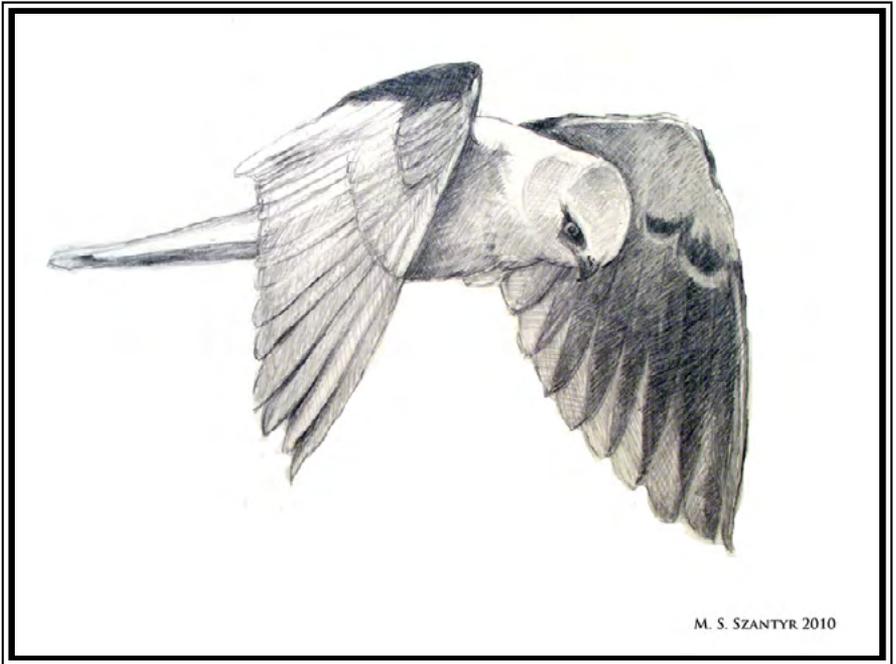


# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



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# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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## ON THE COVER

### White-Tailed Kite

Mark Szantyr captured the aerial mastery of the White-tailed Kite, which must rank as one of the most charismatic avian visitors ever hosted by Connecticut. The combination of first state record status and a meticulously documented 71-day stay earned this bird celebrity status. Beauty didn't hurt either.

# CONNECTICUT'S FIRST WHITE-TAILED KITE

By Scott Kruitbosch

Dennis Varza discovered Connecticut's first White-tailed Kite from Short Beach in Stratford as it flew around Stratford Point around 8 a.m. on August 1, 2010. He was watching for shorebirds as the tide went out and noticed Common Terns attacking what he determined to be a White-tailed Kite near the tip of Stratford Point. Dennis got word out to the public on the COA's CT Birds email list around an hour later. I woke up after he sent out that first email, having slept in a bit on the beautiful Sunday morning. I had been planning to go to Stratford Point later in the morning to conduct my usual survey on the Connecticut Audubon Society-managed property, but Dennis' email made me hurry out the door. Charles Barnard Jr. called me about it as I threw on some clothes and grabbed my gear. He was heading out to check for it as fast as possible. Charlie beat me there, and when I drove up the driveway at Stratford Point, he excitedly waved at me, pointing out the White-tailed Kite as it soared over the coastal grasslands.

As we stared in awe and tried to make 100% sure of the identification, Charlie astutely told me to grab my camera and take record shots in case it flew off. I ran after the kite as it landed in a tree, getting some shots of it as it looked over its shoulder at me, not realizing at the time I was taking the first photos of the species in New England, let alone Connecticut. The only previous sighting in New England was of one bird at Martha's Vineyard on May 30, 1910. Charlie and I got out our phones and started calling every birder we knew while I opened the gate to the property for the masses of visitors that would be rushing to Stratford before this mega-rarity departed. Little did we know that the White-tailed Kite would remain here until October 10 to the delight of thousands of visitors from all over the continent – and little did I know that I would spend hundreds of hours with this spectacular raptor, learning a great deal about this vagrant of the species.

The White-tailed Kite's first day in Stratford was a unique one. I, along with several others, had been to Stratford Point the previous day, so we are certain August 1 was at the very least the first full day it was present. The kite hunted for the entire day, as it was obviously very hungry after a long journey from an unknown origin, though without any success until the evening. It allowed crowds of people physically closer than any subsequent day as it spent a great deal of time kiting and hovering, occasionally perching in a small sapling near the beach or at the top of other trees. During extensive observation on the first day, it was discovered that the kite's two outermost primary feathers were worn and brown, indicating it was undergoing molt. This molt, a process that encompassed most of the time the kite was here, replaced primaries, secondaries, and tail feathers. Its completion may have been a factor in enabling it to depart in October. Most of the general opinion from those who had seen White-tailed Kites before was that this raptor was on the larger side of the spectrum for the species, thus supposing it was female. However, since they are monomorphic in appearance and the bird was never in hand, the sex was never determined. Even though it spent most of the day in front of the ecstatic crowds at Stratford Point, the kite took a few excursions as it explored its new "home" region, hunting at the old dump next to Short Beach, flying up the Housatonic River, and going to the Stratford Great Meadows Important Bird Area, where it was seen near Frash Pond and Sikorsky Airport. In the next few days, it would add Milford Point to the list of places it would frequent, and these locations defined its territory during the entire 71-day stay.

However, Stratford Point remained the White-tailed Kite's primary area, as it depended on the unique coastal grasslands habitat for the vast majority of its prey. I was told repeatedly by visitors who had been to the Texas coast that its home at the mouth of the Housatonic, with coastal grasslands, marshes and beaches, very much resembled the kite habitat there. It quickly developed a reliable daily schedule, feeding on likely two or three prey items just after sunrise, roosting for much of the day, especially on the hotter days



*Bruce Finnan photo*

*The White-tailed Kite was a powerful flier.*

in August, and feeding normally once, occasionally twice, and rarely even more in the late afternoon and evening. It took most of its kills to either the telephone poles at Stratford Point (in the mornings usually) or a juniper tree in the grasslands near the western edge of the property (most often in the evenings), and occasionally its favorite deciduous perch tree on Stratford Point property. When these spots were not available due to human activity or other disturbances nearby it would often bring prey to the Stratford Point beach to eat on the sand. On August 3, an anomalous day during its first week present, it hopped between the sandbars at Milford Point from around 9 a.m. to 5:20 p.m., progressively moving west while eventually catching, mantling and eating some type of prey during the mid-afternoon. Given that there were no rodents out on these sandbars, it was suspected this was a bird, and likely a shorebird. Beyond that, it was impossible to determine the species; the best guess was a Ruddy Turn-

stone. Apart from this incident all other known kills made by the raptor consisted of vole, rat or mouse. I would approximate their frequency at 80%, 13% and 7%, respectively.

### **Grasslands filled with voles**

The coastal grasslands of Stratford Point are filled with voles, and the raptor would hover or kite over that habitat at least 98% of the mornings and 90% of the evenings for its meals. No other forms of hunting were seen in Stratford. It especially preferred the area in front of the main building on the Long Island Sound side of the property, as these grasses were a bit shorter than the rest of the property and featured a more abundant rodent population. It would hover above the ground in one place for anywhere from five seconds to a few minutes at a time, especially if it had prey in sight. The average time was likely about 30 to 40 seconds, often longer when strong winds helped to hold it aloft right along the shoreline. This would be at a height of anywhere from approximately 15 to 50 feet on most occasions, with an average starting point of around 25, with no identifiable reason for the variance in altitude. The only minor correlation I noted was in poor weather (such as rain or cooler than usual temperatures), as the kite would stay closer to the ground, often finding prey faster, eating it more quickly, and leaving the area to roost for the night earlier than usual. These conditions also often meant it would take more than one prey item in the evening, too. What was particularly fascinating is how it would target rats when it had not eaten its normal amount in the morning or if the weather was poor. The kite would fly over to the revetment wall that goes around most of Stratford Point, knowing that the very large rats living in its rocks that would provide a considerably heftier meal. Instead of hunting over the grasslands, it would hover directly over the rocks and capture the prey in its typical manner, often eating at the site of the kill.

The kite would allow its legs to dangle while staring down and around, shooting its eyes all over the grasslands and towards birds or people surrounding it. It would often drop

down in its hover, say from 25 feet to 15 feet, pulling up as prey moved about below. It would point its wings up and head down, diving talons-first to snatch prey, coming up immediately if it was unsuccessful but remaining on the ground for a few seconds to finish off or better position the kill when it succeeded before flying low to the ground to a perch. At the perch, it would do one of two things – eviscerate and decapitate the prey before eating the head and picking apart the body, or position it better in order to swallow it whole. I would estimate the former practice to have occurred 80-90% of the time with the latter being more confined to situations that required expediency – incoming rain, crowds of birders, fishermen, and beachgoers overwhelming it, or the desire to hunt for more prey after instead of resting. For example, seemingly attempting to eat before the incoming rain on the evening of August 12, the kite returned to Stratford Point earlier than usual. It captured a large vole within a few minutes, and took it to the juniper tree perch where it promptly swallowed it head-first, belly-up, before leaving to roost for the night. Notable exceptions to this perch dining rule included a couple of occasions during the evening hunts in late August and early September where the kite was observed taking a vole and devouring it very quickly on the wing then immediately continuing to hunt for more prey. It would be hard to quantify success rates of hovers and time spent hunting – sometimes it took the kite two minutes to hover and make a kill while other times it took nearly an hour. Actual ground strikes were successful probably around half of the time as the fast hunts meant one strike and one kill while other lengthy hunts meant several dives that came up empty.

The only time the White-tailed Kite performed perch hunting, dropping directly on prey from a stationary position on a nearby perch, was when it was on cedar trees on the beach at Milford Point. It was poor at this form of hunting, catching prey at a very low rate (at least <2%). Often times it would attempt to do this for upwards of an hour before flying back to Stratford Point where the habitat was much more conducive to catching its targeted rodent prey. I, along with others who routinely visited in the evening, suspected it did this only as



*A young Peregrine Falcon seems to have the upper hand... Tom Sayers photo*



*Scott Vincent photo*  
*Voles were a reliable food source during the White-tailed Kite's stay.*



*Scott Vincent photo*  
*but the White-tailed Kite could always hold its own.*

an attempt to find food elsewhere on nights where Stratford Point was full of eager and anxious birders. Toward the end of its stay this was a less of a problem as fewer visitors came, but during August and much of September it had to cope with becoming a minor celebrity as people from all walks of life came to see it. Undoubtedly, there was a direct correlation of this perch hunting in Milford, as well as visit length and physical proximity allowed by the kite, to the number of people at Stratford Point.

The White-tailed Kite was a very wary raptor, often not allowing vehicles to approach anywhere near it, let alone people. Even something as innocuous as a truck driving down Prospect Drive would flush it from some of the trees on the Stratford Point property. If there were several photographers around the edges of the grasslands remaining stationary and quiet the kite would approach close enough for them to have to adjust their long lenses. However, loud and excitable groups of people kept it confined to small areas well over 100 feet from anyone, which often meant that I would establish borders so it could hunt in relative peace. It despised noise, fast movement, and being chased after in any form (even responsibly following it at a distance birders would consider sensible). It was much calmer and paid much less attention to people of any kind when there were only a few around, going about its "schedule" and hunting without glancing up so often.

I am certain that I was able to approach the White-tailed Kite as close as possible when I was alone. I am also very confident it learned to identify me as an individual to some degree as it became accustomed to my presence, probably aided by the fact I wore the same clothing and hat to work each day and learned its habits, behavior, and limits. If perched in its favorite tree, a moderately-sized deciduous that is the third down from the beach (or east side) and behind the middle building of Stratford Point, on some protruding limbs or at the top on Y-shaped branches it would allow me to come within approximately 25 feet out in the open. While hover hunting over the grasslands it would consent to my advance-

ment within 15 feet or less. On one occasion, I situated myself behind the tree adjacent to its favorite to wait for it to return. When it did, not noticing my position or not caring about me, I snapped a few photos of it without moving an inch. Being so attentive and wary it heard the click of the camera, flew off the perch and went back to hunting. The closest we ever came was one evening while I walked the perimeter of Stratford Point. It glided slowly along the edge of the grasslands, moving from one hovering spot to another, astonishingly approaching me from behind and passing only several feet over my head so that I did not know it was there upon me until it went by.

### **Battles in the sky**

The White-tailed Kite's interactions with other bird species were even more enthralling. By far the most infamous exchanges were actually all-out aerial battles with two different juvenile Peregrine Falcons, including one with federal bands that frequented the same territory as its hunting grounds. Despite the fact the falcons were very likely in search of completely different prey (birds), both flew at the kite as fast as their powerful wings could carry them when each spotted it for the first time. Notably, one or more Merlins that were occasional visitors to Stratford Point were not seen interacting with the kite. The first Peregrine encounter came on the previously mentioned anomalous third day of its stay, August 3. After hunting for approximately two hours, a Peregrine attacked the kite quite suddenly over the driveway of Stratford Point. While I did not witness this encounter, many observers reported they went at one another to the degree of locking talons in mid-air. The kite went to Short Beach for around an hour before beginning its sandbar visits for the day.

I was present for the second brawl on August 9 that involved a banded Peregrine, born earlier in the year up the Housatonic at the Milford power plant nest. That Peregrine, sitting on a telephone pole on Stratford Point property and being admired by visitors waiting for the kite to return, saw it the second I did. The kite had flown in to its usual hunting

grounds from Milford without anyone noticing until it was over the grasslands, and the Peregrine leapt off the pole as I called out its arrival to everyone. It went at the kite with absolute fury as I ran as fast as I could after the falcon once I realized what it was going to do. I got around to the front of the building as the Peregrine did, seeing the kite dive just in time not to be smacked hard by the falcon. It was a ferocious battle that lasted around three minutes as the raptors flew from over Stratford Point all the way past Short Beach and up the Housatonic River. I watched the entire incredible battle through my binoculars as they moved away, with the kite maintaining air superiority for nearly the entire time, staying above the Peregrine and even doling out some attacks back at the aggressor. The Peregrine kept banking upwards and thrusting its talons at the kite, which would drop down in a similar manner to its hunting technique, legs dangling and wings vertical, throwing its talons out as it neared the falcon. It ended with the Peregrine breaking towards Short Beach and the kite retiring for the night to Milford Point. While there were subsequent minor skirmishes, nothing of the same viciousness occurred again even when both species were present on the property, perhaps because the Peregrines realized they were overmatched.

Surprisingly, the White-tailed Kite and a couple of Northern Harriers did not interact with one another, despite possessing the same diet. The only other raptor it had any contact with was Osprey, and the kite would occasionally try to push one gently out of the area by approaching cautiously if it were too close to Stratford Point. The Ospreys did not seem to care about the kite, and for the most part, they left one another alone. Nearly every passerine species completely ignored the raptor. Various swallows, especially when they were present in numbers in August, would intermittently pursue it as they hunted for insects over the grasslands. What never left the kite alone were the many Common Terns of the area, as they relentlessly pestered it from the moment Dennis first found the raptor all the way to when their numbers dwindled later in the fall. They would fly around and dive at it a little, calling loudly, though the kite rarely showed any sort of reac-

tion to them. These species were akin to annoying flies to the White-tailed Kite, hardly worth the time or effort to react to. What would muster a reaction and agitate it were the gulls – Herring, Ring-billed, Laughing, and especially Great Black-backed. The sheer size of these birds compared to the kite made it impossible for it to ignore their swooping attacks. It would fly nearly the entire distance of the perimeter or over land for a few moments to get the gulls to move on and allow it to hunt in peace. If one came too close for comfort, the kite would go on the offensive, targeting that particular gull for a couple of minutes of chasing and diving. This infrequent display almost led the kite into trouble one evening as it physically attacked one of a group of gulls, the others then forcing it out of the way into an unbalanced maneuver that put it mere inches away from hitting the surface of the water about 500 feet offshore.

The most intriguing gull encounter was on the evening of August 26. After the kite killed a vole after a lengthy hunt, it took it to the beach to eat, sitting on the rocks at low tide. A



*Frank Gallo photo  
The White-tailed Kite chose a variety of  
perches.*

Great Black-backed Gull approached it slowly while it stood over its kill, the kite mantling and pumping its tail, knowing the gull was contemplating how it could snatch that vole for a free meal. It circled the kite at a distance of about five or six feet, just far enough not to be in any danger from the raptor. The kite picked at its meal, quite disturbed by this unwelcome dinner guest, frequently looking at it and maneuvering in place just enough to keep it at bay. After several minutes, where very little eating actually occurred, the kite took off, still carrying the vole. The gull chased after it for another minute before it moved on.

Whenever it had food or was flying over the water, which the kite would rarely do in a direct line from Milford Point to Stratford Point (approximately 1.25 miles), it would stay quite low, pumping its wings slowly but with force. It was a very capable flyer, able to maneuver quite well for having such powerful wings. It favored taking long loops at low levels following the natural perimeters of the Stratford Point property when hunting or interacting with other birds, sometimes doubling back when it reached the edges of the grasslands. One of the most remarkable aspects of its flight was its ability to seemingly disappear. It would move so quickly and stealthily when it wanted to, especially when flying mere feet over the water between Stratford Point and Short Beach, that it would escape the eyes of keen birders watching closely for it. The kite would suddenly appear at Stratford Point in front of our eyes, seemingly out of thin air, and without attracting the attention of any birds along the way. Sometimes we would even see it take off in Milford, track it as it came towards Stratford, lose sight of it somehow, and have it pop up on our shore a minute later. For such a conspicuous raptor, this was quite an amazing yet standard achievement.

Undoubtedly, one of the White-tailed Kite's most distinctive behaviors was its almost ubiquitous tail bobbing or pumping. Even when the kite appeared as only a white dot on cedar trees at Milford Point from Stratford Point one could sometimes see it pumping its tail and know it was not a gull or an Osprey. This tail bobbing was a common behavior, usually

spurred by either birds or humans or the process of hunting. If it got into a mid-air skirmish with a falcon or a gull and consequently landed, it would end up pumping its tail quite hard. If a car flushed it from its feeding perch or people scared it from resting it would pump its tail when it sat on another perch. When frustrated with a hunt and taking a break more tail bobbing would occur, as well as when mantling food on the beach from the Great Black-backed Gull - or me. While it would permit me to approach closely, the kite would not hesitate to pump that long white tail to inform me when I was intruding.

I never saw nor heard of the White-tailed Kite taking any sort of bath. It would typically preen just after sunrise, often after one kill when relatively few people were in the area. More preening would occur in the afternoon or evening if it were undisturbed. It would sit on the preferred perches in either case, most typically its favorite tree. Occasionally, it groomed in flight, scratching itself while it hovered or kicking at insects pestering it. There was no secret being kept of its nighttime location, a site I was questioned about on a constant basis – we simply do not know where it went exactly, though we are certain it had to have been in a large tree near Stratford Point property. It started every day there, and it was never seen traveling any distance in the morning before showing up. At sunset, it often flew out over land behind Short Beach or up the Housatonic cutting back to these areas west of Stratford Point, where we do know it used large deciduous trees occasionally as a daytime roost.

### **The voice of the kite**

Lastly, a huge topic of interest from visitors was vocalization. I can profess to having heard the White-tailed Kite on only two occasions, with the first time in August fooling me completely since I thought I had heard an Osprey. The kite was hunting Stratford Point in the early afternoon with only a couple of visitors on the site, being harassed by some gulls and terns. Something bothered it enough that it let out an Osprey-like loud and sharp whistle. Realizing there were no

Ospreys in the vicinity I came to the quick conclusion I had just heard the kite. A similar call was made on another day when it flew to Stratford Point, as it was busy with birds, to begin the evening hunt.

The last time I saw the White-tailed Kite was late in the morning on October 5. The temperature was in the mid 50s and a steady rain had been falling all day. It was sitting on a slightly sheltered branch in its favorite tree at Stratford Point, feathers puffed up a bit, its head locked in a stare, hardly paying any attention to me whatsoever. It seemed miserable in the poor conditions, and I was not surprised that it departed that next weekend. I witnessed it taking a couple of high-altitude flights in August and September, soaring thousands of feet into the air and coming gracefully back down to the earth. Despite these test flights the White-tailed Kite remained until its molt was complete and the weather had become unsuitable for it. On October 21, a White-tailed Kite was found by McDuffy Barrow in the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge impoundment along Bayshore Drive in Barnegat Township, New Jersey. Based on appearance, timing, location, and sheer logic, it seems quite likely this was "our" kite. It remained there at least until November 11, with no further reports of vagrant White-tailed Kites in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic states. I know I am not alone in eagerly awaiting Connecticut's second White-tailed Kite after the terrific experience I had with this amazingly magnificent raptor.



*Down the hatch!*

*Scott Kruitbosch photo*

# REFLECTIONS ON MY BIG YEAR

## or How I Dealt With My OCD

### (Ornithological Computation Disorder)

By James M. Dugan

Wikipedia states, "A Big Year is an informal competition among birders to see who can see or hear the largest number of species of birds within a single calendar year and within a specific geographical area." Connecticut 2009 was my Big Year.

I hope these reflections will shed a little light on an incredible adventure that very few people have ever had the chance to experience. I also hope that a reader will be inspired to do a Big Year and tick higher than any Nutmegger has to date. I found it to be a deeply personal journey and I know that doing a Big Year will be very different for each individual. It is a real commitment because it involves trying not to allow a single species to slip by, and a year is a very long time. A finite number of bird species will show up in the state during a calendar year. Several might involve only one individual during a year, and it might only be here for a very short period of time.

Your year will be filled with many unforgettable high points. Some will be true Nat Geo moments. But there will be other times when you will swear you have wasted hundreds of hours. Your year will quickly get to a point of no return, after which quitting will not be an option, and even if you see every bird species that is known to be in the state during your Year, there will be little fanfare at the end. Your birding buddies will certainly congratulate you, because they will have witnessed your relentless persistence. However, your true reward will be the memories of the magical places where you

stood as more than just an observer, but inevitably, feeling one with nature.

A little personal history: I have considered myself a birder since the age of nine thanks to my father. He fostered in me a love of the natural world and personally introduced me to Roger Tory Peterson, took me to dinner at Arthur Singer's home and brought me to many of Julio de la Torre's Owl Prowls in the early 1970s. I am very fortunate that my brother Patrick, who in my opinion is a true bird whisperer, shares his deep understanding of birdlife with me every chance he gets. It is true that if I were a more gifted birder I would have spent less time on a few species, but as with anything in life, some people are naturally gifted birders - I am not one of them. I could study avifauna for the rest of my life, and I might not end up as good as some of Connecticut's birders, but that didn't stop me, nor should it stop anyone else from going for a Big Year.

What I do have is a strong sense of perseverance and tenacity towards things I care about, and these attitudes are required for a Big Year. One will certainly need a relatively strong



*Finding a Ruffed Grouse proved very labor-intensive.*

*Ed Doyle photo*

understanding of the birds of Connecticut, but you sure don't need to have a doctorate in ornithology. One thing that truly helped me was that I did a "practice" Big Year in '08, ending up with 271 species. The practice year gave me the indication that I could push myself to the limits necessary for the real thing, especially since I live an hour from the coast.

The actual timing of your Big Year is a major factor in determining your success. Every year is different in regards to what species will occur, and it won't be exactly the same as any other year in history. You will not be able to judge what boreal species and other vagrants will visit us in the winter that your Year ends. You can, however, choose the winter in which to begin. Starting on a finch invasion winter is almost a necessity, and you must make the most of that winter. Do a Big January, and if your list comes out in spades maybe that is your Year. Keep in mind before you even commit to a true Big Year that you must be willing to drive completely across the state, at any time of day, on the mere possibility of adding a hard-to-find species.

Prioritizing species will be very important many times throughout the year. A reasonable understanding of the possible occurrence of the species that live in or visit the state will prove indispensable. Always chase the rarer bird first regardless of almost anything. If there happened to be a Common Moorhen only slightly out of the way to seeing a Common Gull, the moorhen can wait. This is true even if it would only take minutes to see and ID it, and even if you think that it could be the only moorhen seen in the state that year. The gull might only be there for minutes. Always have a current "hit list" based on what tough species might be around at that time of year and familiarize yourself with their habitat as well as the other birds on your hit list that might be found in the same habitat. Review this list often, as time passes quickly. Once a species heads south for the year it's gone. So is your chance to get it on your list.

When you are not actively pursuing a species that is temporarily in the state, you need to be searching for uncommon

resident birds. In 2008, I listed ten species of birds that I never found in 2009, six of which I don't believe were seen in the state at all in '09. One good example of effort put forth for a resident species was my attempt for a Ruffed Grouse. I never got one drumming in the spring. When I wasn't chasing something in particular, I would run a certain route I created based on preferred habitat and where grouse had been seen through Litchfield and Hartford counties. After 14 days spread over many months, I finally found one and couldn't believe my eyes!

Louis Pasteur said, "Luck favors the mind that is prepared." I kept with me a copy of COA's "Connecticut Birds By The Season" and highly suggest you do the same, Big Year or not. The set of bar graphs were crucial to my planning, kept me on a schedule and prompted me to go after tougher species at their initial arrival dates. I NEVER left home without this publication, several field guides, maps, bins, scope, a video camera, cell phone, mp3 player and GPS. There was a January day soon after I completed my Year that I went to the local grocery store without this bag of tricks. The separation anxiety almost made me turn the car around. I had to convince myself that it was OK. My Year was over.

I also made sure that in my trunk I had head-to-toe bad weather gear, a blaze orange vest and hat for hunting seasons, as well as power bars, water, flashlights, come-along, spare cash, batteries, bug repellent and sun screen. I learned quickly to prep the coffee maker, make food, and layout my clothes the night before so as to not wake my family at 4a.m. I tried not to let my car go below a half tank as I never knew where I might have to be next. At times when a needed species was posted by someone on CTBirds too late in the day to get there by dark, I would end up having to be at that location by dawn, sometimes before any gas station en route might be open. I even kept five gallons of gas at home and actually used it several times.

We are fortunate to have today's technologies, which are taking the Big Year and birding in general into a new realm



*Hank Golet photo*  
*Least Bittern was one of two species that revealed itself only by voice.*

of possibilities. Previously I mentioned my bag of tricks, and I recommend using as many modern tools as possible and using them wisely and respectfully. We are also incredibly fortunate to have CTBirds. During your Year you will be living and breathing CTBirds. Ultimately you should have a smart phone so you can check CTBirds regularly when out in the field. Never leave an area to go to another part of the state without checking to see what someone might have posted. Also check at least a couple of hours before sunset every single day so you will have time to get anywhere by dark. I didn't have a smart phone, but I did have several people that didn't mind me constantly calling for updates, or they would call me with hot posts. My two daughters quickly became proficient at checking my email and knowing what posts were important to me at that time. I got three phone calls within minutes when the Hudsonian Godwit was posted at Hammo, and while on my way there I got a call about the one at Sherwood Island. Your extended support group will be critical to your success. Many folks reading this provided me with vital information, whether they already knew me or

we had never met, and I truly thank all of you!

I suggest birding with the best birders you can, and not only when doing a Big Year, but on every possible occasion. That said, when doing a Big Year you will often be alone and you will need to travel light, fast, and maintain your freedom. Your birding friends will understand, and if you keep them aware of your hit list, they will surely assist you in your search. It is important to create a scenario where you can chase a bird at the drop of a hat. If you must take a vacation out of state, consider times of low geographical bird movement and, if you can, take two cars when you have a daytime function with your partner or spouse during times of high movement. When going after a rarity, I tried extremely hard to be with an experienced birder and I tried to video every bird of interest I could. In regards to “seen” vs “heard-only” it is probably best left to personal judgment as to whether you will be satisfied adding a species to your list without seeing it. You can certainly identify most birds beyond a shadow of doubt by sound, but I strived to limit the heard-only birds on my list. Of the 297 species on my Big Year list, only two were identified solely by call, Black-billed Cuckoo and Least Bittern. I also didn’t count species currently unrecognized by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, such as the wild-type Graylag Goose.

I couldn’t have done my Big Year without the tolerance of my workplace and my family’s understanding. However, I also had to swear off any 2010 Big January or even mention trying a Big Year again for a very, very long time. And as someone once mentioned, “don’t worry about your friends during a Big Year because by the time the year is over you won’t have any.” Do your homework, good luck and always keep in mind that New Years Eve will inevitably arrive and your unforgettable and amazing journey will have come to a gratifying end. I know I will never forget mine and the realization of how fortunate I was to be able to have done it.

## BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

**BIRD FEATHERS.** A Guide to North American Species. S. David Scott & Casey McFarland. 2010. x+358 pgs. Stackpole Books. Mechanicsburg, Pa. \$34.95.

Book shelves, car glove boxes, and field packs are full of guides to help to identify birds. Sometimes we only refer to them by shorthand: Peterson, Nat. Geo. Sibley, etc. There are guides to not only identification, but to bird molt, banding, dissections, photography, and so on. But, despite the Perdue family's insistence that "Parts is Parts", there is no guide to help identify feathers. That is, until now, and Scott and McFarland have filled a perceived need. Literally everyone has picked up a feather at some time. They are common, simple and immediately recognizable. But when you start to ask what bird did it come from or on what area of the body did it occur, or is it from a male or a female or its stage in the molt cycle the answer become more difficult. Ask how its shape relates, for example, to the shape of the wing, the intrigue increases.

By tradition, feathers have defined birds. All birds have feathers and only birds have feathers. This truism was challenged in the late 1990s when fossils of feathered dinosaurs were recovered. And the feathers were recognized instantly. Despite the arguments generated it is still true that among living species, birds have feathers, the feathers constitute the plumage, and plumages are the way we identify birds and, in many cases, the way the birds identify one another. Plus, feathers provide the body shape, provide insulation, and constitute the aerodynamic surface for flight.

From the basic facts on feathers, Scott and McFarland erect a useful means for birders, banders, twitchers, biologists, teachers, and other interested parties. In early chapters they catalogue the types of feathers and how they generate the overall shape, pattern, and many of the functions of a bird. For example, how primary and secondary feathers combine

to produce the shape of the wing, so critical to flight. In a separately color-indexed chapter (4) on flight feather identification, the details of the structure-function nexus are explored. It is a primer for what is to follow.

The body of the book (Part II) is taxonomically sequenced. The individual pages contain an outline silhouette of the wing type (i.e., High Speed, Classic Elliptical, Slotted High-Lift), a distribution map, and a photograph that includes examples of wing primary and secondary, tail, and body contour feathers. The accompanying text describes such features as camber, emargination, presence of tegmen, and other morphological features of feathers mostly relevant to properties of the wing linked to flight. Measurements are in both English and Metric units. The pages are clinical in their approach and uniform in their content. Indeed, this is a guide to feather identification. Identification is enriched by including Great Egret breeding plumes and boldly colored display feathers such as in Red-winged Blackbird or Yellow-headed Blackbird. Of course, the banded, spotted, striped and other magnificent patterns are a delight to explore.

These are great images, but this is only where the fun starts. Consider: among woodpecker species, tail feathers are “stiff and pointed”. The apparent function is to brace the bird poised vertically on a tree trunk. Tail feathers on Creepers are also pointed and may be used for the same purpose, to provide bracing while vertically scaling a trunk. Not so for Nuthatches, a species that descends trunks vertically. All well and good. But what of the Bobolink? Tails are stiff and pointed, but they occur in grasslands and marshy areas, perched on single stems of grasses or weeds. They feed on grains, seeds and insects, rarely if ever braced against a tree trunk.

The pages for the 397 species covered are followed by a very brief Additional Resources (three books, and a link to the Slater Museum of Natural History), Acknowledgements and a Bibliography. There is no glossary.

## NOTES ON BEHAVIOR STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION



*Tom Sayers photo*

**An intergrade flicker in Tolland:** This Northern Flicker, showing characteristics of both the yellow-shafted and red-shafted race or subspecies, was visiting Jeanne Kosciw's feeder in Tolland during January. Intergrades arise from mating between races of the same species. In the Northern Flicker, yellow-shafted birds from the East and red-shafted birds from the West, produce intergrade individuals over a broad area of the northern Rocky Mountains and Great Plains. There are no Connecticut records of pure "Red-shafted" Flickers, but intergrades have been detected a few times. Glenn Williams wrote in *The Connecticut Warbler* (Vol. 30 No. 1) about an intergrade seen at Bluff Point in Groton on Sept. 20, 2009. In his research for the article Glenn found no instances of pure red-shafted birds from the Northeast. Banding studies of birds showing red-shafted traits have concluded the birds were intergrades. The Tolland bird represents the first photographic record of an intergrade in Connecticut. It shows the head pattern of a "Yellow-shafted" Flicker but the red tones on the undersides of the tail and wings characteristic of "Red-shafted" Flicker.

# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Summer, June 1 through July 31, 2010

By Greg Hanisek

The summer season is short and complex. Once a time when birders snoozed in the sun after the excitement of spring migration, the season now reveals its nuances and diverse possibilities to a cadre of interested observers that grows every year. In recognition of the season's avian cross currents, this field note report is divided into four sections: Northbound Migration, which continues into June; Southbound Migration, which can often be detected before June ends; Lingerers, Wanderers and Strays, which includes some of the season's most exciting finds; and the Breeding Season, the true heart of this short but intense segment of the Connecticut birding year.

## Northbound Migration

Two immature Northern Gannets were plunge-diving off Stratford on June 6 (FM), and five immatures were at the Norwalk Islands on June 7 (LFI). An unusually late inland Greater Yellowlegs was in a marsh in Torrington on June 20 (PCa). Ten Red Knots were at Short Beach, Stratford, on June 2 (FM); followed the next day by 23 on Cockenoe Island, Westport, (LFI) and six at Milford Point (NB). Cockenoe Island still held 22 on June 5, and 20 were present on June 6 along with one Semipalmated Plover, 60 Ruddy Turnstones, 200 Semipalmated Sandpipers and two Dunlin (LFI). Milford Point held 600 Semipalmated Sandpipers and four White-rumped Sandpipers June 3 (NB). Sandy Point in West Haven had four Black-bellied Plovers, a Semipalmated Plover, five Ruddy Turnstones, nine Red Knots, 102 Semipalmated Sandpipers, a Dunlin and two Short-billed Dowitchers on June 6 (NB, MSt). Harvey's Beach in Old Saybrook held seven White-rumped Sandpipers on June 7 (GH, RD), and three were still at Sandy Point on June 13-15 (TG, SZ, PDe).

Common Nighthawks were still on the move in early June, with one at Woodbury on June 5 and two at Southbury on June 6 (RN). The latest report of Blackpoll Warblers, which typically continue to pass through in early June, was June 12 in Litchfield (RN). A Magnolia Warbler on June 4 at West Hartford Reservoir was probably a late migrant, but this species has also been increasing as a breeder in recent years (PDe). A typically late-moving Mourning Warbler was in New Hartford on June 3 (PCa). Single Nelson's Sparrows on June 1 at Barn Island, Stonington, and June 3 at Pattagansett Marsh in East Lyme conformed to our understanding that this secretive species is a late-spring migrant (CEI et al.).

### Southbound Migration

A Merlin dive-bombing a Red-tailed Hawk on July 24 in Litchfield (DR) probably belongs in this category, but it's worth noting that Merlins have now been confirmed nesting south of Connecticut. A post-breeding concentration of 102 Killdeer on July 3 at Windham Airport, Windham, was noteworthy

(PR). The first report of southbound Arctic shorebirds came from Sandy Point on July 2 with a flock of 13 adult Least Sandpipers (NB). The first four adult Semipalmated Sandpipers were at Milford Point on July 5 (FG), and 3500 were there by July 23 (GH, BB). White-rumped Sandpiper is typically a late northbound migrant, but one on July 10 at Milford Point seems more indicative of an early southbound bird (NB). The first report of a Western Sandpiper came from Long Beach in Stratford on July 26 (CB). The first Whimbrel flew by Stratford Point on July 14 (SK). The first report of a Pectoral Sandpiper came from Milford Point (JMo) and the first of a Red Knot from Sandy Point (GN), both on July 18. A Long-billed Dowitcher was found July 31 at Stratford Marina (JOs), which has become a reliable spot for this hard-to-find species. An adult Bonaparte's Gull in full alternate plumage was at Short Beach in Stratford on July 26 (FM). Most early southbound reports of this species involve juveniles.

