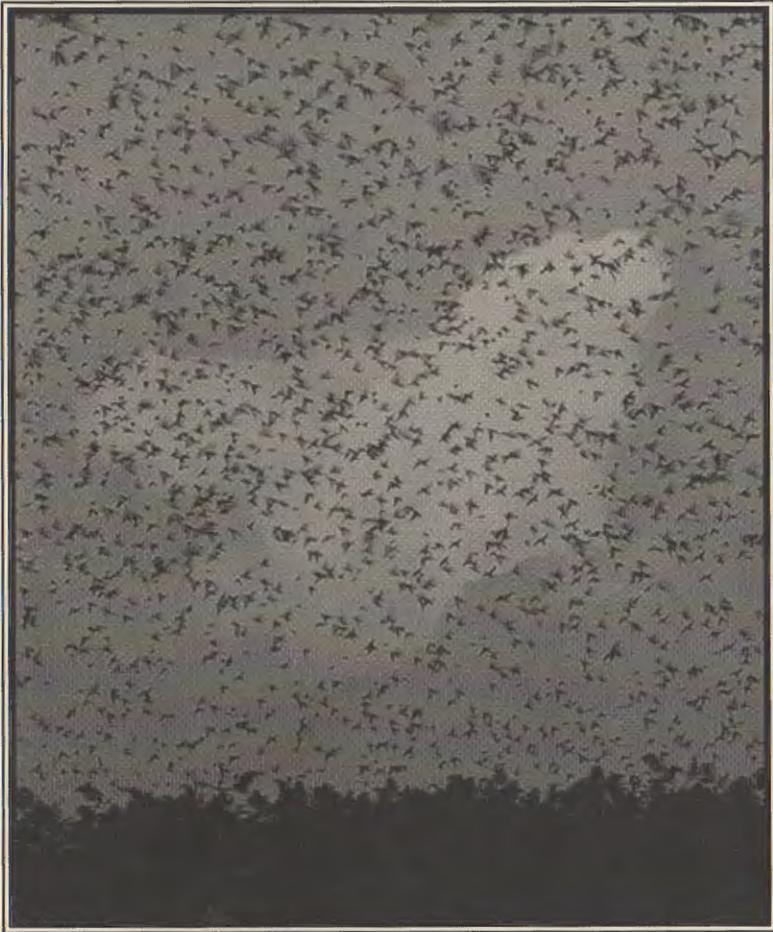


# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

Special Issue:  
Birds By The Season



Volume 25 No. 1    **January 2005**    Pages 1-44

# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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## ABOUT OUR COVER

### Tree Swallows

By Hank Golet

The Connecticut Warbler has a long history of gracing its cover with the skillful line drawings of artists from around the state. We have no plans to abandon that tradition, but for this special edition we present a change of pace. Hank Golet of Old Lyme took this photo of the spectacular Tree Swallow mega-flock that roosts in Phragmites in the lower Connecticut River valley from about mid-August to late September. These swallows, part of a group numbering in six figures, were swirling over the roost site on 6 September 2004.

## Note from the Editor

There's no such thing as a Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

That's why we've produced this special issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and all of the state's birds, have no real meaning without seasonal context. A singing adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak on April 28 means spring migrants have arrived; a female feeding three nestlings on June 20 signifies breeding success; an individual in basic plumage, visiting a feeder during a Christmas Bird Count, shows a rare propensity to linger. The grosbeak enmeshed in time takes on a meaning and significance beyond its mere name or picture on a page.

This issue is designed to provide a guide to seasonal occurrence based on documented records of the state's avifauna. The centerpiece is a set of bar graphs charting each species' frequency over the course of a year. The information used to create the graphs comes from a wide variety of sources, with heavy emphasis on records published in this journal in the seasonal Field Notes, as well as in the Christmas Bird Count, Summer Bird Count and Fall Hawk Migration reports.

The entire project benefited from extensive and helpful suggestions and comments from Robert Askins, Louis Bevier, Buzz Devine, Chris Elphick and Mark Szantyr. Also offering welcomed advice were David Sibley, Ed Hagen, Jay Kaplan, Frank Mantlik, Jamie Meyers, Jeffrey Spindelov and Dori Sosensky.

Because of the uneven nature of the data available for each species, it wasn't feasible to generate the graphs from pure numerical input. The bars are essentially hand-drawn graphic representations based on a combination of published data and the field experience of the

state's birders, including unpublished field notes. While creation of the graphs would not have been possible without the help of many birders, the editor takes responsibility for any ambiguities or errors.

It is our hope that this issue of *The Warbler* will serve as a reference worthy of repeated use, as well as an inspiration and reminder to the state's growing contingent of birders on the value of keeping a journal that tracks the movements of birds from season to season and year to year.

Greg Hanisek



*Hank Golet photo*

*Part of a flock of 18 Hudsonian Godwits on 16 August 2004 at Watch Rock in Old Lyme. The only flock of similar magnitude on record for the state is 19 that appeared in a remarkably similar time frame - 19 August 1990 at Sherwood Island in Westport.*

# CONNECTICUT BIRDS BY THE SEASON

By Greg Hanisek

The beauty of birds, their functional perfection, their mastery of the air, their vocal repertoires --- all these serve as focal points for our senses. We learn about birds by looking and listening, by studying their plumages and learning the array of sounds they make.

Each species presents a distinctive identity, even if some of these identities differ only by slight degrees. They're all there in the pages of our best field guides, yet there is much more to each than a picture and a recording. There is so much more than soft part colors and feather tracts. So much more than territorial song and alarm calls. More even than feeding behavior or territorial defense.

We can learn a lot about birds by looking and listening, but they don't occur in isolation. We enrich the experience by paying attention to context. Studying where, when and in what numbers we observe birds is very important to understanding their lives.

Identifying a bird by sight and sound amounts to just one leg of the tripod on which an accomplished birder balances familiarity with local species. The other two are status and distribution. Ultimately, each bird must be identified by a careful assessment of its field characters, but we never really know a species well without an appreciation for where and when it typically occurs.

Distribution --- a bird's geographical occurrence --- accounts for those all-important range maps tucked neatly among the field guide illustrations. Birders overlook them at their peril. Hand-in-hand with distribution goes habitat --- the precise kinds of places birds favor in the ranges they inhabit. Together, range and habitat constitute the tripod's second leg.

Steadying the whole apparatus is status --- the seasonal distribution of birds in the ranges and habitats they favor. Knowledge of status is probably the most difficult for a birder to acquire. The seasonality of birds is subject to much local variation, and a field guide can deal with it in only the most general terms.

As a result, knowledge of seasonal status is often the least-developed skill of birders striving to understand their local avifauna. The picture comes into clear focus only after years of observation and note-taking. Because of that, we've decided to dedicate this edition of *The Connecticut Warbler* to the seasonal distribution of the state's birds. The centerpiece of our effort is a full set of bar graphs charting the abundance of each extant species over the course of a year. The graphs are based primarily on patterns of occurrence since 1990, the year of publication for the last full treatment of the state's avifauna, "Connecticut Birds" by Joseph Zeranski and Thomas Baptist. It is our hope that birders will use this reference, both at home and in the field, to help hone their skills and add perspective to their observations.

It is hard to overstate the power of seasonal knowledge in helping to make accurate field observations. It may seem intuitively obvious that a bird's appearance alone should establish its identity. In the final analysis that's usually true, but experienced observers know that birds in unusual places or at unlikely times demand special scrutiny. It is easy to head down the wrong identification path without a strong grounding in seasonal likelihood.

Consider the status of Great Crested and Ash-throated Flycatcher in Connecticut. In the broadest sense, Great Crested Flycatcher is a common Connecticut bird, while its close and similar relative in the genus *Myiarchus*, Ash-throated Flycatcher, is very rare. Armed with that amount of information, a birder would understandably expect any *Myiarchus* flycatcher seen in the state to be a Great Crested.

But a thorough grounding in seasonal status paints a different picture. Despite its rarity, Ash-throated Flycatcher arrives in the Northeast in a well-defined time frame, from early November to mid-December. Great Crested Flycatchers, on the other hand, are rare after early October. They are virtually unknown in the Northeast from November through late April. Armed with this knowledge, the alert birder will apply intense scrutiny to any *Myiarchus* flycatcher seen outside the Great Crested's expected season in Connecticut. During a specific time frame, Ash-throated is actually the more expected of the two. Application of this knowledge --- along with very careful observation --- accounts for Connecticut's two documented records for Ash-throated Flycatcher --- birds found on December 20, 1992 in Stamford and November 30, 1996 in Old Lyme.

This kind of understanding evolves over time, especially when identity problems cloud the picture. Consider the situation with western hummingbirds. Building on discoveries in the southeastern U.S., Connecticut birders have determined over the past decade that members of the western genus *Selasphorus* are rare but regular fall migrants here. They can occur any time from July to January, with most records in November and December, after most Ruby-throated Hummingbirds should have migrated beyond our borders. Careful birders refer to the genus *Selasphorus* because most of the birds occurring in Connecticut are females or immatures that cannot be safely sorted out in the field as either Rufous or Allen's Hummingbirds. However, there is only one New England record of Allen's (from Nantucket, Mass., on 8 August 1988), and all of the *Selasphorus* positively identified in Connecticut to date (11 from 1991 to present) have proven to be Rufous. These comprise seven captured and banded, two specimens and two unbanded adult males.

The Rufous Hummingbird picture has begun to clarify itself, but at the same time new questions are raised about

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Connecticut has a number of older records of Ruby-throated from November, but they were logged at a time when much less was known about the eastern status of Rufous. Since female and immature hummingbirds present formidable identification problems, there's no way to know what species was involved in old November sight records. In some cases at least observers may have assumed the birds were Ruby-throated without entertaining other possibilities. Current knowledge suggests a November hummingbird is more likely Rufous (or even some other western species) than Ruby-throated, although there is one November specimen of Ruby-throated.

But remember, this is only a suggestion. The bird in question still has to be studied carefully to determine its identity. In the case of hummingbirds, identification to species level may not be possible in the field.

Assuming proper identification, a bird's degree of rarity is heavily dependent on its seasonal status. That is the central thesis of this issue of *The Warbler*. Most birders know that species categorized as Very Rare demand special attention. More easily overlooked is the importance of documenting regularly occurring species at times of year when they are rare or not known to occur. A Western Tanager in February is very rare, but a Scarlet Tanager in February would be unprecedented.

This issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* is designed to help clarify seasonal questions of this sort for the state's birders.

### Using bar graphs as a tool

Seasonal bar graphs represent a time-honored method of representing bird occurrence in a specific area over time. They're graphically straightforward and convey a lot of information at a glance. Nonetheless an ambitious presentation of the sort provided here requires some caveats.

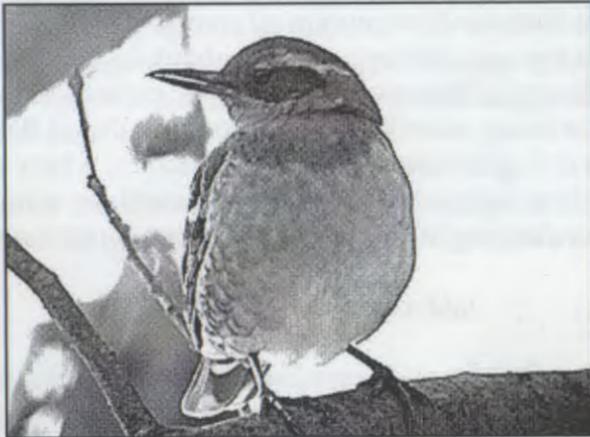
Probably the most critical part of this exercise is applying definitions to the occurrence categories used in the graphs. In this case, the terms chosen are Very Rare, Rare, Uncommon, Fairly Common, Common and Abundant. Some publications employing bar graphs have used very precise numerical definitions for each term. This approach is taken, for example, in David Sibley's excellent *Birds of Cape May*, (N.J. Audubon Society, 1993). Sibley counsels caution about the numbers, noting that they work best as averages and can't account for the day-to-day variability seen by observers when factors such as weather and migratory movements are considered.

The numerical approach probably works better in a relatively small area such as Cape May, where habitat diversity is somewhat limited, than in a state of even Connecticut's small size, where occurrence can vary significantly from region to region. Perceptions of abundance also vary from group to group depending on how easy or difficult certain species are to find and observe. For example, many waterbirds are easily observed in the open habitats they favor, while songbirds that may be much more numerous statewide are harder to find and best detected by ear. As a result, we've crafted definitions that combine numerical standards with more subjective descriptions. Sibley's caveats about day-to-day variability still apply, however. For example, periods of peak fall numbers in many cases take into account flights at Bluff Point in Groton or Lighthouse Point in New Haven, where species presumably widely scattered across the state can occur in large concentrations under proper weather conditions.

### Occurrence Categories

**Very rare** --- Species with very limited numbers of documented records. Found much less than annually, but usually still showing seasonal patterns of occurrence, especially when looked at in a regional context. Examples, White-faced Ibis: Only four records, but all of them in May; Chestnut-col-

lared Longspur: Only three confirmed records, but two of them in early to mid-June. The terms accidental or vagrant have often been used to designate birds of this type, but both words convey a misleading sense of randomness. Even with the rarest occurrences, some sort of seasonal pattern is usually detectable. The bar graphs chart individual records with a small rectangle denoting the approximate time the bird was discovered. A hairline is used to connect individual rectangles to make it easier for the eye to follow them across the chart. It should be noted that a number of birds in this category, especially western species attempting to winter, have stayed for extended periods. The graphs show only the discovery dates to stress the small number of records involved and to eliminate confusing overlap. Following is a list of species for which stays of three weeks or longer have been recorded: Barnacle Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Tufted Duck, Western Grebe, White-faced Ibis, Snowy Plover, Boreal Owl, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, Bohemian Waxwing, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager, Harris's Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, Bullock's Oriole and Brambling.



Mark Szantyr photo

*The very rare Varied Thrush occurs in late autumn and winter, often visiting feeders. This one was photographed at a feeder in Hamden on 30 January 2003.*

**Rare** --- Found annually, or close to annually, but in very small numbers or, in the case of rare breeders, in very limited locations. A species may also be rare at one season but more common at another. Examples, Greater White-fronted Goose throughout its period of occurrence, mid-October to mid-April; Blue-headed Vireo in December; Pied-billed Grebe as a breeding species.

**Uncommon** --- Occurring annually in modest numbers. An active birder should usually be able to find these species in limited numbers during the proper season but could easily miss them on a given day of birding. Without some effort, they could be missed for the season. Examples, Philadelphia Vireo in late August to mid-September; Mourning Warbler in mid-May to early June.

**Fairly common** --- A large number of the state's regularly occurring species fit this category during at least a portion of the year. Moderate numbers should be seen or heard on most trips to appropriate habitat. Examples include Hairy Woodpecker throughout the year; Scarlet Tanager from May to early July.

**Common** --- Widespread and easily found; visits to appropriate habitat may yield dozens of individuals. Extended searches of prime habitat or visits to key migratory sites may occasionally produce 100+ individuals. Examples, Red-eyed Vireo in deciduous woods during breeding season; Black-bellied Plovers at coastal migration sites in May or in mid-July to mid-September.

**Abundant** --- The most common species. Present throughout extensive breeding habitat where a hundred or more individuals can be found during a concerted day's effort, or 1,000+ can be found at the proper season at key migratory sites. Examples, American Robin during breeding season; Semipalmated Sandpiper in coastal roosts from late July to late August; Broad-winged Hawks overhead in mid-September.

**Irruptive** --- These are species that stage incursions that can vary greatly from year to year. It should be noted that the width of the dashed lines vary to denote species that may irrupt in large numbers, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch or Pine Siskin, as opposed to those with more modest irruptions, mainly predators such as Snowy Owl or Northern Shrike.

**Breeding** --- Arrows bracket the egg dates for species known to nest in Connecticut. These are the approximate egg-laying periods based on dates published for Connecticut and nearby states, primarily Massachusetts and New York. The full breeding season is considerably longer, stretching from courtship and territorial selection to raising, fledging and tending fledged young. We made an arbitrary decision to show egg dates in the graphs for several reasons: a. a good amount of published data exists for the region; b. although representing only a portion of the breeding season, these dates give a good relative picture of breeding periods for various groups and species (e.g. very early for Great Horned Owl, rather late for American Goldfinch); c. because of the overlap in breeding period and migration for certain species, especially a number that nest both in Connecticut and farther north, the concentration on egg dates helps prevent over-complication of the bar graphs.

**Out-of-season** (•) --- Individual, anomalous records outside the expected season of occurrence.

**Isolated breeding** (X) --- A few species have been confirmed as breeders once or twice but have not become established. They are designated by an X within the bar graphs.

**Uncertain seasonal status** (?) --- A few species' status at specific times of year lacks clarity because of identification difficulties and limited data. These situations are designated by a question mark within the bar graphs.

**Historic records (gray)** --- In some cases, where appropriate, patterns of historic records are shown. These appear in gray rather than black.

The categories above are broadly applied to each species over the course of a year. Many special situations apply when habitat and regional differences are taken into account. General habitat requirements are described in field guides and should be kept in mind when using the bar graphs. The broadest regional difference within the state, which applies across many groups of birds, involves the higher population densities of many species, especially half-hardy passerines and waterbirds, along the coast and to a lesser extent up the big river valleys in winter. In summer, the following breeding landbirds are more prevalent in the coastal-river valley areas than in the uplands: Eastern Screech-Owl, White-eyed Vireo, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat (rare), Orchard Oriole.

A number of more specific situations are discussed in the extensive annotations that follow the charts. Superscript numbers apply to the relevant annotation. Symbols within the charts, explained at the beginning of the annotations, offer a quick reference to some of these factors, such as preference for coastal or freshwater habitats.



*Bruce Finnan photo*

*The introduced Ring-necked Pheasant has declined as a naturally reproducing breeder. This one was photographed at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison.*

## Pictorial Key to Bar Graphs



Mark Szantyr photo

Abundant



Bruce Finnan photo

Common

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**American Robin:** This familiar species occurs in every town and is abundant during the breeding season. This robin was photographed 18 December 2004 in Southbury.

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**Red-tailed Hawk:** Connecticut's most familiar raptor is common during much of the year. This red-tail flew past Lighthouse Point in New Haven in November 1993.



Mark Szantyr photo

Fairly Common



Bruce Finnan photo

Uncommon

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**Prairie Warbler:** This handsome warbler sings its high-pitched song from shrubland, such as red-cedar fields and powerline cuts. This adult male was banded in August 2003 in Southbury.

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**American Golden Plover:** This elegant shorebird appears on mudflats, turf and other open habitats primarily during southbound migration, with smaller numbers dropping in during spring. This adult molting into basic plumage was photographed at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison in October 1997.

For a complete explanation of the bar graph categories and symbols see Pages 7-11 and the Annotations following the graphs.

## Pictorial Key to Bar Graphs



Mark Szantyr photo

Rare

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** This increasing species now occurs annually in small numbers from late fall to early spring. This bird of the Greenland race was photographed on 2 January 2004 in Trumbull.



Jim Zipp photo

Irruptive

**White-winged Crossbill:** This species is usually seen in conifers during its infrequent invasions. This one was photographed at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison in January 1998.



Mark Szantyr photo

Very Rare

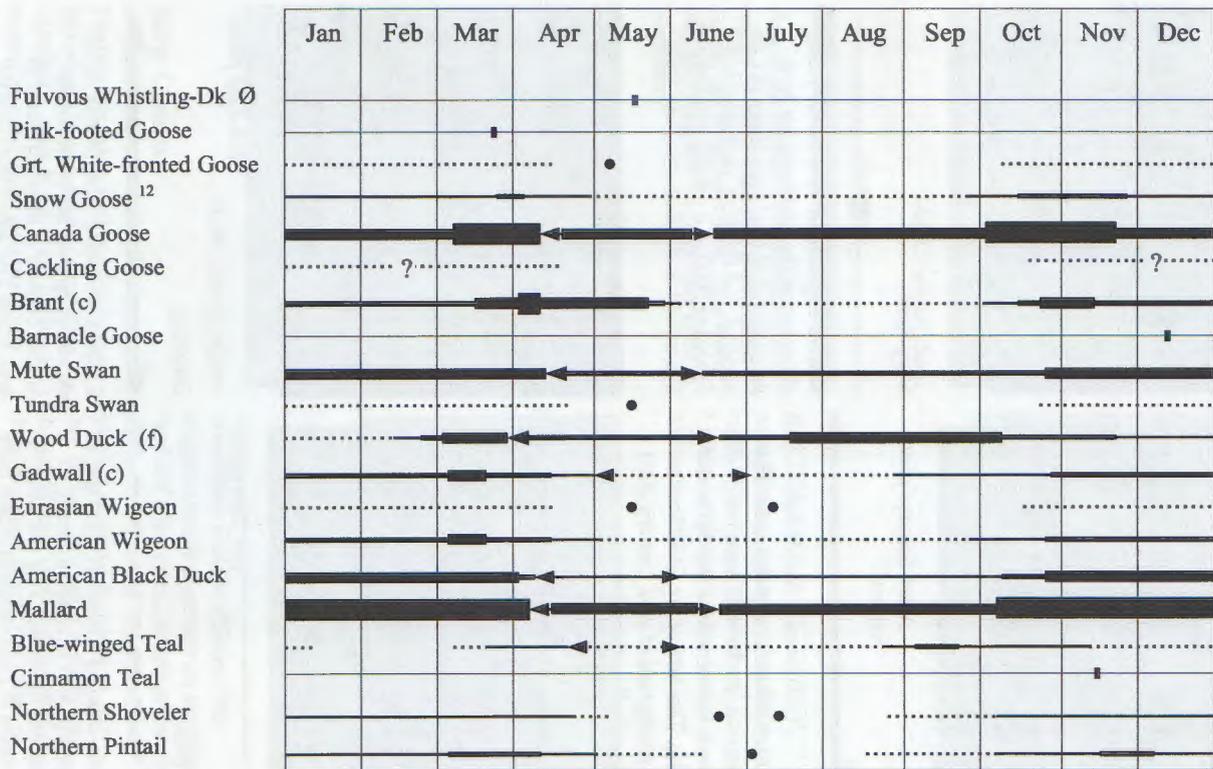
**Harris's Sparrow:** This visitor from the center of the continent has been documented at least nine times in Connecticut, but this bird, photographed 8 February 2003 at a private residence in Bloomfield, is the first one since 1986.

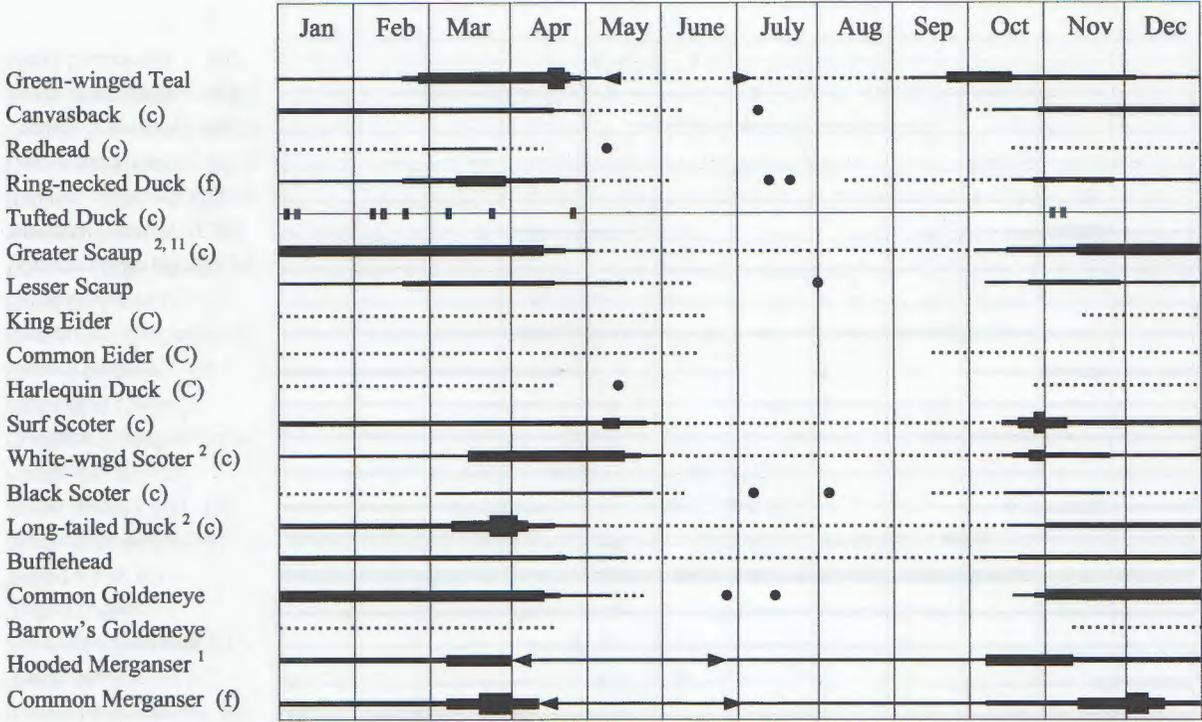


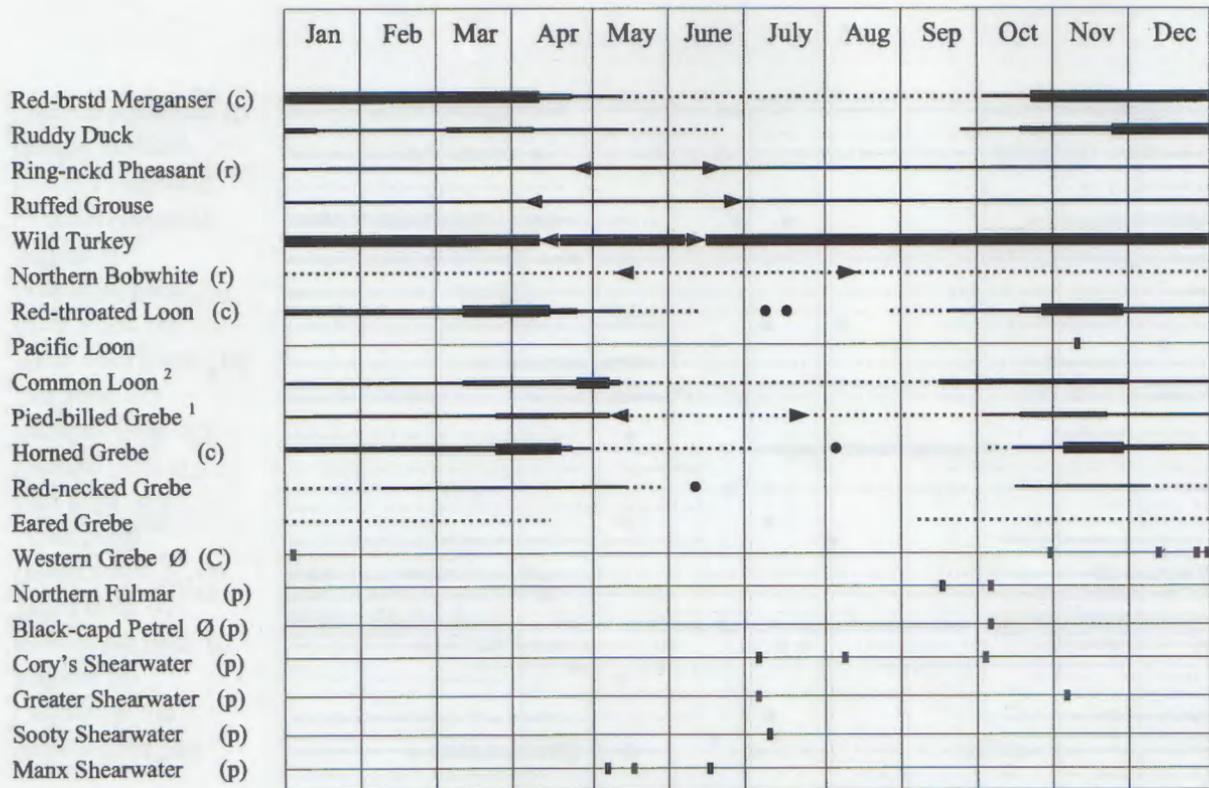
Jim Zipp photo

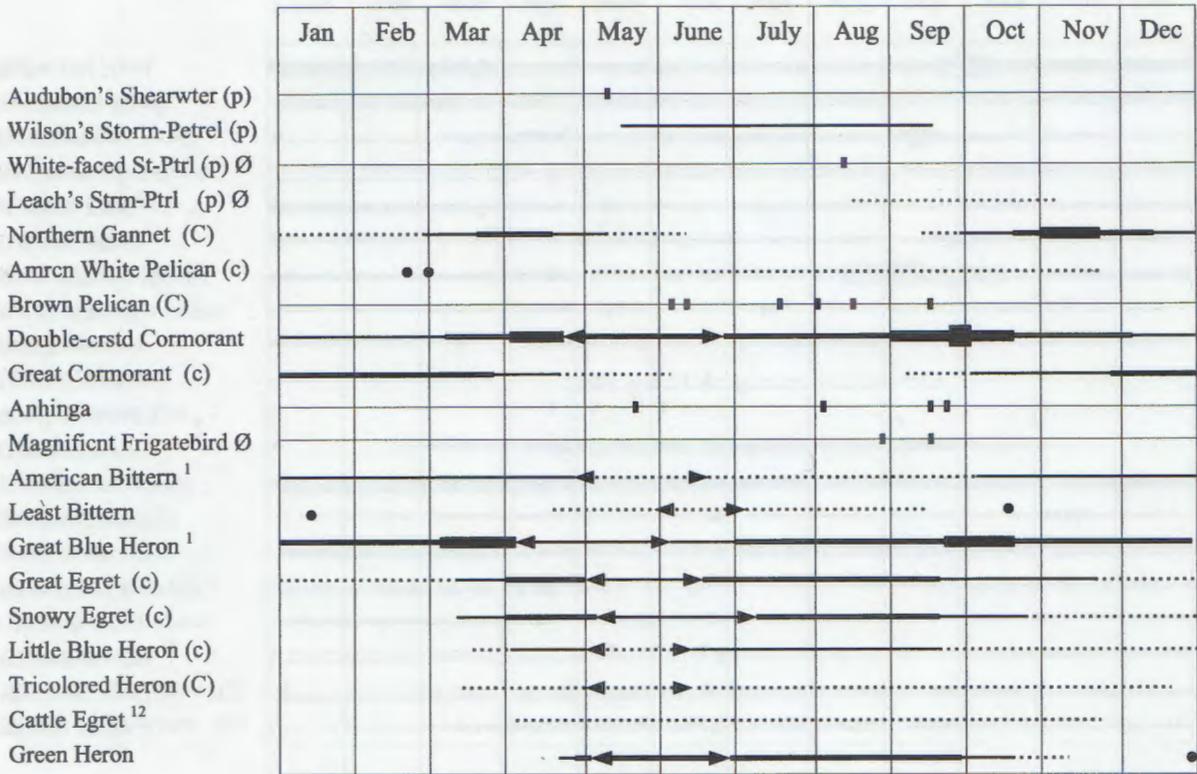
Breeding

**Eastern Bluebird:** This comely thrush thrives in appropriate open habitat largely because of properly installed nest boxes. This adult and fledgling were photographed in Hamden in June 2002.

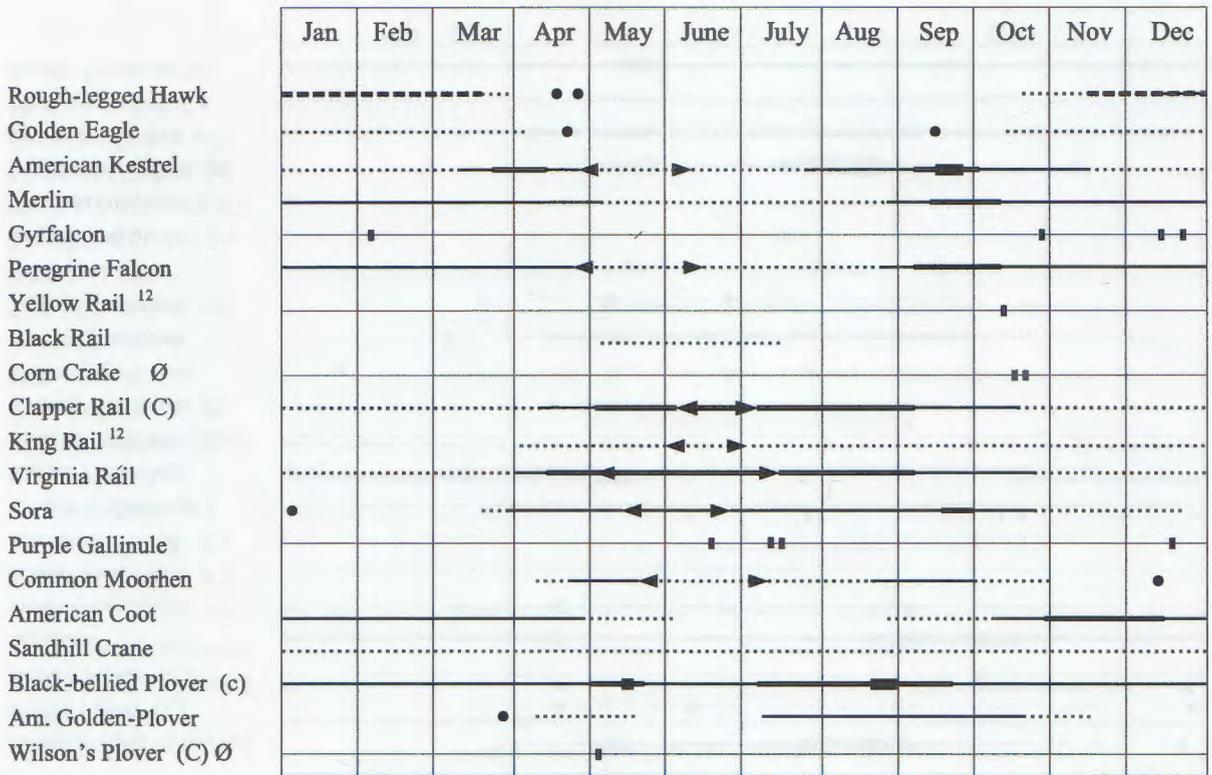




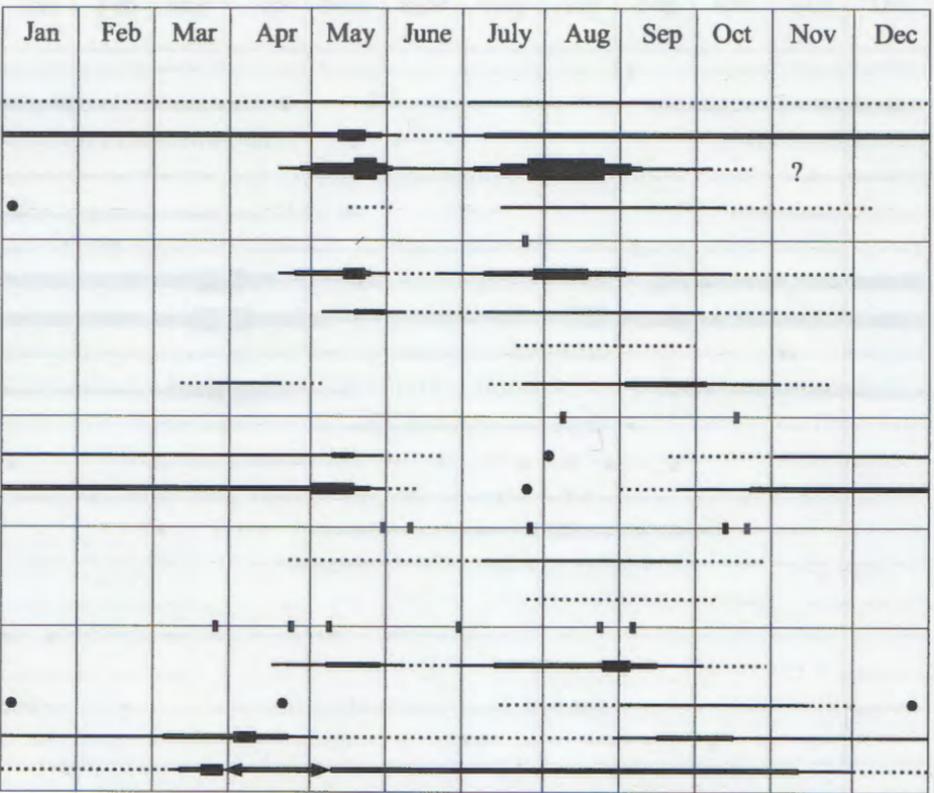




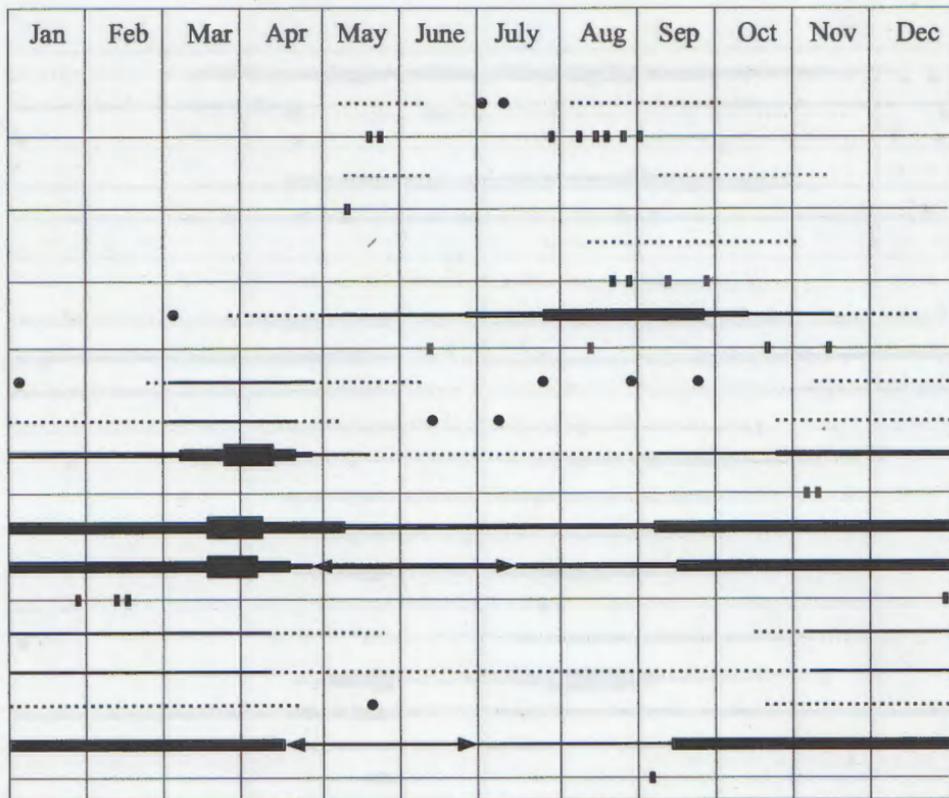


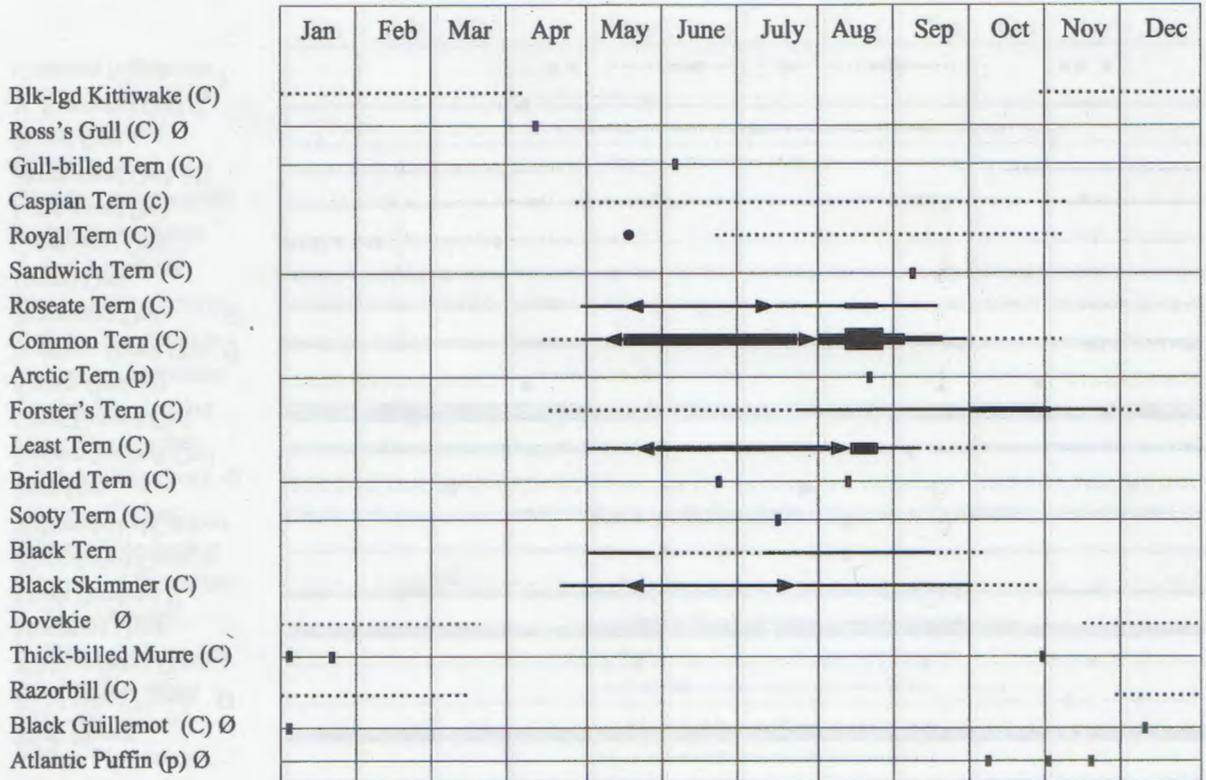






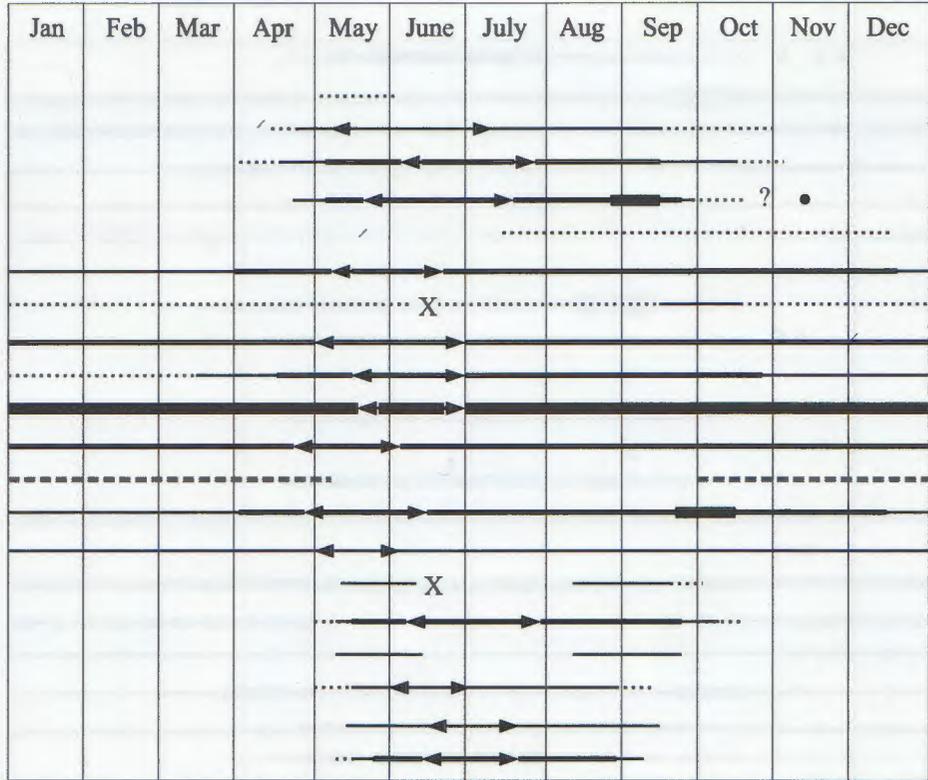
Wilson's Phalarope (c)  
 Red-nkd Phalarope  
 Red Phalarope Ø  
 Pomarine Jaeger<sup>3</sup> (c)  
 Parasitic Jaeger<sup>3</sup> (c)  
 Long-tld Jaeger<sup>3</sup>  
 Laughing Gull (C)  
 Franklin's Gull (C)  
 Little Gull (C)  
 Black-headed Gull (C)  
 Bonaparte's Gull (c)  
 Mew Gull Ø  
 Ring-billed Gull<sup>11</sup>  
 Herring Gull<sup>11</sup>  
 Thayer's Gull  
 Iceland Gull  
 Lsr Blk-bkd Gull  
 Glaucous Gull  
 Grt Blk-bkd Gull<sup>11</sup>  
 Sabine's Gull<sup>3</sup>

