

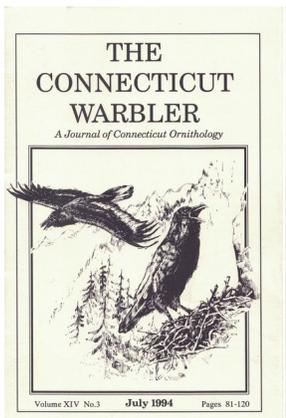
# COA Bulletin



## Connecticut Bird Atlas Update Chris Elphick

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Atlas Update p. 1-3
- Block Busting Fun p. 3-4
- Events & Workshops p. 4
- Photos of Confirmed Breeding Records p. 5-6
- Selected Rarity Photos p. 7
- Summer Workshops p. 8
- 25 Yrs Ago in TCW p. 9
- Hog Island Scholarship p. 10-11



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

As the summer winds down, the Connecticut Bird Atlas is at a pivotal point. Approximately half way through the planned work, we are coming to the end of the second breeding season. We have at least some data for 583 (97%) of the 601 atlas blocks. We have over 15,000 checklists submitted, and are approaching a quarter of a million individual records. And we have good evidence for substantial distributional changes – some increases, some decreases – in a wide variety of species.

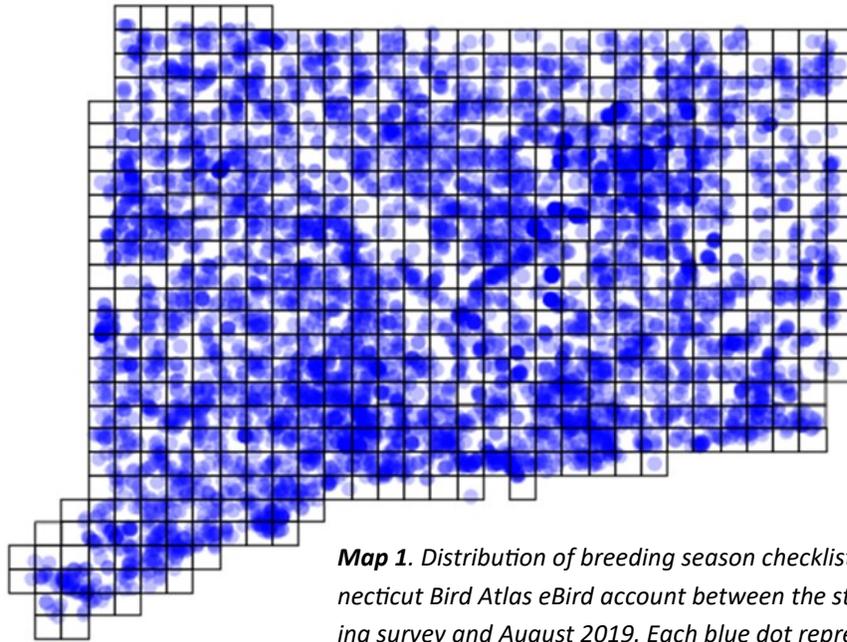


At the same time, there is still much to do. Less than a quarter of blocks have more than 30 species recorded, and over 60% of blocks have fewer than 16 confirmed species. As was true for the previous atlas, sampling is lowest in the eastern half of the state, especially New London county. Over the winter, we plan to work on identifying blocks that can be considered “complete” in order to ensure that we direct as much effort as possible to poorly surveyed areas, and encourage more attention to confirming species.

