



COA Bulletin

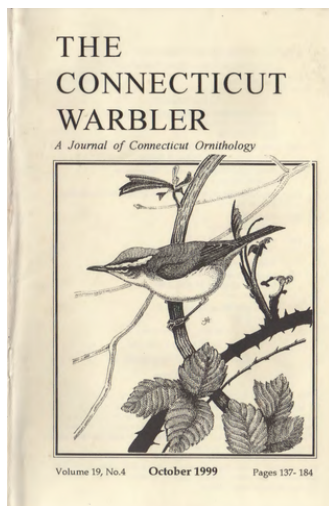
Connecticut Ornithological Association

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Flight ID Challenges</i>	p. 1– 5
<i>Christmas Bird Count</i>	p. 6 - 7
<i>President's Message</i>	p. 8
<i>Rarity Round Up Nov</i>	p. 9-10
<i>Photo Gallery</i>	p. 11
<i>Announcements</i>	p. 12-13
<i>25 Yrs Ago in TCW</i>	p. 14-15
<i>COA Membership</i>	p. 16



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.

Flight ID Challenges of Some Common Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Birds

Steve Mayo

Whether you're leading a CBC party, or just want to improve your identification skills, now is the time to anticipate identification issues you may face during a CBC. These tips are not a definitive guide but a brief review. It's also a reminder that now is a great time to begin researching other tricky IDs you believe you may encounter during the count.

Avoid Gull Guilt

Identifying Ring-billed and Herring Gulls can be difficult, particularly at a distance and especially in flight. I recall a few occasions (CBC area totals, eBird reports) when two parties counting in the same location at the same time, came up with different results. For example, person A may have reported 50 Ring-billed Gulls and 150 Herring Gulls. Person B reported 150 Ringers and 50 Herring Gulls. These wide discrepancies occur when participants don't take the effort to identify first and then do a careful count. While it is definitely challenging, reducing the guesswork in identifying gulls will improve the quality of the data.



American Herring Gull,
Long Beach, Fairfield
Frank Mantlik , 10 Jan 2024

If you see a group of gulls in flight, focus on the adult(s) and then check to see if there are others approximately the same size. If you're fortunate to find a mixed flock in flight, the ID and count is relatively easy as it becomes a comparison exercise. If you encounter a small flight of gulls of the same size, things get tricky. There is some sexual dimorphism in these gulls as males tend to be larger, but there is no overlap between the medium Ring-billed Gull (17.5-20.5 inches length, 45-53 inches wingspan) and the large Herring Gull (22-26 inches length, 47-59 wingspan). These size differences evaporate with distance, and are irrelevant in single species flocks.

Ring-billed Gulls seem to show somewhat slender wings, but the proportions (head/tail projection) are about the same as Herring Gulls. The Ring-billed breast is sleek and flat, and the head and bill are smaller. The Herring Gull has a larger head, thicker neck, a flatter crown, and a long, gradual slope of the forehead. The bill is thicker and longer while the breast and upper belly is definitely broader and more bulging.

Ringers have a more buoyant flight, with quicker wing beats than Herring Gulls. Herring Gulls have more powerful, ponderous, wing beats. These observations get easier if the gulls are flying closer. Often the wing tip pattern on adults can be seen, so study photos of adults in flight. Ring-billed Gulls have much more black on the primary tips. Closer still, you may be able to pick up field marks such as the dark ring on the bill, the yellow legs, or even the rounded head/crown. With a little practice you can be confident you've reported accurate numbers of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls.



*American Herring Gull,
Long Beach, Fairfield
Frank Mantlik , 10 Jan 2024*



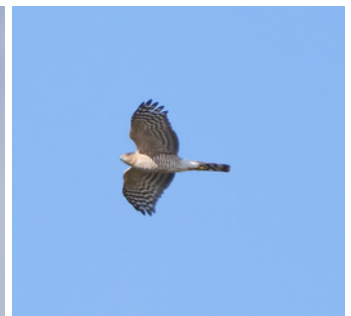
*American Herring Gull,
Long Beach, Fairfield
Frank Mantlik , 10 Jan 2024*

Accipiter vs. Astur vs. Disaster

Oh no, here we go again: Sharp-shinned Hawk vs. Cooper's Hawk. A lot of birders can recite the field marks but it takes a ton of experience to correctly apply them. The problem is complicated because these birds can provide a nice long look at a hawk watch setting, but only a fleeting glimpse on a CBC. About a hundred years ago, the term "darter" was used for both species due to their speed. To avoid this ID catastrophe, you may need to speed-up your game.