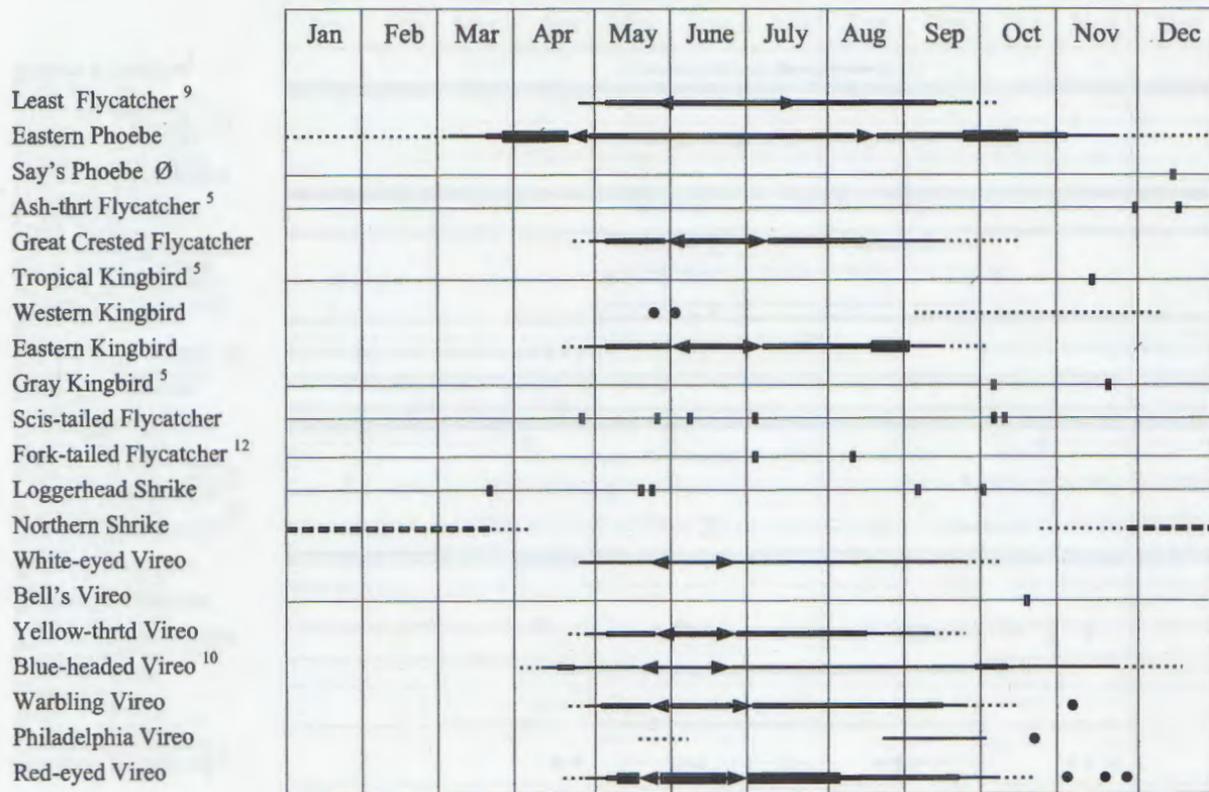




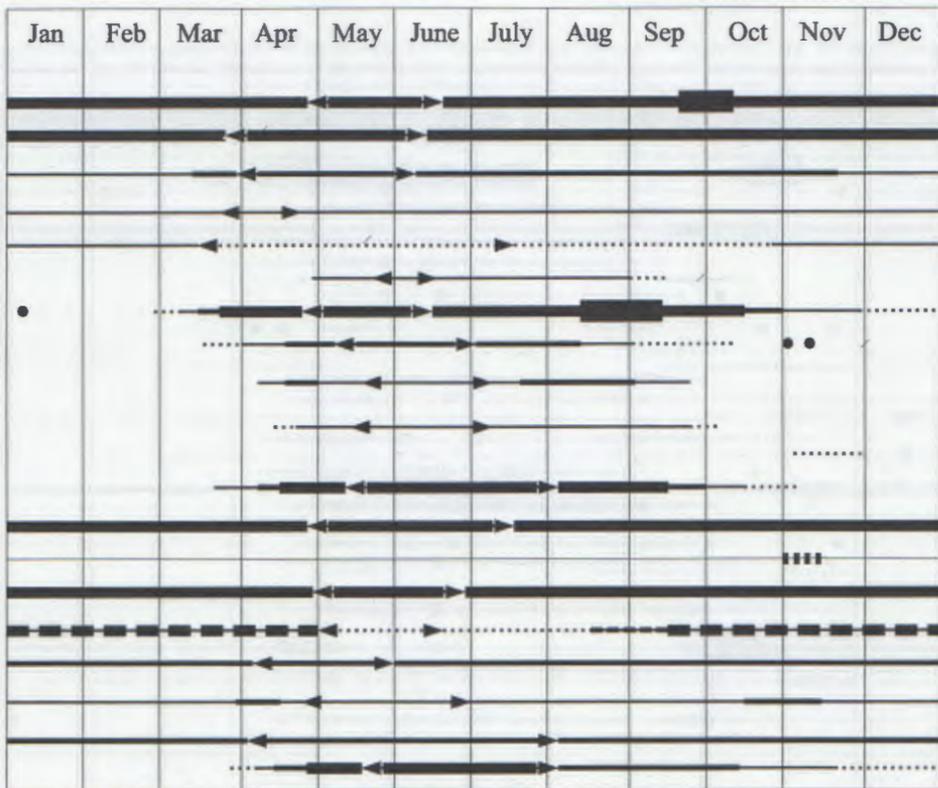


Chuck-will's-widow <sup>4</sup>  
 Whip-poor-will  
 Chimney Swift  
 Rby-thr Hummingbird  
 Rufous/Selasphorus  
 Belted Kingfisher  
 Red-hed Woodpecker  
 Red-bel Woodpecker  
 Yellow-bel Sapsucker <sup>9</sup>  
 Downy Woodpecker  
 Hairy Woodpecker  
 Blk-bckd Woodpckr Ø  
 Northern Flicker  
 Pileated Woodpecker  
 Olive-sided Flycatcher  
 E. Wood-Pewee  
 Yellow-bel Flycatcher  
 Acadian Flycatcher  
 Alder Flycatcher <sup>9</sup>  
 Willow Flycatcher

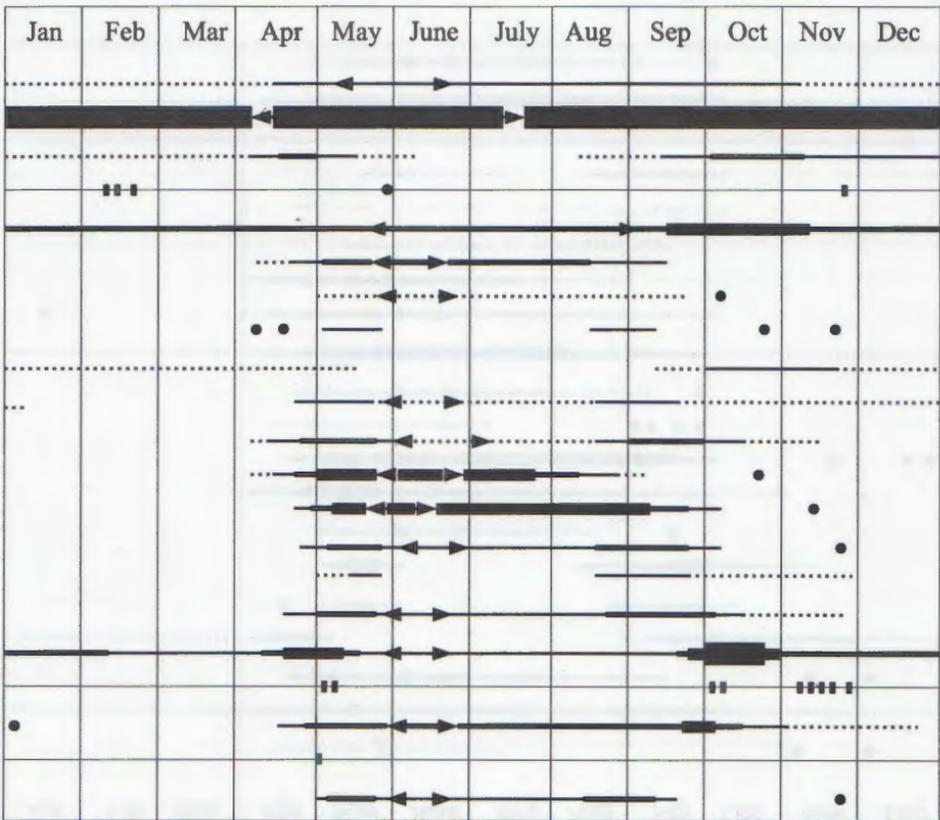


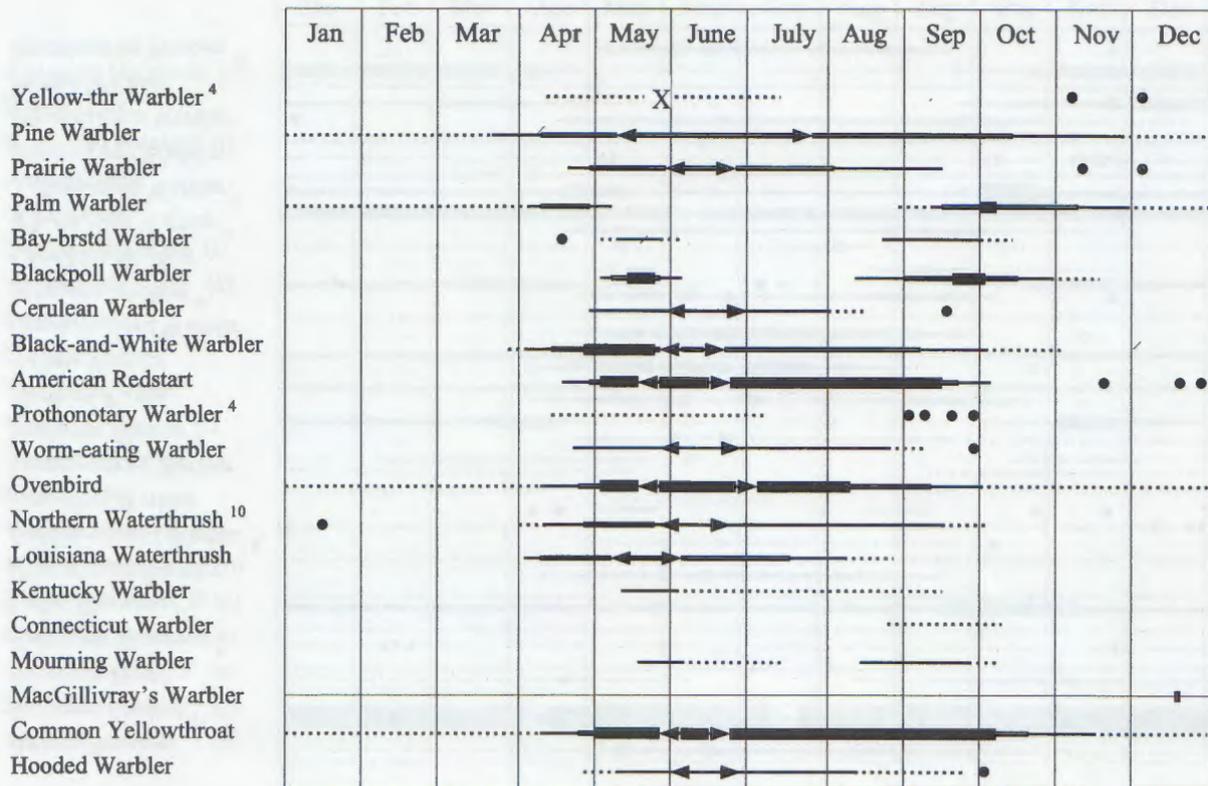


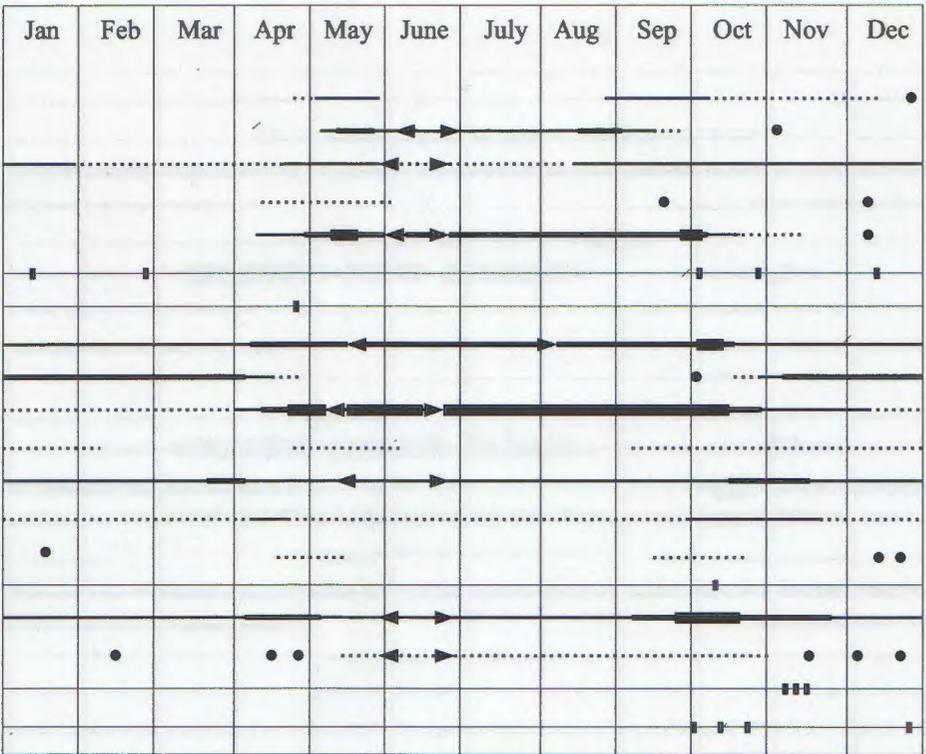
Blue Jay  
 American Crow <sup>11</sup>  
 Fish Crow <sup>12</sup>  
 Common Raven <sup>9</sup>  
 Horned Lark <sup>8</sup>  
 Purple Martin  
 Tree Swallow <sup>11</sup>  
 N. Rough-wg Swallow  
 Bank Swallow  
 Cliff Swallow  
 Cave Swallow <sup>7</sup>  
 Barn Swallow  
 Blk-cpd Chickadee  
 Boreal Chickadee  
 Tufted Titmouse  
 Red-brstd Nuthatch <sup>10</sup>  
 White-brstd Nuthatch  
 Brown Creeper <sup>10</sup>  
 Carolina Wren  
 House Wren





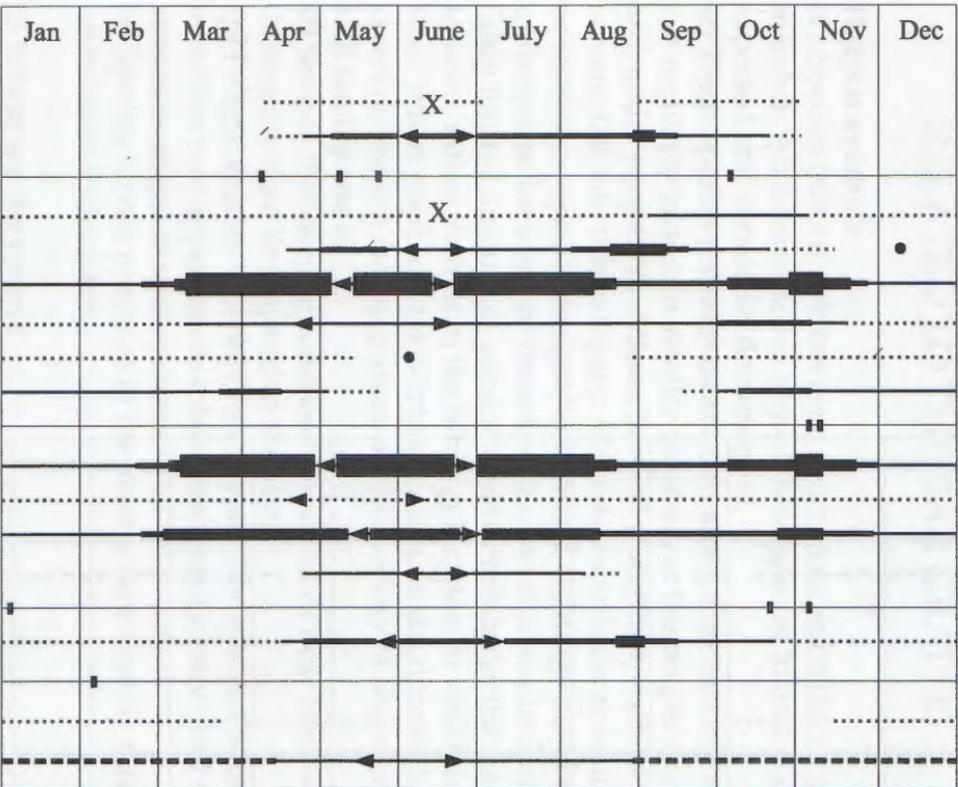


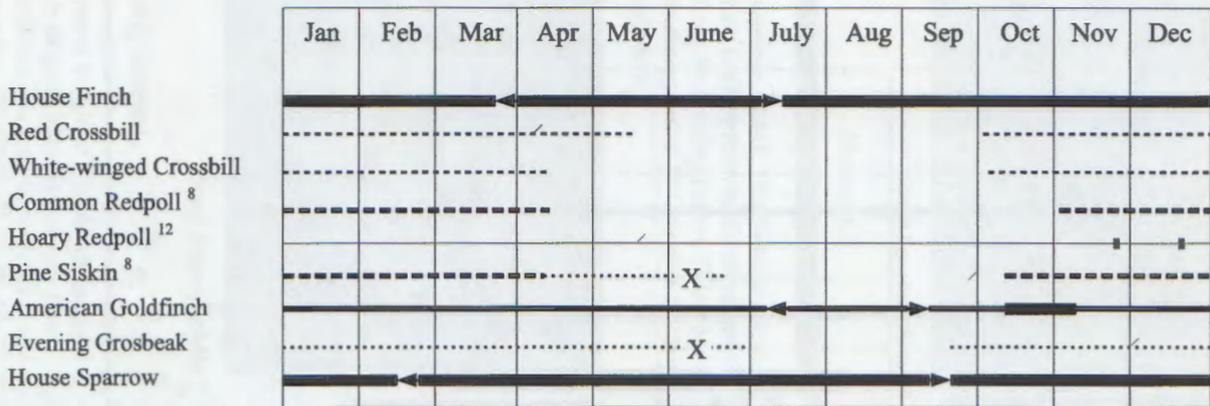




Jan Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec







# AN ANNOTATED COMPILATION OF FACTS, TRENDS AND ANCILLARY INFORMATION RELATED TO THE BAR GRAPHS

## **Habitat symbols**

(C) Species that are seldom seen away from saltwater or salt marshes. An occurrence of any of these species inland is unexpected and should be documented.

(c) These species are seen most often along the coast but occur regularly inland in smaller numbers at the proper season and under proper conditions. Several waterfowl, such as scoters, fall into this category. Most shorebirds do as well, or receive no special designation. Inland sightings may be quite sparse for some of these species, but this results from a fairly limited amount of good shorebird habitat in the state's interior, rather than from the birds' reluctance to visit inland sites. When good habitat is created, such as at a drawn-down reservoir during fall migration, a wide variety of shorebirds will readily use it.

(f) Species that occur almost exclusively in or near freshwater during the time they spend in the state.

(p) Pelagic species that only rarely enter Long Island Sound or whose rare appearances inland are usually associated with storms or major frontal systems.

(r) Species whose presence in the state is now heavily reliant on releases by humans.

## **Ø Where are they now?**

This symbol indicates species for which there are no recent documented records. Species fitting this profile are graphed in the same way as more recent rarities, but the blocks indicating individual records are gray rather than black. A limited number of species that have not been documented since 1990 are represented by more numerous older records.

Following is a summary:

Leach's Storm-Petrel: Formerly a rare visitor associated primarily with fall coastal storms. Potential identification

problems cloud historical record.

**Red Phalarope:** Rare but fairly regular historically with most records in fall on the coast, along with a few in spring, mostly in May. Potential identification problems cloud historical record.

**Dovekie:** More than 70 records, the majority associated with November storms. These well-documented "wrecks" have produced a number of inland records of grounded birds.

**Black-backed Woodpecker:** Periodic incursions have produced about 30 records from September to May.

Two species that appear headed in this direction are Loggerhead Shrike and Henslow's Sparrow (both former nesters). Several other Very Rare species have been observed a few times since 1990 but more frequently in the past. Only the more recent records are graphed. These are the species (with the number of records at the time of Zernanski & Baptist's publication in parentheses): White Ibis (7), Swallow-tailed Kite (11); Gyrfalcon (17), Purple Gallinule (23), Wilson's Plover (18), Black-necked Stilt (5), Long-billed Curlew (several in 1800s), Ruff (19), Red-necked Phalarope (17), Sooty Tern (18), Varied Thrush (16), Boreal Chickadee (several irruptions prior to 1980), Western Tanager (9), Black-headed Grosbeak (10), Harris Sparrow (8).

### **1. From pond to coast**

Three species that breed in the state, Hooded Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe and Great Blue Heron, make a significant switch from freshwater to saltwater preference seasonally. All nest primarily in inland wetlands. They can still be found in those places, as well as larger lakes and rivers in winter as open water allows, but significant numbers move to the coast from mid-October into March. The coastal wintering populations presumably include migrants from farther north or west. American Bittern fits this pattern to a lesser extent, but its small population and secretive nature leave its precise status at all seasons somewhat murky. Nonetheless, it is most likely to be found in inland marshes in breeding season and in salt marshes in late fall and winter.



*Julian Hough Photo*

*An American Bittern liked the accommodations at Silver Sands Sate Park in Milford in January 2005. Please see Annotation No. 1.*

## **2. East side, west side**

There are distributional differences involving a few species of waterfowl that winter in Long Island Sound and stage there before moving north. Both Long-tailed Duck and White-winged Scoter are numerous at times in the western part of the Sound but less so in the eastern portions. The large wintering rafts of Greater Scaup occur mainly from New Haven to Bridgeport, but occasionally as far west as Greenwich. In the other direction, Common Loons occur in winter in larger numbers in the eastern end of the Sound than in the west.

## **3. From Arctic to open sea**

A handful of pelagic species, the three jaegers and Sabine's Gull, apparently make regular migratory crossings over Connecticut en route from high Arctic nesting grounds to wintering areas on the open ocean. All range from rare to very rare in the state, and the small sample of records, especially for Long-tailed Jaeger and Sabine's Gull, indicate they may as likely be encountered as drop-ins during their overland flights as visitors to Long Island Sound. There are more records for Parasitic Jaeger than for the other three combined, and since it frequents inshore waters more readily than the others, it is not surprising that virtually all state records of

Parasitic are from Long Island Sound. Nonetheless, regular passage of all three jaegers on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain suggests any of them could be found inland in Connecticut during migration. The small sample of records for the state suggests inland occurrences of all four species are most likely east of the Connecticut River.

#### **4. From south to north**

Four southern nesting species, Chuck-will's-widow, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler and Summer Tanager, appear in Connecticut mainly as migratory overshoots in the spring. They have overflowed their nesting grounds and are strongly attracted to the types of habitats in which they breed. Breeding has been confirmed at least once for Yellow-throated Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler has made a few extended stays in favorable breeding habitat. All except Chuck-will's-widow have occurred at other times of year, but records are weighted heavily toward late April-May. Some Blue Grosbeaks also arrive in this manner, but see the next section for more on that species, as well as the very rare Painted Bunting.

#### **5. Stuck in reverse**

A few southern species turn up regularly in fall, presumably as the result of a weather-related phenomenon known as "reverse migration." When proper conditions prevail, movements can occur counter to the prevailing migratory direction. This apparently accounts for the rare-but-regular appearance of Blue Grosbeak in the fall, mainly in September. Fall Summer Tanagers and Ash-throated Flycatchers probably fit this category as well, and it may account for the state's fall/winter records for Gray Kingbird, Tropical Kingbird and Painted Bunting (which may also arrive as a spring overshoot). A few Prothonotary Warblers have shown up in the fall flights at Bluff Point, but it is possible these birds originate from farther west, where they nest as far north as western New York state and southern Ontario. (See also comments on Cave Swallow, below).

## 6. Flying kites

Both Mississippi Kite and Swallow-tailed Kite fit the spring overshoot model to some extent, but their situation differs from that of the songbirds noted above. Their occurrences are clustered from mid-May to early June, while many of the songbird records occur from late April to mid-May. The timing suggests the kites may be non-breeders drifting north from nesting grounds to which they have no strong attachment.

## 7. Rarities, and lots of 'em

Two species, although very rare, may occur in double-digit numbers, Cave Swallow and Bohemian Waxwing. The appearance of Cave Swallows in the state was first documented in the mid-1990s, and so far a pattern of November records tied to "reverse migration" has emerged. These flights can involve multiple birds over a period of a week or more. Bohemian Waxwing irruptions from the north have also increased in the past decade. They remain rare, but flocks of up to 20 have occurred during recent invasions, usually in late winter.

## 8. Birds of a feather

A few uncommon species can occur in flocks of dozens to 100+. These include Horned Lark in winter; American Pipit during migration; Common Nighthawk, mainly in fall migration; and Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin and Snow Bunting in some winters. A few species that are common to abundant



*Julian Hough Photo*

*This Snow Bunting dropped in at Sandy Point in West Haven in November 2004. See Annotation No.8.*

breeders become generally less common in winter, but can occur in large flocks at that season. Most notable are American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle and Brown-headed Cowbird.

### 9. Northern exposure

The state's northern tier, and its Northwest Corner in particular, support breeding populations with northern affinities. All of these birds occur throughout the state as migrants and, in some cases winter residents, but for the most part they are restricted to the north in the nesting season. Species fitting this profile include Common Merganser (\*), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (\*), Alder Flycatcher, Nashville Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. Species denoted with an asterisk (\*) are undergoing range expansions that are beginning to carry them beyond these range limits. While the bulk of the state's breeding birds in this category inhabit the Northwest Corner, there is a smaller northeastern concentration in the uplands in the Ashford area, near the Massachusetts border. Common Raven has broken out of this category with its explosive increase in the past decade. Least Flycatcher shows a unique pattern: fairly common across most of the northern tier but then progressively scarcer toward the coast.

### 10. Across the board

Another group of species occupy ranges that are northern in a continental (or at least eastern) context, but occur over a more widespread area as breeders in the state, although some are thinly distributed. These include Northern Goshawk, N. Saw-whet Owl, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Blackburnian Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Canada Warbler and Purple Finch.

### 11. Mega flock

At specific times and places, spectacular flocks or flights ranging from 10,000 to 100,000+ occur. This applies on a

regular basis to only two species, Common Grackles (with other icterids in smaller numbers) in early November, primarily in early morning movements along the coast; and Tree Swallows, from about mid-August to mid-September in phragmites roosts on the lower Connecticut River. Broad-winged Hawks occasionally stage flights of 10,000+ in mid-September, but on a much less than annual basis; normal annual peak flights are in four digits. There is at least one instance of a winter American Robin roost exceeding 10,000 birds, and mixed flocks of gulls feeding in primarily western Long Island Sound in early spring may exceed five figures. Some winter roosts of American Crows (including current ones in Waterbury and Hartford) and European Starlings also reach this level. However, West Nile virus is at present reducing crow populations, and starling numbers, while still high, have been declining in the period covered here. On Long Island Sound Greater Scaup regularly occur in four-figure flocks in winter and early spring, mainly from New Haven westward, and these occasionally exceed 10,000.

## 12. Special cases

**Snow Goose:** No other species passes over the state in such large flocks during migration while occurring in relatively small numbers on the ground (and even smaller on water). Flocks can sometimes be heard overhead on clear nights.

**"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal (Not graphed):** This distinctive form, considered conspecific with Green-winged Teal by North American authorities, occasionally turns up in flocks of Green-winged Teal. It is worth noting that in Great Britain these have been split into two species: Eurasian Teal, *Anas crecca*, and Green-winged Teal, *Anas carolinensis*.

**Cattle Egret:** After colonizing North America in the 1950s, this Old World species eventually established a breeding population on the Connecticut coast. It declined during the 1990s and apparently no longer breeds in the state.

**Black Vulture:** An explosive population increase in the 1990s centered on southwestern Litchfield County. Although still most numerous in the western part of the state, where breeding has been confirmed, this species may now turn up anywhere and at any season.

**Osprey:** Restricted almost exclusively to the coast as nesters, Ospreys are wide-ranging as migrants and non-breeders. They visit and fish in waterways throughout the state during the appropriate seasons.

**Monk Parakeet:** This established exotic remained confined to coastal towns, mainly from the New Haven area westward, throughout the 1990s. More recently it has shown some signs of expansion.

**Eurasian Collared Dove:** (Not graphed). This species has invaded North America from Europe via the Caribbean and through establishment of escapees. It has spread dramatically in some parts of the continent but has been slow to penetrate the Northeast. One, which has not yet been reviewed by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, appeared in Waterbury on 2-4 May 2004.

**King Rail:** The status of the tiny coastal breeding population is clouded by known ability to hybridize with the more numerous Clapper Rail.

**Yellow Rail:** This secretive marsh dweller is in a class by itself among regularly occurring migrants. Although it almost certainly occurs in the state annually in spring and fall it is almost never found, due to its secretive nature.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher:** Unique in Connecticut as a landbird that arrives from the southern hemisphere after making a 180 degree miscalculation in its austral migration schedule when departing from its wintering grounds

**Fish Crow:** Mainly coastal prior to the 1990s, Fish Crows have expanded throughout the state via the river valleys. Their newer outposts have been established primarily, but not exclusively, in urban areas such as Waterbury, Hartford, Willimantic and Torrington.

**Cedar Waxwing:** Waxwings are in a class by themselves as nomads. They are the only species present in the state 12 months a year that is highly irregular in numbers and arrivals at all seasons. At least some birds seem to be on the move at all times of year.

**"Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler:** (Not graphed). There is one documented record for this well-marked western form of the Yellow-rumped Warbler, 15 October 1996 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport.

**Boat-tailed Grackle:** This species established itself as a breeder in the 1990s, occupying New England's only nesting outpost on the Stratford Great Meadows. To date there are very few records, and no breeding records, away from that location.

**"Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow:** (Not graphed). Of all the regularly occurring bird taxa, this well-marked race of the Savannah Sparrow probably has the most restricted status. It occurs only on coastal dunes (a very limited habitat in the state) from late October to early April.

**"Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco:** Birds from this complex of western forms make rare appearances in wintering flocks of juncos. They present an array of identification problems beyond the scope of this article.

**Hoary Redpoll:** This boreal species presumably occurs very rarely at the same time as Common Redpoll, especially during large incursions of that species, but identification is difficult and there are no well-documented recent records. The two occurrences on the bar charts represent the state's two specimen records.

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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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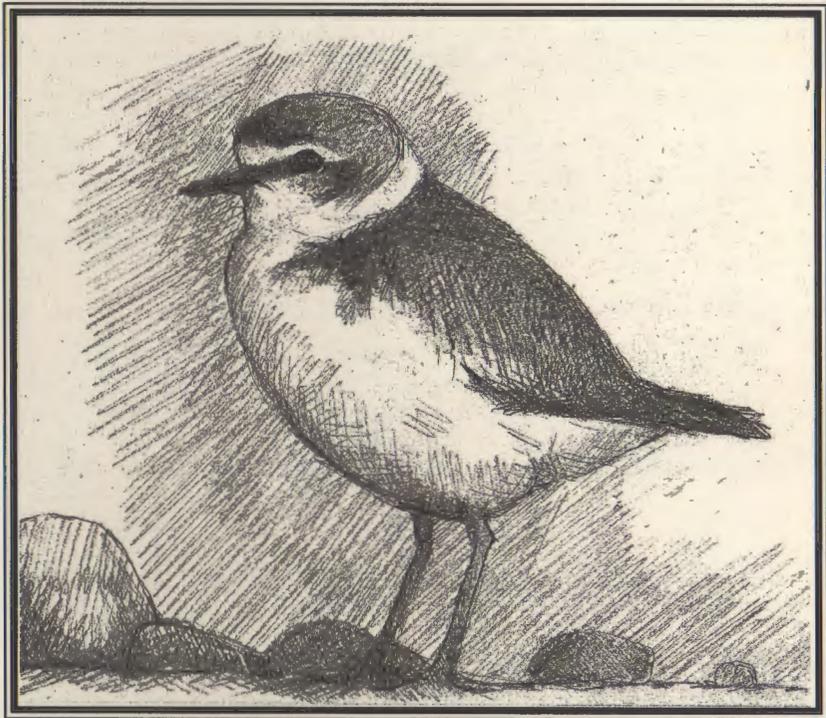


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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

Spotlight on  
Sandy Point



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# The Connecticut Warbler

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## ABOUT OUR COVER

### Snowy Plover

By Mark Szantyr

Mark Szantyr, secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, never goes into the field without his sketchbook. When the state's first-ever Snowy Plover appeared at Sandy Point last October, Mark quickly went into action. The results grace this month's cover.

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

by Greg Hanisek

Over the years Milford Point has earned its reputation as Connecticut's premier shorebird location. It's hard to argue with a Black-tailed Godwit, a Red-necked Stint, a Curlew Sandpiper and thousands of migrants.

But to paraphrase a legendary baseball player, Milford Point better not look back. Sandy Point might be gaining on it.

Of course it wouldn't be in the spirit of environmental awareness to pit two Important Bird Areas against one another. Both play critical roles as nesting, feeding and resting areas for Connecticut's resident, migrant and wintering waterbirds. Nonetheless attention has turned to Sandy Point in recent years for several reasons, the most important being a broad-based effort to enhance protection of its nesting birds.

Sandy Point, a municipally owned complex of sandspit, dunes, lagoon and saltmarsh in West Haven, has always attracted birders. During the past few years a groundswell of interest has grown in its nesting Least Terns and Piping Plovers, both listed as threatened in Connecticut. At the same time some pretty fancy birds have raised its profile.

Black Skimmers have found the tern colony to their liking, establishing the only significant nesting location in the state. During the past year Julian Hough applied his internationally honed shorebirding skills to the flocks of southbound migrants. The probable Little Stint he found on 1 August 2004 is a potential first state record (it didn't stay around long enough for photos or easy viewing), but two months later he made a more satisfy-

ing discovery. The Snowy Plover Julian turned up on October 1 stayed for more than a month, allowing close study by birders from throughout Connecticut and the Northeast. The Black-necked Stilt that Maria Stockmal found while monitoring Piping Plovers wasn't too bad either.

The excitement of rare birds melds nicely with the hard work undertaken by a determined mix of federal, state, town, nonprofit and grassroots organizations to make sure the Sandy Point complex continues to meet the needs of nesting birds, fatten up migrants and attract the unexpected.

In this issue we celebrate Sandy Point with three articles that reach across this spectrum. We hope you enjoy them and support whatever efforts emerge to protect this valuable resource. If you visit Sandy Point, which includes both Sandy Point proper to the north of the lagoon and Morse Point, the site of the nesting colony, to the south, please watch from the northern spit and avoid disturbing the nesting colony.



*Photo by Jennifer Healy*  
*Least Tern chicks at Sandy Point*

# SPOTLIGHT ON SANDY POINT

## Sources of Disturbance at the Sandy Point Least Tern Colony in Summer 2004

By Jennifer L. Healy and Sylvia L. Halkin

### Introduction

Over the past 20 years, there has been a significant drop in the number of nesting pairs of Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*) in the colony located on Sandy Point in West Haven, Connecticut. In 1987 and 1988 there were about 500 nesting pairs located on the Sandy Point beach (Brunton, 1997). In summer 2004, there were only about 200 individual adults in the colony. The reasons for this drop are unknown, but may include predation, human activity, and competition with other avian species (Stevenson, 2004). The drop in numbers has caught the attention of many organizations that are now actively trying to form a restoration plan for Least Terns. Currently Least Terns are listed as Threatened in Connecticut (Stevenson, 2004). Even with a significant drop in the numbers of adult Least Terns, Sandy Point still has one of the highest numbers of this species in Connecticut. In this study, the goal was to determine potential sources of disturbance and mortality at the Sandy Point Least Tern colony during the summer of 2004, with a particular focus on the effect of different human activities.

### Methods

The Least Tern colony is near the tip of Sandy Point complex, where scattered clumps of grass and bushes provide cover for the chicks during hot and rainy days. Jennifer Healy (JH) made the observations for this study during 199.5 hours between 8 May and 8 August 2004.

Least Terns were first seen at the colony on 15 May. Observations were made on most Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and also on two Mondays and one Wednesday. Observations usually extended over 4-7 hours, starting between 9 and 10 a.m., and ending between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m., to include the times when people were most likely to be in the area. The colony was also observed for two hours before dawn on two days, and on 4 nights for periods of 2 or 3 hours between 8:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m.

The colony was surrounded by a fence consisting of thin wooden posts, about 1-1.25 m tall and 1.5-3 m apart, with an approximately 1.5 mm thick black synthetic string wrapped around the posts at a height of approximately 1 m above the ground. One or two strips of orange flagging were tied to the string between each set of posts. The colony occupied an oval area with a long axis of about 70 m and a short axis of about 50 m. Each day the observer began by walking around the fenced area, at a distance between 10 cm and 3 m from the fence, to take an initial count of the adults, chicks, and fledglings. Birds were identified as chicks from the time of hatching through the time that their wings appeared to be fully grown. Fledglings had fully grown wings but immature plumage. This count was repeated at intervals of about 2-3 hours, and the numbers from each count were averaged to estimate the total number of individuals on that day. Between counts the observer sat at a location about 1 m from the fence, midway along the south edge of the colony, where the perimeter of the entire colony could be seen, and observations were made with 7 x 35 binoculars and a 22 X spotting telescope. In addition to counting Least Terns, people were also counted, and their times of arrival and departure and activities were noted.

When Least Terns were disturbed, the majority of the adults in the colony flew up as a group, and returned as a group when the disturbance was gone. The cause of each disturbance was noted, if it could be determined. Disturbance duration was also recorded.

Night sessions were conducted purely to observe any predatory activity at night, as individual Least Tern adults and chicks were extremely hard to see at night. A night scope was used to monitor the colony. To avoid disturbing the colony or predators, the observer sat on the very tip of Sandy Point (approximately 6-10 m from the east edge of the colony) or on the sandy spit separated from the colony by about 4-5 m of water. All potential predators were noted, and their behavior was described. The activities of people on the peninsula were also noted.

## Results

In addition to approximately 200 adult Least Terns, the colony also housed 100-150 individual adult Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*), six nesting pairs of Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*), four nesting pairs of Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*), and one nesting pair of Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*). When disturbances occurred, the Black Skimmers were often the first to leave, followed by the Common and Least Terns. The Piping Plovers and Oystercatchers rarely flew from disturbances, but sometimes ran away.

Each person that came onto the Sandy Point peninsula was tallied. Figures 1a and 1b show the number of people participating in different types of activities; fishermen were the most frequent visitors to the peninsula, followed by walkers (including people with dogs),

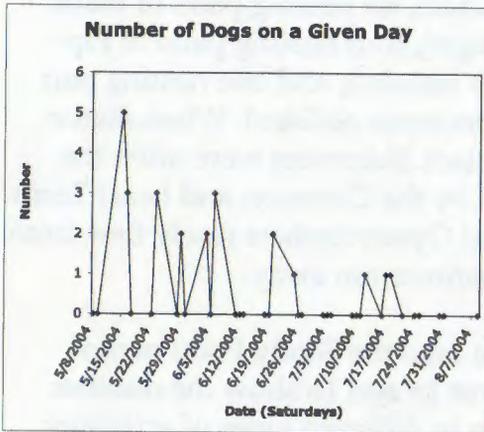
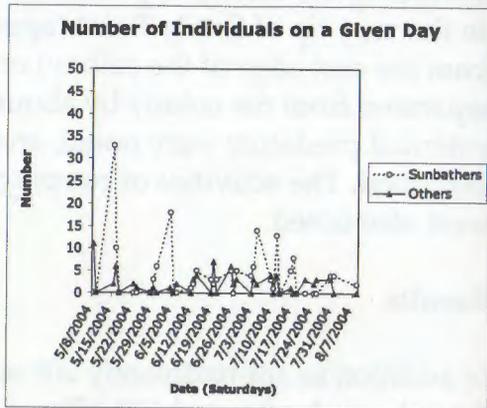
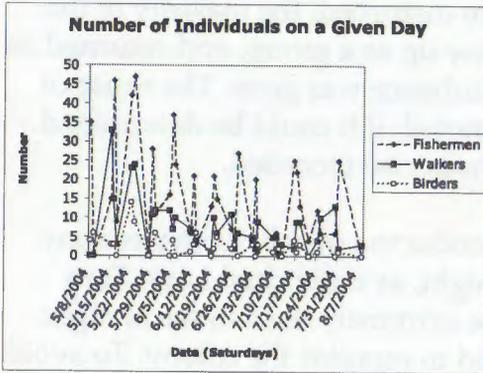


Figure 1: Numbers of people and dogs visiting the Sandy Point peninsula. Dates labeled are Saturdays.

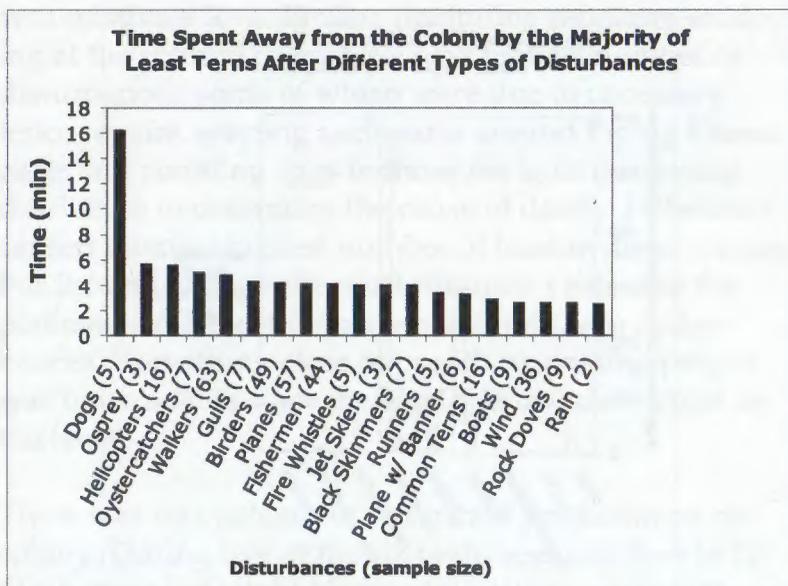


Figure 2: Average amount of time for which each kind of disturbance caused the majority of Least Terns to leave the colony. Numbers in parentheses give number of times that each kind of disturbance occurred.

sunbathers, and then birders. The “Others” category includes runners, people flying kites, kayakers, shell collectors, jet skiers who pulled up and walked on the beach, clammers, and a person picking up garbage. Figure 1c shows the number of dogs. The largest number of people visited in May and early June. Few people visited on rainy days.

In Figure 2, the average amount of time for which each kind of disturbance caused the majority of Least Terns to leave the colony is shown, as well as the number of times that each kind of disturbance occurred. The longest disturbances were caused by dogs; the longest dog disturbance lasted 30 minutes, when an unleashed dog ran through the colony. Ospreys and helicopters flying over the colony caused the next longest disturbances.

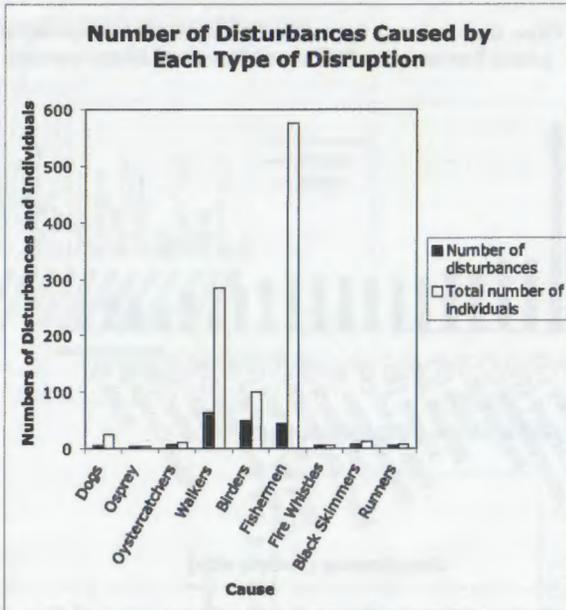


Figure 3: The number of disturbances caused by each type of disruption, and the total number of potentially disrupting individuals of each type. Note that if a group of individuals caused a disturbance, each individual was counted separately, but only one disturbance was recorded as having occurred. On the other hand, a single individual could cause multiple sequential disturbances.

Other disturbances caused by people near the colony lasted an average of 3.4-4.8 min.

The number of disturbances caused by each type of disruption, and the total number of individuals that could potentially cause disruptions of each type, are shown in Fig. 3. Every one of the five fire whistles caused a disturbance. A high proportion of ospreys, oystercatchers and runners also caused disturbances. Black skimmers were next. However, all of these types of disruption were relatively rare. The largest number of disturbances from humans were caused by walkers, mainly when they walked right along the fence line. In some cases, a single individual caused multiple disturbances. However, the proportion of walkers causing disturbances

was relatively low. Birders (including monitors working at the colony) caused the next highest number of disturbances, some of which were due to necessary fence repairs, erecting exclosures around Piping Plover nests and counting eggs in those nests, or examining dead terns to determine the cause of death. Fishermen caused the next highest number of human disturbances, but fishermen were the most common visitors to the peninsula and most fishermen did not cause disturbances. Sometimes close approach by passing people was unavoidable since the high tide line came close to the fence.

