



COA Bulletin

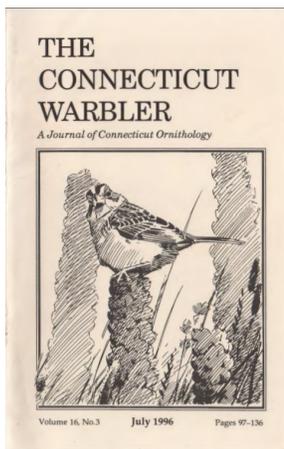
Volume 36, No. 3

Fall 2021

Connecticut Ornithological Association

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

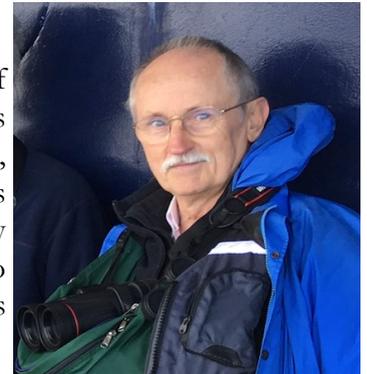
- President's Message p. 1-2
- In Memoriam: G. Zepko p. 2
- Winter Atlas p. 3
- Eastern Screech-Owls p. 4
- CTBirds torch-passing p. 5
- New Look for TCW p. 6
- Workshops/Events p. 7
- Photos of rare birds p. 8
- 25 Yrs Ago in TCW p. 9-10
- COA Membership p. 11



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.

President's Message Tom Robben, President COA

I am very grateful to have been elected President of COA for the two-year term that began in March of this year. The Connecticut birding community is exceptional, with lots of friendly cooperation across all parts of its spectrum. In my new leadership role, I will work closely with my fellow COA officers and board members to continue to serve the state's birders and all its bird clubs and other related organizations.



COA has developed a strong portfolio of resources and services for the Connecticut birding community, which include (1) publishing the preeminent statewide journal of ornithology, *The Connecticut Warbler*, augmented by a quarterly newsletter, the *COA Bulletin*, (2) convening the COA Annual Meeting (hopefully in person in 2022), (3) providing the final-word in official state bird records, with the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC), (4) administering the widely used CTBirds listserv, alerting birders to rarities and other bird observations as well as enabling free exchanges of useful information, (5) offering educational workshops in advanced bird identification, (6) maintaining a functional bridge to DEEP, UConn and the overall ornithological community in CT and beyond, and (7) advocating for worthy conservation goals locally and regionally.

We strive to attract and educate new birders, such as with our recent New Birders Field Trip in Long Island Sound, and to do that in collaboration with all the other birding organizations in the state. We support and advance the science of bird-study, such as our upcoming (Nov. 6) conference on Birds, Science and the Environment. And of course we aspire to be true to and supportive of the COA objectives articulated in our 1984 founding documents:

- To promote an interest in and an appreciation of birds;
- To disseminate accurate scientific information about birds and their habitats;
- To help facilitate understanding and cooperation between the ornithological community and the general public;
- To encourage, through research, the advancement of avian knowledge;
- To maintain and publish ornithological records; and
- To promote the protection and preservation of important bird habitats."

With respect to our organization's roots, we recognize and respect everyone who laid the historical foundations for COA and its work, highlighting many of those

birders from around the state (including Roger Tory Peterson) who led to COA's birth in 1984 and enable its continuing work. We can even trace the influences of historical leaders in ornithology and conservation, such as Ludlow Griscom, Frederick Lincoln, Aldo Leopold and Joe Hickey, on COA.

Thank you, to every Birder in our state, in our strong friendly community, from the rank beginner (we welcome you), to the world-traveling birder who can accurately identify several thousand species of birds (we are very impressed), to the professional ornithologist (we appreciate and support you, and science). Your cooperation and collaboration and support make all this possible. And if you have any suggestions for how to make this organization better, please let us know.