*Coopers Hawk,
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
James Sherwonit, 12 Nov 2024*



*Sharp-shinned Hawk,
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Abby Sesselberg, 16 Oct2024*

Sharp-shinned Hawks have a narrow body and a seemingly shorter tail in proportion to body length. Cooper's have a stouter body and long tails that are rounded, especially when seen (from below) in a soar or glide. Sharpies have short, broad, wings, and the leading edge is often pushed forward at the wrist. The head is smaller, and this is accentuated by that protruding "wrist". Coops have long wings that are often straighter, and their large ("turtle") headed appearance can be picked up at considerable distance. As with our two gulls, the wing beats are reflected by the relative size of these birds. The smaller Sharpie has very quick, snappy, wing beats. The Cooper's Hawk has a stiffer wing beat, clearly originating from the base of the wing.

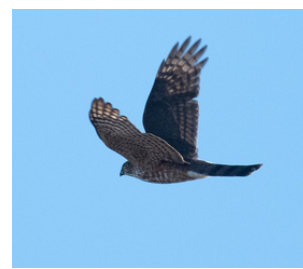
There are very subtle plumage differences between adult males and females and between these two species. The underparts pattern of juvenile birds however, are often helpful for identification. Young Sharp-shinned Hawks have diffuse streaking on the breast and belly. Young Cooper's have very fine, tear-drop streaking on an otherwise white breast/belly. This light streaking, combined with the more visible rusty auriculars (the head is larger after all), can give the Cooper's Hawk a hooded appearance.

Is that little hawk getting closer? Great binocular views or photos show a difference in the eyes of these birds. Sharpies have big, round eyes suggesting a startled look. Coops have a more pronounced supercilium, giving them an angry expression. The graduated tail feathers on the Cooper's hawk, visible from the ventral side, is usually diagnostic.

Study up before being surprised by one of these taxonomically distant but nearly identical bird hawks by looking at photos on Merlin, eBird, Google Images, or iNaturalist. If you report a sighting as unidentified accipiterine, it's really not so catastrophic.



*Coopers Hawk,
Nodbrook Wildlife Management Area, Hartford
Barry Marsh, 11 Oct 2023*



*Sharp-shinned Hawk,
Meadowood, Hartford
Barry Marsh, 17 Jan 2023*



*American Black Duck
Hammonasset Beach SP, New Haven
Steve Mayo, 25 Nov 2024*



*Gadwall
Milford Point, New Haven
Alex Lin-Moore, 21 Jan 2021*



*American Wigeon
Hammonasset Beach SP, New Haven
Russ Smiley, 4 Apr 2024*

Flying Ducks – Plumage Predicament

Rejoice, it's not August! Muddy, scruffy "eclipse" molts are long-gone and drake plumages are bright, crisp, and clean this time of year. Hunters have to make snap IDs all the time, and there are plenty of online waterfowl hunting ID resources available. Check the wing insignia. Is there a white patch in the front of the wing (American Wigeon)? Or is there just a skinch of white in the secondaries (Gadwall)? Mallard vs. American Black Duck can be a real challenge, especially in poor light and an age of rampant hybridization. Calibrate your identifications with lighting conditions. Under wings are similar, but Black Ducks may show much darker upper wings. If the body is entirely dark, mark it down as a Black Duck.

Sea Ducks – A Blob Too Far

Scoters in winter often stay way out on the Sound, just beyond adequate scope views. At a distance, the only species you may be able to tease out in flight is the White-winged Scoter. Review the facial patterns and shapes of both sexes and all three species of scoters. These patterns can melt into overall darkness even among the females. Don't be afraid to report them as scoter, sp. Avoid calling the uncommon Black Scoter unless you clearly see the large, pale, well-defined cheek patch (female, first winter) or the bright yellow bill nob on the adult male. This is especially important in the western portions of the Sound where Black Scoter is extremely uncommon.



Black Scoter
Hammonasset Beach SP, New Haven
Russ Smiley, 19 Feb 2023

Black Scoter (below)
Hammonasset Beach SP,
New Haven
Russ Smiley, 19 Feb 2023



White-winged Scoter (above)
Harkness Memorial SP, New London
Russ Smiley, 11 Apr 2022

Flying scaup are bit more boldly patterned, but sorting out these two species can be difficult. The less common Lesser Scaup shows a shorter white wing stripe because the primary feathers are gray, not white. In Greater Scaup, the white extends well into the primaries. Be careful because female Greaters can show less white in the flight feathers. In flight, it's probably best to start by focusing on the males. Again, review a lot of photos prior to counting in scaup territory.



Greater Scaup
Stratford Point, Fairfield
Frank Mantlik, 7 Feb 2023



Lesser Scaup
Captain's Cove, Fairfield
Alex Lamoreaux, 16 Feb 2022

Icterids – Fifty shades of Black

Blackbirds are not as common in winter, and flocks are getting smaller. Although Common Grackles exhibit sexual dimorphism (males are noticeably larger), they all appear to be jet-black and even the females seem long-tailed. Flocks are often long or at least, tightly-knit. Red-winged Blackbird and Brown-headed Cowbird flocks often present both black and brownish birds. With practice, you should be able to recognize the pointy-billed head, rounder wings, and sexual dimorphism (different sizes) in the Red-winged Blackbird flocks.



