



Chickadee Chatter



May/June 2023

Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 68/Issue 3

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.

Boyd Woods Sanctuary Update

By Rich Martin, Boyd Woods Co-chair

Welcome Spring Walk

The sunny, warm weather on March 20th enticed about 20 spring seekers to head out to Boyd Woods for the Welcome Spring Walk. Debbie Martin led the group along the Windy Woods Trail to the conifer area in hopes of seeing the pair of Barred Owls that perch up in one of the taller pine trees nearly every day at the sanctuary. Unfortunately, they must have heard us coming because we saw neither hide nor hair of them this day. During our walk people observed skunk cabbage coming up beside and in the brook. We also noticed plenty of partridgeberry plants growing along the trail, with their bright red fruit that is edible but has very little taste. We ended up looping around Margery's Pond on our way back to the parking lot. The ice on the pond has since melted, making ready for Wood Frogs and Spring Peepers. Not today though! We had a wonderful time just being outside enjoying the fresh air in good company.

Logging Update

Some of you may have noticed the logging operation that has been taking place over the past few months at Boyd Woods.

Debbie Martin leads the way

Photo: Rich Martin



It's all part of the forest stand improvement project that LHAS undertook with guidance and financial support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Overall, we thinned out about 50-plus acres of wood-

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

lands. Most of the trees that were removed were either dead ash trees (due to the Emerald Ash Borer beetle), decayed and unhealthy trees, or less desirable trees that were competing for sunlight and space with stronger, healthier, and nut-producing trees, such as oaks and hickory nut. These areas where the logging was performed may look rather messy at the moment, but as soon as the weather and ground conditions are favorable the loggers will return with an excavator to do some clean-up work, especially where you see deep ruts. All the trails are open, with some having to be slightly rerouted for the safety of our visitors. If you find a trail that needs attention, for one thing or another, please send LHAS an email at lhasct@me.org.



Skunk Cabbage

Photo: Rich Martin

Logging debris, staying on the ground to benefit amphibians, wildlife, and Mother Earth (decomposition)

Photo: Rich Martin



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 | Janice Jankauskas | 203-231-2022 |
| 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 | <i>vacant</i> | |
| 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 **July/August** issue is **June 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

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Richard Baumann | Sharon |
| Richard Benfer | Watertown |
| Jennifer Benner* | Roxbury |
| Linda Bianowicz | Bantam |
| Susan Brooks | Gaylordsville |
| Matthew Conrad | New Milford |
| James Dugan | New Milford |
| Jill Esterson | Salisbury |
| Laura Evans | Roxbury |
| Shire Feingold | New Hartford |
| Lynn Gray | Kent |
| Kathleen Hartranft | Terryville |
| Craig Haurand* | Warren |
| Richard Heffernon | Washington Depot |
| Jane Herold | West Cornwall |
| Diane Hewat | Salisbury |
| Suzanne Ingellis | Kent |
| Kathryn Jenkowski | Torrington |
| Jeanne Jones* | Colebrook |
| Doreen Konik* | New Milford |
| Cinzi Lavin | Winsted |
| Joan MacSweeney* | Litchfield |
| Patrick McCotter* | New Hartford |
| Andrea Meharg | Litchfield |
| Jennifer Moor | New Hartford |
| Patricia Moore | Lakeville |
| Spencer Musselman | Goshen |
| Jeffrey Nicholas | Torrington |
| Elizabeth Norman | Colebrook |
| Clare Rashkoff | Lakeville |
| Elizabeth Richebourg | Washington Depot |
| Marcy Salmirs | Sherman |
| Frances Schempp | Torrington |
| Alexander Simpson | Sharon |
| Laurie Slotnick | Salisbury |
| Susan Suhanovsky | New Hartford |
| Jon Sweeton | Barkhamsted |
| Reginald Templeton | Washington |
| Leigh Wells* | New Milford |

**Welcome back*

LHAS membership is at 1,122

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

President's Message

By Diane Edwards, President

Many May and June Outings!



Ah, the merry, merry month of May! Warm days, blossoms blooming, and birds, bees and butterflies flitting about in our gardens ... it's time to get outside and enjoy nature. LHAS offers you many ways to do just that. If you take a look at our Calendar on pages 6-8, you will see 16 outings in May and June.

With migration season in full swing, most of those outings will be bird walks, to be led by expert birders Ray Belding, Donna Rose Smith, and Ann Orsillo. A special family hike, May 7 at Boyd Woods, will let young and old alike discover all spring has to offer in this wonderful wildlife sanctuary. We will also hold a "planting party" on May 18 to expand the pollinator garden at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary. If you like to garden or want to know more about bird- and pollinator-friendly plants, you're welcome to help out. And on May 21, you can watch the spectacle of Chimney Swifts swirling around and into their roosting chimney.

