Fall Field Day Sept 19

COA will hold its annual Fall Field Day at the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton on September 19th. A full day of activities is planned, including a variety of workshops and birdwalks.

The day will begin at 7:00 am with small-group birdwalks through the varied habitats of the nature center; these walks will begin at staggered intervals, so late arrivals will not miss out. A special birdwalk for children will begin at 9:00 am. There will also be trips to such nearby birding sites as Great Pond, Nepaug Reservoir, Fisher Meadows, West Hartford Reservoir, and Dead Tree Swamp. Two hawk-watching sites -- Pine Mountain and Booth Hill -- are nearby, and groups will be visiting one or both of these to check on the Broadwing migration.

Two workshops will be given in the morning and two in the afternoon. Workshop topics are the fall migration in Connecticut, summer and Christmas bird counts, a bird nest quiz, and the art of using "jizz" for quick bird identification.

COA members and their guests, and non-members as well, are encouraged to attend this once-a-year event. Field day fees are only $5.00 per person with advance registration or $7.00 at the door; members will receive registration forms and directions in the mail. For additional information, call Jay Kaplan at 693-0263 or Debra Miller at (508) 520-1289. See you there!

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New Big Day Record

by Frank Mantlik

Four birding teams took part in Big Days this May in Connecticut. A Big Day is a 24-hour search for as many species a team can find in a calendar day, with official rules set up by the American Birding Association.

The cumulative total for all four teams was 202 species, including 16 species of waterfowl, 11 species of diurnal raptors, 6 species of owls, 21 species of shorebirds, 6 species of swallows, and 31 species of warblers. An excellent list, reflecting what was generally considered a good spring migration. Last year, when the migration was not as good, seven teams found a total of only 185 species.

Among this year's highlights were both loons, American and Least Bitterns, Common Goldeneye, Black Vulture, King Rail, Bonaparte's Gull, Barn, Long-eared, and No. Saw-whet Owls, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Yellow-throated and Kentucky Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Grasshopper Sparrow.

A new state Big Day record was set on May 19 by the team of Ed Hagen, Mark Szantyr, Buzz Devine, Bill Root, and Dave Tripp. They tallied 173 species, one more than the previous record set in 1990. Congratulations, gents!
COA Banders Assist in National Project

by Alison Olivieri

This past summer a few COA members were lucky enough to be invited by biologists from The Nature Conservancy to participate in a national project called MAPS -- Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship -- run by David F. DeSante of The Institute for Bird Populations, located in Inverness, CA. In September of 1991, Lise Hanners and Steve Patton, directors of the Lucius Pond Ordway Preserve (Devil's Den) in Weston, joined the MAPS program in a coordinated effort among North American banders to establish a continent-wide network of mist netting stations for long term monitoring of landbird productivity and survivorship.

This was a whole new kettle of fish for the COA-ers who've been banding for the Connecticut Audubon Society at Birdcraft Museum in Fairfield, because we have no experience banding during the spring/summer nesting season. However, as Barbara Manicatide (Fairfield), Ethel Follett (Woodbury), Judy Richardson (Easton), Linda Pearson (Easton) and I can tell you, once an obsessed bander equals always an obsessed bander, so we grabbed our pliers and bird bags and hit the rocky terrain. Once a week from June through August, we could be found swatting mosquitos, sweating and grunting up and down the Den's rocky ledges (ever mindful of sunning copperheads), extracting adults and fledglings from the nets. We are all still recovering from our aerobic workouts.

The project was impressively organized by Lise, Steve, and Linda Pearson (a former staff member at the preserve), and participating in it taught us a great deal. Some species found at Devil's Den, such as Great Crested Flycatcher and Hooded Warbler, are not regularly seen at the much smaller, downtown Birdcraft Sanctuary. Data is coded and recorded differently, additional body parts are measured, and color banding is used, with guidance from George Gale, a doctoral student at UConn Storrs who is studying Worm-eating Warblers.

This kind of work contributes to the understanding and creation of sound principles of conservation biology -- plus, it's fun in an eclectic sort of way, and the spirit of cooperation among three organizations (TNC, CAS and COA) full of enthusiastic birders is always impressive. If there are any COA members out there who would like to participate next summer, please call Devil's Den at 226-4991. It would be our pleasure to train you this fall at Birdcraft; we'll be there Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday -- 6 am to 11 am (unless it's raining) -- from August 31 through Thanksgiving.

