



COA Bulletin

Volume 37, No. 3
Fall 2022

Connecticut Ornithological Association

An Update on the CT Bird Atlas Project

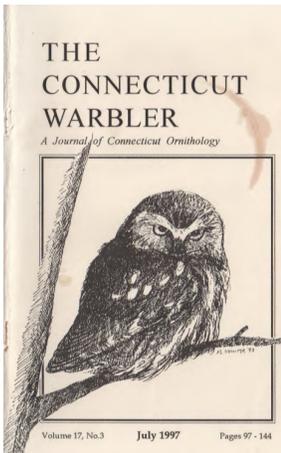
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Dear Conservation Community,

The CT Bird Atlas team, the Regional Coordinators, and the Steering Committee, would like to thank each and every one of the volunteer birders for their tireless contributions towards this Project over the past four years. There is no way that this Project would have been completed without your contributions and data. Over the course of this project, a minimum of 25,000 hours of survey time was spent during the breeding season. There were over 26,000 separate surveys conducted by Atlas volunteers during the four years of breeding season data collection. During the winter portion of the Atlas, a similarly impressive total of at least 6,900 hours was spent in cold, sometimes inclement weather to collect the valuable data that we needed.



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.



We expect that over the course of 2023 we will be publishing products arising from this project to the CT Atlas webpage. Currently we have error checked most of the breeding season block data and all of the wintering atlas block data. Once the breeding season block data are all error checked and final, we will be producing the block maps contrasting the original Atlas and this second iteration. One item we still need to figure out, so that we are truly comparing ‘apples’ to ‘apples’ is how to account for effort during the first Atlas attempt and how that is relatable to how we estimated effort and thus breeding occurrence across the state in this second iteration.

We also conducted numerous point count surveys across the state during the breeding season. These data, along with block data, are being used to develop relative breeding density estimates. These estimates will be the first of their kind for many species, and will be extremely valuable in setting future conservation goals and enacting meaningful habitat protection and enhancement. We should have these estimates done by the spring of 2023.

Our wintering Atlas will likely be the first finished product that we publish on the website. These data were not collected during the first Atlas, and so no comparison

analyses are needed. We did conduct separate winter surveys concentrating on suburban/urban and agricultural areas, and those data will warrant analysis before we publish results.

One of the last items we will tackle is the migratory period. The analysis of this and how we use these data to inform conservation is the trickiest aspect of this project. We purposely did not spend a lot of time collecting any habitat covariates with the bird and radar data that we compiled. We are hoping that our analysis will lead us to the correct habitat metrics to examine in order to correlate our bird usage data with those critical features on the landscape.

Over the course of the next year we will also be determining what the best place/format for all of this great stuff is. Our vision is to have a website that will contain all of this in various formats and individual species pages with in-depth information.



COA Bird of the Month

COA started running its new bird-of-the-month (BOTM) project for both December 2021 and January 2022 as an experiment, to evaluate it and to decide if it should be run at the end of every month going forward. Based on this two-month trial, it was decided to continue this initiative, and BOTM reports have been published for each succeeding month. These reports provide an update of the Connecticut Year List (based on eBird reports) in terms of the new species added in a given month. With respect to the selected BOTM, the reports review its distribution status (eBird maps), provide photo documentation, and supply a host of useful references on the species. Here are links to the 2022 BOTM reports:

- **January:** [Thick-billed Murre](#)
- **February:** [Common \(Kamchatka\) Gull](#)
- **March:** [Short-billed Gull](#)
- **April:** [Black Guillemot](#)
- **May:** [Arctic Tern](#)
- **June:** [Black Rail](#)
- **July:** [Curlew Sandpiper](#)

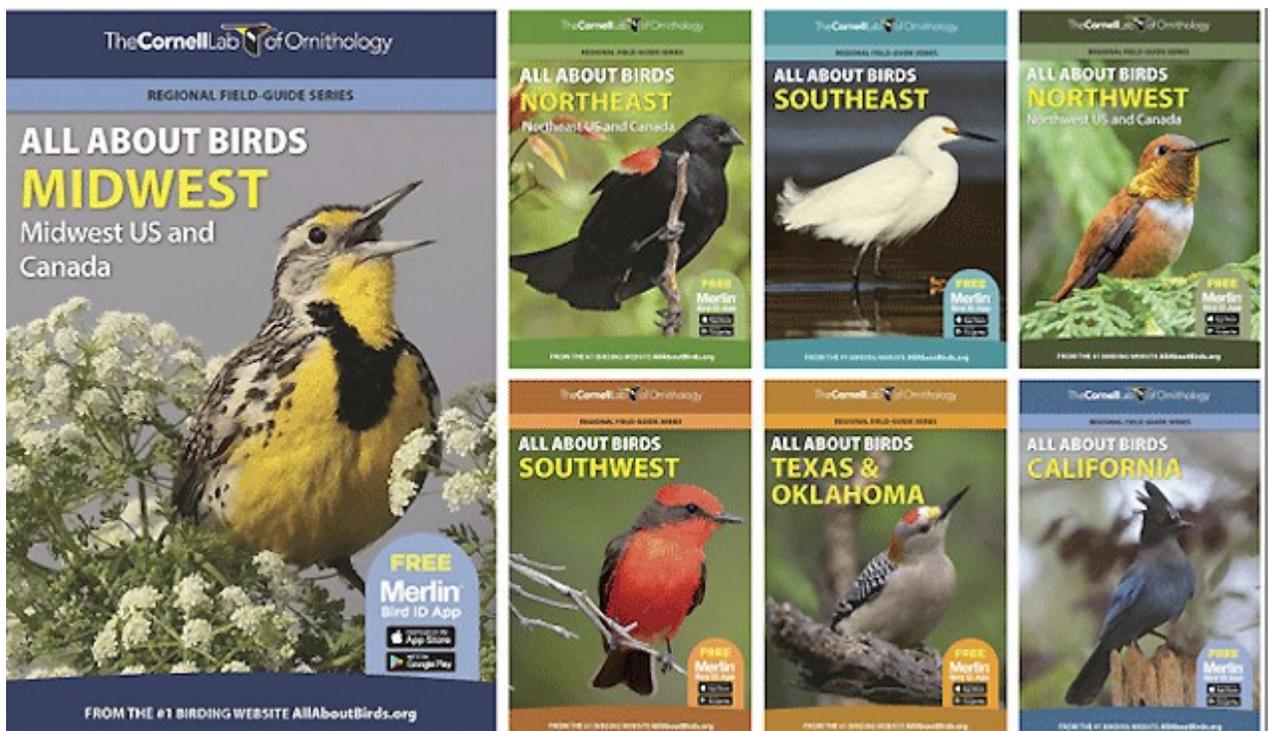


New Field Guide Series from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Christopher S. Wood

Most birders today are familiar with the amazing resources made available through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The eBird data collection system, the Merlin bird identification application, Birds of the World Online, and the All About Birds online guide provide just about everything a birder needs to find and identify birds, log and share records, and learn almost everything about every bird.

Now the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is out with a new field guide series, covering seven regions of the United States and parts of Canada. This series, built from species descriptions in the Lab's website [AllAboutBirds.org](https://www.allaboutbirds.org) and photography from the Macaulay Library, is tailored to beginning and developing birders. This is particularly timely, given the apparent bloom in birding as a hobby likely due in part to the response to social and work changes caused by COVID.



Unlike currently popular guides such as *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, this guide uses photos for the identification guides, by providing illustrations of adult males and females, non-breeding males, and immatures for most species that demonstrate such plumage variety. Personally, I have always preferred drawn depictions of birds in field guides, as most photographs do not usually capture the essence of a bird as well as a good illustration can. But drawing on the vast catalog of the Macaulay Library, these guides provide four adequate views of each species. (A quick disclaimer: several of my own photographs are used, with permission but not compensation, in each of the seven volumes.)

Each volume opens with a color index, listing each family or closely related family groups in the currently understood taxonomic order. Since the species accounts are in taxonomic order, this index is especially helpful to new birders who may be unfamiliar with that system of classification.

A comprehensive beginners guide, titled “Birding 101,” provides four “keys to bird identification:” size and shape; color pattern; behavior; and habitat. I actually found this a useful refresher even for an experienced birder. This guide also includes the obligatory delineation of field marks, that is, names of body parts and plumage

components.

The species accounts are succinct but complete enough to help with identification. Each account describes the bird's size and shape, color pattern, behavior, and habitat. A paragraph offers behavioral and life-history tidbits, such as "...the Sora walks slowly thorough shallow wetlands, a bit like a chicken that has had too much coffee..."

Unfortunately, the developers did not include an overview of local birding resources and information for each of the regions. Some basic guidance to prime locations, habitats, and finding special regional species would be a useful addition, although such information is readily available through eBird. The introductory guide does refer birders to the American Birding Association for contact to local bird clubs, but a simple listing of regional and local birding organizations would also be helpful. However, these omissions are understandable given the volume of information already packed into each book.

Conveniently, each region is covered in a single volume, so for most trips you need only pack one book. While wide-ranging birders might want the entire set, new birders may want to start with just their local guide and add on as their birding takes them farther afield.

I'm sure these guides will move most relatively new birders quickly up the birding learning curve. Experienced birders will also find the guides helpful, especially when visiting an unfamiliar region of the country. One or more of these guides will make a great gift for any new birders and particularly for friends to whom you would like to introduce the exciting, rewarding, challenging, and fun hobby of birding. Available from the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) at \$17.95 per guide or, at 20% discount through September 30th, from [Princeton University Press](#).



Help Save Connecticut's Migratory Birds

Every 9 seconds a bird dies from colliding with a building. Lights Out Connecticut is a non-profit project of the Connecticut Ornithological Association saving migratory birds from deadly window collisions and other threats caused by light pollution.

Join the growing coalition of CT residents, businesses, schools, churches, green spaces, and commercial properties pledging to turn off their unnecessary lighting from **11pm to 6am during peak bird migration (Sept 1-Nov 15 and Apr 1-May 31)** to reduce the risks to migratory birds.

View and sign the pledge here: <https://www.lightsoutct.org/pledge>

Why Lights Out?

Millions of birds pass through Connecticut every spring and fall on their way to and from their summer nesting grounds. Because our state is located along the Atlantic Flyway, many birds use our shorelines and green spaces to rest and refuel during their trip. Some also stay for the summer.

Most migrating birds pass through Connecticut at night. Generally, nighttime hours are calmer and safer for

migrants. Temperatures are cooler, skies are less turbulent, and predators are less active. Landing at daybreak allows for optimal foraging, as insects become active. And many scientists believe that birds navigate by the light of the moon and stars.

But light pollution has wreaked havoc on our night sky. Artificial light emitted by buildings, street lights, bridges, and other structures can confuse and disorient birds, causing them to land near buildings, crash into windows, and/or circle around for hours until they drop from exhaustion. This can be made worse by weather patterns that force them to fly lower, closer to buildings.

Studies show that overly lit buildings and structures can tempt migrating birds into headlong windows collisions. Birds in urban environments are also subject to degraded habitats and can fall prey to housecats.

The result is catastrophic: Nearly 1 billion bird deaths in North America each year.

The Solution

Lights Out Connecticut is a growing community of residents, property owners, businesses, nonprofits, and officials in Connecticut working together to protect migratory birds by reducing artificial light during peak periods of bird migration. We educate and organize people to turn off or dim their nonessential lights during the weeks of April 1–May 31 and September 1–November 15.

Participation is completely voluntary, self-monitored, and self-assessed. For instance, if a resident, business owner, or school determines that they can safely turn off or dim their exterior lights and install motion detection lights as necessary to reduce their lighting load for Lights out Connecticut, they can join us in good faith.

It all adds up to make a big difference for migrating birds looking for safe passage through Connecticut.

Turning out lights also **SAVES** energy and money on electric bills. The Environmental Protection Agency identifies energy as the single largest operating expense for commercial buildings; yet the U.S. Department of Energy found that 99% of the light we emit has no clear purpose.

Our goal is to reduce unnecessary, misdirected, over-illuminated nighttime lighting during bird migration to create safe passage for birds — not to completely darken cities and towns, which could create safety concerns.

Property owners can reduce unnecessary lighting by committing to:

- Turn off nonessential lights from **11 pm to 6 am each night** during peak migration.
- Redirect or swap out landscape lighting near trees or gardens where birds may be resting.
- Make sure outside lights aim down and are well-shielded so they don't create "light trespass" or glare.
- Install motion sensors on outside lights, where possible.
- Choose warm bulbs (3,000 Kelvins or under) if converting outdoor lights to LED.
- Draw blinds or curtains after 11pm to reduce light spill.

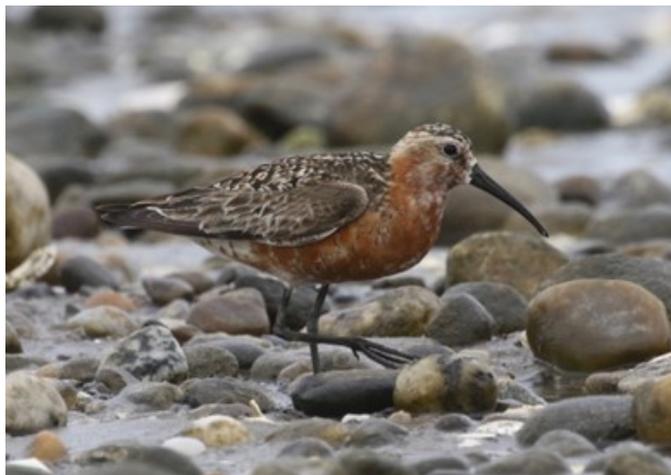
Visit the Lights Out Connecticut web site for additional details: <https://www.lightsoutct.org/>

Partner Organizations



INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION

Summer Rarity Gallery



Curlew Sandpiper, Milford Point
(Frank Mantlik, 29 July 2022)



Great Shearwater, New London – Orient Point
ferry (Steve Mayo, 11 Aug 2022)



Marbled Godwit, Milford – Anderson Ave. pond
(Chris Wood, 8 Aug 2022)



Rufous Hummingbird, private residence,
Plantsville (Abby Sesselberg, 15 Aug 2022)



White Ibis, Plum Bank Marsh, Old Saybrook
(James Sherwonit, 23 Aug 2022)



American Avocet, Nod Brook WMA, Simsbury
(Abby Sesselberg, 11 Jul 2022)

COA Membership

The Connecticut Ornithological Association is the only statewide organization devoted to birds and birding in Connecticut. Since its founding in 1984, its membership has grown to well over 500 people who range from beginning birders to professional ornithologists. COA does not release its membership list to other organizations. Contributions and donations are tax deductible as allowed under law. COA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

The only requirements for membership in COA are interest in birds and an ability to enjoy yourself. Does that sound like you? Then join us!

To join COA or renew online visit: <https://www.ctbirding.org/account-help/>

The link will take you to a page describing the account creation process with a link to start it. You will need to use a credit card, debit card, or PayPal account to purchase a membership.

After purchasing a membership option, your COA account reflects your level of membership. COA members receive copies of COA’s two quarterly publications, *The Connecticut Warbler* and *COA Bulletin*. Members enjoy access to our growing Members-Only content. Membership funds support many [COA services and activities](#).

NOTE: COA has converted all accounts from calendar year to **1yr duration memberships** (from the date you join or renew). For example, if you joined/renewed Jan 15, 2022 your current membership expires on Jan 15, 2023 (fairer when joining after Jan 1). Login to your COA account to check your membership status and expiration date.

Membership Levels:

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Individual	\$25/yr
Student	\$15/yr
Family	\$35/yr
Contributing	\$50/yr
Donor	\$75/yr
Benefactor	\$100/yr
Life	\$1000 (payable in three annual installments)

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Recovering America’s Wildlife Act

A BILL

To amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes.

Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA) would provide close to \$1.4 billion a year for restoring wildlife populations across the country. It passed the U.S. House of Representatives on June 14, 2022 with bipartisan support, and has made it out of the Senate environmental committee. It has 42 Senate co-sponsors, including Sen. Chris Murphy. If passed, Connecticut stands to receive \$11.8 million per year for conservation. A final vote could take place this fall. Passage would represent perhaps the biggest piece of legislation for wildlife since the Endangered Species Act of 1973!

Fall COA Workshops

October

Sparrow Workshop

Chris Loscalzo, speaker

COA resident workshop maven again presents his sparrow class by Zoom, followed by several field workshops around the state. Very popular last year, and with possible limits on field trip participants, be ready to sign up early.



November 5 (tentative)

Birds and the Environment Science Conference

Tom Robben, coordinator

An informative and engaging series of presentations about current bird-related research and scientific activities. Organized by COA President Tom Robben; watch for details this Fall.



November

Winter Waterfowl OR Dabbling/Diving Duck Workshop

Chris Loscalzo, speaker

Chris will reach out for preferences for this workshop. Zoom presentation followed by field trips at several promising locations.



Twenty-Five Years Ago in *The Connecticut Warbler*

Compiled by Steve Broker

Volume 17, No. 3 (July 1997)

Seventh Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, by Frank W. Mantlik, Mark S. Szantyr, and David F. Provencher

This report contains 86 records of 54 species, plus two subspecies, reviewed by the ARCC. . . The records span dates from 1916 to 1996, although the majority are from 1995, which was a banner year for rare birds in the state. . . This report provides details on four additions to the Connecticut state list, which now stands at 396. . . First record for Audubon's Shearwater, White-faced Ibis, Mississippi Kite, Sabine's Gull, and Say's Phoebe. [And, first documented Connecticut record for Long-billed Curlew.]

Audubon's Shearwater. One storm-related bird on Congamond Lakes in Suffield, CT. This bird's appearance was the result of an intense coastal storm 9-10 May that brought high winds, heavy rain and wet snow. White-faced Ibis. An adult in alternate plumage was at Hammonasset, Madison 16-19 May 1995. It actively fed in the salt marshes around Cedar Island with a flock of Glossy Ibis and was seen by many. Mississippi Kite. Three separate and independent sightings of a single bird in Stamford 13 June 1995, 16 June 1995, and in Darien (Woodland Park) 17 June 1995 were possibly of the same individual.

Sabine's Gull. Finding a rarity is always exciting. It is surprising, that the excitement of discovering two immature Sabine's Gulls that briefly stopped at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, Windham 5 Sep 1995 did not prove fatal! This species is highly pelagic, though a portion of the population travels overland from its breeding grounds to oceanic waters. Observations from inland locations are rare in the northeast. Say's Phoebe. This record is the specimen mentioned in Zeranski and Baptist (1990). The specimen's whereabouts were previously considered unknown. It was located, measured, and photographed in the Peabody Museum of Yale University. The specimen was taken in Gaylordsville 15 Dec 1916. The specimen tag states "Collection of Louis B. Bishop, No. 29334, Shot by T. for E.H. Austin. Given me by latter & received in flesh on Dec 17." This female is the only acceptably documented occurrence for CT. Though previously included on the state list, this is the first formal review of the record.

Long-billed Curlew. An adult was present 10-16 Jul 1995 at Windham Airport, North Windham, where it was seen by many and photographed. It should be noted that while several specimens from CT during the 19th century are mentioned in the literature, the whereabouts of these specimens are presently unknown. A bird of the prairies of western North America, it formerly was a more common fall migrant in New England up to the 1850s. It is now only a rare straggler anywhere on the Atlantic coast. This individual obviously found the airport grasslands reminiscent of the prairies.

[Ed's Note: Additional species reviewed by ARCC with informative descriptions of occurrence in the northeast include Wilsons Storm-Petrel, Swainson's Hawk, Arctic Tern, Thick-billed Murre, Boreal Chickadee, Sedge Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Present day ARCC member Phil Rusch is leading the effort by ARCC to locate original reports of rare species in Connecticut in the literature and in museum ornithological collections, as well as submitting articles for publication in *The Connecticut Warbler*.]

Review List of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, by the Avian Records Committee

[This "latest Avian Records Review List" states, "The Committee welcomes written descriptions, photographs, sound recordings, and other documentation for occurrences in Connecticut of any species on this list, as well as any species not on the official state list. A second species list is for unusual breeding birds: "Documentation of breeding of the following species, and others not known to breed, will be reviewed and archived by the ARCC."]

