



COA Bulletin

Volume 36, No. 4

Winter 2021

Connecticut Ornithological Association

Enjoying the Christmas Bird Count

Steve Mayo

The Christmas Bird Count is our most popular form of citizen science. Participants get exercise and fresh air, spend time with old and new friends, learn a lot about local hotspots, get hours of birding experience and contribute to bird conservation. Counts are fun and inclusive. Novice birders can and do make significant contributions. The experience is even more rewarding if you prepare and follow a few tricks of the trade during the big event.

Study in advance. Learn to identify the common birds in flight and at a distance. In flight, can you tell the differences among the 3 common blackbirds? What about House Finch vs. Purple Finch? Relatively common icterids and finches can be special birds on some counts. The only look you may get is a distant flight glimpse or a couple flight call notes. What about backlit Cedar Waxwings as opposed to European Starlings? Flock shape and flight impression are two cues. What about Ring-billed vs Herring Gull? This takes experience. Spend time looking at subtleties in shape and wing beat. Study field marks of the winter half-hardies and the quarter-hardies. Learn the unusual birds you may encounter. For warblers, review Yellow-rumped, Pine and Palm Warblers so that you can make a quick ID. Familiarity will also help you to focus in on field marks if your bird is one of the even rarer, lingering warbler species. There's still time. Open a book and then get out and go birding.

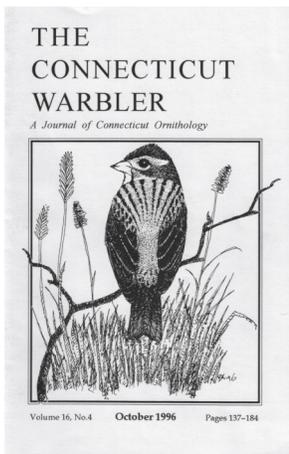
Again, review the unexpected: House Wren, Northern Shrike, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-Crossbill, King Eider, Cave Swallow, Rough-legged Hawk. While you're at it you might as well flip through a field guide and look at the really unexpected: Black-throated Gray Warbler, Painted Bunting, Western Tanager, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Bohemian Waxwing, Varied Thrush, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Gyrfalcon. These represent only a tiny fraction of the unusual and rare bird species encountered on Connecticut CBCs.

Be familiar with all the common call notes of your local, resident birds. For example, the "chink" call of a White-throated sparrow resembles a similar, more metallic call of the Northern Cardinal. The White-throat's "chip" call resembles the "chimp" call of the Song Sparrow. Listen to recordings of all the wonderful call notes of the woodpeckers. Nailing down call notes will help you rapidly sort through and tally more birds throughout the day and alert you to the unfamiliar.

Scout the count area ahead of time for opportunities. Habitat, food, and shelter are critical to these early winter birds. Even though the circle is huge (177 square miles), it's harsh out there and there's not an unlimited area for birds to survive. By the time of the CBC, native grass and weed seeds are getting scarce. Stop whenever you see these. Maybe only patches of goldenrod, mugwort, ragweed, and phragmites remain, but these may hold birds. Be sure to spend time at any sumacs, Eastern Red Cedar, pokeweed, crab apples, Mountain Ash, winterberry - anything that may still be bearing berries or fruit.

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

Scout but stay flexible. If the winds suddenly pick up, check sheltered areas. In the rain, visibility may force you to focus on more open areas or readily seen feeders. If you're lucky enough to have a thaw, check seeps and wet areas for woodcock and snipe.

Check the CT Bird Atlas for the blocks you may be entering. Most counts are done in December (early winter) and a couple counts are in January (late winter). The preliminary species lists for early and late winter show what birds are still needed. Keep track of what block you are in. Incidental observations are welcome. If possible, fit your Christmas counting into other protocols, such as the 1-hour survey, shoreline, roosts or open water surveys. It's a little extra effort but try to double the contribution of your CBC sightings.

Don't undercount, don't be sloppy. For example, don't write down 3 juncos and then ignore/forget the 10 you saw while driving to the next spot. Stay alert and challenge yourself to focus on and attempt a good ID, for every glimpse and call note. When you are lucky enough to encounter large flocks of birds, keep a careful count. An accurate count means you will look at every bird and possibly find a rarity within the flock. For Starlings, check for Red-winged Blackbird. For Greater Scaup check for Lesser Scaup, or Ring-necked Duck, or even Tufted Duck.

Don't overcount. Stay sensitive to the peregrinations of some of the count circle species. It's a bit of an art. You don't have to count a circling Red-tailed Hawk every time you get out of the car. Is it that pale adult or dark juvenile you'd just seen? Or didn't you just see one before with that missing left secondary? Also, re-visiting the same areas (coastal areas on different tides, feeding areas) is a great tactic to add more species to the daily list. Log only the larger individual numbers of the two sets of observations.

Pay attention to bird feeders. If no one is feeding in your area, then feed the birds yourself. Cheap mixed high-millet seed seems to work fine. Toss a few piles of seed out for a day or two prior to Count Day. Practice your own form of "Julenek," the Norwegian custom of leaving out sheaves of wheat or oats for the birds at Christmas. You can do the same with bird seed, prior to and during, your CBC.

Bird in small groups, cover a lot of ground. Volunteer to split out from your larger group and check or re-check an area. Party hours are key. And if you can't cover the whole day, volunteer for a couple of those critical morning hours. After all, you'd only be sleeping. Every hour helps.

Plan your day. Long Island Sound and inland open water areas are good in the morning. The morning is also the time to log in all those chip notes. Afternoon temperatures just might encourage a very late season insect flight. Open areas are good at late afternoon, where you can scan the skies and treetops for flying birds returning to roosts.

A lot of count circles are highly developed, but that doesn't mean there aren't birds. Change your understanding of, increase your definition of, an ecotone. The edges of parking lots, overgrowth on school yard and parking lot fences, cemetery edges and brush piles, are all places for birds. And often these suburban areas seem to have more birds than some larger, less developed wooded areas.

Bring a camera or get a friend to bring a camera. As field sketching is now a lost art, it's important to be prepared should a "really good bird" show up during the day. Photos are perfect for reviewing field marks and IDs, checking on flock quantities, documenting the fun events of the day, and providing submissions to our ARCC.

Finally, check in with the compiler. Perhaps your CBC preparation resulted in finding a good Count Week (3 days before and 3 days after the CBC date) bird prior to the Count Day. And afterwards, find out what was missed. You might know a particular species of bird is around but the Count Day weather was abysmal. Go get it, afterwards. And speaking of afterwards, the CBC season is one of the best times of the year to tick all those rarities that pop up on the eBird digest. If you haven't been the one to discover them first on your CBC, go get them later. You've earned them!

122nd ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT CONNECTICUT 2021-2022 SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2021

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

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

Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (CTWR) Compiler: Ken Elkins, Audubon Center at Bent of the River, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury, CT 06488 kelkins@audubon.org 203-623-6625, (Western Connecticut Bird Club)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2021

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

Hartford, CT (CTHA) Compiler: Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019, jaybrd49@aol.com 860-707-5246 (cell), 860-693-0263 (days), 860-693-0157 (evenings) (Hartford Audubon Society)

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

Lakeville-Sharon (Trixie Strauss CBC), CT (CTLS)

Compiler: Zachary Adams, za4250@hotmail.com, Sharon Audubon Center/National Audubon Society, 325 Cornwall Bridge Road, Sharon, CT 06069, http://sharon.audubon.org/ 860-364-0520 or 717-926-3926

Napatree, RI-CT-NY (RINT) Compilers: Shai Mitra, Biology Dept, College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314, shaibal.Mitra@csi.cuny.edu and Glenn Williams, 221 Pequot Ave, Mystic, CT 06355 gswilliams9@yahoo.com

Norwich, CT (CTNO) Compiler: Allison Black, NorwichCBC@gmail.com, 860-334-9959

Oxford, CT (CTOX) Compiler: Roy Harvey, 320 South Meriden Road, Cheshire, CT 06410-2962, rmharvey@snet.net 203-651-9818 (cell)

Quinnipiac Valley, CT (CTQV) Compilers: Melissa Baston, mbaston@gmail.com 860-995-0656 and Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, cfolsom.okeefe@audubon.org 203-233-0535 (Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society)

Salmon River, CT (CTSR) Compilers: Sharon Dellinger, rsdell@comcast.net 860-803-1626, and Doreen Jezek, dajezek@gmail.com 859-492-1656 (Mattabesock Audubon Society)

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2021

Barkhamsted, CT (CTBA) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 97 Hunter Court, Torrington, CT 06790 dtrippjr@gmail.com (Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

Stratford-Milford, CT (CTSM) Compiler: Steve Mayo, 27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524 rsdmayo@sbcglobal.net 203-551-1707

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2022

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

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

[NOTE: Snow Date = Sunday, January 2, 2022]

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2022

Bristol, CT (CTBR) Compiler: Jack Swatt, 226 Long Swamp Rd, Wolcott, CT 06716, jswattbirds@gmail.com 203-592-4686

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

Old Lyme-Old Saybrook, CT (CTOL) Compiler: Matt Bell, mbell@ctaudubon.org,

The Big Sit! Final Results 2021

Craig Repasz

All eBird checklists from The Big Sit! held on October 9 and 10, 2021 have been received, and numbers have been tallied. We are using the eBird criteria for determining numbers of species and taxa. This year we have a tie for most species recorded by a circle. The two leading circles, with 97 species each, are the Smith Neck Road Circle in Old Lyme, Connecticut, and the Big Sit Zeiss Birding Team, Segerstads fyr, in Kalmar län, Sweden. The circle in Connecticut is new this year, and the circle in Sweden had participated in years past. Congratulations to both groups!

Other circles at the top are Elfin Forest Preserve--Lupine Point Overlook in California with 95 species; The Lost Tinamous Team at Finca La Gracia in Guatemala with 91 species; the Brookline Bird Club's circle at Hellcat Dike in the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts with 86 species; and the circle at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge at Hennepin and Hopper Lakes in Illinois, also with 86 species.

