



Chickadee Chatter



March/April 2023

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 68/Issue 2

The mission of the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitat, for the benefit of the community, through conservation, education, and research.

President's Message

By Diane Edwards, President

Migrating Birds Need Our Help



Even if you like winter (yes, some of us do!), you're probably looking forward to spring, with its warmer weather, a greening landscape, and returning migratory birds.

Speaking of those birds, imagine the rigors they endure as they fly thousands and thousands of miles to return to their nesting grounds: exhaustion from the huge energy expenditure; a lack of adequate food supplies and safe stopover places (for example, because of development); storms; collisions with windows, power lines, and wind farms; predators; and light pollution that can cause birds to lose their way or crash.

Migratory birds need all the help we can give them!

We at Litchfield Hills Audubon try to do our part. We maintain our three sanctuaries to help migratory and non-migratory birds alike find food, suitable habitats, and safe nesting places. We have been removing non-native invasive plants and adding native plants that have evolved along with the insects that birds rely on for food for themselves and their babies. We avoid mowing our meadows until after nesting season. We have nest boxes to help cavity nesters like bluebirds and tree swallows (although it's becoming a challenge to keep bears from breaking the boxes!). And our Boyd Woods Sanctuary in Litchfield has bird feeders out of the reach of bears.

Record-Breaking Annual Appeal!

Thanks to you, our current Annual Appeal, launched last November, has beaten last year's total (a little over \$13,000). As we went to press in early February, we had 203 donations totaling \$16,188! Thank you for your support!

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

There are several things we all can do to help migratory birds:

- During April turn off unnecessary outdoor lights between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. and downshield any necessary lights, since most birds migrate at night. (At our meeting on April 3 you can learn about Lights Out Connecticut; see page 6.)
- Take steps to prevent bird window collisions. (Go to lhasct.org/newsletter to see the May/June 2021 issue

(continued on back page)

It's LHAS Scholarship Application Time

LHAS offers \$2,000 academic scholarships to two students who have been accepted in college programs specializing in environmental studies or a related field. The scholarships are open to a graduating high school senior or a graduate of a high school who lives in the LHAS chapter area (Litchfield County and some surrounding towns).

Applicants can obtain an application from their respective high school guidance office, by downloading the application form available on our website at lhasct.org/scholarships.html, or by contacting Harry Schuh at 860-485-9018 or hschuh@charter.net. Eligibility requirements are listed on the front page of the application form.

Completed applications must be received no later than Friday, April 21, for the upcoming college semester year beginning in August/September.

A special scholarship committee will choose recipients based on qualifications and needs.

LHAS Officers

President	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Vice President	Fran Zygmunt	860-689-5001
Treasurer	Mia Coats	817-691-2525
Rec. Secretary	Janet Baker	860-567-8427
Corresp. Secretary	Terri Bianchi	860-489-8821

Board of Directors

Carol Perrault	2023	860-628-1612
Carol Kearns	2023	860-307-0807
Rich Martin	2023	860-736-7714
Beverly Baldwin	2024	860-921-7075
Vickie Dauphinais	2024	860-361-9051
George Stephens	2024	860-921-7150
Michael Audette	2025	860-388-7874
Marie Kennedy	2025	914-393-6270
Karen G. Nelson	2025	860-309-9018

Committee Chairpeople

Boyd Woods Sanctuary Communications & Digital Media	Debbie & Rich Martin Rich Martin	860-819-7462 860-736-7714
Conservation	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Education	Vickie Dauphinais	860-361-9051
Facebook	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Field Trips	David Zomick	860-513-8600
Fundraising	Janice Jankauskas	203-231-2022
Historian	<i>vacant</i>	
Hospitality	<i>vacant</i>	
Kalmia Sanctuary	Irek Rychlik	860-480-6685
Membership Outreach	Beverly Baldwin	860-921-7075
Membership Records	Doreen Orciari	860-307-3102
Newsletter	Diane Edwards	860-309-5139
Programs	Angela Dimmitt	860-355-3429
Publicity	Shirley Gay	860-482-0819
Scholarships	Carol Kearns & Harry Schuh	860-307-0807
Wigwam Brook Sanctuary	John Baker	860-567-8427

Research

Christmas Bird Count	Dave Tripp	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Summer Bird Count	Dave Tripp	dtrippjr@gmail.com
Nest Box Program	Rebecca Purdy	860-485-8530

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 or mail them to her at **68 Shingle Mill Road, Harwinton, CT 06791**.

