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ON THE COVER

Townsend's Warbler

Mark Szantyr's talents were more than equal to a bird that is both beautiful and a long-awaited first state record. Read more about this Townsend's Warbler in the Spring Season Field Notes.

THE 2019-2020 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS
BIRD COUNT

By Stephen P. Broker

Introduction.

In September 2019, the journal *Science* carried an article titled "Billions of North American birds have vanished", written by Elizabeth Pennisi, a long-time staff writer for *Science*. A frequent contributor of articles on topics in conservation biology, Pennisi was reviewing a newly released *Science* research article, regarded as the most comprehensive inventory ever done for North American birds and written by multiple authors representing a number of ornithological and conservation organizations. The lead author of the article, Kenneth V. Rosenberg, is conservation scientist at Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Pennisi began her review by stating, "North America's birds are disappearing from the skies at a rate that's shocking even to ornithologists. Since the 1970s, the continent has lost 3 billion birds, nearly 30% of the total, and even common birds such as sparrows and blackbirds are in decline, U.S. and Canadian researchers report this week online in *Science*." It is appropriate to consider the results of the 2019-2020 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count in the context of this highly disturbing news of the decline of our North American avifauna.

The Rosenberg, *et al.* article made it into the printed pages of *Science* in the October 4, 2019 issue after having appeared the previous month on-line. This study of North American birds and their current, declining populations drew upon multiple data sets, including the North American Breeding Bird Survey, the International Shorebird Survey, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, aerial surveys of water bodies, and weather radar data on night-flying avian migrants. The study covered 529 bird species, or approximately 75% of all North American species, representing more than 90% of the entire continental bird population. As an example of the data sets studied, the weather radar data which were collected over a ten year

period beginning in 2007 indicated that there has been a 13% decline in migrating birds, with most significant declines along the Eastern Flyway. Pennisi noted from reviewing this research article that some taxa of our birds have thrived over the past five decades, including ducks, geese, and swans and many diurnal and nocturnal raptors, due in part to habitat restoration efforts and single species conservation programs. "But the declines in many other species, particularly those living along shorelines and in grasslands, far exceeds those gains. Grassland birds have declined by 53% since 1970 - a loss of 700 million adults in the 31 species studied, including meadowlarks and northern bobwhites. Shorebirds such as sanderlings and plovers are down by about one-third, [and] habitat loss may be to blame."

The decline in North American bird populations applies to many formerly widespread species, including finches, sparrows, warblers, and blackbirds. The study shows that "19 common species have each (my underscore) lost more than 50 million birds since 1970." The data sets brought together from previous studies indicate that such introduced species as European Starling and House Sparrow have seen major population declines. In addition to habitat loss, documented threats to bird populations include pesticide exposure, unregulated harvest, avian strikes on human-made structures, shifts in food webs, predation by domestic cats and climate change.

This study shows that we are experiencing significant impacts on multiple ecosystems and the services they provide. Both the news article and the research article issue a wake-up call, the urgent need for efforts to reverse habitat loss, the political and social recognition of the impacts of climate change, and the implementation of a variety of conservation actions to stabilize or expand bird populations. The banning of DDT use in the United States in 1972 is mentioned as one strategy that has resulted in the successful recovery of such higher order consumers as osprey, hawks, and falcons.

In addition to Ken Rosenberg from Cornell, co-authors of

this important study were affiliated with the American Bird Conservatory, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, the USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute at the National Zoological Park, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the National Wildlife Research Centre, each of the last two based in Ottawa, Canada. A principal author of the study, Peter Marra, is a product of Connecticut who received some early training in ornithology from the late Noble Proctor. Peter served as director of the Migratory Bird Center, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute during the study and now is director of the Georgetown Environment Initiative and professor at Georgetown University.

The research article states, "Using multiple and independent monitoring networks, we report population losses across much of the North American avifauna over 48 years, including once-common species and from most biomes. Integration of range-wide population trajectories and size estimates indicates a net loss approaching 3 billion birds, or 29% of 1970 abundance. A continent-wide weather radar network also reveals a similarly steep decline in biomass passage of migrating birds over a recent 10-year period. This loss of bird abundance signals an urgent need to address threats to avert future avifaunal collapse and associated loss of ecosystem integrity, function, and services."

A total of 67 families of North American birds were considered in this seminal study. They included shorebirds, landbirds, waterbirds, waterfowl, and introduced species. Species also were grouped based on their preferred habitats. The North American biomes and avian habitats studied for representative species included eastern forest, northern boreal forest, grassland, coast, and also arid lands, arctic tundra, and western forest, including identification of forest generalists and habitat generalists.

The results of this study include:

- review of 67 families of North American birds.
- the total loss of 3.2 billion birds occurring across 38 families.
- a net loss in total abundance across nearly all biomes except wetlands, including 2.5 billion individuals among 419 native resident species.
- a 63% loss among 10 introduced species.
- greatest total population losses by grassland birds (700 million breeding individuals in 31 species)
- a billion individual birds in forest biomes.
- a 37% loss in shorebirds, mostly long-distance migrants.
- a loss of 1.4 billion individuals of bird species that overwinter in temperate regions.
- greatest loss of species overwintering in coastal regions (42%), southwestern arid lands (42%), and South America (40%).
- a total gain of 250 million individual birds in 29 families, including vireos, ducks and geese, gnatcatchers, raptors (four families), turkeys and grouse.
- 100 native resident species showed a small net increase of 26 million individuals among 100 native resident species, mostly waterfowl and raptors. Their increases are due in part to habitat restoration and protection and the banning of DDT and other organochloride biocides.

Approximately 90% of the loss of North American birds has occurred in 12 families. Those families in decline are: New World sparrows (33 of 38 species in decline, down a net 38.0%), New World warblers (28 of 44 species in decline, down 37.6%), New World blackbirds (15 of 18 species in decline, down 44.2%), finches and allies (8 of 13 species in decline, down 36.7%), thrushes (6 of 11 species in decline, down 10.1%), gulls and terns (16 of 22 species in decline, down 50.5%), thrashers and allies (10 species, 80% in decline), kinglets (2 species, 50% in decline), sandpipers (23 of 32 species in decline, down 38.4%), plovers (7 of 8 species in decline, down 38.6%), cardinals and allies (6 of 14 species in decline, down 3.3%), shrikes (all 2 species in decline, down 100%), jays and crows (11 of 16 species in decline, down 6.5%), chickadees and titmice (7 of 10 species in decline, down 4.9%), herons (7 of 12 species in decline, down 28.0%), and grebes (3 of 6 species in decline, down 10.9%).

The authors of this journal article concluded, "Our study documents a long-developing but overlooked biodiversity crisis in North America - the cumulative loss of nearly 3 billion birds across the avifauna. Population loss is not restricted to rare and threatened species, but includes many widespread and common species that may be disproportionately influential components of food webs and ecosystem function." (Rosenberg. 2019.)

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

This brings us to the North American component of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and to a closer look at the Connecticut Christmas Bird Count that has been a regular feature of *The Connecticut Warbler* since its first year of publication 40 years ago in 1981. First, let's consider the contribution of Christmas Bird Counts to the Rosenberg, *et al.* study of the decline of the North American Avifauna. Only a portion of the data sets on bird populations under study in the *Science* article derived from analysis of Christmas Bird Counts, those spanning the years 1966 to 2013. The CBC study cited by Rosenberg *et al.* was an article published in 2016 and authored by Candan U. Soykan, *et al.* as "Population trends for North American winter birds based on hierarchical models" (*Ecosphere*, 7(5): e01351.10.1002/ecs.1351). Geoffrey LeBaron, long-time director of the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count, was a co-author of this article.

The introduction of the article states, "Long-term, large-scale monitoring studies, often carried out by citizen scientists, provide invaluable data on bird and other wildlife populations for conservation and management activities. The Christmas Bird Count (CBC), conducted annually since 1900, and managed by the National Audubon Society since the formation of the organization in 1905, constitutes the longest-running, and is among the geographically most widespread, surveys of bird life in the world." Continuing, "Our specific goals were to: (1) identify population trends for species of North American birds during the winter season for the period 1966-2013 while accounting for variation in survey

effort among CBC circles; (2) aggregate results across individual species at regional and North American scales, and; (3) examine ecological and life history correlates of population trends across species." Trend estimates were developed for individual states and Canadian provinces. The study also considered a subset of 228 bird species that do not frequent bird feeders. Approximately 15% of birds reported on North American CBCs are counted at bird feeding stations. "Our results indicate that 68% of the 551 species had increasing trends within the study area over the interval 1966-2013." I should note here that statistics on the 32% of bird species that were found to have declining populations across North America were not readily available in the supplemental notes for the *Ecosphere* journal article.

The article continued with reference to prior studies that have indicated that those species at greatest risk of population decline include larger bodied taxa, those occupying higher trophic levels, species with longer life spans, producing fewer eggs per clutch, and later age at sexual maturity. A trial set of ten species examined in the study included Turkey Vulture, Great Egret, Dunlin, Virginia Rail, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Pine Siskin, and three species never found on Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts. A more detailed consideration of the Soykan, *et al.* article from the journal *Ecosphere* will have to wait for another time.

Statewide Results of the 2019-2020 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count.

This year, Connecticut fielded a total of twenty-one CBCs, including a new count in Norwich, established by Allison Black and attended by 17 field observers and 3 feeder watchers. The Norwich CBC conducted a trial count in the 2018-19 Christmas Bird Count year. Throughout the state, our 7 northern, 6 mid-state, and 8 coastal counts tallied 161 count day species and an additional 5 count week species (count week referring those missed on all 21 designated count days but occurring within at least one count circle in the three days before or three days after the official count). The 161

count day species fall 6 species short of those found last year and are our lowest total in ten years. Still, solid numbers of 770 field observers and 76 feeder watchers logged more than 2,170 hours in the field and 8,740 miles by foot, car, and boat. We've topped 800 total observers for the sixth year in a row, not a bad effort for nearly two dozen hearty groups of volunteers.

The five count week birds reported this year, typically uncommon to rare finds on any count, were Tundra Swan at Napatree, King Eider at New London, Osprey at Storrs, Seaside Sparrow at Westport, and Ovenbird, also at Westport. Tundra Swan has been recorded in 9 of the last 30 years, for a total of 30 individuals. King Eider has been found along the coast a number of times over the past 30 years, with 12 individuals as well as two previous sightings during the count week period of three days before + three days after any scheduled count day. One or two Osprey are counted in most years, but this is a species to boast about on any CBC. Most eastern Osprey depart our region in September as they migrate to the Caribbean and South America. Seaside Sparrow is a difficult bird to find on our coastal Connecticut CBCs, having been recorded in just 7 of the last 30 years. This is the 5th year in the last 30 that Ovenbird has made the statewide list.

Looking at the three regions of the state, Hartford led all Northern Counts with 89 count day and no count week species. Litchfield Hills recorded 76 count day and 3 count week species. Among Mid-State Counts, Woodbury-Roxbury tallied 76 count day and 4 count week species, followed closely by Quinnipiac Valley with its 75 count day and 2 count week species. On Coastal counts, New Haven was fairly surprised to record 124 count day and 5 count week species under difficult field conditions, while Napatree and Westport each recorded 118 count day and 3 count week species.

