images have graced the covers of *Smithsonian*, *Audubon*, *Outdoor Photographer*, and *Nature Conservancy* magazines, among others. He and his wife, Lynn, live in Lakeville, where Tom serves on the Salisbury Conservation Commission.

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

September 26 . . . Visit Our Table at White Memorial's Family 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.

October 4 Hawk Watch at Lighthouse Point Sunday, anytime after 8 AM

Hawk watchers at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven typically tally more hawks than those at any other reporting site northeast of Cape May, NJ. Thousands of other migrating birds pass the point too, many of them stopping to rest and feed in the nearby woods and marsh. Join Marie Kennedy and Angela Dimmitt for a day of watching this annual migration spectacle. *If interested, please contact Angela at 860-355-3429 or angeladimmitt@aol.com, or Marie at 914-393-6270*

continued on page 7

Board Meeting: 7 p.m., Tuesday, September 15, 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.**

Calendar

(continued from page 6)

or mariekennedy226@gmail.com. Directions: Take I-95 north through New Haven to Exit 50 and turn right on Woodward Avenue. At the end, past Nathan Hale Park, turn right on Townsend Ave. Watch for signs to Lighthouse Point Park and turn right on Lighthouse Road. Continue into the park; park in the parking lot or drive up to the hawk watch on the hill in front of the lighthouse. **Note:** There might be a non-resident parking fee, but it used to be waived if one said one was going to the hawk watch.

October 15–18 . . Birding In & Around Cape May, NJ Thursday–Sunday,

Cape May, NJ, is one of the most well known East Coast birding destinations. We will go to birding sites throughout the county and will stop at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on the way down as well as on the way home to net around 140 species. On past trips, we have seen some great birds and had some great experiences. The Hyland Motor Inn in Cape May Court House is honoring the same price as in past years. Ten rooms have been reserved for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, \$304. We will begin our birding weekend meeting Thursday afternoon. **To reserve a room and get payment instructions, contact Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com; do not contact the motel.** We will visit the Cape May Bird Observatory Fall Bird Festival expo on Friday or Saturday afternoon.

October 17 Visit Our Table at Watertown Lions Club's Wildlife Day Saturday, 10AM-2 PM

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

LHAS Nature Explorers — Family Fun!

September 26.....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. Bring the whole family to celebrate nature!

October 25.....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! Meet at the Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. Rain cancels. **Pre-registration appreciated at lhasjunior@gmail.com. For more information contact Vickie Dauphinais at 860-805-9167.**

Trip Report — July 22**Boyd Woods Biophilia Binge****By Russ Naylor**

Biology guru Donna Rose Smith led a group of LHAS members on a fruitful wildlife walk at our Boyd Woods Sanctuary to sample a cross-section of summer wildlife species from three biotic “kingdoms.”

In the botanical category, we savored a bouquet of summer blooms — Steeplebush, Tall Meadow Rue, Heal-all, Queen Anne’s Lace, dogbane, goldenrod, jewelweed, and the white florescences of Indian Pipe.

From the mycological kingdom came various fungi, with bark- and wood-loving mushrooms, such as Turkey Tails and a variety of bolete-type mushrooms (which have a spongy layer of pores rather than gills, a thick stem, and a cap), some sprouting in a nearly fairy-ring fashion from a single mass of soil-dwelling mycelium growth (the root-like vegetative part of a fungus) — much to the delight of mice, chipmunks, and slugs.



Lynx Paw Oyster Mushrooms.
Photo: Donna Rose Smith

In between these discoveries, a diversity of fauna came forth before our eyes. Insects included

- lepidopterans (moths, butterflies, and skippers) — Summer Azures, Pearl Crescents, northbound Monarch butterflies, noctuid moths, and various skippers;
- odonates (predatory flying insects, including dragonflies and damselflies) — Green Darners, Cherry-faced Meadow Hawks, Common Whitetail Skimmers, and Wandering Gliders;
- hymenopterans (an order of insects) — Paper Wasps, Honeybees, Sweat Bees, and at least three bumblebee species; and
- coleopterans (the largest order of insects) — ground beetles, fireflies, and flower beetles.

Amphibians were represented by Green and Pickerel Frogs, some just metamorphosed from the tadpole stage.

Mammals included chipmunks and squirrels harvesting the year’s first nuts and Eastern Moles leaving earthen

mounds as they aerated soil while feasting on beetles, grubs, and worms. We also saw plenty of Black Bear signs as testimony to Mr. Paddington’s culinary forays — berry-bearing branches pulled down and logs torn open for access to tasty bark beetles and carpenter ants.

Last but not least was a flurry of birdlife — singing Wood Thrushes and Indigo Buntings; Veeries, goldfinches, chickadees, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, towhees, bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks, and a Turkey Vulture.

Courtesy of Donna Rose, we all hiked forth to get in our daily steps while immersed in a wealth of biodiversity. As always, splendidly done!

