



COA Bulletin

Volume 37, No. 4

Winter 2022

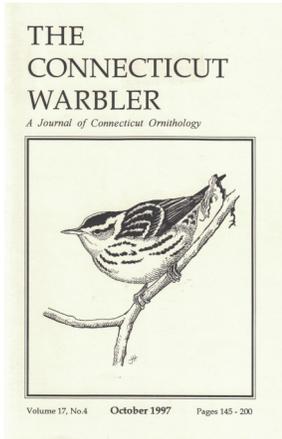
Connecticut Ornithological Association

A Christmas Bird-Census

By Frank M. Chapman

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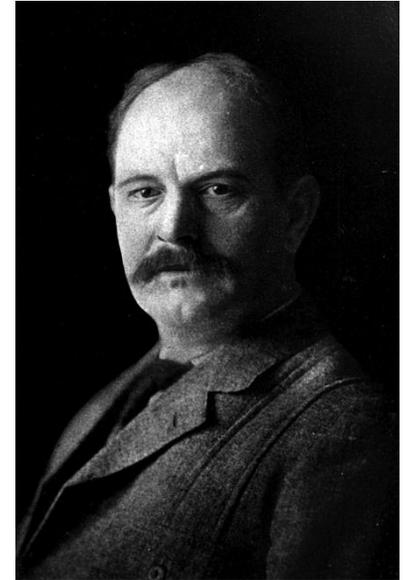
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COA is an all volunteer organization with the mission of promoting interest in Connecticut birds, and collecting, preparing, and disseminating the best available scientific information on the status of Connecticut birds and their habitats. While COA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

It is not many years ago that sportsmen were accustomed to meet on Christmas Day, 'choose sides,' and then, as representatives of the two bands resulting, hie them to the fields and woods on the cheerful mission of killing practically everything in fur or feathers that crossed their path - if they could.

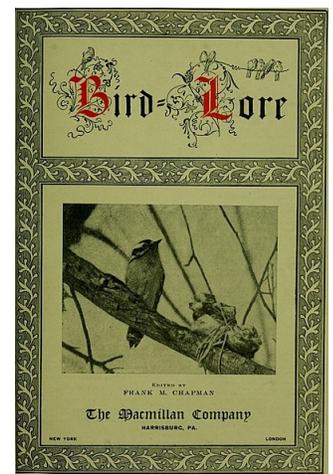
These exceptional opportunities for winning the laurels of the chase were termed 'side hunts,' and reports of the hundreds of non-game birds which were sometimes slaughtered during a single hunt were often published in our leading sportsmen's journals, with perhaps a word of editorial commendation for the winning side. We are not certain that the side hunt is wholly a thing of the past, but we feel assured that no reputable sportsman's journal of today would venture to publish an account of one, unless it were to condemn it; and this very radical change of tone is one of the significant signs of the times.



Now BIRD-LORE proposes a new kind of Christmas side hunt, in the form of a Christmas bird-census, and we hope that all our readers who have the opportunity will aid us in making it a success by spending a portion of Christmas Day with the birds and sending a report of their 'hunt' to BIRD-LORE before they retire that night. Such reports should be headed by the locality, hour of starting and of returning, character of the weather, direction and force of the wind, and the temperature; the latter taken when starting. The birds observed should then be added, following the order in which they are given in the A. O. U. 'Check List,' with, if possible, the exact or approximate number of individuals of each species observed.

Promptness in sending these lists to BIRD-LORE (at Englewood, N.J.) is urged in order that the best of them may be published in our February number, where they will be not only of interest to other participants in the 'hunt,' but will also constitute, in a measure, a census of Christmas bird-life.

