



Chickadee Chatter



November/December 2022 Litchfield Hills Audubon Society Newsletter Volume 67/Issue 6

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

Turning Down the Night Lights



LHAS recently signed on as a participant in Lights Out Connecticut to help reduce bird deaths caused by building collisions. Lights Out Connecticut is a nonprofit project of the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA).

Protecting birds and their habitats is a key part of the LHAS mission. We want to help residents and businesses in our area understand the hazards nighttime outdoor lighting poses to migrating birds.

According to COA, an estimated 350 million to 1 billion birds die in the United States each year after colliding with buildings. The problem is particularly bad during spring and fall migration. Most birds migrate at night, when the weather is typically cooler and calmer, and predators are less active. But bright lights often disorient birds, causing them to crash into windows or fall to the ground.

Lights Out Connecticut is a voluntary program encouraging commercial properties and homeowners to turn off or reduce nonessential lights during peak bird migration periods, April 1 to May 31 (spring) and September 1 to November 15 (fall), between midnight and 6 a.m.

"Our goal is to reduce unnecessary, misdirected, over-illuminated nighttime lighting during bird migration to create safe passage for birds — not to completely darken cities and towns, which could create safety concerns," states the Lights Out Connecticut website, lightsoutct.org.

Studies have shown that bird deaths during peak migration periods can be dramatically reduced when exterior architectural and unnecessary lighting is turned off. Doing so also reduces energy usage and costs.

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

Lights Out Connecticut participants pledge to:

- Turn off spotlights and/or decorative lighting
- Turn off or dim interior lights, especially on upper floors

(continued on page 3)



Magic of Bird Migration

Migration is one of the most amazing feats in the natural world. Twice each year, billions of birds take to the skies, dodging predators, burning fat stores, and enduring the ever-changing weather as they press towards their nesting grounds in the spring and winter havens in the fall. Most birds migrate at night, using the setting sun and stars as their guide, making occasional rest stops along the way to rest and refuel. The journey is long and difficult, and, in recent years, a new threat has emerged — buildings.

Why Lights Out?

Each year, 350 million and 1 billion birds die from building collisions in the United States. Bright artificial lights can disorient migrating birds who travel, trapping them in beams of light, or lure them into unsafe developed areas, causing them to crash into windows and structures. During daylight hours, birds collide with reflective surfaces and transparent facades when they stop to feed or rest.

LEARN MORE - WWW.LIGHTSOUTCT.ORG

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| | | |
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Research

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Christmas Bird Count | Dave Tripp | dtrippjr@gmail.com |
| Summer Bird Count | Dave Tripp | dtrippjr@gmail.com |
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Chickadee Chatter is published in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submission deadline for the **January/February** issue is **December 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

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Paulette Bronzi | Torrington |
| Adrianna Cohen | Washington |
| George Cracknell | Winsted |
| Cornelia D'Andrea | Winsted |
| Gillian Drezin* | Goshen |
| Lewis Drzal | Bridgewater |
| Richard Hebert | Watertown |
| Melanie Johnston | Colebrook |
| Sandra LaRosa | Torrington |
| Linda Luzi | Bristol |
| Elizabeth Martin | Torrington |
| Roger Robbins | Torrington |

**Welcome back*

LHAS Membership is at 1,015.

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

Looking for a Few Volunteers!

Like to do scrapbooking? Be our Historian! You would keep newsclippings, photos, and other documentation of LHAS' activities. Or perhaps you can help us arrange for refreshments at our meetings by serving as our Hospitality Chair. If you can help us in any way, contact Diane Edwards at edwardsd68@charter.net or 860-309-5139.

This newsletter and other LHAS features can be seen **IN LIVING COLOR at www.lhasct.org.**



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

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Chickadee Chatter was printed by **Photo Arts Printing Company**, Torrington, CT.

Special thanks to **Doreen Orciari** and **Janet Baker** for proof-reading this newsletter!