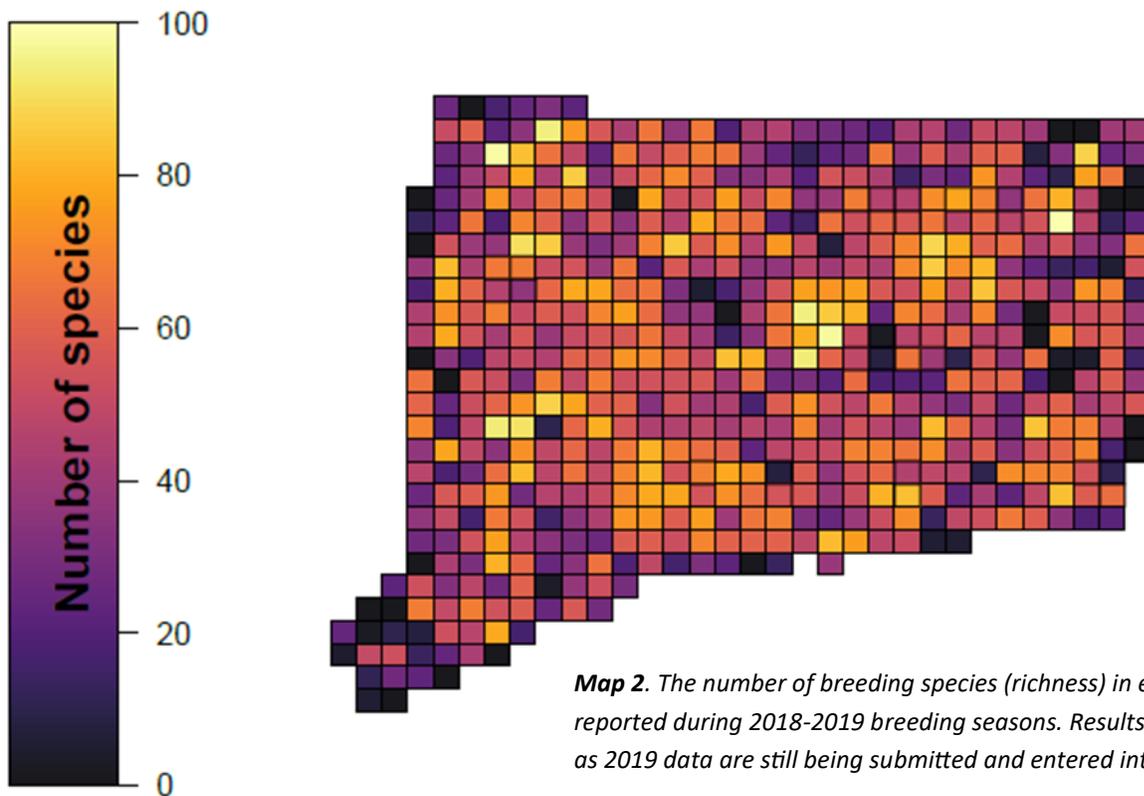
Of course, we also have an upcoming winter field season starting in November. Winter surveys are certainly more of a challenge than breeding season work. But understanding where birds are, and why they are there, during non-breeding periods is one of the biggest gaps in our understanding of the state’s birds. Even though one typically finds fewer birds (admittedly, often many fewer!), determining just what conditions are needed during the harsher conditions of winter, is one of the most important ways in which people can contribute importantly to the project.

Over the next month we will be working to get all of the data from last winter posted on the atlas web site, so that people can see preliminary winter species lists for each block prior to the start of the winter season. We will also be entering summer data submitted on paper or via scanned field cards, so that we can update the breeding season numbers. We hope to be able to share some of this information at the volunteer appreciation event at Hammonasset on 5 Oct (10-12, at the pavilion at Meigs Point), and will be posting more on the project web site and blog over the course of the winter.