An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** made a brief appearance on July 29 at

Cove Island, Stamford (PDu). This fits an emerging pattern of male Rufous appearing in the East in July-August. The early stages of the swallow migration truly are early. A concentration on July 3 at Windham Airport included 300 Tree Swallows, 35 Bank Swallows and 26 Barn Swallows (PR). A leucistic Tree Swallow, almost all white, was at the airport on July 12 (PR). A smattering of mid-summer Red-breasted Nuthatches at non-breeding locations began with singles on July 6 in Stamford (J&RBe) and on July 7 in Windsor Locks (PDe). Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, hereafter HBSP, which lacks breeding woodland warblers, offers a good glimpse at early movements and dispersals, such as a Black-and-White Warbler there on July 18 (PDe). A Northern Waterthrush was on the move July 20 at Station 43, South Windsor. It was the observer's earliest southbound migrant ever by four days (PDe). The often-overlooked July movement of Red-winged Blackbirds produced up to 1000 at Station 43 in South Windsor (PDe) and 770 at Lighthouse Point, New Haven (BB), both

on July 30.

### **Lingerers, Wanderers and Strays**

Two Snow Geese lingered deep into summer at Cummings Park in Stamford (RBe et al.). Brant routinely linger into summer on the coast, but one on July 7 at Gay City State Park in Hebron was unexpected at an inland site (HM). A female type Northern Pintail on July 14 at Stratford marina was well ahead of the typical first arrival of dabbling ducks (NB). A Greater Scaup was at Milford Point on July 10 (NB); a White-winged Scoter at the Stratford seawall on July 13 appeared ill (FM); and a Bufflehead on July 13 in Old Lyme appeared to have an injured wing (HG). The only reports of Long-tailed Duck were four on June 10 at the Norwalk Islands (LFI) and two off Short Beach, Stratford, on June 22 (FM), a big drop from the numbers that summered in Long Island Sound last year. Two Red-breasted Mergansers for the season, on June 5 at HBSP (TG) and June 10 at Long Beach in Stratford (FM), were very low for a species whose recent summer showings

raised suspicion of breeding.

The annual summer complement of non-breeding Common Loons in Long Island Sound included two off Penfield Reef, Fairfield, on July 14 (JP). **Wilson's Storm Petrels** generated the following reports: two on June 14 (SMi) and four on July 17 (NB), both from the New London-Orient ferry; one off Shippan Point, Stamford, on July 5 (AC); and one off Stonington Point on July 8 (GW et al.). An **American White Pelican** was photographed on a rock in the Pawcatuck River, which forms the Connecticut-Rhode Island boundary in Stonington, on June 16 (fide NB); there also was a flyby on July 25 at Cove Island, Stamford (BV). A post-breeding concentration of 54 Great Blue Herons was at the Riverside Park sewage pond in Hartford on July 30 (PCi). A Little Blue Heron was far inland in late June at a private pond in Suffield (fide RZ). Tricolored Herons were noted at Great Island in Old Lyme on June 18 (JHa) and at HBSP from July 11-27 (PDe, JCa et al.). Single Cattle Egrets were at HBSP on June 1 (CF), at Country Club of Fairfield on June 2 (JR) and at

Sherwood Island State Park, Westport, on June 9 (BV), a tight time frame suggesting possible overlap of individuals. An adult Black-crowned Night-Heron was unexpected July 28 on a Scantic River millpond in Somers (JCl).

With just a single sighting, a **Mississippi Kite** over the Farmington Canal Greenway in Hamden on June 2 fits into this category (JMh, TG et al.), but given events elsewhere this year and last, breeding suspicions are raised. A **Common Moorhen** was found at a pond at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, on July 10 (CB). It was seen again the next day (SZ). The season's only Lesser Black-backed Gull was a second-cycle bird on June 20 at the mouth of the Housatonic River (CB). A Glaucous Gull was unexpected on June 12 at Greenwich Point (fide BO). Two Caspian Terns for the season were singles seen on June 16 at the mouth of the Housatonic River in Stratford (FM) and on July 18 at Milford Point (JMo). Three Royal Terns were observed July 16 from the Bridgeport-Port Jefferson Ferry (JO'B), and one flew by the Stratford seawall on June



*Laughing Gulls, including a high percentage of juveniles, visited the state in record numbers this summer.* Mark Szantyr photo

6 (FM). A Common Tern, seldom found inland, was at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 on July 8 (PCi). A gathering of 2500 Common Terns, including 1000 juveniles, was staging on July 26 at Short Beach in Stratford (FM). With no breeding activity noted, single Black Skimmers on June 13 in Old Saybrook (JOg), on July 8 at Greenwich Point (JHn) and on July 25 at Milford Point (JMa) were the only ones reported.

A singing immature male Blue Grosbeak was at Trout Brook Valley in Easton on June 5- 6 (LT). A White-throated Sparrow was an unexpected visitor on June 27 in a Meriden backyard (CF).

### **The Breeding Season**

A pair of Blue-winged Teal on June 13 at Hart Pond in Cornwall suggested possible breeding (FZ). Two male Green-winged Teal on June 16 at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Stratford, were at a potential breeding site (FM). A flock of 18 Common Eider at Stonington Point on July 8 was another sign of the species' push into state waters, as well as a sign that the first breeding record may be imminent (GW). Two female Hooded Mergansers escorted at least five young through the period at Hessekey Meadows Pond in Woodbury (RN). A female was on Post Pond in Moodus on June 26 (ADa), and a juvenile was unexpected

on a coastal pond in Stratford on July 13 (SK). Three female Common Mergansers were on the Pomperaug River in Southbury through the period with broods of 15, eight and seven young, respectively (RN). Pied-billed Grebes were in breeding habitat on June 4 at Wimisink Marsh in Sherman (ADi) and on July 13 at Little Pond in Litchfield (GH). Away from the usual sites in the Connecticut River Valley, a Least Bittern was at the Access Road pools in Stratford on July 11 (JOs). Birding at several sites in Westport on June 27 produced a total of about 150 adult Black-crowned Night-Herons (TG). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron nest with three young in a residential yard in Madison (JCo) was well east of the species' breeding stronghold in the Milford-Stratford-Bridgeport area. It fills in the gap a bit between the western stronghold and an outlying breeding site in Mystic. It also accounted for several summer observations of this species at HBSP (TG, WK et al.).

A leucistic Turkey Vulture, almost completely white, was near Miller Pond

in Waterford on June 11 (DPr). Among the increasing number of inland Osprey nestings was a pair on an old metal structure at Wethersfield Cove (PCi) and a pair on a light stanchion at Willowbrook Park in New Britain/Berlin (JMe). There were also several pairs on cell towers in the lower Naugatuck Valley (BB). A pair of **Mississippi Kites** was confirmed nesting in Simsbury for a third consecutive year when two were seen copulating on June 3 (JW). The female was on the nest June 26 when a food visit by the male was observed (fide JK). The nest was then damaged in a June 30 windstorm and a single egg was found smashed on the ground, ending the nesting attempt for 2010 (from neighborhood resident (fide JK). The state DEP's Bald Eagle monitoring program noted 22 pairs statewide, four territorial and 18 actively nesting. Of the 18 active, six pairs failed and 12 pairs fledged 23 chicks (JV). It was the highest number of failures Connecticut has experienced. The failures all occurred on or after April 1 and some or all may have been related to a severe March 31

rainstorm. At the Southbury Training School farm, a pair of American Kestrels fledged five young by July 15 (LFI, RN). DEP reported 13 pairs of Peregrine Falcons (one inactive, two territorial and 10 active). For three pairs a chick count could not be determined due to inaccessibility. The remaining seven active pairs fledged a total of 19 chicks (JV).

A single **Sandhill Crane** was photographed on June 28 in East Killingly. Information has emerged that two birds had been present in this area in 2008 and 2009, raising breeding possibilities there or in neighboring Rhode Island (BT). Sandhill Cranes have been confirmed

breeding just over the Litchfield County line in Massachusetts, but there is as yet no confirmed breeding here. DEP reported 43 pairs of Piping Plovers that hatched 103 eggs and fledged 79 young (JV). Rentschler Field in East Hartford held three Upland Sandpipers on June 13 (FG), and on July 17 two adults and two juveniles were present (TF, BI). This appears to be the state's only breeding location outside of Bradley International Airport. On June 6 Cockenoe Island in Westport held five pairs of American Oystercatchers, each with two or three chicks (LFI). Two female American Woodcocks with three to four young were at the



*Bill Taber photo*  
 One of the season's most intriguing sightings was this Sandhill Crane photographed on June 28 in East Killingly.



*Mark Szantyr photo*

*This Great Crested Flycatcher was part of a pair feeding young in a natural cavity at Hammonasset Beach State Park this summer.*

Southbury Training School farm in mid-June (RN).

A calling Common Nighthawk on June 11 in downtown New Haven was at perhaps one of the last breeding locations in the state (MA). The surge in Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers as breeders was exemplified by c. 25 nesting pairs in Woodbury and Southbury, towns that were south of the species' breeding limits a decade ago (RN). A colony of up to 20 Fish Crows occupied Coe Memorial Park in Torrington, an area north of historic breeding limits (RN). Acadian Flycatchers are sparse and widely scattered away from a fairly solid population in the southeast, the latter exemplified by four in Pachaug State Forest in North Stonington

on July 4 (BAs). The scattered reports this year came from Cornwall (E&KF), West Hartland (PCa), Woodbury (GH) and Bloomfield (SF) in June. A Great Crested Flycatcher was feeding at least one young in a nest box in Berlin on June 29 (AT).

Six Horned Larks, including some apparent fledglings, were at Bradley International Airport on June 26 (PCi). An active Cliff Swallow nest on the face of the Farmington Library was a first there for the observer in 16 years (SJ). A total of seven pairs of Purple Martins occupied a traditional house and gourd houses in Fairfield (DV). A pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets at White Memorial in Litchfield raised two broods of three

to five young each (RN). A Red-breasted Nuthatch fed a fledgling in a Harwinton yard on July 31 (PCa). A leucistic Cedar Waxwing was at HBSP on June 14 (GH, BB). The only Brewster's Warbler report was on June 15 in Harwinton (GH). Hooded Warblers were reported in unusually high numbers in the northwestern part of their state range, including Woodbury, Southbury and Sherman (RN, SH, KE, ADi). A Yellow-breasted Chat was on the Verkade tract at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford on June 17 (BDw).

A single July 31 report of a Grasshopper Sparrow from Northwest Park in Windsor, where the species has bred, suggests wandering from one of the other breeding sites in this area (PDe). In addition to the Bradley Airport and Rentschler Field breeding areas, Grasshopper Sparrows were reported in June from Ebbs Corner in Suffield (PCi) and from North District Road in Somers (JCl). "Dozens" of Bobolinks were reported on June 1 from fields on Matthews Street in Bristol, an area that receives little birder coverage (DZ). A high count of 11 Eastern Meadow-

larks on June 21 at Windham Airport, Windham, marks this as one of the key locations for this declining grassland species (PR). A single meadowlark was an interesting find June 5-6 at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford, a site with suitable breeding habitat (FM). A female Orchard Oriole fed fledglings on July 2 on the boardwalk railing at Milford Point (JJ). Two pairs of Purple Finches nested successfully at Flanders Nature Center in Woodbury (RN). A single Pine Siskin sang in a Goshen yard on June 20 (KF). The trend of summer Evening Grosbeak sightings in the Northwest Corner continued. A pair visited a Barkhamsted yard on June 9 (DPe); two were flyovers on June 24 at a Colebrook yard (WM); and there was a report of about six at another Barkhamsted location in late June, with one present June 28 (fide ADi).

Observers: Mark Aronson, Bob Askins (BAs), Bill Asteriades (BAAt), Bill Banks, Charlie Barnard, Joan Becker (JBe), Richard Becker (RBe), Ray Belding (RBl), Nick Bonomo, Joseph Budrow (JBu), Alex Burdo, Jim Carr (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa),

Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Al Collins, Jan Collins (JCl), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Randy Domina, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Eileen Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Tom Fiore, Larry Fischer (Lfi), Carolyn Fisher, Larry Flynn (Lfl), Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, Sam Fried, Frank Gallo, Hank Golet, Tina Green, Jan Hamilton (JHa), Greg Hanisek, John Hannan (JHn), Roy Harvey, Seth Harvey, Julian Hough (JHo), Brenda Inskeep, Jalna Jaeger, SH Johnston, Jay Kaplan, Wendy Knothe, Scott Kruitbosch, David Lawton, Chris Loscalzo, Frank Mantlik, Linda Mantlik, John Marshall (JMa), Wayne Meagher, Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers

(JMe), Shai Mitra (SMi), Judy Moore (JMo), Marty Moore, Don Morgan, Harold Moritz, Steve Morytko (SMo), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol,

John O'Brien (JO'B), John Ogren (JOg), Maryann O'Leary, John Oshlick (JOs), Brian O'Toole, Dave Pelletier (DPe), Bev Propen, Dave Provencher (DPr), Paul Provost, James Purcell, James Restivo (JRe), Judy Richardson (JRi), Dave Rosgen, Phil Rusch, Meredith Sampson (MSa), John Schwarz (JSc), Olaf Soltau, Maria Stockmal (MSt), Jack Swatt (JSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Bob Taber, Andy Thiede, Luke Tiller, Bill Van Loan, Dennis Varza, Julie Victoria, Glenn Williams, Brian Webster, John Weeks, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, David Zomick, Fran Zygmunt.

## PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Mark Szantyr

Imagine this scenario. You are sitting at your local CBC compilation supper savoring a plate of baked beans and a steamy mug of hot spiced cider. You overhear a conversation between two of the newer members of the club in which they are describing a bird that puzzled them at a favorite coastal hotspot. You hear it was in the tangles but popped up for a good quick view. You hear..."robin-sized...grayish...wing bars...streaks in the rear flanks...a dark mask...".

Hmmmm. Sounds like...well, flank streaks? As you eat, you thumb through an available field guide. A few birds seem like they might fit but only one is advertised as having all the noted field marks...but it couldn't be!

I actually tested the scenario on an astute but very new birder friend of mine. I asked her to grab her three favorite field guides (she chose the most popular, Sibley, National Geographic and Peterson Eastern ). I recounted the description that I offered above and asked her to try and sleuth out which bird my make-believe friends were describing. For the



sake of realism I called them Julian and Nick. She thumbed through the aforementioned “bibles,” asked a few very good questions to which I only offered what was offered above, and she deftly arrived at three possibilities. Northern Mockingbird, Bahama Mockingbird and Sage Thrasher. She spent some time considering the shrikes but could find none with wing bars or streaking.

I asked her to add up the field marks and choose one. She concluded that, according to the field guides, it must be a Bahama Mockingbird but none of them really fit that well.

I reminded her that the CBC was in Connecticut. I asked if Northern Mockingbird wasn't more likely. She agreed but said that none of the field guides say anything about Northern Mockingbird showing streaking in the flanks and they all say that it is a prominent feature of Bahama Mocker. She noted that the illustrations also show the Bahama Mocker as appearing more masked than the Northern Mockingbird. She also reminded me that I am always looking for oddball vagrants and actually remembered me recently muttering something about a Sage Thrasher.

When I sent this photo to Greg Hanisek, I asked him if it was too easy for a Quiz Bird. He said that it probably was and I let it rest. Lo and behold, the image appeared in the next issue of the Connecticut Warbler. When I asked him about this change of heart, he said that he thought that anyone who thought this was too easy wasn't asking enough questions. That Greg!

I photographed this Northern Mockingbird at Hammonasset Beach State Park in late October 2010 while I was, in fact, looking and hoping for a Sage Thrasher. I had no doubt that the bird was a Northern Mockingbird (that wing pattern was perfect) but was curious about the fairly prominent streaking in the rear flanks. I pulled out my arsenal of field guides (making sure I wasn't missing something) and noted that, indeed, none of the guides offer this as a possibility for Northern Mockingbird but all said it was great for Bahama

Mockingbird. I will admit that in my copy of Peterson's Eastern guide, there is a slight suggestion of a few streaks in the rear flanks in the illustration, but not nearly as prominent as this bird shows and no mention is made in the description.

The key to the answer is in aging the bird. The eye is dusky, actually rich amber colored in the original image, and not that glaring pale eye of an adult Northern Mockingbird. The bill also is a bit short for the species. Juvenal plumaged Northern Mockingbirds are quite streaked below, and while it is heaviest at the breast, birds do show streaking throughout their under parts. What about the masked look? Most adult Northern Mockingbirds have dark feathering in front of the eye. While searching through my many mockingbird photos, I noticed that in some birds of this same age, the dark seems to extend to behind the eye as well. This is variable, however. I also noticed a few birds that I was unable to age confidently (the eyes were pale and the bills were long) that showed faint streaking in the rear flanks. It is likely that the quiz bird is coming into its first basic plumage but is retaining a few of the streaks from its juvenal feathering, these streaks just a bit heavier than normal.

I am confident that you all got this right. I guess I am asking why you got it right...and how did you account for those flank streaks? Another case of me just looking too closely, I guess.



Photo Challenge No. 72

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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

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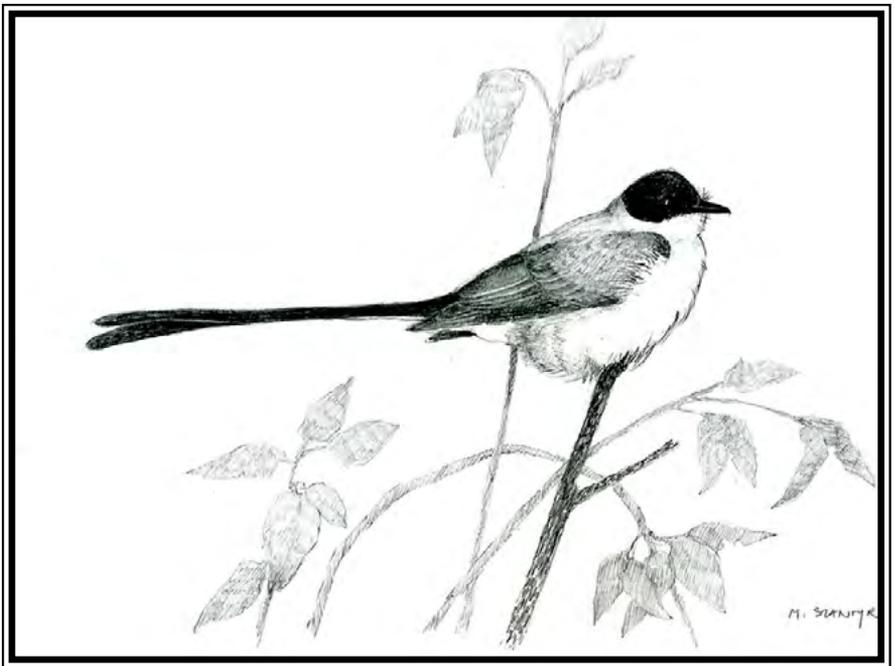
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# The Connecticut Warbler

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## ON THE COVER

### Fork-tailed Flycatcher

Mark Szantyr captured the essence of one of the most popular and charismatic visitors during Connecticut's remarkable autumn of 2010. The Fork-tailed Flycatcher drew hundreds of visitors to Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford during November and into December.

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# SIXTEENTH REPORT OF THE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF CONNECTICUT

By Jay Kaplan and Greg Hanisek

In the Fifteenth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (see July 2010 Vol. 30 No.3 of *The Connecticut Warbler*), Western Meadowlark was added to Connecticut's State List. This year, three species were accepted to the list bringing the state total to 427 birds. These new species are White-tailed Kite, Northern Lapwing and Common Murre.

Over the past year, committee members have been asked about the voting process for records that have been submitted for review. At this time, it seems prudent to provide a brief summary of how the process works. The secretary of the Avian Records Committee compiles a file for each submitted record. Anyone can file a report and guidelines may be found in the ARCC section of the COA web site. The committee members submit votes on each record prior to the holding of committee meetings, generally held annually. In situations where a large number of records are submitted, the committee may schedule additional meetings. Committee members do not discuss records prior to the votes, which are submitted to the chairman and secretary electronically. At the meeting, the vote results are announced. A record is accepted if it receives no more than one negative vote. Voting categories are accept; accept although there may have been questions concerning the origin of the bird; not accepted due to questions about identification; or not accepted due to questions about origin. If the committee does not accept a record on the first round of voting, but the record receives a majority of accept votes, the record goes to a second round of voting. If a record is not accepted on a second round of voting, it may go to a third round. If the record is not accepted on a third and final round of voting, it is not accepted.

It should be noted that following the first round of voting, records are discussed by members of the committee, and these discussions can be quite lively. A record that is not accepted remains in the committee's files. Such a record may be re-opened at any time as requested by any committee member and if there is reason to do so. It may be that new information has been brought to light concerning the record or perhaps concerning the species. This has recently occurred with several records, some of which are more than 20 years old. It should be mentioned that "non-acceptance" of a record does not mean that this bird did not occur in Connecticut. The record may not be accepted because the report was missing crucial information or did not provide information necessary to differentiate it from similar or related species. The ARCC files provide a permanent record for Connecticut ornithologists and birders and must stand the test of time.

ARCC members take their responsibilities seriously, and a great deal of thought and discussion goes into the decision as to whether or not to accept a record. One thing that has made the committee's work easier are incredible advances in digital photography. It should be noted that photographs accompanying a report do not have to be of professional quality. The committee has accepted reports for which photos were taken using a cell phone camera. Another record came from a committee member who observed a bird while delivering mail, and was able to photograph it with a small camera kept in the car. Such activity was unheard of a generation ago.

Another issue with respect to records is who may contribute them. The fact is that anyone can submit a record. It is hoped that Connecticut birders will review the guidelines found in the ARCC section of the COA web site. Often, records take months or more to be submitted because the birders who first found a rare bird wait for a more experienced birder to see the bird and submit a report. If the bird is present for only a short time, reports by experienced birders may not be forthcoming. Today, there are many new birders looking for birds throughout Connecticut. With greater

coverage, it would not be surprising were record submissions to increase considerably.

In closing, the committee would like to publicly thank Ed Hagen for his many years of service. Ed has resigned from the committee as he and his wife recently sold their home in Woodbury and moved to Florida. The committee wishes Ed all the best and hopes that he will have many opportunities to find rarities in the Sunshine State. Finally, the committee held its last meeting at the Peabody Museum in New Haven. At one time, the committee held all its meetings at the Peabody, taking advantage of the institution's collections. These collections can be extremely helpful in reviewing records. The committee thanks Jacob Musser for his invitation to return to New Haven and looks forward to meeting at the Peabody Museum in the future.

## STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

The state list now stands at 427. The committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List (they are species marked with an asterisk on the COA Checklist plus any species new to the state). The most recent State List and Review List can be viewed on the COA Checklist at [www.ctbirding.org](http://www.ctbirding.org). Submit written reports along with documentary material to Jay Kaplan, ARCC chairman, (address below).

## FORMAT

This report continues the format of previous reports. In the case of accepted records, only observers who submitted reports are listed, with the original finder listed first followed by an asterisk. Observers who submitted a photo are acknowledged with ‡ following their names. Hyphenated numbers (e.g. 02-01) preceding the observers are the ARCC file numbers. The species are listed in order according to the AOU Checklist. Multiple records of a particular species are listed chronologically. Months of the year are shortened to their first three letters.

## ACCEPTED RECORDS

**BARNACLE GOOSE** (*Branta leucopsis*) One visited Mackenize Reservoir in Wallingford from 10 Oct through early Nov 2010 (10-20 Mark Barriger\*, Dan Cinotti‡). One joined flocks of Canada Geese in a Windsor corporate park on 31 Oct 2010. It was last seen on 11 Dec 2010 at the Windsor boat launch on the Connecticut River (10-23 Brian Kleinman\*‡, Jay Kaplan, Gil Kleiner‡). One was at Horsebarn Hill in Storrs from 21 Nov through at least 7 Dec 2010 (10-21 Mary Covello\*, Frank Gallo‡, Mark Szantyr‡). One was found in Wooster Park, Stratford, on 2 Dec 2010. It eventually was relocated on 10 Dec at the Longshore Club in Westport, where it remained through 7 Jan 2011 (10-22 Frank Mantlik‡\*, Bruce Finnan‡, Frank Gallo‡, Scott Kruitbosch, Mark Szantyr‡). Record 10-22 was of special significance because observers were able to read a leg band that proved it to be the same bird seen in The Bronx, N.Y. a few days before its arrival in Stratford. New York observers had also read the band and discovered the goose had originated from a prime wintering area of this species on the island of Islay in the western isles of Scotland, U.K., where it was banded as a juvenile on 13 Nov 2002. It had a plastic leg band, VUB, and a metal band,



Bruce Finnan photo

*This Barnacle Goose, shown here at Longshore Club in Westport, was of special significance because of the band from Islay, Scotland, U.K.*

“British Museum # 1291347.” The Barnacle Geese wintering on Islay breed in northeastern Greenland, known to be the point of origin for some neck-collared Canada Geese seen annually in Connecticut. This is also the presumptive point of origin for other Barnacle Geese, Greenland White-fronted Geese and Pink-footed Geese seen in Connecticut, often in the company of neck-collared Greenland Canada Geese. A Barnacle Goose seen and photographed at Beardsley Park in Bridgeport (Scott Vincent‡) between the banded bird’s move from Stratford to Westport is believed to be the same individual. The bird was seen only on the water, so the presence of a band could not be detected.

**WESTERN GREBE** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) One was found swimming off Milford Point on 2-3 Nov 2010 (10-15 Dennis Varza \*, Frank Gallo). The bird was seen by several observers, and Gallo provided detailed sketches along with a report that clearly eliminated the very similar Clark’s Grebe. This is the first record since December 2006 and only the third documented record in more than 30 years.

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) An immature bird was seen in flight and on the water off Stratford Point, Stratford, and Milford Point, Milford, on 10 Aug 2010 (10-16 Scott Kruitbosch‡\*, Frank Gallo‡, Scott Vincent‡). The bird appeared while a number of observers were present at Stratford Point awaiting the arrival of a long-staying White-tailed Kite. Several were equipped with cameras, resulting in excellent photographic confirmation.

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*) An adult was seen flying across Route 1 in Clinton on 7 May 2008 (08-11 Graham Scott\*). The observer and his wife were both familiar with the species from time spent in Florida, where he had photographed a number of individuals.

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*) The state’s first was found on 1 Aug 2010 at Stratford Point, Stratford (10-17 Dennis Varza\*, Bruce Finnan‡, Frank Gallo‡, Julian Hough‡, Scott Kruitbosch‡, Tom Sayers‡, Mark Szantyr‡, Scott Vin-



*Jim Zipp photo*  
*Stinging insects were no match for the Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Stamford.*



*Mark Szantyr photo*  
*The Northern Lapwing on the UConn campus at Storrs was an exciting first for Connecticut.*

*Jim Zipp photo*  
*A LeConte's Sparrow at Milford Point confined itself to a very small area of Spartina grass.*





*Mark Szantyr photo*  
This Eared Grebe, one of two during fall 2010, was at Snipsic (Shenipsit) Lake in Tolland.



*Rollin Tebbets photo*  
Security concerns made the Mountain Bluebird at Bradley International Airport a tough bird to see.



*Hank Golet photo*  
A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Old Lyme broke the prevailing pattern of late spring-early summer occurrences.

cent‡, Rick Wiltraut‡, Jim Zipp‡). The bird's remarkable stay of more than four months allowed several thousand observers to see it and produced a remarkable array of photographs. The bird became perhaps the best-documented individual rarity ever in Connecticut. It spent some time at Milford Point but was most often observed at Stratford Point, a location not always open to the public. Throngs of people were able to see it there because of warden services provided by Kruitbosch through Connecticut Audubon Society. His almost-daily observations were published as an article in *The Connecticut Warbler* (Vol. 31 Number 1), which featured a deft cover drawing by Mark Szantyr. The only previous sighting in New England was at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on 30 May 1910. Hough provided the following on age and sex: "While worn outer primaries and the state of molt may have initially suggested a 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar-year bird, input from experienced birders (Liguori, Clark et al.) indicated a molting adult cannot be excluded, and the bird is best left as 'age and sex uncertain'. Further research revealed that while many juvenile White-tailed Kites replace much of their plumage in the first fall, according to Clark, they do not replace their black wing coverts, which according to him would still be white-tipped, unlike the adult feathers of the Connecticut individual."

**NORTHERN LAPWING** (*Vanellus vanellus*) A bird discovered 27 Dec 2010 at Lot W on the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs represented a first state record of this Old World plover (10-08 Phil Rusch\*, Frank Gallo‡, Mark Szantyr‡). It was seen by many observers on 28 Dec, the final day of its two-day stay, when it traded between Lot W and Horsebarn Hill, also on the UConn campus. Its arrival coincided with a significant weather-related movement of Northern Lapwings, as well as other Eurasian species, into northeastern North America, primarily the Canadian Maritime Provinces as expected.

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** (*Rissa tridactyla*) A total of four sightings involving at least three birds, all adults, was made 2 Jan 2010 from the New London-Orient, N.Y. ferry in

Connecticut waters (10-10 Frank Mantlik\*‡). One bird was seen on the outward-bound trip and three on the return trip. This pelagic winterer rarely penetrates deep into Long Island Sound, making this easterly ferry route a prime spot for sightings.

**ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisaea*) A single adult was seen flying past the tern colony at Falkner Island, Guilford, on 1 Jul 1999 (10-06 Peter Vickery\*). Although this species breeds as close by as the Massachusetts islands, it is a pelagic migrant not inclined to enter Long Island Sound. The sighting came to light in a manner that may produce additional significant records in the future. The very experienced observer was entering some of his old records into eBird, the online database maintained jointly by National Audubon Society and Cornell University. The eBird filters, set to capture records of rarities, flagged the entry. The observer was asked for details and he provided succinct, species-specific notes taken at the time. The value of good field notes goes without saying, especially when the passage of time has blurred memory of a long-ago day in the field.

**COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) The state's overdue first record involved a bird in breeding plumage found by an adult education birding class on 30 Jan 2011 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (11-01 Tina Green\*, Nick Bono-mo‡, Sarah Faulkner ‡, Frank Gallo‡, Greg Hanisek, Keith Mueller‡). As the bird made a slow swimming circuit around Meigs Point early on a Sunday morning, a number of birders were able to hustle to Hammo to see it. Because the species is highly pelagic away from its breeding grounds, it had not been a good candidate historically to enter Long Island Sound. However, a recent change in pattern had resulted in a significant increase in onshore and near-shore sightings from as close by as Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

**EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) One was found on 22 May 2008 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (10-14 Michael DiGiorgio\*‡, Patrick Dugan‡). It was relocated briefly the following morning. This is a second



*Keith Mueller photo*  
*This unbelievably cooperative Common Murre at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison provided a long-awaited first state record.*

state record for this introduced and now well-established Old World species, which has spread significantly since its anchoring of a breeding population in Florida. Its radiation includes a westward component that has resulted in relatively few New England records. The previous state record was also in May.

**CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD** (*Stellula calliope*) One visited a feeder in Guilford, where it was first identified to species on 10 Dec 2010 (10-11 Hank Kranichfeld\*, Frank Gallo‡, Mark Szantyr‡). It was a third state record, all involving birds visiting feeders in early winter. An exact arrival date is not known, but the bird was present for some time before it was identified as a Calliope. It was last seen on 1 Jan 2011, when it was believed to have departed. The homeowner graciously invited observers to view this elegant little gem, allowing many to enjoy its visit.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus forficatus*) One frequented private property in Old Lyme from 3 through 12 Nov 2010 (10-19 Frank Gallo‡, Hank Golet‡). Both the length of stay and late fall appearance were unusual. Most records have been of short duration in late spring-early summer.

**FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus savana*) One discovered on 17 Nov 2010 turned out to be a star attraction at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford, where it remained until 4 Dec 2010 (10-07 Tina Green\*, Kevin Bolton‡, Nick Bonomo‡, Patrick Dugan‡, AJ Hand‡, Greg Hanisek, Julian Hough‡, Frank Mantlik‡, Michael Moccio‡, Mark Szantyr‡, Scott Vincent‡, Jim Zipp‡). The bird, a third state record, was enjoyed by visitors from at least 25 states and three foreign countries. The visitors' log was signed by 650 people, but it was absent on seven days of the bird's 18-day stay. Sanctuary members estimated total visitors at 1000 to 1200. A Cove Island newsletter account surmises that the bird may have either succumbed to cold weather and a lack of insects or fallen prey to a Cooper's Hawk.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) A first-winter/female appeared 23 Sep 2010 at Allen's Meadow in Wilton (10-09 Tina Green\*, Michael Warner‡). Its arrival fell squarely in the typical mid-September window for appearances in the state.



Mark Szantyr photo  
Connecticut's third Calliope Hummingbird stayed  
through December at a feeder in Guilford.

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia currucoides*) One was found on 7 Dec 2010 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (10-12 Rollin Tebbetts\*‡, Frank Gallo‡). Tebbetts, who works at the airport, has photographed several rare species on the grounds, which are for the most part off limits to birders because of homeland security concerns. However, Tebbetts facilitated a relaxation of the rules about parking along the perimeter road on 11 Dec, allowing a number of observers to see the bird, which was last seen by Tebbetts on 6 Jan 2011. The bird, a first-winter male, was a third state record.

**VARIED THRUSH** (*Ixoreus naevius*) One was found dead on a residential street in the Pawcatuck section of Stonington on or about 14 Nov 2010 (10-26 Lisa Bolduc\*‡, Robert Dewire). One was seen throughout the day and photographed on 16 Jan 2011 in a yard in East Hartland (11-02 Kristen Anderson\*‡). Grayish breast bands indicate both were females.

**BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** (*Dendroica nigrescens*) An observer delivering mail in the Compo Beach area of Westport on 7 Dec 2010 found and photographed an adult female (10-13 Frank Mantlik\*‡). It could not be relocated. Because of a flurry of records in the 1990s, ARCC removed this species from the state review list. However, its subsequent scarcity in the past decade resulted in ARCC returning it to review status at its 2010 meeting.

**LeCONTE'S SPARROW** (*Ammodramus leconteii*) One was found on 29 Oct 2010 at Milford Point, where it remained until at least 14 Nov 2010 (10-25 Tom Sayers\*, Greg Hanisek, Jim Zipp‡). The bird remained confined to a small area of marsh grass, *Spartina alterniflora*, affording many observers the chance to see what is often a frustratingly secretive species. This was a sixth state record.

**PAINTED BUNTING** (*Passerina ciris*) An adult male visited a backyard feeder on 5 May 2010 in Milford, where it was photographed by the homeowner (10-03 Roger N. Borgerson Jr.\* ‡, Alyce S. Borgerson). An adult male was seen on 25 Dec 2010 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford (10-18

Douglas and Shirley Beach\*). The bird was seen briefly but described in good detail by two observers familiar with the species from decades of living in south Florida.

#### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

**LeCONTE'S SPARROW** (*Ammodramus leconteii*) One was reported from Coventry on 26 Nov 2010 (09-15). This single-observer report included some details indicative of this species, but the observation was of short duration, which is not surprising for a noted skulker that can be difficult to see well. Given its similarity to several closely related species, the committee took a conservative approach.