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

NEW MEMBERS

By Doreen Orciari, Membership Records Chair

Susan Auclair	Winsted
Nancy Bagnaschi	Canaan
Ginger Balch	Torrington
Artur Baltazar	Bristol
Helena Barnes	Sharon
Venice Blackman	Torrington
Kevin Bonville	Harwinton
Gerald Buchas	Harwinton
Emily Carlquist	Bethlehem
Janice Cesino*	Pleasant Valley
Patricia Decker	Lakeville
Alan Friedman	Salisbury
Francine Gryniuk	Torrington
Caitlin Hanlon	Salisbury
Dorian Hansen	West Cornwall
Jill Hanson	Riverton
Dianna Hofer	Norfolk
Anne Ireland*	Winsted
Carol Johnson	New Milford
Barbara McQueen*	Barkhamsted
Jeanette Mercure	New Hartford
Nikki & Richard Middendorf	Bridgewater
August Molitano*	Riverton
Mario Mucciacciaro	Watertown
Dexter Munger	New Milford
Kristine Ohotnicky	Torrington
Eric Rehnberg	Kent
David Roe	Terryville
Bernadette Rossi	Torrington
Paola Styron	Sherman
Marie Synnestvedt	Washington Depot
Anna Traggio	Sharon
Laura Tucker	Sharon
Khalid Wasti	Kent
Monica Weber	Roxbury
Anna Wolf	Sherman

**Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 1,023

If your newsletter is addressed incorrectly, send an email to Doreen Orciari at doreen.orciari@gmail.com.

Trip Report

A Brisk and Breezy Visitation

By Russ Naylor

On January 15, a dozen daredevil LHAS ornithophiles braved Old Man Winter's blustery gusts to scour the shores of Stratford for a slew of winged wonders, led by mettlesome featherquaster Angela Dimmitt. The Lordship Boulevard warehouse pond produced American Tree, Clay-colored, and



Northern Mockingbird

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

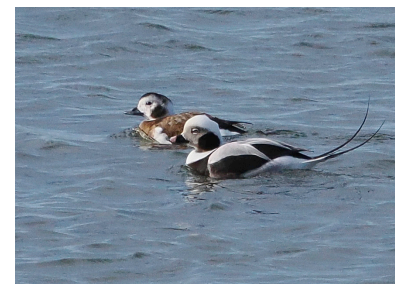
White-crowned Sparrows — some posing for photos — plus a mockingbird eager to meet camera-toting paparazzi.

Long Beach's wind-whipped waters were thronged with dozens of Long-tailed Ducks vivaciously abustle in courtship chases and displays, plus a raft of winter-hardy Com-

mon Goldeneyes. In more sheltered saltmarsh waters rafted other waterfowl — Brant and Black Ducks by the hundreds, Hooded Mergansers, and a few Gadwalls. At least two Northern Harriers plied the marshes for rodents.

Stratford Point's relentless gales didn't chill our enthusiasm as we ferretted out Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Black

Ducks, two Scoter species, American Coots, and a few Common Loons — all riding out choppy waters. Meanwhile, more Long-tailed Ducks indulged in mating chases as Savannah Sparrows skulked amid shoreline grasses.



Long-tailed Ducks

Photo: Paul Edwards

Frash Pond gave haven to a boisterous multitude of Red-breasted Mergansers seeking surcease from the wind, joined by clownishly capering Buffleheads and Hooded Mergansers. Four Canvasbacks napped on, unfazed by all this nonsense, while an adult Great Egret concentrated on inspecting the premises for food, and a Double-crested Cormorant stirred to fly off to some urgent appointment.

All told, our merry band tallied at least 53 species. We laud our ever stalwart bird-finding Brit Angela for a jolly good show! As ever, brilliantly done!

LHAS Now Has an Office!

As of February 1, we now are the happy tenants of the Litchfield Land Trust. We are renting a small office in the old train station in Litchfield that the Land Trust has restored and renovated. Called The Station, it's located at 28 Russell Street. We're in Unit B. Most of our furniture — a table, desk, file cabinets, bookshelves, and chairs — were donated to us by Ward Leonard, a Bristol manufacturing company. The Land Trust also donated chairs. We thank both of them for their help!



Move-in day! From left, Irek Rychlik, Paul Edwards, Diane Edwards, and Fran Zygmunt.

Photo: Marie Kennedy

Mark Your Calendar for Give Local — April 25-26

Your donation can help us raise bonus funds!



The Give Local campaign for Waterbury and the Litchfield Hills is a great way to support causes that matter to you. We hope that includes LHAS!

During the 36-hour online campaign, LHAS and other nonprofits will earn bonus dollars for every donor we secure and will have an opportunity to vie for cash prizes. The campaign is sponsored by the Connecticut Community Foundation and the Ion Bank Foundation. For more information, visit givelocalccf.org.