BIRD-LORE, II(6): 192 (December 1900)



**123rd ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
CONNECTICUT 2022-2023 SCHEDULE****SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2022**

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)

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(Western Connecticut Bird Club)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2022

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 860-693-0157 (H), 860-707-5246 (cell)
(Hartford 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

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

Napatree, RI-CT-NY (RINT) Compilers: Shai Mitra, Biology Department, College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10314 shaibal.Mitra@csi.cuny.edu
and Glenn Williams, 221 Pequot Avenue, 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
(Mattabesek Audubon Society)

Westport, CT (CTWE) Compilers: Mardi and Townsend Dickinson, 20 Blake Street, Norwalk, CT 06851-3007 mardi1d@gmail.com 203-846-0359 and <http://kymrygroup.com> (Kymry Group)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022

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

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2022:

Guilford-Long Island Sound, CT (CTGU) Compiler: John Picard, Madison, CT
johnpicardiwcc@aol.com 203-645-8959
(Menunkatuck Audubon Society)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2022

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

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2023

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

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)

MONDAY, JANUARY 2, 2023:

Bristol, CT (CTBR) Compiler: Jack Swatt, 209 Deerfield Terrace, Colchester, CT 06415
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)



Connecticut Has Another Strong Showing for The Big Sit!® 2022

Craig Repasz

Connecticut always has a strong showing in the Big Sit!®. This year the event, held on Oct 8 and 9, had 115 circles in four countries. Connecticut had more circles than every other state with 15 circles. There was a strong effort with a total just under 136 hours.

A circle in Connecticut has either finished in first or tied for first with the highest species count since the New Haven Bird Club took over the administration of the Big Sit!. This year a circle in Cape May, one of the premier fall migration hot-spots in the U.S., came in with an impressive 152 species. In second place was the Smith Neck Rd circle in Old Lyme, CT, with 104 species followed by Milford Point, with 103. The Milford Point circle was raising funds for The Connecticut Audubon Society.

The Connecticut Big Sit circles tallied 158 species and 23 other taxa (subspecies, hybrids and birds that could not be fully identified). The total of individual birds counted was 25,184. The individual birds are underreported, however, because some circles only reported species and not individual counts.

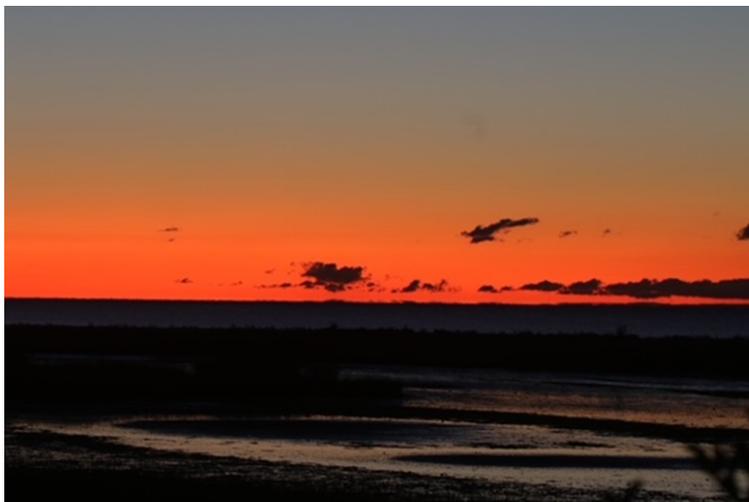
Some notable birds reported: American Golden-Plover, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Dickcissel.

The Golden Bird Award- This year the New Haven Bird Club was able to reintroduce the Golden Bird Award. Zeiss Optics donated a pair of Zeiss Conquest HD 8x42 binoculars to the winner. The award is a double drawing, first a species is randomly drawn from all of the species observed during the Big Sit! to be the Golden Bird. This year the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was selected. Next the winner is randomly drawn from all of the circles that recorded the Golden Bird. From a list of eight circles reporting the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher the winner was the circle at the Eagle Cove Observation Platform, Tishomingo NWR, sponsored by Texoma Audubon.

The following page gives some more details.