Eagles Nesting Again

On June 19, 1992, an historic event occurred in Barkhamsted, Connecticut, as two wild Bald Eagle chicks were introduced to the media and fitted with aluminum leg bands for identification. These chicks are the result of the first successful nesting of a pair of Bald Eagles in the state since the 1950s. Bald Eagles usually nest in large, undeveloped areas near water bodies with adequate food (fish) and low human activity. Thus, the choice of the pristine, 10,000-acre Barkhamsted Reservoir watershed as a nesting site by the eagle pair was not a surprise. (Reprinted with permission from DEP's SCOPE, July/August 1992)

Summer Bird Counts

by Joseph Zeranski

Summer Bird Counts (SBCs) are becoming an increasingly popular COA-sponsored activity. The Counts are conducted in June, and will, in the long term, provide a better understanding of the breeding birds of our state.

Enthusiasm for SBCs grew this year, as three new counts (Barkhamsted, Quinnipiack Valley, and Salmon River) were begun, adding to the five previously-established ones (Greenwich-Stamford, Hartford, New Haven, Storrs, and Woodbury-Roxbury).

Among the highlights were 188 participants (compared to 149 in 1991), who recorded 178 species (169 in 1991). The most noteworthy find was a nesting pair...
of Bald Eagles (with two young) at Barkhamsted Reservoir.

Many birders expressed the feeling that the Summer Bird Count brought an interesting and rewarding element to birding in our state and said they look forward eagerly to participating again next year. Complete details on all of the 1992 SBCs will appear in the October issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*.

### Merlin Mystery

**A CT Birder in the Adirondacks**

by Wright Montgomery

In early June of this year, I was at my camp on a lake near Saranac Lake, and some non-birding neighbors said that for several weeks they had had what they thought was a noisy Kingbird (dark tail with white tip, sits on treetops) living above their camp and dropping nesting material, which descended daily.

As advertised, I was able to spot a bird at the tip of a hemlock which could be seen only from my boat in front of the camp. In spite of the boat’s motion, I had a clear and lengthy look with 8x glasses. My thought process went somewhat along the following lines: strong suggestion of a moustache, should be a falcon - small bird, but anyway that’s no Peregrine -- certainly not a Kestrel -- Merlin? Well maybe. A look at Peterson tossed Sharpshin into contention, but the very wide, dark terminal tailband didn’t fit. Then the bird flew. Look at those wingtips! Must be a Merlin, either adult or immature female.

I reported my rather rudimentary analysis to a very knowledgeable and experienced birder friend who lived nearby, and he indicated that he would attempt to visit my "Merlin." I had to return to Connecticut the following day, so I made arrangements with my neighbors for him to check the bird. Upon my arrival back at camp for the Fourth of July, I found he had not gotten around to making the trip -- a staggering two miles! A reasonable thought might be that my limited birding experience, combined with there never having been a Merlin recorded nesting in New York State, just may have caused my friend’s apathy.

After I finally dragged this reluctant birder to the site and he agreed with my diagnosis, a small torrent of birders followed -- one, Frank Nicoletti, from a six hours’ drive away. They all saw and identified what was by then a pair of Taiga Race Merlin and a nest with three quite well-advanced, downy young. The birding experience of the fifteen or so men and women ferried to the camp aggregated well over 500 years!

By the time my last visitor, raptor expert Elsbeth Johnson, arrived, the young were fully fledged, and she was able to see all five birds at once. She also observed copulating adult birds, thereby eliminating doubt as to which was the female, at least temporarily.

The birds finally departed on August 5th, leaving me to complete a New York State Avian Records Committee report. The whole experience was quite a high for someone who has been birding seriously for only three years or so. However, I should say that while the tenor of this story is rather light, the supporting detail going to NYSARC is running to many pages. This has somewhat altered my perception of the joys of birding, but is nevertheless a different kind of fun.

### Return of the Pelicans

by Frank Mantlik

Unprecedented numbers of Brown Pelicans invaded the waters off the south shore of Long Island, NY this July. Normally ranging only as far north as Virginia, these birds wandered north after breeding, possibly in search of schooling fish. Not surprisingly, a few rounded the point at Montauk and entered the mouth of Long Island Sound.