XMAS Bird Count Results

By Dave Tripp, Jr., Compiler

I want to start this year's summary by thanking a bunch of people. Marie Kennedy arranged this year's compilation, held at Patty's Restaurant. We had the place to ourselves. And thank you to Janet Baker and her crew for all the years arranging the hospitality at the Carriage House, all of the count captains and their parties who spent the day in the field counting all of the birds, and lastly Ray "Bud" Belding.

Ray has decided to take a permanent break from being the CBC compiler. Guess how long he had been compiler? I'll get to that in a minute. Ray's endless work from year to year made this a fun, sometimes competitive, and one of the most successful Connecticut bird counts. I remember being at his house in Harwinton in 1986 when he said, "Go ahead, Bud, you have first pick at any area you want to captain." (I chose Lake Waramaug over Bantam Lake.) Ray had moved the entire LHAS count circle a tad to the northeast in 1986. The original circle, believe it or not, overlapped with the

more southern Woodbury-Roxbury CBC at Washington Depot.

Oh yeah, how long? Ray has compiled this count for a whopping 45 years! Steve Broker, who puts together every count's data for the Connecticut Ornithological Association, said he was sad to see Ray retiring, adding "he had a great run."

Steve said he appreciated the work and effort Ray had put in. Thanks, Ray, for compiling the LHAS CBC for 45 years. We'll see you again at next year's compilation.

For our count on December 18, 2022, 44 participants assisted in the field or at feeders counting a total of 13,038 individual birds representing 79 species. An incredible combined total of 157.5 hours was spent owling, watching feeders, and



An eagle eating a pintail duck.

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

CBC Species Totals (CW = Count Week)

Canada Goose	1,517	Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Winter Wren	7
Mute Swan	15	Cooper's Hawk	6	Carolina Wren	43
American Wigeon	3	Bald Eagle	24	European Starling	2,668
Mallard	270	Red-shouldered Hawk	22	Gray Catbird	3
American Black Duck	43	Red-tailed Hawk	41	Northern Mockingbird	4
Mallard x American Black Duck.....	2	Eastern Screech Owl	5	Eastern Bluebird	146
Northern Pintail.....	CW*	Great Horned Owl.....	5	Hermit Thrush	12
Redhead	1	Barred Owl.....	22	American Robin	178
Ring-necked Duck	20	Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	Cedar Waxwing	12
Lesser Scaup.....	2	Belted Kingfisher	5	House Sparrow	369
Long-tailed Duck.....	1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	20	House Finch	217
Bufflehead	51	Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	66	Purple Finch	6
Common Goldeneye.....	13	Downy Woodpecker	102	Pine Siskin.....	1
Hooded Merganser	142	Hairy Woodpecker	47	American Goldfinch	128
Common Merganser	2,212	Pileated Woodpecker	15	Field Sparrow	2
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Northern Flicker	6	American Tree Sparrow	76
Ruddy Duck	15	Blue Jay	159	White-throated Sparrow	129
Wild Turkey	170	American Crow	1,061	Dark-eyed Junco	756
Pied-billed Grebe.....	1	Fish Crow.....	3	Song Sparrow	63
Rock Pigeon	213	Common Raven	29	Swamp Sparrow	3
Mourning Dove	184	Black-capped Chickadee	664	Eastern Towhee	1
American Coot.....	4	Tufted Titmouse	331	Red-winged Blackbird	49
Ring-billed Gull	100	Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	62
Herring Gull	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	14	Rusty Blackbird.....	2
Common Loon.....	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	Common Grackle.....	23
Great Blue Heron.....	4	White-breasted Nuthatch	179	Northern Cardinal	161
Black Vulture.....	3	Brown Creeper	8		

* The count week hen pintail didn't make it past 10:30 a.m. on Dec. 15. She was harassed until she was too exhausted from diving under the water and made a fatal mistake as a Bald Eagle hauled her out of the middle of Lake Waramaug. The eagle flew to a tree and tore her apart for a meal (see photo above). An amazing series of events to watch unfold yet sad to see happen.

(continued on page 5)

XMAS Bird Count Results

(continued from page 4)

in the field via foot, bike and car. Participants covered a total of 565.5 miles, all within a 17-mile diameter circle.

Here are the participants (c = area captain): John Anderson, Savanna Arcuri, John Baker (c), Janet Baker, Bev Baldwin, Bob Barbieri (c), Marcia Barker, Ray Belding (c), Terri Bianchi, Doug Craig, Melissa Craig, Vickie Dauphinais, Michael Doyle, Kristi Dranginis (c), Diane Edwards, Paul Edwards, David Emond (c), Eileen Finnan, Kevin Finnan, James Fisher, Ben Gianforti, Nica Gianforti, Ed Goodhouse, Nicki Hall (c), Dennis Hannon, Judy Herkimer, Kim Herkimer, Erin Josefson, Bill Kennedy, Marie Kennedy, Nic Main (c), Debbie Martin, Janice Martin, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor (c), Ann Orsillo (c), Patty Pickard, Sam Slater, Donna Rose Smith (c), Carrie Szwed (c), Josh Szwed, Phoebe Szwed, David Tripp, Jr. (c), Fran Zygmunt.