The most abundant species on the 2019-20 Connecticut CBC, listed in descending order, are: (1-10) Canada Goose, European Starling, American Crow, Herring Gull, Mallard,

Dark-eyed Junco, Ring-billed Gull, White-throated Sparrow, Common Merganser, House Sparrow; (11-20) Blue Jay, Common Grackle, Black-capped Chickadee, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Tufted Titmouse, Song Sparrow, American Robin, American Black Duck, and American Goldfinch. Eighteen of these 20 species appeared on last year's top-20 list. Song Sparrow and American Black Duck bumped Red-winged Blackbird and Common Eider from this year's list. The exotic, introduced, or feral species, including Mute Swan, domestic Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Rock Pigeon, Monk Parakeet, European Starling, House Sparrow, and House Finch, constituted nearly 20% of the statewide total individual birds. European Starling continues to have an outsized influence on CBC birds seen.

Twenty-three bird species were found on a single CBC, a number comparable with most years. They are (using abbreviated count names): Pink-footed Goose (NO), Barnacle Goose (SM), Tundra Swan CW (NA), Eurasian Wigeon (WE), Canvasback (SM), Redhead (GS), Tufted Duck (WE), King Eider CW (NL), Harlequin Duck (SM), Red-necked Grebe (NA), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (SM), American Oystercatcher (NH), Long-billed Dowitcher (SM), Bonaparte's Gull (SM), Osprey CW (ST), Rough-legged Hawk (HA), Barn Owl (QV), Short-eared Owl (SM), Tree Swallow (NA), Grasshopper Sparrow (NA), Seaside Sparrow CW (WE), Ovenbird CW (WE), and Nashville Warbler (WE). Most of these species also are uncommon to rare on our statewide CBC. Bonaparte's Gull has been in decline along the coast in early winter and raises the greatest concern in this group of birds for its severely limited occurrence this year. Stratford-Milford, Westport, and Napatree counts are to be commended for their many rarity contributions to the 2019-2020 CBC results.

Many birders take enjoyment in naming the best bird or birds seen on a given outing, and in this case let's do so for the most notable species recorded on the CT CBC. Here, the term "notable" when applied to birds ranges from the most surprising to the most eye-popping to the over-the-top dazzling. (I tend not to be a fan of the term ****mega.) We have our

share of notables once again. Some already are listed above as unique to a single count, but they are worth repeating. The most notable species of the 2019-2020 CT CBC include: Pink-footed Goose at Norwich (new to statewide count day, and found previously during count week at Greenwich-Stamford in 2016-17; this year's is a nice find for the inaugural year Norwich birders); Barnacle Goose; Tundra Swan CW; Tufted Duck; Harlequin Duck; Long-billed Dowitcher; Golden Eagle, one each at Litchfield Hills and Napatree; Blue-headed Vireo at Oxford and New Haven; Grasshopper Sparrow; Seaside Sparrow CW; Ovenbird CW.

I've saved the two dazzling species for their own paragraphs. The first is a Barn Owl heard screaming by two very experienced birders at an undisclosed location on the Quinnipiac Valley CBC. Barn Owl used to be an uncommon but semi-predictable owl species on past Connecticut CBCs, having been recorded on 15 of the last 30 years (22 individuals total). Usually, one or two Barn Owls were reported, and in two years a total of three individuals were found, most often at known long-term nesting sites. This year's observation of Barn Owl is the first in nine years and a very welcome suggestion of a bird on territory. The report comes at a time when the current Connecticut Bird Atlas has extremely limited evidence of Barn Owls in the state, as well as limited preliminary data on most owl species in Connecticut during wintering and breeding seasons. While it must be emphasized that the Atlas data are preliminary, there is some genuine cause for concern about most of our nocturnal birds of prey.

The second dazzling discovery, (****mega, if you really must), is the unique occurrence of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, sighted on December 21 at Stratford-Milford. Ruby-throated Hummingbird has never occurred in any of the previous 119 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count years. This is the only hummingbird species that breeds in eastern North America. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds from the eastern United States depart our region beginning in late August, continuing their southward autumn migration through Sep-

tember, with essentially all having departed by early October. Any hummingbird reported from mid-October through December in Connecticut is expected to be one of several western hummingbird species, the most likely of which is Rufous Hummingbird. (The state still has no confirmation of the very similarly appearing Allen's Hummingbird.) Western species that have been sighted and photographed in Connecticut include Rufous, Calliope, Black-chinned, and Broad-billed hummingbirds, and most recently Mexican Violetear. All sightings of these western species have occurred from October through late December and earliest January. The only western species to have been found on one of our Christmas Bird Counts is Rufous Hummingbird, which has been recorded in 8 of the last 18 years and was first identified on the 2002-03 CT CBC.

The Connecticut 30-year statewide list now consists of 262 count day species (down 2 from last year's 30-year cumulative total of 264 - excuse the typo in last year's review article) and 4 count week species (Purple Gallinule, Piping Plover, Gyrfalcon, and Western Kingbird). This year, there were equal numbers of species showing 30-year high counts and 30-year low counts. The species reported at new high counts during this three decade time period follow, to be read as Species Name (previous 30-year high count=>new 30-year high count). They are: Common Merganser (7,492=>7,540), Long-billed Dowitcher (3=>3), Black Vulture (330=>421), Bald Eagle (195=>252), Common Raven (263=>281), Marsh Wren (25=>27), Carolina Wren (1,220=>1,452), Brown Thrasher (16=>18), Chipping Sparrow (43=>65), and Orange-crowned Warbler (4=>8). Common Merganser undoubtedly benefited from extensive open still and running water throughout the state, as its numbers typically vary annually from 2,000 to 5,000 individuals. Black Vulture, Common Raven, and Carolina Wren continue their dramatic breeding and wintering population expansions, the vulture and the wren from the south and the raven from west and north. Bald Eagle is in remarkable recovery since the extirpation of breeding pairs in Connecticut in the 1950s. This post-DDT rebound of territorial and breeding eagles in the Northeast is

a direct result of re-introductions of Bald Eagles in the East through well organized hacking programs and diligent protections designed for nesting eagles. Relatively high numbers of Brown Thrashers are a bit of welcome news, most likely due to mild weather conditions in the months leading up to this year's counts. Preliminary Connecticut Bird Atlas results show a major fall off in breeding evidence for Brown Thrasher.

Those species recorded in new three-decade low totals are, with Species Name (previous 30-year low count=>new 30-year low count): American Wigeon (363=>311), American Coot (24=>21), Killdeer (6=>1), Bonaparte's Gull (2=>2), Great Black-backed Gull (757=>569), Black-crowned Night-Heron (4=>4), Eastern Screech-Owl (93=>63), Monk Parakeet (70=>46), Black-capped Chickadee (5,936=>5,733), Purple Finch (28=>18), American Tree Sparrow (892=>602). American Wigeon varies from year to year, ranging from 400 to 900 individuals. American Coot also varies annually in early winter, but the totals of recent years are a far cry from the 1,000+ coots reported statewide in the late 1990s. We've seen significantly reduced numbers of Killdeer for the last 7 years. It was not uncommon to count more than 140 Killdeer on CBCs statewide in the 1990s. Cornell Lab of Ornithology's on-line publication *Birds of the World* indicates a shortage of information on the historic changes in distribution of Bonaparte's Gull. In the 1980s and 1990s, we counted from 300 to so many as 2,200 Bonaparte's Gulls in some years. Preliminary Atlas data show a huge fall off in Eastern Screech-Owl breeding and wintering numbers. The introduced, messy and noisy but beautiful Monk Parakeet persists in spite of the best efforts of the power companies. Purple Finch showed significant decline in the 2007-2011 Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas. A 50% decline throughout the Northeast is linked with interspecific competition with House Finches and not with climate or habitat changes (*Birds of the World*). Finally, Connecticut CBC data indicate a five-year decline in numbers of American Tree Sparrow, a species that numbered from 2,000 to 6,000 individuals on the CBCs of the 1990s.

Weather Conditions:

The lead up to the 2019-2020 Christmas Bird Count season is best described as unseasonably mild. The New Haven region averages high temperatures of 65 degrees F. in October, 53 degrees F. in November, and 43 degrees F. in December. October temperatures remained in the mid to high 60s through the month, reaching the low 70s moving into November.

November was extremely dry throughout the state but was characterized by several warm surges, leading to higher than average temperatures in December, especially just before the start of the Christmas Count period. The last month of the year ended with unusually warm weather. Hartford averages high temperatures of 63 degree F. in October, 51 degrees F. in November, and 39 degrees F. in December. This late fall pattern of mild weather in 2019 was similar in the more northern portions of the state, with unseasonably warm weather beginning in the second weekend of the count.

Three Christmas Bird Counts were held on Saturday, December 14, followed by eight counts on Sunday, December 15. New Haven, Storrs, and Woodbury-Roxbury experienced mostly light rain through much of the day, with temperatures ranging from mid- to high 30s and rising to mid- to high 50s. Morning and afternoon fog made for challenging birding. Still waters were partly frozen and moving waters open. Chris Loscalzo, New Haven CBC compiler, wrote, "birders had to contend with a persistent light rain and intermittent fog. Going out in the rain was a real show of dedication and perseverance. Finding birds was a challenge, but we birders are a hardy and determined lot and, collectively, we found lots of interesting and unusual species and performed the annual census thoroughly and well. We found a total of 124 species in the count circle in count day and added five more during the count week period."

Sunday, December 15 continued with lows generally in the mid-30s and highs reaching the mid- to high 40s, and above for several of the eight counts. Hartford CBC compiler Jay Kaplan wrote, "weather was quite pleasant and mild with

temperatures reaching fifty degrees, although it was a bit on the breezy side. The mild weather preceding Count Day melted much of the ice that had accumulated in a colder than normal first half of December. There was no ice on rivers, and in most locations, previously frozen still water was again partially open. Concerns that the severe cold early in the month would eliminate most lingerers proved not to be the case as Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee and Chipping Sparrow were all reported within our Count Circle." Most Sunday birding was conducted under cloudy skies but with no precipitation. Still and moving waters remained the same as on the preceding day. Counts in all three regions of the state had to deal with strong wind gusts.

Three counts were held on the weekend of Saturday, December 21 and Sunday, December 22. The coastal Stratford-Milford CBC began the day with a low of 20 degrees F., while Barkhamsted to the north began in high single digits. Both counts proceeded under conditions that never exceeded the low 30s. Partly cloudy skies brought no precipitation. A day later, Napatree enjoyed temperatures rising to the mid-40s and afternoon clearing skies. Again, there was no precipitation. Napatree CBC compiler Shai Mitra wrote, "Though some early freezes and very cold weather the day before the count restricted open water and froze marshes, the weather on count day was as accommodating as one could want for Christmas bird count. We totaled 118 species, plus two notable count week birds. We also added two new species to our eighteen year count total, which stands at 192. Not bad for a brief history. It was not a day for numerical superlatives, good or bad, even for a relatively new count." Napatree's count this year was its 18th consecutively.

The Bristol CBC was held on Saturday, December 28, followed by the Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood count on Sunday, December 29. Cooler temperatures in northern Connecticut leading up to this weekend produced frozen ponds and lakes while river courses remained open. Jack Swatt, compiler of the Bristol count, wrote, "the warm and sunny

day led to quite a few new high counts for the 30th Bristol CBC." He noted that "the Bristol CBC was one of the original 25 CBCs started in 1900. This marks our fourth consecutive year since the count was restarted in 2016." The Trail Wood count experienced similar weather conditions, and again no precipitation.

Five counts were held in the new year, beginning at Pawling, NY/Hidden Valley, CT on this count's traditional January 1 date. Colder temperatures ranged from the high 20s to the high 30s, still and moving waters were open, and morning skies were fairly clear. Guilford-Long Island Sound, New London, and Norwich followed on January 4 with temperatures remaining in the 40s throughout, moderate winds, and some clouds and foggy conditions. These three counts had light rain throughout the day. Old Lyme-Saybrook completed the Christmas Count period on Sunday, January 5 with 30-45 degree days, some gusting winds, but clear skies and no precipitation.