In Connecticut, Nobody Sits! Frank Mantlik @ Milford Pt



Milford Point. Stewart B McKinney NWR. by Frank Mantlik



Last Light at Salt Meadow. Stewart B McKinney NWR, Chris Howe

The Top 10 Big Sit Circles

Rank	Date	Total Time (hours)	Country-State/Province	Team's eBird Location	Team Name	eBird Species	eBird Other Taxa
1	08 OCT 2022	24.0	US-NJ	Cape Island--CMPSP--Hawkwatch Platform		152	0
2	08 OCT 2022	16.3	US-CT	Smith Neck Road Big Sit!	The Great Islanders	104	4
3	09 OCT 2022	14.8	US-CT	Milford Point-Outer Platform (Big Sit!)		103	6
4	08 OCT 2022	15.3	US-OH	Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area--Force Rd. West		99	0
5	08 OCT 2022	12.9	US-TX	40-Acre Lake Trail, Needville, TX		93	1
6	09 OCT 2022	13.5	US-TX	Estero Llano Grande SP WBC	Weslaco Red-Crowns	93	0
7	09 OCT 2022	12.0	US-CA	Elfin Forest Preserve--Lupine Point Overlook	Elfin Forest Lupine Point	90	0
8	08 OCT 2022	12.5	US-PA	HRDABRD at Middle Creek (Big Sit)	Lancaster County Bird Club	88	3
9	08 OCT 2022	12.5	US-VA	Kiptopeke SP--Hawk Platform		88	3
10	09 OCT 2022	13.7	US-PA	John Heinz NWR--impoundment		83	1

The Big Sit Connecticut Circles 2022

County	Location/Name	Date	Hours	Species from eBird	Other taxa from eBird	Individual Birds
New London	Smith Neck Road Big Sit!	10/8/22	16.30	104	6	3,773
New Haven	Milford Point – Outer Platform (Big Sit!)	10/9/22	14.78	103	6	4,233
New Haven	Jared Eliot Preserve, Guilford	10/8/22	12.45	71	1	X
Hartford	Glastonbury Meadows	10/8/22	8.08	67		979
New Haven	Lighthouse Point Park	10/8/22	9.05	62	8	3,725
Windham	Plainfield-Quinebaug Valley Fish Hatchery	10/9/22	13.25	60		481
New Haven	Lighthouse Point Park	10/8/22	3.5	43		671
New Haven	Hammonasset Beach SP	10/8/22	3.08	57		6,568
New Haven	Big Sit 2022 Willard's	10/8/22	10.00	55		2,410
New London	RTP Estuary Center, CT Audubon	10/9/22	9.00	52	1	187
Hartford	Station 43	10/9/22	6.50	51		1,917
New Haven	Chaffinch Island Park, Guilford	10/8/22	11.00	51		X
Middlesex	Salt Meadow NWR Big Sit! Circle	10/9/22	9.67	45	1	X
New Haven	126 Perry Merrill Dr, West Haven	10/9/22	7.00	33		173
Windham	CT-RI-MA Tri State Marker	10/8/22	2.25	22		67
Total			135.92	158		25,184

Fall Photo Gallery



Brown Pelican, Niantic Bay Boardwalk
(Abby Sesselberg, 13 Sep 2022)



Gull-billed Tern, Sandy Point, New Haven
(David Mathieu, 19 Oct 2022)



Ruff, Hammonasset Beach State Park
(Alex Lin-Moore, 15 Sep 2022)



Gray Kingbird, Bauer Farm, Madison
(Chuck Imbergamo, 12 Oct 2022)



Sedge Wren, Sherwood Island State Park
(Craig Heberton, 4 Nov 2022)



Townsend's Solitaire, Hammonasset Beach State
Park (Bob MacDonnell, 22 Nov 2022)



Smith's Longspur, Sandy Point, New Haven
(Cody Limber, 18 Oct 2022)



LeConte's Sparrow, Southbury Training School
– Cassidy Rd (Jeff Campbell, 20 Oct 2022)

COA Mini-Grant Call for Applications

COA awards small grants for projects that directly benefit Connecticut birds. Details on the COA Mini-Grant program and the application form can be found on the COA web site at this link: <https://www.ctbirding.org/resources/coa-mini-grant/>

Applications for our 2023 round of funding can be submitted at any time, but the deadline is midnight on January 15, 2023. Final decisions are made at the February COA board meeting, and funds are distributed shortly thereafter. Read about one of the projects to establish a nesting structure for Great Blue Herons in Norfolk in the following project report from a COA Mini-Grant recipient.

