

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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CONTENTS

- 21 **The Connecticut Bird Atlas: Preliminary Results of the First Year of the Breeding Bird Component (2018)**
Stephen P. Broker
- 151 **Connecticut Field Notes**
Greg Hanisek and Frank Mantlik
- 162 **Photo Challenge**
Nick Bonomo

ON THE COVER

The eiders epitomize the rugged world of the sea ducks. Mark Szantyr has captured the allure of the handsome adult males of both species found in Long Island Sound - the King Eider and the Common Eider - the former always a great find and the latter now numerous in eastern New London County.

THE CONNECTICUT BIRD ATLAS: PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE BREEDING BIRD COMPONENT (2018)

By Stephen P. Broker

The First Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas (1982-1986)

The first breeding bird atlas for the State of Connecticut was held beginning 35 years ago, and the results of that effort were published in 1994 (*The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut*, Department of Environmental Protection, Bulletin 113 of the State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut). In those days, before web posts, cell phones, and instant communication from the field, bird atlases were a fairly new phenomenon in North America. The project leaders for the CT BBA1 had the formidable task of establishing protocols, submission and maintenance of data, and production and interpretation of breeding evidence throughout the life of the project. Massachusetts Commonwealth had completed its first, six-year breeding bird atlas in 1979, but the results of that excellent project were not published until 2003.

At the time and still in hindsight, the 1982-1986 breeding bird atlas in Connecticut was a remarkable effort to document the distributions of breeding birds in the state, involving more than 500 field observers and the support of the National Audubon Society and the Audubon Council of Connecticut. Using an atlas grid system based on U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps, nearly 600 atlas blocks were surveyed for evidence of breeding birds, with a total of 188 species detected, including 175 confirmed, 11 probable, and 2 possible breeding species. The publication that resulted was edited by Louis R. Bevier and illustrated by Michael DiGiorgio, with five contributing editors and bird species accounts provided by twenty-five contributing authors. The book, which remains available through the Connecticut DEEP bookstore and is on-line at the U.S. Geological Survey, Patuxent Wild-

life Research Center (North American BBA Explorer), provides an invaluable benchmark for our understanding of the breeding birds of our state.

The new Connecticut Bird Atlas is a five-year effort that was launched in 2017. Project leaders are Dr. Min Huang of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Dr. Chris Elphick of the University of Connecticut, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB), and Dr. Morgan Tingley of UCONN EEB. The Atlas Team includes Dr. Valerie Steen of UCONN EEB, Craig Repsz (Coordinator of Volunteers), and eight regional coordinators for atlas field work. The Atlas has much greater scope than did the 1980s Breeding Bird Atlas, with data collected and interpreted for breeding, wintering, and migrant birds.

The 2017-2021 Connecticut Bird Atlas Project Goals:

- Describe the distribution and abundance of each breeding species.
- Document changes in breeding distribution since the first Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas, conducted in the 1980s.
- Describe the distribution and abundance of each species during non-breeding periods.
- Identify the most important factors affecting where each species occurs.
- Develop methods for predicting how Connecticut's changing landscape will affect birds.
- Inform decision making for conservation priority species identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan.
- Make project data available to all stakeholders interested in improving bird conservation in the state.

As stated on the Atlas website, "The Connecticut Bird Atlas aims to provide comprehensive information about the distributions of all species that occur in the state. With the help

of the state's birding community, we will conduct field work during both breeding and non-breeding periods, with data collection focused on describing both where each species occurs and how abundance varies across the state." It should be noted that several adjacent states are engaged in new bird atlases, including Maine (Maine Bird Atlas, 2018-2022), Rhode Island (Rhode Island Bird Atlas 2.0, 2015-2019), and New York (New York State BBA III, set to begin in 2020).

Observing Breeding Bird Behavior

"Perhaps I didn't properly explain the fundamentals of the slowdown plan."

Andrew Shepherd (played by Michael Douglas) to Sydney Ellen Wade (Annette Bening) in *The American President* (Warner Bros., 1995)

Collecting evidence of breeding bird behavior is very different from participation in a bird count, a Big Day or Big Year, or most field experiences that birders enjoy. Determining whether a bird species is breeding or attempting breeding requires a much more deliberate pace in the field, with extended watching and listening, seeking evidence using an established protocol of breeding codes, often returning to the same field site multiple times over a period of weeks. Birds require time to establish and defend territories, maintain pair bonds, construct nests, incubate eggs, and collect food for nestlings and fledglings. The patient birder has a far greater chance of observing any of these evidences of breeding behavior, and the order of the day is the slowdown plan.