Checklist Summary of Bird Species Observed.

Let's now do a run-through of statewide results for the 2019-2020 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count, following the taxonomic order currently used by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC). This year's results are compared with the 29 previous CBCs held, beginning with the 1990-1991 CT CBC in an effort to detect changing early winter population trends. Count by count results are summarized toward the end of this article. For each taxonomic grouping, Family names are given with summary information on the increasing or declining populations throughout North America as determined by the recent Rosenberg, *et al.* analysis. In the absence of information about individual species and their current population status, the increases or declines cited refer to the entire family groups across Canada and the United States.

Waterfowl. Family Anatidae (ducks, geese, and swans) show a 56% increase in populations across North America in the

past 50 years.

Seven goose species, 2 swan species, and 28 duck species (9 dabbling, 19 diving) were reported this year, for a total of 37 species of waterfowl (22% of the complete statewide species list). It's important to keep your ducks in a row. The most notable of these anatids were Pink-footed Goose and Harlequin Duck, with a few additional nice finds. Jay Kaplan noted that "the Brant in West Hartford was the most unusual goose reported [for the Hartford CBC], while a lone Greater White-fronted Goose was with Canada Geese on the flooded playing fields at Hartford's Riverside Park. This was the seventh report over the past ten years for this once rare species." Compiler Jack Swatt noted for the Bristol count, "Highlights were an immature Snow Goose found at Memorial Boulevard right in downtown Bristol and a Greater White-fronted Goose found at Farmington Meadows." Napatree's two Tundra Swans were seen in Weekapaug the day after the count. Compiler Shai Mitra wrote, "Puddle ducks and marsh birds can always be a challenge for the Napatree CBC. With the degree of freezing in our area prior to the count, we struggled to get a number of species; but our dedicated efforts managed to turn up fourteen solo representatives." The Family Anatidae is one of the families of North American birds that the Rosenberg, *et al.* study found to be increasing in their populations.

Past review articles have commented on the steady increase in numbers of several duck species, especially Bufflehead, Common Eider and Black Scoter (thanks to Napatree's Atlantic waters), and Hooded Merganser, and the steady to precipitous decline in American Black Duck, Canvasback, and Greater Scaup. Many of our waterfowl vary annually due to availability of open water. Waterfowl missed this year were Ross's Goose, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal (in my dreams), and Barrow's Goldeneye, the last of which would have been the most likely to find.

Gallinaceous Birds to Rallids. Family Odontophoridae (New World quail) 52% decline, Family Podicipedidae (grebes) 11%

decline, Family Trochilidae (hummingbirds) 17% decline, Family Columbidae (doves and pigeons) 2% increase, and Family Rallidae (rails, coots, and gallinules) 6% increase.

Sixty-eight Ring-necked Pheasants represented the highest statewide CBC total in 17 years. Napatree compiler Shai Mitra noted that the count's one Ring-necked Pheasant was found at Fisher's Island (New York State) - "a bird we should get annually as long as we can get someone out there each year." ARCC has elected to list Ring-necked Pheasant as extirpated as a wild breeder in the state, joining Northern Bobwhite for that distinction. I'm reminded of the day many years ago when I was driving on the Wilbur Cross Parkway in North Haven and a pheasant flew into the open rear window of my car, dying on impact on the back window ledge. In this most unusual event, the unfortunate gravid female released a partially shelled yolk, clear evidence to me - as I cleaned up the car - of a breeding population, however large or small that may have been. Now, all our pheasants apparently are sourced from farms for gun clubs. Ruffed Grouse has experienced greatly reduced numbers for at least 20 years. The past high count was 92 individuals in the 1991-92 CBC year. Wild Turkey was at half-strength compared with last year's total but has had secure breeding populations in Connecticut since reintroductions at least as far back as the 1960s. Northern Bobwhite has been undetected over the past nine CBC years. The species description for Northern Bobwhite in *Birds of the World* states, "During 1965-1995 regional, statewide, and local declines of 70 to 90% were common and widespread in 80% of states with Northern Bobwhite. Today many of these declines have ceased because population monitoring programs such as the Christmas Bird Count no longer detect bobwhites across broad areas." Low population densities are particularly hard to survey. *Birds of the World* continues, "Declines are attributed primarily to habitat loss from changing land uses in agriculture, forestry, and expanding suburbanization."

Pied-billed Grebe has had generally reduced numbers over the last 30 years, and this year we counted the second lowest



Steve Broker photo

It takes hard work to record secretive marsh birds. Participants didn't shy away from wetlands and darkness to find a total of five Clapper Rails.

total, a mere 13 birds. Horned Grebe was represented fairly well, while a single Red-necked Grebe made the count. Both Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves were at near record low totals. Ruby-throated Hummingbird receives the best bird of the count designation. Five Clapper Rails, nine Virginia Rails, and twenty-one American Coots were the only rallids reported this year. Coots show extreme variability from year to year, and this year was a 30-year low for this delightful chicken-like bird of freshwater and coastal wetlands. "Although population has stabilized during last 3 decades, annual totals may still fluctuate dramatically in response to moisture levels on main breeding grounds" (*Birds of the World*), referring to drought conditions in the Prairie-Pothole Region of southern Canada and north-central U.S..

Shorebirds to Alcids. Family Scolopacidae (sandpipers) 38% decline, Family Charadriidae (Plovers) 38% decline.

One or two American Oystercatchers are found in 60% of CBC years. Black-bellied Plover has had reduced numbers for a decade. American Golden-plover was reported CW once in the 1970s, and Piping Plover CW in 1993-94. Killdeer

has been reported annually for at least 70 years, but a single bird this year and greatly reduced numbers for the last seven years are a source of concern. Recent studies suggest a possible population decline in the eastern United States due in part to predation of eggs and chicks. It has been challenging to locate numbers of Ruddy Turnstones in coastal counts for most of the past ten years. Red Knot has been reported just once in the last 24 CBC years. Sanderlings and Purple Sandpipers were in near record low numbers, while Dunlin presented along the coast in good numbers. American Woodcock and Wilson's Snipe, two species that always are a treat to see (briefly!) when flushed, were once again scarce and give evidence of being in decline. Hartford's lone Wilson's Snipe was found in South Windsor. The 103 Razorbills counted represent the second highest total ever for the "statewide" count, spread out from Napatree to New London to Greenwich-Stamford, but still dwarfed by the 1,832 Razorbills counted last year. No murrelets or Black Guillemots made the count in spite of a dozen or more birders riding the New London to Orient Point Ferry on the January 4, 2020 New



Steve Broker photo

Once a winter rarity, replaced almost completely by Great Cormorants, Double-crested Cormorants are now found regularly on the CBCs.

London CBC.

Gulls to Cormorants. Family Laridae (gulls and terns) 50% decline, Family Gaviidae (loons) 33% increase, Family Phalacrocoracidae (cormorants) 152% increase.

As noted previously, Bonaparte's Gulls are disappearing from our early winter coastal waters. Shai Mitra noted for Napatree, "Not a single Bonaparte's Gull was observed. We had but one last year. On the second year of this count in 2002, we had 405." The big three of Ring-billed, Herring, and Great Black-backed gulls have had significantly declining numbers over the past 15 years, undoubtedly related in part to the closing of state landfills. Eight Iceland Gulls were representative of most years. The Bristol CBC found one Iceland Gull at Lakeood Park in Waterbury. None of the far less common Black-headed, Laughing, or Glaucous gulls were reported. The only tern found in recent years was a *Sterna* species identified on the Napatree count in 2015-16. Red-throated Loon saw a dip in numbers this year but continues to maintain good presence along the coast, while Common Loon, about 25% more likely to be seen, has increased its



Steve Broker photo

Bonaparte's Gull remains a species of concern, as its downward trend neared bottom with just one individual recorded on the 2019-2020 Christmas Bird Counts.

early winter numbers over the last 9 years. Common Loon is five times more likely to occur on an inland lake or river than is Red-throated Loon. Cormorant numbers are variable from year to year, but Double-crested is replaced by Great Cormorant in winter far less than was the case 30 or more years ago.

Herons. Family Ardeidae (herons) 28% decline.

Great Blue Heron appears to maintain stable early winter populations across the state. Most Great Egrets migrate south from late September to early November. Mild conditions in the Northeast result in lingering individuals, accounting for the 15 Great Egrets found this year on coastal counts, primarily at Stratford-Milford and Napatree. Black-crowned Night-Herons did not respond in similar fashion with just four counted (30-year low total), and no Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were found. Rare early winter "day herons", including Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, and Green Heron, were unreported, as might be expected.

New World Vultures to Owls. Family Cathartidae (New World Vultures) 265% increase, Family Accipitridae (hawks) 79% increase, Family Strigidae (owls) 16% increase.

The Black Vulture early winter population has grown from 1 individual in 1995-96 to a record high 421 individuals this year, a continuation of this species' dramatic northward range expansion along the East Coast. Black Vultures now maintain a year-round presence in Connecticut, although inclement fall weather drives many individuals southward. Hartford compiler Jay Kaplan noted a high count of Black Vultures in that CBC circle, "as the Manchester roost continues to flourish." Turkey Vultures also have increased significantly in numbers over the past several decades. Possible causes are greater availability of carrion food sources and a rebound from pesticide poisoning (*Birds of the World*). Both vulture species nest in undisturbed caves, barns, and abandoned buildings in the state and are a challenge to confirm for breeding. Golden Eagles were reported this year at Litchfield Hills and Napatree. Napatree compiler Shai Mitra noted that the count's Golden Eagle was seen at the last

impoundment at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area. Northern Harrier numbers increased 30% from a year ago. Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers continue to drop, and this remains an endangered species in Connecticut, while Cooper's Hawk has increased its presence in early winter for at least 16 years. Northern Goshawk was a very rare miss for the second time in three years. The extensive logging of this past year's storm-damaged trees in the remote breeding and wintering habitat that goshawks favor cannot have beneficial impact on this state-threatened species.

In one of the greatest American conservation success stories, Bald Eagle has returned from some 40 years of breeding extirpation in the state to a steadily expanding number of territorial and breeding pairs. This year's 252 Bald Eagles represent a 30% increase over last year's record number. Red-shouldered and Red-tailed hawks continue robust populations. Rough-legged Hawk, a bird of the arctic taiga and tundra, is found in nearly every CBC year, but numbers can range widely from a single individual, as in this year, to a dozen or more, characteristic of this irruptive species. The only Rough-legged Hawk found this year was "seen soaring over Hartford's Cedar Hill Cemetery, observed initially against dark clouds and almost written off as one of the Red-tailed Hawks that are commonly seen there" - from Jay Kaplan. Barn Owl (Family Tytonidae) has sparse distribution in Connecticut and is threatened with morbidity or mortality from the ingestion of rodenticide at regional landfills, a habitat that this species is known to use for breeding and wintering. The Quinnipiac Valley Barn Owl report is a very welcome one. Eastern Screech-Owl is at a 30-year record low total, and Great Horned Owl also shows evidence of reduced numbers. Barred Owl is faring better but has fallen off from the record-setting 2017-18 Connecticut Christmas Bird Count. This was not a Snowy Owl winter. Long-eared Owls at Litchfield Hills, Stratford-Milford, New London, and Norwalk were excellent finds. Stratford-Milford had the only Short-eared Owl. The 16 Northern Saw-whet Owls heard were the second lowest total in three decades.



Steve Broker photo

Peregrine Falcons represent a significant success story, with both breeding numbers and increased wintering birds on the CBCs providing evidence.

Kingfishers to Tyrant Flycatchers. Family Alcedinidae (kingfishers) 48% decline, Family Picidae (woodpeckers) 19% increase, Family Falconidae (falcons) slight increase of 0.5%, Family Tyrannidae (tyrant flycatchers) 20% decline.

