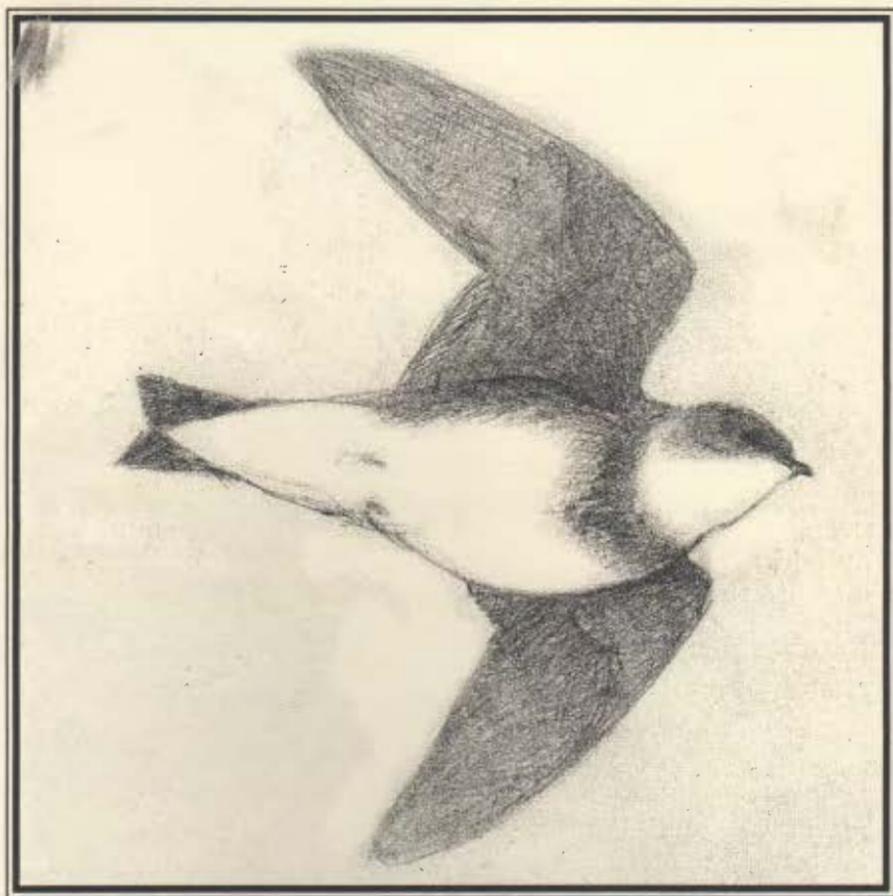


THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



Volume 27 No. 1

January 2007

Pages 1-36

The Connecticut Warbler

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Documenting The Unexpected

The bird on the cover looks like a Bank Swallow. When Mark Szantyr realized it was bigger than nearby Barn Swallows he got out his notebook and sketch pad. Mark submitted a detailed report to the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut detailing the bird as a Brown-chested Martin - a potential first state and third or fourth North American record. Our cover drawing is a refinement of his field sketches. It is part of the documentation being circulated among international experts in preparation for ARCC review.

PROBLEMS IN SEPARATING THAYER'S AND KUMLIEN'S GULLS BY PLUMAGE TONE AND PRIMARY COLOR

Mark S. Szantyr

I joined Frank Mantlik and Janet Mehmel on the 2004 Stratford – Milford Christmas Bird Count. I was running late for our meeting at Long Beach in Stratford, so when I did arrive Frank and Janet had already started the long, bone-chilling death march out this wind-blown spit of land. I packed my compact digital camera in my parka pocket, girded myself against the cold, and began to follow their footsteps. In the lee of the first breakwater, I noticed a small mixed flock of gulls feeding along the beach and roosting on the water. I located a juvenile/first winter bird in flight. Due to its overall pale color, I initially identified it as a Kumlien's Gull (*Larus glaucoides kumlieni*), the North American subspecies of Iceland Gull and the only form known to occur in Connecticut.

On closer inspection as it sat on the water, I noticed this bird had extremely dark primary feathers and tertials. Both contrasted dramatically with the overall paler color of the remaining feathers. The bird flew again, and I noticed what appeared to be a solid rather dark tail and a contrastingly dark secondary bar. The bird's flight feathers appeared to be dark on the outer web and pale on the inner web of each



Figure 1. The gull in question.

feather, causing the "Venetian blind" pattern associated with... yup, you guessed it.... Thayer's Gull!

I cell-phoned Frank, and as he and Janet headed back, I was working myself into a frenzy. Most of the field marks known to separate Thayer's Gull from Kumlien's Gull were present. The bird showed solid dark primaries and dark-centered tertials that contrasted strikingly with the overall pale plumage, a dark secondary bar that also was much darker than the rest of the bird, and a solid dark tail that showed mottling at the bases of the outer tail feathers. This contrasted markedly with the mottled upper tail coverts and rump. This dark tail was not as dark as the primaries but nearly so. The tail showed obvious pale terminal edging. On the water this bird seemed quite pale overall, aside from the primaries and tertials, though close examination showed the tertials to have fairly broad pale edges and barring that seemed to cross the entire feather. At one point the bird flexed its wing and several primaries remained open long enough to get a digital image. This view seemed to show the dark outer web and pale inner web associated with Thayer's Gull.



Figure 2. The gull with Ring-billed Gulls.



Figure 3. The primaries exposed.

While everything seemed good for Thayer's Gull, I was troubled. I seemed to vacillate between excited exaltation and worried doubt. Was it dark enough? Was the tail right? Was it wishful thinking? I called Frank two or three more times as he headed back. In one call I said I was sure it was Thayer's. In the next, I said that maybe it was Kumlien's. Why was I so unsure?

I made several calls to alert others doing Christmas Birds Counts nearby. Frank and Janet showed up, as did several other birders including Nick Bonomo. While most of them agreed with my initial identification, Nick and I remained to study the bird for quite a while. We discussed several characters that were mildly troubling. The bird was pale and largely evenly colored. In structure, the bird was very much like an Iceland Gull, showing a delicate round head, small bill, and substantial primary projection. The bird had the attenuated appearance of a Kumlien's Gull and not the shorter-winged, sturdier appearance of Thayer's Gull. Except for the dark color of the primaries and tertials, the bird did not appear like a Herring Gull at all, an appearance I have come to associate with bona fide Thayer's Gulls in juvenile/first-

winter plumage.

Most of the other birders were satisfied with the identification and headed in out of the cold. Those that remained continued to discuss the possibilities. During this time, the bird made several flights and shifted its position. Just prior to the arrival of another group of birders, the gull headed out and away, not to be relocated that day.

In spite of the structural problems, I was fairly convinced the bird was a Thayer's Gull. I had never seen a Kumlien's Gull be so strikingly dark in the primaries and tertials. We went home and my deeper investigation began.

After reviewing my digital images, I was struck by how similar in structure the bird was to an Iceland Gull. It was inseparable from several other birds portrayed in my collection of gull images. Most of the contemporary literature suggests the two taxa, *thayeri* and *kumlieni*, are not safely separated by structure. Older literature seems to confirm my field impression that there are some differences between the two. Older texts suggest that Thayer's Gull is very much like Herring Gull in build and shows a shorter primary projection than Iceland Gull. The older texts also suggest some head structure differences between *thayeri* and *glaucoides / kumlieni*. The photos showed the mantle feathering fairly well. It is thought that Kumlien's Gull molts mantle and scapulars earlier than Thayer's Gull. Basically Thayer's Gulls retain their juvenile feathers into late winter, unlike Kumlien's Gulls, which molt into first-winter by mid-winter. So a Kumlien's Gull at the time of our observation might show more mixed-age feathering, or be mostly in first-winter feathering. A Thayer's might be more uniform in age of feathers and more likely to retain juvenile mantle feathers. This bird showed mantle feathers that were nearly all first-winter type. There were a few sun-bleached retained juvenile feathers.

On closer inspection of the tertials, the transverse barring was fairly well-defined and was discernable through the dark center of the feather. The pale fringes of the tertials seemed too broad for a typical Thayer's Gull, but were somewhat darker than typical Kumlien's Gull. Close inspection of the primaries showed a suggestion of the dark sub-apical spot variably evident in Kumlien's Gull primaries.

Several years prior to this observation, I photographed another gull that was initially thought to be a Thayer's Gull. Neil Currie found this bird at the New Milford landfill and, at that time, none of us was aware of any Kumlien's Gull with primaries as dark.

Mostly we knew Kumlien's Gulls to show variation in the color of the primaries, but this color was no darker than the darkest part of the remaining plumage. The tertials were usually similar in color to the remaining plumage. How could one subspecies of a bird show such incredible variation in plumage characters?

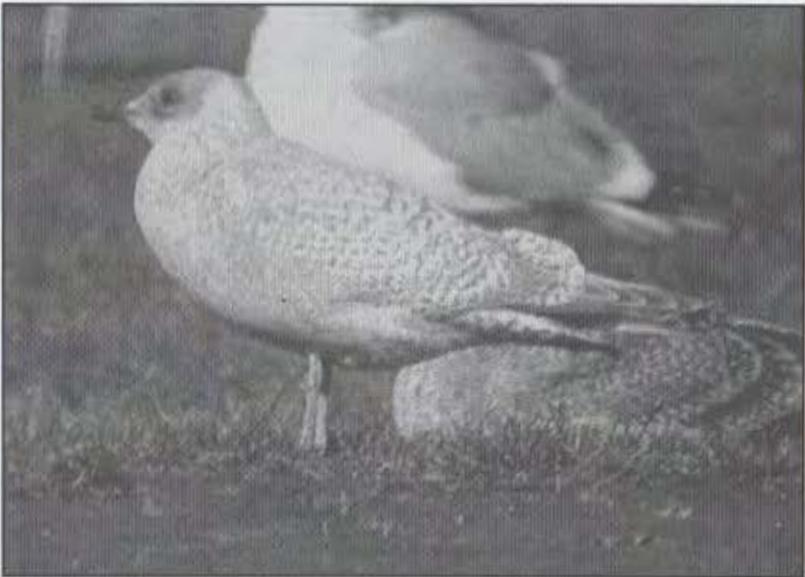


Figure 4. The New Milford gull.



Figure 5. A pale example of Kumlien's Gull.

The New Milford bird was interesting, but careful study of the plumage revealed this was a very dark Kumlien's Gull. The tertials were heavily mottled, thus appearing rather dark while not being truly dark-centered. The primaries were dark, but the pale edging, limited to chevrons at the tip in Thayer's Gull, was too extensive in this individual. In structure and mantle feathering, the bird also fit Kumlien's Gull. In hindsight, the dark appearance was within the range of the Kumlien's subspecies.

On 13 February 1994, Patrick Comins, Clark Mosely and I found a first winter Thayer's Gull at the Manchester landfill. Seen by numerous observers on the 14th, this bird was like a Kumlien's Gull only in its ventral aspect in flight. The wing-tip pattern from below was like a white-winged gull. When the bird showed its dorsal aspect in flight, it was very much like a Herring Gull. On the ground, this bird was built and colored like a diminutive Herring Gull. It was short-winged and heavily built. Its head was blocky, and the bill, while more delicate than a Herring Gull's, was rather wedge-shaped and thicker than that of a Kumlien's. The primaries

were darker than the rest of the mantle and showed the limited pale chevrons associated with Thayer's Gull. The tertials were solidly dark-centered and did not show barring. In flight, the secondary bar and tail were strikingly dark and the tail showed no internal vermiculations associated with Kumlien's. Again, structurally, this bird appeared much more like a Herring Gull and not at all like a Kumlien's Gull.

So there you have it. What the heck were we left with? We have a bird that in many aspects looked like what we know a Thayer's Gull to look like. This same gull is built like and has some of the morphology of a Kumlien's Gull. Several characters that are good for Thayer's Gull allegedly eliminate

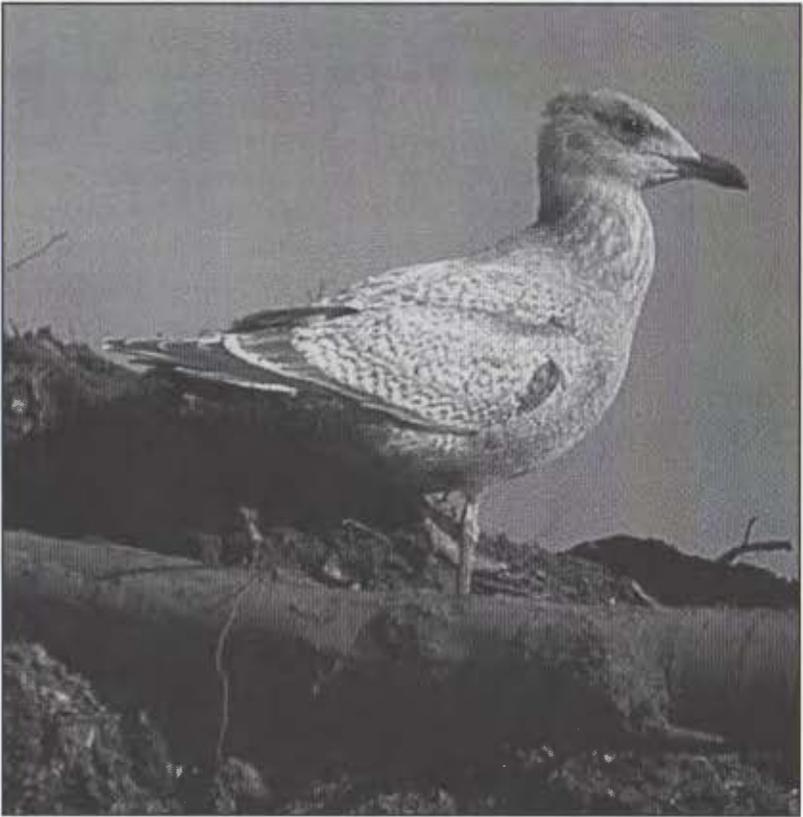


Figure 6. The Thayer's Gull at Manchester landfill.

its possible identification as a Kumlien's. Several structural characters and feather details seem to suggest it is a Kumlien's Gull and seem to eliminate or at least make uncertain its identification as a Thayer's Gull. All of what I had learned so far indicated that this bird was likely a hybrid between the two. I admit I needed help.

I sent the images to a few noted West Coast authorities and to Bruce MacTavish. Bruce lives and birds in Newfoundland and has probably seen more Kumlien's Gulls than anyone in North America. I also sent the images to several mid-continent birders who have recently been in a similar identification quandary.

The West Coast birders were split evenly as to its ID. Those who have little East Coast experience believe it was in the possible realm of variation for pure Thayer's Gull. Those with more extensive East Coast experience believe that it is within the possible realm of variation for Kumlien's Gull. Interestingly, the West Coast observers without East Coast experience both commented on a recent increase in sightings of pale, delicate Thayer's Gulls in their region, as well as an increase in the number of birds that were similar but identified as Kumlien's Gull.

The mid-continent authorities had a very interesting viewpoint. Birds appearing extremely similar to the Stratford bird were becoming increasingly numerous in this region. They were thought to come from the contact zone of both species in the Arctic. They were being called variably Thayer's X Kumlien's intergrades or Thayer's Gulls depending on the understanding and opinion concerning the species / subspecies status of each form. (This is a rat's nest of contradicting opinion that is better left to another article by a braver author than I).

Bruce MacTavish took longer to answer but his response was worth waiting for. In his opinion, the primaries and tertials

of this bird were outside of what is possible for dark Kumlien's Gulls. He also thought that the gull appeared more similar to Thayer's Gull but not quite right for that species either, favoring Iceland Gull in some features. He noted that in recent years there were two such birds, extremely similar to the Connecticut bird, discovered in Iceland. These two birds were still being studied, but current thinking is that they might be hybrids between Thayer's Gull and nominate Iceland Gull, *Larus glaucooides glaucooides*, the subspecies that occurs in Europe. These two forms nearly make contact at the northern tip of Greenland. Bruce believed the best answer to the Connecticut problem was to put no name on it but said my suggestion of a hybrid origin is plausible. He warned us to stay tuned as more work is being done on this apparent growing identification puzzle.

I do not believe the Connecticut bird is identifiable at this time. It may never be. I believe it is likely a hybrid / inter-grade between Thayer's Gull and Iceland Gull. It seems that which subspecies of Iceland Gull is still up for grabs. What this means depends on which viewpoint you have on the status of these species / subspecies in North America. To summarize the possibilities:

- Thayer's Gull is a full species, independent of Iceland Gull or Herring Gull.
- Thayer's Gull is a subspecies of Herring Gull.
- Thayer's Gull is a subspecies of Iceland Gull.
- (Kumlien's) Iceland Gull is a bona fide species.
- (Kumlien's) Iceland Gull is a subspecies of (*glaucooides*) Iceland Gull, which is its official status at present.
- (Kumlien's) Iceland Gull is a self-sustaining hybrid population (or "swarm") between Thayer's Gull and (*glaucooides*) Iceland Gull.
- Thayer's Gull, (Kumlien's) Iceland Gull, and (*glaucooides*) Iceland Gull are part of a continuum, or cline, from west to east, constituting one species.

I believe something is going on in the Arctic between Thayer's Gulls and Kumlien's Gull, our North American form of Iceland Gull. Perhaps the contact zone is broadening and perhaps more hybrid individuals are occurring, possibly establishing a hybrid population with extremely variable characteristics. Possibly these individuals winter in areas geographically associated with their parent species, with the mid-continent getting proportionally more of the intergrades.

I also believe we do not have a clear understanding of what Kumlien's Gulls can look like. We do not have a consistent understanding of the variability of feather color and pattern. It is possible that the same is true of Thayer's Gull, though I think that the view expressed in older texts, that Thayer's Gulls in first-winter plumage are consistently like the typical dark individuals found on the West Coast and like the Manchester bird, might be closer to the truth. Something is surely going on with this situation and close observations and record keeping will help sort this out.

Many folks were disappointed when I spread the word that the Stratford gull was likely not a pure Thayer's Gull. The



Figure 7. Bored by constant questions, a few gulls go about their daily business.



Figure 8. Kumlien's Gulls show broad variety. Here is a rather robust one that was present at Long Beach, Stratford, in winter 2006-7.

question: with primaries this dark, if this bird was not a Thayer's Gull, could Thayer's Gulls ever be confidently identified in the East. Using the current criteria of plumage tone and primary color, I believe they can be. Birds that look like the old-school notion of Thayer's Gull, birds like the Manchester dump bird, are strikingly different from Kumlien's Gulls. They are easily separated in the field. We will likely miss some birds that are in the gray zone. That's birding.

Photographs appearing in Figures 1-8 are courtesy of Mark Szantyr

Field Mark	Juv/1W (Kumlien's) Iceland Gull	Juv/1W Thayer's Gull
Bill	All dark to significant paling at the base, sometimes paling enough to show the second- year bill pattern. Bill is usually fine and delicate though there is significant variation due to age and sex.	Usually all dark, sometimes showing a paling at the base of the lower mandible. Late in season a more noticeable paling is possible. The bill is more angular than Iceland Gull but not as angular as Herring Gull. Usually chunkier than Iceland Gull. Same age / sex variables apply.
Eye	Usually dark.	Usually dark.
Legs	Pink to bright rosy pink.	Pink, often deep bright rosy pink. Shorter legged.
Tail	Usually marbled or mottled with brown, usually no darker than the darkest part of plumage, looking pale in flight. Some show a distinct dark sub-terminal band that can be rather solid like Thayer's but often has internal mottling.	Usually gives the appearance of a dark tail with a pale terminal band. Spread outer rectrices often show mottling at base. Tail as dark as the darkest plumage but may also be paler. Very reminiscent of a washed out smithsonianus Herring Gull tail pattern.
Primaries	Extremely variable. Pure white to dark brown. Pattern similar with dark outer web and pale inner web. Usually shows a sub-apical dark spot. Pale edges usually more extensive than the terminal and limited pale chevrons shown by Thayer's Gull. Primaries seem more pointed, resulting in a long primary projection. Primary coverts paler than in Thayer's, a good feature in flight.	Not as variable. Usually darker than all plumage except tertial centers. Color usually dark brown and can appear nearly black. Often shows a pale chevron on the folded feather tips. Alternating pattern of dark outer web and pale inner web: the "Venetian blind" pattern. A shorter primary projection contributes to a short-winged appearance.

Tertials	Extremely variable from apparent solid dark centers to completely mottled or marbled. Usually shows more prominent pale edging even when at their darkest. Usually only as dark as the darkest part of the plumage and often appearing not as dark as the primaries, but some quite Thayer-like. Tends to show tertials and primaries more concolor with the rest of the plumage.	Also quite variable, with some West Coast birds showing mottling similar to Iceland Gull. Usually solid dark centers and limited pale edging that may be broken up by varying degrees of marbling merging with the dark center. Thayer's Gulls usually show primaries and tertials significantly darker than any other part of the plumage, even darker than the solid dark tail.
Secondary Bar	Usually not present but when present, pale and not showing significant contrast to the rest of the upper wing plumage.	Usually present and showing significant contrast to the wing coverts, often approaching the color and contrast of the primaries.
Mantle and Scaps	Showing delicate even barring that blends with the delicate marbled pattern of the rest of the upper parts. Variable but probably distinct from Thayer's.	Usually as juvenal, showing dark centers and pale edges and more contrast to the evenly mottled feathers of the coverts.

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Vultures' Use of Man Made Thermals

On 7 September 2006, I was observing a stack test at Lake Road Generating Co.'s Dayville facility. While up on the stack I observed activities by Turkey Vultures and two Black Vultures that I found intriguing.

First, let me describe the facility where this took place. It consists of three gas turbine electrical generators that each consists of: a large jet engine, stream generator and cooling tower. The cooling tower is the primary part of this story.

Hot air is generated by the turbine and must be cooled. To do this the air is piped to the cooling tower and passed through a series of "radiators," where six large fans force ambient air up through the radiators into the atmosphere. The air temperature around the radiators is about 130-140 degrees F, and the fans are perhaps 12-15 feet in diameter.

Three to four hundred yards away is a large, cylindrical water tank where the vultures spend the night. I arrived at Lake Road at 8:00 a.m. and noticed the vultures sitting on top of the tank. About 8:45, five vultures left the tank and made their way directly to the cooling tower. Upon reaching the updraft, they proceeded to ride it up and began cavorting in the flow, swooping down and then back to repeat the process a number of times. After a short while they would ride the thermal up very fast to a height of hundreds of feet and glide off to wherever they wanted to go. Eventually, all the vultures took advantage of the thermals from the cooling tower, apparently "playing" in the up-rushing air, before leaving. There were as many as 12-15 vultures at one time taking advantage of the rising air.

The facility's environmental manager told me he has observed this activity a number of times.

Carl Ekroth

A Significant Purple Martin Roost

The huge Tree Swallow roost on the lower Connecticut River, which builds to six-figure size by late August, also contains by far the largest number of Purple Martins that assemble anywhere in Connecticut. During the last 10 days of August 2006, observations by boat from the north end of Goose Island noted the arrival of birds about a half hour before sunset.

The martins tended to come in high, Barn Swallows low and Tree Swallows, which make up more than 90 percent of the roost, come at all levels. The martins like to perch on sailboats anchored near the island before going to the roost as darkness falls. An actual count of the martins as they come in, many giving a single-note flight call, is difficult, but they number in the hundreds.

Observations by Hank Golet



Hank Golet Photo

About 90 Purple Martins perch on the rigging of a sailboat in the lower Connecticut River on 23 August 2006 before going to roost.

A Cackling Goose in Branford

Since the split of Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) into two species, the general consensus has been that Cackling Geese (*Branta hutchinsii*) reaching Connecticut by natural means would most likely be of the race known historically as Richardson's (or Hutchins) Goose and now bearing the trinomial *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*.

Of the four races of Cackling Goose, this is the one that breeds the farthest east, with nesting recorded on the west shore of Hudson Bay, on Southampton Island at the north-west corner of Hudson Bay and farthest east on southwestern Baffin Island (Abraham). When a Cackling Goose spent a long stretch of winter 2006-07 at the Branford Supply Ponds, allowing many birders close and extended views, questions were raised about its subspecific status. Some suggested it could be the far-northwestern race *minima*. Sorting out the seven races of Canada Goose and four races of Cackling Goose presents a variety of challenges, and away from breeding areas many birds cannot be safely identified beyond species. In some cases even species identification can be problematic.

Here is a photo assessment of the Branford bird from Steven G. Mlodinow, author of "America's 100 Most Wanted Birds." Steve is a resident of Washington state, where Cackling Geese of more than one race occur regularly, and he's co-author of "Birds of Washington: Status and Distribution." "There is considerable variation in *hutchinsii* size, and I think many are as small as typical *minima* (one of the three far western races). ... Color is highly variable in all taxa, with immatures paler than adults, and color possibly affected by food selection prior to molt.

"That leaves us with few solid marks. Rather, subspecific ID of an individual {Cackling Goose} is more of a multivariate analysis. The head shape of this bird is rather boxy for a *minima*. *Minima*, some of which are quite pale-breasted (and

this would still be pale for a minima), tend to show a shiny gloss on the breast, lacking in this bird. "The bill is proportionally long for a minima. Apparently only adult minima show a partial neck ring (some show none), and an adult minima should show more contrasting wing covert subterminal/terminal bands and a darker breast. Exceptions to almost all of the above rules can be found, but virtually every indicator points away from minima, and as the bird's shape looks good for Richardson's (*B. h. hutchinsii*) I see no reason to assign another ID to it. Or just leave it as Cackler, type unknown."

Banding records suggest that Cackling Geese reaching Connecticut are most likely from the Baffin Island population of *B. h. hutchinsii*. Returns of five Baffin Island birds have been logged from Virginia to Massachusetts, although none of them are from Connecticut. Of the other two breeding areas noted above, west shore of Hudson Bay and Southampton Island, all Canadian banding returns were west of Ontario, and the eastern most U.S. return was from Tennessee (Abraham).

Literature Cited

Abraham, Ken. Ontario Field Ornithologists News 23 (1): 2-6. February 2005.

Greg Hanisek



*Tom Sayers photo
Cackling Goose at Branford Supply Pond, with Canada Goose.*

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

IN THE COMPANY OF CROWS AND RAVENS. 2005. John M Marzluff and Tony Angell. xix+384 pgs. Numerous unnumbered illustrations. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Marzluff and Angell have produced probably one of the more celebrated nature books of the past year. Or at least one of the most conspicuously reviewed including most of the major international scientific journals. Deservedly so, the book is full of charm, loaded with facts and keen observations, solid science and a number of thoughtful interpretations. One example is the author's speculations about the resident ravens and their possible interactions with the first humans as they arrived across the Bering land bridge at the closing of the last ice age. Marzluff and Angell project these early associations to contemporary ecological relations with urban crows, the cultural based habituation of the two species to one another, and even to possible co-evolutionary interactions. It makes for fascinating reading and is very different from the singing crows in the movie *Dumbo*.

In writing of the genre there is always a potential problem with giving human qualities to animals. Folks who work in animal behavior, especially studying birds and primates, seem most at risk. As editor of a scientific journal I objected when authors referred to broken pair bonds as "divorce." Clearly, since the pair was never legally bonded, divorce with all its legal, emotional, social and lifestyle implications cannot apply here. It is natural selection, not lawyers and judges, social stigma and broken vows. The actions of the birds will increase their possibility for survival and reproduction. Marzluff and Angell understand this. In the places where anthropomorphizing their subjects' behavior does creep in, they are clear that it is for "engaging convenience, not scientific accuracy." It works well.

The book is rich in both information and imagery. Marzluff, a professor at University of Washington, skillfully explores the primary ornithological literature, but touches on history, art, mythology and poetry as well. It is a tour de force regarding understanding the complexity of the biology of the birds, and the intricacy of the long-term and current relationships between the birds and humans. There is a place or two where the authors seemingly overstep a line where anecdotal information or observation is used to generalize concepts beyond which at least one reviewer thinks "can reasonably be justified." Almost all reviewers commented about Angell's recollection (pg 137) of how the spirit of a friend had 'manifested itself in a crow.' The event involved unusual (or rarely observed), repeated avian behavior that reminded Angell of a friend who lived some distance away. The friend, unknown to Angell, had been ill and died at the time, the implication being that the animal was a vehicle for the friends' spirit. While this is hard to imagine, it may differ only in degree from the myths that hold that "finding a dead crow in the road was good luck..." These beliefs should not be confounded, however, with finding a crow dead from West Nile virus.

At this juncture, I have to point out how unlike *Crows and Ravens* is compared with the current Oxford series on "The Bird Families of the World". These volumes are highly technical, illustrated with lavish color plates, somewhat stilted and formulistic, and very expensive. With the inclusion of a few more genera including jays and magpies it's not far to THE CORVIDAE. *Crows and Ravens* by contrast is closely written with a curiosity and joy reflective of the birds themselves. Taxonomic details are minimal but sufficient. The text indicates the recent changes in the status of Fish, Northwestern, and American Crows. Other crow species such as the White-necked, Hawaiian, Mariana, Flores and Banggai which are at risk worldwide, are pointed-out. The entire group is detailed in the comprehensive table (pg 72-79) of species, their distinguishing features, habitat and range. But this is only the introduction. Marzluff writes captivantly about the

birds' social behavior, interactions with humans, intraspecific communication, problem-solving abilities and apparent intelligence. Angell's black and white plates are superb.

The relationships between humans and corvids may go back a long way. Marzluff traces this association back 30,000 years to records made on the cave walls at Lascaux through the protection provided ravens in the 16th century by Henry VIII of England. In contrast is the mass destruction of roosts in the American Midwest, where in the winter of 1939-1940 the Illinois Department of Conservation killed 328,000 crows, which illustrates another human mind-set. Their ultimate protection under the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act is confounded with regular efforts at control by federal agents and, of course, seasonal hunting for sport. Crows are considered a nuisance in many countries, in particular in urban areas. I like Marzluff's comment that crows and ravens deserve "respect simply for being such tenacious survivors despite persistent persecution".

Crows, by whatever definition, are smart and may be capable of play. Corvids appear in movies, although under Alfred Hitchcock's direction, not always in a flattering light. Corvids appear in literature as far back as Aesop and Chaucer, in Poe, Dickens, and Carroll (breaking-up a fight between Tweedledum and Tweedledee). They have been credited with the ability of knowing future events and have a long association with death. They appear as sports icons, symbolize humility (eating crow), aging (those irritating crow's feet), and the most direct route anywhere (as the crow flies). The book is thought-provoking and provides many insights into our relationships with birds. Enjoy.

AVIAN PREY OF NESTING GREAT HORNED OWLS

By Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith

The Great Horned Owl is noted for its opportunism and diversity of prey selection. Studies have shown that it takes prey ranging in size from crickets and scorpions up to woodchucks, bobcats, geese, and herons (Bent, 1938, Houston et. al., 1998, Smith 2002). In this paper we document an example of feeding opportunism displayed in the prey remains brought to nestlings of a Great Horned Owl pair that nested along the broad floodplain of the Thomaston Dam Flood Control Impoundment located in Thomaston, Conn.

At the time of discovery (10 April 2006) the nest contained two owlets and was located 16.8 meters (55 feet) high in the secondary crotch of a 21.9-meter (72-foot) tall mature white pine (*Pinus strobus*). The adult owls had appropriated a bulky Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) nest constructed a previous year. The nest disintegrated before the owlets fledged, and they roosted on nearby branches as they waited for the adults to deliver food. Habitat surrounding the nest site consisted primarily of wetlands associated with the Naugatuck River. These included wet meadows and shrub thickets interlaced with several small shallow ponds that are bordered by bottomland woodland containing a white pine copse.

Pellets and prey remains were collected from beneath the nest tree on 5 May 2006 and taken to Southern Connecticut State University for dissection and identification. As necessary, skulls, fur remains, and feathers were compared with specimens in the collections to verify species identification. Fish remains, consisting of posterior quarter sections, were tentatively identified using the keys in *Freshwater Fishes of Connecticut* (Whitworth 1996) as a reference. Staff members

from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Fishery Division confirmed identification.

Results

Prey debris beneath the nest site contained an assortment of vertebrates with a preponderance of avian prey (Table 1). Notable prey species included remains of a decapitated Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*), the head of a male Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), tail feathers of a Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*), primary feathers of Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), and Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*), miscellaneous feathers of one or more unidentified sparrows (Emberizidae), and posterior quarter sections of two species of trout.

Aside from the diverse selection of avian prey, the occurrence of two species of trout in the diet is noteworthy. Fish are described as an occasional to very minor component of the Great Horned Owl's diet, though they have been reported to take dace, bullhead, sucker, goldfish, and carp, among others (Bent 1938, Devine and Stevens 1985, Errington et al., 1940, Houston et al., 1998). Apparently, the occurrence of the Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) and Rainbow Trout (*Salmo gairdneri*) as prey items has not been previously documented for the Great Horned Owl.

In addition to the avian prey, one or both of the adult Great Horned Owls likely destroyed a Cooper's Hawk nest located 230 meters from the owl's nest. Nestlings were missing during a 26 June 2006 check of the hawk's nest and plucked juvenile feathers were found at the nest site. Prior to the nest check, the Great Horned Owl family unit regularly roosted within a white pine copse between both nest sites.

Discussion

We can speculate that the observed concentration of avian prey at this nest occurred because the area surrounding the nest was severely flooded by spring rains and intermit-

tently remained flooded following hatching and rearing of the young. At this critical time, the adult owls likely focused their search efforts on immediately available prey near the vicinity of the nest site to supply the growing young with food.

Certainly the selection of prey delivered to the young owls during this time demonstrates the opportunistic nature of Great Horned Owl predation with its noted concentration of wetland birds and wildlife, directly reflecting prey availability within this riverine floodplain. This adaptability is one of the recurrent reasons for the widespread distribution and success of the Great Horned Owl within the exceptionally wide variety of human-modified habitats in which we have documented presence and breeding of this species.