**BRAMBLING** (*Fringilla montifringilla*) A singing male was reported from East Rock Park in New Haven on 16 May 2010 (10-24). Two observers submitted a written description of the bird and its song. The details were consistent with the species, but the committee took a conservative approach based in part on the lack of precedent for spring records of singing birds in eastern North America. Most North American records away from Alaska, including Connecticut's single confirmed sighting, involve wintering birds. The possibility of a cage bird escape could not be ruled out as well.

#### CORRECTIONS

**Mew Gull** (09-03) In the Fifteenth Report, Vol. 30 No. 3, an incorrect scientific name was given in an account accepting the first photo documentation of the species and the first documentation for the Old World subspecies, known in Britain as Common Gull. The correct name is *Larus canus canus*.

**Chuck-will's-widow** (09-18) Also in the Fifteenth Report, the primary observer, Glenn Williams, was inadvertently omitted from the account accepting the record.

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## NOTES ON BEHAVIOR STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

**A possible hybrid Buteo in Oxford** - Lynn Jones and I found an odd raptor on 19 December 2010 along the Housatonic River in Oxford on the Oxford Christmas Bird Count. It nearly made our heads explode trying to work out what it was. It had a short white and black-banded tail with wider than normal white bands for a Red-shouldered Hawk, more like a Broad-winged Hawk, but the wings didn't fit for Broad-winged. It acted like a Red-shouldered Hawk, sitting low in the forest, had a wing pattern mostly like a Red-shouldered, but had a brown head, pale throat and upper chest and back markings more like a Red-tailed Hawk. I sent it off to Brian Wheeler and he forwarded it to Jerry Liguori. Both are authors of several highly respected books on identification of North American raptors. Both agreed that it's a possible Red-tailed x Red-



*Frank Gallo photo  
This Buteo shows characteristics of two species,  
suggesting it may be a hybrid between a Red-tailed Hawk  
and a Red-shouldered Hawk.*

shouldered hybrid. See their responses below.

Wheeler: "This looks more like a hybrid Red-tailed Hawk and Red-shouldered Hawk. The head is very Red-tailed-like, as are the rufous sides of neck. Lack of distinct white barring on the secondaries is interesting, too. There are some aberrant adult Red-shouldered Hawks with funky barring on the under parts, but this bird seems to have something other in it. It is not anything like a California type (Red-shouldered), either (western bird)."

Liguori: "Hi Brian." At first glance, it looks like another hybrid RS x RT. It has RT traits on the underbody and RS-like upper parts and tail. I'd love to see other photos, but just from these, hybrid looks good."

David Sibley, author of "The Sibley Guide to Birds," also agreed that it looked like a Red-shouldered x Red-tailed hybrid and mentioned a well-documented record in the Northeast from March 2007 that brought to light one or two other records. The following link leads to photos of the suspected hybrid from Vermont mentioned by Sibley: <http://juliesmagi-clightshow.com/?&tc=93&sc=218>

Frank Gallo

**Discovering a Black Vulture Nest** - Rob Ballinger of Farmington provided the following account of his discovery:

"While hiking in Killingworth yesterday (9 April 2011) I found a Black Vulture nest. I thought the two eggs were fake, because it was on the ground and very near a trail, about 2 feet from the blazed path. I knew they weren't Turkey eggs and couldn't imagine what other huge bird would nest on the ground. I touched one egg and it was warm, so I snapped a quick picture and high-tailed it out of there. The adults returned quickly from their nearby perch. I hadn't realized they were keeping an eye on the nest the whole time... I checked references and Black Vultures typically nest on or near the ground."

EDITOR'S NOTE -Although Black Vultures had established themselves in Connecticut by the 1990s, the first nest was not discovered here until 2002. Rock climbers found a nest in a small cave on an otherwise inaccessible cliff face in Kent. During its northward range expansion, which included a first New Jersey nesting in 1981, this southern species entered the state from the west, apparently using the Appalachian ridges as a conduit. They established themselves in western Litchfield County before gaining a foothold farther east and in the southern tier. They followed a similar pattern in New Jersey, moving into the northwestern counties via the mountains, apparently from a historic outpost in south-central Pennsylvania. It appears that their hesitance to cross large bodies of water, such as Delaware Bay or the New York Bight, slowed their arrival in the southern parts of New Jersey and Connecticut. They still remain rare on Long Island, N.Y., but have expanded into western Massachusetts.

Because the species often uses rugged terrain for nesting, few



*Rob Ballinger photo  
This ground nest containing two Black Vulture eggs was found in  
Killingworth on April 9.*

nests have been discovered in Connecticut. However, the Kent and Killingworth nests, along with the first New Jersey nesting, give a good idea of breeding seasonality. The Kent nest, found on 1 April, and the Killingworth nest found on 9 April, both contained eggs. The Kent bird appeared to be brooding on 1 April, and a return visit on 6 April confirmed the presence of two eggs. The New Jersey nest, found in a jumble of rocks on Hell Mountain, Tewksbury Township, contained two downy young on 14 May. The Kent nest contained one just-hatched chick, with the second egg in the process of hatching, on 4 May.

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# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Fall, August 1 through November 30, 2010

By Greg Hanisek

The autumn season typically produces the year's most interesting array of sightings, but autumn 2010 was off the charts. Two first state records and two third state records led a stellar list of rarities. The quality was such that Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Brown Pelican and Northern Wheatear couldn't even crack the top five. Arctic geese continued to arrive in unprecedented numbers. The state's two premier migratory watch sites, Lighthouse Point in New Haven for diurnal movements and Bluff Point in Groton for morning flight, generated exciting action as usual.

The season produced reports of eight or nine **Greater White-fronted Geese**, starting with up to two at Mackenzie Reservoir in Wallingford beginning on Oct. 10 (JBa et al.). Other reports from mid-October through season's end came from Greenbacker Pond in Durham (JBa), from a Windsor corporate park (SZ et al.); from the Dayville section of Killingly (PR); from the UConn campus in Storrs (JMe et al.); from Southbury (RNa); from South Windsor (RM); and from Middlefield (MB). Most were reported on multiple days, so the exact number of individuals involved remains uncertain. The same caveat applies to the season's

**Cackling Geese**, which also began with one at Mackenzie Reservoir on Oct. 10 (JBa). Others from then through the end of November were at Stearns Farm, Mansfield, (MSz); Boothe Park, Stratford, as a flyover on Oct. 29 (FM, SK); at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PCi); at the Windsor corporate parks (NB); in Southbury (RNa); and at Stratford Point Nov. 25 (SK). The Oct. 10 arrival of arctic geese at Mackenzie Reservoir also brought the first of a flurry of **Barnacle Geese**, with this one staying into early November (JBa et al.). Others were found on Oct. 31 at the Windsor corporate park (BK et al.) and on Nov. 21 at Horsebarn Hill in

Storrs (MC), staying through the end of the season.

A female Eurasian Wigeon was at the front end of this species' arrival period on Oct. 25 at Long Beach in Stratford (FM). The state boat launch at Windsor produced an extraordinary high count of 24 Blue-winged Teal on Sept. 25 (PCi), with another 12 at the Action Wildlife Pond in Goshen on Sept. 24 (KF, BF) and 18 at Konold's Pond in Woodbridge on Nov. 18 (SBr). The first Northern Shoveler arrived Sept. 14 at Batterson Pond, Farmington (PCi). Four Red-heads off Milford Point on Oct. 23 were the only ones reported (DV). The first reports of single Ring-necked Ducks came from the Shetucket River in Norwich on Aug. 28 (JMe), from Aspetuck Reservoir in Easton on Aug. 30 (DV) and from Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford on Aug. 31 (PCi), a typical arrival scenario for the species. Common Eider has quickly moved from a state rarity to a year-round presence, with 10 off Stonington Point on Aug. 16 (GW). The first breeding record is eagerly awaited. A female **Harlequin Duck** was off Milford

Point on Nov. 5 (DV); later on that day it was attacked and killed by a Great Black-backed Gull (SS, video). The first report of six Surf Scoters came from Groton Long Point on Sept. 21 (DV). Five were unusual inland on Batterson Pond on Oct. 4 (PCi). An excellent inland total of 147 Black Scoters were on Bantam Lake, Litchfield, on Nov. 6 (MDo). Twin Lakes in Salisbury held 30 on Nov. 10 (PCa). Two Ruddy Ducks were unseasonable on Aug. 10 at Batterson Pond, Farmington (PCi), and an overnight flight dropped 317 onto a reservoir in Bristol on Oct. 17 (PCa). Pistapaug Pond in Wallingford held 146 the next day (MM). Later in the season Colebrook Reservoir held 243 on Nov. 17 (RBe).

At a vineyard in Colchester, where some of the land is being managed for wildlife, the owner reported a minimum of 25 Northern Bobwhites on Oct. 3 (GC). A Pied-billed Grebe on Aug. 9 in Great Pond, South Glastonbury, was on a date when breeding somewhere locally could be suspected (BA). Breeding was confirmed at Hessekey Meadows in Woodbury, where two young were

hatched by Aug. 15 (RNa). There were just three Red-necked Grebe reports: Nov. 10 at Bantam Lake (DRo), Nov. 21 at Milford Point (NB) and Nov. 29 in Waterford (DP). An **Eared Grebe** found Oct. 28 at Snipsic (Shenipsit) Lake in Tolland remained through the season (CEk et al.). Another was present Nov. 2-11 at Bantam Lake (DRo et al.). A **Western Grebe**, which could have been bird of the season in a less spectacular fall, was off Milford Point Nov. 2-3 (DV et al.). The only report of a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** came from Stratford Point on Aug. 23 (BB, GH). An immature **Brown Pelican** was seen off Stratford and Milford on Aug. 10 (SK et al.). The lower Housatonic River held 340 Double-crested Cormorants on Sept. 4 (FM), with 500 there on Sept. 16 (DV).

A Snowy Egret was a good inland find Sept. 11 at a small pond in East Granby (JMe). An unusual concentration of 18 Little Blue Herons was noted on Aug. 26 in Westbrook (CLO). Inland reports came from Station 43 in South Windsor on Aug. 6 (PDe) and from South Glastonbury on Aug.

9 (BA). A juvenile Tricolored Heron was found Aug. 19 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, hereafter HBSP (F&TH). Perhaps the same bird accounts for an Aug. 21 report from Westbrook (JSc). A juvenile then turned up again at HBSP on Oct. 20 (RP, KM). A remarkable 11 Cattle Egrets were at Greenwich Point on Oct. 14 (SMu); obviously 14 at Veterans Park in Norwalk on Oct. 28 were even more remarkable (LFI). That group may have accounted for three that flew over a Southport golf course the same day (JR). A single bird moved by Stratford Point on the strong northeast winds of Aug. 23 (SK); others were in Stonington on Oct. 16 (BD), at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 23 (PDe), at Jennings Beach, Fairfield, on Oct. 31 (AB, JPu), at Silver Sands State Park, Milford, Oct. 31-Nov. 9 (MH et al.), and in Essex on Nov. 3 (JDe). A juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron was far up the Connecticut River valley Nov. 1 at Desmond's Pond in South Windsor (PF). A Glossy Ibis was late Nov. 14 at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington (RNe).



*Julian Hough photo  
The state's first White-tailed Kite  
started off the season with a bang  
when it was found on Aug. 1 at  
Stratford Point.*

Although the state's breeding Ospreys are doing well, they still face perils. On Aug. 4 a chick just about to fledge from a channel marker in Norwalk harbor was found dead, tangled in fishing line (LFI). The season started out with a resounding bang when a **White-tailed Kite**, a first state record, was discovered on Aug. 1 at Stratford Point (DV et mult. al.). It quickly became a star attraction through Oct. 10, trading between Stratford Point, Short Beach in Stratford and across the mouth of the Housatonic R. to Milford Point. A detailed account accompanied by multiple photos appeared in *The Connecticut*

*Warbler*, Vol. 31 No. 1. Two Sharp-shinned Hawks were observed Sept. 19 in Mystic picking dragonflies out of an afternoon swarm, a behavior more typical of small falcons (GW).

In coves on the lower Connecticut River that still support Wild Rice, an observer in a kayak saw 30 Soras and heard many more on Sept. 11, offering a hint at peak migration time for this secretive species (HG). A juvenile on Aug. 6 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford was probably indicative of the front end of the southbound movement (PDU). The season's only **Common**

**Moorhen** was present on Oct. 9-12 at Bishops Pond, Meriden (MB). Lord's Cove in Old Lyme held 185 American Coots on Oct. 31 (HG) and c. 200 were at Konold's Pond in Woodbridge on Nov. 18 (SBr). Two adult **Sandhill Cranes** with a fledged young were at Woods Pond in Norfolk on Sept. 1 (PP). This is close to a location in Massachusetts where the species has nested. One was seen in Pomfret during the last few days of September (fide CEL).

A good overall flight of American Golden Plovers, spanning all four months of the season, included a high of 13 on Sept. 22 at Rocky Hill Meadows (SZ et al.). The second of two first state records for the season, a **North-ern Lapwing** was found late in the day on Nov. 27 and enjoyed by many birders on Nov. 28 as it traded between Lot W and Horsebarn Hill on the UConn campus in Storrs (PR, m.ob.). It was last seen flying high and to the southwest late in afternoon of the 28th.

During boat surveys of the Norwalk Islands Larry Flynn has discovered an August staging of American Oyster-

catchers. The peak numbers have been increasing from 30 on Aug. 30, 2008, to 63 on this Aug 28. The majority, 59 this year, stage on a small sand spit called Crow Island. There were still 18 oyster-catchers present on Oct. 1 off Compo Beach, Westport (FM). Two **American Avocets** were in a small marsh in Guilford on Aug. 17 (JiC & JoC), and two performed for many observers at a pond in East Hartford from Oct. 29 to Nov. 1 (JMc et al.). An unusually large gathering of 11 Solitary Sandpipers was at Horse Pond in Madison on Sept. 23 (JCo). A migrant Upland Sandpiper dropped into Rocky Hill Meadows on Aug. 28 (PCo).

Single Hudsonian Godwits were found on Aug. 22 at Sandy Point, West Haven (NB et al.) and on Nov. 1 on Housatonic River mud flats in Stratford (FM). The season's only Marbled Godwit was found Aug. 5 in Old Lyme (AG). A Sanderling was a good inland find Aug. 29 at the Windsor state boat launch on the Connecticut River (JMe), followed by three in the same area on Sept. 11 (JMe). A Western Sandpiper provided another



*Mark Szantyr photo  
These two American Avocets  
proved popular visitors to a  
small pond in East Hartford.*

inland treat on Sept. 8 at Colebrook River Lake in Colebrook (DRo). The Riverside Park sewage pond in Hartford held a good inland total of 80 Least Sandpipers on Aug. 22 (BA). The first of 12 Baird's Sandpipers, a good seasonal total, was at Stratford Marina on Aug. 10 (MSz). The Windsor state boat launch held a state-record six on Aug. 28 (PCi).

A good Pectoral Sandpiper flight included a high of 16 on Sept. 23 at a sewage pond in Hartford (PCi). The first Stilt Sandpiper was at Sandy Point, West Haven, on Aug. 16 (GH, BB), followed by four each at Milford Point and McKinney on Aug. 22 (NB, FM). One on Sept. 11-

12 at Mackenzie Reservoir, Wallingford, was a rarity inland (JMe). Nine reports of Buff-breasted Sandpipers included a high count of four on Sept. 20 at Rocky Hill Meadows (PCi). A search of the lower Housatonic River, including Milford Point, on Sept. 1 produced 127 Short-billed Dowitchers (DV). An adult Long-billed Dowitcher, always a scarce species here, was found Aug. 3 at what has become one of its most reliable spots, a tidal channel near Stratford Marina (FM). Reports of at least one there continued for most of the season. One was reported from the Access Road pools in Stratford on Aug. 19-22 (CB et al.) and up to two were at Milford Point

on Sept. 1-22 (FM, DV). One was at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary on Nov. 11 (PDu). The first migrant Wilson's Snipe was reported from Mackenzie Reservoir on Sept. 19 (DRa). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was seen sitting on Long Island Sound on Nov. 16 by an observer on the shore at HBSP (DV).

The first report of juvenile Laughing Gulls involved about six off Westport and Norwalk on Aug. 9 (FM, LFl). On Sept. 4, after passage of Hurricane Earl, 5000 Laughing Gulls (80% juveniles) were moving into the mouth of Housatonic River in Stratford (FM). In conjunc-

tion with Tropical Storm Nicole on Sept. 30, Seaside Park in Bridgeport held 6000 (FM). A juvenile Bonaparte's Gull rested on pilings at Litchfield Town Beach on Bantam Lake on Aug. 18 (GH), and one was at Twin Lakes in Salisbury on Aug. 29 (PCa). A group of seven made a quick stop at Bantam Lake on Nov. 17 (RBe).

The season's only Caspian Tern was reported from Milford Point on Aug. 15 (JKa et al.), and the only Royal Tern was there on Aug. 3 (FG). The big storm-related Sept. 4 movement on the lower Housatonic included 3000 Common Terns, which appeared



*Mark Szantyr photo  
This Long-billed Dowitcher (right, with a Short-billed Dowitcher)  
enjoyed a long stay at a favorite spot for the species at Stratford  
Marina.*

after numbers had declined to a few hundred in recent weeks (FM). Perhaps the most seasonally unexpected birds of the fall were three immature Common Terns at Mystic on the very late date of Nov. 20 (NB). One adult Forster's Tern on Sept. 17 at Bantam Lake, Litchfield, was unusual inland (GH). The first report of a juvenile came from Cockenoe Island, Westport, on Aug. 9 (FM, LFI). It was an unusually good season for Black Terns, with 25 reports that included a flock of six migrating by Short Beach, Stratford, on Aug. 23 on strong northeast winds (FM). Black Skimmer reports included four juveniles at Short Beach, Stratford, on

Aug. 30 (FM) and up to 9 juveniles at Milford Point on Sept. 1-22 (FM, DV). A group of nine on Sept. 24 at Short Beach included three adults (FM). The latest report, of three juveniles, was from Short Beach on Oct. 6 (FM). Three Razorbills from the New London-Orient, N.Y., ferry on Nov. 28 presaged a good winter for this species in Long Island Sound (FG).

Two Monk Parakeets were unexpected Nov. 14 at a feeder in Wallingford (MM). The latest of only four Black-billed Cuckoo reports were singles from Lighthouse Point (SMA) and Milford Point (FG), both on Oct. 10. Yellow-billed Cuckoos were



*Mark Szantyr photo*  
 This adult female Rufous Hummingbird, banded by Mark Szantyr at a Niantic feeder, was one of at least five Rufous/Selasphorus sp. hummers found during the fall.

much more widely reported. Of special interest was a late flurry in which seven of the season's 15 reports occurred on Oct. 7 or later, with the latest on Oct. 22 in Norwalk (MWi). The first report of a migrant Common Nighthawk was a single bird on Aug. 13 in Simsbury (SBa). Triple-figure counts included 120 on Aug. 21 in Goshen (KF); c 100 in Bloomfield (SF) and 130 in Woodbury (RNa), both on Aug. 25; 200+ in Meriden on Aug. 26 (JA); c. 100 in Ridgefield on Aug. 29 (JKe); and 290 in Storrs on Sept. 19 (CEl). The first reports of Short-eared Owls came in quick succession from Silver Sands State Park in Milford on Oct. 17 (SS) and the Boothe Park hawk watch in Stratford on Oct. 18 (SK). A total of 10 to 15 Northern Saw-whet Owls were detected during peak migration Oct. 19-20 in Southbury and Newtown (LFi et al.). An evening search on Nov. 13 in Barkhamsted located five Saw-whets (FZ). On Aug. 25 a flock of 220 Chimney Swifts was observed entering a chimney roost in New Milford (JDu). A migratory flight of 370 was logged on Aug. 29 at Lighthouse Point,

New Haven (BB).

An adult female **Rufous Hummingbird** arrived at a Sterling feeder on Oct. 11 (RDi). It remained through the season and deep into winter. Adult females visited feeders in Niantic from early October through the end of the season (MSz) and in Guilford from Nov. 24 onward (JMH). *Selasphorus* sp. were at feeders in East Hampton (fide JA), and in mid-November in Wolcott (JTo). Away from Lighthouse Point, Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported from a North Stamford yard on Sept. 27 (AC) and a vineyard in Colchester on Oct. 3 (GC).

The first of about a dozen Olive-sided Flycatcher reports came from Sperry Pond, Middlebury, on Aug. 26 (GH). A report of three on one road in Winchester on Aug. 29 was unusual (DRo). The first of about a dozen Yellow-bellied Flycatcher reports came from the Baker-ville section of New Hartford on Aug. 26 (PCa). Two **Western Kingbirds** for the season comprised a juvenile at Sand Bank Road, Watertown, on Sept. 16 (GH) and an adult at Woodbridge Community

Gardens on Oct. 10 (JMo). It's clearly an extraordinary autumn when a **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, a third state record, isn't automatically the bird of the season. One found on Nov. 17 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford (TG, m.ob.) ranked high in popularity as it remained very cooperatively through the end of the season. A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was on private property in Old Lyme Nov. 3-12 (AG et al.). Northern Shrikes were reported from Ferry Lane in South Windsor on Nov. 20 (PCi) and McDonough Recreation Area in Barkhamsted on Nov. 21 (DRo). A Red-eyed Vireo was late Oct. 24 at HBSP (GH et al.). A Blue-headed Vireo, much more inclined than Red-eyed to linger, was at East Shore Park in New Haven on Nov. 27 (PDe).

Fish Crow movements aren't well known at our latitude, but a flock of 140 flying west over Norwalk on Oct. 15 certainly is noteworthy (FM). Also on the move was a flock of six high over Mansfield on Sept. 4 heading southeast (MSz). The annual mega-roost of Tree Swallows in Phragmites on the

lower Connecticut River held 400,000 birds in the third week of September (AG). There were about 50 **Cave Swallows** for the season, including a high of 13 at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 31 (SMa et al.). All were coastal as usual from Oct. 29 through the end of November. Two late Barn Swallows were at Stratford Point on Nov. 23 (CB). Numbers are hard to gauge during Black-capped Chickadee movements through Lighthouse Point, but hundreds were on the move during several days in the first week of October (JH et al.) A good prolonged flight of Red-breasted Nuthatches produced counts of 35 on Aug. 28 (CB et al.) and 160 on Oct. 9 (AG), both at Bluff Point in Groton.

Single **Sedge Wrens** were at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford on Oct. 7 (PDu) and at Brooksvale Park in Hamden on Oct. 19 (JZ). A Marsh Wren was an unusual find on Oct. 2 in the Stratford Community Gardens (FM). Bluff Point produced 140 Golden-crowned Kinglets on Sept. 26 (CEI). Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers lingered until Nov. 29 at East Shore Park in New Haven

(GH). A female/immature **Northern Wheatear** was at Allen's Meadow, Wilton, on a typical date, Sept. 23 (TG, MWa et al.). Lighthouse Point logged a nice flight of 220 Eastern Bluebirds along with 8600 American Robins on Oct. 29 (DC et al.). The Point followed up with 322 Eastern Bluebirds on Nov. 12 (DC et al.). Late Swainson's Thrushes were reported on Oct. 31 at Macricostas Preserve in Washington (PS, BS) and on Nov. 1 in Harwinton (PCa). Gray-cheeked (type) Thrushes generated only five reports. Rocky Hill Meadows held c. 300 American Pipits on Nov. 9 (PCi).

The season's only Golden-winged Warbler was at Bluff Point on Oct. 2 (GW et al.). The first of nine Orange-crowned Warbler reports was a bit early Sept. 19 in Guilford (JMh). A Nashville Warbler was at Short Beach in Stratford on Nov. 21 (NB). A late Northern Parula was at Boston Hollow on Nov. 11 (DM) and two were at East Shore Park on Nov. 15 (FG). One **Yellow-throated Warbler** for the season was at Glastonbury Meadows on Sept. 11 (BA, TR). The first Palm Warbler of the season

was early on Aug. 31 at Bluff Point (PDe). An immature male American Redstart was late Nov. 29 in New Milford (AD). One **Prothonotary Warbler** for the season was at Glastonbury Meadows on Sept. 11 (BA, TR). A Louisiana Waterthrush, a typically early migrant, was at a non-breeding location in Farmington on Aug. 4 (PDe). A Northern Waterthrush, clearly a migrant, was along the saltmarsh at Milford Point, an unusual location, on Aug. 18 (BP). A late one was in Woodbury on Oct. 4 (RNA). The first of seven Connecticut Warbler reports came from Bluff Point on Sept. 11 (GW, JOs). The earliest of four Mourning Warbler reports came from Milford Point on Aug. 17 (CW). The first Yellow-breasted Chat was reported from Greenwich Point on Aug. 28 (LT et al.), followed by a flurry at Greenwich Audubon Center on Sept. 9 (LT et al.), at HBSP on Sept. 10 (JCo), at Bluff Point on Sept. 11 (GW, JOs et al.) and at Station 43, South Windsor, on Sept. 16 (PDe). Later reports came from Hamden on Oct. 20 (JZ et al.), from Milford Point on Oct. 23 (CW) and from Guilford on

Nov. 3 (JSc et al.).

The warbler migration at Bluff Point State Park in Groton produced a number of detailed reports: Aug. 27 - 2000+ warblers of 19 species including 500+ Am Redstarts and three Oporornis. (DP et al.); Aug. 28 - 750 warblers of 14 species including two Oporornis (CB et al.); Sept. 11 - 1000+ warblers of 14 species (85% Am Redstarts) plus one Connecticut Warbler (GW et al.); Sept. 21 - c 1000 migrants of 70 species, including 600 warblers of 15 species (CEI et al.); Oct. 2 - 750 warblers of 15 species (GW); and Oct. 9 - c. 1500 warblers (AG). Other noteworthy flights included 530, mainly American Redstarts and Magnolia Warblers, at Greenwich Audubon on Sept. 10 (BV) and 16 species at Allen's Meadow in Wilton on Sept. 12 (JBe).

The first American Tree Sparrow of the season arrived at a Hamden feeder on Nov. 2 (JZ, CZ). The first of 15 Clay-colored Sparrow reports came from HBSP on Sept. 9 (NB); needless to say this species' numbers in the state are on a steep upward trend centered on fall migration. A Vesper Sparrow on Sept. 19

at UConn's Lot W in Storrs was about a month ahead of the species' general arrival (PR). Single **Lark Sparrows** were at Allen's Meadow on Sept. 23-24 (MH et al.) and at a feeder in East Granby on Nov. 15-16 (BK). Grasshopper Sparrows, tough to detect in migration, were good finds on Oct. 11 in Stratford Community Gardens (FM) and Oct. 24 at Stratford Point (SK). Joining the season's array of headline birds was an uncharacteristically cooperative **LeConte's Sparrow** found on Oct. 29 at Milford Point (TS et al.). It was present in a very confined area of marsh grass until at least Nov. 14, allowing many to see a very secretive species. An "Acadian" Nelson's Sparrow, an expected coastal migrant, was a good find inland at a Hartford landfill on Oct. 8 (PCi). The first reports of Lincoln's Sparrow, typically on the move ahead of other northern sparrow species, came on Sept. 19 from Swendsen Farm Preserve, Bethlehem (JMa), and Macricostas Preserve, Washington, where four were found (PS et al.). There were seven at Hartford North Meadows on Sept. 24 (PCi). White-

crowned Sparrows staged a widespread first arrival on Oct. 2, when they were reported from at least five locations (CLO et al.)

A good showing of five **Blue Grosbeaks** involved singles Sept. 5 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford (BI), Sept. 25 at Hartford North Meadows (PCi); Oct. 8 at Stratford Community Gardens (FM); Oct. 9 at Osbornedale State Park in Derby (RH) and Oct. 25 at Farmington Meadows (SJ). A seasonal total of c. 25 Dickcissels included four on Sept. 6 at Lighthouse Point (GH) and 3 each on Sept. 14 at Farmington Meadows (SJ) and Sept. 26 at Lighthouse (SMa).

At Lighthouse Point, daily migration totals for Bobolink included 2300 on Sept. 6 (GH) and 1175 on Sept. 10 (DC). Two Eastern Meadowlarks were unusually early migrants on Aug. 27 at Lighthouse Point (DC). The season's only **Yellow-headed Blackbird** flew by Lighthouse Point on Oct. 3 (SMa). The first reports of Rusty Blackbirds were from Bakerville swamp in New Hartford (PCa) and Little Pond,

Litchfield (DRo), both on Oct. 2. The 32 Boat-tailed Grackles at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on Aug. 16 were described as "all variety of ages/sex/molt" (FM). An Orchard Oriole on Aug. 28 at Stratford Point was on the late side for this early-departing species (SK). Here's an idea for looking for rare orioles. A vineyard owner had 15 Baltimore Orioles eating grapes on his property on Oct. 3 in Colchester. He said orioles often flock to vineyards at that time of year (GC). A Baltimore Oriole was still in a New Haven yard on Nov. 23 (MA).

A heavy seasonal movement of House Finches through Lighthouse point produced flights of 1000 on Oct. 8 (DC) and 1800 on Oct. 18 (GH). The best Purple Finch count at Lighthouse was 200 on Oct. 8 (DC). A Common Redpoll was unique for the season on Nov. 25 at Cove Island (PDu). A Pine Siskin at feeders in a Milford yard on Aug. 11 was outside its normal time of occurrence (MF). A modest flight developed later in the season. The flight of Evening Grosbeaks, good

by recent standards, included three over Meriden on Sept. 24 (PCo); three over Thomaston on Oct. 14 (GH); two on Nov.1 in Hamden (JZ); 10 at White Memorial in Litchfield on Nov. 2 (DRo); and 12 on Nov.7 in East Glastonbury (BA).

**Exotics:** A Saffron Finch was in a Woodbury neighborhood through Sept. 25 (RNa).

**Observers** - Jayne Amico, Ralph Amodei, Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade (RBa), David Babington, Jim Bair (JBr), Steve Ballantine (SBa), Bill Banks (BBa), Charles Barnard Jr., John Barriger (JBa), Mark Barriger, Joe Bear (JBe), Ray Belding (RBe), Bob Bitondi (BBi), Nick Bonomo, Steve Broker (SBr), Alex Burdo, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, John Clancy (JCn), Linda Clancy, Jim Clifford (JiC), Joan Clifford (JoC), Al Collins, Jan Collins (JCl), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Mary Covello, Gary Crump, Peter DeGennaro (PDn), Jim Denham (JDe), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Bob Dewire, Mardi Dickinson (MDi), Angela Dimmitt, Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Mike Doyle (MDo), Jim Dugan (JDu), Patrick Dugan (PDu), Cynthia Ehlinger (CEh), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Chris Elphick (CEl), Tammy Eustace, Patrice Favreau, Mike Ferrari, Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan,

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# PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Greg Hanisek and Mark Szantyr

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was little need for the term “white-cheeked geese.” Officially, every goose fitting that description was a Canada Goose. It comprised a complex species, generally recognized as consisting of 12 subspecies, but they were all Canada Geese. The smallest forms were recognizable in the field, but we seldom encountered them in Connecticut.

Two things changed all that. First, in 2004 the long-held belief of a number of waterfowl experts came to the fore. The American Ornithologists Union split the “white cheeked geese” into two species, Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), the large-bodied forms breeding away from tundra habitats, and Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*), the small tundra-breeding forms. The impact of this in Connecticut would have been less significant if the second thing had not happened. This was the fairly recent population surge in Arctic nesting geese that has added Barnacle Goose and Pink-footed Goose to the state list, made Greater White-fronted Geese and Cackling Geese annual visitors here, and is causing the ARCC to scratch its cumulative head over what could be the first lower 48 record of Graylag Goose, (*Anser anser*).

Separating Cackling Geese from Canada Geese requires some attention to detail but is relatively straightforward in most cases when good views are afforded. When the split occurred, Connecticut birders were well-advised to learn the specific characters of one of the four Cackling Goose subspecies, *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*. (See Figure 1). This is the form nesting farthest east and the one expected to occur here. Older eastern field guides often showed it as a recognizable subspecies known as Richardson’s or Hutchins’ Goose.

Advancement in information and birding skills has increased interest in identifying subspecies when possible if a variety of

caveats about uncertainty are observed. Geese are prime candidates for subspecific field study because of their large size, use of open habitats and tendency to allow approach and photography within reasonable (and often small) distances. As a result, Connecticut birders surprised themselves by finding two apparent examples of a second Cackling Goose subspecies, *Branta hutchinsii taverneri*, sometimes known as Taverner's Goose. (See Figure 2; also see "Diary of a Birding Geek: Taverner's Cackling Goose in Connecticut," *The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. 28 No. 3). This form occurs farther to the northwest and winters west of the Rockies, but "the eastern limits of the breeding range... is uncertain" (Mlodinow et al.) and "due to identification challenges and prior taxonomic uncertainty, the wintering range... is also poorly understood" (Mlodinow et al.). In addition to the two apparent Connecticut records, a Taverner's Goose also has been reported from the Connecticut River valley of Massachusetts. Expert commentary on photos of the two Connecticut birds suggested they fit well the criteria for *B. h. taverneri* (Mlodinow, pers. comm.).

So that brings us to our Challenge bird. If you said Cackling Goose, you are correct. If you preferred to up the degree of difficulty, you took a stab at the subspecies. If that stumped you, don't feel bad. This was *Branta hutchinsii leucoparia* (See Figure 3). Known as Aleutian Goose, this form has not been recorded in Connecticut and is not known to occur naturally in the East. But *taverneri* wasn't expected either, and mental exercises of this sort only serve to sharpen birding skills. A recent record of a Cackling Goose on Staten Island, NY, was attributed to *B.h. minima*, a more western and highly unexpected form, but only after *B. h. leucoparia* was critically and painstakingly ruled out. The subspecific identification of Cackling Geese can be extremely difficult.

#### Literature Cited

Mlodinow, S.G. et al. 2008. Distribution and Identification of Cackling Goose Subspecies. In: *North American Birds* 62: 344-360.



**Figure 1** - This is *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*, the expected form in Connecticut. Note the blocky head, indented cheek patch, pale breast and rather frosty mantle typical of this form. This bird was photographed by Mark Szantyr in January 2011 at The Longshore Club in Westport, where an apparent Taverner's Goose also was present.



**Figure 2** - This is an apparent example of *Branta hutchinsii taverneri*, the second reported from Connecticut. It was found and photographed by Frank Gallo in December 2010 at The Longshore Club in Westport. The first was in Middlefield in November 2007. Gallo sent photos to Mlodoinow, who replied: "They don't come any more classic than that. Nice bulge at base of mandible, head shape great (with rather thick short bill sloping seamlessly into a moderately sloped forehead and a rounded crown), feather edgings w/in range of taverneri, wrong for (*B. h.*) minima. Bulky looking. Cheek patch shape normal for Taverner's, not normal for Richardson's."



**Figure 3** - *Branta hutchinsii leucoparia*. Clues to the subspecific identification of the quiz bird include the complete white collar around the base of the neck and the more pronounced bump on the forehead, a result of this bird using a more saline environment. A gland that removes salinity from ingested water is located there and this bump increases in prominence with the amount of work it gets. This bird, photographed at the Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy in Litchfield, shows this bump as reduced in size, creating the effect of a square head, a character that might cause confusion with *B.h. hutchinsii*. Birds in the wild often show a quite exaggerated prominence here. Perhaps the best clue to the identity was having the curator of the Ripley collection, Ian Gereg, standing nearby while pondering the subspecies of this bird.



# 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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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



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# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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## ON THE COVER

Paul Carrier of Harwinton executed this handsome portrait of an adult male Evening Grosbeak, one of the true avian icons of a New England winter but one that has become increasingly difficult to find in recent years. Read more about this species in the Christmas Bird Count analysis and Winter Season Field Notes.