There was much open water this year, owing to the mild weather leading up to the CBC season. This may account for a lower number of Belted Kingfishers reported. Our woodpecker species continue to show expanding populations in early winter, including the dramatic northward range expansion of Red-bellied Woodpecker and the more widespread distribution in the state of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Downy and Hairy woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, and Pileated Woodpecker all benefit from life in an extensively forested state.

It's a mixed bag for our falcons, with American Kestrel sightings dropping badly over nearly two CBC decades, while Merlin and Peregrine Falcon numbers surge. Peregrines are a

migratory species (hence the Genus name *Peregrinus*, or wanderer), but pairs on territory and breeding tend to be nonmigratory and remain present throughout the year. A 22-year ongoing study of breeding Peregrine Falcons in New Haven County indicates that some tiercels (males) and peregrines (females) will maintain the same territory over a decade or more, but that pairings can be made and undone every few years. Over time, it is very much a changing cast of characters at any given breeding site. The result of having two dozen or more breeding pairs in Connecticut is that regardless of the success rate for peregrines fledging young at any one site, the breeding and wintering populations continue to grow statewide.

Monk Parakeets (Family Psittacidae, parrots) are a beleaguered lot at war with people of power. Consider the 46 individuals counted this year versus the 1,204 observed in 2004-05. We need a Green New Deal! New Haven compiler Chris Loscalzo wrote, "Remarkably, we didn't record a single Monk Parakeet on this year's Christmas Count. About 20 years ago, our count had the distinction of recording more Monk Parakeets than any other count in the United States." Eastern Phoebe, which is Connecticut's one tyrant flycatcher found virtually every year, took advantage of the mild weather conditions to linger in the state well into December and even early January. Bristol ("one of the original 25 CBCs started in 1900") now has conducted four consecutive Christmas Bird Counts, as this count was reactivated by Jack Swatt in 2016-17. Bristol recorded its first Eastern Phoebes this year when individuals were found at Wolcott and Southington. Blue-headed Vireo (Family Vireonidae) was reported for the 6th year in the last 21, with Oxford and New Haven reporting single birds. This is the earliest arriving vireo in spring migration and the last to depart in fall, with some individuals lingering into November and December. Blue-headed Vireos winter in the southeastern United States, the Gulf Coast states, Mexico, and Central America. It was a shrike-less year.

Corvids to Kinglets. Family Corvidae (jays and crows) 7% decline, Family Alaudidae (larks) 67% decline, Family Hi-

rundinidae (swallows) 22% decline, Family Paridae (titmice and chickadees) 5% decline, Family Sittidae (nuthatches) 67% increase, Family Certhiidae (treecreepers) 34% increase, Family Troglodytidae (wrens) 14% increase, Family Regulidae (kinglets) 7% decline.

While early winter populations of crows are variable from year to year, this year we recorded the second lowest statewide total in 30 years. *Birds of the World* states that the winter ecology of the American Crow is poorly known. In Connecticut massive roosts of crows in several parts of the state tend to shift over a period of years. Hartford area birders have the best understanding of winter crow roosts in the state, hence this extended quote from Jay Kaplan: "This year, what I assume to be the state's largest crow roost has moved yet again. The birds are roosting in trees at the edge of a residential area off Talcott Street in West Hartford and not far from the commercial area that includes Home Depot and other big box stores. It was very difficult to count the crows flying toward the roost as they first descended into a linear park along Trout Brook to the west of the roost. Many did not fly in until after dark. The crows were spread out over a large area, and there may have been other 'sub-roosts' that we did not locate. As such, we have decreased the crow count this year, but it is quite possible we are off in our estimation. Fear not, there are still a lot of crows in this roost!"

Fish Crow is best distinguished from its slightly larger cousin by call, and this species continues its advance along coastal regions and up major river valleys. Nearly 1,000 Fish Crows were counted this year, two-thirds of them on coastal CBCs. Common Raven continues its statewide settlement advances, with a new record high early winter total. This species pioneered on Connecticut CBCs from populations to the north and west, beginning in the mid-1980s. Northern counties continue to host breeding and wintering ravens, but the statewide distribution is evening out: 43% on northern CBCs, 30% mid-state, and 27% on coastal CBCs.

Horned Larks are variable in numbers from year to year.

This year they were down 75% from three years ago. Jay Kaplan wrote, "it should be noted that the low of twenty Horned Larks was likely at least partially attributable to our inability to access the Hartford landfill this year." A conservative count of five Tree Swallows made an appearance at "three different beach locations" for the Napatree CBC. This was a Christmas Count year in which no Northern Rough-winged Swallows or Cave Swallows were recorded. Both Black-capped Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse have seen declining numbers in recent years, apparently in keeping with North American trends. The irruptive Red-breasted Nuthatch was in very short supply throughout the state this past December, with a few eBird reports coming in from northern Connecticut towns by January and more widespread distribution through the state by February. Only 16 individuals were reported on the CT CBC, and they were scattered through all three regions of the state. Year-round White-breasted Nuthatches made their presence known once again. Brown Creeper dipped to third lowest numbers in the 30-year period reviewed. Connecticut CBC data for wrens agree well with the overall trend of increasing populations through North America, although 40% of all wren species in North America are found to be in decline. Four House Wrens were identified on coastal counts, a good CBC representation. Winter Wren was far more easily found this year than usual, and Marsh Wren was counted in record high numbers, including two at Hartford, one at Norwich, and two dozen seen or heard along the coast from New Haven to Napatree. Of the two kinglet species, we count an average of 15 Golden-crowned for every Ruby-crowned. Mild fall and early winter weather benefits the appearance in Connecticut of Ruby-crowned Kinglets. "This kinglet breeds farther north and winters farther south than the congeneric Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*), and the northern boundary of its winter range appears to be influenced by temperature" (*Birds of the World*).

Thrushes to Waxwings. Family Turdidae (thrushes) 10% decline, Family Mimidae (thrashers and allies) 19% decline, Family Sturnidae (starlings) 49% decline, Family Passeridae

(Old World sparrows) 80% decline, Family Motacillidae (pipits and wagtails) 29% decline.

Eastern Bluebird early winter populations remain fairly steady, as do those of Hermit Thrushes. American Robin flocks vary dramatically from year to year. This was an off year CBC-wise in Connecticut for *Turdus migratorius*. The semi-hardy Gray Catbird enjoyed the mild season, lingering in greater numbers than usual. Present in the state through the year, the majority of catbirds migrate south along the entire eastern seaboard to southeastern states and neotropical wintering grounds. This was a very good year for Brown Thrasher, again the result of mild fall and early winter temperatures. Preliminary Atlas data indicate that thrashers are in decline as breeders in Connecticut, a likely consequence of reforestation and loss of edge habitat. Northern Mockingbird has been in decline for more than a decade, and that trend continues. Connecticut CBC data do not support a continued northward migration of this species, although *Birds of the World* suggests that reduced visibility of mockingbirds in winter may affect the way we view and interpret their winter populations. The ongoing precipitous crash of European Starlings on Connecticut Christmas Bird Counts has been commented on in this review article for at least 20 years. The introduced House Sparrow also is in continued decline statewide. American Pipits that breed in Newfoundland and Ontario migrate through Connecticut from late September to December, wintering from New Jersey southward. They appear on CT CBCs with high variability and were largely absent this year.

Winter Finches to Sparrows. Family Fringillidae (finches and allies) 37% decline, Family Calcariidae (longspurs) 31% decline, Passerellidae (New World sparrows) 38% decline.

Once again, we had no irruption of northern winter finches: no Evening Grosbeaks, no redpolls, no crossbills. Significant winter irruptions for Common Redpoll, Red Crossbill, and White-winged Crossbill were last enjoyed by Connecticut birders during 2012-13 and 1997-98 CBC years. Evening



Steve Broker photo
Marsh Wren was one of 10 species that established new high totals for the 2019-2020 CBC with 27, two more than the previous high.

Grosbeak has been almost entirely absent from our early winter avifauna for the last 25 years. In addition, Purple Finch numbers have been severely reduced for more than a decade. House Finch has experienced declining numbers for some 25 years in Connecticut and throughout the United States, the consequence of the spread of the poultry disease mycoplasma conjunctivitis. According to *Birds of the World*, "In 1994, the explosive growth of House Finch populations across North America was interrupted by one of the worst epizootics in history – an outbreak of mycoplasmosis that killed millions of individuals across the continent and drove many small populations to near extinction." House Finches consequently experienced a 60% decline in population during the three year period 1994 through 1997. They had been introduced into the eastern United States because of "a few California individuals released from a pet store in New York City in 1939" (*Birds of the World*). A mere 6 Pine Siskins on northern counts and one count week at New Haven added to the absence of winter finches this year. American Goldfinches were recorded somewhat higher than on last year's count.

Small numbers of Lapland Longspurs were found on four coastal counts, including one that lingered at the Misqua-

micut State Beach parking lot (from Shai Mitra). Snow Buntings also were in short supply. An above average of Eastern Towhees was in keeping with other semi-hardy species, including a record high number of 65 Chipping Sparrows. American Tree Sparrows, at a new low 30-year total, continue their decline of the last five years. Clay-colored Sparrow was found on count day at Woodbury-Roxbury and at the Watch Hill Light the day before the Napatree CBC. Field Sparrows staged a big rebound from last year but this grassland sparrow has continued to trend downward over the past 15 years. Vesper Sparrows were enjoyed at New London at Westport (4 there!) as well as count week at Woodbury-Roxbury. Savannah Sparrow showed well at a predictable spot in the Hartford count circle, also nicely at Norwich, and on most coastal counts. Old Lyme-Saybrook and Stratford-Milford added the pale, Sable Island, Nova Scotia breeding 'Ipswich' Sparrow to their totals, 'Ipswich' Sparrow being one of 17 subspecies of Savannah Sparrow.

Grasshopper Sparrow at Napatree was an excellent find.



Bruce Finnan photo

While common and very popular at feeding stations, Northern Cardinals nonetheless recorded their second-lowest numbers in the past three decades.



Bruce Finnan photo

The CBCs recorded seven species of warblers, including an excellent total of nine Pine Warbler, a short-distance migrant well equipped to handle our increasingly mild winters.

Napatree compiler Shai Mitra wrote, "The most notable bird for the count and one of our new species was a Grasshopper Sparrow found at Noyes Farm in Weekapaug. It took a great deal of effort to track down and identify this stealthy, skulking bird - a rare winter species anywhere in New England." Seaside Sparrow is an increasingly rare find on our CBCs, having been located just 7 times in 30 years. One was found count week at Westport. The very classy looking Fox Sparrow was found in below average numbers this year. Song Sparrows maintain consistent early winter populations. Another species to enjoy mild weather conditions at CBC time was Swamp Sparrow, described accurately as elusive but local, a bird that overwinters in greatly reduced numbers in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Most Swamp Sparrows migrate south to southern and mid-western states by the middle of October. White-throated Sparrows had a banner year, their highest CBC total in ten years. White-crowned Sparrows were less well represented this year. Hartford recorded highest numbers of this species. The always welcome snow bird Dark-eyed Junco showed up better than was the case last year. Saltmarsh Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow made no

appearances.

Chats to Carduelinae Finches. Family Icteriidae (New World blackbirds) 44% decline, Family Parulidae (New World warblers) 38% decline, Cardinalidae (Cardinals and allies) 3% decline.