The breeding codes, published on the Atlas website, are essentially the same as those used during the first Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas. In order of increasing importance, they range from Observed (species observed in an atlas block, but no evidence of breeding) to Possible (an individual in suitable breeding habitat during the known breeding season, or a singing bird) to Probable (a pair together in suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season; territorial behaviors; courtship; visiting a probable nest site) to Confirmed (carry-

ing nest material; nest building for most species; distraction display; recently fledged young; adults carrying food for or feeding young; nest with eggs; nest with young). It often is the case that a field observer will move any given bird species from Possible to Probable to Confirmed breeder with visits to the same field site over a period of days or weeks.

Summary of the 2018 Breeding Bird Data

The Atlas Team offered a series of training sessions to field volunteers around the state in early 2018, and the official launching of field work for the first year of the breeding bird component of the Atlas took place this April. At present, more than 700 volunteers have stepped forward to assist in data collection out in the field. Of the 601 atlas blocks that are recognized for field work, some 450 have been adopted by birders who pledge to invest a minimum of 20 hours in the field during the breeding season, and another 150 blocks are yet to be adopted. In a review last month of the block data available at the Atlas website, I determined that 80 of the 150 atlas blocks that remained open had submitted breeding reports, with more than 50 open blocks reporting 1 to 10 species and more than 20 additional blocks showing extensive coverage revealing from 30 to 64 possible, probable, or confirmed species. It is readily apparent that one does not have to adopt an atlas block in order to contribute significantly to the Atlas Project. At that time, more than 50 blocks that had designated adopters lacked any posted breeding evidence. The 2019 and 2020 breeding seasons will offer more opportunity to collect data on each block's breeding birds, but the first breeding season is now passed, and renewed efforts are required to get the needed data, along with the future scheduling of block busting groups.

The Summary of 2018 Breeding Bird Data (see figure) prepared by Morgan Tingley shows the mean number of bird species for each of the eight regions in the state, along with mean effort per atlas block. These data are based on all 75 or so blocks within each geographical region, not just those with some breeding evidence reported. Actual mean total num-

bers of species, mean confirmed breeding species, and mean effort in field hours for actively birded blocks thus are higher than shown in this table.

Region Number	Mean Number Species	Mean Confirmed Species	Blocks with No Records	Blocks with No Confirmed	Mean Effort (hrs) per Block
1 North West	33	7	12	20	9
2 North Central	29	8	9	12	9
3 North East	33	10	13	18	9
4 West Central	39	10	9	12	12
5 Lower CT River	39	12	5	7	14
6 South East	21	7	18	25	7
7 South West	27	7	15	20	10
8 New Haven	40	15	1	4	22
Total	33	9	82	118	12
*Based on all blocks, not just those that had been visited.					

Here is some more very encouraging evidence of the fruits of our labors in the first year of collecting breeding evidence. Eighty per cent of atlas blocks have reported at least one confirmed breeding species, and at least 40% of all atlas blocks have reported 30 or more total species. More than 115 atlas blocks (nearly 20%) have reported at least 50 species within their blocks, a good indication of species richness in the first year of field work.

There are eight bird species not confirmed as breeders in Connecticut during the first Breeding Bird Atlas that are confirmed breeders in 2018. Here they are, shown with the 1980s records, which involved possible or probable breeding only. Common Loon (0 CO, 3 PR, 7 PO), Bald Eagle (0 CO, 1 PR, 1 PO), Common Raven (0 CO, 6 PR, 3 PO), and these species with no records in 1982-86: Black Vulture, Peregrine Falcon, Sedge Wren, Boat-tailed Grackle, and Monk Parakeet. In contrast, the following species from the first Breeding Bird

Atlas (with 1982-86 records shown in parentheses) have had no breeding records submitted during 2018: Green-winged Teal (0 CO, 2 PR, 2 PO), Blue-winged Teal (3 CO, 4 PR, 6 PO), King Rail (1 CO, 1 PR, 2 PO), Black Skimmer (1 CO, 2 PR, 1 PO), Long-eared Owl (1 CO, 0 PR, 1 PO), Olive-sided Flycatcher (1 CO, 0 PR, 4 PO), Swainson's Thrush (0 CO, 3 PR, 6 PO), and Vesper Sparrow (1 CO, 2 PR, 3 PO). Again, not all records of very rare species may have been entered into the database.

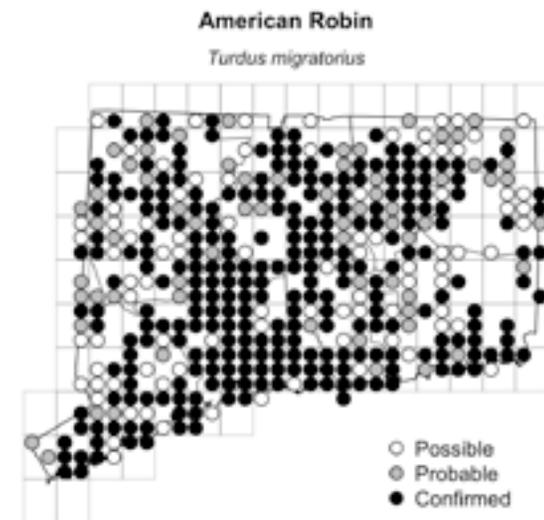
Comparison of Atlas Maps for Selected Species, Conn BBA 1 and ConnBirdAtlas 2018

Chris Elphick and Morgan Tingley currently are reviewing all atlas block lists and are on track to have the preliminary breeding data on the website interactive map by the end of this year. Until the statewide data become available, we have little basis for establishing clear trends in changing avian breeding distributions. So, in the meantime I have requested the current 2018 maps for two dozen species of birds for comparison with the maps generated for the 1980s data in the first Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas. While it should be emphasized that the 2018 maps are very preliminary, they do represent most of the data that have been submitted for breeding birds this year. Some submitted written records are still being entered into the database, as well as records for threatened or highly vulnerable species (owls, falcons, rare song birds). From the maps I have seen, I have selected two species that had confirmation of breeding in the 1980s atlas in most or all of the 600 blocks. American Robin and Song Sparrow are assumed to be equally ubiquitous in their breeding distributions around the state as they were three decades ago. A second pairing of maps is for a species known to have begun breeding in Connecticut since the completion of BBA1 (Common Raven, which first bred in Connecticut after completion of the '80s atlas), and a species that has been expanding its breeding territory southward in the state (Yellow-bellied Sapsucker). The third pairing of maps shows 1980s results and 2018 results for two species already known to be in significant decline as nesters in Connecticut: Ruffed

Grouse and Eastern Meadowlark. The top maps show data from 1982-86, and the bottom maps show preliminary data from 2018.



American Robin (top 1986, bottom 2018):

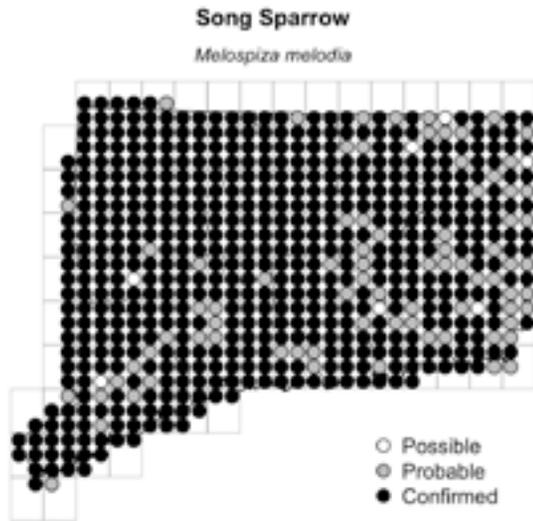


American Robin

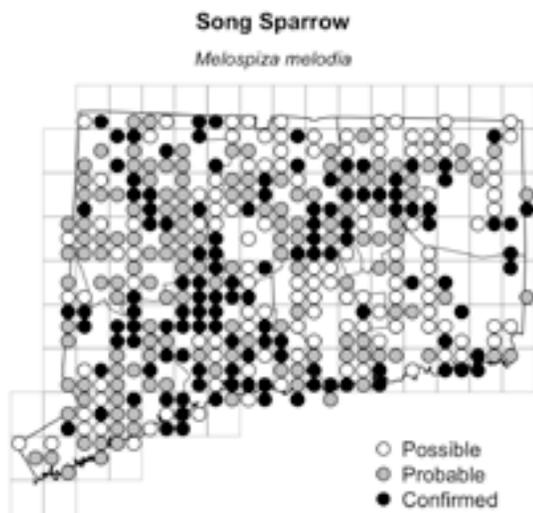
American Robin was one of the most widely distributed species in Connecticut and was a confirmed breeder in 592 of 593 atlas blocks and a probable breeder in the one remaining block in Conn BBA 1.

Song Sparrow

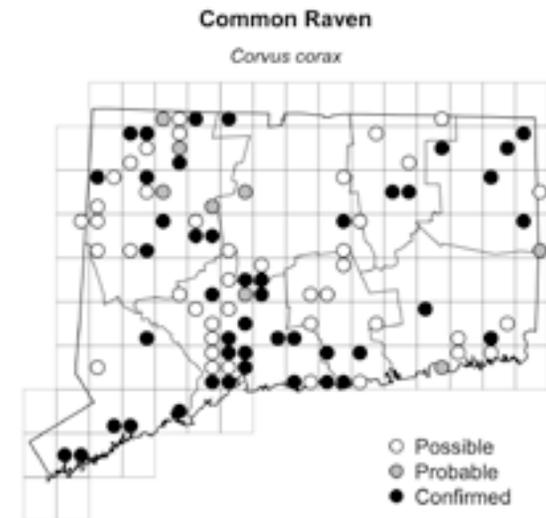
Song Sparrow was a confirmed breeder in 509 atlas blocks, probable breeder in 79 blocks, and possible breeder in 7 blocks during Conn BBA 1. It nests on the ground in a diversity of open habitats with shrubs and secondary woodlands.



Song Sparrow (top 1986, bottom 2018):



Adult female Common Raven with small nestlings, taken April 5, 2013 at West Rock, Woodbridge, CT.

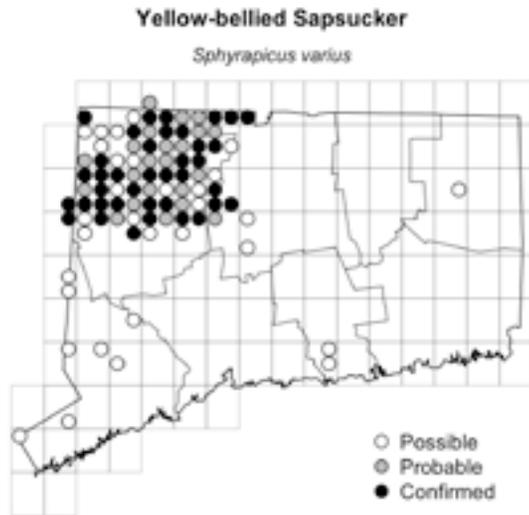


Common Raven

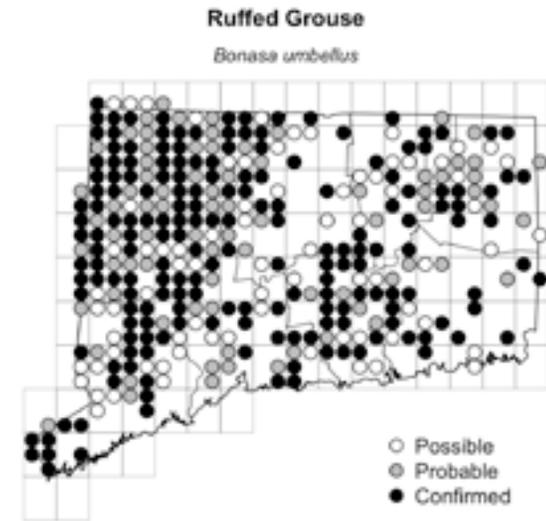
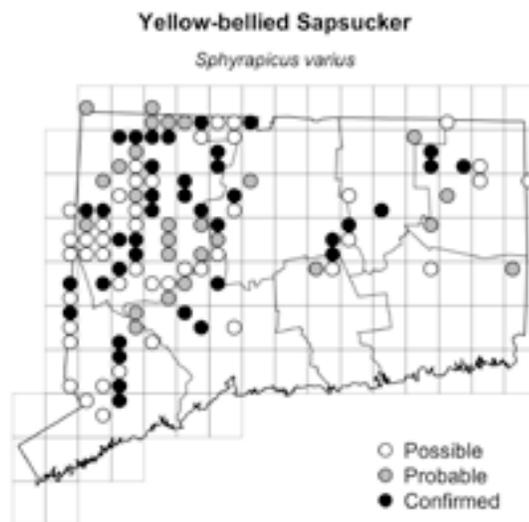
There was no evidence of breeding by Common Ravens in the first Atlas. This species is first documented as a breeder in Connecticut in the late 1980s. Since then, ravens have extended their breeding throughout much of the state, including coastal locations. They build large stick nests on cliffs, trees, buildings, and under bridges.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

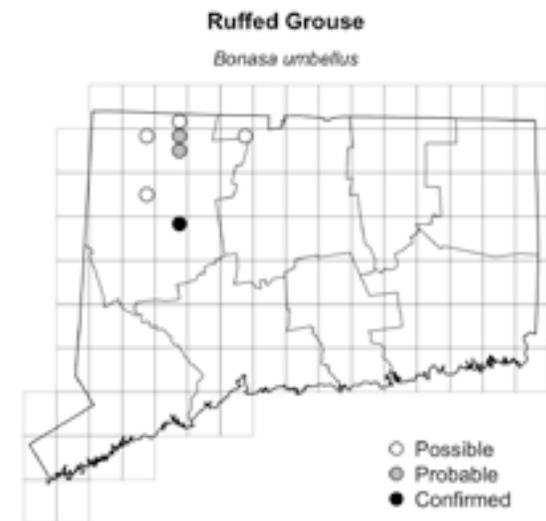
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker had breeding evidence in 91 atlas blocks (38 CO, 22 PR, 31 PO). Records were concentrated in Northwestern Connecticut, with scattered records in the northeast and southwest. They were considered rare and locally uncommon cavity nesters in the state.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (top 1986, bottom 2018):

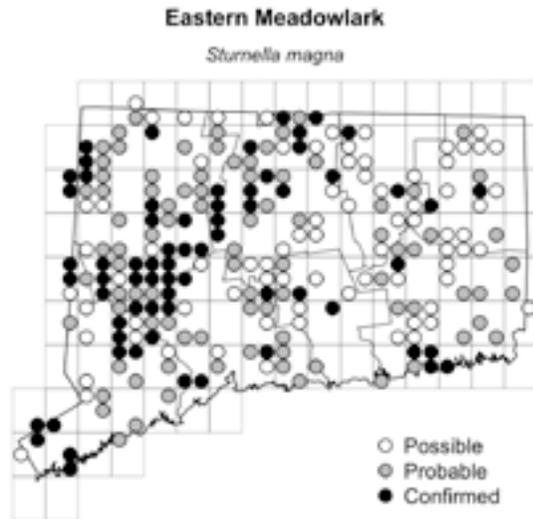


Ruffed Grouse (top 1986, bottom 2018):

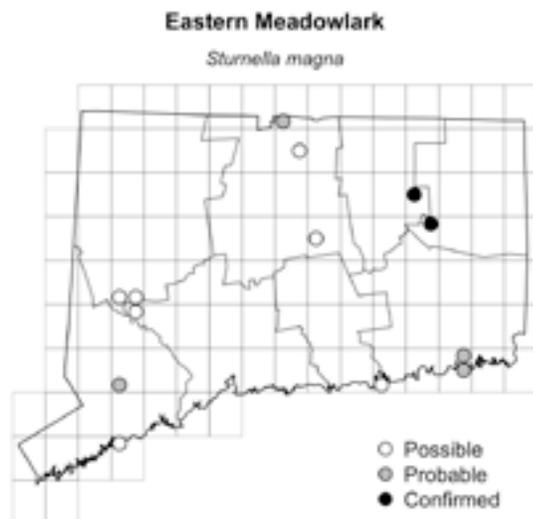


Ruffed Grouse

A total of 340 atlas blocks showed evidence of breeding by Ruffed Grouse in the 1980s (185 CO, 79 PR, 76 PO), with greatest concentrations in Northwestern Connecticut but much documented breeding in most other parts of the state. Ruffed Grouse nest on the ground in mixed coniferous-deciduous woodlands with well developed understory.



Eastern Meadowlark (top 1986, bottom 2018):

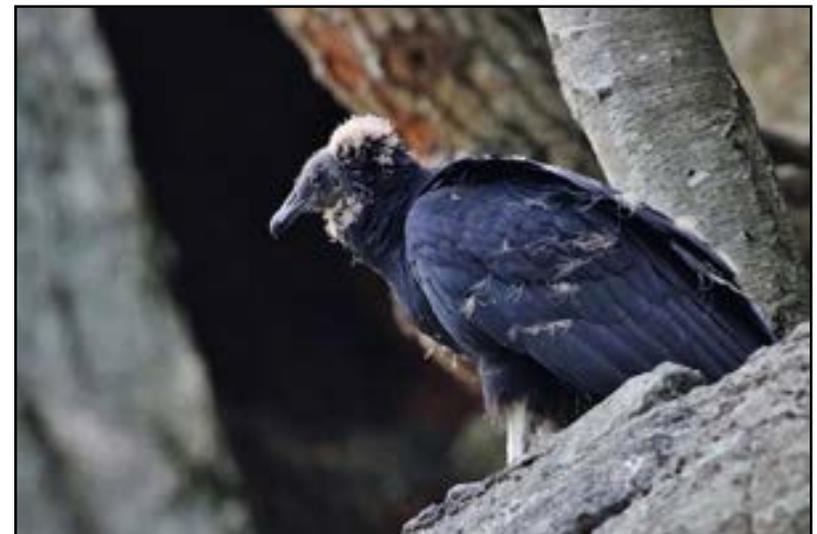


Eastern Meadowlark

Eastern Meadowlark was a widespread but declining grassland specialist breeder in Connecticut in the 1980s (67 CO, 88 PR, 78 PO), with western Connecticut reporting more records than in the eastern part of the state. Its numbers had been declining with the abandonment of farmland.

