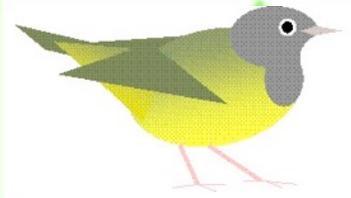


COA Bulletin



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE KATHY VAN DER AUE

I hope everyone took advantage of the mild fall weather and got out birding. We hosted a number of rarities last month including the “invasion” of Franklin’s Gulls, an Ash-throated Flycatcher (fifth record in Connecticut), Pink-footed Goose, and Hudsonian Godwit.

COA has worked hard to forge better relations between DEEP and the birding community in the belief that things couldn’t get much worse after the Hammonasset owl’s nest tragedy. Forging lines of communication has shown preliminary favorable results, and we are hopeful that the voices of birders are now being heard in Hartford.

On September 20, 2014, Governor Dannel P. Malloy established the Important Bird Area Advisory Committee within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for the purpose of advising the agency on the creation of an Important Bird Area (IBA) Program. This program focuses on the recognition of critical bird habitats and the promotion of bird conservation in the state. COA has been given a seat on this Committee, which meets quarterly. We discussed Hammonasset Beach State Park and Silver Sands State Park at our last meeting.

COA has also been asked to provide the content for the “In the Air” exhibit at the new Hammonasset Beach Meigs Point Nature Center. This is a fantastic opportunity to educate the public about the many habitats at the park and about the birds that live there. Most of the visitors to the current nature center are children, and we are hard at work trying to develop content that will engage not only this young audience but inform all ages who visit.

We have formed a committee of experts to work with the DEEP Wildlife Division in mitigating the damage done to wildlife habitat during the construction at Hammonasset Beach. Their work will begin soon. Shorebird pools and feeding plots are being considered for installation.

We testified at the public hearing on the Silver Sands improvements. Our objections to the project centered on the overflow parking lot (known as the “Sparrow Lanes”), as a close reading of the plans disclosed that the area was to be stripped of vegetation and leveled. We took the position that the structural improvements were needed, especially from a sanitation perspective (three outhouses serve the entire beach), however our testimony on the overflow lot counseled a wait and see approach, leaving the area as is and even adding more bird friendly shrubs between the rows. At this point DEEP is revisiting the project.

(continued on page 2)

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We have written a number of letters in favor of or opposing legislation affecting the environment. We have also filed letters of support for two federal sanctuaries, the Coral Canyons and Seamounts and the Cashes Ledge Closed Area. Sanctuary designation approval for these important offshore areas are awaiting President Obama's signature.

Our Research Committee is conducting research on the environment of Long Island Sound, doing fieldwork and using data from various sources including the DEEP water quality test cruises, eBird and the Christmas Bird Counts.

Speaking of the Christmas Bird Counts, here's hoping for favorable weather! If any of you are sitting on the sidelines on this important count and want to become involved, details appear in this bulletin. Try it, it's great fun.

Kathy Van Der Aue



Hammonasset Beach State Park.
The old and the new Nature
Centers. Photo by Steve Broker.

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

BY

LEE SCHLESINGER

As I write this, there are Franklin's Gulls scattered all over the Connecticut coast in unprecedented numbers--that is, in numbers never recorded before. We have some sense of why this is: perfect weather configurations for such an event, excellent birders, sophisticated communications—but also something totally incalculable, something hugely incalculable. Good science stretches the limit of calculation, but by definition, at that limit the incalculable looms. Science, intuition, calculation say: Franklin's Gulls, and sometimes they are there, and more often they are not, and we don't really know why not, we shrug our shoulders and say, Not this time. But today they are there. Practically everywhere someone has looked along the shoreline, these birds have been seen.