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Table 1. Tabulated Prey Remains at a Great Horned Owl Nest in Thomaston, CT

	SPECIES	COMMENTS
Fish		
	Brown Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	hind quarter
	Rainbow Trout (<i>Salmo gairdneri</i>)	hind quarter
Birds		
	Virginia Rail (<i>Rallus limicola</i>)	body skin
	Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	feathers
	Northern Flicker (<i>Colaptes auratus</i>)	feathers
	Red-bellied Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>)	feathers
	Blue Jay (<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>)	feathers
	Eastern Towhee (<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>)	head, feathers
	Cedar Waxwing (<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>)	feathers
	Unidentified Sparrow(s)	feathers
Mammals		
	Eastern Chipmunk (<i>Tamias striatus</i>)	skull fragments
	Gray Squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	skull fragments

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Dwight Smith, Biology Department, Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT 06515

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Summer, June 1 to July 31, 2006

By Greg Hanisek

Northbound migration

Rocky Hill meadows still held 16 Semipalmated Plovers, a Solitary Sandpiper and a White-rumped Sandpiper on June 2 (PCi). McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford held a Whimbrel on June 4-5 (CB), with 12 shorebird species present June 5 including two White-rumped Sandpipers and one Pectoral Sandpiper (JMc). The latest White-rumped were two on June 11 at McKinney (GH). Western Sandpipers are rare in spring but usually late when they do occur, like a breeding-plumaged bird reported June 11 at Sandy Point, West Haven, along with 30 Semipalmated Sandpipers (PH). A Red Knot was at Sandy Point, West Haven, on June 4 (GNi). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was a good find June 7 at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport (FG). Two Caspian Terns were a surprise on June 11 flying north up the Interstate 91 corridor in Hartford (JK, JMc). Another was at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) on June 17 (JC).

A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was on its typical late migration schedule June 5 in Torrington (PCa). So was an Olive-sided Flycatcher June 2 in Watertown (RN). At Greenwich Point, where the species is not known to breed, a Marsh Wren was present June 4-8 (DE, MSa). A Swainson's Thrush was reported as late as June 10 in Washington (AD), and one lingered to early July in Woodbury (CW). The latest Blackpoll Warbler report was June 13 in Watertown (RN). A typically late-moving Mourning Warbler visited a backyard in Orange on June 2 (NB).

Southbound Migration

A Northern Harrier made what was probably an early southbound appearance on July 30 at Mudge Pond in Sharon (FB). Although American Oystercatcher nests at Milford

Point, the presence of 15 on July 15 indicates some kind of migratory movement or dispersal (PCo). The same can probably be said for a flock of 13 Piping Plovers there on July 16 (FM). The first Lesser Yellowlegs was at Stratford Marina on June 27 (NB). The first Whimbrel arrived at Milford Point on July 31 (GNi). Semipalmated Sandpiper numbers began to build July 14 at Milford Point, where 600+ were on the bars (NB). A careful search at this time turned up a great rarity, Connecticut's third record of **Red-necked Stint**, on July 16 (NB). The adult bird was present through July 23 and enjoyed by many. (See a more detailed account, Connecticut Warbler Vol. 26 No. 4). An adult Western Sandpiper was at Sandy Point on July 15 (JHo), and up to two were present at Milford Point during the visit by the Red-necked Stint (MDi, NB). Another was at Sandy Point on July 31 (NB). The first two Least Sandpipers were reported June 30 at Milford Point (FG), with the first juvenile there July 20 (NB) and the first White-rumped Sand-

piper on July 18 (GNi). Two adult Baird's Sandpipers, an age-class seldom reported in the state, were at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on July 11 (CB, PS). Another adult was at Sandy Point on July 19 (JHo). The first Pectoral Sandpiper was at HBSP on July 23 (GNi), followed by singles July 29 at Milford Point (CE, FM) and McKinney (CB). A Stilt Sandpiper was at Sandy Point July 20 (NB). Two Stilt Sandpipers, along with a Western and a White-rumped Sandpiper, were good finds on the Saugatuck River in Westport on July 27 (LT, PS). Plum Bank Marsh in Old Saybrook held 14 Short-billed Dowitchers July 9 (JO). Two Short-billed Dowitchers of the less common *hendersoni* race were at Stratford Marina on July 31 (NB).

A **Parasitic Jaeger**, now annual in Long Island Sound, was seen at the Norwalk Islands on July 8 (LF, TD). A Bonaparte's Gull passed over McKinney Refuge on July 19 (CB). A Red-breasted Nuthatch appeared July 10 at a feeder in Southington (S&VG), well away from known breeding areas, but

no signs of a major irruption followed. At Cemetery Pond in Litchfield, 350 Barn Swallows were staging July 17, with the number building to 450 on July 25 (DR).

Lingers, Wanderers and Strays

A Snow Goose lingered with Canada Geese June 4 at Rentschler Field in East Hartford (J&CN). Somewhere between breeding and heading south were two Green-winged Teal July 29 at Great Pond, Simsbury (PCi). A drake Blue-winged Teal was at a pond in Stamford on June 13 (AC). Six Long-tailed Ducks included four together off the Norwalk Islands on June 16 (AG), one at Milford

Point on June 14-25 (FG, FM) and one inland on June 17 at Nepaug Reservoir in Burlington (PCi). A Common Loon in alternate plumage hung out on the Farmington River in Collinsville all summer (PCi), and one was present until June 30 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (DR). Horned Grebes rarely linger, but one was present until at least June 8 at Holly Pond, Stamford (PDU) and one in alternate plumage was seen July 16-31 on the Indian River, Clinton (JR, JHi).

A Greater Shearwater in weakened condition was picked up by boaters in Stonington harbor on June 28. It was taken into care but died the same night. There are two previous specimen



Mark Szantyr photo
This Greater Shearwater was picked up in Stonington but died shortly thereafter.

records for the state. This one was delivered to UConn, Storrs, for preparation as a study skin (PR et al). Four **Wilson's Storm-Petrels**, now annual in Long Island Sound in summer, were two miles off Old Lyme on June 10 (JO, AO). One was seen from shore at Great Island, Old Lyme, on June 29 (DG), and six were seen from a boat off Niantic the same day (ER). Up to three were off Norwalk July 18 (NB et al.). An immature Northern Gannet, two miles off Old Lyme on June 10, was presumably wandering with no urgency to return to northern breeding colonies (AO, JO). An immature Great Cormorant was far inland June 3-9 at Colebrook Reservoir (PCa). A canoe trip in the Quinnipiac River marshes in Hamden July 11 turned up a Least Bittern (RB, JMh). A Great Egret wandered up the Connecticut River to Portland on June 8 (JL), where an unusual inland concentration of eight appeared June 25 (LN). Single Snowy Egrets were good inland finds July 27 in Cornwall (MLD) and July 29 in Rocky Hill (PCi). A Tricolored Heron was at Mil-

ford Point on June 11 (GH). The only report of Cattle Egret came from Chittenden Park, Guilford, on June 19 (GNi). Two Black-crowned Night Herons, still unproven as nesters inland, were at Shepaug Dam in Southbury in early June (DR).

A juvenile **Mississippi Kite** was rare but right in its expected seasonal window June 8 in Norwalk, where it was seen hawking insects over the observer's yard (WH). An immature was reported again on June 16 as flyby at East Granby (JW). More surprising seasonally was an adult on July 19 at Great Pond, Simsbury, where it was relocated on July 23 (PCi, RP). Great Pond is the place where an adult was seen on Aug. 19, 2005. A Bald Eagle was at Easton Reservoir, where breeding is not known to occur, on June 2 (MJ). An immature was on the Housatonic River in West Cornwall on June 21 (EH) and another was at Nepaug Reservoir July 27 (PCi). Up to two American Coots were at Milford Point to at least June 27 (KE). **Sandhill Cranes** now generate multiple reports each year. This season

one was reported over Avon Mountain in Avon on June 9 (AL). An Iceland Gull hung in until at least June 4 at Greenwich Point (DCu). An adult **Gull-billed Tern** was found on June 24 at Milford Point and spent about an hour at the mouth of the Housatonic River, where it

appeared June 27 at Sandy Point (NB). An Acadian Flycatcher was an unexpected visitor June 23 to a yard in Mystic, in an area where it is not known to breed (GW). Well outside its normal window of appearance, an adult male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was photographed July



Julian Hough photo

This Caspian Tern was at Sandy Point, West Haven, on July 9.

was photographed (NB et al.). It was the first record since 1996. A Caspian Tern on July 9 at Sandy Point probably fits in this category as well as any (JHo, MSt et al.). One was seen there again on July 18 (FM), followed by one the next day in Westbrook (PCa). The season's first Forster's Tern

17 in a yard in Baltic (DSm).

Breeding Season

A pair of Hooded Mergansers had young at Minetto State Park in Torrington on June 5 (PCa), and a female escorted up to six young in early June at Van Deusen Preserve in Roxbury (LW).

At Wimisink Preserve in Sherman in June, a female had a brood of nine young that included one Wood Duck duckling, presumably from dump nesting by a female Wood Duck (RN et al.). The high count of Little Blue Herons was three on July 3 at HBSP (DL). Ospreys nesting on the Quinnipiac River fledged 28 chicks, down by three from last year. The decline was attributed to two weeks of cold, wet weather at hatching time (MH). A pair of Northern Harriers was seen food-carrying in July at their traditional breeding site at McKinney National

Wildlife Refuge in Stratford (CB). Sharp-shinned Hawk, a scarce and shy nester, is seldom confirmed breeding, so an adult with two fledglings July 19 in Meriden was noteworthy (MM). Three American Kestrels on June 28 in South Windsor were encouraging considering this species' decline as a breeder (PCi). Better still, a pair fledged two chicks in a train yard in North Haven (MH). Wimisink Preserve held four adult and three downy young Virginia Rails on June 18 (DR et al.).

Three Black Skimmers were west of known breed-

Visitor From the Southern Hemisphere?

While conducting survey work July 1 at Groton-New London Airport, Mark Szantyr encountered an unfamiliar swallow that he identified as a Brown-chested Martin, a South American species that has been confirmed twice in North America: 12 June 1983 at Monomoy, Mass. (specimen), and 6-15 November 1997 at Cape May, N.J., (photo). There is also a photographic record under review from Arizona and a sight record from Belle Glade, Fla. MSz provided field notes and field sketches for what is arguably the rarest bird that the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut has ever considered. Review is pending.

ing sites June 8 off Shippan Point, Stamford (PD). On June 20 crows chased a Barn Owl through a residential section of Middletown, a town that has historically supported breeding pairs (JMa). A Northern Saw-whet Owl was calling on July 1 in Nepaug State Forest in New Hartford (PCa, RF). Despite the conventional wisdom about drastic declines, Whippoorwill continues to be widely reported in the breeding season. In addition to its stronghold in Nehantic State Forest and environs, reports were received from Ellington, Southington, Waterbury and Plymouth. (See also

reports in the Spring Field Notes). Of special note were seven calling on territory in Nepaug State Forest in New Hartford on July 1 (PCa). The **Chuck-will's Widow** discovered in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme during the spring season was present to at least June 4 (GNi).

Devil's Hopyard State Park in East Haddam held two or three Common Ravens June 21, far from traditional sites for this booming species (LJ, DCa). Two Purple Martins checked out a nest box at Milford Point regularly in late June but nesting did not occur (FG). A Purple Martin was at



Mark Szantyr photo

This is one of a group of Cliff Swallow fledglings brought into rehab from Bloomfield.

Stony Creek, Branford, on June 1 (GNi). The nesting colony of Cliff Swallows at the Shepaug Hydro Station in Southbury held at least 94 birds on June 6 (DR), and nesting was reported June 5 from Shoppes at Farmington Valley in Canton (GNa). A group of Cliff Swallow fledglings from Bloomfield were brought into rehab July 10 (JA). Colonies at Stevenson Dam in Oxford (RH) and at Colebrook Reservoir (PCa) were also active. A leucistic American Robin was at Penwood State Park, Bloomfield, July 31 (PCi).

A female Golden-winged Warbler, in company with a male Blue-winged Warbler, was at the Route 44 power line in West Hartford from June 4 to early July (TS, RS et al.). A male was in Naugatuck State Forest on June 17 (RH). An adult male Brewster's Warbler, believed to be a back-cross, was seen June 18 to early July at the West Hartford, power line (PH, PCi). The only Lawrence's Warbler was at Walden Preserve in Salem on June 21 (LJ, DCa). A pair of Northern Parulas was in Hartland July 19 (DR). The Catlin Woods section of

White Memorial in Litchfield produced a good count of 13 Blackburnian Warblers June 28 (DR); 10 were at a location in Burlington on June 23 (DR). A male Kentucky Warbler sang on territory through June at Penwood State Park in Bloomfield (m.ob.), but there was no sign of a mate. A male Mourning Warbler sang near Barkhamsted Reservoir June 24 and July 8 near the spot where breeding was reported last year, but no sign of a female or young was discerned (DR). A singing male was heard in Hartland on July 9 (DR). A female Hooded Warbler fed a Brown-headed Cowbird fledgling July 7 in a Newtown yard (RB). A Yellow-breasted Chat was in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme on June 17 (GNi).

Eastern Meadowlark was noted at East Granby Farms in June (JW). Two pairs were believed to be breeding at Wintonberry Golf Course and one pair at Samuel Wheeler Reed Park, both in Bloomfield (SF). The undeveloped portion of Rentschler Field in East Hartford continues to support grassland breeders. On June 4 observation from

adjacent parking lots produced six Bobolinks, three Eastern Meadowlarks and three Grasshopper Sparrows (J&CN). One or two territorial male Grasshopper Sparrows sang from a field near Buckland Hills Mall in Manchester in June (JS). At the capped New Milford landfill, a visit June 19 produced at least three pairs of Eastern Meadowlarks, two pairs of Savannah Sparrows and three singing male Bobolinks (AD). At least Six Boat tailed Grackles were at Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport July 30 (PCo).

Correction: In the spring field notes, an Eastern Wood-Pewee on May 8 was in West Hartford, not Windsor Locks.

Observers: Jayne Amico, Renee Baade, Charlie Barnard, Fred Baumgarten, Nick Bonomo, Dana Campbell (DCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly, Annette Cunniffe, Daniel Cunniffe (DCu), ML Dahl (MLD), Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Towney Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt, Patrick Dugan, Carl Ekroth, Ken Elkins, Debbie Ethridge, Karen Fiske, Ray Fisk, Larry Flynn,

Sam Fried, Frank Gallo, Shari Gaurino, Val Gaurino, Art Gingert, Dave Gumbart, William Haffey, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Roy Harvey, Phil Henson, Jason Hill (JHi), Mike Horn, Julian Hough (JHo), Lynn James, Matthew Jewett, Jay Kaplan, David Lawton, Joanne Luppi, Alan Lurie, Frank Mantlik, John Maynard (JMa), Janet Mehm-el (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Marty Moore, Gretchen Nareff (GNa), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol (GNi), Larry Nichols, Carol Norton, Jim Norton, Anders Ogren, John Ogren, Brian O'Toole, Roger Preston, Edward Raynor, James Restivo, Dave Rosgen, Phil Rusch, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Ryan Sayers, Tom Sayers, Doris Smith (DSm), Penny Solum, Dori Sosensky (DSo), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Jerry Stage, Luke Tiller, Leigh Wells, Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, Chris Wood.

Correction: The following names were inadvertently omitted from the end of the observer list with the Spring Field Notes. Joe Wojtanowski, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

"Hey! Here's a Red-tailed. No, wait a minute, it's pale, a Red-shouldered or maybe a Broad-winged?"

Such typical statements about Buteo identification can be heard at our coastal hawk watches in October. These large, bulky broad-winged raptors can be a challenge to identify for many birdwatchers, not just beginners, since distance, flight style and plumage variation can all create identification confusion.

This month our bird is a Buteo, and from the photo we can see dark-tipped primaries, two dark "moustache marks" and a relatively pale belly with obvious dark spots. The markings on the underparts, combined with a narrow trailing edge to the wing and a tail that shows several narrow dark bars, age it as a juvenile, since adult Red-tailed, Broad-winged and Red-shouldered all show distinctly patterned tails. The bird's underparts are distinct, and though superficially appearing like a 'belly band,' they are much less marked and



don't show the heavily streaked or solid dark belly band typical of Red-tailed Hawks. While variable, the lightest marked Red-taileds often show a pale breast band contrasting with a darkish head, a pattern not seen on our bird. Glancing at the leading edge of the wing, the lack of dark patagial bars, a clinching feature of Red-tailed Hawks, confirm our suspicions that this is something else.

So, faced with a choice of either Red-shouldered or Broad-winged, the pale plumage, dark primary tips and lack of pale crescents across the primaries (the most eye-catching feature of a Red-shouldered) seem to indicate a juvenile Broad-winged. On that species, the markings on the underside are variable, though they tend to be heavier at the breast sides in Broad-winged. Our bird's pattern doesn't help much in eliminating either juvenile Broad-winged or Red-shouldered.

Looking at the shape, the bird is rather slim and relatively long-tailed for a Buteo and may recall a chunky Accipiter. This is generally wrong for Broad-winged, which to my eyes mostly look compact with broad, short wings and a short broad tail (actually Broad-winged's tail is the narrowest of the Buteos when folded, but appears broad when fanned). Also, on juvenile Broad-wings, the barring on the secondaries might appear lighter and the under wing coverts may be virtually unmarked, but again due to variability, these features are limited in their use when taken individually. Even the dark mesial stripe on the throat can be shown by both, though this bird's single streak fits better with Broad-winged, than Red-shouldered, which often shows multiple streaks.

If we take into account the shape of the bird, as well as the pattern and distribution of the dark spots on the underparts, the bird fits better as a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk.

"But, hey, where are the pale primary crescents – THE Red-shouldered Hawk id. mark?" I hear you ask.

Unfortunately, had the bird been photographed from a

slightly different angle, those tell-tale primary crescents would indeed be visible. The problem with separating these two species is that due to variability, they can appear identical. When the diagnostic pale crescents of a Red-shoulder are not obvious, the best traits are long wings that seem to lack pointed tips (Broad-wingeds show pointed wingtips in active flight) and a more stocky head and body.

This juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk was photographed by myself at Lighthouse Point, New Haven, in October 2005.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friend, Jerry Liguori, hawk-watcher extraordinaire and author of the must-have "Hawks from Every Angle," for suggestions that improved the text.

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



Photo Challenge #56

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a computer disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

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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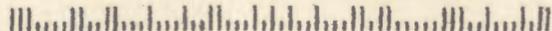
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A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Front: Mark Szantyr created this portrait of the Hammonasett Lazuli Bunting, the subject of a detailed article in this issue.

Back: Julian Hough, author of the Lazuli Bunting article, did this field sketch with notes as part of the effort to identify the bird. The article reveals the outcome.

THE MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD

The prestigious Wright Award was presented to Patrick Comins by COA President Steve Mayo at the annual meeting in April at Middlesex Community College in Middletown. Following are Steve Mayo's remarks:

Mabel Osgood Wright, nature writer, naturalist and ornithologist, fostered a passion for birds and bird conservation. She founded Birdcraft, a sanctuary in Fairfield, named after one of her very popular books (published in 1895). Birdcraft was one of the first sanctuaries of its kind. The 6-acre property was groomed and gardened, so that it could serve as a safe haven for migrating and resident birds.

Sanctuary is a term that this year's award winner should be very familiar with. Consider these other Connecticut "sanctuaries": Northwest Park, Great Meadows, McKinney, Barn Island, Salt Meadow, Menunkatesuck, Cove Island, Conte, Lighthouse Point, Great Captains Island, Good Hill Farm, East-West River Marshes, Bent of the River, Sandy Point. Regardless of where you live in Connecticut, you've probably gone birding at several of these sites. This year's recipient has been personally involved in the continued preservation and stewardship of these, as well as others. He has developed conservation plans which are critical prerequisites for obtaining grants and other funding. He is in charge of the Audubon Connecticut Important Bird Area Program.

He worked with Chris Elphick of the University of Connecticut on the conservation of the Salt Marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow. He is chair of the state forest ecosystem health committee. He also serves as northeastern representative to Partners in Flight for Audubon. He actively participated in the Grasslands Working Group and, in 2003, co-authored, with Greg Hanisek and Steve Oresman, the report titled "Protecting Connecticut's Grassland Heritage." They made important recommendations for protecting the state's most endangered habitat.

A few years back, Patrick had spent many hours at a very unique type of sanctuary. At the former Manchester Landfill, Patrick dodged bulldozers and tolerated the stench of rotting garbage. But he also had the thrill of discovering a Thayer's Gull and other rarities, among the swarms of the more common Larids. His passion for gull identification, birding's toughest challenge, is unmatched.

Patrick has served on the COA Board of Directors and helped raise the quality of our popular COA workshops. He is a valued contributor to our journal, "The Connecticut Warbler". He has published articles on the Nelson's Gull, Roseate Tern and the Grasshopper Sparrow. He has also contributed analyses of COA's Annual Summer Bird Counts.

He has been very active with the Hartford Audubon Society. He has served on the Board of Directors, has edited the newsletter and has co-compiled the Hartford Christmas Bird Count.

Patrick has a BS in Biology from Trinity College. He has been with Audubon Connecticut as the director of bird conservation since 2000. He began his career with the Connecticut Audubon Society, doing surveys at the McKinney Wildlife Refuge, and then worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service at McKinney in Westbrook.

Patrick is an educator and a campaigner for conservation partnerships.

On behalf of the membership of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, I am very pleased to present the Mabel Osgood Wright Award to Patrick Comins.

Color In The Warbler

Our ability to use color in recent issues of the magazine has been aided greatly by generous donations from AJ Hand, Fran Zygmunt and Mark Szantyr. Their support is appreciated.

THE HAMMONASSET BUNTING

Lazuli or not Lazuli... that is the question

By Julian Hough

Late in the evening of 4 January 2007, I received a call from Frank Gallo to report a sighting by Bill Yule. Bill had seen an unidentified bunting in the vicinity of the now defunct west pavilion at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. He described it as a "dull buffy bunting with pale eye-ring, buffy unstreaked chest, pale buff wing bars and slight blue on outer primary and tail feathers much like a female Indigo Bunting." Based on Bill's description, the idea that it was a Lazuli Bunting wasn't totally lost on Bill or myself.

Several observers arrived at first light the next morning. After some intensive searching, observers found the bird in the weedy margins of the East Beach parking lot. It fed in open areas of gravel around the perimeter, loosely associating with White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos. Although it would disappear for short periods, it remained faithful to this area all day. Despite deterioration in the weather, it was seen by a number of people. Frank Mantlik managed to obtain some digiscoped pictures, and the general consensus seemed to be that it was indeed a Lazuli Bunting.

Mantlik's photos were taken in adverse weather conditions and unfortunately, through no fault of the photographer, the true plumage tones were not represented in these initial shots. A discussion ensued around these photos, and some experienced West Coast birders suggested the possibility of a hybrid Lazuli x Indigo Bunting. These buntings are known to hybridize with some frequency, so the possibility needed to be considered.

On the 7 January I managed to see the bird well in good light. I agreed it was neither an Indigo Bunting nor a hybrid and showed all the requisite characters of a Lazuli Bunting. Once additional photos were obtained in good light, the bird

took on a different appearance and any lingering doubts seem to be dispelled. It appeared to be Connecticut's first Lazuli Bunting.

Status and distribution

Indigo Buntings are a familiar bird, breeding in the state and passing through in fall as they head south to winter in Mexico. Lazuli Buntings breed from the Midwest westward to California and north to British Columbia. The two species are known to occasionally hybridize where their ranges overlap. Lazuli Bunting is a rare vagrant with only a few records in the Northeast. Hot on the heels of the Connecticut bird, the following 2007 records are of interest

Massachusetts: Male, Hampshire County, January 30-31, 2007
Pennsylvania: Male, Redhill, Montgomery County, March 4-10 2007

Given the paucity of records of this species, these two records hint at a small influx of these buntings into the Northeast and lend support to the Connecticut bird's occurrence.

Molt and migration

Both Lazuli and Indigo Buntings have an unusual molt strategy for passerines. Both begin their post-breeding molt on the breeding grounds and then arrest it in fall when they arrive at staging areas in Arizona and New Mexico. At these areas both adults and first-years molt into a preformative or supplemental plumage before commencing migration to Mexican and Central American wintering grounds. This molt involves the replacement of nearly all the body feathers for a second time. This strategy is thought to be linked to the dry, food-scarce summer habitat as compared to the wet, food-rich staging areas used in August to October.

Once molt is completed, both adults and first-years are similar in plumage. In the early spring, the buff tips to the feathers of the adults wear away to reveal the bright spring plumage below.



Figure 1.

Julian Hough www.naturescapeimages.net

First-year male Lazuli Bunting, Hammonasset S.P, 20 Jan. 2007 Note the two pale wingbars, uniform upperparts and unstreaked throat and breast compared to Indigo Bunting. In good light the blue bloom to the greater coverts, alula, primary fringes and rectrices was obvious. Closer inspection revealed blueish bases to the mantle feathers. Combined with the blue rectrices, this indicated that the bird was a first-year male, not a female.(Julian Hough)



Figure 2.

JulianHough/www.naturescapeimages.net

First-year male Lazuli Bunting, Hammonasset S.P, 20 Jan. 2007 The throat is buffish, not white as in Indigo Bunting, and is concolorous with the head and breast. The bill is not as two-toned as in many Indigo Buntings, but it's unknown if this is a consistent difference. Most importantly, the underparts are uniform and lack the blurry streaks shown by first-winter Indigo Buntings. The subtle plumage tones of this individual could easily be altered by the light conditions, but when seen well, the upper breast was strikingly honey colored and characteristic of this species. (Julian Hough)

Identification

In breeding plumage, males of both species are unmistakable. Basic-plumaged Indigo and Lazuli Buntings are basically brown and buff and require careful separation from one another. The main differences are the fact that Lazuli Buntings have noticeable whitish-buff wingbars, a buffish throat, unstreaked underparts and a bright honey-buff "bib" across the upper breast. Indigo Buntings tend to be a richer, more tan-brown with indistinct cinnamon wingbars and tertial edgings, a whitish throat and some diffuse streaking on the upper breast. The features of the Hammonasset bird fit nicely with Lazuli Bunting and showed no tell-tale signs of hybridization.

Discussion

After more photos were taken and circulated, subsequent correspondence with experienced observers, some of them known and respected for their identification expertise, raised questions about the identification as Lazuli. West Coast observers were still somewhat cautious and made no firm pronouncements. The question of whether there were any Indigo Bunting genes still lingered, mainly based on the color of the wingbars. This was rather surprising to many observers who had seen the bird well in the field and were quite happy it was in fact a Lazuli Bunting. Further clarification was sought from people who had banded Lazuli Buntings. Peter Pyle, author of "The Identification Guide to North American Passerines," agreed with our assessment that the bird was a first-year male, not female, and added the following:

"It is in its first cycle and has replaced its outer 5 primaries, inner 3-4 secondaries (tertials and maybe s6), and all of its rectrices and secondary coverts during the preformative molt. The molt limits and brown retained juvenal primary coverts easily age this as first cycle. The blackish formative rectrices with blue edging indicates male.

"I must say that I am unsure what species it is, primarily because it is in fresh formative plumage, which we do not usually encounter north of Mexico, and thus I do not think we have a good handle on range of variation in Indigo and Lazuli. In some fresh plumages Indigo can have paler tipping to the greater coverts, yielding a wing-barred appearance. Some to most of these coverts are replaced during the first prealternate molt of Indigo (with blue feathers in males) whereas in Lazuli the greater coverts are usually retained. I'm guessing we can answer this with a bit of specimen examination."

With some unresolved questions, I visited Peabody Museum at Yale University to look at specimens. While it was possible to examine a range of non-breeding Indigo Buntings collected in Mexico (November-February), a lack of any winter Lazuli Bunting specimens collected at the same time of year meant it was not possible for any direct comparisons.

My examination concentrated on assessing how consistent the appearance of Indigo Buntings was during the winter when they had acquired their formative (or supplemental) plumage. Quantifying consistent plumage characters of Indigo Buntings at this time of year could be used as a basis to compare them to the Hammonasset bird.

Indigo Bunting specimens labeled "female" and "imm male" were for all intents and purposes similar in plumage and no effort was made to differentiate them. An examination of skins revealed that all basic-plumaged Indigo Buntings showed some degree of blurry, grayish-brown streaking across the upper breast. This varied in prominence depending on age and sex. The point is that all these plumages of Indigo Bunting had some streaking, regardless of age or sex, which would be easily noticeable in the field. In all specimens of Lazuli Buntings, the breast was unmarked. The only exception to this was in a couple of specimens of adult females in summer that showed pencil-thin gray shafts to

some of the breast feathers. These are hardly detectable and would not attract attention in the field. I have also seen this on one or two photographs and feel that it is typical of some adult females.

The upper parts of these same Indigo Buntings had a rich tan-brown (or cinnamon) tone. This rich color also extended to the tips and fringes of the median and greater covert (forming two similar-colored wingbars) and the tertials. It was consistent across the specimens I examined. No consistent differences in tertial pattern between the two species were detected.

Lazuli Bunting specimens labeled "female" and "imm male" were for all intents and purposes similar in plumage and no effort was made to differentiate them. Basic-plumaged Lazuli Buntings exhibited grayish-brown upper parts lacking the tan component of Indigo Bunting and buff colored throats blending into the upper breast. The breast was unmarked but varied in brightness from grayish-buff to the distinctive honey-buff or butterscotch color obvious on many basic-plumaged Lazuli Buntings. This pattern was not matched by any Indigo Bunting specimens that I examined.



Figure 3.
The Hammonasset bunting in flight.

Bruce Finnan photo

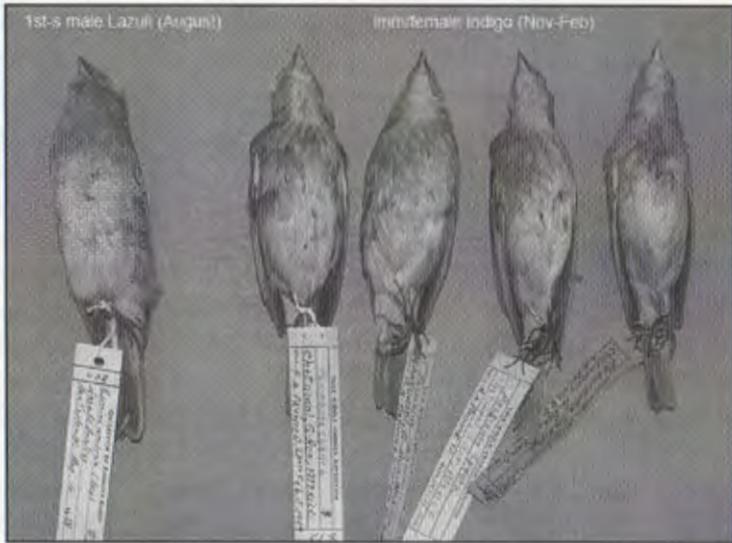


Figure 4. *JulianHough/www.naturescapeimages.net*
 The four Indigo Buntings at right show pale throats and noticeable blurry breast streaks. The Lazuli Bunting at left shows a clear breast with little throat contrast

This rather basic comparison was all that was needed to ascertain the presence or absence of streaks on the under parts, the color of the upper breast and the ground color to the wingbars and upper parts between the two species. In examining the skins, the paler throat of Indigo Bunting, framed by the diffuse breast streaking, is obvious and a noticeable difference from Lazuli Buntings, which show uniformly buff throats blending smoothly into the richer upper breast. This latter feature is noticeable on the Hammonasset bird and again fits Lazuli Bunting perfectly.

If one plumage feature was to be used in identifying the Hammonasset bird as either Indigo or Lazuli, then based on breast pattern the Hammonasset bird is a typical non-breeding Lazuli Bunting. The grayish-brown or sandy-buff color of the upper parts (lacking any rich tan tones to the mantle and wingbars) further strengthens the identification, and the color of the 'bib', in my opinion, is the coup de grace. Other features noticeable on the images compared to Indigo Bunting are the actual hue of blue visible on the Hammonasset bird's

tail, primary edgings and wing-coverts. To my eyes, and this might be wishful thinking, it seemed a more azure-blue, typical of spring male Lazuli, rather than the deep cobalt blue of a spring male Indigo.

Conclusion

Subsequent to the above visit, I further corresponded with Peter Pyle, who kindly examined specimens and said, "I agree with you now that the Connecticut bird is a Lazuli based on the color and the streaking to the under parts. I could not detect a difference in the extent or ground color of the wing bars and so I think the identification needs to rely primarily upon the breast features."

The Massachusetts and Pennsylvania records most likely relate to birds that arrived earlier in the winter and went undetected. The weather patterns and numbers of southwestern vagrants in the Northeast, especially in Connecticut, would seem to support this hypothesis. The record was accepted by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut at its March 18, 2007 meeting. This constitutes the first state record of Lazuli Bunting.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to the lively discussion of this bird and offered valuable insight and opinion including, Paul Lehman, Louis Bevier, Matt Heindel, Greg Hanisek, Mark Szantyr, Peter Pyle, Nick Bonomo, Dave Tripp, Fran Zygmunt and Noble Proctor. Kristoff Zyskowski kindly allowed access to specimens at the Yale-Peabody Museum, and George Franchois and Marj Rines provided information on extralimital occurrences.

ROSS' GOOSE IN CONNECTICUT

By. E.J. Raynor

At about 12:40 p.m. on 11 Dec 2006, I arrived at the sandy parking lot at Bradley Point in West Haven, where I noticed about a hundred regular gulls on the beach. After checking the gulls for Lesser Black-backed or Bonaparte's, I began scanning through the American Wigeon spread across the shore toward St. John's by-the Sea. I did not find any Eurasian Wigeon, so I began scanning offshore for bay ducks and grebes. As I set up my scope to look south over Long Island Sound, I noticed some Canada Geese in front of me. The flock was less than 60 yards away. The geese were quickly moving west and looking at me as if I scared them away from the rocks at Bradley Point.

Looking through my binoculars at the flock of nine Canada Geese, I saw a small, very white goose swimming west with them. I was shocked when I realized how small the bird was compared to the Canada Geese towering above it. I got my scope on the bird and confirmed these details on plumage, shape, size, and behavior:

The bird's plumage was bright white with a little black sticking out from the sides at the rear, which were the black primaries. I saw the odd contour-type feathers arranged in a parallel fashion at an angle along the mid to upper section of the bird's short neck. The neck did not extend upwards too much and seemed stout. The bird's head was bright white with a small, black eye. The brightness of the plumage clearly eliminated a young bird.