Tom Robben
President, COA

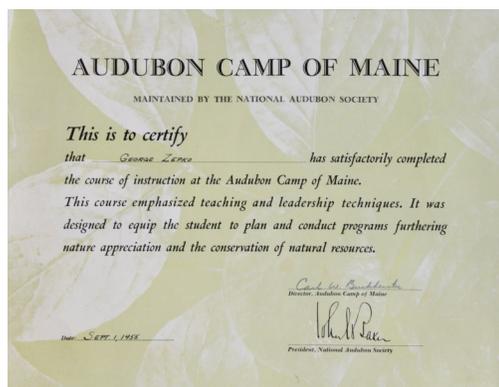
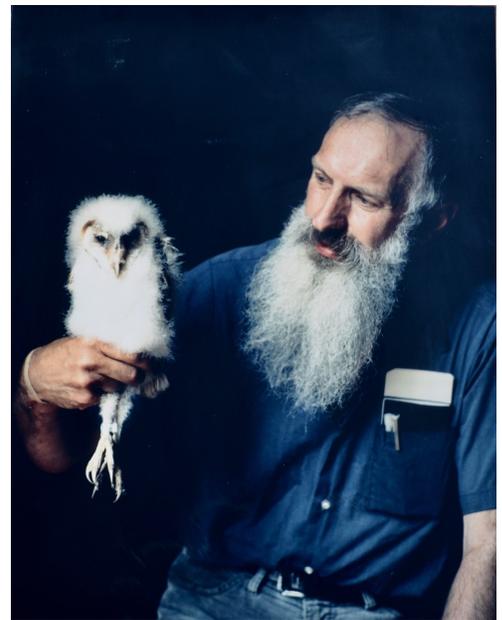
IN MEMORIAM

George W. Zepko, 1936-2021

George W. Zepko made significant and lasting contributions to the appreciation, study, and conservation of birds in Connecticut. As manager of user services at Wesleyan University's computing center, George coordinated all the data processing of Connecticut's first Breeding Bird Atlas during the five years of statewide field work, 1982 to 1986. His long-term monitoring of the state endangered Barn Owl included banding young in three Middlesex County barn and water tower nest sites. George's support of the National Audubon Society-sponsored Connecticut Christmas Bird Count included participation in a record number of counts statewide, including more than 50 consecutive years on the Westport, CT CBC.

Most characteristically, George believed in giving back to others. In 1955, he was the recipient of a scholarship to the National Audubon Society Nature Study Camp for teachers and adult students at Hog Island, Maine.

In the last several years, George has establishing a permanent endowment for future young recipients of the George W. Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship. For these and other accomplishments, the Connecticut Ornithological Association presented George with the Mabel Osgood Wright Award for 2020. George Zepko's insightful philosophy, wise counsel, gentle sense of humor, and steadfast friendship continue to be treasured by those who knew him.



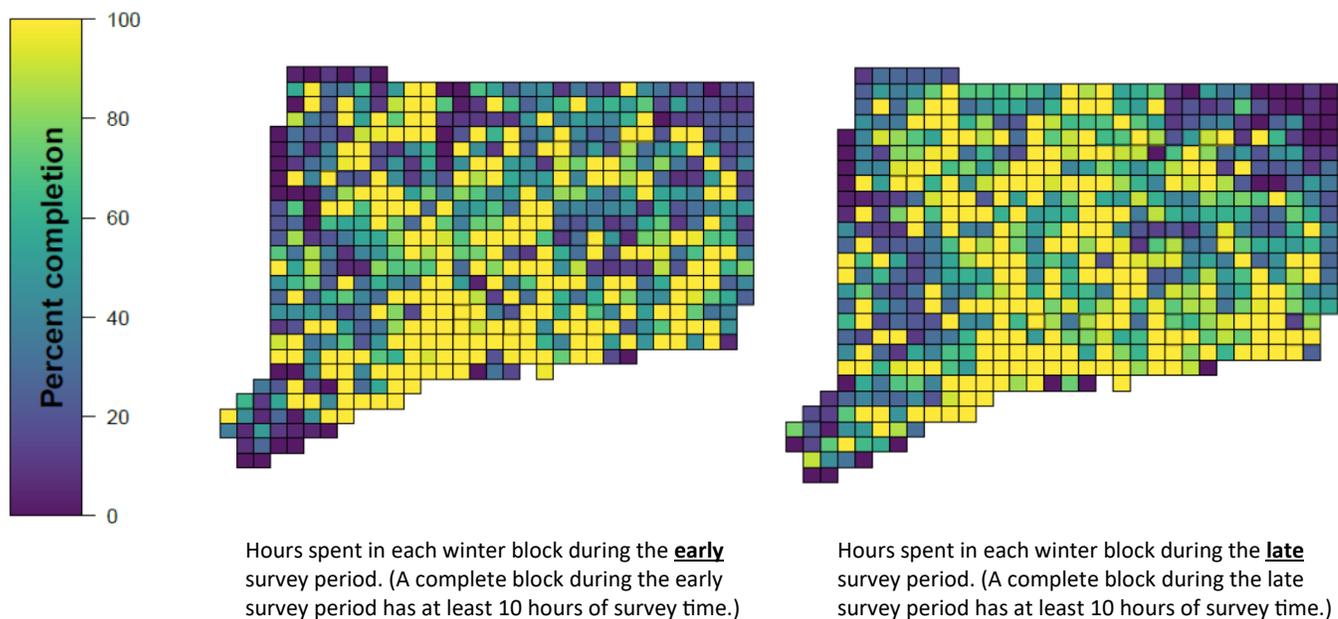
Where and How to Assist with the Winter Atlas