LHAS at Family Nature Day: 'Irma from Burma' Plus Fun for Kids

John and Janet Baker's Burmese python, "Irma from Burma," was a hit with kids (young and old) at White Memorial's Family Nature Day, September 24. Those brave enough to pet her learned that snakes aren't slimy — their skin feels cool and dry. Irma calmly posed for photos, garnering donations for LHAS!

Meanwhile, our Education Committee staffed a fun-filled table where kids pasted colorful designs onto paper butterflies. They also had a chance to use binoculars for a scavenger hunt to find and identify the 10 (fake) birds hidden in nearby bushes.



John Baker with Irma

Thank you to our helpers that day: Janet and John Baker, Beverly Baldwin, Vickie Dauphinais, Diane Edwards, Bill and Marie Kennedy, Ann Orsillo, Carol Perrault, George Stephens, Josh Szwed, and David Zomick.



Beverly Baldwin (in plaid shirt) helps kids decorate butterfly shapes.



Photos: (left) Marie Kennedy and (right) Ann Orsillo.

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

- Substitute task and area lighting or draw blinds/shades after 11 p.m.
- Down-shield exterior safety lighting or limit it to ground level
- Put outdoor lighting on timers and/or motion sensors, where possible
- Reduce lobby and atrium lighting, where possible
- Substitute strobe lighting for safety, where possible

I hope you will consider turning down your outdoor lighting to protect our birds. And please help spread the word! We still have a few more weeks this fall to make a difference for birds.

Beyond that, I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season!

Diane

Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Update

By John Baker, Wigwam Brook Sanctuary Chair

The sanctuary has survived another year with no major changes.



A Monarch feasts on a coneflower at Wigwam's pollinator garden.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

A pollinator garden was developed near the Chestnut Orchard. Another 50 chestnut trees were marked for removal due to blight infection; Jon Remeika will do this work for us.

Some of the conifers were a thinned and invasives were treated. The beavers have moved to the south end of the property due to very low water at the Lipeika Road pond. There's a good chestnut crop, which should be available in due course.

Come on out and enjoy the wildlife!

Conservation News

By Diane Edwards, Conservation Chair

FWS Proposes Listing Tricolored Bat as Endangered



Tricolored Bat

Photo:Wikimedia Commons

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says this bat faces extinction due primarily to the impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent. White-nose syndrome has caused estimated declines of more than 90% in affected Tricolored Bat colonies and is currently present across 59%

of the species' range. Earlier this year, the FWS proposed reclassifying another bat, the Northern Long-Eared Bat, from threatened to endangered. Comments on the proposal concerning the Tricolored Bat can be submitted to the FWS by November 14. See the press release for details; go to [fws.gov/press-release](https://www.fws.gov/press-release).

New Tower Tracks Migratory Birds Flying Over State's Northwest Corner

A wildlife tracking tower installed at the Sharon Audubon Center in August receives pings from tracking devices on birds, helping scientists better understand their movements.

Called a Motus tower, the tower tracks migratory birds by picking up radio signals from any bird with a radio tag that flies within 9 miles of the site. The tower will connect the center's important bird habitat to the global Motus network, increasing the network's coverage of the north-eastern American forest, where large numbers of migratory birds raise their young.

"Motus" means "movement" in Latin and refers to the network's ability to track bird migrations from Canada south to Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

The data collected from Motus towers supports Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative, which brings together tracking, banding, and eBird data across the Western Hemisphere to

help improve conservation planning for imperiled birds.

Read more about Sharon Audubon's new tower at ct.audubon.org/news.

White-tailed Deer Dying from Hemorrhagic Disease

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) says hemorrhagic disease has been confirmed in white-tailed deer for the third year since it was first documented in our state in 2017. This year positive cases came from deer found in Goshen, Kent, and East Haddam. Reports to DEEP of dead deer in multiple other towns, mainly in the northwest and southeast areas of the state, fit the description of animals affected by the disease.

Hemorrhagic disease, transmitted by biting midges, usually kills the animal within one to three days of infection. Outbreaks of the disease tend to occur during years, like 2022, in which drought conditions are prevalent, and occur in late summer and early fall due to an increase in midge numbers. Hemorrhagic disease outbreaks cease with the onset of a hard frost, which kills the midges. The disease does not affect humans.

The DEEP Wildlife Division is encouraging anyone who observes deer appearing emaciated, behaving strangely, or lying dead along the edge of waterbodies to report the information to the DEEP Wildlife Division at andrew.labonte@ct.gov or by calling 860-418-5921.

Bill in U.S. House to Help Migratory Birds

The Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act has been introduced in the House of Representatives. National Audubon says this bipartisan bill will enhance the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), an innovative and cost-effective approach to the conservation of the more than 350 neotropical bird species in the U.S. that travel to Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Canada every year, such as the Scarlet Tanager, Purple Martin, and Blackburnian Warbler. The NMBCA supports the conservation of bird habitat as well as research, monitoring, outreach, and education. As a matching grant program, it catalyzes funding from a range of sources beyond the U.S. government. To read more about this, go to audubon.org/news.

Meetings, Bird Walks and Activities

LHAS Calendar — Fall/Winter 2022



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.

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.

November 7 . . . Life History of the Peregrine Falcon Monday, 7 PM



By the mid-1960s, peregrines had become extinct east of the Rocky Mountains. Then in 1998, the Travelers Tower in downtown Hartford hosted a nesting pair. Today there are at least 14 known territorial pairs in Connecticut. Our presenter, Steve Broker, has spent 24 years observing, studying, and photographing peregrines at West Rock Ridge in Woodbridge and East Rock Park in New Haven. Steve will discuss the life history strategies of peregrines, including sexual dimorphism, gender roles, territoriality, nest site selection and preparation, behavior, feeding, mating, egg laying, care of nestlings and fledglings, dispersal of young, site fidelity, and longevity. Steve's illustrated presentation draws on his 24-year experience with superb photographs of the birds in their most natural habitat. Steve worked in science education in Connecticut for 45 years. He is a past president of the New Haven Bird Club as well as the Connecticut Ornithological Association, for which he has also served as secretary and vice-president. He has also been a compiler of the Christmas Bird Count for 35 years.

December 5 . . . Bins, Scopes & Other Birding 'Visual Aids' (in-person only). Monday, 7 PM

Don't know much about binoculars, spotting scopes, or other optical equipment that would make it easier to "get good looks" at birds? Or are you just curious about what's new? Perhaps you're looking for holiday gift ideas for those special birders (including you!) on your list. Learn about birding optics from an expert: Jerry Connolly, co-owner with his wife of the Audubon Shop in Madison. An avid birder, field trip leader, and experienced presenter on optics, Jerry will give us advice on buying and using optical equipment, and show us some of the products available today.

January 9All About the American Bittern Monday, 7 PM



Sam Merker's fascinating and entertaining presentation will focus on the life history of the American Bittern, knowledge gaps, the state of the current research in Connecticut, and what researchers hope to learn in the future. Sam is a postdoctoral researcher at UConn, working with Chris Elphick and Morgan Tingley using data collected for the Connecticut Bird Atlas to estimate population sizes for as many birds as possible in the state. Sam is very interested in studying understudied birds like American Bitterns. He spends his free time bird watching, hiking, wood-working, and generally tinkering with things. Although new to Connecticut, Sam is originally from New Hampshire and is happy to be back in New England after 7 years in Georgia.

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The next Board Meeting will be at 7 p.m., Tuesday, November 15 at the Litchfield Community Center.

Calendar

(continued from page 5)

BIRDING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

November 13...Annual Duck Ramble Sunday, 2 PM

Noted birder Fran Zygmont will lead LHAS' Annual Duck Ramble to help us identify the various ducks and other birds on Bantam Lake. Meet at the White Memorial museum parking lot at 2 p.m. Rain Date: November 20. **For more information contact Fran at fzygmont@charter.net.**

December 18...Christmas Bird Count.....Sunday

See below for details!

Christmas Bird Count 2022

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in our area this year will take place **December 18**. If you want to help, **contact Dave Tripp at dtrippjr@gmail.com** and he will put you in contact with the captain for your area. At the end of the day, we will gather at a local restaurant to compile our results and enjoy a meal.



Begun more than a century ago, Audubon's CBC is the longest-running wild-life census in the Western Hemisphere. This citizen-science event provides vital information about bird populations and trends, data that alerts Audubon to environmental threats not only to birds but to the larger ecosystems we all depend on.

According to Audubon's website, each count takes place in an established 15-mile-diameter circle and is organized by a count compiler. (Our circle's compiler will be Dave Tripp Jr.) Count volunteers follow specified routes, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally — all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

Birders of all skill levels are involved in the CBC. If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler.

For more information about the CBC, visit www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count.

Christmas Bird Census 2022 Feeder Count Form

On December 18, count the birds listed below, record the numbers, and mail the form to Dave Tripp, 97 Hunter Court, Torrington, CT 06790.

- Mourning Dove _____
- Cardinal _____
- Downy Woodpecker _____
- White-throated Sparrow _____
- Chickadee _____
- Tree Sparrow _____
- Titmouse _____
- Song Sparrow _____
- White-breasted Nuthatch _____
- House Finch _____
- Blue Jay _____
- Junco _____
- Crow _____
- Goldfinch _____
- Starling _____
- House Sparrow _____
- Other _____

Advice from CT DEEP: Leave the Leaves This Fall!

Save yourself time, energy, and money and simply leave the leaves where they fall in your yard. A carpet of leaves serves as food and shelter for many insects, including moths and butterflies. Different species may spend the winter as eggs, caterpillars, or adults, and finding refuge in the leaves is often essential to their survival. Plus, more insects means more natural food sources will be available for birds throughout winter.

All About Birds

Brought to you by the LHAS Education Committee

Wild Turkey: An Amazing All-American Bird

By Vickie Dauphinais, Education Committee Chair

Thanksgiving will soon be upon us. Many of us will get together with friends and family to give thanks and enjoy some roasted turkey with all the fixings. Most of us know the turkey we eat is the domesticated version of the Wild Turkey. But how much do we really know about the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)?

Following is a brief history and some wild facts about America's native bird you can share with your dinner guests.

Indigenous Americans domesticated Wild Turkeys as far back as 46 A.D. The bird's meat and eggs served as a food source and the feathers were used in ceremonies. In the 1500s, Spanish traders brought the turkeys to Europe. The succulent bird quickly became a sensation on the continent's fine dining scene. Later on, the domesticated turkeys were brought back to America by English settlers. But the settlers were amazed to see large flocks of Wild Turkeys roaming the landscape. They quickly discovered these wild game birds tasted much better than their domesticated cousins. Overhunting and habitat loss during the 19th and early 20th centuries led to a steep decline in Wild Turkey populations. By the early 1900s, only about 200,000 birds were left. Here in Connecticut, though, Wild Turkeys were completely eliminated by the early 1800s.



A male, or tom, Wild Turkey.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Conservation efforts over the past century have led to a dramatic population resurgence. In Connecticut, 356 Wild Turkeys that were live-trapped in other states and

relocated here were released at 18 sites throughout the state between 1975 and 1992. Now turkeys have been restored to all 169 Connecticut towns. Today the population of Wild



A female Wild Turkey with her poults.

Photo: Diane Friend Edwards

Turkeys numbers close to 8 million in North America.

Here are a few interesting facts you might not know about Wild Turkeys:

- Wild Turkeys are smart, social animals. They can work together in a flock and adapt to the environment.
- The birds see in color and have excellent eyesight and hearing. However, their night vision is poor. They roost in trees to avoid predators.
- Turkeys are the most hunted game birds in North America. However, they are difficult to hunt due to their adaptability, keen eyesight, and hearing. Only one in six hunters will get a turkey during hunting season.
- They can be aggressive toward humans if threatened, especially during breeding season.
- An adult turkey has 5,000-6,000 feathers.
- A group of turkeys is known by many unusual descriptive terms, including a "flock," "gaggle," "crop," "dode," "gang," "posse," and "rafter."
- Turkey poop tells a bird's age and sex — male droppings are J-shaped; female droppings are spiral-shaped. The larger the diameter, the older the bird.
- Wild Turkeys may look off-kilter, but they are fast on their feet. They can run 25 miles per hour. Unlike their overweight domesticated cousins, wild turkeys can fly up to 50 miles per hour.
- If they need to, turkeys can also swim by tucking their wings close, spreading their tail, and kicking.
- Wild turkeys have patriotic heads. If excited, their bald head can change color from white to red to blue.

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Wild Turkeys

(continued from page 7)

- Baby turkeys are poults, juvenile males are jakes, and juvenile females are jennies.
- Male turkeys will mate with as many female turkeys as possible but provide no parental care! Doesn't seem fair.
- Turkey hens lay their eggs on the ground under vegetation. They can lay as many as 18 eggs in a clutch. A poult is up, out of the nest, and walking around searching for food within 24 hours.
- Wild turkeys are omnivorous; they eat both plant-based and animal-based foods. They eat ticks and stink bugs!
- Benjamin Franklin never proposed the turkey as a symbol for America, but he did praise it as being "a much more respectable bird" than the Bald Eagle, which often "steals" food from other birds.

As you celebrate Thanksgiving this year with turkey, reflect on the rich traditions and interesting attributes of our native bird, *Meleagris gallopavo*.

Boyd Woods Report: A Year in Review

By Rich Martin, Boyd Woods Sanctuary Co-chair

As the year quickly winds down, I take a moment to reflect on what has taken place over the year at LHAS' Boyd Woods Audubon Sanctuary.

It has been a relatively quiet and uneventful year thus far at Boyd Woods. I hope I'm not speaking too soon as I realize I'm writing this report during hurricane season.

Marie Kennedy kicked off the year at Boyd Woods with a "First Day" hike on January 1, with temps reaching nearly 50 degrees.



Round Leaf Yellow Violet

Photo: Rich Martin

On February 19, Debbie Martin led a group of enthusiastic birders to partake in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Debbie indicated in her trip report that the temperature was 23 degrees at the start of her walk and that the group counted 19 bird species.

A bundled-up group of 14 curious explorers joined Debbie

on April 10, to see and learn "What was Happening in the Woods," a habitat walk at Boyd Woods. Everyone was so excited to see one of the first flowers of spring blooming, the Round Leaf Yellow Violet.

We purchased and picked up a number of plants and shrubs at the Northwest Conservation District's native plant sale on April 22. These items were planted at Boyd Woods' bird blind area, to provide cover for birds and to help prevent erosion.



May 15 bird migration walk at Boyd Woods

Photo: Vickie Dauphinais

On May 15, Marie Kennedy, along with Kent Center School science teacher Josh Szwed, led folks along the winding trails at Boyd Woods searching for and observing migrating birds.

August 1, LHAS' Annual Picnic was held at Boyd Woods. It was a beautiful summer evening, a bit warm, but no fear of thunderstorms this year. Sharon Audubon provided an interesting program and demonstration on raptors.

If you had visited Boyd Woods in early October you might have seen a man driving around the woodland areas in an ATV with a large container strapped to it. He is the forester LHAS is using to help accomplish the many forest stand improvement tasks defined by the NRCS in LHAS' Forest Management Plan. During this time he was treating the invasive plants prior to a prescribed woodland thinning. Two areas at Boyd Woods will undergo a thinning between now and April 2023.

Along with all of the above activities, the 3-plus miles of trails were well maintained throughout the year. The bird feeders at the bird blind were continually filled during the bird feeding season, keeping our feathered friends happy and providing opportunities for photographers and curious observers.

In My Garden — A Journal — September 2022

By Angela Dimmitt

Remember the Good Old Days when Labor Day came and the weather gently changed? "Not no more" and not this year! The hot weather continued through the middle of the month till the equinox arrived and autumn began, when it plummeted into the 60s, with chilly nights requiring an extra blanket.

My garden has never looked so sad — the drought took its toll on some shrubs and younger trees, but my flower beds hung in there and the house was always full of bouquets. Not knowing how deep or reliable is my well, I did not use it for watering, thinking "tough love" and relying on a large rain barrel plus the stream (which barely kept flowing — I used it mainly for the vegetable garden and newly planted shrubs). All would have been well had not the deer decided to strike — one night they ate all but two of my many prized and handsome hostas and polished off the few remaining day lilies. So my erstwhile lush beds are filled with pathetic

green stalks. Luckily there is a bumper crop of assorted goldenrods and asters (wild and domestic); sedum "Autumn Joy" is as striking as ever, and those of the various hydrangeas which also did not get eaten are still handsome, but that's it, nothing else, nada. Several pretty shades of phlox had also lingered but they are gone today, thanks to deer again I suppose. There are at least two does and their young, and two six- to eight-point bucks which I see quite often, so presumably they are fattening up for winter. Incredibly, the lawns stayed green all along, but now are really thick and lush — you'd think that would keep the deer happy, but no.

My vegetable garden — only peas, heritage beans, tomatoes, and peppers this year — did get watered regularly from



Ovenbird

Photo: Angela Dimmitt

(continued on back page)

Fall Planting at Kalmia Sanctuary's Pollinator Garden



A variety of native, bird-friendly plants were added to the garden at Kalmia. Plants included Agastache (hyssop), astilbe, wild geranium, autumn sedum, and Baptisia (wild indigo) — all favorites of birds, bees, and butterflies.

Fall is an ideal time to plant native perennials. The soil and cool temperatures are great for root establishment, getting an early start on spring blooms to benefit the pollinators.

Thank you, Kalmia "gardeners" — Vickie Dauphinais, Karen Getz, Irek Rychlik, and David Zomick.

Photos: Anna Buczniewicz





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Journal

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the stream but somehow that's just not the same as proper rain. Wish I knew why — getting water requires going to the stream, clambering down the bank, crossing the dry shingle and bending down really low, leaning under overhanging jungle to reach a deep spot gouged out under the bank. And then getting only half a watering can. Ah well — still very lucky! Sometimes I'd see birds bathing and drinking in the stream, such a joy to watch. In fact, of the few warblers (including Worm-eating and Magnolia) I've seen migrating through this garden, most have been doing that.

Not many migrating birds visited the garden: several Magnolia and Nashville Warblers were attracted to the action around the hanging feeders, and an Ovenbird scratched there for several days. It was quiet after residents like catbirds moved on. October 1 — winter birds are arriving! The first White-throated Sparrows (same date as last year); one Dark-eyed Junco (earlier), a Ruby-crowned Kinglet (also earlier); and migrating towhees, catbirds (my nesting pair left ages ago), phoebes, and Chipping Sparrows. Also, a late Ruby-throated Hummingbird, looking very fat, feeding on salvias in the patio tub. Blue Jays are raucous, goldfinches squabbling.

Now leaves are seriously beginning to turn color, a nice

distraction from the unfortunate flower beds — which now need cleaning up, although I'll leave coneflowers, sunflowers, and others with seed heads for the goldfinches and sparrows to munch. Goldenrods should be left standing since some bees and other insects lay their eggs in the stems to overwinter — but since the insects do not hatch until May, that is a bit late for cutting back for the new growth then emerging, so I am confused as to how to do the right thing.

The bear finally found the peanut feeder on the front porch, but when he returned and found it gone, he threw a temper tantrum (truly!) — knocked over a couple of potted geraniums, ripped other plants out of a planter, and pulled down a hanging basket, emptying it! Well, who else could it have been?

Star has stopped demanding to go out as soon as I get up — and this is the true sign of Season Change — his velvet snake, which had been hanging over the back of a chair since spring, suddenly appeared in the middle of the floor, and instead of howling at the back door, he now lies down on the snake, demanding I play with him even before feeding him and making coffee. Then maybe he goes out, only to return immediately: "What on earth made you think I wanted to go out? Where's my breakfast?" However, he has also been very clingy lately, and although I've not seen the bear recently, something outside has spooked him a couple of times. Last night he actually crept under the covers and cuddled up instead of sleeping at my feet. Ah, the pleasures of a Siamese cat!