LHAS will also be collaborating with other local nature organizations on four special occasions: Flanders Nature Center's 60th anniversary celebration on May 20, when our "Nature Explorers" will offer fun activities for kids and expert birder Russ Naylor will lead a bird walk for all ages; a guided tour of Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy on May 21; a Connecticut Trails Day hike at Prospect Mountain on June 3, cosponsored by LHAS and the Litchfield Land Trust; and the Litchfield Marketplace on June 10, when we will have a table with hand-outs.

Last but not least: Be sure to sign up for our 68th Annual Meeting and Dinner, June 5 at the Torrington Elks Lodge. (See the flyer in the centerfold of this issue if you receive a hard copy; if you receive the newsletter by email, the flyer will be emailed to you separately.) Besides a yummy buffet dinner, there will be socializing with your friends, a raffle for a beautiful stained glass panel, a program on marine mammals and sea turtles of Long Island Sound, and the election of LHAS officers and new board members.

Speaking of the officers and board members, I want to thank outgoing recording secretary Janet Baker and three outgoing board members: Carol Kearns, Rich Martin, and Carol Perrault. Great job, you "guys"!

Happy spring, everyone!

Diane

Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Update

The pollinator garden created at Wigwam Brook last spring attracted a variety of visitors, including hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. The plan for this spring is to expand the garden to attract more pollinators



A winged visitor at the pollinator garden last summer

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

and provide food for birds and their young. Thanks to a \$250 grant from the Connecticut Ornithological Association, and a generous donation of \$500 from LHAS member Dr. Thomas Reinhardt, we will be able to purchase a nice variety of native shrubs and perennials for the garden.

By the time you read this, a dedicated group of volunteers will have already cleared the area, got soil ready for planting, and purchased most of the plants. Volunteers will be needed to help with planting, watering, and weeding during the spring and summer months. If you have an interest in gardening, either learning about or sharing your knowledge of bird-friendly plants, please consider lending a hand. The birds and the bees need you! A planting party is planned for May 18, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., rain date May 19, 1-3 p.m. **Contact Vickie Dauphinais at fdauphinais@optonline.net or 860-361-9051 to sign up.**

Kalmia Sanctuary Has New Chairperson

Irek Rychlik, who had been overseeing LHAS' Kalmia Wildlife Sanctuary, resigned in March to pursue other interests. Janice Jankauskas has volunteered to take his place.

We thank Irek for his dedication to helping LHAS over the past few years. Besides managing Kalmia, he put his woodworking skills to use by building bird nest boxes and a kiosk at the sanctuary and helped us in other ways. We wish him well.

And thank you, Janice, for enthusiastically taking on the "job" of keeping the trails and nest boxes in good shape!

Newburyport Trip Report

Punxutawny Phil Trumps Connecticut Chuckles

By Russ Naylor

Our Connecticut groundhog's prognostication of an early spring, with red maples, crocuses, and other early blooms aborning, was rather rudely refuted when icy blasts and freezing rain delayed our February 23 departure for the mighty Merrimac and environs by a day. What a day February 24 was — glacial gusts sent wind chills to subzero degrees, starting a weekend of clouds and snow and ice. Our annual foray to the Newburyport, Massachusetts area truly lived up to its nickname: The Frostbite Special! (You know it's frigid when John Baker is wearing long pants!)



Undaunted as ever, our leader, Dave Tripp, and bird-whisperer Fran Zygmunt led us into the teeth of fridity to track down an abundance of winter birdlife. Starting at Salisbury Beach State Reservation, we sighted both loons, a pot-pourri of sea ducks, early robins, and a Lapland Longspur bright-plumaged amidst an exaltation of Horned Larks.

Common Eider drake

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.



After an informative stint at the Birder's General Supply Store, some scouting on the backside of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge brought us Great Blue Heron,

Northern Pintail, Short-eared Owl, and a thoroughly disgruntled Great Horned Owl sitting churlishly atop her nest as it bounced in high winds — for sure, her mate must have endured a hail of infuriated hoots!



Great Horned Owl

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.

Pressing on the next day to Gloucester, we visited a gracious local couple who shared with us a mix of feeder visitors — Pine Siskins, Carolina Wrens, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and an adult Cooper's Hawk. Jodrey State Fish Pier yielded sundry sea ducks plus two Razorbills touring the town fishery. Rocky Neck had Gadwalls, our first Bald Eagle of the weekend, Great Cormorants, and Black Guillemots. Niles Pond hosted Greater Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, and out on the seashore, a beachcombing American Pipit witnessed by Harbor Seals hauled out for a nap on nearby rocks.