By Min Huang



As we enter the final year and winter of data collection for the CT Bird Atlas (nice metaphor, huh!), we wanted to provide some guidance, similar to the breeding season, for those of you who were wondering how best to contribute your valuable time and efforts.

We have a number of blocks that need survey hours in both the early (November-December) and late (January-February) survey periods. Those blocks are shown below. Remember, the darker the block, the more survey time it needs! Let there be light!!



We know that winter birding, particularly in January and February isn't nearly as fun as when the weather is nicer and the diversity of birds is greater and in some instances, much more colorful. However, there are so many great birds and places to visit in the winter!!

For those that are going to continue to engage in winter block surveys, we remind everyone that these are timed 1-hour surveys. Yes, this is a bit more of a hassle (cold weather, protocols)!!! But, these timed surveys really enable us to use and interpret the data that you are collecting in the proper way. As has been the case since the onset, please find and survey as many different types of habitat that you can within your chosen survey block. Just remember to **submit each 1-hour survey as a separate checklist!!**

Winter block busting can also be an extremely productive and fun activity. Competition among groups across blocks for most species in an hour survey and then pooled across a morning or afternoon of surveys can make for a fun group prize pursuit to be tallied and awarded over lunch or dinner after surveys. Nothing like earning a free beverage or meal by tallying the most birds!

Other ways to contribute valuable data to the winter Atlas are to do waterbody or shoreline surveys. These aren't timed surveys and ideally are conducted from vantage points that provide good viewing of the given waterbody. Also, if possible, these types of surveys are done periodically throughout the winter (early and late). These data can be submitted as checklists, just **be sure to put into the comment section what kind of Atlas survey it is** (e.g. inland waterbody).

(Details on the Connecticut Bird Atlas, including instructions on conducting surveys and other information, can be found at <http://www.ctbirdatlas.org/>)

Eastern Screech-Owls – Woodbury/Roxbury Count Circle – 1973-2020

By Angela Dimmitt

The Woodbury-Roxbury CBC was started in 1964, and detailed records of the annual counts are archived with the COA. In 1971, the circle was moved slightly south, partly to increase the potential of open water and also to eliminate overlaps with neighboring counts. In 1982, a summary of the count was issued, detailing when species were first recorded, high and low counts, norms, etc. This article is based mainly on counts from 1971, which is coincidentally when the first Eastern Screech-Owls were reported, the use of screech-owl tapes having recently become popular. Many variables come into play, such as the weather that day as well as the preceding week, and indeed month; whether the ponds and rivers are frozen or open; the irruptive nature of some species, and to some extent the participants, whether they go out owling before dawn or not, and also the use of screech-owl tapes.