Red-winged Blackbird
Lighthouse Point Park,
New Haven
Russ Smiley, 14 Nov 2020



Common Grackle
Lighthouse Point Park,
New Haven
Russ Smiley, 11 Nov 2023

Frenetic Flying Finches

One of David Sibley's revolutionary field guide improvements was to include tiny, elegant, paintings of passerines in flight. These are a great study tool. The American Goldfinch is the smallest and stubbiest of the finches with a very pronounced bouncy flight and thin, faint, but often visible stripes on the wings. Speaking of wing stripes, make sure to review some flight images and calls of Pine Siskins which are often only observed in flight. House Finch are small-bodied but the long tail makes its shape a bit unique. Purple Finch may appear more distinctly bi-colored, probably because the larger body size makes the pale under tail coverts more obvious. The dark, notched tail is a dead giveaway for Purple Finch. Like many passerines, these finches have distinctive call notes. This further enables accurate ID, even when they are speeding overhead.



American Goldfinch
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Russ Smiley, 2 Nov 2023



Pine Siskin
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Russ Smiley, 2 Nov 2023



House Finch
Sherwood Island SP, Fairfield
Russ Smiley, 28 Oct 2023



Purple Finch
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Russ Smiley, 2 Nov 2023

Thrushes – It's getting easier

Eastern Bluebird and American Robin are two likely thrushes to be seen in small groups overhead. Both have ventriloquial but unique flight calls. Bluebirds appear bi-colored (rust then white) with silver under wings. Back-lit American Robins can resemble blackbirds but their overall "Ace-of-Spades" body shape (thick wings, narrow tail) is diagnostic.



Eastern Bluebird
Hot Corner - Bluff Point SP, New London
Russ Smiley, 2 Sep 2022



American Robin
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Russ Smiley, 2 Nov 2023

Take some time this season to learn the shapes and calls of common birds. You'll be better at quick, accurate, CBC field counts and better prepared when something unusual flies over. Finally, don't forget to take pictures. A simple point-and-shoot camera can often capture fleeting images of shape, proportion, color, pattern, and other field marks. If interested in learning more about identification, check out applicable sections of the Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding (Houghton-Mifflin, 2011). For more about CBC preparation and related information, refer to the Bulletin Archives. Some previous articles have included general tips on how to conduct the CBC (Winter, 2006; Winter, 2021), calls of CBC birds (Winter, 2007), late season sparrows in CT (Fall, 2024), and how to select a birding camera (Fall, 2024).

Details on CBC dates and locations on following page. Get involved if you can!

125th ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2024-2025 SCHEDULE



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2024

*New Haven, CT (CTNH) Compiler: Chris Loscalzo, 67 Wepawaug Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525
closcaiz@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

*Woodbury-Roxbury, CT (CTWR) Compiler: Robert Buck, 116 North George's Hill Road, Southbury, CT 06488
equinehusband@aol.com 203-558-3328, (Western Connecticut Bird Club)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024

*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)

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

*Lakeville-Sharon (Trixie Strauss CBC), CT (CTLS) Compilers: Eileen Fielding
eileen.fielding@audubon.org and Bethany Sheffer bethany.sheffer@audubon.org
(Sharon Audubon Center/National Audubon Society 325 Cornwall Bridge Road, Sharon, CT 06069
<http://sharon.audubon.org/> 860-364-0520 or 717-926-3926)

*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) Compiler: Melissa Baston, mbaston@gmail.com 860-995-0656
(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, (Mattabeseck Audubon Society)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024

*Barkhamsted, CT (CTBA) Compiler: David Tripp, Jr., 97 Hunter Court, Torrington, CT 6790
dtrippjr@gmail.com, (Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

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

*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 Ave,
Mystic, CT 06355 gswilliams9@yahoo.com

*Stratford-Milford, CT (CTSM) Compiler: Steve Mayo, 27 Tuttle Court, Bethany, CT 06524
scmayo999@gmail.com 203-772-9842

*Westport, CT (CTWE) Compilers: Chase McCabe, chase.e.smith@gmail.com 203-326-0378 and Aidan
Kiley, eezambo@gmail.com 203-505-2305

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2024

*New London, CT (CTNL) Compiler: Lisa Wahle, 38 North Main Street, Chester, CT 06412
lcwahle@gmail.com , 860-304-6184

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2024

*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

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2025

*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)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 2025

*Guilford-Long Island Sound, CT (CTGU) Compiler: Sue Stark, 31 Morgan Park, Clinton, CT 06413
pazburd@yahoo.com, 610-952-1852 (Menunkatuck Audubon Society)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2025