What Does CBC Data Tell Us?

According to Audubon CEO Dr. Elizabeth Gray, the Christmas Bird Count began in 1900 and has now generated more than 120 years' worth of data that shows how bird populations change over time.

Here is an excerpt from a letter written by Dr. Gray and emailed to members in December 2022:

"Long-term trends in that data show dramatic changes in bird communities, even within the past few decades. Thirty-five years ago, about 1,500 count circles recorded 100 million individual birds. In comparison, for the 122nd count [in 2021], more than 2,600 groups counted only 42 million birds. That means that participants are seeing less than half as many birds three decades later, even though the coverage and effort have substantially increased.

"Birds are telling us that we are in trouble. CBC counts were among the data used in a groundbreaking study that found that we have lost 3 billion birds in North America since 1970. We also know that climate change is the biggest threat to birds and people alike — and it is already having an effect.

"In a new climate study published this year, Audubon researchers looked at 90 years of CBC data. They found that winter ranges for many birds of the eastern United States have changed in response to climate-related changes in temperature and precipitation. This is consistent with our 2021 climate study that used CBC data to determine that many duck species that winter in the Southeastern U.S. have shifted northward due to temperature changes. Birds with specific habitat needs will be even more restricted by habitat availabil-

ity and land-use change in a climate-disrupted future.

"While the findings are alarming, they are helping scientists and conservation experts figure out how to protect wildlife. Understanding how wildlife is affected can help us make their habitats more adaptable and resilient to future changes. For example, Audubon's National Wildlife Refuge study has prompted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal agencies to manage natural resources differently to effectively help protect the places birds need now and in the future."

LHAS Christmas Bird Count 4Kids

By Vickie Dauphinais, LHAS Education Chair

Members of the LHAS Education Committee held the first Christmas Bird Count 4Kids on December 18, 2022 at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield. The CBC 4Kids is a less rigorous citizen science adventure than the traditional Christmas Bird Count for adults. It's a fun way for kids to celebrate nature and the outdoors.

Our small, enthusiastic group gathered in the Carriage House for a brief orientation by Josh Szwed, then headed out with a short bird list to the feeders by the museum and a stroll around Ongley Pond. It was a lovely winter day with a fair number of birds at feeders and in the bushes; lots of chickadees, titmice, and juncos, and a couple of White-breasted Nuthatches and Downy Woodpeckers.

The group proceeded to walk alongside Ongley Pond. An adult Bald Eagle and an immature one were seen flying overhead. The kids loved seeing the majestic Bald Eagle through the binoculars! As we were making our way back to the bird-feeders, two Red-tailed Hawks wowed us as they flew by. We convened back at the Carriage House to tabulate our results.

Bill and Marie Kennedy had pizza, cookies, and hot chocolate ready for everyone to enjoy. We recorded 11 species for a total of 37 birds. Pretty good for one hour of birding. Results were forwarded to Carrie Szwed, White Memorial CBC team captain. The morning was enjoyed by all! The Education Committee hopes CBC 4kids becomes an annual event in our community.



A dad and daughter search for birds.

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Winter/Spring 2023



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 B Russell St., Litchfield, CT.

GENERAL MEETINGS

Note: The following meetings will be hybrid — in person and via Zoom. If you want to participate via Zoom, go to the Calendar section of our website, lhasct.org, to register. You will be sent the meeting login link.

March 6. Birds on the Brink: The World of Captive Waterfowl Conservation . . Monday, 7 PM

Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy is often referred to as one of the hidden gems of Litchfield County. Although the facility may be tucked away in the woods, the RWC's name and legacy are known around the world. With over 400 birds and close to 90 species, RWC is one of the largest collections of waterfowl in the country and a breeding center for many rare and endangered species. During this program, led by RWC Director of Aviculture Logan Connor, you will learn a bit more about RWC and their birds as well as the importance of aviculture and captive breeding programs and how they relate to waterfowl conservation.

April 3. Lights Out Connecticut! Monday, 7 PM

Craig Repasz, Connecticut Ornithological Association's Conservation Committee chair and past president of the New Haven Bird Club, will tell us about Lights Out CT!, a campaign to help protect migrating birds from crashing into buildings at night. Why Lights Out? Most migratory birds pass over our state at night, when temperatures are cooler and skies are less turbulent. However, artificial lights attract and disorient birds, leading to collisions with buildings. The result is catastrophic: almost 1 billion birds killed in the United States every year. Craig Repasz will tell you more about the problem and the steps you can take to protect our birds.