Yellow-breasted Chat, a bird with a checkered systematic history, now is considered . . . not a wood-warbler, not a tanager, not a vireo, not a mimid, but rather as . . . an icteric, or New World blackbird, thanks to the most recent DNA comparisons. Whew! Napatree, New Haven, New London, and Old Lyme-Saybrook added this colorful species to their 2019-2020 counts. Eastern Meadowlark appeared on two mid-state and four coastal counts, and Baltimore Oriole (two in Stonington for the Napatree count) lent some additional class to four counts, a pretty good showing for this grassland species. Flocking blackbirds show the greatest year-to-year variability in their numbers. This year, Red-winged Blackbird was less well represented, the nest parasite Brown-headed Cowbird was too well represented, the declining Rusty Blackbird was in reduced supply, and Common Grackle was 1,200 below last year's total and 21,000 below the year before. Get the point on year-to-year variability? Stratford-Milford tried again for its fairly predictable one to three dozen Boat-tailed Grackles but without success.

This was a seven species wood-warbler year, including the count week Ovenbird at Westport, a very impressive 8 Orange-crowned Warblers, Nashville Warbler also at Westport, 3 coastal Common Yellowthroats, 4 coastal Palm Warblers, an even more remarkable 9 Pine Warblers, and a solid showing of Yellow-rumped Warblers. Napatree's Orange-crowned Warblers were found at Napatree Point (2) and Barn Island (1), while their Common Yellowthroat was seen at Chapman Pond. Our 30-year list of parulid warblers now stands at 22 species, including a nice list of rarities. Northern Cardinal was the only member of its family to appear on the CT CBC, disappointingly coming in at second lowest numbers in the last three decades.

Statewide Christmas Bird Counts (7 Northern, 6 Mid-State, 8 Coastal = 21 total).

271,919 total individuals, 161 count day species + 5 count week species (Tundra Swan, King Eider, Osprey, Seaside Sparrow, Ovenbird)

770 field observers + 76 feeder watchers = 846 total observers

2,171.13 total party hours & 8,740.99 total party miles

30-year high counts (10): Common Merganser (7,540<=7,492), Long-billed Dowitcher (3<=3), Black Vulture (421<=330), Bald Eagle (252<=195), Common Raven (281<=263), Marsh Wren (27<=25), Carolina Wren (1,452<=1,220), Brown Thrasher (18<=16), Chipping Sparrow (65<=43), Orange-crowned Warbler (8<=4)

30-year low counts (11): American Wigeon (363=>311), American Coot (24=>21), Killdeer (6=>1), Bonaparte's Gull (2=>2), Great Black-backed Gull (757=>569), Black-crowned Night-Heron (4=>4), Eastern Screech-Owl (93=>63), Monk Parakeet (70=>46), Black-capped Chickadee (5,936=>5,733), Purple Finch (28=>18), American Tree Sparrow (892=>602)

New species (2): Pink-footed Goose (new to count day, was count week), Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Rarities (5): Tufted Duck (3X), Long-billed Dowitcher (6X), Blue-headed Vireo (6X), Grasshopper Sparrow (4X), Ovenbird CW (5X)

Other Noteworthy Species (1): Seaside Sparrow CW

30-year Statewide total = 262 count day + 4 count week species (Purple Gallinule, Piping Plover, Gyrfalcon, Western Kingbird)

Northern Christmas Bird Counts (Barkhamsted; Berlin; Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood; Hartford; Litchfield Hills; Lakeville-Sharon; Storrs)

92,137 total individuals, 107 total count day species + 4 count

week species (Northern Shoveler, Long-tailed Duck, Osprey, Baltimore Oriole)

250 field observers + 33 feeder watchers = 283 total observers

672.75 total party hours & 3,362.26 total party miles

30-year high counts (3): Black Vulture (129<=123), Bald Eagle (90<=51), Common Raven (121<=110)

30-year low counts (8): Mourning Dove (1,720=>1,484), Ring-billed Gull (1,211=>946), Horned Lark (196=>196), Black-capped Chickadee (2,590=>2,496), Red-breasted Nuthatch (9=>9), Purple Finch (8=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years), American Tree Sparrow (344=>228), Rusty Blackbird (1=>1)

New species (0)

Rarities (2): Brant (5X), Osprey CW (3X)

30-year Northern total = 174 count day species + 1 count week species (Black-and-white Warbler)

Barkhamsted, CT CBC (December 21, 2019)

Compiler: David Tripp, Jr. (Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

9,829 total individuals, 66 count day species + 1 count week species (Black Vulture)

34 field observers + 3 feeder watchers = 37 total observers

78.00 total party hours & 629.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (1): Song Sparrow (97<=92)

30-year low counts (5): Ring-billed Gull (42=>20), Belted Kingfisher (1=>1), Black-capped Chickadee (569=>530), Red-breasted Nuthatch (4=>4), Northern Mockingbird (4=>2)

New species (0)

Rarities (4): Black Vulture CW (2X), Eastern Phoebe (3X),

Chipping Sparrow (6X), Common Yellowthroat (3X)

30-year total = 127 count day species + 0 count week species

Bristol, CT CBC (December 28, 2019)

Compiler: Jack Swatt

8,840 total individuals, 70 count day species + 0 count week species

35 field observers + 11 feeder watchers = 46 total observers

82.25 total party hours & 459.02 total party miles

New species (2): Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee (new to count day, was count week)

4-year total = 86 count day species + 2 count week species (Great Black-backed Gull, Rusty Blackbird)

Edwin Way Teale, Trail Wood, CT CBC (December 29, 2019)

Compiler: Susan Harrington (Natchaug Ornithological Society)

4,875 total individuals, 63 count day species + 0 count week species

10 field observers + 0 feeder watchers = 10 total observers

55.50 total party hours & 270.50 total party miles

30-year high counts (2): Wood Duck (3<=2), Pileated Woodpecker (6<=4)

30-year low counts (1): American Tree Sparrow (10=>1)

New species (0)

Rarities (3): Northern Pintail (4X), Pied-billed Grebe (2X), White-crowned Sparrow (6X)

Other noteworthy species (1): Wood Duck (7X)

30-year total = 120 count day species + 0 count week species

Hartford, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compiler: Jay Kaplan (Hartford Audubon Society)

33,985 total individuals, 89 count day species + 0 count week species

87 field observers + 5 feeder watchers = 92 total observers

224.00 total party hours & 589.50 total party miles

30-year high counts (5): Black Vulture (60<=58), Bald Eagle (16<=15), Common Raven (15<=10), Marsh Wren (2<=1), Swamp Sparrow (36,+36)

30-year low counts (3): Great Black-backed Gull (19=>19), Brown Creeper (7=>4), Dark-eyed Junco (1,059=>823)

New species (0)

Rarities (2): Brant (5X), Bufflehead (5X0)

30-year total = 147 count day + 7 count week species (Tundra Swan, White-White-winged Scoter, Virginia Rail, Osprey, Snowy Owl, Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-and-white Warbler)

Litchfield Hills, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compiler: Raymond Belding (Litchfield Hills Audubon Society)

14,531 total individuals, 76 count day species + 3 count week species (Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Savannah Sparrow)

44 field observers + 12 feeder watchers = 56 total observers

110.00 total party hours & 667.50 total party miles

30-year high counts (2): Bald Eagle (19<=13), Eastern Bluebird (406<=304)

30-year low counts (9): Mallard (267=>92), American Black

Duck (29=>6), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1=>1), Eastern Screech-Owl (3=>2), Great Horned Owl (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years), Black-capped Chickadee (726=>565), Northern Mockingbird (1=>1), Purple Finch (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years), American Tree Sparrow (92=>42)

New species (0)

Rarities (2): Cackling Goose (2X, but note 4 previous years with Canada Goose, small forms), Golden Eagle (2X)

Other noteworthy species (2): Chipping Sparrow (7X), Savannah Sparrow (7X)

30-year total = 144 count day species + 2 count week species (Blue-winged Teal, Glaucous Gull)

Lakeville-Sharon, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compilers: Zach Adams, Robert Moeller (Audubon Sharon)

14,931 total individuals, 71 count day species + 2 count week species (Great Blue Heron, Red-shouldered Hawk)

25 field observers + 1 feeder watcher = 26 total observers

58.75 total party hours & 413.30 total party miles

30-year high counts (6): Bufflehead (17<=12), Black Vulture (37<=23), Bald Eagle (27<=11), Northern Flicker (17<=14), Carolina Wren (11<=11), Eastern Towhee (1<=1)

30-year low counts (2): Mourning Dove (79=>61), American Tree Sparrow (44=>23)

New species (0)

Rarities (7): Cackling Goose (2X), Merlin (5X), Peregrine Falcon (6X), Eastern Phoebe (3X), Winter Wren (6X), Eastern Towhee (5X), Field Sparrow (4X)

Other noteworthy species (1): Red-shouldered Hawk (7X)

30-year total = 129 count day species + 0 count week species

Storrs, CT CBC (December 14, 2019)

Compiler: Steve Morytko (Natchaug Ornithological Association)

5,146 total individuals (30-year low total), 67 count day species + 9 count week species (Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Great Black-backed Gull, Eastern Screech-Owl, Baltimore Oriole)

15 field observers (30-year low total) + 1 feeder watcher = 16 total observers (30-year low total)

64.25 total party hours & 333.44 total party miles

30-year high counts (1): Chipping Sparrow (3<=1)

30-year low counts (8): American Black Duck (2=>2), Rock Pigeon (83=>39), Mourning Dove (92=>63), Herring Gull (4=>1), Golden-crowned Kinglet (6=>4), Northern Mockingbird (10=>7), American Tree Sparrow (23=>20), Dark-eyed Junco (455=>438)

New species (1): Long-tailed Duck CW

Rarities (4): Osprey CW (2X), Chipping Sparrow (4X), Baltimore Oriole CW (2X), Yellow-rumped Warbler (5X)

30-year total = 128 count day species + 3 count week species (Long-tailed Duck, Short-eared Owl, Evening Grosbeak)

Mid-State Christmas Bird Counts (Norwich; Oxford; Pawling/Hidden Valley; Quinnipiac Valley; Salmon River; Woodbury-Roxbury)

54,303 total individuals, 101 count day species + 4 count week species (Snow Goose, Greater Scaup, Pied-billed Grebe, Vesper Sparrow)

159 field observers + 30 feeder watchers = 189 total observers

532.38 total party hours & 2,463.61 total party miles

30-year high counts (4): Black Vulture (225/179), Bald Eagle (71/63), Fish Crow (268/74), Carolina Wren (352/330)

30-year low counts (6): American Black Duck (199/164), Eastern Screech-Owl (26/19), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1/0, missed 1st time in 30 years), Northern Mockingbird (55/52), American Tree Sparrow (175/151), White-crowned Sparrow (1/0, missed 1st time 30 years)

New species (2): Pink-footed Goose, Barn Owl

Rarities (3): Blue-headed Vireo (2X), Marsh Wren (5X), Clay-colored Sparrow (5X)

30-year Mid-State total = 173 count day species + 1 count week species (*Selasphorus* hummingbird)

Norwich, CT CBC (January 4, 2020)

Compiler: Allison Black

8,326 total individuals, 67 count day species + 6 count week species (Ring-necked Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Common Raven, Fox Sparrow)

17 field observers + 3 feeder watchers = 20 total observers

48.20 total party hours & 286.00 total party miles

1-year total = 67 count day species + 6 count week species (Ring-necked Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Common Raven, Fox Sparrow)

Oxford, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compiler: Roy Harvey

7,189 total individuals, 73 count day species + 0 count week species

15 field observers + 2 feeder watchers = 17 total observers

81.39 total party hours & 356.80 total party miles

30-year high counts (4): Bald Eagle (21<=9), Pileated Woodpecker (7<=7), Peregrine Falcon (3<=2), Rusty Blackbird (13<=13)

30-year low counts (0)

New species (0)

Rarities (4): Eastern Phoebe (4X), Blue-headed Vireo (2X), Chipping Sparrow (3X), Eastern Meadowlark (5X)

30-year total = 133 count day species + 1 count week species (Evening Grosbeak)

Pawling, NY-Hidden Valley, CT CBC (January 1, 2020)

Compilers: Carena Pooth, Angela Dimmitt (Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club)

12,188 total individuals, 73 count day species + 0 count week species

34 field observers + 4 feeder watchers = 38 total observers

133.75 total party hours & 643.45 total party miles

30-year high counts (4): Red-shouldered Hawk (18<=16), Merlin (2<=2), Carolina Wren (85<=80), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3<=3)

30-year low counts (1): Northern Mockingbird (12=>8)

New species (0)

Rarities (2): Common Loon (5X), Common Yellowthroat (2X)

30-year total = 133 count day species + 3 count week species (Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Pine Grosbeak)

Quinnipiac Valley, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compilers: Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, Melissa Baston (Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society)

7,718 total individuals (30-year low total), 75 count day species + 2 count week species (Snow Goose, Chipping Sparrow)

21 field observers + 6 feeder watchers - 27 total observers

73.12 total party hours & 330.36 total party miles

30-year high counts (1): Hooded Merganser (213<=144)

30-year low counts (5): Mourning Dove (161=>122), Ring-billed Gull (237=>232), Blue Jay (146=>132), Black-capped Chickadee (150=>120), House Sparrow (120=>84)

New species (1): Barn Owl

Rarities (0)

30-year total = 147 count day species + 2 count week species (Sandhill Crane, Snowy Owl)

Salmon River, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compilers: Sharon Dellinger, Doreen Jezek (Mattabesec Audubon Society)

5,009 total individuals, 71 count day species + 1 count week species (Barred Owl)

41 total field observers + 11 feeder watchers = 52 total observers

84.01 total party hours & 370.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (1): Red-breasted Merganser

30-year low counts (3): Sharp-shinned Hawk (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years), Hermit Thrush (2=>2), House Sparrow (129=>58)

New species (0)

Rarities (2): Red-breasted Merganser (2X), Black Vulture (5X)

Other noteworthy species (1): Green-winged Teal (7X)

30-year total = 136 count day species + 2 count week species
(Long-tailed Duck, White-winged Crossbill)

Woodbury-Roxbury, CT CBC (December 14, 2019)

Compiler: Ken Elkins (Western Connecticut Bird Club)

13,873 total individuals, 76 count day species + 4 count week species

31 field observers + 4 feeder watchers = 35 total observers

112.00 total party hours & 477.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (6): Gadwall (2<=2), American Wigeon (2<=2), Ring-necked Pheasant (25<=16), Black Vulture (96<=87), Fish Crow (25<=22), Carolina Wren (118<=104)

30-year low counts (7): Canada Goose (2,242=>1,512), Eastern Screech-Owl (8>=1), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30-years), Black-capped Chickadee (362=>320), Tufted Titmouse (214=>209), American Robin (109=>99), American Tree Sparrow (61=>32)

New species (0)

Rarities (3): Green-winged Teal (American) (4X), Greater Scaup (4X), Clay-colored Sparrow (3X)

Other noteworthy species (2): Cackling Goose (7X), but note 5 previous years with Canada Goose, small forms), American Wigeon (7X)

30-year total = 145 count day species + 3 count week species (*Selasphorus* hummingbird, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager)

Coastal Christmas Bird Counts (Guilford-Long Island Sound; Greenwich-Stamford; Napatree; New Haven; New London; Old Lyme-Saybrook; Stratford-Milford; Westport)

125,479 total individuals (30-year low total), 158 count day species + 6 count week species (Tundra Swan, King Eider,

Pine Siskin, Clay-colored Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Ovenbird)

361 total field observers + 13 feeder watchers = 374 total observers

966.00 total party hours & 2,915.12 total party miles

30-year high counts (6): Bald Eagle (91/88), Common Raven (76/57), Carolina Wren (819/741), Chipping Sparrow (51/33), Orange-crowned Warbler (8/4), Pine Warbler (8/6)

30-year low counts (11): American Wigeon (340/307), American Coot (23/12), Killdeer (3/1), Great Black-backed Gull (650/477), Black-crowned Night-Heron (4/4), Sharp-shinned Hawk (36/31), Eastern Screech-Owl (23/14), American Kestrel (2/1), Monk Parakeet (70/46), Black-capped Chickadee (1,700/1,550), House Sparrow (3,407/3,296)

New species (1); Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Rarities (7): Barnacle Goose (5X), Tufted Duck (3X), Long-billed Dowitcher (6X), Golden Eagle (4X), Blue-headed Vireo (6X), Grasshopper Sparrow (3X), Ovenbird CW (5X)

Other noteworthy species (2): Tundra Swan CW (7X), Seaside Sparrow CW (7X)

30-year Coastal total = 254 count day species + 5 count week species (Pink-footed Goose, Purple Gallinule, Piping Plover, Gyrfalcon, Bullock's Oriole)

Guilford-Long Island Sound, CT CBC (January 4, 2020)

Compiler: John Picard (Menunkatuck Audubon Society)

3,399 total individuals, 63 count day species + 0 count week species

19 field observers + 0 feeder watchers = 19 total observers

31.00 total party hours & 97.00 total party miles

5-year high counts, without numbers: Gadwall, American

Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Common Merganser, Dunlin, Red-throated Loon, Cooper's Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal

New species (1): Greater Yellowlegs

5-year total = 105 count day species + 1 count week species (Black Vulture)

Greenwich-Stamford, CT/NY CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compiler: Cynthia Ehlinger (Audubon Greenwich)

24,497 total individuals, 108 count day species + 3 count week species (Snow Goose, American Woodcock, Horned Lark)

73 field observers + 2 feeder watchers = 75 total observers

247.50 total party hours & 854.25 total party miles

30-year high counts (9): Greater White-fronted Goose (2<=1), Lesser Scaup (30<=30), Razorbill (11<=6), Bald Eagle (26<=15), Peregrine Falcon (8<=3), Fish Crow (210<=185), Common Raven (35<=10), Winter Wren (39<=39), Pine Warbler (4<=1)

30-year low counts (2): Mute Swan (34=>33), Killdeer (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years)

New species (0)

Rarities (5): Greater White-fronted Goose (6X), Redhead (6X), Razorbill (6X), Iceland Gull (3X), Pine Warbler (2X)

30-year total = 190 count day species + count week species (Ross's Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Purple Gallinule, Sanderling, Glaucous Gull, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Lincoln's Sparrow, Painted Bunting)

Napatree, RI/CT/NY CBC (December 22, 2019)

Compilers: Shai Mitra, Glenn Williams

18,762 total individuals, 118 count day species + 3 count week species (Tundra Swan, Fish Crow, Clay-colored Sparrow)

35 field observers + 3 feeder watchers = 38 total observers

113.50 total party hours & 268.37 total party miles

19-year high counts (5): Northern Pintail (9<=8), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (13<=9), Northern Flicker (102<=75), Field Sparrow (34<=33), Orange-crowned Warbler (3<=1)

19-year low counts (1): 1=>0, missed 1st time in 19 years)

New species (3): Tundra Swan XW, Golden Eagle, Grasshopper Sparrow

Rarities (1): Clay-colored Sparrow (3X)

Other noteworthy species (1): Tree Swallow (4X)

19-year total = 191 count day species + 2 count week species (Pink-footed Goose, Tundra Swan)

New Haven, CT CBC (December 14, 2019)

Compiler: Chris Loscalzo (New Haven Bird Club)

24,120 total individuals (30-year low total), 124 count day species + 5 count week species (Black Vulture, Killdeer, Peregrine Falcon, Baltimore Oriole, Pine Siskin)

71 field observers + 2 feeder watchers = 73 total observers

161.00 total party hours & 581.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (3): Wood Duck (47<=44), Wild Turkey (123<=123), Iceland Gull (3<=2)

30-year low counts (11): Mute Swan (50=>41), American Wigeon (42=>29), Mallard (845=>771), American Coot (1=>1), Killdeer (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years), Great Black-backed Gull (53=>53), Sharp-shinned Hawk (5=>5), Eastern Screech-Owl (4=>2), Black-capped Chickadee (195=>153),

American Goldfinch (174=>162), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1=>1)

New species (0)

Rarities (3): Common Eider (5X), Blue-headed Vireo (3X), Lapland Longspur (6X)

Other noteworthy species (2): Greater White-fronted Goose (7X), Pine Warbler (7X)

30-year total = 196 count day species + 5 count week species (Black-legged Kittiwake, Seaside Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole)

New London, CT CBC (January 4, 2020)

Compiler: Robert Dewire

16,087 total individuals (30-year low total), 111 count day species + 2 count week species (King Eider, Black Vulture)

43 field observers + 3 feeder watchers = 46 total observers

109.50 total party hours & 405.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (5): Fish Crow (101<=89), Carolina Wren (194<=177), Song Sparrow (440<=424), Swamp Sparrow (45<=27), Orange-crowned Warbler (2<=1)

30-year low counts (12): Mute Swan (92=>91), Mallard (578=>577), American Black Duck (252=>145), Bufflehead (307=>264), Dunlin (1=>1), Ring-billed Gull (204=>129), Great Black-backed Gull (70=>61), Sharp-shinned Hawk (6=>2), Red-tailed Hawk (1=>9), American Crow (247=>195), Black-capped Chickadee (391=>357), House Finch (127=>124)

New species (0)

Rarities (3): King Eider CW (4X), Vesper Sparrow (2X), Orange-crowned Warbler (5X)

30-year total = 189 count day species + 3 count week species (Osprey, Western Kingbird, Black-and-white Warbler)

Old Lyme-Saybrook, CT CBC (January 5, 2020)

Compiler: Barbara Hawes

9,478 total individuals, 102 count day species + 0 count week species

55 field observers + 1 feeder watcher = 56 total observers

99.00 total party hours & 302.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (2): Bufflehead (159<=157), Black Vulture (14<=12)

30-year low counts (4): Mourning Dove (87=>64), Great Cormorant (1=>1), American Tree Sparrow (20=>8), Common Grackle (3=>3)

New species (0)

Rarities (1): Yellow-breasted Chat (5X)

Other noteworthy species (1): Black Vulture (7X)

30-year total = 191 count day species + 4 count week species (Sandhill Crane, Piping Plover, Gyrfalcon, Painted Bunting)

Stratford-Milford, CT CBC (December 21, 2019)

Compiler: Steve Mayo

18,666 total individuals, 111 count day species + 2 count week species (Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel)

38 field observers (30-year high count) + 2 feeder watchers = 40 total observers

115.00 total party hours & 270.50 total party miles

30-year high counts (3): Long-billed Dowitcher (3<=2), Red-shouldered Hawk (14<=6), Chipping Sparrow (8<=2)

30-year low counts (2): Green-winged Teal, American (missed 1st time in 30 years), Great Cormorant (5=>1)

New species (3): Barnacle Goose, Harlequin Duck, Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Rarities (4): Long-billed Dowitcher (4X), Eastern Phoebe (3X), Brown Thrasher (6X), Baltimore Oriole (4X)

Other noteworthy species (3): Orange-crowned Warbler (7X), Common Yellowthroat (7X), Palm Warbler (7X)

30-year total = 183 count day species + 3 count week species (Sandhill Crane, peep sp., Seaside Sparrow)

Westport, CT CBC (December 15, 2019)

Compilers: Mardi Dickinson, Townsend Dickinson (Connecticut Audubon Society Birdcraft Sanctuary)