*Old Lyme-Saybrook, CT (CTOL) Compiler: Matt Bell, mbell@ctaudubon.org, mjbell1214@gmail.com

***=CONFIRMED BY COMPILER**





President's Message - COA Membership Update

Chris Wood

Thanks largely to the efforts of Steve Morytko, Cynthia Ehlinger, Dan Rottino, Chuck Imbergamo, and now, Corey Leamy, COA has moved into the digital era. Our website and social media pages and the CTBirds email listserv provide Connecticut birders with access to all things about birding in Connecticut. COA's online eStore allows for easy access to everything needed to join or renew memberships and register for workshops and other events. We hope COA members take advantage of these resources and a list of the links to them is provided below.

Which leads me to a reminder for COA members and anyone interested in joining: our annual memberships now run for the full year following the date of joining or renewing. Previously, all memberships ran from January through December which could get confusing if someone wished to join or renew mid-year. So now, it does not matter when you join or renew; you will immediately start receiving The Connecticut Warbler and access to all "members' only" resources including early access to workshops and special events and the Annual Meeting.

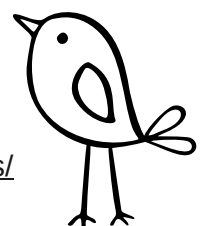
All members will receive an automatic notice of their renewal date two weeks in advance, helpful for those of us with too many memberships and subscriptions to keep track of, so watch for those notices and be sure to add membership@ctbirding.org to your address book so they don't go to the junk mail folder. And if you have any questions or problems with managing your membership, simply reach out to the Membership Team for assistance at coa-membership@googlegroups.com.

Your membership helps COA continue to provide support for birds, birders, and birding in Connecticut including our quarterly journal The Connecticut Warbler, the quarterly newsletter you are reading now; our workshop programs, which grow more varied and informative each year; the Avian Records Committee, the official statewide authority on bird records for Connecticut; the Annual Meeting, a fun get-together with all your birding friends; our Mini-Grants program supporting important projects to help birds and improve birding; the CTBirds list serve, providing a discussion venue for Connecticut birders; our website and social media presence; and our support for important research and conservation efforts protecting birds and habitats.

As COA wraps up its 40th year, we should all take pride in all COA has done to promote birds and birding, help develop birding skills and access, and generally serve as a link between the science of ornithology and the popularity of birding. We hope you will continue to support this work by our all-volunteer Board and associates. Comments and questions are welcome at contact@ctbirding.org. Thanks all, and Happy Christmas Count Birding!

COA Digital Resources

- Register, Join, and Renew: <https://www.ctbirding.org/join-us/>
- COA Website: <https://www.ctbirding.org>
- Enroll with CTBirds Listserv: ctbirds-request@lists.ctbirding.org
- COA on Instagram: https://www.ctbirding.org/follow-coa-on-our-new-instagram-ct_birds/
- COA Facebook: <http://facebook.com/ctbirding>



Rarity Round Up November

Aidan Kiley

If someone were to ask Connecticut birders what their top three favorite months of the year for birding are, November would likely be on many folks' lists! Why? November is "rarity month". This month is when many western species appear in the Northeast. This short article will explore some of the types of rare birds to look for, review the Cave Swallow and Franklin's Gull phenomenon, and briefly discuss rarity-finding strategy.

Many different species come to mind for fall vagrants. The first group personally is western and southern flycatchers. There are plenty of new world flycatchers that should be searched for! One that would be easy to recognize would be one of the yellow-bellied kingbirds. Western Kingbird is by far the most frequent non-Eastern kingbird in the eastern US, but there are other possibilities. Tropical Kingbird is an option as well. One was seen at Lighthouse Point in November 1990. Very similar to Tropical is Couch's Kingbird, which has not been recorded in CT but is certainly feasible given a few eastern records. Gray Kingbird is quite rare here, although there are two recent records — one at Milford Point found by Justin Hamlin earlier this November, and one in Madison found by Chuck Imbergamo in October 2022. Cassin's Kingbird has several regional records but none in the state. Three other distinctive flycatchers, Scissor-tailed, Fork-tailed, and Ash-throated each have a handful of CT records.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Troutbrook Conservation Area, Fairfield
Avery Cotton, 1 June 2019

Other flycatchers to keep an eye out for are Empidonax flycatchers! We have four species that breed in CT, and some of the western ones have been known to appear in the Northeast in late fall. There are over 20 Northeast records of Hammond's Flycatcher, but zero from CT! This species is similar to Least but has longer primary projection, a smaller bill, and a more peaked crown. CT has three records of Western Flycatcher, which is quite similar to Yellow-bellied. Dusky and Gray are possibilities as well. However, it's important to note that there are plenty of late records of Least, Alder, Willow, and Yellow-bellied. So a November empid is not necessarily one from two thousand miles away!



MacGillivray's Warbler
Pine Creek, Fairfield
Justin Hamlin, 19 Nov 2023

Another family that often comes to mind is warblers. Possibilities for rare warblers include MacGillivray's, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, Hermit, and Virginia's. CT does not have an accepted record of Virginia's but one was found in Westchester County in 2016 so certainly could happen! MacGillivray's, the western counterpart to Mourning, is a skulking bird of thickets. James Purcell found one at Pine Creek in Fairfield last November, which was a state bird for many folks!



Cave Swallow
Cove Island Park, Fairfield
Christopher Whisker, 24 Nov 2024

One of the most fascinating fall vagrants is Cave Swallow. Cave Swallow is a southern species. There are three subspecies groups: Caribbean, Texas, and Yucatan. The Texas subspecies group is the one that shows in the region (with few exceptions), and the way it happens is quite interesting! In short, Cave Swallows from Texas get pushed north by strong south November winds. They end up in the Great Lakes region of the US and Canada, in much colder temperatures than they are used to! They will wander around the Great Lakes, but if there are periods of strong Northwest winds, some will shoot down to the Northeast! The number that end up here strongly depends on the year. This year was one of the best Cave Swallow Novembers in recent memory. For more than two weeks, they were sighted around coastal CT by numerous observers, often putting on a show! One morning Cape May recorded almost 80!



Franklin's Gull
Penfield Reef, Fairfield
Jo Fasciolo, 29 June 2024

In November of 2015, there was an invasion of not only Cave Swallows but also of Franklin's Gulls. November 13th and 14th were two days many of us will never forget. On November 10th, Nick Bonomo and Frank Gallo found CT's 5th Franklin's at Seaside Park, finding exactly what they went there for! That bird disappeared, and birders were quite disappointed — and unaware of what was about to happen. On the 13th, reports of dozens of Franklin's started pouring in from Cape May. Not long after, CT birders began to report them from all across the state! I am not sure if ARCC tried to determine approximately how many were seen in the state that day, but it was over 30! Some of them stayed until Saturday, which turned out to be Cave Swallow Day. They were reported from what felt like every coastal town. I'll never forget seeing 4 of them fly around the bridge at Southport Beach before roosting. Those two days were certainly two of the most exciting of all time for many of us! It can pay to follow weather conditions!



Franklin's Gull (way in th back)
Penfield Reef, Fairfield
Aidan Kiley, 29 June 2024

Some states organize a rarity roundup, which is a November event to get people out to turn up rarities, especially by checking spots that rarely get covered. I have organized an informal one for CT the last few years and did it again this year with David Mathieu. Next year we are going to organize a more formal event! This year's most exciting find was 4 Cave Swallows found by Patrick Dugan at Cove Island, which stayed the whole day into the next morning! I found a Brant that appears consistent with the very rare form Gray-bellied at Veterans Park in Norwalk. Other good birds seen include previously-found Ross's Goose and Eurasian Wigeon. While no first state records were found, it was still fun to get out and check a bunch of spots. Maybe next year someone will discover the Hammond's Flycatcher!

Fall Photo Gallery



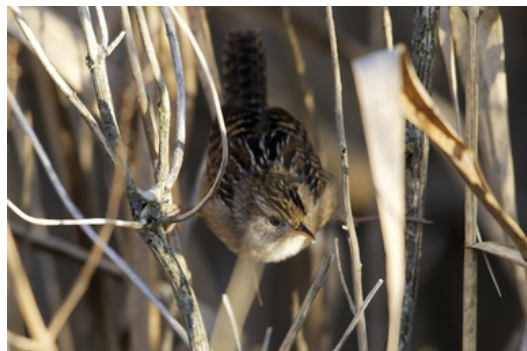
King Eider
Waterford Beach, New London
Russ Smiley, 30 Sep 2024



American Goshawk
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Abby Sesselberg, 16 Oct 2024



Chestnut-collared Longspur
Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven
Steve Mayo, 27 Oct 2024



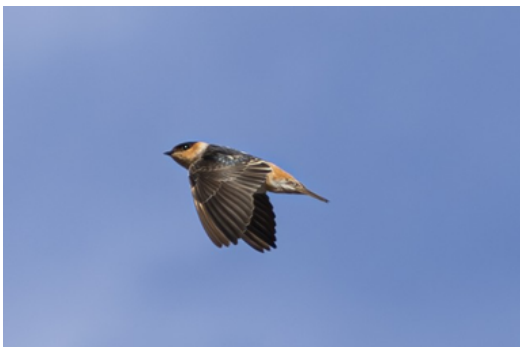
Sedge Wren
Saltwater Farm Vinyard (Restricted Access), New London
David Matthieu, 29 Oct 2024