# THE 2010-2011 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Stephen P. Broker

The 2010-2011 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count was held during the National Audubon Society's designated December 14 to January 5 window. Once again, 18 counts were held in the state this year, a number that has been maintained since the inception of the Napatree, RI/NY/CT Christmas Bird Count in 2002-03. Six of the counts are located in "northern" Connecticut, five are "mid-state", and seven are "coastal". The table that follows this narrative does not indicate sub-totals for the three geographic regions of the state (they are tabulated nonetheless), but some of the comments below take into consideration the new species, rarities, and 30-year high and low totals on a region-by-region basis.

A total of 669 field observers and 90 feeder watchers located, identified, and reported 171 count day and 1 count week species (the latter being Cackling Goose) over the course of the three week count period. The species count is well above average, and it compares favorably with the record total of 177 count day species in 2007-08. In the process, our birders logged 2251 hours in the field and at feeders, and they covered 9287 miles on foot, by car, and in boats. (The Pawling/Hidden Valley count did particularly well with record high numbers of field observers and total party hours.) This citizen science effort, often described as the longest continuously running wildlife census in the world, provides extremely valuable information on the health and well being of our early winter avifauna to the scientific community, conservation organizations, and to a well-educated, nature-cherishing population. Christmas Bird Count participants are to be thanked in abundance for their dedication, whether they have done one CBC in their lives or more than 200!

The majority of counts were held on the first weekend of the count period, with four on Saturday, Dec. 18, and eight on Sunday, Dec. 19. The New London CBC and Old Lyme-

Saybrook CBC continued their tradition of scheduling counts on the last Saturday (Jan. 1) and Sunday (Jan. 2) of this year's count period, respectively. Pawling held its traditional New Year's Day count, while Barkhamsted and Stratford-Milford provided their usual creativity in offering a northern count and a coastal count the day after Christmas. The Edwin Way Teale-Trail Wood CBC was held on January 2.

Weather conditions were favorable for conducting a Christmas Bird Count this season, with several notable exceptions. The first weekend produced partly cloudy morning and afternoon skies with no rain or snow and no winter white ground cover. Temperatures ranged from a low of 20 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of 35 to 38 degrees along the coast. There was the expected clinal decrease in temperatures to mid-state and northern counts, with Lakeville-Sharon and Litchfield Hills CBCs beginning with 10-11 degree low temperatures and warming throughout the day to highs of 31-35 degrees. Partly clear or partly cloudy conditions also prevailed at the other end of the count period, again with no rain or snow. On January 1, New London experienced a temperature range of 36 to 45 degrees F, while Pawling recorded 27 to 50 degree weather. By January 2, it had chilled off a bit, and Trail Wood conducted its count with 22 to 38 degree conditions.

However, it was a different matter on the coast with Old Lyme-Saybrook birders out in light rain throughout the second day of the new year while experiencing A.M. fog and P.M. clouds. At least the temperature reached a comparatively toasty 50 degrees by mid-afternoon following its start just below the freezing point. None of these counts dealt with the conditions facing birders on Dec. 26, a day that will be remembered by Stratford-Milford and Barkhamsted field observers for quite some time. On the coast, the Stratford-Milford day began with some promise for finding birds under cloudy skies and generally light wind. By noontime, a predicted blizzard rolled in from the north as a solid wave of strong sustained winds (up to 30 mph) and thick snowfall. This effectively shut down birding for the entire afternoon

except for the persistent efforts of one intrepid team of polar explorers. At Barkhamsted in the northern part of the state, the day began at a chilly 12 degrees, and by late morning and early afternoon the north winds (to 15 mph) carried in light to heavy snow, also shutting down the count effort. Remarkably, in the face of these challenging conditions, both Stratford-Milford and Barkhamsted came up with good results for birds when measured by total individuals counted, species diversity, and new and rare species located.

As an additional comment on the weather, many of us who think back on the winter of 2010-11 will remember it as a particularly brutal and snowy one. The Dec. 26 blizzard was just one of many that raced through the state. We were inundated with news stories of collapsing snow-covered roofs, and it was a "field season" for plowmen and for hardware stores selling long-poled roof shovels. It is important to recall, however, that nearly the entire succession of snowstorms that battered southern New England occurred in January and February after the CBC season had ended. We won't have a good grip on the longer-term impact of heavy, extended snow cover on semi-hardy bird species such as Carolina Wren until the coming year. [Note: the Summer Bird Count has concluded in Connecticut as this article goes to press and publication. My own experience in New Haven during the June 11 & 12 SBC is that Carolina Wrens were not to be found in many of their usual habitats.]

Taxonomically speaking, the 2010-11 count produced two species that are new to the statewide list – Nelson's Sparrow and White-eyed Vireo. Keep in mind that the American Ornithologists' Union recently split Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow into two distinct species, now known as Saltmarsh Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow, based on differences in phenotype (physical appearance) and in overall reproductive isolation. In actuality, some of our counts, most specifically Old Lyme-Saybrook, have been careful in distinguishing between these two "forms" for some years. We benefit from this splitting by gaining a new species, both for our state checklist and for the CBC all-time list. On the other hand,



*Hank Golet photo  
This Rufous Hummingbird visiting a Niantic feeder was  
an exciting addition to the New London count.*

White-eyed Vireo, recorded on the Napatree CBC, was more of a bolt from the blue. White-eyed Vireo is not unique to a New England Christmas Bird Count, but it surely is a fantastic addition to our own CBC list. White-eyed Vireo receives top bird honors this year, so it deserves further consideration in the narrative that follows.

We recorded a small number of “rare” species, consisting of Cackling Goose (found count week at Westport), Broad-winged Hawk (well-identified and described at New Haven), and Rufous Hummingbird (at New London). Greater White-fronted Goose has become an annual find on Connecticut CBCs for the past 15 years, but the discovery of three at New Haven (Orange, CT) is remarkable. Barnacle Goose recorded at Westport also is worthy of note. One gets the impression that this is the Year of the Goose. In addition, there were 12 species and one form that were counted at 30-year record high totals, including several ducks, Black Vulture, two hawks, an owl, two woodpeckers, a wren, one wood warbler, two sparrows, and Rusty Blackbird. The 30-year low totals constituted a somewhat smaller group of nine species, including two hawks, a plover and a sandpiper, one gull, a sparrow, and Brown-headed Cowbird (perish the thought!). More generally, the trends of past years in both expanding

avian populations and declining avian populations hold fairly steady through the current year – good news for the winners and bad news for the losers.

It should be noted that this is the last year that the Napatree results will be shown in the table as a column separate from the 17 other “statewide” counts. Napatree observes and records a dozen coastal bird species that are seen in significantly higher numbers east of Long Island Sound. For these species, Napatree data have tended to skew Connecticut statewide results when high and low species totals are tabulated. When Napatree holds its tenth consecutive count in 2011-12, we will have achieved a decade of measurable and comparable results for all 18 CBCs we hold. Consequently, Napatree’s past and future results will be rolled into the year-by-year Connecticut statewide totals for analysis. We adjust with the times.

As mentioned in previous review articles, several of our “Connecticut” Christmas Bird Counts extend into neighboring New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The year’s results are compared with the results of the previous 29 years of counts on a species-by-species basis in order to shed some light on trends with early winter bird populations in Connecticut (and bordering portions of the states adjacent to us). A 30-year Excel spreadsheet has been updated to span the period 1981-82 through 2010-2011. (Actually, there are spreadsheets updated for each of the 18 counts and for northern, mid-state, coastal, and statewide regions as well as for the current year – making a total of 23 spreadsheets that get produced each year.) The comments below are based on this 30-year analysis and do not consider count results prior to 1981-82. Other forms of evidence about bird populations, such as the Summer Bird Count and breeding bird surveys, do not figure in this analysis. The sections that follow provide some observations on the species recorded this Christmas Bird Count season.

## Waterfowl to Hawks

Brant numbers have surged along the coast over the course of the past decade. While a 30-year high total of 4748 Brant were counted in 1981-82, for most of the 1980s and '90s they were in much shorter supply, from fewer than 100 to 600 or so. This year's count of 3351 is the second highest total on record, due mostly to high numbers at New Haven and Westport. Hartford recorded the only Brant away from the coast. Mute Swan numbers have held at about 1,000 birds statewide, well short of that halcyon year of 2002-03 when more than 2,000 graced our coastal shores and inland bodies of water. Greater than 82% of Mute Swans continue to be found in Connecticut's coastal winter habitats, with about 15% seen on mid-state counts and fewer than 3% on northern counts. Napatree added another 255 Mute Swans to the total. Among dabbling ducks, Wood Duck was counted at the third highest total in 30 years, and American Wigeon, which tends to be all but exclusive to the coast, was on the low side this year. One seen count week at Storrs generated some excitement. American Black Duck maintains its low numbers of



*Julian Hough photo  
The 3351 Brant recorded on the state's  
2010-11 Christmas Bird Counts represented  
the second-highest total in 30 years.*

the past seven years and is down 50% from the early 1980s. The 700+ at Napatree were a somewhat encouraging addition to the total. Northern Shoveler returns to the statewide list after being absent for two out of the last three years. Shovelers were found this year at Hartford (3), New Haven (3), and Greenwich-Stamford (CW). In most years fewer than 5 are found on the state's CBCs.

Many species of diving ducks enjoyed high numbers, including Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter, and White-winged Scoter. Greater Scaup was counted at one of the highest totals in the last 10 years, and Lesser Scaup, while down 100 from last year's count, still was in well-above-average numbers. Surf Scoter set a 30-year high record thanks in large part to the rafts occurring at New London and Stratford-Milford. A huge raft of White-winged Scoters off the Stratford coastline pushed the record statewide count to three times higher than occurred in 2008-09. Scoters are picked up by discerning eyes when scoped from shore but are far more easily and accurately counted year-to-year from offshore boats. New Haven would do well to team up again with the U.S. Coast Guard for its offshore surveys.

Although Canvasback was recorded at twice the level of last year's early winter census, it continues a decade-long run of greatly diminished numbers. Back in the day (early 1980s) we used to see 2,000 to 3,000 Canvasbacks along the coast. In more recent years we're lucky to push above double-digit totals. King Eider is another species that returns to this year's list, thanks to two at Stratford-Milford and one at Westport. King Eider has been seen on eight of the last 30 CBCs, with a high of 4 in 1985-86. Common Mergansers were on the low side throughout the state, and Ruddy Ducks returned to more typical numbers following very robust totals in the late 1990s and the early to mid 2000s. Two Redheads at Lakeville-Sharon were very noteworthy, as was a count week Long-tailed Duck at Litchfield Hills.

Three of the four gallinaceous species occurring in Connecticut are in major decline. The introduced Ring-necked Pheas-

ant's populations are less viable than they once were, and the latest edition of the Connecticut Ornithological Association field checklist of the birds of Connecticut indicates that "native populations of Northern Bobwhite [are] extirpated". Quinnipiac Valley missed spotting Ring-necked Pheasant for the first time in 30 years. Salmon River reported Northern Bobwhite (the one individual found on the statewide count) for the first time in 20 years. Eight Ruffed Grouse seen or heard on northern counts plus one mid-state at Salmon River and one count week at Quinnipiac Valley are further evidence of the diminished role of grouse in our state avifauna. At least we can give a drum roll for the successful reintroduction of Wild Turkey to our forests, fields, and urban habitats.

Among the loons and grebes, Red-throated Loon was down somewhat from its elevated numbers of the past 15 years, while Common Loon was seen at near-record numbers. Pied-billed Grebe continued last year's low totals, and Horned Grebe achieved highest numbers of the past five years due to tallies at New Haven and New London. The prehistoric looking Northern Gannet continues its recent tendency to soar into Long Island Sound and westward along our coastline. Woodbury-Roxbury found a Great Cormorant for just the second time in 30 years.

Who would have thought back in the mid-1990s that we would be counting 250 Black Vultures on a Connecticut Christmas Bird Count? It must pay to be a scavenger. Turkey Vulture numbers also continue on the high side, but these recyclers no longer get first dibs on the end-of-life fauna or the collateral wildlife damage caused by our state's motor vehicles. Nearly all our hawks, eagles, and falcons have experienced population resurgence in recent years. Bald Eagle and Cooper's Hawk were counted at second-highest totals, and Red-shouldered Hawk numbers (168 this year) jumped 20% above the previous statewide high of 127 in 2005-06. Record high totals on northern, mid-state, and coastal counts suggest both a robust breeding population and a northward pushing wintering range. Red-shouldered Hawk was recorded several times prior to the 1980s at Lakeville-Sharon,

but one seen this year is new to Lakeville-Sharon's 30-year species list. Peregrine Falcons continue their dramatic expansion in numbers (reflecting increased state breeding pairs during March and April), with 26 counted this year, up six from the previous record high of two years ago. In the "You must be kidding!" category, Broad-winged Hawk is a south-migrating hawk species that automatically raises eyebrows when reported on one of our Christmas Bird Counts. Adult Broad-wings winter from southern Mexico to Brazil and Bolivia, while a few no-nothing or timorous immatures can be expected to winter in South Florida. Yet, for the third time in the last 12 years a Broad-winged Hawk was reported and well described, this time at New Haven.

There are some notable exceptions to the trend in increasing hawk numbers. One Northern Goshawk was seen count day at Pawling and one was found during count week at Litchfield Hills, making this the lowest total in 30 years for this elusive species – elusive, that is, unless you happen upon it in the nesting season! Rough-legged Hawk continues to be much harder to find today than in the 1980s, with just four on count days and one count week. American Kestrel



*Mark Szantyr photo*  
*Black-bellied Plovers registered a 30-year low on the statewide Christmas Bird Counts.*

barely hangs on by a thin malar stripe. Seven kestrels mark a 30-year low total. Once again, our diminutive falcon was outnumbered by its larger Merlin cousin. Storrs had a count day Merlin, a bird recorded there only during a previous year's count week. Additional hawks recorded on the count, including Northern Harrier and Sharp-shinned Hawk, were in average numbers this time around.

### **Shorebirds to Chickadees and Friends**

Black-bellied Plover dipped to record 30-year low numbers this year, with a dozen each from Greenwich-Stamford and New London being supplemented by one seen at Old Lyme-Saybrook and two at Napatree. There is no clear trend in their numbers from year to year. Killdeer also registers fluctuations in numbers on a yearly basis, with 52 being counted this year. No rare early winter plovers (American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated, Piping) were observed. Two American Oystercatchers at New Haven were the only ones seen along the coast. Greater Yellowlegs (2 at New Haven, 1 count week at Westport) and American Woodcock (seen this year only on four coastal counts) set new 30-year low records. In addition, Ruddy Turnstone was in low supply, and Wilson's Snipe continued its low numbers of the past six years. Clearly, this was not an inspiring CBC season for shorebirds. A similar comment can be made about gulls. Bonaparte's Gull was limited to 8 at Greenwich-Stamford, one each at New Haven, Old Lyme-Saybrook, and Westport, and 23 at Napatree. Great Black-backed Gull slipped further from the scene, being best represented at Hartford, New London, and Napatree. Small numbers of Iceland Gull (6), Lesser Black-backed Gull (1 at Westport), and Glaucous Gull (1 at New Haven, 1 at New London) were reported. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls held fairly steady in this post-landfill age.

The only alcid recorded was Razorbill, a species that has been occurring much more commonly along the coast than in previous years. Nine on the New London count made for a good total. Pigeons and doves offered nothing special to coo about, but one has to wonder when these species will

be joined on a Connecticut Christmas Bird Count by that expert interloper, Eurasian Collared-Dove. The appearance of a nest-building pair at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford this spring raises both hopes and concerns, depending on your persuasion. Monk Parakeet dipped to its lowest total in 17 years. Is the hand of man at work here again? Owling hours produced good numbers of most species. In most years at least one Barn Owl is found on a CBC, and this year New Haven provided the lone observation of *Tyto alba*. Eastern Screech-Owl (including 12 at Trail Wood), Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, and Northern Saw-whet Owl all provided good company for our nocturnal birding set. Great Horned Owl bounced back strongly from last year's 30-year low, and Barred Owl (72 in all) easily broke the record high total. Let's give a caterwauling shout-out for that positive news. Long-eared Owl was represented on nine different counts, including fairly rare finds at Barkhamsted and Oxford. In contrast, single Short-eared Owls were reported only from Hartford and Old Lyme-Saybrook.

A Rufous Hummingbird was viewed by many at New London, joining previous CBC sightings in 2002-03 (1 individual), 2006-07 (1), and 2007-08 (2). This species is well monitored by hummingbird aficionados in the state, and it is just a matter of time before an in-the-hand Selasphorus hummingbird proves to be Allen's Hummingbird for Connecticut's first state record, perhaps on a Christmas Bird Count. Given the extensive open water during this year's CBC season, it is a little surprising that Belted Kingfisher numbers were somewhat reduced. Old Lyme-Saybrook recorded the lone Red-headed Woodpecker. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker continues to gain in numbers, with its second highest total being logged this year. Red-bellied Woodpecker continues to outpace all other avian species in population growth, with 1526 being counted in 2010-11. Thirty years ago, the statewide number was 67. Ten of 18 counts recorded Red-bellied Woodpecker at new high levels. Downy and Hairy Woodpecker numbers were slightly above average, while Northern Flicker continued ten years of gradual slippage. Pileated Woodpecker

reached record high numbers with 158 counted statewide. This species has been found just twice in southeastern Connecticut on the New London CBC, and it has not yet been recorded at Napatree.

White-eyed Vireo is a secretive, spectacled, neotropical migrant that breeds typically as far north as southeastern Massachusetts and Connecticut (where it is uncommon) and winters from extreme southeastern Virginia south through South Florida and on to Mexico, Belize, and Honduras, less commonly in Bermuda, the Bahamas, and down the Caribbean's Atlantic coast to Panama. Generally, it arrives on its wintering grounds by mid-October. However, during the past 30 years White-eyed Vireo has occurred on Christmas Bird Counts in New Jersey (10 individuals on a total of seven counts, most recently in 2008-09), New York (five individuals on four counts, most recently 2008-09), Rhode Island (one individual in 1993-94), and Massachusetts (one individual in 1984-85, one in 1997-98, and one in 2003-04). The occurrence of White-eyed Vireo this year on the Napatree CBC in Rhode Island adds this species to the all-time list of species occurring on "Connecticut" counts. White-eyed Vireo is known to exhibit site fidelity to its wintering grounds, which may account in part for the recent repeat occurrences in New Jersey. The species has been expanding its breeding range northward, and the species may well occur in Connecticut in a future early winter period. Kudos to Napatree for reporting the most intriguing bird of our 2010-11 Christmas Bird Count.

Among corvids, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, and Common Raven occurred in above average to high numbers. This is particularly true of Fish Crows (3<sup>rd</sup> highest total) and ravens (2<sup>nd</sup> highest total with 96 individuals statewide). Fifty-seven of the ravens were seen on northern counts, 23 on mid-state counts, and 16 on coastal counts. While ravens can be seen anywhere in the state at the present time, they continue to be more common the farther north one travels in the state. In future years they may become equally widespread throughout Connecticut. Fish Crow was a new species for

the Storrs CBC. Black-capped Chickadee has rebounded from lower numbers of the two previous CBC years, while Tufted Titmouse has remained remarkably consistent in numbers for the past two decades. This was no irruption year for Red-breasted Nuthatch, suggesting that it will prove to be a less common breeder in southern New England in 2011. The 1292 Carolina Wrens counted this year (2<sup>nd</sup> highest total ever) ran into an especially tough post-CBC January and February winter spell with seemingly unending snow cover. It will be very interesting to see how their numbers hold up when the 2011 Summer Bird Count data are compiled and for the 2011-12 Christmas Bird Count. Conventional wisdom has it that they will take a major hit in their populations, as was the case following the heavy winters following the 1992-93 CBC, when it required ten years for their numbers to return to four-digit levels. As noted above, my own experience with the New Haven Summer Bird Count suggests to me that a number of wintering birds were culled from the viable year-round population.

New Haven works hard to get its small number of Marsh Wrens (three this year), and Greenwich-Stamford, New London, and Napatree also found one, two, and three Marsh Wrens, respectively. But if you have a hankering to experience Marsh Wrens in early winter, by all means participate in the Old Lyme-Saybrook CBC. This year, a total of 19 were enticed into view, shattering Old Lyme-Saybrook's previous high count of 12 individuals. Let's practice our Marsh Wren calls more diligently for next year: "tek tek tek tek tek tek". Ruby-crowned Kinglet is another bonus bird for most state counts, and this year the small number counted (14) approached the 30-year low total of seven birds in 1995-96.

### **Mockingthrushes through Passerines**

Hermit Thrush is our one spotted thrush species that is found reliably on a Christmas Bird Count, although its numbers fluctuate substantially from year to year. This year saw a downswing in their occurrence. (Compiler Dave Tripp, Jr. noted that "a Wood Thrush was in the Barkhamsted count



*Scott Vincent photo  
A near-record 113 American Pipits were logged by counters  
on the state's Christmas Bird Counts in 2010-11.*

circle up to a week prior to count week".) In the "wildly fluctuating" category, American Robins followed last year's eye-reddening 42,000 strong with a mere 11,000+ in the latest December-January CBC season. This was still good for robins making the ninth spot on the top ten list of most abundant birds on the count. In descending order of abundance, they are: Canada Goose, European Starling, American Crow, Ring-billed Gull, Dark-eyed Junco, Mallard, Herring Gull, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, and House Sparrow. (See the table for their total numbers.) Remember, it is the Year of the Goose. This is not intended to be a comment on the country's present economic health.

Northern Mockingbird registered in at 50% more than last year's dismal total but still 50% fewer than in the 1980s and '90s. Brown Thrashers are very challenging to find on a CBC, and they always present challenges to the field observer. The coastal counts are responsible for producing 85% of all Brown Thrashers found during the CBC, and this year all eight individuals came from the coast: two at New Haven, two at New London, one at Old Lyme-Saybrook, and three at Napatree. This review article has chronicled the severe decline in European Starling numbers for more than a dozen years. The 2010-11 total of 40,000 starlings represents the

third lowest total since time began. Starlings account for 12% of all individual birds recorded on the 2010-11 count, yet at their peak occurrence in 1983-84 they comprised 45% of all individuals counted. In one sense, doesn't this justify classification as a species of special concern? It used to be so much easier when a person would tell you that they saw a bird, and you could safely respond, "It was a starling". Now you actually have to listen to the description of the unknown bird before venturing an identification!

Sixty-one American Pipits at Quinnipiac Valley and 44 at Old Lyme-Saybrook pushed the statewide total to a near-record high of 173. There was a generally poor showing of wood warblers this year, with one Orange-crowned Warbler at Napatree, one Pine Warbler at New London and two at Napatree, two Palm Warblers at New Haven, single Common Yellowthroats at Pawling and Greenwich-Stamford, and two Yellow-breasted Chats each at New Haven and at Napatree. Yellowthroats are proving to be harder to locate than they used to be. Napatree also had a strong number of Yellow-rumped Warblers (83), while the remaining 17 counts could find no more than a combined 46 (a 30-year low). Hartford recorded a single Yellow-rumped among northern counts.

Eastern Towhees were relatively easy to find, but American Tree Sparrows continued at reduced numbers observed for most of the last dozen years. This is the sixth year in the last fourteen that Clay-colored Sparrow makes the statewide count (one was seen at Napatree), reflecting an increase in breeding birds in southern New England. Field Sparrows have moved in the opposite direction, now at 60% of last year's record low total. Eleven individuals of the 'Ipswich' form of Savannah Sparrow were counted this year at five different coastal counts. With the recent splitting by the AOU of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow into two distinct species, Saltmarsh Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow, Old Lyme-Saybrook is the first count to submit a record under the species name, Nelson's Sparrow. CTOL field observers take it all in stride, as they have been recognizing and not-

ing the distinction for some years now. Seaside Sparrow is a very difficult marsh sparrow to find on a CBC. Three at Old Lyme-Saybrook comprise the only ones reported this year. Fox Sparrows were prevalent, especially along the coast, but Song Sparrows were less common than is typically the case. Hartford and Woodbury-Roxbury did well in finding single Lincoln's Sparrows each.

Connecticut is successful in submitting reports of Dickcissel on a CBC every three years or so. Woodbury-Roxbury found the only Dickcissel this year. Eastern Meadowlark is another grassland bird in decline, and 13 at Old Lyme-Saybrook, five at Napatree, two at Oxford, and one at Storrs were the best we could do. Among the common flocking blackbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds were less than abundant as were Common Grackles, while Brown-headed Cowbirds slipped to a 30-year low total. Just as our attention is turned to the precipitous decline in Rusty Blackbirds, we record a record high number on the Christmas Count, with 79 at Quinnipiac Valley, 67 at Hartford, and 64 at Salmon River. The Salmon River flock was foraging on the grassy grounds adjacent to a sizeable Moodus farm, and after flying off they were relocated on mudflats along the margins of Moodus Reservoir. A limited knowledge of Rusty Blackbird biology, the uncertain status of its breeding populations, and a suspected decline in its wintering populations all argue for more careful study of this species. Eleven Boat-tailed Grackles at Stratford-Milford keep us in the East Coast spotlight.

New Haven found the only Baltimore Oriole this year. Once again we missed out on a winter finch irruption, with low numbers of Purple Finch, no Red Crossbills, 11 White-winged Crossbills at Quinnipiac Valley (new to this count), and a relatively modest incursion of 111 Common Redpolls (with 66 at Stratford-Milford, 32 at Barkhamsted, seven at Storrs, and one or two at Edwin Way Teale-Trail Wood, Litchfield Hills, Lakeville-Sharon, and Pawling). The 2008-09 CBC was the banner year for Pine Siskins, yet five northern counts, led by Barkhamsted and Storrs, did well this year with scattered siskin flocks. House Sparrows (number 10 on

the top ten list) remained at average levels.

The following is a list of species missed throughout the state this Christmas Bird Count season, and the number of years they have been sighted on the 29 previous counts: Evening Grosbeak (24), Osprey (22), Northern Shrike (22), Saltmarsh Sparrow (19), Snowy Owl (17), Pine Grosbeak (16), Red Crossbill (15), Black-headed Gull (14), Orange-crowned Warbler (14), Blue-winged Teal (13), Sora (13), Golden Eagle (12), Laughing Gull (12), Tundra Swan (10), Red Knot (9).

Finally, here are lists of the most significant results for each region of the state, based on the compilations for northern counts, mid-state counts, and coastal counts:

Northern Counts: no new species; four rarities (Brant, Short-eared Owl, and Lincoln's Sparrow at Hartford, House Wren at Storrs); thirty-year high totals (11): Cooper's Hawk, Eastern Screech-Owl, Barred Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren. Also, high from the statewide list, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, White-crowned Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird; 30-year low totals (1): Field Sparrow.

Mid-State Counts: no new species; 1 rarity (Dickcissel at Woodbury-Roxbury); thirty-year high totals (11): Great Cormorant, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle. Also, high from the statewide list, Black Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, and Rusty Blackbird; 30-year low totals (1): Ring-necked Pheasant.

Coastal Counts: 1 "new" species: Nelson's Sparrow at Old Lyme-Saybrook; four rarities (Cackling Goose CW and Barnacle Goose count day at Westport, Broad-winged Hawk at New Haven, and Rufous Hummingbird at New London); 30-year high totals (9 + 1 form): Greater White-fronted Goose, Mallard, Common Goldeneye. Also, highs from the statewide list: Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Hooded Merganser, Peregrine Falcon, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Marsh Wren, Savannah 'Ipswich' Sparrow; 30-year low totals

(9): Ring-necked Pheasant (missed first time in 30 years), Great Black-backed Gull, European Starling. Also, lows from the statewide list: Black-bellied Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, American Woodcock, Bonaparte's Gull, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Field Sparrow.

The Connecticut Christmas Bird Count is, in effect, a regional association of autonomous CBCs conducted by highly dedicated compilers. Most of our present compilers have served in their roles for years, and they know better than anyone the intricacies of their count circles, including habitats, target species, and best assignment of field observers. They, in turn, are dependent on a team of area captains who over the years have sought out the most productive sites within their sectors and developed the best travel routes and times of day to bird them. We are fortunate, also, in being able to pass the leadership baton from time to time to new, skillful birders in order to maintain the CBC tradition.

The following compilers and their organizational sponsors are to be thanked for their strong leadership in this longest running wildlife census:

David Tripp, Jr. (Barkhamsted, Litchfield Hills Audubon Society), Susan Harrington (Edwin Way Teale–Trail Wood, Connecticut Audubon Society at Trail Wood), Jay Kaplan and Stephen Davis (Hartford, Hartford Audubon Society), Raymond Belding (Litchfield Hills, Litchfield Hills Audubon Society), Robert Moeller (Lakeville-Sharon, Audubon Sharon), Steve Morytko (Storrs, Natchaug Ornithological Society), Roy Harvey (Oxford, Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society), Carena Pooth and Angela Dimmitt (Pawling (Hidden Valley)), Corrine Folsom-O'Keefe and Melissa Baston (Quinnipiac Valley, Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society), Joseph Morin (Salmon River, Mattabeseck Audubon Society), Chris Wood (Woodbury-Roxbury, Western Connecticut Bird Club), Brian O'Toole (Greenwich-Stamford, Greenwich Audubon Society), Christopher Loscalzo (New Haven, New Haven Bird Club), Robert Dewire (New London), Barbara Hawes (Old Lyme-Saybrook, Potapaug Audubon Society), Steve Mayo (Stratford-Milford, "just some loose, friendly affiliations"), Mardi and Townsend Dickinson (Westport, Connecticut Audubon Society/Birdcraft Museum), Shai Mitra and Glenn Williams (Napatree).



SPECIES	NORTHERN COUNTS							MIDSTATE COUNTS					COASTAL COUNTS						STATE	NA
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	SI	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL		
Northern Gannet									1	2		6	1			2	2	11	50	
Double-crested Cormorant												9	8	41	2	3		66	5	
Great Cormorant			1						2	46	1	68	10	22	13	6	10	179	80	
cormorant, sp.														4				4	1	
American Bittern															1			1	29	
Great Blue Heron	1	6	14	3		2	9	2	7	6	16	35	38	34	18	7	26	224	29	
Great Egret															1			6	1	
Black-crowned Night-Heron														1	4		1	6	1	
Black Vulture			1			CW	75	17	CW	87	6	8	42			3	3	7	5	
Turkey Vulture		2	12				95	2	CW	16	100	56	93			3	33	462	23	
Bald Eagle	11	1	5	4	4	2	4	6	3	4	19	3	3	3	11	1	6	90	1	
Northern Harrier			10	1	1	2	1	2	2	1		4	3	8	18	10	1	64	12	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2		14	3	3	3	5	12	6	8	8	14	18	12	11	5	6	130	8	
Cooper's Hawk	5	3	29	9	4	7	7	12	5	2	7	16	18	21	10	5	6	166	7	
Northern Goshawk						CW			1									1	1	
Accipiter, sp.	1																	1	1	
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	4	9	6	2	12	24	10	7	19	21	4	16	18	7	1	6	168	6	
Broad-winged Hawk													1					1	1	
Red-tailed Hawk	27	20	166	71	85	51	59	72	61	31	116	87	123	42	25	17	25	1078	22	
Rough-legged Hawk				2	1									1		CW		4	4	
American Kestrel		3	CW													2	1	7	1	
Merlin			1			CW			2		1			1	1	1		10	2	
Peregrine Falcon			2									3	5	4	5	3	4	26	4	
Clapper Rail													1	1	3	CW		5	8	
Virginia Rail																		8	0	
American Coot				4	10		1		21			6	49	6	10	19	7	133	1	
Black-bellied Plover												12	12	1				25	2	
Killdeer		1	2			5			2	2		16	8	3	2	1	10	52	2	
American Oystercatcher													2					2	2	
Greater Yellowlegs													2				CW	2	2	
Ruddy Turnstone												44	4	6	17	1	27	99		
Sanderling													130	2	105	131	100	468	48	
Purple Sandpiper												9	46	17	22	91	9	194	29	
Dunlin													6	9	290	96	128	529	37	
Wilson's Snipe									1			1	3	1	1	1		8	1	
American Woodcock															1		CW	3	3	
Black-legged Kittiwake															1			0	8	
Bonaparte's Gull												8	1	0	1		1	11	23	
Ring-billed Gull	812	28	897	84	46	102	1169	160	751	209	2145	1096	3524	249	282	3583	450	15587	299	
Herring Gull	22	24	1271	2	9	6	197	81	61	61	644	968	1429	4447	570	2217	1243	13252	1419	
Iceland Gull			2											2	1			6	6	
Lesser Black-backed Gull																	1	1	1	
Glaucous Gull														1				2	2	
Great Black-backed Gull	1	2	120			CW	16		5	15	74	77	87	172	77	76	79	801	146	
gull, sp.		1																1	1	
Razorbill														9				9	57	
Rock Pigeon	251	207	1350	322	318	255	300	84	511	188	127	747	1569	765	207	638	224	8063	78	
Mourning Dove	182	196	958	404	458	308	184	309	328	243	365	651	752	345	300	167	238	6388	317	
Monk Parakeet												22	112		31	53	10	228		



SPECIES	NORTHERN COUNTS						MIDSTATE COUNTS						COASTAL COUNTS						STATE TOTAL	NA
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL	NA	
American Tree Sparrow	97	42	623	323	140	71	95	151	68	34	165	56	206	64	337	60	44	2576	60	
Chipping Sparrow								1	1	1			2					5		
Clay-colored Sparrow																		0	1	
Field Sparrow		1	4	1			5	2	4	5	1	4	25	18	11	1	8	90	19	
Vesper Sparrow								1										1		
Savannah Sparrow	2		49					15			8	1	19	18	10	1	5	128	14	
Savannah Ipswich Sparrow													2		4	3	1	10	1	
Nelson's Sparrow																		2		
Seaside Sparrow														3				3		
Fox Sparrow			5				3		1	4	2	14	11	17	6	4	3	70	18	
Song Sparrow	33	48	349	68	44	72	229	73	104	81	205	379	280	289	135	119	166	2674	249	
Lincoln's Sparrow			1								1							2		
Swamp Sparrow	2		8	10			5	5	5	2	11	21	14	13	30	2	7	135	20	
White-throated Sparrow	131	77	549	354	181	238	569	500	432	589	637	1285	1058	906	479	281	355	8621	393	
White-crowned Sparrow			32	1	8			3	1		26		9	1	1		1	83	8	
Dark-eyed Junco	1045	437	1724	1013	717	885	1137	810	606	739	1425	1646	853	635	319	200	575	14766	494	
Northern Cardinal	227	52	363	296	90	197	246	271	211	253	362	363	392	329	181	137	133	4103	179	
Dickcissel											1							1		
Red-winged Blackbird		1	993	272	44	18	49	3145	20	14	150	7	165	313	170	24	9	5394	35	
Eastern Meadowlark						1	2								13			16	5	
Rusty Blackbird			67	24	20	1	1		79	65	1	4	9	6	12	11		300	6	
Common Grackle		142	421	70	300		781	1630	91	5	168	46	149	113	133	2	1	4052	75	
Boat-tailed Grackle																11		11		
Brown-headed Cowbird	6	104	13	87	133	12	15	441	13	24	126	5	68	102	2	1	2	1154	7	
Baltimore Oriole													1					1		
Purple Finch	16	3		27	8			1	2	9	2	20	4	2	5	2	1	102	11	
House Finch	107	71	387	188	69	198	92	175	110	276	326	285	481	358	239	28	59	3449	133	
White-winged Crossbill										11								11		
Common Redpoll	32	1		2	2	7												111		
Pine Siskin	72	31		20	8	69		13	1	2		5	1				66	111		
American Goldfinch	228	74	487	203	79	180	197	114	93	261	297	293	338	193	140	64	103	3344	89	
House Sparrow	185	154	761	370	214	392	346	665	430	279	644	1170	1485	1813	289	375	526	10098	327	
TOTALS	9862	5774	51096	19785	7599	9520	12364	17795	16749	8716	28544	26435	41790	27113	10870	25878	15710	335600	14846	
Total Individuals	67	63	89	80	69	68	70	77	85	79	85	108	131	124	114	107	109	167	121	
Total Count Day Species	1	0	1	2	0	8	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	4	8	1	0	
Total Count Week Species	24	10	108	53	24	24	23	43	23	21	35	69	76	34	29	20	30	646	23	
Total Field Observers	9	0	11	10	11	1	0	12	1	10	1	12	4	2	0	2	4	90	0	
Total Feeder Watchers	33	10	119	63	35	25	23	55	24	31	36	81	80	36	29	22	34	736	23	
Total Observers	78.75	41.25	233	149.25	67.5	98.25	65.25	283.5	114.25	95	118	199	176	143	102	75.5	126.25	2165.75	86	

**Northern Counts**  
 BA = Barkhamsted  
 HA = Hartford  
 LH = Litchfield Hills  
 LS = Lakeville-Sharon  
 St = Storrs

**Mid-State Counts**  
 OX = Oxford  
 PA = Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT  
 QV = Quinipiac Valley  
 SR = Salmon River  
 WR = Woodbury-Roxbury

**Coastal Counts**  
 GS = Greenwich-Stamford  
 NH = New Haven  
 NL = New London  
 OL = Old Lyme-Saybrook  
 SM = Stratford-Milford  
 WE = Westport  
 NA = Napatree, RI/CT

**Legend**  
 CW Count Period  
 0 First time not seen in 30 years  
 XX Rare Species  
 XX New 30 Year High Count  
 XX New 30 Year Low Count  
 XX New Species for Count

## BOOKS ON BIRDS

By Alan Brush

The Crossley ID Guide. Eastern Birds. Richard Crossley. 2011. 529 pgs. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ \$35.00.