Trekking farther out along the Gloucester shoreline, we had a few dozen Great Cormorants. Meanwhile, back at Rocky Neck, an Eared Grebe consorted with four Horned Grebes — we dashed back to see them before debarking at Pigeon Cove. Here we took in the beauty of a raft of Harlequin Ducks in display, courting and feeding as Purple Sandpipers dodged crashing surf on offshore boulders.

After enjoying more Harlequin Ducks by the dozen, we scouted the lower Merrimac's Common Eider rafts, some 1,100 strong — an entourage fit for a king — but found no King Eider holding court.

On our last day along the Merrimac we scored a hat trick of mergansers. The Joppa Flats area brought us Wild Turkey, Mute Swan, American Tree Spar-

Snow Bunting

Photo: Dave Tripp, Jr.



Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

Connecticut Purple Martins Get a New Place to Nest

Purple Martins used to nest in naturally occurring cavities like old woodpecker holes. But they now rely almost exclusively on human-made structures to form their nesting colonies and raise their young. To help these birds, whose populations have been declining, Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury recently erected a "gourd array" consisting of 12 white, butternut squash-shaped nesting boxes suspended more than 10 feet into the air atop a metal pole. It might take a while for a colony to become established at the new site, according to the Bent staff, because Purple Martins prefer to nest where other Purple Martins are present. The new array will include a decoy and other ways to attract Purple Martins.



New Purple Martin "gourd array"

Photo: Bent of the River Audubon Center

Early this year, the Connecticut General Assembly's Environment Committee considered a bill that would have established a lottery for recreational bear hunting, but the

No Bear Hunting in Connecticut

committee eventually dropped the bill from its agenda. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) had supported the bill as a way to deal with increasing conflicts between bears and people, resulting from our growing bear population. However, the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters testified against the bill, saying there were more effective ways of curbing the problems. Their testimony noted that "DEEP already has the ability to destroy any bear that comes in conflict with humans, their pets, or their farms. A largescale hunt to reduce the population will not change the root cause of human-bear conflict in certain communities."

To read the testimony, which includes a fact sheet on "Keeping People Safe and Bears Wild," go to ctlc.org. Click on "Legislation" and then on "Testimony." For information about nonlethal approaches to reducing human-bear conflicts, visit ctbears.org.

Reminder: Lights Out at Night During Bird Migration Season

Bright lights at night confuse and mislead migrating birds, often causing them to crash into buildings or fall to the ground in exhaustion. That's why Lights Out Connecticut! urges us all to turn off or downshield outside lights between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. during peak migration season: April 1 to May 31 in the spring and September 1 to November 15 in the fall. Visit lightsoutct.org to learn more.

Report Sightings of Mallard Nests

If you see a Mallard nest, DEEP asks that you report it by sending an email to min.huang@ct.gov.

Report Sightings of Mallard Nests

low-rumped Warbler, and a confiding Red Crossbill letting herself be photo-documented.

We finished our rime-ridden pilgrimage at the Merrimac waterfront with great views of a hen Barrow's Goldeneye as Long-tailed Ducks conducted a choreography of courtship displays. As at Cape May, our finale was a flyby Bald Eagle's wingover above our troop ere it landed in a tree to see us off on our return journey.

Hats off to Dave for leading a really cool expedition extraordinaire — well done!

Newburyport

(continued from page 4)

rows, and early blackbirds in passage. Despite a fog of snowflakes, Plum Island came through with birds — a local pair of peregrines, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers on the prowl, and a Barred Owl posing for paparazzi while compiling a daily checklist of visiting birders.

Two coyotes showed up on the hunt — one sitting for a break as a Bald Eagle and Canada Geese winged by in the background. Other avian tidbits were Hermit Thrush, Yel-

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Spring/Summer 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 28B Russell St., Litchfield, CT.

GENERAL MEETINGS

Note: The May and July 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.

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.