Gray Kingbird
Milford Point, New Haven
Justin Hamlin, 10 Nov 2024



Ash-throated Flycatcher
Salvin Lake Park, New London
Bob MacDonnell, 12 Nov 2024



Cave Swallow
Cove Island, Fairfield
Zach Shaoul, 24 Nov 2024

Also seen:

- *Yellow Rail*
- *Lark Sparrow*
- *Swainsons Hawk*
- *Rufous Hummingbird*
- *Black-chinned Hummingbird*

Announcements

Opportunity for Young Birders! Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarship



The Connecticut Ornithological Association is pleased to announce that we will offer TWO Zepko Audubon Camp Scholarships to nurture interest in bird study and conservation among young birders. The 2025 Scholarship will cover the full cost for Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens during one of two sessions in June. The cost includes housing, boat travel and all meals. Scholarship recipients will be responsible for transportation costs to and from camp.

This intensive 6-day, 5-night program on Hog Island allows enthusiastic young birders to work with some of the country's best known birders and ornithologists on field identification, bird ecology and conservation. Occurring concurrently with the adult Field Ornithology and Hands-on Bird Science sessions, and sharing many of the same instructors, this program includes the unique opportunity to see Audubon's seabird restoration work in action.

Applicants must be a resident of Connecticut, ages 14-17, and must submit a written application along with two letters of reference. Preferences will be given to applicants with individual or family COA memberships. Completed applications and references must be received by the COA via jo_fasciolo@msn.com by January 31, 2025.

If you know a young birder who may be interested please pass this information along!

Visit <https://hogisland.audubon.org/bird-studies-teens> for more information about Hog Island.

Visit <https://www.ctbirding.org/zepko-audubon-camp-scholarship-for-young-birders/> for COA Scholarship information.

Contact Jo Fasciolo at jo_fasciolo@msn.com for more information.

Congratulations to Lighthouse Point and Quaker Ridge for another successful season of hawkwatching! Welcome Hoyden's Hill, Fairfield as an official hawk watch site! Visit <https://www.hawkcount.org/> for data detail.



**Save the Date
"Birding Technology Workshop"
Saturday, February 1st. More details to come.**

Announcements

Coalition of Connecticut Birding Organizations

The new Coalition of Connecticut Birding Organizations was recently formed in order to give a greater and more consolidated voice in matters pertinent to birders, birding, and the preservation of bird habitat across the state, particularly at state parks, on state lands, and at other critical birding areas.

The coalition is currently comprised of leading birding groups within Connecticut, including the Connecticut Ornithological Society (COA), Connecticut Audubon Society, New Haven Bird Club, Western Connecticut Bird Club, and Hartford Audubon.

The creation of this coalition was inspired by the collected desire of its member groups to champion birding and habitat preservation across Connecticut. Birding organizations interested in becoming a member of this coalition should contact Micky Komara, COA Conservation Committee, via Kimberly Jannarone, kimberly.jannarone@hotmail.com.



Get Your COA Mini Grant Application In!



The purpose of the COA Mini-Grant committee is to help fund and support initiatives within the state of Connecticut which specifically benefit the avian wildlife in our state and opportunities for public observation and enjoyment of those natural resources.

Submit your application by January 15, 2025. All award decisions will be finalized by March 1, 2025. Any applications received after January 15, 2025 will not be eligible for consideration for the March 1, 2025 awards. Those received after January 15, 2025 will be added to the pool of applications for March of 2026.

For details and application forms see <https://www.ctbirding.org/coa-mini-grant/>



COA's 41st Annual Meeting will be held in March!
Check our website for upcoming details along with other Calendar events at <https://www.ctbirding.org/events/>

Twenty-Five Years Ago in The Connecticut Warbler

Compiled by Steve Broker
Volume 19, No. 4 (October 1999)

[Editor's Note: The study of birds in Connecticut and throughout North America has a lengthy history, with many dedicated ornithologists and naturalists contributing their expertise in diverse ways. This Twenty-Five Years Ago column includes references to a quartet of Connecticut birders who made significant and lasting contributions to our knowledge of birds and birding, four friends who no longer are with us: Carl Trichka, Gene Billings, Joe Zeranski, and Roland Clement. In preparing this edited article on the October '99 issue of TCW, I recalled that in 1999 the Connecticut birding community also lost Ray Schwartz, Jr.. Ray Schwartz was for many years a significant contributor to the New Haven Bird Club, to hawk banding, and to mentoring some of the next generation of ornithological leaders.]