The bird's head was small and very rounded at the top and not flat like a Snow Goose or in between round and flat like a hybrid would be. The neck was short and thick. The body shape was similar to a floating Snow Goose but the size was comparable to a Mallard or American Black Duck.

The bird's bill was similar to a short, pinkish-red triangle

with some dark and bluish coloration at the base. The base of the bill was flat or straight and didn't show an indented crescent poking towards the front of the bill. Another key feature on this bird's bill was the lack of a "smile" or "grin-patch" where the upper and lower mandibles meet. A "smile" would be seen on a Snow Goose's bill and on a hybrid. Some Ross's Geese have a slight "smile" but this feature was not observed on the West Haven bird.

The proportion of the bird's body that was above the surface of the water was about $3/5$ or almost $4/5$. I could see the tarsus and feet of the floating bird. The front of the bird seemed more submerged than the rear. I noticed the bird's pinkish webbed feet, which were paddling away from me, but I failed to see any hind toe clipping and could not see anything that looked like a band on the viewable right leg. Observing hind-toe clipping on this swimming bird was not possible as the bird swam away toward St. John's By-the-Sea and did not come to shore.

The behavior matched a skittish bird that was perturbed by intrusion of a possible predator. The geese were looking at me and tossing their heads "up and down" together as if communicating to each other about taking flight. At a distance of approximately 100 yards, the flock lifted off the water and gained altitude as I watched through my scope. The bird's size was diminutive compared to the Canada Geese in flight. The size was comparable to a Mallard or American Black Duck rather than a mid-sized goose i.e. Snow Goose. The bird's body was entirely white except for the dark black primaries. I lost the flock of 10 geese over the trees in the St. John's By-the-Sea parking lot as it headed west-northwest.

On list serves in the northeast between 10 and 13 Dec a rash of Snow Geese observations were posted in Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. A single Ross's Goose was observed in Cape May County, N.J., on 13 Dec.



A.J. Hand photo

The 2006 Ross's Goose in Westport.

Editor's Note: On 16 Dec 2006 a single Ross's Goose was found at Burying Hill Beach in Westport by Penny Solum and Luke Tiller. It was subsequently seen by many and well-photographed through at least 29 Dec. Its presence with a small flock of Canada Geese strongly suggested it was the same bird first observed by E.J. Raynor. At its meeting in March the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut considered reports submitted by Raynor and several observers of the Westport bird, as well as a series of photographs. The records were accepted as representing a single individual.

There were no accepted Connecticut records of Ross's Goose at the time of the sightings, but ARCC had under consideration a Ross's Goose found by Nita Hamilton on 22 Sept 2003 at Caswell Cove in Milford. Photos, sketches and a report submitted to ARCC confirmed the identification, but questions of origin were unresolved. The date of the sighting was somewhat early, and most Ross's Geese found in the Northeast have been in large flocks of Snow Geese.

The presence of the West Haven/Westport bird with Canada Geese played a role in ARCC's acceptance at its March meeting of the 2003 Ross's Goose as a first state record. Other factors favoring wild origin included a marked upward trend in Ross's Goose sightings in the Northeast and research that revealed some similarly early arrival dates.

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

BIRDS. *The art of ornithology.* J. Ephick. 2005. 335 pg., 212 numbered plates. Rizzoli International Publications, New York, NY

With vanishing few exceptions, the sclera of most birds is pigmented and is usually deep brown or black. It adds strength to the eye and functions in vision to keep stray light from entering the eye. This rule includes penguins, the exception being the Emperor Penguins portrayed in "Happy Feet," the recent Disney movie. In these birds the sclera are white. And that is a big part of what causes them to appear so human like. The small band of Adelie Penguins which actually have a white eye ring appear natural; save for the Mexican accents. The fact that they talk, sing and dance is beside the point. The point being, that artists may manipulate images and, in the case of Disney, render the subjects as life-like and just enough human-like as possible but not go beyond the realm of possibility.

For wildlife painters and carvers the expectations are different. We expect the subjects to have some degree of vitality, to be in a natural appearing habitat, and to represent our psychological conceits (e.g., the majesty of raptors, or the grace of albatrosses). One subset of the genre is illustrations for field guides, which are different in degree. In addition to an accurate representation of the species, male and female, field guides must emphasize those features most important to identification, to separate closely related species, and often to include geographic variation. One need only compare the classic early Peterson images with current artists such as David Sibley, Lars Jonsson, the group effort for the National Geographic, or the 3000+ color illustrations prepared by Heinzl for the "Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East", to get some idea of the range and scope incorporated into this relatively specialized world.

All of these artists and many others also paint studio portraits of birds. These are done with a different eye and a dif-

ferent feeling. In North America some of the earliest artists to paint birds with plants were Mark Catesby and JJ Audubon. While the field guides we all know and love are a relatively recent invention, usually attributed to Peterson in the mid 1930s, wildlife illustration for a variety of purposes goes back much further. Excluding Neolithic cave paintings, certainly by the end of the 18th and into the early 19th C paintings were made to document collects, for publication, as well as for collectors. Ephick's volume begins with the works of artists in the mid-1500s. The main text is essentially a time-line labeled "Engravers and Explorers (1650-1800)", "Audubon to the First Lithographers (1800-1850)", "The Golden Age of Lithographers (1850-1890)" and "An Age of Transition (1890-Today)". The majority of the artists included are western. The images are a treasure and deserve close inspection. Myriad techniques are represented and the occasional painted plate will also contain both botanic background and a related anatomical sketch. Because of the time when the painting was executed, birds now extinct are included (e.g., Dodo, White Gallinule). My favorite image is the wood engraving of a Tawny Owl by Thomas Bewick (think Bewick's Wren). The Calkin portrait of JJ Audubon is included.

Ephick's text is not to be overlooked. It is informative, includes material on both the subject presented and the artist. I'm always impressed with the body of work by Sidney Parkinson, who sailed with James Cook. The paintings here are all dated 1867, although it is unlikely they were all painted then. Parkinson was brought aboard Endeavour by Joseph Banks, the botanist (and eventually President of the Royal Society) to document the findings. The images are from SE Asia, Australia, and Africa. Unfortunately, Parkinson died before Cook brought his ship to Cape Town and never returned to England. But he was a force in bird art of the time.

Books on bird art not primarily for identification or documentation are not rare. Several have appeared in recent years that can be enjoyed casually by the birder and others that are representative of a particular artist. Robert Bateman enjoys great commercial success with his classic representations of both birds and mammals, particularly raptors and

trophy mammals. This is only one approach and below is a selection of recent examples of what is referred to broadly as wildlife art. Most of these artists worked out-of-doors. They all captured some of the subject's jizz and particular bits of behavior. The subjects are instantly recognizable.

George Lodge, artist-naturalist. 1986 J. Savory, Ed, 118 pg., 73 plates, Tanager Press, Dover, NH. A collection of original, very British in tone, early 20thC works. In addition to studio work Lodge also illustrated many books.

C.F. Tunnicliffe. *A Sketchbook of Birds*. 1979. Introduction by I Niall. 123 pgs. Holt, Rinehart, Winston. New York, NY A fine example of the artists' notebooks (1934-1962). No text with the plates except for the artists' notes and sketches. Valuable insights into how an artist works.

A Celebration of Birds. The life and art of Louis Agassiz Fuertes. 1982. R. McC. Peck. xiii+178 pg., plates and photographs. Published for the Academy of Natural Sciences by Walker & Co., NY. Fuertes was one of the premier bird illustrators of the 20th C. His work is instantly recognizable and was frequently done from fresh specimen.

Francis Lee Jaques, artist-naturalist. 1982 D. T Luce & LM Andrews. ix+76 pg. University of Minnesota Press. Like many volumes of this type, this is an exhibition catalogue. Jaques illustrated an astonishing number of books and this brings together samples of this work, many with spectacular skylscapes, in a biographical framework.

Roger Tory Peterson. *At the Smithsonian*. 1984 RM Zusi. 72 pg. For the Smithsonian by Mill Pond Press, Venice, FL. An exhibition catalogue of extreme value as it includes samples of just about everything painted by RTP including early notebooks. Remarkably comprehensive.

Modern Wildlife Painting 1998. N Hammond. 240 pg. Yale University Press. The author's insightful comments, comprehensive coverage, and superior color reproductions make this volume invaluable. Thumbnail biographies of the artists are included.

Unless it is being in the field birding, I cannot think of a more rewarding pastime than studying books of this type; and these are only a sample. Eye candy can expand your understanding of plumage, postures, and habitat. It's especially pleasant on a foul, chilly, evening when being outside seeing birds is not a serious option.

NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Ruby-throated Hummingbird mega flight

An amazing passage of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds occurred on 4 Sept 2006 at Lighthouse Point in New Haven. Aided by Bill Banks during my regular hawk watch duty, we tallied 450. I'm not aware of other places where fly-by hummingbirds are regularly counted in fall migration, but at Lighthouse we normally get c. 20 on good days (late August to early September) and c. 40 on top-notch days. The second best day in fall 2006 was 44 on 10 Sept. (Steve Mayo). Sept. 4 was off the charts. The two of us turned over the light hawk flight to several other people and did nothing but count hummingbirds, with the hawk watchers contributing some as well. Of course hummers don't exhibit flocking behavior. This was just an incredibly heavy run of individuals shooting by in fast, directional flight. I've given this some thought, and in 45+ years of birding I can't think of another event I've witnessed that was so far in excess of numerical expectations.

Given the size and speed of the species involved, we were certainly likely to detect a lower percentage of passage birds than would be the case with raptors. There is probably no way to quantify the actual numbers moving through the park.

Sept. 4 is early but not out of the question for vagrant hummingbirds, but the chances of finding and identify one in fast passage are minimal. If any species other than Ruby-throated Hummingbird moved through in this flight, it's probably safe to assume the numbers were statistically insignificant.

Greg Hanisek

Great Horned Owl takes occupied Red-tailed Hawk nest

17 Feb. 2007: On a cold February morning I observed a pair of Red-tailed Hawks carrying small sticks over a frozen cattail

marsh to a distant nest. With spring around the corner, nest maintenance had begun and courtship was in full swing. The nest is situated in a stand of tall trees between Station 43 and Vibert Road in the South Windsor meadows. At this time of year it can be easily viewed with a scope or binoculars.

23 Feb. 2007: A few days later I was driving along a snow-covered Vibert Road when my eye caught an unusual amount of activity at the nest. A Great Horned Owl was spotted inside the nest with two agitated Red-tailed Hawks perched close by. It appeared the owl had no intention of leaving its new-found home. With a major problem staring them in the eyes, the Red-tails tried to force the owl from the nest.

The first attempt to evict the owl was a surprisingly brash head-on tackle that landed one of the hawks in the nest with the Great Horned. Then the talons came out flying, as did a number of feathers. After a minute or so of tussling and aggressive threats, the Great Horned easily forced the hawk out of the nest.

The second attempt was made shortly thereafter by the other Red-tail. This time the hawk quickly circled the owl and tried to hit it from behind. The hawk misjudged the owl's quickness and ended up with a pair of talons to its chest. Then the Great Horned went on the offensive and promptly repelled the hawk with flurry of attacks. Over and out went the second hawk.

A passing flock of crows flew in close enough to find out what all the commotion was about. After a few moments they left as quickly as they had arrived.

The third and final attempt to win back the nest seemed to be a choreographed double-team effort. Both hawks flew in toward the owl at the same time. The owl keyed in on one of the Red-tails and chased the hawk into the shrubs at the base of the tree. The hawk emerged from the shrubs disheveled and apparently tired. For the next few minutes I tried to relocate the owl, but I was unsuccessful. I feared that it could

have been injured during the altercation or at best exhausted and resting on the ground.

Since Great Horned Owls do not build their own nests, they frequently use one built the previous year by Red-tailed Hawks. In this case an owl took over a nest that was already occupied. Great Horned Owls are very aggressive predators and even more aggressive toward intruders that threaten nest and young. Great Horned Owls have been known to prey on Red-tailed Hawks as well as other large birds such as Great Blue Herons.

1 March 2007: I was back in the meadows along Vibert Road when I spotted a Red-tail heading south over the farm fields to some nearby woodlands. I followed it until it landed in a nest that had another Red-tail patiently waiting. The hawks had simply moved next door to another nest and were doing fine. I suddenly remembered the Great Horned Owl and focused my scope in that direction. To my delight, I spotted a pair of ear tufts and a beautiful Great Horned Owl sitting in a hard-earned nest. For now there was peace and tranquility in the South Windsor meadows.

Paul Cianfagione

A shorebird fallout

Lesser Yellowlegs and Stilt Sandpipers largely over-fly the state in fall. We get small numbers of the former and just a very few of the latter. Heavy rain on 27-28 Aug. 2006 precipitated a major fallout of both species on 28 Aug. At Sikorsky Airport in Stratford, pools on runways attracted 350 Lesser Yellowlegs and 30 Stilt Sandpipers along with smaller numbers of more regular species. Airport personnel eventually came out in vehicles in an effort to flush the birds. Nearby, pools on lawns at Seaside Park in Bridgeport held 200 Lesser Yellowlegs and eight Stilt Sandpipers. A managed shorebird scrape at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in the Lordship section of Stratford held 18 Stilt Sandpipers. The only similar count on record for Stilt Sandpiper is 38 in Stratford on 26 Aug 1979 (*American Birds* 34:140). Note the remarkably similar date of occurrence.

Greg Hanisek, Nick Bonomo

CONNECTICUT'S 2006 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

By Neil Currie

Birding has become so popular that each year's calendar is filled with dates for bird counts: the Christmas Count, the June Count, feeder counts, backyard bird counts, and various surveys. Becoming more popular are hawk counts, spring and fall. Many years ago some of the best known-hawk watch sites were at Cape May and Montclair Quarry in New Jersey, Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania, Mount Tom in Massachusetts, and Duluth, Minnesota. There are even reports in the late 1800s from New Haven of large flights of hawks in that region.

Just over 30 years ago, hawk watchers in Connecticut, becoming aware that large numbers of hawks were passing through the state, organized the New England Hawk Watch (NEHW). Later this same group helped form the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA). These organizations have promoted hawk watching. Today, as a result, watch sites are located over much of North America, and even in Mexico and Central America. New sites formed as birders discovered they might not see just a single hawk or two (as during the rest of the year) but large numbers, even hundreds, in a day.

Birders came to lookouts to see a variety and large numbers of hawks or in hopes of seeing a rarity. Somehow, counting the hawks became part of the excitement at the watch. Today each lookout has an official counter for the day. Since the formation of HMANA, thousands of daily report sheets have been funneled into boxes stored at Hawk Mountain. Now current counts are reported daily into a HMANA Web site – www.hawkcount.org – and are instantly available to anyone who wants to see them.

Three years ago HMANA, along with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Hawk Watch International, initiated a Raptor Pop-

ulation Index project with the purpose of monitoring species population changes and to make this information available to other conservation organizations. As part of the RPI project, past data is also being entered into the hawk count Web site. One requirement is that there must be, in the case of past data, at least ten continuous years of reports. In Connecticut we have already entered such counts from 13 of our sites. Over the years observers have learned much of what to expect of the fall migration: the sites, the weather patterns, the numbers, possible flight pathways, the best days for migration (weather), and the best months to see certain hawks. Expectations even include the idea that something unexpected and exciting will occur. While we watch for hawks, other migrating birds pass the lookouts adding excitement and surprises. For instance, a November flight of Cave Swallows is now a regular feature of the Lighthouse Point hawk watch. The tables supporting this report as usual give the big picture. To view all five of them, visit the COA Web site, ctbirding.org.

Table One, also printed here, includes all sites and all hawks recorded. On the Web site, Table Two is the picture of the Broadwing flight through Connecticut, with a comparison of totals from three previous years. Tables Three and Four give monthly totals from Lighthouse Point and Quaker Ridge. Table Five lists statewide species counts from the past ten years or longer.

The year 2006 was the year of the eagle. A record 330 Bald Eagles were spotted in migration, with 125 at Lighthouse and 100 at Quaker. All but two of the 15 reporting lookouts recorded Bald Eagles, with 18 at Flirt Hill in Easton. Golden Eagles came in record numbers, 46 across the state, a remarkable 24 at Quaker, and 10 at Lighthouse. Five other sites reported Golden Eagles. Both Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures passed in record numbers, and Osprey and Northern Harrier numbers were greater than in the past few years (Table 5). Cooper's Hawk maintained a two-year high, but American Kestrel numbers continued to decline at Light-

house Point as they did at many other lookouts. Peregrine Falcons continued their remarkable recovery. Numbers of Broad-winged Hawks continued to rebound from the meager 4881 total in 2003. That more than unusually low count has never been explained.

The following birders took part in 2006 as identifiers and counters:

Lois Aldi, Renee Baade, David Babington, Bill Banks, Peter and Linda Barnes, Dan Barvir, Trudy Battaly, Mike Beath, Steve Beal, Ray Belding, Ron Bell, Gail Benson, Brian Bielfelt, Debbie Bishop, Tom Bravo, Polly Brody, Tom Burke, Dana Campbell, Al Collins, Mike Culhane and Neil Currie
 Peter Davenport, Ayreslea Denny, Paul Desjardins, Angela Dimmitt, Randy Domina, Jim Dugan, Cynthis Ehlinger, Dick English, Larry Fischer, Steve Foisey, Frank Guida, Tim Guida, Tony Hager, Greg Hanisek, Jane Hankey, Art Hankey, Liam Hegarty, Orlando Hidalgo, Julian Hough and Lynn James. Mike Janovey, Elsbeth Johnson, Marge Josephson, Anne Kehmna, Bob LaTulipe, Jane Low, Lisa Lozier, Ryan MacLean, Jerry Marcellina, Hugh Martin, Shawn Martin, Stefan Martin, Steve Mayo, Robin McAllister, Ken Merrifield, Ken Mimor, Ken Mirman, Marty Moore, Judy Moore and Vicky Nigro, Briam O'Toole, Drew Panko, Janet Petricone, Matt Popp, Mike Ruse, Tom Renner, Gail Roberts, David Salmon, Fred Schroeder, Donna Rose Smith, Dori Sosensky, Judith Stevens, Carol Titus, Tony Tortora, Bill Wallace, Mike Warner, Steve Walter, Winston Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, John Wojtanowski, Terry Wojtanowski, Joe Zeranski, Jim and Carol Zipp, Chris Zimmerman, Fran and Liz Zygmont.

A complete set of charts from the autumn 2006 hawk counts can be viewed at the COA Web site, www.ctbirding.org

Table 1: All Connecticutr Sites - Fall 2006

	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	2006 Total	2005 Total	2004 Total
Booth Hill	16			9	11	3	16	2	2		199					6				248	1108	417
Botsford Hill	89			86	11	7	190	14			2132				1	46	2	1	17	2507	960	1567
Briggs Hill	6	2			1	2	3				21						2			31	323	97
Chestnut Hill	62			25	10	4	60	10			1147					17	2		23	1298	1922	1606
East Shore Park	46	2	242	66	8	14	1018	119	1	3	153		107		2	40	6	12	78	1871	680	1690
Flat Hill	40	3		25	7	3	72	4			832					15	1		24	986	742	
Flirt Hill	128		28	27	18	44	130	43		15	750		76		2	320	16	4		1473	609	644
Huntington S.P.	16			2		1	7	5			26					2	2			45	472	
Johnnycake Mount	26			25	13	8	68	1			537			1	1	38	10	2		704	6627	934
Lighthouse Point	641		486	1509	125	617	6801	1103	12	120	1564		484	1	10	1128	310	95	254	14619	13845	16500
Middle School	118	6		56	5	2	84	17	1	6	1308		4			39	7	2	32	1569	4157	2059
Peak Mountain	349	2	145	105	12	51	268	43	5	31	284		222	1	6	73	37	16	34	1335	5421	150
Quaker Ridge	593	48	804	817	100	264	3434	491	6	239	10464		407	1	24	719	89	30	180	18117	14591	13187
Taine Mountain	14		3	10			5	1			53		1							73	3161	258
Waveny Park	69			107	9	7	212	7	1	4	2011		4			70	5	5	28	2470	609	1159
Totals	2213	64	1708	2869	330	1027	12368	1860	28	418	21481		1305	4	46	2513	489	167	670	47346	55227	40268

	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
Lighthouse Point	641	1	486	1509	125	617	6801	1103	12	120	1564		484	1	10	1128	310	95	254	14619
Quaker Ridge	593	48	804	817	100	264	3434	491	6	239	10464		407	1	24	719	89	30	180	18117
Total - All Others	979	15	418	543	105	146	2133	266	10	59	9453		414	2	12	666	90	42	236	14610
Totals	2213	64	1708	2869	330	1027	12368	1860	28	418	21481		1305	4	46	2513	489	167	670	47346

Booth Hill	West Hartland	Johnnycake Mt.	Burlington
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	Lighthouse Point	New Haven
Briggs Hill	Sherman	Middle School	Torrington
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	Peak Mountain	East Granby
East Shore Park	New haven	Quaker Ridge	Greenwich
Fiat Hill	Southbury	Taine Mountain	Burlington
Flirt Hill	Easton	Waveny park	New Canaan
Huntington S.P.	Redding		

BV	Black Vulture	CH	Cooper's Hawk	RL	Rough-legged
TV	Turkey Vulture	NG	Northern Goshawk	GE	Golden eagle
OS	Osprey	RS	Red-shouldered	AK	American Kestrel
BE	Bald Eagle	BW	Broad-winged	ML	Merlin
NH	Northern Harrier	SW	Swainson's	PG	Peregrine
SS	Sharp-shinned	RT	Red-tailed	UR	unidentified

AUTUMN 2006 FIELD NOTES

By Greg Hanisek

Autumn in Connecticut is so long and productive, and so many birders are now enjoying its bounties, that the season defies easy summarizing. It's best to just dig into the reports. They're filled with all kinds of interesting things.

This season's bundle of **Greater White-fronted Geese** includes one a bit early on Sept. 22 at Farmington Meadows (BT); one Oct. 30 and beyond in Newtown (ER et al.); one at Howard Reservoir, Manchester, on Oct. 30, with two there Nov. 23 (TAn); two at Bolton Lake on Nov. 24 (TAn); and one at a pond in Farmington the same day (PCi). The best overhead flocks of Snow Geese were 150 on Oct. 26 at Quaker Ridge hawk watch in Greenwich (BBi), 100 on Oct. 22 in Woodbury (RN) and 100 on Nov. 2 over South Norwalk (NB). There were four **Cackling Goose** reports: one Oct. 7-15 and another Oct. 28-Nov. 30 at Southbury Training School (RN), one Nov. 24-30 in Newtown (ER, JCa et al.) and one from Nov. 30 deep into winter at Branford Supply Ponds (NP, CLe et al.). A **Barnacle Goose** arrived on Oct. 30 in Newtown, where one was present

a year earlier, and remained through the season (ER, LF et al.); another was seen on Nov. 18 in Fairfield (CLv). The season's only **Tundra Swan** made a brief stop Nov. 3 at West Beach in Stamford (MMc).

Greenwich Point hosted a Eurasian Wigeon on Nov. 6 (JWe). At the start of Blue-winged Teal migration, Watch Rock in Old Lyme held nine on Aug. 9 (HG). A Common Eider was at Enders Island, Mystic, on Nov. 27 (FN). Mid-October to mid-November produced the usual flurry of sea ducks on lakes and ponds, with widespread reports totaling 14 White-winged Scoters, 25 Black Scoters and 18 Long-tailed Ducks. A Common Goldeneye, one of the least-encountered of the summering non-breeders, was at Compo Beach, Westport, on Aug. 9 (ACo). Good Ruddy Duck numbers included 290 on Oct. 31 at Bristol Reser-



Paul Fusco Photo

An American White Pelican at Hammonasset on Nov. 10.

voir No. 7, Harwinton (PCa) and 300 on Nov. 15 at South Cove, Old Saybrook (SKo).

With Ruffed Grouse increasingly difficult to find, three in West Hartland on Sept. 29 was a good count (PCa et al.). An unusually high 14 inland reports of Red-throated Loon included an unprecedented six on Batterson Pond, Farmington, on Nov. 16 (PCi). A breeding-plumaged Common Loon Aug. 9 on the Farmington River in Collinsville was unexpected and possibly injured (JK et al.). Two Red-necked Grebes on Oct. 22 at Barn Island, Stonington,

(ADa, JR et al.) were the first of 12 reported for the season. The high was five on Nov. 6 at Bantam Lake, Litchfield (DR). Four **American White Pelicans** flew by Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) on Nov. 2 (MSh), and one flew by on Nov. 10 (PF). An immature Great Cormorant was early Sept. 3 at Short Beach, Stratford (FMa). An **Anhinga** was reported over Quaker Ridge in Greenwich by four observers on Sept. 6 (BBi et al.); another was reported over Lighthouse Point, New Haven, on Oct. 10 by a single observer (BBa).

The first of 10 American Bittern reports was from Milford Point on Sept. 13 (FMa); one was a fly-by at Johnnycake Mountain in Burlington on Sept. 17 (PCa). Least Bitterns are seldom seen away from the state's few known breeding locations, so a migrant Aug. 27 at Sandy Point in West Haven was a nice find (NB). So was a late one Oct. 12 at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford (CEI). The best count of Little Blue Herons was seven, including one adult, on Aug. 12 at Watch Rock in Old Lyme (GN). A Cattle Egret was at McKinney on Aug. 24 (FMa); one flew by Lighthouse Point on Nov. 6 (GH); and one was at

Griswold Point, Old Lyme, on Nov. 18 (MO). A juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron was far inland Aug. 7 at Nod Brook WMA in Avon (PCi); another was at Fisher Meadow, Avon, on Oct. 9 (PCi). A concentration of 18 immature Yellow-crowned Night Herons on Oct. 2 at Milford Point included 12 that were seen to fly south across Long Island Sound in the early evening (FMa).

The best of the burgeoning Black Vulture numbers were 16 in North Canaan on Nov. 2 (JMe); 41 at a deer carcass in New Milford on Nov. 15 (ADi); and 22 soaring over downtown Watertown on Nov. 30 (KF). A late Osprey was in Wilton on Nov. 26



Julian Hough Photo
One of two Marbled Godwits that frequented Sandy Point, West Haven.

(LT). It was an extraordinary season for Golden Eagles. Away from the main hawk watches 11 were reported. The hawk watches produced record seasonal counts of 24 at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich and 10 at Lighthouse Point. Quaker Ridge had a state record daily high of six on Nov. 4 (BO). (See a full report on the 2006 hawk migration elsewhere in this issue and at ctbirding.org). An unusual concentration of 16 American Kestrels were sitting on poles at a tobacco field in East Windsor on Sept. 15 (CEK). Lord's Cove in Old Lyme held a Common Moorhen Aug. 11 (HG), and another was at McKinney Refuge on Nov. 4 (KE). Two **Sandhill Cranes** were in Norfolk on Sept. 14-16 (SC, ACh), and one visited a cornfield at Bafflin Sanctuary in Pomfret on Oct. 24 (ARz).

A total of about 25 American Golden Plover reports spanned Aug. 9 to Oct. 31. Two Semipalmated Plovers were late Nov. 4-7 at Greenwich Point (MSa). The tail end of the Solitary Sandpiper migration produced two at Old Greenwich Oct. 10 (MSa) and two at Pinewood Lake, Trumbull, on Oct. 11 (JMe).

Three Lesser Yellowlegs were late Nov. 4 at Stratford marina (GH). A migrant Upland Sandpiper stopped in a newly mowed field in Morris on Aug. 31 (JHa). Reports of 11 Whimbrels spanned Aug. 1 through Oct. 4, with highs of three on Aug. 29 at Sandy Point (LT) and four Sept. 2 at Long Beach, Stratford (FMA). Single Hudsonian Godwits were at Milford Point on Aug. 31 (LR), Long Beach in Stratford on Oct. 11 (JMe), again at Milford Point as a fly-by on Oct. 30 (DV) and inland on Nov. 2 at Heritage Village Golf Course in Southbury (CW). A Marbled Godwit was at Sandy Point Aug. 26 to Sept. 4 (DV et al.), with two present from Sept. 5 to Nov. 4, often trading between Sandy Point and Long Wharf in New Haven (GW et al.). One was at McKinney Refuge on Aug. 30 (JMe).

Sandy Point held a high of 12 Red Knot on Aug. 19 (JMh). Semipalmated Sandpiper numbers peaked at c. 4,000 on Aug. 3 at Milford Point (NB). There were eight reports of Western Sandpiper and 24 of White-rumped Sandpiper, all coastal. The first of nine Baird's Sandpipers for the season was at San-

dy Point on Aug. 16 (GN), with a high of three on Aug. 20 at Rocky Hill Meadows (JMe, JK); one was rather late Oct. 12 at Sandy Point (JHo). A good Pectoral Sandpiper flight generated reports of 55 individuals, including nine on Sept. 14 at Great Pond in Simsbury (PCi). Single Stilt Sandpipers were seen Aug. 1 at HBSP (MA) and Aug. 24 at Greenwich Point (MSa), but a storm system on Aug. 28 produced a major fallout of this species and Lesser Yellowlegs. (See a detailed account in Notes on Behavior, Status and Distribution elsewhere in this issue). The first of 15 Buff-breasted Sandpipers was at Sandy Point Aug. 17 (JHo), with a high of four at Rocky Hill Meadows on Sept. 7 (JHo). Two Short-billed Dowitchers of the *hendersoni* race were at Stratford marina on Aug. 2 (NB). An adult Long-billed Dowitcher was at Sandy Point on Aug. 27 (NB).

Single **Parasitic Jaegers**, one described as a dark morph, were seen at separate locations off Stratford on Sept. 3 (NB, FMa, CB). A Laughing Gull was a rare inland find Sept. 13 at Batterson Pond in Farmington

(PCi), as was another Oct. 28 at Lake Winnemaug in Watertown (GH). The first Bonaparte's Gull appeared Aug. 3 at Silver Sands State Park in Milford (JBa). A worn adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Short Beach, Stratford, on Aug. 29 (FMa). The reliable Burying Hill Beach bird in Westport was first reported Sept. 7 (ER), and another adult was at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 on Sept. 12 (PCi). One of the best birds of the season was an adult **Gull-billed Tern** that flew by Compo Beach in Westport on Aug. 25 (FM). An adult Royal Tern was at Milford Point on Aug. 7 (FG et al.), followed by an adult Caspian Tern there Aug. 11 (JMh, FG). Two Royals were at Sandy Point on Aug. 26 (DV), with two (the same?) at Griswold Point in Old Lyme the same day (TH). Another Caspian was at Sandy Point on Sept. 6 (PF). A group of at least 25 Forster's Terns was on the Connecticut River in Old Lyme on Aug. 11 (HG). A juvenile **Sooty Tern** was reported flying west off Shippan Point, Stamford, on Sept. 2 (PDu, JMh), the most noteworthy product of Tropi-

cal Storm Ernesto. Another dark tern, possibly this species, was seen off Stratford Point the next day (NB). An excellent gathering of six Black Terns was at Sandy Point on Aug. 15 (NB). One was inland Aug. 30 at Long Meadow Pond in Middlebury (GH).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were on the late side Oct. 5 at Lighthouse Point (RDo) and Oct. 7 at both Station 43 (CEk) and Milford Point (CWe). A Black-billed Cuckoo was even later Oct. 20 in Greenwich (BO). A Great Horned Owl was rescued from a soccer net Oct. 21 at Allen's Meadow in Wilton (FMa, JBe et al.). A Whip-poor-will was still singing on Sept. 13 in Somers (JSt). It was another good season for Common Nighthawk. The main flight was Aug. 15 to Sept. 7. We received many reports of double-digit counts and 11 reports of triple-digit counts. The highest were 725 on Aug. 30 in Hamden (JZ); 515 on Aug. 22 at East Granby (JWo); and 441 on Sept. 6 at East Granby (JWo). About 700 Chimney Swifts passed Lighthouse Point on Sept. 5 (BBa).

Perhaps the most extraor-

dinary avian event of the season was a flight of at least 450 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (obviously many were missed) on Sept. 4 at Lighthouse Point, New Haven (GH, BBa). (For a more detailed account see Notes on Behavior, Status and Distribution elsewhere in this issue). The **Rufous Hummingbirds** just keep coming. On Nov. 19 Mark Szantyr banded three at feeders - an adult female in Niantic, an immature male in Milford and an immature male in Stamford (PDU et al.). On Nov. 24 he banded an adult female in Somers that stayed deep into winter. On Dec. 2 he banded an adult female in New Fairfield that had been present since late November. Another *Selasphorus* visited a feeder in Colchester but left before the Nov. 19 banding flurry. In addition an unidentified hummingbird flew by at Lighthouse Point on Nov. 10 (DCa).

There were about 20 Red-headed Woodpeckers reported for the season. Fourteen Olive-sided Flycatchers were reported through Sept. 26. Reports of seven Yellow-bellied Flycatchers started with one on Aug. 22 at Lighthouse

Point (NB). A Great Crested Flycatcher was on the late side Sept. 30 at Lighthouse Point (BBa). A **Western Kingbird** arrived Nov. 19 in East Haven and remained through the period (JHo). An excellent flight of 195 Eastern Kingbirds passed Lighthouse Point in New Haven on Aug. 22, followed by 46 the next day (BBa). A Northern Shrike was at the front end of the species' arrival period on Oct. 31 at Simsbury Meadows (LK). Others appeared Nov. 5 through period's end at Station 43 (RM et al.), Nov. 14-15 in Southbury (NC), Nov. 19 in New Hartford (FZ) and Nov. 27 in Waterford (FN). A **Loggerhead**

Shrike, now a great rarity, made a brief visit to Cove Island Park, Stamford, on Nov. 1 (PDu). A White-eyed Vireo was a good northern tier migrant Sept. 5 in Nepaug State Forest in New Hartford (PCa). A Blue-headed Vireo at East Shore Park, New Haven, on Nov. 20 lingered into winter (FMa).