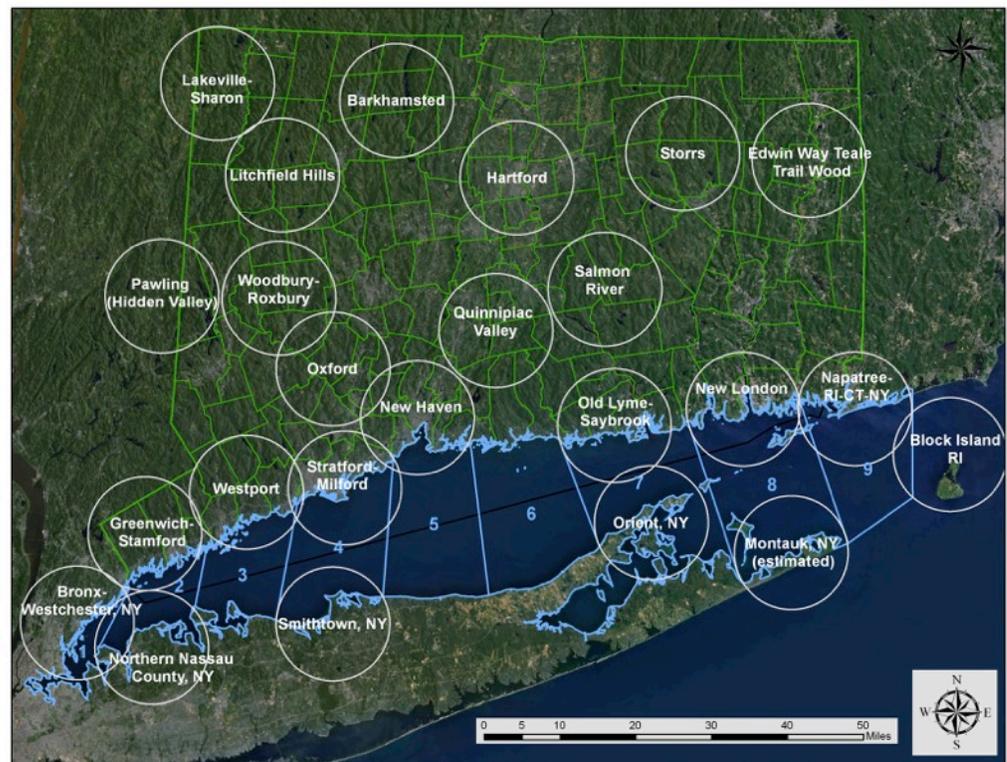
As I write this, also, the beginning of the Connecticut Christmas Count season is a few weeks away. The long-term weather forecast says snow, or maybe rain, or maybe sunshine, for December 19, but we'll revisit that forecast at 11:58 PM on December 18. An almost infinite set of weather variables, almost infinite in their interaction, stands between now and then. And among those variables, for Christmas Counters of course, are the birds themselves. We love narratives of cause and effect when talking of Nature. It appears to be a basic calculation; but cause and effect is difficult to determine, and undoubtedly strange. Does the freeze-up of ponds to our north send thousands of Canada Geese (and a few Snow Geese and White Fronted Geese and Cackling Geese and maybe this year a Ross's Goose) migrating overhead through the entire Count Circle all the day of the Count; or does the birds' departure trigger the freeze-up? We would do well not to reject the one explanation as too mystical, or the other as too mechanical. That's Nature for you. (continued on page 3)

But this is a Christmas COUNT—by definition, dealing with the calculable, the quantifiable. We aspire to the highest level of numbers-accuracy that is possible. A flock of geese on a baseball field can more or less be counted one by one, or at least ten by ten. But what of that cloud of Robins that suddenly flies out of a thicket and disappears into the nearby woods? And then there are the singular birds, seen once in a territory or once on a Count or even once in the whole state tally. Almost 65 million birds were recorded in the United States on last season's Counts, but there was only a single American Golden-Plover among them, this bird at the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. Its presence there would be both improbable and incalculable. Nonetheless, fully 9% of all reported species and distinct forms were represented by a single bird, all of which would also be improbable and incalculable. I happen to have handy my 1988 Christmas Count tally for the New Haven Count territory I have covered for years, around Orange, Connecticut. Of the birds I recorded that year, 25% were represented by a single individual, and none would really be considered, in the larger picture, improbable. For this territory, however, its habitats, such as they were, and its dynamics, the lone Pileated Woodpecker observed was a thrilling surprise. It came at a moment when these birds were learning how to live near humans and were beginning to recolonize suburban woodlots in Orange and elsewhere. So it's all relative, more or less. And it's lucky. And it's a consequence of learning more and more about the bird activity of the neighborhoods. What we come to know diminishes the improbability but does not eliminate it. After all, new knowledge brings new variables. And then there is time, that torrent of variables.

On the 2014-2015 Connecticut Count about 12% of the species recorded were represented by an individual bird. One of those was a White Pelican, truly improbable by any standards, a dream bird for the state tally. But another of those birds was a lone Canvasback. About 40 years ago I was at Lake Saltonstall, East Haven on one of the first Christmas Counts in which I participated. Late in the afternoon snow flurries thickened into outright snowfall. In fading light I saw a raft of about 2000 Canvasbacks on the water. Their backs were whiter than the snow. Now 40 years later New Haven recorded one Canvasback. This bird species drifts from the abundantly likely to the improbable, with the impossible beckoning. If we are to see a Canvasback on the next count, we will all have to look with diligence and care. By definition, the improbable result, whether presence or absence, will not be what we assume, but what we find.

