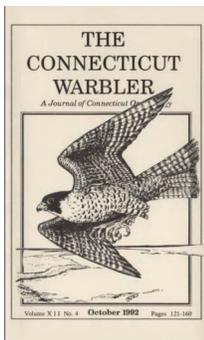


COA Bulletin



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COA is an all volunteer organization with the mission of promoting interest in Connecticut birds, and collecting, preparing, and disseminating the best available scientific information on the status of Connecticut birds and their habitats. While COA is not primarily an advocacy organization, we work actively to provide scientific information and to support other conservation organizations in the state.

COA President's Message

Steve Broker

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of playing Luther Billis in an amateur production of the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical, South Pacific. Luther has some insights into life that are best described as “astonishing”, but one of his statements always rings true with me as it applies to my own study of birds. Says Luther, “Projects. That’s what I like. Projects.” In the weeks and months ahead, Connecticut birders have some wonderful opportunities for pursuing their own bird-related projects. During the period December 14, 2017–January 5, 2018, Connecticut will be



conducting 20 separate National Audubon Society sponsored Christmas Bird Counts, seven of them in the northern part of the state, five mid-state, and eight coastal. (See the complete list of Connecticut CBCs in the following pages.) What better way to contribute to this longest running wildlife census in the world by participating in one or more CBCs? For many Connecticut birders, the Christmas Bird Count season is a major annual project. Our compilers collectively have provided an astonishing several centuries of leadership to their Audubon societies and bird clubs through coordination of these Christmas Bird Counts.

In the last, Fall 2017 issue of the COA Bulletin, COA board member Craig Repasz wrote that “the state birding community will be called on to help conduct surveys for the Connecticut Bird Atlas Project starting in 2018. Broader in scope than its 1980s predecessor, ‘The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut,’ this new project will focus on all of Connecticut’s bird life, whether breeding, wintering, or migrating through our state.” The Connecticut Bird Atlas Project now has a homepage, <http://www.ctbirdatlas.org>, where this multi-year effort is defined as follows: “The Connecticut Bird Atlas is a joint project of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Wildlife Division and the University of Connecticut, with additional funding from the Connecticut Ornithological Association, Great Hollow Nature Preserve and Ecological Research Center, and the support of many other partners.” The Bird Atlas Project also can be found on Facebook.

Finally, I’ll note that the Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) has just published Connecticut State of the Birds 2017, and the entire issue focuses on “The New Bird

Atlas: A Call to Action for Connecticut's Conservationists". The Connecticut Ornithological Association is extremely happy to report that CAS has kindly arranged for the printing of additional copies of Connecticut State of the Birds for the entire COA membership. We will be mailing out this essential report to our members following the press conference announcing the Connecticut Bird Atlas Project just held December 1, 2017 at the DEEP headquarters in Hartford. When you receive your copy of this beautifully illustrated report, you will find articles addressing the procedures for data collection on Connecticut's birds, the value of this information for avian and land conservation, ten good reasons why you should contribute to the three years of fieldwork (2018-2020), a personal recollection of participation in the first Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas of 1982-1986, and a regional perspective on the importance of bird atlases. Best wishes from COA for the holiday season, for the pursuit of your avian projects, and for good birding.

118th ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2017-2018 SCHEDULE

* = CONFIRMED BY COMPILER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2017:

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

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

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017:

*Greenwich-Stamford, CT (CTGS) Compiler: Cynthia Ehlinger, 27A Sheephill Road, Riverside, CT 06878, cynthia.ehlinger@gmail.com 203-219-1963 (Audubon Greenwich)

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

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

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

*Oxford, CT (CTOX) Compiler: Roy Harvey, [32 Wanda Drive, Beacon Falls, CT 06403](#), rmharvey@snet.net 203-888-5757

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

*Salmon River, CT (CTSR) Compilers: Sharon Dellinger, 930 Middletown Road, Colchester, CT 06415, rsdell@comcast.net 860-803-1626, and Doreen Jezek. 11 Casner Road, East Haddam, CT 06423, dajezeck@gmail.com 859-492-1656 (Mattabesock Audubon Society)

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2017:

*Barkhamsted, CT (CTBA) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., [298 Park Avenue, Unit 2](http://298ParkAvenue.com), Torrington, CT 06790, dtrippjr@gmail.com (Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2017:

*Bristol, CTBR Compiler: Jack Swatt, [226 Long Swamp Road, Wolcott, CT 06716](http://226LongSwampRoad.com), jswattbirds@gmail.com 203-592-4686

*Guilford-Long Island Sound, CTGL Compilers: Tom Kelly, thomask567@aol.com and Louise Kelly, lkelly0731@yahoo.com 203-430-3180 (Menunkatuck Audubon Society)

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2017:

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

MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2018:

*Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY/CT (NYHV) Compilers: Carena Pooth, carena@prodigy.net and Angela Dimmitt, P.O. Box 146, Sherman, CT 06784, angeladimmitt@aol.com, 860-355-3429

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

CONTACT COMPILER FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Lakeville-Sharon (Trixie Strauss CBC), CT (CTLS) Compiler: Sean Grace, sgrace@audubon.org (Sharon Audubon Center/National Audubon Society, [325 Cornwall Bridge Road, Sharon, CT 06069](http://325CornwallBridgeRoad.com), <http://sharon.audubon.org/>, 860-364-0520 Housatonic Audubon Society)

(compiled by Steve Broker)

Sitting Big in Glastonbury Meadows: Perspectives on an Inland Big Sit

Andrew Dasinger

In the Winter 2016 issue of the Bulletin, Frank Gallo vividly chronicled the Big Sit of that year conducted at Milford Point, which has yielded an amazing list of species over the years. Inland sites, though lacking the obvious benefits of a coastal location, still demonstrate that observing from a fixed position for part of a day can reveal an avian diversity nearly as high as what can be found by mobile means. Bill Asteriades and I tried our first Glastonbury Meadows Big Sit in 2011. After birding here for a number of fall seasons, we both thought it would be possible to achieve a reasonably good list if the weather cooperated and the date coincided with a migratory push. Located in the floodplain of the Connecticut River, which serves as a migratory pathway, Glastonbury Meadows has a wide variety of habitats, plentiful food sources, and views in all directions. Unfortunately, no good locations provide an unobstructed view of the river itself, so most water birds would be flyovers or heard only. Below are some highlights from six years of Big Sits. The location of our Sit has varied year-to-year based on where habitat conditions look the best.



View in early morning fog from our 2014 location. The dense weed cover actually conceals a tomato field

2011: A shorebird bonanza!

As luck would have it, our first year was unique due to some incredible shorebird habitat created in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene and subsequent additional rainfall, which flooded a low-lying farm field. Lacking a platform or other established observation point, we chose a Big Sit spot on a dirt road in a weed-choked tomato patch with a distant view of the flooded field, about 75 feet from a wooded border with dense undergrowth. A small stepladder helped immensely in extending our view. With a little help from a Big Sit rule that allows an observer to leave the circle to confirm an ID if the bird was first seen from inside the circle, we extracted four peep species from the flooded field, including both Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers, the first and only time we've seen these species here. In fact, on this day we had 11 shorebird species, including a small flock of Golden Plovers that touched down briefly in the early morning fog and a rare-for-here flyover of a lone Black-bellied Plover. A couple of other good birds were an Orange-crowned Warbler that appeared briefly during the post-dawn flurry of activity and a Vesper Sparrow. At 11 a.m. we were at 60 species. We were amazed to reach 69 species by the time we suspended our Sit at around 1:30 p.m.! We returned at 5:30, and after seeing a flock of shorebirds circling the field once again, we tracked down the Baird's. The only problem with our location was road noise from I-91 across the river, which was surprisingly loud during the early morning hours and made it hard to pick up nocturnal migrants.

2012: Sparrow-palooza

In Year 2, we shifted our location to a spot near the north side of the Meadows but farther east, which decreased the nighttime traffic noise from I-91. Even so, we didn't hear any nocturnal migrants, but picked up a couple of owl species. It turned out to be a magnificent day for birds migrating down the river valley, helped by a northerly breeze. We picked up some ragged lines of waterfowl in the distance that turned out to be Brant. Additional flocks passed by during the morning. Raptors were prominent—10 species in total. But sparrows and finches were the star performers. As we scoured the weed patches around us for something different, a handsome Lark Sparrow appeared — our first and only record of this species for the Meadows. It fed on the ground with other sparrows, but mysteriously disappeared, never to be seen again. We also added a

Clay-colored Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and multiple White-crowned. Finches also passed overhead during the morning, including Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak. When we decided to call it a day, we learned that we matched the 70 species of the year before, which we thought would be impossible to reach again.

2013: Silence of the chickadees

Positioned close to our 2012 spot, we detected several migrating Swainson's Thrushes and a Gray-cheeked Thrush in our pre-dawn vigil, and with Great Horned Owl, Screech Owl, and Am. Woodcock before sunrise, it felt like a good start. During the day we added a number of species not encountered in the first two years, including Common Raven, House Wren, Nashville Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Bobolink. Sometimes, however, it's the species you can't find that are the most noteworthy. This year it was Black-capped Chickadee. Towards the very end, at 4:30 p.m., we resorted to blasting out chickadee calls from a portable speaker, but to no avail. Our first year we had a similar experience with Carolina Wren, which is usually quite vocal during the dawn chorus and audible from distant locations. Overall, there were few standout species, unlike the first two years, but we still managed 69 species. The chickadee no-show was a bitter pill to swallow—we should have hit 70 again!

2014: Persistent fog

We returned again to a spot near the 2012/2013 locations. We missed Wood Duck, Black Duck, and Green-winged Teal, all of which we had in the prior three years. Ditto for Blackpoll Warbler and Brown-headed Cowbird. New additions to the cumulative list were Black Vulture, Hermit Thrush and Black-and-white Warbler. Seeing 11 diurnal raptor species was the highlight. We fought hard until 2:30 p.m. for 65 species.

2015: An off year

It was on the windy side, and there was less weed cover than prior years. We had some significant misses, like Mallard, Northern Harrier, Double-crested Cormorant, owls, Tufted Titmouse (!), and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The birds were not flying overhead like in other years, and activity died off quickly in the morning warmth. Best bird honors went to a late Yellow Warbler. In the end we squeezed out 55 species and left a little early. With few birds to be seen, our lawns were waiting to be mowed, and we packed it in at 1 p.m.

2017: A new approach

We skipped 2016 due to bad weather, and given the low count in 2015 we decided to try a completely different location, near a cattail marsh at the east edge of the Meadows, which in recent years became a haven for rails and other marsh-loving species. Our chosen spot featured a weedy pumpkin patch, some shrubby edges, a tree line full of dead snags, and of course the marsh. We were back in business with ducks, though we were actually quite lucky to pick up Mallard, Black Duck and Green-winged Teal. Star of the waterfowl show was the Wood Duck; our count of 100+ indicated a significant nighttime roost in this marsh. Firsts included vocalizing Sora (6!) and Marsh Wren, and later in the morning a Dickcissel appeared. An Orange-crowned Warbler was also a nice find. But for the first time we missed Turkey Vulture and Bald Eagle, and we were not graced with a single grackle among the plethora of Red-winged Blackbirds exiting the marsh at dawn. We maxed out at 61 species, ending at 1 p.m. If we do a Big Sit in 2018, we'll probably return to this spot.

Our cumulative Big Sit list for Glastonbury Meadows is 110 species. Still no House Sparrow, which is fine with us! Credit and thanks are also due to other birders from Glastonbury and elsewhere who joined us for portions of various Sits.



Our 2014 Big Sit location, with melon patch, weedy edge, corn rows, and tree line bordering the edge of the CT River.

Sabine's Gull at Sherwood Island State Park



Sabine's Gull – Juvenile, Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, Sept 3, 2017. The bird was discovered early that morning by Tina Green, who quickly got word out to the birding community. It was subsequently seen by dozens of excited birders. It occurred during stormy weather, caused by the remnants of Hurricane Harvey. This represents only the second record of this species documented in CT; the first was of two juveniles in Windham on Sept 5, 1995, seen by Mark Szantyr and Bruce Carver.

Frank Mantlik
COA Vice President

Another CT Birder is eBirder of the Month!

Congratulations to Dylan Pedro of Waterford, CT, for being named eBirder of the month for October! Dylan was selected from the 3,048 eBirders who submitted 15 or more eligible checklists with media that had 1 or more ratings in October. See full story at <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/carlos-pedro-october-ebirder-of-the-month/>.



Photos of Notable Fall 2017 Birds



LeConte's Sparrow at Cove Island Bird Sanctuary, Stamford (David Winston, 10/21/17)



Clay-colored Sparrow at Hammonasset Beach State Park (Frank Mantlik, 9/26/17)



Snowy Owl at Gresczyk Farms, New Hartford (Bill Batsford, 11/20/17)



White Pelican at Long Beach, Stratford (Jory Teltser, 11/18/17)



2 female King Eider, Long Beach, Stratford (Anthony Vicciarelli, 11/16/17) - later joined by a 3rd bird



Eared Grebe (2nd from right) at Broad Brook Reservoir, Cheshire (Melissa Baston, 11/19/17)

COA Sparrow Workshop, Stratford Point

Scott Kruitbosch
COA Board Member

RTPI Conservation & Outreach Coordinator

On Sunday, October 15, we hosted the Connecticut Ornithological Association Sparrow Workshop here at Stratford Point. 22 birders attended, eager to learn more about our state’s sparrows, with reach peak diversity around this time. Chris Loscalzo and Paul Wolter led the session, with Chris providing an informative and amusing presentation inside about sparrow identification, followed by a walk around all 28 acres of Stratford Point. Sparrow highlights included Clay-colored and Lincoln’s among the more usual species such as Savannah, Swamp, White-throated and Song, plus birds like Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-headed Vireo, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. Thank you to all who joined us!



A packed house at the Point



Look at this blank screen and imagine your favorite sparrow!



Optics raised, everyone is presumably seeing sparrows



The presentation was amply illustrated with photos

(All photos on this page by Scott Kruitbosch)

Selected Fall 2017 Waterbird Rarities



Harlequin Duck at Stratford Point (Frank Mantlik, 11/16/17)



Marbled Godwit at Milford Point (Steve Spector, 9/24/17)



Wilson's Phalarope at Rocky Neck State Park, East Lyme (Dylan Pedro, 9/11/17)



American Avocet at Four Mile River Landing, East Lyme (Anthony Vicciarelli, 9/12/17)

COA Annual Meeting—Save the Date!

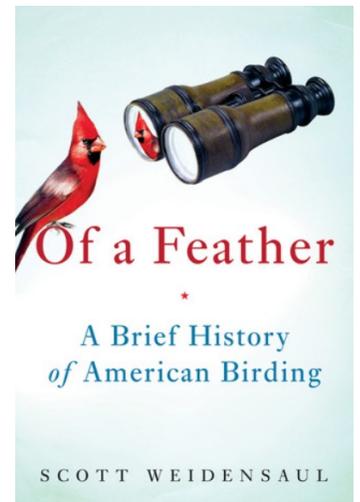
The Connecticut Ornithological Association's 34th Annual Meeting is being held on **Saturday, March 24, 2018** at Middlesex Community College, Middletown.

Guest speakers include:

Scott Weidensaul presenting "Of a Feather". Based on his book "Of a Feather", this whirlwind history shows how ornithology and birding grew from eccentric hobbies into something so completely mainstreamed they're now (almost) cool.

John Himmelman presenting "Birds: Their Side of the Story". John shares light-hearted stories of birds and bird watching – from cuisine to cartoons; ornaments to icons; murmurs to murders.

Chris Elphick discussing the new Connecticut Bird Atlas. This presentation will provide a history of atlas projects, an overview of what the Connecticut study will achieve, and a description of how birders can get involved.



Twenty-Five Years Ago in *The Connecticut Warbler* Compiled by Steve Broker

Volume XII, No. 4 (October 1992)

Bald Eagles Successfully Nest in Connecticut in 1992, by Donald A. Hopkins.

Throughout the winter of 1991-1992, the [Bald Eagle] pair remained together [at Barkhamsted Reservoir, Hartford County]. They perched together and even defended territory over a winter kill at nearby Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford. The first sign of incubation was observed on April 5, 1992. By May 10 a change had occurred; the adults were taking longer to exchange positions at the nest, indicating that an egg had been hatched. The first nestling was not seen until May 24th, and on June 7th a second nestling was observed. On June 19th, under the direction of the Department of Environmental Protection, banding of the nestlings took place. Based upon bill measurements . . . it is assumed that one of the nestlings was a male and the other a female. Fledging of the two chicks was observed on July 26 and July 27.

[Ed's Note: This essential four-page article, which includes a photo of the nestling eaglets at Barkhamsted Reservoir, gives context to the return of nesting eagles in Connecticut (last recorded in the late-1950s) and elsewhere in New England. Don Hopkins's concluding sentence, "It would appear that the Bald Eagle recovery plan is showing signs of success in the northeast", proves a prescient understatement 25 years later as Bald Eagles continue to expand their nesting in the state. See article acknowledgements for a list of members of the Bald Eagle Study Group]

The 1992 Summer Bird Count, by Joseph Zeranski.