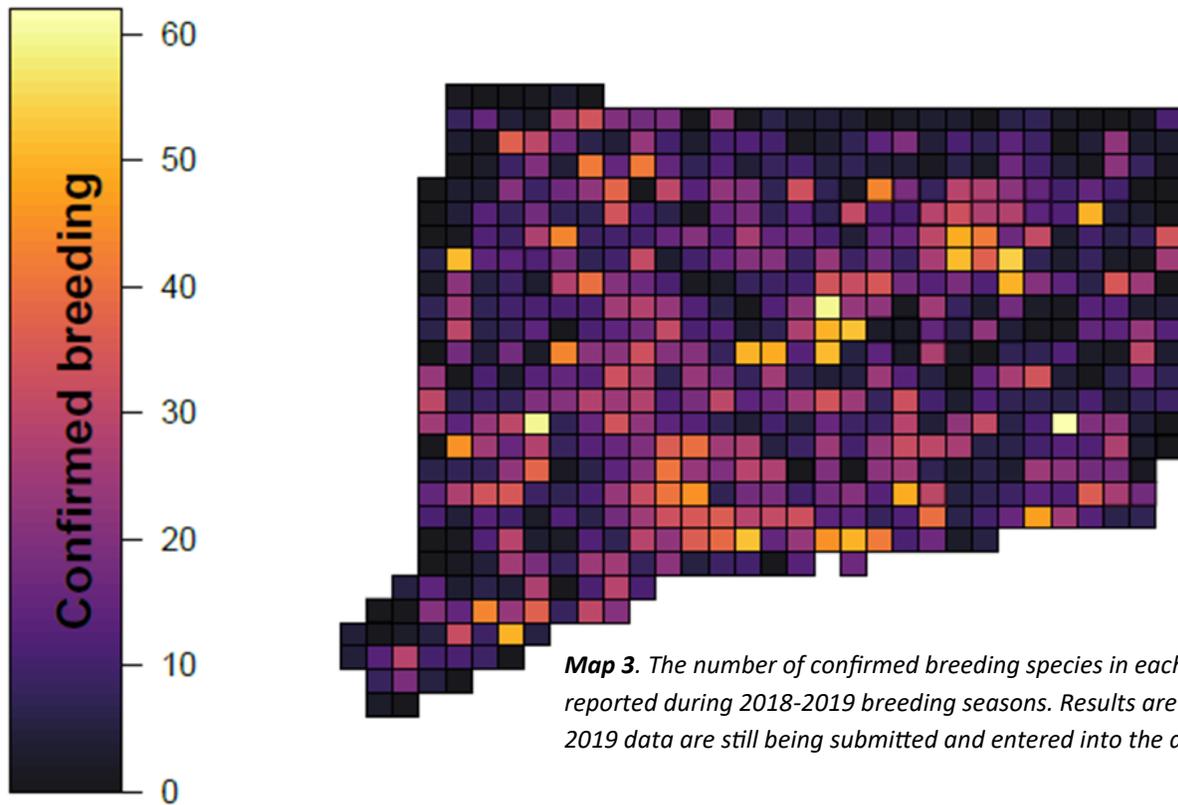
The following pages present three maps illustrating status and progress.



**Map 1.** Distribution of breeding season checklists shared with the Connecticut Bird Atlas eBird account between the start of the 2018 breeding survey and August 2019. Each blue dot represents a location where at least one checklist has been submitted.



**Map 2.** The number of breeding species (richness) in each atlas block, reported during 2018-2019 breeding seasons. Results are preliminary as 2019 data are still being submitted and entered into the database.



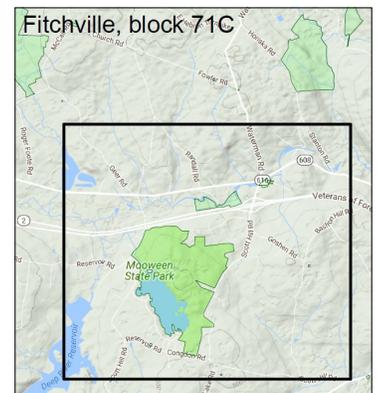
*Map 3. The number of confirmed breeding species in each atlas block, reported during 2018-2019 breeding seasons. Results are preliminary as 2019 data are still being submitted and entered into the database.*

**Atlas Block Busting: What fun!!**

**Chris Loscalzo, COA President**

Participating in the Connecticut Bird Atlas has many rewards. Not only are we contributing to an important science project, we are also finding new places to go birding within the state. My wife and I have been birding throughout the state in recent years (as “empty nesters” we have had lots of opportunity for recreation) but the atlas project has afforded us the opportunity to explore areas that we have never been to before. Every time, we have been pleased and delighted to find these new scenic locales, full of birds. Our atlas work has taken us to many parts of the state, including the scenic northwest and, more recently, the eastern hills.

I selected two unclaimed atlas blocks in Eastern CT this year to explore. I chose them based upon how they looked on a map. One had a large lake and wooded park and the other had a river coursing through it, bisecting the block. We enjoy birding by kayak and that made these two blocks good choices for exploration. We weren’t disappointed. The first block, 71C, included Mooween State Park and the adjacent Red Cedar Lake. Hiking through the park, we found Pileated Woodpecker, Scarlet Tanager, Veery, and several warbler species, including a pair of breeding Yellow-rumped Warblers (a bit of a surprise at this location). We also saw a Broad-winged Hawk perched on a dead branch in the woods being mobbed by numerous birds. The lakeside was inhabited by many of the birds you might expect, including Spotted Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird and Warbling Vireo.