Connecticut had seven circles this year: Filley Rd in Haddam, Salt Meadow SBM NWR, Milford Point SBM NWR, Chaffinch Island Park in Guilford, Light House Point in New Haven, Jared Elliot Preserve in Guilford, and Smith Neck Road in Old Lyme. The three circles that were held on Sunday had a challenging day with rain in the afternoon. Some of these circles have been a part of the Big Sit! since the beginning.

The Big Sit! was started by the New Haven Bird Club 1992. Nine years later Birdwatcher's Digest took over management of the event and with their resources grew the event to 234 circles in ten countries.

Due to changes at Birdwatcher's Digest, management of The Big Sit! was given back to the New Haven Bird Club last year. NHBC is a small club and had to use a combination of approaches to keep The Big Sit! going. We built a website to inform the participants, we used eBird for data handling and Facebook for comments, chats, and photos. Please continue to chat with us and other circles on Facebook, share your pictures of scenery, birds and birders, and your snacks.

Many organizations still use The Big Sit! to raise funds for conservation. The Circle at Milford Point raises funds for the Connecticut Audubon Society.

eBird added an important aspect to The Big Sit! eBird offers a simple user interface, an ease of effort tracking, an ability to capture GPS coordinates and location management, and accessibility to the data that could be invaluable to scientists studying bird migration on a continental scale. Data can be exported from eBird and shared as a spreadsheet.

Most of the Connecticut Circles were held on public lands: National Wildlife Refuges, Nature Preserves, and Wildlife Sanctuaries. It is important to point out how important these lands are to bird migration. The birds certainly bring us to beautiful places.



Big Sit! Circle at Light House Point Park New Haven



Chaffinch Island, Guilford, CT, Photo by John Himmelman

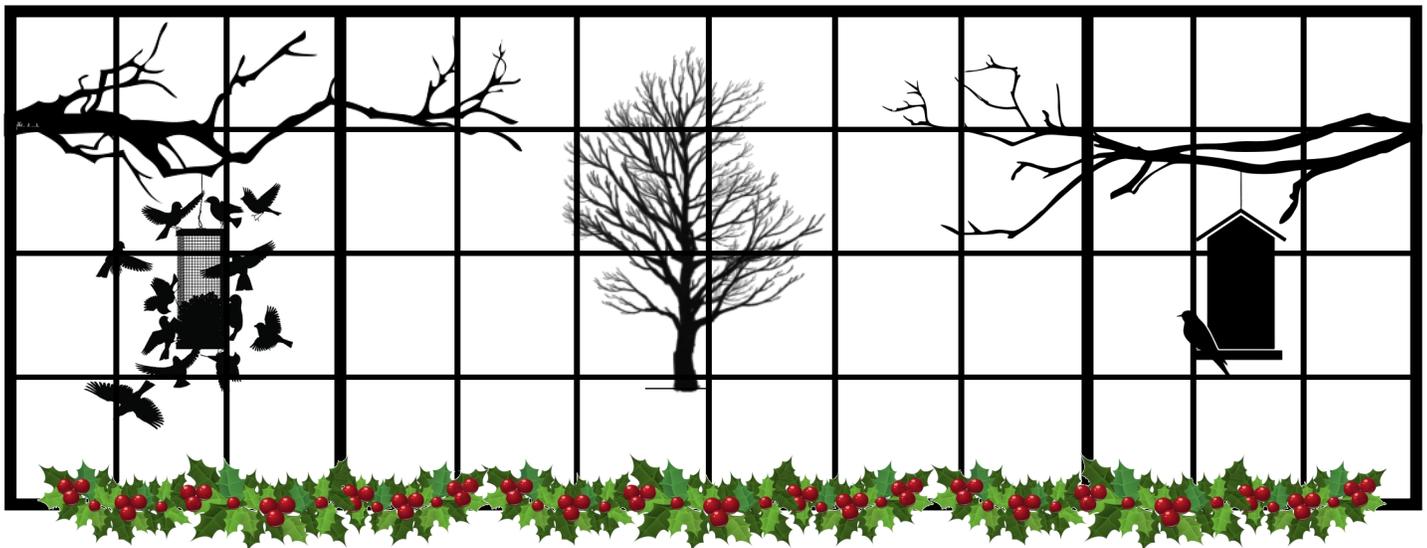
This year The Big Sit! had four countries participating: Australia (1 circle, 26 total species), Guatemala (1 circle, 91 species), Sweden (1 circle, 97 species), and the United States of America (92 circles, 349 species). Hopefully in the future we can increase the number of circles and attract Big Sit! circles in other countries and on other continents.

THE RESULTS

- Number of Circles in 2021 (includes circles that reported on both days) – 95 (102 in 2020)
- The Best Overall Count (most species identified by a single circle). Tie with 97 species: Smith Neck Rd, Old Lyme CT, and Big Sit Zeiss Birding Team, Segerstads fyr Sweden
- Longest Duration of a Circle – Shavers Creek, Huntington, Pennsylvania USA, 22 hours and 45 min
- The Big Sit! Total Number of Species Reported – 573 (472 in 2020)
- The Big Sit! Total Number of Birds Reported – 535,767 (194,484 in 2020)
- Most Common Species was the American Crow, reported by 72 circles (78% of all circles). In 2020 there was a tie between American Crow and Turkey Vulture, reported by 79 circles (77% of all circles).

There are a few technical issues that the New Haven Bird Club will try to work out. For example, eBird has a problem with an open stationary checklist for long periods of time, and we still need to find a better way to record participants. We will continue to improve on The Big Sit! in the future. Our hope is to grow the event across all countries and continents so we can have a valuable snapshot of bird migration across the planet and have fun at the same time.

Please let us know if you have comments or suggestions. Email us at TheBigSitNHBC@gmail.com. Please visit the website at www.thebigsit.org for a complete report.



COA Mini-Grant Applications Due 1/15/22

The deadline for 2022 Mini-Grant applications is midnight on January 15th, 2022.

The grants in amounts of up to \$1,000 are available for funding of projects which “benefit Connecticut’s birds.” Successful projects have been such things as osprey nest platforms and habitat improvements using native, bird friendly plants. Grants are typically awarded at our COA annual meeting in March. If we are again unable to gather in person, we will send the checks after the committee makes its decisions in mid-February. Full details and applications can be found at <https://www.ctbirding.org/resources/coa-mini-grant/>

COA Mini Grant Application Form
Applicant Name:
Address (City, State, Zip Code):
Amount of Funding Requested:
Project Title:
Brief Description of Project (attach additional sheets, if needed):
Specific Goals and Objectives of Project (attach additional sheets, if needed):
Deliverables (include a list of specific products/activities to be accomplished in Project. Attach additional sheets, if needed):

Fall Photo Gallery



**Pink-footed Goose, 9th District Road, Somers
(Jeff Fengler, 31 Oct 2021)**



**Cattle Egret, Seaside Park, Bridgeport
(Aidan Kiley, 30 Oct 2021)**



**Black-legged Kittiwake, Hammonasset Beach SP
(Carolyn Cimino, 8 Sep 2021)**



**Sabine's Gull, Long Island Sound
(Nick Bonomo, 3 Sep 2021)**



**Mississippi Kite, Lighthouse Point Park
(Cody Limber, 19 Sep 2021)**



**Swainson's Hawk, Lighthouse Point Park
(Cody Limber, 19 Sep 2021)**

Fall Photo Gallery



Western Kingbird, Hammonasset Beach SP
(Bob MacDonnell, 9 Nov 2021)



Lark Sparrow, Glastonbury Town Hall
(Dave Mathieu, 29 Sep 2021)



Harris's Sparrow, Allen's Meadows Park
(Dave Mathieu, 22 Oct 2021)



LeConte's Sparrow, Smith Richardson Preserve, Westport
(Chris Wood, 25 Oct 2021)



Black-throated Gray Warbler, Hammonasset Beach SP
(Jason Reiger, 24 Oct 2021)



Western Tanager, East Shore Park, New Haven
(John Oshlick, 18 Nov 2021)

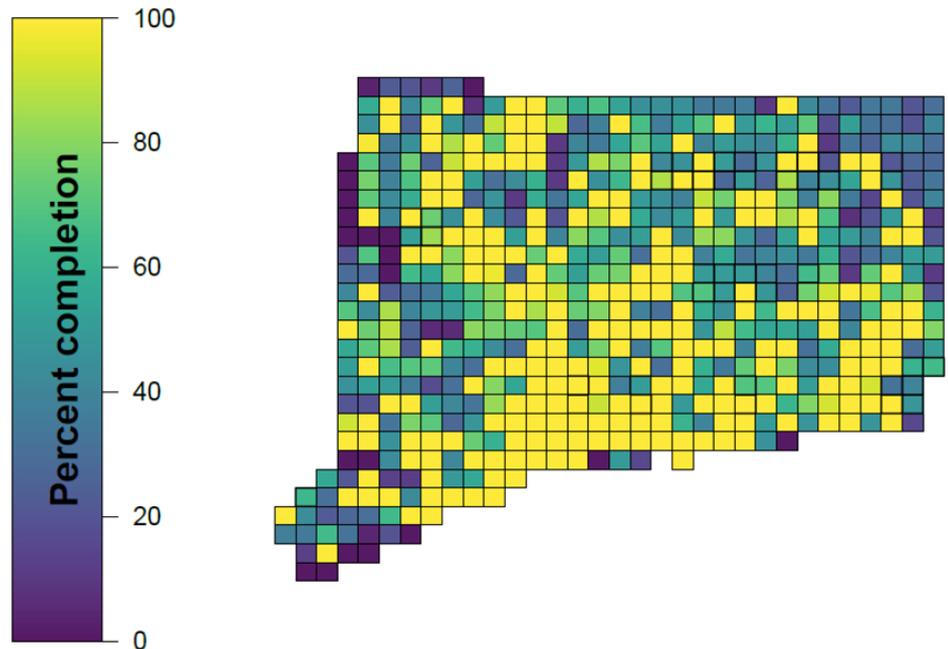
CT Bird Atlas Update: Wrapping up with the final winter season

Chris Elphick



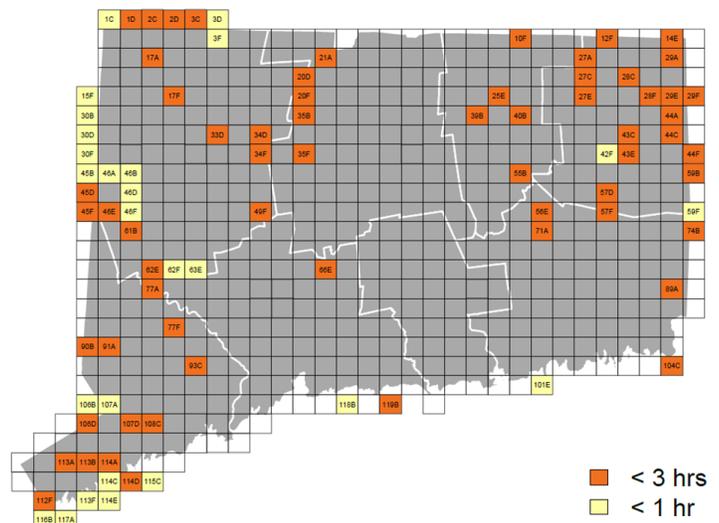
As year’s end approaches, we are almost half-way through the final winter of data collection for the Connecticut Bird Atlas. This means that there are only a couple more weeks in which to add data for the early winter period. Coverage for this period has improved greatly, and many blocks have now reached the target of 10 survey hours between 1 November and 31 December (Map 1).

Map 1. Survey coverage during the early winter period (Nov-Dec) for the Connecticut Bird Atlas. Blocks are considered complete once they have received 10 hours of survey effort.



There are still plenty of blocks that are far from this target, however; especially in the northeastern corner of the state, central-western and far southwest Connecticut, and scattered places throughout the state’s interior. The highest priority blocks are those that have received less than 3 hours of surveys, with those with less than an hour (often zero) especially likely to benefit from even a short visit (Map 2).

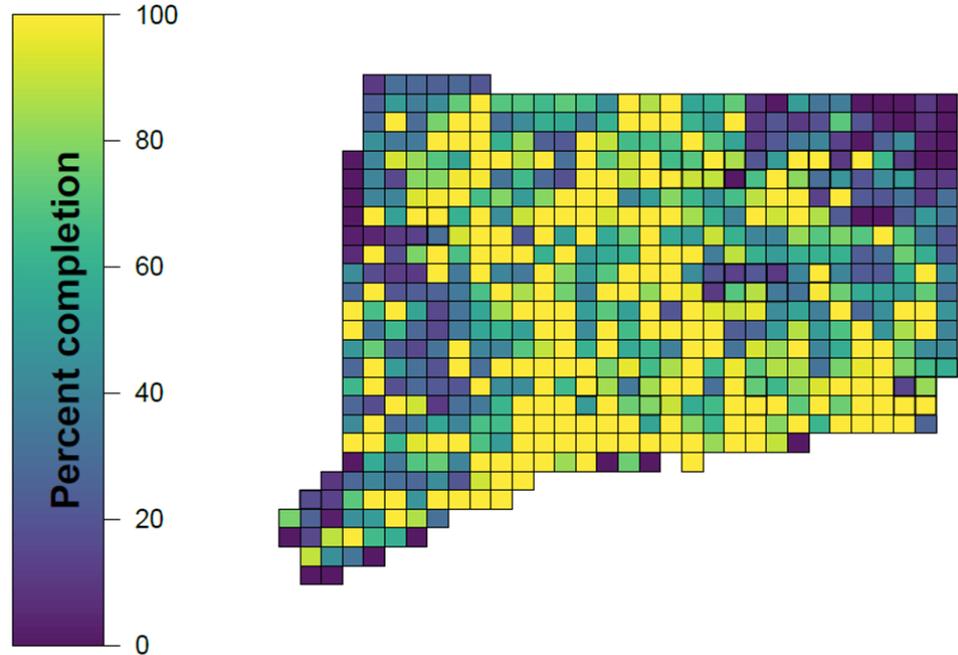
Map 2. Blocks that have received less than 3 hours of surveying during the early winter period (Nov-Dec) are the highest priority for visits before the new year.



■ < 3 hrs
■ < 1 hr

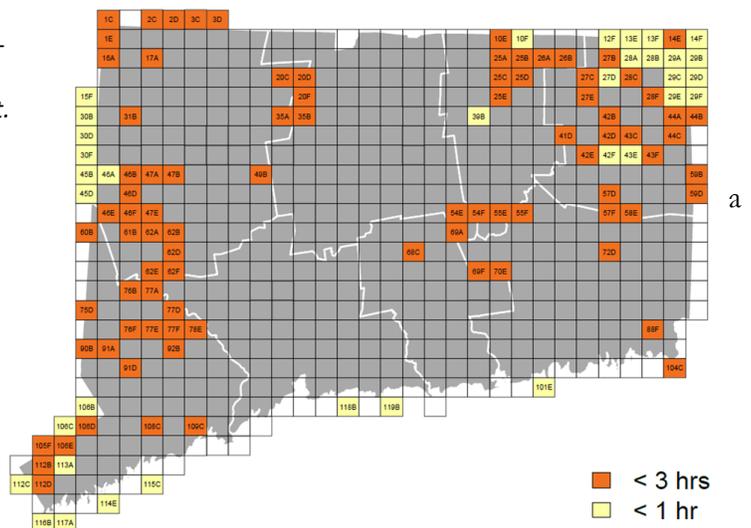
Looking forward to the new year, we will have just two short months to complete data collection for the entire atlas. Late winter coverage is not quite as good as that for early winter, so there are more opportunities to add to blocks that have not yet received 10 hours of surveys. Again, blocks near the state’s periphery are where the greatest need is, but there are clusters of blocks in more populated areas, such as along Rte 66 in the Marlborough-Hebron area, between Roxbury and Newtown, and just north of Meriden, as well as scattered blocks in almost every part of the state (Map 3).