May 1 Intro to 'Ungardening' Monday, 7 PM

Join Cornell-educated botanist and ecologist Aubree Keurajian for an introduction to the idea of "ungardening," or restorative home land care that is guided by natural ecological processes. She will discuss the concept and method of ungardening, what a "weed" really is, invasive species and how to deal with them, and suggested plant identification resources. Keurajian has worked as a botanist in Connecticut for the past four years, protecting native plants, while founding Ungardening Native Plants to educate people about native plants and ecological living.

BIRDING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

March 20 Welcome Spring at Boyd Woods Monday, 1:30 PM

We'll wander along the tranquil sanctuary trails to look for signs of spring. Brighter sunshine and longer days are warming the Earth, bringing forth amazing wildflowers! This may be a bit of an exaggeration this early in the season, but we're sure to see some (itty-bitty) flowers (with a magnifying glass that leader, Debbie Martin, will bring).

The next Board Meeting will be at 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 21 at the LHAS office located at 28 Russell Street, Unit B, Litchfield.

We'll keep a list of the birds we see: Phoebes at the kiosk, Wood Ducks at the pond, Fox Sparrows at the feeders, and (hopefully) many other new arrivals. The truth is, we never know what we may (or may not) find on an early spring day. But, even if we find no spring species on this day, we'll enjoy being outdoors and sharing the excitement and hopefulness of this new season with our walking companions along the beautiful Boyd Woods trails. Wear boots or waterproof walking shoes. Trails will be muddy! Dress warmly. Meet at the Boyd Woods parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. No dogs! **For more information contact Debbie Martin at barnowl524@hotmail.com or 860-819-7462.** Rain date: March 21, Tuesday.

April 2. Early-Migration Walk Around White Memorial. Sunday, 8 AM

Come join Fran Zygmunt, LHAS vice president and birder extraordinaire, to explore and learn about bird migration. Early springtime is when the first migrants return to their breeding grounds in northern Connecticut. We'll welcome Eastern Phoebes and Pine Warblers while saying goodbye to the local wintering waterfowl. This will also be an educational program that will link to our April monthly meeting and the Lights Out program to be presented by Craig Repasz on April 3 (see page 6). Meet in the White Memorial parking lot. **Contact Fran at fzygmunt@charter.net for more information.**

April 15 Annual Woodcock Walk at Boyd Woods Saturday, 7:15 PM

Over the winter, foresters have been busy at Boyd Woods, thinning woodlands and clearing other areas to create better habitat for wildlife. One such improvement was implemented in the "early successional habitat," an area where we've been delighted, year after year, to enjoy the show our reliable woodcocks put on overhead. The recent removal of tall trees and thick vegetation from this area not only provides the perfect spot for this fascinating bird's aerial mating dance, but also allows better viewing for us, the spectators! We'll also take a short walk through the Conifer Plantation to check on our Barred Owl pair. And, wandering a short distance to Margery's Bird Pond, we may hear or see Spring Peepers and Wood Frogs. Sanctuary managers Rich and Debbie Martin will guide you on this evening walk. Boots or waterproof shoes are recommended as trails are muddy from forestry work. Dress warmly! Bring a flashlight. 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.** Rain date: April 22, 7:15p.m.

April 16. Shorebirding in Connecticut Sunday, 8:30 AM

Join Angela Dimmitt for yet another of her shorebird trips to see what's happening along the coast! We'll decide where to go nearer the time based on what's been reported where, but it will be somewhere like Milford Point or Sherwood Island, maybe Stratford Point again. **If interested or for more information, please contact Angela in advance at 860-355-3429 or angeladimmitt@aol.com.**

April 20. Bird Walk at Bent of the River Audubon Center. Thursday, 8 AM

This walk, led by Donna Rose Smith, will take us to the historic barn and nature center. Meet at the visitor parking area at 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury, CT.

April 21-23 . . . Northwest Conservation District Earth Day Plant Sale Friday-Sunday

Visit our table at the Northwest Conservation District's annual plant sale. We'll have information on bird-friendly plants, many of which you can buy right there. See page 9 for more details.

April 27. Bird Walk on the Appalachian Trail along the Housatonic River . . . Thursday, 8 AM

We will look for spring migrants on this walk, led by Donna Rose Smith. Rain cancels. **Directions to River Road, Cornwall Bridge:** Navigate to the junction of Route 4 and Route 7 in Cornwall Bridge. Drive over the bridge toward Sharon, and take the first right onto River Road. (Enter 1-99 River Road, Cornwall Bridge into your navigation device.) We will meet under the bridge and carpool to the end of the road, as parking is limited.

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

Audubon CT's 2022 Shorebird and Seabird Conservation Highlights

It was "one of our best seasons yet" for shorebird and seabird conservation efforts, according to Audubon CT. All three of their focal species — Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Least Terns — had excellent nesting seasons in 2022.