Of special interest was a dark **martin sp.** seen briefly as a fly-by Nov. 6 in Westport. The late date raises the possibility of a vagrant rather than a Purple Martin (FMa). This year **Cave Swallows** trickled through over more than a month, rather than putting on a big push over a couple days. One on



Tom Sayers Photo

This Western Kingbird lingered at a landfill in East Haven.



Julian Hough Photo

This Northern Wheatear visited Milford Point Sept. 27-29.

Oct. 23 at Lighthouse Point was the state's earliest ever (GH). Others included three on Oct. 31 at LHP (BBa); one on Nov. 3 at Greenwich Point (JWe); one on Nov. 3 at LHP (JHo); two on Nov. 7 at Greenwich Point (MSa); one on Nov. 10 at HBSP (JCo); one on Nov. 14 at LHP (BBa); two on Nov. 17 at LHP (DCa); one on Nov. 21 at LHP (DS); three on Nov. 22 at LHP (RBe); one on Nov. 24 at Greenwich Point (MSa); and one on Nov. 27 at LHP (GH). The only **Sedge Wren** report was from Fairchild Garden, Greenwich, on Sept. 26 (BO). A **Marsh Wren** was a local rarity Nov. 3 at Simsbury Meadows (JK, JMe). A record-late **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was at Walnut Beach, Milford, on Nov. 30 (NB).

A seasonal highlight was two **Northern Wheatears**, part of widespread movement in the Northeast, from Sept. 18-23 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (RT et al.), followed by one at Milford Point Sept. 27-29 (FG et al.). We received 12 reports of **Gray-cheeked (sp.) Thrush**, which is good by recent standards. One died in a window strike Sept. 25 at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton (JK). The latest was Oct. 8 at Milford Point (LT et al.). One **Bicknell's Thrush** made things easy when it flew inside the Roaring Brook Nature Center building on Sept. 1. It was captured and released (JK). Another was banded Sept. 26 at Birdcraft Museum in Fairfield (WH). It

was an unusually good year for Swainson's Thrush, with about 40 reports, all birds on the ground. We received no reports of nocturnal monitoring of flight calls, which sometimes yields much higher results. The biggest flock of American Pipits reported was 150 on Oct. 7 at Rocky Hill Meadows (PCi). The seasonally unpredictable Cedar Waxwings produced a surprisingly early flight of c. 1,000 on Aug. 30 at Lighthouse Point (BBa). The 3,700 there on Oct. 31 was more seasonally typical (BBa).

The first of seven Orange-crowned Warbler reports was an inland bird on Sept. 30 at Johnnycake Mountain, Burlington (PCa). The latest of three November Nashville Warblers was in a Stratford yard on Nov. 23 (SKr). A Northern Parula was late Oct. 29 in Canton (JK), followed by one Nov. 3 in Groton (FN). A Black-throated Blue Warbler was late Nov. 4 in Waterbury (GH). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** visited a yard in Old Lyme from Oct. 14 to Nov. 20 (DJ). A very early Palm Warbler was at Milford Point on Aug. 19 (JMe). Late Blackpoll Warblers were at

Greenwich Point on Nov. 5 (MSa, BO) and Long Beach, Stratford, Nov. 10 (CB). An adult male Cerulean Warbler was unexpected on Sept. 10 at Greenwich Point (JBe et al.). A late Ovenbird was a window casualty Nov. 19 in Ashford (SMo). The first of six Mourning Warbler reports were singles on Sept. 11 at Greenwich Point (BO) and West Hartford (PCi). The first of ten reports of Connecticut Warbler were singles Sept. 5 at Bent of the River in Southbury (PCo) and in Southington (JA). Yellow-breasted Chats were at Lighthouse Point on Sept. 10 (NB, ER), Milford Point on Sept. 13 and 19 (CWe, SH), Greenwich Point Sept. 25 and Oct. 5 (MSa, JWe), Milford Point on Oct. 7 (CWe) and in Middletown on Oct. 14 (DCi).

Warbler migration highlights were: eight species at Lighthouse Point Aug. 17 (NB); 400 of 16 species Sept. 5 at Bluff Point and 15 species that day at Lighthouse (NB); 600 of 12 species Sept. 10 at Bluff (GW); 450 of 10 species on Sept. 17 at Bluff (GW); 500 of 16 species Sept. 21 at Bluff (GN); 400 of 15 species Sept. 26 at Bluff (JCo) and 16 spe-

cies at Greenwich Point that day (MSa).

The first of six **Clay-colored Sparrows** was at Allen's Meadow, Wilton, on Sept. 21 (NB). Others were at HBSP Sept. 28 (GN), at Silver Sands in Milford on Sept. 25 (NB); at McKinney Refuge on Oct. 1 (NB); in Harwinton on Oct. 19 (PCa) and at HBSP Nov. 4-11 (JCo et al.). Starting on Sept. 26, Vesper Sparrow generated reports of 22 individuals. A **Lark Sparrow** was a good find Sept. 9-10 at Sandy Point (TAM, MA). Savannah Sparrow can be an abundant fall migrant as suggested by more than 200 in one large field in Orange on Oct. 17 (NB). A Grasshopper Sparrow was at Greenwich Audubon Center on Oct. 2 (BO et al.), and one appeared Nov. 3-6 at Greenwich Point, where one wintered a year earlier (MSa, JWe). The first report of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was from Milford Point on Oct. 7 (CW); 15, all judged to be *subvirgatus*, were reported from Long Beach, Stratford, on Oct. 10 (CB). The season's first Fox Sparrow was at White Memorial on Oct. 18 (TZ). Birders are getting pretty good at finding Lincoln's Sparrows,

with about 50 reported starting on Sept. 5. This species typically starts to show up ahead of most of our migrant sparrows. A good tally of 70 Swamp Sparrows was made during the COA Sparrow Workshop Oct. 22 at Silver Sands (FMa). The season's first White-crowned Sparrow was at Allen's Meadow on Sept. 22 (LT).

A good fall for **Blue Grosbeaks** generated reports of two at Allen's Meadow on Sept. 21-24 (NB, LT et al.); at least two at Rocky Hill Meadows on Sept. 23 (ACu, MSa), one at Silver Sands on Sept. 25 (NB), and one in Norwalk on Oct. 2 (FMa). Reports of c. 30 Dickcissels, mostly flyovers at coastal watch points, began with one on Sept. 4 at Lighthouse Point (GH), the best place for this species. There were four there on Sept. 11 (NB et al.) and five on Sept. 22 (DCa et al.). A series of days producing 500 to 800 Bobolinks at Lighthouse Point peaked with at least 1,000 on Sept. 7 (MMo, BBa). A flock of 13 Eastern Meadowlarks was at Griswold Point on Nov. 27 (HG). The first Rusty Blackbirds, a flock of 12, were at White Memorial in Litchfield

on Sept. 28 (DR). The big icterid flights of early November produced a count of c. 40,000 Common Grackles Nov. 4 at Quaker Ridge (BO). A mixed passage of c. 90,000 was noted Nov. 10 at Lighthouse Point (DCa). A high of 29 **Boat-tailed Grackles** was noted Oct. 22 at McKinney Refuge (FMA). Of three November Baltimore Orioles, the latest was Nov. 21 at Lighthouse Point (BBa et al.).

Observers - Tony Amato (TAm), Jayne Amico, Tim Antanaitis (TAn), Mark Aronson, Renee Baade (RBa), Jim Bair (JBa), Steve Ballentine, Bill Banks (BBa), Charles Barnard, Joe Bear (JBe), Ron Bell (RBe), Brian Bielfelt (BBi), Nick Bonomo, Dana Campbell (DCa), Jay Carlisle (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Alan Chidester (ACH), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Dan Cimbaro (DCi), Steve Civco, John Clancy (JCl), Linda Clancy, Alex Coffey (ACo), Jan Collins (JCn), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connelly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe (ACu), Neil Currie, Fran D'Amico, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine, Mardi Dickinson, Townsend Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Mike Doyle, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth (CEK), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), John Eykelhoff, Kevin Finnan, Larry Fischer, Jim

Ford, Sam Fried, Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Shari Gaurino, Val Gaurino, Hank Golet, Lorraine Gunderson, William Haffey, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks, James Harmon (JHa), Roy Harvey, Ted Hendrickson, Julian Hough (JHo), Jalna Jaeger, Diana Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Scott Kruitbosch (SKr), Dave Lawton, Carol Lemmon (CLe), Gary Lemmon, Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Chris Lovell (CLv), Alan Lurie, Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik (FMA), John Marshall (JMr), John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo (SMo), Florence McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Mike Moccio (MMc), Judy Moore (JMr), Marty Moore (MMo), Steve Morytko (SMo), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, Fred Norton, Mike O'Leary, Brian O'Toole, Noble Proctor, E.J. Raynor, James Restivo, Arne Rosengren (ARo), Dave Rosgen, Libby Ross, Andy Rzezniakiewicz (ARz), Meredith Sampson (MSa), Tom Sayers, Mike Shafnaker (MSh), Arthur Shippee, Susanne Shrader (SSH), Penny Solum (PSo), Dori Sosensky, Charla Spector, Steve Spector (SSp), Peary Stafford (PSt), Jerry Stage (JSt), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Rollin Tebbets, Luke Tiller, Brian Toal, John Triana, Dennis Varza, Jack Wells (JWe), Charlotte Weston (CWe), Glenn Williams, Joe Wojtanowski (JWo), Chris Wood (CWo), Alice Anne Wormald, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Tom Zissu, Fran Zygmunt.

PHOTO CHALLENGE No. 56

This month's quiz bird, by virtue of the bright orange facial triangle, is immediately recognizable as a Sharp-tailed Sparrow, a species regularly seen creeping around the coastal marshes here in Connecticut.

However, in 1995, the American Ornithologists Union split the Sharp-tailed Sparrow into two species, the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows (*A. nelsoni*) (hereafter simply Saltmarsh Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow). Nelson's Sparrow breeds in freshwater marshes of the northern prairies, fresh and brackish marshes around the southern coast of Hudson Bay and along the northeastern Atlantic coast from the Maritime Provinces to northern Massachusetts. Saltmarsh Sparrow breeds in saltmarshes of the Atlantic Coast from central Maine south. Both species winter along the southern Atlantic coast of the U.S. Nelson's also winters farther to the west and occurs along the Gulf of Mexico and locally in coastal California.

One of the biggest problems in Connecticut is that during migration the observer must attempt to differentiate between local Saltmarsh and migrant Nelson's Sparrows. Due to overlap in morphometrics and a wide range of individual variation in both species, separating the two in the field can be challenging and sometimes impossible. So, we must decide if the bird in the photo is a Saltmarsh or a Nelson's Sparrow. Since separating these two species is based on subtle plumage colors, this month's photo in glorious technicolor is invaluable.

Sibley (1996) made a first attempt at outlining the main identification criteria for separating Nelson's and Saltmarsh Sparrows and suggested criteria useful for separation of the different races in each species. The race of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow that most frequently occurs here on migration is *subvirgatus*, sometimes called the Acadian Sharp-tailed Sparrow. It breeds from northern Massachusetts northwards. It is this rather dull race to which we will refer in the following text.

Key plumage features Sibley (1996) lists for Saltmarsh Sparrow:

- a relatively long bill and flat headed appearance.
- a bright orange triangle on the face that usually contrasts with a paler (often whitish) breast and a clean whitish throat.
- a distinct dark whisker line that separates the orange submoustachial from the white throat.
- bold blackish streaking on the breast and flanks that is uniform, darker and crisper than on Nelson's.
- crisp, fine dark streaks on the orange supercilium behind the eye.

Key plumage features Sibley (1996) lists for Nelson's Sparrow (*subvirgatus*):

- triangle on the face dull, dingy orange-gray, similar to the color of the breast, and contrasting little with the buffy throat.
- breast buffy-orange as in face, with sharply contrasting white belly.
- throat bordered by a smudgy gray whisker line.
- rear supercilium clouded grayish, and not distinctly streaked, so orange color on the face is brightest on the submoustachial.
- breast streaking obvious but blurred grayish, and fades to almost nothing on the rear flanks.
- upper parts (the back) typically plain grayish with indistinct streaks, and no white or black.

Using the above criteria, our mystery bird fits Saltmarsh Sparrow in a few characters: the orange stands out from the paler breast; the throat appears somewhat whitish; there is some obvious white streaking on the mantle; the breast streaks are narrow and crisp.

There is one problem, and most people that take the time to really look at Saltmarsh Sparrows will agree. The bird doesn't look like birds we see in Connecticut. Typical Salt-



Mark Szantyr photo

Figure 1. *The mystery sparrow.*

marsh Sparrows have well-defined blackish-brown, relatively broad and coarse streaks across the breast and along the flanks. They don't show an obvious contrast between the buffy breast and belly, and they are rather flat-headed and have a comparatively long bill. They also show fine dark streaks in the rear supercilium, but this is somewhat inconsistent and may not be visible or present in all individuals.

On the other hand, it doesn't look like the typical Nelson's we get here in fall either (see bird in Figure 2). The breast is



Jim Zipp photo

Figure 2. *Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, subvirgatus race.*

not concolorous with the orange submoustachial and supercilium, and the throat appears pale though not buff. The streaks are not diffuse or blurry. They appear crisp and well-defined, particularly on the rear flanks.

So what species is it? To be honest, based on my experience, I'll be perfectly happy to tell you I wasn't initially sure. There is a great deal of intraspecific variation between these species, and we are more familiar with Nelson's in fall plumage than spring. I think the criteria put forward by Sibley (1996, 2005; and Howell & Sibley 1998) form an excellent summary, and Sibley cautions that there is more variation than we currently accept. I wholeheartedly agree and would caution trying to assign every individual to species, especially when it neither matches "classic" birds nor shows the full suite of characters listed above. Views from several angles, as well as notes about an individual bird as it appeared in the field, are also needed. Complicating things further, the two species hybridize where they overlap in northern New England. What these hybrids look like is not extensively documented.

To summarize, although the bird's plumage looks initially intermediate between Nelson's and Saltmarsh, there are more features that fit Nelson's overall. The anterior part of the ear coverts are washed buff, the rear supercilium lacks any dark streaks, the bill is rather short and the "whisker" line is grayish. Since we are not familiar with Nelson's in spring or summer, the pattern of the under-part streaks may be explained by wear. The blurry, dusky streaks that are typical of fall *subvirgatus* may wear to produce the more pronounced streaks visible in the photo.

A typical fall Nelson's is shown for comparison. Figure 2, taken by Jim Zipp at Milford Point in autumn 2004, shows the pale buffy throat, blurry grayish streaks on the flanks, and a small but noticeable primary projection (very small or lacking in Saltmarsh). The white "tramlines" on the mantle, (contra Sibley) seem fine for Nelson's and are well illustrated here.

This month's interesting challenge (Figure 1) was photo-

graphed by Mark Szantyr at Groton-New London Airport on 20 May 2006.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Louis Bevier for providing valuable resource material, insightful discussion on this subject and for making suggestions that greatly improved the text.

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Photo Challenge No. 57

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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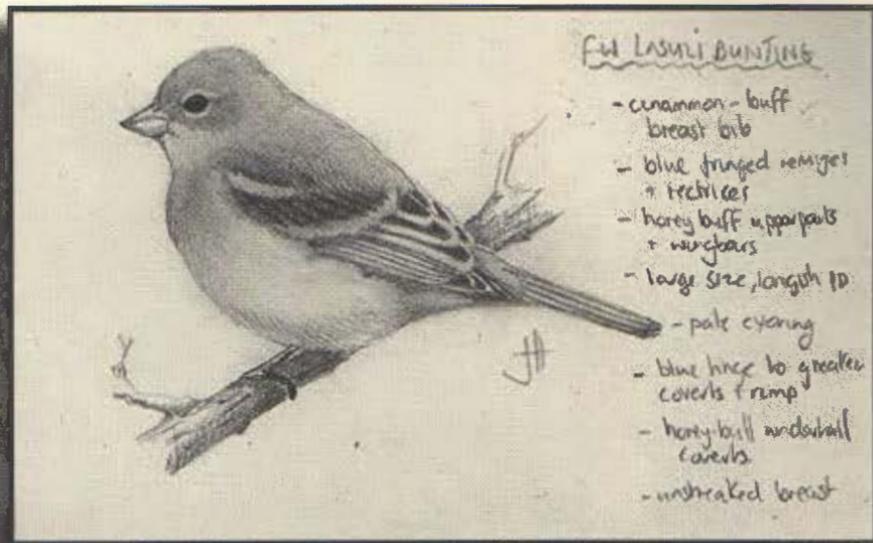
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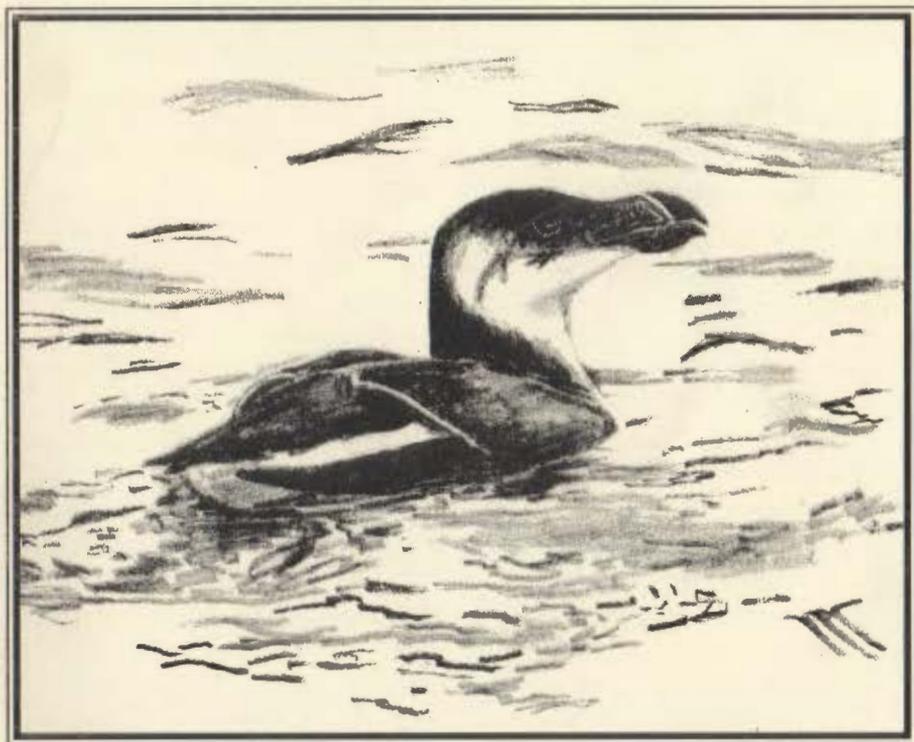
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THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



Volume 27 No. 3

July 2007

Pages 77-116

The Connecticut Warbler

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Razorbill

Andrew Dasinger, a member of the COA board, complements Glenn Williams' engaging article on pelagic birding with this evocative drawing of a Razorbill, a species that has become more accessible to Connecticut birders in recent years.

PELAGIC BIRDING IN CONNECTICUT OR HOW THE DUKE OF YORK RUINED MY STATE LIST

By Glenn Williams

We Nutmeggers don't expect much sympathy from the landlocked states, but for a coastal member of the nation, Connecticut can be a very difficult place to see pelagic birds. Despite 253 miles of shoreline that run over one-quarter of its total border, Connecticut is pelagically challenged. Neighboring states have capes, points and islands that jut out into the ocean and allow for great sea birding from land.

These same geological entities serve only to frustrate the Connecticut birder. A quick glance at a map reveals that New York's Long Island blocks most of Connecticut's coast from the Atlantic Ocean. On our eastern end, Fishers Island drapes across what little hope of open ocean remains to Connecticut. On a clear day, you can see cars driving on Fishers Island from southeastern Connecticut with the naked eye, but the island is New York's. Our southeastern border, the Pawcatuck River, makes a quick jog west before meeting the sea, giving Rhode Island (with the highest coast-to-land ratio in the nation) Watch Hill and Napatree Point. This effectively cuts off most pelagic birds trying to enter our waters from the east. The final insult upon injury may be that any small island that cannot be hit by a rock thrown from our mainland belongs to either Rhode Island or New York.

The saltwater we can claim in Connecticut, the Long Island Sound, is disproportionately divided. The border with New York runs very close to the Connecticut shore and Rhode Island's border is only 400 yards from Stonington at one point while that same point is almost two miles from the Rhode Island mainland. You can always take a boat out to pelagic bird in Connecticut, but where does one go? The best part about a pelagic trip in Connecticut is that if the boat sinks, you can walk to shore.

Things did not have to be so bleak for Connecticut birders. There was a time when the colonies debated borders and

several countries battled for control of the New World. Each colony, country and Native American tribe had its own ideas about who controlled the land. The state's original charter set the western boundary at the Pacific Ocean. (Now that's what I'm talking about!). Though this proved to be a bit unrealistic and was not destined to be maintained, Connecticut did have under its jurisdiction the eastern end of Long Island, Fishers Island, Block Island, and the many smaller islands in the Sound.

Connecticut's problem was that it got caught between the Dutch and the English with neither side interested in what would be best for the Connecticut colonists (much less for the future birders of the state). History shows that Connecticut was the loser in this conflict. Control of the areas that are now Connecticut and New York went from a struggle between Connecticut and England versus the Dutch to Connecticut versus its Motherland. There were three Anglo-Dutch Wars from 1652 to 1674. At the beginning of the second in 1664 – in a negotiation for the Duke of York's land patent – Connecticut had to give up its claims to any of the offshore islands to the Dutch. Through the three wars, England maneuvered to wrest New Amsterdam from the Dutch and rename it New York. In an oversimplification, the Duke



Northern Gannets by Andrew Dasinger

of York negotiated away Connecticut's claims to the offshore islands, gave them to the Dutch, then took them from the Dutch and made them part of his New York. He placed Sir Edmund Andros as its governor to do his bidding. With little time to enjoy the end of the Dutch threat, Connecticut faced an invasion from New York, led by Andros, with the Duke's blessing. The invasion was repelled. Some would argue that New Yorkers have been invading Connecticut ever since. The Duke would eventually become King James II, but he was overthrown after a few years. Andros, by then the loftily titled governor of the Royal Colony of New York and the Dominion of New England, was thrown into jail by the colonists. Connecticut never got its islands back. Unfortunately, Connecticut birders must suffer for the Duke's machinations to this day. Our reign as the only "landlocked" coastal state is forever.

From a birding sense, many frustrations arise from the cartographic anomalies of Connecticut. The single best example involves the Common Eider. This handsome sea duck is indeed common on the coast of New England and New York in winter. But in Connecticut, it is a highly sought after species. I have seen approximately the same number of King Eiders as Common Eiders in Connecticut – a handful of each. The out-of-state birder may agree that this is odd or unfortunate - but frustrating? All one needs to do is take a trip to New York's South Dumpling Island. It is possible to sit on a boat in Connecticut waters and watch over fifty Common Eider feed and fly about this small island and heron rookery. Too further the ornithological nose-thumbing, this island that is just hundreds of yards from Connecticut's border has had nesting Common Eider for the past few years. The first time that I discovered their nests, eggs, and downy young, I tried to calculate how long it would take an average swimmer to make it to Connecticut waters from one of these nests. One would have time to brew a pot of coffee, but that is about it. One would barely have time to spill a cup in the time it would take for an eider to fly to the Connecticut portion of the Sound. Would it be too much to ask for these ducks to make an occasional visit?

Long Island is host to numerous bird species that would cause the Connecticut birder to salivate. Ignoring the land-based sea watches and boat trips that are never to be for us, there are species such as the Gull-billed Tern or Brown Pelican that are regular on our former turf, but highly sought after review species in the Constitution State. When you consider the pelagic species seen from Long Island and the boating possibilities and associated trip lists, a dedicated pelagic bird-lover from Connecticut can get more than a little jealous.

Napatree Point, which curls salaciously across Connecticut's southeastern border from Rhode Island, is a great birding spot. I was leading my high school ornithology class back down the beach after a day of May birding. All of the students were novice birders and most did not have binoculars. They just needed a science credit and liked the outdoors. They had seen their first American Oystercatchers, Roseate Terns, and Piping Plovers, among others, through my scope but were doubtlessly looking forward to getting back to the bus to eat, talk or sleep. A bird flying down the shore towards us got my immediate attention, gliding over the waves just off the beach on stiff wings. I had never seen a shearwater from land in southwestern Rhode Island and was not expecting one on such a calm spring day. I was both incredibly excited and awestruck as I called the bird to the class' attention.

"A Sooty Shearwater!" called several students simultaneously.

Despite their overall inexperience, they were able to make the call. We had seen some on a whale watch to Massachusetts' Stellwagen Bank in the fall. This was not a new bird to the students and they weren't particularly impressed. I looked over at my native Connecticut so nearby, and watched the Sooty Shearwater gliding in the direction of its waters. At the time, Connecticut did not have an accepted record of Sooty Shearwater and my students could not understand why I watched the shearwater with my scope until it disappeared, never seeing it cross the border.

"Didn't you see it well enough when it was right in front of you, Mr. Williams?" asked one of the students.

I didn't know how to explain it to the impatient high-schoolers. Did the bird make it to Connecticut? Probably not. Like most ocean birds, it surely veered off towards Fishers Island and Long Island before circling back to continue its migration northward.

Almost all of the reasonably expected pelagic species are on Connecticut's state list and some Connecticut birders have a good number on their personal lists. The problem is that all species' appearances are few and far between or consist of washed up carcasses. It is very difficult and time consuming to compile a decent number of sea birds on one's Connecticut list. When a storm blows and conditions are right for seeing pelagic birds from land, a Connecticut birder faces a dilemma – do I go to a neighboring state and actually see birds, or do I stay at home and comb the Sound in the hopes of finally getting a distant look at my state-first Black-legged Kittiwake or jaeger? To an avid state-lister, the choice may seem easy until one calculates the odds, realizes one must gain experience with pelagic species first to nail a distant Long Island Sound identification, and one must give up any reasonable hope of seeing a truly rare species. Nobody wants to spend countless cold, wet hours staring at the Sound and then miss their one shot at a Parasitic Jaeger because they lack the requisite identification skills. Worse may be hearing about the Long-tailed Jaeger that your out-of-state buddies got while you stayed home with the storm-tossed Laughing Gulls.

I recently saw my first Connecticut Greater Shearwater, but it is not on my state list for two reasons. First, frozen birds don't count. Secondly, I actually misidentified the bird – embarrassing, I know. Since I cannot use swells, distance, sun conditions, etc., to explain my identification faux pas, I can only say that my countless hours observing thousands of shearwaters on the ocean did not prepare me to identify a rigid and motionless lump in hand. Such is pelagic birding in Connecticut. That the bird will be Connecticut's fourth overall and second specimen record is little consolation to a Connecticut pelagic enthusiast. When many of your state's ocean birds are seen because they are exhausted by storms, sick, oiled, or dead, a little of the thrill is gone. It is a sharp



Wilson's Storm-Petrel by Andrew Dasinger

contrast to the dawn sun, sea air, and anticipation that accompanies the out-of-state pelagic trips that I so enjoy. The possibilities of true rarities and thrill of seeing seabirds in their element is rarely accomplished in Connecticut.

One can get on a boat to bird in Connecticut waters, but as stated earlier, you will have to stay close to shore. Birders sometimes take the ferries to the islands to try for pelagic species. One quickly realizes that almost any bird seen from the boat could also be seen from land and the majority of the ferry ride will be in New York waters. In fact, the only way to avoid seeing land during a Connecticut pelagic trip is to go to the head.

The Connecticut Ornithological Association has organized several pelagic boat trips to help the pelagically challenged state-lister. It is a tribute to organizer Dori Sosensky that the boat was filled each time. It is also a measure of our desperation. A December trip had visions of alcids dancing in our heads. Like many others that day, I was able to add Razorbill to my state list – my 300th Connecticut species. Nothing else of note was seen. As if to take the thrill and bragging rights away from those who boarded the boat that day, or to vindicate those who scoffed at a Connecticut “pelagic” trip, Razorbills became easy to see from land that winter and the next. With little effort, many birders were reporting Razorbills all along the coast and even in the lower Thames River.

A fall trip created an interesting situation. Only in Connecticut could the best pelagic bird be seen from land before the boat left the dock. Unfortunately, few state lists increased that day. As people arrived to board, the word passed that two foreign birders discovered a Parasitic Jaeger sitting on the water off of Avery Point in Groton where the boat was docked. Two trip participants were able to see it before it flew off into the fog. I was birding that morning before the trip and could have been there to see the jaeger. I was not, because why sea watch when you are soon going out in a boat? The reason - because you are in Connecticut, where sea birds do not exist and when they do, they don't follow the rules. This leads to a truism about Connecticut pelagic birding.

There is no perfect time or season to find pelagic birds in Connecticut. There is no formula or expectation for any one species. I can board a boat in Rhode Island and be guaranteed to see Razorbill and Common Murre in winter. I can count on seeing a number of shearwaters and storm-petrels in the right season on a number of trips off of the New England coast. Connecticut birders can increase their odds by heading to the coast during Nor'easters, getting out in boats, or checking the Sound at prime migration times for pelagic species. One thing is certain - when one finally gets their Connecticut Parasitic Jaeger or Thick-billed Murre, they probably won't be expecting it. More than likely they will have already spent fruitless hours braving wet winds, only to have a jaeger fly by when they are at the beach, binocular-less and hanging out with family or friends. Luckily the bird will be so close that optics are not necessary. Or so I keep telling myself.

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The Connecticut Warbler, Vol. 27 No.3, July 2007

NOT GREAT BUT GETTING BETTER

By Greg Hanisek

Connecticut's small sliver of salt water will never be a pelagic paradise, but things have been looking up somewhat. Species associated with coastal and offshore waters have increased inside Long Island Sound during the past 15 years.

Three species – Northern Gannet, Wilson's Storm-Petrel and Razorbill – have been transformed during that time from rarities to regular visitors during the appropriate seasons. Increased observer effort may play some role in the number of observations, but the regular and significant presence of these birds in Connecticut waters leaves no doubt that an actual change in status has occurred. These are changes unrelated to hurricane-diven records.

Northern Gannet:

In 1990 gannet was a review species for which the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut sought full documentation. In its Fourth Report, published in the Connecticut Warbler in October 1990, a sighting of a single Northern Gannet on March 18, 1989 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison was accepted. Then things changed quickly. On Nov. 13, 1990, seven were reported off Stratford. They were termed "numerous" in spring 1991, with reference to a strong run of Blue-backed Herring, and their fall 1991 flight was termed an "invasion." ARCC removed Northern Gannet from its review list in the Fifth Report, published in 1993. Since then there have been a number of daily counts, mainly in November, ranging from 300 to 1,000.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel:

In 1990, these small tubenoses from the Southern Hemisphere were almost unknown in Connecticut waters. Things began to change in 1995, when up to 45 settled in near the mouth of the Thames River in Groton and New London in mid-July, affording many birders the first chance to add them to their state lists. Since then they have been regular in mid-summer with at least three daily counts ranging from 90 to 120. They

are no longer a review species.

Razorbill:

In 1990 Razorbill had not yet been added to the state list. Records existed for Thick-billed Murre, Dovekie, Black Guillemot and even Atlantic Puffin, but Razorbill had yet to be officially recorded. The first accepted record was a bird seen off of Waterford on Dec. 16-17, 1992. Small numbers were reported annually through the 1990s, then the winter 2002-03 marked a significant invasion. Razorbills were seen from Stonington to Greenwich, with c. 20 off Stamford on Dec. 22, 2002, a day when c. 100 reported were reported in adjacent New York waters. They have remained regular in moderate numbers since then. They are no longer a review species.

Other species:

In addition to these three species, which have become regular, several other pelagic birds have spiced up recent Sound-watching. Connecticut added its third well-documented Cory's Shearwater on July 7, 1997 at Hammonasset; its second Northern Fulmar on Sept. 14, 1997, off Stamford (the first was in 1909); and its first Sooty Shearwater on July 8, 2004, off Madison.

Since 1993, there have been five reports involving six Manx Shearwaters, a species that has bred as nearby as Massachusetts. None of these has been accompanied by documentation sufficient for official acceptance by ARCC, but an upward trend seems to be indicated.

Parasitic Jaegers are now annual in Long Island Sound in small numbers and have been removed from the state review list by ARCC. The other two jaegers remain too rare to discern a change in status.

Black-legged Kittiwakes remain rare, appearing primarily in November, and no obvious change in status has developed. More far-ranging species, such as Sooty Tern, appear to have maintained their status as storm waifs, with most records tied to hurricanes, tropical depressions or, as occurred this April, to powerful nor'easters.

BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

SEABIRDS: A Natural History. AJ Gaston. 2004. 222 pgs with numerous plates, figures and tables. Yale University Press, New Haven (in England published by A&C Black Publishers, Ltd., London. ISBN 0-300-10406-5.

Unlike us, seabirds spend the majority of their lives away from land. We go to sea dependent on the safety of a small vessel, the competence of the skipper, and navigation information downloaded from satellites. We know we are not in our natural environment and are reminded of our uneasiness through the occasional disconnect between our eyes, the inner ear's semi-circular canal, and the proprioceptors of the neuromuscular system.

Away from the land we are voyagers in the realm of pelagic birds. The ocean is a theater of very different scale. The surface changes moment-to-moment, the sky is completely open with nothing to obstruct the view, and the winds blow over what appears to be an endless surface and provides a cheap energy source for travel be it in a sailboat or for a soaring bird. Seabirds live and thrive in this environment. Pelagic birds are the masters of what we often perceive of as an endlessly moving, barren, windblown world.

Seabirds return to land to breed, in some species after several seasons at sea. Breeding occurs on the most isolated islands, and may involve great numbers of individuals crowded together on steep cliffs, or in colonies exposed to the elements. Many lay only a single egg, and take months to raise their chick. Reproduction is a challenge, but life is long for these birds, and the effort is well rewarded. Witnessing a seabird colony in full swing is an otherworldly experience. The noise, smell, and activity of a cliff in high temperate or low arctic latitudes populated by gannets, murres, Atlantic Puffins and Kittiwakes is excitement personified. This is especially so if one is balanced precariously on the deck of a small boat with waves crashing all around. Equally im-

pressive are sites in the Antarctic where either albatross or any species of penguins breed. Sharing a beach with several hundred breeding penguin pairs, with fur seals and elephant seals competing for space, and with Sheathbill, Skuas and Giant Petrels lurking nearby will certainly encourage an appreciation of the processes of evolution.