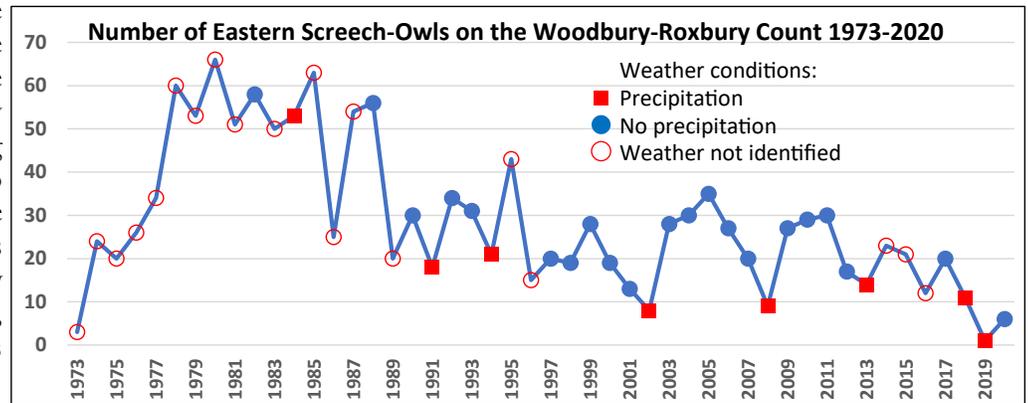
In 1978 this keen group of birders who had been doing the Woodbury-Roxbury count together decided to form the Western Connecticut Bird Club. They also established the June Breeding Bird Count.

Screech-Owl numbers started slowly in the early 70s and quickly rose through the 80's. After 1988, however, numbers began to fall, and since 2000 they have remained lower, with some exceptions. One definite factor is the weather: owls do not like rain, sleet or wind, and days thus affected have consistently resulted in low numbers. Snow, however, does not bother the little owls.

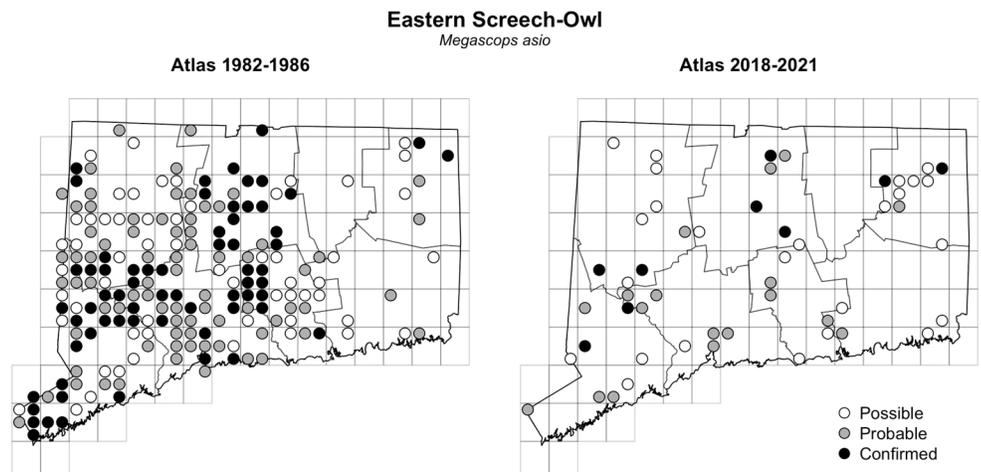
I personally have been doing the Woodbury-Roxbury Christmas (and also June Counts) since the early 80s (records unfortunately incomplete), and I have noticed a decrease in the number of Screech-Owls in my area within the circle, sometimes correlating with the numbers for the circle overall.

This is hardly a scientific survey, but the numbers are as recorded. I included nighttime temperatures from 3 AM and broad nighttime weather (there are a few omissions). There is nobody around now who participated in the early 70s to report on activity then, but clearly enthusiasm for Christmas counts become stronger in about 1976.

Ed Hagen and Buck Jenks were the prime movers, and they have remained so ever since. The whole circle is covered, usually by the same individuals covering the same areas year after year, so presumably they know where owls are likely to be found. Thus the numbers should be relatively reliable and reflect the situation, taking into account variables as listed above.



In addition, the 2018-2021 Connecticut Bird Atlas project shows a dismal picture of Eastern Screech-Owl breeding in Connecticut compared to the Atlas conducted in 1982-1986. Very few birds were confirmed nesting, and a fraction of those “probable” or even “possible” nesters were reported in the current Atlas.



CTBirds Moderator Changing of the Guard

Roy Harvey has been running our CTBirds listserv as the primary moderator non-stop since he helped get it started in 2007.

Roy began his work for Connecticut birding when he started taking over the daily rare bird report from Dori Sosensky in 2004. He handled that solo for many years until its demise in 2015. But it was this CTBirds mailing list that he helped establish in 2007, and moderated since, that has been his greatest contribution.

The participation of Connecticut birders has made CTBirds the success it has been, and Roy's stewardship has been key to that success. Roy retired from his full time moderating duties at the end of August. Let's thank Roy for all those years of non-stop service to Connecticut birders! Roy, you have done an extraordinary job supporting one of COA's most essential services. Thank you!

Chuck Imbergamo took over from Roy as moderator on September 1, 2021, so let's welcome Chuck to this crucial job! Chuck is a long-time Connecticut birder (sparked by a 1970s Great Gray Owl) and is enthusiastic about helping COA and Connecticut birders by moderating the CTBirds listserv. Thank you, Chuck.

Roy and Chuck have been overlapping closely for the last two months, so Chuck is already hitting the ground running.

Less visibly but equally important, Steve Morytko manages back-end support for CTBirds, COA's website and membership services, and many other COA IT-related resources. Thank you, Steve. CTBirds is a free service supported by COA members. Please consider joining COA if you are not already a member.

Tom Robben and Chris Wood
President and Vice President
COA



Roy Harvey enjoying some time away from his computer and moderator duties (photo by Steve Broker)

ctbirds@lists.ctbirding.org
For discussing birds and birding in Connecticut

By month Sep 2021 Sort by Most Recent

Thread subject	Messages	Active members	Last Activity
Caspian Terns, Millford Pt	1 messages	TM	Thu, Sep 16, 2021 9:14 PM
Am Golden Plover	3 messages	GH CC CI	Thu, Sep 16, 2021 7:51 PM
Canary	1 messages	SM	Thu, Sep 16, 2021 4:35 PM
Am Golden Plover in North Windham	1 messages	PR	Thu, Sep 16, 2021 2:16 PM

New Look for Our Flagship Publication, *The Connecticut Warbler*

COA members: the latest issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* is now published. Did you notice something different about the July 2021 edition of *The Connecticut Warbler*, the journal of the Connecticut Ornithological Association?

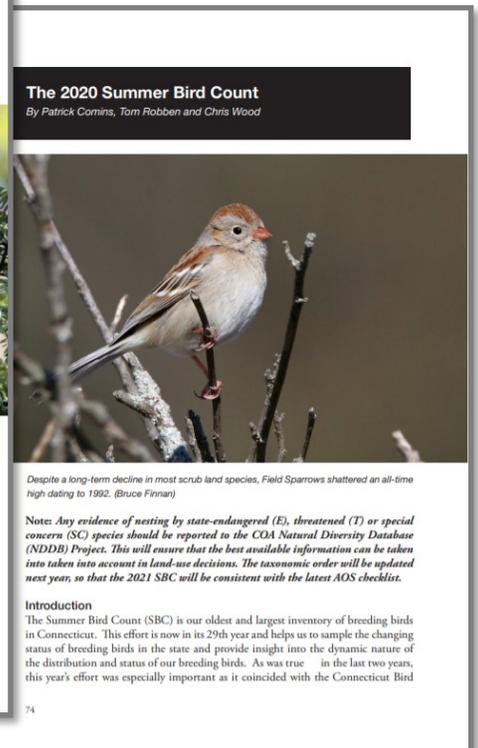
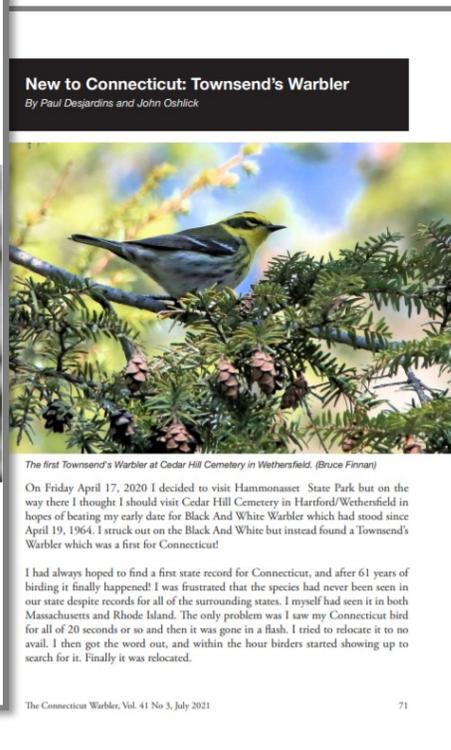
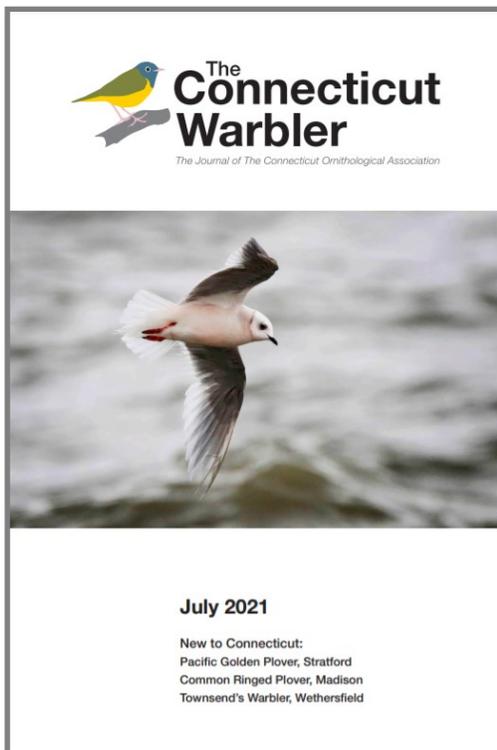
The publication continues its strong tradition of providing outstanding science-based articles about Connecticut's birds. But in this issue, we feature a major redesign that highlights the new logo and more synchrony with the COA website, namely additional details on the 2020 Summer Bird Count.