Lee Schlesinger

Christmas Bird Count circles for Connecticut and the north shore of Long Island, New York.



CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2015-2016 SCHEDULE
116th ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2015:

New Haven, CT (CTNH): Compiler: Chris Loscalzo, 67 Wepawaug Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525
closcalz@optonline.net 203-389-6508
(New Haven Bird Club)

Storrs, CT (CTST): Compiler: Steve Morytko, 288 Varga Road, Ashford, CT 06278
smorytko@yahoo.com 860-680-5728
(Natchaug Ornithological Society)

Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (CTWR): Compilers: Renee Baade, 46 Obtuse Road, Newtown, CT 06470
rbaade@juno.com (H) 203-270-9953, and Ken Elkins, Audubon Center at Bent of the River, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury, CT 06488 kelkins@audubon.org
203-405-9113
(Western Connecticut Bird Club)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015:

Greenwich-Stamford, CT (CTGS): Compilers: Matt Fry, 203-722-7022, mbf27@optonline.net, and Gary Palmer, 34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807
203-661-4897 gejlpalmer@yahoo.com
(Audubon Greenwich)

Hartford, CT (CTHA): Compilers: Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019 jaybrd49@aol.com
860-693-0263 (days), 860-693-0157 (evenings), and Steve Davis, stevesuedavis@comcast.net 860-242-2135.
(Hartford Audubon Society)

Lakeville-Sharon (Trixie Strauss CBC), CT (CTLS): Compiler: Robert Moeller, Post Office Box 1119, Sharon, CT 06069, Sharon Audubon Center/National Audubon Society, 325 Cornwall Bridge Road, Sharon, CT 06069, <http://sharon.audubon.org/>, 860-364-0520
(Housatonic Audubon Society)

Litchfield Hills, CT (CTLH): Compiler: Raymond E. Belding, 1229 Winsted Road #30, Torrington, CT 06790 hoatzin1@optonline.net 860-482-4046
(Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

Oxford, CT (CTOX): Compiler: Roy Harvey, 32 Wanda Drive, Beacon Falls, CT 06403, rmharvey@snet.net,
203-888-5757
(Naugatuck Valley Audubon)

Quinnipiac Valley, CT (CTQV): Compilers: Melissa Baston, 860-995-0656 mbaston@tgimachine.com and Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, 203-630-9640
cfolsom-okeefe@audubon.org
(Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society)

(continued on page 5)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015, continued:

Salmon River, CT (CTSR): Compiler: Joe Morin, 8 West Street Terrace, Cromwell, CT 06416, 860-635-2786
joseph.mor@sbcglobal.net
(Mattabeseck Audubon Society)

Westport, CT (CTWE): Compilers: Mardi and Townsend Dickinson, 20 Blake Street, Norwalk, CT 06851-3007,
mardi1d@gmail.com 203-846-0359 and <http://kymrygroup.com>
(Connecticut Audubon Birdcraft Museum/Kymry Group)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2015

Barkhamsted, CT (CTBA): Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 345 Colebrook Road, Winsted, CT 06098,
dtrippjr@gmail.com
(Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

Napatree, RI-CT-NY (RINT): Compilers: Shai Mitra, Biology Department, College of Staten Island, 2800
Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314 mitra@mail.csi.cuny.edu and Glenn Williams, 221 Pequot Avenue, Mystic, CT
06355 gswilliams9@yahoo.com

Stratford-Milford, CT (CTSM): Compiler: Steve Mayo, 27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524,
rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net, 203-393-0694

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2016:

Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY/CT (NYHV): Compilers: Carena Pooth, 22 Brothers Road, Poughquag, NY
12570, carena@prodigy.net, 845-724-3236 and Angela Dimmitt, P.O. Box 146, Sherman, CT 06784,
angeladimmitt@aol.com, 860-355-3429
(snow storm date Saturday, January 2, 2016)

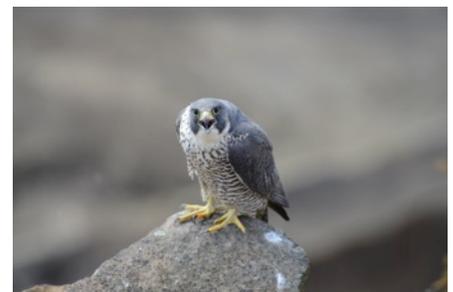
SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 2016:

New London, CT (CTNL): Compiler: Robert Dewire, 9 Canary Lane, Pawcatuck, CT 06379,
robertdewire9@comcast.net, 860-599-3085

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2016:

Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood Sanctuary, Hampton, CT (CTEW): Compiler: Sue Harrington, 28D Anton
Road, Storrs, CT 06268, hoopoe@sbcglobal.net, 860-429-6257
(Natchaug Ornithological Society)

Old Lyme-Saybrook, CT (CTOL): Compiler: Barbara Hawes, 310 Boston Post Road, Unit #71, Waterford, CT
06385 860-710-5811 bhawes71@gmail.com
(Potapaug Audubon Society)



New Globally Important Bird Areas Identified in Connecticut

by Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe

Important Bird Area Program Coordinator

In the spring of 2014, the Connecticut IBA Technical Committee was reconvened. The Committee's first task was to identify sites in Connecticut that are important to species determined to be globally vulnerable or near threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These species have experienced significant population declines in recent years. The National Audubon Society sets criteria for each species (number of breeding pairs or number of individuals) based on the global threat category, dispersion patterns, and global population sizes (National Audubon Society, 2015). If a site meets criteria, it qualifies as a *globally* Important Bird Area.

IUCN species that are found in CT in large enough numbers that a site might meet the criteria included: Long-tailed Duck (90 individuals), Rusty Blackbird (90 individuals), Semipalmated Sandpiper (180 individuals), Saltmarsh Sparrow (10 breeding pairs or 30 individuals) and Chimney Swift (240 individuals). Long-tailed Duck breeds on the Arctic coasts of North America, Europe, and Asia and winters at sea further south, including western Long Island Sound (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2015). There is evidence that the species is experiencing low reproductive success resulting from wetland habitat degradation and loss. Rusty Blackbird nests in boreal wetlands and migrates through CT in the spring and fall, sometimes overwintering. The species has declined in worldwide population size by at least 85% since 1966; the reasons behind current trends are not well understood. Semipalmated Sandpipers' status as Near Threatened may be the result of over-exploitation in the non-breeding range (in particular in Suriname), with eastern populations also potentially declining due to reduced food supply at key staging sites. The global population of Saltmarsh Sparrow is confined to a narrow strip of high marsh along the Atlantic coast from Maine southwards to the Delmarva Peninsula in breeding. This species is likely to be severely impacted by sea level rise resulting from climate change. Lastly, Chimney Swifts have been declining since the 1960s. Reasons for the decline may include a lack of nest sites (chimneys and hollow trees) in some areas, and a possible shift in diet that coincided with the use of DDT (Kearney-McGee, 2015).

The Committee reviewed recognized state level IBAs and also several sites that had not been considered previously. The Committee concluded that six state level IBAs should be upgraded to global level IBAs and identified seven new global IBAs. The Committee's recommendations were reviewed by the National Technical Committee and in April of 2015, these 13 sites were accepted as global IBAs. (continued on page 7)



Hammonasset Beach State Park,
a Globally Important Bird Area.
Photo by Steve Broker.

COA Mini-grants Available

The COA Mini-Grant committee is now accepting applications for the 2016 awards. The program is designed to help fund projects in Connecticut which specifically benefit Connecticut's birds. Successful applications in past years have been for such items as materials for 10 Kestrel nest boxes (\$500.00), a raptor enclosure for educational birds (\$700.00) and a sound system to attract Purple Martins to an existing "apartment complex" in a wildlife preserve (\$350.00). The total amount available is \$2,500.00 and the deadline for submission is January 15, 2016. Complete information and application forms can be found on the COA Web site at: <http://ctbirding.org/minigrantguide.htm>.

IBAs that are important to Saltmarsh Sparrow include Hammonasset Beach State Park, Barn Island Wildlife Management Area (both previously identified as global IBAs), the Quinnipiac River Tidal Marsh, the Salt Meadow Unit of the Stewart B. McKinney NWR (both upgraded to global), and three newly identified sites. Milford Point, Sandy Point, and Great Stratford Meadows were upgraded to global status for their importance to Semipalmated Sandpiper. Great Stratford Meadows and one newly identified site met criteria for Long-tailed Duck. White Memorial was found to be globally important to Rusty Blackbird. Lastly, the Committee identified three sites important to Chimney Swifts.