COA Mini-Grant Project: Norfolk Heron Rookery Sue Frisch

Norfolk Heron Rookery Project Report

We proposed to build an artificial nesting structure in a heron rookery that had lost two of its three nesting trees. As herons are known to accept artificial nesting platforms, this is expected to keep the rookery going when the last remaining tree collapses, which it is likely to do soon, and possibly allow the rookery to expand in the meantime. It was built in late winter, 2022, and resulted in one new nest that produced four fledglings.

The Platform

On the morning of February 11, 2022, a four-man volunteer crew from the Norfolk Heron Rookery Project met to carry tools and materials onto the ice of the beaver pond that housed the existing rookery. There, in the course of a day and a half, the artificial heron nesting platform we described in our grant application was erected.



Because herons are colony nesters, a spot on the pond was chosen near the remaining nest tree. On an earlier reconnaissance by kayak in the fall, the pond was determined to be four or five feet deep at that point and the bottom flat and muddy.

The structure is simple. It consists of a galvanized pipe tripod, its legs bolted at the apex to a hinged cap, and two courses of horizontal bracing that support the wooden nest platforms. Holes were cut through the ice for the tripod legs. The 30-foot legs were then assembled, using sections of 1 and 3/8-inch galvanized fence pipe, and these were bolted to the hinged cap at the apex. The structure was then raised and settled on the floor of the pond. The horizontal braces, also of 1 and 3/8-inch fence pipe, were then attached to the

tripod legs with u-bolts. These stabilize the structure and, extending past the legs of the tripod, create a V-shaped support for the platforms proper.

Six mini-platforms (or nesting baskets), constructed beforehand and consisting of wood-framed triangles with a chicken wire floor, were then lifted into place. A few sticks were tossed onto each platform to suggest the beginnings of a nest.

Noticing more flex in the structure than we had expected, we came back the next day with six 10-foot lengths of pipe that we drove into the mud of the pond at an angle, two to a leg, and bolted fast, giving the structure some

Heron Rookery Mini-Grant Project (continued)



added rigidity. The area was then cleared of extraneous material and the pond left undisturbed.

The herons returned in mid-March. During the spring, several newly started nests were observed on the artificial platforms. One was abandoned early, one may or may not have had young (we did not observe during that period) and a third was seen in June to have four nestlings about to fledge.

Overall, the project has been a success. The herons have accepted the presence of the structure in their rookery and continued to nest in the remaining natural tree. They have also accepted the artificial nest platforms as viable nesting sites, and at least one heron pair has successfully raised young on

them. We hope and expect that more herons will nest on the pond next year.

Conclusions

One lesson we learned is that the herons can be very skittish when choosing a nesting site. At first they seemed to be somewhat suspicious of the new structure and we suspect that two of the nests on it were abandoned because someone disturbed their builders at the wrong time. Consequently, we did not attempt to document the entire evolution of the site, but had to be satisfied with beginning and ending photos.

As for the tripod, in retrospect it seems that we might have used a heavier gauge of pipe for the legs and possibly for the crosspieces, and did not need to make the structure so tall. There has also been discussion about the flanged, triangular metal plate at the structure's apex. Although it worked well enough, a simpler solution might be possible. We will be inspecting the structure this winter to see if any maintenance is needed.

We are very grateful to the COA for its generous grant, and we believe it has allowed us to extend the life of a productive rookery and help the local heron population.

In the coming months, we will be looking at other ponds in the area to see if any might also benefit from an artificial nesting structure. We have identified one site that would be accessible to the public for viewing, although we have found that the herons are very skittish and easily disturbed.



Candlelight Vigil for Migratory Birds at Yale

Meredith Barges

A Candlelight Vigil for Migratory Birds was held at Yale University's Edward P. Evans Hall on November 15, at 5pm. Co-organized by Yale Divinity School students Kelli Hata (MAR '25) and Meredith Barges (MDiv '23), the event was well attended, with over 30 people gathered to commemorate and honor the birds whose lives were cut short at Yale. The vigil featured a roll call of the 55 bird species affected by window collisions on Yale's campus, commemorative bird song, poetry by Noah Humphrey (MDiv '23), and live music by Henri Santelman (MDiv '25).