June 5 **Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles of Long Island Sound** **Monday, 6 PM**

Discover the diversity of seal, whale, and sea turtle species that visit the Sound, seasonal and long-term changes in these populations, and how to get involved in local marine mammal rescue efforts. Our presenter is Mystic Aquarium's Senior Director of Education and Conservation, MaryEllen Mateleska. MaryEllen manages conservation messaging and environmental initiatives at Mystic Aquarium. With over 20 years' experience working in conservation education, MaryEllen has brought marine science, environmental conservation, and STEM topics directly to individuals of all ages and backgrounds. *Note: This program will be preceded by our Annual Meeting and Dinner. The evening will kick off with socializing at 6 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner at 6:30, our Annual Meeting at 7:15, and the presentation at 7:45. To register, see the enclosed flyer, page 13. (If you receive Chickadee Chatter by email, the flyer will be emailed to you separately.)*

July 10. **Developing the Arts and Crafts House and Garden.** **Monday, 7 PM**

Jeanne Farewell will discuss the Arts and Crafts Garden with photos of her own garden in Brewster, NY, and those of British gardens, referencing architecture, design, and the artistic origins of the movement. Jeanne brings her arts background to the garden and has been a speaker for groups such as the Garden Conservancy's Digging Deeper program. She is co-host of the "Parsley and Sage" podcast. Note: Jeanne will also lead a tour of her garden in Brewster, NY, on July 15; further details to come in the next issue of *Chickadee Chatter*.

BIRDING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

May 3 **Bird Walk with Ray Belding** **Wednesday, time TBD**

If you're interested in attending, send your email address to Ray at turaco3000@gmail.com.

May 7 **Family Program: Celebrate Spring at Boyd Woods Sanctuary** **Sunday, 11 AM**

Join LHAS Nature Explorers, led by Ann Orsillo and Josh Szwed, for a hike at Boyd Woods Sanctuary to enjoy all that

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

spring has to offer. The sanctuary with its mix of conifers, shrubland, open fields, and forest habitat is a great place to see and hear migrating birds, such as warblers, vireos, orioles, towhees, and others. The ponds and the bordering brook on the property will offer a glimpse of all the critters and plants coming to life. Listen for toad and frog calls. Maybe spot a Jack-in-the-Pulpit or a lovely Trillium. Come ready to get your hands dirty. Wear waterproof footwear for pond exploration. Fun! Appropriate for kids and adults. Meet at Boyd Woods parking lot on Route 254 in Litchfield. Pre-registration is appreciated at lhasjunior@gmail.com. *For questions, call Vickie Dauphinais at 860-361-9051.* Heavy rain cancels.

May 9 Bird Walk on River Road in Kent Tuesday, 8 AM

River road is noted for spring migrants. Meet Donna Rose Smith at 8 a.m. to carpool from the Kent post office, 21 Kent Green Boulevard. *For more information, contact her at drsmith006@sbcglobal.net.*

May 10 Bird Walk with Ray Belding Wednesday, time TBD

If you're interested in attending, send your email address to Ray at turaco3000@gmail.com.

May 16 Bird Walk in Mohawk State Forest Tuesday, 8 AM

We will look for warblers, thrushes, tanagers, and more. Meet Donna Rose Smith at 8 a.m. in the parking area off Route 4 in Cornwall. *For more information, contact her at drsmith006@sbcglobal.net.*

May 17 Bird Walk with Ray Belding Wednesday, time TBD

If you're interested in attending, send your email address to Ray at turaco3000@gmail.com.

May 18 Planting Party at Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Thursday, 10 AM–Noon

We're expanding the pollinator garden at the sanctuary. If you're interested in gardening, please consider lending a hand. Rain date May 19, 1-3 p.m. *Contact Vickie Dauphinais at fdauphinais@optonline.net or 860-361-9051.*

May 20 LHAS at Flanders Nature Center's 60th Anniversary Saturday, 11 AM–4 PM

LHAS will have a table with fun children's activities at this event. And LHAS member Russ Naylor will lead an easy bird walk at 11:30 a.m. around a pond, up a small hill, and to the Sugar House and Botany Garden.

May 21 Bird Walk at Goshen Land Trust Preserve Sunday, 7:30 AM

Join Ann Orsillo for birding on the Goshen Land Trust trail on Pie Hill Road, Goshen. From Route 63 opposite the Goshen Fairgrounds entrance, turn onto Pie Hill Road. Go about a mile to a small bridge over a river. Park in the turn-off next to the bridge. Wear sturdy footwear. The trail has some rocks. Last year we saw warblers, orioles, swallows, grosbeaks, Swamp Sparrows, and ducks, and heard Virginia Rails.