Seabirds, according to Gaston, are those groups found away from shore, frequently out of sight of land. Taxonomically, Procellariiformes, Sphenisciformes, Pelecaniformes and selected Charadriiformes are included. The few seaducks such as eiders and some loons that may be encountered a few miles offshore are excluded in his definition. Emphasis is on birds adapted to living in the ocean. Their habitat at sea is correlated with oceanographic features that maintain and provide the food webs that fuel both travel and reproduction. In response, seabirds have evolved strategies different from terrestrial and near-shore species for finding and capturing food. These soaring roamers will all return to land to breed, frequently in extensive colonies where they provide long term care to a few, slow growing, high quality young. Along with their low annual reproductive output and need to travel long distances to forage, seabirds are long-lived. Gaston builds on these features and the scale of the ocean environment to introduce and develop nothing less than a marine ornithology. He does it with clarity and breadth. He includes many personal anecdotes and comments, all organized extremely well much to the benefit of his readers. His scope is worldwide and his particular interest in those factors that control and regulate the seabird numbers.

The core of the book is in the chapters that address Adaptations; Plumage; Distribution & Communities; Feeding Behavior; Migration & Movement; Breeding, Coloniality and its Consequences. The final two chapters are on Birth & Death, one called Theory, the other Observations. The intellectual thread that binds it together is Gaston's "seabird syndrome". The concept is introduced early in only three paragraphs, but brings together the essential elements, scale and mobility, that distinguish seabirds from their terrestrial relatives. The "syndrome" in all its manifestations and the global patterns

involved are painted with a broad brush. He integrates behavioral and ecological attributes and emphasizes that while all attributes of the "syndrome" occur scattered in other birds, their combination in seabirds makes them unique and successful.

The book contains important insights, but Gaston is not shy in pointing out that more needs to be done. He is especially concerned about the fact that many seabird species are long-lived (albatross can live 30+ years), and populations may fluctuate over the course of decades. Hence, long-term studies of colonies can exceed that of the professional lifetime of most researchers. Consequently, institutional involvement is critical and there are several examples, such as the Point Reyes Observatory, Skomer Island in Wales and the British and French Antarctic Surveys providing data on long term populations, but more is needed. Gaston points out that these data on demographics are crucial to understanding the complexities and implications of the "syndrome". This is only a beginning as existing data are inadequate, for example, to test some of the basic theories regarding population numbers. Further, there is now the added threat to albatross of long-line fishing. On the other hand, these groups in cooperation with other workers have used electronic tracking to revolutionize understanding of the broad scale movements and habitat use of seabirds, something not possible only a short time ago. Nevertheless, because these species operate on a global scale, declines in their numbers may indicate changes in climate and the health of the oceans.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter, December 1, 2006, to February 28, 2007

By Greg Hanisek

The season continued the recent mild trend, with unseasonably warm weather dominating until mid-January. A number of late records materialized, as expected, but the dominant trend was an amazing run of rarities, predominantly species of western origin. Several of these were long-staying and cooperative, making for an exciting time for the state's birders. Colder, more seasonable weather settled in with a Jan. 16 cold front, and the late season didn't produce any notable early arrivals. Irruptions of boreal species were scant to non-existent, with very few northern finches reported.

Ten **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season included one in Norwalk on Dec. 6 (DV), singles that wintered in Newtown (LF et al.) and South Windsor (PCi et al.), three in Storrs on Dec. 16 (fide CEI), two in Avon on Dec 27 (BC), one in Branford on Jan. 2 (CL), and one at Broad Brook Pond in East Windsor in January (CEk). An adult **Ross's Goose** was found Dec. 11 at Bradley Point in West Haven with a small flock of Canada Geese (ER), and what was almost certainly the same bird was relocated with a small flock of Canadas on Dec. 16 in Westport, where it stayed

through Dec. 29 (LT, PSo et al.). A **Cackling Goose** wintered at a small pond in Branford. Close observation and photos showed it to be the expected *B. h hutchinsii* (CL, NP et al.). There also were Cackling Goose reports from Southbury (BJ, RN), New London (BDw), Newtown (LF), Farmington (PCi) and the Greenwich-Stamford CBC. For the second year in a row a **Barnacle Goose** wintered in a flock of Canada Geese (along with one Greater White-fronted Goose and some White-fronted X Canada hybrids) in Newtown (m.ob). The only **Tundra Swan** stopped off at Bantam Lake in Litchfield

Jan. 7-10 (JMr, RDo).

The Short Beach salt pond in Stratford held 138 Gadwall on Jan. 31 (FM). Seven **Eurasian Wigeon** for the season were above average, which is about three. One inland in New Fairfield on Jan. 8 was unusual (ADi). The only **Eurasian Teal** for the season was at Wooster Park Pond in Stratford on Jan. 21 (FM). Reports of about 30 Northern Shovelers included eight on Brewster Pond in Stratford on Dec. 15 (JP), with up to 14 there in early February (FM). It was a good winter for Redhead. There were at least 20 for the season, mostly in February, which is the normal pattern. The high count was six on Bantam Lake in Litchfield in mid-

month (DR et al.). Trap Falls Reservoir in Shelton held 140 Ring-necked Ducks on Feb. 25 (FM). Frash Pond in Stratford held 16 Lesser Scaup on Jan. 6 (NB), a good total, but numbers built all the way to 70 on Jan. 31 (CBa).

One of the season's most remarkable occurrences was the arrival of a flock of 1,500 **Common Eider** off Enders Island in Mystic while observers for the New London CBC were scanning the water on Dec. 30 (CT, BDw). There were still more than 600 present on Jan. 2 (FM) but then they dispersed. A single female **Harlequin Duck** was a very rare inland find Dec. 10 at Barkhamsted Reservoir in a group that included two Long-tailed Ducks and two



Field sketch by Paul Carrier

A female Harlequin Duck, right, with two White-winged Scoters on Dec. 10, 2006, at Colebrook Reservoir.

White-winged Scoters (PCa). The observer provided good details and a sketch. There are two old inland records, both from Litchfield County (Zeranski & Baptist). Another female was photographed Jan. 20 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford but could not be relocated (RP). A Black Scoter was on Barkhamsted Reservoir on Dec. 14 (DR). An adult male *Bucephala* photographed Dec. 19 in Milford showed characteristics of a Common X Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid (NB). A flock of 2,000 Common Mergansers gathered at Lake Waramaug, New Preston, in mid January (PSt), with c. 1,500 on Bantam Lake on Dec. 31 (RBI).

A Horned Grebe, apparently grounded by a freeze, was picked up in a parking lot in Canton and later released into the Farmington River (JK). Another one seen Feb. 11 at MacKenzie Reservoir in Wallingford (WS) was probably part of the same movement. The only inland sighting of Red-throated Loon was from Bantam Lake on Dec. 10 (JE). Inland Red-necked Grebes were at Bantam Lake on Dec. 9

(BS), Nepaug Reservoir in Canton on Jan. 17 (PCa) and two at Trap Falls Reservoir in Shelton Feb. 24-28 (DV et al.). A **Western Grebe** was found on Dec. 31 in Long Island Sound at Old Lyme on the Old Lyme-Old Saybrook CBC (DW et al.). It was seen by many that day and again briefly on Jan. 1. It was the state's first since 1973. In the past 15 years Northern Gannet has gone from rare to numerous in Long Island Sound. From Jan. 20 to 22 there were c. 375 feeding off Waterford (NB et al.)

Three American Bitterns for the season were on the coast as expected. This species is a regular winterer in the big salt marshes but is obviously hard to detect. Several Great Egrets lingered into early January, which has become the norm. The latest was in Hamden on Jan. 30 (SBr). Snowy Egrets are less inclined to stay late, but one was still present Jan. 19 in Stratford (CB). The Stratford-Milford CBC reported an immature Little Blue Heron on Dec. 23 (SM). Most surprising was a Green Heron on Jan. 7-8 at Old Greenwich (BO et al.), a record late date

and a first for January.

The New London CBC recorded 34 Black Vultures on Dec 30, a high total for the southeast (BDw). An Osprey on Jan. 16 in Stratford follows a recent pattern of a tiny number staying into mid-winter (BB). It was followed by one the next day in Torrington (PCa). On Jan. 12-13 there were 11 Bald Eagles on Bantam Lake and on Jan. 19 there were eight on Lake Waramaug in New Preston (DR). Until recently those kinds of numbers were reported only on the state's big

rivers. There were four reports of Northern Goshawks. Six Rough-legged Hawks for the season were seen primarily during a flurry in late February. After a record fall flight, only two Golden Eagles were reported. There were just five reports of American Kestrel.

A **Yellow Rail**, regular but extremely secretive, was flushed twice at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington on Dec. 17 (PR, JR). The date raises the possibility of a wintering attempt. A Virginia Rail in the



Mark Szantyr photo

This White-winged Dove arrived at a Branford feeder in February and was still present in July.



Paul Fusco photo

A Snowy Owl at the Stratford Great Meadows on Dec. 2, 2006.

Morris Creek marshes of East Haven on Feb. 16 apparently wintered (SBr). A **Sandhill Crane** was reported Jan. 14 from a small cornfield in East Haddam, where local residents said it had been present for several weeks (BW et al.). It was present until at least Jan. 19. One Lesser Yellowlegs was seen periodically with Greater Yellowlegs in Stratford until the very late date of Jan. 19 (CB). Six Long-billed Dowitchers made a one-day appearance Jan. 16 in Stratford (NC, BB et al.). A cold front the next day marked the onset of extended winter weather. Was it warm before that? Two American Woodcock were displaying far inland in Litchfield on Jan. 4 (DM).

A Black-headed Gull wintered at Wethersfield Cove (SKo et al.). Iceland Gull numbers have held up very well since the closing of most all of the state's landfills. The season's tally, eliminating duplicates where possible, was a minimum of 25. **Glaucous Gull** also produced a good seasonal total of five, and two Nelson's Gulls (Herring X Glaucous hybrids) were reported Feb. 3 at Windsor landfill (NB). Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers seem to have leveled off with just six for the season. Razorbill continued its recent run of regular appearances in Long Island Sound with about 10 reported from Stamford to Stonington (m.ob.).

In a winter filled with significant records, a **White-winged Dove** that arrived at a Branford feeder on Feb. 20 raised some of the most interesting questions (DL). The bird belongs to a species undergoing an explosive range expansion coupled with wide-ranging vagrancy, so the appearance of a wild bird would be no surprise. However, this individual showed bill and foot abnormalities that raised the possibility of time in a cage, or possibly cold-weather trauma. It remained through the period and well into summer. The season's only **Snowy Owl** was in the Stratford Great Meadows Dec. 2-4 (PF et al.). Five Short-eared Owls for the season included one inland at Wilton on Dec 9 (LT). A search at White Memorial on Dec 17 turned up four Northern Saw-whet Owls (DR et al.). One **Rufous Hummingbird** from the good fall flight stayed until Jan. 16 at a feeder in Somers, where it was banded (MSz, m.ob). Another was banded Dec. 2 at a feeder in New Fairfield (MSz). A bird banded by MSz in November in East Lyme was seen on the New London-Groton CBC (BDw).

A highlight of the season was the **Calliope Hummingbird**, a first state record, that was present Dec. 2-7 at feeders in the butterfly garden at Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven (DS, NB et mult. al.). See a full account elsewhere in this issue. Seven Red-headed Woodpeckers for the season was a good total. Pairs were reported wintering at feeders in two locations, Killingworth (CBe) and Woodbury (SL), through the Great Backyard Bird Count (fide PCo). Two were found on the New Haven CBC, with one staying through the winter at Edgewood Park in New Haven. Another was seen throughout the season in Simsbury (LK et al.).

The latest of five Eastern Phoebes (winterer or early migrant?) was at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Central Village on Feb. 28 (RDi). Another of the season's western rarities, an **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, was found on private property in Stamford on Dec. 17 on the Greenwich-Stamford CBC (PDu et al.). It was present until at least Dec. 20. The **Western Kingbird** found in November in East Haven was present until at least Dec. 3 (m.ob.).

Six Northern Shrikes for the season were clustered around the CBC weeks, with four reported on Dec. 16: Southbury (DR), Roxbury (DB, RBa), East Granby (JW) and Storrs (CEL). One was present all winter in the vicinity of Station 43 in South Windsor (PCi et al.), and one was seen Dec 22 in Simsbury (PCi). A late Tree Swallow was on the New Haven CBC on Dec. 16 (fide DS). Two **Cave Swallows** from the November flight edged over into the period, with singles at Lighthouse Point on Dec. 2 and 3 (RBe et al.). The New London CBC had a single House Wren (BDw). A Marsh Wren was a good mid-winter find Jan. 27 at Glastonbury Meadows (ADa). One Feb. 11-16 in the Morris Creek

marshes in East Haven was indicative of overwintering (SBr). An Orange-crowned Warbler was at Saybrook Point on Dec. 31 (NP), and a Nashville Warbler was found on the New Haven CBC (DS). A Wilson's Warbler found on the Greenwich-Stamford CBC was relocated Jan. 14 at Cove Island Park in Stamford (PDu). It was present until at least Jan. 18. Two Yellow-breasted Chats for the season were on the Storrs CBC on Dec. 16 (CEL) and on the Stratford-Milford CBC on Dec. 23 (SM).

A female **Western Tanager** turned up on Dec. 17 in East Haddam (CT et al.), and it was seen again on Dec 19 (EHa, RN). A first-year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited a yard in Farming-



Julian Hough photo

This Painted Bunting was found in Hamden in December.

ton on Feb. 4, and presumably the same bird was there on Feb. 18 (CD). The bird of the season was the state's first **Lazuli Bunting**, a species lacking a strong history of vagrancy to the Northeast. The first-winter male was very cooperative at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison from Jan. 4 until at least-Feb. 12 (BY et mult. al.). See a full account with color photographs in Connecticut Warbler, Vol. 27 No. 2. A female/immature **Painted Bunting**, the state's first since the early 1990s, had to play second fiddle in the Passerina category. It was found in Hamden on Dec. 16 on the New Haven CBC and was seen through at least Dec.22 (AB, m.ob).

Three Dickcissels were singles at a feeder in Windsor on Dec. 7 (JW), at Allen's Meadow in Wilton on Jan. 10 (MD) and wintering in a thicket in Washington (RBl et al.). A very cooperative **Lark Sparrow** was found Jan. 7 in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Enfield, where it remained through most of the season and entertained many visitors to the tiny slice of habitat it favored (JMe et al.). A Lincoln's Sparrow turned up in Hamden Dec. 17-23 during the search for the Painted Bunting (JS). There also was one on the New London CBC on Dec. 30 (BDw). In a winter with few reports, 26 Snow Buntings on Jan. 23 at Seaside Park in Bridgeport (FM) and 22 on Jan. 31 at



Tom Sayers photo

This Lark Sparrow made itself at home in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Enfield.

Sherwood Island in Westport were noteworthy (MSa). The biggest flock was c. 150 with an equal number of Horned Larks on Feb. 17 at Bradley International Airport (JMe). There were five reports of Baltimore Orioles mostly in December (DF et al.). The best count of Rusty Blackbirds was 51 on Feb. 23 at White Memorial (DR). A flock of 22 Boat-tailed Grackles wintered in the Stratford Great Meadows area (m.ob.). Among a very few reports of Pine Siskins was a flock of 12 on Dec. 5 in West Hartland (PCa). The only Evening Grosbeaks reported were singles in Southbury on Dec. 7 (RN) and visiting a feeder in Winchester on Feb. 18 (RBu).

Correction: A photo of a Cackling Goose in the January issue was taken by Bruce Finnan. An incorrect photo credit was published.

Observers – Jayne Amico, Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Phil Asprelli, Renee Baade (RBa), Dave Babington, Jim Bair, Steve Balentine (SBa), Bill Banks, Charles Barnard (CBa), Dan Barvir, Ray Belding (RBl), Colleen Bell (CBe), Ron Bell (RBe), Nick Bonomo, Andy Brand, Steve Broker (SBr), Rita Bu-

chanan (RBu), Bob Cameron, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Jan Collins, Patrick Comins (PCo), Neil Currie, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Mardi Dickin-son, Townsend Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Carole Donagher, Patrick Dugan (PDU), Carl Ekroth (CEK), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEL), Richard English, John Eykelhoff, Dorothy Fink, Larry Fischer, Paul Fusco, Hank Golet, Greg Hanisek, Ed Hagen (EHa), Ernie Harris (EHr), Ted Hendrickson, John Himmelman (JHi), Julian Hough (JHo), Lynn James, Buck Jenks, Elsbeth Johnson, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Steve Kotchko (SKo), Scott Kruitbosch (SKr), Susan Leach, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Donna Lorello, Rick Macsuga, Frank Mantlik, John Marshall (JMr), Debbie Martin, John Maynard (JMa), Steve Mayo, Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, Larry Nichols, Fred Norton, John Ogren, Scott Olmstead, Brian O'Toole, Julian Peet, Ron Pelletier, Noble Proctor, Dave Provencher, Charlie Rafford, Edward Raynor, Mike Resch, James Restivo, Dave Rosgen, Phil Rusch, Tom Sayers, Penny Solum (PSo), Dori Sosensky, Peary Stafford (PSt), Meredith Sampson (MSa), Will Schultz, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Bob Stanowski, Jack Swatt, Mark Szantyr (MSz), Clay Taylor, Luke Tiller, John Triana, Dennis Varza, Danny Williams, Joe Wojtanowski, Betsy Worthington, Bill Yule, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Anthony Zemba, George Zepko, Joe Zeranski

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD: NEW TO CONNECTICUT

By Julian Hough

Early on Saturday, 2 December 2006, I made a brief foray to East Haven to try to photograph the Western Kingbird that I had discovered back in early December. I had also planned to visit nearby Lighthouse Point, but as time elapsed, domestic duties beckoned and I decided to return straight home instead.

When I arrived home at around 10 a.m., I got a call from Dori Sosensky informing me that she and Nick Bonomo had seen a hummingbird visiting the garden feeder at Lighthouse Point. They were unable to identify it from the brief views they had, and asked if I could come down and help with the identification. Given the time of year and the unusually high number of Rufous Hummingbirds that had occurred in the state, I expected the bird to be another of these "usual suspects." However, I was mindful that in recent years there had been records of other rare western hummingbirds in the Northeast. Identification of these small hummingbirds is difficult. Since the bird couldn't be assigned to genus as either an *Archilocus* or *Selasphorus*, curiosity dictated I check it out. Painting would have to wait!

When I arrived, I took a look at Nick's digital picture and felt quite excited that the bird looked good for a Calliope Hummingbird. The overall shape, lack of rufous in the tail and dark comma in front of the eye seemed to fit this better than a Rufous Hummingbird. Within minutes the bird flew in to the feeder, a habit it would repeat regularly throughout the day. I quickly took some digital photos. Obtaining photographic images is invaluable for analyzing fieldmarks that are almost impossible to discern accurately in the field. Once images had been obtained, I could relax and start to piece together the fieldmarks from the bird's repeated visits to the feeder.

I was aware that New Jersey's first Calliope was initially misidentified by some respected observers, so I was somewhat cautious until I had seen several features, a process made more difficult by the bird's quick visits and failure to perch. Vagrant hummingbirds from the West often seem to change their appearance depending on the light conditions and distance, so repeated or prolonged views are essential to get a true feel for size and proportions. It was imperative that we eliminate a lingering Ruby-throated Hummingbird, especially since this bird appeared to have a longer bill than would be expected on a typical Calliope.

Frank Gallo joined our small group. We watched the bird and discussed the field marks, agreeing that the bird, while seemingly long-billed and lacking rufous in the tail, was certainly not a Ruby-throated. When it perched overhead in a nearby sapling, the small size, rotund body and seemingly short tail became evident, further strengthening our opinion. Although certain diagnostic features had still not been seen, we felt pretty good the bird was most likely a Calliope. We then made several phone calls to alert other observers.

I had been able to take shots of the tail pattern, which revealed a dark tip to the central tail feather, and finally the bird perched showing the diagnostic short tail of a Calliope! During the next hour more people arrived to see the bird, which performed superbly for everyone. It remained regular at the spot until 7 December, when an approaching cold front most likely prompted it to depart. Mark Szantyr, an experienced and licensed hummingbird bander, banded the bird on 3 December. He added the following comments:

"Compared to the Rufous Hummingbirds I have banded, the wing measurement (44 mm) was near the median wing length for that species, the culmen (16 mm) toward the longer end and the tail (20 mm) was approximately 6 mm shorter than most typical Rufous. Based on the measurements and the combination of the smooth culmen, extent and coloration



Calliope Hummingbird, Lighthouse Pt., 12/2/06 (Julian Hough)
*The squared-off tail falls short of the wings - the best Calliope feature.
Note broad, rounded primaries, peach wash on flanks and dark "comma"
in front of eye.*



Rufous Hummingbird, adult female, Niantic, 11/8/06 (Mark Szantyr)
Note tail projecting past wingtips, extensive flank color and contrasting white fore collar. Lorai area lacks dark "comma" and white extending above bill "lip." Rufous visible on upper tail coverts. Outer primaries narrower and not as rounded.



Calliope Hummingbird, Lighthouse Pt., 12/3/06 (Mark Szantyr)
Note dark "comma" in front of eye and white of lores extending subtly, but diagnostically, above gape (Howell 2002). Measurements confirmed bill in longer end of range for Calliope.



Calliope Hummingbird, Lighthouse Pt., 12/3/06 (Mark Szantyr)
Note tail feathers of almost equal length, contributing to short, square tail. Central feather extensively black, not uniform green as in Archilocus. Rufous/Allen's would show more rufous at base of feathers and central feather one-third (not half) black.

of the throat spotting, the fresh wings and slightly worn tail I aged the bird as AHY (after hatch year) female. Subsequently, a review of the literature and discussion with other experienced banders resulted in two experts that were in agreement with the bird being an AHY, while two others thought it was a hatch-year (HY). When you add in the suggestion in (Peter) Pyle (*The Identification Guide to North American Passerines*) of a second-year plumage (SY), which the Connecticut bird matched in several ways, I think it wise to leave this individual as "age unknown."

This is the first state record of this species and it became a media superstar, attracting many admirers from New York,



Calliope Hummingbird, Lighthouse Point., New Haven, 12/2/06 (*Julian Hough*)

Note head pattern and bill length.

Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The story made the local newspapers and the Connecticut section of the New York Times.

Status

In the Northeast, *Selasphorus* hummingbirds are regular in late fall and are annual in the state, often with multiple individuals occurring from July to December. Although the majority of these *Selasphorus* hummingbirds are Rufous (confirmed by banding), it pays to be aware that other similar species could occur. Calliope Hummingbird, while of the genus *Stellula*, is very similar and we should not assume that any late fall hummingbird is a "Rufous-type" by default. Below are records of three vagrant hummingbirds recorded in the Northeast.

Black-chinned Hummingbird

New Jersey: Villas, 10-15 Nov 1996; Cape May, 27-29 Oct 2001; Barnegat Light, 20- 27 Nov 2005.

Massachusetts: Cohasset, 25 Nov 1979 (specimen); Brewster, 6 Aug 2006.

Calliope Hummingbird

New Jersey: Wildwood Crest, 23 Nov-5 Dec 1996; Goshen, 11-15 Nov 2000; Linwood, 1-5 Nov 2002; Villas, 17-23 Oct 2004

Massachusetts: Eastham, 1 Nov 19 Dec 2002; a male and a female reported at separate locations in Dartmouth in early 2007 (photographed-per M.Rines)

New York: Two males, Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan, Dec 2001; Robert Wagner Park, 24 Nov 2002; Larchmont, 4-6 Nov 2004

Allen's Hummingbird

New Jersey: Cape May, 12 Nov 2000- 2 Jan 2001; Cape May, 14 Nov 2003- 11 Jan 2004; Villas, 3 Nov-19 Dec 2004

Massachusetts: Nantucket, 26 Aug 1988 (specimen).

Identification

This deals mainly with the basic separation of Calliope from Rufous/Allen's. It is not meant to be an in-depth treatment of the three species but covers the main points to look for should you be lucky enough to attract a lingering fall/winter hummingbird. Since Ruby-throated has been recorded occasionally in late fall and early winter, we must first eliminate that species from the running before considering other vagrants.

Calliope vs. Ruby-throated

Ruby-throated and Black-chinned are slightly bigger birds with longer bills and darker lores. Some fresh juvenile Ruby-throated in early winter can show pale buff on the flanks (similar to Selasphorus). But these bright Ruby-throats can be separated by their white (not buff) undertail coverts and their whitish, unmarked (not spotted/flecked) throat. Both Archilocus species lack any obvious rufous at the base of the tail. Many Calliopes have some rufous or cinnamon fringes to the bases of the outer tail feathers, but it is generally not apparent in the field.

The main difference from an Archilocus-type in the field is that Calliopes have short, squared-off tails with a diagnostic central tail feather that is about 1/2 to 2/3 black. The small size, overall pale bronzy-green upperparts and peach-washed flanks are features that should initially attract attention in the field. Typically, but not always (as in the Lighthouse individual) Calliopes have a noticeably shorter and straighter bill than other hummingbirds. Combined with the small size, short tail and pot belly, it gives them their subtle shape and recognition as the smallest breeding bird in North America.

Calliope vs. Rufous/Allen's

Any small hummingbird that is rather warm with obvious buff-flanks and shows obvious rufous in the spread tail is a Selasphorus. Separating Rufous/Allen's from Calliope

can be tricky as shown by the Calliope in Wildwood, N.J., that was initially misidentified by experienced observers as a Rufous-type. It is only through the appearance of these tricky individuals that we now have a better grip on the salient features of these species.

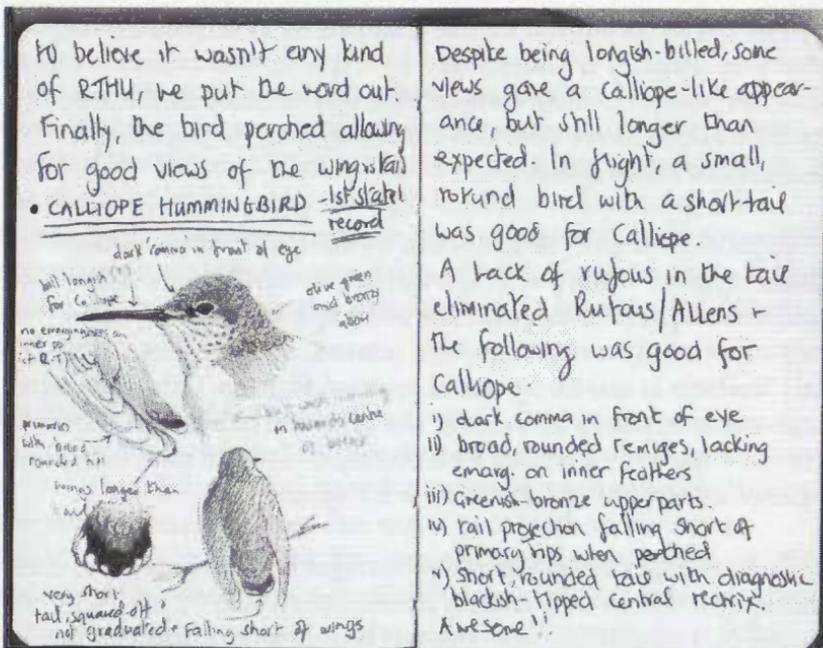
Typical Rufous is larger, longer-billed and longer-tailed than a typical Calliope. The most important feature is the tail, which projects beyond the wingtips at rest. Any obvious amount of rufous (age/sex related) at the bases of the tail feathers is another pointer toward Rufous. Other features noticeable in the field include the brighter cinnamon flanks, contrasting with a whiter fore collar, and the throat, which is often, but not always, more heavily spotted.

Rufous Hummingbirds are often quite vocal and announce their presence as they utter a harsh, junco-like "chip". Calliopes by comparison are quieter, with a softer, less obvious "chip." Their presence is not usually detectable by call.



Ryan Sayers photo

The banding operation at Lighthouse Point proved fascinating to those who came to observe and see the bird in the wild.



**Field sketches of Calliope Hummingbird, Lighthouse Point 12/02/06
(Julian Hough)**

Photographic evidence is invaluable, and with today's advancement in digital technology and digiscoping, documenting rarities has never been easier. However, basic written descriptions are required by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC) to maintain a legacy of historical record.

Selasphorus hummingbirds are being recorded with increasing frequency in Connecticut, and banding confirms that those caught are in fact Rufous. However, the records of other vagrants are increasing as well. The almost identical Allen's has been recorded in New Jersey and Massachusetts, and the similar Calliope is being recorded with more frequency in the Mid-Atlantic States. Although Ruby-throated should be considered and eliminated as a matter of process, observers must also remember to consider its western counterpart, since records hint it's only a matter of time before Black-chinned is added to the Connecticut list.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Marj Rines of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC), Jeanne Skelly and Angus Wilson of the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) and Paul Lehman of the New Jersey Records Committee for furnishing records of vagrant hummingbirds from their respective states. Mark Szantyr kindly furnished photos and banding information. Last but not least, thanks to Nick Bonomo and Dori Sosensky for first noticing the bird.

A further acknowledgement should be made to Dori, Dan Barvir and many others for their hard work tending to the Lighthouse Point garden and maintaining the feeder throughout the fall in the hope that it would attract something good. It did!

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NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Birds on the Naugatuck River Greenway

When I stepped onto the Naugatuck River Greenway I didn't expect much. I was just checking it out. But, the next year and a half was a great surprise. I have logged bird species after bird species to the tune of 73 birds. I don't know if this is normal, but it was totally unexpected.

The Naugatuck River Greenway is another in a list of greenways popping up in Connecticut. It is in Derby and runs along the Naugatuck River. It goes out to Sullivan's Island, which is now joined to the mainland, and on to the Housatonic River. The confluence of the two rivers can clearly be seen from Sullivan's Island.

The greenway is in the heart of a busy section with housing on one side, a commercial area on another, downtown Derby on a third, and a bridge, a railroad and Route 8 all coming through it. There is ever-present traffic noise throughout the year. But walking along the trail, anyone can see that each season brings its own beauty.

In winter, when the leaves are absent, the area appears desolate. In spite of that, there is still repose, and the greenway's own beauty jumps out whether someone notices the river, the waterfowl in the water or the birds in the air. The highway, the homes and the commercial area are all visible, yet the walk overcomes it.

In spring, the buds begin to swell and leaf out and the a cover-up begins. The busy areas begin to become obscured. Summer finishes the obscurity, and a real sense of being away from it all sets in. Fall colorfully sheds this mantle and reminds us of where we are again.

I often wonder if people believe me when I tell them about the birds there. So I photographed as many of them as I could for a display at the Derby Public Library. There is much to be said about the attraction of the river to birds. I never see other wildlife there, but a beaver has been photographed.

I've watched a Belted Kingfisher pick a fish out of the water, kill it by beating it against the tree limb, and then swallow it whole in 40 minutes time. On one of my walks, I have come across a small flock of American Pipits making their way up the Naugatuck River as they alight briefly on the rocks. I've watched Red-tail Hawks lock their talons in the air and tumble down a short distance before flying off. A Black Vulture circles regularly among Turkey Vultures.

I've walked right by a Sharp-shinned Hawk perched in a small tree as I took the corner to go under Route 8. I didn't even see it until I was past it and happened to look back. I remember hearing "fitz-bew" and thinking, no, it can't be a Willow Flycatcher. It was. The pumping station attracts Barn and Rough-winged Swallows.

I heard a Wood Thrush singing as I walked up to the Housatonic River side of the trail during migration season. It was gone the next day. Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Eastern Kingbirds and Warbling Vireos nest there. About 35 Turkey Vultures perched on a railing as people walked by, and both were undisturbed.

The Great Blue Heron, Ring-billed, Herring, and Black-backed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, Belted Kingfishers, Barn Swallows, Common Nighthawks, Killdeer and songbirds have all been seen flying up, down and across the river. There is nothing like watching a V-formation of Canada Geese flying along the river. At once I am reminded that the river is not only mine.

In winter, the Red-breasted Merganser is the first to arrive. Then come the Hooded and Common Mergansers. The Green-winged Teal shows up periodically. The Mallard and Black Duck are established. I've witnessed the dead of winter turn into a burst of song, as did many other people as I listened to them comment on it.

These birds have been logged and recorded on the City of Derby Web site. Some other bird highlights are: Green-backed Heron, Least Flycatcher, Orchard Oriole (suspected nester), Black-crowned Night Heron and White-crowned Sparrow. This is in addition to other regulars such as: Great Egret, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, the blackbirds, American

Robin, Song, Swamp and Whitethroat Sparrows.

I cannot help but think that this greenway, constructed for people's enjoyment, is also a treasure of bird wildlife. The greenway should also be thought of as a conservation effort. This is undoubtedly an afterthought to the project. Preservation of birds, as well as all wildlife, should be considered in the further planning of all greenways.

I think the Naugatuck River Greenway has become an oasis where people and wildlife can learn to live together, and the opportunity to make the effort is provided. So far neither the wildlife nor the people on the greenway interfere with each other and the bird numbers seem stable. (I've been walking the trail since people were allowed to use it). However, I keep monitoring bird activity to see if the attraction of people to the greenway changes the numbers of species or number of birds I have recorded there, and, if the enhancements and clearing of the trail will affect the birds of the river.

Maria Stockmal

Sap Wells and the Birds That Love Them

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is a bird commonly reported in Connecticut during migration and less frequently in the winter months. During the summer, I am very fortunate to have sapsuckers nesting in my Canton yard. A mix of older birch and other rough-barked trees has provided me with daily observations of these often-shy woodpeckers.

One late afternoon while walking in the backyard with my son, I came face-to-face with a male sapsucker perched on the side of a tree. The bird seemed reluctant to move so I backed off a bit to give it some breathing room. I looked up the trunk of this large yellow birch and noticed an active sap well with a White-breasted Nuthatch feeding from its flow. The sapsucker calmly flew up to the well and spooked the Nuthatch to another tree. A pair of noisy Blue Jays passed overhead and startled the woodpecker enough to allow a Black-capped Chickadee to sneak a bit of sugar. Two Downy Woodpeckers were the next sap thieves followed by three Tufted Titmice.