- 66 pairs of Piping Plovers were monitored during the nesting season. They produced 97 fledglings, for a productivity rate of 1.51 fledglings per pair. Compared with 2021, "we had more pairs, more fledged chicks, and a higher productivity — all sure signs that the population is growing!"
- American Oystercatchers had 79 confirmed breeding pairs out of a population of 200 individuals — an increase of 28% over the last decade. These pairs fledged 62 chicks, for a productivity of 0.78 fledglings per pair. "This is higher than the 0.5 fledglings per pair recovery goal for this species, and our highest number of fledged chicks since we started this work in 2012."
- The 247 pairs of Least Terns monitored fledged 211 chicks, adding up to a productivity of 0.85 fledglings per pair. This is the highest number of fledged Least Terns in years, and significantly higher than the 0.11 productivity from the 2021 nesting season.



Audubon CT to Create Regional Coastal Resilience Hub in West Haven

The Connecticut State Bond Commission has approved \$850,000 in bond funding to help Audubon Connecticut and New York, a regional office of the National Audubon Society, establish a Coastal Resilience Hub in or near the Sandy Point Beach and Bird Sanctuary in West Haven.

That sanctuary "is one of the state's foremost locations to observe rare shorebirds and is a nationally listed Important Bird Area," said Mike Burger, executive director of Audubon Connecticut and New York and vice president of National Audubon. "The Hub will ... create a place to demonstrate climate resilience best practices and highlight ways to use nature-based solutions to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change." It will also support wildlife, recreation, and open space in West Haven.

Study: US Birds Declining in All Habitat Types Except Wetlands

The 2022 State of the Birds report for the United States reveals two trends, one hopeful, one dire. Long-term trends of waterfowl show strong increases where investments in wetland conservation have improved conditions for birds and people. But data show birds in the U.S. are declining overall in every other habitat type — forests, grasslands, deserts, and oceans.

Here are findings included in the new report, which was published by 33 leading science and conservation organizations and agencies, including Audubon:

- More than half of U.S. bird species are declining.
- U.S. grassland birds are among the fastest declining, with a 34% loss since 1970.
- Waterbirds and ducks in the U.S. have increased by 18% and 34% respectively during the same period.
- 70 newly identified "tipping point" species have each lost 50% or more of their populations in the past 50 years, and are on a track to lose another half in the next 50 years if nothing changes. They include beloved gems such as Rufous Hummingbirds, Golden-winged Warblers, and Black-footed Albatrosses.

"The State of the Birds Report underscores both the seri-

Congress Fails to Pass Recovering America's Wildlife Act

The bipartisan bill, "which would prevent extinctions and help plants and wildlife thrive," according to the National Wildlife Federation, did not make it out of last year's Congressional session because of disagreements over a financial matter. Supporters will likely reintroduce this bill this year.

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

ous threats facing birds as well as opportunities to forge solutions that will benefit birds and the places they need. ... Ensuring healthy landscapes across our forests, grasslands, wetlands, and more will help protect birds and people alike by storing carbon, providing essential habitat, and building more climate-resilient communities," said Marshall Johnson, chief conservation officer for National Audubon.

"Everyone can make a difference to help turn declines around," said Mike Parr, president of American Bird Conservancy. "Everyone with a window can use simple solutions to prevent collisions. Everyone can help green their neighborhood and avoid using pesticides that harm birds. Everyone who lives in a neighborhood can bring the issues and solutions to their community and use their voice to take action."

Americas Flyways Initiative Launched

Audubon, Birdlife International, and the Development Bank of Latin America are partnering to develop this initiative to identify more than 30 critical landscapes and seascapes along the Americas flyways for urgent conservation, restoration, and management by local partners, communities, and indigenous peoples. America's flyways cover North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean, extending across 35 countries, from the Arctic Circle in the north to

Tierra del Fuego in the south.

Audubon and BirdLife International will use advanced scientific and digital technologies to select sites, programs, and landscapes crucial for biodiversity conservation and community development.

"Our alliance aims to protect the vital flyways [birds] use to traverse the continent while at the same time mobilizing people across the Americas to conserve the places we all need to survive," said Elizabeth Gray, CEO of the National Audubon Society.

Housatonic River Gains 'Wild and Scenic' Designation

A 41-mile section of the river from the Massachusetts border to the Boardman Bridge in New Milford has been designated by the National Park Service as a Wild and Scenic River. National Wild and Scenic Rivers are exceptional rivers that have been designated to protect their free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values. The Housatonic's designation will enable the Housatonic River Commission to implement its management plan for the river, which you can read more about at hrcct.weebly.com.