May 21 Guided Tour of Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy Sunday, 12:30 PM

Logan Connor, Ripley's director of aviculture, will give us a comprehensive tour of the RWC facilities and their unique bird collection. Located in Litchfield, this is a rare gem that houses one of the largest collections of waterfowl in North America, maintaining a flock of 70+ species totaling over 450 birds! RWC conserves rare and endangered waterfowl from around the world. Their goal is to spark a passion for the natural world through the close exposure of students and visitors to these unique creatures. This tour will be restricted to 20 participants. The Conservancy will charge each participant \$5 for the tour, so please bring \$5 in cash when you come. *For additional information and to make your reservation by May 10th, contact Janet Baker at berryledges@optonline.net or 860-567-8427.*

May 21 Chimney Swift Swirl Sunday, 7:30 PM

Come watch Chimney Swifts gather at their traditional spring roost site in an aerobatic show of winged agility as they return from winter sojourns in Brazil. Meet at the Canfield Corner Pharmacy at the junction of Routes 6 (Main Street North) and 47 in Woodbury. *For more information, call Russ Naylor at 203-841-7779; leave a message.*

May 23 Bird Walk on Lower River Road in West Cornwall Tuesday, 8 AM

We will take a leisurely walk along the Housatonic River looking for warblers and other nesting birds. Meet Donna

(continued on page 8)

Calendar

(continued from page 7)

Rose Smith at 8 a.m. at the end of Lower River Road past the Trinity Retreat Center in West Cornwall. **For more information, contact her at drsmith006@sbcglobal.net.**

May 24 Bird Walk with Ray Belding Wednesday, time TBD

If you're interested in attending, send your email address to Ray at turaco3000@gmail.com.

May 31 Bird Walk with Ray Belding Wednesday, time TBD

If you're interested in attending, send your email address to Ray at turaco3000@gmail.com.

June 3 Connecticut Trails Day Hike at Prospect Mountain Saturday, 9–11 AM

This is a joint hike with the Litchfield Land Trust. The hike has some steep climbs and will traverse field and forest, offering views from Prospect Mountain's summit. Plan to look and listen for birds along the way and feel free to ask questions about birds, the forest tree species, or the mining history of Prospect Mountain. LHAS member Pam Hicks will help ID birds. Heavy rain cancels. Meet at the Prospect Mountain Preserve's Pepper Spur Trailhead parking lot on the east side of Prospect Mountain Road (309 Prospect Mountain Road) in Litchfield. **For more information, contact Diane Edwards at edwardsd68@charter.net or Dean Birdsall at director@litchfieldlandtrust.org.**

June 10 Visit LHAS at the Litchfield Marketplace Saturday, 9 AM–4 PM

Stop by to visit the LHAS table at the Litchfield Marketplace, a juried arts and crafts fair, on the Litchfield Green.

June 10–11 Summer Bird Count Saturday–Sunday

The count can be done on one day or spread over both days. The results are sent to the Connecticut Ornithological Association. If you want to participate, **send an email to Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com.**

Cornell Lab Announces Great Backyard Bird Count Results: Wow!

The 2023 Great Backyard Bird Count exceeded all expectations. Organizers estimate that more than 500,000 participants from around the globe made the latest count (February 17–20) the best ever. First, a look at the numbers:

- 7,538 species reported
- 202 participating countries
- 390,652 bird lists submitted
- 151,479 photos, videos, and sounds uploaded
- 555,291 estimated global participants

The highest number of checklists submitted came from the United States due to its size and history of the count — the count began in 1998 in the U.S. and Canada and went global in 2013. But India has marched quickly up the list each year, now ranking number two for number of checklists in 2023, and Canada is third.

Taking a look at the number of species reported yields a different result. Colombia takes the crown as the country with the most species reported, with a mind-boggling 1,293. Ecuador and India follow; lucky birdwatchers in both countries reported more than 1,000 species.

Participation across the United States, ranked by number of checklists, is dominated by the birdy states of California, Texas, and Florida. In Canada, the top three provinces participating were Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec.

Connecticut's Results

- 147 species observed
- 2,734 complete checklists
- 1,987 hotspots
- Top county: Fairfield, with 126 species, followed by New Haven, with 122 species; Litchfield County had 70
- Top hotspot: Hammonasset Beach, with 65 species

Red-winged Blackbirds were seen in the northern United States and Canada earlier than usual this year, possibly because of a somewhat milder February. One report documented more than 30,000 of these birds in Indiana.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. Many thanks to all who participated!

For a more detailed report of results, go to www.birdcount.org/2023-final-results.

Trip Report**A Fishing Derby, National Bird Style**

By Russ Naylor

On January 29, our LHAS birdaholics were treated to a display of avian anglership extraordinaire as well over a dozen Bald Eagles showed off their prowess at fishing at the Shepaug Dam in Southbury.