Trip Report — May 31**An Ebullient End to May Bubbling Over with Joy****By Russ Naylor**

Our Shepaug Dam birding day and picnic ended May on a lively note as we tallied some 70 species at Lake Zoar in Southbury. A Like the proverbial Bobolink, a visiting young birder “bubbled over with bubbling joy” in her enthusiasm for birds, butterflies, wildflowers, and being outdoors as she learned more about nature.

Amid lively discussions about birds, forestry, and environmental issues, we discovered nesting birds up close. This included a fence-post hole nest of baby chickadees, Chipping Sparrows nesting right over our heads, and a baggy sock-like nest of a Baltimore Oriole whose occupant sat atop new eggs. Below, a bonded pair of Spotted Sandpipers patrolled potential rocky-island nest sites.

Much birdsong blessed our outing — Prairie and Yellow Warblers, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, all four local vireos (including a single Blue-headed), Indigo Buntings, as well as phoebes and Eastern Wood-Peewees.

A parade of raptors (some late migrants) passed by for our inspection — both vultures, three Bald Eagles, two buteos (Red-tails and Red-shoulders), and two accipiters (three Sharp-shins and a Cooper’s Hawk).

Meanwhile, we were charmed by wildlife enjoying the sun — a Gray Squirrel stretched out atop a fence post sunbathing, turkeys dust bathed in dry sand, a Common Merganser bathed in sparkling water, a wood-peewee basked on an open branch, and Double-crested Cormo-

continued on page 9

Trip Report — June 23**Mohawk Pond Paddle Trip****By Ann Orsillo**

Mohawk Pond is always a favorite paddle for LHAS members. Some of the flora around the pond is unique.

**Sheep Laurel.**

Photo: Ann Orsillo

**Sundew.**

Photo: Ann Orsillo

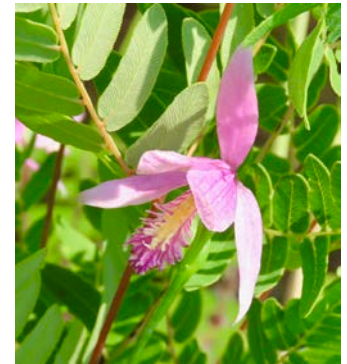
These plants only grow in a wet bog habitat. The Sheep Laurel is bountiful, and the sundews and pitcher plants are very interesting (both are carnivorous). Other wildflowers abound.

The birds we saw included Broad-winged Hawks, Great Blue Herons, Kingbirds, Swamp Sparrows, Yellow-throated and Yellow



Clockwise from top left: Swamp Loosestrife (also known as Swamp Candles), pitcher plant, and Rose Pogonia.

Photos: Ann Orsillo



Warblers, goldfinches, and Black and Turkey Vultures. A towhee sang the entire time.

We marveled at the massive trunks of old pine trees and the huge boulders left from the last glacier.

We welcome members to experience Mohawk Pond with us next year.

An Ebullient End to May*(continued from page 8)*

rants spread their wings in sun-worshipful ecstasy. As all this went on, newly returned Cliff Swallows engaged in building mud nests on Shepaug Dam as they commenced domicile duties toward producing another season of progeny. As the local Shepaug Dam raven said to us in gruff greeting: “Many more!”

**Cliff Swallow.**

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Rain Barrels Installed at Kalmia

The garage at Kalmia Sanctuary now has gutters and leaders that feed rainwater into rain barrels. The water will make it easier for our gardening volunteers to water the plants in the butterfly garden and pollinator garden. Many thanks to Janice Jankauskas and Rich Martin, who leveled a spot for the smaller rain barrel, and to Logan Connor, who obtained and installed the 300-gallon “barrel” (which looks more like a tank).



Conservation News

From CT DEEP

Study Underway of Rare Butterfly Found at UConn

The Frosted Elfin, a rare, small butterfly, is being considered for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act due to factors like habitat loss and fragmentation. In 2023, a population of Frosted Elfin was found in UConn's Hillside Environmental Education Park. The discovery



Frosted Elphin
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

brought together researchers from UConn's College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources; CT DEEP; and the UConn Office of Sustainability. The team is collaborating on a project to learn more about the species, including how to help the population grow.

CT Proposes Updates to Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern Species List

Successful conservation efforts have improved the status of Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and American Oystercatchers in Connecticut. As a result, CT DEEP has proposed changing their status from Endangered to Threatened. The proposal is part of the periodic review of the state's List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species, which is required by the state's Endangered Species Act. The proposal includes dozens of other changes to the status of bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, invertebrate, and plant species. It also includes some taxonomic changes. Other birds besides the three already mentioned appear on the list, including the Salt Marsh Sparrow and Northern Saw-whet Owl, which are changed from Special Concern to Threatened. And the proposal calls for delisting the Henslow's Sparrow (which is believed to be extirpated in Connecticut) and the Northern Parula. To see the proposal, go to portal.ct.gov/deep/endangered-species/connecticuts-endangered-threatened-and-special-concern-species.

Climate-fueled Storms Biggest Threat to Salt Marshes, UConn Study Finds

Until recently, climate scientists have attributed the decline in salt marshes to rising sea levels. But a new UConn study has found that stronger storms fueled by climate change are now the main culprit behind the acceleration of tidal wetland losses. Connecticut's tidal wetlands consist mostly of salt marshes — essential habitat for many birds and fishes. At Hammonasset Beach State Park, about 27 acres of salt marsh have disappeared over the past 90 years, according to the *Waterbury Republican-American* (June 28, 2026).