Exploring the other block was just as much fun: we kayaked up and down the Quinebaug River south of Canterbury hearing and seeing many bird species along the way. We enjoyed it so much that we decided to “bust

the block” north of the one we had chosen by paddling up the river through that block, too. Those two blocks, 58C and 58E, hadn’t gotten any coverage until we got there in our boats. We saw lots of birds along the river. We learned that Yellow-throated Vireos really like riparian habitats and we also learned that Louisiana Waterthrushes are not limited to small woodland streams. They can be found along the edges of wider rivers, too. Our visits this spring and early summer added at least 60 species to each of the three blocks we spent time in. We’ll visit them again next year to fill in some of the blanks on the list and confirm more species as breeders, if we can. I highly recommend block busting. Go birding somewhere you haven’t gone before. See what birds are there. Make a contribution to an important bird census within our state. And have fun!!

Chris Loscalzo, COA President

## Upcoming Events and Workshops

(these and many other events are also listed on the COA web site’s **Birding Calendar**: <https://www.ctbirding.org/connecticut-birding-events-calendar/>)



### Annual Migration Festival

**Sunday, September 15th, 8 AM - 3 PM**

**Lighthouse Point Park, 2 Lighthouse Rd, New Haven CT**

This festive event is sponsored by the New Haven Department of Parks, Recreation and Trees; the NHBC; and other fine organizations. There will be hawk watching, bird banding, live raptor demonstrations, bird walks, and more. Chris Loscalzo will lead a walk at 8 AM, Mike Horn will lead a 9:30 AM walk, and Flo McBride will lead a kid’s walk at 9:30 AM. Additional details will be forthcoming on the New Haven Bird Club web site.

### COA Raptor Workshop

**Sunday, September 15th, 9 AM-10 AM**

**Lighthouse Point Park, 2 Lighthouse Rd, New Haven CT**

Learn how to identify raptors as they pass by in fall migration. You’ll learn how to identify the various buteos, accipiters, eagles, vultures, and falcons that can be observed in CT. The workshop will be held during the Migration Festival, run by the New Haven Parks Department.

Leader: Steve Mayo (coordinator of the Lighthouse Point Hawk Watch).

Contact person: Chris Loscalzo at [closcalz@optonline.net](mailto:closcalz@optonline.net) and 203 389-6508



### Connecticut Bird Atlas Volunteer Appreciation Fall Get Together

**Sunday, October 5th, 10 AM - 12 PM**

**Hammonasset Beach State Park, Pavilion at Meig’s Point**

We will give updates of the Atlas Project, data, trends and stats; present the winter survey protocol; and present awards and door prizes. Refreshments will be served. Stay tuned for more announcements.



### The Big Sit!

**Saturday, October 12 or Sunday, October 13th**

**Various locations across the state**

Saturday: New Haven Bird Club (the originator of this event), Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society

Sunday: Hartford Audubon Society



### COA Sparrow Workshop

**Saturday, October 19th, 8 AM - 11 AM (Rain date, Sunday, October 21)**

**Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison**

Improve your identification skills of the numerous sparrow species that are found in CT by attending this workshop. We will have an indoor review session followed by a walk in the park. We’ll review how to differentiate between similar species and gain a greater appreciation for this remarkable group of birds. October is the height of sparrow migration and we may see ten or more species on the trip. Meet at the nature center parking lot at the east end of the park at 8 AM. The workshop is free and open to COA members and non-members alike.

Leaders: COA sparrow experts

Contact person: Chris Loscalzo at [closcalz@optonline.net](mailto:closcalz@optonline.net) and 203 389-6508



### Photo Documentation of Confirmed Breeding Records

FL = recently fledged young  
NE = nest with eggs  
NY = nest with young



FL-Hooded Mergansers, Pistol Creek Park, Berlin (Jannie Shapiro, 5/26/19)



NE-Wild Turkey, Bent of the River Sanctuary (Glen Somogie, 5/1/19)



FL-Clapper Rail, Hammonasset Beach SP (Jason Reiger, 7/16/19)



FL-American Oystercatcher, Milford Point (Bill Batsford, 7/10/19)



FL-Great Horned Owl, Boulder Knoll, New Haven county (Alan Malina, 5/1/19)



NY-Barred Owl, Brett Woods Open Space (Tina Green, 5/29/19)

(All photos are from eBird checklists)