Some snatched alewives, their primary fare of the day, off the water's surface with one foot and hardly a ripple. One spry adult eagle circled in a figure-eight pattern, snatching a fish with one foot and then another fish with the other foot with each turn, savoring scaly snacks. Several birds picked up fish and gulped them down on the wing, one after another; an aquiline form of "finger

food" as a snack. Others executed aerial maneuvers of great agility when trying to steal each other's catch. There were other displays, too, as eagles played talon tag aloft or "king of the limb" by displacing one another from perches. We even observed several eagles fishing on foot in riparian shallows, between bouts of bathing or raptorial horseplay.

Various eagles came and went, birds of diverse age groups, as new birds on migration came through. We bore witness to intimate glimpses into much natural behavior and personality traits of our national bird.

In addition, other piscivorous (fish eating) birds strutted their stuff. Common Mergansers by the hundreds, most newly arrived on their way north, dove and caught fish in waters both still and fast, with adroit techniques — between bouts of flock courtship displays done with much bumptious posing and splashing about. More sedately, Black Ducks winkled out small fish from amidst rocks and branches, taking a share missed by gulls, eagles, or mergansers. A Great Blue Heron, undisturbed by all the avian commotion around him, stood still to spear fish floating within range of his dagger-sharp bill. Gulls of three species took floating prey, while Buffleheads and Common Goldeneyes salvaged deep-water fare.

Meanwhile, as all the birds harvested their bounty of fresh-water herring, they were watched by local pairs of Red-tailed Hawks and ravens conducting their own business of advertising territory and bonding with mates.

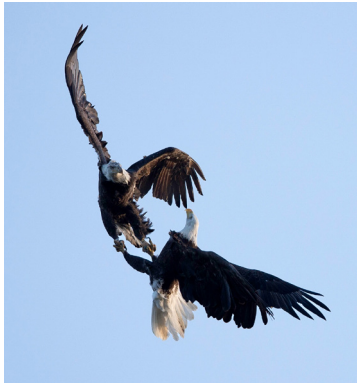
**"Talon tag"**

Photo: john581, via Wikimedia Commons

On this day of hardy early-migrant passage and early-season courtships being consummated, we were reminded that lengthening days herald the environmental clock's slow ticking toward the arrival of spring.

Corollary to Lights Out CT ...**Light Pollution from Megafleets of Satellites**

By Russ Naylor

Night-flying birds and other creatures might be harmed by a new and growing source of light pollution affecting our night sky: the deployment of fleets of hundreds of low-earth-orbit communications satellites such as SpaceX's Starlink satellite system and Amazon's satellite internet project called Project Kuiper. These satellite fleets often look like new stars in the sky, even appearing to be megaconstellations that obscure the visibility of stars and the Milky Way in the night sky. They can change the appearance of the star field, reflecting ground-based sky glow back to Earth.

Besides affecting night-time bird migration (see box), these visible satellites might hinder photoperiod-based life cycles and can interfere with Earth-based astronomy research, astrophotography, and the search for hazardous near-Earth asteroids.

In addition, debris from defunct satellites and other "space junk" can potentially scatter light or brighten the overall sky background,

obscurating stars and other celestial objects. Such debris re-entering Earth's atmosphere and burning up can pollute the atmosphere with chemicals, affecting the ozone layer and adding to particulate matter. This could make the atmosphere more opaque, reflecting more sunlight off the Earth (possibly resulting in a cooling effect) or providing particulate nuclei for water droplets and increased cloud formation (which would enhance the greenhouse effect). Debris that makes it to the ground can further pollute ecosystems and pose potential impact hazards for people and wildlife alike. The low-Earth-orbit atmosphere needs to be treated as an ecosystem like the rest of our air, earth, and water.

Hopefully, conservation organizations can team up with

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"By observing the apparent nighttime rotation of the stars around the North Star, the birds learn to locate north before they embark on their first migration, and an internal 24-hour clock allows them to calibrate their sun compass."

Scientific American, April 1, 2022.

Focus on Birds

The Cry of the Eastern Whip-poor-will

By Karen Geitz, Education Committee member



Eastern Whip-poor-will

Photo: Mykola Swarnyk, via Wikimedia Commons

One summer night, Danny, my cat, and I were sitting outside on the deck in the dark. It was quiet because all the tree frogs had stopped calling, the birds had long since settled in, and the lightning bugs were putting on their beautiful

show. Suddenly we heard a sound we had never heard before: "whip poor will, whip poor will" We were used to hearing a Screech Owl, but this was something new! Danny's ears perked up and his head turned in the direction of the sound. So did mine! We sat and listened for a while ... "whip poor will, whip poor will" After a while, my curiosity overwhelmed me, and I headed for my laptop. Time to ask Google: What bird makes the sound "whip poor will"? To my surprise, up popped the name of a bird called the Whip-poor-will.