The majority of the data used to identify CT's globally important IBAs came from eBird. By submitting checklists, you are assisting the Committee in evaluating sites. Just this past week, Horned Grebe was listed as vulnerable. If you encounter this species, please submit eBird checklists. Places that may prove to be globally important to the species include: Greenwich Point Park, Hammonasset Beach State Park, and Harkness Memorial State Park. Cerulean Warbler (criteria: 15 pairs or 45 individuals) is also listed as vulnerable by the IUCN. It is possible that we may have global IBAs for Cerulean within the state, especially in the northwest corner and in the area around Nehantic State Forest. Students from Marvelwood School's honors ornithology class in Kent were awarded an IBA Small Grant to organize a town wide Cerulean Warbler survey in June of 2016. If you would like to participate, contact their teacher, Laurie Doss (laurie.doss@marvelwood.org).

References

International Union for the Conservation of Nature. (2015). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Retrieved from International Union for the Conservation of Nature: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>
Kearney-McGee, S. (2015, Apr.). *DEEP Wildlife Division Chimney Swift Page*. Retrieved from Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection: http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/wildlife/pdf_files/nongame/SwiftConservation.pdf
National Audubon Society. (2015). *A1 Threatened Species*. Retrieved from National Audubon Society Important Bird Areas Program: <http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/A1.html> Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe

COA SPARROWS WORKSHOP Allen's Meadows, Wilton, October 17, 2015



COA SPARROWS WORKSHOP

Allen's Meadows, Wilton, October 17, 2015

by Frank Mantlik – photos by Steve Broker

The annual COA Sparrows Workshop was held Saturday, October 17 at Allen's Meadows in Wilton. This is a multi-use, town-owned park that includes a community garden, foot trails through meadows and forest, and many soccer fields. Allen's Meadows can be great for fall birding, and past rarities found here have included Northern Wheatear, Harris's Sparrow, and (on May 1 of this year) a Smith's Longspur. About 10 participants joined co-leaders, COA board member Frank Mantlik and COA member Joe Bear. The weather was a chilly 36°F, with clear skies and calm winds to start; some frost was on soccer fields. Conditions warmed a bit, but with increasing clouds and a chilly northwest wind. After Frank's introduction about sparrow identification, we hit the gardens and trails. There were plenty of sparrows and other birds to view and study. Of the 43 bird species observed, highlights were great looks at 7 species of sparrows, including 1 Vesper and 2 White-crowned. Also seen were 1 Blackpoll and 23 Palm Warblers, 2 American Pipits, 10 Eastern Bluebirds, 2 House Wrens, 1 Indigo Bunting, and 2 Rusty Blackbirds. The drama of Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks hunting was thrilling to watch.



Top left and bottom left: COA Workshop Leaders Frank Mantlik and Joe Bear.
Top and bottom right: COA Workshop participants.

RECENT SIGHTINGS - FALL RARITIES



Pink-footed Goose, Fisher Meadows Recreation Area, Avon, November 20, 2015. Photo by Mark Danforth.



Pink-footed Goose, Fisher Meadows Recreation Area, Avon, November 22, 2015. Photo by Patrick Comins.



Purple Gallinule at Commonfields, Mansfield, September 28, 2015. Photo by Mark Szantyr.



Hudsonian Godwit at Stratford Marina, Stratford, November 14, 2015. Photo by Chris Howe.



Franklin's Gull, Seaside Park, Bridgeport, November 10, 2015. Photo by Nick Bonomo.



Ash-throated Flycatcher, Sherwood Island State Park, December 4, 2015. Photo by Mark Szantyr.

RECENT SIGHTINGS - FALL RARITIES



Ash-throated Flycatcher, Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, November 17, 2015. Photo by A.J. Hand.



Dickcissel at Sherwood Island State Park, November 18, 2015. Photo by Chris Wood.

Twenty-Five Years Ago in *The Connecticut Warbler* Compiled by Steve Broker Volume X, No. 4 (October 1990)

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER, "HAPPY 10TH BIRTHDAY" by Carl J. Trichka and Fred C. Sibley

"As *The Connecticut Warbler* celebrates 10 years of publication, some of our members and subscribers may wonder how this all began. The time – late fall, October 1980. Seated at the dining room table of a farmhouse in Kempton, PA, were Milan Bull, Dennis Varza and Carl Trichka. Trichka recalls, "we were leading a field trip to Hawk Mountain for Connecticut Audubon Society. We began to put together an idea for publishing a newsletter for the bird banders in the state. CAS was asked for approval and funding; they agreed. We obtained a list of the banders and sent them a questionnaire. About one half responded, applauding our effort and a few said they would try to send material."