Later that evening, I decided to sit out on the patio and watch the sap well for more bird activity. I was amazed at the number of birds that came by for a visit. From Hairy Woodpeckers to Eastern Phoebes and even a Pine Warbler sampled the goods. Well-known sugar hounds like Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Baltimore Orioles were also around and visibly perturbed by the presence of other species.

I have read that more than 30 species of birds have used sapsucker wells to feed on the nutrient rich sap and insects attracted to them. Fresh sapsucker wells provide a steady stream of sugary sap that accounts for as much as 25 percent of a young sapsucker's diet. It was becoming clear to me that many bird species use sap wells to increase the survival rate of their young and to supplement their own diet.

As the day was coming to an end, I began to stroll from tree to tree looking for older scarring from past years. The different patterns of perfectly drilled holes and the smooth texture of the birch bark reminded me of an artist's canvas. With nature's art before me, I thought about all the birds I saw today and the small flow of sap that meant so much to them.

Paul Cianfaglione

Birding by Ear in July

One of my favorite places in Hartford County to watch birds is McLean Game Refuge in Granby. Named after former Connecticut Governor and U.S. Sen. George P. McLean, this refuge comprises over 4,000 acres of mature forests, streams and ponds. On an ideal day for a visit, skies were clear, the sun was shining and many birds were singing. The sweet, clear song of a Blue-headed Vireo caught my attention as did the buzzy, hurried song of a Black-throated Green Warbler. The loud choppy notes from a wetland revealed a pair of nesting Northern Waterthrushes and fledgling. A stand of massive White Pine trees echoed with the trills of Pine Warblers and the cascading sounds of Brown Creepers. Even a Winter Wren sang from the moss covered under story of a Hemlock ravine. For some of you, the idea that this day

was near the end of July may come as a shock.

Was I still listening to and identifying birds in late July?? The answer to this question was an emphatic yes. For many people, birding occurs during two main seasons, spring and fall migration. The summer months are often neglected and passed off as the nesting time or described simply as slow and quiet. Our thoughts about the nesting season may make us think that birds just disappear or go silent altogether. Or maybe we just assume that the only sounds in a hot summer forest would be the humming of giant mosquitoes and the nerve-wrenching calls of cicadas. But birds are still singing and calling well into late summer months.

On a recent walk along a West Hartford power line cut in mid-July, I had noted more than 10 species of birds before lifting my binoculars. Why were Eastern Towhees and Field Sparrows still singing loud and strong? Are these birds still defending their territories or are they calling to another potential mate. Can competing with other males is more of a full-time job than we realize? I continued down the path a little further and heard the familiar beee-buzzz of a Blue-winged Warbler. A Prairie Warbler sang from the base of a mountain laurel, and a noisy flock of Cedar Waxwings exploded out of the crown of some tall maple trees. Before ending my walk, a Louisiana Waterthrush broke into full song along a small stream. I thought to myself, wow, I haven't heard that in awhile!

It's true that many birds stop singing once nesting has commenced. When young are born, the desperate need to find and provide food takes up much of the male's time and energy. Also, song could disclose the location of a nest to potential predators.

As we get deeper into summer months the songs of birds are definitely less frequent and harder to come by, but many are still in full song right up into August. A few examples of this behavior include singing Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler and Scarlet Tanager on Aug. 16 in Avon. A quick stop down a dirt road in Simsbury produced Eastern Wood-Pewee, Swamp Sparrow and Rose-breasted Grosbeak on Aug. 14. Was it early June in Windsor when I heard Indigo Bun-

ting, Red-eyed Vireo and Field Sparrow? No, Aug. 9!

We can consider ourselves fortunate to have birdsong throughout most of the summer months. Think about the grand undertaking of locating a Grasshopper Sparrow within the fields of Bradley International Airport during a grassland survey. Not an easy thing to do without its distinctive insect-like song. Are you looking for wetland species like Virginia Rail or Least Bittern? A rail calling in thick marsh vegetation is sometimes the best you can hope.

Birds that sing during the breeding season can also help us with tough identification problems. Willow and Alder Flycatcher are two species that look identical to each other and become very difficult to separate in the field when silent. Both birds nest in the Litchfield hills and occur in the same wet brushy habitat. Fortunately, both birds sing different songs and can be heard well into the summer. Though there is some controversy about Willow singing a near perfect Alder rendition, their songs are more often than not their calling card.

Avian song during the summer can play an important role in our knowledge of bird migration and nesting habits. Marsh Wren, for instance, is a common migrant and breeder in the South Windsor meadows. This year I heard my first singing Marsh Wrens in very late June. In past years, Marsh Wrens had typically been reported all throughout May. Were those birds in May just passing through to more northern areas? Could the South Windsor nesting birds actually be arriving on territory later than we had expected? The answer to some of these interesting questions are often hard to prove, but the pieces of the puzzle begin to come together when we continue to monitor the situation through the main migration period. Our experience in the field with summer birdsong may help us understand the habits of Marsh Wren migration in the northeast.

I hope I have persuaded a few of you to take a walk in the woods next summer. Birders need to change their way of thinking and get back to the forests and wetlands after the Memorial Day weekend. I encourage you to open your mind and ears to a new and wonderful birding experience.

Paul Cianfaglione

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Mark S. Szantyr



Figure 1

Mark Szantyr photo

Imagine it is a cold and blustery November day. The winds are strong out of the northeast and there is a good flight of loons streaming by you as you do diligent duty on a sea watch at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. Long Island Sound looks more like the open Atlantic than the flat, calm pond it usually resembles. Getting a good look at sitting birds in the violent white caps is nearly impossible.

You stay vigilant, however, as this is the kind of day when something good might show up. In the distance, a loon sitting on the water catches your attention. It is smaller than the Common Loons that you have seen all day and it seems darker. The bill looks short, slim and rather straight although the bird seems to hold it slightly above horizontal. There seems to be a clean line of demarcation between the white throat and fore neck and the black nape and hind neck. You curse the bad weather and light conditions and struggle to get a better look at this interesting bird as you catch it between dives.

You then see a key field mark - a white patch just above the waterline toward the rear of the bird. You wait until it surfaces and confirm that, yes, there is a distinct white flank

patch. Searching your frozen memory banks, you remember that Arctic Loon shows such a patch! It is the well-advertised field mark that separates this bird from the rare but more-expected Pacific Loon. You struggle to double check you sighting but the bird swims farther away and as luck would have it, a cold dismal rain begins to fall. You rush back to the car, check your field guide and determine that it could only be an Arctic Loon. I mean, it had such a well-defined flank patch!

You make a plethora of cell-phone calls and as darkness approaches, you retire to the comfort of your living room where a further search of information seems to support your identification.

The next day dawns clear and calm. You trudge back out to Meigs Point and search the water for your Arctic Loon. Unfortunately all you can find is a smattering of Common Loons and a few Red-throated Loons. As you scan the water, you spot a bird that shows that flank patch. Your heart races... and then sinks.

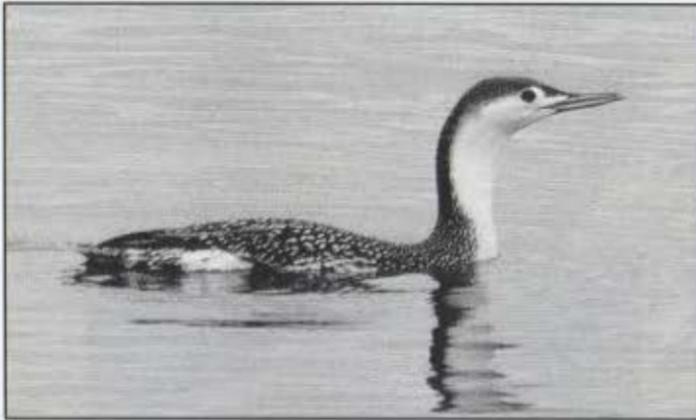


Figure 2

Mark Szantyr photo

It is a Red-throated Loon in adult winter plumage. But it has that flank patch!

It is not widely known that Red-throated Loons can and many times do show a white patch at the rear flanks just above the waterline. This patch sometimes extends farther forward, causing most of the flank above the waterline to appear white. When it is restricted to the patch at the rear, it can

be very similar to that "diagnostic" patch shown by Arctic Loon. Red-throated loons can also hold their bills surprisingly horizontal, again looking like an Arctic Loon. Add to this the fact that Arctic Loon is known to hold its bill slightly above horizontal and the matter gets stickier.

The adult winter plumage of Red-throated Loon is very black and white, and with its smaller size, it can be mistaken for an Arctic Loon. Figure 2 is the same one as the first darker image, just lightened and sharpened. Good looks at the bird in question show the distinctive face pattern, the dark eye surrounded by white giving the bird a very plain-faced appearance. The distinctive bill shape, that is, a straight upper mandible and a lower mandible that bends upward at the midpoint, is obvious here. In the darker image and in poor conditions, the bill could look similar to the dagger-like bill of Arctic Loon.

I know of at least one instance where this "field mark" has led experienced birders down the fabled garden path. It is a good practice to study regularly occurring birds in a variety of lighting and weather conditions to know the amazing array of "looks" they can have. Putting all your eggs in the basket of "one diagnostic field mark" can lead to an omelet of erased twitches on your life list...or something just as silly as this analogy.



Photo Challenge No. 58

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler (ISSN 1077-0283) is devoted to the study of birds and their conservation in Connecticut and is published quarterly (January, April, July, and October) by the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a computer disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

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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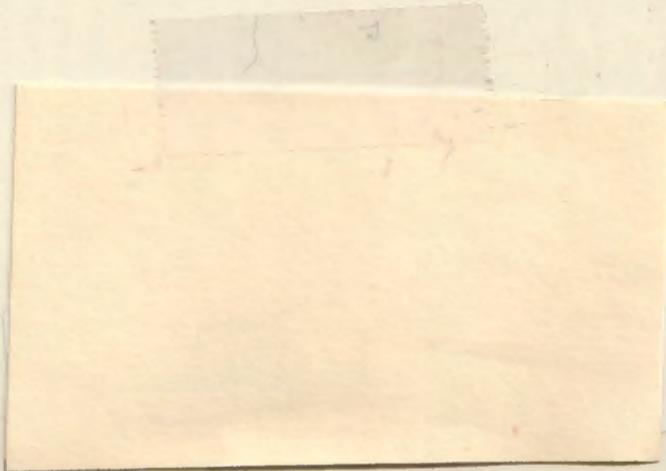
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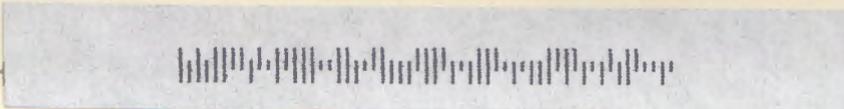
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Photo Challenge

Mark Szántyr



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THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology



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ABOUT OUR COVER

Eastern Bluebird by Paul Carrier

The Eastern Bluebird's Connecticut population has rebounded well from low points in the mid-20th century, but recent results from the state's Summer Bird Counts show a declining trend.

THE 2007 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

By Patrick Comins and Joseph Zeranski

Introduction

This year 189 count day species were recorded, up from last year's 181 and very close to the 188 recorded two years ago. Only one additional species was recorded in the count period. Two hundred and forty species have been recorded on the SBC since 1997. There were 257 observers, in 135 parties, a record high level of participation; 1349.8 party hours were tallied, also a record high.

There were 105,949 individual birds recorded, 104% of the previous ten years' average, up by more than 6,000 over last year's results and a little more than 5,000 shy of the alltime high. The ten most abundant species recorded were, in descending order: **American Robin, Common Grackle, European Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Canada Goose, Gray Catbird, House Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Mourning Dove and Red-eyed Vireo.** This is very similar to the last two years' top ten lists, with each of the ten species returning and only differing slightly in order.

Seventeen species were represented by a single individual: **Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Bobwhite, Sora, American Coot, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Red Knot, Black Tern, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Swainson's Thrush, Nashville Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.** Of these, about half are potential nesters and the rest are migrants or non-nesting visitors. One hybrid combination, a "**Brewster's**" Warbler, was also represented by a single

individual.

Only one species was recorded within the count period but not on the count days, but it was a significant one, the SBC's first ever **White-winged Dove**. This record is pending a decision by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut on whether the bird is of wild origin. This individual had been present in a Branford yard since February and represents a species that has been reported with increasing frequency in the Northeast.

There were 29 species recorded on the count days that do not regularly breed in Connecticut and can be considered either late migrants or non-nesting visitors: **Brant**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Bufflehead**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Common Loon**, **American Coot**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Semipalmated Plover**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Red Knot**, **Sanderling**, **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, **Least Sandpiper**, **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Dunlin**, **Laughing Gull**, **Ring-billed Gull**, **Forster's Tern**, **Black Tern**, **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, **Swainson's Thrush**, **Blackpoll Warbler**, **Mourning 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.

Noteworthy from this group was New Haven's first-ever **Ring-necked Duck**, New Milford/Pawling's first **Ruddy Ducks**, and Greenwich/Stamford's first **Sanderlings** and **Olive-sided Flycatchers**. New statewide highs were recorded for: **Common Loon** (9) **Black-bellied Plover** (9), **Dunlin** (11), and **Laughing Gull** (111, 105 of which were in Greenwich/Stamford!).



Paul Fusco photo

White-rumped Sandpiper was one of the late migrants recorded by the count.

White-rumped Sandpipers and **Red Knots** are always noteworthy when seen in mid-June with only three and one previous SBC records, respectively. The spate of shorebird records are indicative of a spring shorebird migration that was seemingly prolonged.

Greater Scaup was missed for the third year in a row after having been recorded in each of the ten previous years.

Notable Nesting Species

Gadwall are not all that unusual in the nesting season on the shore, but one recorded in Hartford was the first record for that area. New Milford/Pawling recorded its first-ever **American Black Duck**, but this is a relatively new count area. **American Bittern** can be a late spring migrant. One was recorded in Greenwich/Stamford, seemingly an annual occurrence, three were

recorded in Woodbury/Roxbury, the first ever for that area, where some appropriate nesting habitat is present, and two more in Litchfield Hills made for a new statewide high of six. Any evidence of nesting by this state-endangered species should be reported to the COA Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) Project. Woodbury/Roxbury also recorded its first ever **Least Bittern**, along with the two recorded in Hartford. Being a state-threatened species, the same caveat applies regarding the NDDB project.

Two **Glossy Ibis** were recorded in New Haven, a species that has been recorded in about half of the previous counts. It seems under-represented for its abundance in the state, but the population center for this species in eastern coastal Connecticut is not covered well by SBC. New Milford/Pawling recorded its first **Sora**, and Litchfield Hills recorded a single **Northern**



Hank Golet photo

The count found Least Bitterns in two circles.

Saw-whet Owl; two uncommon and secretive species that always tough to find in the state. New Haven recorded its annual **Common Nighthawk**, and there were single individuals recorded in Woodbury/Roxbury and New Milford/Pawling. The New Haven record raises the possibility of nesting because of the annual recurrence. Most recent nesting records for this species have been on gravel rooftops in urban settings.

Storrs recorded its first-ever **Common Ravens** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** and New Haven recorded a "**Brewster's**" **Warbler**, the more common (compared with "Lawrence's Warbler"), but still rare, hybrid between Blue and Golden-winged Warblers. Barkhamsted recorded a **Nashville Warbler**, a species that once nested within the cities of New Haven and Bridgeport, but is now rare as a nester and confined to the northern-most reaches of the state. **Northern Parula** is another example of a formerly common nester that is now quite rare. One was recorded in Barkhamsted and five in Litchfield Hills. A single **Yellow-breasted Chat** was recorded in Greenwich/Stamford, where 40 years ago it was a localized regular nester. Whether or not this represents a nesting attempt is unknown, but it is unlikely. Three **Grasshopper Sparrows** were recorded in Hartford, the last 'stronghold' for this state-endangered species. As always, **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was grossly under-represented on the SBC, with only 11 individuals reported, partly a testament to the secretive nature of this sparrow and partly because its population strongholds lie east of our SBC circles.

Increasing species (See graphs Page 155)

The nature of the SBC makes it difficult to quantify increases or decreases. This year's great weather on count period days may have contributed to the bumper

crop of ten-year high count species. It is interesting to note and supportive of the weather link that when ten-year high and low counts are compared, large numbers of high counts tend to occur in years when the weather is mild and good for birds and birders, while bumper crops of low counts occur when there is prolonged rain, cold or especially hot and humid conditions.

While year-to-year count fluctuations and lack of standardized data collection rules call for a large degree of caution when interpreting the SBC results as long-term population changes, there are a few species that show a clear and continuing upward trend. While not recorded at record levels this year, **Osprey** has clearly staged a remarkable comeback, thanks in large part to the banning of DDT in 1972 and to the efforts of the Connecticut DEP and many volunteers to erect nesting platforms in appropriate habitat. **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** show a clear upward population trend over the last 10 years, perhaps the result of the increased popularity of landscaping with nectar-rich plantings in suburban situations. **Hairy Woodpeckers** continue to be recorded in larger numbers year after year. This is contradictory to data from the Breeding Bird Survey, which shows a declining trend for Connecticut, but does make sense in light of the continued maturation of the state's woodlands. **Common Ravens** continue their success in the state, which is perhaps a result of a species becoming more adapted to suburban habitats. Formerly restricted to rugged natural areas in the northern parts of the state, they are now nesting in larger cities, such as Meriden and New Haven, provided that suitable nesting sites are present (cliff faces, large trees with a suitable 'shelf' for nesting). They are even regularly observed foraging at dumpsters at urban fast food restaurants and grocery stores.



Mark Szantyr photo

Count results show an upward trend for White-breasted Nuthatch.

White-breasted Nuthatches were at a record high this year and show a clear and continued increasing trend. This is a species that is clearly adapting well to suburbia, will visit feeders year-round, and regularly nests in close proximity to houses, so an increasing trend is not surprising. **Orchard Oriole** continues to be found in larger numbers and represents a species that is expanding its nesting range northwards with increasing populations at the historic northern boundaries of its nesting range and beyond. The increasing number of **Purple Finches** over the past ten years is a bit of a surprise and is counter to longer-term trends for our region. Perhaps the corresponding recent decline of House Finches has allowed for a Purple Finches to recover, although there is minimal overlap in nesting habitat between the two species.

Ten-year high counts

New high counts of individuals for the period 1997-2007 were recorded for the following species: **Wood Duck, Common Loon, American Bittern, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Black-bellied Plover, American Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Laughing Gull, Common Tern, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Common Raven, White-breasted Nuthatch, Veery, American Robin, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Common Grackle, Orchard Oriole and Purple Finch.**

Species well above 1997-2007 average

Nesting species that were recorded at 140% or more of the 1997-2007 average include: **Wood Duck (157%), Black Vulture (175%), Osprey (140%), Bald Eagle (161%), Cooper's Hawk (140%), Red-shouldered Hawk (147%), Peregrine Falcon (219%), American Oystercatcher (167%), Willet (192%), Common Tern (219%), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (169%), Blue-headed Vireo (176%), Common Raven (233%), Carolina Wren (174%), Magnolia Warbler (155%), Black-throated Blue Warbler (140%), Hooded Warbler (146%), Dark-eyed Junco (145%), Orchard Oriole (192%), Purple Finch (144%).**

While all of these numbers would need to be interpreted with some caution, the high number of **Common Terns** needs to be interpreted with special caution. Over 95% of the Common Terns in Connecticut nest at Falkner Island and would not be picked up by SBC, so even record high numbers would not be indicative of how this species is doing in Connecticut.

Decreasing species (See graphs Pages 151-154)

As is the case for increasing trends, a large degree of caution is necessary to interpret SBC results as indicative of long term trends, but some species do appear to have clear and continued decreasing trends over the long term. Since SBC can be an early warning system for broad-scale population changes, a few species that appear to have clear declining trends are worthy of note.

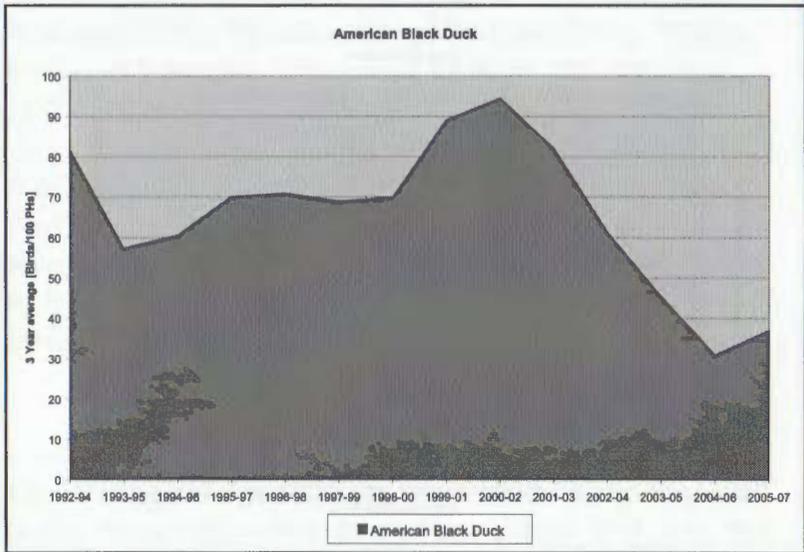
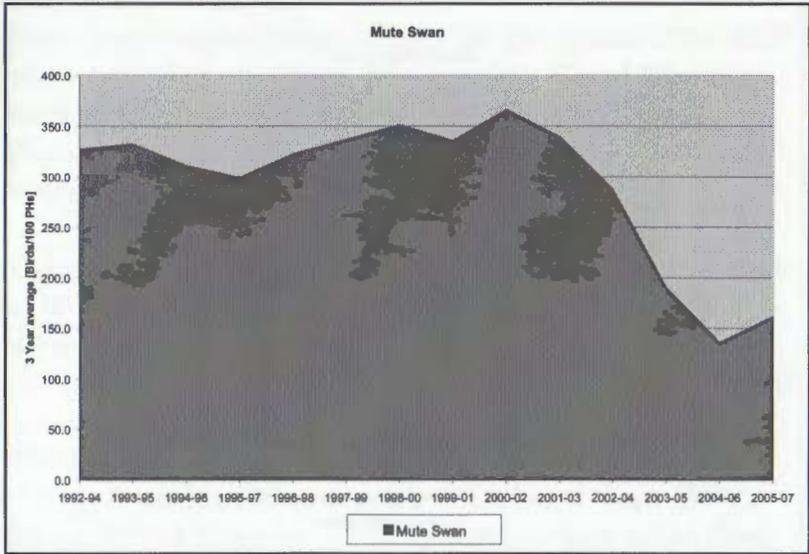
Snowy Egret appears to have a sharply declining trend since 1997 and while not recorded in record low numbers or at <60% of the ten-year average, it is worth keeping an eye on this state-threatened species. **Least Terns** show significant year-to-year variation in where and how successfully they nest, but there are clearly fewer Least Terns being recorded on the SBC. A limited number of potential nesting areas, a scarcity of strong winter coastal storms that can improve nesting habitat, increasing demand for our beaches for general recreational activities and other factors combine to make Least Terns a continued focus of conservation efforts in Connecticut. **Belted Kingfishers** are among several water-dependant species that have been recorded in sharply lower numbers each year since 1999, a phenomenon that is discussed in more detail below. **Northern Flickers** are clearly being recorded in lower numbers year after year. A potential factor includes the loss of farmland and other open habitats, as downward trends are noted for several other species that utilize grassland, shrubland and other open country habitats including: **White-eyed Vireo, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow** and **Eastern**

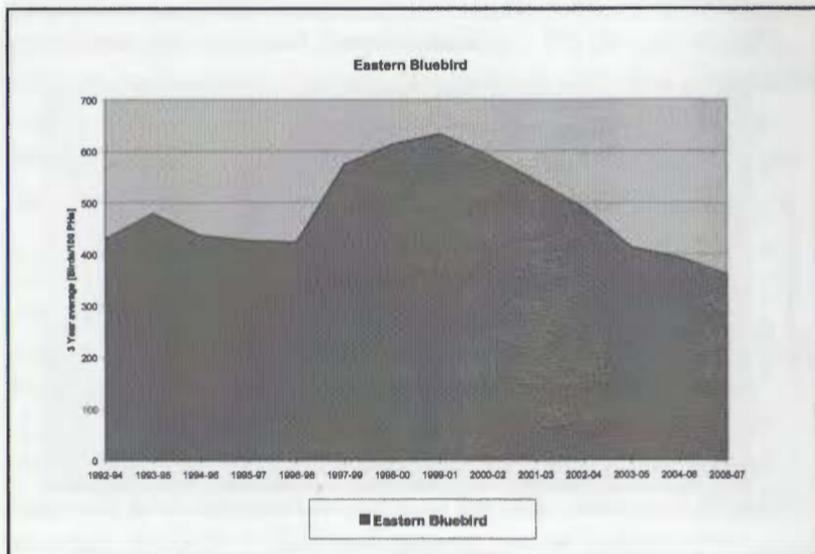
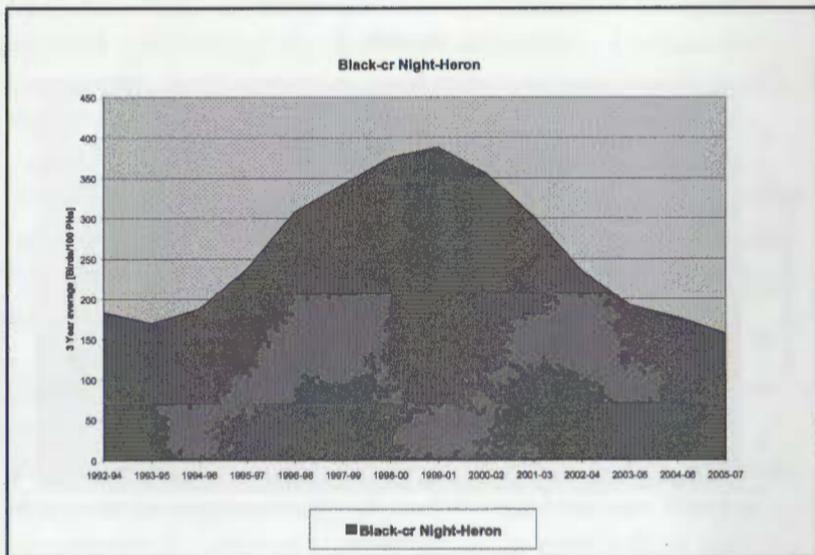
Meadowlark. **Eastern Bluebirds** are a bird from this habitat with a slightly different situation. Unlike the long-term declining trends of most open country birds, there was an increasing trend for bluebirds for many years. Numbers recorded on the SBC have, however, been in sharp decline since 1999. Two species that have been discussed in past analyses show declines that are likely related to disease: **American Crow** (West Nile virus) and **House Finch** (conjunctivitis).

One of the few forest-nesting birds with a clear declining trend from SBC data is the **Worm-eating Warbler**, a species that relies on a healthy forest under story and large unfragmented forest blocks. They are especially vulnerable to invasive plants that can dominate a forest under story layer and to the effects of excessive deer browse. Additionally, forest interior habitat in Connecticut is declining at a much greater rate than generalized forest habitat. While our state's forests continue to mature, for several decades there has been a decline in the overall amount of forest habitat and a significant decline in the amount of forest interior habitat over the last 20 years.

Short term declines in birds found near water.

Several species have been recorded in decreasing numbers since ~2000, leading some to question whether West Nile virus, which was first detected in North America in 1999, may be playing a role in population declines for species in addition to the well-publicized impacts to American Crows. The SBC does not provide enough insight to this to draw any conclusions on this hypothesis. Correlation can not be interpreted as causation, but the apparent decline in several species since ~2000 is worth noting. Four graphs are provided as examples.





Ten-year low counts

New low counts of individuals for the period 1997-2007 were recorded only for a few species: **Great Black-backed Gull**, **Whip-poor-will**, **Belted Kingfisher**, **Purple Martin**, **Bank Swallow**, **Brown Thrasher** and **Worm-eating Warbler**.

Taking into account nesting species that were recorded at 60% or less of the 1997-2007 averages highlights several additional species: **Ring-necked Pheasant** (38%), **Northern Bobwhite** (36%) (note that populations of both of these species rely heavily on released stock), **Black-crowned Night-Heron** (60%), **Piping Plover** (59%), **American Woodcock** (60%), **Least Tern** (50%), **Black-billed Cuckoo** (42%), **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (43%), **Whip-poor-will** (27%), **Purple Martin** (40%), **Bank Swallow** (49%), **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (39%), **Winter Wren** (51%), **Brown Thrasher** (46%), **Prairie Warbler** (59%), **Worm-eating Warbler** (55%), **White-throated Sparrow** (55%); and **Eastern Meadowlark** (43%).

It is interesting to note that while **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were quite hard to find in the nesting season this year, we are experiencing a major invasion of this species this fall. It will be interesting to see if some of these remain in our area as nesters next year.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, 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.

2007 Connecticut Summer Bird Count Totals

Species known to nest recently within Connecticut are shown in italics. The high/low/rare statistics below are given for local SBCs at least ten years old. For SBCs held for fewer than 10 years (NM/P) only new Count Day species are noted. Stats under State Totals pertain to the prior ten SBCs.