I started to read about this interesting bird and its haunting call. I found out it was the male that was chanting the song and that sometimes they do it for hours at night. They also

have great camouflage, with their brown and gray feathers, that allows them to sleep all day and sing all night. Whip-poor-wills love to eat insects, and they forage in early morning and early evening. But on moonlit nights they hunt for moths and beetles all night. They even time their nesting so the chicks will hatch about 10 days before the full moon, giving the parents more time at night to catch insects to feed them.

But what really caught my attention was how the bird and its cry are included in culture, literature, and song. Native Americans believed that the call of the Whip-poor-will was an omen of ill fortune and/or death. One New England legend says the Whip-poor-will can sense a person's soul departing and capture it as it leaves. One of my favorite authors, James Thurber, wrote a short story called the "Whip-poor-will." Mr. Kinstrey, the protagonist of the story, goes mad at hearing the constant nighttime singing of the Whip-poor-will. He ends up killing everyone in his house, including himself. Hank Williams wrote in his song "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry": "Hear that lonesome Whip-poor-will. He sounds too blue to fly." Robert Frost even referred to the bird in his 1915 poem "Ghost House."

So, if you're sitting outside on a beautiful, moonlit summer night and you hear "whip poor will, whip poor will," what will *you* think about?

Photos and recordings of its call: https://www.allabout-birds.org/guide/Eastern_Whip-poor-will/photo-gallery

References: allaboutbirds.org, American Bird Conservancy (abcbirds.org), Homestead.org, and Wikipedia.

Great Mountain Forest Produces 'Bird-Friendly' Maple Syrup

This 6,000-acre forest in Litchfield County is being recognized for managing its sugarbush in ways that help declining forest birds. Its 320-tap maple operation has become Connecticut's first officially recognized Bird-Friendly Maple producer. Through the Bird-Friendly Maple project (a collaborative effort between Audubon, Cornell, and the New York State Maple Producers Association), they will manage their sugarbush — the forest area where maple syrup is produced — in ways that provide more resilient bird habitat.

"Keeping our sugarbushes healthy is especially important in the face of a changing climate. Warmer temperatures, changes in soil characteristics, and the shortening and unpredictability of freeze-thaw cycles will impact maple trees, syrup production, and the habitat which birds and other wildlife need to thrive. ... By improving forest health through

bird-friendly management, producers are protecting their businesses and their birds," said Rosa Goldman, forest program associate and Bird-friendly Maple project lead.

What makes a healthy bird-friendly sugarbush?

- Young trees and shrubs provide cover, food, and nesting sites for Black-throated Blue Warblers and Wood Thrushes.
- Snags (dead trees) are left standing to provide nesting sites for woodpeckers and White-breasted Nuthatches, and insects for Scarlet Tanagers.
- Downed trees and other woody material are left on the forest floor for birds like the Ovenbird and Ruffed Grouse to take cover, nest, and forage.

To read more about this, visit ct.audubon.org/news.

In My Garden — A Journal — March 2023

By Angela Dimmitt

'Tis the Season! Bears are out in force, hungry males anyway, no mums and cubs reportedly seen yet to my knowledge. Of course mine came overnight yesterday, March 30 — luckily I had taken the tubes off the pole feeder before going to bed. He came before the overnight snow — there were no footprints — and he could not reach the feeders hanging from the overhead wire, though they must have smelled good because he went into a rage: knocked the pole down (no damage, the staples pulled out of the ground, releasing the hoop base so it just fell over, and no tubes to destroy); knocked over the bird bath; removed the top layers from the compost bin and made quite a mess without finding anything yummy or even edible; knocked over a large plastic bin with the remains of some very ancient Milorganite fertilizer in the bottom (apparently not edible though deliciously smelly when wet); and finally in dire frustration, he pulled a 6-foot window box over, emptying all the soil onto the ground and leaving it hanging by two nails — apparently nothing edible there either. So I had quite a surprise when that first cup of coffee opened my eyes! He had also visited a few days earlier when it was still rather dark (I was up very early) — he reached the hanging feeders, trashing one — I swear it was the biggest bear I had ever seen to reach that high!

It's been an interesting animal month — a bobcat also greeted me one morning, while I was sitting near the kitchen window. As I turned to grab my camera, he/she got up and walked a few feet then hunkered down like a domestic cat, front paws tucked under its chin — and took a nap. Not very large, so I think it was a female. I watched her for over an hour, eyes opening every now and then and looking around

A local Bald Eagle, back on the nest

Photo: Angela Dimmitt



before resuming her nap. Finally, she got up, stretched like any cat and trotted off into the woods. I'd also seen the cat near the house a few days before, but it fled when it saw me driving in. A coyote also

trotted through the lower lawn, either shedding its winter coat or a bit mangy, and four white-tailed deer regularly wander through.