The Connecticut Ornithological Association's President's Award, by COA President Dave Provencher

As I reviewed the service Carl [Trichka] has given to COA since its inception I was struck by the simple fact that no other individual deserves more recognition for the creation and success of the association. Carl was one of the founding fathers of both The Connecticut Ornithological Association and its journal, *The Connecticut Warbler*. He has served as Assistant Treasurer, Treasurer, Editor, author, and President. He has been the organizational nerve center for nearly the entire existence of COA and continues to play an important role in the day-to-day functioning of the organization. Indeed, there is virtually no function within the association that Carl has not at one time or another performed and performed well.

[Ed's Note: Sadly, Carl Trichka died in September 2001. In *North American Bird Bander*, Volume 42, Number 3, Birdcraft Banding Station Master Bander Judy Richardson wrote, "Although Carl is no longer with us . . . his mission for the [banding] station remains unchanged, training new banders, presentations to the public about bird banding, and monitoring the spring and fall migrations. Those he trained did so well that they continue to carry on his legacy."]

In Memory of A.E. "Gene" Billings, by Jay Kaplan

Gene [Billings] had a quiet, gentle manner about him, but at the same time he was someone who made things happen. Passionately interested in the natural world, Gene served on numerous local and statewide boards and commissions, and was a former director of COA. He authored two publications on birds and birding in Connecticut, and was at work on another book at the time of his death aboard Egypt Air Flight 990. Over a twenty-five year span, I had the pleasure of spending time with Gene both in the field and around a board table, but it wasn't nearly enough time. Gene Billings and his wife Barbara will be sorely missed by his many friends in COA and in Connecticut's environmental community.

[Editor's Note: The two books by Gene Billings, each published by Rainbow Press in Torrington, CT, are *Birds of Prey in Connecticut: A Guide to Finding and Understanding Hawks, Eagles, Vultures and Owls* (1990), and *Finding Birds in Connecticut: A Habitat-Based Guide to 450 Sites* (1996), coauthored with Dave Rosgen. These guides continue to be important sources of information about Connecticut birds and birding.]

1999 Connecticut Summer Bird Count, by Joseph Zeranski and Thomas R. Baptist

The nine [Summer Bird Count] tracts encompass a significant area of the state (1,642 square miles, or 31.2%), more than any other breeding bird census technique used in the state. A review of SBCs conducted since 1993 reveal that the census effort has been consistent, as measured by the number of participants and party hours logged. The resulting data provide useful insights into short-term population changes, and some of the apparent population changes are summarized herein.

Increasing Species. Most raptors put in a good showing. . . Twelve Black Skimmers, a recent colonizer at West Haven's Sandy Point, returned for the second consecutive year. . . Woodpeckers continued a positive trend. . . Species that have acclimated to human settings increased this year . . . Decreasing Species. Eight species set ten-year record lows, and at least ten other species continued severe long-term declines. The reasons for the decreases are not fully understood and may involve a combination of factors. . . Further study is necessary, however, to determine the importance of these factors to each of the declining species.

[Editor's Note: This is an important article from twenty-five years ago, as it identifies a number of bird species then exhibiting apparent increasing and decreasing breeding populations. Zeranski and Baptist's

discussion of factors contributing to population declines is particularly insightful. The population trends they identify can be seen now in light of the 2019 Science article "Decline of the North American Avifauna" by Ken Rosenberg, et al. and with the anticipated results of the 2017-2021 Connecticut Bird Atlas. Zeranski and Baptist's article also notes the late lingering species and rarities on the 1999 Connecticut Summer Bird Count. Individual Count Totals are given for each of the nine SBCs, and an eleven page table of statewide results completes the article. On a personal note, I enjoyed the reference to "Peregrine Falcons [that] were posted at New Haven and Hartford." While participating in the Sunday, June 6, 1999 New Haven SBC, I discovered a pair of peregrines in residence at the West Rock Ridge cliff face in Woodbridge. This was the first pair of peregrines to attempt nesting on a Connecticut cliff in nearly sixty years. My discovery of this pair has completely altered my field work since then, leading to the next twenty-five years of my observing and studying breeding peregrines at West Rock, and a few years later at East Rock Park in New Haven.]

Bald Eagles in North Central Connecticut, March 1998 to April 1999, by Michael O'Leary for The Bald Eagle Study Group

The Bald Eagles in North Central Connecticut have been observed by the Bald Eagle Study Group since 1979. Their movements and behaviors have been reported in this periodical since then. This report has been prepared to assist those agencies and individuals engaged in Bald Eagle research, management, preservation and enjoyment.

[Editor's Note: Mike O'Leary's article discusses the mated pair of Bald Eagles (a brother and sister) incubating eggs in Suffield's Hilltop Farm nest through two breeding seasons. The article focuses on the many challenges of protecting Bald Eagle nesting habitats that occur on private property, including Hilltop Farm and the St. Alphonsus College property, both of which were at that time up for sale and facing potential development. "We have observed since the beginning of this Annual Report in 1979 that eagles used certain specific perches in the area. Any dramatic change to these properties would severely alter the eagles's use of the area, even if the radius of 660 feet around the nest was protected." The eagle pair of brother and sister hatched in the same Gill, Massachusetts nest from the same parent birds, but in successive years. Today, Mike celebrates a remarkable increase in breeding Bald Eagle pairs in highly diverse Connecticut habitats, including human-dominated ones.]