Some Insights from Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (2007-2011)

The results of Mass BBA 2 are available online at massaudubon.org (Walsh, Joan, and Wayne Petersen, eds. 2013. Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2. Lincoln, MA: Massachusetts Audubon Society). In the Foreword to this publication, Wayne Petersen draws attention to the “many changes in the Massachusetts landscape and the bird populations occupying this landscape” in the years following the Commonwealth’s first Breeding Bird Atlas (1974-1979). “A substantial cadre of species that were absent or of only marginal occurrence as recently as 34 years ago, many of them of southern ori-



*Black Vulture fledgling, Webb Mountain Park, Monroe, CT, July 21, 2018 (Jim Jacques photo).
Atlas Block 93B Long Hill.*



Great Horned Owl Fledgling, Lake Saltonstall, Branford, CT, May 20, 2018 (Gina Nichol photo).

Atlas Block 96C Branford.

gin, is now well established in Massachusetts. As examples, consider the Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Peregrine Falcon, Fish Crow, Common Raven, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Pine Warbler, and Orchard Oriole, to name but a few."

The above are among the "winners" in the Massachusetts breeding avifauna, and they are offset by a number of species with the greatest decrease in the absolute number of atlas blocks occupied since Mass Breeding Bird Atlas 1. They include American Black Duck, American Kestrel, Eastern Meadowlark, Ring-necked Pheasant, Brown Thrasher, Purple Finch, Northern Bobwhite, Ruffed Grouse, Black-billed Cuckoo, and White-throated Sparrow. Further down this list

are Field Sparrow, Broad-winged Hawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, American Woodcock, Eastern Screech-Owl, Chimney Swift, and Northern Mockingbird. Walsh and Petersen (2013) discuss likely factors that have contributed to the decline in such species, including a growing human population, urban sprawl, loss or degradation of avian habitat, forest fragmentation, a decline in farming, predatory feral cats and other mammals, and environmental contaminants. The changing avifauna of Massachusetts Commonwealth over the past three decades offers some indication of what we can expect to find as we survey Connecticut's breeding birds in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Selected Examples of Breeding Bird Observations

The new Connecticut Bird Atlas is about the birds of Connecticut, but it is equally about "man's place in nature", or the interactions between our avifauna and ourselves. As such, the Connecticut Bird Atlas is very much a human story. As we pursue evidence of breeding birds across the state and in its diverse habitats, which are the species that we locate or that locate us, what are they doing in terms of singing,



American Redstart nest-building, Kent, CT, May 9, 2018 (Bruce Finnan photo).
Atlas Block 31E Ellsworth.



*Pileated Woodpecker adult and fledgling, Lake Saltonstall, Branford, CT , July 4, 2018 (Gina Nichol photo).
Atlas Block 96C Branford)*

defending territory, attracting a mate, building a nest, sitting in incubation, carrying food to the nest, or caring for fledged young? What agitated behaviors or distraction displays do we observe? What nests with eggs or young do we chance upon and give proper distance? Most importantly, what surprises have been or will be in store for us? What new behaviors reveal themselves to us? What emotions are generated in us during our field work for the Atlas? What rewards await us as we survey our atlas blocks? Here are a few of the many stories that have emerged in the first year of the breeding bird component to the atlas.

Bill Asteriades is block adopter for Atlas Block 53C Glastonbury in Territory 5 Lower Connecticut River. Bill has special access to Glastonbury Meadows, which is owned by a hunt club and is not open to the public. He writes as follows. "During early June, I heard a few adult Least Bitterns calling in the Glastonbury Meadows marsh. Their calling continued over the next few weeks. In trying to confirm breeding, I was confronted with a couple of challenges – locating a nest

in a marsh, which is nearly impossible, and dealing with a highly secretive species. On July 21, I birded the marsh and saw an adult Least Bittern briefly in flight, but I had no luck at finding a nest. As I exited the marsh, I approached an area I birded several minutes earlier which had been quiet. This time, though, I heard an alarm call from 30 feet away. There was a juvenile Least Bittern, as noted by the bold stripes in neck and chest, in the cattails at water's edge. It stayed for 30 seconds or so before flying across the marsh. The juvenile was about 100 feet from where I had seen the adult. Timing is everything!"

On the morning of August 5, Bill made the following observation, also from Glastonbury Meadows. "While walking along a dirt road next to the marsh, I flushed a Sora just a few feet away. The bird flew for 4 to 5 feet before settling down in the tall grass, offering brief but excellent views. This apparent juvenile Sora was smaller and thinner than an adult. Field marks included an overall medium brown color with no gray tones in the neck area; the side of the head was a lighter brown to buffy, and the beak blended in with the



*Least Bittern Fledgling, Glastonbury Meadows, Glastonbury, CT, July 21, 2018 (Bill Asteriades photo).
Atlas Block 53C Glastonbury.*

head color showing no signs of yellow. No black was noted at the base of the beak. Although past the safe date for breeding confirmation purposes, there are no other eBird posts of Sora in Connecticut during July. The closest Soras are in Massachusetts, and it is unlikely that a juvenile would fly from there at this time of year.” Bill submitted this record as confirmed breeding of Sora, CO(FL) recently fledged young. A total of 70 bird species were recorded in Atlas Block 53C in the 1980s CT BBA, including 35 confirmed, 20 probable, and 15 possible breeders. In this first year of breeding season field work, Bill Asteriades has exceeded the 1980s numbers, with 76 species recorded, including 54 confirmed, 11 probable, and 11 possible breeders.

Dave Provencher is Regional Coordinator for Territory 6 South East (mostly New London County). He has adopted six Atlas Blocks in a portion of the state that is underbirded and has many open blocks. Atlas Block 87B Uncasville is one of Dave’s blocks, and here he has made some very interesting observations. Dave writes, “Rose Hill Wildlife Management Area falls into one of my blocks and also straddles the Preston/Ledyard border. One section of the WMA has been cut



*Peregrine Falcon with two eggs, New Haven County, CT (Steve Broker photo).
Regional Territory 8 New Haven.*



*Sedge Wren, CAS Center, Pomfret, CT, June 28, 2018 (Aaron Bourque photo).
Atlas Block 43A Danielson.*

over while leaving the existing cedars intact. As vegetation is growing back in, Prairie Warblers have taken advantage of the habitat for nesting. This is the only area that I know of in this atlas block that has Prairie Warblers on territory. I was pushing my way through the vegetation to try and get nesting confirmation, and it seemed I was finding every thorn that existed in there. My pants and shirt ended up torn and I availed myself of my entire vocabulary of colorful language as my skin was pierced and shredded by the thick tangles of thorn-clad greenery. Confirming Prairie Warbler nesting was truly going to be a bloody proposition!

“I finally found a good observation spot and was licking my wounds when I suddenly heard a distinctive call. I recognized it immediately as a Yellow-breasted Chat. Quite soon, I was watching the Chat doing its display flight and song over and over again. My cuts and scratches forgotten, I just stood there and enjoyed a show rarely seen in Connecticut. Over the coming days I would return several more times to this spot (and donate quite a bit more blood) to see if the Chat would find a mate. Unfortunately it didn’t, but I was compensated by finding a Lawrence’s Warbler in the same area

as well. That particular section of the WMA has extracted a fair bit of pain from me, but it remains one of my favorite new local spots. And of course, I was able to confirm Prairie Warbler nesting as well, as on my last visit I witnessed juvenile warblers being fed by adults!" Dave Provencher also has surpassed in one year the 1980s species totals for the species rich Atlas Block 87B, which in the first Breeding Bird Atlas had 27 confirmed, 38 probable, and 4 possible species. His totals for this year are 61 confirmed, 16 probable, and 1 possible breeding species, totaling 78 species.

Phil Rusch has adopted Atlas Block 56B Willimantic in Territory 6 South East. He writes as follows. "My block in northeast Connecticut has several unique habitats within its boundaries. The largest and rarest is the large expanse of grassland located at the Windham airport in North Windham CT. I chose this block with the sole purpose of surveying this grassland. Prior to this year, the only views of this extensive habitat and the inhabitants were from the top of the dike at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir. The views were distant and often frustrating, to say the least. As part of the CT Breeding Bird Atlas, I was granted access to the grassland. As a result of this access, I was able to confirm two rare grassland breeding birds.

"Eastern Meadowlark is a declining nester in Connecticut. Most likely this is due to habitat loss and modern haying practices. Most years there are 3-4 pairs breeding on the airport grounds. This year was a tough one. I was able to confirm nesting by observing an adult carry fecal sacs away from the presumed nest site in an area not easily visible from the dike. There were 2 other singing males on the airport this year, but I was only able to confirm the one nest site, and no fledged young.