A Bobcat wanders through the yard

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

Birds have been a bit disappointing — not many coming to the feeders, but first thing in the morning, as I take the tube feeders out, they are singing their heads off. Juncos are twittering their magical little calls; a cardinal serenades his bride before daylight outside my bedroom window (hence early rise, seeing bear); woodpeckers are drumming; Song Sparrows, Carolina Wrens, and House Finches are singing their sweet songs.

Bluebirds have apparently built a pine needle nest in their favorite box, although I've heard them more than seen them. Or could it be the Carolinas?

Mallards and Canada Geese are flying up the stream to Bullymuck Swamp (expect Black and Wood Ducks any day now). And a Great Blue Heron has flown over a couple of times. Since the heronry in Sherman has completely vanished, maybe another will appear up this valley? Our local Bald Eagles are back on their nest, location a secret of course.

And the garden is awakening — I'm so sorry for all of you who were hit by storm Brenda and suffered damage from the ice and wet snow — it was a nonevent here in New Milford. Now the first daffs on the south wall are still thinking about opening, but there are masses of crocuses in the meadow — not planted by me, mice maybe? Daylilies are shooting up, which means a feast for the deer; lilac buds are opening green rather early, and my hybrid pussy willows are finally above deer browse and covered with 2-inch pink tufts.



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Birds Nesting too Close to Home? Here's What to Do

Audubon magazine's spring 2023 issue (www.audubon.org/audubonmagazine) offers advice on what to do if birds are raising their young on your house or building:

Leave It Be: The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects more than 1,000 bird species, include their eggs and nests.

Protect the Area: Keep cats indoors and avoid too many visits to the nest for photos — predators such as raccoons and crows can discover the nest by watching your movements.

Call an Expert: If birds build a nest in an unsafe spot such as a car tailpipe or a gravel driveway, don't try to remove it yourself. Instead call a wildlife rehabilitator. (Sharon Audubon Center has a Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic; call 860-492-0106 or visit sharon.audubon.org/help-injured-orphaned-or-sick-wildlife). On the other hand, if a chick falls out of a nest, you can put it back; the parent birds won't reject it.

Hang Nest Boxes: Birds often nest in pocket-like nooks or crannies. Hanging nest boxes can lure the birds to safer areas.

Enjoy the View: Install a camera or use binoculars to watch the parents and chicks from a distance. Consider contributing your observations to the Cornell Lab's NestWatch program (nestwatch.org).

Light Pollution

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astronomy science groups such as the International Dark Sky Association and the local Litchfield Hills Amateur Astronomy Club to work with space companies and government agencies to address the issues arising with the new technology and minimize their negative impacts.



Litchfield Hills Audubon Society's
68th Annual Meeting & Dinner



Monday, June 5, 2023

At Torrington Elks Lodge

70 Litchfield Street, Torrington, CT

6 p.m. Social • 6:30 Buffet Dinner • 7:15 Annual Meeting • 7:45 Program

Menu: Sliced roast beef; salmon with citrus glaze; penne à la vodka; mixed green salad with green apples, Gorgonzola cheese, and candied walnuts; asparagus; rolls and butter; cookies and brownies; coffee and tea

PROGRAM

Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles of Long Island Sound

Presenter: MaryEllen Mateleska



Just off the shores of our coastline, the waters are teeming with life, from shorebirds and fish to marine mammals and sea turtles. Come and discover the diversity of seal, whale, and sea turtle species that visit Long Island Sound, documented seasonal and long-term changes in these populations, and how to get involved in local marine mammal rescue efforts. Our presenter is Mystic Aquarium's Senior Director of Education &

Conservation, MaryEllen Mateleska. MaryEllen is responsible for managing conservation messaging and environmental initiatives on-site at Mystic Aquarium as well as with public visitors of all ages. With over 20 years' experience working in conservation education, MaryEllen has brought marine science, environmental conservation, and STEM topics directly to individuals of all ages and backgrounds.



Harbor Seal, aka Common Seal

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Special Event: Raffle for a Stained Glass Panel

Make your reservations now! The deadline is Friday, May 26th.

Please clip and mail this form with your check to LHAS - AGM, P.O. Box 861, Litchfield, CT 06759.

LHAS June 5, 2023 Annual Meeting & Dinner Registration

Total Number of Reservations ___ @ \$45 per person = **Total enclosed: \$** _____

Your name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____ **Email Address:** _____

For name tags, please list each attendee's name: