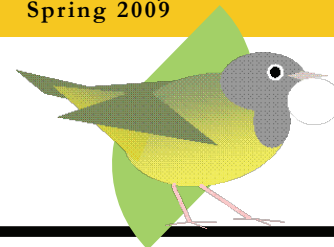


# COA BULLETIN



## 25TH COA ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 21, 2009

The Connecticut Ornithological Association invites you to attend its 25th Annual Meeting on **Saturday, March 21, 2009**, at Middlesex Community College in Middletown, CT. As in past years, the on-campus site will be Chapman Hall (for map and directions, visit [www.mxctc.commmnet.edu](http://www.mxctc.commmnet.edu) or call: 860-343-5800). To save on printing and postage costs, no separate announcement will be mailed to membership.

**Note: This Bulletin will be your only printed announcement.**

Plan to arrive between 8:00 and 9:00 AM for registration and to visit the COA marketplace. We will begin with a message from COA President Steve Mayo and an introduction to the day's events by COA Program Chairman Jerry Connolly. Our speakers for the day include:

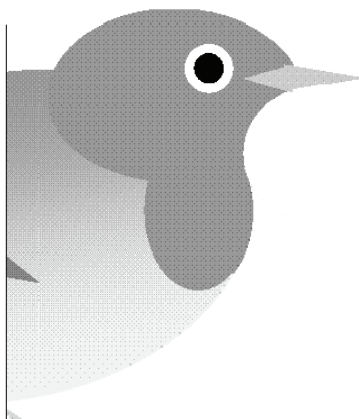
- Gina Nichol—Leader of local, national, and international birding tours
- Twan Leenders—Conservation biologist for Connecticut Audubon
- Chris Field—Important Bird Area coordinator for Audubon Connecticut
- Greg Hanisek—Editor of the Connecticut Warbler, columnist and blogger on bird and nature topics, and Managing Editor for a Connecticut newspaper

Speaker bios and descriptions of their talks are on pages 2 and 3.

The cost for the meeting is \$15 for advance registration (received by March 14); walk-in registration on the day of the meeting is \$20. A buffet lunch is available for \$14, and must be paid for in advance.

**The Program of Events can be found on page 3. The registration form is on page 7. Please send your check (made payable to COA) along with registration form to COA Director: Larry Reiter, 32 West Mystic Ave., Mystic, CT 06355**

**Support bird conservation at the Annual Meeting by donating to Birders' Exchange.** Birders' Exchange takes new and used birding equipment and educational materials and matches it with local scientists, conservationists, and educators, in Latin America and the Caribbean. Look for the Birder's Exchange table in the Annual Meeting marketplace. More info at their web site: <http://www.aba.org/bex> .



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COA Annual Meeting	1
COA Annual Meeting Program	2-3
Golden-crowned Kinglets in Winter	4-5
25 Years Ago in the CT Warbler	5
Gull workshop	5
Book Review: Wesley the Owl	6
Annual Meeting Registration Form	7

## ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE OF EVENTS MARCH 21, 2009

8:00–9:00	<b>Registration/COA Marketplace</b>	12:00–1:00	<b>Lunch at Founder's Hall Cafeteria; return to Chapman Hall for dessert</b>
9:00–9:20	<b>Welcome / Business Meeting</b> Steve Mayo, COA President Jerry Connolly, Program Chairman	1:00–2:00	<b>Breeding Bird Atlases as Conservation Tools</b> Chris Field
9:20–10:15	<b>Connecticut State of the Birds and the Endangered Species Act</b> Twan Leenders	2:00–2:15	<b>Break—COA Marketplace</b>
10:15–10:25	<b>Mabel Osgood Wright Award Presentation</b>	2:15–3:15	<b>Hummingbirds: Aeronautic Marvels, Feathered Gems</b> Gina Nichol
10:25–10:35	<b>Betty Kleiner Award Presentation</b>		
10:35–10:55	<b>Break—COA Marketplace</b> (socialize, purchase COA raffle tickets, and check out vendors)	3:15–3:30	<b>COA Raffle and Silent Auction</b> The ever-popular raffle will conclude our day with many prizes, including avian artwork and valuable birding equipment donated by artists and vendors. Raffle tickets will be available throughout the day.
10:55–11:55	<b>Only the Names Have Changed</b> Greg Hanisek		

## COA ANNUAL MEETING SPEAKER BIOS AND PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

### Gina Nichol

#### HUMMINGBIRDS: AERONAUTIC MARVELS, FEATHERED GEMS

With 330 species known in the world, hummingbirds are the second largest family of birds after flycatchers. Their maneuverability in the air and their physiological capacity to survive cold nights are unmatched in the animal world. This program illustrates the amazing adaptations of these glittering gems and describes their fascinating life histories. Vivid photographs of hummingbirds in the United States, Costa Rica, and Ecuador tell the story of how these birds survive in habitats that range from tropical forests to the forests of the Andes Mountains.

Gina Nichol is the founder and principal tour leader of Sunrise Birding. A naturalist and birder for more than twenty years, Gina began leading ecotours for Audubon Nature Odysseys in the early 1990's in Greenland, Iceland, Scotland, the Pacific Northwest, and Baja California. Gina has studied animal behavior as well as methods for tracking animal movements while at the Yellowstone Institute in Wyoming. Her varied interests and love of the natural world have taken her to Alaska, Costa Rica, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico, Kenya, Chile, the Northwest Territories, Panama, the American Southwest, California, Belize, Florida, and a host of other destinations.



## Chris Field

### BREEDING BIRD ATLASES AS CONSERVATION TOOLS

Chris will present the history of Breeding Bird Atlases, traditional and new methods of creating atlases, and how they can be used as powerful conservation tools. He will also talk about the future of Connecticut's second-generation breeding bird atlas, and how it will be shaped by advances in technology like GIS software and birding tools (e.g., eBird).

Chris Field graduated with a Masters of Science, from the University of Connecticut's Biodiversity and Conservation Biology program. He has worked at Yale University on projects looking at the role of birds in the spread of infectious diseases such as Lyme disease and West Nile Virus. He has been the Important Bird Area Program Coordinator for Audubon Connecticut since April of 2008. Working with the Menunkatuck Chapter, he embarked on the first ever citizen science monitoring project aimed at Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows.



## Twan Leenders

### CONNECTICUT STATE OF THE BIRDS AND THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT



Connecticut Audubon Society's 4<sup>th</sup> annual "Connecticut State of the Birds" report takes an in-depth look at the birds included in the Connecticut Endangered Species Act (CT-ESA) and others considered at risk by important conservation organizations. It proposes a list of 20 "Conservation Priority" birds that can be used as a tool to guide conservation planning in the state. Using a "Biological Conservation Unit" approach to conservation, these 20 species can serve as indicators of the most threatened habitats available in the state and their protection will benefit numerous other state threatened and endangered species (both plants and animals).

Twan grew up in The Netherlands, where he completed his doctoral exam in Biology, specializing in Animal Ecology. Twan has worked (and lived) in Central America and tropical Africa to study amphibians and reptiles. After moving to the US in 2001, Twan has been working in the Dept. of Vertebrate Zoology of Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History. He was an assistant professor in the

Dept. of Biology of Sacred Heart University before joining The Connecticut Audubon Society in June 2008 as the organization's conservation biologist.

## Greg Hanisek

### ONLY THE NAMES HAVE CHANGED

Lumping? Splitting? Changing bird names and classifications? What does it all mean? Greg Hanisek will inform and entertain us on the crucial, yet sometimes confusing subject of taxonomy.

Greg Hanisek, an amateur naturalist and professional journalist, is well-known and admired in the Connecticut Birding community for his vast knowledge of birds and his dedication to sharing that expertise. He is editor of COA's Connecticut Warbler. He also writes a nature column for the Waterbury-Republican-American, where he works as Managing Editor. Greg also serves as secretary of the COA Avian Records Committee, provides a bird and nature blog called Talking Nature, and teaches adult education birding classes.



## What are Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus satrapa*) searching for in the tips of conifer branches during winter?

By Paul Carrier

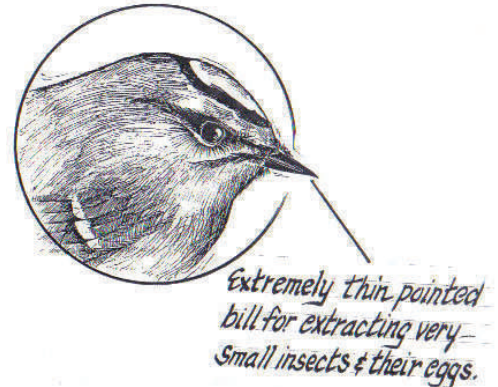
During the days of cross country skiing within the forests of Connecticut, for recreation and Christmas bird counts, I often encountered the tiny Golden-crowned Kinglet. While enjoying these dead-of-winter observations of this second smallest bird found in Connecticut, I often thought, "how does the kinglet survive our winters and what do they eat to do so?" After many years of not knowing, I decided to find out the answer to my long enduring question.

On many of these snowy mid-winter forest excursions, this diminutive, lively 3.5-inch bird was often observed flitting about the tips of coniferous branches, seemingly searching for edibles to survive for another day. My quest to answer this question began by collecting coniferous branch tips from the Balsam Fir, Hemlock and Black Spruce trees.

**Balsam Fir:** On some of the outer needles I saw a form of insect molt casing, plus what looked like small eggs at the base of some needles.

**Hemlock:** The undersides of the new year's needles were covered with tiny, attached oval brownish scaly things, which I suspected were insect related.

**Black Spruce:** Seen under the outer needles were scars, possibly made by insect feedings, plus some form of fungal infection.



Not being an entomologist, I continued my research through the Internet and various books on coniferous insect tree pests. These sources identified many examples of insect pests of these three northern trees. Most of them have multiple stages in their life cycle, with adult stages prevalent from early March to late June and eggs from July to February. I concluded the only possible insect food available to kinglets in the outer twigs and needles during the cold winter months had to be insect eggs and/or dormant, over-wintering adults. Kinglets feed on the following throughout the year: small beetles, gnats, midges, caterpillars, scale insects, aphids, spiders and their eggs. During the winter, Springtails and dormant adult and insect eggs are the main source of food for these small birds, with some being found under the bark of branch twigs and new needles.

The following species are most likely to subsist on the three trees mentioned above and are found here in southern New England and Connecticut forests.

**Balsam Twig Aphid:** Adults have four stages beginning in early March through late June. Eggs laid after July winter over until March when the first nymph stage hatches. Adults feed on sap from the newly growing underside of needles and are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long.

**Balsam Gall Midge:** The larvae of this fly cause small galls to form on the base of new needles. The small yellow 1/8-inch larvae winter over inside the galls or fall to the ground in autumn.

**Pine Needle Scale:** White or light yellow, oyster shaped scales covering needles. Eggs winter over beneath dead female scales. Adults are covered with a white waxy coat and are 1/10 inch long.

**Spruce Spider Mite:** 1/50 inch. Too small for a Kinglet to see or find?

**Bagworm:** This moth larva builds a 2-inch casing bag from needle particles. It is more common south of New England.

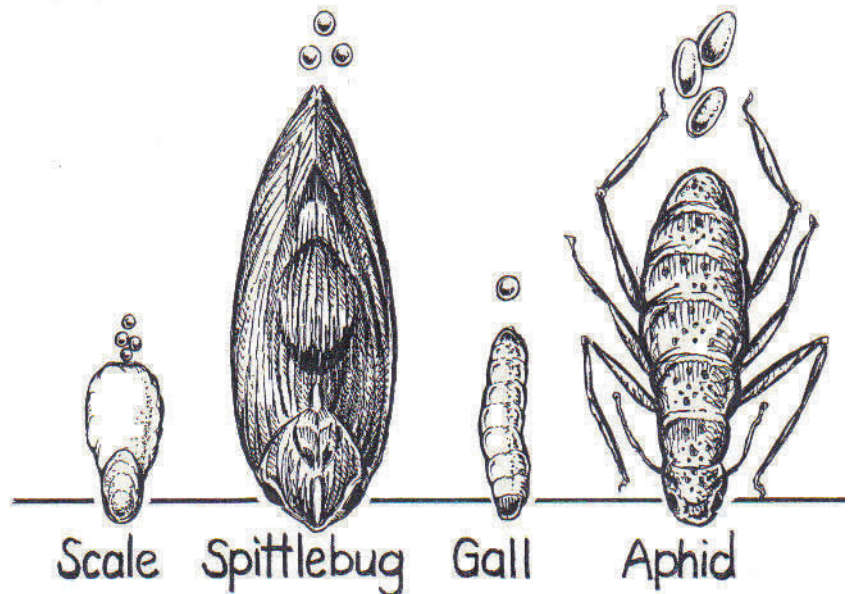
**Spittlebug:** These bugs secrete a frothy white spittlemass on new shoots in which they hide. Oval shaped adults are about 1/3 inch long. Nymphs hatch in May from eggs deposited under the bark of young shoots.

**Conclusion:** Kinglets are extremely well adapted for exploiting this niche of tiny insects and their eggs that many other bird species cannot, affording them the advantage of a food source unavailable to many other bird species. Remarkably, it appears Golden-crowned Kinglets obtain much of their food in the end branch twigs and

needles of these three trees (and others) in the heart of winter. Most adult forms of these insects are dead by winter, but the eggs of most are still available. During the warmer months of the year, within the kinglet's northern breeding territory, the insects mentioned above, plus many more species, are available to kinglets in a much larger abundance.

Though we humans perceive the adult insects, larvae and eggs as extremely tiny, I believe they are not to the kinglet. If we enlarge, in proportion, the head of a kinglet to the size of a human's head, it should show us how we would interpret the size of its prey as the kinglets see them. The illustration to the right depicts the view kinglets would have of their food.

*This is the size a Kinglet sees them*



## 25 YEARS AGO IN THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Compiled by Stephen P. Broker

From Volume IV Number 1, January 1984:

**New Frontiers: 1984** - "It is with pleasure that I accepted the invitation to write this editorial because it includes the privilege of announcing the formation of a new group we have long needed, a Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA), organized and managed by and for Connecticut's birding community, both professional and amateur. I expect, therefore, that 1984 will be a milestone in the history of ornithology in our state.

"The first step in bringing Connecticut up to date in addressing the need to integrate our growing interest in birdlife, and begin publishing our findings, was taken in 1981 with the appearance of this journal, the first quarterly devoted to combining the study of birds and the fun of seeking them out in our particular countryside. Now, the Connecticut Audubon Society, which subsidized this publishing venture, has agreed to cede The Connecticut Warbler to the new C.O.A.

"I therefore ask all birders, and all organizations interested in birds and their conservation, to join me in giving wholehearted support to C.O.A. It will be our organization, and our journal. Together these will bridge the gap between scientific ornithology at our several universities, and the legion of people who enjoy watching birds because they are such colorful, cheery members of the outdoor community. Indeed, the more we learn about them, the more we realize that birds are an index to the ecosystems we both occupy.

"Join us so that no birds shall join the Great Auk in oblivion." By Roger Tory Peterson.

## GULL WORKSHOP

A workshop on gull identification is planned for March 2nd at the Windsor Landfill (on a Monday—gulls congregate in larger numbers when the landfill is accepting deliveries). This has proven to be a hot spot for gulls in the winter (being one of the few remaining active landfills). Look for further details on this workshop on CTBirds and the COA home page. (Editor's note: hot off the press—apparent 2nd CT record of Slaty backed Gull at the landfill!)

## BOOK REVIEW: *WESLEY THE OWL*

Stacey O'Brien. *Wesley the Owl*. New York: Free Press, 2008.

Reviewed by Jim Bair

Another animal adoption book? Come on, we fall in love with the cute, clever, almost human animal, and then we cry when we say good-bye: *Born Free*, *The Yearling*, *Marley and Dewey*, ad infinitum. Well, *Wesley the Owl* is different.

First, Wesley, the Barn Owl, has a very low cuteness factor. One person when viewing Wesley as a nestling said, "Ugh, is it some kind of dinosaur?" The author seemed to think the owl could coexist with her zebra finches (bunnies and pit bulls anyone?), but Barn Owls are predators. Their primary sense is hearing. They are solitary to a fault. Bird rehab is labor-intensive enough, but living with an owl is a lonely commitment. Wesley is never anthropomorphized. Indeed, the author has to learn to think like an owl.

Second, the author is a scientist. She worked for years at the Cal Tech animal laboratory. That is, in fact, how she hooked up with the three-day-old owlet in the first place. She had some very knowledgeable ornithologists as advisors and mentors. Most of what she shares about the owl are behaviors that could be worthy of a life history study like A. C. Bent or a life cycle study like Konrad Lorenz.

Much of the book is devoted to Barn Owl behavior. Yes, it is told as a narrative, but the author shares many owl behaviors, including some that had not been observed before. The ornithologists at Cal Tech were especially excited about the recordings she made of various vocalizations. She found that in many cases she was able to communicate with the bird using English while the bird made its specific needs known by slight variations in the sounds it made. This communication became much more specific than a mere "Wesley wants a mouse."

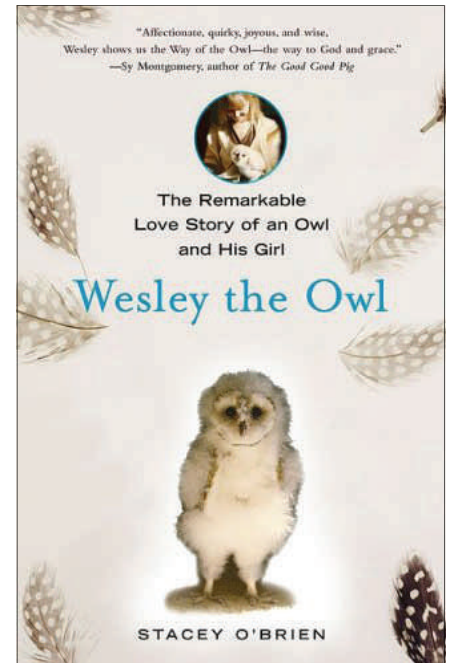
The book's humor, like the humor of a stand-up comic, often comes from responses to keep from getting angry, bitter, or frustrated. Picture the thirty-something research scientist and a group of Los Angeles teen gang members in leather jackets tossing frozen mice on the top of a popular coffee shop. Or, when the bird decides you are no longer its mother but its mate, what do you do? Grab a microscope!

The author presents numerous challenges she had to face over the years: Where to find mice when the city is shut down by riots; how to manage a social life when "love me, love my owl" does not work like "love me, love my dog;" how to find a baby-sitter for an animal that by nature only imprints on one other creature in its lifetime. The biggest challenge comes when the author herself is faced with a life-threatening medical condition. By then, she has been living "the way of the owl," and that perspective helps carry her through.

As O'Brien's story progresses, there is a change in tone. At first, she uses the language of the laboratory scientist. We get fascinating descriptions of the bird's physiology and behavior. (You will never guess what Barn Owls smell like...) But by the end, her observations have gone beyond mere behaviorism. She is still very specific in what she notes, but she begins to see life itself differently. She becomes like Hamlet, saying to us, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Isn't this really why we continue to study nature? Isn't there still a lot of mystery out there?

The author is a native of Southern California, so besides the scientists and "geeks" of Cal Tech, there is a backdrop of show business—not with the owl, thankfully. The author's grandfather was a big band musician of some renown, her uncle was one of the original Mouseketeers, and she and her sister were child actresses. Her best friend's husband is a singer-songwriter whose record my roommates and I played until it warped thirty years ago.

Oh yes, Barn Owls smell like butterscotch!



## COA ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

**Early Registration:** \_\_\_\_\_ persons @ **\$15/person** (pre-pay only) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 (must be received by 3/14; registration at the door: \$20/person)

**Buffet lunch:** \_\_\_\_\_ persons @ **\$14/person** (pre-pay only) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please **print** name(s) as you would like it (them) to appear on name tag:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send check, payable to COA, along with registration form, to: Larry Reiter, 32 West Mystic Ave.  
 Mystic, CT 06470

## COA MEMBERSHIP FORM

### JOIN COA FOR THE BEST OF BIRDING IN CT

New Member  Renewal  Gift

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address\* \_\_\_\_\_

COA is always in need of volunteer help. If you are interested, please check the areas below that you would like to know more about::

Computer skills  Events  Field trips  Finance  Workshops  Science

Membership Category:

Student  (\$15)

Individual  (\$25)

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Send this form with your check or money order to:

Connecticut Ornithological Association

314 Unquowa Road

Fairfield, CT 06824

\* COA does not release its membership list to other organizations

Dues are tax deductible as allowed by law

The COA Bulletin is the quarterly newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, published in February, May, September, and December. Please submit materials for the next issue by April 10, 2009, to:

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 or

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 Mystic, CT 06355

Download a pdf version of the COA Bulletin (in color!) at:

[www.ctbirding.org](http://www.ctbirding.org)

## COA OFFICERS

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## COA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

<i>Conservation</i>	Milan Bull
<i>Electronics</i>	Dori Sosensky
<i>Finance</i>	Steve Oresman
<i>Membership</i>	Roy Harvey
<i>Workshops</i>	Randy Domina
<i>Annual Meeting</i>	Jerry Connolly
<i>Connecticut Warbler</i>	Greg Hanisek
<i>COA Bulletin</i>	Andrew Dasinger
<i>Rare Records</i>	Jay Kaplan
<i>Refuge Relations</i>	Dori Sosensky
<i>Science Advisory</i>	Milan Bull



**COA Annual Meeting  
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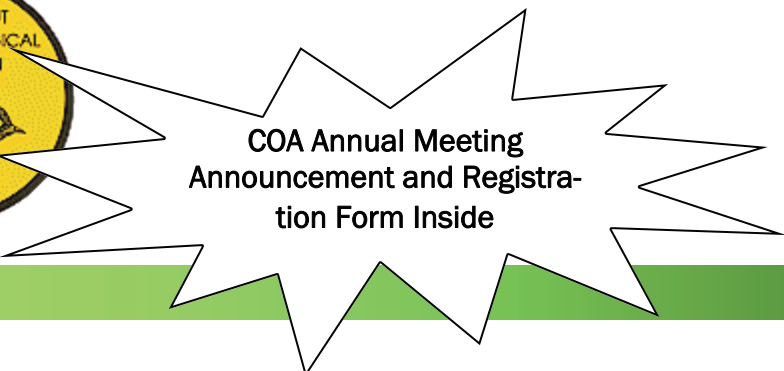
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