There was no evidence of significant predation on the colony. During five of the six night sessions, two to 12 Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) were observed near the colony. They stayed in a group, walking around the perimeter of the fenced area and foraging in the lagoon between the colony and the sandy spit to the north. A Black-crowned Night-Heron only

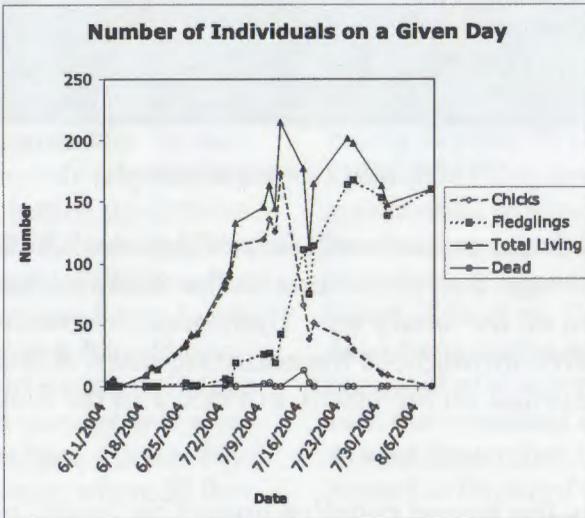


Figure 4: Counts of chicks, fledglings, and dead young observed on each day. Counts are based on the average of 1-3 tallies.

entered the colony once during the night sessions; it was mobbed by Common Terns as it flew over the colony, continued to be mobbed as it landed briefly in the area where the Common Terns nested, and then quickly left, with the Common Terns in pursuit.

Other predators such as raccoons, crows, and domestic cats were never observed in the fenced area. There were



*Photo by Jennifer Healy*

*Adult Least Tern at Sandy Point*

raccoon tracks on the north side of the beach but they never entered the fenced area. A few domestic cats were observed on the sandy spit. There were no crows in the fenced area throughout the entire summer. A few crows were recorded on the beach, but never in the fenced area.

Probably the largest negative impact on Least Tern productivity was caused by Common Terns. The Common Terns tended to nest on the north side of the colony, but as the season progressed some of the nesting pairs

moved south to where the Least Terns were most concentrated. Disturbances to the whole Least Tern colony were caused when Common Terns chased and harassed adult Least Terns, sometimes causing the Least Terns to drop the fish that they were carrying. Fig. 4 shows the counts of chicks and fledglings on each day. A major drop in numbers can be seen around the week of July 16. There is also a corresponding rise in the number of dead chicks and fledglings. Two dead fledglings had puncture wounds in their abdomens, and one chick had a puncture wound in its side. Multiple people saw adult Common Terns take fish away from chick Least Terns as and after they were being fed by their parents. This behavior occurred frequently, and worsened as the summer progressed. The adult Common Terns sometimes harassed the adult and chick Least Terns to the point where they were picking up the chicks. The Com-



*Photo by Jennifer Healy*

*Dead Least Tern chick with puncture wound likely inflicted by an adult Common Tern*

mon Tern would fly up with the chick in its beak and drop the chick until the chick dropped the fish. It seems likely that the puncture wounds found in dead imma-

ture Least Terns were caused by the beaks of Common Terns.

In addition to the three young with puncture wounds, 21 other chicks and fledglings were found dead during the course of the summer. Seventeen had no obvious cause of death. Four chicks and two eggs were stepped on by people. One egg was found punctured and may have been eaten.

There were approximately 20 Least Tern nests outside but close to the initially fenced area; the fencing was moved to include most of these. The fencing was not expanded to extend below the normal high tide line; about four Least Tern nests were washed away by high tides, as well as two Piping Plover nests and several Common Tern nests. (The Piping Plovers re-nested successfully on higher ground.)

On the nights of July 3 and 4, fireworks were visible and audible from the beach. On July 3, the West Haven fireworks did not appear to disturb the Least Terns, but the noise caused some movement of the Piping Plovers. On July 4, the programmed New Haven fireworks caused Least Terns to leave the colony only when the fireworks were extremely loud. However, before, during, and after the programmed fireworks, people on the sandy spit north of the colony were setting off personal fireworks, including noisy sparklers that stayed on the spit, and loud aerial fireworks that exploded over the colony. These caused multiple departures from the colony.

### **Discussion: Restoration Recommendations**

Human-related disturbances to the Least Tern colony at Sandy Point are significant. Better signage, and im-

provements to the fencing around the colony, will help to educate visitors to the beach and minimize colony disturbance. There was a large sign near the parking area for the peninsula, and a relatively small Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection sign, and a relatively small U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services sign, at the corner of the fenced area that people would first approach from the parking area. A large sign fully explaining the purpose of the fenced area should be placed near the parking lot or where people first approach the fenced area. This sign should include information such as natural histories of both Least Terns and Piping Plovers. By having this much information on the sign, people will be aware of the problems that are occurring to cause the decline of these two species of birds, and may be more motivated to avoid disturbing the colony.

There were very few other Connecticut D.E.P signs spaced out around the fence surrounding the colony. The majority of the signs were on the north side of the fenced area. Most people avoided that area during the nesting season because Common Terns would mob them if they approached. More signs are needed, and they should be posted around the entire fence. Kress (2000) suggests posting signs every 15 m; shorter intervals of 7-10 m may well be appropriate at Sandy Point. Signs should indicate that this is a protected nesting area; Kress (2000) suggests signs that "reference enforceable laws, have a minimum of words and ideally display an illustration of nesting terns that features the vulnerable chicks and eggs." Nails protruding from the tops of fence posts and signs can prevent perching by avian predators (Kress, 2000; 1 nail/7.5 cm along each fence post or sign top).

The two "No Dogs Allowed" signs near the parking lot

were extremely faded and hard to read. There were 24 dogs recorded for the summer on the beach. The majority of the dogs were leashed but there were a few that were not. Three of the dogs without leashes ran through the colony. One came within about 2.5 cm of a newly hatched chick. Next year, replacement signs should be put along the beach and along the fence. The dogs do not bother the colony until they approach the fenced area. Since this is the case, if people violate the rules and bring dogs onto the beach, signs around the fenced area explaining that dogs are a significant disturbance (e.g., "Dogs cause terns to leave their nests: Please keep away") might at least help motivate people to keep their dogs away from the colony.

The fencing could also be improved. The major problem was with visibility: even with the flagging, many people did not notice the black string and did not know that the fence was there until they were extremely close or the adult Least Terns started diving at them. Some walkers may not have realized the purpose of the fence; they simply pushed the string down and stepped over it. The Least Terns also appeared to have trouble seeing the string. An observer noticed an adult Least Tern with the left wing torn at the wrist. It was later found dead, and it seemed likely that its wing had been caught in the string and then torn as the bird tried to get free. As the juveniles learned to fly, many of them would fly into the string while taking off. Also, adults that nested under or near the string tended to fly into the string every now and then as they took off from their nests. A thicker, brighter colored string would more than likely solve this problem. Yellow cord or rope would be more visible for both people and birds. Kress (2000) suggests the cord or rope run at about 1.2 m above the ground, with colorful flagging tied onto the rope at intervals of about

4.5 m, and states that "a taut line between sturdy erect posts gives the message that the fence is well-tended and serves an important purpose."

Personal fireworks caused significant disturbances to the colony on the night of July 4. Police monitoring of the entrances to the sandy spit and the Sandy Point peninsula, and patrolling along these beaches on these nights, should prevent this problem.

While Common Terns cause some problems, they also likely prevent others. Their vigorous mobbing probably helps to keep many people and predators away from the colony.

It was not possible to tell whether most disturbances led directly to tern mortality. While adults are off the nest, eggs and chicks can become overheated (on hot days) or chilled (on cold or wet days or at night). Seventeen chicks and fledglings were found dead with no apparent cause.

Continued monitoring of the Least Tern colony will ensure that the problems affecting the colony are observed and addressed. In 2004 there did not appear to be significant predation on the colony, but that may not always be the case. Changes in signage, fencing, and patrolling should be assessed to make sure that they are benefiting the colony. The presence of human monitors at the nesting area may in itself reduce predation (Kress, 2000). Because people visiting the beach often expressed an interest in the nesting colony and in birds in general, the presence of a human monitor and interpretive signage is also a good opportunity to publicize the efforts of many organizations to restore a healthy population of Least Terns in Connecticut.

## Acknowledgments

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## Monitoring Piping Plovers

By Maria Stockmal

I volunteer. Do you remember times when you raised your hand, not knowing what to expect when you volunteered for something? Sometimes you were pleased and sometimes you wondered what you had gotten yourself into.

Three years ago I decided to volunteer for the Piping Plover program run by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and Connecticut Audubon. I didn't know what to expect, but I was pleasantly surprised and plan to go back for a fourth year.

When I first stepped out onto assignment at Sandy Point in West Haven I didn't really know what I was looking for on the sandbar or how to look for Piping Plovers. The plovers actually nest on Morse Point, opposite Sandy Point proper, in what is called an imaginary fenced area consisting of thin poles and string. There are signs on some of the poles that warn of nesting Piping Plovers and Least Terns. The warning is usually well-respected by the community.

Positioning myself on Sandy Point in the first year of monitoring, I didn't know how I was going to find Piping Plovers. I scanned the area but didn't see any birds. Fortunately a birder happened by and asked me if I saw any noteworthy birds. I told him I was monitoring Piping Plovers and looking for them. Of course he found them immediately, and of course I was relieved that I had birds.

I sat in the location I had chosen and watched the plovers appear and disappear for a couple of weeks before I figured out that I should make observations from Morse Point. What a difference! I actually saw the plovers court and mate, and when the eggs hatched, after being incubated for four weeks, I watched the tiny young scurry. They can walk and run hours after hatching. After another four weeks they fledged. I was happy that seven chicks fledged that first year.

A disappointing part of monitoring was the discovery of nests washed out by high tides associated with a full moon. Sometimes a nest is only a few days from hatching when it happens. When they lose a nest, the would-be parents walk around slowly and look stunned until they re-nest. The plovers also face threats from predators such as gulls, skunks, dogs and even people when they do not respect the fenced area.

The Piping Plovers continually watch their young. They call out to them if they wander too far, or if the parents fear danger is approaching. Unfortunately, their calls or warning sounds makes them easy to find during the nesting and rearing periods. On cold spring days the young can be found sitting under a parent bird. If four eggs hatch, all four tiny plovers may be sitting under one parent.

In the first year, there were times when a few poles for the fenced area came down and weren't replaced. There also were times when the beach was lined with fishermen. They kept moving down the beach, away from the fenced area, and I saw fewer and fewer of them along the beach in front of the fenced area in the next

two years. The fishermen seemed like great people who would ask about the plovers and how they were doing.

The landscape of the point is bare when the monitoring season begins. Many days are cold and windy. But the Piping Plover is a hardy bird and will position itself behind a leafy plant to wait out the wind and cold. In summer the area turns leafy. It is busy with growth and all kinds of birds.

One of the perks of monitoring is watching migratory birds pass through. The first year I saw a place within the fenced area that looked like dirt. I thought someone from DEP had dug up the spot. (Connecticut DEP was my main contact the first and second years, and I e-mailed most of my reports there). When I reached the fenced area, to my surprise, the dirt area was really 3,000 Semipalmated Plovers sitting next to each other. It was an amazing sight! That first year I regularly saw groups of 100 to 200 migratory birds stop over. They included Black-bellied Plovers, Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones. These were in addition to the Least and Common Terns that share the nest site with Piping Plovers. In the first year there were about 50 Least Terns and 12 Common Terns nesting in the same fenced area as the Piping Plovers.

The first year extended from mid-April to mid-August for me, but it's not unusual to monitor into September. It all depends on how the nests survive the weather and predation. There were many times I found myself worried about the plovers and was happy when my counts found them all present and accounted for. By mid-August I could start to feel the wear and tear of coming out

once a week for four hours. I was happy when it was over but satisfied of a job well done.

In the second year there were some changes. The volunteers monitored for only three hours at a time. Green plants grew in the nesting area, creating a situation that would not be good for plovers in the future. There were now 200 Least Terns and 12 Common Terns nesting with the Piping Plovers. And what a noise the terns make! Not only did I have to deal with the racket but with the dive-bombing of the terns protecting their nests not to mention the droppings. (In the third year my scope and I got hit a few times). There were also five pairs of Black Skimmers nesting that year, and the excitement touched everyone from DEP, to birders, to West Haven residents. I also found a nesting pair of Spotted Sandpipers, in addition to the Willets and Clapper Rails that have been nesting there.

The Piping Plover activities remained constant, but I got better at finding nests. I learned more about the birds and their behavior. I remember sitting on a log, on the beach, and a young Piping Plover about two weeks old got separated from the rest of its family (as I like to call them). The little plover would run up near me and stop. It did this several times until it ran up into the fenced area, crossed over in front of me, and ran back down the beach to join the family group. It seemed like good problem solving. I began to realize that at the onset of the season the plovers form pairs, establish territory and will actually escort another plover out of the territory. The nesting season improved for all species in the second year.

The third year saw even more changes. The green area in the nesting site stayed brown, probably because it was a cooler year. The nesting pairs of Piping Plovers increased from five to eight. Almost every nest had four eggs, but the number of fledglings remained about the same each year seven to 10 per year over the three years. The wash out of nests in the third year was incredible. The first four nests hatched young, but the second set of four nests was washed out. It was a colder year, and the plovers didn't look as robust as I remembered them from the first two years. My skills had improved, and now I was better at reading signs that indicated whether a plover has a nest or was protecting its young using a broken wing trick.

Reports were now e-mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DEP and Connecticut Audubon (paper reports were used in the first two years), and the Nature Conservancy became a partner. If poles fell down, they were immediately returned to their correct position. Connecticut Ornithological Association sent someone to monitor the Least Terns, including a check on predation at night using a night vision device. An intern from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also came down to track the birds

And the birds? There were still about 200 Least Terns, an increase of Common Terns, still five pairs of Black Skimmers and new pair of American Oystercatchers all nesting in the imaginary fenced area. I also think there were two pairs of Spotted Sandpipers and two pairs of Willets, as well as the regular Clapper Rails.

What I found amazing in the third year was the behavior of the oystercatchers when they protected their nest. An Osprey was flying over, very high, and one of the

oystercatchers flew all the way up to dive bomb it and chase it away. I didn't see as many migratory shorebirds as I did the first two years (it could have been timing because I heard reports of thousands of birds), but I did see a Black-necked Stilt, a rare species in Connecticut.

As for the environment, I think the sands at the tip of Morse Point are moving. The tip seems to be reaching closer to Sandy Point and one day may merge with it. I noticed people crossing over to Morse Point from Sandy Point easily in the third year. In the first two years no one would attempt it. This could be bad news for migratory shorebirds if the lagoon fed by tidal water passing between the two points eventually ceases to exist.

Every year I thank people involved in the monitoring program for giving me this opportunity to learn more about the environment and the birds, and to feel the joy of a successful nesting season. I think I'm at the point of no return when it comes to the Piping Plover. If I decided not to monitor them I would probably go out to Sandy Point anyway just to see how they are doing. So I'm expecting to monitor Piping Plovers for a fourth year this year. I feel I get as much out of it as the sponsors.

## Snowy Plover at Sandy Point

By Julian Hough

After residing in land-locked Naugatuck, my move to the balmy shores of West Haven in July 2003 allowed me to indulge in after-work birding throughout the late summer and fall. Sandy Point, and the parallel spit of Morse Point, are two key areas on the edge of New Haven harbor that have consistently turned up good birds in the past.

With this spot only a mile from the house, it was logical that I should adopt it as my new "local patch." I hoped that with regular coverage, a better understanding of migration through this excellent locale would be realized. In reality, I hoped that I would unearth a good rarity or two!

After hours of searching the masses of roosting shorebirds in July and August, I stumbled onto a small, distant "peep" that had Little Stint subtly caked over its warm-brown plumage. Elusive and difficult to pick out, it was unable to be appreciated by the masses. A potential first state record, its discovery became a non-event and it left me somewhat disappointed.

However, on the evening of the 1 October 2004, that feeling would be rectified. It was a typical cool, clear evening when I arrived home a little later than normal. As the evening closed in, I was in two minds whether to visit the point, but the beautiful evening light spurred me on to try and do some photography.

Walking out onto the point, I noticed a group of Black-bellied Plovers in a close group of rocks. I left

my telescope and tripod behind and approached them stealthily, camera at hand. As I crept closer, I noticed a small gray-brown shorebird, several hundred yards away, scurrying between the rocks. From the brief view, and the way it moved, I suspected the bird was a plover, yet all the local migrant Semipalmated Plovers had been absent from the point for some time. My curiosity was certainly piqued and the immediate thought was I half-wished the bird to be a Wilson's Plover, a species with a proven pattern of vagrancy in the East. Through binoculars, I picked up the bird much further away, half-hidden by rocks and barely recognizable. But it was a plover, and it didn't have dark ear-coverts or a large bill. "Holy !!!##@@ It's a !!!#@ Snowy Plover!!!"



*Photo by Julian Hough*

*Snowy Plover, Sandy Point, New Haven, CT. Note newly molted upperpart feathers, tertials and primaries.*

The distance made me doubt what I was discerning. Panic set in and I ran back for my 'scope, scattering

Black-bellied Plovers left and right. After a few minutes, I locked onto the bird. The proportionately big head and long, spindly legs suggested the identification would be correct, moments before it turned and revealed its black bill and isolated dark breast patches, cementing the identification. Remembering the Little Stint, I fired off a few record shots to put it "in the bag." Thankfully, I made a few calls on my cell phone while keeping an eye on the bird. Local photographer Paul Fusco happened by chance to be present, and after screaming and jumping up and down like a maniac I was able to attract his attention.

With the arrival of a frantic, out of breath Dori Sosensky all three of us enjoyed great views of Connecticut's first Snowy Plover.

Thankfully, the bird remained faithful to Sandy Point, last being seen around the 7 November. During its stay it attracted hundreds of people from New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Maine.

### Status and Distribution

Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) occur both in the New World and in the Old World. In the U.S., they are resident along the Pacific Coast from British Columbia to Mexico (race *nivosus*) and along the Gulf Coast from Texas to Florida (race *tenuirostris*). The latter birds are assigned from a type specimen from Guantanamo, Cuba, a fact overlooked by most ascribing Gulf Coast birds to this race (L. Bevier pers. comm.). The Gulf coast populations are more sedentary and are typically paler/grayer above than western *nivosus*. Snowy Plovers also

occur in South America in coastal Peru and Chile (race *occidentalis*).

In the Old World there are several races occurring from Eurasia east to Japan and south to southern India. These races are colloquially known in the Old World as Kentish Plover, named after the English county in which it most regularly bred.

The individual and geographical variation within the North American populations, as well as a large overlap in morphometrics with the Eurasian races, has been the main stumbling block in assigning this bird to a particular race. There are no proven occurrences of the Old World Kentish Plover in North America.

The overall color, size and shape of the Connecticut bird seemed to rule out the Gulf coast race and indicated the bird belonged to either the western population (*nivosus*) or the nominate European race (*alexandrinus*).

### Ageing and Sexing

The following generally applies to all races. Males and females in breeding plumage may occasionally appear similar, but males are often contrastingly blackish on the lores, forehead and rear ear-coverts and have a strong ginger tone to the crown. Females are typically browner and more uniform in appearance.

There is tremendous individual variation across Old World and New World populations in plumage color, leg color and the amount of dark on the lores. Molt timing may vary between populations in North America and as a result, it may be difficult to use molt to age birds of unknown origin or a vagrant. Initially, the heavily abraded wing feathers on the Sandy Point bird

were thought to be retained juvenile feathers and thus suggested the bird was possibly in its second calendar year. However, a lack of solid information on molt schedules of North American Snowy Plovers, combined with the possibility that the bird had suspended/ altered its molt through stress/ trauma cloud the true age of this bird. It would be unwise to age this bird definitively at this time.

### Vagrancy in the Northeast

The Connecticut individual is only the second record for coastal northeastern states, preceded by a bird at Chatham, Mass., in May/June 1994. On plumage the Massachusetts individual was assigned to the paler, Gulf coast population.

Further west there are three records from Pennsylvania -- one per century:

- a specimen collected in Berks County, eastern Pa., on 29 June 1886
- at Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, western Pa., 17-23 May 1986
- Imperial, Allegheny County, western Pa., 6 August 2002.

Ohio has five records, but interestingly three occurred in the same year, 1993

- 13 May 1993 (Lake County)
- 1-7 Aug 1993 (Lucas County),
- 11-13 Sept 1993 (determined to be a different individual than the August bird)

Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland have no records.

The occurrence of the Connecticut bird raised interesting questions as to origin, molt-timing and subspecific racial identification of vagrant Snowy Plovers. One great benefit of vagrants is that they cause us to look intently at a species that we would normally gloss over in search of more interesting species on any out-of-town



*Photo by Paul Fusco*

*Snowy Plover, race tenuirostris, Florida, May*



*Photo by Julian Hough*

*Snowy Plover, Sandy Point, New Haven, CT 2004.*

birding trip. I noted at the time that the Connecticut bird looked rather rangy, with long legs and long neck and a reasonably long bill. It reminded me in structure of a miniature sandplover sp., and not what I recalled of the few Snowy Plovers I had seen in Texas and California.

Other observers commented similarly on its appearance. This circumstantial evidence, particularly the fact that it was the only fall record in the eastern region, provoked the suggestion that the bird may have originated from the Old World populations. Taking into consideration the date, location and the bird's plumage, the possibility that this could be North America's first Kentish Plover had to be taken seriously. After extensive research of photos, measurements and correspondence with experienced and respected birders, we all agreed that due to the large overlap in morphometrics, it was impossible to know if it was either a Kentish Plover or the more likely western migratory race of Snowy Plover. For the record, Mark Szantyr made some comparative measurements from photographs of similarly positioned birds and found Old World (Kentish) birds showed a nail approximately 50% of the culmen length. North American (Snowy) birds seemed closer to 33% of the culmen length. Interestingly, the culmen of the West Haven bird was nearer the 50% mark and thus closer to the Old World races. Although these measurements are from a small sample and are inconclusive by themselves, further research and study of specimens may add insight to racial differences.

Also worth noting is that generally Snowy Plovers show dark, blackish legs. The flesh-pink leg color of the West Haven bird was anomalous with any race. Although, some western Snowy Plovers can show pale legs and the South American race, *occidentalis*, shows

pale legs (A. Jaramillo, pers. comm.), the less than pristine condition of the West Haven bird probably was responsible for the atypical leg coloring.

It was thought by some observers that due to the bird's dark upperparts and lores that it most likely originated from the more migratory *nivosus* populations in the West. In support of that theory, the North American Birds report for the Summer Season 2004 noted that low water levels in reservoirs in the west/mid-west (California, Nebraska etc) were perhaps responsible for the exploitation of breeding habitat by Snowy Plovers. These reports and records of extralimital occurrences from nearby states occurred in late summer and presumably related to wandering adults.

From where our bird originated, nobody will ever know...

### Acknowledgements

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Julian Hough, 22 Hallock Ave, New Haven, CT 06519

## CONNECTICUT'S 2004 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

By Neil Currie

At Quaker Ridge in Greenwich 2004 marked the 20th consecutive year of autumn hawk migration counts. Twenty years with good reason, as Quaker Ridge lies in an area unique for hawk migration. With migrants pushing south and southwest in a broad path across Connecticut in the fall, encountering the water barrier of Long Island Sound and finally swinging to a more westerly direction, they become more concentrated as they pass over southwest Connecticut. Because of this Quaker Ridge is a premier location for observation, in particular for seeing large numbers of Broad-winged Hawks. (Table 1: 20 Years at Quaker Ridge).

For reasons unexplained the three years prior to 2004 produced the lowest Broadwing counts in all 20 years, with only 1044 in 2003. This decline occurred at all of the Connecticut lookouts in 2003, but in 2004 there was a welcome change (Tables 1, 2, and 5). At Quaker Ridge Broadwing numbers exceeded 6600. There were other noteworthy increases there as well: a surprising 27 Black Vultures, 591 Turkey Vultures, more than 600 Ospreys, and the second-best Bald Eagle count (82) ever. Golden Eagles continued their annual appearances, and there was one Swainson's Hawk during the fall. There were increased numbers of all species except Rough-legged Hawk, which doesn't even appear in many years.

If Quaker Ridge is a premier hawk watching spot, so is Lighthouse Point in New Haven. Again Long Island Sound acts as a barrier that concentrates the hawks at Lighthouse Point. (Tables 3 and 4). However, the char-

acter of the hawk migration at Lighthouse is different than at Quaker Ridge. Quaker Ridge features Broadwings, while Lighthouse Point features Ospreys, Northern Harriers, Accipiters and falcons. Every few years, Broadwings appear at Lighthouse in great numbers, and this happened in 2004. (Tables 3 and 4). Counters there recorded more than 3600 Broadwings, 3500 of them in the period September 19 through 23. In the New Haven region during that same period almost 4300 Broadwings passed over Maltby Lakes, and large numbers were observed along and north of West Rock. The 3600 Broadwings at Lighthouse contributed to a count in line with the total counts of previous years (Table 4). This meant that there were decreases in the numbers of other species of hawks. Osprey, Northern Harrier, Accipiter, and falcon numbers were all down. On the positive side there were 86 Bald Eagles, a record over the Point during the fall.

Connecticut's 12 inland lookouts feature Broad-winged Hawks and operate for only a few days in mid-September. As migrating Broadwings pass these sites so do small numbers of the other hawks: Osprey, Harrier, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk and American Kestrels. As at Quaker Ridge the Broadwing counts of 2004 were far greater than those of 2003 (Table 2). Bald Eagles were seen at all lookouts, continuing the trend of the last few years. Noteworthy were the numbers of Northern Harriers, Cooper's Hawks, and American Kestrels at Flirt Hill in Easton and the number of Cooper's Hawks at the Middle School in Torrington. The following birders took part in counting and compiling during fall 2004: Rick Abbott, Lois Aldi, Ralph Amodie, Neila Augelli, Renee Baade, David Babington, Bill

Banks, Dan Barvir, Trudy Battaly, Mike Beath, Ray Belding, Tom Bravo, Polly and Chuck and Peter Brody, Tom Burke, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier, Al Collins, Mike Culhane, Neil Currie, Angela Dimmitt, Patrick Dugan, Duncan and Ayrselea Denny, Cynthia Ehlinger, Richard English, Larry Fischer, David and Ann Fiske, Steve Foisey, Shirley Gay, Jim Goodsman, Frank Guida, Tony Hager, Jim Halligan, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris, Lynn James, Elsbeth Johnson, Paul Kennedy, George Letis, Lisa Lozier, Roger MacLean, Steve Mayo, Robin McAllister, Anne and Stephen McKenzie, Tom Meyer, Marty Moore, Vicky Nigro, Brian O'Toole, Drew Panko, Janet Petricone, William Piccard, Matt Popp, Mike Reese, Gail Roberts, Arne Rosengren, Bruce Sebastian, Donna Rose Smith, Judith Stevens, Carol Titus, Tony Tortora, Dave Tripp, Aaron Virgin, Mike Warner, Joe Wojtanowski, David Wright, Joe Zeranski, Chris Zimmerman, and Jim and Carol Zipp.

Table 1: 20 Years at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich, CT

| YEAR  |       |    |         |       |     |      |       |      |     |      |        |    |      |    |     |       |     | Total |      |        |          |
|-------|-------|----|---------|-------|-----|------|-------|------|-----|------|--------|----|------|----|-----|-------|-----|-------|------|--------|----------|
|       | Hours | BV | TV      | OS    | BE  | NH   | SS    | CH   | NG  | RS   | BW     | SW | RT   | RL | GE  | AK    | ML  | PG    | UR   | Total  | less BWs |
| 1985  | 404   |    | 193     | 297   | 9   | 235  | 3099  | 45   | 11  | 32   | 14398  |    | 317  | 1  |     | 474   | 5   | 9     | 238  | 19363  | 4965     |
| 1986  | 602   |    | 201     | 618   | 23  | 268  | 3629  | 75   | 15  | 23   | 39743  |    | 544  | 2  | 6   | 673   | 9   | 7     | 337  | 46173  | 6430     |
| 1987  | 604   |    | 395     | 1021  | 24  | 332  | 3800  | 169  | 10  | 75   | 12405  |    | 374  | 1  | 4   | 894   | 30  | 22    | 299  | 19855  | 7450     |
| 1988  | 524   |    | 377     | 683   | 22  | 260  | 3337  | 153  | 14  | 169  | 34125  |    | 282  |    | 5   | 851   | 40  | 16    | 202  | 40536  | 6411     |
| 1989  | 534   |    | 244     | 687   | 11  | 256  | 3511  | 169  | 4   | 98   | 12522  |    | 209  |    | 4   | 986   | 48  | 22    | 279  | 19050  | 6528     |
| 1990  | 615   |    | 414     | 1038  | 21  | 164  | 3381  | 269  | 27  | 191  | 9997   |    | 481  | 1  | 8   | 980   | 82  | 39    | 304  | 17397  | 7400     |
| 1991  | 530   |    | 453     | 461   | 12  | 74   | 2128  | 146  | 13  | 106  | 7823   | 1  | 349  |    | 5   | 622   | 39  | 13    | 182  | 12427  | 4604     |
| 1992  | 525   |    | 396     | 410   | 24  | 80   | 2495  | 183  | 11  | 117  | 8187   |    | 468  | 1  | 3   | 465   | 47  | 17    | 181  | 13085  | 4898     |
| 1993  | 511   | 1  | 381     | 518   | 64  | 154  | 2953  | 166  | 11  | 132  | 29118  |    | 252  | 1  | 11  | 535   | 29  | 13    | 113  | 34452  | 5334     |
| 1994  | 584   |    | 354     | 393   | 29  | 166  | 2128  | 165  | 5   | 136  | 18180  |    | 289  |    | 7   | 842   | 31  | 9     | 79   | 22813  | 4633     |
| 1995  | 632   | 3  | 617     | 627   | 55  | 258  | 3123  | 259  | 15  | 260  | 36632  |    | 742  |    | 23  | 970   | 78  | 16    | 101  | 43779  | 7147     |
| 1996  | 557   |    | 295     | 306   | 68  | 62   | 1549  | 157  | 7   | 180  | 8071   | 2  | 336  |    | 2   | 383   | 49  | 12    | 47   | 11526  | 3455     |
| 1997  | 590   | 1  | 554     | 610   | 67  | 127  | 3360  | 368  | 13  | 126  | 15018  | 2  | 290  |    |     | 700   | 93  | 23    | 70   | 21422  | 6404     |
| 1998  | 616   |    | 353     | 923   | 93  | 313  | 3436  | 315  | 9   | 128  | 9949   |    | 238  |    | 8   | 922   | 67  | 19    | 82   | 16855  | 6906     |
| 1999  | 471   |    | 382     | 633   | 77  | 145  | 2282  | 321  | 17  | 137  | 10938  |    | 346  | 2  | 8   | 804   | 63  | 13    | 110  | 16278  | 5340     |
| 2000  | 552   | 3  | 213     | 400   | 50  | 125  | 1834  | 349  | 10  | 114  | 14408  | 1  | 286  | 1  | 3   | 527   | 49  | 13    | 59   | 18445  | 4037     |
| 2001  | 597   | 3  | 618     | 502   | 49  | 154  | 2460  | 297  | 14  | 172  | 4487   |    | 228  |    | 5   | 594   | 44  | 16    | 101  | 9744   | 5257     |
| 2002  | 464   | 4  | 520     | 585   | 53  | 159  | 1748  | 292  | 8   | 69   | 5222   |    | 206  |    | 5   | 453   | 46  | 23    | 234  | 9627   | 4405     |
| 2003  | 452   | 7  | 475     | 313   | 30  | 152  | 1434  | 206  | 2   | 64   | 1044   |    | 255  | 1  | 4   | 343   | 41  | 17    | 164  | 4552   | 3508     |
| 2004  | 655   | 27 | 591     | 619   | 82  | 153  | 3274  | 342  | 11  | 251  | 6654   | 1  | 384  |    | 4   | 570   | 89  | 24    | 111  | 13187  | 6533     |
| TOTAL | 11019 |    | 49 8026 | 11644 | 863 | 3637 | 54961 | 4446 | 227 | 2580 | 298921 | 7  | 6876 | 11 | 115 | 13588 | 979 | 343   | 3293 | 410566 | 111645   |
|       | 551   | 2  | 401     | 582   | 43  | 182  | 2748  | 222  | 11  | 129  | 14946  |    | 344  | 1  | 6   | 679   | 49  | 17    | 165  | 20482  | 5536     |

SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

BV - Black Vulture  
 TV - Turkey Vulture  
 OS - Osprey  
 BE - Bald Eagle  
 NH - Northern Harrier

SS - Sharp-shinned Hawk  
 CH - Cooper's Hawk  
 NG - Northern Goshawk  
 RS - Red-shouldered Hawk

BW - Broad-winged Hawk  
 SW - Swainson's Hawk  
 RT - Red-tailed Hawk  
 RL - Rough-legged Hawk

GE - Golden Eagle  
 AK - American Kestrel  
 ML - Merlin  
 PG - Peregrine Falcon  
 UR - unidentified raptor

Table 2: Broad-winged Hawk Flights - Fall 2004

| DATES             |               | Hours | Pre |     |     |      |         |     |      |      |      |         |      | Post  |       |       | 2004 | 2003 |
|-------------------|---------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|---------|-----|------|------|------|---------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
|                   |               |       | 11  | 11  | 12  | 13   | 1415-18 | 19  | 20   | 21   | 22   | 2324-26 | 26   | Total | Total |       |      |      |
| Bald Peak         | Salisbury     | 3     |     |     |     | 1070 |         |     |      |      |      |         |      |       |       |       | 1070 |      |
| Booth Hill        | West Hartland | 6     |     |     |     |      |         | 370 |      |      |      |         |      |       |       |       | 370  | 191  |
| Peak Mountain     | East Granby   | 32    | 7   |     | 6   | 31   | 41      |     | 13   |      |      |         |      |       |       |       | 98   |      |
| Taine Mountain    | Burlington    | 16    |     |     | 2   |      | 86      |     | 120  | 4    |      |         |      |       |       |       | 212  | 66   |
| Johnnycake Mt.    | Burlington    | 31    |     | 217 | 24  | 13   | 355     | 1   |      | 60   | 45   |         | 24   |       |       |       | 739  | 81   |
| Middle School     | Torrington    | 63    |     |     |     |      | 469     | 12  | 1193 | 8    | 29   | 1       | 21   | 9     | 4     |       | 1746 | 1478 |
| Chestnut Hill     | Litchfield    | 52    | 8   | 8   | 99  | 319  | 152     | 11  | 857  | 7    | 29   | 2       |      |       |       |       | 1492 | 285  |
| Botsford Hill     | Bridgewater   | 47    |     | 263 | 112 | 224  | 85      | 10  | 668  | 35   | 1    |         |      |       |       |       | 1398 | 125  |
| Briggs Hill       | Sherman       | 5     | 4   | 85  |     |      |         |     |      |      |      |         |      |       |       |       | 89   | 118  |
| Heritage Village  | Southbury     | 24    |     |     |     | 667  |         | 9   | 383  | 223  | 29   |         |      |       |       |       | 1311 | 238  |
| Bent-of-the-River | Southbury     | 37    | 3   | 1   |     | 100  | 91      | 0   |      | 5    | 84   | 0       | 0    | 89    |       |       | 373  | 101  |
| Flirt Hill        | Easton        | 43    | 0   |     |     |      |         | 2   | 0    |      |      | 300     |      |       |       | 0     | 302  | 58   |
| Lighthouse Point  | New Haven     | 583   | 4   | 32  |     | 25   | 3       | 1   | 1320 | 817  | 1    | 118     | 1241 | 57    | 74    |       | 3693 | 427  |
| East Shore Park   | New Haven     | 37    |     |     |     |      |         |     |      |      | 16   |         | 360  | 3     | 4     |       | 383  | 25   |
| East Rock Park    | New Haven     | 2     |     |     |     |      | 7       |     |      |      |      |         |      |       |       |       | 7    | 3    |
| Maltby Lakes      | Orange        | 82    | 21  | 74  | 56  | 61   | 43      | 950 |      | 875  | 1169 | 1366    | 874  |       | 1     |       | 5490 | 287  |
| Waveny Park       | New Canaan    | 47    |     |     | 114 | 9    | 20      |     | 106  | 7    | 149  | 170     | 268  |       |       |       | 843  | 16   |
| Quaker Ridge      | Greenwich     | 655   | 206 | 300 | 408 | 635  | 151     | 19  | 1337 | 2310 | 794  | 292     | 72   | 39    | 91    |       | 6654 | 1044 |
|                   |               |       |     |     |     |      |         |     |      |      |      |         |      |       | Total | 26270 | 4543 |      |

Table 3: All Connecticut Sites - Fall 2004

| SITES             | Hours |    |     |      |    |     |      |     |    |      |      |    |     |    |     |      |     |     | 2004 | 2003  | 2002  |       |
|-------------------|-------|----|-----|------|----|-----|------|-----|----|------|------|----|-----|----|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
|                   |       | BV | TV  | OS   | BE | NH  | SS   | CH  | NG | RS   | BW   | SW | RT  | RL | GE  | AK   | ML  | PG  | UR   | Total | Total | Total |
| Bald Peak         | 3     |    |     | 6    | 1  | 1   | 3    | 2   |    |      | 1070 |    |     |    |     | 3    |     |     |      | 1086  |       |       |
| Booth Hill        | 6     |    |     | 10   | 5  |     | 24   |     |    | 370  |      |    |     |    | 8   |      |     |     |      | 417   | 255   |       |
| Peak Mountain     | 32    |    |     | 5    | 7  | 1   | 24   | 3   |    | 98   |      | 3  |     |    |     | 2    | 1   |     | 6    | 150   |       |       |
| Taine Mountain    | 16    |    |     | 13   | 2  |     | 30   |     |    | 212  |      |    |     |    | 1   |      |     |     |      | 258   | 86    | 93    |
| Johnnycake Mt.    | 31    |    |     | 44   | 14 | 5   | 83   | 2   |    | 2    | 739  |    |     |    | 37  | 4    | 2   | 2   |      | 934   | 175   | 1500  |
| Middle School     | 63    |    |     | 34   | 7  | 8   | 80   | 36  | 5  | 12   | 1746 |    | 18  |    | 36  | 9    | 3   | 65  |      | 2059  | 1771  | 11036 |
| Chestnut Hill     | 52    |    |     | 28   | 3  | 1   | 41   | 6   | 1  | 1492 |      |    |     |    | 16  | 2    |     | 16  |      | 1606  | 420   | 12982 |
| Botsford Hill     | 47    |    |     | 30   | 8  | 3   | 84   | 4   |    | 4    | 1398 |    |     | 1  | 1   | 19   |     |     | 15   | 1567  | 215   | 222   |
| Briggs Hill       | 5     |    |     | 1    | 1  |     |      | 1   |    | 89   |      | 5  |     |    |     |      |     |     |      | 97    | 171   | 222   |
| Heritage Village  | 24    |    |     | 12   | 2  | 1   | 30   | 2   |    | 1311 |      | 2  |     |    | 10  |      |     | 12  |      | 1382  | 326   |       |
| Bent-of-the-River | 37    |    |     | 16   | 1  | 1   | 37   | 4   |    | 1    | 373  |    | 8   |    | 4   |      | 1   | 1   |      | 447   | 175   | 2108  |
| Flirt Hill        | 43    |    |     | 15   | 4  | 22  | 59   | 20  |    | 6    | 302  |    | 13  |    | 2   | 198  | 2   | 1   |      | 644   | 348   | 655   |
| Lighthouse Point  | 583   |    | 598 | 1054 | 86 | 329 | 6662 | 823 | 9  | 162  | 3693 |    | 890 | 5  | 2   | 1445 | 344 | 75  | 323  | 16500 | 15460 | 15062 |
| East Shore Park   | 37    |    | 216 | 50   | 14 | 7   | 706  | 89  | 0  | 9    | 383  |    | 91  |    | 50  | 3    | 5   | 67  |      | 1690  | 815   | 1879  |
| East Rock Park    | 2     |    |     | 5    |    | 1   | 4    | 1   |    | 7    |      | 3  |     |    | 1   | 2    |     |     |      | 24    | 22    | 43    |
| Maltby Lakes      | 82    |    |     | 245  | 30 | 4   | 139  | 9   |    | 5490 |      |    |     | 2  | 98  | 3    | 7   | 2   |      | 6029  | 568   | 2352  |
| Waveny Park       | 47    |    |     | 56   | 5  | 6   | 168  | 16  | 1  | 2    | 843  |    | 3   |    | 42  | 3    | 3   | 11  |      | 1159  | 102   | 243   |
| Quaker Ridge      | 655   | 27 | 591 | 619  | 82 | 153 | 3274 | 342 | 11 | 251  | 6654 | 1  | 384 | 4  | 570 | 89   | 24  | 111 |      | 13187 | 4552  | 9627  |

SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

BV - Black Vulture  
 TV - Turkey Vulture  
 OS - Osprey  
 BE - Bald Eagle  
 NH - Northern Harrier

SS - Sharp-shinned Hawk  
 CH - Cooper's Hawk  
 NG - Northern Goshawk  
 RS - Red-shouldered Hawk

BW - Broad-winged Hawk  
 SW - Swainson's Hawk  
 RT - Red-tailed Hawk  
 RL - Rough-legged Hawk

GE - Golden Eagle  
 AK - American Kestrel  
 ML - Merlin  
 PG - Peregrine Falcon  
 UR - unidentified raptor

Table 4: Lighthouse Point, New Haven - Fall 2004

Species

| MONTH      | Hours | BV | TV  | OS   | BE | NH  | SS   | CH   | NG | RS  | BW   | SW | RT  | RL | GE | AK   | ML  | PG  | UR  | Total |
|------------|-------|----|-----|------|----|-----|------|------|----|-----|------|----|-----|----|----|------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| August     | 17    |    |     |      | 9  |     |      | 1    |    |     |      |    |     |    |    |      | 1   |     | 2   |       |
| September  | 203   |    | 23  | 850  | 27 | 113 | 2509 | 300  | 2  | 14  | 3630 |    | 44  |    |    |      | 769 | 123 | 18  | 122   |
| October    | 207   |    | 447 | 194  | 49 | 142 | 3696 | 446  | 2  | 71  | 62   |    | 434 | 2  | 1  | 665  | 164 | 48  | 147 | 6570  |
| November   | 156   |    | 128 | 1    | 10 | 74  | 456  | 77   | 5  | 77  | 1    |    | 412 | 3  | 1  | 10   | 57  | 7   | 54  | 1373  |
| Total 2004 | 583   |    | 598 | 1054 | 86 | 329 | 6662 | 823  | 9  | 162 | 3693 |    | 890 | 5  | 2  | 1445 | 344 | 75  | 323 | 16500 |
| Total 2003 | 623   | *1 | 462 | 1268 | 47 | 724 | 7715 | 1170 | 30 | 153 | 427  | 6  | 928 | 4  | 2  | 1724 | 355 | 90  | 355 | 15460 |
| Total 2002 | 566   |    | 471 | 1418 | 76 | 413 | 8096 | 796  | 10 | 90  | 737  | 3  | 750 | 1  | 10 | 1807 | 332 | 50  | 202 | 15062 |

Table 5: Quaker Ridge, Greenwich -Fall 2004

Species

| MONTH      | Hours | BV | TV  | OS  | BE | NH  | SS   | CH  | NG | RS  | BW   | SW | RT  | RL | GE | AK  | ML | PG | UR  | Total |
|------------|-------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|-----|----|-----|------|----|-----|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|-------|
| August     | 68    | 2  | 6   | 62  | 7  | 6   | 9    | 1   |    |     | 95   |    | 1   |    |    | 11  | 1  |    | 1   | 202   |
| September  | 229   | 17 | 29  | 466 | 47 | 83  | 1801 | 135 | 1  | 10  | 6493 |    | 18  |    |    | 351 | 39 | 10 | 43  | 9543  |
| October    | 224   | 5  | 485 | 91  | 26 | 47  | 1383 | 190 | 7  | 128 | 66   | 1  | 193 |    | 2  | 207 | 43 | 14 | 52  | 2940  |
| November   | 134   | 3  | 71  | 0   | 2  | 17  | 81   | 16  | 3  | 113 |      |    | 172 |    | 2  | 1   | 6  |    | 15  | 502   |
| Total 2004 | 655   | 27 | 591 | 619 | 82 | 153 | 3274 | 342 | 11 | 251 | 6654 | 1  | 384 | 0  | 4  | 570 | 89 | 24 | 111 | 13187 |
| Total 2003 | 492   | 7  | 475 | 313 | 30 | 152 | 1434 | 206 | 2  | 64  | 1044 |    | 255 | 1  | 4  | 343 | 41 | 17 | 164 | 4552  |
| Total 2002 | 464   | 4  | 520 | 585 | 53 | 159 | 1748 | 292 | 8  | 69  | 5222 |    | 206 |    | 5  | 453 | 46 | 23 | 234 | 9627  |

## NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

### An Unexpected Rescue

On 1 February 2005 Donna Salmon met an unexpected visitor to her neighborhood in East Canaan, Litchfield County. A stout bird with a long neck and a formidable bill was stranded on the snowy lawn of a nearby church. Donna picked up the bird and took it to Sharon Audubon Center, where wildlife rehabilitator Wendy Rineer identified it as a Red-necked Grebe. Wendy examined the bird, testing its swimming ability in a bathtub. She determined it was plump and uninjured. The bird was released into Long Island Sound at Stratford on 6 February. Wendy has handled a wide variety of wildlife, but the Red-necked Grebe was the first of its kind taken into care at Sharon Audubon.



*Wendy Rineer photo*

*This well-traveled Red-necked Grebe crash landed in East Canaan, took a bath in Sharon, then got back to business in Stratford.*

Red-necked Grebes, uncommon in Connecticut, are noted for unpredictable and poorly understood movements in late winter and early spring. (For a discussion of this phenomenon, as it relates to a major movement in February and March 2003, see the Changing Seasons column in *North American Birds*, Vol. 57 No. 3). The arrival of the bird in East Canaan did not appear to be associated with any widespread movement or any noteworthy weather.

Information from Wendy Rineer

### A Hill Full of Sparrows

On 18 December 2004, as a participant in the 2004 Woodbury-Roxbury Christmas Bird Count, I was surveying the hilltop farm property of the Southbury Training School in Southbury, New Haven County. Last year, at this same location, Ed Hagen and I found an amazing 22 White-crowned Sparrows scattered through the hedgerows and the overgrown field edges.

*Zonotrichia leucophrys* is a regular and sometimes fairly common migrant along the coast in the fall, and a more widespread but less common spring migrant through our area. But a group of this size at any time and so far inland was remarkable. Imagine my surprise this year when, at the same location, I counted 37(!) individuals working the brushy farm habitat. The birds seemed evenly split between bright adult plumaged birds and less striking birds in first basic plumage. This number is probably more than I have seen in an entire fall season in Connecticut.

Even more interesting was a single bird repeatedly located in the group. The distal portion of the white

supercillium and the white central crown stripe seemed broader, especially when the crown was erect. More interesting, this bird showed a bill that appeared longer and thinner than the other White-crowned Sparrows present and distinctly yellow (sort of a straw yellow). The other birds showed shorter and thicker bills that appeared fleshy pink or fleshy orange.

This yellow bill coloration is cited as a character of a few of the more western forms of *Z. leucophrys*. These forms typically show a pale lore, where the eastern form shows a dark lore. The bird in Southbury was obviously dark-lored. It is unclear whether either or the combination of these characters, the increased amount of white in the crown or the structure and color of the bill, suggest evidence of non-eastern genes or whether this bird was simply abnormal. Likewise, it isn't clear whether either of these marks is out of the range possible for *Z. l. leucophrys*, the eastern subspecies we usually encounter in Connecticut, but I have not noted them in the past. In any case, it was an interesting bird and more White-crowned than I have seen together in the East.

Mark Szantyr

## CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Autumn, August 1 through November 30, 2004

By Greg Hanisek

The long and productive autumn migration season offered its usual flurry of rare birds, including a first state record provided by a highly cooperative Snowy Plover. It also solidified the changing status of a few species that are now regular in small numbers, rather than very rare and less than annual. Greater White-fronted Goose and Sandhill Crane seem safely in this category, joining such species as Dickcissel and Clay-colored Sparrow. Of birds staging unusually robust migratory flights, Red-headed Woodpecker probably topped the list. At the other end of the scale, some of the boreal nesting warblers were hard to find. The flight of northern finches was meager, presaging what would be a finchless winter.

### Geese through Tubenoses

Nine **Greater White-fronted Geese** included singles on the UConn campus in Storrs from October 8 on (MO et al.), in Coventry October 23 (JMe), at Great Pond, Simsbury, October 24 (LK), in Enfield October 29 (CEk), at Bolton Lake October 30 (TA) and in Preston November 10 (DP). Two immatures were at Southbury Training School October 10 (RN), and an adult was there November 27 (RN). A small, short-billed

Canada-type goose October 30 at Bolton Lake may have been the newly split **Cackling Goose**, whose status in the state needs to be worked out (TA). A group of five, with c. 300 Canada Geese on November 1 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, were also considered candidates for this species (FG).

A **Eurasian Wigeon** arrived October 31 at Konold's Pond, Woodbridge (RT). Blue-winged Teal numbers have been on the rise in recent years; reports of a

total of c. 40 for the season were good by low standards established in the 1990s. They included 14 on August 2 at Bantam Lake, Litchfield (MK); 16 on September 14 at Little Pond, Litchfield (DR); and nine on October 2 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PCi). The best count of Northern Shoveler was five on November 2 at Lake Whitney in Hamden (FMc). The first Northern Pintail appeared in normal dabbling duck fashion on August 17 at Selby Pond in Stratford (DV). The only Redhead reported was a female on November 4 at Mondo Ponds in Milford (DV). Ring-necked Duck topped out at 300 November 7 at Konold's Pond in Woodbridge (CLO).

A female **King Eider** appeared November 16 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP), apparently to winter for the fourth straight year (JMa et al.). Single Surf Scoters dropped in at Bantam Lake in Litchfield October 14 (JE) and at Hatch Pond in Kent October 16-22 (JJo). The big movements occurred a little later, with 20 Surf Scoters at Bantam Lake October 28 (DR), 13 White-

winged Scoters at Barkhamsted Reservoir October 27 (DR) and nine white-wings October 27 at Bantam (JE). A White-winged Scoter August 5 at Stratford Point probably summered (CB). Three Black Scoters were unexpected November 15 on small Lake Forest in Bridgeport (AK). Eleven at Saugatuck Reservoir in Weston on October 30 were at a more expected inland location (CB), as were 13 at Bantam Lake on November 2 (DR). Common Goldeneyes are rare in summer on Long Island Sound. One inland at Lake Zoar in Southbury through August 27 was totally unexpected (RN). Ruddy Ducks peaked at 165 on November 17 at Lake Beseck in Middlefield and c. 300 on November 23 at Bride Brook Pond in East Lyme (HG).

A hen Ruffed Grouse had four young in tow August 10 in Litchfield (DR). The first five Red-throated Loons for the season were a bit early September 5 at Lighthouse Point in New Haven (SMa, PDe); the only inland report came from Bantam Lake in Litchfield on November 7-26 (DR et al.). A **Pacific Loon**, a species that has proved very

uncooperative for the state's birders, was found one day only November 8 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (FMa). November reports of Northern Gannet in Long Island Sound were topped by 570 moving past HBSP on November 13 (JCo). Inland Great Cormorants were at Bantam Lake Nov. 1-30 (DR) and Batterson Pond in Farmington October 24 to November 7 (PDe). A **Manx Shearwater**, very rare in Long Island Sound, was seen flying west on August 7 at Stamford (PDu). It was seen later the same day off nearby Rye, N.Y. (TBu).

### Herons through Red Knot

Two American Bitterns at Lord's Cove, Old Lyme, on August 30 (HG) were among eight reported for the season. The only migrant Least Bittern turned up October 3 at HBSP (RN). A significant movement of 83 Great Blue Herons passed over Lighthouse Point, New Haven, from 7 to 9 a.m. on October 20. This passage was also noted at New Canaan Nature Center, where 56 flew over at 8:30 a.m. (FG). Three Snowy Egrets and 32 Great

Egrets were excellent inland totals August 6 at Riverside Park, Hartford (PCi). Plum Bank Marsh in Old Saybrook held four Little Blue Herons August 21 (JO). The only two Cattle Egrets were in Avon October 22-24 (PM et al.). A state record-high count of 30 Yellow-crowned Night Herons, with 16 Black-crowned Night Herons, were at Milford Point on October 5 (FMa). The recent string of **Swainson's Hawk** reports continued with two for the season: October 20 at Quaker Ridge (BO) and October 23 in Essex (AGr). A leucistic Red-tailed Hawk soared over Lighthouse Point October 5 (LJ). The season's first Rough-legged Hawk was a dark morph October 26 at Lighthouse Point (CZ). A **Yellow Rail** presented itself briefly October 10 at Milford Point (FG, PDu), and one was flushed while a hay field was being mowed during the first week of November in Salem (DBi). Two **Common Moorhens** for the season consisted of a summering bird that remained through at least September 17 at a pond at Stratford Great Meadows (FMa et al.) and a juvenile September 12 at

Cemetery Pond in Litchfield, a place where breeding has been confirmed in the past (DT, FZ). A **Sandhill Crane** on September 5 in Old Saybrook (AO) fit the pattern of increasing reports of migrants. More intriguing were two that were first reported in the last week of July in Norfolk and were seen feeding in a recently mowed hayfield in early August (ADe, HM). What were likely the same birds were seen as late as November 23 in nearby Canaan (AGi). Although no evidence of breeding was found, nesting has recently been confirmed at several eastern locations, including one in Maine.

An excellent high count of 23 American Golden Plovers was made at Ferry Lane, South Windsor, on September 9 (TA). A **Snowy Plover**, representing a first state record, was found October 1 at Sandy Point, West Haven, and remained to at least November 16 (JHo, please see feature article, this issue). Two Solitary Sandpipers were late on October 16 at Horse Pond in Madison (FMc). Migrant Upland Sandpipers were at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, August

2 (ER); Rocky Hill Meadows August 18 (PCi), South Windsor August 31 (TA) and two at Johnnycake Mountain, Burlington, September 30 (PCa). The best count of Whimbrel was five on August 13 at Milford Point (CB). The 18 Hudsonian Godwits at Watch Rock, Old Lyme, on August 16 (HG) was the largest group in the state since 19 were at Sherwood I., Westport, on August 19, 1990. A Marbled Godwit was at HBSP on August 22 (FNw), and two were in Greenwich on August 29 (TBa). The declining Red Knot put on a decent showing this fall with a high of 50 on August 5 at Short Beach, Stratford, (CB) among reports totaling about 170 individuals.

### **Calidrids through Woodpeckers**

A calidrid believed to be a faded adult **Little Stint** was reported in detail by a very experienced observer on August 1 at Sandy Point, West Haven; there are no accepted state records to date (JHo). Reports of about 15 Western Sandpipers included eight at Sandy Point August 22 (JHo); one was inland at

Trap Falls Reservoir, Shelton, August 15 (CB). Baird's Sandpiper reports included singles August 22 to September 1 at Milford Point (PF); August 24-25 at HBSP (PF); September 4 at HBSP (TA) and September 21 at Milford Point (PF), plus two at Sandy Point on September 25-27 (BD et al.). The high count of White-rumped Sandpipers was 18 on September 9 at Ferry Lane, South Windsor, along with 20 Pectoral Sandpipers (TA, ADA). Another good Pectoral count, among numerous reports, was 16 on October 17 at Sandy Point (JHo). The six Stilt Sandpipers for the season consisted of two each on August 10 at Stratford Great Meadows (FMa) and September 11 at Sandy Point (SSp) plus singles August 1 at Sandy Point (JHo) and August 14 at Milford Point (MSa). The season's only Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at HBSP September 12 (RDo et al.). Four Long-billed Dowitchers were found October 31 at Mondo Ponds in Milford and stayed through the season after being joined by a fifth individual (DV et al.). The season's only **Wilson's Phalarope** was at Birdseye boat launch in

Stratford August 13 (TL).

A Bonaparte's Gull was inland October 2 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (DR). An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull arrived at Shippan Point, Stamford, on September 9 (PDu). A leucistic Great Black-backed Gull turned up at Sandy Point on August 21 (PCo). Two Caspian Terns were at Sandy Point September 26 (JHo), with one there and at HBSP on October 16 (JHo, FMc). Royal Tern visits have plummeted this decade. The only report came from Old Lyme on September 8 (TH). The tern roost at Sandy Point held 2,000 Common Terns and 500 Least Terns on August 7 (ER). The high count for Forster's Tern was 100+ on October 3 at Sandy Point, West Haven (FMa). Forty-five were still in Bridgeport on November 6 (CB), with the latest reports on November 9 at Westport (FMa) and Fairfield (CB). At the front end of the season, 40+ were at Harvey's Beach, Old Saybrook, September 6-19 (JO). A good run of Black Terns included a high of seven on August 1 at Sandy Point (JHo). The Black Skimmer breeding colony peaked at 30+ at Sandy Point on

August 30 (GN).

A Monk Parakeet nest was found in September in New Britain; it remains to be seen if they'll become established there (JMe). A **Snowy Owl** appeared November 8 at HBSP (NL). The first Short-eared Owl report came from Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford, on October 18 (TH). Widespread double-figure reports of Common Nighthawks in late August and early September were dwarfed by a flight of c. 1,070 in Stamford on September 10 (PDu). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was late October 13 at a feeder in Stratford (FMA). Red-headed Woodpeckers staged an excellent flight, with 30+ reports well scattered around the state. The first flew by Quaker Ridge in Greenwich September 3 (BO) and at Lighthouse Point at least four were present October 5 (PCa et al.) followed by at least five on October 10 (SMA). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker September 19 at East Rock Park, New Haven, was at the front end of migration (JBe et al.). A Northern Flicker at Bluff Point, Groton, on October 11 showed red shafts (FNo), probably indicative of an

intergrade.

### **Flycatchers through Warblers**

The first of six Olive-sided Flycatchers was in Glastonbury August 19 (RAM); the last was at Saugatuck Falls, Redding, on September 21 (LTi). The first of seven Yellow-bellied Flycatchers for the season was in New Hartford August 26 (PCa); Bluff Point recorded two on September 1 (JHo). Two **Western Kingbirds** for the season were at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport September 30 (RS) and at Windham Airport October 23–November 1 (BBi et al.). The first **Northern Shrike** turned up November 10 in Bloomfield (LC); the only other report came from Somers on November 30 (JS). A September 30 flight at Bluff Point produced 75 Red-eyed Vireos (DP). The latest of 10 Philadelphia Vireo reports was October 3 in Waterbury (JMe). Lighthouse Point in New Haven, noted for fall Blue Jay flights, had 7,500 on October 1 (BBa). Add another confirmed nesting site for Common Raven. An adult was feeding two young at

a cliff face in Avon in June (PCi). Another individual was far from normal raven territory at the Waterford/East Lyme boundary November 15 (HG).

A **Cave Swallow** made a low pass through Lighthouse Point November 8 (GH). Other reports consisted of a probable one on November 14 at Lighthouse (SMA); seven on November 25 at Greenwich Point (MSa); one at Lighthouse on November 26 (JHo) and a probable one at Sandy Point the same day (SBa). Remarkably, a species first confirmed in the state in 1999 is now staging flights that border on the predictable. Four unfledged Black-capped Chickadee chicks were found in a cavity when a tree was cut down in Hamden on September 25, a very late date. They were taken into rehab (fide JZi, JA). The September 30 flight at Bluff Point included 100 Tufted Titmice, 10+ Red-breasted Nuthatches and 400 to 500 mixed Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets (DP). A pre-dawn flight on September 14 included 200+ Veerys at Watertown (RN).

Bluff Point produced two Golden-winged Warblers

on September 1 (SSI). A Brewster's Warbler was there the same day (JHo), as was one of eight Orange-crowned Warblers reported statewide for the season (SSI). That Orange-crown was early, but one on August 6 at Kalmia Sanctuary in Harwinton was extraordinarily so (RBr). A Nashville Warbler was a bit late November 4 in Wilton (LTi). Cape May Warblers remain hard to find (and probably to identify) with only seven reports for the season, the last of them October 3 at Bluff Point (GW). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** on November 17 at Osbornedale State Park in Derby (MSt) fit this species' arrival pattern. If accepted this would be the ninth state record, eight of them from 1991 to present. A widespread arrival of Palm Warblers October 11 included 70+ in Wilton (JBe).

A flight of 600+ warblers September 1 at Bluff Point included 186 American Redstarts (JHo). A **Prothonotary Warbler**, a species more regular in spring, was in Norwalk on August 22 (WH). The only Kentucky Warbler was at Greenwich Point August 22 (MSa). The only Connecticut Warbler

was reported from Cove Island, Stamford, on September 21 (PDu). The first two of about 12 Mourning Warblers were at Milford Point August 17 (CW); the latest was at Woodbridge community gardens October 13 (JMo). Hooded Warblers, uncommon in fall, were in Westport September 1 (FMa), in Greenwich September 11 (BO) and at Bluff Point September 20 (SMo), with two at Osbornedale State Park, Derby, on September 25 (MSt). A late Wilson's Warbler was found on November 21 in Milford (DV). There were eight reports of Yellow-breasted Chat for the season ranging from August 24 to October 16, mostly near the coast (CW et al.).

### **Scarlet Tanager through Evening Grosbeak**

The September 1 flight at Bluff Point included 55 Scarlet Tanagers (JHo). An American Tree Sparrow was a record early arrival October 1 in Stratford (CB). The first two of six Clay-colored Sparrows were found September 30 at Cove Island (PDu) and Johnnycake Mountain, Burlington (PCa). Others were

at Cove Island October 18 (JW), South Windsor October 24 (RM), Sherwood Island October 31 (FG) and HBSP November 13 (JCo). The first of 15 Vesper Sparrow reports came on September 29 in Burlington (DR); the best count was three on October 16 at Allen's Meadow, Wilton (JBe). **Lark Sparrows** were at Bauer Park, Madison, on October 10 (NP), and Cove Island October 16-17 (PDu). Single Grasshopper Sparrows visited the capped New Milford landfill October 18 (ADi, EA) and Cove Island October 30 (PDu). The first Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was at Barn Island, Stonington, on September 26 (MSt), followed by two at Sandy Point the next day (JZi). Long Beach in Stratford, which had seven Nelson's on October 8, may be the best place to see this species (CB) although its movements in Connecticut are still coming to light. Five were at Barn Island, Stonington, October 17 (GW et al.). A heavy sparrow movement October 13 brought 200+ Song Sparrows and 200+ Swamp Sparrows to Silver Sands State Park in Milford (FMa). A White-crowned Sparrow

was early September 24 at Cove Island, Stamford (JBe). A leucistic Dark-eyed Junco was in Harwinton October 30 (PCa).

Two of the season's three **Blue Grosbeaks** turned up on September 23, at Rocky Hill meadows (PCi) and at Cove Island, Stamford (PDu, JMh); Cove Island produced another one October 21-31 (PDu et al.). A good concentration of 25+ Indigo Buntings was at Allen's Meadow, Wilton, September 25 (JBe). The first two of about 20 **Dickcissels** for the season were at Silver Sands State Park in Milford on August 24 (FMa). Ten of them were found from October 6-10. An excellent count of 18 Eastern Meadowlarks was at Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, on August 7 (ER). The season's first six Rusty Blackbirds were at Cromwell Meadows September 25 (MM); the high count was 150+ on October 12 at Cemetery Pond, Litchfield (DR). Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport held 15 **Boat-tailed Grackles** on November 18 (CB), and the flock was seen through season's end in nearby Stratford (RH et al.). Massive icterid movements occur

like clockwork at Lighthouse Point in the first seven to ten days of November. This year November 8 produced 110,000 Common Grackles and 10,000 Red-winged Blackbirds (GH). Baltimore Orioles peaked at 40 on September 1 at Bluff Point (JHo).

The first Pine Siskin in what developed as a modest flight was in Sterling October 17 (RDi). Common Redpolls made a one-day foray into the state on November 15, when one was seen at Greenwich (BO) and six were in West Hartford (PCi). The only Evening Grosbeak reports were 20 in Greenwich on November 13 (JZe) and eight in West Hartland on November 17 (PCa).

Observers: Claudia Ahrens, William Ahrens, Randy Ameen (RAM), Jayne Amico, Ralph Amodei (RAd), Tim Antanaitis, Elliott Ashe, Rene Baade (RBA), Jim Bair (JBA), Bill Banks (BBa), Tom Baptist (TBa), Robert Barbieri (RBr), Charles Barnard, Scott Baron (SBa), Dan Barvir (DBa), Larry Bauscher, Joe Bear (JBe), David Bingham (DBi), Bob Bitondi (BBi), Steve Broker (SBr), Tom Burke (TBU), Paul Carrier

(PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), John Clancy (JCl), Linda Clancy, Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Neil Currie, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Ayreslea Denny (ADe), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Bob Dewire, Towny Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Patrick Dugan (PDu), Cynthia Ehlinger (CEh), Carl Ekroth (CEk), John Eykelhoff, Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Sam Fried, Paul Fusco Frank Gallo, Ted Gilman, Art Gingert (AGi), Hank Golet, Andy Griswold (AGr), Lorraine Gunderson, William Haffey, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHa), Roy Harvey, Simon Harvey (SHr), Ted Hendrickson, Julian Hough (JHo), Katy Hubbard, Jim Hunter (JHu) Jalna Jaeger (JJa), Lynn James, John Johnson (JJo), Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Marie Kennedy, Betty Kleiner (BKl), Brian Kleinman (BKn), Cindy Kobak, Steve Kotchko, Andy Krofina, Roger Lawson, David Lawton, Nita Levenduski, Stephen Living, Carolyn Longstreth (CLn), Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Todd Lovell, Richard Macsuga, Frank Mantlik (FMa), Patsy Mason, John Maynard (JMa),

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## PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough  
Answer to Photo Challenge 48

It's a fine spring morning and as you look out the window, at the bottom of the yard you notice a bird perched at the entrance to your beehive. Intrigued by the strange bird and its behavior you take a closer look. It's a rather robust bird with strong bill and feet, but otherwise it's fairly nondescript and monochromatic.

The lack of markings rule out buntings and sparrows and this is confirmed by size – the bird looks fairly large when compared with the bees, much larger than any sparrow or bunting. The dark beady eye, size and uniform plumage suggest a female tanager, but which one? Scarlet Tanager is a common migrant throughout Connecticut during migration, while Summer Tanagers are a very scarce overshoot from more southerly states, occurring predominantly in late April-May, and occasionally in fall.

So, what do we look for to separate the female tanagers? When you look closely at both Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, the females both have stout bills and beady eyes. The overall plumage tone is a grayish green, brighter and slightly more suffused with yellowish on the under parts (Scarlet) or a slightly more mustardy-yellow tone (Summer). Without true color representation and direct comparison of the two species, the differences in plumage tone and bill size become



useless, but with experience, the slightly longer, more conical bill of Summer Tanagers gives them away to experienced observers. The slightly longer bill and smaller eye of our bird point to it being a female/immature Summer Tanager, and that is what it is!

Compared with female Scarlet Tanager, the bill is proportionately larger and paler (orange-horn). Female Scarlets tend to have a shorter, more grayish-toned bill and slightly larger eye, which, to me at least, lends them a more 'surprised' look.

Also, in life, this bird showed a slightly more peaked shape to the crown, another subtle character associated with Summer Tanager as opposed to Scarlet, which often appears rounder-headed.

The uniformly greenish tail (slightly darker and more contrasting in Scarlet) and greenish/grayish-yellow underwing coverts are other good pro-Summer features. The latter are useful pointers with overflying migrants at places such as Bluff Point, when bill size and shape is indeterminable.

One other clue is the bird's behavior. I have never seen a Scarlet Tanager actively hunting bees at hives. This is apparently a somewhat typical trait of Summer Tanagers on their breeding grounds, where they are known colloquially as "bee-birds."

This female/immature Summer Tanager was photographed by myself at Hank Golet's residence in Old Lyme in January 2004.



*Photo Challenge 49 Identify the species. Answer next issue.*

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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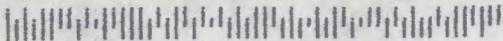
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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



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# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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## ABOUT OUR COVER

### Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

By Paul Carrier

Paul, a resident of Hawinton, is a well-known artist and illustrator. An avid hawk watcher, nature writer and photographer, he operates an advertising studio at his home. We've devoted a good portion of this issue to his cover subject, one of the least-known of the state's regularly occurring migrants.

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

By Greg Hanisek

One of my birding mentors, an elegant country justice of the peace, imparted words of wisdom on various things avian as he drew deeply on his ever-present pipe. To this day, the smell of pipe tobacco brings back memories of car trips full of natural history banter and specific bits of commentary that remain apropos to this day.

On the matter of the lumping and splitting of species, a subject that turned the birding world topsy-turvy in the 1970s when the Myrtle Warbler and Baltimore Oriole disappeared with the stroke of a pen, my friend The Judge readily put things in perspective. With a wreath of smoke encircling his head, he exhaled reflectively and said, "You know, Greg, the birds haven't changed. Just the way we think about them."

This is a good point to keep in mind when considering latter day changes in avian nomenclature and taxonomy. Our featured species in this issue, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, is a case in point. *Ammodramus nelsoni* wasn't suddenly discovered and dropped in birders' laps. It had been there all along, submerged within the species known until the late 1990s as the Sharp-tailed Sparrow, (*Ammodramus caudacutus*).

So what happened?

In 1993, J.D. Rising and J. Avise, as well as J.S. Greenlaw, published articles in *The Auk* describing evidence that the five races of Sharp-tailed Sparrow should be split into two species. The three northern-most races would be called Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (from west to east, *Ammodramus nelsoni nelsoni*, *A. n. alterus* and *A. n. subvirgatus*). The two southern-most races would be called Salt-marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (our Connecticut breeder, *Ammodramus caudacutus caudacutus*, and the more southerly, *A. c. diversus*, which is essentially identical to our local subspecies and is unlikely to

occur in Connecticut). The split became official in 1996 with the publication of the 40th Supplement to the AOU Checklist.

Connecticut birders scrambled to figure out what this all meant. For me, The Judge's words proved worth remembering. Nothing had changed about the birds. It was just time to think of them differently. The eastern-most race of what we now call Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was well-known to discerning New England birders more than a half-century ago, when subspecies were the coin of the ornithological realm. Back then it was subspecies, rather than species, that carried English names. The distinctively marked northeastern subspecies, *subvirgatus*, was known as Acadian Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Bird books of the day, such as Forbush's Birds of Massachusetts, illustrated it beautifully, and older Peterson field guides described it in an appendix on subspecies. Back then the name Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow applied only to the western-most subspecies of the as-yet-unsplit *Ammodramus caudacutus*.

The current state of affairs offers room for confusion, since the western-most (*nelsoni*) and eastern-most (*subvirgatus*) Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows look quite different from each other. However, in the years since the split occurred, a number of Connecticut birders have become adept at finding Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, primarily in the fall. In this issue we will explore their apparent status in Connecticut (still not fully worked out) and offer tips on how to find this intriguing species.

Some identification information is included, but this is primarily a bird-finding exercise. The critical separation of subspecies is beyond the scope of this article and in some cases, especially with suspected *alterus*, will not be possible in the field. References are provided for those who want to explore this area further.

# FINDING NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW IN CONNECTICUT

By Charles Barnard

Migrant Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) can start appearing in Connecticut coastal marshes with the arrival of the first cool fronts of mid- to late September. At this time, a walk along any of the marsh edges can yield to a persistent birder with a planned approach a view of this species. The birds seem to come through in clusters. One day will produce perhaps half a dozen or more, and then there may be a gap of several days until the next group arrives. This pattern repeats itself until about the end of the first week in November. After that, the Nelson's Sharp-tailed becomes difficult or impossible to find in Connecticut. The peak of this species' migration through the state seems to take place during the first half of October. Only once have I found a Nelson's Sharp-tailed in winter here in Connecticut. That bird appeared to be a Nelson's of one of the inland races.

The nominate race, *A. n. nelsoni*, breeds primarily in the Canadian prairie provinces and is apparently the race least likely to occur in Connecticut. *A. n. alterus*, which nests in the area of James Bay and Hudson Bay, is more likely to be encountered in Connecticut in fall migration, but positive identification is problematic. The last race is *A. n. subvirgatus*, more commonly known as the "Acadian" race. David Sibley, in his fine field guide, refers to this race as the "Atlantic" race. (I prefer the term "Acadian" because it more precisely defines the breeding range. Besides, in most instances I regret to see the older terminology lost.) It has been stated in at least one text/field guide that birds of the Acadian race are probably the most numerous migrants through the Northeast, but the full racial status of birds passing through Connecticut remains to be worked out. My observations in western Connecticut suggest both "inland" and Acadian birds can be found in autumn, but most observations in eastern Connecticut involve apparent Acadian birds (Chris Elphick et al.,

personal communication).

The Acadian race of Nelson's is usually recognizable in the field, given a decent view. However, there are times when it is difficult to make positive identifications. Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows and the Acadian race of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow sometimes hybridize where they overlap between the Parker River in coastal Massachusetts and the Weskeag Marsh on the southwest area of Penobscot Bay in Maine. There also can be overlap in field characters between *subvirgatus* and *alterus* (Sibley 1996). Yet, it is safe to say that if you get a decent look, in most cases you should be able to identify an Acadian race of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. The other two races, the nominate *nelsoni* and *alterus*, also show overlap, according to the literature. While the brightest and most distinctly marked *nelsoni* should be identifiable as such, those birds are apparently extremely rare or non-existent in Connecticut. We can identify them together as an "inland race" of Nelson's and leave it at that. It seems likely, based upon the location of the breeding grounds, that the majority of any inland birds passing through Connecticut are *alterus* from James Bay/Hudson Bay.

So how can we best see any of these? My approach is pretty simple. I look for extensive areas of the taller variety of *Spartina alterniflora*, the tallest of the Spartinas growing in our marshes. These grasses will have inflorescences that are heavy with seed in the fall. This seed in turn attracts the migrant Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. I prefer to look for the birds when the tide is low enough to expose the mud at the base of the grasses. This allows the birds two advantages: The first is that the birds can simply walk about on the muddy surface at the base and pick off fallen seed. Here they can also find various arthropods, larvae and perhaps small snails that they feed upon before the seed heads are ripe. Also, the birds probably expend less energy feeding this way than they would if they were clinging to the plant stem near the top and picking off seed. The second advantage is that this allows the birds to stay down out of sight of the numerous raptors (Merlin, Sharp-shinned hawk, Northern Harrier etc.) that are

## An Identification Primer



Jim Zipp photographs

**Figures 1 and 2 (from left):** This Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (Figure 1), photographed in late September at Sandy Point in West Haven, illustrates key points in separating Nelson's from Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (Figure 2). Note the blurry breast and flank streaking, blurry "whisker" mark, and the lack of contrast between the throat, malar area and ground color of the breast. The Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed, photographed in late spring in Madison, shows crisp streaking over a pale to whitish breast, a crisp "whisker" and a white throat strongly contrasting with a richly colored malar. Note that in Figure 1 the Nelson's darker ground color of the breast contrasts sharply with the white belly. This bird shows the washed out colors (drab grays and dingy buffy orange) typical of the Acadian race. However, Chris Elphick cautions that worn adult Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows can appear quite dull. In direct comparison with a fresh juvenile Saltmarsh, such a bird could be mistaken for Acadian race of Nelson's. "Inland" races are generally more brightly colored but still show the smudgy streaking and lack of throat-malar-breast contrast that help separate them from Saltmarsh. "Inland" birds also show more rufous in the wings than Saltmarsh and reddish brown streaks on the lower flanks (Sibley 1996, 2000).

frequently hunting the marshes.

Fortunately, the birds respond well to "spishing" early on. They will usually come fluttering up to the top of the grasses

to look for whatever is producing that sound. They often cling to the top long enough to give a viewer a decent look. Sometimes they even forget their caution and start feeding on the seeds by pecking at them directly from the inflorescence at the top of the grass. That is good for you, the observer. It is sometimes not good for them. Case in point: On a field trip to Hammonnasset Beach State Park one October, a group of us watched a Merlin dive on a marsh sparrow (of unknown species) that got careless in the open. The Merlin grabbed it and flew upwards before releasing the sparrow. The released sparrow dived for cover only to be grabbed again by the Merlin. This routine was repeated another time before the Merlin had had its fun and let the sparrow make it back into cover. By mid-October the birds are not as responsive to spushing. They have become very wary and difficult to get a good look at. Patience and persistence are often required.

At the higher tides, when the bases of the low marsh grasses are submerged, the birds sometimes can be found near the marsh edges in other types of grasses. However, only rarely have I seen one in the beach grass growing on the sandy dunes. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows also feed in the high marsh where it is not so wet, and other grass species such as *Spartina patens* and *Distichlis spicata* are still providing seed. Chris Elphick has found them in those situations, where he reports that flushed sharp-taileds "promptly fly to the nearest mosquito ditch, or other tall vegetation." The difficulty for most birders will be in accessing the high marsh to search. Kayakers and canoers have an advantage here. It is also possible that the birds may be within the tangles of the higher grasses just waiting out the tide.

It seems logical that an inland race of Nelson's could also be found in inland sedge marshes at this time of the year, and there have been inland reports historically. Wet meadows and cattail swamps may both be good places to look for an inland race of Nelson's during migration in either fall or spring. Documentation of such finds would add to our knowledge of the bird's Connecticut status.

Acadian race Nelson's pass through Connecticut on the spring migration also, from late May into mid June. (I confess that I have never seen one in the spring. Most of us, including myself, are probably inland chasing warblers when Acadians pass through headed north). The inland race, *alterus*, may well pass through Connecticut in the spring also. I could find no record of any of the inland races here in the spring, although that could be attributable at least in part to lack of effort before the species were split.

So, there is a lot that we don't yet know about Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. A good way to add to our knowledge would be to simply report the birds, whenever possible, as either Acadian race (*subvirgatus*) or as one of the inland races. The large majority of reports seem to be of "Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow" without any mention of the race involved. More extensive recording could help clarify the situation, bearing in mind that it is sometimes difficult to be sure of the race involved. There are those birds which just don't seem like "clean" examples of either Acadian or inland races. Sharpening ID skills is definitely in order.

Another benefit of looking for Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow is that in the process of doing so, birders are going to be seeing the more familiar Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows and Seaside Sparrows - both Connecticut nesters - as well. Those reports also add to our knowledge of when these birds begin and end migration through Connecticut.

The best reason for getting out and looking for these birds is that it is both fun and challenging. Enjoy it and good birding.

Chris Elphick provided invaluable comment and insight. He and his students at University of Connecticut at Storrs are currently conducting banding studies of marsh sparrows in Connecticut. Louis Bevier provided significant help with comments, photo identifications and references.

## Fall Banding Numbers

| Site                   | Date   | Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow |                | Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow |          |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------|
|                        |        | HY                             | AHY            | HY                            | AHY      |
| Barn Island            | 12-Sep | 4                              | 7              | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 1-Oct  | 3                              | 1              | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 15-Oct | 2 <sup>a</sup>                 | 3              | 0                             | 1        |
| East River             | 5-Sep  | 1                              | 6              | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 17-Sep | 0                              | 1 <sup>b</sup> | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 3-Oct  | 1                              | 4 <sup>c</sup> | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 6-Sep  | 4                              | 2              | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 30-Sep | 2                              | 6 <sup>d</sup> | 1                             | 0        |
|                        | 9-Oct  | 1                              | 2 <sup>e</sup> | 0                             | 2        |
|                        | 21-Oct | 0                              | 2              | 1                             | 0        |
| Milford Point          | 19-Sep | 3                              | 3              | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 4-Oct  | 5                              | 2              | 5                             | 0        |
|                        | 17-Oct | 0                              | 0              | 1                             | 1        |
| McKinney,<br>Westbrook | 3-Sep  | 5                              | 6              | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 20-Sep | 2                              | 5 <sup>f</sup> | 0                             | 0        |
|                        | 2-Oct  | 0                              | 2              | 1                             | 1        |
|                        | 10-Oct | 0                              | 0              | 1                             | 0        |
| <b>Total</b>           |        | <b>34</b>                      | <b>52</b>      | <b>10</b>                     | <b>5</b> |

a one of these birds is a Recapture, first caught on 5 Sept at Guilford  
b Recapture - first caught on 5 September at same site.  
c Two of these birds are Recaptured, first caught on 5 September at same site  
d one of these birds is a Recapture, first caught on 6 September at same site  
e one of these birds is a Recapture, first caught on 30 September at same site  
f one of these birds is a Recapture, first caught on 3 September at same site

*Elphick et al. unpublished data*

**Figure 3:** This is a summary of fall banding data from 2002, part of a study headed by Chris Elphick of UConn-Storrs. Notice that in September essentially all sparrows are Saltmarsh Sharp-taileds. In October, Nelson's start to show up and are almost as common as Saltmarsh, which decline in numbers as they complete their moult and move out. Another important point is that essentially every Nelson's caught had completed its moult and was in fresh plumage. A bird in moult, especially in September, therefore is very likely a Saltmarsh.

## Where to Look

Following are a series of tips from local birders on how to find Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in Connecticut. All of the information applies to autumn. So far birders have had little success finding this species in spring, when it apparently moves late in the season and may pass through quickly en route to not-too-distant nesting grounds. Any intrepid birders who make a special effort to find Nelson's in spring will help to fill in a gap in our knowledge.

### **Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, Stonington**

The single best place and time to find Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow in southeastern Connecticut is at the first impoundment of Barn Island in mid-to-late October. High tide might be preferable, as there will be fewer places for the birds to hide, but a walk through the marsh is necessary and will be all the more soggy. Though hip-boots are not required, boots or old sneakers are recommended. Beware of mosquito ditches, as some are covered over by summer's growth and have slippery, unstable edges. Going with at least one other birder will increase your chances of getting good and identifiable looks.

Following the road into Barn Island from Palmer Neck Road, one should park at the last gate on the left (east side) before the boat launch. Walk down the wooded trail past the gate down to the first impoundment marsh. A narrow beach and Little Narragansett Bay will be visible to your right (south). Follow the path until you get past the first sluiceway and look for openings to get into the marsh. The best access is at the eastern end of the first impoundment near the next wooded section of the trail.

Walking out into the *Spartina* marsh, one should head south toward Little Narragansett Bay. There seem to be more sharp-tailed sparrows the closer that you get to the bay, especially near the scrub-shrub on the border of the marsh and narrow beach on the bay. Though getting a good look is

difficult, the birds tend to flush into the shrubs where longer, clearer views are more likely. Patience and diligence are required.

On 17 Oct 2004 Phil Rusch, Scott Tsagarakis, Andrew Dasinger, Phil Budlong and I were able to observe five Nelson's Sharp-tailed and five Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Though numbers are a best estimate, we feel confident in our accuracy. Though many looks were unsatisfactory for identification, the ratio of each species identified was 1/1. Every bird determined to be Nelson's was of the subvirgatus or Acadian race. Bob Dewire et al. observed one of each saltmarsh species at Barn Island on 19 December 2004 on the Napatree CBC.

As a further note, I saw three Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows (Acadian) at nearby Charlestown Breach Way in Rhode Island on 15 Oct 15 2004. Though I observed 13 birds total, all seen well enough to identify to species were Nelson's.

The preceding information was gathered from personal experience after following advice from Chris Elphick via Phil Rusch.

Glenn Williams



*Jim Zipp photo*

*This Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was photographed in late September at Sandy Point in West Haven.*

## Long Beach, Stratford

The Long Beach area has been a good spot to find Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Simply walk the beach beyond the western end of the parking lot on the marsh side. As you walk parallel to the *Spartina*, simply stop and spish once in awhile to see what you can draw up from the base of the grasses. For some reason, the stretch beyond the western end of the parking lot is more productive than any other at Long Beach, although there is plenty of *Spartina alterniflora* throughout the area. I am sure there are other productive pockets out there that could be found by a persistent birder who does not mind slogging through mucky tidal channels.

Charles Barnard

## Milford Point

At Milford Point I have had the greatest success along the inside (marshward) side of the barrier beaches. The birds most often occur in the *Spartina alterniflora* directly adjacent to the beach. Often they would be difficult to observe, but if you notice movement in the grass and do some 'spishing' they may perch up and allow for good viewing.

When the tide is high, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows will sometimes occur in other brushy vegetation higher up on the beach, such as high tide bush, *Iva frutescens*, (as I recall, all individuals identified as non-Acadians have been in such areas). I've had the most success early in the morning, but that may have been an artifact of when I was doing surveys. Most of the birds I have seen were in mid- to late October, but I may have had one or two in spring migration over the years. All of the spring observations have been on the basis of song alone, as Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows do have a distinctive song.

Nearly all of the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows I have encountered in Connecticut have been of the more distinctive

subvirgatus or 'Acadian' race. I have had perhaps one or two over the years that appeared to be of one of the 'inland' races.

Patrick Comins

### **Sandy Point, West Haven**

My experience with Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in Connecticut in the fall is fairly limited. In late September, I've come across individuals and small groups of two or three when birding Sandy Point. They can be hard to find as they are usually pretty quiet and preoccupied with foraging in the tall grasses and small shrubs that are found along the trails and surrounding the large tidal pool. "Pishing" can sometimes get their attention, and they will pop up to investigate. That is how I've most often found them. I've not found them to be "regulars" there and consider them a pleasant bonus.

Jim Zipp

### **Cove Island, Stamford**

Cove Island Park, located at Cove Road and Weed Avenue, has one of the smallest pieces of habitat that regularly attract Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. To reach the new Important Bird Area, go straight into the park past the skating rink to the southwest corner of the parking lot. Park near the ball fields. Walk west along the south edge of the ball fields to find the trail that goes south into the IBA. Once in the IBA, walk south and slightly east to the beach. The small *Spartina* marsh is obvious and usually attracts one to three Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows from about 8 Oct to 20 Oct. An hour before high tide is the best time for viewing them.

Patrick Dugan

### **Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison**

The extensive marshes at Connecticut's premier birding location provide excellent habitat for our featured species. In fact, the amount of habitat may seem a bit daunting in a search for a stealthy sparrow. However, general suggestions noted for other locations apply. Careful scrutiny of marsh edges, especially at the Meig's Point parking area, Willard's and Cedar

islands and the moraine trail east from Meig's Point, should prove fruitful in October.

Greg Hanisek

### Sherwood Island State Park, Westport

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow regularly stops here in autumn, with the most sightings in the second half of October. As many as eight have been recorded in a single day. The lone spring sighting was on 24 May, in keeping with the later spring migration schedule attributed to this species. Upon entering the park, proceed to the model airplane field. The birds occur in the saltmarsh immediately north of the field. They can be found along the edge of the marsh adjacent to the field or about 100 yards to the east or west. The birds are best found by walking just inside the marsh near its edge. Birds encountered in this manner will often perch up and afford good views.

data from Richard Soffer

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## THE 2004-2005 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Stephen P. Broker

On first examination, the 2004-2005 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count would seem to have been a fairly lackluster event, for diverse reasons. The 17 bird counts sponsored by local or statewide bird clubs and organizations under the auspices of the National Audubon Society produced the lowest species total in 30 years, with a mere 159 count day and no count week species. The 360,000 birds counted, including those found on the recently established Napatree, Rhode Island, CBC, represent the second lowest tally of total individuals in 30 years. No species new to the statewide count were found on the seventeen CBCs located wholly or partly in Connecticut. We had the smallest participant turnout (total observers) in 30 years and the smallest aggregate of feeder watchers during these past three decades. One count, the Edwin Way Teale - Trail Wood CBC first established some 20 years ago, put a small number of birders in the field but did not obtain the coverage necessary to submit results to the NAS Bird-Source Web site. In addition, the weather during the December 18-January 3 CBC season was mild to the point of being bland, with unseasonably high temperatures on most counts and essentially no snowfall during the three count weekends. Most counts were conducted under partly cloudy to cloudy conditions with no snow or rain. It seems pretty dull and tedious, right? Maybe so, but maybe not.

As implied above, recent Connecticut CBCs have produced some startling finds that have expanded the 30-year statewide list to 253 count day species and an additional 7 species observed during the count periods (three days before and three days after each given count day). These most recent additions to the statewide CBC list include Summer Tanager in 2003-04 (described in the April 2004 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*), Storm-Petrel (unconfirmed as to species but most probably Wilson's), Thick-billed Murre, Rufous

Hummingbird, and Black-throated Gray Warbler in 2002-03, MacGillivray's Warbler in 2001-02, Pacific Loon in 2000-01, Blue-headed Vireo and Yellow-throated Warbler in 1999-2000, and Purple Gallinule (count week) and Blackburnian Warbler in 1998-99. The late 1980s and early 1990s produced similar first occurrences on Connecticut CBCs, including Painted Bunting (count week), Golden-crowned Sparrow, Tufted Duck, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Piping Plover (count week), Cinnamon Teal, Mountain Bluebird, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Chestnut-collared Longspur. (The Connecticut Ornithological Association's Avian Records Committee reviews each of these reports for possible acceptance on the Connecticut Check-List.) With these exciting near-annual discoveries, one gets a little jaded if there isn't anything new that turns up on the latest round of counts. Nevertheless, let's take a second look at this year's results, for there is much to be gained by a closer examination of the data.

What rarities did we find this time around? The best statewide reports were of Sandhill Crane at Hartford, two Long-billed Dowitchers at Stratford-Milford, 30 Razorbills at New London and another 87 at Napatree, Blue-headed Vireo at New Haven, and Boat-tailed Grackle (count week) at Stratford-Milford. Among the six northern Connecticut counts, the most significant finds were of Greater White-fronted Goose at Storrs, Long-tailed Duck at Hartford (on Batterson Pond – new to the Hartford count), Black Vulture (count week) at Litchfield Hills, Golden Eagle and Short-eared Owl (count week) at Storrs (with excellent supporting details provided for the count by compiler Steve Rogers), Pine Warbler at Hartford and three at Litchfield Hills, and Lincoln's Sparrow at Hartford ("well-described in Avon/Farmington" and "new to our count" as per compilers Jay Kaplan and Stephen Davis). Not to be outdone, the five mid-state counts produced a similar list of rarities, including Greater White-fronted Goose and Long-tailed Duck (count week) at Woodbury-Roxbury, Golden Eagle at Pawling, Pine Warbler at Woodbury-Roxbury, and also four Bonaparte's Gulls at Woodbury-Roxbury. Along the coast, Greenwich-Stamford,

New Haven (count week), New London, and Napatree each recorded a single Common Raven, and Old Lyme-Saybrook counted an eye-and-ear-catching 15 ravens! All in all, these finds do not make for a bad list of early winter birds in an otherwise "off year." I am very appreciative of the excellent compiler comments and supporting details provided by compilers Gary Palmer and Brian O'Toole (Greenwich-Stamford), Chris Loscalzo (New Haven), Steve Mayo (Stratford-Milford), Jay Kaplan and Stephen Davis (Hartford), Steve Rogers (Storrs), and Carena Pooth and Angela Dimmitt (Pawling).

The flashier bird species recorded annually elicit much deserved interest. But, it is the species population trends, becoming increasingly evident from year to year, that represent the greatest long-term value of these early winter bird censuses. Past review articles by Fred Sibley and by this author have drawn attention to a number of such population increases and declines in the state. A 60-year review of Connecticut CBC results is presently in preparation. For now, let's consider how this year's CBC results bring clarity and confusion to the ever-changing avifaunal picture in the state.