CTDOT Expands Pollinator Program

The Connecticut Department of Transportation's Pollinator Program aims to cultivate critical habitats for pollinators, including bees and Monarch butterflies, through targeted seeding efforts and vegetation management, such as reduced mowing practices. Begun in 2017 with eight sites totaling about 10 acres, the program now has 167 conservation areas totaling about 260 acres. The pollinator corridors, which bloom through the summer, are marked with special conservation area signage. For more information about the importance of pollinators, visit pollinator.org.

Major Conservation Bill Advances

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee in June approved a companion bill to the House version of the Farm Bill (the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026), which was passed by the House of Representatives in April. According to National Audubon, the bill includes critical support for voluntary, science-based conservation programs that help farmers, ranchers, and foresters steward working lands. These programs are key for helping reverse the decline in bird populations across the country, a decrease of 3 billion since 1970. The programs incorporate proven practices that are already helping farms and forests be more productive and resilient, while supporting the recovery of birds as diverse as the Cerulean Warbler and Northern Bobwhite.

continued on page 11

Conservation News (continued from page 10)

New Rule Weakens Habitat Protections

The Trump administration has announced a final rule that rescinds the longstanding definition of what it means to “harm” a plant or animal under the Endangered Species Act. The new rule says that habitat destruction is no longer a prohibited form of harm to an endangered species. The administration also announced two additional rules that will weaken protections for endangered species. The first rescinds blanket protections for species listed as “threatened” under the ESA. The second revises the process for excluding otherwise suitable areas from designation as “critical habitat.”

Jan Glendening, a Nature Conservancy vice president, said, “In order to survive and thrive, animals and plants need habitat. These rules will make it harder for them to find shelter, food, and places to mate.

“These rules come at a time when so much habitat is under threat from things like development, fires, drought, and floods. We need more, not fewer, effective protections and incentives for habitat restoration. Science increasingly points to the importance of healthy and connected habitat as essential for the long-term survival and recovery of species.”

Another Season of Beautiful Blooms

Text and photos by Vickie Dauphinais

The pollinator gardens at Wigwam Brook and Kalmia Sanctuaries were in full bloom in late July, thanks to the dedication of our gardening volunteers. There was an abundance of colorful native blossoms for the bees, moths, butterflies, and hummingbirds to feast on. The flowers should still be blooming now — feel free to visit and watch the pollinators at work.



Coneflowers at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary.



Rich Martin installing a sign at Wigwam Brook.

lanthus occidentalis) were added along the garden perimeter and a Trumpet Honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera sempervirens*) was planted by the fence enclosing the chestnut orchard. A new garden sign was also installed. A huge thank you to Mary Guilfoile, Jim Gillespie, and Rich Martin for helping with the project.

These gardens need caring hands all season long. 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 get notification when work parties are scheduled.



Mary Guilfoile and Jim Gillespie planting Buttonbush shrubs at Wigwam Brook.

This past spring we expanded the pollinator garden at Wigwam Brook as part of the Litchfield 250 Conservation Challenge, honoring America's 250th birthday. Three Buttonbush shrubs (*Cepha-*



Flowers at Kalmia Sanctuary.



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DATED MATERIAL — PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

Why Remove Burning Bush?

By Eileen E. Cooper, Ph.D.

In October, when the foliage changes color here in Connecticut, the Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*) makes our forests and yards pretty. The shrub, introduced into the U.S. in the mid-1800s, provides good screening and produces an abundance of berries for birds, although of poor nutritional quality. Birds, in turn, have distributed the seeds throughout our forests, introducing this invasive species to outcompete native species for resources. Burning Bush aggressively blocks sunlight needed for understory plants and animals to survive. It prevents the regeneration of tree seedlings. There are no natural predators or diseases to keep it in check. It harms the environment.

The dominance of Burning Bush changes the structure of the forest, yet we can help undo the harm. There are good native alternatives with brilliant fall foliage, berries, and an appeal to local wildlife that provide greater ecological benefits. Some include Chokeberry (*Aronia species-A. melanocarpa* and *A. arbutifolia*); Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), which produces a magnificent display of red and orange fall foliage; Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) with red foliage and stems; Oakleaf

Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) with striking burgundy leaves in the fall; Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), which produces vibrant yellow and orange



Oak Leaf Hydrangea.
 Photo: Wikimedia Commons

leaves with berries that attract birds; and Sweetpire (*Itea virginica*), a fragrant flower whose colors change from crimson to purple in season. Trees include Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*); Sweetbell (*Eubotrys racemosa*), which likes challenging conditions and produces dramatic scarlet colors; and the Maple-leaf Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), which offers shades of red, pink, and purple as leaves turn. Local nurseries selling these native species can be found on the internet.

Removing and replacing Burning Bush is about money, time, and values. It boils down to “pretty” versus a healthy environment. It’s your choice.