Julian Hough did a full redesign that includes a change in the publication's paper, an upgraded use of photos, and new fonts, typefaces, etc. Julian created the design, and Manny Merisotis executed the layout and pagination for the July issue. Greg Hanisek, editor of *The Connecticut Warbler*, signed off on the final product with Yale Printing & Publishing, and membership chair Larry Reiter sent our mailing list of members. Together with the efforts of all the authors, the publication took a lot of hard, detailed and cooperative work to get it done.

Look for *The Connecticut Warbler* in the mail. Members can also sign into the website and see it in our Members Only section.

We hope you are pleased with the way *The Connecticut Warbler* turned out. We are!

Cynthia S. Ehlinger for Connecticut Ornithological Association
cynthia.ehlinger@gmail.com



COA Workshops & Events

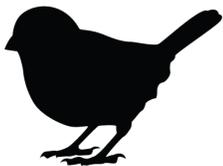
For many years, COA has offered a variety of educational workshops to its members and the general public. You can always find the latest information on what's coming up on the COA web site at <https://www.ctbirding.org/events/>.

Successful Summer Shorebird Workshop Held

Patrick Comins, executive director of the Connecticut Audubon Society, held a virtual (via Zoom) shorebird identification workshop on August 13, attended by about 65 participants. With concerns about nesting shorebirds at Milford Point and on-going pandemic precautions, this year did not feature a field component. This online Shorebird ID Workshop was recorded and is available to COA members on the Members Only section of our website (<https://www.ctbirding.org/members-only/>) through September 30, 2021. You must log in to access the Members Only content.



Sparrow Identification Workshop - October 16-17



We are planning the annual fall COA sparrow workshop for October 16th and 17th. Chris Loscalzo will be giving a Zoom presentation the evening of the 16th, and then we hope to offer walks in various parts of the state for up to 10 birders at each location on Sunday morning, the 17th. So far, we have 5 leaders lined up to lead walks, but more are being sought (preliminary lineup is Joe Bear at Allen's Meadow, Ken Elkins at Bent of the River, Greg Hanisek at Hop Brook, Chris Loscalzo in Woodbridge and Chris Wood at Sherwood Island SP). Stay tuned for further details on CTBirds and the COA web site as plans firm up.