Map 3. Survey coverage during the late winter period (Jan-Feb) for the Connecticut Bird Atlas. Blocks are considered complete once they have received 10 hours of survey effort.



Again, we’ve highlighted those blocks that have little or no coverage as our top priorities in Map 4. Getting to at least 3 hours in all of these blocks would really help round out the atlas effort.

Map 4. Survey coverage during the late winter period (Jan-Feb) for the Connecticut Bird Atlas. Blocks are considered complete once they have received 10 hours of survey effort.



Once data collection is complete, we have at least year of data analysis work to do, and we will be asking the state’s birders to review our block summaries to help us identify errors and omissions before we finalize the results. Ultimately, we intend to build a comprehensive web site that will include all the atlas results, and become a primary resource for understanding the distribution and abundance of the state’s birds. This work will take some time, and we project that it will be completed late in 2023. We will however provide a preliminary overview of the atlas results at the COA’s annual meeting in 2022, and will release additional results on the atlas blog as each part of the project is completed.

As always, none of this work would be possible without the efforts of the state’s birders, and we appreciate the many hours people spend tromping through the state’s woods, fields, and suburbs in the dead of winter!

Birds and the Environment Science Conference – Online



Saturday, November 6, 2021 9:30 am -3:15 pm

The Connecticut Ornithological Association Birding Conference was held online via Zoom. It featured 17 short talks, each about 15 minutes in length, on bird science topics and projects conducted by a wide spectrum of birders, from professional ornithologists to young students.

The table below provides more information on the presenters and their topics as well as timings to be able to easily locate each one in the video.

Additional video recordings of COA Zoom Workshops are available under the Members Only menu tab for members who log in.

PRESENTERS	TOPICS	START TIMES
Tom Robben, COA	Introduction	00:00:00
Judy Richardson, CAS Birdcraft	Bird Banding at Birdcraft	00:11:14
From Marvelwood School Aiden Cherniske, Sebastian Killin, Ashley Wilkins, Brennan Wilkins Laurie Doss	Community Partnerships That Benefit Birds: Purple Martin Natal Dispersal in the Northwest Corner.	00:27:12
Laurie Doss, Marvelwood School	Inspiring the Next Generation of Conservationists: Birds & Project-Based Learning on Skiff Mountain, Kent, CT.	00:51:40
Min Huang, CT DEEP	Conservation Planning for Wintering Black Ducks: Full Life Cycle Models.	01:08:01
Steve Broker, COA	Overviews of Ongoing Research Topics: (1) The Connecticut Christmas Bird Count; (2) Field Studies.	01:35:10
Chris Elphick, UConn	CT Bird Atlas and More	01:50:16
Samantha Apgar, UConn	How Tidal Marsh Birds Cope with Nest Flooding during High Tides	02:08:50
Franco Gigliotti, UCONN	Saltmarsh Restoration and Its Consequences for Coastal Marsh Birds	02:25:00
Andrew Dasinger, COA	North American Breeding Bird Survey Transects and Results, Since 1960	02:49:20
Morgan Tingley, UCLA	How and Why Some Birds are Better at Coping with Climate Change	03:10:42
Preston Lust, Princeton	Nocturnal Migration and Arrival Dates: Recordings, Methods, Results	03:26:40
Patrick Comins, CAS & Tom Robben, COA	Summer Bird Counts: Old and New	03:41:10
Chris Wood, COA	Wood Warbler Population and Habitat Trends: Observations From a Connecticut Summer Bird Count	04:11:58
Margaret Rubega, UConn	Tern Conservation in Long Island Sound	04:24:33
Brian Hoover, Chapman Univ.	Plankton, Fish & Birds: Marine Food Webs in a Changing World	04:55:40
Cody Limber, Yale Univ.	Extinctions, Genetics and Future Possibilities	05:33:51
Tom Robben, COA	Other Projects Summarized: CBC Data Mining, Gulf of Maine Research, Sabine's Gulls Tracking, Shearwater Tracking, etc.	05:47:15

Twenty-Five Years Ago in *The Connecticut Warbler*

Compiled by Steve Broker

Volume XVI, No. 4 (October 1996)

Roger Tory Peterson (1980-1996), by Roland C. Clement

The great bird man is dead after eighty-seven productive years. For the better part of this century he was the popular incarnation of the modern bird man: keen of eye and ear, world traveler, illustrator and popularizer of birds and their conservation on two continents, inventor (or rather patentee) of the field mark approach to identifying things, editor, sought-after writer of forwards, favorite medalist and honorary degree recipient for organizations wishing to be noted in turn. He learned to use the media to advance his freelance career, with Life Magazine, movie lectures, wildlife tours, and books.