"I was touched to see so many gather in solidarity with the birds," remarked Hata.

This year during peak fall bird migration (Aug 15-Nov 15), over 500 birds representing at least 60 species were found dead, stunned, or injured on Yale's campus due to window strikes, according to [publicly available data](#) from carcass surveys conducted by the Yale Bird Friendly Building Initiative and community science observations. This number, which is most probably a dramatic undercount, includes at least 55 birds found at Evans Hall.

Organizers selected Evans Hall as the vigil site because of the building's unfortunate role in [causing window collisions](#) but also the important steps that Yale School of Management administrators have taken recently to help prevent collisions. Feather Friendly film was installed on a portion of the back of the building in October.

To learn more about how to make your home or business bird-friendly, see Audubon's "[Simple Solutions to Prevent Collisions](#)."



Birds and the Environment Science Conference – Online

This second annual COA Science Conference focused on the birds in and around Long Island Sound throughout the year and the ecosystem and food web that support them: The Long Island Sound Restaurant, as we see it. In addition to several expert presentations on birds, scholars also discussed marine life and the LIS environment.

You can view this informative and engaging series of presentations about current bird-related research and scientific activities related to birds and the habitats of the Long Island Sound area on the COA web site at <https://www.ctbirding.org/events/coa-science-conference/>



Organized by Connecticut Ornithological Association President Tom Robben.

The table below provides more information on the presenters and their topics.

Topic	Presenter
Preliminaries	Angela Dimmitt, COA, Co-host
Welcome	Tom Robben, COA President, Host
Overview	John Waldman, Queens College, <i>Big changes in LIS Long Island Sound</i>
Environment & Habitats	Mary Beth Decker, Yale Univ., <i>Describing LIS environment and habitats</i>
FOOD WEB:	
Plankton	George McManus, Univ. of Connecticut <i>LIS Plankton: Types, species, seasonal changes, and long-term changes</i>
Invertebrates	Gail Hartnett, Univ. of New Haven, <i>LIS Invertebrates: Types, species, seasonal changes, and long-term changes</i>
Fish	David Molnar, CT DEEP, <i>LIS Fish: Types, species, seasonal changes, and long-term changes</i>
Marine Mammals	Mary Ellen Mateleska, Mystic Aquarium, <i>LIS Marine Mammals: Types, species, seasonal changes, and long-term changes</i>
Birds	Chris Wood, COA, <i>Norwalk Harbor nesting birds and changes over time</i>
Birds	Steve Broker, COA, <i>Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts and trends in birds in LIS</i>
Birds	Breanne Ellis, CAS, <i>The Osprey Project in and around LIS</i>
Introducing UConn students	Chris Elphick, Univ. of Connecticut
Birds	Frank Gigliotti, Univ. of Connecticut, <i>The saltmarsh restoration work at Stratford Great Meadows</i>
Birds	Carlin Eswarakumar, Univ. of Connecticut, <i>Diets of seaside and saltmarsh sparrows around LIS</i>
Birds	Will DeMott, Univ. of Connecticut, <i>New methods to measure effects of wind and date on Tree Swallow migration near LIS</i>
Panel and final thoughts	

Twenty-Five Years Ago in *The Connecticut Warbler*

Compiled by Steve Broker

Volume XVII, No. 4 (October 1997)

Letter to the Editor, *The Connecticut Warbler*, by Frank W. Mantlik, with reply by Dave Provencher

I read with interest Dave Provencher's Site Guide article on Bluff Point (Vol. 13, 84-90). [See the Fall 2018 issue of the COA Bulletin for the Twenty-Five Years Ago reference to this article.] The fall migration of passerines there has made it a popular location for Connecticut and New England birders; some have even termed it a "mini-Cape May." Is this an isolated phenomenon in Connecticut, or are there other locations that have similar concentrations of fall migrants? Frank Mantlik

Dave Provencher replies:

The phenomenon which has become well known at Bluff Point in Groton is called morning flight. It is a poorly understood continued movement of nocturnal migrants in the first hours of daylight. This movement has been observed throughout eastern North America and beyond so it is not restricted to Bluff Point. What is special about Bluff Point is the concentration of numerous migrants into a relatively small area. Why is this? I believe several factors create this, and I do not believe these factors to be exactly duplicated anywhere else in Connecticut. Bluff Point is an undeveloped coastal peninsula of some size surrounded by development, open expanses of water, and an airport. It also has a raised central spine oriented north/south that dominates the coastal plain in southeastern Connecticut. [Ed's Note: Dave Provencher continues his discussion of morning flight with reference to nocturnal and diurnal migrants, the attraction of migrants to the woodlands adjacent to the coastline, and the listing of three other coastal sites in Connecticut that likely experience this avian phenomenon. He concludes, "I still believe that dawn at the 'hot corner' is the best place to be on the east coast north of Cape May during the fall migration!"]

Identification of Adult Arctic Tern vs Adult Common Tern in Fall, by David F. Provencher and Mark S. Szantyr

The purpose of this article is to discuss the field identification of adult Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) vs adult Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) during fall migration. The occurrence of Arctic Tern in coastal waters of eastern North America south of the breeding grounds is more likely during the pre-breeding, northern migration than during the southward post-breeding migration (reference given). . . [T]he status of Arctic Tern in Connecticut remains accidental at best. The discussion that follows is a point by point separation of fall adult Arctic Tern from fall adult Common Tern, the species most often misidentified as *Sterna paradisaea*).

[Ed's Note: Provencher and Szantyr's insightful article describes in detail the distinguishing features of Arctic and Common terns, including structure of standing birds, structure of flying birds, plumage, and flight style. They note that dispersal from the more northern breeding grounds over pelagic waters of alternate plumage/late summer Arctic Terns "makes the chances of seeing [them] in Connecticut rather small. It is this very fact that makes any sighting of Arctic Tern in our state significant for the ornithological record. Carefully documenting the observation will help us better understand the status in Connecticut of this elegant creature of the sea." The article is accompanied by superb drawings of Arctic and Common terns by Mark Szantyr. The July 2022 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* sent earlier this year to the COA membership contains the article "Arctic Tern: An unprecedented fallout in inland Connecticut and the Northeast" by Jeremy Nance, describing the remarkable May 13, 2022 Arctic tern fallout.]

Site Guide: Farmington Canal Greenway - Hamden and Cheshire, by Dwight G. Smith, Arnold Devine, and Andy Brand

Farmington Canal Greenway began life in 1828 as the Farmington Canal, a 78 mile inland transportation route that ran from New Haven north through central Connecticut to join with the Connecticut River near Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1848, the canal line became part of the New Haven and Northampton Railroad, which

still later was incorporated as part of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. With the decline of the rail lines in the middle years of this century, the canal railway deteriorated rapidly. In some places sections were taken over by adjacent businesses and in others the land was converted into convenient dump sites.

In the 1990s, a grassroots movement centered in the towns of Cheshire and Hamden successfully promoted the conversion of several sections of the old canal line into a linear greenway park. Today, some 6.6 miles of former canal line/railroad bed in Hamden and Cheshire have been leveled, paved, and provided with wooden bridges, benches, and other modern conveniences for recreation. Plans call for a further extension of the greenway south through Hamden into New Haven and possibly north into Southington. Birders can find birding opportunities along the existing greenway throughout much of the year.

[Ed's Note: this article on birding along the Farmington Canal Greenway describes the birds likely to be seen in four sections of the rail trail. Today the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail is part of the larger greenway extending from Long Island Sound north to Northampton, Massachusetts. Some sections remain under construction. "The New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway Alliance represents seven non-profit groups that make up the 81-mile multi-use greenway in Massachusetts and Connecticut, with a focus on strengthening the tourism and recreational opportunities along the greenway corridor." <https://sites.google.com/view/nhncg/>]

The 1997 Summer Bird Count, by Joseph Zeranski

For the fourth consecutive year the same nine Summer Bird Counts (SBCs) were conducted in Connecticut. Held on weekends throughout June, two SBCs were coastal, two were held along the Connecticut River, two others were upland, while the remaining three counts were in the northern hills.