10,465 total individuals, 118 count day species + 3 count week species (Great Egret, Ovenbird, Seaside Sparrow)

27 field observers + 0 feeder watchers = 27 total observers (30-year low total)

89.50 total party hours & 137.00 total party miles

30-year high counts (5): Cackling Goose (2<=2), Bald Eagle (14<=6), Red-shouldered Hawk (9<=9), Common Raven (14<=7), Vesper Sparrow (4<=1)

30-year low counts (2): Eastern Screech-Owl (1=>1), Great Horned Owl (1=>0, missed 1st time in 30 years)

New species (2): Seaside Sparrow CW, Ovenbird CW

Rarities (8): Greater White-fronted Goose (4X), Cackling Goose (5X), Tufted Duck (2X), Lapland Longspur (4X), Vesper Sparrow (5X), Eastern Meadowlark (5X), Nashville Warbler (5X), Pine Warbler (3X)

Other noteworthy species (1): Orange-crowned Warbler (7X)

30-year total = 182 count day species + 4 count week

species (Sandhill Crane, Red Crossbill, Seaside Sparrow, Ovenbird)

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Steve Broker

Cheshire, CT

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Spring season, March 1 through May 31, 2020

By Greg Hanisek and Frank Mantlik

Connecticut birders had been waiting, well – forever – to get the state’s first Townsend’s Warbler. This was the spring that it happened. A lot of other things happened as well, from unprecedented numbers of Bay-breasted Warblers and Summer Tanagers to a steep decline in Bonaparte’s Gulls and gull feeding flocks overall in Long Island Sound. Overriding everything was the arrival of the pandemic, which essentially put an end to group birding but perhaps encouraged birders to explore places close to home, especially in the context of the ongoing Connecticut Bird Atlas. Following is a list of first arrival dates for regular migratory species. Unusually early dates appear in the main field notes text.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – April 19 in Madison (JR); Black-billed Cuckoo – May 3 in Chaplin (PR) and Lyme (DP); Eastern Whip-poor-will – April 20 in Stonington (GW); Chimney Swift – April 20 in Hartford (RR); Ruby-throated Hummingbird – April 25 in Niantic (TR); American Oystercatcher – March 6 in Milford (JOs); Semipalmated Plover – April 28 at Milford Point (SSt); Piping Plover – March 9 in Milford (TA); Least Sandpiper – April 17 in Stonington (DP); Pectoral Sandpiper – March 20 in Durham (PSm); Solitary Sandpiper – April 30 in Westport (TG); Wil-

let – March 18 in Westport (BM); Snowy Egret – March 28 in Westport (TG); Green Heron – April 12 in Simsbury (SJ); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron – March 28 in Stratford (ADi); Osprey – March 3 at Deep River (JCo); Eastern Kingbird – April 16 in North Stonington (GW); Eastern Wood-Pewee – May 7 in New Haven (JOs); Alder Flycatcher – May 16 in Litchfield (GHa); Acadian Flycatcher – May 7 in North Stonington (RA); Willow Flycatcher – May 3 in Stratford (FM); White-eyed Vireo – April 24 in Madison (SR); Blue-headed Vireo – April 5 in Portland (JSh); Warbling



Chris Wood photo

A must-find for every active birder in spring migration is Mourning Warbler. This beauty was photographed on May 18 at Point Folly on Bantam Lake in Litchfield.

Vireo – April 29 in Westport (TG); Red-eyed Vireo - May 1 in Greenwich (ACu).

Also Purple Martin – April 5 in Madison (CL); Tree Swallow – March 7 in Mansfield (DMa); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - April 6 at three locations; Wood Thrush – April 25 in Darien (KW); Veery - April 30 in Westport (TG); Swainson’s Thrush – May 5 at several locations; Seaside Sparrow – March 31 in Milford (SP); Bobolink – May 1 in Rocky Hill (PDe); Eastern Meadowlark – March 20 in Westport (TG); Orchard Oriole – April 29 in Bolton (SMi); Ovenbird – April 6

in Westport (PL); Louisiana Waterthrush – March 28 in Berlin (EM); Black-and-white Warbler – April 20 in Branford (GN); Hooded Warbler – April 30 in Darien (JL); American Redstart – April 26 in Oxford (PF); Cape May Warbler - May 3 in Hartford (CAn); Cerulean Warbler – May 3 in Vernon (SMi); Northern Parula – April 20 in Fairfield (PL); Yellow Warbler – April 11 in Bolton (JFe); Chestnut-sided Warbler – May 1 in Guilford (EHo); Black-throated Green Warbler – April 25 in Cornwall (BV); Canada Warbler – May 3 in Tolland (SMi); Scarlet Tanager – April 27 in Old

Lyme (DR); Rose-breasted Grosbeak – April 14 in Gales Ferry (JSt); Indigo Bunting – April 14 in Guilford (CD).

The biggest day for first arrivals was May 2, when the following species were recorded: Common Nighthawk in Greenwich (PSw); Least Flycatcher in Goshen (BV) and Westport (TG), Great Crested Flycatcher in Redding (KR); Yellow-throated Vireo in Lyme (JSr); Worm-eating Warbler in Mansfield (ADe) and Lyme (JSr); Blue-

winged Warbler in Wallingford (NB); Nashville Warbler at three locations; Blackburnian Warbler in Wallingford (NB); Black-throated Blue Warbler in Fairfield (JFa).

A March 20 flight of Snow Geese included 100+ over Litchfield (DMr) and 60+ over Batterson Pond, Farmington (PDe). A flock of eight on April 4 at Fisher Meadow, Avon, included six blue morphs (PDe). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was unexpected on April 10 at Jones Pond



Julian Hough photo

The bird of the season was the long-awaited first state record of Townsend's Warbler, found on April 17 in the Wethersfield section of Cedar Hill Cemetery and cooperating for many observers over several days.



Chris Wood photo

It was a good season for Kentucky Warblers, and this one at Bent of the River Audubon in Southbury was the most cooperative, singing and showing off into mid-June.

in Morris (GHa et al.). It was present to at least April 19 (BD). Two Blue-winged Teal were in Norwalk March 20 (BM), three were at the Sherwood Island Millpond in Westport on April 14 (TG), and one on May 12 in Simsbury was in a time frame suggestive of breeding (DBi). A good flock of 10 Northern Shovelers was at Station 43 in South Windsor on March 15 (PG) with up to 11 there March 27 (PDe). A **Green-winged (Eurasian) Teal** was at Milford Point on April 2 (SMa). A Greater Scaup was at Nepaug Reservoir in Canton on March 20 (JMe).

Inland waterfowl at Columbia Lake included a

Surf Scoter on March 20 (DMA) and two Long-tailed Ducks on March 16 (SMi et al.). A March 20 flurry of Long-tailed Ducks included eight at Mansfield Hollow (PR), five at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (MD) and four at Coventry Lake (DMA). A **Harlequin Duck** was a nice find March 15 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (JR). A male was at Milford Point on March 27 (NB). One was unexpected inland on April 5 at Aspetuck Reservoir in Easton (JN), and one was back at Milford Point the next day (SP). Three Ruddy Ducks lingered to May 25 at Long Meadow Pond in Bethlehem

(SMI).

A Ruffed Grouse was drumming on March 14 in Boston Hollow (SMi), with two there March 18 (ABo). A high count of six Red-necked Grebes were at Lower Bolton Lake on April 28 (MB). One knocked down by inclement weather was a good inland find March 20 at West Thompson Lake, Thompson (PR, SMi). Another was inland April 17 at Coventry Lake (DMA). A **Western Grebe**, the state's fifth and the first since 2016, was at Cove Island Park in Stamford on May 5 (PDu et al.). A **White-winged Dove** was a nice surprise April 10 in a residential area in Old Saybrook (JSr). A **Common Gallinule** was present May 2 through at least May 12 at Sharon Audubon Center (SW, SP et al.). Three **Sandhill Cranes** were in Norfolk on March 15 (TG). Others were in Bethany on April 12 (JOs); in Southbury from April 14-21 (PCn et al.); in West Haven on April 21 (PU); in Trumbull April 28 (CW); in Westport May 2 (PL); in Hamden May 3 (JZ); in Fairfield on May 13 (TG); and in Ellington on May 22 (JCI).

The season's best double header was probably the two **Black-necked Stilts** at Barn Island in Stonington on May 30 (GW). An American Golden-Plover was a good seasonal find March 20-April 1 at Milford Point (SR et al.). Another was at Sandy Point on April 23 (CL, MV). An Upland Sandpiper, very scarce as a migrant, dropped in April 28 in North Windham (PR). A boat trip around Goose Rocks and Falkner Island off Guilford on April 9 produced a good tally of 68 Purple Sandpipers (NB). Five were still northbound on May 29 at Merwin Point in Milford (FM). A **Wilson's Phalarope** cooperated for many observers May 12-15 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, hereafter HBSP, (NB et al.). Perhaps the same one was at Barn Island in Stonington on May 16 (DP).

In a season where numbers were greatly reduced, 96 Bonaparte's Gulls were at Southport Beach on April 1 (FM). Rain on April 17 produced widespread inland appearances that included 15 on Bantam Lake in Litchfield, along with a single Common Tern (NM); two at Mans-

field Hollow Dam (SMi); and two at Laurel Reservoir in Stamford (FG). A couple of tardy ones visited Sandy Point on May 14 (MA). A coastal incursion of Lesser Black-backed Gulls occurred in rain and wind on April 13, with reports from seven locations including a high of three a bit inland in Ledyard (DP). Glaucous Gulls included one on March 3 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (EHa) and one the next day at Long Beach in Stratford (FM). A Caspian Tern made an early appearance April 15 at Sandy Point in West Haven (JHo). Two Black Terns were a good find May 29 at Tyler Lake in Goshen (NM). A Black Skimmer made its first appearance on May 23 at Milford Point (NB).

High on the list of significant finds was a **Pacific Loon** on May 21 at Harkness (DP). A count of 18 Common Loons passed over Sherwood Island State Park on April 30 (TG). An **American White Pelican** flew by HBSP on April 6 (JSh) and was later seen at Short Beach in Stratford (SSt). Another sighting at HBSP occurred on May 5 (FF). A flight of 100+ North-

ern Gannets passed Harkness on March 15 (TG) and 590 were recorded at Shippan Point, Stamford, on March 27 (PDu). There were 140+ on April 8 at Stratford Point (SMa). A big two-day movement of Double-crested Cormorants included 605 counted on May 2 in Stonington (GW).

Away from regular breeding sites, a Least Bittern was at HBSP on May 16 (SR). A Snowy Egret was rare for Litchfield County April 30 at Bantam Lake (NM). Single Tricolored Herons were seen from April 16 through the end of the period, with most reports from the Great Meadows area in Stratford and HBSP (FG, FM et al.). One was at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington on May 12-16 (BM, SMu et al.). Two Black-crowned Night-Herons, unusual inland in spring, were at Fisher Meadow in Avon on May 3 (BT), with three were even more unexpected May 11 at Mohawk State Forest in Cornwall (BG). The now-annual arrival of **White-faced Ibis** occurred April 6 in Clinton (MK), with sightings through May 9 in Clinton and Madison (m.ob.). Others

were in Stonington on April 17 (DP) and in Groton on May 4 (RA).

Glastonbury produced another of what have become annual **Mississippi Kite** sightings there, this one on April 12 (JT). A kite returned to the breeding site in north-eastern Fairfield County on May 11 (JHI), and nesting subsequently occurred for the third year in a row. An immature Golden Eagle was along the Connecticut River in East Haddam on March 19 (BP). One was in Ledyard on April 4 (DP). Up to three Long-eared Owl were present in Pomfret through most of April, raising speculation about possible breeding (AR et al.). One was vocal in Litchfield on May 15 (NM).