Although he did not publish many scientific research papers, every ornithological organization was eager to list him among its counselors. His easel paintings, promoted far and wide by modern print houses, were never accepted for a juried art show.

But more important, Roger Peterson remained sincere and accessible to legions of birders - high and low - all his life. He encouraged and assisted many and never had a harsh word for those with whom he disagreed. This is how I'll remember him: not as ornithologist, though he was an excellent field man; not as artist, though his bird paintings are known to millions; but as a gentle man ever eager to share information about the birds that inspired his long life; birds, he said again and again, that are a litmus test for us in deciding what kind of environment we will leave for future generations of humans. He did his share, and more.



Left to Right: Virginia Peterson, Denise Szejman, Bill Martha, Grit Ardwin, Roger Tory Peterson, Noble Proctor, Pat Lynch. New Haven CBC, December 20, 1986, Area H Lake Saltonstall. (photo from Noble Proctor, digitally edited by Bill Martha)

The 1996 Summer Bird Count, by Joseph Zeranski

Not unexpectedly, the Summer Bird Count (SBC) presented us with some surprises, mostly positive and always interesting. One hundred and ninety three species (a record) were observed. More participants and more party hours (PH) were tallied than ever before. . . Four new species were recorded this year on count day (CD), plus another as a count period (CP) bird: "a pair of Common Eiders were flushed from the shore of Great Captain's Island off Greenwich"; Long-eared Owl; Yellow-throated Warbler "has nested only in recent years in Connecticut, and only at one location, along the Housatonic Valley in Kent in a stand of sycamore trees"; Rusty Blackbirds "have been found summering here once or twice previously". [Ed's Note: Joe Zeranski's article is a rich source of information analyzing the early years of the Connecticut SBC. His comments about changing summer populations of the following species are particularly interesting to read with 25-year hindsight: Osprey, Wild Turkey, Monk Parakeet, Barred Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, House Finch, Ring-necked Pheasant, Carolina Wren, Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Double-crested Cormorant, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, gulls, Common Raven, Northern Mockingbird. One correction to make is that the Yellow-throated Warbler nest was found on May 19, 1991 at the far north end of River Road, Kent in an Eastern White Pine tree during a New Haven Bird Club walk. The tree fell down some years ago.]

See also: “Do Feeding Sites Affect the Date of Song Cessation by Breeding Birds?” by Christina A. Carbone; “Books on Birds” by Alan H. Brush; “Connecticut Field Notes (Spring, March 1 to May 31, 1996)” by Greg Hanisek, and “Photo Challenge” by Louis Bevier. The cover drawing of Dickcissel is by Brian Kleinman. The October 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 137-184.

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

Reflections on the Hog Island Audubon Camp Teen Birding Program

Every year, COA awards the George W. Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship to a teen birder to attend a week-long summer camp at Hog Island on the Maine coast. In 2021, Sebastian Killin and Eli Holton both attended - Eli was unable to go in 2020 when the teen program was cancelled due to Covid. They both provided reports on their experiences at camp, and we think COA members will agree that their personal reflections illustrate the value this opportunity offers to our young birders.



The Hog Island Experience

Sebastian Killin

People go to Hog Island to indulge and learn about nature, and in many cases, with emphasis on the field of ornithology. Hog Island and the surrounding sea, fields, and forest have richly diverse bird life, making it worth the visit for campers, listers, and bird watchers alike.

I found my way to Hog Island through a scholarship provided by the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA). There, not only did I learn so much about birds, but I also had the opportunity to connect with fellow birders whether they were counselors or other campers. This small group of people came from all over the country, and allowed me to hear many interesting stories of other people's experience in birding, as well as picking up tips to become a better birder along the way.

When it came to the actual activities, our daylong excursions would take us near or far to little spots to bird, draw, photograph, or learn about the island itself. During these times, I took many photos of different species, some of which are included with this article. Each day was a new adventure, where we learned new things or saw new bird life.

Day 1: I remember that first day of camp found us on Monhegan Island, 13 miles out to sea, where we focused mainly on hiking and birding. We started with a land species count, and then moved our way down to the shore. After we saw all there was to see with the time we had, we left the island for Egg Rock, the nesting site of Atlantic Puffins and several species of terns and gulls. After a 30-minute visit, in which we circled by boat, we started heading for basecamp and dinner, way back on Hog Island.

Day 2: The second day of camp, my group left the island for mainland Maine, where we spent a couple of hours banding songbirds. Being interested in banding myself, I knew most of what I was watching, but was curious about how the local banding station operated, and how they differed from the one at school. While we did not catch anything rare, we did enjoy seeing birds up close, and getting some good photo opportunities. Afterwards, we hiked around the woods, and on the road for about 45 minutes before returning to camp for lunch and some practice on field sketching, which I never thought I would enjoy.

For the last remaining days, we spent more time exploring Hog Island's landscape and history. We went on walks to the far coves and looked for shore life, went into the woods to sketch plants, and visited the cabins deep within the forest. During all this, not only was the experience with the wildlife rewarding and insightful, but I enjoyed time hanging out with my friends and getting to know other birders and naturalists just like me from all different backgrounds.