On July 19, COA member Bob Dewire received a call from fishermen who had seen a few Pelicans off Stonington Point. Bob confirmed this the next day by observing three pelicans flying back and forth past the point. Word spread through the birder’s phone network, and several others got to see the pelicans, which stayed around through July 22. A number of photos were obtained, documenting the first sightings in Connecticut since a dead specimen was found in Westport in March, 1977.

### HOTLINE REPORTS

To report sightings of rare, unusual, or migrating birds, call one of the following:

- Milan Bull 259-6305 or 255-8837
- Tom Rochovansky 222-7777
- Frank Mantlik 838-1694
More Ornithological Milestones - Part One

by Joseph Zeranski

(Many readers will remember Joe's fascinating Milestone tidbits published last year in the Bulletin. This is a whole new series of them, which counts back from 1992. -- Ed.)

These historic benchmarks in Connecticut ornithology are intended to enlighten and amuse. It is hoped that they might assist birders to better appreciate the degree of change continually occurring among avian populations, including their ranges, and more fully understand the importance of documenting these changes by careful record-keeping and reporting. They are given in five year segments.

5 Years ago first mid-winter American Oystercatcher seen at Madison on February 8, 1987...one of a very few spring American Avocets was present from May 14 to 21 at Stonington...three Fulvous Whistling-ducks were at North Stonington May 16-29, the only record for Connecticut...an amazing 120 White-rumped Sandpipers were observed at Westport on September 18 after a storm...earliest known fall report of a Red-necked Grebe occurred on October 10...the state's first verified Le Conte's Sparrow was found at Canton on December 27.

10 Years ago a rarely noted mid-winter Black & White Warbler was observed on February 15, 1982 at South Windsor...the earliest recorded spring Piping Plover arrived on February 27, while an early Least Bittern followed on April 20...second state record of Smith's Longspur was located at Madison on May 2...a lingering Great Cormorant was seen on May 26, the same day as the state's first confirmed Painted Bunting was identified at Norwalk...Black Skimmer first proven nesting was in Greenwich, while the first known nesting in the Mansfield area of White-eyed Vireo occurred...a sight report of Band-tailed Pigeon fell on November 7 (East Haven)...lingering very late was a Tri-colored Heron found on December 26.

15 years ago remains of a Brown Pelican found in Westport on March 12, 1977 constitute the second state record...the state's only known Hermit Warbler was present at New Haven on May 1 & 2...latest spring record of Rough-legged Hawk was seen on May 13...a lingering Great Cormorant was present until May 21...early for fall was an August 14 American Avocet, as was a Pied-billed Grebe the next day...unusually late was a December 26 Snowy Egret.

20 years ago a January 2, 1972 (same date again in 1977) Lesser Yellowlegs made its latest known fall appearance...a January 9 Green-backed Heron at East Haven was uniquely late...the state's only verified record of Franklyn's Gull was found on June 6 at New Haven...Gadwall (Stonington) and Cerulean Warbler (Canton) were first recorded nesting...an early fall (presumably) Common Loon was seen on August 20...the latest known departure date for Piping Plover was November 12.

25 years ago eleven hundred Bonaparte's Gulls were counted on March 10, 1967 at Saybrook...April 12 brought with it an early Double-crested Cormorant...a summering Harlequin Duck at West Haven was present August 6 - September 7...earliest recorded for fall was a September 10 Dunlin...unique for the state was a Black-throated Gray Warbler observed on October 4, 25, and 27 at Waterford...32 Pied-billed Grebes congregated at New Haven on October 29...latest verified Semipalmated Sandpiper lingers until November 18.

30 years ago a spring Cattle Egret was early on April 13, 1962...first observed nesting were Red-bellied Woodpecker (Farmington) and Common Merganser (Barkhamsted Reservoir), while Mute Swan experienced its first nesting in the Mansfield area...the state's second Tricolored Heron record occurred at Norwalk...latest for fall was a November 23 Cattle Egret...a December 29 Eared Grebe at Westport constitutes the state's first sight record.

35 years ago an April 7, 1957 Solitary Vireo was the earliest one reported for the state, while the 27th produced the earliest Swainson's Thrush...Glastonbury was the site of the state's first Cattle Egret appearance (April 20-May 12)...latest fall records of Wilson's Plover occurred on September 10 and Cerulean Warbler on September 29...an early migrating Snowy Owl was noted on October 18.