- XX = "Rare"- noted on fewer than five years during previously censused 10 years [outlined box]
- XX = New Count Day[CD] species; not recorded on previously censused 10 years [darkened outlined box]
- XX = More birds were tallied than were on any of the previously censused 10 years [underlined number]
- XX** = Fewer birds were tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 year [boldfaced number]
- 0** = Not recorded on CD 2007, but recorded on all the previously censused 10 years [boldfaced zero]

SPECIES	<i>Coastal SBCs</i>		<i>CT</i>	<i>Upland SBCs:</i>					2007 State Totals	% of 97-06 average	# yrs obs	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley Hfd	Mid-state		Northern						Ave	Low	High
				WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Snow Goose										0%	3	0	0	1
<i>Canada Goose</i>	1560	325	353	363	469	280	424	58	3832	87%	10	4404	3585	5197
Brant	7	5							12	109%	9	11	0	29
<i>Mute Swan</i>	85	144	11	11	45		10		306	98%	10	312	165	462
<i>Wood Duck</i>	174	11	34	128	40	38	102	8	535	157%	10	341	281	418

<i>Gadwall</i>		5		1					6	81%	7	7	0	15
<i>American Wigeon</i>										0%	4	0	0	1
<i>American Black Duck</i>	65	13		3	1		4		86	119%	10	72	30	120
<i>Mallard</i>	867	215	483	141	117	91	138	12	2064	88%	10	2339	1460	3022
MallardxAm Black Duck			1			1			2					
<i>Blue-winged Teal</i>										0%	4	1	0	8
<i>Northern Shoveler</i>										0%	3	0	0	2
<i>Northern Pintail</i>										0%	3	0	0	1
<i>Green-winged Teal</i>										0%	5	1	0	4
<i>Ring-necked Duck</i>		1							1	333%	4	0	0	1
<i>Greater Scaup</i>										0%	9	1	0	4
<i>Lesser Scaup</i>										0%	3	0	0	1
<i>White-winged Scoter</i>										0%	2	0	0	1
<i>Long-tailed Duck</i>	2								2	143%	7	1	0	4
<i>Bufflehead</i>	1								1	83%	6	1	0	4
<i>Common Goldeneye</i>	1								1	100%	5	1	0	6
<i>Hooded Merganser</i>				1	1	8	11		21	74%	10	28	11	72
<i>Common Merganser</i>				27	1	75	7		110	87%	10	127	85	196
<i>Red-breasted Merganser</i>	1								1	50%	9	2	0	7
<i>Ruddy Duck</i>		4			2				6	333%	5	2	0	10
<i>Ring-necked Pheasant</i>	2		1	4				1	8	38%	10	21	3	93

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007	% of	#	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	97-06	yr	Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals	average	obs			
<i>Ruffed Grouse</i>						17	1		18	85%	10	21	13	28
<i>Wild Turkey</i>	92	44	7	29	39	190	119	2	522	105%	10	497	335	645
<i>Northern Bobwhite</i>			1						1	36%	9	3	0	6
<i>Red-throated Loon</i>										0%	6	1	0	8
<i>Common Loon</i>	6			2		1			2	196%	10	5	0	8
<i>Pied-billed Grebe</i>										0%	8	2	0	7
<i>Horned Grebe</i>										0%	3	0	0	2
<i>Red-necked Grebe</i>										0%	3	0	0	1
<i>Manx Shearwater</i>											CP	0	0	0
<i>Wilson's Storm-petrel</i>										0%	1	0	0	3
<i>Northern Gannet</i>											CP	0	0	0
<i>Double-crested Cormorant</i>	682	209	9	2	17	5	12	1	937	126%	10	744	574	964
<i>Great Cormorant</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>American Bittern</i>			1				2		6	400%	8	2	0	3
<i>Least Bittern</i>			2						3	125%	10	2	0	7

<i>Great Blue Heron</i>	10	8	38	18	35	47	52	3	211	120%	10	175	88	248
<i>Great Egret</i>	186	48							234	88%	10	265	188	376
<i>Snowy Egret</i>	67	23							90	62%	10	146	70	249
<i>Little Blue Heron</i>										0%	9	2	0	5
<i>Tricolored Heron</i>										0%	2	0	0	1
<i>Cattle Egret</i>										0%	1	0	0	4
<i>Green Heron</i>	36	8	12	4	3	2	4		69	95%	10	73	59	86
<i>Black-cr Night-Heron</i>	167	26							193	60%	10	321	165	458
<i>Yellow-cr Night-Heron</i>	1	3							4	78%	10	5	1	21
<i>Glossy Ibis</i>		2							2	250%	5	1	0	4
<i>Black Vulture</i>	3			10	5		3		21	175%	9	12	0	26
<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	48	10	32	51	53	58	72	12	336	105%	10	319	251	382
<i>Osprey</i>	43	42		2		3			90	140%	10	64	22	101
<i>Bald Eagle</i>		4	1			12	3		20	161%	10	12	2	22
<i>Northern Harrier</i>										0%	6	2	0	5
<i>Sharp-shinned Hawk</i>		1		1		5	2		9	95%	10	10	7	14
<i>Cooper's Hawk</i>	3	1	2	5	11	15	8		45	140%	10	32	21	40
<i>accipiter species</i>														
<i>Northern Goshawk</i>		1				2			3	67%	10	5	2	7
<i>Red-shouldered Hawk</i>	6	5	2	15	5	16	6	2	57	147%	10	39	25	51
<i>Broad-winged Hawk</i>	6			2	4	22	10	5	49	85%	10	58	46	66

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007	% of	#	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	97-06	yrs	Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals	average	obs			
<i>Red-tailed Hawk</i>	71	17	23	41	28	32	40	10	262	103%	10	255	177	341
<i>American Kestrel</i>		1	1	3	3	1	2	2	13	108%	10	12	3	20
<i>Peregrine Falcon</i>	1	4	2						7	219%	10	3	1	6
<i>Clapper Rail</i>	4	4							8	71%	10	11	2	21
<i>King Rail</i>										0%	4	1	0	2
<i>Virginia Rail</i>				6			22		28	97%	10	29	15	51
<i>Sora</i>					1				1	77%	8	1	1	3
<i>Common Moorhen</i>										0%	2	0	0	2
<i>American Coot</i>	1								1	143%	5	1	0	3
<i>Black-bellied Plover</i>	2	7							2	360%	6	3	0	7
<i>American Golden Plover</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Semipalmated Plover</i>		6							6	107%	5	6	0	35
<i>Piping Plover</i>		8							8	59%	10	14	6	24
<i>Killdeer</i>	54	17	40	34	20	18	34	2	219	86%	10	254	158	351
<i>American Oystercatcher</i>	53	7							60	167%	10	36	21	57
<i>Greater Yellowlegs</i>		1							1	40%	8	3	0	5

Solitary Sandpiper	1						1	125%	6	1	0	2	
<i>Willet</i>	5	10					15	192%	8	8	0	24	
<i>Spotted Sandpiper</i>	4	4	12	4	3	4	31	87%	10	36	26	49	
<i>Upland Sandpiper</i>									CP	0	0	0	
Ruddy Turnstone	8	3					11	216%	9	5	0	16	
Red Knot		1					1	333%	1	0	0	3	
Sanderling	3						3	65%	6	5	0	21	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	12	203					215	346%	8	62	0	349	
Least Sandpiper		30					30	833%	4	4	0	30	
White-rumped Sandpiper		6					6	462%	3	1	0	6	
Dunlin	11	CP					11	1571%	3	1	0	4	
Short-billed Dowitcher								0%	3	2	0	8	
Common Snipe								0%	1	0	0	1	
<i>American Woodcock</i>				3	5	1	1	10	60%	10	17	9	24
Laughing Gull	105	6					111	531%	10	21	1	48	
Bonaparte's Gull								0%	1	0	0	1	
Ring-billed Gull	94	232		19	9	0	354	68%	10	524	311	795	
<i>Herring Gull</i>	501	188	10	10	2		711	85%	10	832	532	1096	
Glaucous Gull								0%	1	0	0	1	
<i>Great Black-backed Gull</i>	157	39	9	8			213	75%	10	282	216	414	
Caspian Tern								0%	1	0	0	2	

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007 State Totals	% of 97-06 average	# yrs obs	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Royal Tern									0%	1	0	0	1	
Roseate Tern									0%	1	0	0	1	
Common Tern	357	170							527	219%	10	241	84	518
Forster's Tern	4								4	400%	4	1	0	7
Least Tern		107							107	50%	10	215	50	355
Black Tern	1								1	1000%	1	0	0	1
Black Skimmer		6							6	71%	9	9	0	26
Rock Pigeon	215	293	273	36	14	53	66	84	1034	78%	10	1323	898	2543
White-winged Dove		CP							CP		0			
Mourning Dove	788	338	486	370	190	301	366	58	2897	116%	10	2507	2236	2896
Monk Parakeet	13	56							69	76%	10	91	14	288
Black-billed Cuckoo		1		6	1		4		12	42%	10	29	8	69
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	6		1	14		1	3	1	26	70%	10	37	4	144
cuckoo species	4							1	5					
Eastern Screech-Owl	21	1	1	10	6		7		46	118%	10	39	25	57
Great Horned Owl	7			5		6	11	2	31	108%	10	29	10	39

<i>Barred Owl</i>	7	1	1	9		29	21	2	70	95%	10	74	48	131
<i>Northern Saw-whet Owl</i>							1		1	43%	9	2	0	7
<i>Nighthawk, Common</i>		1		1	1				3	21%	10	14	2	77
<i>Chuck-will's-widow</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Whip-poor-will</i>						5			5	27%	10	19	11	25
<i>Chimney Swift</i>	99	49	82	101	50	103	99	16	599	88%	10	682	576	771
<i>Ruby-throated Hummingbird</i>	18	6	4	17	18	46	54	7	170	137%	10	124	83	179
<i>Belted Kingfisher</i>	14	3	5	9	6	17	14	2	70	61%	10	115	71	166
<i>Red-headed Woodpecker</i>										0%	2	0	0	1
<i>Red-bellied Woodpecker</i>	241	73	64	92	51	43	71	5	640	133%	10	482	347	573
<i>Yellow-bellied Sapsucker</i>				31	57	239	167		494	169%	10	293	162	452
<i>Downy Woodpecker</i>	208	67	43	71	76	132	114	12	723	103%	10	700	501	905
<i>Hairy Woodpecker</i>	65	20	10	26	29	64	62	3	286	136%	10	210	154	243
<i>Northern Flicker</i>	228	42	63	39	41	56	43	2	514	86%	10	599	481	694
<i>Pileated Woodpecker</i>	31	3	4	16	17	41	32		144	139%	10	104	80	126
<i>Olive-sided Flycatcher</i>		2							2	250%	6	1	0	2
<i>Eastern Wood-Pewee</i>	134	54	56	91	50	120	161	13	679	117%	10	582	441	797
<i>Yellow-bellied Flycatcher</i>										0%	6	1	0	5
<i>Acadian Flycatcher</i>	5	1	1	5	8	1	4		25	107%	10	23	7	39
<i>Alder Flycatcher</i>			3	8	3	14	81	2	111	116%	10	95	74	138
<i>Willow Flycatcher</i>	45	35	41	36	19	21	55		252	100%	10	252	215	293

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007 State Totals	% of 97-06 average	# yrs obs	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
<i>Least Flycatcher</i>			1	19	10	42	55	3	130	93%	10	140	98	166
Epidonax species														
<i>Eastern Phoebe</i>	63	25	32	109	54	167	171	14	635	87%	10	728	496	907
<i>Great Crested Flycatcher</i>	87	47	31	96	31	49	99	4	444	103%	10	430	352	529
<i>Eastern Kingbird</i>	82	35	54	106	62	95	114	12	560	98%	10	570	489	683
<i>White-eyed Vireo</i>	11	1	4	1				1	18	69%	10	26	9	49
<i>Yellow-throated Vireo</i>	39	4	5	54	44	39	74	16	275	124%	10	222	169	276
<i>Blue-headed Vireo</i>	2			12	4	141	67	1	227	176%	10	129	79	187
<i>Warbling Vireo</i>	204	35	26	155	66	45	126	13	740	123%	10	600	517	725
<i>Red-eyed Vireo</i>	276	94	61	317	177	1127	624	22	2698	116%	10	2321	1640	2888
<i>Blue Jay</i>	465	167	133	163	126	345	238	12	1649	111%	10	1483	1328	1729
<i>American Crow</i>	420	160	165	380	326	375	560	28	2414	69%	10	3491	2202	4516
<i>Fish Crow</i>	26	26	10	7	1	6	2		78	113%	10	69	54	94
<i>Common Raven</i>	5	2	4	6	12	70	5	1	110	233%	10	47	28	73
<i>Purple Martin</i>	8	4					2		14	40%	10	35	17	54
<i>Tree Swallow</i>	200	56	116	180	157	424	505	80	1718	99%	10	1743	1422	2176

<i>Northern Rough-w Swallow</i>	114	40	20	44	34	73	23	1	349	90%	10	390	323	540
<i>Bank Swallow</i>	1	9	65	23	17	23	4	6	148	49%	10	305	202	404
<i>Cliff Swallow</i>	105		2	59	70	12	29		277	93%	10	297	190	420
<i>Barn Swallow</i>	447	152	47	287	141	178	335	111	1698	109%	10	1561	1339	1843
<i>Black-capped Chickadee</i>	292	87	62	270	129	637	390	36	1903	103%	10	1856	1602	2064
<i>Tufted Titmouse</i>	437	100	106	250	163	323	276	28	1683	98%	10	1710	1391	2269
<i>Red-breasted Nuthatch</i>	2					10	6		18	39%	10	46	14	81
<i>White-breasted Nuthatch</i>	138	17	29	74	64	158	124	22	626	127%	10	493	349	601
<i>Brown Creeper</i>						33	45		78	96%	10	82	41	130
<i>Carolina Wren</i>	178	42	53	49	37	14	31	12	416	174%	10	239	61	420
<i>House Wren</i>	310	41	44	145	79	168	115	9	911	112%	10	815	544	1016
<i>Winter Wren</i>	1					16	11		28	51%	10	55	14	88
<i>Marsh Wren</i>	23	24	3		3		16		69	71%	10	97	51	167
<i>Golden-crowned Kinglet</i>	1						3	2	6	81%	9	7	0	16
<i>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</i>	32		5	67	18	28	55	12	217	93%	10	234	169	308
<i>Eastern Bluebird</i>	53	7	5	105	70	76	126	15	457	79%	10	578	441	793
<i>Veery</i>	149	35	17	258	235	821	576	28	2112	136%	10	1560	1298	1950
<i>Bicknell's Thrush</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Swainson's Thrush</i>				1					1	167%	5	1	0	2
<i>Hermit Thrush</i>				9	3	162	54		235	132%	10	178	109	243
<i>Wood Thrush</i>	246	64	90	201	93	261	201	17	1173	91%	10	1287	1065	1503

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007	% of	#	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state			Northern		State	97-06	yr	Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals	average	obs			
<i>American Robin</i>	2267	549	1273	770	442	841	914	107	7163	124%	10	5782	4750	6656
<i>Gray Catbird</i>	898	205	242	528	417	608	664	72	3634	97%	10	3732	3140	4219
<i>Northern Mockingbird</i>	118	67	90	77	37	19	12	13	433	74%	10	586	403	754
<i>Brown Thrasher</i>	6	6	3	6	2	1	2		26	46%	10	57	27	94
<i>European Starling</i>	1421	1072	1237	461	365	266	362	205	5389	82%	10	6549	4766	8852
<i>Cedar Waxwing</i>	203	142	186	202	190	279	380	16	1598	106%	10	1506	1181	2387
<i>Blue-winged Warbler</i>	71	27	18	86	16	35	64	6	323	79%	10	408	271	623
"Brewster's Warbler"		1							1					
<i>Golden-winged Warbler</i>										0%	6	1	0	2
<i>Tennessee Warbler</i>										0%	2	0	0	1
<i>Nashville Warbler</i>						1			1	77%	5	1	0	7
<i>Northern Parula</i>						1	5		6	122%	10	5	1	11
<i>Yellow Warbler</i>	581	131	238	301	186	188	451	34	2110	104%	10	2029	1791	2231
<i>Chestnut-sided Warbler</i>	4	5	8	74	51	260	237	3	642	99%	10	652	553	761
<i>Magnolia Warbler</i>	2			1	2	112	22		139	155%	10	90	67	117
<i>Cape May Warbler</i>										0%	1	0	0	1

<i>Black-throated Blue Warbler</i>			1	7	2	170	63		243	140%	10	173	120	219
<i>Yellow-rumped Warbler</i>				4		79	44		127	100%	10	127	97	169
<i>Black-thr Green Warbler</i>	3	6		2	4	187	111	7	320	101%	10	317	204	436
<i>Blackburnian Warbler</i>				3		98	50	1	152	88%	10	174	107	243
<i>Yellow-throated Warbler</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Pine Warbler</i>	70	27	13	38	3	151	93	7	402	118%	10	340	202	435
<i>Prairie Warbler</i>	8	9	11	46	11	2	2	6	95	59%	10	160	92	243
<i>Bay-breasted Warbler</i>										0%	2	1	0	5
<i>Blackpoll Warbler</i>				2			1		3	60%	9	5	0	11
<i>Cerulean Warbler</i>				1	1	3	5		10	110%	10	9	2	16
<i>Black-&-White Warbler</i>	36	25	3	94	31	156	153	0	498	93%	10	534	417	639
<i>American Redstart</i>	42	7	46	217	110	362	435	4	1230	113%	10	1093	896	1320
<i>Prothonotary Warbler</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Worm-eating Warbler</i>	27	12	2	19	4	4	4	3	75	55%	10	136	89	201
<i>Ovenbird</i>	125	94	22	189	86	618	491	22	1647	123%	10	1335	1112	1556
<i>Northern Waterthrush</i>	2			3	3	14	32		54	115%	10	47	22	59
<i>Louisiana Waterthrush</i>	41	7	3	55	11	37	28	6	188	127%	10	148	84	194
<i>Kentucky Warbler</i>										0%	4	1	0	7
<i>Mourning Warbler</i>			1						1	59%	7	2	0	4
<i>Common Yellowthroat</i>	230	43	120	243	158	604	491	20	1909	110%	10	1738	1516	1993
<i>Hooded Warbler</i>	1	1		29	12	3	2		48	146%	10	33	11	72

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007	% of	#	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern			State	97-06	yrs	Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St	Totals					
Wilson's Warbler									0%	1	0	0	1	
Canada Warbler				5	2	27	41		75	135%	10	56	39	83
Yellow-breasted Chat	1								1	200%	4	1	0	2
Scarlet Tanager	107	35	31	116	57	241	137	11	735	108%	10	678	533	839
Eastern Towhee	93	49	65	102	107	114	134	13	677	109%	10	621	511	705
Chipping Sparrow	412	72	128	411	270	588	481	87	2449	125%	10	1965	1701	2248
Field Sparrow	10	2	15	52	12	7	10	1	109	71%	10	154	82	203
Savannah Sparrow			24	20	1		8	2	55	133%	10	42	12	63
Grasshopper Sparrow			3						3	111%	9	3	0	6
Nelson's Sh-tailed Sparrow	1								1	200%	5	1	0	1
Salm Sharp-tailed Sparrow	5	6							11	79%	10	14	5	26
Seaside Sparrow										0%	6	4	0	11
Song Sparrow	584	224	327	348	325	591	684	50	3133	126%	10	2493	2093	2915
Swamp Sparrow	6	7	11	17	34	59	171	2	307	93%	10	329	252	457
White-throated Sparrow	1						4		5	50%	10	10	2	17
White-crowned Sparrow										0%	2	1	0	8

<i>Dark-eyed Junco</i>						44	15		<u>59</u>	145%	10	41	29	53
<i>Northern Cardinal</i>	455	180	209	284	184	<u>254</u>	284	42	<u>1892</u>	114%	10	1654	1452	1844
<i>Rose-breasted Grosbeak</i>	<u>61</u>	28	34	87	45	74	96	10	435	107%	10	407	351	509
<i>Blue Grosbeak</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Indigo Bunting</i>	<u>112</u>	38	20	105	51	94	66	19	505	120%	10	422	290	609
<i>Dickcissel</i>										0%	1	0	0	1
<i>Bobolink</i>			41	149	37	<u>57</u>	228	5	517	111%	10	466	335	571
<i>Red-winged Blackbird</i>	<u>959</u>	482	<u>692</u>	768	573	350	964	208	4996	112%	10	4448	3851	5271
<i>Eastern Meadowlark</i>				1	6		1	3	11	43%	10	26	8	39
<i>Common Grackle</i>	2322	612	772	592	364	272	467	86	<u>5487</u>	116%	10	4734	3871	5396
<i>Boat-tailed Grackle</i>										0%	4	1	0	5
<i>Brown-headed Cowbird</i>	<u>313</u>	106	159	219	93	117	183	30	1220	105%	10	1165	922	1403
<i>Orchard Oriole</i>	<u>48</u>	4	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	8		2		<u>112</u>	192%	10	58	38	85
<i>Baltimore Oriole</i>	<u>412</u>	65	121	185	101	125	173	37	1226	115%	10	1067	892	1400
<i>Purple Finch</i>				<u>12</u>	8	<u>99</u>	78		<u>197</u>	144%	10	137	80	167
<i>House Finch</i>	245	70	117	218	110	127	158	45	1090	84%	10	1298	945	1487
<i>Pine Siskin</i>										0%	4	1	0	3
<i>American Goldfinch</i>	<u>503</u>	171	280	315	249	532	576	59	2685	111%	10	2419	1927	3030
<i>Evening Grosbeak</i>										0%	3	1	0	2
<i>House Sparrow</i>	1074	304	479	404	223	<u>325</u>	<u>570</u>	166	3545	109%	10	3267	2816	4051
other unidentified/hybrid														

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2007 State Totals	% of 97-06 average	# yrs obs	1997-2006		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Ave	Low	High
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	<u>26033</u>	9449	10550	13289	8778	17360	18248	2242	105949	104%		101409	87437	110964
<i>CD Species</i>	140	129	106	129	114	120	132	91	189	100%		189	181	202
<i>CP Species</i>	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	56%		2	0	6
DEGREE OF EFFORT:														
<i>Observers</i>	62	35	36	27	19	22	52	4	<u>257</u>	112%		229	193	249
<i>Parties</i>	<u>39</u>	16	18	20	11	14	14	3	135	114%		118	102	136
<i>Party Hours</i>	<u>364</u>	128	111	131	101	230	<u>258</u>	29	<u>1349</u>	116%		1159	1008	1329
<i>Day Party Hours</i>	<u>346</u>	126	111	121	98	214	<u>245</u>	28	<u>1290</u>	117%		1105	962	1275
<i>Night Party Hours</i>	17	2	0	9	2	16	12	0	59	109%		54	42	69
<i>Indiv. birds per 10 PHs</i>	716	738	950	1018	873	755	709	780	785	90%		875	743	992
<i>Indiv. birds per Observer</i>	420	270	293	492	462	789	351	561	412	94%		438	397	498
<i>% SBC Observers</i>	24	14	14	11	7	9	20	2	100					
<i>% SBC Party Hours</i>	27	9	8	10	7	17	19	2	100					
<i>% SBC Individual Birds</i>	25	9	10	13	8	16	17	2	100					

2007 CONNECTICUT SUMMER BIRD COUNT

STATEWIDE COUNT TOTALS

Count Dates: June 3, 9-10, 16-17, 23-24. Reported were 189 species (with all but twenty-nine species presumably nesting) on Count Days (CD), consisting of 105,949 CD Individuals, plus one additional Count Period (CP) species. Two hundred & fifty-seven observers (a record high) in 135 Parties (Plys) spent 1349.75 Party Hours (PHs) in the field.

LOCAL COUNT TOTALS

Barkhamsted Summer Bird Count (*founded 1992*)

Count Dates: June 23 - 24 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 120 species, 17360 individual birds, plus one hybrid. Twenty-two observers in 14 Plys spent 230 PHs in the field. Since 1992, 159 CD species have been recorded, 156 in the last ten years, while 120 have been confirmed as nesting.

Participants: Kim Barbieri, Ray Belding, Douglas Carrier, Paul Carrier, Angela Dimmitt, Nikki Hall, Katy Hart, Seth Harvey, Cheryl Hebert, Joshua Hebert, Vicki Hester, Janine LaPlant, Michelle LaPlant, Vima LeJeune, Russ Naylor, Carol Parent, David Rosgen (121 Laurel Way, Winsted, CT 06098-2534; drosgen@optonline.net), John Shugrue, Sam Slater, Bob Stanowski, Duane Tabak, and Fran Zygmunt.

Weather: Every day was mostly Sunny and each night was Clear. 6/23- AM: NW winds 5-7 mph., 48° to 71°F., Night- NW winds 5-10 mph., 71° to 56°F. 6/24- NW winds 5-15 mph. 47° to 78°F., Night- NW winds 0-5 mph., 78° to 58°F.

Count (a rectangle, 12 mile east-west by a 17 mile north-south) Center: 41° 55' N 72° 59' W. Elevation: 285 to 1457 feet. Area covered: Barkhamsted, Burlington

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(northern 1/4), Canton, Colebrook (south half), Granby (southwest 1/4), Hartland, New Hartford, Harwinton (northern edge), Torrington (northern 1/4), and Winchester.

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

Count Dates: June 9 & 10 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 140 species, 23275 individual birds. Sixty-two observers in 39 Pts censused for 363.5 PHs. Since 1976, 226 CD species have been recorded, with the additions this year of Sanderling and Olive-sided Flycatcher; 140 of these have been found nesting

Participants: Tom Andersen, John Askildsen, Pat Bailey, Trudy Battaly, Steve Beal, Joan Becker, Richard Becker, Joe Belanger, Terri Belisle, Gail Benson, Brian Bielfelt, Michael Bochnik, Thomas W. Burke (235 Highland Road, Rye, NY 10580; tom.burke@rsmi.com), Al Collins, Diane Collins, Annette Cunniffe, Peter Davenport, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Debbie Etheridge, Andrew Farnsworth, Frank Gallo, Kathy Gellman, Ted Gilman, Olivia Giuntini, Frank Guida John Hannan, Carolyn Hartel, David Havens, Jalna Jaeger, Kelli Jewell, Paul Lewis, Shaun Martin, Stefan Martin, Janet Mehmel, Anna Mnyukh, Frank Novak, Jim O'Brien, Paul Oehlein, Brian O'Toole, Gary Palmer (34 Field Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807; gejlpalmer@yahoo.com), Drew Panko, Matt Popp, Steve Ricker, Polly Rothstein, David Salmon, Meredith Sampson, Jonna Schaffer, Alice Smith, Bruce Smith, Andy Towle, Robby Towle, Jim Utter, Bill VanLoan, James Vellozzi, Jim Voros, Bill Wallace, Steve Walter, Mike Warner, Alec Wiggin, Joe Zeranski, and Adam Zorn.

Weather: 6/9- NE winds 1-8 mph, 53° to 72°F., 0.03" rain, overcast, mostly cloudy; 6/10- SE winds 0-4 mph., 62° to 71°F., 0.12" rain, overcast, mostly cloudy,

Count (a square, 15x15 mile east-west) Center: 41° 05' N 73° 37' W. Elevation: sea level to at least 740 feet. Area covered (Connecticut, 65% of area): Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, & Stamford; and (New York, 35% of area) Armonk, Bedford (in part), Port Chester, Rye, and White Plains (in part).

Hartford Summer Bird Count (*founded 1991*)

Count Dates: June 9 & 10 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 105 species, 10550 individual birds. Thirty-eight observers in 18 Partys censused over 111 PHs. Gadwall was new this year; from 1991 through 2007 163 CD species have been documented.

Participants: Gina Alfieri, Tim Antanaitis, Sam Brady, Mona Cavallero, Frances D'Amico, Andrew D'Amico, Andrew Dasinger, Paul Desjardins, Jim Dumphy, Liz Dumphy, Carl Ekroth, Peter Egan, Patricia Favreau, Brian Fisher, Flo Fisher, Jim Ford, Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris, Jay Kaplan, (71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT. 06019; jaybrd49@aol.com), Len Kendall, Gil Kleiner (5 Flintlock Ridge, Simsbury, CT 06070; CTWarbler@cs.com), Rick Macsuga, Donna Nowak, Fred Nowak, Mike Pascarelli, Lisa Peterson, Anne Pettengill, Roger Preston, Duffy Schade, Anita Shaffer, Leslie Stophel, Brian Toal, Judy Whittlesey, Mike Whittlesey, Roy Zatarian, and Anthony Zembo.

Weather: 6/9- Steady Rain AM, Cloudy PM, NE winds 5-10 mph., 62° to 75°F. 6/10- AM- Light Rain, drizzle, PM- Cloudy; NNE winds 5-10 mph., 57° to 75°F.,

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 46' N 72° 40' W. (Old State House), Elevation: 40 to 640 feet. Area covered: Bloomfield, East Hartford, Farmington (in part), Hartford, Manchester (in part), Newington (in part), Rocky Hill (in part), South Windsor, Wethersfield, and Windsor.

Litchfield Hills Summer Bird Count (*founded 1994*)

Count Dates: June 9 & 10 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 132 species, 18,248 individual birds. Fifty-two observers in 14 Ptrys censused over 257.5 PHs. Since 1994, 184 CD species have been observed, 170 in the prior ten years.

Participants: Susan Ainsworth, Bob Barbieti, Marcia Barket, Bob Barbieri (Kalmia Sanctuary, 183 Laurel Lane, Harwinton, CT 06791), Kim Barbieri, Ray Belding, Debbie Bishop, Mellissa Brutting, Al Cibelli, Ed Crossman, Angela Dimmitt, Mary Donaldson, Curt

Edgat, Judith Ehrman, Max Ehrman, John Eykelhoff, Kathy Felton, Eileen Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Mary Gendron, Jeff Greenwood, Nikki Hall, Pam Hicks, Lukas Hyder, Mark Hyder, Daren Jacklin, Joan Lang,, Gordon Lory, Jerry Marcellino, Deborah Martin, Rich Martin, Marlan McGowan, Patti McCurdy, Lois Mclatagno, Caitlin MacGinitie, Scott Mills, Russ Naylor, Ann Orsillo, Clarence Parker, Jim Parker, Cynthia Phipps, Linda Potter, Scott Rintz, Dave Rosgen, Margaret Sellers, Sam Slater, Donna Rose Smith, Olaf Seltan, Bob Stanowski, Dave Tripp, David Zomick, and Fran Zygmunt.

Weather: "Sunny",

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 43' N 73° 14' W. Elevation: 450 to 1658 feet. Area covered (in whole or in part): Cornwall, Goshen, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, Sharon, Torrington, Warren, and Washington.

New Haven Summer Bird Count (*founded 1991*)

Count Dates: June 9 & 10(Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 128 species, 9449 individual birds, plus two CP species. Thirty-five observers in 16 P tys spent 128 PHs in the field. Since 1991, 206 CD species were confirmed with Ring-necked Duck added this year. Bald Eagle was a new nesting bird for the area.

Participants: Lee Aimesbury, Marion Aimesbury, Ralph Amodei, Phil Aspereli, Larry Bausher, Steve Broker, Sharon Dellinger, Randy Domino, Melanie Drinnan, Richard English, Tracey Ferguson, Niel Gesuero, Stacy Hanks, Christine Hayes, Mike Horn, Lynn James, Patrick Leahy, Christopher Loscalzo, Steve Mayo (27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524; rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net), Florence McBride, Bob Mitchell, Judy Moore, Frank Ragusa, Nancy Ragusa, Craig Rapasz, Nancy Rosenbaum, Arne Rosengren, Mark Scott, Art Shippee, Dori Sorsensky, Carlo Spector, Steve Spector, Maria Stockmal, John Triana, and Peter Vitali.

Weather: 6/9- Steady rain early AM through noon(0.1" rain), day: E winds 5-10 mph, 60° to 70°F.; Night: E winds 0-5 mph., 64°F. 6/10- N winds 3-7 mph., 61° to 69°F. Night: S/W winds 3-7 mph., 65°F.,

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 18' N 72° 56' W. Elevation: Sea level to 700 feet. Area covered: Branford (western), East Haven, Milford, New Haven,

North Haven, Orange, West Haven, and Woodbridge (in part).

New Milford/Pawling Summer Bird Count (*founded 2003*)

Count Dates: June 16 & 17 (Sat. & Sun.)

Totals: 114 species, 8778 individual birds. Nineteen observers in eleven P tys spent 100.5 PHs in the field.

Since 2003, 139 CD species have been noted, with the additions this year of American Black Duck, Ruddy Duck, Sora, and Cerulean Warbler; 98 have been confirmed nesting.

Participants: Pat Bailey, Ray Belding, Ioa Byrne, Angela Dimmitt (PO Box 146, Sherman, Ct. 06784; angladimmitt@aol.com), Larry Fischer, Linton Hamilton, Carol Hartel, David, Liedlich, Nancy Liedlich, William Liedlich, Russ Naylor, Nancy Nichols, Corena Pooth, Linda Potter, Dave Rosgen, Sally Spence, Nick Thold, Herb Thompson, and Bill Wallace.

Weather: 6/16- Mist, clearing, lovely, 62° to 75°F., Night: clear, 54° to 62°F., 6/17- hot and humid, 57° to 80°F.,

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 32' N 73° 34' W (Intersection of routes 68 & 157). Elevation: 30 to 600 feet. Area covered (Connecticut, 1/3 of area): Sherman, New Fairfield, New Milford (west of route 7), and portions of Brookfield & Danbury; and (New York, 2/3 of area) Patterson, Pawling, Putnam Lake, Carmel, southern Wingdale, and Poughquag.

Storrs Summer Bird Count (*founded 1990*)

Count Dates: June 23 (Sat.)

Totals: 90 species, 2242 individual birds. Four observers in three Parties spent 28.75 PHs in the field. Since 1990, 133 CD species have been counted; 66 are nesters.

Participants: Kathleen Demers, John Morey, Steve Morytko, and Steve Rogers (75 Charles Lane, Storrs, CT 06268; climbroggers@charter.net),

Weather: 6/23- very windy, NW winds 10-25 mph., 58° to 70°F.

Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 48' N 72° 15' W. (Juncture of Route 195 and North Eagleville Road)

Elevation: 200 to 750 feet. Area covered: Andover, Ashford, Chaplin, Coventry, Mansfield, Tolland, Willimantic, West Willington, Willington, and Windham.

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

Count Date: June 3 (Sun.)

Totals: 129 species, 13,289 individual birds. Twenty-seven observers in 20 Parties spent 121.5 PHs in the field. Since 1978, 180 CD species have been recorded, while 122 species have nested.

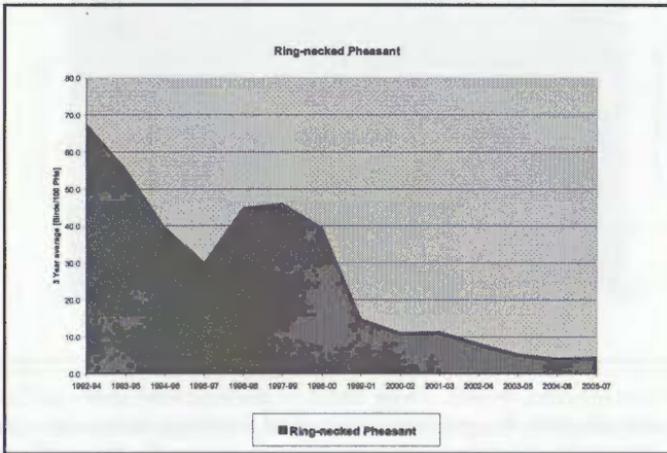
Participants: Terry Amalavage, Elliott Ashe, Renee Baade, Dave Babington, Bob Barbieri, Ray Belding, Polly Brody, Neil Currie, Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Larry Fisher, Ed Hagen, Seth Harvey, Anne Kehmna, Russ Naylor (44 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798), Sandra Overton, Dave Rosgen, Fred Schroeder, Donna Rose Smith, Carol Titus, Dave Tripp Jr., Terry Weaver, Leigh Wells, Mary Wetherill, Joe Zegall, Tom Zissu and Francis Zygmunt.

Weather: SSW Winds, 5-10 mph., Sunny AM, Overcast PM, 65-80°.

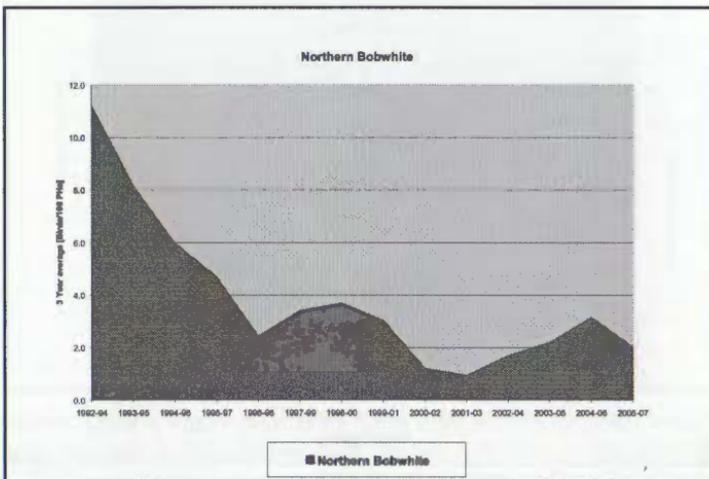
Count (15-Mile diameter circle) Center: 41° 32' N 73° 16' W. Elevation: 110 to 1060 feet. Area covered: Bethelhem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Middlebury, New Milford, Newtown, Roxbury, Southbury, Washington, and Woodbury.

The following graphs show Summer Bird Count trends for several species. For additional graphs please visit the COA Web site at Ctbirding.org.

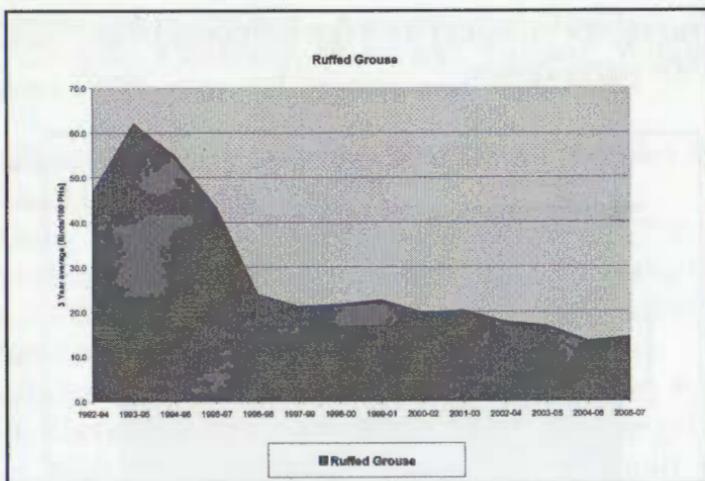
All graphs are of 3-year average numbers of individuals per 1000 party hours.