On the last day, a Thursday, we were taken to one of the coves, where we were told to disperse in the general area with a piece of paper and an envelope. We were to seal a letter to our future selves in the envelope. Then, at some random time later on, the camp will send us those letters, so that we can reflect upon our time there. I look forward to receiving mine someday, even if I have forgotten it by the time I see it.

Although this was a very short report, I tried not to make it much of a ramble and stick to what the highlight events were, and what the whole experience felt like. The bottom line that resonates most with me after my time there were the good memories I made with kids who had been complete strangers merely hours before. I would like to thank the Connecticut Ornithological Association for this wonderful experience provided to me, and I look forward to hopefully working on other projects with them in the future.

Hog Island Trip Report

Eli Holton

The first day of Hog Island, I drove into the wet parking lot and got out to grab my bags and load them on the ferry. I checked in with a couple of the counselors and stepped onto the dock that you could see Hog Island from. I was surprised to find that everybody was already talking amongst each other and relating stories of good birds or experiences they had. A couple of the teen birders were doing state big years, and so had plenty of exciting chase stories to tell.

On the island, there was a large common area with a couple of tents and picnic tables to eat at, a small garden with plenty of flowers, and an open view of the sea to the south of us. I unpacked my bags quickly and grabbed my binoculars and camera to do a little pre-dinner birding, along with meeting several of the counselors, who I had all heard of before and who were very good birders with a lot to teach. Everybody was incredibly friendly, and the rest of the day went by fast with a few name games and a delicious dinner.

The next day was a big one, I woke up early to participate in the early bird walk around the island and had a great time. The counselors also explained breeding codes for birds and how to identify the codes correctly. After breakfast, we got onto the boat and started heading towards Monhegan Island. On our way there we birded constantly, picking up Black Guillemots, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, and even a few Atlantic Puffins, passing close to Eastern Egg Rock.

Reaching Monhegan, we walked around for the rest of the morning and into the afternoon, spotting several good birds such as Lesser Yellowlegs, Alder Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Brown Thrasher, and the highlight of the walk for me, watching a family of Ring-necked Pheasants run around leisurely up close, the stunning male showing off his bright feathers and their three chicks running in circles.

We also did some seawatching from the cliff top where we saw Great and Manx Shearwaters and I was able to pick out a Great Cormorant flying along the edge of the island. Heading back onto the boat we slowly made our way back to Hog Island, stopping and circling around Eastern Egg rock several times where we got to watch Roseate, Common, and Arctic Terns swoop by the boat and over the island.

The Puffins were numerous and came fairly close at times, hanging out with Common Eiders and more Guillemots. A Common Murre also flew right by our boat close enough for us to get photos and identify it, a good bird for the time of year. Wilson's Storm Petrels skimmed over the surface of the water and we got to get good



photos of the bird.

looks at a sitting Great Shearwater. It was amazing to witness such a beautiful birding spot that was absolutely filled with all different species, especially after being taught about the island's history. Heading back to Hog Island, I carefully counted all of the Black Guillemots I was seeing from the boat, as larger and larger rafts started to appear, ultimately tallying 277, the high count for the entire county by only one bird! The day finished with some reflection and teaching by the counselors and some wonderful presentations of some of the things that they had done that led to them being where they were now. It was insightful and helpful, and I learned a lot.



The next couple of days we did some more hikes around the island and helped find breeding birds for the Maine Breeding Bird Atlas. One of those birds included a Northern Parula who preened right in front of us and gave us an excellent show.

We also had several presentations, including one from a seabird conservation expert who explained to us the rich history of Eastern Egg Rock and why it was so important and the methods and techniques used to rehabilitate and attract birds. Afterward we painted our own tern decoys that were used when first trying to attract nesting terns to the island. We also got several lessons from an expert artist who specialized in wildlife drawing and who was able to improve my drawing skills much more and teach us about how to use field notebooks to document the species we saw and questions we had about them.



The next day we went back to the mainland and did a couple hours of bird banding in the morning, which was an amazing thing to watch and learn about. There are many more details involved in banding than I ever realized, including sexing, aging, migration patterns, and much more, most of which can also help with identification.



Once we had been successful in banding for a couple of hours, we did a long bird walk through the neighborhood and picked up several more excellent warbler species. Back on the boat we did more birding in the bay, picking out several more species and seeing a large group of seals resting on the rocks. Once back on the island, we noticed a pair of Long-tailed Ducks sitting on the rocks by the shore, providing an excellent opportunity for an up-close look at a species that isn't common at that time of year.

One of the exercises that the counselors had us do was to write a letter to ourselves in several months, which I thought was a very meaningful exercise. I don't remember exactly what I said, but I believe it was about remembering a lot of the specific experiences I had gained from this camp and to remember to put the skills and knowledge I had learned to good use. I'm very grateful that I was able to go to this camp, it was not only a lot of fun hanging out with experts, teen birders, and getting to go birding every day, I also took away a lot of lessons from the presentations and exercises they had us do, some of which I am confident will be very helpful in the future for me personally. The birds were amazing, the people were even better, I'm glad I had the opportunity to spend a week with all of these wonderful birders. Thanks!





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