40 years ago eager spring migrants included a March 31,1952 Barn Swallow, an April 20 Eastern Night-hawk, and an April 2 House Wren...what was probably the first nesting of Great Black-backed Gulls was noted...
off Guilford...September 7 brought with it a very early Red-throated Loon, October 1 a Eurasian Wigeon, and October 12 a Northern Shrike...quite tardy was a November 29 Forster’s Tern.

45 years ago May 25, 1947 was unusually early for a Black Rail...Blue-gray Gnatcatcher first attempted to nest (Fairfield)...Tricolored Heron was first seen in the state on June 14 at Westport...latest fall migrants were Orchard Oriole recorded on August 16 and Bank Swallow on October 4...the first of a very few Connecticut Atlantic Puffin records was found in Fairfield on November 19.

50 years ago a June 21, 1942 Wilson’s Storm-petrel was early...first found nesting was Northern Cardinal (Greenwich)...earliest dates for fall migrants were an August 16 Blackpoll Warbler and a September 12 White-winged Scoter...Kentucky Warbler last occurred on September 26...a Parasitic Jaeger was found on November 1 at Fairfield...strange indeed was a December 14 East Windsor Empidonax flycatcher (species unknown) which flew past an open door and into a kitchen.

55 years ago a late spring Gyrfalcon was observed on March 19, 1937...two days later a pair of Barrow’s Goldeneyes were at Fairfield...an especially late spring Snow Bunting was found on April 3...earliest ever for spring was an April 29 Black Tern...what was only the second known nest of Hooded Merganser was located at Farmington...late was an October 24 Northern Waterthrush and an October 31 Black & White Warbler...Aaron Bagg & Samuel Eliot’s monumental “Birds Of The Connecticut River Valley” was published.

**QUESTION CORNER**

**Do Birds Sleep?**

Diurnal perching birds do sleep at night. In late afternoon, they find a sheltered roost tree or shrub, often an evergreen, and often return to the same branch night after night. The anatomy of a bird’s leg is such that as the bird becomes more relaxed, the feet actually grip tighter, literally locking onto the branch. At dawn, birds will warm themselves for a while by moving to a nearby sunlit perch.

**REGIONAL HOTLINES**

Connecticut (203) 254-3665  
Rhode Island (401) 231-5728  
Eastern Massachusetts (617) 259-8805  
Western Massachusetts (413) 253-2218  
Vermont (802) 457-2779  
New Hampshire (603) 224-9900  
Maine (207) 781-2332  
New York Metro (212) 832-6523  
Northern New Jersey (201) 766-2661  
Cape May, New Jersey (609) 884-2626

**COA Book Reception at AFO/ABA Meeting**

COA authors will sign their books

COA will co-host a reception and book-signing at the joint meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists and the American Birding Association to be held at Connecticut College in New London from October 2nd to 4th. The reception will take place on Saturday, October 3rd from 5:00 to 6:30 pm in the Faculty Lounge in the Blaustein Humanities Center.

A number of well-known authors of birding books will be present, including Roger Tory Peterson if his schedule permits. COA will be well represented by the following writers: Joseph Zeranski and Thomas Baptist (“Connecticut Birds”), Gene Billings (“Birds of Prey in Connecticut”), Dwight Smith and Arnold Devine (“Connecticut Birding Guide”), Julio de la Torre (“Owls: Their Life and Behavior”), and Louis Bevier (“Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Connecticut”).

Other authors who will be present include Edward Burtt (“A Photographic Guide to Birds of the World”), Stephen Kress (“The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds”), Dick Walton (“Birding by Ear”), and Claudia Wilds (“Finding Birds in the National Capital Area”)

All of these authors will be happy to sign their books, which can either be brought to the reception or bought from the booksellers who will be present. All COA members are invited to attend this event, whether or not they are registered for the AFO/ABA joint meeting. For information about attending the meeting, contact Robert Askins at 447-1911 x7444.
Trips & Events

Hawk Watching
The great bulk of the fall hawk migration through Connecticut takes place between the middle of September and the end of October. Broadwings move through first in mid September, followed by accipiters, falcons, and Ospreys from late September to mid October, and the flights conclude with the passage of buteos and eagles toward the end of October.