First State Record: Sabine's Gull in Northeastern Connecticut, by Mark S. Szantyr

One day while birding with Louis Bevier on the dike that forms the boundary between the east end of the Windham Airport and the Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, North Windham, Windham County, we were musing over what rare birds might be found at this location. Previously that summer, we had found a Long-billed Curlew on the grassy lawns surrounding the runways of the airport. This furnished a first documented modern record for the state. Louis and I were discussing the merits of the habitat, the unique circumstances in 1995 that forced the water level of the reservoir to be so extremely low, exposing vast mudflats, and the possibility of daily coverage by a small group of local birders. We came up with a list of ten species. Some of these would be first or second state records, others would be first northeast Connecticut records. Either way, the finding of any of these birds would be significant to Connecticut ornithology, and making such a dream list seemed to spur us on during long, hot days at the dike.

On 5 September 1995, Bruce Carver and I decided to bird the dike, after a rather unsuccessful morning chasing landbird migrants along nearby abandoned railroad bed. A moderate cold front had passed during the night of 4-5 September and we began our morning with hopes of a good bird movement. Another cold front was making its way out of the north and we went to the dike hoping to census shorebirds that had been building in numbers before impending torrential rain would wash out our day altogether.

I noticed four gulls winging in from out over the reservoir. . . I identified two of them as Ring-billed Gulls, and the other two as juvenile Sabine's Gulls.

[Ed's Note: Mark's article describes further the behavior of the Sabine's Gulls, gives a detailed description of their appearance, lists how other gull species were eliminated from consideration, and answers the question, "Why was Sabine's Gull on our list?" The article is a fascinating story that brings together an understanding of habitat requirements and seasonal occurrences of birds, making predictions, and follow up with extended field observations. Ten rare species had been predicted for Connecticut and the northeastern part of the state, and "we got four out of ten - Hey, if you hit .400 in the Majors your picture would be on a cereal box."]

First White-faced Ibis for Connecticut, by David F. Provencher

On 16 May 1995 I was returning home from a morning of birding East Rock Park in New Haven when I decided to stop at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison to look for Little Blue Heron. I was at the end of the Cedar Island trail scoping the marsh when I noticed about seven ibis fly in and land near the trees of Cedar Island. I could not see the birds in the marsh from where I was so I made a mental note to check them for White-faced Ibis when I left. As I walked back along the trail I saw the ibis feeding in the marsh and began looking through them. One bird lifted its head and displayed a red face and red iris. It also had a relatively broad white border of feathers around the face and completely encircling the eye. Even though I was looking for this species, I had quite a jolt when I saw it. I watched the bird a little longer noting bright red intertarsal joints, or knees (actually ankles), bright red feet, and an overall reddish coloration to the plumage. I then left to call other birders, a number of whom were able to relocate the bird later that day and the two subsequent days.

[Ed's Note: Dave Provencher provides a detailed description of the identification of White-faced Ibis and its features that distinguish this species from Glossy Ibis. He also discusses the distribution of White-faced Ibis in North America and its recently increasing status in New England and the northeast.]

See also: Books on Birds, by Alan H. Brush (Antbirds and Ovenbirds, by Alexander Skutch, 1996. Austin: University of Texas Press.); Connecticut Field Notes (Winter, December 1, 1996 to February 28, 1997), by Greg Hanisek, and; Photo Challenge, by Julian Hough. The cover art of Northern Saw-whet Owl is by Mark Szantyr. The July 1997 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* can be seen in its entirety at the following link to the COA website. Download Volume 17, and view pages 97-144.

<https://ctbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTWarblerVolume17.pdf>



Connecticut Ornithological Association

314 Unquowa Road

Fairfield, CT 06824

www.ctbirding.org

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Vice President	Chris Wood, Woodbury, CT
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Summer Bird Count Compilers	Tom Robben, Patrick Comins
Great Backyard Bird Count	Patrick Comins

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 20, 2022 to the editor at amdasinger@gmail.com