### **Anatids through Phasianids**

Greater White-fronted Goose has been seen in nine of the last ten years. Single birds were found this year at Storrs and Woodbury-Roxbury. Last year, Hartford and Stratford-Milford each recorded this species. Canada Goose numbers have totaled more than 50,000 in four of the last six years. Fifteen to 20 years ago, an average of 35,000 geese were being seen on Christmas Bird Counts, so it's apparent that far more golfers are forced to clean their spikes these days. Brant were counted in numbers at half-strength of the four previous years. Brant numbers do fluctuate significantly over a period of time, and 628 this year is still a good count total. Mute Swan occurred in the lowest numbers since 1981-82. Wood Ducks were not well-represented this year, and Gadwall were recorded in lowest numbers since 1983-84. Greenwich-Stamford found the only Eurasian Wigeon of this count season. The last two years have seen the lowest numbers of

American Black Duck since well before 1969-70. Alternatively, Mallards have enjoyed consistently high numbers for the last dozen or so years. Blue-winged Teal, rare in early winter, was present this year at Greenwich-Stamford. Last year, Westport had two Blue-winged Teal on its count. There were only four Northern Shovelers this time around, all at New Haven. Eight Northern Pintails represent a 36-year low total. Two pintails were seen on northern counts, one at Barkhamsted and one at Litchfield Hills. During the early 1970s, an average of 2,000 to 3,000 Canvasbacks typically were counted. This year, a 36-year low total of 15 Canvasbacks was reached, and the species has numbered no higher than double digits in three of the last four years. Canvasbacks have experienced the most serious decline of any duck species found in Connecticut. Their Redhead cousins were unseen this year, and Lesser Scaup nearly dropped off the charts, with seven found at Litchfield Hills and just three along the coast or on coastal lakes.

A Common Eider at New Haven was a rare find. The Atlantic waters of the Napatree count, however, encompass some of the winter range of Common Eider, and 801 were seen there. The 65 Black Scoters at New Haven and the 52 at Old Lyme-Saybrook accounted for all Connecticut birds and made for one of the highest totals in the last three decades. Napatree recorded nine additional Black Scoters. Surf Scoters are ten times more abundant in Long Island Sound than are Black Scoters, and White-winged Scoters are 20 times more abundant, according to long-term Connecticut CBC data. Buffleheads and Common Goldeneyes occur in remarkably consistent numbers over the years. This is the seventh year without a Barrow's Goldeneye. The three merganser species have fared very well in recent years. Hooded Mergansers achieved a record high total again this year. Their substantial increases in numbers became evident in 1990. New London and Westport each had record high numbers of this pretty little diving duck. The record high numbers of

Common Mergansers on coastal counts were at the expense of northern and mid-state counts, where they were in comparatively short supply. Ruddy Ducks have been present in significantly high numbers for most of the last eight years. There was a big drop-off last year, with a partial rebound this year.

This year and last, Ring-necked Pheasant numbers have dropped to three to four dozen statewide. Pheasants were four to five times more abundant for the previous generation of birders (and hunters). Similarly, populations of the native Ruffed Grouse have dropped precipitously since the start of a slide in the late 1980s. The last five years have seen the five lowest totals of this species, with most birds being found these days on northern counts. It has been pointed out previously that their decline corresponds closely with the dramatic increase in the reintroduced and now well-established Wild Turkeys, but other factors may be at work here, including habitat alteration, avian predation (accipiters), and mammalian predation (coyotes, foxes, etc.). This year, turkeys were in near record high numbers. There were no Northern Bobwhites observed on any count.

### **Loons through Vultures**

Red-throated Loons and Common Loons were present in fairly high numbers along the coast. Barkhamsted Reservoir produces one or more loons each year of late, but a Common Loon was a rarity for the Pawling/Hidden Valley count. Horned Grebe numbers fluctuate from year to year, so the 20-year record high of last year is not all that surprising followed by a 36-year low count this year. The pelagic Northern Gannet now has been seen near-annually since 1991, indicating a much more regular use of Long Island Sound in early winter. Guano lovers will rejoice at the record high numbers of Double-crested Cormorant at Hartford, Storrs, Oxford, and Greenwich-Stamford. Double-crested Cormorants formerly were rare to uncommon in early winter

but their numbers have been gaining ground steadily on their more wintry cousin, Great Cormorant.

Stratford-Milford boasts the only American Bittern of the 2004-05 count. Great Blue Herons continue their elevated numbers of the last 20 years, reflecting an expansion of breeding localities. Still, this year's total is only 60% of the record high number (442) of five years ago. Black-crowned Night-Herons were in very short supply and at a 36-year low total. As for Black Vultures, one can only marvel at their dramatic appearance and increase. They have occurred annually on CBCs since 1995. Long gone are the days when one would have to drive to the New Milford landfill to see one. Black Vultures reported on Christmas Counts remain largely a western Connecticut and mid-state phenomenon, with winter population centers at Pawling/Hidden Valley and Woodbury-Roxbury. Perhaps a new center is developing in the New London area. Turkey Vultures also were counted in record-shattering high numbers and now have population strongholds in many regions. Prior to 30 years ago, they rarely occurred on Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts.

### **Diurnal Raptors through Sandpipers**

Bald Eagle represents an on-going conservation success story in southern New England, with elevated CBC numbers occurring through the last decade. Large reservoirs (at Barkhamsted and Pawling/Hidden Valley) and the lower Connecticut River (Old Lyme-Saybrook) provide the best winter habitat for this grand bird. Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks were found in good numbers in all three regions of the state, with Cooper's Hawk outnumbering Sharp-shinned for the first time in 36 years and most likely, the first time on record. Among the buteos, Red-shouldered Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks continue to be found in abundance, with Red-tails increasing steadily through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, and the Red-shouldered population climbing since the mid-1990s. This year, we scored a double eagle (golden vari-

ety) for the first time, with the occurrence of *Aquila chrysaetos* at Storrs and at Pawling. Among falcons, American Kestrel continues its dramatic downward spiral, with a record low total of eight reported this year. Recall that 150-200 kestrels were being counted annually during the 1970s and early 1980s. In contrast, Merlin – a species seen infrequently prior to the mid-1980s – has been reported in numbers equal to or greater than kestrel for the last three years. Peregrine Falcon numbers have inched up since the mid-1990s. Hartford had three peregrines on its latest count. This year's New Haven peregrine was an adult female perched on a favored light tower adjacent to the Quinnipiac Bridge. It has alternately occupied the Q Bridge and a nearby trap rock ridge since 2002, when it was a first-year bird. This large female is believed to have bred successfully on the Q Bridge, paired with an unbanded male, in 2003. Her left leg is color-banded (\*H/\*Y on black over red backgrounds), and her right leg carries a USFWS aluminum band (1807-980??). She is a priority individual for identification. Thus far, the Fish & Wildlife Service has not been able to provide information on the bird bander or the location of banding, and assistance is requested to determine where the bird originated.

### Rallids through Alcids

There is no clear trend in Clapper Rail numbers, although fewer than ten are typically recorded. During the three-year period of 1973-74 through 1975-76, high numbers of Clapper Rails were reported - 19, 25, and 21, respectively. The single Clapper at New Haven this year is a 30-year low total. There have been only two years in the last 20 when more than one Sora has been found. This year, Greenwich-Stamford had the only Sora. One of the best birds was Sandhill Crane, previously found in 1991-92 at Old Lyme-Saybrook (count week) and in 2000-01 at Hartford. Hartford repeats with Sandhill in its county almanac this year. The bird was reported by compilers Jay Kaplan and Stephen Davis to have been seen by observers on both sides of the Connecticut River. Black-

bellied Plover is another species whose numbers vary widely from year to year, so this year's second lowest total is not a surprise. Killdeer, however, was seen in very low numbers for the third year in the last five. Greenwich-Stamford is the only count that did well. This species bears watching for a potential decline. The record high 122 Ruddy Turnstones at Westport made for a good coastal total. Red Knot is a hard-to-find CBC bird in Connecticut, the last ones having been seen in 1995-96. This year, Napatree recorded two knots, a new species for this Rhode Island/Connecticut count.

The wind-up beach toys that we call Sanderlings were in great abundance, with 231 at Stratford-Milford, 227 at Westport and 186 at New Haven, making for a 30-year record high count. Purple Sandpipers were in low supply even with checks of jetties and off-coast rocky outcrops, and Dunlin were at their second lowest total in 30 years. The Calidris (peep) species seen count week at Stratford-Milford is suspected to have been a Western Sandpiper, most recently recorded in Connecticut in 1993-94 and found only five times in the last 30 years. Dowitchers are bonus birds on Connecticut CBCs. Short-billed Dowitcher has been seen just once in 36 years, a single bird in 1980-81 at Greenwich-Stamford. The late fall migrating Long-billed Dowitcher is more likely to linger into early winter and is a rarity for any Connecticut Christmas Bird Count. Two Long-billed Dowitchers at Stratford-Milford rank among the best finds this year. A Wilson's Snipe at Oxford was a mid-state rarity, and ten at New Haven contributed to a good statewide total.

Bonaparte's Gulls were less common than their usual numbers, but four at Woodbury-Roxbury were excellent finds. Greenwich-Stamford and New London had the corner on the Bonaparte's market this year. Of the three common gull species, only Great Black-backed Gull was in reduced numbers. This year, Iceland Gull was found at Hartford and on three coastal counts, making this the second highest state-

wide total behind last year's record 13 Iceland Gulls. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen at Hartford and Greenwich-Stamford, but no count produced a Glaucous Gull. Razorbill is an alcid species that is far more commonly seen in Long Island Sound in recent years. Thirty at New London are a record-breaking high count for Connecticut-New York waters, and they are complemented by the 87 found at Napatree.

### **Columbids through Corvids**

Perhaps the peregrines now occurring in Connecticut are taking a bite out of the Rock Pigeon population, which achieved low numbers this year. Be certain that the Monk Parakeet population is thriving, however, with New Haven (507), Stratford-Milford (456), Westport (120), and Greenwich-Stamford (112) undergoing continued greening as these parrot family members spread west and east along the coastline. Stratford-Milford was successful in locating Barn Owl again this year, the only one recorded. Apparently, as go the Red-shouldered Hawks, so go the Barred Owls. They achieved a 30-year high count of 52 individuals, spread fairly evenly among northern, mid-state, and coastal counts. Litchfield Hills and Westport led the way with high totals. Red-headed Woodpecker is another rare find for New Haven. Red-bellied Woodpecker has been identified in recent years as the bird species undergoing the most rapid population increase in Connecticut. The eight highest totals of Red-bellied Woodpecker all have occurred in the eight most recent years. Both Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were counted in healthy numbers, but Northern Flicker – another recent growth industry – experienced a drop in numbers. With pheasants, grouse, bobwhites, and killdeer also in decline, one begins to consider that life on the ground has become a little more dangerous, lately. If the possibility exists for birders once again to see Ivory-billed Woodpecker in southern swampland, the reality in Connecticut is that Pileated Woodpecker is in record high numbers.

It was a non-irruptive year for Northern Shrike, with single birds being seen at Litchfield Hills, Pawling, Greenwich-Stamford, and Old Lyme-Saybrook. Blue-headed Vireo now has been seen three times in the last six years, twice at New Haven (in 2001-2002 and again this year), and at Oxford (1999-2000). Blue Jays were in low numbers this year. Their populations suggest a cyclical pattern based on CBC data, and a downturn has been with us for several years. The current period of lower Blue Jay numbers needs to be viewed in terms of West Nile virus in corvid species and bears watching. American Crows also have declined in numbers, now for the last five years. Some feel that this decline is directly attributable to West Nile. Barkhamsted continues to be the epicenter of Connecticut's growing Common Raven population, with Litchfield Hills and Pawling/Hidden Valley housing good numbers of *Corvus corax*. This year, ravens are new to Greenwich-Stamford, New London, and Napatree CBCs.

### Parids through Parulids

Some of the most interesting high counts for 2004-05 included common resident birds of forest, field, and edge. Tufted Titmouse was counted in near-record numbers, as was White-breasted Nuthatch. This was not an irruptive year for Red-breasted Nuthatch, which had one of the lowest totals in the last three decades. Carolina Wren numbers have not plummeted as a result of the heavy snow cover of two winters ago. This southern species appears to have rebounded quickly from last year's numerical falloff. A high percentage of Marsh Wrens counted were occupying suitable habitat in Morris Creek Marshes, New Haven or were seen on the Napatree count. Eastern Bluebirds are another conservation success story, with 2,000 or more being counted in five of the last seven years. Thirty to 35 years ago, we were lucky to get 150-250 bluebirds statewide. This was a fairly big year for American Robin, a species that fluctuates in numbers substantially from year to year. Northern Mockingbird has rebounded nicely from last year's low total. Mention has

been made several times in recent review articles about the remarkable decline in European Starlings in Connecticut and presumably throughout the northeast. During the period 1970-71 through 1984-85, European Starling was recorded eight times in numbers exceeding 200,000. Christmas Bird Count data show this introduced species dropping below 100,000 beginning in 1998-99. This year, starlings were at a 30-year low, with just over 54,000 birds reported. The list of species that top 10,000 birds in a CBC season is short, this year consisting of Canada Goose, Mallard, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, and Dark-eyed Junco. European Starling still tops the list in total numbers, but it has a shrinking share of the avian biomass, for reasons that are not fully understood. This CBC season was not stellar for the wood warblers. Even the usually dependable Yellow-rumped Warbler was at a 30-year low. The most significant development with the parulids was that Pine Warbler established a record high count. Eleven birds were found, at Hartford, Litchfield Hills, Woodbury-Roxbury, New Haven, and Old Lyme-Saybrook.

### **Sparrows through Finches**

Chipping Sparrows were more abundant than usual in 2004-05. Field Sparrow continues a six-year trend in falling numbers, during which observers have reported a mere one-third to one-fifth of the numbers counted during the 1970s and early 1980s. Fox Sparrow also was down, perhaps a consequence of cyclical changes in its occurrence. The one Lincoln's Sparrow counted at Hartford was a new addition to that count. Woodbury-Roxbury located 37 White-crowned Sparrows, contributing to the second highest statewide total in 30 years. Northern Cardinal was at a 30-year high, and probably an all-time high. However, its near neighbor on the AOU check-list, Eastern Meadowlark, continues a steady downhill slide, with only five being recorded. Prior to the early 1990s, it was not unusual to have 200 or more meadowlarks on Connecticut counts. The species must certainly

be considered one of the grassland birds that is in extreme jeopardy in Connecticut. Another top bird of this year's count was Boat-tailed Grackle, seen for just the third time. The birds found count week at Stratford-Milford are part of the small breeding population residing at Lordship Marshes. Crossbills and Redpolls were not to be found. Winter finch years are fading into the past, with 1997-98 being the best of recent years.

### **Concluding remarks**

Most species introductions, whether they are plants or animals, fail to establish viable populations. We know, however, that some exotic introductions thrive in newly found habitat, and that these species, including generalists and also specialists exploiting previously unoccupied niches, can exhibit exponential (and weedy) growth. This can lead to direct threats to native biological diversity, as illustrated by European Starlings out-competing Eastern Bluebirds for nest cavities or the link between Mallard population increases and American Black Duck population declines. (Interbreeding of the two anatid species adds a further complication to this story.) Exotic species introductions are now recognized as the second greatest threat to global biodiversity, after habitat alteration and habitat destruction.

The introduced bird species that we record on Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts include or have included Mute Swan, Mallard (a western North American species), Chukar, Ring-necked Pheasant, Rock Pigeon, Budgerigar, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Monk Parakeet, European Starling, House Finch (another introduction from the American West), and House Sparrow. The small numbers of Chukars reported from the Greenwich-Stamford count circle beginning in 1976-77 persisted for a few years but apparently ceased to exist following the 1984-85 CBC season. Similarly, Budgerigar and Rose-ringed Parakeet did not persist in the wild and have not been reported since the 1980s. Ring-necked Pheasant appears

unable to maintain viable populations without an active restocking program, and its numbers are slipping in the state. Monk Parakeet clearly continues in a period of exponential growth, and Mallard numbers increase at a gradual, linear pace. Mute Swan, European Starling, House Finch, and House Sparrow all have experienced population declines in recent years, with disease appearing to account for the drop in House Finch numbers.

So far as I know, the addling of Mute Swan eggs to control their populations has not continued in most recent years. The closing of Connecticut landfills may have direct bearing on the remarkable population decline of European Starlings, but it may well be that a shifting ecological balance is establishing itself and pulling this species' numbers down to a much lower and long-term viable level. Population trends of introduced species are as interesting to follow as are the natural range expansions presently occurring with such southern species as Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, and the earlier-arriving Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Cardinal, and several other species. Regarding this latter group of birds, there is clear and mounting evidence for population range expansions and earlier seasonal arrival times as a direct result of global warming.

There is some cause for concern about declining numbers of field observers, feeder watchers, and the total number of participants on Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts. Half the counts conducted this year established 30-year lows or second lowest totals of observers, or they experienced a substantial falling off in participant numbers. A notable exception to this pattern was the Woodbury-Roxbury count, which shattered its previous record for total party hours and in the process achieved a second highest species total that included a number of high counts and noteworthy rarities. It's not unreasonable to assume a relationship between participant

level and count results. Compiler retirements (there have been a few in most recent years) tend to result in reduced participant numbers in subsequent years, as the new leadership strives to maintain continuity. These bird counts should not be dependent on a small number of charismatic mega-birders, however. We need to do a better job attracting new and younger birders to the ranks in order to ensure the future health of the Christmas Bird Count. It's time to get busy!

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*Mark Szantyr photo*

*Common Raven, an increasing species, was new to three CBCs this year. This one was flying over Stevenson dam in Monroe in January.*

|                              |     |      |      |       |      | Mid-<br>state<br>Counts |      |      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       | State | Coast |      |
|------------------------------|-----|------|------|-------|------|-------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| SPECIES                      | BA  | HA   | LH   | LS    | ST   | OX                      | PA   | QV   | SR  | WR   | GS   | NH   | NL   | OL   | SM   | WE   | Total | NA    | Total |      |
| Gr. Wh.-fronted Goose        |     |      |      |       | 1    |                         |      |      |     | 1    |      |      |      |      |      |      | 2     |       | 2     |      |
| Snow Goose                   |     | 1    |      | 34    |      |                         |      |      |     | 1    | 2    | 1    | 1    | 1    |      |      | 41    |       | 41    |      |
| Canada Goose                 | 317 | 8704 | 2718 | 11759 | 3737 | 948                     | 1554 | 4277 | 204 | 5918 | 3240 | 3080 | 2774 | 2073 | 1094 | 1416 | 53813 | 859   |       |      |
| Brant                        |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 122  | 117  | 58   |      | 144  | 187  | 628   | 5     | 633   |      |
| Mute Swan                    | 3   | 13   | 29   | 22    | 1    | 15                      | 42   | 55   | 70  | 27   | 57   | 166  | 519  | 127  | 15   | 31   | 1192  | 194   | 1386  |      |
| Wood Duck                    |     |      | 3    | 1     | 7    |                         |      | 5    | 2   | 4    | 3    | CW   |      | 2    |      |      | 27    |       | 27    |      |
| Gadwall                      |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 52   | 56   | 2    | 2    | 52   | 41   | 205   | 26    | 231   |      |
| Eurasian Wigeon              |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    |      |      |      |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |      |
| American Wigeon              |     | 2    |      | 4     |      |                         |      |      |     | 1    | 15   | 132  | 26   | 2    | 224  | 91   | 497   | 2     | 499   |      |
| American Black Duck          | 22  | 193  | 137  | 52    | 34   | 10                      | 22   | 53   | 116 | 187  | 331  | 696  | 324  | 403  | 1014 | 541  | 4135  | 578   | 4713  |      |
| Mallard                      | 348 | 1744 | 779  | 312   | 388  | 223                     | 660  | 1211 | 189 | 721  | 1125 | 2239 | 1258 | 984  | 1091 | 705  | 13977 | 807   |       |      |
| Mallard Hybrid               |     |      | 1    |       |      | 2                       |      |      |     |      |      | 38   |      | 1    | 14   | 3    | 59    |       | 59    |      |
| Blue-winged Teal             |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    |      |      |      |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |      |
| Northern Shoveler            |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 4    |      |      |      |      | 4     |       | 4     |      |
| Northern Pintail             | 1   |      | 1    |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    | 3    |      | 2    |      |      | 8     |       | 8     |      |
| Green-winged Teal<br>(Amer.) |     | 7    |      |       |      |                         |      | 1    |     | 7    | 4    | 75   |      |      | 2    |      | 96    | 1     | 97    |      |
| Teal, sp.                    |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      |      |      | 1    |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |      |
| Canvasback                   |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 3    | 12   |      | 0    |      | 15    |       | 15    |      |
| Ring-necked Duck             |     |      | 14   | 95    | 80   | 14                      |      | 29   |     | 3    | 102  | 44   | 372  | 6    | 53   | 46   | 858   | 1     | 859   |      |
| Greater Scaup                |     |      | 7    |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 0    | 363  | 6    | 358  | 60   | 1    | 795   | 31    | 826   |      |
| Lesser Scaup                 |     |      | 7    |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    | 0    | CW   |      | 1    |      | 9     | 1     | 10    |      |
| Scaup, sp.                   |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    |      |      |      |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |      |
| Common Eider                 |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 1    |      |      |      |      | 1     | 801   | 802   |      |
| Surf Scoter                  |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    | 40   | 54   | 51   |      | 12   | 158   | 2     | 160   |      |
| White-winged Scoter          |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 90   | 6    | 6    | 3    | 45   | 150   | 100   | 250   |      |
| Black Scoter                 |     |      |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 65   |      |      |      | 52   | 117   | 9     | 126   |      |
| Long-tailed Duck             |     | 1    |      |       |      |                         |      |      |     |      | CW   | 205  | 39   | 102  | 44   | 38   | 611   | 1040  | 18    | 1058 |
| Bufflehead                   |     |      | 1    |       |      |                         | 10   | 10   | 2   | 5    | 358  | 162  | 441  | 54   | 59   | 250  | 1352  | 263   | 1615  |      |
| Common Goldeneye             | 7   | 1    | 16   | 66    | 4    |                         | 6    | 1    | 26  |      | 270  | 118  | 230  | 129  | 515  | 183  | 1572  | 157   | 1729  |      |
| Hooded Merganser             | 40  | 6    | 70   | 72    | 6    | 23                      | 13   | 28   | 62  | 11   | 244  | 337  | 551  | 31   | 96   | 234  | 1824  | 70    | 1894  |      |
| Common Merganser             | 87  | 94   | 118  | 60    | 112  | 69                      | 52   | 75   | 0   | 325  | 1288 | 138  | 83   | 209  | 42   | 126  | 2878  | 3     | 2881  |      |
| Red-br. Merganser            |     |      |      | 2     |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 362  | 211  | 806  | 165  | 338  | 303   | 2187  | 751   | 2938 |

| SPECIES              | BA  | HA  | LH  | LS  | ST | Mid-state<br>Counts<br>OX | PA  | QV  | SR | WR  | GS  | NH  | NL  | OL  | SM | WE  | State | Coast | Total |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|---------------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-------|-------|-------|
|                      |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     |     |     |     |    |     | Total | NA    |       |
| Ruddy Duck           |     |     | 11  | 4   |    |                           | 18  | 8   |    |     | 31  | 1   | 1   |     |    | 31  | 308   | 4     | 312   |
| Duck, sp.            |     |     |     | 5   | 28 | 13                        |     |     |    |     |     |     |     |     |    |     | 46    |       | 46    |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | 2   | 3   | 9   | 4   |    |                           |     | 13  |    | 3   | 0   |     | 2   | 1   |    | 9   | 46    |       | 46    |
| Ruffed Grouse        | 3   |     | 7   | 2   | 1  |                           |     |     |    | 2   |     |     |     |     | 1  |     | 16    |       | 16    |
| Wild Turkey          | 181 | 30  | 193 | 206 | 98 | 20                        | 131 | 147 | 26 | 278 | 198 | 108 | 37  | 145 | 42 | 24  | 1864  | 31    | 1895  |
| Red-throated Loon    |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     | 78  | 37  | 25  | 25  | 11 | 32  | 208   | 134   | 342   |
| Common Loon          | 1   |     |     |     |    |                           | 1   |     |    |     | 21  | 21  | 35  | 31  | 9  | 44  | 163   | 564   | 727   |
| Pied-billed Grebe    |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     | 1  | 6   | 2   | 6   | 3   | 7   | 0  | 25  | 1     | 26    |       |
| Horned Grebe         |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    | 23  | 12  | 20  | 8   | 12  | 25 | 100 | 81    | 181   |       |
| Northern Gannet      |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    | 2   | 3   |     | 3   |     | 3  | 11  | 29    | 40    |       |
| D.c. Cormorant       |     | 4   |     |     | 38 | 11                        |     |     |    | 13  | 6   | 58  | 4   | 3   | 3  | 140 | 35    | 175   |       |
| Great Cormorant      |     |     |     |     |    | 3                         |     |     | 8  | 2   | 57  | 17  | 47  | 42  | 10 | 23  | 209   | 109   | 318   |
| Cormorant, sp.       |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     |     |     |     | 1  |     | 1     | 1     | 2     |
| American Bittern     |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     |     |     |     | 1  |     | 1     | 1     | 2     |
| Great Blue Heron     | 1   | 19  | 2   | 1   | 4  | 7                         | 2   | 12  | 3  | 14  | 52  | 35  | 48  | 14  | 13 | 39  | 266   | 37    | 303   |
| Great Egret          |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     | 1   |     |     |     | 1  |     | 3     |       | 3     |
| Black-cr Night-Heron |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     | 1   | 1   |     |    | 2   | 4     |       | 4     |
| Black Vulture        |     |     | CW  |     |    |                           | 26  |     |    | 37  |     |     | 4   |     | CW | 67  | 17    | 84    |       |
| Turkey Vulture       |     | 17  | 1   |     | 31 | 103                       | 8   | 1   |    | 33  | 52  | 12  | 170 | 157 | 1  | 40  | 626   | 56    | 682   |
| Bald Eagle           | 15  | 2   | 2   | CW  |    |                           | 7   |     | 5  | 4   | 2   | 4   | 2   | 16  | 2  | 2   | 63    | 1     | 64    |
| Northern Harrier     |     | 8   |     | 2   | 2  | 4                         |     | 1   |    |     | 1   | 10  | 6   | 19  | 12 | 1   | 66    | 9     | 75    |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk   | 2   | 12  | 7   | 2   | 4  | 3                         | 1   | 6   | 4  | 11  | 8   | 17  | 19  | 10  | 3  | 12  | 121   | 5     | 126   |
| Cooper's Hawk        | 3   | 19  | 6   | 4   | 4  | 3                         | 5   | 5   | 1  | 12  | 14  | 18  | 11  | 12  | 5  | 7   | 129   | 6     | 135   |
| Northern Goshawk     |     |     |     |     |    |                           | 1   |     |    |     | 1   | 2   | 1   | 1   |    | 1   | 8     |       | 8     |
| Red-shouldered Hawk  | 5   | 4   | 1   |     | 7  | 6                         | 2   | 1   | 6  | 10  | 4   | 8   | 4   | 14  | 1  | 5   | 78    | 3     | 81    |
| Red-tailed Hawk      | 32  | 161 | 57  | 43  | 36 | 20                        | 68  | 47  | 23 | 89  | 70  | 85  | 38  | 13  | 15 | 28  | 825   | 17    | 842   |
| Rough-legged Hawk    |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     | 1   |     |     | 2  |     | 3     |       | 3     |
| Buteo, sp.           |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     | 1  |     |     |     |     |     |    |     | 1     |       | 1     |
| Golden Eagle         |     |     |     |     | 1  |                           | 1   |     |    |     |     |     |     |     |    |     | 2     |       | 2     |
| American Kestrel     |     | 0   | 1   | 2   | 1  |                           |     |     |    |     | 1   | 1   |     |     | 1  | 1   | 8     | 2     | 10    |
| Merlin               |     | 3   | 1   |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     | 2   | 3   | 2   | 1   |    |     | 12    | 3     | 15    |
| Peregrine Falcon     |     | 3   |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     | 1   | 1   | 1   |     | 1  |     | 7     |       | 7     |
| Clapper Rail         |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     | 1   |     |     |    |     | 1     | 1     | 2     |
| Virginia Rail        |     |     |     |     |    |                           |     |     |    |     |     | 3   | 2   | 5   |    |     | 10    | 1     | 11    |

|                        |      |      |     |     |     | Mid-<br>state<br>Counts |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     |      |      |       | State | Coast |  |
|------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-------|--|
| SPECIES                | BA   | HA   | LH  | LS  | ST  | OX                      | PA   | QV  | SR  | WR  | GS   | NH   | NL   | OL  | SM   | WE   | Total | NA    | Total |  |
| Sora                   |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 1    |      |      |     |      |      | 1     | 1     | 2     |  |
| American Coot          |      |      | 7   | 1   |     |                         | 20   | 2   |     | 1   | 2    | 4    | 18   |     |      | 5    | 60    | 16    | 76    |  |
| Sandhill Crane         |      | 1    |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |  |
| Black-bellied Plover   |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 11   | 6    | 11   |     |      | 10   | 38    | 3     | 41    |  |
| Killdeer               |      |      | CW  |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 12   | 1    |      | 2   |      | 1    | 16    |       | 16    |  |
| American Oystercatcher |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      | 1    |      |     |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |  |
| Greater Yellowlegs     |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      | 4    |      |     | 1    | 5    | 10    |       | 10    |  |
| Ruddy Turnstone        |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 4    | 2    | 19   | 11  |      | 122  | 158   |       | 158   |  |
| Red Knot               |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     |      |      | 0     | 2     | 2     |  |
| Sanderling             |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      | 186  | 1    | 13  | 231  | 227  | 658   | 54    | 712   |  |
| Purple Sandpiper       |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 3    | 32   | 24   | 4   |      | 23   | 86    | 33    | 119   |  |
| Dunlin                 |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      | 12   | 20  | 76   | 134  | 242   | 77    | 319   |  |
| Peep, sp.              |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     | CW   |      | CW    |       | CW    |  |
| Long-billed Dowitcher  |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     | 2    |      | 2     |       | 2     |  |
| Wilson's Snipe         |      |      |     |     |     | 1                       |      |     |     |     |      | 10   | 1    |     |      | 1    | 13    |       | 13    |  |
| American Woodcock      |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      | 3   |     |     | 1    |      | 1    | 2   |      |      | 7     |       | 7     |  |
| Bonaparte's Gull       |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     | 4   | 49   | 5    | 68   | 5   | 1    | 1    | 133   | 235   | 368   |  |
| Ring-billed Gull       | 1703 | 2418 | 978 | 910 | 206 | 745                     | 1312 | 845 | 91  | 938 | 1106 | 2740 | 517  | 648 | 2063 | 865  | 18085 | 454   |       |  |
| Herring Gull           | 14   | 2387 | 23  | 44  | 23  | 172                     | 120  | 62  | 30  | 65  | 1208 | 1074 | 4146 | 997 | 3590 | 1384 | 15339 | 1069  |       |  |
| Iceland Gull           |      | 3    |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      |      | 2   | 4    | 1    | 10    |       | 10    |  |
| Lesser Bl.-backed Gull |      | 1    |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 1    |      |      |     |      |      | 2     |       | 2     |  |
| Great Bl.-backed Gull  | 5    | 389  | 4   | 1   | 10  | 11                      | 15   | 16  | 11  | 35  | 110  | 242  | 224  | 132 | 107  | 164  | 1476  | 173   | 1649  |  |
| Gull, sp.              |      |      |     |     | 1   | 29                      |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     | 1    |      | 31    |       | 31    |  |
| Razorbill              |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      | 30   |     |      |      | 30    | 87    | 117   |  |
| Rock Pigeon            | 209  | 1503 | 236 |     | 144 | 224                     | 109  | 515 | 113 | 269 | 758  | 1986 | 263  | 286 |      | 463  | 7078  | 127   | 7205  |  |
| Mourning Dove          | 340  | 1363 | 438 | 647 | 286 | 272                     | 258  | 547 | 307 | 380 | 906  | 750  | 485  | 194 | 220  | 366  | 7759  | 289   | 8048  |  |
| Monk Parakeet          |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     | 112  | 507  |      | 9   | 456  | 120  | 1204  |       | 1204  |  |
| Barn Owl               |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      |     |     |     |      |      |      |     | 1    |      | 1     |       | 1     |  |
| Eastern Screech-Owl    | 5    | 24   | 22  | 2   | 10  | 4                       | 16   | 29  | 5   | 30  | 61   | 16   | 4    | 18  | 5    | 20   | 271   |       | 271   |  |
| Great Horned Owl       | 6    | 7    | 14  | 8   | 3   | 3                       | 2    | 11  | 7   | 10  | 19   | 8    | 2    | 20  | 2    | 13   | 135   | 1     | 136   |  |
| Barred Owl             | 3    | 2    | 8   | 1   | 2   | 1                       | 4    | 2   | 4   | 3   | 5    | 1    | 4    | 4   | 1    | 7    | 52    | 5     | 57    |  |
| Long-eared Owl         |      |      |     |     |     |                         |      | 2   |     | CW  |      |      | 1    | 1   |      |      | 4     | 2     | 6     |  |
| Short-eared Owl        |      |      |     |     | CW  |                         |      |     |     |     |      | 1    |      | 2   | 1    |      | 4     |       | 4     |  |
| North. Saw-whet Owl    | 1    |      | 3   | 1   | 2   |                         |      |     | 1   | 8   |      | CW   | 7    | 1   |      |      | 24    | 4     | 28    |  |

|                       |      |       |      |      |      | Mid-<br>state<br>Counts |      |      |     |      |      |      |      |     |      |      |       | State | Coast |  |
|-----------------------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-------|--|
| SPECIES               | BA   | HA    | LH   | LS   | ST   | OX                      | PA   | QV   | SR  | WR   | GS   | NH   | NL   | OL  | SM   | WE   | Total | NA    | Total |  |
| Belted Kingfisher     | 1    | 22    | 1    | 3    | 4    | 9                       | 7    | 5    | 6   | 6    | 24   | 31   | 9    | 23  | 13   | 14   | 178   | 4     | 182   |  |
| Red-hdd. Woodpecker   |      |       |      |      |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 1    |      |     |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |  |
| Red-bld. Woodpecker   | 39   | 91    | 65   | 35   | 63   | 29                      | 40   | 39   | 62  | 79   | 151  | 97   | 29   | 34  | 19   | 68   | 940   | 15    | 955   |  |
| Yellow-bld. Sapsucker | 3    | 3     | 2    |      |      |                         | 1    | 3    | 3   | 9    | 5    | 2    | 3    | 4   |      | 1    | 39    | 1     | 40    |  |
| Dowry Woodpecker      | 165  | 254   | 236  | 57   | 98   | 102                     | 121  | 84   | 132 | 223  | 262  | 231  | 105  | 117 | 34   | 129  | 2350  | 55    | 2405  |  |
| Hairy Woodpecker      | 42   | 50    | 47   | 18   | 27   | 14                      | 19   | 8    | 19  | 43   | 54   | 26   | 8    | 12  | 2    | 43   | 432   | 2     | 434   |  |
| Northern Flicker      | 1    | 40    | 9    | 6    | 14   | 24                      | 15   | 19   | 49  | 27   | 23   | 38   | 52   | 26  | 10   | 12   | 365   | 39    | 404   |  |
| Pileated Woodpecker   | 8    | 6     | 17   | 11   | 4    | 3                       | 10   | 2    | 9   | 12   | 15   | 2    |      | 9   | 1    | 6    | 115   |       | 115   |  |
| Eastern Phoebe        |      |       |      |      |      |                         |      |      | 1   | 1    | 2    | 1    | 1    | 1   |      |      | 7     |       | 7     |  |
| Northern Shrike       |      |       | 1    |      |      |                         | 1    |      |     |      | 1    |      |      | 1   |      |      | 4     |       | 4     |  |
| Blue-headed Vireo     |      |       |      |      |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 1    |      |     |      |      | 1     |       | 1     |  |
| Blue Jay              | 240  | 437   | 376  | 176  | 1156 | 191                     | 103  | 183  | 374 | 383  | 361  | 265  | 93   | 89  | 63   | 129  | 4619  | 60    | 4679  |  |
| American Crow         | 454  | 25000 | 936  | 614  | 260  | 856                     | 1160 | 682  | 203 | 2608 | 771  | 2020 | 365  | 292 | 250  | 314  | 36785 | 45    |       |  |
| Fish Crow             |      | 5     |      |      |      | 4                       | 8    |      | 1   | 3    | 7    | 34   |      |     |      | 18   | 33    | 113   | 113   |  |
| Common Raven          | 33   | 2     | 11   | 2    |      |                         | 10   |      |     |      | 3    | 1    | CW   | 1   | 15   |      | 78    | 1     | 79    |  |
| Horned Lark           |      | 68    | 39   | 40   | 150  |                         |      |      |     | 230  | 2    | 9    | 16   | 148 | 37   | 3    | 742   | 43    | 785   |  |
| Black-cpd. Chickadee  | 1219 | 867   | 1589 | 426  | 659  | 362                     | 665  | 206  | 421 | 1033 | 697  | 609  | 522  | 582 | 112  | 353  | 10322 | 451   |       |  |
| Tufted Titmouse       | 496  | 729   | 485  | 125  | 462  | 288                     | 399  | 175  | 342 | 616  | 607  | 384  | 256  | 489 | 83   | 226  | 6162  | 77    | 6239  |  |
| Red-br. Nuthatch      | 4    | 4     | 0    | 1    | 3    |                         | 1    | 1    | 5   | 1    | 3    | 11   | 3    | 2   |      | 1    | 40    | 27    | 67    |  |
| White-br. Nuthatch    | 197  | 243   | 395  | 68   | 175  | 88                      | 184  | 56   | 121 | 240  | 245  | 155  | 88   | 284 | 28   | 135  | 2702  | 47    | 2749  |  |
| Brown Creeper         | 20   | 13    | 22   | 1    | 6    | 0                       | 10   | 2    | 5   | 17   | 8    | 3    | 5    | 5   | 3    | 4    | 124   | 1     | 125   |  |
| Carolina Wren         | 22   | 114   | 28   | 2    | 24   | 30                      | 31   | 32   | 61  | 44   | 119  | 91   | 113  | 102 | 21   | 63   | 897   | 155   | 1052  |  |
| House Wren            |      |       | 1    |      |      |                         |      |      |     |      | 1    |      |      |     |      | 1    | 3     | 1     | 4     |  |
| Winter Wren           | 5    | 10    |      |      | 2    | 1                       | 2    | 1    | 3   | 6    | 25   | 7    | 6    | 6   | 1    | 1    | 76    | 8     | 84    |  |
| Marsh Wren            |      | 1     |      |      |      |                         |      |      |     |      |      | 9    | 1    | 3   |      |      | 14    | 7     | 21    |  |
| Golden-crown' Kinglet | 214  | 98    | 190  | 45   | 57   | 18                      | 48   | 11   | 14  | 115  | 44   | 123  | 34   | 30  | 4    | 32   | 1077  | 61    | 1138  |  |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet  |      |       | 1    |      |      | 2                       | 1    |      |     | 3    | 4    | 17   | 6    | 1   |      | 13   | 48    | 7     | 55    |  |
| Eastern Bluebird      | 78   | 82    | 206  | 116  | 109  | 114                     | 154  | 86   | 191 | 504  | 60   | 39   | 79   | 250 | CW   | 74   | 2142  | 48    | 2190  |  |
| Hermit Thrush         | 3    | 13    | 8    | 1    | 8    | 1                       | 3    | 10   | 10  | 34   | 19   | 18   | 9    | 22  | 1    | 6    | 166   | 32    | 198   |  |
| American Robin        | 447  | 1037  | 779  | 4067 | 360  | 1251                    | 474  | 688  | 404 | 2467 | 733  | 2033 | 415  | 450 | 113  | 207  | 15925 | 699   |       |  |
| Gray Catbird          |      | 10    | 6    |      | 2    | 3                       | 2    | 7    |     | 8    | 9    | 26   | 21   | 8   | 4    | 13   | 119   | 25    | 144   |  |
| Northern Mockingbird  | 18   | 217   | 21   | 13   | 42   | 67                      | 50   | 78   | 32  | 83   | 118  | 179  | 133  | 73  | 33   | 58   | 1215  | 119   | 1334  |  |
| Brown Thrasher        |      |       |      | 1    |      |                         |      |      | 1   | 2    |      | 1    | 7    |     |      |      | 12    | 4     | 16    |  |
| European Starling     | 980  | 15000 | 2620 | 2861 | 1004 | 2470                    | 1392 | 7886 | 824 | 3193 | 3471 | 5826 | 2313 | 368 | 2109 | 1706 | 54023 | 1718  |       |  |

| SPECIES                       | BA   | HA   | LH   | LS  | ST  | Mid-state<br>Counts<br>OX | PA  | QV  | SR  | WR   | GS   | NH  | NL  | OL  | SM  | WE  | State |     |       |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-------|
|                               |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | Total | NA  | Total |
| American Pipit                |      |      |      |     |     |                           | 8   | 8   |     | 4    | 1    |     |     | 5   | 1   |     | 27    | 3   | 30    |
| Cedar Waxwing                 | 310  | 157  | 164  | 36  | 50  | 406                       | 193 | 33  | 351 | 549  | 586  | 248 | 63  | 234 | 49  | 100 | 3529  | 105 | 3634  |
| Yellow-rmpd. Warbler          |      | 0    |      |     |     | 2                         | 1   | 1   |     | 3    | 7    | 2   | 66  | 5   | 1   | 2   | 90    | 236 | 326   |
| Pine Warbler                  |      | 1    | 3    |     |     |                           |     |     |     | 1    |      |     | 2   | 4   |     |     | 11    |     | 11    |
| Palm Warbler                  |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      | 4   | 1   |     |     |     | 5     | 1   | 6     |
| Common Yellowthroat           |      | 1    | CW   |     |     |                           |     |     |     | 1    |      |     |     |     |     |     | 2     | 1   | 3     |
| Yellow-breasted Chat          |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | 0     | 3   | 3     |
| Eastern Towhee                |      | 8    | 1    |     | 2   | 4                         | CW  |     |     | 1    | 2    | 11  | 11  | 6   | 4   | 4   | 54    | 25  | 79    |
| Amer. Tree Sparrow            | 81   | 692  | 401  | 106 | 78  | 29                        | 51  | 76  | 59  | 219  | 11   | 183 | 48  | 74  | 148 | 91  | 2347  | 90  | 2437  |
| Chipping Sparrow              |      |      | CW   |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      | 1    | 12  | 2   |     | 1   |     | 16    | 1   | 17    |
| Field Sparrow                 |      | 7    | CW   |     | 2   | 21                        | 4   | 10  | 9   | 33   |      | 39  | 61  | 21  | 5   | 6   | 218   | 33  | 251   |
| Vesper Sparrow                |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      | 1    | 1   |     |     |     |     | 2     |     | 2     |
| Savannah Sparrow              |      | 61   | 1    |     | 2   |                           |     | 5   |     | 10   |      | 25  | 2   | 5   | 65  | 1   | 177   | 30  | 207   |
| 'Ipswich' Sparrow             |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1     |     | 1     |
| Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | 0     | 2   | 2     |
| Saltm. Shp-tailed Sparrow     |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | 0     | 1   | 1     |
| Sharp-tailed Sparrow, sp.     |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | 0     | 1   | 1     |
| Fox Sparrow                   |      | 2    | 1    | 1   | 3   | 8                         |     | 2   | 4   | 2    | 6    | 7   | 6   | 4   | 3   | 2   | 51    | 7   | 58    |
| Song Sparrow                  | 77   | 545  | 98   | 15  | 127 | 183                       | 68  | 80  | 128 | 309  | 369  | 563 | 252 | 107 | 187 | 218 | 3326  | 279 | 3605  |
| Lincoln's Sparrow             |      | 1    |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | 1     |     | 1     |
| Swamp Sparrow                 | 4    | 9    | 20   | 3   | 8   | 4                         | 2   | 4   | 23  | 7    | 10   | 7   | 12  | 32  | 0   | 6   | 151   | 6   | 157   |
| White-thr. Sparrow            | 75   | 530  | 222  | 43  | 115 | 553                       | 186 | 411 | 212 | 606  | 944  | 911 | 436 | 459 | 152 | 287 | 6142  | 345 | 6487  |
| White-crn. Sparrow            |      | 7    |      | 2   |     |                           |     |     |     | 37   | 1    | 1   |     |     |     |     | 48    |     | 48    |
| Dark-eyed Junco               | 1178 | 1576 | 1090 | 372 | 686 | 811                       | 556 | 385 | 406 | 1334 | 1263 | 457 | 137 | 408 | 60  | 460 | 11179 | 163 |       |
| Lapland Longspur              |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     | 1    |      |     | 2   | 1   | 1   |     | 5     |     | 5     |
| Snow Bunting                  |      | 1    |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      | 16  | 6   |     | 8   |     | 31    | 1   | 32    |
| Northern Cardinal             | 279  | 588  | 287  | 78  | 238 | 165                       | 212 | 175 | 180 | 449  | 426  | 433 | 252 | 320 | 84  | 192 | 4358  | 194 | 4552  |
| Dickcissel                    |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |     |     |     | 0     | 1   | 1     |
| Red-winged Blackbird          | 3    | 1493 | 98   | 220 | 3   |                           | 105 | 0   | 3   | 236  | 14   | 63  | 20  | 67  | 0   | 8   | 2333  | 14  | 2347  |
| Eastern Meadowlark            |      |      |      |     |     |                           |     |     |     |      |      | 4   |     |     | 1   |     | 5     |     | 5     |
| Rusty Blackbird               |      | 3    | 7    |     | 1   |                           | 15  | 2   |     |      | 48   |     |     | 1   |     |     | 77    | 17  | 94    |

|                     |       |       |       |       |       | Mid-state<br>Counts |       |       |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |        | State | Coast |  |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--|
| SPECIES             | BA    | HA    | LH    | LS    | ST    | OX                  | PA    | QV    | SR   | WR    | GS    | NH    | NL    | OL    | SM    | WE    | Total  | NA    | Total |  |
| Common Grackle      | 1     | 31    | 122   | 300   | 1     | 1                   |       | 1     | 4    | 1855  | 66    | 43    | 4     | 7     |       | 20    | 2456   | 9     | 2465  |  |
| Boat-tailed Grackle |       |       |       |       |       |                     |       |       |      |       |       |       |       |       | CW    |       | CW     |       | CW    |  |
| Brown-hdd. Cowbird  | 16    | 176   | 81    | 1085  | 1     |                     | 1     | 20    | 9    | 59    | 8     | 230   | 23    | 113   |       |       | 1822   | 23    | 1845  |  |
| Oriole, sp.         |       |       |       |       |       |                     |       |       |      |       |       | 1     |       |       |       |       | 1      |       | 1     |  |
| Purple Finch        | 43    | 4     | 37    | 10    |       | 12                  |       | 2     |      | 4     | 7     | 3     | 5     | 1     |       | 2     | 130    | 8     | 138   |  |
| House Finch         | 174   | 724   | 530   | 115   | 338   | 234                 | 244   | 178   | 154  | 530   | 620   | 315   | 337   | 170   | 165   | 156   | 4984   | 168   | 5152  |  |
| Pine Siskin         | CW    |       |       |       | 3     |                     | 1     |       |      |       | 2     |       |       | 6     |       |       | 12     |       | 12    |  |
| American Goldfinch  | 407   | 635   | 309   | 135   | 167   | 157                 | 135   | 240   | 146  | 450   | 417   | 437   | 156   | 193   | 42    | 160   | 4186   | 154   | 4340  |  |
| House Sparrow       | 388   | 1256  | 541   | 178   | 408   | 252                 | 398   | 269   | 381  | 568   | 1136  | 1413  | 1206  | 453   | 704   | 427   | 9978   | 291   |       |  |
| <b>TOTALS</b>       |       |       |       |       |       |                     |       |       |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |  |
| Individuals         | 11081 | 72073 | 18036 | 25757 | 12234 | 11728               | 11577 | 20186 | 6679 | 28712 | 26581 | 33923 | 21805 | 13944 | 16410 | 14878 | 345604 | 14422 |       |  |
| CD Species          | 64    | 86    | 81    | 70    | 73    | 65                  | 74    | 74    | 66   | 91    | 115   | 127   | 114   | 116   | 94    | 103   | 159    | 120   | 164   |  |
| CW Species          | 1     | 0     | 5     | 1     | 1     | 0                   | 1     | 0     | 0    | 2     | 0     | 3     | 1     | 0     | 2     | 1     | 2      | 0     | 2     |  |
| Field Observers     | 29    | 127   | 49    | 21    | 24    | 15                  | 41    | 11    | 31   | 39    | 68    | 77    | 35    | 37    | 19    | 36    | 659    | 22    | 681   |  |
| Feeder Watchers     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 3     | 2                   | 0     | 1     | 2    | 0     | 0     | 4     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 10    | 22     | 0     | 22    |  |
| Total Observers     | 29    | 127   | 49    | 21    | 27    | 17                  | 41    | 12    | 33   | 39    | 68    | 81    | 35    | 37    | 19    | 46    | 681    | 22    | 703   |  |
| Party Hours         | 97    | 349   | 123   | 64    | 102   | 74                  | 113   | 51    | 67   | 240   | 253   | 175   | 120   | 117   | 76    | 17    | 2042   | 86    | 2128  |  |
| Party Miles         |       | 1024  |       |       | 635   | 384                 |       | 361   | 258  |       |       | 658   |       | 328   |       |       | 3648   |       | 3648  |  |

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Northern Counts<br>BA = Barkhamsted<br>HA = Hartford<br>LH = Litchfield Hills<br>LS = Lakeville-Sharon<br>ST = Storrs | Mid-state Counts<br>OX = Oxford<br>PA = Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT<br>QV = Quinnipiac Valley<br>SR = Salmon River<br>WR = Woodbury-Roxbury | Coastal Counts<br>GS = Greenwich-Stamford<br>NH = New Haven<br>NL = New London<br>OL = Old Lyme-Saybrook<br>SM = Stratford-Milford<br>WE = Westport<br>NA = Napatree, RI | Legend<br>CW Count Week/Count Period<br>0 First time not seen in 30 years<br>XX Rare Species<br>XX New 30 Year High Count<br>XX New 30 Year Low Count<br>XX New Species for Count |
|---|---|--|---|

## NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

### Possible Nesting Site for Monk Parakeet and Osprey in Hartford County

In June 2004, local birders Alice-Anne Wormald and Jim Ford heard and saw Monk Parakeets frolicking about the light stanchions at Willowbrook Park on the New Britain/Berlin town line. While Monks are well-documented and even notorious as nesters along the southwestern Connecticut coast, I have not heard of a nesting anywhere near this far inland. Unfortunately, by the time I had a chance to check on the report in 2004 it was mid-August. While I didn't see or hear any Monks at that time, I did note stick nests in two of the light stanchions facing the east side of the soccer stadium that to me obviously represented at least an attempt to nest by this species.