Find, or buy a copy of this book and be surprised with what you see. Guaranteed! It's different—that's both good and bad. There are literally dozens of blogs, comments, and reviews on Crossley's new book online. Anyone even remotely interested in birds or birding should at least look through this very different approach. Crossley considers the design of the book as an interactive tool for the reader analogous to a workbook. It could help even experts sharpen their skills. Ideally the reader would approach the open page *sans* any preconceived ideas. First, Crossley suggests, ask yourself 'what do I see', not 'what am I supposed to see'. (Not to transpose in your mind's eye the pointers of a traditional Peterson-like field guide). Because of the intensity and variety of images for each, some of which admittedly are rather small, the reader is presented with a close up, the bird in flight, seen from unusual angles, etc., all adequate to identify the species almost without regard to season, posture and behavior, or adequate eventually (as experience grows) to verify even a fleeting impression. Indeed, there can be something here for everyone.

Crossley is all about images, with minimal text and tiny maps. The plates declare Photoshop a verb and each one is alive with fascinating details. Crossley's intent is for the viewer to examine them with no clue from the author. The text contains remarks on distribution and abundance, behavior, clues to separate close congeners, and comments on shape and plumage features. Closely related species, e.g. SPSA and SOSA, GRSC and LESC, LBDO and SBDO, are often on facing pages. The plates are not clever paintings,

sketches, photos as in Stokes or Kaufman, or a collage: they are masterful, reworked digital images photoshopped to peak information density. For example, 30 CORE appear in a snowy scene. In numerous cases this would include male and female, immature, and basic and alternate plumages might be in the same image. While there might be an incongruity between habitat season and plumage, it is of no consequence after all, it is all about the birds.

The book is not organized taxonomically as are most popular field guides. We have all become accustomed to using one or another sequence of the orders of birds in the field to help or confirm an ID. The problem that can arise with any taxonomic organization scheme is that species grouped together in an order (for example, Charadriiformes) may not look alike (consider alcids, jaegers and stilts). Crossley's solution, a more ecological approach, employs the larger categories of Waterbirds and Landbirds. Waterbirds are then divided roughly into swimming, flying and walking. Landbirds include upland gamebirds, raptors, miscellaneous large landbirds, aerial landbirds and songbirds. Not bad, but very 'field friendly'. Cleverly, the images used to represent each group are also used in the "Quick Key to Species" and also appears in the front inside cover. A size guide is included. Users will immediately note the use of the 4-letter "Birders Code" throughout the book. I'm uncomfortable with CITE, BWTE, RWBB, RBWO, etc., for example. Although much of it is intuitive if you know the complete common name, it can be clumsy and hinders verbal communication. Further, it reminds me too much of the acronyms used in text messaging: WRUD (what are you doing), ADAD (another day another dollar), KYFC (keep your fingers crossed, or perhaps Kentucky Fried Chicken) and WWSO (what would Sibley do). It is difficult to follow without a lot of practice, even though Crossley is correct in positing that it saves key strokes.

In a way, the most important reading is the Introduction (pgs 22-35). In a book with '...over 10,000 images and covering 660 species', understanding the challenges, philosophy, and goals of the author is essential. Without question, this is a



*The American Oystercatcher plate in The Crossley ID Guide.*

major step in a new direction, and deserves careful attention.

Feathers. The Evolution of a Natural Miracle. Thor Hanson. 2011. 336 pgs. Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, New York, NY. \$25.99

It is not possible to have an interest in natural history without some curiosity about feathers. This volume is a fascinating introduction to understanding the evolution of feathers, their structure and function, and multiple uses by humans. Hanson interviews many of the principals who participated in studying feathered dinosaurs, the mechanisms of color production, and models of feather growth and diversity. He introduces the Smithsonian feather ID Laboratory and recounts the history of the conservation movement initiated by the trade in plumages and current uses in fashion, and even fly tying.

The science here is accurate, the discourse conversational, and the results are entertaining. The bibliography is accessible and timely.

# THE TOP TEN CONNECTICUT BIRDS IN 2010

By Frank W. Mantlik

Early in 2010, I decided to keep a running tally, with monthly updates, of all the bird species reported to Connecticut's birding list-serve. It was probably the birding "Big January" total of a remarkable 161 species that instigated this endeavor. Month after month brought new birds reported, and by Dec. 31 the cumulative 2010 state list stood at 319 species. This incredible total was augmented by a fabulous autumn and early winter of great rarities. To quote Noble Proctor, "Last year had a load of really good birds. When fall hit, it seemed like every week had us heading somewhere for a rarity".

Then in January, at the suggestion of Joe Zeranski, I decided to take a poll of the top ten species of the year. I set down some guidelines, culled the overall list to a more manageable 80 species, and asked the top 42 birders of the state to select and rank their top ten species. Many factors could play a part in their selection process – sheer rarity, beauty and/or grace, cooperativeness of the bird, length-of-stay, amount of press coverage, whether they personally saw it or not, etc. And comments were solicited. I thank the 29 respondents for their time and effort. Point values were then assigned to the ranked species (10 points for their number one pick, 9 points for number two, etc.) and results were tabulated.

Here are the results, along with each species' point totals:

- Northern Lapwing (254)
- White-tailed Kite (251)
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher (220)
- LeConte's Sparrow (113)
- Mountain Bluebird (93)
- Western Grebe (89)
- Calliope Hummingbird (78)
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (54)
- Dovekie (49)

Black Guillemot (47)  
 And the next ten:  
 Barnacle Goose (banded) (41)  
 Brown Pelican (34)  
 Black-throated Gray Warbler (23)  
 Mississippi Kite (17)  
 Black-legged Kittiwake (16)  
 "Black" Brant (12)  
 Eared Grebe (12)  
 American Avocet (12)  
 Am. White Pelican (10)  
 Painted Bunting (7)  
 Hudsonian Godwit (7)

Now let's look at some of the reasons for their rankings.

### **Northern Lapwing**

A lone bird discovered in Storrs Nov. 27 by Phil Rusch, and confirmed by Roy Harvey and enjoyed by masses of birders the next day. "The northeast bird of the year" (GW). "I had to pick this one first". (PR). "A real "WOW" bird, but it only stayed for a day" (CL). "Undoubtedly the bird of the year. When you combine its status as a continental mega-rarity with its striking plumage, this bird is tough to argue against getting the top vote. This was a dream bird for many of us in CT." (NB). "First (possibly 2<sup>nd</sup>) state record, but many records for the northeast, although not so many for the lower 48". (FG). His number one pick "for the significance of the record, and it was a pretty damn cool bird. The drama of chasing it from field to field that afternoon was fun too". (KE). "Exceptional new CT record, well documented but its stay was too short". (JZ).

### **White-tailed Kite**

An unexpected first state record discovered in Stratford Aug. 1 by Dennis Varza, this raptor dazzled hundreds of visiting birders for months with its aerial behavior until its departure Oct. 10. "A once-in-a-century sighting of a magnificent bird that stayed for two months for all to see. I think we'll re-

member this bird for many years to come." (CL). "First state record, second record in New England in 100 years". (FG). "While more birders got to see it, its level of significance is slightly less than the Lapwing. It certainly put Stratford Point on the birding map ... and led to many other great sightings." (KE). "This bird's combination of power, grace, and beauty attracted birders from many states. Its cooperative nature greatly enhanced the experience." (NB).

### **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**

A bird discovered at Cove Island Park in Stamford by Tina Green Nov. 17, and seen daily through Dec. 4. "Third state record, first that could be chased." (FG). "Another extraordinary rarity, from South America no less! Found in an accessible location and stayed long enough for many to see it." (CL). "Number one any other year." (GW). "Cove Island was overdue for a chaseable rarity, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> record, all the active birders in the state finally got to twitch this vagrant." (KE).

### **LeConte's Sparrow**

A skulking beauty positively identified by photographer Tom Sayers Oct. 29 at Milford Point. "Five records since 1987." (FG). "Unusual for such a secretive bird to be rather reliable for such a long period of time. Perhaps the most beautiful North American sparrow." (NB). "Rare and secretive. Was unusually cooperative by staying as long as it did and in a place where people could come to see it." (CL). "Sparrows deserve more respect, especially when they're as elusive as this little bugger. Led to the Western Grebe too." (KE).

### **Mountain Bluebird**

A western vagrant (third state record) first discovered at Bradley Airport Dec. 7 by Rollin Tebbetts. "First since the Guilford Sluice bird and how many birds in the state get their own police escort"! (NP). "A real beauty. It stayed for weeks, into the harsh winter, but was in an inaccessible location." (CL). "I didn't get to enjoy this bird, but they are so gorgeous, and got some un-needed press because of its sensi-



*Storrs or Scotland? This photo by Mark Szantyr would be almost impossible to duplicate anywhere in North America. This single image taken on Nov. 28, 2010, shows both the 2010 Connecticut bird of the year, a Northern Lapwing (far upper right) and a Barnacle Goose (lower left). The inset photo, taken the same day by Frank Gallo, offers a closer look at the lapwing, a state first.*

tive location.” (KE). “The intense sky-blue color is difficult to describe in words.” (NB).

### **Western Grebe**

A bird discovered off Milford Point Nov. 2 by Dennis Varza, and identification confirmed by Frank Gallo. “Third recent record, but prior to these three, not one for a while (6 records).” (FG). “A great example of the ‘Patagonia Picnic Table Effect’.” (KE).

### **Calliope Hummingbird**

This little gem was first reported Dec. 10 at a Guilford feeder by homeowner, Hank Kranichfeld, then seen by many through Jan.1, when it flew up and away. “Third state re-

cord" (FG). "Third record, but the rarity and endurance of these little guys never wears off." (NP). "A real winter treat in CT." (RD).

### Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

A great bird in Old Lyme Nov. 3 – 12, but only a handful of birders got to see due to being on private property. "Five records since 1983." (FG). "Very few saw it, but this bird's bright salmon-pink flanks, pearl-gray head, and jet-black wings and tail were a thrill to see." (NB). Ranked "on aesthetics as much as rarity." (CB). "What a beauty but too bad on private land and so few got to enjoy it." (NP). "14<sup>th</sup>! Man, we had a good year. (GW, who had ranked this species 14<sup>th</sup> on his survey).

### Dovekie

A "wrecked" seabird found on a New Canaan yard, and taken in for rehabilitation by Meredith Sampson Jan. 26. A species notoriously difficult to rehab, it died the next day. "Rare, but most sightings are of injured birds." (CL). "Oceanic birds



*Frank Mantlik was quick on the draw with a handy camera when he saw this Black-throated Gray Warbler while delivering mail in Westport. It was never seen again.*

are always high in LI Sound" (RD). "Always a tough find any time in the last 50 years, not reported regularly." (JZ).

### **Black Guillemot**

Two birds reported in Stonington Dec. 16 by a lone, reliable observer. Review by Avian Records Committee of CT is pending. "In the top 10 for its rarity." (CL). "Still waiting for this one, too. Hours of cold sea watching will pay off someday and I will get this one at the Stonington breakwaters." (GW).

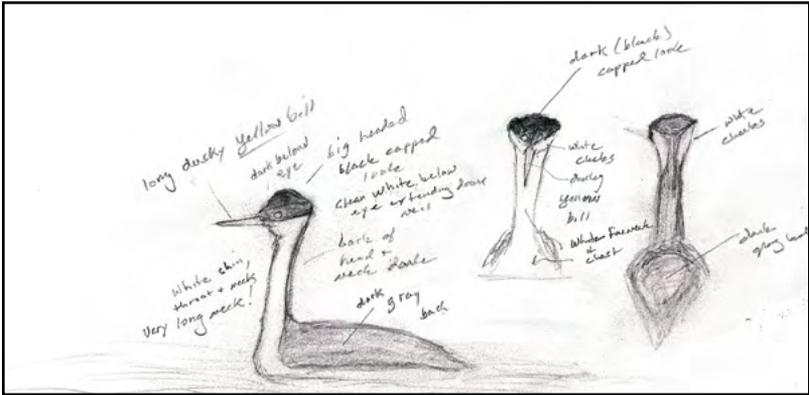
A few comments are in order. It is noteworthy that eight of the top ten birds were discovered in late fall (Oct 29 – Dec. 16). What an exciting autumn of birding in CT it was! Also a few notes about some of the runners-up are worthy.

**Barnacle Goose:** Sightings of several individuals around the state. Most noteworthy was a banded bird I found Dec. 3 in Stratford and relocated Dec. 10 in Westport. "Exceptional because one was banded in Scotland, confirming its presence as a bona fide vagrant." (NB).

**Brown Pelican:** An immature flew by Stratford Point Aug. 10. "Fewer than a handful of CT records." (JZ). "A few lucky kite-watchers were thrilled to see this bird. A couple folks were actually able to chase and see it before it flew east." (NB). "Would make anybody's day in CT." (RD).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler:** A female I spotted Dec. 7 while delivering mail in Westport. It stayed for only ten minutes. "There hadn't been one of these western warblers in the state for several years." (NB). "A beautiful little bird, seen 'on the job', reminding all of us to always be on the lookout for anything." (CL).

**Mississippi Kite:** A breeding pair returned to Simsbury in 2010. "In the top 20 because of its amazing breeding status." (CL). "Probably #1 as a breeding species." (RD).



*The Western Grebe found off Milford Point did not offer many good viewing opportunities, but Frank Gallo documented it with this set of sketches.*

In closing, it was an unbelievable and incredible year of birding in CT in 2010. A big reason for this is the number of tireless field birders that quickly share their finds with the rest of us. The CT birding population, with its friendly comraderie and terrific communication, is the envy of many other states. In that regard, here's a big thank you to Roy Harvey, moderator of the CT birding list-serve, for his tireless efforts. Let's keep it going.

**Acknowledgements.** I wish to thank the survey respondents, for without them this article would not have been possible: Thomas Baptist, Ray Belding, Nick Bonomo, Charles Barnard, Jr., Patrick Comins, Paul Desjardins, Arnold (Buzz) Devine, Robert Dewire, Bob Dixon, Carl Ekroth, Ken Elkins, Frank Gallo, Tina Green, Ed Hagen, Greg Hanisek, Roy Harvey, Jay Kaplan, Chris Loscalzo, Frank Mantlik, Janet Mehmel, Noble Proctor, Dave Provencher, Phil Rusch, Mark Szantyr, Dennis Varza, Glenn Williams, Sara Zagorski, and Joe Zeranski.

# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Winter December 1, 2010 through February 28, 2011

By Greg Hanisek

The season produced an ample dose of wintry weather, including a fast-moving snowstorm that disrupted Christmas Bird Counts on Dec. 26. January was especially snowy with a total 41.8 inches, including 15 inches on Jan. 12, recorded at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford. A nice smattering of rarities included one first state record. In addition to information provided below, most of the state review species mentioned in this report were also detailed in the 16<sup>th</sup> Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, which was published in the April issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. 31 No. 2. Elsewhere in this issue, Steve Broker's analysis of the 2010-11 Christmas Bird Counts provides a wealth of detail and historical analysis.

Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season consisted of one in Somers on Dec. 2 (JCI); one Dec. 3-6 in the Mackenzie Reservoir area of Wallingford (NB et al.); one in Windsor Dec. 5-8 (JMe et al.); one in Orange on Dec. 18 (LS); and one in the Storrs area in early December (PR et al.). An immature Brant was a good inland find Dec. 18 at Mill Pond in Newington (RZ, AS et al.). Four **Cackling Geese** for the season were singles at Bantam Lake on Dec. 30- Jan. 2 (DR et al.), and at Mackenzie Reservoir, Wallingford, on Jan. 7-11 (MB, NB), with two in Westport during January (FMa, FG, TG et al.) All were of the expected *hutchinsii* race except for one of the Westport birds. It was identified as Connecticut's second example of the northwestern *taverneri* race. (See article and photo in *The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. 31 No. 2).

A **Barnacle Goose** was found in Wooster Park, Stratford, on Dec. 3. It eventually relocated to the Longshore Club in Westport, where it remained through Jan. 7 (FMa et al.) and was determined through a leg band to have originated from



Mark Szantyr photo

*The cold, snowy January put a lot of pressure on the state's resident Carolina Wren population. This species has historically suffered larger-than-normal population culls during hard winters.*

a prime wintering area of this species on the island of Islay in the western isles of Scotland, U.K., where it was banded as a juvenile on Nov. 13, 2002. A Barnacle Goose seen and photographed at Beardsley Park in Bridgeport (SV) was believed to be the same individual. A Barnacle Goose in the Storrs area since late November remained until at least Dec. 4 (PR et al.), and one found in October in Windsor was last seen on Dec. 11 (PCi). The season's lone Tundra Swan was on the Connecticut River in Essex on Feb. 12 (BY).

The state's increasing number of wintering Wood Ducks was illustrated by c. 20 on Jan. 3 in the Farmington River, Farmington, (SJ) and 10 at East Rock Park, New Haven, on Jan. 20 (CF). The lower Housatonic River held 157 Gadwall on Feb. 17 (FMA). Four Eurasian Wigeon for the season was about average. A drake Mallard X N. Pintail hybrid was at Wooster Park Pond in Stratford on Dec. 3 (FMA) and perhaps the same bird showed up at Raven Pond in Stratford in mid-February (GH, BB). A good show-

ing by Northern Shovelers included five at Milford Point on Dec. 15 (FG). About 20 Green-winged Teal wintered in the Birdseye boat ramp area of Stratford (FMa et al.). An excellent season for Redheads included an unexpected six (three males) on Twin Lakes in Salisbury on Jan. 5 (RBe et al.). There were reports in the Milford-Stratford-Bridgeport area throughout the season, with a high count of seven (three males and four females) at Short Beach, Stratford, on Feb. 17 (FMa et al.). Two males were in a large raft of Greater Scaup off the West Haven boat launch on Jan. 16 (GH); a single male joined a flock of 85 Canvasbacks on Feb. 19 at Smith Cove, Waterford (PR), one was in New Haven harbor on Dec. 15 (KM); and a female was at Long Wharf, New Haven, on Jan. 23 (KM). A large mixed flock of scoters and other waterfowl off Cove Place in Stratford held up to four Redheads (three males) from mid-December to late January (m.ob.).

The Bridgeport area from Captain's Cove to St. Mary's-by-the-Sea held a

total of 200 Lesser Scaup spread out over three sites on Feb. 3 (CB). A flock of 120 Bufflehead staged and courted off Compo Beach, Westport, on Feb. 23 (FMa). A drake **Barrow's Golden-eye** was off Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) on Dec. 10 (JCa), and a female was near Tuxis I., Madison, on Dec. 15 (KM). A drake found Jan. 1 at Mumford Cove in Groton remained through the season (ST, GW). Another was at Stratford Point on Feb. 4 (SK). Two female **King Eiders** were near Stratford Point Dec. 3 through mid-January (FMa et al.) and a female was at Penfield Reef, Fairfield, on Jan. 1 (LF, JPu). A spectacular concentration of 2500+ Common Eiders were seen moving from Connecticut to Rhode Island waters on Jan. 30 from Ender's I. in Mystic (PR, GW). Numerous reports of small numbers of Common Eiders, mainly in the eastern half of the Sound, were logged throughout the season. An inland report of two Long-tailed Ducks came from West Hill Lake in New Hartford on Dec. 2 (RBe). A female Black Scoter was on the Connecticut River at

Riverside Park in Hartford to at least Dec. 2 (PCi). A huge mixed raft of bay and seaducks formed at Cove Place near Stratford Point in December. On Jan. 6 the flock consisted of 10,000 Greater Scaup, 4000 White-winged Scoters, 200 Surf Scoters and two female **King Eiders** (FMa). High counts of two other species in the flock, 49 Lesser Scaup and six Black Scoters, were obtained on Dec. 16 (FG).

A Red-throated Loon was unexpected Jan. 1-3 on the Quinnebaug River in Putnam (PR et al.). Single Red-necked Grebes were at Greenwich Point on Dec. 22 (MSa) and

Jan. 3 (SMu); at Seaside Park, Bridgeport, on Dec. 26 (NB, TG); and at HBSP from Jan. 22 on (CL), with two off Long Beach, Stratford, on Jan. 4 (MSz). Two **American White Pelicans** were reported from Smith Cove, Waterford, on Dec. 25 (RL fide GW), beginning an interesting seasonal saga. Frank Mantlik received a report of five fly-by White Pelicans seen on Dec. 28 in Westport. The observer vacillated a bit, but the next night Frank got an email from Brian Tabor, who had read Frank's CTBirds post about the Westport sighting. Tabor said he had seen a flock of five that day (Dec. 29) flying



*Here is part of the flock of Rusty Blackbirds that enjoyed a long stay at Jim and Carol Zipp's feeders in Hamden. Their peak count was 101.*

*Jim Zipp photo*



*Jim Zipp photo*  
*It was a good winter for Rusty Blackbirds. See photo on facing page, as well as the Christmas Bird Count summary.*

over Charlestown, R.I. Then one was seen off Chaffinch Island, Guilford, on Jan. 2-3 (DCh, JMh), followed by another (or perhaps the same one) at Six Penny Island, Noank, on Jan. 5 (SP fide MJ). At least one of these failed to make it through the season, being found dead and somewhat decomposed at Chaffinch I. on March 4. A Double-crested Cormorant was unexpected inland on the Farmington R., Farmington, on Jan. 25 (SJ). Another was at Riverside Park, Hartford, on Feb. 7 (PCi). Great Cormorant numbers were low in Long Island Sound,

but up the Connecticut River 19 were off Lyme on Feb. 6 (HG).

Reports were received from four coastal locations of American Bitterns, regular but secretive winterers in salt marshes. Great Egrets continue to linger later and in higher numbers, as illustrated by three on the Poquonnock River in Groton on Jan. 1 (PR, KJe) and one in Old Greenwich on Jan. 6 (SMU). Late Snowy Egrets were seen Dec. 12 in Stratford (FMA) and Dec. 22 in Old Saybrook (NB). An immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron was a good late find Dec. 26 in

Stratford (BDe).

A roost of 86 Black Vultures on Dec. 7 in New Milford was a high count even by western Connecticut standards (AD). The Shepaug dam viewing area on the Housatonic River in Southbury recorded 20 Bald Eagle (13 immatures and seven adults) on Dec. 29 (JSt). A buteo believed to be a **hybrid Red-tailed X Red-shouldered Hawk** was found on Dec. 19 in Oxford (FG). A detailed article and photo appeared in *The Connecticut Warbler*, Vol. 31 No. 2. Rough-legged Hawks were widespread with reports involving 15 to 20 individu-

als from both the coast and inland locations. A Clapper Rail was in Old Saybrook on Jan. 2 (JOg), and a Virginia Rail showed itself on Jan. 5 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (TG et al.). The exact wintering status of both species is masked by their furtive natures.

A Semipalmated Plover lingered to Dec. 15 at Milford Point (FG). A pair of American Oystercatchers arrived on Feb. 20 at a rock island off East Haven where they nested last year (BDr). Mid-winter American Woodcock reports came from Killingworth on Jan. 1 (KM), in a parking lot at Yale



*This Wood Thrush was an unusual December find in Canton. Normally Hermit Thrush is the only spotted thrush present that late in the year.*

*Phil Worley photo*

University's West Campus in Orange on Jan. 13 (JMu), and sunning along a roadside in Stonington on Jan. 16 (PR). A late Laughing Gull was at Seaside Park in Bridgeport on Dec. 22 (KM). The season's only Black-headed Gull was in Guilford from Feb. 15 through the end of the season (KM et al.). The season produced more than 20 reports of Iceland Gulls and about 10 reports of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Single first-cycle Glaucous Gulls were at Windsor-Bloomfield landfill Jan. 8 (PCi) and Feb. 24 (JOs) and at Riverside Park in Hartford on Feb. 7 (PCi). It's possible that fewer than three individuals were involved in these reports. Alcids, a group that's usually marginal at best in Connecticut, played a starring role this winter. The bird of the season was a state-first **Common Murre** found off HBSP on Jan. 30 by a Newington Adult Education birding class (TG, GH et al.). It swam a slow circuit around the park, affording quite a few birders time to get there and see it in crisp breeding plumage. Razorbill, the only alcid making regular appearances in Long Island Sound, was widespread and

regularly reported this winter with more than 30 observations logged on CTBirds. An observer familiar with the species reported two **Black Guillemots** on Dec. 16 off Stonington Point (KM).

The season's only Snowy Owl was seen flying west over Sherwood Island State Park in Westport on Jan. 13 (AH fide FMA). Six reports of Short-eared Owls included one inland at Woodstock on Jan. 12 (KG) and two in the East River marshes of Guilford Feb. 9-11 (JMh et al.). A CBC foray Dec. 19 in Stonington produced a Long-eared Owl and five N. Saw-whet Owls (PR).

Four female **Rufous Hummingbirds** were all at feeders as expected, with one in Sterling making a 106-day stay starting in the fall season and ending on Jan. 23, when the bird was taken into rehab because it struggled to feed on even protein-enriched food as temperatures hit single digits (RDi). It eventually succumbed. An adult that arrived Nov. 24 in a Guilford yard was present to Dec. 8 (JMh). One, which had been visiting a Hampton feeder

since Oct. 14, was believed to have left on the morning of Dec. 11 (fide JA). One that arrived at a Niantic feeder in October stayed until at least Jan. 1 (fide FMA). The state's third **Calliope Hummingbird** visited a feeder in Guilford, where it was first identified to species on Dec. 10 (HK, FG et al.). It was last seen on Jan. 1. Red-headed Woodpeckers were in an Old Saybrook yard on Feb. 17 (DW) and wintering in a beaver swamp in Lyme (HG). An intergrade Northern Flicker, showing characters of both the Yellow-shafted and Red-shafted races, visited a feeder in Tolland in late January (JKo fide TS).

The latest Eastern Phoebe report came from the Cos Cob section of Greenwich on Jan. 14 (SMr). A **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** discovered Nov. 17 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford remained until Dec. 4 (TG et al.). It was a third state record. A Northern Shrike was taken into rehab briefly after a window strike in Falls Village and released in the same area Dec. 6 (fide AD). Other singles were at Station 43, South Windsor on Jan. 1

(MR), in Litchfield on Feb. 17 (RBe), in Hartland on Feb. 20 (NH) and in Canaan on Feb. 27 (RBe). A flock of 50 Fish Crows passed over Paradise Green in Stratford on Feb. 14 (FMA).

Two Northern Rough-winged Swallows lingered until Dec. 4 at the Glastonbury wastewater treatment plant (BA). Single **Cave Swallows** were at Stratford Point (TL) and Greenwich Point (MSa), both on Dec. 1; two were at East Shore Park, New Haven, on Dec. 2-7 (CL et al.); and one was at Greenwich Point on Dec. 3 (MA). A late House Wren was in Chaplin on Dec. 18 (PR), and a Marsh Wren remained until at least Jan. 6 in Stratford (CB). A **Mountain Bluebird**, another third state record, was found on Dec. 7 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (RT). It was last seen on Jan. 6, spending most of its time in inaccessible areas. A very late Wood Thrush was photographed at a feeder in Canton on Dec. 15 (PW), providing excellent documentation of a significant record. Any thrush other than a Hermit Thrush at this season should be



*Julian Hough photo*  
 A special arrangement was made to allow birders to see the Mountain Bluebird on restricted property at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. A good crowd turned out for the third state record. A photo of the bird appeared in the 16th Report of Avian Records Committee of Connecticut.

photographed if possible. An unusually large winter flock of c. 60 American Pipits was on the salt marsh at HBSP in early January (TD et al.)

The season's only Orange-crowned Warbler was at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield on Jan. 19 (RDi). An observer delivering mail in the Compo Beach area of Westport on Dec. 7 found and photographed a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** that could not be relocated. (FMa). Among a dearth of

Pine Warbler records this season, one was in Groton on Jan. 1 (PR). The only Yellow-breasted Chat report came from a school property in Branford Dec. 18-20 (BZ et al.).

A major snowstorm Jan. 12 brought seven Eastern Towhees to feeders in a Killingworth yard (KM). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Latimer Point in Stonington was present from at least Dec. 19 until early January (BDw et al.). A Vesper Sparrow was

feeding in a plow-scraped road in Woodbury during the Jan. 12 snowstorm (GH). Exploration of Great Island in Old Lyme by kayak on Jan. 2 produced three Seaside Sparrows and one Nelson's Sparrow (DP). One Nelson's Sparrow was found Jan. 4 at McKinney NWR in Stratford (CB). The Christmas Bird Counts produced two reports of late Lincoln's Sparrows, and one was at Mumford Cove, Groton, on Jan. 6 (TG). A clear-lored White-crowned Sparrow of one of the western subspecies, likely *gambelii*, was at Sandy Point in West Haven on Dec. 30 (JHo).

An East Hartford yard held a flock of at least 20 Northern Cardinals on Dec. 23 (DCa). An adult male **Painted Bunting** was seen briefly but well on Dec. 25 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford (DB). Single **Dickcissels** visited a Woodbury feeder in early December (RN) and a Fairfield feeder on Feb. 26 (fide DV). Four Eastern Meadowlarks in Stonington on Dec. 19 represented an excellent total by recent standards (PR). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird**

was found at Riverfront Park in Glastonbury on Jan. 15 (BA, RMa), and one was in a mixed flock of icterids in a Clinton yard on Feb. 5 (JPf). A flock of Rusty Blackbirds that peaked at 101 visited a feeder in Hamden in late January-early February (CZ, JZ). Also outstanding were flocks of 65 in Moodus on Dec. 19 during the Salmon River CBC (SBr et al.) and 40+ eating cracked corn in a Woodbridge yard on Feb. 1 (NC). A flock of 15 fed in a cornfield in Morris the first week in January (RBe), and a flock of 15 flew by a Winchester yard on Jan. 16 (DR). A Baltimore Oriole appeared at a Norwalk feeder on Jan. 13, with a second one arriving on Jan. 20. Both remained through the season (LF).

A flock of 11 White-winged Crossbills was observed on Dec. 19 in Rockland (CL). Other reports involved one on Dec. 29 at a feeder in Columbia (SSp), two on Jan. 17 at a feeder in Woodbridge (JMo), one on Jan. 20 at a feeder in Coventry (DM), two on Jan. 21 at a feeder in Harwinton (PCa), two on Jan. 26 at a feeder in North Haven (fide SHa) and

one at a Greenwich feeder on Feb. 27 (fide PCo). Noteworthy was an adult male that visited a Weston feeder from Dec. 27 to at least Jan. 26 (MWa). Common Redpolls were widely reported during the season, with a significant push during the last two weeks of February. Of special interest was a flock of 45 on Cockenoe I. off Westport on Feb. 18. The observer said, "I never thought I'd see redpolls feeding around Slipper Shells one mile offshore." (LF). The biggest feeder flock was 60 in a Winchester yard on Jan. 26 (DR). Pine Siskins were less numerous, but a feeder in Sterling hosted up to c. 100 through most of the season (RDi). A flock of nine Evening Grosbeaks was northbound over Kent on Dec. 1 (JD), and three were in Guilford on Jan. 1 (LG).

Observers - Jayne Amico, Bill Asteriades, Michael Aurelia, Renee Baade (RBa), Steve Ballantine (SBa), Bill Banks, Aaron Barriger (ABa), Mark Barriger, Charlie Barnard, Scott Barron (SBn), Douglas Beach, Ray Belding (RBe), Nick Bonomo, Steve Broker (SBr), Alex Burdo (ABu), Dana Campbell (DCa), Jim Carr (JCa), Paul Carrier

(PCa), Diane Chodkowski (DCh), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Jan Collins (JCl), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Barbara DeRienzo (BDr), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Mardi Dickinson, Angela Dimmitt, Robert Dixon (RDi), Randy Domina (RDo), Turk Duddy, Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDU), Carl Ekroth, Ken Elkins, Tammy Eustis, Patrice Favreau, Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Larry Flynn, Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, Frank Gallo, Ted Gilman, Ken Goldsmith, Hank Golet, Steve Gordon, Tina Green, Lorraine Gunderson, Tony Hager (THa), Nikki Hall, A.J. Hand, Greg Hanisek, Stacy Hanks (SHa), Shelley Harms (SHr), Ernie Harris, Roy Harvey, Jan Hollerbach (JHl), Fran Holloway, Tom Holloway (THo), Julian Hough (JHo), Kevin Jensen (KJe), Denise Jernigan, Kris Johnson (KJo), SH Johnston, Maggie Jones, Jay Kaplan (JKa), Julie Keefer (JKe), Brian Kleinman, Cindy Kobak, Jeanne Kosciw (JKo), Hank Kranichfeld, Scott Kruitbosch, Roland Langlois, Twan Leenders, Chris Loscalzo, Joey Lounsbury,

Don Lukaszek, Rick Macsuga (RMa), Frank Mantlik (FMa), John Marshall (JMa), Shaun Martin (SMr), Steve Mayo (SMa), Flo McBride (FMc), Janet Mehmel (JMh), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Vanessa Mickan, Rob Mirer (RMi), Judy Moore (JMo), Don Morgan, Steve Morytko (SMo), Keith Mueller, Sean Murtha (SMu), Jacob Musser (JMu), Russ Naylor, Gina Nichol, John Ogren (JOg), John Oshlick (JOs), Brian O'Toole, John Pfitzner (JPf), Steve Plant, Dave Provencher, James Purcell (JPu), Judy Richardson, Dave Rosgen, Phil Rusch,

Matthew Rymkiewicz, Meredith Sampson (MSa), Tom Sayers, Lee Schlesinger, Anita Shaffer, Nancy Specht, Charla Spector, Steve Spector (SSe), Susan Spiggle (SSp), Judith Stevens (JSt), Jack Swatt (JSw), Bill Sweet, Mark Szantyr (MSz), Rollin Tebbetts, Andy Thiede, Dave Tripp, Scott Tsagarakis, Dennis Varza, Scott Vincent, Dorothy Wadlow, Mark Warner (MWa), Marjorie White (MWh), Glenn Williams, Phil Worley, Bill Yule, Sara Zagorski, Roy Zartarian, Carol Zipp, Jim Zipp, Betty Zuraw.