### More Photo Documentation of Confirmed Breeding

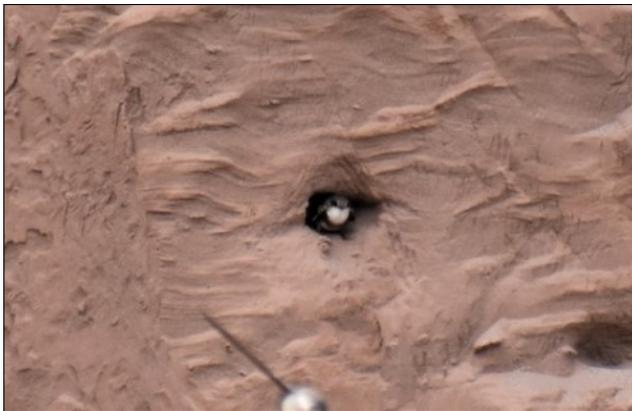
CN = carrying nesting material  
 ON = occupied nest  
 NY = nest with young  
 FY = feeding young  
 CF = carrying food



NY-Pileated Woodpeckers, The Woodlot Sanctuary—  
 Avalonia Land Trust (Rick Newton, 6/8/19)



ON-Red-eyed Vireo, Bantam Lake, Point Folly  
 (Jannie Shapiro, 6/9/19)



ON-Bank Swallow, Portland (Sharon Dellinger, 6/17/19)



CF-Winter Wren, Steep Rock Preserve (Chris Wood,  
 6/8/19)



CN-Cedar Waxwing, Swamp Road, Woodbury  
 (Chris Wood, 6/22/19)



FY/FL-Orchard Oriole, Quinebaug Valley Fish  
 Hatchery, Plainfield (Bob Dixon, 7/8/19)

(All photos are from eBird checklists)

## Selected Late Spring and Summer Rarities



Wilson's Phalarope, Hammonasset Beach State Park  
(Bill Batsford, 5/22/19)



American Avocet, Hammonasset Beach State Park  
(Jason Rieger, 7/9/19)



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Trout Brook Valley Conserva-  
tion Area (Avery Cotton, 6/1/19)



Red Crossbills, Benedict Pond (Frank Mantlik, 7/16/19)



Magnificent Frigatebird, Hammonasset Beach  
State Park (Shannon Skalos, 8/17/19)



Marbled Godwit, Sandy Point (Gillian Smits, 8/9/19)

(All photos are from eBird checklists)

### Summer COA Workshops

#### Shorebird Workshop August 25, Milford Point



Slides like the above were shown by Patrick Comins during the lecture portion of the workshop, here illustrating the differences between Long-billed and Short-billed Dowitchers. Attendees then hit the beach to further hone their skills at shorebird identification:

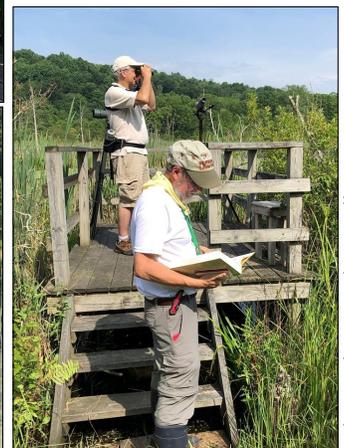


These workshops are free to members and non-members of COA. If you are not a current member and find them to be useful learning experiences, please consider joining COA

#### Joint COA/ CT Botanical Society Workshop August 25, Wimisink Preserve



About 20 birders and botanists braved the heat and visited the Wimisink Preserve in Sherman for the joint COA/CBS workshop. They saw a lot of nice fresh water marsh birds including numerous Green Herons and Wood Ducks. There were interesting plants for the botanists to enjoy. The birding highlight was a Mississippi Kite that soared over the parking area at the end of the walk.



Photos by Deirdra Wallin

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

Volume XIV, No. 3 (July 1994)

### **Snow Geese in the Atlantic Flyway, by Charles Barnard, Jr.**

On October 20, 1993, a flock of about 90 Greater Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens atlantica*) landed at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, Connecticut. . . One of these birds wore a neck collar that later proved it had been banded August 9, 1993 on Bylot Island in the eastern Canadian Arctic - about 475 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

The Snow Goose is divided into two races. In addition to the Greater, there is also the Lesser Snow Goose (*C. c. caerulescens*). There is also a separate color phase of the bird known as the "blue goose." Although the blue phase was considered rare in the early 20th century, it now constitutes a majority of some populations of the Lesser Snow Goose (ref. given). . . The blue phase is still thought to number considerably less than one per cent of the Greater Snow Goose population (ref. given).