I found myself back in this location just after dawn on 7 June 7 2005, hoping to add the parakeet to my Hartford County list. As I exited the highway from Route 9 heading northbound toward the park, I was excited to see a pair of Ospreys perched on the most southeasterly light pole at the park. Knowing that this species has not nested in Hartford County in generations, but also knowing that it is beginning to make inroads inland in other parts of the state, I parked and watched as both members of the pair flew onto the platform with nesting materials. They deposited in a rather haphazard fashion onto what could best be called a messy pile of sticks.

While I watched the Osprey show, I heard the distinctive squawk of a Monk Parakeet and saw a pair of Monks fly into a nest constructed underneath the platform of the stanchion just to the north of where the Ospreys were. They did not appear to be adding nesting materiel but were instead flying in and out with purpose, as though they had either set up nesting shop there or were strongly considering it.

After a spell I left but have returned to the location a number of times since then, mostly to watch New Britain Rock Cats' baseball games. I've positioned myself in a place where I could watch the action on the field and also at the adjacent soccer stadium where the birds were. I did see an Osprey land briefly on a different light stanchion on June 18, but have seen neither bird since nor any evidence of actual nesting. I have seen and heard Monk Parakeets at the location every time I've gone, and have now noted individuals flying into two different nests atop poles on both sides of the soccer stadium. There is a third nest on the east side that might also be active, although European Starlings might be in that one. I have not directly viewed Monks using it.

Although I did not see any young or proven nesting, my conclusion at this time is that the parakeets are attempting to nest there and that the Ospreys may make a serious attempt in the near future. I don't know when the Ospreys actually arrived but, when I saw them it was obviously late in their normal nesting cycle to be in construction. That leads one to wonder if these birds were a pair that failed elsewhere and were making a last-ditch effort. Also, one wonders if the Monks are present at this location year-round, as they are along the coast. Since I didn't see them last August despite a thorough search, that is also an intriguing question.

Jamie Meyers

### **An Aggressive Nester**

Among Connecticut's nesting birds, the Northern Goshawk is by far the most ferocious in defense of its nest. There's a big dropoff to number two on the list, but the Northern Mockingbird deserves consideration. Arthur Cleveland Bent in his "Life Histories of North American Birds" says, "it rivals the kingbird in attacking anything that violates

(its territory)." Tony Mangiapane hosted an especially feisty nesting pair of mockers in his yard in Waterbury in summer 2005.

It was never clear which member of the pair launched the attacks, but they were always carried out by a single bird. The bird dived on and struck a marauding cat on at least one occasion, a behavior that is well-documented in this species. This mockingbird carried its assault to another level by striking the homeowner on the head and neck with its wings on several occasions. The strikes occurred while Mr. Mangiapane was walking in the yard and once while he was sitting in a chair near the nest site.

#### Information from Tony Mangiapane

# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter, December 1, 2004 through February 28, 2005

By Greg Hanisek

The weather was unremarkable, with enough snow and cold, especially in January, to give it a normal feel. It wasn't a very good year for northern irruptives. Finches were in short supply, although a few predatory species made decent showings.

## Geese through Ducks

Nine **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season included singles December 11-15 in Groton (GW), January 15 in Enfield (PCi), to at least January 30 in Southbury (RN et al.), through late January in Newtown (LFi) and February 27 at North Farms Reservoir, Wallingford (WS), plus two each January 15-16 in Simsbury (JMe, BK), and February 20-27 at Mackenzie Reservoir, Wallingford (OW et al.). Snow Geese were typically widespread in small numbers. Of a dozen reports, all were singles with the exception of three on January 7 in Somers (CEk). A Tundra Swan remained about a month on the lower Connecticut River in Essex after

appearing January 2 (OW) and was briefly joined by a second on January 30 in Old Saybrook (JHi).

The first migrant Wood Ducks were noted February 12 at Konold's Pond in Woodbridge, which held 16 on February 27 (FMa). The usual complement of three or four drake **Eurasian Wigeons** were along the coast west of New Haven (m.ob.). Dabbling ducks peaked December 19 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield with counts of 96 American Black Ducks and 454 Mallards (DRo et al.). After the deepest freezes in January, numbers built again to 150 American Black Ducks on February 9 (JE) and 530 Mallards on February 4 (DRo). Three Northern Shovelers were at

Lake Forest in Bridgeport December 25 (DV), with two at Lake Whitney in Hamden December 4 (FMc). The best count of Northern Pintail was 35 on December 8 at South Cove, Old Saybrook (JO). A good mid-winter count of 10 Green-winged Teal were at 14-Acre Pond in Norwalk January 3 (FMa). Nine Red-heads for the season, good by recent standards, included a hen January 1-7 at Fargeorge Preserve in New Haven (RA), a drake at South Cove, Old Saybrook on January 14 (JO); a pair at Nepaug Reservoir, New Hartford, on January 20 (PCa), a pair at Captain's Cove, Bridgeport, February 3-11 (DV); and three at Stonington Point on February 4 (FN). Bantam Lake produced a good late count of 47 Ring-necked Ducks on December 22 (JE). After dropping to as low as five Ring-neckeds as things froze up, the number climbed to 65 on January 28 (DRo).

A female **King Eider** wintered at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) for the fourth consecutive winter (CRa et

al.). A Long-tailed Duck on December 13 at Batterson Pond, Farmington, was a bit later than most inland occurrences (PCi). A boat trip February 8 to the Norwalk Islands produced excellent counts of 800 Long-tailed Ducks, 25 White-winged Scoters and 400 Common Goldeneyes (FMa, LFI). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** appeared February 2 at Shippan Point, Stamford, recently the most-reliable place for this species (PD). The only other report involved a male February 13 at Middle Beach in Madison (PD, JCo et al.). Bantam Lake held 1,275 Common Mergansers on December 13 (DRo) and 65 Hooded Mergansers on December 14 (JE). Bantam also had the top Ruddy Duck flock, 113 on December 4 (JE).

### Grouse through Crane

Ruffed Grouse have become increasingly difficult to find, so three at Apple Hill in White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield, on December 9 were noteworthy (LH). A

Red-throated Loon was an uncommon visitor to Batterson Pond, Farmington, on December 13 (PCi). A possible Pacific Loon, a species that seems to defy full documentation, was off Avery Point in Groton December 11 (GW). Three Red-necked Grebes for the season included one that crash-landed February 1 on a lawn in East Canaan, (WR); it was taken into care at Sharon Audubon Society and later released. Others were at Greenwich Point January 16 (MSa) and Stratford February 3 (CB). An unusual mid-winter concentration of eight Double-crested Cormorants was noted January 30 on the Connecticut River in Wethersfield (SK). Great Cormorants continue to make inland appearances, with two at Shepaug Dam, Southbury, on December 18 (DRo).

An American Bittern was at Silver Sands State Park in Milford December 23-26, where it afforded better views than this secretive species usually allows (JHo et al.). Great Egrets now linger regularly into December,

which produced four reports. The latest were seen January 2 in Niantic (BDw) and January 3 in Lordship (DV). A few Black-crowned Night Herons wintered in Stratford and Westport (FMa et al.). Widespread reports of Black Vulture included a flock of 12 settled in at restaurant dumpsters in Watertown in early February (RH et al.). The Woodbury-Roxbury CBC logged 37. The latest report for Osprey was December 11 in East Haddam (HG). Observers reported five Northern Goshawks and 16 Red-shouldered Hawks for the season. It was a good winter for Rough-legged Hawk, with about 20 reports after attempts to eliminate duplication (DS et al.). The only Golden Eagle report involved an adult over East Hartford January 18 (JHi). The only reports for the plummeting American Kestrel were singles in East Haven on December 11 (DSo), Bridgeport on January 25 (CB) and Ellington on February 4 (CEk). In contrast, there were about 15 Merlin reports well-scattered both inland



*Photo by Mark Szantyr*

*Red-throated Loons outnumber Common Loons in winter in most parts of Long Island Sound. This Red-throated Loon was off Long Beach, Stratford, on 30 December 2004.*

and along the coast (m.ob.)  
A **Sandhill Crane** appeared December 18 in both South Windsor (CEk) and Windsor (BK) as this species' upward trend continues.

### **Coot through Shrike**

American Coot numbers were down from the recent triple-digit concentrations at Bantam Lake. The high was only 20 in early December (DRo). A group of 19 Purple Sandpipers December 9 at

Penfield Reef, Fairfield, represented the season's high count (CB). Two of the four Long-billed Dowitchers present in November lingered to at least January 5 in Milford (DV, JSi et al.). A **Black-headed Gull** was at Greenwich Point December 7 for the season's lone report (MSa). Despite the loss of landfills, the less common large gulls continue to make good showings. The rarest of these, Glaucous Gull, was represented by an unusually

high seven reports, including three together February 8 at Great River Park in East Hartford (PCi). Other good season totals were 20 Iceland Gulls (including four with the 3 Glaucous in East Hartford) and eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls. **Razor-bills** continued their recent trend of entering Long Island Sound in numbers. Reports were scattered from Stonington to Greenwich with a high of 29 off Mystic on January 1 (BDw). The first report was of seven seen from a Project Oceanography boat December 7 at three locations in eastern Long Island Sound (GW). At the western end of the Sound, the high count was seven from Shippan Point, Stamford, on January 8 (PD, ACo).

The only Barn Owl report came from Bridgeport December 26 on the Stratford-Milford CBC (FMa, JMh). The only Snowy Owl was seen December 12 at Silver Sands State Park, flying to Charles Island. (JV). Catlin Woods at White Memorial Foundation held three N.

Saw-whet Owls on January 4 (DRo, MK). Three Red-headed Woodpeckers for the season, following a good fall flight, consisted of singles December 27-28 in Ashford (SM), January 2-4 in Torrington (JW) and in early February in New Haven (LG). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers seem to be increasing as winterers in parallel with their surge as breeders. About 20 reports included several visiting suet feeders (TA, CRo et al.). The latest reports of Eastern Phoebe came from Old Lyme on January 9 (HG, TH) and Derby on the very late date of January 28 (RL). The season's lone Blue-headed Vireo was on New Haven CBC on December 18. Northern Shrikes made a decent showing. Singles were in Bloomfield December 26, with possibly a different one there February 11-27 (DL et al.), in Somers December 29 (JSt), in Litchfield December 29-January 3 (MDo et al.) and in Watertown February 28 (DRo).

## Nuthatch through Finches

You know it was a slow winter for Red-breasted Nuthatch when White Memorial, a stronghold for the species, reported only one all winter (DRo). An exception was a group of up to four that could be found reliably in a small stand of pines at HBSP (m.ob.). A House Wren was

present to the record late date of February 12 in Litchfield (EH). Four Marsh Wrens were still in the Morris Creek marshes in East Haven December 5, with at least one still present January 9 (SB). The latest of very few Ruby-crowned Kinglet reports was from Simsbury on December 29 (DRo). American Robins going nightly to a roost in



*Photo by Mark Szantyr  
Merlins have begun to outnumber American Kestrels as wintering birds. This Merlin was eyeing songbirds on 29 December 2004 in Southbury.*

Litchfield in early December numbered up to 7,000 (DRo). American Pipits were typically scarce, with the only significant report a flock of six on January 17 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (MSa). Yellow-rumped Warblers were rather sparse, but reports of 15 Pine Warbler for the season were unprecedented. They weren't found just around Christmas Count time, but well spaced out with a number of them wintering at feeders and in evergreen groves. This included at least four wintering at Lake Whitney in Hamden (AS) and four on February 9 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 1 (PCi). A Common Yellowthroat lingered to December 27 at Greenwich Point (JBr).

A nice gathering of seven Eastern Meadowlarks was at Griswold Point in Old Lyme December 29 (JCa). A flock of 13 Rusty Blackbirds was at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery, Central Village, on January 10 (FN), and 15 were at Roosevelt Forest, Stratford, on January 30 (CB). These were dwarfed by 50 in a

Madison yard on February 14 (JCo), which were quickly followed by widespread single-digit reports (TA et al.). A group of **Boat-tailed Grackles** (most reports were of 12) wintered in Stratford/Bridgeport (CB et al.). In a winter bereft of northern finches, a single Common Redpoll turned up in Greenwich January 3 (ACu). Pine Siskins and Purple Finches were scattered in moderate numbers, and that was about it.

**OBSERVERS** - Ralph Amodei, Tim Antanaitis, Bob Askins, Jim Bair (JBa), Charlie Barnard, Dan Barvir, Larry Bauscher, Peter Bono, Andrew Brand, Jackie Bruskin (JBr), Steve Broker, Jay Carlisle (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Al Collins (ACo), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe (ACu), Neil Currie, Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Townsend Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt, Randy Domina, Patrick Dugan, Mike Doyle (MDo),

Carl Ekroth, John Eykelhoff, Larry Fischer (LFI), Larry Flynn (LFI), Frank Gallo, John Gaskell, Ted Gilman, Hank Golet, Lorraine Gunderson, Ed Hagen, Nita Hamilton, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHA), Roy Harvey, Simon Harvey (SHr), Ted Hendrickson, John Himmelman (JHi), Julian Hough (JHo), Katy Hubbard, Lukas Hyder, Lynn James, John Johnson, Marie Kennedy, Betty Kleiner, Cindi Kobak, Steve Kotchko, Roger Lawson, David Lawton, Gordon Loery, Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik (FMA), John Maynard (JMa), Florence McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMH), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Judy Moore (JMu), Marty Moore, Nancy Morand, Steve

Morytko, Russ Naylor, Bruce Nichol, Gina Nichol, Dave Norris, Fred Norton, John Ogren, Maryann O'Leary, Charlie Rafford (CRa), EJ Raynor, Larry Reiter, Wendy Rineer, Carla Roselli (CRo), Nancy Rosenbaum, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dean Rupp (DRu), Edward Sadowski, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Tom Sayers, Wilford Scholz, Arthur Shippee, Jim Sirch (JSi), Dori Sosensky, Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Jerry Stage (JSt), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Luke Tiller, Matthew Toomey, Dennis Varza, James Vellozzi, John Wagenblatt, Glenn Williams, Olive Wysocki, Jim Zipp.

## PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough  
Answer to Photo Challenge 49

This month's quiz bird is a tricky one. Shorebirds can be difficult to identify for many people when they are awake, let alone when they are tucked up asleep!

The overall appearance is of a rather small-headed, rotund shorebird with relatively pale, unpatterned upper parts and crown. The uniformity of the upper parts and lack of any dark-centered feathers lead us to assume we are dealing with a bird in non-breeding plumage. The legs are hard to see, but appear pale, which rules out winter Dunlin at least, but leaves us with a list of other species which resemble our bird: winter Wilson's Phalarope, Red Knot, Short and Long-billed Dowitchers and Willet.

Wilson's Phalaropes have a much more pronounced supercilium extending markedly behind the eye, while Red Knots typically have darker legs than our mystery shorebird. If you take into account that some of the leg is hidden beneath fluffed out feathers our bird has quite long legs, another character that is at odds with Red Knot (which has short legs, especially above the "knee") and is more indicative of Willet.

Willet is a much better guess, and most features seem to fit that species – the size, color, upper part pattern, rather pale long legs. But there are a couple of things that, if you look closely, seem at odds with Willet. The clues are the pale-fringed tertials, the presence of small spots on the rear flanks and the tail pattern – white with narrow wavy bars. It's not a Willet but a dowitcher! And we didn't even have to see the bill – which is not necessarily a good thing, since this might help us identify it to species.

Winter-plumaged dowitchers can be difficult, if not impossible, to identify as either Long-billed or Short-billed in some situations. The tail pattern is an oft-touted field mark for separating the two; Long-billed has a darkish tail with narrow white bars, while Short-billed as a whitish tail with narrow blackish bars, narrower or equal in width to the dark

bars. The pattern of our bird is, in my opinion, ambiguous and could arguably belong to either species. Breast pattern (more uniformly gray in Long-billed and slightly more spotted in Short-billed) is of no use. Neither are the spots on the flanks, since these are shown by both species.

In fact this may not be identifiable from this picture, and as is often the case in life, this bird may have to be left as dowitcher sp. In these instances, it helps to know date and location, since that may be invaluable in determining an identification when plumage features are of no help.

In fact, this is a Long-billed Dowitcher, one of several that frequented Mondo Ponds, Milford, during late fall and early winter of 2004-05, dates more typical of Long-billed than Short-billed. The photo was taken by Mark Szantyr in January 2005.

Such birds, whose identification is known, can be used to assess features that may help us tell the two tricky species apart in winter. Typically, Long-billed Dowitchers tend to show no primary projection beyond the tertials (like our



bird) while Short-billed shows slightly more primaries visible beyond the longest tertials. The upper parts feather centers on Long-billed can be a little more diffuse than similarly plumaged Short-billeds, which tend to be more uniform with a hair-thin shaft streak.

In life, this individual also showed a very long-bill. While not indicative on its own, combined with other features this is a strong supporting feature of the identification as Long-billed. Of course, during numerous observations its distinctive call was heard by many observers. If the bird calls, a high "keek" (Longbilled) or a rapid, "tu-tu-tu" (Short-billed) you're home free!

In any case, this month's picture is an example that not every bird will be identifiable, depending upon circumstances, by even the most experienced birders.

Julian Hough, 80 Sea Street, New Haven, CT 06519



Photo Challenge 50. Identify the Species. Answer next issue.

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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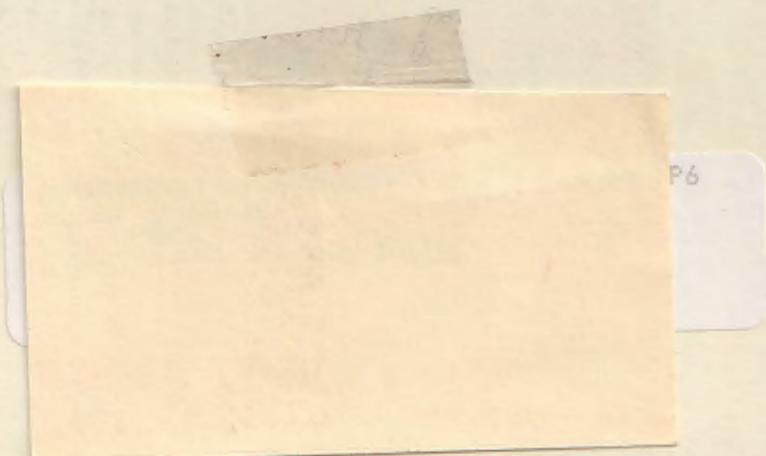
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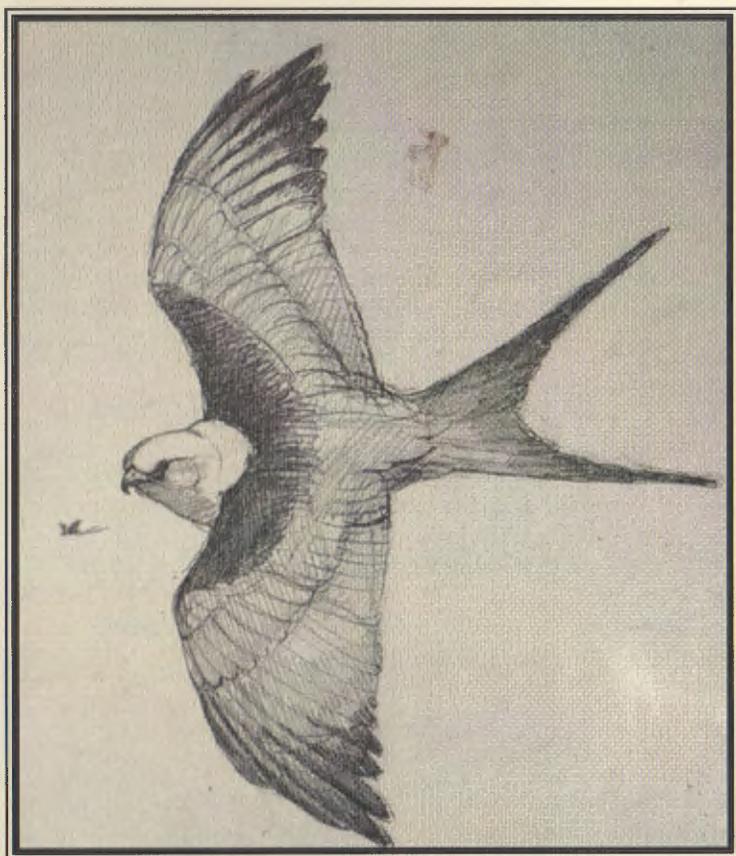
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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



Volume 25 No. 4

October 2005

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# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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## ABOUT OUR COVER

### Swallow-tailed Kite

By Mark Szantyr

Mark Szantyr of Waterbury had his camera and sketch pad out when the Swallow-tailed Kite settled in at Deep River last spring. His efforts at documenting this bird grace our cover and also illustrate a Behavior Note in this edition. Mark is secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut.

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

By Greg Hanisek

A birder's best moments occur in the field. No one would dispute that. Whether pastime, obsession or pleasant diversion, birding happens in the natural moment. There's no substitute for being there.

If you take notes, however, you can relive the experience. Americans are notably deficient in this regard. Good note-taking is considered almost an obligation among birders in most of western Europe. The notebooks of many British birders are minor works of art. This is not to say that one needs to be an artist to keep a birding notebook. Rough sketches can convey a lot of information, and written notes alone can cover dates, weather and behavior.

Anyone who birds can contribute interesting and significant information from careful notes taken while an observation is fresh in the mind. In an effort to encourage this, I've made a point to include notes on behavior, status and distribution in each issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*. Notes of this sort have been elevated to the lead position in this issue in an effort to encourage COA members to share their observations.

These can range from very brief descriptions, such as Dave Zawisha's hummingbird incident, to more detailed studies such as Jay Kaplan's examination of Red-shouldered Hawks' winter feeding habits. I contributed a note on a Northern Harrier's hunting technique, and I confess that I had forgotten all about it until I started paging through my notebook for spring field notes.

I know you're all getting out there. Consider sharing some of your experiences with our membership.

## NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

### A Kite's Aerial Smorgasbord

On 16 and 17 April 2005, I enjoyed photographing and observing Connecticut's second chaseable Swallow-tailed Kite, which settled into the lower Connecticut River valley in the vicinity of Deep River about a week earlier. Over the period of its stay, hundreds of observers noted this avian wonder actively feeding on mayflies as it dove and soared acrobatically over the scene. On the 17th, being the documentation geek that I am, I was able to capture one of these insects and examine it. Noted naturalist Noble S. Proctor was present, and I asked Dr. Proctor if he knew what species of mayfly the bird was feeding on. Noble related that *Leptophlebia cupidus* was the dominant one. *Paraleptophlebia adoptive* was much rarer but landed on us from time to time, so it



Mark Szantyr photo

The photographer gets up close and personal with a hungry Swallow-tailed Kite.

was undoubtedly included in the smorgasbord. The kite fed by delicately grabbing the small insects as they swarmed overhead and gracefully bringing the prey to its bill in its talons while on the wing. What an incredible flying and eating machine! Sadly, by the time I got around to actually identifying which mayfly species I had captured, the specimen dried to a near unidentifiable condition but was likely one of the two mentioned above.



*Mark Szantyr photo*

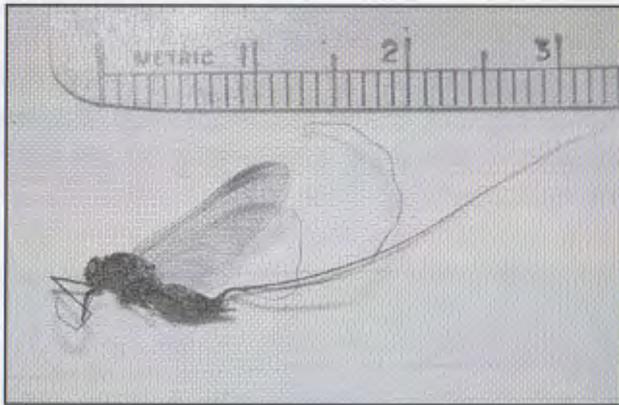
*The Swallow-tailed Kite shows off its aerial feeding technique.*

Observing any bird, especially one as rare and beautiful as this kite, can be a rich experience and can be made richer by paying close attention to what the bird is doing. I feel fortunate indeed that I have my notes and photos to always remember this morning with great friends and an incredible bird.

As secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, I implore others of the lucky hundreds that saw this bird to submit their documenting notes and

photos. To date, we only have two or three reports including my own and that of the initial observer.

Mark Szantyr



Mark Szantyr photo

One of the mayflies on which the kite was feeding.

## A Tough Winter for Red-shouldered Hawks

A discussion of the Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut* (Louis Bevier, ed. 1994), states that early accounts described this species as the most common raptor in southern New England. The Red-shoulder has declined since early in the 20th century as Red-tailed Hawks have increased. "The rather low nesting success of this species is ascribed to intolerance of humans around nest sites, predation of adults and young by nesting Great Horned Owls and sensitivity to low numbers of prey." It was the comment about sensitivity to its prey that piqued my interest in January, as I watched a Shoulder sitting above a feeding station in a driving winter rainstorm. The bird remained motionless for several hours, watching for small rodents, its preferred food, to make an appearance. Songbirds were aware of the hawk's pres-

ence, but continued to feed at the feeders, glancing up occasionally to make sure the hawk was not taking an interest in their comings and goings.

During the winter of 2004-05, in my travels around Connecticut, I saw a number of Red-shouldered Hawks. Although I do not have any documentation to prove it, personal communications would indicate that this species has increased as a winter resident in Connecticut over the past decade. In the April 2004 issue of this magazine, I wrote a brief behavioral article about a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk killing and feeding upon a Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) at a Simsbury feeding station. In the following issue of *The Warbler*, Paul Carrier wrote about a Red-shouldered Hawk feeding on carrion, including chicken bones, at his compost pile in Harwinton.

Unlike larger raptors such as Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) or Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Red-shouldered Hawks have relatively small feet. Although



*Gil Kleiner photo*  
Two Red-shouldered Hawks eat suet in a Simsbury yard in March 2005.

The Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds (John K. Terres, 1980) does include tree squirrels, rabbits and opossum among their prey items, it is more likely that the bulk of their winter diet is composed of small mammals including mice, voles, shrews and moles. At least one study on the Red-shoulder provides a diet of 65% small rodents and 2% poultry (A.C. Bent, 1937). The study does not mention whether the poultry was alive or came out of a compost pile.

The winter of 2004-2005 was a difficult one for many wildlife species. Snow remained on the ground from mid-January well into March throughout the northern half of the state. March temperatures continued below normal throughout the month preventing snowmelt, particularly in shaded woodlands. Bird such as Red-shouldered Hawks and Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) that depend primarily on a diet of small rodents no doubt had difficulty finding sufficient food. On 14 March, a dead Barred Owl was brought to my office at Canton's Roaring Brook Nature Center. The owl was found hanging from a tree branch. It showed no apparent injuries, but was very thin and may have died of starvation.

It would appear that Red-shouldered Hawks are quite capable of altering their hunting strategies in a difficult winter. The season's first report of unusual Red-shoulder behavior came from Walter Lowell of Avon. Mr. Lowell was aware of a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks in his neighborhood, a wooded residential area, during summer 2004. In November, Mr. Lowell noted that in addition to a daily contingent of crows and starlings, the Red-shoulders began hanging around his compost pile. By early January 2005, the Lowells were purchasing low-fat hamburger meat and offering it to the hawks.

Mr. Lowell provided several photographs of these birds feeding on snow and on bare ground in his yard. The hawks were still in the area in late March 2005.

By mid-March, food must have been even more difficult to come by. Two reports, both with photographs, were received of Red-shoulders feeding on suet at backyard feeding stations. On 10 March, a Red-shouldered Hawk appeared on a suet feeder in Canton (C. Griggs, personal communication). The following day, a pair of hawks appeared, although only one bird was seen feeding on suet. The hawks were present for much of both days, but the many songbirds at the feeders did not seem at all concerned about the presence of these large raptors.

The second report came from Simsbury. In early March 2005, Gil and Betty Kleiner observed a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks perched in a tree in their backyard. On 11 March, the hawks were observed feeding on suet from a cage-type feeder. Again, woodpeckers, chickadees and titmice were in the vicinity, but did not appear to be bothered by the hawks' presence. The hawks looked at the smaller birds on occasion, but did not seem particularly interested in them. The following day, 12 March, was characterized by cold temperatures and light snow. The hawks were again attempting to get suet from the cage. Betty Kleiner took a large hunk of suet from her freezer and placed it on the ground. The hawks initially flew off, but one soon returned, perched on the suet and began to eat it. The other bird soon joined it, with both feeding on the suet simultaneously. Some time later, according to the Kleiners, one hawk flew up to a nearby tree, and the other bird picked up the remains of the suet and flew off with it (G. Kleiner, personal communication).

Red-shouldered Hawks, it would appear, will seek out other food sources during difficult winters. Whether this is a relatively new behavior or has always been a characteristic of the species will require additional research. It would certainly be of interest to learn about instances of other raptors changing feeding habits in response to unusual circumstances. Just another of the many opportunities for Connecticut's birders to observe unique bird behavior in the field or in the backyard.

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Jay Kaplan

### **An Unhappy Hummingbird Saga**

An early spring arrival can reward a bird with the first chance at a prime territory. It can also prove fatal. On 16 April 2005 Dave Zawisha of Fairfield was walking at Saugatuck Reservoir in Weston with a friend, Wil-

liam Nichols. They were scouting out trout fishing areas when they noticed a small bird huddled on a dead coniferous twig. Realizing it was a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird, they approached for a closer look. They were surprised to find that the bird, although upright with its feet clutching the twig, was dead. The bird was hunkered down as if trying (unsuccessfully) to keep warm. There are several records of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds arriving in Connecticut on 20 April and one record for 19 April. An arrival on 16 April, or presumably at least one day earlier, is extraordinary. Typical first arrival dates fall in the last few days of April, with most showing up in the first two weeks of May.

Information from Dave Zawisha

### **A Persistent Predator**

On 22 March 2005, while birding at Milford Point, I noticed a Northern Harrier hovering over a small channel far out on the Nell's Island marsh. Through a 30-power lens I could see that a drake Bufflehead was splashing and diving frantically while the harrier hovered above it. The drama continued for ten minutes, until the harrier dropped down and clutched what presumably was an exhausted duck. The harrier stood for about five minutes with its wings held upright for balance, apparently drowning the Bufflehead. Eventually the harrier arose twice with the limp duck dangling from its talons. The prey was apparently too heavy, because it was dropped both times. Two Great Black-backed Gulls then moved in on the kill.

Greg Hanisek

# THE 2005 SUMMBER BIRD COUNT

Joseph Zeranski and Patrick Comins

## **Introduction**

Monitoring is a critical component of bird conservation. As habitats change, there will be changes in bird populations, and having comprehensive data on the numbers of nesting birds throughout Connecticut will allow us to make more informed decisions on conservation efforts. These data will also help illustrate how effective our efforts are and if we need to modify them. The Summer Bird Count (SBC) is the largest and most widespread annual effort to track the status of nesting birds and provides valuable insight into their status. The ability of the SBC to detect changes in the state's bird populations makes it an important conservation tool.

Analyzing the results of the SBC over the years presents some challenges. Since there is no standardized protocol for collecting data, there is no guarantee it will be collected in a similar manner each year. Additionally, there have been changes in the areas covered. The Trumbull-Bridgeport SBC was held from 1999 to 2003, the Salmon River SBC was last held in 2002, and the Quinnipiac Valley SBC ceased in 2003. There was a two-year gap in the participation of the Hartford area, and we added the New Milford-Sherman-Pawling SBC in 2004. Despite these changes, the long-term trends are yielding very similar patterns to those of other efforts, such as the Breeding Bird Survey. This is a clear indication that the SBC is a useful tool for detecting changes in bird populations over time.

## **2005 results**

This year 188 count day species were recorded, slightly up from last year's 183 species and just under the re-

cord high of 191 in 2002. Three additional species were recorded in the count period. There were 249 observers, in 130 parties. The number of observers is second only to 1996 and 109% of the last ten years' average. A new record was set this year with 1329 party hours, eclipsing last year's record by nearly 100 hours. More time was spent in the field by observers this year as compared with the last ten years.

There were 98,936 individual birds recorded, slightly above (105%) the '95-05 average. The ten most abundant species recorded were, in descending order: **American Robin, European Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Gray Catbird, Canada Goose, House Sparrow, Red-eyed Vireo, Mourning Dove and Song Sparrow.** This is very similar to last year's top ten list, with nine species repeated. **Red-eyed Vireos** jumped up to eighth place, kicking goldfinches out of the top ten.

Seventeen species were represented by a single individual: **Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Little Blue Heron, American Coot, Semipalmated Plover, Sanderling, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Bicknell's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.** So was the rare, recessive hybrid form of Blue and Golden-winged Warblers, "**Lawrence's Warbler.**"

The three species recorded within the "count period" but not on the count days were: **Northern Gannet, Black Tern and Manx Shearwater,** all from Greenwich Stamford. **Northern Gannet** is a great bird for this time

of year and a first for the SBC. With increasing numbers of Gannets using Long Island Sound in migration, non-nesting individuals might become more frequent this time of year. This was the third time that **Black Tern** has been recorded on the SBC, with the other occurrences being on count day in 2003 and a count period bird in 1996. The **Manx Shearwater** is a first for the SBC and a rarity on Long Island Sound regardless of the date. The Sound seems to be producing more pelagic birds in recent years than it has in decades. Zeranski and Baptist mention one 1980 sight report of Manx, but there have been at least three records since then from the Stamford-Greenwich/Rye, N.Y., area (Tom Burke, pers. comm.). Such regular sightings so close to shore are quite intriguing. Do these represent non-breeding individuals that have wandered into Long Island Sound, making their way to the western end in search of a water passageway out? Or do they represent birds scouting for a suitable nesting areas, or perhaps even nesting birds? Manx Shearwaters have nested in Buzzards Bay, Mass, (Veit and Petersen, 1993) and are even thought to possibly nest in Narragansett Bay, R.I., on Gulf of Maine islands, and on rocky islets in Long Island Sound, N.Y. (Buckley and Buckley 1984, via Lee and Haney, 1996). The Birds of North America account for this species states their nesting habitat as: "remote, uninhabited, turfey islands and headlands (less commonly inland mountains) that have few mammalian predators..." (Lee and Haney, 1996).

There were 20 species recorded on the count days that do not breed in Connecticut and can be considered either late migrants or non-nesting visitors: **Brant**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Red-throated Loon**, **Common Loon**, **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, **American Coot**, **Semipalmated Plover**, **Sanderling**, **Semipal-**

mated Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Bicknell's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. The underlined species are potential nesters, but in the absence of additional supporting evidence they will be considered non-nesting visitors.

Worth noting from this group: The fifth **Red-throated Loon** for the SBC since 1992 was especially noteworthy inland in Litchfield Hills and a first for this SBC area. The first SBC record for **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** occurred on the Greenwich-Stamford Count. Storm-Petrels appear to be becoming more regular in Long Island Sound and were once much more common on the Sound (Zeranski and Baptist, 1980). The seventh record for **American Coot**, also in Greenwich-Stamford, was notable because it nests as close as the New York City/New Jersey Meadowlands area. **Ring-billed Gulls** are noteworthy this year as they follow last year's first report ever of a nesting attempt, in Branford's Thimble Islands (Celia Lewis pers. comm.). Since the vast majority of the 476 individuals are non-nesting visitors, Ring-bills will remain in the non-nesting category, but birders should be on the lookout for evidence of additional nesting attempts. The **Olive-sided Flycatcher** in Barkhamsted is a new species for that circle and the eighth recorded on the SBC. This species has not yet been confirmed as nesting, but suitable habitat is available, especially close to the Massachusetts border. Determining if this record represents a breeding attempt is problematic because this species can be a late migrant. A record five **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were recorded this year, from Hartford, Woodbury-Roxbury and Litchfield Hills. The **Bicknell's Thrush** recorded on the Hartford circle is

a spectacular rarity for Connecticut in mid-June and a first for the SBC statewide. Separating this species from the very similar Gray-cheeked Thrush represents one of the most difficult identification challenges faced by birders in North America. It is particularly difficult to distinguish Bicknell's from the Newfoundland race of Gray-cheeked, *C. x minimus*, outside of their respective nesting ranges. Great care should be taken when attempting to identify a bird from this group to species, particularly outside of normal migration dates. This individual was observed by three very experienced observers, who carefully eliminated Gray-cheeked and the other *Catharus* thrushes in their field notes. **Swainson's Thrush** is listed as a potential nester in the Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas, but can also be a late migrant. Also noteworthy was the **Tennessee Warbler**, from Litchfield Hills. (fifth SBC record). The **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** on Greenwich-Stamford is the sixth record for the SBC since 1992, perhaps indicating a pattern of late migration. Three species seen on at least ten SBCs since 1992 were not recorded this year: Greater Scaup, Greater Yellowlegs and Ruddy Turnstone.

### Notable Nesting Species

The **Green-winged Teals** in New Haven and Hartford are the first SBC records for those circles. This species is a recent addition to the list of breeding species in Connecticut. Hartford is an interesting location since all of the known nesting attempts have occurred in coastal locales. **Northern Bobwhite** numbers have declined to the point where it is now a notable nesting species. Our local population is heavily dependent upon the numbers of captive birds released, and there may be no native populations left. **Pied-billed Grebes** were in short supply this year. It is difficult to tell if this is

indicative of a trend since they are one of the rarest and most endangered nesting species in the state and are also easily overlooked. **Little Blue Herons** and **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were below average this year, but this is likely not indicative of any true population declines. Three **American Bitterns** were recorded, including the first ever in the Hartford circle. This state endangered species is quite elusive as a breeder and, as with all state-listed species, any evidence for nesting should be reported to COA. Two **Soras**, a species that can be difficult to find nesting, were recorded in Litchfield Hills and New Haven. Only one **Northern Saw-Whet Owl** was recorded, in Barkhamsted, but like Pied-billed Grebe, this is an easily overlooked species. The two **Common Nighthawks** recorded in New Haven and one in Litchfield Hills may just be migrants, but the New Haven record is interesting since nighthawks were recorded on this circle for the last two years. Their primary nesting habitat in Connecticut is flat gravel roofs in urban and suburban areas.

It would be interesting to know if **Golden-winged Warbler**, a first for the Hartford circle, represents a nesting attempt and, if so, if it was paired up with another Golden-winged or with a Blue-winged Warbler. Two **Nashville Warblers** were reported in the Litchfield Hills circle and could represent nesting in this northern circle by a species recorded eight times since 1992. Seven **Northern Parulas** were recorded, some of which could represent nesting attempts by a species that may be moving back into the state as a nester. **Mourning Warbler** joins the nesting category for the first time, with a nesting attempt reported in the Barkhamsted circle (Dave Rosgen pers. comm.). Three birds were recorded there and another individual was in Woodbury-Roxbury, making for a high count total of four. **Yellow-**

**breasted Chat** was a new species for Woodbury-Roxbury, and another was reported in Greenwich-Stamford. This species nests in the state in at least one location, but these individuals were likely migrants. Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were recorded in Hartford, but it is likely that this is only a fraction of the birds that nested there this year. Rentschler Field, which was not canvassed, still supports a sizeable nesting population. Two **Evening Grosbeaks** in Litchfield Hills were a good find, especially since this species is getting hard to find at any time of year.

New count-circle species that may represent nesting attempts include: **American Woodcock**, in New Haven; **Brown Creeper**, **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Brown Thrasher**, **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, **Blackburnian Warbler**, **Northern Waterthrush** and **Canada Warbler** in Pawling-Hidden Valley; and **Black Vulture** in Barkhamsted.

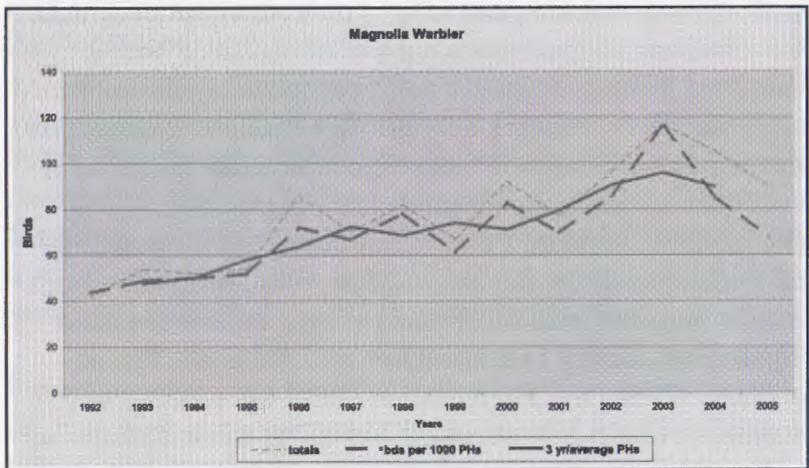
Two counts recorded new species that nest elsewhere in the state but probably not in these circles: **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **Purple Finch** and **Northern Waterthrush** in New Haven and **Black-crowned Night-Heron** in Barkhamsted. That three **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were recorded inland is also noteworthy.