The exact timing of the migration depends much more on the weather than on the date, with major movements usually occurring immediately after cold fronts push the birds down the New England coast. Overall totals were down last year, possibly because many hawks were out of sight in overcast skies. See the April, L992 edition of The Connecticut Warbler for details on last fall's migration.

For general information about hawk watching and directions to sites call Polly Brody at 426-9926 or Neil Currie at 426-9861 or Larry Fischer at 426-9929. The hawk watch sites listed below welcome visitors.


QUAKER RIDGE in Greenwich. Staffed daily. 1991 totals: 12,427 hawks of 15 species including 12 Bald Eagles, 5 Golden Eagles, 13 Peregrine Falcons, and a rare Swainson's Hawk. For information call Canby Clark at 531-4857 or Jay Gartner at (914) 949-8782.

WEEKEND WATCHES are staffed on September weekends only: Botsford Hill in Bridgewater, Johnnycake Farm in Burlington, East Rock Park in New Haven, Whippoorwill Hill in Newtown, Longshore Country Club in Westport.

Hawk Watch Weekend
A weekend of hawk watching and related activities is scheduled for the height of the Broadwing migration. There will be films, hawk identification seminars, and presentations by raptor rehabilitators of live hawks.

QUAKER RIDGE at the Greenwich Audubon Center. Saturday, September 12 and Sunday, September 13 9:00 am - 5:00 pm rain or shine. For information, call 661-9200.

Connecticut Audubon
CAS announces the following field trips and will extend its member rate to COA members. For more information, contact Lauren Brown, CAS field trip coordinator, at 259-6305 or 481-0377.

CAPE MAY with Fred Sibley, Jay Hand, and Jim Mockalis. Friday, September 25 - Sunday, September 27. Cost is $285, which includes transportation, hotel, and meals. The best fall birding on the East Coast.

BRIGANTINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE with Milan Bull. Saturday, November 7 - Sunday, November 8. Cost is $165. Snow Geese by the thousands at one of the East Coast's most beautiful refuges.

New COA Field Trips
This fall, COA is initiating a new birdwatching field trip program, designed to visit productive areas throughout the state at their peak seasons. Geared for birdwatchers of all levels of experience, from novice to veteran, the trips will be led by a battery of top field birders who have a knack for education. Trips will generally be open to all, and go rain or shine. For information, call COA Field Trip Chairman Steve Mayo (874-1860) or President Frank Mantlik (838-1694).

COASTAL BIRDS OF MILFORD POINT on Sunday, August 30, 11:00am - 3:00pm. A shorebird/gull/tern identification workshop. For details and directions, call the RBA (254-3665).

HAWK MIGRATION EXTRA-VAGANZA on Saturday, October 10, 8:30am - 4:00pm. Witness the peak of Hawk migration at the state's two premier hawkwatch lookouts. Morning portion at Lighthouse Point (New Haven), afternoon at Quaker Ridge (Greenwich). Thousands of hawks are possible, given proper weather conditions.

WATERFOWL WORKSHOP AT JAMAICA BAY on Sunday, November 15. Meet at 9:00 am at Riverside Shopping Center (exit 5 of I-95) or 10:00 am at the refuge. The ponds, bays, and marshes of this famous refuge will provide an opportunity to study a wide variety of waterfowl, as well as a few raptors.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RARITIES CHASE on Friday, Jan. 1, 1993. Time and place to meet will be announced on RBA. Kick your birding year off right with a carpool run around the state to see the rare birds located on the various CBCs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
COA encourages local bird clubs to send announcements of field trips and other events to Jay Knox, Bulletin Editor 43 Bridge Road, Weston, CT 06883
Fall Field Report

Please tear off the form which appears below, and use it to submit your Fall Field Report. List noteworthy sightings on separate sheet(s) of lined paper, giving species, date, number of individuals, and location. Use abbreviations when possible; for example, five Common Loons seen at Sherwood Island State Park on Feb. 26 should be entered as "Com. Loon 2/26 (5) SISP."

For common species, please record dates and locations of first, last, and maximum sightings. Rare and uncommon species, for which reports of all sightings are needed, are listed below. The compilers would greatly appreciate receiving your report with species listed in phylogenetic order; use the COA Connecticut Field List as a guide. Note: Detailed descriptions should be submitted for any species on the Field List which is denoted by * (rare) or # (hypothetical) or for any species not on the Field List. All reports will be preserved. Editorial commentary is welcomed.

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