Birds, Science and the Environment Online Conference - November 6

On November 6th, COA is presenting an online conference on Birds, Science and the Environment. It will feature about a dozen short talks on bird science topics and projects conducted by a wide spectrum of birders, from young students to professional ornithologists. Much of the data for these projects, it turns out, comes from birders who submit observations to eBird, Christmas Bird Counts, Summer Bird Counts, the state Atlas, Breeding Bird Surveys, and other standardized counts! Ornithologists and other scientists will later use and analyze our data to learn more about birds, their distributions, their movements, their changes over many years, and our shared environment, etc. There is no charge for viewing this conference, but you will need to register (after which full details will be emailed to you)... You can join and leave this meeting at any time, staying for all the presentations, or for just a few. Please go to the COA web site after October 1st <https://www.ctbirding.org/events/> to register and get more information.



Sea Duck Workshop - November

Chris Loscalzo will be leading a workshop on sea ducks during the month of November. Look for details on timing, locations, and logistics to be announced through the COA web site and CTBirds.

Rare Bird Gallery



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Woodbury
(Erin and DT Bowen, 1 Jun 2021)



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Rocky Hill Meadows (Bill
Asteriades, 31 Aug 2021)



Little Egret at Grace Salmon Memorial Park (Frank Mantlik, 12 May 2021)



Roseate Spoonbill at The Sound School, New Haven (Frank
Mantlik, 31 July 2021)



Swallow-tailed Kite, old State Hospital site, Preston
(Dave Provencher, 12 May 2021)



Black-necked Stilt at Barn Island, Stonington (Christopher
Veale, 31 May 2021)



Gull-billed Tern at Milford Point (Frank Mantlik, 4 June
2021)



Sedge Wren at Duck Marsh Preserve, Pomfret (DT Bowen, 12
Jun 2021)

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

Volume XVI, No. 3 (July 1996)

Recent Taxonomic Changes Affecting the Connecticut State List of Birds, by George A. Clark, Jr.

The number of bird species recorded from Connecticut abruptly increased by at least three species with the recent publication of the Fortieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds (AOU 1995). The aim of this review is to point out initial effects of that Supplement on Connecticut ornithology, including 1) changes of common and scientific names, 2) species newly recognized and known to have occurred in Connecticut, and 3) comments on sources providing information on the identification of the newly recognized species.

For the names of North American birds, the standards have been set for more than a century by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list Committee, which is composed of ornithologists with extensive experience in avian taxonomy and nomenclature. Over the decades, changes in the AOU Check-list have reflected both new discoveries about the birds and refinements of ideas on what constitutes a species. In recent decades species limits for birds have been determined by whether populations would freely breed with one another if they should come into contact in nature.

Knowledge of North American birds has increased with the passage of decades, and changes in the AOU Check-list reflect new discoveries about 1) vocalizations, 2) geographic ranges, and 3) DNA, the hereditary material of the birds. Because additional new discoveries are likely to continue to occur, still further changes in the Check-list are to be expected.

[Ed's Note: George Clark highlights AOU Check-list scientific and common name changes in 1996 for several bird species found in Connecticut. He describes at length the splitting of four species previously found on the Connecticut state list, including the following. Gray-cheeked Thrush now is split into two distinct species, the more geographically restricted Gray-cheeked Thrush and Bicknell's Thrush. These thrush species are recognized as having well separated breeding ranges and wintering grounds. Rufous-sided Towhee is split into our commonly observed Eastern Towhee and the Spotted Towhee, the latter widely distributed in western North America. At present, the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC) recognizes a single state record of Spotted Towhee, an individual observed by many at Groton Long Point from December 31, 2005 through mid-February 2006. Sharp-tailed Sparrow is split into the more southern Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and the more northern Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. The first breeds in Connecticut, while the second is observed here only in migration. Their common names have been shortened in more recent years. Northern Oriole is split into Baltimore Oriole and Bullock's Oriole, as "this split represents a return to a classification used earlier in this century." In 2021, ARCC has updated the official list of bird species found in the state, reflecting the last 25 years of advances in our understanding of bird phylogeny and taxonomy.

Site Guide: Mansfield Area Birding Tour, by Arnold Devine and Dwight G. Smith.

This birding tour includes parts of Mansfield and Windham in central-eastern Connecticut. The Mansfield region offers a number of interesting sites for birders who want to explore the interior of eastern Connecticut. Mainly rural and residential, much of the topography is in the form of open habitat featuring large areas of farmland, mowed and cultivated fields, thickets, and scrub. These open areas are interspersed with several interesting water bodies.