## NOTES ON BEHAVIOR, STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

### A Boat-tailed Grackle Eats a Fish

While birding the Railroad Trail at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on 22 May, 2011, Vanessa Mickan and I noticed a female Boat-tailed Grackle disappearing under the tall grass lining the water channels. It was high tide, and she appeared to be hunting for food along the ditches. After one sortie under the grasses, she emerged with a small fish in her beak, which she then gulped down, head first, and dove back under the grass in search of another.

Neither of us had ever witnessed a grackle of any kind eating fish before, and it was a bit of a surprise to see. It makes a nice addition to my list of unexpected things I've seen birds eat, e.g. a Great Horned Owl standing on the ground under a light catching moths in Peru, a Peregrine Falcon hawking moths out of the air at night in Stamford, or a female Baltimore Oriole subduing a fiddler crab for dinner at the Coastal Center in Milford. Orioles and grackles are closely related... hmm. Protein is protein, I guess.

**Frank Gallo & Vanessa Mickan**



*Bruce Finnan photo  
The state's, and New England's, only breeding  
colony of Boat-tailed Grackles resides in coastal  
scrub not far from Gallo and Mickan's observation.*

# PHOTO CHALLENGE

by Julian Hough



Overhead, a medium-sized bird suddenly appears, silhouetted against the sky. You're expecting a hawk, but the rounded wings, short tail and large, blunt head indicate it's an owl. Surprised to see a day-flying owl, you watch the bird as it slowly floats by, trying to take in details that might aid in its identification.

Most owls are nocturnal, but a few species can be seen hunting at dawn and dusk (crepuscular) or may be seen during migration, or even during the middle of the day in winter. The most likely species to be seen under these circumstances in Connecticut is the Short-eared Owl, a species that migrates through the state in small numbers in fall, with a few occasionally lingering throughout the winter. Long-eared Owl breeds in Connecticut and the numbers increase in the winter

and during fall migration. While not as diurnal as Short-eared Owl, Long-eared can be seen hunting during periods of daylight, though more restricted to early mornings and late evenings. They will fly over open ground if flushed or disturbed from their roost sites. In the UK, I have seen birds in flight on migration, arriving in off the sea at coastal migration sites. So, while on probability alone, it's most likely a Short-eared, how do we exclude Long-eared Owl on this kind of view?

Short-eared is paler and buffier than the darker Long-eared and has striking yellow eyes, not reddish as in Long-eared. The eye color is often not visible in such a view as we have here, so we have to look at other features. There are a few field marks to key into:

- Under wing markings on the primary tips
- Barring on the tail
- Extent of streaking on the under parts

On this bird, the under part streaking is concentrated on the head and upper breast, fading out past the wings. A quick look at the wingtips and tail reveal three bold dark bars. Long-eared is more streaked below with the streaking extending farther past the wings on to the central belly and not often concentrated on the upper half of the bird. Its wingtips and tail are also barred, but are typically finer and average 4-5 bars rather than 2-3 boldly dark ones as in Short-eared. So based on this, our bird is, as expected, a Short-eared Owl.

The rather pallid under wing with an obvious dark carpal crescents is often apparent on day-flying Short-eareds and their wingtips may look more solidly dark on many birds when seen from a distance. From above, Short-eareds often show a narrow white-trailing edge to the wing. Another feature that I had not registered before, but which is noted in the excellent Collins Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe (Svensson, Grant, Mullarney and Zetterstrom), are the darker tertials of Short-eared Owl when seen from below. Not always obvious, and more likely to be seen when viewed on a

static image, they are visible in our bird as a shadowy line at the junction of the wing and body.

This Short-eared Owl was photographed by me at Salisbury, Mass., in November.



Photo Challenge No. 74

# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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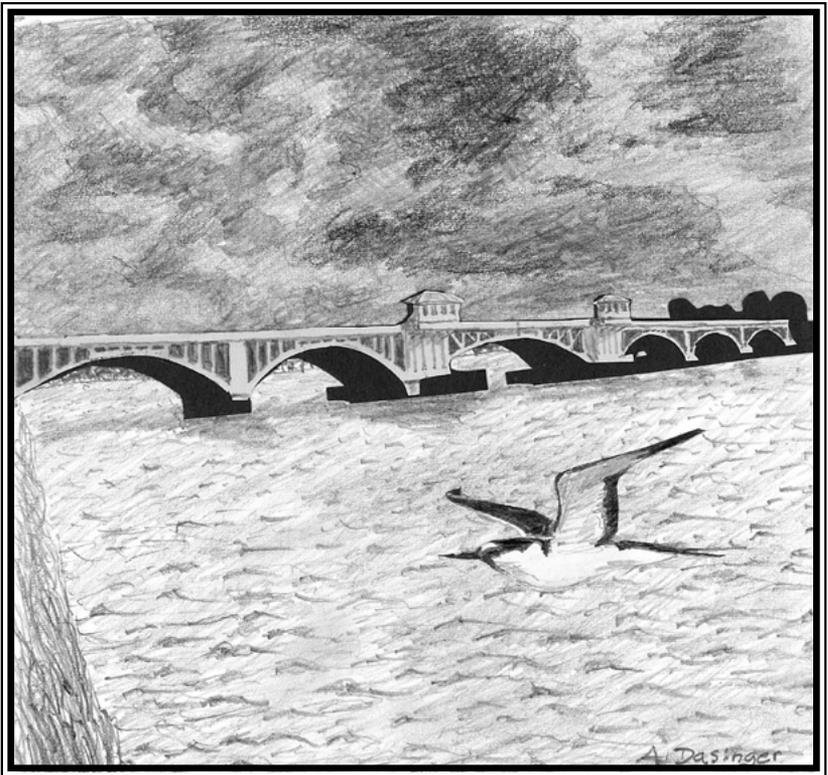
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# THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*



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# The Connecticut Warbler

*A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology*

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## ON THE COVER

Andrew Dasinger memorialized Connecticut's significant avian bounty produced by Tropical Storm Irene with his evocative drawing of a Sooty Tern, the most widespread "hurricane bird" reported during, and in a few instance after, the Aug. 28, 2011, event. The tern is seen flying over the Housatonic River with the Route 1 Washington Bridge between Stratford and Milford in the background. Multiple Sooty Terns were observed at this location.

# IRENE HITS CONNECTICUT

## Searching for Hurricane Birds in the Digital Age

By Nick Bonomo and Scott Kruitbosch

*All specific storm and weather information cited and discussed in this article is courtesy of the National Hurricane Center, a division of the National Weather Service, which is an agency of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration contained within the United States Department of Commerce.*

The first National Hurricane Center advisory for Tropical Storm Irene came on Saturday, Aug. 20, 2011 at 7 p.m. EDT, five days after the tropical wave it originated from came off the African coastline. At that time, the maximum sustained winds were 50 MPH as she moved to the west at 22 MPH. During the first few advisories, it looked as if Irene would be “just” another tropical storm in the already active 2011 season, passing over the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba



*Linda Bowen photo  
The state's first White-tailed Tropicbird was picked up on a road in Colebrook on Aug. 29, 2011. Rehabilitator Linda Bowen facilitated its delivery to a seabird sanctuary in Florida.*

before entering the realm of the Sunshine State. Florida was decidedly the initial target, though we must bear in mind that tropical cyclone forecasting, as with any type of weather, is a difficult science. Let us be clear here – forecasting has progressed unbelievably in the past 20 years alone, with lead time for life-threatening storms increasing on a regular basis, and accuracy of future paths narrowing the window of possibilities often by hundreds of miles. With that in mind, the incredibly complex processes of the Earth mean that the science of forecasting is far from perfect, and it will likely be decades before we are able to project the course and strength of a tropical cyclone two weeks in advance.

This time, however, Florida would be spared a direct hit by a tropical storm or hurricane. It did not take long for a northward component to alter Irene's course, as by 8 p.m. on Aug. 21 she was already about to ram into Puerto Rico with heavy rains and winds up to 60 MPH. Her five-day course was now projected to be somewhere on the east side of Florida or even still over the Atlantic waters threatening Georgia and the Carolinas. Puerto Rico did not weaken Irene much, and instead of remaining a tropical storm, she surprised us with rapid organization and strengthening, tightening her convection and becoming the first hurricane of the 2011 season on the 5 a.m. advisory on Aug. 22 while over Puerto Rico. Clearly, this was now a system to be monitored closely by everyone on the southeastern Atlantic coastline and kept watch on by those of us to the north.

Once Irene gained hurricane status the possibility for her becoming even more powerful increased, as did the chance she would have some sort of appreciable impact on the continental United States. In fact, a frightening 11 a.m. advisory on Aug. 22 gave her a shot to become the first major hurricane of the season (having sustained winds greater than 110 MPH), with a direct course into the coastline of the southeastern U.S. All eyes were now fixed on Irene, and hopes were that she would be able to swing wide just enough to avoid a catastrophic landfall. In Connecticut, our eyes shifted to the possibility of a tropical cyclone making its way up the coast,

whether it was the remnants of a once-mighty hurricane or even still a tropical cyclone, threading the needle and entering New England's history books. Suffice it to say hurricanes that make landfall in New England have to get here in a hurry lest they lose their power or path on the journey northward through unfavorable conditions and cooler waters. They also typically have to avoid making landfall elsewhere as this takes a great deal of the punch from the storm. It is a rare event, but as long-time Connecticut residents knew and spoke of more and more frequently, we were due. Hurricane Bob was the last hurricane to make landfall in New England, just over 20 years to the day that Irene would be making her way up the Atlantic coast.

Irene first hit 100 MPH sustained winds at the 2 a.m. advisory on Wednesday, Aug. 24. This advisory will be remembered for quite some time for more than the increase in wind speed as it very nearly projected the exact path of Irene for the next five days, though we did not know it would be so perfect at the time. It had Irene, at 8 p.m. on Aug. 28, centered on the New York City area, having barely missed the mid-Atlantic coastline after making landfall in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Shortly after this time model agreement on the forecast track was unbelievable as most of the major forecasting systems had it projected to take a course somewhere in this vicinity. That advisory was in error on timing and strength to some degree, as the cyclone advanced more rapidly and was weaker at all points in the projected path after it attained major hurricane status with maximum sustained winds of 120 MPH. Nevertheless, it was a great success in weather forecasting, and allowed residents the proper time to prepare for the storm, taking precautions and, in some cases, readying themselves for one of the best birding experiences of their lives.

The storm's sheer size, strength, and track through bird-rich regions meant that Irene had great potential to deliver a variety of seabirds, shorebirds, and terns we would otherwise have little or no chance of viewing in Connecticut. As of Thursday, Aug. 25, Irene still looked poised for a weekend



*Fran Zygmunt photo*  
*Quick action with the camera captured this image of a Leach's Storm-Petrel's brief passage over Bantam Lake during the storm.*

landfall in our region, and earnest preparations began. Irene was looking like a late Sunday event, with the storm's center making landfall along or near the Connecticut coast sometime on Sunday afternoon. Birders were anticipating intense weekend birding, and some were already making plans to call out of work for the aftermath on Monday.

This would be the first such local event of the Internet, cell phone and digital camera eras. Hurricanes Bob (1991) and Gloria (1985) roared through before we were all connected via cell phone and well before the days of posting messages to listservs directly from the field via smartphone. Rarities could not be documented by digital cameras with ease like they are today. And back then, only 20 to 30 years ago, birders were not fully aware of the most productive storm-birding strategies. But this time we would be armed with invaluable data from recent cyclones that made landfall elsewhere along the eastern seaboard, such as Fran in 1996, Isabel in 2003, and Earl in 2010. In this way, Irene would be an unprecedented event for Connecticut birders. But would the birds deliver?

As she made her turn northward while approaching the United States, the first reports from the southeast began to trickle in. On the afternoon of Aug. 26, with the storm still greater than 150 miles SE of South Carolina, birders there reported such goodies as Sooty Tern, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Brown Noddy. On the morning of Aug. 27 Irene made landfall along the Outer Banks of North Carolina as a Category 1 hurricane. Birders in North Carolina and Virginia were rewarded on that day with many Sooty and Bridled Terns, including several inland Sooties, a theme that would be repeated further north. Indeed, Irene came bearing gifts.

Back in Connecticut, the 27<sup>th</sup> represented the calm before the storm. We awoke to overcast skies, and the first light showers began to fall while a light easterly breeze gradually built. Being a Saturday, many birders were out checking the coast, but nothing storm-related was reported, which was not surprising given the hurricane's distance from the state at that time. As darkness fell Irene was still about 300 miles to our south but was gaining speed. At this point meteorologists reported with confidence that we would feel the brunt of the storm earlier on Sunday than previously thought, with late-day clearing and breaks of sun not out of the question. The only uncertainty was whether we would see a direct landfall of the center or a near miss to the west. Last-minute birding strategies were determined as the 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. advisories were released. For the authors and many birders statewide, very little sleep was had.

Conditions quickly deteriorated overnight Saturday as Irene raced closer. Irene's path would likely keep her to our west, sparing most of Connecticut of rainfall totals beyond six inches, but hammering the state with powerful winds. The pre-dawn hours featured the worst of that wind, probably containing a fair number of birds that will forever be unknown. Wind speeds were at least 45 MPH for nearly all of Connecticut, pushing well past 50 and even 60 MPH in many areas. This was especially focused on the western shoreline of the state.



*Fran Zygmunt photo  
This is one of a group of four Sooty Terns that dropped down briefly at  
Bantam Lake in Litchfield during the storm.*

Connecticut residents awoke on Sunday, Aug. 28 to downed trees and power lines with Irene's center of circulation still to our SSW. During the height of the wind and rain early that morning most birders were stuck at home tending to their properties and, most importantly, ensuring their own safety. A determined contingent was out at daybreak, not only here but in every state from the Carolinas to northern New England.

At 7:41 a.m. Connecticut's first storm-blown waif was spotted, an adult Sooty Tern along the coast in Milford as southeast winds battered the shoreline. During the morning hours Connecticut was squarely in the "right-front" quadrant of the storm, which is the quadrant that has historically delivered the most birds during these events. This is because of cyclonic winds spinning counter-clockwise as a tropical cyclone moves north, gathering up birds and pulling them along for a difficult ride. This area of tropical cyclones holds the highest wind speeds because of the combined forward motion of the cyclone itself and this cyclonic action. Think of this counter-clockwise motion in the eastern half of Irene pushing birds towards our southern facing shores as opposed to winds on the western half, which would have been pushing them back

to sea. Having her center pass over us or to our west would be ideal for storm birding. Birders who were aware of this fact therefore recognized the importance of getting out during the worst of the storm to ensure the greatest chance at finding wayward seabirds. Those who braved the elements were not disappointed.

Around 9 a.m. on Aug. 28, the center of Tropical Storm Irene was over New York City, right where she had been projected to be in that outstandingly accurate advisory from the early morning hours of Aug. 24, only weaker and about a half-day faster. No one would complain about the outcome as we were spared a major disaster and a powerful hurricane, yet still received a bounty of birds because of the location of landfall, with that right-front quadrant passing directly over most of Connecticut as Irene slowly dissipated.

Over the next few hours the reports poured in. People used their cell phones to call friends from the field to keep them abreast of the events, and those with smartphones posted updates directly to CTBirds in real time. Communication was outstanding.

This first wave of positive reports came strictly from the coast. Sooty Tern was the dominant rarity, but many other gems were found including two Band-rumped Storm-Petrels (potential first Connecticut record, pending ARCC review), Wilson's Storm-Petrels, a Long-tailed Jaeger, Parasitic Jaegers, and many Red-necked Phalaropes including a flock of 52 in Stratford. Inland birders were also watching, but reports were strictly negative until noon.

As Irene worked her way north-northeast, so did the entrained seabirds. Just before noon Fran Zygmunt found and photographed a Leach's Storm-Petrel at Bantam Lake in Litchfield. This was the first reported inland pelagic species but would not be the last. Birders trying to relocate the storm-petrel at Bantam Lake were soon rewarded with a flock of four Sooty Terns, the first of many inland sightings of that species throughout the state.

For the rest of the day the rarity reports came from every corner of Connecticut. Sooty Terns were widespread with the high count of 22 coming from Cornfield Point in Old Saybrook. Other storm-related terns that day included multiple coastal Royals, many Black Terns (including several inland) plus an impressive tally of four inland Least Terns. A few Caspian Terns, inland Common Terns, and more-than-usual Forster's Terns were also seen, though it is debatable whether some of the latter species were truly storm-blown or simply local migrants downed by the rough weather.

The larger tubenoses were somewhat scarce, likely due to the combination of a weakening storm plus Connecticut's lack of a true open-ocean coastline. However, singles of both Great and Manx Shearwaters were seen from Old Saybrook. No *Pterodroma* petrels were seen here, but the storm-petrels put on an unprecedented show. All of the inland stormies appeared to be Leach's, while the coast saw a smattering of Wilson's plus a few Leach's of their own and the two aforementioned Band-rumped. A couple more jaeger reports came in, with at least one identified as Parasitic. In general, however, jaeger numbers were relatively low for a storm of this magnitude. A single Red Phalarope was reported from Old Saybrook as well.

During the afternoon the weather began to clear from south to north, as blue sky was even seen through breaks in the clouds. Winds shifted to the south and southwest. As is often the case with these storms, the seabirds cleared out *in a hurry* at the first sign of improving conditions, especially those individuals that were carried inland. "Chasing" was generally not a successful strategy as most sightings were brief. Some birders who were stuck in their homes until late afternoon missed out on the action entirely. As the day drew to a close the reports dwindled and local birders began to reflect on what had become the single best day of storm birding in Connecticut's history.

While everyone had correctly predicted fast and furious birding during the storm on Sunday, we didn't really know

what to expect for Monday, Aug. 29. We awoke to clear blue skies and a light west wind, making it hard to believe that we had been hit with a strong tropical storm less than 24 hours earlier. While most of the seabirds had clearly reoriented back to the ocean, a few stragglers were seen. Two Parasitic Jaegers were seen moving down the Housatonic River from Stratford. Milford Point proved to be quite productive with a flyby Sooty Tern, at least one Royal Tern, and shorebird rarities such as a Black-necked Stilt and three Hudsonian Godwits. Griswold Point in Old Lyme hosted a Brown Pelican and two Royal Terns. In fact, Royal and Caspian Terns were seen at several coastal locations on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

The effects of Tropical Storm Irene would be felt by Connecticut birders for many days, even weeks to come. While the true pelagic birds had cleared out except for a late Sooty Tern seen along the coast on Sept. 2, a few displaced coastal species remained. The highlights included a Gull-billed Tern at Milford Point on Sept. 1, the continuing Black-necked Stilt at the same location until the 5<sup>th</sup>, Royals Terns lingering



*Hank Golet photo  
This immature Brown Pelican at Griswold Point on Aug. 29, 2011, was the first of numerous sightings in the days and weeks after the passage of Irene.*

into early September, Black Skimmers hanging around to mid-September, and many reports of single Brown Pelicans wandering up and down the coast with scattered sightings continuing well into November. The exact number of pelicans is unknown, but since both adult and immature age classes were reported we can be sure that at least two birds were involved.

Undoubtedly the rarest seabird of the storm was one never glimpsed by a single birder. News broke on Sept. 13 that a White-tailed Tropicbird had been picked up in Colebrook on Aug. 29, the day after the passage of Irene. The non-birder who found this first state record kept it alive for several days on raw fish and seafood until he was able to contact wildlife rehabilitator Linda Bowen of Falls Village. By the time local birders got wind of the sighting, the tropicbird had already been shipped by plane to Florida for rehabilitation, where the bird is currently recuperating.

Neighboring states also fared very well, with the most impressive sightings generally coming along the path of the storm's center of circulation. Irene will likely be known as "the tropicbird storm" for some time, as an unprecedented number of White-tailed Tropicbirds were tallied both inland and coastally throughout the region. Locations that lie on the open Atlantic Ocean, such as Long Island, N.Y., recorded a greater variety of tubenoses and other pelagic species including Bridled Tern and South Polar Skua, which is to be expected given their geographic "advantage." Every species seen in Connecticut during and after the storm was reported elsewhere in the northeast as well, a testament to the volume of birds displaced by Hurricane Irene.

Amazingly, New England is still due for that elusive hurricane – after all of this we still have not had one make landfall since Hurricane Bob in 1991, and we did not technically have a tropical storm make landfall, either. These are only words and scientific classifications, as Connecticut residents essentially felt the effects of a strong tropical cyclone that will not be forgotten for a long time, and the Connecticut birding

community will never forget Irene and the historical birds she literally dropped on our state.



*Peter Thiel photo  
This Leach's Storm-Petrel was picked up in a yard in Prospect during the storm. It quickly expired, and the specimen has been delivered to Yale Peabody Museum.*

# THE 2011 SUMMER BIRD COUNT

By Patrick Comins and Joe Zeranski

## Introduction and 20-Year Retrospective

This year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> year\* we have been conducting statewide Summer Bird Counts! Though some counts (Greenwich/Stamford, Woodbury-Roxbury, New Haven and Hartford) started before 1992, this is the year we reached a critical mass to call this a statewide effort. This 20 year retrospective edition of the Summer Bird Count is dedicated to all of the observers, area captains, compilers and understanding spouses, families and loved ones that have made 20 continuous years of summer bird monitoring possible.

Over those 20 years, 4,654 observers contributed 23,144 party hours to record 1,819,214 individual birds of 256 species! An amazing 144 species have been recorded on all 20 counts since 1992. All of those species could be considered regular nesters with the exception of **Ring-billed Gull**, which has one nesting record. This is one less species than was reported last year as having been found on all 19 counts because **Laughing Gull** was missed for the first time in 2011. Of those 144 species, nine are not native nesters in the state, **Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Rock Pigeon, Monk Parakeet, European Starling, House Finch** and **House Sparrow**. Additionally, **Wild Turkey** was extirpated and reintroduced to Connecticut with populations originating from other areas of the country.

There have been some tremendous population changes detected over this timeframe. For example, when comparing the six year average for the period of 1992-1997 with that of 2006-2011 (in raw numbers not corrected for party hours), **Ring-necked Pheasants** dropped from an average of 50.8 per year to 6.3 per year, -87% and **Eastern Meadowlarks** from 63 to 18.5, -71%, whereas **Black Vultures** increased from 2.5 per year to 25.5, +920% and **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** from 92 to over 500 per year on average +444%.

**Table 1**, species with greatest percentage change between 1992-'97 and 2006-'11 averages

Decreasing Species	% Change	Increasing Species	% Change
Ring-necked Pheasant	-87.54%	Black Vulture	920.00%
White-eyed Vireo	-82.83%	Willet	807.41%
Ruffed Grouse	-75.00%	Osprey	763.10%
Eastern Meadowlark	-70.63%	Common Raven	675.00%
Prairie Warbler	-60.61%	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	444.38%
Brown Thrasher	-60.47%	Bald Eagle	326.47%
Snowy Egret	-59.72%	Great Blue Heron	299.54%
House Finch	-58.11%	American Oystercatcher	285.90%
Blue-winged Warbler	-53.44%	Common Tern	249.92%
Northern Mockingbird	-48.96%	Peregrine Falcon	241.67%

Our graphs section will look at some of these changes and a detailed analysis of abundance changes will be available on the COA web page. <http://www.ctbirding.org>

Twenty-five species have been recorded in only a single year, including one that was found for the first time on this year's count, **Anhinga**. This list is pretty convenient for listing the 25 rarest birds found on the Summer Bird Count since its inception.



*Mark Szantyr photo  
The SBCs' star attraction - an Anhinga on Lake  
Whitney in Hamden.*

**Table 2: Species recorded on only one SBC count since 1992 (in taxonomic order)**

Canvasback, 1994	Chuck-will's-widow, 1997
King Eider, 2010*	Sedge Wren, 1993
Common Eider, 1996	Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2005
Manx Shearwater, 2005*	Gray-cheeked Thrush, 2010
Wilson's Storm-petrel, 2005	Bicknell's Thrush, 2005
Northern Gannet, 2005*	Cape May Warbler, 1997
Anhinga, 2011	Prothonotary Warbler, 2003
Mississippi Kite, 1995	Summer Tanager, 2010
American Golden-Plover, 2003	Blue Grosbeak, 2003
Lesser Yellowlegs, 1994	Dickcissel, 2001
Pectoral Sandpiper, 2010	Bullock's Oriole, 1994
Royal Tern, 2001	Red Crossbill, 2010
Long-eared Owl, 1996	

\* Count period only.

Taking into account overall pattern of occurrence in Connecticut, e.g. a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** in June is a much bigger deal than one in May or September, special honors have to go to this year's **Anhinga** and 2005's **Manx Shearwater** as the two top prizes of the 20 years of counts. The **Anhinga** will be discussed under this year's results. The **Manx Shearwater** was particularly interesting because they could potentially nest in Long Island Sound. They nest on offshore islands as close as Massachusetts and are extremely inconspicuous in the nesting season.

Also worth mention is 1996's **Long-eared Owl** (E), which could make a claim as Connecticut's most elusive nesting bird, although some other species should be viewed in a nesting context, **Mississippi Kite** now nests in CT and **Common Eider**, **Sedge Wren** (E), **Prothonotary Warbler**, **Blue Grosbeak**, **Dickcissel** and **Red Crossbill** should be watched for signs of nesting if encountered in June. Other elusive nesting birds that have been recorded over the history of the

count include: **Horned Lark** (E) (1993, 2009), **Roseate Tern** (E) (1992, 2002), **Tricolored Heron** (3 counts), **Cattle Egret** (3 counts) and **Barn Owl** (E) (first 4 counts, but not recorded since 1995), **Upland Sandpiper** (E) (4 counts, but now expected to be regular until Rentschler Field is developed), **Common Moorhen** (E)(potential nester, 5 counts), **Boat-tailed Grackle** (regular nester outside circles, 5 counts), and **King Rail** (E) (6 counts, though they can be a late migrant).

## 2011 Results

This year 191 count day species were recorded, tying the all time record highs of 2002 and 2007. There were no additional species recorded in the count period. There were 229 observers, in 129 parties; 1278.5 party hours were tallied, the exact number of party hours as last year's count, with 1238 being daylight hours and 40.5 night hours.

There were 100,687 individual birds recorded, which is about average. The ten most abundant species were, in descending order: **American Robin**, **European Starling**, **Common Grackle**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Gray Catbird**, **House Sparrow**, **Canada Goose**, **Red-eyed Vireo**, **Song Sparrow**, and **American Crow**.

The top seven of these repeat in the same order as last year's list with **Red-eyed Vireos** returning to the list at #8 and **American Crows** replacing **Mourning Doves** (now #13) at #10, **Chipping Sparrows** (#12) were also displaced from the top 10 list.

Twenty species were represented by a single individual:

**American Wigeon**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **Greater Scaup**, **White-winged Scoter**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Ruffed Grouse**, **Anhinga**, **Least Bittern** (T), **Little Blue Heron** (SC), **Cattle Egret**, **Merlin**, **Sora**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Glaucous Gull**, **Forster's Tern**, **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (SC), **Common Nighthawk** (E), **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Nashville Warbler** and **Saltmarsh Sparrow** (SC).

There were 26 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**, **American Wigeon**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **Greater Scaup**, **White-winged Scoter**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Common Loon** (SC), **Anhinga**, **Cattle Egret**, **Merlin**, **American Coot**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Semipalmated Plover**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, **Least Sandpiper**, **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Dunlin**, **Ring-billed Gull**, **Glaucous Gull**, **Forster's Tern**, and **Blackpoll Warbler**.

The underlined species are potential nesters, but in the absence of additional supporting evidence they will be considered non-nesting visitors. Additionally, **Ring-necked Pheasants** may no longer have a self-sustaining breeding population and are reliant upon annual stocking for their persistence in the state.

Noteworthy from this group were the **American Wigeon**, **Ring-necked Duck**, and **White-winged Scoter** found on the Greenwich/Stamford count (8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and, 5<sup>th</sup> SBC records). Adding to their **Brant**, **Greater Scaup**, **Long-tailed Duck** and **Red-breasted Merganser** this made for a good year for lingering waterfowl! Continuing this theme, New Milford/Pawling had three **Ruddy Ducks** and New Haven had one (10<sup>th</sup> SBC records). Storrs recorded their first ever **Common Loon**, which was also found on New Haven and Woodbury/Roxbury.

The bird of the count and perhaps the best bird ever found on a Summer Bird Count was the **Anhinga** discovered by Flo McBride, at Lake Whitney on the New Haven Count. After discovery it remained all day Saturday to be seen by dozens of birders. This is one of only a handful of previous Connecticut reports and the first to be photographed in the state.

The **Cattle Egret** was a first for the Hartford area and the first for the SBC since 1998 (3<sup>rd</sup> SBC record) **Little Blue Heron** was also a first for Hartford. **Merlin** was a first for Litchfield Hills and only the second SBC record. **American Coot** was

a first for the Storrs count and was also recorded on Greenwich/Stamford. New Haven did well with lingering shorebirds with a **Solitary Sandpiper** (11<sup>th</sup> SBC record), six **Least Sandpipers** (10<sup>th</sup> record), two **White-rumped Sandpipers** (7<sup>th</sup> record), and the second ever SBC record for **Dunlin**, which was also recorded on Greenwich Stamford to make for a record high count of two. Greenwich/ Stamford rounded out the good non-nesting birds with the SBC's 3<sup>rd</sup> ever **Glaucous Gull**, and a **Forster's Tern** (7<sup>th</sup> count day record, 9<sup>th</sup> overall).

### Notable Nesting Species

Hartford tallied six **Common Mergansers**, a first for this area. The Storrs Count logged its first **Ring-necked Pheasants** (3) and only one **Ruffed Grouse** was recorded on the Litchfield Hills Count. Woodbury/Roxbury found their first **Pied-billed Grebe**, which was also recorded on the New Milford/Pawling count. Litchfield Hills also found the only **American Bitterns** (E) (2) of the count.

**Least Bittern** (T) seems to be harder and harder to find and one was logged on the Hartford count. Finding a **Peregrine Falcon** (E) is certainly not the news it once was, but it was a first for the Barkhamsted SBC. Greenwich/Stamford recorded their first ever **Sora**, the only one for the count this year. Hartford made their now annual grassland bird contribution to the count by finding **Upland Sandpipers** (E) (4) and **Grasshopper Sparrows** (E) (6), both record high counts for that circle. Three elusive nocturnal birds made an appearance with one each of **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (SC) (Litchfield Hills) and **Common Nighthawk** (E) (New Haven) and **Whip-poor-wills** (SC) were found on two counts (Litchfield Hills) and Barkhamsted (2). **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** are not a big deal throughout much of the state, but Greenwich/Stamford recorded their first ever. Only two **White-eyed Vireos** were found, including the first ever for Barkhamsted. Woodbury/Roxbury logged their first **Marsh Wren** and keen eyes or ears in New Milford/Pawling turned up a single **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, a species that was missed in 1993. A **Nashville Warbler** was a great find for Litchfield Hills, a

species that has been missed seven times in the past. Hartford had a bumper crop of uncommon northern species for them, including **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, **Northern Waterthrush**, **White-throated Sparrow** and **Purple Finch**. Only one **Saltmarsh Sparrow** was recorded, on the New Haven Count.

### **Species Recorded in Above Average Numbers**

**Black Vulture** came in again at record levels with 41 found statewide, a species that was only recorded on 2 of the first 6 counts. **Bald Eagle** also set a new statewide record with 31, eclipsing the old record of 30 counted on the last two counts. The 19 Ruddy Turnstones for New Haven and three more for Greenwich/Stamford helped us double the old record of 11 (2000 and 2007) with 22 statewide this year. **Purple Martin** came in with a 10-year high of 50, but just shy of the all time record of 54 set in 2000.

**Cedar Waxwing** set the new all-time high with 2,391, just edging the 2,387 found back in 2002. **Cerulean Warblers** also set a new statewide high of 21, 18 of which were from Litchfield Hills and Storrs, eclipsing the old statewide record of 15 in 2002. Finally, **Swamp Sparrow** came in at a 10-year high with 438 but shy of the all time high of 457 in 1999, which is refreshing since they recorded a 10-year low of 245 just in 2008.

**Table 3**, species with greater than 120% of their 10-year average numbers. In taxonomic order.

Species	% of 10 YA	Species	% of 10 YA	Species	% of 10 YA
<b>Brant*</b>	171%	<b>Peregrine Falcon (E)</b>	196%	<b>Yellow-bellied Sapsucker</b>	145%
<b>Ring-necked Duck*</b>	200%	<b>American Coot*</b>	286%	<b>Pileated Woodpecker</b>	130%
<b>Greater Scaup*</b>	143%	<b>Semipalmated Plover*</b>	350%	<b>Fish Crow</b>	139%
<b>White-winged Scoter*</b>	1000%	<b>Solitary Sandpiper*</b>	167%	<b>Common Raven</b>	135%
<b>Ruddy Duck*</b>	174%	<b>Willet</b>	178%	<b>Purple Martin (T)</b>	177%
<b>Pied-billed Grebe (E)</b>	125%	<b>Upland Sandpiper (E)</b>	667%	<b>Veery</b>	123%
<b>Yellow-cr Night-Heron (SC)</b>	164%	<b>Ruddy Turnstone*</b>	537%	<b>Cedar Waxwing</b>	148%
<b>Black Vulture</b>	216%	<b>Semipalmated Sandpiper*</b>	229%	<b>Cerulean Warbler</b>	206%
<b>Glossy Ibis (SC)</b>	308%	<b>Dunlin*</b>	133%	<b>Hooded Warbler</b>	132%
<b>Osprey</b>	133%	<b>American Woodcock</b>	128%	<b>Savannah Sparrow (SC)</b>	122%
<b>Bald Eagle (E)</b>	157%	<b>Glaucous Gull*</b>	500%	<b>Grasshopper Sparrow (E)</b>	250%
<b>Red-shouldered Hawk</b>	139%	<b>Least Tern (T)</b>	160%	<b>Swamp Sparrow</b>	140%
<b>Cooper's Hawk</b>	125%	<b>Barred Owl</b>	122%	<b>Dark-eyed Junco</b>	136%
<b>Merlin*</b>	1000%	<b>Ruby-throated Hummingbird</b>	122%		

\* Non-nesting species.

Note, deviations from average do not necessarily demonstrate an increasing trend, but can indicate either trends or year to year variation, especially in species with low numbers recorded on average. For example, 667% of the average for Upland Sandpipers amounts to all of four individuals.

### Species Recorded in Below Average Numbers

Record low counts are the theme this year, with 24 statewide 10-year low counts, 18 of which were all time lows. Please see table 3.

**Table 4**, species with record low counts with number and percentage of 10-year average (in taxonomic order and in absolute numbers not corrected for party hours)

<b>Canada Goose</b> , 2998, 73%	<b>Laughing Gull**</b> , 0, 0%	<b>Least Flycatcher</b> , 75, 53%
<b>Mallard</b> , 1228, 62%	<b>Ring-billed Gull**</b> , 190, 41%	<b>White-eyed Vireo</b> , 2, 11%
<b>Common Merganser*</b> , 69%	<b>Herring Gull</b> , 413, 53%	<b>Carolina Wren*</b> , 199, 58%
<b>Ruffed Grouse</b> , 1, 6%	<b>Great Black-backed Gull</b> , 107, 40%	<b>Northern Mockingbird</b> , 370, 71%
<b>Great Egret (T) *</b> , 163, 60%	<b>Rock Pigeon</b> , 759, 70%	<b>Chestnut-sided Warbler*</b> , 529, 84%
<b>Snowy Egret (T)</b> , 66, 65%	<b>Mourning Dove*</b> , 2273, 85%	<b>Yellow-rumped Warbler*</b> , 95, 77%
<b>Black-cr Night-Heron</b> , 161, 59%	<b>Whip-poor-will (SC)</b> , 3, 21%	<b>Field Sparrow</b> , 77, 60%
<b>Red-tailed Hawk*</b> , 217, 79%	<b>Northern Flicker</b> , 468, 84%	<b>House Finch</b> , 776, 67%

\*10 year low only. \*\*non-nesters

Last year's historically harsh winter could account for some of these lows, as this group is well represented by short-distance migrants, but some of them also occurred in species with clear downward trends. Species whose declines may be related to weather include: **Canada Goose, Mallard, Common Merganser, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Northern Flicker, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **House Finch**. Perhaps even the gulls could be included here. **Carolina Wrens**, which are non migratory and known to be affected by deep snowfalls were clearly impacted, going from 502 last year to 199, a 60% drop in one year. **Winter Wrens** may have also been affected, going from 74 to 26, a 64% drop.