"The fledgling group decided to go forward and publish any bird related material they could find. They contacted amateurs and professionals around the state for material and began setting up an advisory board. Work on Volume 1, Number 1 began in January 1981, and the first issue was printed and appeared in late winter of that year.

"As the first issue's table of contents indicates, Trichka, Bull and Varza were the whole journal. Once the journal was a reality, however, interest increased greatly. By the second issue, Noble Proctor, Robert Dewire and Fred Sibley had all submitted articles, and the subsequent list of contributors expanded rapidly. This was a formative year as the journal sought a direction, finally establishing a niche somewhere between the prestigious scientific journals and the *Birdwatchers Digest* type magazine. Fred Sibley remembers, "we started with a very large editorial board, trying from the inception of the journal to involve all parts of the state's birding community. Although we had some 20 members involved with the publication, it was difficult to fill a broom closet when a meeting was called. This problem was gradually addressed at nomination time, and board meetings today frequently have 95% attendance. It is interesting to look at this initial board of directors and see how many are still active – Roland Clement, Joe Zeranski, George Clark, Gordon Loery, Frank Mantlik as examples."

(continued on page 11)

**Twenty-Five Years Ago in
The Connecticut Warbler
(continued)**

“By the end of 1981 “The Warbler” had over 200 subscribers, and that figure grew for the next two years. Later in 1983, CAS decided they could no longer underwrite *The Connecticut Warbler* although they would still support it with mailing privileges.

“There was never any serious thought of letting “The Warbler” die, but a crisis was fast approaching. Membership was not large enough to support even a stripped down version of “The Warbler,” and a new editorial staff and working area was needed. Several members of the advisory board were recruited, and a committee was formed for the purpose of establishing a non-profit ornithological association, one totally independent of any Audubon affiliation. The primary objective of this association was the continuing publication of the journal. The next step was funding, and through the generous support of a group of Founding Members as well as some donations, a financial base was established. Thus, the Connecticut Ornithological Association was formed and officially announced by Roger Tory Peterson in the January 1984 issue of the journal.

“In late 1984, the editing process shifted to the Yale University’s Peabody Museum and the editorship to Tony Bledsoe. While the Connecticut Ornithological Association was increasing its membership, the production of the journal remained difficult. Sibley recalls, ‘we begged for articles, tried to find a reasonably priced printer, and find a free computer to use, etc.’” Tony Bledsoe finished his degree at Yale and left the area for another employment, and in mid 1985, Roland Clement, Carl Trichka and Fred Sibley filled the gap in publishing “The Warbler.” At the end of that year, Betty Kleiner assumed the position of editor and continues in that capacity today.

“Thinking back on the history of “The Warbler,” one remembers a lot of dark moments when the future was pretty bleak, or it just wasn’t fun anymore. In celebrating the 10th year of publication, it is nice to know that the dreams of those early years have actually materialized. The COA continues without regional bias and provides a focal point for Connecticut’s birders. A rare records committee has been active in producing an official state checklist. Authors receive requests for article reprints from all over the globe. The journal is exchanged with 18 ornithological groups across the country and is subscribed to by the British Museum of Natural History, as well as the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in California.

“This could only have happened through the tireless dedication of our officers, board members, the editorial staff, and other volunteers who have donated their time and efforts to our success. To our members who have been with us since 1981, and those new to our ranks, we say thank you for your support – it is what keeps us going.

“We hope you will join us in wishing *The Connecticut Warbler* a happy birthday and wish it continuing success in the years to come.”

[Ed’s note: This and other articles from the October 1990 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* may be seen in their entirety at the following link to the Connecticut Ornithological Association website. Download Volume 10, and view pages 81-112.]

<http://www.ctbirding.org/Warbler/CTWarblerVolume10.pdf>

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Conservation	Patrick Comins
Finance	Paul Wolter
Membership	Larry Reiter
Avian Records	Jay Kaplan
Research	Tom Robben
Workshops	Chris Loscalzo
Connecticut Warbler	Greg Hanisek
COA Bulletin	Steve Broker
Christmas Bird Count Compiler	Steve Broker
Summer Bird Count Compilers	Joe Zeranski & Patrick Comins
Great Backyard Bird Count	Patrick Comins

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 January 15, 2016 to:

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