LHAS Supports NCD's Earth Day Plant Sale, April 21-23

Hope You Will Too!

Each year, LHAS usually buys native plants and shrubs from the Northwest Conservation District's plant sale for our sanctuaries. Why? Because native plants provide more of the foods that our birds and pollinators need to thrive. National Audubon's website says: "Native plants are those that occur naturally in a region in which they evolved. They are the ecological basis upon which life depends, including birds and people. Without them and the insects that co-evolved with them, local birds cannot survive. For example, research by the entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars, whereas ginkgos, a commonly planted landscape tree from Asia, host only five species of caterpillars. When it takes over 6,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of chickadees, that is a significant difference."

Northwest Conservation District's 41st Earth Day Plant Sale at the Goshen Fairground

At this three-day sale, you will find thousands of native and ornamental shrubs and trees, perennials, groundcovers, vines, and grasses, carefully chosen for use in all types of settings — from pollinator and bird gardens to rain and backyard vegetable gardens. As part of the educational outreach, NCD will have information and attendance from some of its partners, including the Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, supporting environmental stewardship of our land and all of the creatures that depend on nutritious food, clear air, clean water, and shelter to live and thrive. **Visit <https://nwcd.org> for more information about pre-ordering and pick-up as well as day-of-sale purchases.**

Focus on Birds

The Belted Kingfisher — Hunting Headfirst for Fish

By Ann Orsillo



Belted Kingfisher

Photo: Ann Orsillo

Kayaking quietly along the shores of Woodridge Lake in Goshen, I often spot a Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*). This bird perches midway among tree branches over the water. It's often heard emitting a rattling sound when disturbed. Then it flushes from its perch to fly to another perch and rattles as it flies. With its keen eyes

and long, dagger-like bill, it's an expert fisher. When it spots a small fish it plunges headfirst into the water and grabs a fish with its bill beneath the water surface. It may hover for a few seconds (like a hummingbird) over the water before it dives. Kingfishers are adept at keeping their head still while their wings and tail adjust so they can home in on their prey. They don't swim, so they catch prey near the water surface. Fish are a primary food source, but they also consume frogs, tadpoles, and other aquatic animals and insects. When a fish is caught, kingfishers fly to a perch, toss it up, and rearrange the fish so it can be eaten headfirst and swallowed whole.

This bird has a bluish-gray back and a white belly. A bluish-gray belt runs across its chest, and the female has an additional reddish band across the belly that extends down her flanks. A special third eyelid closes to protect the eyes while underwater. This 16-inch-long bird's big head sports a shaggy crest and a small spot between the eye and the bill. Juveniles resemble adult females.

Kingfishers are unique in their nest building. Both sexes burrow with their strong feet and sharp claws and bill. They construct a horizontal tunnel 3 to 6 feet long in a steep sand or gravelly bank near suitable watery habitat. At the end of the tunnel they excavate a round cave where the eggs and young will be safe from predators. Both parents take turns incubating the eggs and feeding the young. Their fishing territory is nearby, and this site must have clear water. The eggs hatch in about four weeks, and the young fledge four weeks later. Last year, during the summer bird count, I was on the western fringe of Mohawk State Forest. I observed a kingfisher with a frog in its beak. It flew south toward the Shepaug River. When a kingfisher flies with prey, it usually means it's carrying food to its nest. Hopefully the nest was successful.

Kingfishers are solitary birds and defend their fishing territory from other kingfishers. I often see one chasing another. So I was surprised one morning in late summer to see two kingfishers flying together. I stopped paddling and studied each bird with my binoculars. I was delighted to identify one as a mature female and the other as a fledgling. It was learning fishing techniques from its mother. It probably stayed with her a few more weeks until it was able to fend for itself.

Kingfishers are widespread throughout North America. They require open water for fishing, so the northern population migrates south for the winter. According to bird surveys, the population has declined. There seem to be enough fish in rivers, streams, and lakes for food. However, the sandy and steep sandbanks required for nesting are becoming scarcer due to stream channelization and human disturbance. Acid rain is another likely cause of the birds' decline. If water quality is maintained and kept free of contaminants (especially pesticides), kingfishers will continue to thrive in our area. Look for them along the Bantam River, other rivers, and streams. Then we can continue to marvel at their expert fishing abilities and their amazing hovering flight.

Birding Backpacks Coming to a Library Near You!



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

Litchfield County has an abundance of nature preserves and natural habitats for wildlife, many with well-marked trails. LHAS hopes to encourage more families to get outdoors and learn about birds by offering them an opportunity to try a new hobby without the upfront costs.