Of all the avian population changes occurring in the northeastern United States as a result of habitat alterations, the most pervasive is the persistent decline of birds which are found among treeless expanses, such as grasslands, fields, meadows, and low thickets. . . Some grassland species like Upland Sandpiper, Common Nighthawk, and Grasshopper Sparrow are hanging in by the 'skin to their teeth' as breeders. Yellow-breasted Chat and Savannah Sparrow, often locally common nesters into the early part of this century, are not doing much better. Formerly abundant, Vesper Sparrow may be gone as a nester. Norther Bobwhite is not far behind as its numbers diminish. Most of these species have lost all but a fraction of their preferred nesting habitat, with the remainder in jeopardy.

[Ed's Note: the SBC review article comments further on selected species: Chuck-will's-widow - "undoubtedly a spring overshoot, but its nesting range is slowly expanding northward and eventual breeding here is not an outlandish prospect"; King Rail - "may not be quite as rare [a nester] as is generally thought"; Barred Owl - "a recent jump in numbers"; Red-bellied Woodpecker - a southern species "still increasing"; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - "expanding from the north"; Alder Flycatcher - "recent growth"; Common Raven - "has increased within the last two decades from an accidental vagrant to a regular local upland nester"; Golden-winged Warbler - "a marginal state nester". Individual count totals and the annotated 1997 Summer Bird Count table accompany the narrative.]

See also: Books on Birds, by Alan H. Brush (The Origin and Evolution of Birds, by Alan Feduccia. 1996. Yale University Press); Connecticut Field Notes (Spring, March 1 to May 31, 1997), by Greg Hanisek; Bird Behavior Notes, by Greg Hanisek; by Betty Kleiner, and; Photo Challenge, by Julian Hough. The cover art of Black-and-white Warbler is by Julian Hough. The October 1997 issue of The Connecticut Warbler can be seen in its entirety at the fol-

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 2022, Jonathan Wright-Goodison and Conner Lehmacher both attended. Personal accounts of their experiences at camp are on the next two pages, and we think COA members will agree that these illustrate the value this opportunity offers to our young birders. The Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship 2023 will be Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens, June 18-23, 2023.

Mountains to Sea Birding for Teens Camp

Jonathan Wright-Goodison

My time in Maine started on a Sunday with a bus ride a couple hours north of Portland to Bremen, where Hog Island is located. After a short boat ride to the island we were oriented and settled into our cabins before some casual birding from the dining hall, where we saw Northern Parulas, Purple Finches, Goldfinches, Song Sparrows, and flyover Red Crossbills. After dinner, we watched a presentation about the history of Hog Island given to us by our instructor Eva.



The next day we had an early morning bird walk, we ate breakfast and took a boat ride back to the mainland where we took a birding walk.



On the walk we saw Canada Warblers that could be drawn out with pishing and many other songbirds like Common Yellowthroat, Warbling Vireo, Least Flycatcher, and Scarlet Tanager. We were also able to observe a bog containing pitcher plants and sundew plants. After the walk we visited the Mad River decoy shop at Hog Island Audubon, and saw how the decoys, used to bring seabird colonies back all around the world, are made. We then painted our own tern decoys - mine as a Least Tern. Dinner was followed by a presentation about a big year on a budget by instructor Christian.

On Tuesday, we went out to Egg Rock to view Atlantic Puffins. Out on the boat, we saw Atlantic Puffins and Guillemots. We also saw Arctic, Roseate, and Least Terns, and some of us even got looks at little Wilson's Storm-Petrels in the distance dancing above the water. Back on the mainland we continued our birding at two locations, one being the Damariscotta Fish Ladder, which had lots of Herring Gulls, a Black-Crowned Night Heron resting in the trees, and warblers like Yellow Warblers and American Redstarts. After dinner, we watched a presentation by Doug about the Maine Bird Atlas, learning about breeding codes for birds and why they are important data tools.