We know . . . that the Greater Snow Goose has a very distinct nesting range and a migration route which brings it over Connecticut during both spring and fall on its way to and from its primary staging area - the St. Lawrence River around the Cap Tourmente in Quebec.

It is estimated that around the beginning of the 20th century the Greater Snow Goose numbered between two or three thousand (Palmer 1976 Handbook of North American Birds, Vol. 2). Their numbers have risen to more than 400,000 in less than a full century. This tremendous rise in population can be attributed to the following factors: the signing of the migratory bird treaty in 1916; the banning of Greater Snow Goose hunting in the United States from 1931 to 1975; the creation of a system of wildlife sanctuaries; and a series of years which provided favorable conditions on the nesting grounds (ref. given).

Generally, Greater Snow Geese begin to pass over Connecticut in mid-October with their numbers increasing into November (DEP ref. given). They often fly at high altitudes - 2,000 feet and above. Many apparently fly non-stop to Southern New Jersey and Delaware Bay from the St. Lawrence (Bellrose 1976. *Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*).

The primary winter range of Greater Snow Goose is between southern New Jersey and coastal North Carolina. The Snow Goose winters in Connecticut only in small numbers. Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in Connecticut from 1972 to the present totaled from six to 86 birds (Connecticut DEP and *The Connecticut Warbler*). Late March and early April once again finds Greater Snow Geese passing over Connecticut en route to their St. Lawrence River staging area. Finally, it is back to the Arctic, the land "beyond the North Wind" for another nesting season. [Ed's Note: *Birds of North America* states, "The species is composed of three fairly discrete regional breeding and wintering populations - western, midcontinent, and eastern - with birds from the same breeding population using similar staging and stopover areas each year while migrating south along roughly parallel lines of longitude to their wintering grounds." Connecticut CBC data for "blue goose" show that this color morph has occurred on only 9 statewide CBCs since 1950-51 for a total of 15 individuals - the highest count being 5 birds in 1972-73.]

### **Maximizing Wild Bird Numbers on Small Properties, by George A. Clark, Jr.**

People who enjoy watching birds often wish to increase the number of wild birds in the vicinity of their residence. If a property is large, encompassing hundreds of acres, for example, then it is conceivably possible to manage the landscape to maintain or create a diversity of habitats including fields, brushy areas, woodlands, marshes, ponds, which will be attractive to a greater variety of birds. Most Connecticut residents, however, do not live in such tracts. More often, home sites include two acres or less, so these are the focus of this article.

Conclusions: Provision of food, water, cover, and nest sites, while minimizing disturbance of birds can lead to a considerable increase in the number of birds that will frequent a small property, but obviously space requirements such as territoriality place limits on how many individuals can be attracted at any one time. What is achievable depends greatly on the particular situation, so actions to be undertaken will necessarily differ somewhat from one property to the next. In general, for most properties an increase in the number of avian visitors is achievable. [Ed's Note: George Clark's article, by far the best description ever published in *The Connecticut Warbler* of how one can manage one's property to attract birds, includes sections on feeding stations, natural foods, water, cover, nest sites, and avoiding disturbance. The complete article is essential reading for anyone wanting to attract birds to a yard.]

[Ed's Note: See also articles on nesting American Oystercatchers on Falkner Island, by James M. Zingo; aberrant nest-building by a Great Blue Heron, by Roland Clement; Connecticut Field Notes, by Jay Kaplan; and the photo challenge, by Louis Bevier. Cover art of Common Ravens is by Paul Carrier. The July 1994 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* can be seen in its entirety at the following link to the COA website. Download Volume 14, and scroll down to pages 81-120.]

<http://www.ctbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTWarblerVolume14.pdf>

### **A Note of Appreciation from George Zepko Hog Island Camp Scholarship Recipient, Kayleigh Goberman**



**The adventure begins!**

Hog Island was an amazing experience. I had the privilege of meeting dedicated birders and enthusiastic conservationists who made me feel even more excited about the activities and birding we did. We observed puffins on Eastern Egg Rock, saw Red-winged Blackbirds and a family of Canada Geese at a marsh, and spotted a White-winged Crossbill in the mist on the peak of Borestone Mountain. Every day was packed with fun nature-related activities!