Prairie Birds, by Roland C. Clement

It was the last chapter of William Burt's lovely book on rails, *Shadowbirds* (1994), that prompted my 1998 trip to the high plains of the Canadian west. That book's gentle word pictures of big sky country, the ethereal songs of windbirds in open landscapes, and two captivating men, the Reverend P.B. Peabody and A.C. Bent - all these became a lure to my lifelong ambition to 'get the feel' of all of North America's biotic provinces. The time to do that is when plants are in flower, and the birds are singing.

When I learned that Bill Burt planned to revisit that country, I asked whether I might join him afield, and he agreed! I could at least help bridge the century. Bill Burt, a wildlife photographer and writer who lives in Old Lyme, is a superior field man with a superlative ear. He recognizes unique habitats on sight. . . I was struck, again, by how poorly most field guides capture the character of the species they portray. . . How much there is to learn! As to bird diversity, we found the contrasts striking. Land in wheat of course has few birds. Lightly grazed prairie has fair numbers. Wherever the original prairie and its ponds had been preserved more or less intact, they seemed to have as many birds as in Bent's day. But these areas had become oases.

[Editor's Note: Roland Clement's fascinating article describes his long wished for exploration of "the wooded stream bottoms and the prairie lakes" of southwestern Saskatchewan with friend Bill Burt. "As we drove back to our Maple Creek motel near midnight, we marveled at a spectacular display of Aurora Borealis. I apparently waxed so enthusiastic over this spectacle that Bill said I should put that sort of verbal excitement into my writing. But that's his forte." Roland's rich and highly productive life, including leading Rhode Island Audubon, serving as vice-president and ecologist with National Audubon Society, and chairing the board of Connecticut Audubon Society, ended in 2015 at the age of 102 years. Bill Burt continues to reside in Old Lyme, and one can appreciate his writing and photographic work in his regular column "One Photograph" published in Estuary Magazine (Life of the Connecticut River).]

See also in this issue of The Connecticut Warbler: Identification Notes: Two New Wrens for Connecticut, by Mark S. Szantyr; Bald or Golden?, by Paul Carrier; Bird Behavior Notes: Tool Use by Green Heron, by Roy Harvey; Connecticut Field Notes, Spring, March 1 Through May 31, 1999, by Greg Hanisek; Photo Challenge, by Julian Hough. Cover art of Red-eyed Vireo is by Mark Szantyr. The October 1999 issue of The Connecticut Warbler can be seen in its entirety at the following link to the COA website: <https://ctbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTWarblerVolume19.pdf?x92901> Download Volume 19, and view pages 150-201.

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!

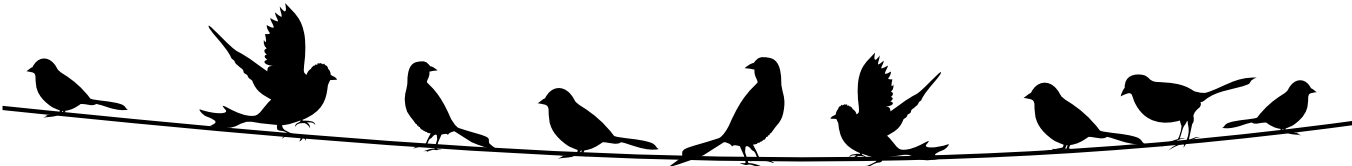
To join COA or renew online visit: <https://www.ctbirding.org/join-us/>
The link will take you to a page describing the account creation process with a link to start it. You will need to use a credit card, debit card, or PayPal account to purchase a membership. After purchasing a membership option, your COA account reflects your level of membership. COA members receive copies of COA's two quarterly publications, The Connecticut Warbler and COA Bulletin. Members also enjoy early notification of events and access to our growing Members-Only content (mostly instructional videos). Membership funds support COA's many services and activities (CTBirds, workshops, mini-grants, annual meeting, etc.).

Membership Levels:

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Individual	\$35/yr
Student	\$15/yr
Family	\$45/yr
Contributing	\$50/yr
Donor	\$75/yr
Benefactor	\$100/yr
Life	\$1000 (payable in three annual installments)



Seeking Authors and Ideas for the COA Bulletin!
Do you have an idea for a COA Bulletin article you would like to have published? Or, is there something related to birds you would like to learn about and wish there was an article about it? If so, reach out to me at jo_fasciolo@msn.com and let me know your thoughts!





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