Only one **Saltmarsh Sparrow** was recorded. While this isn't likely reflective of any trend in this species since count areas do not comprise their primary nesting grounds in the state, it gives us an excuse to mention that this species is quite likely to go extinct within the next 50 years. They are already having poor reproductive success due to increased coastal tidal flooding and any additional sea level rise or marsh subsidence could doom this species within a few years.

Consistent with the theme, shrubland and other early successional specialists are again well represented within this group by **Ruffed Grouse, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Mourning Dove, Whip-poor-Will, White-eyed Vireo, Northern Mockingbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler**, and **Field Sparrow**. Colonial-nesting herons and egrets are also well represented with all-time lows for **Snowy Egret** and **Black-crowned Night-Heron** and a 10-year low for **Great Egret**.

### Thank you

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. Special thanks are also in order to Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, who assisted with statistical analysis of data.

## 2011 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 unless double underlined.

"Rare"- noted on fewer than five years during previously censused 10 years [outlined box]	= <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px;">XX</span>
New <b>Count Day</b> [CD] species; not recorded on previously censused 10 years[darkened outlined box]	= <span style="background-color: #cccccc; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px;">XX</span>
<u>More numbers</u> were tallied than were on any of the previously censused 10 years [underlined number]	= <u>XX</u>
<b>Fewer numbers</b> were tallied than recorded on any of the previously censused 10 year [boldfaced number]	= <b>XX</b>
<b>Not recorded</b> on CD 2011, but recorded on all the previously censused 10 years [boldfaced zero]	= <b>0</b>
Double underlined boxes are shown [double underline]	= <u><u>0</u></u>

<b><u>SPECIES</u></b>	<i>Coastal SBCs</i>		<i>CT</i>	<i>Upland SBCs:</i>					<b>2011 State</b>	<b>% of 00-09</b>	<b># yrs</b>	<b>2001-2010</b>				
	<b>GS</b>	<b>NH</b>	<i>Valley</i> <b>Hfd</b>	<i>Mid-state</i>		<i>Northern</i>						<b>Totals</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>obs</b>	<b>Ave</b>	<b>Low</b>
				<b>WR</b>	<b>NM/P</b>	<b>Ba</b>	<b>LH</b>	<b>St</b>								
Snow Goose																
<i>Canada Goose</i>	977	<u>629</u>	204	297	299	196	<u>299</u>	87	<u>2988</u>	73%	10	4073	3585	5197		
Brant	62	5							67	171%	10	39	6	235		
<i>Mute Swan</i>	39	156	<u>25</u>	8	42		8		278	103%	10	271	165	462		
<i>Wood Duck</i>	147	37	61	43	25	16	82	9	420	108%	10	390	272	599		
<i>Gadwall</i>										0%	9	8	2	15		
American Wigeon	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1</span>								<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1</span>	100%	1	1.0	1	1		
<i>American Black Duck</i>	18	3	<u>2</u>			1	1		32	50%	10	64	30	120		

<i>Mallard</i>	<b>410</b>	175	<b>238</b>	105	36	95	<b>106</b>	<u>63</u>	<b>1228</b>	62%	10	1983	1460	2825
MallardxAm Black Duck						1			1					
Blue-winged Teal										0%	3	1.1	3	8
Northern Shoveler										0%	2	0.2	2	2
<i>Green-winged Teal</i>										0%	3	1.1	3	8
Ring-necked Duck	<b>1</b>								<b>1</b>	200%	4	0.5	1	2
Greater Scaup	1								1	143%	5	0.7	1	2
Lesser Scaup										0%	3	0.2	1	1
King Eider										0%	1	0.0	0	0
White-winged Scoter	<b>1</b>								<b>1</b>	167%	2	0.6	1	5
Long-tailed Duck	2								2	105%	8	2	1	4
Bufflehead										0%	6	0.9	1	2
Common Goldeneye										0%	3	0.4	1	2
<i>Hooded Merganser</i>	<u>8</u>	1		<b>1</b>	2	2	12		26	84%	10	31	11	72
<i>Common Merganser</i>			<b>6</b>	34	1	38	7		<b>86</b>	69%	10	125	102	196
Red-breasted Merganser	1								1	67%	10	2	1	4
Ruddy Duck		<b>1</b>			3				4	174%	5	2	1	10
<i>Ring-necked Pheasant</i>		<u>2</u>			1			<b>3</b>	6	77%	10	8	3	16
<i>Ruffed Grouse</i>							1		<b>1</b>	6%	10	17	4	26
<i>Wild Turkey</i>	85	<u><u>73</u></u>	24	49	48	90	145	<u><u>68</u></u>	<u><u>582</u></u>	109%	10	533	461	645
<i>Northern Bobwhite</i>										0%	9	2	1	5
Red-throated Loon										0%	5	1.3	1	8
Common Loon		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>				<b>1</b>	3	71%	9	4	1	9
<i>Pied-billed Grebe</i>				<b>1</b>	1				2	125%	6	2	0	7
Wilson's Storm-petrel										0%	1	0.3	3	3
Northern Gannet										0%	1	0	0	0
<i>Double-crested Cormorant</i>	509	<b>98</b>	13	13	11	<u>14</u>	31	<u>14</u>	703	86%	10	813	574	1025
Great Cormorant										0%	1	0.1	1	1

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2011 State	% of 00-09	# yrs	2001-2010		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Totals	Average	obs
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Great Cormorant cormorant (sp?)		1							1	0%	1	0.1	1	1
Anhinga		1							1	0%	0	0.0	0	0
American Bittern								2	2	71%	9	3	1	6
Least Bittern			1						1	37%	9	3	1	7
Great Blue Heron	19	21	52	72	25	36	45	24	294	119%	10	246	154	375
Great Egret	123	40							163	60%	10	272	188	376
Snowy Egret	52	14							66	65%	10	102	67	143
Little Blue Heron			1						1	100%	7	1.0	1	2
Tricolored Heron										0%	1	0.1	1	1
Cattle Egret			1						1	0%	0	0.0	0	0
Green Heron	17	15	12	12	8	6	4	4	78	102%	10	77	59	113
Black-cr Night-Heron	142	16		3					161	59%	10	271	165	450
Yellow-cr Night-Heron	7	3							10	164%	10	6	1	21
Glossy Ibis	8								8	308%	8	3	1	8
Black Vulture		3		18	12	1	7		41	216%	10	19	4	28
Turkey Vulture	17	24	11	55	46	58	78	35	324	95%	10	340	270	402
Osprey	58	58	6	1	1	2	3	4	133	133%	10	100	71	176
Bald Eagle	1		4	5	1	13	6	1	31	157%	10	20	10	30
Northern Harrier										0%	4	0.6	1	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	1		2	1	3	2		10	88%	10	11	7	18
Cooper's Hawk accipiter species	11	2	3	3	1	7	10	7	44	125%	10	35	21	45
Northern Goshawk		1				1	1		3	71%	10	4	3	7
Red-shouldered Hawk	7	8	7	24	2	15	2	10	75	139%	10	54	32	95

<i>Broad-winged Hawk</i>	4		<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	1	<u>12</u>	16	<u>10</u>	51	89%	10	57	45	66
<i>Red-tailed Hawk</i>	44	<b>10</b>	32	41	19	22	34	<u>15</u>	<b>217</b>	79%	10	274	219	341
<i>American Kestrel</i>			2	3			1	1	7	57%	10	12	3	21
Merlin							<u>1</u>		<u>1</u>	1000%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Peregrine Falcon</i>	1	3	<u>4</u>			<u>1</u>			9	196%	10	5	2	9
<i>Clapper Rail</i>		5							5	43%	10	12	2	21
<i>King Rail</i>										0%	2	0.2	1	1
<i>Virginia Rail</i>	<u>1</u>		<u>2</u>	2	6		17		28	108%	10	26	15	38
<i>Sora</i>	<u>1</u>								1	91%	8	1.1	1	3
<i>American Coot</i>	<u>1</u>							<u>1</u>	2	286%	5	0.7	1	3
<i>Black-bellied Plover</i>	1	1							2	51%	8	4	1	9
<i>American Golden-Plover</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Semipalmated Plover</i>		14							14	350%	8	4	1	15
<i>Piping Plover</i>		15							15	103%	10	15	6	24
<i>Killdeer</i>	57	14	47	19	8	27	32	22	226	94%	10	241	158	297
<i>American Oystercatcher</i>	34	<u>18</u>							52	112%	10	46	29	60
<i>Spotted Sandpiper</i>	4	5	19	4	1	7		<u>9</u>	49	106%	10	41	26	65
<i>Solitary Sandpiper</i>		1							1	167%	5	0.6	1	2
<i>Greater Yellowlegs</i>		2							2	80%	7	3	1	5
<i>Willet</i>	4	19							23	178%	10	13	4	24
<i>Upland Sandpiper</i>			<u>4</u>						<u>4</u>	667%	2	0.6	3	3
<i>Ruddy Turnstone</i>	<u>3</u>	<u>19</u>							<u>22</u>	537%	8	4	1	11
<i>Red Knot</i>										0%	4	0.5	1	3
<i>Sanderling</i>										0%	5	3	1	21
<i>Semipalmated Sandpiper</i>	1	72							73	229%	9	32	2	215
<i>Least Sandpiper</i>		<u>3</u>							3	23%	6	13	1	66
<i>White-rumped Sandpiper</i>		<u>2</u>							2	83%	7	2.4	1	6
<i>Pectoral Sandpiper</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Purple Sandpiper</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1

SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2011 State	% of 00-09	# yrs	2001-2010		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Totals	Average	obs
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Dunlin	1	1							2	133%	4	1.5	1	11
Short-billed Dowitcher										0%	1	0.3	3	3
Wilson's Snipe										0%	1	0.1	1	1
American Woodcock			1	2		6	6	1	16	128%	10	13	8	20
Laughing Gull	0								0	0%	10	39	6	111
Ring-billed Gull	42	122			20			4	190	41%	10	459	311	795
Herring Gull	263	149	1						413	53%	10	783	532	1096
Glaucous Gull	1								1	500%	2	0.2	1	1
Great Black-backed Gull	86	14	4	3					107	40%	10	265	213	373
Least Tern		256							256	160%	10	160	13	334
Gull-billed Tern										0%	1	0.2	2	2
Caspian Tern										0%	2	0.5	2	3
Black Tern										0%	3	0.2	1	1
Common Tern	277	21							298	97%	10	308	84	547
Forster's Tern	1								1	500%	7	2.1	2	7
Royal Tern										0%	1	0.1	1	1
Black Skimmer										0%	8	7	2	26
Rock Pigeon	193	143	119	59	17	75	87	66	759	70%	10	1087	898	1318
Mourning Dove	434	254	370	285	104	261	385	180	2273	85%	10	2670	2334	2897
Monk Parakeet	6	53							59	59%	10	100	26	288
Black-billed Cuckoo		1		4	1	1	2	2	11	41%	10	27	10	69
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	2	1	1	4	1	1	2	6	18	46%	10	39	11	144
cuckoo species					3				3		2			
Eastern Screech-Owl	5	1	3	13	7		1	9	39	91%	10	43	27	59

<i>Great Horned Owl</i>	2	2		5	2	2	5	18	64%	10	28	10	38	
<i>Barred Owl</i>	14	<u>2</u>		<u>15</u>	1	37	19	<u>14</u>	102	122%	10	84	61	131
<i>Northern Saw-whet Owl</i>						1			1	42%	8	2.4	1	7
<i>Nighthawk, Common</i>		1							1	9%	10	12	1	77
<i>Whip-poor-will</i>						2	1		3	21%	10	14	5	25
<i>Chimney Swift</i>	<u>142</u>	89	79	101	44	143	88	<u>69</u>	<u>755</u>	107%	10	704	554	783
<i>Ruby-throated Hummingbird</i>	17	8	4	26	25	48	46	26	200	122%	10	164	126	220
<i>Belied Kingfisher</i>	8	9	11	12	5	23	11	<u>2</u>	81	82%	10	99	70	125
<i>Red-bellied Woodpecker</i>	185	59	73	<u>127</u>	42	51	96	50	683	116%	10	586	459	750
<i>Yellow-bellied Sapsucker</i>	<u>1</u>			<u>52</u>	41	279	<u>224</u>		597	145%	10	411	242	649
<i>Downy Woodpecker</i>	<b>151</b>	67	52	100	67	106	<u>171</u>	55	769	99%	10	775	501	1095
<i>Hairy Woodpecker</i>	<b>49</b>	11	17	32	17	56	53	11	246	98%	10	250	202	356
<i>Northern Flicker</i>	<b>149</b>	46	78	39	26	45	71	14	<b>468</b>	84%	10	556	481	687
<i>Pileated Woodpecker</i>	23	2	6	18	11	<u>49</u>	41	<u>12</u>	<u>162</u>	130%	10	125	103	167
<i>Olive-sided Flycatcher</i>										0%	7	1.1	1	3
<i>Eastern Wood-Pewee</i>	92	27	33	109	50	<b>84</b>	154	60	609	95%	10	640	510	797
<i>Yellow-bellied Flycatcher</i>										0%	4	1.1	1	5
<i>Acadian Flycatcher</i>	3		<u>1</u>	7	2	4	6	<u>1</u>	24	108%	10	22	7	31
<i>Alder Flycatcher</i>			1	6	5	21	60	2	95	95%	10	100	75	138
<i>Willow Flycatcher</i>	42	51	27	32	18	24	90	4	288	111%	10	260	226	315
<i>Least Flycatcher</i>			1	21	7	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>	8	<b>75</b>	53%	10	143	98	166
Epidonax species					3				3					
<i>Eastern Phoebe</i>	<u>31</u>	26	42	77	50	128	135	59	548	74%	10	744	496	907
<i>Great Crested Flycatcher</i>	<u>58</u>	30	54	115	33	43	122	<u>54</u>	509	115%	10	443	360	529
<i>Eastern Kingbird</i>	<b>58</b>	42	<b>29</b>	101	11	93	144	<u>46</u>	524	94%	10	558	486	683
<i>White-eyed Vireo</i>	1					<u>1</u>			<u>2</u>	11%	10	18	5	49
<i>Yellow-throated Vireo</i>	<b>11</b>	2	<u>2</u>	56	25	33	73	<u>40</u>	242	102%	10	238	176	280
<i>Blue-headed Vireo</i>	2		<u>2</u>	6	7	63	61	<u>1</u>	142	83%	10	170	116	227
<i>Warbling Vireo</i>	142	70	<u>92</u>	171	49	44	130	<u>74</u>	772	113%	10	681	517	825
<i>Red-eyed Vireo</i>	<b>160</b>	75	70	400	143	889	790	<u>191</u>	2718	103%	10	2651	2255	2992

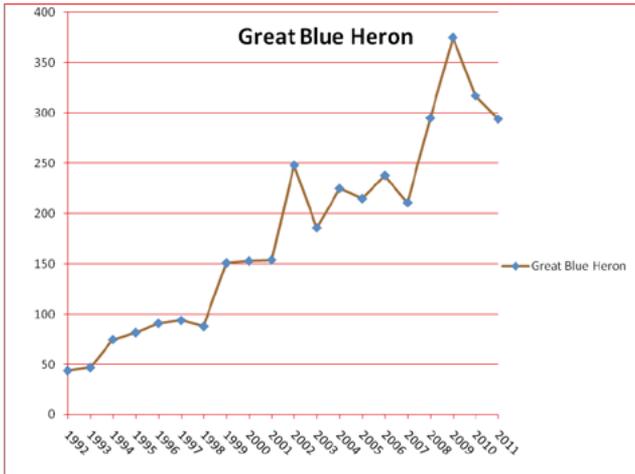
SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2011 State	% of 00-09	# yrs	2001-2010		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Totals	Average	obs
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
<i>Blue Jay</i>	277	168	119	173	78	274	218	87	1394	91%	10	1528	1328	1729
<i>American Crow</i>	274	188	161	479	294	394	672	155	2617	95%	10	2768	2202	4109
<i>Fish Crow</i>	40	24	5	21	3	7	11	7	118	138%	10	85	54	144
<i>Common Raven</i>	7	5	9	9	1	52	19	1	103	135%	10	76	43	116
<i>Horned Lark</i>										0%	1	0.2	2	2
<i>Purple Martin</i>	42	4					4		50	177%	10	28	14	44
<i>Tree Swallow</i>	187	134	127	176	73	293	489	226	1705	99%	10	1725	1245	2176
<i>Northern Rough-w Swallow</i>	111	62	43	73	50	64	32	20	455	112%	10	407	328	540
<i>Bank Swallow</i>	CP	6	77	12	52	69	10	25	251	86%	10	290	148	407
<i>Cliff Swallow</i>	47	30	CP	101	29	30	22		259	92%	10	281	181	365
<i>Barn Swallow</i>	387	220	92	249	85	250	311	190	1784	107%	10	1668	1483	1889
<i>Black-capped Chickadee</i>	153	59	51	218	105	524	491	88	1689	90%	10	1877	1602	2254
<i>Tufted Titmouse</i>	309	83	86	336	126	367	369	147	1823	99%	10	1845	1478	2269
<i>Red-breasted Nuthatch</i>				5	10	15	10		15	55%	10	27	7	60
<i>White-breasted Nuthatch</i>	99	38	32	102	38	145	129	71	654	111%	10	591	349	982
<i>Brown Creeper</i>	2		1		3	20	26		52	76%	10	68	41	93
<i>Carolina Wren</i>	72	11	18	39	14	18	13	14	199	58%	10	346	226	502
<i>House Wren</i>	159	57	29	134	78	120	106	40	723	83%	10	876	544	1143
<i>Winter Wren</i>				1		17	8		26	56%	10	46	13	88
<i>Marsh Wren</i>	10	10	2	1	8		53		84	73%	10	115	52	253
<i>Golden-crowned Kinglet</i>					1				1	15%	9	7	3	16
<i>Ruby-crowned Kinglet</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</i>	27	1	6	51	13	32	68	54	252	96%	10	263	193	321
<i>Eastern Bluebird</i>	54	6	16	97	47	82	148	51	501	93%	10	538	441	672

Gray-checked Thrush										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Veery</i>	107	31	22	232	170	746	<u>838</u>	94	2240	123%	10	1819	1371	2260
Bicknell's Thrush										0%	1	0.1	1	1
Swainson's Thrush										0%	6	0.7	1	2
<i>Hermit Thrush</i>			1	6	2	136	63		208	96%	10	217	147	270
<i>Wood Thrush</i>	140	65	52	168	86	259	287	59	1116	87%	10	1288	1065	1503
<i>American Robin</i>	2032	948	909	<b>660</b>	311	805	1019	<u>488</u>	7172	110%	10	6493	4750	8404
<i>Gray Catbird</i>	801	272	274	<u>537</u>	308	707	<u>1025</u>	<u>237</u>	4161	107%	10	3876	3140	4396
<i>Northern Mockingbird</i>	110	74	51	59	23	16	<u>19</u>	18	<b>370</b>	71%	10	523	403	754
<i>Brown Thrasher</i>	9	4	5	12	5	1	6	4	<u>46</u>	111%	10	41	26	59
<i>European Starling</i>	1052	949	1183	484	216	431	470	699	5484	92%	10	5992	4766	8852
<i>Cedar Waxwing</i>	192	139	331	303	86	504	<u>684</u>	<u>152</u>	<u>2391</u>	148%	10	1619	1181	2387
<i>Blue-winged Warbler</i>	49	29	12	64	28	17	67	<u>50</u>	316	96%	10	330	271	426
"Lawrence's Warbler"	2								2					
"Brewster's Warbler"														
<i>Golden-winged Warbler</i>										0%	3	0.3	1	1
Tennessee Warbler										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Nashville Warbler</i>							<u>1</u>		1	71%	6	1.4	1	7
<i>Northern Parula</i>		<u>1</u>		1		2	1		5	94%	10	5	1	11
<i>Yellow Warbler</i>	412	151	137	273	83	149	579	129	1913	95%	10	2012	1791	2195
<i>Chestnut-sided Warbler</i>	5		5	75	24	203	205	12	<b>529</b>	84%	10	629	553	701
<i>Magnolia Warbler</i>				2		79	<b>6</b>	<u>1</u>	88	85%	10	103	77	139
<i>Black-throated Blue Warbler</i>			<u>1</u>	6	2	<b>110</b>	43		162	80%	10	201	160	243
<i>Yellow-rumped Warbler</i>						73	22		<b>95</b>	77%	10	123	97	169
<i>Black-thr Green Warbler</i>	3	3		32	1	148	129	10	326	91%	10	357	272	436
<i>Blackburnian Warbler</i>				4	1	121	74		200	103%	10	195	139	243
<i>Pine Warbler</i>	39	12	20	20	10	117	<u>152</u>	<u>35</u>	405	100%	10	406	319	460
<i>Prairie Warbler</i>	4	10	12	41	8	1	5	8	89	71%	10	125	80	234
Bav-breasted Warbler										0%	1	0.5	5	5

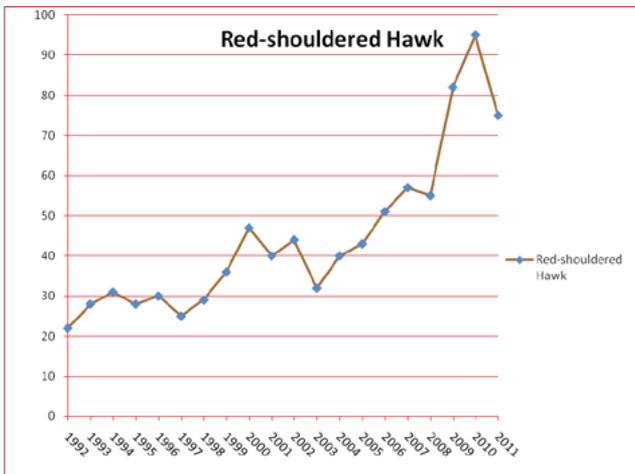
SPECIES	Coastal SBCs		CT	Upland SBCs:					2011 State	% of 00-09	# yrs	2001-2010		
	GS	NH	Valley	Mid-state		Northern						Totals	Average	obs
			Hfd	WR	NM/P	Ba	LH	St						
Blackpoll Warbler	<u>1</u>			2			1		4	93%	10	4.3	1	9
Cerulean Warbler					1		2	<u>9</u> <u>9</u>	<u>21</u>	206%	10	10	4	16
Black-&-White Warbler	<u>14</u>	11	1	83	22	198	<u>231</u> <u>21</u>		581	112%	10	517	417	617
American Redstart	<u>29</u>	8	52	200	87	395	412	<u>98</u>	1281	105%	10	1220	896	1382
Prothonotary Warbler										0%	1	0.1	1	1
Worm-eating Warbler	25	10	<u>1</u>	25	9	1	6	<u>21</u>	98	83%	10	117	75	201
Ovenbird	<u>49</u>	59	25	165	81	551	578	<u>124</u>	1632	110%	10	1484	1249	1722
Northern Waterthrush			<u>2</u>	6	1	5	25	2	41	84%	10	49	22	77
Louisiana Waterthrush	26		<u>4</u>	41	14	39	<u>48</u>	9	181	110%	10	164	84	205
Kentucky Warbler										0%	2	0.2	2	2
Mourning Warbler										0%	6	1.2	1	4
Common Yellowthroat	<u>131</u>	<u>40</u>	84	214	110	528	<u>672</u>	105	1884	108%	10	1745	1516	1974
Hooded Warbler	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>		23	18		<u>7</u>		50	132%	10	38	11	72
Wilson's Warbler										0%	2	0.2	1	1
Canada Warbler				2		19	23		44	84%	10	52	39	75
Yellow-breasted Chat										0%	4	0.5	1	2
Scarlet Tanager	<u>75</u>	25	25	114	44	219	173	<u>49</u>	724	98%	10	740	569	839
Eastern Towhee	<u>34</u>	29	42	91	40	104	<u>189</u>	40	569	97%	10	588	446	705
Chipping Sparrow	<u>296</u>	70	80	346	158	695	456	229	2330	103%	10	2252	1707	2745
Field Sparrow	4	6	13	<u>32</u>	2	<u>1</u>	9	10	<u>77</u>	60%	10	128	82	188
Savannah Sparrow			29	<u>15</u>			10	17	<u>71</u>	122%	10	58	21	92
Grasshopper Sparrow			<u>6</u>						<u>6</u>	250%	9	2.4	2	5
Nelson's Sparrow										0%	4	0.4	1	1
Saltmarsh Sparrow	<u>0</u>	1							<u>1</u>	9%	10	11	5	26
Seaside Sparrow										0%	6	4	3	11

<i>Song Sparrow</i>	386	166	242	432	171	480	<u>712</u>	<u>129</u>	2718	102%	10	2671	2093	3133
<i>Swamp Sparrow</i>		1	10	8	17	<u>76</u>	<u>324</u>	2	<u>438</u>	140%	10	312	245	368
<i>White-throated Sparrow</i>			<u>1</u>	CP		1			2	27%	10	8	2	19
<i>Dark-eyed Junco</i>						<u>40</u>	<u>17</u>		57	136%	10	42	29	59
<i>Dark-northern Cardinal</i>	354	150	149	282	135	351	312	144	1877	102%	10	1835	1452	2247
<i>Rose-breasted Grosbeak</i>	47	33	30	75	40	107	100	<u>32</u>	464	104%	10	445	351	577
<i>Blue Grosbeak</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Indigo Bunting</i>	65	28	30	107	61	88	73	38	490	98%	10	502	346	616
<i>Dickcissel</i>										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Bobolink</i>	<u>2</u>		40	109	16	46	202	<u>21</u>	436	90%	10	486	335	703
<i>Red-winged Blackbird</i>	658	703	588	584	393	441	<u>1169</u>	512	5048	108%	10	4663	3851	5453
<i>Eastern Meadowlark</i>			1	3	3			2	9	44%	10	20	8	39
<i>Common Grackle</i>	1992	670	696	380	150	<b>371</b>	<u>690</u>	206	5155	104%	10	4975	3871	6534
<i>Boat-tailed Grackle</i>										0%	4	1.0	1	5
<i>Brown-headed Cowbird</i>	201	74	129	131	70	114	200	<u>82</u>	1001	87%	10	1154	922	1284
<i>Orchard Oriole</i>	27	1	13	24	1		1	<u>2</u>	69	94%	10	73	38	112
<i>Baltimore Oriole</i>	255	75	121	198	36	87	<u>192</u>	<u>95</u>	1059	94%	10	1129	907	1400
<i>Purple Finch</i>			<u>1</u>	4	2	70	<u>77</u>	<u>1</u>	155	96%	10	161	122	200
<i>House Finch</i>	<u>85</u>	66	103	135	49	151	137	50	<u>776</u>	67%	10	1166	945	1437
Red Crossbill										0%	1	0.1	1	1
<i>Pine Siskin</i>										0%	2	5	1	50
<i>American Goldfinch</i>	<b>286</b>	169	213	<u>203</u>	139	438	542	196	2186	89%	10	2457	2171	3030
<i>Evening Grosbeak</i>										0%	3	1.1	2	7
<i>House Sparrow</i>	922	625	462	270	100	349	310	276	3314	97%	10	3402	2816	4194
other unidentified/hybrid									0			22	8	77

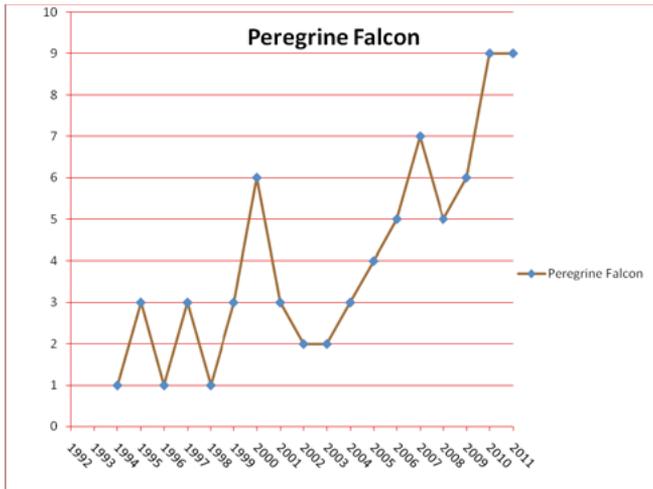




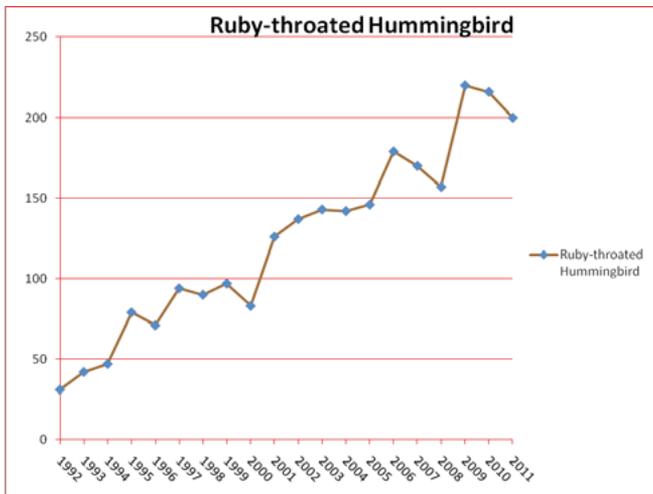
There has been clear upward trend in the numbers of Great Blue Herons recorded over the 20 years of the count.



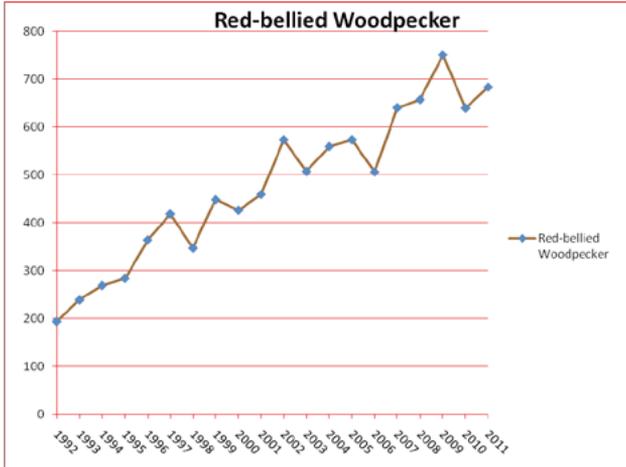
Numbers of Red-shouldered Hawks are down slightly from last year's record high count, but still well above levels of the '90s when on average, fewer than 30 were recorded per year.



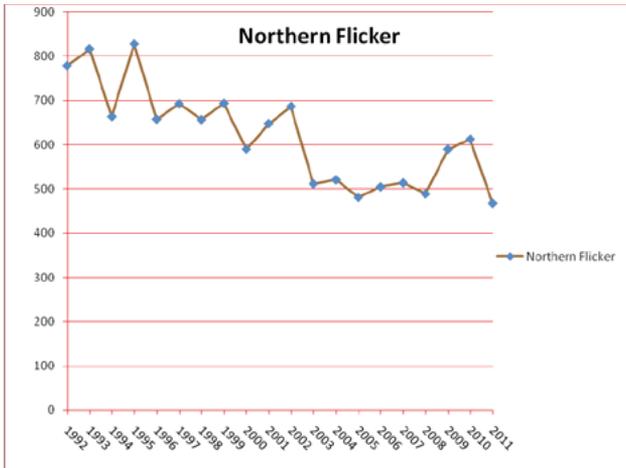
As would be expected for a less-common species, the graph for Peregrine Falcon has many more peaks and valleys. No Peregrine Falcons were recorded in 1992 or '93. There have been 9 in each of the last two years.



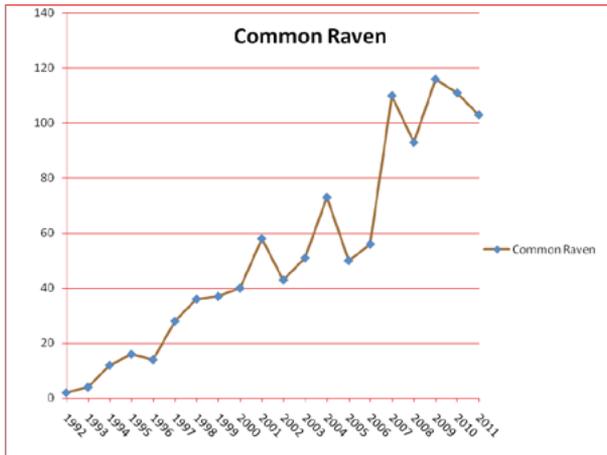
Hummingbird numbers are down a bit from their high of 220 in 2009, but still well above levels of the early days. In the first 7 years of the count, an average of around 60 hummingbirds were recorded per year, contrasting with an average of 190 per year for the last seven years.



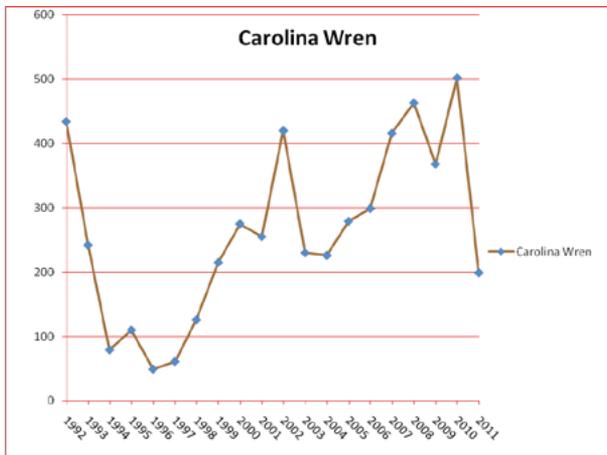
Not surprisingly, far more Red-bellied Woodpeckers are being recorded on Summer Bird Counts than in the '90s.



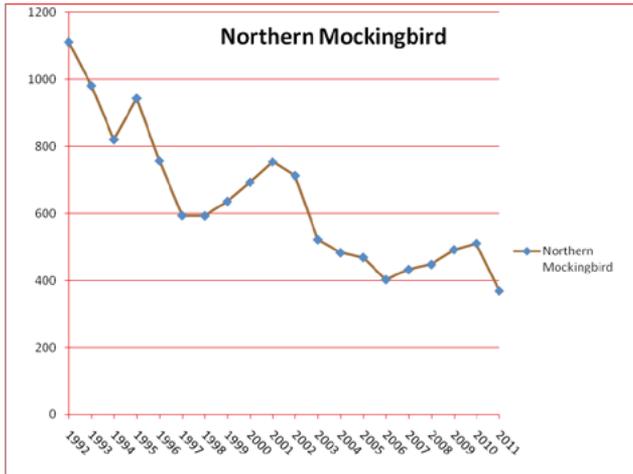
In contrast to the rest of the woodpeckers, we are finding fewer Northern Flickers than we were in the '90s.