The next day we took a long bus ride up to Borestone Mountain Bird Sanctuary, where we were spending the rest of our time. On the way, we made multiple birding stops, the most memorable being Messalonskee Lake, where we were able to see Black Terns and an active Warbling Vireo nest. Borestone was filled with the sounds of Winter Wrens and Blackburnian Warblers. We hiked the next day, and were able to see a mother moose and her calf at the edge of a lake from the peak of Borestone Mountain. Later, we partnered up and did a bio blitz in which we tried to identify as many species of organisms as possible. After the bio blitz, we got into groups and created skits for later that evening. At the campfire, we ate s'mores, played bird charades, and presented our skits. The following morning, we saw a Common Loon on the lake in front of our cabins. Hearing its forlorn call was enough to make our hearts leap. To perfectly conclude the trip, the group saw a mink along the shore, where it made eye contact with us, then continued on through the lakeside vegetation.



Hog Island Audubon Camp was an amazing experience because it provided an opportunity to spend time around people like me - teens that were bird nerds - and I was able to learn about birding techniques from our instructors. I was also able to pick some new lifers up in Maine like Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Red Crossbill, Glossy Ibis, and many more. Thank you so much to the Connecticut Ornithological Association for this great opportunity, it has helped me grow as a birder and allowed me to create connections with other birders my age!

Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens Camp 2022

Conner Lehmacher

Before I talk about what happened at the Audubon Bird Study camp, I wanted to express my thanks to the COA for choosing me to receive the George Zepko Scholarship Award to attend the National Audubon Society's Hog Island Summer camp this Summer. I found it to be a very rewarding experience.

When I arrived at the boat dock, I was amazed to see the Osprey nesting above the dock. I was able to observe them catching fish in the bay while I waited for the short boat ride to Hog Island.

That Sunday evening was just about getting to know the other campers and getting settled in for the upcoming week. On Monday we did a day of birdwatching on the island. For the week I was able to add 18 new life birds to my list. Of course my favorite bird to add to the list was the Atlantic Puffin. They were so colorful, and I was able to study them really close, unlike my grandfather who only saw them on a pelagic trip. We had a bagged lunch on the island and finished up the day with more bird identification. After dinner, we had several presentations, starting with the birds that we saw that day on the island. We watched a video on Birding in Alaska and how the environment is being impacted and how the birds are being affected by the way humans treat the environment.

On Tuesday we birded the mainland, which was a lot buggier than on the islands. We had a bagged lunch and continued to bird on the mainland until heading back to Hog Island for dinner. The boat trip back and forth to Hog Island was only 5 minutes! That evening we had guest speakers that talked about conservation and the environment, seabird nesting behavior and courtship.

On Wednesday we took the boat trip to Egg Rock Island. It was more than I had hoped for as far as seeing pelagic birds for the trip. We saw Atlantic Puffins, Black Guillemots, Razorbills, Common Eiders, Laughing Gulls, Common, Roseate and Artic Terns, and other than the Puffin, my favorite was the Leach's Storm-Petrels. We were able to experience them up close and personal, and had to fend terns off from doing their artwork on our hats or heads. They were able to reach in and hold a Leach's Storm-Petrel while we were watching them. To see those pelagic birds so close was amazing. In fact my grandfather was very jealous that I was able to see the Leach's Storm-Petrel that close without having to be on a boat trailing a fish oil slick behind it. But he did say that he did get to see them skipping across the water with their little feet.

Thursday was the last full day on the island, and we spent some of it banding birds caught in the mist nets that were set up. It was very interesting to see how they gently removed the birds from the nets, weighed them, and then banded them to be able to study their movements and migration patterns. The staff showed us how to blow on their belly feathers to see how much fat was being stored for their upcoming migrations. After a full day in the field we were ready for lobster dinner. That had to be my best meal on the island, other than the delicious seafood stew.

I had a great time on the island, and met other birders from as far away as Washington state. I was able to see many new birds, and learned how much conservation efforts really do affect the birds, and our future on this planet.

I again want to thank the COA and the Audubon Society for giving me the opportunity to stay on Hog Island Audubon Camp during the second week and increase my knowledge of the birds and conservation.





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