Fifteen species that nest in Connecticut were not recorded, but each is an uncommon to rare and/or localized nester and can easily be missed: **Gadwall**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **Glossy Ibis**, **King Rail**, **Common Moorhen**, **Upland Sandpiper**, **Roseate Tern**, **Barn Owl**, **Long-eared Owl**, **Red-headed Woodpecker**, **Kentucky Warbler**, **Seaside Sparrow**, **Blue Grosbeak**, **Boat-tailed Grackle** and **Pine Siskin**.

### Increasing Species of Note

**Black Vultures** put in another record performance with a new high of 26, including the first for the Barkhamsted circle. **Osprey** had a new high statewide total of 99, an impressive and steady increase from the 15 recorded in 1995. Nine **Osprey** were recorded from inland circles. This is worth noting since this species has re-established nesting along the coast but has not reclaimed historic inland nesting areas. **Black Skimmers** were also recorded in record high numbers, with 17 in the New Haven circle. **Monk Parakeets** set a new high with 288, more than double the previous high count and up markedly from the eight birds recorded statewide in 1995. All of its SBC records for this year were in coastal circles, but this species has now started nesting inland in at least one location. Both **Black-billed** and **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were recorded in record high numbers with 69 and 144, respectively. For **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** this shatters the previous high of 50 in 2003. **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were recorded again in record high numbers. When party hours are taken into account, the numbers from two years ago exceeded this year's, but high numbers in recent years suggest a growing population. Most of the woodpeckers, with the exception of flickers, appear to be doing well, with new high counts for **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Hairy Woodpecker** and **Pileated Woodpecker**. These new highs do not hold up when party hours are taken into account, but all of these species, as well as **Downy Woodpecker**, appear to show increasing trends over the last decade. This is perhaps indicative of Connecticut's maturing forests and, at least for some of the species, the growing popularity of backyard bird feeding. Feeding can affect winter survival and nesting populations, particularly among minimally migratory species such as woodpeckers.

The maturation of Connecticut's woodlands is also a likely factor in the record high numbers of **Eastern Wood Pewees**. While most of our woodland-nesting species appear to be in good shape, this does not mean that populations of woodland birds are safe in the longer term. Over the next 20 years and beyond, forest fragmentation is projected to greatly outpace reforestation of farmland. Continuing monitoring efforts will be needed to detect any future population changes at an early stage. Both **Alder** and **Willow Flycatchers** were in record numbers. For **Willow Flycatchers** the record is offset when party hours are taken into account, but both species appear to have at least a modest increasing trend over the last ten years. Most vireos also seem to be doing well, with high counts recorded for **Yellow-throat-**



**ed, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireo**. When party hours are taken into account, the record highs do not stand, but the last ten years of data indicate a slight increasing trend, or at least steady populations, for each of those species as well as **Blue-headed Vireo**. **White-breasted Nuthatch** is another feeder and forest bird that turned

in a new high, at least in terms of overall numbers recorded. Even with party hours taken into account an increasing trend is indicated. **Veerys** also turned in a new high, at least in terms of overall numbers, and appear to have an increasing trend over the last ten years. **Pine Warblers**, while not recorded in record numbers, appear to have experienced a substantial increasing trend over the last ten years, both in terms of overall numbers recorded and birds/party hour. **Cerulean Warblers** were recorded in record high numbers this year with 16 statewide. Our Connecticut population is so small that minor SBC shifts tell us little, but Cerulean Warblers are important to track since they are considered at risk for global extinction. Connecticut does not lie in the heart of its range, but with apparently increasing populations here and dramatic declines in the heart of the range, this state may become relatively more important for this species. **American Redstart** and **Louisiana Waterthrush** turned in a new high for overall numbers recorded with 1318 and 189, respectively. These high counts do not stand up when party hours are taken into account, but there does appear to be a slight overall increasing trend or at least steady populations for both species. **Hooded Warblers** were observed in record high numbers with 72 recorded, nearly doubling the previous high count of 37 in 1997. **Scarlet Tanagers** also had a new high, but not when corrected for party hours. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Indigo Bunting**, **Orchard Oriole** and **Baltimore Oriole** all turned in high counts and appear to be increasing, perhaps indicating increased adaptability to suburban habitats.

Since a year's total is dropped each year from the SBC ten-year statistics, a species' old lows and highs are eventually replaced by new ones. Thus new highs and lows are a yearly feature, but often signify no long-term

population changes. Other species with new highs, but no reliable indication of overall increasing trends, include: **Common Tern**, **Great Crested Flycatcher**, **House Wren** and **Savannah Sparrow**.

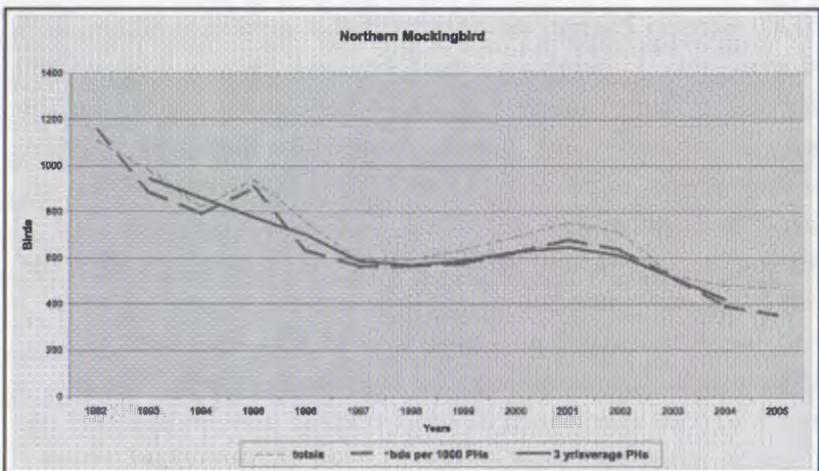
### **Declining Species**

**Canada Geese** were recorded at a low of 3585 birds, 78% of average and down over 1,500 from the peak count of 2001. While **Canada Geese** are native to the area as a migrant and wintering population, a different sub-species was introduced as a nester. These recent declines follow several years of increasing populations. Additional counts will help determine whether the recent trends represent a peak and ensuing decline or a temporary lull in growth of this non-migratory population. **Mute Swan** turned in a new low of 165, 48% of the average and down substantially from the peak count of 462 in 2002. Part of this decline is certainly due to the loss of the Quinnipiac Valley circle, which typically had the highest total in the state, but a new low was also recorded in Greenwich-Stamford, and other studies indicate a statewide decline in recent years. Only 32 **American Black Ducks** were recorded statewide, a new low, which is 41% of average and only 25% of the peak total from 2001. No Black Ducks were recorded from inland counts, but there were two **hybrid American Black Duck X Mallard** in Woodbury-Roxbury. Interbreeding between the native American Black Duck and the closely related and introduced (as a nesting species) western Mallard may be a factor in declining populations of Black Ducks throughout the northeast. Only three **Ring-necked Pheasants** were recorded, a new low, which likely is indicative of a mix of factors including less stocking, the effects of harsh winters, and undoubtedly the decline of early successional habitat in

the state (slightly weedy, overgrown fields are in very sharp decline on lower Fairfield County and are declining everywhere). If this trend continues it is likely that we will see this introduced species extirpated from the state. Although this year's numbers of **Ruffed Grouse** were not at record low levels, at 19 recorded, they are down substantially from the high of 77 recorded in 1995 and are a cause for concern. This is a species that requires relatively young woodlands to successfully nest, and as Connecticut's forests mature there is less and less optimal habitat available for grouse. Growing deer populations consume a great deal of the ground cover and understory vegetation that these birds require.

Dependent upon the same changeable sites year after year, colonial nesters can experience noticeable annual fluctuations. Their censusing may fluctuate due to the weather and observer variations. **Snowy Egret** recorded another new low of 95, 54% of average, adding to concern that this state-threatened species may be declining. **Black-crowned Night-Herons** are also substantially down, with 165 recorded this year, 51% of average and a new low when viewed in the context of party hours. This is down from a peak number of 458 in 2000. **Green Heron** also turned in a new low of 59, 77% of average. This species may be undergoing a shallow declining trend statewide, but a few more years of data may help clarify any trend. **American Kestrels** remain at low levels, with only 13 recorded statewide and none in Greenwich-Stamford. **Belted Kingfisher** also turned in a new low with 71, or 58% of average. **Northern Flickers** were the exception among woodpeckers and were recorded at a new low of 508, less than 80% of average. Likewise, unlike the other vireos **White-eyed Vireos** remained at near record low levels, but up slightly from last year's record low. **American Crows**

remained near last year's record low levels, but at a record low when viewed in the context of party hours. Crows appear to have undergone a steep decline since the peak numbers of 1998 and 1999. Part of this decline may be due to West Nile virus, which was introduced in 1999. Christmas Counts also show a declining trend since 1999/2000. **Purple Martins** are up slightly from last year, but with a record low in the context of party hours. **Brown Creeper** recorded another new low of 41 or half of average, one of only a few forest nesting species with an apparent declining trend, at least since 2000. Dependent upon a limited number of nesting locations, **Marsh Wrens** are down substantially from the peak number recorded in 2003 and at only 58% of the average. We will keep an eye this species in future counts. **Northern Mockingbirds** appear to have been declining since 1995, with a record low this year at 70% of average. While mockingbirds have adapted well to suburbia, perhaps harsh winters are taking a toll along with a scarcity of natural shrubland habitat. **Brown Thrashers** are up slightly from the low recorded two years ago, but still well below numbers recorded in the 90s. They continue to suffer a long-term decline due to



reduced nesting habitat. **European Starlings** turned in a record low of 4766, which is 76% of average. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were also at a new low of 97, or 71% of average. **Common Yellowthroats** were at a new low and may be declining, but a few more years of data will help to clarify any trend. **Eastern Meadowlarks** also came in at a new severe low of eight, which is only 24% of average and down from a peak count of 63 in 1996. **House Finches** remain at low levels. While this year's total was not a new low, it is at a low in the context of party hours, perhaps an indication that the mycoplasma eye disease is still affecting the population.

Three additional species recorded new lows this year, but year to year eccentricity in these species makes it difficult to determine if there is any overall trend: **Clapper Rail**, **Great Horned Owl** and **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow**. Summer Bird Counts are not the best tool for tracking these species as they all require specialized techniques to estimate populations.

### Thank you

In conclusion, on behalf of the Connecticut Ornithological Association and everyone who cares about Connecticut's birds, we would like to thank all of the observers, captains and compilers. The data that you provide is critical for understanding our changing breeding bird populations.

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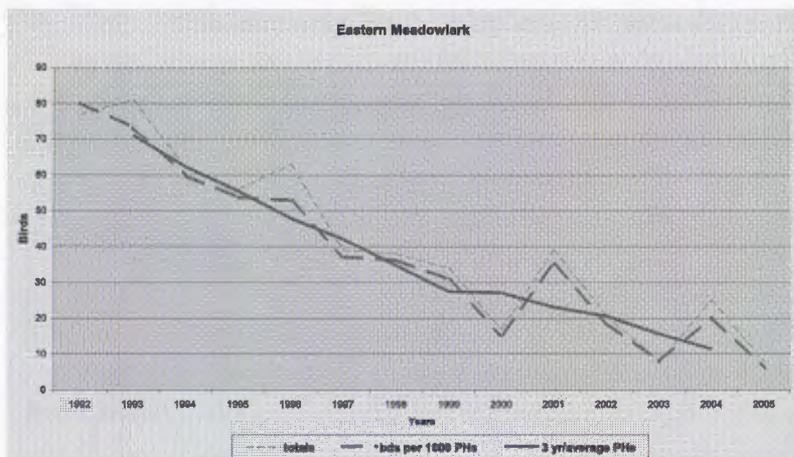
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2005 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

Species known to nest recently within Connecticut are shown in italics. The high/low/rare stats (below) are given for local SBCs at least ten years old. For courts held for fewer than 10 years (PHV) only new Count Day species are noted. Under the statewide totals all stats pertain to the prior ten years.

- XX** = Rare, noted on fewer than five years during previously censused 10 years [outlined box]
- XX** = new Count Day species; not recorded on previously censused 10 years [darkened outlined box]
- XX = more birds tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 years [underlined number]
- XX** = fewer birds tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 year [boldfaced number]
- 0** = not recorded on CD, but recorded on each of the previously censused 10 years [boldfaced zero]

| SPECIES                    | Coastal     |            | CT            | Upland Counts |     |          |           |           | 2005<br>State<br>Totals | % of<br>95-04<br>aver | yrs<br>obs | 1995-2004 |      |      |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-----|----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|------|------|
|                            | GS          | NH         | Valley<br>Hfd | Mid-state     |     | Northern |           |           |                         |                       |            | Ave       | Low  | High |
|                            |             |            |               | WR            | PHV | Ba       | LH        | St        |                         |                       |            |           |      |      |
| Snow Goose                 |             |            |               |               |     |          |           |           |                         | 0%                    | 3          | 0.3       | 0    | 1    |
| <i>Canada Goose</i>        | <b>1084</b> | <i>573</i> | 383           | 490           | 440 | 205      | 327       | 83        | <b>3585</b>             | 78%                   | 10         | 4574      | 3783 | 5197 |
| Brant                      | 21          | <b>6</b>   |               |               |     |          |           |           | 27                      | 264%                  | 9          | 9.2       | 0    | 29   |
| <i>Mute Swan</i>           | <b>39</b>   | 88         | 5             | 20            | 6   |          | 7         |           | <b>165</b>              | 48%                   | 10         | 341       | 184  | 462  |
| <i>Wood Duck</i>           | 98          | 19         | <u>47</u>     | 79            | 21  | 13       | <b>56</b> | <u>20</u> | 353                     | 107%                  | 10         | 329       | 280  | 418  |
| <i>Gadwall</i>             |             |            |               |               |     |          |           |           |                         | 0%                    | 8          | 8.4       | 0    | 15   |
| American Wigeon            |             |            |               |               |     |          |           |           |                         | 0%                    | 5          | 0.5       | 0    | 1    |
| <i>American Black Duck</i> | <b>15</b>   | 17         |               |               |     |          |           |           | <b>32</b>               | 41%                   | 10         | 78        | 50   | 120  |
| <i>Mallard</i>             | 908         | 246        | <b>296</b>    | 122           | 54  | 96       | 207       | 45        | 1974                    | 79%                   | 10         | 2493      | 1460 | 3022 |

| SPECIES                | Coastal |    | CT<br>Valley<br>Hfd | Upland Counts |    |          |     |   | 2005<br>State<br>Totals | % of<br>95-04<br>aver | yrs<br>obs | 1995-2004 |     |      |
|------------------------|---------|----|---------------------|---------------|----|----------|-----|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|-----|------|
|                        | GS      | NH |                     | Mid-state     |    | Northern |     |   |                         |                       |            | Ave       | Low | High |
|                        |         |    | WR                  | PHV           | Ba | LH       | St  |   |                         |                       |            |           |     |      |
| MallardxAm Black Duck  |         | 4  |                     | 2             |    |          |     |   | 6                       |                       |            |           |     |      |
| Blue-winged Teal       |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 4          | 1.3       | 0   | 8    |
| Northern Shoveler      |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 1          | 0.3       | 0   | 2    |
| Northern Pintail       |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 3          | 0.3       | 0   | 1    |
| Green-winged Teal      |         | 1  | 1                   |               |    |          |     |   | 2                       | 286%                  | 4          | 0.7       | 0   | 4    |
| Ring-necked Duck       |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 5          | 0.6       | 0   | 2    |
| Greater Scaup          |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 9          | 1.7       | 0   | 4    |
| Lesser Scaup           |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 3          | 0.3       | 0   | 1    |
| Common Eider           |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 1          | 0.2       | 0   | 2    |
| White-winged Scoter    |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 1          | 0.1       | 0   | 1    |
| Long-tailed Duck       | 1       |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   | 1                       | 77%                   | 5          | 1.3       | 0   | 4    |
| Bufflehead             |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 6          | 1.1       | 0   | 4    |
| Common Goldeneye       |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 4          | 1.0       | 0   | 6    |
| Hooded Merganser       |         | 3  |                     |               |    | 3        | 5   |   | 11                      | 45%                   | 10         | 25        | 2   | 72   |
| Common Merganser       |         |    |                     | 37            | 16 | 56       | 4   |   | 113                     | 94%                   | 10         | 120       | 72  | 196  |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 1       |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   | 1                       | 56%                   | 7          | 1.8       | 0   | 7    |
| Ruddy Duck             |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     |   |                         | 0%                    | 5          | 1.8       | 0   | 10   |
| Ring-necked Pheasant   | 1       |    |                     |               |    |          |     | 2 | 3                       | 11%                   | 10         | 27        | 6   | 93   |
| Ruffed Grouse          |         |    |                     | 1             |    | 10       | 7   | 1 | 19                      | 66%                   | 10         | 29        | 13  | 77   |
| Wild Turkey            | 86      | 36 | 22                  | 94            | 30 | 113      | 125 | 8 | 514                     | 112%                  | 10         | 460       | 298 | 645  |
| Northern Bobwhite      | 1       |    |                     |               |    |          |     | 1 | 2                       | 51%                   | 9          | 3.5       | 0   | 11   |
| Red-throated Loon      |         |    |                     |               |    |          |     | 1 | 1                       | 77%                   | 4          | 1.3       | 0   | 8    |

|                                 |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |      |      |     |     |     |   |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Common Loon                     | CP  | 2   |    |    |    |    |    |    | 6   | 8    | 195% | 9   | 4.1 | 0   | 8 |
| <i>Pied-billed Grebe</i>        |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1   | 1    | 35%  | 7   | 2.3 | 0   | 7 |
| Horned Grebe                    |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |      | 0%   | 2   | 0.3 | 0   | 2 |
| Red-necked Grebe                |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |      | 0%   | 2   | 0.2 | 0   | 1 |
| Manx Shearwater                 | CP  |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | CP   | 0%   | 0   | 0.0 | 0   | 0 |
| Wilson's Storm-petrel           |     | 3   |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | 3    |      | 0   | 0.0 | 0   | 0 |
| Northern Gannet                 | CP  |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | CP   | 0%   | 0   | 0.0 | 0   | 0 |
| <i>Double-crested Cormorant</i> | 532 | 298 | 23 | 10 | 21 | 7  | 8  | 3  | 902 | 123% | 10   | 732 | 574 | 964 |   |
| Great Cormorant                 |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | 0%   | 2    | 0.2 | 0   | 1   |   |
| <i>American Bittern</i>         |     |     | 1  |    |    | 1  | 1  |    | 3   | 273% | 7    | 1.1 | 0   | 3   |   |
| <i>Least Bittern</i>            |     |     |    |    |    |    | 1  |    | 1   | 37%  | 10   | 2.7 | 1   | 7   |   |
| <i>Great Blue Heron</i>         | 17  | 12  | 24 | 18 | 15 | 52 | 65 | 12 | 215 | 146% | 10   | 147 | 82  | 248 |   |
| <i>Great Egret</i>              | 141 | 47  |    |    |    |    |    |    | 188 | 74%  | 10   | 255 | 168 | 376 |   |
| <i>Snowy Egret</i>              | 60  | 35  |    |    |    |    |    |    | 95  | 54%  | 10   | 175 | 97  | 261 |   |
| <i>Little Blue Heron</i>        |     | 1   |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1   | 39%  | 9    | 2.3 | 0   | 5   |   |
| Tricolored Heron                |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | 0%   | 2    | 0.2 | 0   | 1   |   |
| Cattle Egret                    |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | 0%   | 1    | 0.4 | 0   | 4   |   |
| <i>Green Heron</i>              | 18  | 10  | 10 | 8  | 4  | 1  | 7  | 1  | 59  | 77%  | 10   | 76  | 62  | 87  |   |
| <i>Black-cr Night-Heron</i>     | 135 | 27  |    | 1  |    | 1  | 1  |    | 165 | 51%  | 10   | 324 | 161 | 458 |   |
| <i>Yellow-cr Night-Heron</i>    | 1   | 2   |    |    |    |    |    |    | 3   | 50%  | 10   | 6.0 | 2   | 21  |   |
| <i>Glossy Ibis</i>              |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | 0%   | 5    | 0.9 | 0   | 4   |   |
| <i>Black Vulture</i>            |     |     |    | 15 | 7  | 4  |    |    | 26  | 333% | 8    | 7.8 | 0   | 22  |   |
| <i>Turkey Vulture</i>           | 17  | 26  | 14 | 77 | 36 | 67 | 82 | 12 | 331 | 110% | 10   | 302 | 251 | 382 |   |
| <i>Osprey</i>                   | 28  | 62  |    | 1  |    | 4  | 4  |    | 99  | 206% | 10   | 48  | 15  | 87  |   |
| Mississippi Kite                |     |     |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | 0%   | 1    | 0.1 | 0   | 1   |   |
| <i>Bald Eagle</i>               |     |     | 1  | 1  |    | 9  | 2  |    | 13  | 121% | 10   | 11  | 2   | 22  |   |
| <i>Northern Harrier</i>         |     | 2   |    |    |    |    |    |    | 2   | 125% | 6    | 1.6 | 0   | 5   |   |

| SPECIES                       | Coastal |    | CT     | Upland Counts |     |          |    |    | 2005<br>State<br>Totals | % of<br>95-04<br>aver | 1995-2004<br>yrs<br>obs | Ave | Low | High |
|-------------------------------|---------|----|--------|---------------|-----|----------|----|----|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|------|
|                               | GS      | NH | Valley | Mid-state     |     | Northern |    |    |                         |                       |                         |     |     |      |
|                               |         |    | Hfd    | WR            | PHV | Ba       | LH | St |                         |                       |                         |     |     |      |
| <i>Sharp-shinned Hawk</i>     | 1       | 1  | 2      | 1             |     | 1        | 1  |    | 7                       | 76%                   | 10                      | 9.2 | 5   | 14   |
| <i>Cooper's Hawk</i>          | 1       | 2  | 1      | 9             | 1   | 1        | 3  | 3  | 21                      | 70%                   | 10                      | 30  | 18  | 40   |
| <i>accipiter species</i>      |         |    |        |               |     |          |    | 1  | 1                       |                       |                         |     |     |      |
| <i>Northern Goshawk</i>       |         |    |        | 1             |     |          | 2  |    | 4                       | 75%                   | 10                      | 5.3 | 2   | 9    |
| <i>Red-shouldered Hawk</i>    | 1       | 6  | 1      | 13            | 1   | 8        | 7  | 6  | 43                      | 123%                  | 10                      | 35  | 25  | 47   |
| <i>Broad-winged Hawk</i>      | 7       |    | 1      | 8             | 3   | 14       | 18 | 13 | 64                      | 115%                  | 10                      | 56  | 46  | 66   |
| <i>Red-tailed Hawk</i>        | 55      | 19 | 32     | 50            | 23  | 27       | 29 | 13 | 248                     | 105%                  | 10                      | 237 | 177 | 341  |
| <i>American Kestrel</i>       |         |    | 1      |               | 7   |          | 3  | 2  | 13                      | 96%                   | 10                      | 14  | 3   | 30   |
| <i>Peregrine Falcon</i>       | 1       | 1  | 2      |               |     |          |    |    | 4                       | 148%                  | 10                      | 2.7 | 1   | 6    |
| <i>Clapper Rail</i>           | 1       | 1  |        |               |     |          |    |    | 2                       | 18%                   | 10                      | 11  | 6   | 21   |
| <i>King Rail</i>              |         |    |        |               |     |          |    |    |                         | 0%                    | 4                       | 0.5 | 0   | 2    |
| <i>Virginia Rail</i>          | 1       | 1  | 3      | 5             | 1   |          | 8  |    | 19                      | 66%                   | 10                      | 29  | 15  | 51   |
| <i>Sora</i>                   |         | 1  |        |               |     |          | 1  |    | 2                       | 154%                  | 7                       | 1.3 | 0   | 3    |
| <i>Common Moorhen</i>         |         |    |        |               |     |          |    |    |                         | 0%                    | 4                       | 0.6 | 0   | 2    |
| <i>American Coot</i>          | 1       |    |        |               |     |          |    |    | 1                       | 167%                  | 4                       | 0.6 | 0   | 3    |
| <i>Black-bellied Plover</i>   |         |    |        |               |     |          |    |    |                         | 0%                    | 7                       | 3.0 | 0   | 7    |
| <i>American Golden Plover</i> |         |    |        |               |     |          |    |    |                         | 0%                    | 1                       | 0.1 | 0   | 1    |
| <i>Semipalmated Plover</i>    | 1       |    |        |               |     |          |    |    | 1                       | 16%                   | 6                       | 6.2 | 0   | 35   |
| <i>Piping Plover</i>          |         | 8  |        |               |     |          |    |    | 8                       | 62%                   | 10                      | 13  | 6   | 24   |
| <i>Killdeer</i>               | 47      | 44 | 84     | 20            | 11  | 18       | 30 | 12 | 266                     | 101%                  | 10                      | 262 | 158 | 351  |
| <i>American Oystercatcher</i> | 26      | 5  |        |               |     |          |    |    | 31                      | 96%                   | 10                      | 32  | 11  | 57   |
| <i>Greater Yellowlegs</i>     |         |    |        |               |     |          |    |    | 0                       | 0%                    | 10                      | 2.8 | 1   | 5    |
| <i>Solitary Sandpiper</i>     |         |    |        |               |     |          |    |    |                         | 0%                    | 7                       | 0.9 | 0   | 2    |

|                                |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            |      |    |      |     |      |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----------|-----------|----|---|---|---|------------|------|----|------|-----|------|
| <i>Willet</i>                  |     | 4         |           |    |   |   |   | 4          | 48%  | 8  | 6.7  | 0   | 24   |
| <i>Spotted Sandpiper</i>       | 2   | 5         | <u>13</u> | 6  | 1 | 3 | 5 | 35         | 112% | 8  | 31.3 | 0   | 49   |
| <i>Upland Sandpiper</i>        |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 2  | 5.2  | 0   | 26   |
| <i>Ruddy Turnstone</i>         |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 9  | 5.8  | 0   | 16   |
| <i>Red Knot</i>                |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 3  | 0.8  | 0   | 6    |
| <i>Sanderling</i>              |     |           | 1         |    |   |   |   | 1          | 36%  | 6  | 2.8  | 0   | 9    |
| <i>Semipalmated Sandpiper</i>  | 1   | 1         |           |    |   |   |   | 2          | 2%   | 8  | 66   | 0   | 349  |
| <i>Least Sandpiper</i>         |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 4  | 0.7  | 0   | 3    |
| <i>White-rumped Sandpiper</i>  |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 2  | 1.2  | 0   | 6    |
| <i>Dunlin</i>                  |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 4  | 1.0  | 0   | 4    |
| <i>Short-billed Dowitcher</i>  |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 2  | 1.2  | 0   | 8    |
| <i>Common Snipe</i>            |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0   | 1    |
| <i>American Woodcock</i>       |     |           | 1         | 8  |   | 1 | 9 | 19         | 123% | 10 | 15   | 9   | 24   |
| <i>Laughing Gull</i>           | 36  | 3         |           |    |   |   |   | 39         | 141% | 10 | 28   | 1   | 119  |
| <i>Bonaparte's Gull</i>        |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 2  | 0.2  | 0   | 1    |
| <i>Ring-billed Gull</i>        | 71  | 336       | 43        | 3  | 5 | 7 | 9 | 476        | 94%  | 10 | 504  | 311 | 795  |
| <i>Herring Gull</i>            | 302 | 344       | 2         | 2  | 6 |   | 1 | 657        | 70%  | 10 | 944  | 532 | 1229 |
| <i>Glaucous Gull</i>           |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0   | 1    |
| <i>Great Black-backed Gull</i> | 141 | 83        | 6         | 10 |   |   |   | 240        | 77%  | 10 | 311  | 216 | 414  |
| <i>Gull-billed Tern</i>        |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0   | 1    |
| <i>Royal Tern</i>              |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 2  | 0.5  | 0   | 3    |
| <i>Roseate Tern</i>            |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0   | 1    |
| <i>Common Tern</i>             | 173 | 118       |           |    |   |   |   | <u>291</u> | 151% | 10 | 177  | 7   | 518  |
| <i>Forster's Tern</i>          |     |           |           |    |   |   |   |            | 0%   | 2  | 32   | 0   | 321  |
| <i>Least Tern</i>              | 1   | 214       |           |    |   |   |   | 215        | 79%  | 10 | 274  | 50  | 560  |
| <i>Black Tern</i>              | CP  |           |           |    |   |   |   | CP         | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0   | 1    |
| <i>Black Skimmer</i>           |     | <u>17</u> |           |    |   |   |   | <u>17</u>  | 283% | 7  | 4.2  | 0   | 12   |

| SPECIES                          | Coastal   |            | CT         | Upland Counts |     |           |            |           | 2005<br>State<br>Totals | % of<br>95-04<br>aver | yrs<br>obs | 1995-2004 |      |      |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|---------------|-----|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|------|------|
|                                  | GS        | NH         | Valley     | Mid-state     |     | Northern  |            |           |                         |                       |            | Ave       | Low  | High |
|                                  |           |            | Hfd        | WR            | PHV | Ba        | LH         | St        |                         |                       |            |           |      |      |
| <i>Rock Pigeon</i>               | 148       | <u>476</u> | 145        | 85            | 17  | 54        | 66         | 36        | 1027                    | 76%                   | 10         | 1354      | 898  | 2543 |
| <i>Mourning Dove</i>             | 492       | 394        | <u>473</u> | 318           | 163 | 223       | 311        | 216       | 2590                    | 106%                  | 10         | 2455      | 2236 | 2896 |
| <i>Monk Parakeet</i>             | 16        | <u>272</u> |            |               |     |           |            |           | <u>288</u>              | 614%                  | 10         | 47        | 8    | 121  |
| <i>Black-billed Cuckoo</i>       | 7         | 2          | 4          | <u>20</u>     | 8   | <u>9</u>  | <u>17</u>  | 2         | <u>69</u>               | 235%                  | 10         | 29        | 8    | 52   |
| <i>Yellow-billed Cuckoo</i>      | 27        | 8          | <u>11</u>  | <u>45</u>     | 8   | <u>11</u> | <u>28</u>  | <u>6</u>  | <u>144</u>              | 505%                  | 10         | 29        | 4    | 50   |
| cuckoo species                   | 1         |            |            |               |     |           |            |           | 1                       |                       |            |           |      |      |
| <i>Barn Owl</i>                  |           |            |            |               |     |           |            |           |                         | 0%                    | 1          | 1.3       | 0    | 13   |
| <i>Eastern Screech-Owl</i>       | 18        |            | 1          | 7             | 7   |           | 6          |           | 39                      | 93%                   | 10         | 42        | 25   | 61   |
| <i>Great Horned Owl</i>          | 2         | 2          |            | 7             |     | 2         | 5          |           | <b>18</b>               | 56%                   | 10         | 32        | 25   | 40   |
| <i>Barred Owl</i>                | 4         | CP         | 1          | 14            | 3   | 19        | 20         | 3         | 64                      | 89%                   | 10         | 72        | 48   | 131  |
| <i>Long-eared Owl</i>            |           |            |            |               |     |           |            |           |                         | 0%                    | 1          | 0.2       | 0    | 2    |
| <i>Northern Saw-whet Owl</i>     |           |            |            |               |     | 1         |            |           | <u>1</u>                | 36%                   | 9          | 2.8       | 0    | 7    |
| <i>Nighthawk, Common</i>         |           | 2          |            |               |     |           | 1          |           | 3                       | 19%                   | 10         | 16        | 2    | 77   |
| Chuck-will's-widow               |           |            |            |               |     |           |            |           |                         | 0%                    | 1          | 0.1       | 0    | 1    |
| <i>Whip-poor-will</i>            |           | 1          |            | 2             |     | <u>13</u> | 6          |           | 22                      | 129%                  | 10         | 17        | 11   | 25   |
| <i>Chimney Swift</i>             | 66        | 77         | 66         | 159           | 64  | 131       | 113        | 56        | 732                     | 107%                  | 10         | 682       | 576  | 771  |
| <i>Ruby-throated Hummingbird</i> | 17        | 9          | <u>7</u>   | 11            | 9   | 38        | 39         | <u>16</u> | <u>146</u>              | 137%                  | 10         | 106       | 71   | 143  |
| <i>Belted Kingfisher</i>         | <b>12</b> | 6          | 8          | 15            | 3   | <b>9</b>  | 13         | 5         | <b>71</b>               | 58%                   | 10         | 123       | 89   | 166  |
| Red-headed Woodpecker            |           |            |            |               |     |           |            |           |                         | 0%                    | 3          | 0.3       | 0    | 1    |
| <i>Red-bellied Woodpecker</i>    | 225       | 60         | <u>65</u>  | <u>106</u>    | 41  | 21        | 55         | 20        | <u>593</u>              | 135%                  | 10         | 439       | 284  | 573  |
| <i>Yellow-bellied Sapsucker</i>  |           |            |            | 32            | 18  | 181       | <u>201</u> |           | <u>432</u>              | 180%                  | 10         | 240       | 126  | 412  |
| <i>Downy Woodpecker</i>          | 178       | <u>72</u>  | 71         | 82            | 73  | 99        | <u>144</u> | 31        | 750                     | 115%                  | 10         | 650       | 424  | 905  |
| <i>Hairy Woodpecker</i>          | 63        | 12         | 16         | 24            | 21  | 44        | 54         | 5         | 239                     | 125%                  | 10         | 192       | 141  | 228  |

|                                  |            |           |            |            |     |           |            |           |             |      |    |      |      |      |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|------|----|------|------|------|
| <i>Northern Flicker</i>          | <b>158</b> | 61        | 95         | 36         | 26  | 43        | 62         | 27        | <b>508</b>  | 78%  | 10 | 649  | 512  | 828  |
| <i>Pileated Woodpecker</i>       | 12         | 3         | 3          | 21         | 10  | 27        | 41         | 9         | <u>126</u>  | 126% | 10 | 100  | 80   | 123  |
| <i>Olive-sided Flycatcher</i>    |            |           |            |            |     | <u>1</u>  |            |           | 1           | 125% | 6  | 0.8  | 0    | 2    |
| <i>Eastern Wood-Pewee</i>        | <u>143</u> | <u>46</u> | <u>57</u>  | 131        | 50  | 90        | <u>227</u> | <u>53</u> | <u>797</u>  | 148% | 10 | 539  | 441  | 661  |
| <i>Yellow-bellied Flycatcher</i> |            |           | <u>3</u>   | <u>1</u>   |     |           | <u>1</u>   |           | <u>5</u>    | 278% | 5  | 0.9  | 0    | 3    |
| <i>Acadian Flycatcher</i>        | 3          |           |            | 9          | 7   | 3         | 4          |           | 26          | 108% | 10 | 24   | 7    | 39   |
| <i>Alder Flycatcher</i>          | <u>1</u>   |           | 2          | 6          | 5   | 15        | <u>108</u> | <u>1</u>  | <u>138</u>  | 167% | 10 | 83   | 53   | 116  |
| <i>Willow Flycatcher</i>         | 53         | 35        | 35         | <u>44</u>  | 16  | 21        | 85         | 4         | <u>293</u>  | 120% | 10 | 245  | 200  | 281  |
| <i>Least Flycatcher</i>          |            |           | 3          | 29         | 10  | 28        | 70         | <u>16</u> | 156         | 106% | 10 | 147  | 98   | 223  |
| Epidonax species                 |            |           |            | 1          |     |           |            |           | 1           |      |    |      |      |      |
| <i>Eastern Phoebe</i>            | 77         | 30        | 25         | 130        | 82  | 107       | 231        | <u>71</u> | 753         | 106% | 10 | 708  | 496  | 907  |
| <i>Great Crested Flycatcher</i>  | <u>84</u>  | 59        | <u>42</u>  | 115        | 22  | 45        | 134        | 28        | <u>529</u>  | 127% | 10 | 417  | 352  | 513  |
| <i>Eastern Kingbird</i>          | 63         | 34        | 38         | 125        | 34  | <b>78</b> | 151        | 35        | 558         | 95%  | 10 | 585  | 489  | 683  |
| <i>White-eyed Vireo</i>          | 10         | 1         | 4          | 7          |     |           |            |           | 22          | 68%  | 10 | 33   | 12   | 49   |
| <i>Yellow-throated Vireo</i>     | 31         | 2         | 9          | 61         | 36  | 26        | <u>73</u>  | <u>38</u> | <u>276</u>  | 127% | 10 | 217  | 169  | 248  |
| <i>Blue-headed Vireo</i>         |            |           | 2          | 13         | 5   | 81        | 50         | 2         | 153         | 133% | 10 | 115  | 76   | 159  |
| <i>Warbling Vireo</i>            | <u>137</u> | 34        | 85         | 208        | 50  | 29        | 117        | <u>65</u> | <u>725</u>  | 127% | 10 | 573  | 517  | 664  |
| <i>Red-eyed Vireo</i>            | 199        | 80        | <u>97</u>  | <u>475</u> | 186 | 951       | 802        | <u>98</u> | <u>2888</u> | 136% | 10 | 2122 | 1640 | 2784 |
| <i>Blue Jay</i>                  | 308        | 185       | 155        | 237        | 86  | 243       | 239        | 44        | 1497        | 98%  | 10 | 1532 | 1328 | 1729 |
| <i>American Crow</i>             | 298        | 173       | <b>165</b> | <b>397</b> | 330 | 365       | 528        | 98        | 2354        | 62%  | 10 | 3793 | 2300 | 4516 |
| <i>Fish Crow</i>                 | 14         | 20        | 3          | <u>17</u>  | 1   | 1         | 9          |           | 65          | 100% | 10 | 65   | 39   | 94   |
| <i>Common Raven</i>              |            | <u>1</u>  | <u>3</u>   | 6          | 4   | 24        | 12         |           | 50          | 126% | 10 | 40   | 14   | 73   |
| <i>Purple Martin</i>             | 16         | 1         |            |            |     |           | 5          |           | 22          | 57%  | 10 | 38   | 17   | 54   |
| <i>Tree Swallow</i>              | 214        | 75        | 215        | 240        | 90  | 492       | 504        | 92        | 1922        | 114% | 10 | 1687 | 1422 | 2176 |
| <i>Northern Rough-w Swallow</i>  | 92         | 72        | <b>6</b>   | 89         | 62  | 46        | 25         | 10        | 402         | 109% | 10 | 367  | 294  | 540  |
| <i>Bank Swallow</i>              |            |           | 13         | 122        | 16  | 69        | <b>5</b>   | 26        | 251         | 76%  | 10 | 330  | 202  | 529  |
| <i>Cliff Swallow</i>             | <u>89</u>  |           |            | 160        | 77  | 10        | 5          |           | 341         | 125% | 10 | 273  | 190  | 420  |

| SPECIES                        | Coastal |     | CT<br>Valley<br>Hfd | Upland Counts |     |          |     |     | 2005<br>State<br>Totals | % of<br>95-04<br>aver | yrs<br>obs | 1995-2004 |      |      |
|--------------------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|------|------|
|                                | GS      | NH  |                     | Mid-state     |     | Northern |     |     |                         |                       |            | Ave       | Low  | High |
|                                |         |     | WR                  | PHV           | Ba  | LH       | St  |     |                         |                       |            |           |      |      |
| <i>Barn Swallow</i>            | 219     | 175 | 101                 | 207           | 183 | 143      | 305 | 150 | 1483                    | 98%                   | 10         | 1515      | 1184 | 1843 |
| <i>Black-capped Chickadee</i>  | 215     | 85  | 101                 | 289           | 144 | 556      | 446 | 83  | 1919                    | 106%                  | 10         | 1814      | 1598 | 2064 |
| <i>Tufted Titmouse</i>         | 374     | 150 | 155                 | 385           | 186 | 229      | 273 | 123 | 1875                    | 115%                  | 10         | 1630      | 1389 | 2269 |
| <i>Red-breasted Nuthatch</i>   | 2       | 2   |                     | 4             |     | 41       | 11  |     | 60                      | 106%                  | 10         | 57        | 14   | 129  |
| <i>White-breasted Nuthatch</i> | 102     | 33  | 39                  | 76            | 62  | 151      | 82  | 53  | 598                     | 134%                  | 10         | 447       | 303  | 583  |
| <i>Brown Creeper</i>           | 1       |     | 2                   |               | 1   | 10       | 26  | 1   | 41                      | 50%                   | 10         | 82        | 52   | 130  |
| <i>Carolina Wren</i>           | 95      | 26  | 47                  | 62            | 16  | 5        | 10  | 18  | 279                     | 142%                  | 10         | 197       | 49   | 420  |
| <i>House Wren</i>              | 215     | 39  | 70                  | 231           | 93  | 170      | 150 | 48  | 1016                    | 129%                  | 10         | 787       | 544  | 938  |
| <i>Winter Wren</i>             | 5       |     | 2                   | 14            | 6   | 30       | 30  | 1   | 88                      | 209%                  | 10         | 42        | 14   | 80   |
| <i>Marsh Wren</i>              | 14      | 27  | 2                   |               | 2   |          | 15  |     | 60                      | 59%                   | 10         | 101       | 51   | 167  |
| <i>Golden-crowned Kinglet</i>  |         | 1   |                     |               | 1   | 10       | 4   |     | 16                      | 212%                  | 9          | 6.8       | 0    | 16   |
| <i>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</i>   | 29      | 1   | 12                  | 60            | 23  | 40       | 63  | 29  | 257                     | 112%                  | 10         | 230       | 169  | 308  |
| <i>Eastern Bluebird</i>        | 42      | 10  | 17                  | 161           | 51  | 73       | 122 | 16  | 492                     | 87%                   | 10         | 569       | 319  | 793  |
| <i>Veery</i>                   | 139     | 21  | 14                  | 266           | 199 | 529      | 496 | 69  | 1733                    | 119%                  | 10         | 1460      | 1247 | 1710 |
| <i>Bicknell's Thrush</i>       |         |     | 1                   |               |     |          |     |     | 1                       |                       | 0          | 0.0       | 0    | 0    |
| <i>Swainson's Thrush</i>       |         |     |                     |               |     | 1        |     |     | 1                       | 167%                  | 5          | 0.6       | 0    | 2    |
| <i>Hermit Thrush</i>           |         |     | 6                   | 9             | 2   | 78       | 52  |     | 147                     | 85%                   | 10         | 172       | 109  | 243  |
| <i>Wood Thrush</i>             | 239     | 83  | 106                 | 283           | 83  | 274      | 303 | 48  | 1419                    | 110%                  | 10         | 1291      | 1065 | 1503 |
| <i>American Robin</i>          | 1293    | 553 | 704                 | 734           | 523 | 511      | 987 | 433 | 5738                    | 101%                  | 10         | 5654      | 4750 | 6354 |
| <i>Gray Catbird</i>            | 741     | 243 | 319                 | 565           | 379 | 575      | 771 | 151 | 3744                    | 102%                  | 10         | 3676      | 3140 | 4219 |
| <i>Northern Mockingbird</i>    | 103     | 114 | 78                  | 81            | 22  | 18       | 23  | 30  | 469                     | 70%                   | 10         | 669       | 483  | 943  |
| <i>Brown Thrasher</i>          | 14      | 3   | 10                  | 11            | 1   | 1        | 9   |     | 49                      | 74%                   | 10         | 66        | 36   | 94   |

|                                    |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |    |      |      |      |
|------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|----|------|------|------|
| <i>European Starling</i>           | 1185 | 786 | 904 | 385 | 235 | 238 | 606 | 427 | 4766 | 72%  | 10 | 6625 | 4854 | 8852 |
| <i>Cedar Waxwing</i>               | 186  | 120 | 112 | 193 | 83  | 206 | 357 | 92  | 1349 | 95%  | 10 | 1415 | 568  | 2387 |
| <i>Blue-winged Warbler</i>         | 61   | 32  | 37  | 105 | 22  | 31  | 71  | 33  | 392  | 82%  | 10 | 476  | 271  | 716  |
| "Lawrence's Warbler"               |      |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     | 1    |      |    |      |      |      |
| <i>Golden-winged Warbler</i>       |      |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     | 1    | 111% | 7  | 0.9  | 0    | 2    |
| <i>Tennessee Warbler</i>           |      |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1    | 200% | 3  | 0.5  | 0    | 2    |
| <i>Nashville Warbler</i>           |      |     |     |     |     |     | 2   |     | 2    | 182% | 4  | 1.1  | 0    | 7    |
| <i>Northern Parula</i>             | 1    | 1   |     | 2   |     | 1   | 2   |     | 7    | 167% | 10 | 4.2  | 1    | 11   |
| <i>Yellow Warbler</i>              | 410  | 163 | 261 | 336 | 153 | 164 | 530 | 101 | 2118 | 101% | 10 | 2088 | 1896 | 2352 |
| <i>Chestnut-sided Warbler</i>      | 1    | 2   | 6   | 95  | 37  | 243 | 282 | 6   | 672  | 99%  | 10 | 676  | 553  | 777  |
| <i>Magnolia Warbler</i>            |      |     | 6   |     | 1   | 68  | 15  |     | 90   | 106% | 10 | 85   | 54   | 117  |
| <i>Cape May Warbler</i>            |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0    | 1    |
| <i>Black-throated Blue Warbler</i> |      |     |     | 7   | 1   | 126 | 56  |     | 190  | 117% | 10 | 162  | 105  | 219  |
| <i>Yellow-rumped Warbler</i>       |      | 2   |     |     |     | 47  | 47  | 1   | 97   | 71%  | 10 | 136  | 110  | 183  |
| <i>Black-thr Green Warbler</i>     | 8    | 4   | 2   | 56  | 1   | 109 | 106 | 6   | 292  | 95%  | 10 | 306  | 204  | 436  |
| <i>Blackburnian Warbler</i>        |      |     |     | 18  | 2   | 94  | 76  | 1   | 191  | 115% | 10 | 167  | 107  | 243  |
| <i>Yellow-throated Warbler</i>     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      | 0%   | 2  | 0.2  | 0    | 1    |
| <i>Pine Warbler</i>                | 48   | 27  | 28  | 45  | 8   | 145 | 86  | 21  | 408  | 134% | 10 | 303  | 202  | 435  |
| <i>Prairie Warbler</i>             | 1    | 9   | 30  | 84  | 6   | 3   | 3   | 10  | 146  | 80%  | 10 | 183  | 101  | 249  |
| <i>Bay-breasted Warbler</i>        |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      | 0%   | 2  | 0.6  | 0    | 5    |
| <i>Blackpoll Warbler</i>           |      |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1    | 14%  | 8  | 5.9  | 0    | 11   |
| <i>Cerulean Warbler</i>            |      |     |     |     |     | 6   | 6   | 4   | 16   | 190% | 10 | 8.4  | 2    | 15   |
| <i>Black-&amp;-White Warbler</i>   | 32   | 29  | 6   | 80  | 27  | 138 | 172 | 12  | 496  | 89%  | 10 | 560  | 453  | 639  |
| <i>American Redstart</i>           | 25   | 6   | 36  | 208 | 60  | 321 | 633 | 29  | 1318 | 127% | 10 | 1039 | 896  | 1223 |
| <i>Prothonotary Warbler</i>        |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      | 0%   | 1  | 0.1  | 0    | 1    |
| <i>Worm-eating Warbler</i>         | 41   | 19  | 3   | 28  | 16  | 7   | 9   | 18  | 141  | 97%  | 10 | 145  | 91   | 201  |
| <i>Ovenbird</i>                    | 100  | 110 | 27  | 200 | 109 | 381 | 453 | 83  | 1463 | 110% | 10 | 1328 | 1112 | 1556 |