Several birding areas in this site guide are particularly good for migrants, especially during the fall (starting in July) migration. One location, the dike separating the Windham Airport from Mansfield Hollow State Park, received increase coverage in 1995, which resulted in the discovery of numerous rarities including Long-billed Curlew, Baird's and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Sabine's Gull, and Northern Wheatear.

[Ed's Note: Buzz Devine and Dwight Smith include highly informative descriptions of the following birding sites: (1) Storrs Area Tour - "W" Parking Lot; Horse Barn Hill Road; Mirror Lake. (2) Mansfield Hollow State Park - Willimantic Reservoir; Windham Airport and Dike; Windham Atlantic White Cedar Swamp. See *Connecticut Birding Guide*. 1996. Thomson-Shore, Inc. Buzz Devine and Dwight G. Smith. Illustrations by Mark S. Szantyr.]

Prey Patch Selection in Titmice, by John P. Roche and William E. Glanz.

Chickadees and their relatives (the titmice, family Paridae) are small, active birds that have high surface to volume ratios. In addition, most species overwinter in cold climates. Small size and low winter temperatures combine to cause titmice to lose heat quickly to the environment, heat that must be replaced with energy from their food. These phenomena, which continually subject titmice to the threat of starvation (reference given), produce strong selective pressures for efficient foraging behavior.

Food items are often clumped together in "patches" in the environment (reference given). Therefore, for titmice to efficiently gather energy in a patchy environment, they must select patches in which to forage and must decide when to leave those patches. Important questions about the choice of prey patches in titmice include the following: (1) Has selection produced traits permitting titmice to recognize, and concentrate their efforts on, higher quality patches? and (2) If titmice can select richer patches, what is the mechanism with which they do so? In this paper, we review what has been learned about these questions.

[Ed's Note: Roche and Glanz considered a number of models of patch selection behavior of Titmice. They submitted this article from the Center for the Integrative Study of Animal Behavior, Indiana University. The "Literature Cited" section is extensive.]

See also "Books on Birds" by Alan H. Brush, "Connecticut Field Notes (Winter, December 1, 1995 through February 29, 1996)" by Greg Hanisek, and "Photo Challenge" by Louis Bevier. The cover drawing of Grasshopper Sparrow is by Barry W. Van Dusen. The July 1996 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* can be seen in its entirety at the following link to the COA website. Download Volume 16, and view pages 97-136.

<https://ctbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTWarblerVolume16.pdf>



Join COA or Renew Your Membership Today!

There are many services COA provides for no fee, but we can't do it without your help. The CTBirds list, free workshops, two great quarterly publications, web services, and behind-the-scenes support for birds and habitat throughout the state. Your support helps us to continue to maintain and enhance these services, pursue our mission, and promote avian interests in our state.

Join On-Line

You can now conveniently join or renew on-line on the COA web site! To get started, you must first create a COA account. Registering for an account ensures that COA has your preferred and current contact information. Instructions are here: <https://ctbirding.org/join-us/registration/>

Instructions on joining COA or renewing are found at: <https://www.ctbirding.org/join-us/>

2021 membership options are as follows:

- Individual \$25
- Student \$15
- Family \$35
- Contributing \$50
- Donor \$75
- Benefactor \$100
- Life \$1,000
- Gift \$25

Payment by US Mail

While we prefer that members purchase new memberships and renewals online (above), especially during the current pandemic, we will continue to accept forms sent by US Mail. Mail will be processed, but on a somewhat irregular basis.

Send your contact information and a check payable to:

Connecticut Ornithological Association

314 Unquowa Road

Fairfield, CT 06824

Include name, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, and email address which are used for quarterly delivery of The Connecticut Warbler and COA Bulletin.

You may also download a [COA Membership Form .pdf file](#).

Please contact the COA membership chair (membership@ctbirding.org) for questions about membership.

**CONNECTICUT
ORNITHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**

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Summer Bird Count Compilers	Patrick Comins, Tom Robben
Great Backyard Bird Count	Patrick Comins
Mini-Grants	Kathy Van Der Aue

The COA Bulletin is the quarterly newsletter of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, published in February, May, September, and December. Please submit materials for the next issue by November 1, 2020 to the editor at amdasinger@gmail.com