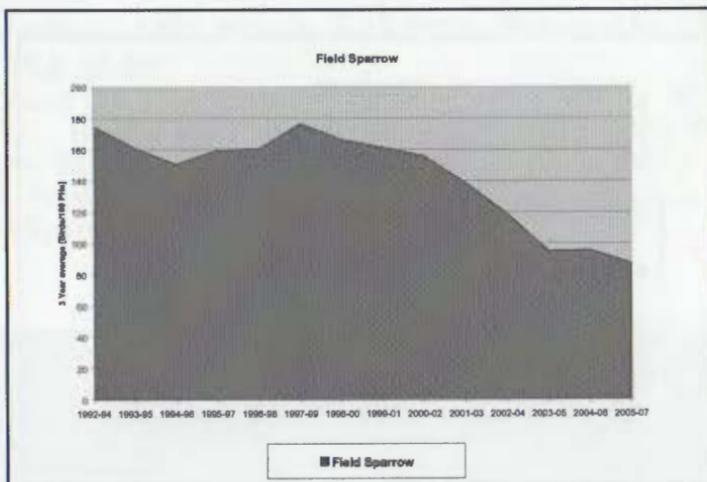
Ring-necked Pheasant populations are heavily dependent on stocking, but the old field/shrub habitat in which they can survive and reproduce is dwindling. Fewer are being recorded each year, aside from a bump in the late-90s (the result of a one-year spike, which was likely because of a pre-count release).



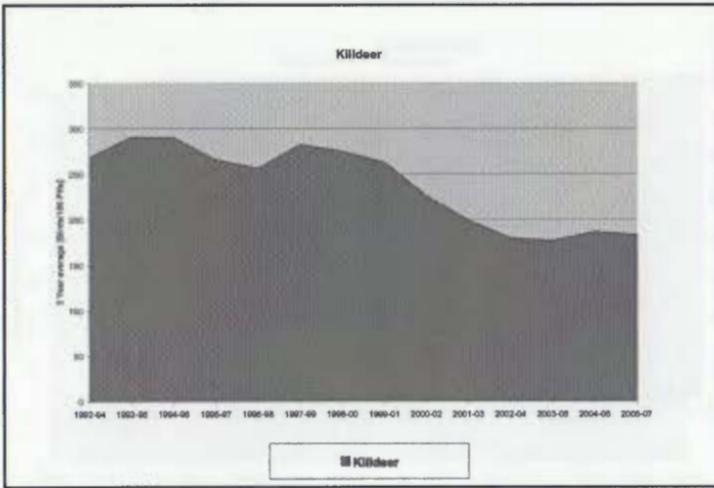
Like pheasants, Northern Bobwhites are dependent on captive-raised stock. Unlike pheasant, bobwhite is a native species, but it is likely that the native stock is now extirpated. As with many old field/shrub-dependent species, habitat loss has had an impact, but it is also thought that captive-raised birds of southern origin have interbred with the native population, making them less cold hardy and less able to survive our winters.



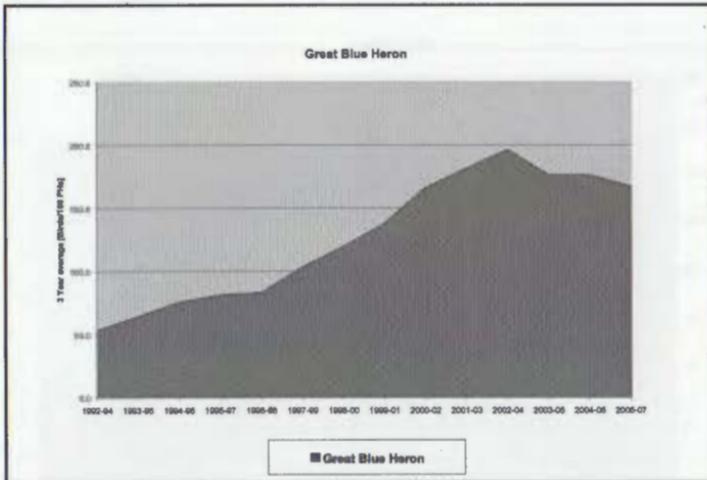
Ruffed Grouse are often thought of as a forest bird, but they require young forest and shrub cover to successfully reproduce. They are among the group of birds that are thought to be in decline in large part because of the maturation of our woodlands.



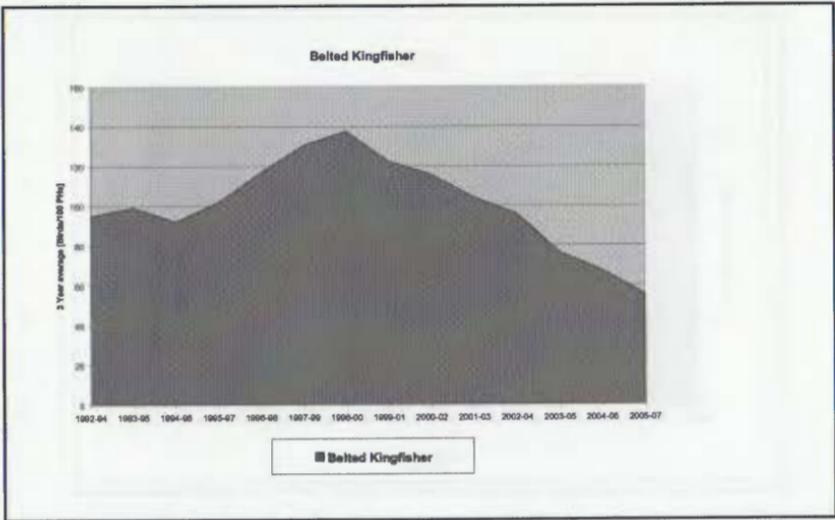
Field Sparrow is another resident of old field habitat that has been recorded in fewer numbers in the last decade. Longer term studies track these declines back to the 1960s.



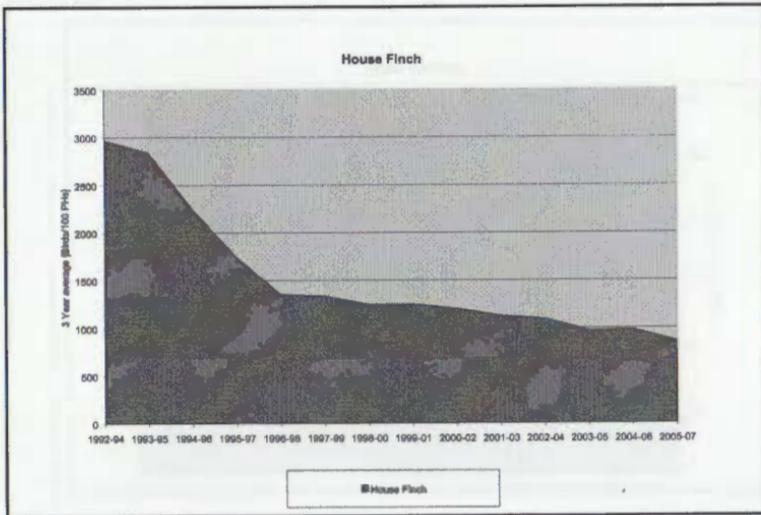
Fewer Killdeer have been recorded in recent years. This is consistent with long-term and widespread population declines for this species indicated by Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Count going back to the late 1960s. They make sense in light of the declines in farmland and other open habitats in the state.



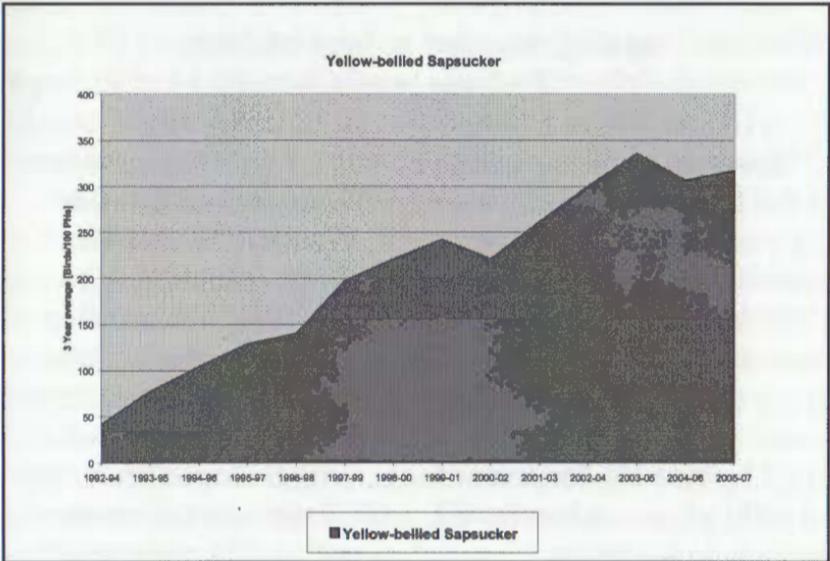
After several years of higher returns for Great Blue Herons there has been a leveling off and even a slight decline, with the peak occurring in the 2002-04 period. This species had been recovering for many years and was listed as a species of special concern in Connecticut as recently as 2000. Potential factors in this recovery include forest maturation, a recovery of state beaver populations (providing expanses of dead trees with water below), the banning of DDT, or as was the case for many colonial waterbirds a delayed response to the protections afforded them in the early 20th century. It is too early to accurately assess the recent declines.



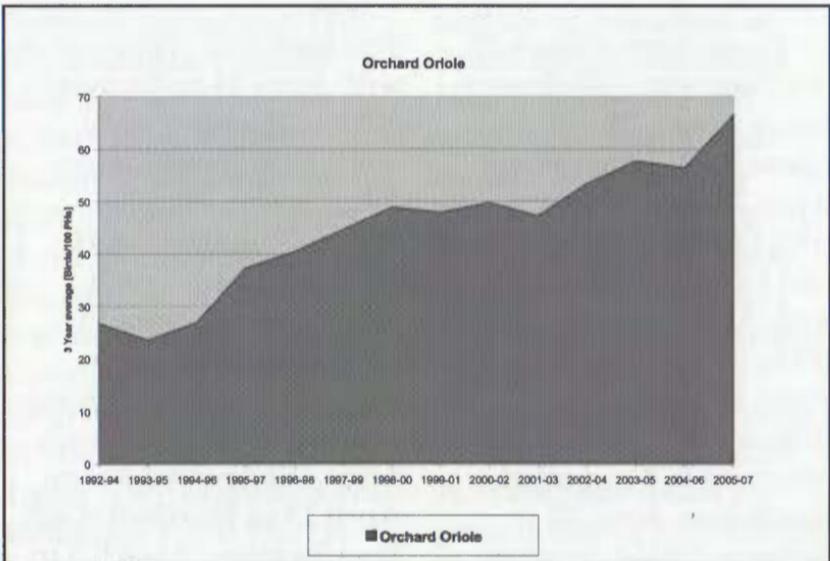
There is a marked decline in the numbers of Belted Kingfishers recorded since the 1998-2000 period.



House Finches were not at record low levels this year, except when corrected for party hours. Markedly fewer have been recorded since the mid '90s when an eye disease (mycoplasmal conjunctivitis) began affecting them. This disease has hit eastern populations much harder than western populations. It is thought that perhaps the lack of genetic diversity within a rapidly-growing population with a source of a few escaped individuals left the introduced eastern populations more vulnerable.



Not all bird species are recorded in lower numbers. Many more Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers have been recorded in recent years, which is consistent with a growing population regionally.



More Orchard Orioles are also being recorded, with a new high count this year and a steady growth in the numbers observed. This is a species that is expanding its range northward.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring, March 1 to May 31, 2007

By Greg Hanisek

Several specific weather events added to the flavor of the spring season. A March 16 snow storm hit during peak migration of American Woodcocks and Fox Sparrows, littering the state with both species. A powerful April 16 nor'easter produced two significant tern records. A May 2 system marked by fog and drizzle in many areas precipitated a wide-ranging fall out of both water and landbirds. A nice mix of rarities was headlined by two significant records, which were documented with photos taken by the only observers fortunate enough to see them.

Following are some first arrival dates for regularly occurring migrants.

Great Egret: March 20 in Greenwich (JB); Snowy Egret: March 28 in East Lyme (FC); Green Heron: April 22 in Greenwich (JV); Osprey: March 14 in Old Lyme (FC); Clapper Rail: April 22 in Stratford (FM); Solitary Sandpiper: April 17 in Bridgeport (CB); Willet: April 23 in Stratford (CB); Spotted Sandpiper: April 22 in Bethany (SMA); Semipalmated Sandpiper: April 28 in Stratford (FG); Least Sandpiper: April 23 in

Stratford (CB); Whip-poor-will: April 24 in Plymouth (GH); Chimney Swift: April 23 in Southington (JA); Eastern Phoebe: March 10 in Southbury (RN) and Farmington (DT); Great Crested Flycatcher: May 1 in New Haven (BY); Eastern Kingbird: April 24 in Milford (SSp). White-eyed Vireo: April 23 in Branford (GH); Tree Swallow: March 3 in Milford (LT); N. Rough-winged Swallow: March 28 in Norwalk (FM); Barn

Swallow: March 27 in Essex (LT); Purple Martin: April 24 in Madison (FC); House Wren: April 23 in Southbury (PCo).

Marsh Wren: April 28 in Stratford (FG); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: April 10 in Lyme (FC); Blue-winged Warbler: April 21 in Durham (JMo); Nashville Warbler: April 29 in Westport (LT); Northern Parula: April 22 in Harwinton (PCa); Yellow Warbler: April 25 in Stamford (MMo); Black-throated Green Warbler: April 23 in Hartford (TS); Blackburnian Warbler: May 2 in Killingworth (DRu); Pine Warbler: March 13 in East Lyme (DW); Prairie Warbler: April 23 in Orange (NB); Blackpoll Warbler: May 5 in New Haven (DBa); Cerulean Warbler: April 29 in Kent (LT); Black & White Warbler: April 22 in Lyme (DP); Louisiana Waterthrush: April 7 in New Haven (BBa); Common Yellowthroat: April 22 in Greenwich (JV); Hooded Warbler: April 23 in New-

town (RBa); Scarlet Tanager: April 21 in Greenwich (JWe); Lincoln's Sparrow: April 29 in Wilton (LT); Rose-breasted Grosbeak: April 25 in Berlin (AT) and Stratford (SKr); Indigo Bunting: April 22 in Waterford (JC); Baltimore Oriole: April 17 in Shelton (SSd).

Waterfowl through Cormorants

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season, low by recent standards, remained at South Windsor through March (PCi et al.) and in Newtown until mid-March. The **Cackling Goose** that wintered in Branford was seen again on March 26 (CLE et al.). Brant now linger regularly in large numbers, e.g., 500 at Sandy Point, West Haven, on May 20 (MSt). A **Trumpeter Swan** appeared March 10-18 on the Connecticut River from Hadlyme to Chester (BY et al.). From March 18-22 two different individuals

were at Cedar Lake, Chester, then on April 6 four more appeared at Pratt Read Reservoir, Chester. All seven were tagged and were from the Ontario Trumpeter Swam Re-Introduction Program. The first three, at least, were reported at Barneveld, N.Y., in January 2007 before showing up in Connecticut.

Two locations in South Windsor held a total of 120 Wood Ducks on March 24 (TAn). Milford Point held 206 Gadwall, mostly in pairs, on March 31 (FG). A drake Eurasian Wigeon was late May 4 at Milford Point (FG). An exceptional season for Blue-winged Teal brought reports of c. 35 individuals, along with c. 15 Northern Shovelers. The only report of **Eurasian Teal** came from Guilford on March 26 (GH et al). Redheads were more numerous and widespread than usual with 17 reported, mainly in March, from both inland and coastal locations. The high count was nine on March 30 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield

(DRo). A pond in Salisbury held more than 200 Ring-necked Ducks on March 29 (PCa), with 85 lingering to April 28 at Twin Lakes, Salisbury (PCa). Four **Common Eiders**, a drake and three hens, were an excellent inland find May 19 at Barkhamsted Reservoir (FZ). There was the usual May smattering of White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks at inland sites. The only inland Surf Scoters were two in the May 2 fallout at Nepaug Reservoir in Canton (JMe). A major feeding group of waterfowl off the Saugatuck River mouth in Westport on March 10 included 2,500 Greater Scaup, 1,500 Long-tailed Ducks, 300 Common Goldeneyes and 600 Buffleheads (FM). A Common Goldeneye lingered in Stratford until at least May 19 (NB). A raft of 1,000 Common Mergansers was still on Lake Waramaug in New Preston on April 15 (ADi et al.). A Ruddy Duck lingered at Laurel Reservoir, New Canaan, to

at least May 14 (FG, PDU), with one at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 on May 15 (PCi).

The state's population of Ruffed Grouse appears to have suffered a severe crash; but observers were on the lookout and reported 10 individuals, mostly in the northwest part of the state. The high was four on May 4 at East Granby Farms (JWo). Twin Lakes in Salisbury held 13 Common Loons on April 7 (PCa), and 15 were on Snipsic Lake in Ellington on May 11 (CEK). St. John-by-the-Sea in West Haven, a regular staging area for Horned Grebe, held 165 in various stages of molt on March 7 (NB). One in full alternate plumage was still there May 19 (NB). The season produced 15 reports of Red-necked Grebe, including nine on Batterson Pond, Farmington, on May 2 (PCi). A nice fall out of 15 Pied-billed Grebes was on the same pond March 29 (PCi). The first report of Northern Gannet was a single March

25 at Merwin Point, Milford (FM). A Great Cormorant was far inland May 7 at Colebrook Reservoir (PCa).

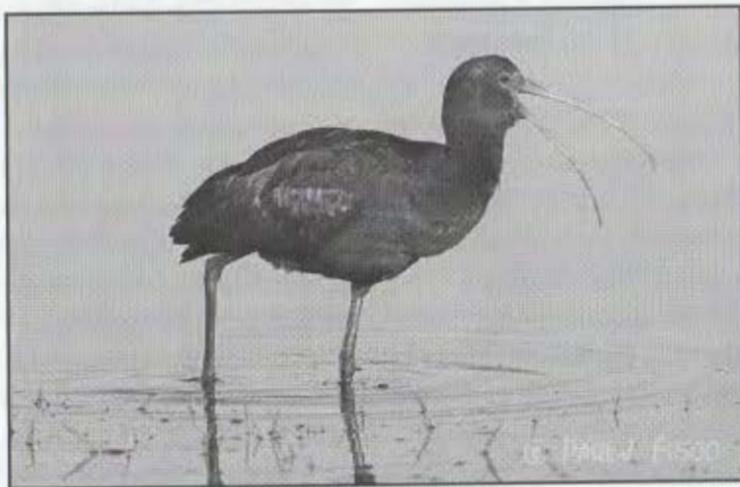
Hérons through Rallids

Twelve reports of American Bittern included one that visited a tiny frog pond in a backyard in Southington on April 5 (JA) and an injured one found April 20 in Stamford and taken to a rehabilitator (MSa). Away from known nesting spots, a Least Bittern was at Grotton Long Point on May 23 (CEI). The only inland Little Blue Heron was in Mansfield on May 19 (TH). A Tricolored Heron arrived in Stratford April 28 (FG) and was seen periodically thereafter. Two were at Barn Island, Stonington, on May 23 (CEI). Three Cattle Egrets for the season were singles in Guilford on April 18 (LG), in Stonington April 28 (FN) and in Windsor Locks May 7 (RT). A **White-faced Ibis** visited Hammonasset

Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) April 18 -22 (RBa et al.), for a fifth state record. This was in association with a broad arrival of Glossy Ibis, including several inland reports and a state-record flock of 110 in Guilford on April 19 (BY).

The high counts of Black Vulture were 31 on March 27 in Kent (JD) and 25 on March 30 in Watertown (GH). Seven on March 25 in Storrs was a new high for that area (SMo). More evidence of inland nesting by Ospreys was provided by nests on

two cell towers near the Naugatuck River in Seymour (RP). The season's only **Mississippi Kite**, an adult, passed northeast over Quaker Ridge, Greenwich, on May 27 (BO et al.). Sharp-shinned Hawk, hard to find as a breeder, was at nest sites in Canaan in April and New Hartford in May (PCa). A Northern Goshawk was at Ansonia Nature Center, a known nesting area, on April 19, but no nesting was detected this year (MSt). Extremely rare anywhere in the East, a dark morph Broad-winged



Paul Fusco photo

This White-faced Ibis at Hammonasset State Park was the state's fifth.

Hawk was reported from Bent of the River in Southbury on April 30 (PCo). Seven reports of Rough-legged Hawks included two late ones, a dark morph April 11 (PCa) and a light bird April 19 (PCi), both in Windsor. An adult Golden Eagle was reported March 12 at Peak Mountain hawk watch in East Granby (JWo). Part-time coverage at Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch in Greenwich turned up 73 Broad-winged Hawks on April 24 (BO). Up to 14 American Kestrels were at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport on April 3 (JMn). Merlins, which have now been confirmed nesting south of Connecticut (in Bradford, Pa.), were reported twice in May.

Rails through Terns

A King Rail was heard and then seen May 21 at HBSP, where it remained until at least May 29 (GN et al.). If looks and accessibility count, the bird of the season was a **Purple**

Gallinule found April 29 in a small backyard pond in Stratford (SKr et al.). The bird stayed through the season. It was seen by scores of observers and was photographed by several. According to the homeowners, it had been present for a number of days before revealing itself to birders. Two **Common Moorhens** for the season were at Cemetery Pond in Litchfield (BDe et al.) and Roosevelt Forest, Stratford (SMa), both in mid-May. In addition, one was picked up dead on the boardwalk at Little Pond in Litchfield, not far from Cemetery Pond (fide DRo).

The season's only American Golden Plover was at HBSP on April 21 (JCo). A real stunner and seasonal highlight, a **Wilson's Plover** revealed itself to a single observer on May 11 at Sandy Point (RW), but the observer got photos that have been submitted to ARCC. The last record was May 3, 1989, in Stratford. A Semipalmated Plover dropped in at Little



Julian Hough photo

This Wilson's Phalarope showed off its feeding style in Stratford.

Pond in White Memorial on May 19 (DRo). The first two Upland Sandpipers were noted April 24 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (RT), and one dropped in at Sikorsky Airport, Stratford, on April 30 (JMh). The first of two Marbled Godwits and the first of three Whimbrels for the season were both at Sandy Point on May 6 (JHo, MSt). The other Whimbrels were at Stratford May 6 (ADa) and May 16 (NB); the other godwit was at HBSP from May 21-28 (ADa et al.). Two Western Sandpipers,

quite rare in spring, were at Milford Point on May 16 (NB). Good spring concentrations of Least Sandpipers were 275 at Milford Point on May 6 (GH) and 310 at Grace Salmon Park, Westport, on May 7 (FM). A White-rumped Sandpiper was early April 27 in Stratford (FM); followed by one April 29 at HBSP (BY).

The first Pectoral Sandpipers of the year were two on March 24 at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport (JB). There were seven at the Stratford railroad trail on April 24 (FG).

An alternate plumage Dunlin was a good inland find April 28 in Simsbury (PCi). Stilt Sandpiper produced two reports: May 21-22 in Guilford (GH et al.) and May 25-26 at HBSP (NB et al.). A black Ruff made a brief appearance on May 22 at HBSP (TAn et al.). Five Short-billed Dowitchers were a bit early April 16 at HBSP (GH et al.). High counts of Wilson's Snipe included at least 40 at Portland fairgrounds (LN) and about 50 at Durham Meadows (BY), both on April 8. The big March 16 snow storm

resulted in many reports of American Woodcocks in yards in both urban and suburban areas, with multiple emaciated birds taken into rehab. A Wilson's Phalarope turned up May 12 at the railroad trail in Stratford (SMA et al.).

It was a good season for small gulls, with nine Black-headed Gulls and eight Little Gulls reported at coastal sites with concentrations of Bonaparte's Gulls during the staging/migration period in late March-early April (m.ob.) A Bonaparte's Gull was a good find away from the



Steve Ballentine photo

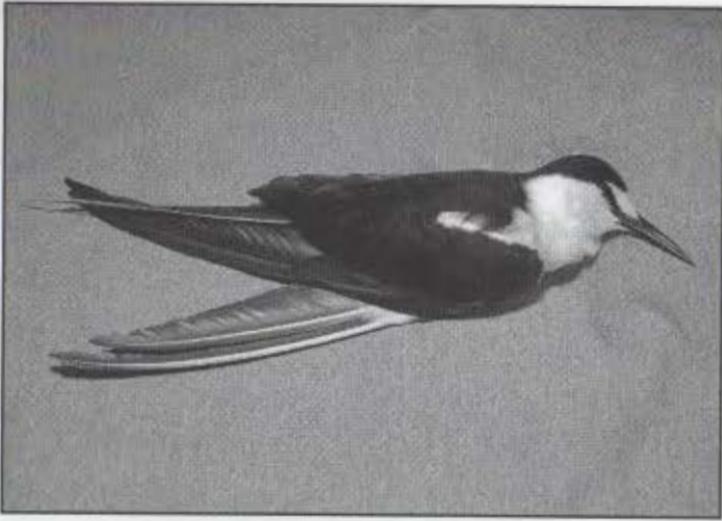
This American Woodcock in Simsbury was one of many grounded by a March 16 snow storm.

immediate coast March 2-4 at a small pond in Middlefield (SL), as was one far inland at Twin Lakes, Salisbury, on April 28 (PCa). Three on May 2 at Nepaug Reservoir in Canton were part of the statewide fallout of both land and waterbirds (JMe). The season produced good counts of eight Glaucous Gulls and 12 Iceland Gulls but only four Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Three Caspian Terns for the season were singles at Sandy Point, West Haven, on April 22 (JHo), at West Thompson Dam, Thompson, on May 3 (KG) and at Niantic Bay on May 4 (DP). Both a Common Tern and a Black Tern were at Batterson Pond in Farmington on May 2 (PCi), with single Black Terns at Nepaug Reservoir the same day (JMe), in Mansfield on May 19 (TH) and at Sandy Point on May 28 (NB). Another inland Common Tern was on the Connecticut River in South Windsor on May 16 (PCi). A Least Tern on April 16 at

HBSP was a record early date by nine days (GH et al.). Its presence was tied to a powerful nor'easter that accounted for the discovery of an adult **Sooty Tern** in moribund condition the same day on the deck of a home in Southington, well away from the coast in Hartford County. It was taken to a veterinarian but succumbed (JA). The specimen was delivered to UConn.

Doves through Pipits

A **White-winged Dove** that arrived at a Branford feeder in February remained through the period; unexpectedly a second bird was present for a single day, May 20 (DL). Both were photographed, and they could be distinguished because the long-staying bird had easily seen toe damage and a beak abnormality. The second bird showed neither of those traits. A Barn Owl was hunting over the marsh at Stewart B. McKinney National



Bruce Finnan photo

This Sooty Tern failed to survive a storm-blown trip to Southington.

Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on March 14 (LT et al.). A Common Nighthawk was early April 30 in Torrington (TL); the high count was 60 in Simsbury on May 15 (SBa). In Fairfield County, where they are least common, single Whip-poor-wills were at Greenwich Audubon on May 1 (BO) and in Trout Brook Valley, Easton, on May 3 (MB). A Ruby-throated Humminbird was somewhat early April 14 in Bantam (fide SSSt). A Red-headed Woodpecker that wintered was present through the season at

Edgewood Park, New Haven (m.ob.). Another was in Old Lyme from March 21 to April 19 (HG).

The first of nine Olive-sided Flycatcher reports was from a Hamden yard May 7 (J&CZ). The first of six Yellow-bellied Flycatcher reports came from Stratford on May 21 (SKr). Alder Flycatcher, the latest arriving of our regular breeders, was first noted May 13 at White Memorial, an early date (DRo). Two Northern Shrikes for the season included one in South Windsor to at least March 23 (RM, PCi)

and one at Storrs to at least March 25 (SMo). The amazing, explosive statewide increase in Common Ravens continues; a sampling of active nests found this spring were in Colebrook, Barkhamsted, Canton, Newington, Guilford, Naugatuck, Waterbury, Southbury, Woodbury, Woodbridge and Meriden. Two were present for an extended period in May in Stamford (FG, P Du), and on March 30 a group of 20+, which included what appeared to be multiple mated pairs, were in display in the air together in Norfolk (NC, RBa). A leucistic Blue Jay, with white replacing the blue, was at a feeder in Farmington March 22 (DT).

A new colony of about 35 Purple Martins was found in Westport (DV, ER). About 70 individual reports of Swainsons Thrushes on the ground were received, with a high of c. 15 on roads in Penwood State Park, Bloomfield, on May 18 (PCi). The first one was a bit early

May 2 in Milford (SSp). There were only three reports of Gray-cheeked (type) Thrushes. After the March 16 storm, 10,000+ American Robins were noted flying east at Bridgeport. They were in steady, broken groups up to a ½ mile off shore between 10 a.m. and noon (MA). The best count of American Pipits was 26 on March 5 at a farm in Salem, where they had been present about a month (DBi).

Warblers through Finches

A male Golden-winged Warbler appeared territorial for the second year in a row in Naugatuck State Forest in Naugatuck (RH et al.), far from the last few breeding sites in the Northwest Corner. One Orange-crowned Warbler for the season was in Fairchild Garden, Greenwich, on May 2 (BO). The only reports of Cape May Warblers were singles May 7 in West Hartford (PDe), May 17-20 at White Memorial (GH et al.) and May



Hank Golet photo

This Summer Tanager at Griswold Point was one of three in the state in spring 2007.

22 in East Granby (BK). The season's only **Yellow-throated Warbler** turned up April 28 in Woodbridge (CLO), the same day that produced the lone **Prothonotary Warbler** in Westport (LT). Six Kentucky Warblers for the season was a good number, starting with an early one April 29 in Pawcatuck (BDw). Others were at White Memorial on May 11 (BBr), at Penwood State Park, Bloomfield, from May 12 onward (LC et al.), at Branford Supply Ponds on May 12 (GN), in Glaston-

bury on May 19 (ADa) and in Naugatuck State Forest on May 19 (RH). The first of six Mourning Warbler reports came from Bent of the River in Southbury on May 14 (PCo). A Yellow-breasted Chat was at Greenwich Point on May 22 (MSa).

Three **Summer Tanagers** provided excitement at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, on April 26 (HG), in Farmington on April 25 (TD) and in Mystic on May 15-16 (MJ). An American Tree Sparrow was a bit late April 22 in Somers (PDe).

The first Vesper Sparrow arrived April 22 at Greenwich Audubon (SMr). A **Lark Sparrow** was unique for the season April 20 in Bloomfield (SF). A Grasshopper Sparrow, hard to find away from breeding areas, was in a power line cut in Westbrook April 23 (BY). The March 16 snow storm precipitated a major fallout of Fox Sparrows. Multiple birds were reported from feeders around the state. Many people said they had never had a Fox Sparrow at their feeder before or had never had more than one. Feeder

counts included 20 in a Barkhamsted yard March 18 (FZ), 14 at White Memorial March 17 (DRo), 14 in Greenwich March 18 (MSa) and 10 on March 19 in Sterling (RDi). Most amazing was a count of 54 along the edges of plowed streets in Westport on March 17 (FM). Vying with the Wilson's Plover as bird of the season, a **Smith's Longspur** was seen and photographed on March 23 by a single observer at Sherwood Island State Park, Westport (LF). It could not be relocated. This is a third state record



Larry Flynn photo
This Smith's Longspur at Sherwood Island State Park was a spring highlight.

pending ARCC review. A late Lapland Longspur was in the May 2 fallout in morning drizzle and fog in Westport (FM).

The lone **Blue Grosbeak** turned up May 2 on the Yale campus in New Haven (GW et al.), and the lone Dickcissel visited at a Branford feeder in mid-May (DL). About 25 reports of Eastern Meadowlark emerged during their March migration period, but a flock of 10 on March 5 at a farm in Salem had been around for a month (DBi). The wintering flock of Boat-tailed Grackles in the Bridgeport-Stratford area numbered 23 (m.ob.), and two males were singing on Charles Island, Milford, on April 28 (FG). A fallout of Baltimore Orioles on May 5 found 12 adult males and several females/immatures in a yard in Cheshire (BT) and c 10 with one male Orchard Oriole in a yard in Southington (JA). On May 8 about 10 were in a Higganum yard with one Orchard Oriole (HC).

Orchard Orioles were widely reported May 5-8. An undetermined number of Evening Grosbeaks were heard March 2 in Hartland (PCa). The only other reports were of one on March 16 (RBU) and two on April 25, both in Winchester (DRO).

Exotics: Two Bar-headed Geese were in a swamp in Ledyard April 24 (SGo). A Golden Pheasant was at Osbornedale State Park on May 6 (TAm). A Pied Crow was in Stratford in late March (CM).

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PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

This month's challenge is obviously a small grebe. The contrasting black and white plumage rules out Red-necked Grebe, which is a little more sullied and not as black and white. The two choices are either Horned or Eared Grebe.



Horned Grebe is a numerous winter visitor to our shoreline, while Eared Grebe remains a rare and somewhat sporadic vagrant. However, since both species are basically similar we must pay attention to several field marks to make a correct identification.

The bird is rather distant and only a few features are visible. The black cap is well marked and cut off from the white-cheeks and foreneck, and the rear-body is rather fluffed up. The crown is rather flat with a peak at the rear (Horned), but the fluffed up rear end, riding rather high in the water, is an Eared Grebe trait. Hmmm.

Let's double check the head pattern again, since this is the

area that holds most clues to separating these two species in winter plumage.

Eared Grebe has a small, slightly upturned bill with a steep forehead with a peak above the eye, which gives it an almost triangular shaped head. Unlike, Horned, the dark-cap extends down below the eye before curving upwards towards the nape. Combined with a thinner-looking neck, it gives Eared Grebe a distinctive look.

The flat crown, with a peak well behind the eye, and the lower border of the cap extending apparently through the eye (and not below it) are all typical Horned Grebe features, and that's what this bird is.

The fluffed up rear of this bird, while somewhat more often seen on Eared Grebes can be variable and subjective, but the head pattern differences are solid.

This winter-plumaged Horned Grebe was photographed by me at Seaside Park, Bridgeport.



Photo Challenge No. 59

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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