| SPECIES                    | Coastal |     | CT<br>Valley<br>Hfd | Upland Counts |     |          |     |     | 2005<br>State<br>Totals | % of<br>95-04<br>aver | yrs<br>obs | 1995-2004 |      |      |
|----------------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|---------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|------|------|
|                            | GS      | NH  |                     | Mid-state     |     | Northern |     |     |                         |                       |            |           |      |      |
|                            |         |     | WR                  | PHV           | Ba  | LH       | St  | Ave | Low                     | High                  |            |           |      |      |
| Northern Waterthrush       |         | 1   |                     | 6             | 3   | 8        | 34  | 3   | 55                      | 113%                  | 10         | 49        | 22   | 69   |
| Louisiana Waterthrush      | 37      | 6   | 8                   | 65            | 15  | 16       | 35  | 7   | 189                     | 139%                  | 10         | 136       | 84   | 160  |
| Kentucky Warbler           |         |     |                     |               |     |          |     |     |                         | 0%                    | 3          | 0.9       | 0    | 7    |
| Mourning Warbler           |         |     |                     | 1             |     | 3        |     |     | 4                       | 215%                  | 7          | 1.3       | 0    | 3    |
| Common Yellowthroat        | 137     | 49  | 88                  | 203           | 137 | 377      | 459 | 66  | 1516                    | 84%                   | 10         | 1800      | 1544 | 2061 |
| Hooded Warbler             | 2       | 2   | 1                   | 33            | 29  |          | 5   |     | 72                      | 283%                  | 10         | 25        | 11   | 37   |
| Wilson's Warbler           |         |     |                     |               |     |          |     |     |                         | 0%                    | 2          | 0.3       | 0    | 2    |
| Canada Warbler             |         |     |                     | 2             | 2   | 19       | 28  | 1   | 52                      | 87%                   | 10         | 60        | 41   | 83   |
| Yellow-breasted Chat       | 1       |     |                     | 1             |     |          |     |     | 2                       | 400%                  | 4          | 0.5       | 0    | 2    |
| Scarlet Tanager            | 95      | 21  | 46                  | 150           | 47  | 238      | 200 | 42  | 839                     | 128%                  | 10         | 658       | 533  | 827  |
| Eastern Towhee             | 48      | 44  | 79                  | 129           | 71  | 87       | 105 | 34  | 597                     | 87%                   | 10         | 683       | 554  | 887  |
| Chipping Sparrow           | 313     | 53  | 91                  | 405           | 270 | 455      | 446 | 145 | 2178                    | 115%                  | 10         | 1899      | 1701 | 2211 |
| Field Sparrow              | 2       | 4   | 23                  | 62            | 8   | 8        | 20  | 2   | 129                     | 78%                   | 10         | 165       | 82   | 203  |
| Savannah Sparrow           |         |     | 27                  | 8             | 1   | 5        | 12  | 10  | 63                      | 162%                  | 10         | 39        | 12   | 54   |
| Grasshopper Sparrow        |         |     | 2                   |               |     |          |     |     | 2                       | 53%                   | 9          | 3.8       | 0    | 8    |
| Nelson's Sh-tailed Sparrow | 1       |     |                     |               |     |          |     |     | 1                       | 100%                  | 4          | 1.0       | 0.0  | 1.0  |
| Saltm Sharp-tailed Sparrow | 5       | 6   |                     |               |     |          |     |     | 11                      | 88%                   | 10         | 13        | 0    | 26   |
| Seaside Sparrow            |         |     |                     |               |     |          |     |     |                         | 0%                    | 6          | 3.5       | 0    | 11   |
| Song Sparrow               | 325     | 127 | 264                 | 381           | 253 | 372      | 549 | 103 | 2374                    | 95%                   | 10         | 2508      | 2093 | 2915 |
| Swamp Sparrow              | 0       | 2   | 4                   | 9             | 16  | 59       | 198 | 4   | 292                     | 89%                   | 10         | 328       | 238  | 457  |
| White-throated Sparrow     | 1       | 1   |                     | 1             |     | 3        | 4   |     | 10                      | 81%                   | 10         | 12        | 2    | 23   |
| White-crowned Sparrow      |         |     |                     |               |     |          |     |     |                         | 0%                    | 2          | 0.9       | 0    | 8    |

|                               |              |            |            |            |      |            |            |             |             |      |     |       |       |        |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------|-----|-------|-------|--------|
| <i>Dark-eyed Junco</i>        |              |            |            |            | 27   | 14         |            | 41          | 94%         | 10   | 44  | 29    | 66    |        |
| <i>Northern Cardinal</i>      | 339          | 183        | 160        | 363        | 157  | 174        | <u>291</u> | <u>134</u>  | 1801        | 111% | 10  | 1628  | 1452  | 1844   |
| <i>Rose-breasted Grosbeak</i> | 55           | 43         | 29         | <u>122</u> | 44   | 74         | <u>116</u> | <u>26</u>   | <u>509</u>  | 126% | 10  | 403   | 351   | 476    |
| <i>Blue Grosbeak</i>          |              |            |            |            |      |            |            |             | 0%          | 1    | 0.1 | 0     | 0     | 1      |
| <i>Indigo Bunting</i>         | 69           | 24         | 15         | <u>193</u> | 85   | 105        | <u>110</u> | 8           | <u>609</u>  | 158% | 10  | 385   | 290   | 493    |
| <i>Dickcissel</i>             |              |            |            |            |      |            |            |             | 0%          | 1    | 0.1 | 0     | 0     | 1      |
| <i>Bobolink</i>               |              |            | <u>58</u>  | 136        | 26   | 23         | 243        | 12          | 498         | 106% | 10  | 469   | 335   | 571    |
| <i>Red-winged Blackbird</i>   | 641          | 614        | <u>664</u> | 704        | 443  | 226        | 949        | <u>429</u>  | 4670        | 106% | 10  | 4418  | 3851  | 5271   |
| <i>Eastern Meadowlark</i>     |              |            | 2          | 1          | 2    |            | 2          | 1           | 8           | 24%  | 10  | 34    | 8     | 63     |
| <i>Rusty Blackbird</i>        |              |            |            |            |      |            |            |             | 0%          | 1    | 0.5 | 5     | 5     |        |
| <i>Common Grackle</i>         | 1273         | 659        | 509        | 444        | 277  | 275        | 529        | 176         | 4142        | 86%  | 10  | 4841  | 3871  | 5582   |
| <i>Boat-tailed Grackle</i>    |              |            |            |            |      |            |            |             | 0%          | 4    | 1.0 | 0     | 0     | 5      |
| <i>Brown-headed Cowbird</i>   | 197          | 100        | 96         | 174        | 115  | 105        | 189        | 108         | 1084        | 91%  | 10  | 1198  | 922   | 1450   |
| <i>Orchard Oriole</i>         | 36           | 5          | 10         | <u>28</u>  | 5    | <u>1</u>   |            |             | <u>85</u>   | 170% | 10  | 50    | 29    | 71     |
| <i>Baltimore Oriole</i>       | 363          | 102        | 175        | 248        | 94   | <u>113</u> | <u>191</u> | <u>114</u>  | <u>1400</u> | 136% | 10  | 1028  | 892   | 1192   |
| <i>Purple Finch</i>           |              | <u>1</u>   |            | 6          | 4    | 51         | 56         | 4           | 122         | 95%  | 10  | 128   | 80    | 167    |
| <i>House Finch</i>            | 227          | 83         | 88         | 216        | 138  | 90         | 153        | 88          | 1083        | 73%  | 10  | 1483  | 945   | 2519   |
| <i>Pine Siskin</i>            |              |            |            |            |      |            |            |             | 0%          | 4    | 0.6 | 0     | 0     | 3      |
| <i>American Goldfinch</i>     | 325          | 188        | 300        | 260        | 185  | 345        | 376        | <u>192</u>  | 2171        | 93%  | 10  | 2336  | 1736  | 3030   |
| <i>Evening Grosbeak</i>       |              |            |            |            |      | <u>2</u>   |            |             | <u>2</u>    | 200% | 4   | 1.0   | 0     | 5      |
| <i>House Sparrow</i>          | 834          | <u>479</u> | 285        | 285        | 174  | 268        | <u>379</u> | <u>212</u>  | 2916        | 86%  | 10  | 3282  | 2858  | 4051   |
| other unidentified/hybrid     |              | 12         |            |            |      |            |            | 10          | 22          |      |     |       |       |        |
| <b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</b>      | <u>18622</u> | 10723      | 9215       | 14636      | 7689 | 13675      | 18996      | <u>5379</u> | 98935       | 105% | 10  | 94416 | 80860 | 110978 |
| <i>CD Species</i>             | <u>129</u>   | 132        | 115        | 129        | 117  | <u>130</u> | 142        | 100         | 187         | 107% |     | 175.0 | 165   | 191    |
| <i>CP Species</i>             | 4            | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0    | 0          | 0          | 0           | 3           |      |     | 0.9   | 0     | 3      |

| SPECIES                       | Coastal |              | CT        | Upland Counts |      |              |              |             | 2005            | % of          | 1995-2004  |      |      |      |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------------|-----------|---------------|------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|------|------|------|
|                               | GS      | NH           | Valley    | Mid-state     |      | Northern     |              |             | State<br>Totals | 95-04<br>aver | yrs<br>obs | Ave  | Low  | High |
|                               |         |              | Hfd       | WR            | PHV  | Ba           | LH           | St          |                 |               |            |      |      |      |
| <b>DEGREE OF EFFORT:</b>      |         |              |           |               |      |              |              |             | 0               |               |            |      |      |      |
| <i>Party Hours</i>            | 292.0   | <u>134.0</u> | 141.5     | <u>147.0</u>  | 75.0 | <u>238.0</u> | <u>239.0</u> | <u>62.5</u> | <u>1329</u>     | 121%          |            | 1101 | 1009 | 1232 |
| <i>Day Party Hours</i>        | 274.5   | <u>134.0</u> | 141.5     | 138.0         | 71   | <u>228</u>   | <u>226</u>   | 62.5        | <u>1276</u>     | 119%          |            | 1072 | 963  | 1170 |
| <i>Night Party Hours</i>      | 17.5    | 0            | 0.0       | 9             | 4    | 10           | 13           | 0.0         | 53.5            | 99%           |            | 54   | 42   | 70   |
| <i>Observers</i>              | 55      | 34           | 29        | 34            | 13   | 23           | <u>54</u>    | 7           | 249             | 109%          |            | 228  | 193  | 257  |
| <i>Parties</i>                | 32      | 16           | <u>22</u> | 17            | 9    | 15           | 14           | 5           | 130             | 112%          |            | 116  | 102  | 130  |
| <i>Indiv bds per 10 PH</i>    | 638     | 800          | 651       | 996           | 1012 | 575          | 795          | 861         | <b>744</b>      | 83%           |            | 894  | 802  | 992  |
| <i>Ind. bds per Observer</i>  | 339     | 315          | 318       | 430           | 584  | 595          | 352          | 768         | 397             | 94%           |            | 423  | 341  | 498  |
| <i>% SBC Observers</i>        | 22      | 14           | 12        | 14            | 5    | 9            | 22           | 3           | 100             |               |            |      |      |      |
| <i>% SBC Party Hours</i>      | 22      | 10           | 11        | 11            | 6    | 18           | 18           | 5           | 100             |               |            |      |      |      |
| <i>% SBC Individual Birds</i> | 19      | 11           | 9         | 15            | 8    | 14           | 19           | 5           | 100             |               |            |      |      |      |

### **Statewide Count Totals**

Count Dates: June 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, & 26. One hundred and eighty-seven species were reported on Count Days (CD) with three additional Count Period (CP) species. The total number of Individual birds was 98,935. Two hundred & forty-nine observers in 130 Parties (Ptys) spent 1229 Party Hours (PHs) in the field. In addition to 143 species seen on CDs since 1995 are this year's additions of Wilson's Storm petrel and Bicknell's Thrush. Not reported during the last ten years but reported as CP birds this year are Manx Shearwater, Northern Gannett, and Black Tern.

### **Individual Count Totals**

#### **Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count (founded 1992)**

Count Dates: June 25 & 26 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 130 species, 13675 individual birds. Twenty-three observers in 15 Ptys spent 238 PHs in the field. Since 1995, 152 CD species have been confirmed; New CD species added were this year of Black-crowned Night Heron and Black Vulture. Mourning Warbler was confirmed as a new nesting species for the state.

Participants: Ray Belding, Douglas Carrier, Paul Carrier, Ayreslea Denny, Duncan Denny, Angela Dimmitt, Nikki Hall, Seth Harvey, Joshua Hebert, Vicki Hester, Candace Kalmick, Jay Kaplan, Patricia Keener, Marie Kennedy (Assistant Compiler), Vima LeJuene, Carol Parent, Cynthia Phipps, Thomas Robben,, David Rosgen (121 Laurel Way, Winsted, CT 06098-2534; drosge@optonline.net), Sam Slater, Robert Stanowski, David Tripp Jr., and Fran Zygmunt.

Weather: Partly sunny, hot and humid both days. 6/25- SW winds 0-5 mph., 68° to 98°F. Night- clear, calm winds, 75° to 70°F. 6/26- SW winds 0-5 mph., 70° to 91°F. Night- calm winds, 79° to 71°F.

#### **Greenwich-Stamford Summer Bird Count (founded 1976)**

Count Dates: June 11 & 12 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 129 species, 18622 individual birds, plus four CP species. Fifty-five observers in 32 Ptys surveyed over a period of 292 PHs. Since 1995, 203 CD species were ob-

served with the addition of Wilson's Storm Petrel this year; 139 of these have nested.

Participants: Tom Andersen, John Askildsen, Pat Bailey, Tom Baptist, Trudy Battaly, Joan Becker, Richard Becker, Scott Benedict, Gail Benson, Michael Bochnik, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye, NY 10580; tom.burke@rsmi.com), Ioa Byrne, Al Collins, Dana Crandell, Stan Crandell, Peter Davenport, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Debbie Etheridge, Frank Gallo, Margaret Gargen, Kathy Gellman, Ted Gilman, Andy Guthrie, Richard Guthrie, Jahn Hannan, Carol Hartel, David Havens, Jalna Jaeger, Kelli Jewell, Berna Lincoln, Stan Lincoln, Shaun Martin, Frank Novak, Jim O'Brien, Paul Oehrlein, Anneliese O'Toole, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807), Drew Panko, Liz Pomper, Matt Popp, Paul Renken, Polly Rothstein, Meredith Sampson, Anne Semmes, Dierdre Siberstein, John Tirpak, Andy Towle, Richard Trepp, Bill Van Loan Jr., Aaron Virgin, Bill Wallace, Steve Walter, Mark Weckel, and Lynn Zeltman.

Weather: 6/11- N winds 2-6 mph, 68° to 85°F. 6/12- N winds 0-6 mph., 73° to 87°F., sprinkle.

### **Hartford Summer Bird Count (founded 1991)**

Count Dates: June 11 & 12 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 114 species, 9214 individual birds. Twenty-nine observers in 22 Prys surveyed over 120 PHs. Since 1993, 160 CD species have been documented, with Green-winged Teal, American Bittern, Bicknell's Thrush and Golden-winged Warbler added this year.

Participants: Bill Altman, Tim Antonaitis, Paul Cianfaglione, Pam Cooper, Andrew Dasinger, Natasha Domina, Randy Domina, Jim Ford, Pat Junn, Marjorie Haley, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Betty Kleiner (5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT 06070; CTWarbler@cs.com), Gil Kleiner, Steve Kotchko, Jack Lazoric, Caroline LeRoux, Stephanie Lovell, David Lyons, Jamie Meyers, Ann Shapiro, Mark Shapiro, Tom Sharp, Shirley Smigel, Brian Toal, Frank Vartulli, Michael Whittlesey, Alice Anne Wormald, and Anthony Zemba.

Weather: Mostly sunny, hot and humid, very little

wind; 6/11- NW winds 0-5 mph., 73° to 88°F. 6/12- NW winds 0-5 mph., 72° to 89°F.

### **Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count (founded 1994)**

Count Dates: June 11 & 12 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 142 species, 18996 individual birds. Fifty-four observers in 14 Ptys censused over 239 PHs. Since 1995, 174 CD species have been observed, including Red-throated Loon this year, of which 119 have nested.

Participants: Janet Baker, John Baker, Bob Barbieri (Kalmia Sanctuary, 183 Laurel Lane, Harwinton, CT 06791) Ray Belding, George Boynton, Brian Coltil, Ed Crossman, Angela Dimmitt, Mary Donaldson, Curt Edgat, John Eykelhoff, Cathy Felton, Dick Felton, Kevin Finnan, Tom Fiore, Paul Fusco, John Grabowski, Jeff Greenwood, Joe Greenwood, Nikki Hall, Rick Harnon, James Harmon, Ron Hummell, Lukas Hyder, Candace Kalmick, Richard Kapia, Marie Kennedy, Joan Lang, Gorden Loery, Marian Lyga, Terry Marcellino, John Marshall, Deborah Martin, Patti McCurdy, Scott Mills, Nancy Nichols, Ann Orsillo, Joan Perlinski, Linda Potter, Dave Rosgen, Sam Slater, Donna Rose Smith, Ron Sokolowski, Robert Stanowski, Jan Sturdevast, David Tripp Jr., Pamela Velez, Dale Wakefield, David Wakefield, Kristine Wellstrom, Lyle Whittlesey, Paul Woodward, Ed Yescott, and Francis Zygmunt.

Weather: Hot and humid both days. 6/11- 80° to 90° F. 6/12- 80° to 90° F.

### **New Haven Summer Bird Count (founded 1991)**

Count Dates: June 11 & 12 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 132 species, 10723 individual birds, plus one CP species. Thirty-four observers in 16 Ptys spent 134 PHs in the field. Since 1995, 192 CD species were counted with Green-winged Teal, American Woodcock, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Purple Finch added this year.

Participants: Lee Aimesbury, Marion Aimesbury, Ralph Amodei, Larry Bausher, Andrew Brand, Steve Broker, Dana Campbell, Barrie Collins, Natasha Domina, Randy

Domina, Sherry Grant, Stacy Hanks, Mike Horn, Lynn James, Patrick Leahy, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Christopher Loscalzo, Steve C. Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524; SMayo@sikorsky.com), Robin McAllister, Bob Mitchell, Judy Moore, Frank Ragusa, Nancy Ragusa, Linda Rediker, Craig Repasz, Nancy Rosenbaum, Arne Rosengren, Lee Schlesinger, Dori Sorsensky, Maria Stockmal, Mariane Vahey, Peter Vitalli, and Betty Zuraw.

Weather: 6/5- day: E winds 0-12 mph, 56° to 65°F.; night: E-NE winds 7-8 mph., 58°F to 59°F. 6/6- 0.05" rain, N-NE winds 10-15 mph., 54° to 59°F.

### **New Milford-Sherman-Pawling Summer Bird Count (founded 2003)**

Count Dates: June 18 & 19 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 117 species, 7689 individual birds. Thirteen observers in nine Ptys spent 75 PHs in the field.

Since 2003, 126 CD species have been noted with Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Thrasher, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Canada Warbler additions this year.

Participants: Pat Bailey, Robert Cartoceti, Angela Dimmitt (PO Box 146, Sherman, Ct. 06784; Angeladimmitt@aol.com), Larry Fischer, Carol Hartel, Ann Kehmna, William Liedlich, Russ Naylor, Dave Rosgen, Sally Spence, Nick Thold, Bill Wallace, and Tom Zissu.

Weather: 6/18- 55° to 76°F., 6/19- 60° to 70°F., Night: 58° to 59°F.,

### **Storrs Summer Bird Count (founded 1990)**

Count Dates: June 18 & 19 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 100 species, 5379 individual birds. Seven observers in five Ptys spent 62.5 PHs in the field. Since 1995, 126 CD species have been verified, 66 have nested.

Participants: Bruce Carver, Carol Charter, Kathleen Demers, Marcia Hughes, Mary Morytko, Steve Morytko, Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268; climbrogers@charter.net) and Jane Seymour.

Weather: 6/18- Early AM Light rain, then foggy;

PM, Cloudy with intermittent showers, 0.1" rain after 3 PM, NW winds, 0-5 mph., 52° to 70°F.; 6/19- Partly sunny, with clouds and sunshine throughout PM, ENE winds 0-10 mph., 51° to 72°F.

### **Woodbury-Roxbury Summer Bird Count (founded 1978)**

Count Date: June 5 (Sun.)

Totals: 129 species, 14636 individual birds. Thirty-three observers in 17 Ptyps spent 138 PHs in the field. Since 1995, 150 CD species have been recorded with Yellow-breasted Chat an addition this year.

Participants: Renee Baade, Dave Babington, Ray Belding, Buzz Devine, Polly Brody, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Natashua Domina, Randy Domina, Larry Fisher, Seth Harvey, Jason Hatstatt, Anne Kehmna, Carolyn Longstreth, John Longstreth, Christy Melhart, Ann Montgomery, Dave Montgomery, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798), Allan Root, Dave Rosgen, Fred Schroeder, B. K. Stafford, Peary Stafford, Barb Starr, Gail Szantyr, Mark Szantyr, Darcy Thurrott, Carol Titus, Dave Tripp jr., Leigh Wells, Mary Wetherill, Tom Zissu and Francis Zygmunt.

Weather: morning mist, then hot, hazy, humid; WSW winds 10-15 mph., 55° to 90°F.,

## CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring, March 1 to May 31, 2005

By Greg Hanisek

For Connecticut's birders this spring the key word was cooperative. Two birds noted for frustratingly brief appearances - Swallow-tailed Kite and Chuck-will's-widow- set up shop in consistent locations for long-staying visits. Anyone who wanted to see (or in the Chuck's case, hear) these species had ample opportunity. Otherwise the season unfolded in fairly typical fashion, although some cold, wet weather near the normal May peak of the warbler migration resulted in some unusually high species counts later in the month. These included 19 species at Old Greenwich and 17 species in East Hartford, both on May 27.

As the number of birders reporting sightings to COA's e-mail list increases, it becomes easier to trace migratory periods for individual species. The breadth of movement by a number of the less common but regular migrants also comes into clearer focus. For a number of these species, such as Swainson's Thrush and Olive-sided Flycatcher, the number of reports received is significantly higher than in the past. The increased number of observers is clearly an important factor.

The following are first arrival dates for some regularly occurring species:

Great Egret: March 23 in Westport (FMa); Green Heron: April 21 in Darien (JMh); Osprey: March 13 in Niantic (JSu); Broad-winged Hawk: April 7 in Litchfield (DRo); Virginia

Rail: April 11 in Litchfield (DRo); Piping Plover: March 12 in Old Lyme; Least Tern: May 1 in West Haven (PDe) and Stratford (JMh); Whip-poor-will: April 24 in Durham (NM);

Common Nighthawk:  
 May 14 in Meriden (PCo);  
 Eastern Phoebe: March 6  
 in Plainville (JMe), Blue-  
 headed Vireo: April 9  
 in East Haddam (PDe).  
 Warbling Vireo: April 28  
 in New Canaan (FG); Fish  
 Crow: March 22 in Litch-  
 field (DRo); Tree Swallow:  
 March 10 in Old Lyme  
 (HG); Northern Rough-  
 winged Swallow: April  
 9 in Stratford (CE); Bank  
 Swallow: April 21 in Strat-  
 ford (FMA), Cliff Swallow:  
 April 20 in New Hartford  
 (PCa).

House Wren: April  
 21 in Greenwich (TBa);  
 Marsh Wren: April 29 in  
 Stratford (FMA); Blue-gray  
 Gnatcatcher: April 19 in  
 Litchfield (DRo); Blue-  
 winged Warbler: April  
 27 in Greenwich (TBa);  
 Yellow Warbler: April  
 26 in Somers (JSt); Palm  
 Warbler: April 6 in New  
 Canaan (FG); Prairie War-  
 bler: April 24 in Stamford  
 (PDU); Black-and-White  
 Warbler: April 21 in Strat-  
 ford (FMA); American  
 Redstart: April 26 in New  
 Canaan (FG) and New

Milford (ADi); Ovenbird:  
 April 27 in Greenwich  
 (TBa); Northern Water-  
 thrush: April 22 in Li-  
 tchfield (DRo); Hooded  
 Warbler: April 26 in Gro-  
 ton (JR); Scarlet Tanager:  
 May 1 in Branford (CLE);  
 Chipping Sparrow: April  
 7 in Newtown (RBA);  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak:  
 April 25 in Simsbury (SBI);  
 Indigo Bunting: April 24  
 in Moodus (SBr); Eastern  
 Meadowlark: March 12  
 in South Windsor (LK);  
 Orchard Oriole: April 18 in  
 Old Saybrook (JO).

### **Waterfowl through Herons**

Five **Greater White-  
 fronted Geese** for the  
 season comprised one at  
 Union Pond in Manches-  
 ter March 14 (KP), one at  
 Bantam Lake March 19-22  
 (KF), two at Mackenzie  
 Reservoir, Wallingford,  
 on March 20 (WS), and  
 one in Thomaston March  
 31 (TL). A bird thought to  
 be a Cackling Goose was  
 at Bantam Lake March  
 22 (DRo). Wood Ducks

peaked at 63 on March 26 at Bantam Lake (DRo). An American Wigeon lingered through May in Stratford (NB, FMa)). The Sherwood Mill Pond in Westport held two drake **Eurasian Wigeons** on March 22 (MT). The first two Blue-winged Teal were at Station 43 in South Windsor on March 26 (TA). There were no large concentrations but a total of 25 were reported for the season, in comparison to a total of 15 Northern Shovelers. Two **Eurasian Teal** were at Milford Point in March (C&SS et al.), and at least one was there until April 14 (SS). Another was at Watch Rock in Old Lyme on April 12 (FN).

The high count of Ring-necked Ducks was 200+ on March 8 at Hamburg Cove in Lyme (HG). At South Dumpling in Long Island Sound, near the Connecticut-Rhode Island border, 40 **Common Eider** were counted May 26 (GW). A flock of 20 White-winged Scoters flew by May 18 at Milford Point (NB). A

drake **Barrow's Golden-eye** frequented the east side of New Haven harbor March 3-6 (PCs et al.). The only inland reports of Red-breasted Merganser were singles May 19 at Bantam Lake (JE) and May 31 at Batterson Pond in Farmington (PCi). Bantam Lake remains one of the top spots for concentrations of Hooded Mergansers, with 112 there on March 26 (DRo).

Single Red-throated Loons were unexpected visitors April 20 at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford (PCa) and May 3 at Bantam Lake (DRo). One lingered to May 24 at Milford Point (NB). A Horned Grebe lingered to May 21 at Pine Creek Beach in Fairfield (DV), and a count of 180 off Sandy Point on April 10 represented a good concentration at peak migration time (JHo). Single Red-necked Grebes were at Batterson Pond on April 4 (PCi) and in Westport on April 16 (JHu).

An American Bittern was away from known

breeding areas May 1 at Bent of River Audubon in Southbury (CLO). It was one of a half-dozen reported. Eight Great Blue Herons were back on nests March 26 at Hatch Pond in Kent (ADi). The first Little Blue Heron was in Westport on March 22 (MT); a pied subadult was inland April 28 in Watertown (GH). A Cattle Egret, now barely annual in the state, was in Litchfield April 16-17 (MDo). Single Black-crowned Night Herons were well inland April 3 in Portland (LN), April 18 at Secret Lake in Avon (PCi) and May 19 in the Poquonock section of Windsor (JWo). A newly established breeding site for Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Stonington was active again this year, with two nests being re-used (GW). This is the easternmost locale in the state for a species whose stronghold is the Milford-Bridgeport area. A Glossy Ibis was inland May 8 in Rocky Hill (JF, AW).

## Vultures through Terns

The high counts of Black Vultures were 12 each on March 23 in Kent (ADi) and April 14 at West Rock State Park in Woodbridge (L&MA). A total of more than 60 were reported from throughout the state. A new nesting pair of Ospreys took up residence on the entrance marker to Southport harbor (DV). Easily the highlight of the season, a **Swallow-tailed Kite** was first seen April 9 in both East Haddam (DRt) and Lyme (fide JZ), followed by hit-and-run sightings April 10 in Chester (TE) and April 12 in East Lyme (DH et al.). Then, much to everyone's delight, it settled in at a location in Deep River on April 14 (JWi fide FMa). It was present there through April 19 (photos, m.ob.). Almost all other state records are quick fly-bys. Northern Goshawks were reported March 22 and 27 at Peak Mountain hawk watch in East Granby (JWo), March

24 in Southbury (PCo), March 26 in Harwinton (PCa), March 30 in Winchester (DRo) and April 4 in New Haven (CD). This flurry seems indicative of a migratory movement. A dark **Swainson's Hawk** reported April 29 in Hamden was an extreme rarity, representing only the second spring record for the state (DSo, DB, RH). Rough-legged Hawks were reported March 19 and 27 at Peak Mountain (JWo), March 30 in Bloomfield (DRo) and March 31 at White Memorial (RDo). This movement seems to coincide with that of the goshawks. Single Golden

Eagles passed the Peak Mountain hawk watch on March 22 (JWo) and flew northwest over Milton April 9 (MK). American Kestrel reports of note included one near a nest box March 28 in South Windsor (CE), a pair copulating in Bloomfield on March 30 (DRo), two on April 24 in East Windsor (CE) and one on May 22 in Hartford (PDe). A Peregrine Falcon caught a Ruddy Turnstone on May 21 at Milford Point (TA).

An American Golden Plover visited Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) on the late dates of May 7-



*Julian Hough photo*

*This second-year Glaucous Gull lingered cooperatively into May along the shore in West Haven.*

13 (JCo, GN et al.). A May 19 flight brought good inland totals of 20 Greater Yellowlegs, 10 Lesser Yellowlegs, 10 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 40 Least Sandpipers to Little Pond at White Memorial Foundation (DRo et al.). An Upland Sandpiper dropped in at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport on April 30-May 1 (FMa, JMh). Four Whimbrel were at Sandy Point on May 28 (JMa). HBSP held three Red Knots on May 14 (JMa) and 11 were at Milford Point on May 26 (FMa). The only report of Pectoral Sandpiper was of three on April 16 at Compo Beach, Westport (JHu). Four Purple Sandpipers were still present May 27 at HBSP (GN). An extraordinary inland concentration of 54 Short-billed Dowitchers visited the Little Pond-Bantam Lake area May 22 (FZ). No one turned up any really big concentrations of Wilson's Snipe. The largest was 20 on April 27 at Station 43 (TA). A female Wilson's

Phalarope stopped by on May 16 at Milford Point (NB).

The first Laughing Gull wandered into the state April 27 in Westport (FMa). Surprisingly, no Little Gulls were reported this spring. Single Black-headed Gulls were seen March 15-19 at Long Wharf, New Haven, (JHo), March 30 at Lake Forest in Bridgeport (DV) and April 6 at Long Beach, Stratford (FMa). Up to three Bonaparte's Gulls dropped in at Bantam Lake May 13-16 (JE et al.). The best coastal concentrations were on April 6, with 1,000 at Long Beach, Stratford (FMa), and April 8, with 800 at Southport Beach and 500 at the Lordship seawall in Stratford (FMa). The latest of nine Iceland Gull reports was April 27 in Stratford (FMa). There were four reports of Lesser Black-backed Gull. Three Glaucous Gulls for the season included one April 3 at Lake Whitney in Hamden (FMc et al.), one April 5 at Batterson Pond (PCi) and

a second-year bird that lingered through May in West Haven (JHo). Gull feeding frenzies in the Sound weren't as prominent this spring as in the recent past, but a mixed flock of 6,000 (98% Ring-billed Gulls) was off Long Beach in Stratford April 5 (FMa). This phenomenon apparently involves larvae of marine worms and/or barnacles. The season's only Caspian Tern flew over the Great Meadows refuge in Stratford May 14

(FMa, PCo et al.)

### Parakeet through Corvids

A flock of 18 Monk Parakeets in Trumbull were a bit inland from usual coastal haunts (JBa). It was another good season for cuckoos, which were widespread and conspicuous. We received 28 reports of Black-billed Cuckoo and 35 of Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Three Long-eared Owls roosted in Fairfield in mid-March



*Mark Szantyr photo*

*This Red-headed Woodpecker made a typically unpredictable appearance from March 25 to April 5 in Eastford.*

(DZ). A Short-eared Owl was inland March 27 in Durham (JHo). A **Chuck-will's-widow** was discovered April 28 at Nehantic State Forest in Lyme and remained through the season, calling and occasionally showing itself for many observers (JGa et al.) Most previous records have been of birds heard briefly by a limited number of people. Movements of Common Nighthawks occurred daily at White Memorial from May 12 to May 31, with high counts of 45 on May 15 and 69 on May 27 (DRo et al.). State-wide during this period we received 24 reports involving 120 individuals, including 22 on May 20 and 24 on May 27, both in Poquonock (JWo), and 31 on May 27 in Bloomfield (DL). Whip-poor-wills were reported in late April and May from Canton (JK), Somers (JSt), Durham (NM), Ellington (CE), Waterbury (GH), New Hartford (PCa), Lyme (JGa et al.), Southington (JA) and Madison (JMe). Two

Red-headed Woodpeckers for the season were in Eastford from March 25 to April 5 (PR et al.) and at Sachem Head, Guilford, on May 18 (MSc). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was in a yard in Newtown on May 10 and again as late as June 6 (RBa), another indication of this species' southward expansion during breeding season.

Observers reported 13 Olive-sided Flycatchers and 12 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, all in the second half of May as expected. An Acadian Flycatcher appeared May 20 on River Road in Roxbury (ADi). A migrant Alder Flycatcher was detected May 24 in Waterford (GW). Most of this species seen in the state are on territory in the northwest. Northern Shrikes were in Wolcott March 18 (JSw) and in Somers March 23 (JSt), with one still present April 5 in Litchfield (MK). There were a half-dozen reports of White-eyed Vireos, with the first on April 12 in New Canaan (FG). The

typical late, sparse movement of Philadelphia Vireos produced individuals May 26 in Waterbury (GH,) May 27 in Bolton (TA) and May 29 in East Rock Park, New Haven (MM, RBl). A pair of Common Ravens was observed copulating March 4 in Woodbridge, and a nest there had one egg March 6 (SBr). Another was at an apparent nest site in Suffield on April 11 (LTu).

### Swallows through Finches

Six Purple Martins were in a colony at Lake Warmaug in New Preston during May (EH). A Winter Wren began singing March 27 in Wilton (JBe). Greenwich Point held at least eight Swainson's Thrushes May 11 (MSa) and seven were in Simsbury May 16 (PCa). These were the high counts among reports of 75 individuals, compared to 10 reports of Gray-cheeked (type) Thrushes. Brown Thrashers were found loosely scattered

throughout the state with reports of 40 individuals.

Away from the far northwest corner, the only Golden-winged Warbler reported was a female from May 20 through the end of the season in West Hartford (BT et al.). Single Brewster's Warblers were at White Memorial May 14 (DRo et al.) and New Hartford May 23 (PCa). Single Lawrence's Warblers were at Lake Wintergreen in Hamden May 14 (CLs) and in Cornwall May 21 (AG). Five Tennessee Warblers on May 15 at White Memorial represented a good count by recent standards (RBe) and the species was rather widely reported. An Orange-crowned Warbler, quite uncommon but also easily overlooked in spring, was at Birdcraft Museum in Fairfield (MDi). Up to five Cape May Warblers were part of a 21-species flight on May 15 at Bent of the River in Southbury (PCo et al.). The period May 14-16 saw good warbler numbers around the state, includ-

ing up to 23 species at East Rock Park. A total of 11 Cape Mays were reported for the season. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was at Greenwich Point on May 27 (JWe). Bay-breasted Warblers staged a good mid-May flight with more than 30 reported.

An exceptional four **Prothonotary Warblers** for the season were in Madison April 10 -17 (TH), in East Lyme on April 14 (AZ), at Perry's Mill Pond in Fairfield on May 7-8 (TBr) and East Rock Park, New Haven, on May 11 (FMc). The four Kentucky Warblers for the season were found on May 17 at Lake Wintergreen in Hamden (J&CZ), on May 19 at both Sachem Head in Guilford (JCo) and in Orange (NB) and again in Guilford on May 28 (GN). Observers reported 16 Mourning Warblers for the season. The first Hooded Warbler appeared April 26 in Groton (JR). Yellow-breasted Chats were in New Milford May 14 (ADi), in Guilford May 15

(CA), in Cromwell Meadows May 17 (MM), in both East Granby (JWo) and Hamden (RT) on May 18 and at Barn Island in Stonington on May 21 (PCo).

The May 15 flight brought highs of 18 Scarlet Tanagers and 20 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at White Memorial ((DRo). A Vesper Sparrow was at Allen's Meadow in Wilton on April 29 (LTi), followed by two the next day in South Windsor (ADa). Another was at Bent of River Audubon in Southbury May 8 (JL). The first two Grasshopper Sparrows were noted April 30 in Suffield (SL). Fox Sparrows were widely reported from March 9 to April 7, the typical migration season, with a high of 12 on April 5 in Litchfield (DRo). A Lapland Longspur was still present April 14 at HBSP (RBa).

Single **Blue Grosbeaks** were at Farmington Canal in Hamden on April 29 (MSc) and in West Hartford on May 28 (RS). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird**

was in Wilton April 6 (JHu). The high count of Rusty Blackbird was 150 at White Memorial on April 11 (DRo). A flock of 10 was a bit late May 1 in Canaan (JMe), and one was still in Litchfield May 5 (DRo).

**Boat-tailed Grackles** returned to New England's only nesting site in the Lordship area of Stratford after wintering in the area, with a maximum of 14 on March 13 (FMa et al.). Of special interest were three males and three females at Milford Point on April 14 (FMa) and a female May 1 at Sherwood Island (FMa, JMh). Could this be a sign of possible future expansion? Purple Finches were widely reported, but the only Pine Siskins were a single on April 17 in Winchester (DRo) and three in New Hartford April 20 (PCa)

Observers - Claudia Ahrens, Jayne Amico, Lee Aimesbury, Marion Aimesbury, Tim Antanaitis, Renee Baade (RBa), James Bair (JBa), Steve

Ballentine (SBl), Bill Banks, Thomas Baptist (TBa), Charles Barnard, Scott Baron (SBa), Dan Barvir, Larry Bauscher, Joe Bear (JBe), Ray Belding (RBe), Ron Bell (RBl), Peter Bono, Nick Bonomo, Tom Bravo (TBr) Steve Broker (SBr), Steve Brown (SBn), Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cashman (PCs), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), John Clancy (JCl), Linda Clancy, Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe, M.L. Dahl, Chris Dalton, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Natasha Domina, Randy Domina, Mike Doyle (MDo), Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth, Tammy Eustis, John Eykelhoff, Kevin Finnan, Jim Ford, Frank Gallo, John Gaskell (JGa), Ted Gilman, Art Gingert, Hank Golet, Jeff Greenwood (JGr), Lorraine Gunderson, Dan Hageman, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHa), Roy Harvey, Simon Harvey

(SHr), John Himmelman (JHi), Toni Hobson, Julian Hough (JHo), Jim Hunter (JHu), Lynn James, Rich Kania, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Marie Kennedy, Tom Kilroy, Betty Kleiner (BKl), Brian Kleinman (BKn), Steve Kotchko, Roger Lawson, Dave Lawton, Twan Leenders, Carol Lemmon (CLe), Carolyn Longstreth (CLo), Chris Loscalzo (CLs), John Longstreth, Stephanie Lovell, Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik (FMa), John Maynard (JMa), Flo McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Marty Moore, Nancy Morand, Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, Dave Norris, Fred Norton, John Ogren, Brian O'Toole, Kim Picard, Ron Pelletier, E.J. Raynor, James Restivo, Arne Rosengren, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dan Rotino (DRt), Phil Rusch, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Wilford Schultz, Mark Scott (MSc), Arthur Shippee, Rob Slabinski, Dori Sosensky, Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Jerry Stage (JSt), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Jim Sullivan (JSu), Jack Swatt (JSw), Bill Sweet, Clay Taylor, Luke Tiller (LTi), Brian Toal, Matthew Toomey, Richard Trepp, John Triana, Louise Tucker (LTu), Dennis Varza, Linda Vegliante, Jack Wells (JWe), John Wilder (JWi), Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanowski (JWo), Alice Ann Wormold, Dave Zawisha, Anthony Zemba, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmunt

## PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

Answer to Photo Challenge 50

"One good tern deserves another," or so they say. Well, this month's quiz bird is a species of tern, which should be obvious to relatively inexperienced birders by virtue of its pale plumage, pointed wings, forked tail and head and bill pattern.

Many adults and juveniles of the same species differ markedly in plumage due to wear, and it can be a frustrating (and often futile) exercise trying to compare plumage details of birds of different ages. With many identifications, I find an accurate assessment of age is always the best starting point. It allows us to compare similar features between similar species of the same age.

By mid-September, juvenile terns have begun the molt to first-winter plumage and have started to replace some head and body feathers. Wing feathers will be molted on the wintering grounds after migration. The "buffy" juvenile terns we remember from summer are now slightly worn and can appear superficially similar to winter adults. On this individual, the plumage looks fairly fresh with uniform-looking primaries, a well-defined dark cap and a short-forked tail. Add in a shorter (not yet fully-grown) pale-based bill, and we are fairly confident it is a juvenile/first-winter. At this time of year adults that have lost most of their complete black crown would show a longer, all-dark bill and worn body feathers. The outer primaries in particular would be worn blackish due to the rigors of having retained



them through a breeding season. A closer look reveals dark subterminal marks to the mantle feathers and primaries. This clinches the age, since only juveniles show these features. Now that we have done a short summary of "aging 101," let's figure out which species we are dealing with. Common, Forster's, Roseate and the rare Arctic Tern are all possible contenders.

The obvious dark carpal bar and the black of the crown extending onto the nape immediately eliminate non-breeding Forster's Tern of any age, which show a black "bandit-mask" and a pale gray nape. Other features such as the pale-based bill and prominent dark carpal bar are also atypical of first-winter Forster's.

Roseate Terns are frequent additions to post-breeding tern flocks along our shoreline. The head pattern will help eliminate Roseate. One of the characteristic features that help identify juvenile Roseate in large tern flocks is their dark forehead. This is further accentuated by their all dark bill, which gives them a unique "hooded" look. The dark subterminal fringes to the upperpart feathers lack any warm buff-tones and are conspicuously blackish and well marked. This makes them look more "pie-bald" than other juvenile terns (which often show remnants of warm brownish tones to some of the upperpart feathers). Our bird shows a pale forehead and inconspicuous upperpart scaling. Thus it does not fit with Roseate Tern. Another feature to look for, which may not register immediately, is the color of the legs: blackish on Roseate and brownish-red to red on Arctic and Common. Our bird shows legs that appear paler than black, which narrows the choice to either juvenile Common or Arctic Tern.

This can be a difficult identification, mainly because juvenile Common Terns, more than any of the other similar species, are very variable in plumage tone. This can confuse beginners faced with both bright, buff-washed individuals and paler, more worn grayer ones. There are a few features that we should concentrate on. The sleek, domed crown of our bird, combined with the slim body and pale-based bill are all pro-Common features. The indistinct eye-ring is unusual for Arctic Tern and further solidifies the identification

as a Common Tern. Unlike Common Terns, the bill of juvenile Arctic Terns quickly turns blackish, with any pale reddish confined to the very base, and is unlikely to be noticeable at long range.

Although these tangible features help us identify the bird to species, with experience, "jizz" becomes an important aid in identification. Many observers who are familiar with Arctic Tern would have eliminated this bird on shape and structure long before noting whether or not the bird showed indistinct pale eye-rings. Arctic Terns are proportionately squarer-headed, shorter-billed and shorter necked than Common Terns. As a result they appear more compact or "squat." The legs are very short, so Arctic Terns often appear to sit lower when compared with Common Terns. This may even make them look slightly smaller. This is probably the best clue to locating an Arctic Tern among the large flocks of Common Terns.

Arctic Terns normally migrate off shore and are very rare visitors to Connecticut. On probability alone, it is more likely that any "funny-looking" tern will prove to be a Common. However, non-breeding first-summer Arctic Terns are seen annually in late summer on Cape Cod, so diligent observers should not be discouraged from searching for this species here, particularly after storms.

This juvenile Common Tern was photographed by me at Sandy Point, West Haven, in September 2004.



Photo Challenge #51

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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