A Red-headed Woodpecker that wintered in Suffield was present to at least March 8 (MP), and one found March 24 in Westport stayed through at least May 10 (GM et al.). One made a brief appearance March 31 in Warren (PSt). Others were in Edge-wood Park in New Haven on April 20 (MH) and in Granby on May 24 (LS). The first Olive-sided Flycatchers were found May 15 at Wooster

Park in Stratford (FM, TM), at Wintergreen Brook in Hamden (SB) and at Edge-wood Park in New Haven (EHo). More than 20 were reported into early June. May 16 produced reports of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers from three locations: Point Folly at Bantam Lake (GHa), Allen's Meadow in Wilton (JB) and Trout Brook Valley in Easton (JN). An extremely rare **Loggerhead Shrike** was seen May 25-26 at Bargh (Mianus) Reservoir in Stamford (ACo, MC). The first of about a dozen Philadelphia Vireos was reported May 11 at East Rock (NA). A Horned Lark, one of the state's most restricted breeding species, was at Rentschler Field in East Hartford on May 5 (JMe). Another was at HBSP on May 14 (JFe). An April 21 storm knocked down 40 Purple Martins over Aspetuck Reservoir in Easton (JN). Two Barn Swallows were early March 3 in Old Lyme (PCo, ABl).

A **Sedge Wren** was reported May 8 from a possible breeding location in Southbury. There was one report of two birds being present but no evidence of breeding was obtained (SP). One was heard



Max Collins photo
The surprise bird of the season was this Loggerhead Shrike found by Al and Max Collins on May 25 at Bargh Reservoir in Stamford during a Connecticut Bird Atlas survey.

only April 16 in Westport (JTe). An Evening Grosbeak made one of its unexpected appearances April 26 in Tolland (fide ADo), followed by another at a Wolcott feeder on May 4 (CZ). Less unexpected was a Red Crossbill on April 29 at Great Mountain Forest in Canaan, identified by analysis of recorded calls as Ponderosa Pine or Type 2 (NB). One near Benedict Pond in Norfolk on May 3 was identified by call analysis as Type 1, a first for Connecticut (FZ, TS). Others were in Sharon the next day (TG) and in Cornwall May 13 (BV).

Recording of nocturnal flight calls on May 2 in Westport logged passage of 15 Chipping Sparrows and 30 Savannah Sparrows (PL). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** put in a rare spring appearance May 24 at Crystal Lake in Old Saybrook (JA). A migrant Grasshopper Sparrow was a good find May 9 at Sherwood Island (BM, SMu). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was a fly by April 18 at Sherwood Island (JTe), and one visited a feeder in Norwalk on May 11, remaining for a few days (JFa). The only reports of Yellow-breasted Chats came from Birdcraft

Sanctuary in Fairfield on May 7 (SP), in North Windham on May 10 (PR) and in Lyme on May 11 (PR). The first Boat-tailed Grackle was at Stratford Great Meadows on March 5 (GHa).

An Ovenbird seen and heard singing in a Watertown backyard on March 20 was possibly a bird that wintered nearby rather than a very early migrant (JSi). The now-rare Golden-winged Warbler was reported just once, on May 3 in Chaplin (PR). **Prothonotary Warblers** were nice finds May 3 in Storrs (NR), May 16 at Larsen Sanctuary in Fairfield (JP, ABu) and May 29 at Edgewood Park in New Haven (TD et al.). Among many reports of singles, two Mourning Warblers were at East Rock on May 16 (NA), on May 17 in Watertown (JSi) and May 20 in Hamden (SB). A Kentucky Warbler was a good find April 23 at Mondo Ponds in Milford (TG) and opened the door for an unusual number: May 6-7 in Darien (ID et al.), May 25 at Bent of the River Audubon in Southbury, where it stayed to mid-June (RW, m.ob.), May 27 at East Rock in New Haven (PSm) and May 30 in Stamford (CEh). A Ceru-

lean Warbler was away from known breeding locations May 11 at Lake Mohegan in Fairfield (AK). The warbler of the season in terms of numbers was Bay-breasted Warbler, when a May 17 fall-out produced a remarkable count of 27 at River Road in Kent (GN); others observers there that day logged 16 to 20.

A **Yellow-throated Warbler** made a seasonally typical appearance April 15 at a Westbrook feeder (CB). Others were at Mondo Ponds April 22-25 (LO, m.ob.); at East Rock Park in New Haven May 3-4 (GHo et al.); and at Bent of the River on May 16-18 (BC, SP). A March 23 snowfall brought three Pine Warblers to a feeder in Ellington (CM). The bird of the season was the state's long-awaited first **Townsend's Warbler**, found by veteran birder Paul Desjardins on April 17 at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Wethersfield. It was enjoyed by many through April 20. A warbler fallout on May 15 produced c. 19 species at the following locations: Trout Brook Valley (JN), Bolton Notch (SMi), Wooster Park, Stratford (FM), Cockaponset

State Forest (JSh), Selleck's Woods in Darien (DA) and River Road in Kent (SMY). These were followed the next day by 23 species at Bolton Notch (DMa) and 24 at Meshomasic (DC).

Summer Tanagers have been on the increase, but this spring produced what amounted to a couple years worth of records. Here's a run down of all 14 reports: May 3 at the Racebrook Tract in Woodbridge (CL); May 4 at Selleck's Woods in Darien (DA); May 9 at Smith-Richardson in Westport (JFa); May 11 at Rosa Hartman Park in Stamford (PDU); May 12 at Trout Brook Valley (DH); May 15 at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford (PDe) and East Rock Park (SR); May 16 in Colchester (SD); May 17 at Avalonia (CS) and two at Larsen Sanctuary in Fairfield (DA); May 19 in Woodbridge (MG); May 25 in Bloomfield (BK); and May 30 in Barkhamsted (FZ).

A **Western Tanager** at a Stratford feeder from April 16-20 was a seasonal highlight (FM, LM). Also highlight-worthy was the appearance of a **Blue Grosbeak** at the same feeder April

30 (FM). That was followed by five more reports: May 9 at Maltby Lakes in Orange (EK); May 13-18 at Edgewood Park in New Haven (TD et al.); May 16 at Oak Lawn Cemetery in Fairfield (JP); May 20-23 at Cove Island in Stamford (PDU et al.) and May 22-25 at HBSP (KE et al.). A **Painted Bunting** that wintered at a New Canaan feeder was last seen April 6 (CAb). A wintering **Dickcissel** was still present April 1 in Fairfield (CP).

Observers – Cleo Abrams-Horsburgh (CAb), Dave Alpeter, Corey Anderson (CAN), John Anderson, Tom Anderson, Mark Aronson, Robert Askins, Nicholas Aubin, Dave Babington (DBa), Bill Banks, Joe Bear, Matt Bell, Deb Bishop (DBi), Allison Black (ABl), Cheryl Blum, Nick Bonomo, Aaron Bourque (ABO); Steve Broker, Alex Burdo (ABu), Bridget Cervero, Dan Cimbaro, Al Collins (ACo), Jan Collins (JCl), Max Collins, Patrick Comins (PCo), Pat Conboy (PCn), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe (ACu), Tom Damiani, Sharon Dellinger, Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine, Ian Devlin, Robert Dewire, Angela Dim-

mitt (ADi), Alex Delehanty (ADe), Aaron Dollar (ADo), Mike Doyle, Ceclia Duffy, Patrick Dugan (PDU), Cynthia Ehlinger (CEh), Ken Elkins, Chris Elphick (CEl), Jo Fasciolo (JFa), Jeff Fengler (JFe), Facundo Fernandez-Duque, Jason Farrow (JFr), Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Ben Gottesman, Tina Green, Mark Grogan, Peter Grose, Ed Haesche (EHa), Greg Hanisek (GHa), David Henkel, James Heuschkel (JHe), Matthew Higbee, Gary Hodge (GHo), Janet Holt (JHl), Eli Holton (EHo), Julian Hough (JHo), Sandra Jones, Jay Kaplan, Aidan Kiley, Micky Komara, Brian Kulvete, Ekaterina Kuzina, James Leone, Chris Loscalzo, Preston Lust, Nicolas Main, Cathy Malesk, George Masumian, Frank Mantlik, Linda Mantlik, Deborah Martin (DMr), Stefan Martin (SMa), Dave Mathieu (DMa), Steve Mayo (SMy), Janet Messick (JMs), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Scott Mills (SML),

Sean Milnes (SMi), Tom Murray, Brendan Murtha, Sean Murtha (SMu), Eric Myskowski, Jeremy Nance, Gina Nichol, John Ogren (JOg), Linda Olsen, John Oshlick (JOs), Serena Pedane, Maggie Peretto, Chris Petherick, Barbara Pokorny, Dave Provencher, James Purcell, Robert Reginio, Noah Reid, Katie Rice, Jason Rieger, Tim Riley, Scott Roxbrough, Dean Rupp, Phil Rusch, Andy Rzeznikiewicz, Jannie Shapiro (JSh), James Sherwonit (JSr), Lynn Simpson, James Singletary (JSi), Paul Smith (PSm), Tim Spahr, Steve Spector (SSp), Peary Stafford (PSt), Jim Stanton (JSt), C.J. Stetzel; Stephanie Stewart (SSt), Paul Swigert (PSw); Jory Teltser (JTe), Joan Tinson (JTi), Brian Toal, Percy Ulsamer, Marianne Vahey, Benjamin Van Doren, Chandler Wiegand, Kim Westcott, Scott Whalen, Ryan Wirtes, Glenn Williams, Sara Zagorski, Chet Zak, Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmunt

SBC CORRECTION

The 2019 Summer Bird Counts were published here last quarter (July 2020) with two incorrect state-wide summary total numbers. The total number of parties should be 143, not 125. The total number of individual birds observed should be 95,066, not 95,001.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Aidan Kiley

There are a couple of clues that help to narrow this down this edition's bird quite quickly. First, it is feeding on the ground below a feeder. Connecticut has breeding warblers, vireos, thrushes, and many other families, but the majority of those species do not regularly visit feeders. Many common feeder birds are easily ruled out by size, shape and plumage. This bird's overall brown appearance, long tail and conical bill make this a sparrow.

Distinctive sparrows such as Dark-eyed Junco, Eastern Towhee, Fox, and American Tree can be ruled out quite easily by plumage.

To arrive at the answer, let's look at sparrows that are visitors to feeders. Song, Chipping, and White-throated are the only common feeder sparrows in Connecticut, so let's dive into those three.



Mark Szantyr photo

This bird is narrow with a long tail, dark eye line, pale orange bill, and crisp streaking on the breast.

Song Sparrows are short-tailed sparrows with with dense streaking on the breast. They also tend to be on the larger side, and a bit chunky, although not nearly as much as Fox. This doesn't seem to be our bird.

Chipping Sparrows are small sparrows with long tails, gray breasts without streaking, reddish orange crown, and clean white throats.

White-throated Sparrows are large sparrows with yellow lores, white throat, broad white supercillium, dark brown wings, and little to no streaking below, depending on age.

None of these seem to match the bird. Are we forgetting a species? Maybe not. This bird has a plumage unlike any adult sparrow in CT. However, juveniles of these species can appear quite different. The closest match out of the three was Chipping, based on the long tail. Turning to juvenile sparrows, we reach the answer. Thin, long tail, pinkish/orange bill, thinly streaked breast, dull brown crown, dark eyeline, white supercillium, and orange/brown back lead us to juvenile Chipping Sparrow, a common breeder and feeder visitor in Connecticut.



Photo Challenge No. 111

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a computer disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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