Thanks to generous sponsor donations, the LHAS Education Committee is in the process of assembling Birding Backpacks to donate to a few local libraries. These packs will be available for patrons to borrow. Each backpack will be stocked with the essentials for a ready-to-go nature experience: a pair of binoculars, illustrated guides for identifying and learning about birds, and some suggestions for good birding spots. The backpacks are lightweight and adjustable for birders, nature enthusiasts, and citizen scientists of all ages and abilities. We are planning to have the backpacks in libraries around spring migration. Pack a few layers, insect repellent, and snacks and you're ready to go bird watching!

In My Garden — A Journal — January 2023

By Angela Dimmitt

January is always a strange month — this year so mild, no snow, not very cold, but it flew by and I do not know where the time went! At least the bears seem to have stayed in their dens, though I fully expected a hungry male to come sniffing around my pole feeder — I took the feeders in at night once or twice but that was such a nuisance, I got lazy. So far, so good, but I shouldn't speak too soon! There seem to have been far fewer birds at the feeders than usual, and other people have been commenting on the scarcity of birds too. Even the two hen turkeys which came most days through the end of December have not come once in January. They used to back away when they saw me coming, but if I swung my arm to throw some corn, they would come running quite close to me. They ran to me from their first visit last spring — I did not teach them; someone else had obviously been feeding them.

How bleak it is without snow! But if you look down, not up or straight ahead, the grass is green and the moss on the rocks is spectacularly bright, back in the woods and in the garden around the house. Believe it or not, daffodils are peaking out under the south wall, and hyacinths are about an inch high here as well at the post office in Sherman! The stream is high, and during the last big rainstorm, Lake Dimmitt was wide enough to skate on had it frozen. The wind brings down quite a lot of twigs, but not too many branches and so far no big trees, although the woods are a mess. The drought weakened many trees.

Star has been demanding to go out in the morning — he turns around and scoots back in, but clearly he thinks it's worth checking. On rainy days he doesn't bother, going straight back to bed after breakfast. One can't help but anthropomorphize!

"... an extraordinary number of rarities and unusual birds have shown up here, and a lot of people are chasing them all over the state. Most sightings are along the coast, but some are inland."

I have been doing the usual Big January. It used to be a quiet, informal affair run by the Connecticut Ornithological Association, but now scores of people are joining in, the idea being to find over a hundred different bird species in the state of Connecticut during January.



Female Harlequin Ducks on the Farmington River.

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

By coincidence, an extraordinary number of rarities and unusual birds have shown up here, and a lot of people are chasing them all over the state. Most sightings are along the coast, but some are inland. In Fairfield, there's a Green-tailed

Towhee (a cousin of our Rufous-sided Towhee); he's from California or Arizona chaparral and should be in Mexico now! Many seabirds

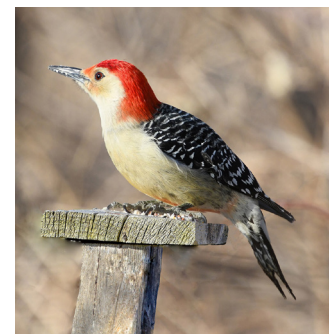
are showing up on Long Island Sound, including Razorbills, Murres, even a Dovekie — following the fish perhaps? Sadly, no Snowy Owls. Up here in Litchfield County we have some very interesting visitors — for example, a pair of Harlequin Ducks on the Farmington River in the People's State Forest, a bird we usually see on the Frostbite Special off Cape Ann in Massachusetts! And in Goshen, there is an immature Red-headed Woodpecker visiting a feeder; it's probably from south of here, although Red-headed Woodpeckers might be nesting here now. Yes, there really is a woodpecker with that name, which is why our local "red-headed" is called "red-bellied."

(continued on back page)

Red-headed vs. Red-bellied

Near right: The Red-Headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) is the only eastern woodpecker with an entirely red head. Far right: Our much more common Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) has a partially red head and a blush of red on its belly.

Photos: Wikimedia Commons





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In My Journal

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Great Blue Heron at Hammonasset Beach State Park

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

so make sure they are clean! Happy Birding!

So why do I chase birds now? Because there's not much going on in my garden — a flock of robins yesterday, the occasional Brown Creeper, maybe a bluebird checking for food. They will roost in their nest boxes too,

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

of *Chickadee Chatter* for an article on how to do this. It's on page 3.)

- Keep cats indoors.
- Provide water, for example, with a bird bath. (You probably like to feed birds, too, but by April bears will be back and hungry after their winter denning — best not to attract them with bird seed!)

To learn more about bird migration, check out these resources:

- Audubon's Bird Migration Explorer. Go to ***explorer.audubon.org***.
- ***Birdcast.info*** has a Migration Dashboard that lets you see nightly migration data in our region.
- Attend our Early-Migration Walk on June 2, led by LHAS Vice President Fran Zygmunt. See page 7 for details.

I hope you get outdoors to enjoy spring!

Diane