The day I arrived at camp, we introduced ourselves before boarding a boat for Hog's Island. A hike to our cabin through the evergreen forest covering the island allowed us to see many bird species, including Mallards, Herring Gulls, Red Crossbills, and even a juvenile Bald Eagle! Upon arriving at our cabin, the Crow's Nest, we dropped off our backpacks and headed down to the lodge for pre-dinner activities. Journals were handed out for us to sketch wildlife and take notes in. We went to bed excited by the



**View of Hog Island**

news that we would be sailing out to Eastern Egg Rock the next day.

The ride out to Eastern Egg Rock on Monday was filled with amazing sights! Harbor seals lounged on rocky islands and stared at us as we sailed by. Terns and gulls soared in the air and perched on rocks long before we reached the island. Bald Eagles and Ospreys perched in trees, while Common Eiders, loons, and ducks floated in the water. Lobster pot buoys bobbed all around the boat right up until we arrived at Eastern Egg Rock. At the island, we were delighted to see puffins floating in the water and flying overhead with fish in their beaks. In addition to the puffins, we saw Roseate, Arctic, and Common Terns wheeling around in the air and sitting on rocks with Double-crested Cormorants. Female Common Eiders watched over chicks in the water near the rocks. We even saw a Common Murre swimming along in a group of puffins and Black Guillemots! It was even more

fascinating to see researchers on the island in gear to protect against the terns swarming them. On the way back, we had the chance to see old lighthouses, a shipwreck, and even the contents of a lobster pot. When we got back, we returned to the mainland to do some birding at fish ladders and at a freshwater marsh. We saw a female Baltimore Oriole at the fish ladders, while Bobolinks, Red-winged Blackbirds, and a family of Canada Geese were the highlights of the marsh. After we got back, we spent the rest of the time before dinner doing bird related activities, such as identifying wing and tail feathers.



Common Murre and Atlantic Puffin



Decoys

Tuesday marked our last day on Hog Island. For most of the morning, we explored tide pools on the mainland and sketched what we found in our journals. While we were there, we spied a Northern Parula singing by its nest in a pine tree covered in old man's beard lichen. After the tide pools, we walked up to the Mad River Decoy building to learn how decoys were made. The decoys are used to encourage birds to stop and live in certain areas. Decoys were used to re-establish puffins at Eastern Egg Rock. Then it was time to travel to Borestone Mountain! Along the way, we stopped at another freshwater marsh, where we saw several Great Blue Herons and even a Sandhill Crane. We also pulled over to observe Purple Martins in birdhouses, Cedar Waxwings, Bank Swallows, and luna moths. Lunching next to a lake we saw a Downy Woodpecker. Upon arriving at Borestone, we hiked up the long road and took boats across two lakes to the cabins. Several hummingbird feeders attracted Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, which were very fun to observe. We filled the late afternoon exploring and drawing in our notebooks before dinner.

On Wednesday, we traveled to various freshwater habitats to look for birds. We saw a Common Merganser in a river before driving to a series of marshes and lakes. These areas were lush with wildlife including Cedar Waxwings and Hooded Mergansers. Another lake afforded us sightings of loons and sounds of a Blue-headed Vireo singing. The evening activity was an interactive talk about how you sometimes need to be able to draw birds quickly before they fly away. I enjoyed the activity, especially since we got to try to draw photos of birds in magazines.



Red-winged Blackbird

Our last full day at Borestone was spent hiking up to the peak of the mountain. The steep slope had us scrambling straight up in some areas. We stopped for a break near a small pool of water on top of the mountain's ridge before proceeding to the summit. We spent time up there resting and observing our surroundings. It was amazing to see the trees disappearing into the persistent mist all around us; it felt like we were in the clouds. A few White-winged Crossbills wheeled around above us and perched in trees, chirping at us continuously until we left. The fog cleared up by the time we reached the cabins at the foot of the mountain, allowing us to appreciate our last afternoon before we left the next day. Our last evening was around the campfire, roasting s'mores, playing hacky sack, engaging in camper led activities and reflecting on our incredible week. As we were finishing up, the sun set over the Borestone lakes and on our days at Hog Island Audubon Camp.

*Many thanks to the COA and Mr. Zepko for providing me with this amazing experience.*

*Kayleigh Goberman*

[Note: all photos by Kayleigh Goberman]

COA offers one Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship annually to nurture interest in bird study and conservation among young birders. Applicants must be a resident of Connecticut, ages 14-17, and must submit a written application along with two letters of reference prior to the application deadline of January 31.

## CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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