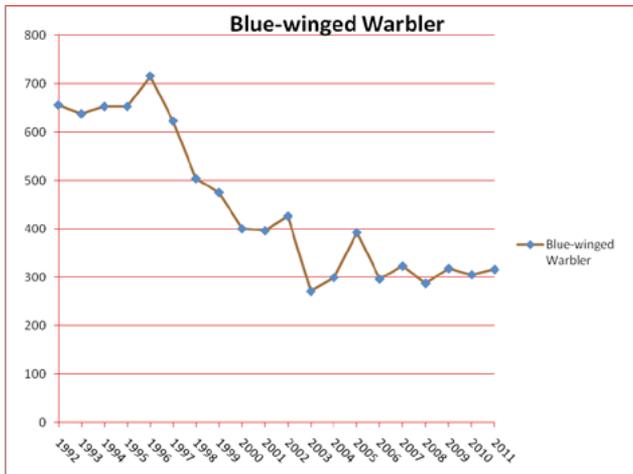
Summer Bird Count has done a good job of recording the amazing expansion of Common Ravens into Connecticut. Formerly a bird of the northern corners of the state, you can find a raven nearly anywhere in the state today.



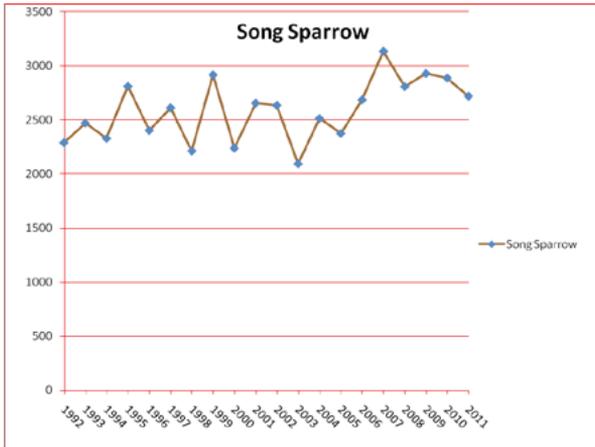
Not all species show a clear trend on SBC. Carolina Wrens appear to have a boom/bust cycle. This year's results matched expectations. They dropped from an all time high of 502 last year, to a 10-year low of 199. Last year's historically harsh winter appears to have taken a toll.



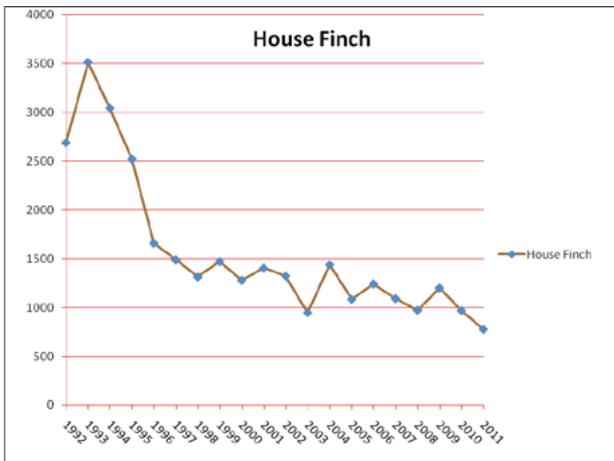
Mockingbird is another generally resident bird for which an impact of last year's winter was expected. They did come in at a record low, but there appears to be a longer term decline at work.



Blue-winged Warblers continue to hover around historic SBC lows.



Not all species show a clear trend in any direction. Inter-year variability appears to be more significant than any longer term trends in the number of Song Sparrows recorded.



House Finches appear to have taken a big hit in the '90 and have not recovered. A record low of 776 was recorded in 2011. The decline in SBC numbers correlate very well with the introduction of House Finch conjunctivitis in the '90s, the first cases of which appeared in 1994 in Washington D.C.

## 2010 FALL HAWK WATCH

By Steve Mayo and Neil Currie

The fall of 2010 marked the 40th consecutive season of organized Connecticut hawk watching. This remarkable accomplishment represents thousands of hours of careful observation and data collection. Observers logged over 1800 hours during the 2010 fall season. Some historical sites went uncovered during Broad-winged Hawk season, but there were bright spots, including an increase in hours at Boothe Memorial in Stratford.

Study of the hawk migration season is not limited to our times. From 1885 to 1894, Charles Trowbridge noted large numbers of various species of hawks migrating through Connecticut in the fall. The Columbia University physics professor observed a trickle of Accipiters and Buteos in August but also noted, "in the middle of September, when the stronger winds blew from the northwest and north, and the temperature lowered, the number of hawks which were passing greatly increased."

Professor Trowbridge would have easily been able to predict the peak flight days of the 2010 season, even without CTBirds, countless guide books, NorthEast Hawk watch, Hawk Migration Association of North America, the National Weather Service, Internet, and a vast established Connecticut network of devoted cell phone-toting birders. A passing front with light northerly winds brought Broad-wings to our state on Sept. 15. Quaker Ridge took top honors for the season with a Sept. 15 total of 4,334 "Broadies" and Boothe Memorial Park tallied 1,884 that same day. There was another significant inland Broad-winged flight on the afternoon of Sept. 19, with high tallies at most of the covered inland sites: Booth Hill, Botsford Hill, Chestnut Hill, Johnnycake, Middle School and White Memorial.

This passing front generated powerful northeast winds by the morning of Sept. 20. At Lighthouse Park, winds were 10-22 mph with gusts to 30 mph. Observers counted

2,128 hawks (only 196 Broad-wings) representing 10 species. Quaker Ridge had 2,357 total raptors, including 2,074 Broad-wings. Similar gusty winds hit the coast on Oct. 3. Lighthouse counted 1,083 hawks comprising a dozen species. Quaker Ridge still had 486 raptors that day, long after its peak period, comprising 9,539 Broad-wings, Sept. 15-21. Eleven hours of effort resulted in 1,015 hawks at Lighthouse on Oct. 9. Again, there were strong north winds from the passing of an earlier storm.

Several cold fronts passed from mid October through early November, bringing the more colorful adult "Sharpies" and "Coops" as well as good numbers of Turkey Vultures, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks. Of the rarer late season migrants, Quaker Ridge totaled an impressive 15 each for Golden Eagle and Northern Goshawk. Lighthouse had seven Golden Eagles and 13 Northern Goshawks.

These fronts generated 2010 species daily records for all New England sites. Records included: American Kestrel (301 at Lighthouse on 9/20), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1,326 at Lighthouse on 9/20), Cooper's Hawk (161 at Lighthouse on 10/3), Bald Eagle (30 at Quaker Ridge on 9/15), Turkey Vulture (190 at Boothe Memorial on 11/1), Red-tailed Hawk (249 at Boothe Memorial on 11/1) and Red-shouldered Hawk (108 at Lighthouse on 11/12).

Individual sites require years of coverage in order to identify meaningful trends. These data are available for Quaker Ridge and Lighthouse. Quaker Ridge had a record season for Bald Eagle and noted increases in Cooper's Hawks, Sharp-shinned hawks and Red-shouldered hawks. Numbers of American Kestrel were down slightly, as were Red-tailed Hawk. Lighthouse had its best season total since 2004, and that count included a record for Peregrine Falcons. Sharp-shinned Hawks and American Kestrels rebounded a bit, and Coopers Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks were the highest since peak 1990-1994 seasons. Season totals for all sites are available at [hawkcount.org](http://hawkcount.org). For species' statistical trends at Lighthouse, refer to the Raptor Population Index ([rpi-project.org](http://rpi-project.org)).

Of course, standing at one site for hours also generates other remarkable sightings. Quaker Ridge observers noted shorebirds (!), Glaucous Gull, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Lincoln's Sparrow. Non-raptor seasonal sightings at Lighthouse included Cattle Egret, Dickcissels, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Cave Swallows, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Lincoln's Sparrows, and Northern Wheatear. Lighthouse is also well known for its massive passerine migration. As expected, the fall of 2010 saw the passage of hundreds of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds; thousands of geese, Bobolinks, Blue Jays, Eastern Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, swallows and finches, and tens of thousands of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles. These unexpected finds, and expected spectacles, only add to the enjoyment of a long day of hawk watching.

Birders who counted at our Connecticut lookouts in 2010, included: Rene Baade, David Babington, Bill Banks, Tom Baptist, Dan Barvir, Charlie Barnard, Ray Belding, Debbie Bishop, Nick Bonomo, Poly Brody, Dana Campbell, Patty Clarke, Rich Clarke, Al Collins, Neil Currie, Ayreslea Denny, Paul Desjardins, Karen Dixon, Randy Domina, Paul Carrier, Neil Currie, Cynthia Ehlinger, John Eykelhoff, James Fischer, Steve Foisey, Samantha Foster, Frank Gallo, Frank Guida, Tony Hager, Greg Hanisek, Tom Hanrahan, Art Hankey, Jano Hankey, Dennis Hannon, Tom Hook, Julian Hough, Lynn James, Elsbeth Johnson, Anne Kehmna, Sulmaan Khan, Scott Kruitbosch, Lisa Lozier, Ryan Maclean, Frank Mantlik, Steve Mayo, Robin McAllister, Ken Merrifield, Ken Mirman, Judy Moore, Mary Moore, Don Morgan, Steve Oresman, Paul Roberts, Mike Reese, Dave Rosgen, Sol Satin, Dori Sosensky, Robert Stanowski, George Stevens, Luke Tiller, Carol Titus, Tony Tortora, Mike Warner, Winston Williams, Joe Zeranski.

#### LITERATURE CITED

Trowbridge, C.C., Hawk Flights in Connecticut, *The Auk*, Vol. 12, July, 1895

Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 2010

Lookout	Town	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW
INLAND GROUP												
Booth Hill	W. Hartland	7			4	3	1	19	1	1		1449
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	80			62	29	2	170	15			2129
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	56			25	5	5	56	4			1676
Johnnycake Mt.	Burlington	7			10	7		25	3			534
MiddleSchool	Torrington	83	2		18	13	4	35	14		3	2079
Taine Mountain	Burlington	6		2	2		1	2				24
White Memorial	Litchfield	51	6	12	29	27	16	56	28		6	686
		51										
INLAND TOTAL		290	8	14	150	84	29	363	65	1	9	8577

### Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 2010

Lookout	Town	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW
COASTAL GROUP												
Boothe Memorial	Stratford	153	11	470	237	61	68	1242	167	2	41	3404
Lighthouse Point	New Haven	650	1	388	1039	99	549	6528	1580	13	365	831
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich	665	12	346	606	236	247	4167	420	15	319	10943
Waveny Park	New Canaan	38			23	9		77	14			968
COASTAL TOTAL		1506	24	1204	1905	405	864	12014	2181	30	725	16146
2010	Grand Total	1796	32	1218	1934	489	893	12377	2246	31	734	24723
Lighthouse Point		650	1	388	1039	99	549	6528	1580	13	365	831
Quaker Ridge		665	12	346	606	236	247	4167	420	15	319	10943
All Other Lookouts		481	19	484	410	154	97	1682	246	3	50	12949
Total		1796	32	1218	2055	489	893	12377	2246	31	734	24723

Lookout	Town	Hours	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	TOTAL
INLAND GROUP										
Booth Hill	W. Hartland	7				1	1			1480
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	80				19	1		18	2445
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	56			1	21	1		5	1799
Johnnycake Mt.	Burlington	7				13	1			593
MiddleSchool	Torrington	83	9		1	13	5		23	2219
Taine Mountain	Burlington	6							2	33
White Memorial	Litchfield	51	5		1	26	3	2		903
		51								
INLAND TOTAL		290	14	0	3	93	12	2	48	9472

Lookout	Town	Hours	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	TOTAL
COASTAL GROUP										
Boothe Memorial	Stratford	153	423	0	2	167	36	16	66	6413
Lighthouse Point	New Haven	650	740	1	7	1790	374	191	617	15113
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich	665	160	1	15	566	105	21	81	18260
Waveny Park	New Canaan	38	4			52	4	3	5	1159
COASTAL TOTAL		1506	1327	2	24	2575	519	231	769	40945
2010	Grand Total	1796	1341	2	27	2668	531	233	817	50417
Lighthouse Point		650	740	1	7	1790	374	191	617	15113
Quaker Ridge		665	160	1	15	566	105	21	81	18260
All Other Lookouts		481	441	0	5	312	52	21	119	17044
Total		1796	1341	2	27	2668	531	233	817	50417

## Connecticut - Broadwing Flight - Fall 2010

Lookout	Town	Hours	Aug	Sep					Oct		Nov	
				thru 9	thru 14	thru 19	thru 23	thru 31	thru 15	thru 31		Total
INLAND GROUP												
Booth Hill	W. Hartland	7				1449						1449
Botsford Hill	Bridgewater	80		12	266	1084	749	18				2129
Chestnut Hill	Litchfield	56			262	1346	68					1676
Johnnycake Mt.	Burlington	7				534						534
MiddleSchool	Torrington	83		10	65	1886	118					2079
Taine Mountain	Burlington	6				24						24
White Memorial	Litchfield	51			12	433	241					686
		51										0
INLAND TOTAL		290		22	605	6756	1176	18	0	0	0	8577

## Connecticut - Broadwing Flight - Fall 2010

Lookout	Town	Hours	Aug	Sep					Oct		Nov	
				thru 9	thru 14	thru 19	thru 23	thru 31	thru 15	thru 31		Total
COASTAL GROUP												
Bearhouse Hill	Madison								45			45
Boothe Memorial	Stratford	153	15		154	1908	1322	5				3404
Lighthouse Point	New Haven	650			105	91	231	6	382	5	11	831
Quaker Ridge	Greenwich	665	45	13	964	6283	3322	116	195	5		10943
Waveny Park	New Canaan	38				728	458					1186
		51										0
COASTAL TOTAL		1506	60	13	1223	9010	5333	127	622	10	11	16409
2010	GRAND TOTAL	1796	60	35	1828	15766	6509	145	622	10	11	26782

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

## Lighthouse Point, New Haven - Fall 2010

	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PF	UR	TOTAL
July	3																		0
August	31			45		9	10	4							32				100
September	207		12	631	37	200	2633	376	2	11	433	9			805	109	61	174	5493
October	232	1	125	350	52	292	3402	961		59	387	115		3	933	230	95	214	7219
November	178		251	13	10	46	481	237	11	294	11	613	1	4	20	35	35	229	2291
December	5					2	2	2		1		3							10
Total	656	1	388	1039	99	549	6528	1580	13	365	831	740	1	7	1790	374	191	617	15113

## Quaker Ridge, Greenwich - Fall 2010

	Hours	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PF	UR	TOTAL
August	92			39	19	9	39	11			45				24	2	2	2	192
September	221		1	444	132	117	1869	119	1		10698	1			353	41	6	36	13818
October	224	12	261	120	59	102	2068	245	7	141	200	19	1	5	187	57	13	35	3532
November	128		84	3	26	19	191	45	7	178		140		10	2	5		8	718
Total	665	12	346	606	236	247	4167	420	15	319	10943	160	1	15	566	105	21	81	18260

# CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring March 1 to May 31 2011

By Greg Hanisek

Last spring's cluster of very early arrival dates didn't repeat itself, but overall arrivals continued on an earlier track. Because of the ever-increasing amount of information generated by the CTBirds e-mail list and by eBird, first arrival dates in a given year have gone from spottily reported to quite comprehensive. This year we have what appears to be a solid first arrival date for almost every regularly occurring migrant. It's worth noting that all regular warbler species except Cape May and Mourning were found before May 1.

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

Blue-winged Teal - March 26 in Westport (TGr); Snowy Egret - April 2 in Stratford (CBa); Little Blue Heron - April 3 in Madison (GN); Green Heron - April 14 in Westport (MW); Glossy Ibis - March 18 in Old Lyme (TR); Osprey - March 6 in Hamden (GS); Broad-winged Hawk - April 10 in Harwinton (PCa), Semipalmated Plover - April 29 in Stratford (SK); Piping Plover - March 9 in Stratford (SK); Spotted Sandpiper - April 16 in New Haven (fide FMa); Solitary Sandpiper - April 14 in Watertown (GH); Willet - April 13 in Stratford (TL); Semipalmated Sandpip-

er - May 1 in Guilford (CL); Least Sandpiper - April 18 in Westport (JO); Common Tern - May 1 in Stratford (CBa) and Guilford (CL); Least Tern - May 1 in Stratford (CBa); Common Nighthawk - May 7 in Madison (JCo); Whip-poor-will - April 24 in Durham (NM); Chimney Swift - April 14 in Woodbridge (FG); Ruby-throated Hummingbird - April 9 in Guilford (LG); Willow Flycatcher - May 10 in Ellington (CEk); Least Flycatcher - April 26 in Simsbury (JT); Eastern Phoebe - March 9 in Greenwich (MSa); Great Crested Flycatcher - April 26 in Milford (FG) and West Hartford (PDe); Eastern Kingbird - April 24 in New

Haven (PW) and Fairfield (MW); Yellow-throated Vireo - April 29 in Lyme (DP) and Milford (SSp); Blue-headed Vireo - April 12 in Bolton (EH); Warbling Vireo - April 25 in New Haven (GH); Red-eyed Vireo - April 29 in Goshen (TL) and Fairfield (ABu); Purple Martin - April 8 in Greenwich (MSa); Tree Swallow - March 13 in Madison (JT) and Westport (PW); Northern Rough-winged Swallow - March 23 in Easton (MW); Barn Swallow - April 5 in Stratford (SK) and Milford (SSp); House Wren - April 19 in Greenwich (SK); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - April 10 in Mystic (GWi) and Ashford (SMo); Veery - April 24 in New London (BDw); Wood Thrush - April 24 in Branford (MSt).

Also Blue-winged Warbler - April 25 in Hamden (JZ); Tennessee Warbler - April 29 in Bolton (EH); Nashville Warbler - April 21 in Fairfield (KV); Northern Parula - April 24 in New Haven (PW) and West Hartford (DT); Yellow Warbler - April 19 in New Haven (MSc); Chestnut-sided Warbler - April 26 in New Haven (MSc); Magnolia Warbler - April 25 in South Windsor

(PDe); Black-throated Blue Warbler - April 22 in Washington (RBa); Black-throated Green Warbler - April 19 in Ashford (DM); Blackburnian Warbler - April 23 in Darien (CBo); Pine Warbler - March 16 in Danbury (JL) and Harwinton (PCa); Prairie Warbler - April 15 in New Haven (SBr); Palm Warbler - April 5 in Monroe (RBa) and Avon (SBa); Blackpoll Warbler - April 29 in Suffield (JWo); Bay-breasted Warbler - April 28 in Hartford (PDe); Black-and-White Warbler - April 12 in Waterford (DP); American Redstart - April 25 in Greenwich (MSa) and New Haven (RDo); Worm-eating Warbler - April 26 in New Haven (SSp); Ovenbird - April 24 in Bridgeport (GH); Northern Waterthrush - April 19 in Ashford (DM); Louisiana Waterthrush - April 6 in Southbury (KE) and Canton (JK); Common Yellowthroat - April 24 in Bridgeport (GH); Hooded Warbler - April 29 in Lyme (PCo); Wilson's Warbler - April 27 in New Haven (CD); Canada Warbler - April 29 in New Haven (GP); Scarlet Tanager - April 21 in Sherman (PB); Seaside Sparrow - April 26 in Stratford (SK); Rose-breasted Grosbeak

- April 19 in Darien (CBo); Indigo Bunting - April 18 in Greenwich (CEh); Bobolink - April 26 in Storrs (CEl); Eastern Meadowlark - March 7 in Litchfield (RBe); Orchard Oriole - April 22 in Branford (PW); Baltimore Oriole - April 13 in Danbury (JL).

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** for the season were singles March 8-12 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (DRo) and March 12 at Broad Brook Pond in East Windsor (JCl). A flock of 150 Snow Geese was over Bantam Lake in Litchfield prior to storms April 5 (MD), with 50 in a field in another part of town around the same time (SA). An unusual flock of 22 "Blue" Geese was on the ground in Middlefield on March 8 (MBa), with at least 17 still present the next day in nearby Durham (KM). Single **Cackling Geese** were at Durham Meadows (NB) and at Bantam Lake, Litchfield (DRo), both on March 8. The only Tundra Swan report came from Greenwich Point on March 17 (JWe). A pair of **Trumpeter Swans** of unknown origin was at Konold's Pond, Woodbridge, from March 21 to April 2 (FG et al.).

The abundance of Wood Ducks in the state was underscored by a count of 210 on March 23 at Station 43 in South Windsor (RM). A female Blue-winged Teal, a potential breeder, was at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison, (hereafter HBSP) on May 20 (FG). A drake Northern Pintail lingered through the end of the season on the Saugatuck River in Westport (TGr et al.). **Eurasian Teal** were at Milford Point on March 8 (CS, SSp) and at McKenzie Reservoir in Wallingford on March 23-24 (TGM et al.). A late drake Green-winged Teal was at McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on May 21 (FG). An "intergrade" (Green-winged X Eurasian) Teal was at McKinney on March 31 (FMa). A drake Lesser Scaup was seen as late as May 24 at Lower Bolton Lake, Bolton (EH). The only report of Redhead was a pair March 9-21 at Konold's Pond (CL et al.).

An impressive raft of 240 Common Eiders was off Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford on May 16 (NB). A male **Harlequin Duck** was off Long Beach, Stratford, on April 13 (BBo);

a male, possibly the same individual, was off Greenwich Point on May 14 (DE); and a female was off Greenwich Point May 23 (MSa). Three Surf Scoters were unusual inland April 20 at Batterson Pond in Farmington (PCi). Three White-winged Scoters, more frequent inland visitors, were at Snipsic Lake in Tolland on May 16 (CEk). A female Bufflehead was late May 23 at Holly Pond in Stamford (FG). A female Hooded Merganser escorted six young May 5 at a pond in Avon (DLA). Three Ruddy Ducks were on Bantam Lake in Morris on the unexpected date of May 24 (GH).

Inland a Red-throated Loon was on East Twin Lake in Salisbury on April 8 (PCa); two were on Snipsic Lake in Tolland on April 13 (CEk) and one was at Bantam Lake in Litchfield on April 21 (MD). Bantam Lake attracted 23 northbound Common Loons and one Red-necked Grebe on April 7 (DRo). Two Red-necked Grebes were at Batterson Pond on April 26 (PCi), and this species' protracted migration season was illustrated by four flying by Long Beach, Stratford, on

May 24 (FMa, LM).

Northern Gannets were on the move throughout Long Island Sound on April 5, with a high count of 22 from Stratford Point (SK). **An American White Pelican** was found dead on March 3 at Chaffinch I., Guilford (TSh fide DRi). About 30 Double-crested Cormorants were back at a nesting site in the Norwalk Islands on March 17 (LF). Away from regular breeding areas, a Least Bittern was at Peck's Mill Pond in Stratford on May 17 (SK). Singles were at Barn Island, Stonington, on May 19 (BDw) and at Durham Meadows on May 16 (NB). During the course of the morning on April 4, more than 20 Great Blue Herons flew by Stratford Point (TL). A Little Blue Heron was unusual inland April 10 at Nod Brook WMA in Avon (JT). The first Tricolored Heron of the season appeared April 27 at Gray's Creek in Westport (FMa). The season's only report of Cattle Egret came from Stratford on May 28-30 (FMa). The first Yellow-crowned Night Heron was a bit early March 31 in Norwalk (LF), and one on April 14 at Station 43 in South

Windsor was unusual inland (GWI). A Glossy Ibis was a good inland find May 1 at Osbornedale State Park in Derby (PFu). A **White-faced Ibis** visited HBSP April 21-22 (PFu et al.).

A Black Vulture ground nest with eggs was found April 9 in Killingworth (RBI), and a nest that fledged young was observed through the season in an abandoned building in Newtown (WK et al.). Although this species is widespread in the state, few nests have been confirmed. An immature **Mississippi Kite** was over Norwalk on April 21 (LF), and two were seen on May 21 over Great Pond, Simsbury, the area where breeding has been documented in recent years (PDe). A pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks, scarce

and secretive breeders in the state, was acting territorial in Mystic on May 2 (GWi). The latest report of Rough-legged Hawk was April 11 at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks (RT). At Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, 14 American Kestrels on April 5 indicated a migratory movement (TGr).

The seldom-encountered **Yellow Rail** was seen and described by two observers May 14 at a marsh in Harwinton (PCa, WW, sketch). A King Rail was reported calling in a drained beaver pond in Shelton on May 11 (DV). A rail believed to be a hybrid King X Clapper Rail was seen May 22 at McKinney N.W.R. in Stratford (FMa et al.). The increasing reports of **Sandhill Cranes** continued.



*This White-faced Ibis, right, with Glossy Ibises at Hammonasset Beach State Park, was a seasonal highlight.*

Two were in a cornfield in Franklin on March 22 (SW); one flew over Windsor on April 11 (JWo); one flyover was at Talcott Mountain, Avon, on April 18 (PCa, DC); three flew over White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield on May 11 (MD); one was in a field on Flat Hill in Southbury on May 12 (TT); and one was near Woods Pond, Norfolk, in the last week of May (PP).

A Lesser Yellowlegs was early March 13 in Durham (NB). Upland Sandpiper was first detected April 18, when six were present at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, the state's primary breeding location (RT). Semipalmated Sandpipers hit a late peak of 1,000+ on May 31 at Sandy Point, West Haven (PCo). A count of 175 Least Sandpipers May 17 at Wethersfield Meadows was an excellent inland concentration (PCi). Pectoral Sandpipers often arrive in March, but the first two weren't detected until April 8 at Durham Meadows (RP). Three Dunlins were a good inland find on April 22 at Station 43 (PCi), and one was at a pond in East Hartford on May 18-19 (SZ et al.).

One of the most significant finds of the season was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, a species almost unheard of in the Northeast in the spring, on April 28-30 at Rentschler Field, East Hartford (PCi et al.). It was a first spring record for Connecticut. One of the season's best finds was an adult female **Ruff** that was present May 4-17 at McKinney N.W.R. (FMa et al.). A significant high count of 227 Short-billed Dowitchers was made at Sherwood Island on May 23 (FG). Three **Red-necked Phalaropes** were in New Haven Harbor on May 15 (NB); followed by four on Bantam Lake, Litchfield, on May 20 (DRo et al.) and three on Mansfield Hollow Reservoir in Mansfield the same day, right after a thunderstorm cleared the area (PR).

A **Parasitic Jaeger** flew past Shippan Point, Stamford, on May 25 (PDu). A Black-headed Gull was reliable near Leetes Island, Guilford, March 3-23 (KM et al.). Others were at Penfield Reef, Fairfield, on March 22 (JPu); at Southport Beach on March 24 (FMa); two off Stratford on March 26-29 (FMa et al.), and one at Holly Pond,

Stamford, on April 8 (PDu). A Glaucous Gull was a good inland find March 24 at Batterson Pond in Farmington (PCi). A fish kill at North Farms Reservoir in Wallingford resulted in an unusual inland concentration of 33 Great Black-backed Gulls on March 14, with the number building to 40 the next day (MMo, GH). A Forster's Tern was an unexpected find both inland and seasonally at a pond near Rentschler Field, East Hartford, on April 28 (JT). The first report of a Black Skimmer came from Short Beach, Stratford, on May 4 (FMa), followed by a good spring count of 11 on May 22 in East Haven (CL). Between 5:30 and 6:50 p.m. on April 5 an observer at Milford Point saw a total of 10 large alcids, one positively identified as a Razorbill, flying east to west (FG).

In a season in which cuckoos were in short supply, the first Black-billed Cuckoo was early April 26 at East Rock Park in New Haven (NS et al.). The equally scarce Yellow-billed Cuckoo was more timely with a first arrivals reported on May 14 in Avon (SSh) and Stratford (FMa). The latest of six Short-

eared Owl reports came from Station 43 in South Windsor on April 3 (JZ, BT). A good season for Red-headed Woodpeckers produced reports from Nehantic State Forest in Lyme beginning on March 20 (DP); at another Lyme location during May (HG); at Goodwin Park in Hartford on May 10 (JK, BA); at another Hartford location May 17 (ST); at a feeder in East Lyme in May (fide HG); and in Boston Hollow, Ashford, on May 17 (DM).

The first of 10 Olive-sided Flycatcher reports was May 12 at Brooksvale Park in Hamden (CZ, JZ). The first of eight Yellow-bellied Flycatcher reports came on May 9 at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford (PDe). The first Acadian Flycatcher appeared May 1 at Nehantic State Forest in Lyme, a traditional breeding area for this widely scattered species (DP). A Northern Shrike sang briefly at the Donnelly Preserve in South Windsor on March 14 and was present to at least March 23 (PDe et al.). One was at Little Pond in Litchfield on March 18 (DRo). The first report of a White-eyed Vireo came from the Con-

necticut College arboretum on April 24 (BDw). The season's three Philadelphia Vireo reports came from a Harwinton yard (PCa) and a Goshen neighborhood (KF), both on May 20, and Baker-ville Swamp in New Hart-ford on May 26 (PCa). Swain-son's Thrushes continued a recent trend toward early arrivals with the first report-ed on April 30 in New Haven (PDe), followed by several more at various locations on May 1 (JMu et al.). As usual Gray-cheeked (type) Thrush, first reported May 7 in Bran-ford (MSt), produced very few sightings.

A Brewster's Warbler was in Norwich on May 13 (DP). Three Lawrence's Warblers for season the season were at Greenwich Audubon on April 27-30 (MW); in Bethany on April 30 (BDe); and at Saugatuck Falls in Redding on May 6 (MW). One of the few warblers that failed to make an April appearance, a Cape May Warbler was at Stony Brook Park in Suffield on May 8 (PDe). There were only three reports for the sea-son. Four **Yellow-throated Warblers** for the season was a good total. The first was at

Walker's Pond in Milford on April 29-30 (SSp et al.), fol-lowed by one in Cornwall on May 2 (FZ), one in Norwich on May 13 (DP) and one at Bent of River, Southbury, on May 26 (KE). A Cerulean Warbler, a species seldom encountered away from known breeding sites, was at East Rock Park in New Haven on April 24 (KW). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was reported from Belding Preserve in Vernon on May 5 (DH). A hike through good woodland habitat in Guilford produced 17 Worm-eating Warblers (DP). This wide-spread woodland nester is easily overlooked because of its high-pitched insect-like song. A fallout in fog on May 24 at Stratford Point produced he season's only report of Kentucky Warbler (SK). May 25 brought a flurry of Mourning Warbler sight-ings (KB, DS et al.) with a total of 12 reported from then through the end of the season. A Yellow-breasted Chat, scarce as usual, was at Wilcox Park in Milford on May 5 (FG).

The season's only **Sum-mer Tanager** visited a Guil-ford yard on May 2 (JMH).

An immature male **Western Tanager** was reported from Milford Point on May 19 (SMr). A Grasshopper Sparrow was found May 1 at Northwest Park in Windsor, marking the first time since 2006 that this state endangered species had been on territory at that location (PDe). The first two Nelson's Sparrows, a species difficult to detect in spring, were at Barn Island, Stonington, on May 25 (CEL). The first migrant Vesper Sparrow was in Hartford North Meadows on April 13 (PCi). The first northbound Lincoln's Sparrow visited a feeder in Colebrook on May 5 (WM). The season's two **Blue Grosbeaks** were at the West Hartford powerlines on May 16 (SZ) and at Walden Preserve in Salem on May 28 (BM). **Dickcissels** are regular fall flyovers at Lighthouse Point in New Haven, but one flying over there on April 29 was unexpected (FG).

Two Baltimore Orioles that wintered in a Norwalk yard were still present April 13 (LF). Following a winter in which northern finches were in short supply, 20

White-winged Crossbills visited a yard in Harwinton on March 1 (PCa). Late ones were at a feeder in Glastonbury to April 17 (BA) and in a Stratford yard May 5-12 (JG). A flyover Red Crossbill on April 24 in Boston Hollow, Ashford, was unique for the season (FG). A late flurry of Common Redpolls produced flocks of c. 60 at Long Beach in Stratford and c. 25 at Sandy Point in West Haven (KM), both on March 1. A flock of 70+ was in a Coventry yard on March 14 (DM); 50 were in a Canaan yard March 11 (IS, TSc) and 60 were in Winchester on March 12 (DRo). A number of lingering Pine Siskins included two adults escorting two juveniles in a Sterling yard on May 31 (RDi). A single Evening Grosbeak flew over an Avon yard on April 25 (DLA).

Correction: The peak number of Rusty Blackbirds at Jim and Carol Zips feeders in Hamden was 152 on Jan. 29, 2011. An incorrect number was reported in the Winter Field Notes in Volume 31 Number 3.

Observers: Susan Ainsworth, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade (RBa), Pat Bailey, Steve Ballantine (SBa), Rob Ballinger (RBl), Bill Banks (BBa), Barney Bontecou (BBa), Tom Baptist, Charlie Barnard (CBa), Mark Barriger (MBa), Ray Belding (RBe), Bob Bitondi, Nick Bonomo, Chris Bosak (CBo), Andy Brand (ABr), Steve Broker (SBr), Milan Bull (MBu), Alex Burdo (ABu), Kevin Burgio, Dana Campbell, Paul Carrier (PCa), Paul Cashman (PCs), Mona Cavallero, Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Linda Clancy, Jan Collins (JCl), Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe, Peter DeGennaro (PDn), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Angela Dimmitt, Randy Domina (RDo), Mike Doyle, Robert Dixon (RDi), Jim Dugan, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Charlie Dow, Cythia Ehlinger (CEh), Carl Ekroth (CEk), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Debby Ethridge, Sarah Faulkner, Patrice Favreau (PFa), Bruce Finnan, Kevin Finnan, Larry Flynn, Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, Paul Fusco (PFu), John Gallagher, Frank Gallo, Ted Gilman (TGi), Art Gingert, Hank Golet, Tina Green (TGr), Ted Groom (TGm), Lorraine Gunderson, Tony Hager, A.J. Hand, Greg Hanisek, Shelley Harms, Ernie Harris, Roy Harvey, John Himmelman (JHi), Pam Holden, Jan Hollerbach (JHa), Dan Huber, Julian Hough (JHo), Brenda Inskeep, S.H. Johnston, Jay Kaplan, Gil Kleiner, Wendy Knothe, Scott Kruitbosch, David Lawton (DLa); Twan Leen-

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## PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Mark Szantyr

If you have been working on this photo quiz since you received your journal, you have undoubtedly arrived at the conclusion that the quiz bird is a sparrow, based on the bill shape and overall streaky plumage. The combination of characters, finely streaked breast, streaky crown with an obscure but evident stripe in the fore-crown, reasonably distinct wing-bars, and a proportionately long tail eliminates virtually all the sparrows that show streaked breasts as adults.

Should we consider juveniles? Unlike many species we observe during fall migration, species like shorebirds, herons, and gulls, sparrows (and warblers too for that matter), only hold their juvenal plumage on their breeding grounds and sometimes just a bit beyond. If this bird is in solidly a juve-



nal plumage, it is likely a bird that is the result of a reasonably local nesting. Most sparrows are streaked below as juveniles. Is there anything about this bird that might provide clues to what it will look like as an adult?

A close look at the tail shows it to be notched. The crown, though streaked, seems familiar. Oh look! There is a very distinct line from the base of the bill back through the dark eye that is resulting in what appears to be a pale supercilium.

Notched tail, dark line through a dark eye, a capped look, white wing bars....could this be a young Chipping Sparrow?

Yes it can be. Shortly after fledging, Chipping Sparrows can be very heavily streaked below. Still built like the adults, their rich warm buff coloration and the streaked crown and breast can suggest other species. The streaking can even suggest a *Carpodacus* finch. This streaking rapidly thins out as the summer progresses and in late fall the birds show clean under parts.

This juvenal Chipping Sparrow was one of several at my feeders in Ashford, Windham Co., and was photographed on 23 June 2011.



Photo Challenge No. 75

# 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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