During count days, 178 species and 79,861 individual birds were counted. Last year five SBCs were undertaken; Greenwich-Stamford, Hartford, New Haven, Storrs and Woodbury-Roxbury. This year, they were joined by Barkhamsted, Quinnipiac Valley and Salmon River. . . The most exciting nesting event of the season was a pair of Bald Eagles tending two six-week-old chicks at Barkhamsted Reservoir. This was one of four pairs reported in southern New England.

[Ed's Note: See table of results of the 1992 Summer Bird Count and individual count overviews. Joe Zeranski writes, "we are well on our way to assembling data which will become an increasingly valuable asset."]

Common Tern Adopts American Oystercatcher Egg at Falkner Island, by James M. Zingo.

Two American Oystercatchers were observed foraging at Falkner Island on 26-28 April 1991, and individuals were seen on 31 May and 1 June. On 2 June, I saw a pair of birds and discovered an egg in a shallow scrape on a pebbly section of beach. The nest was located at the outskirts of a colony of Common (*Sterna hirundo*) and Roseate Terns (*S. dougallii*) at the north end of the island. . . About noon on the following day, I found a second egg, observed both birds near the nest and saw one bird incubating the eggs.



Falkner Island, Guilford coastline, CT, August 1, 2017

[Ed's Note: Jim Zingo identifies this as the first nesting of American Oystercatcher in New Haven County. His article continues with the description of the disappearance of the oystercatcher adults, the resumption of incubation of one oystercatcher egg by a Common Tern, and "an unexpected ending to the American Oystercatcher's first breeding attempt on Falkner Island".]

Interlude in Fog, by Roland C. Clement.

I saw one Sharp-tail dominate a Seaside in a brief territorial contest. We were struck by the individual variation in color and markings among these birds, a reminder that our field guides provide us only one “snapshot” to serve as clues to the identification of variable populations of birds. The Sharp-tails were often conspicuously more burnt-orange than any bird artist has pictured them. The young Seasides showed no hint of the yellow lore spot one usually uses as a field mark, though the malar streak, or mustache, was prominent. Both species are also much more “leggy” than usually pictured.

[Ed’s Note: Roland writes, “Four of us enjoyed getting to know these two species (the bird now commonly known as Saltmarsh Sparrow, and Seaside Sparrow) under unusual circumstances at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison on August 27, 1992”.]

These and other articles in the October 1992 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* can be viewed in their entirety at the following link. Scroll down to pages 121-160.

<http://www.ctbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTWarblerVolume12.pdf>

COA Mini-Grant Applications due 1/15/18

COA has a grant program to help fund and support initiatives within the state of Connecticut which specifically benefit the avian wildlife in our state. It has always been part of COA’s mission to reach out to all of those in Connecticut who appreciate our state’s birds and support bird management/conservation initiatives whenever possible. Applications for funding are due on or before January 15, 2018. Grants are awarded at the COA Annual Meeting in March. Follow this link for more information and links to download the forms.

<http://www.ctbirding.org/resources/coa-mini-grant/>

Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship

COA is very pleased to announce that through the great generosity of one of our founding members, George W. Zepko, we now are offering annually the Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship. When George was a teenager, he received a scholarship to the Audubon Camp of Maine (now known as the Hog Island Audubon Camp), which started his life-long interest in birds and natural history. He has made it possible for COA to offer a similar opportunity to new generations of birders and naturalists.

The Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship nurtures interest in bird study and conservation among young birders. The 2018 scholarship covers the full cost (\$1,395) of the Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens program at Hog Island Audubon Camp during the week of June 17-22, 2018. The cost includes housing, boat travel, and all meals. Further information and the application form can be found on the COA web site, www.ctbirding.org.



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COA Bulletin	Andrew Dasinger, Kathy Van Der Aue
Christmas Bird Count Compiler	Steve Broker
Summer Bird Count Compilers	Joe Zeranski & Patrick Comins
Great Backyard Bird Count	Patrick Comins
Mini-Grants	Kathy Van Der Aue

The COA Bulletin is the quarterly newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, published in February, May, September, and December. Please submit materials for the next issue by January 15, 2018 to:
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