"Grasshopper Sparrow is another declining nester in Connecticut. By gaining access to an area on the airport that I have named the "Old Dump", Chris Elphick, Frank Gallo, and I were able to confirm nesting of at least 3-4 pairs of Grasshopper Sparrows. On 5/26/17, there were 12-15 sing-



*Clapper Rail adult feeding fledgling, Sandy Point, West Haven, CT, July 28, 2018 (Gilles Carter photo).
Atlas Block 95F New Haven.*

ing males present, maybe more. On 6/17/18 and 6/26/18, we were able to confirm nesting when the sparrows performed distraction displays to lead us away from the nest, carried fecal sacs away from the nest, and most importantly carried food into the presumed nest site.

"I need to emphasize that access to this site is by special permission, and under no circumstances should anyone attempt to access the grassland. Viewing of the two species is possible from the top of the dike at the first 90 degree bend in the path as one walks from the commuter lot on Route 6 in North Windham. Get there early in the morning, with the sun behind you, and scan the distant grassland to the west with a spotting scope. If you are lucky, you will see a teed up Grasshopper Sparrow. If you are real lucky, you will hear one.

"Virginia Rail is an easily overlooked nester in northeast Connecticut. On multiple dates from early April through June of this year, I heard both the grunting and the "kiddick" call of Virginia Rail coming from the reeds at the base of the

dike of Mansfield Hollow Reservoir. Early in the morning of 6/17/2018, I was lucky to see a single small black puffball baby rail in the same patch of reeds. Since the only rail that was heard at this site in the spring of 2018 was Virginia Rail, I felt confident in confirming breeding by using the Recently Fledged Young code." The recorded totals for the 1980s CT BBA in Atlas Block 56B Willimantic were 26 confirmed, 18 probable, 20 possible, and 64 total species. In this first year, Phil Rusch has found evidence of 59 confirmed, 19 probable, and 6 possible breeding species, for a total of 84 species reported.

Gina Nichol is block adopter for Atlas Block 96C Branford in Territory 8 New Haven. The Regional Water Authority at Lake Saltonstall is a favored birding area for her. "I was walking a trail at Lake Saltonstall on the evening of May 20, 2018, and I heard a sound that I couldn't quite place. I stood and listened for a long time and eventually located its source about 50 feet off the trail in the woods. It was a young Great Horned Owl begging. I watched the bird while standing behind a tree a safe distance away, and I photographed the young owl with zoom lens. There may have been an adult in the area, but all I saw was movement through the canopy. After about 10 minutes with the bird, I walked away with it still on its dead tree perch.

"On July 4, 2018 at Lake Saltonstall I found and photographed an adult Pileated Woodpecker with its fledgling Pileated Woodpecker. Once again, I heard a commotion in the woods, and I slowly tracked it down to find the young woodpecker calling furiously from a tree trunk. This went on for at least 20 minutes, and then the adult flew in. The leaves on the trees made for difficult viewing, so it was quite a victory to track this one down."

Gina Nichol also confirmed the breeding of Tufted Titmouse, American Robin, and Black-and-white Warbler on this Independence Day outing, as well as obtaining probable breeding evidence for Spotted Sandpiper and Field Sparrow at Salton-

stall. In this first breeding bird season for the new Connecticut Bird Atlas, Gina has all but matched the five year effort of the 1980s, with 64 species recorded as compared with 66 in the first Atlas. More species remain to be lifted from probable to confirmed breeders in Block 96C, but there is no doubt that Gina will complete a comprehensive survey of the breeding birds of Lake Saltonstall and surrounding woodlands in the next two years.

While it is important to ask birders to sign up as adopters of specific Atlas Blocks (this bestows a sense of personal ownership as well as carrying the responsibility for surveying the block a minimum of twenty hours during each year of the breeding season), all birders are encouraged to submit reports to the Connecticut Bird Atlas wherever they are finding evidence of breeding. Gilles Carter has spent hours birding and doing superb photography and video at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, Sandy Point in West Haven, and especially East Rock Park in New Haven. He has shared the following observations of breeding birds this year.

"A Killdeer nest on April 20th at Hammonasset Beach SP [Atlas Block 98F Clinton] was "too easy" to find, since it had built the nest on the main parking lot at Hammonasset. (The park personnel literally had to cordon off the nesting area, snow cones and all.) The fun part was that while I was watching, the bird got up off the nest and walked a few feet away, exposing the eggs to view, and then after eating something, resumed (her?) spot back on the nest. Some days later, a fellow-birder pointed out a Northern Cardinal nest in East Rock Park [Atlas Blocks 95B and 95D New Haven]. It was right below one of the paths, so you could look into the nest from above. I was wondering about the eggs [April 29], as they seemed to be somewhat different colors. I returned here later [May 10] and filmed the fledglings' hearts beating.

"On May 6 at East Rock Park, I heard a pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks vocalizing, and I then watched the two grosbeaks building their nest. I observed, photographed, and filmed the parents bringing worms and bugs back to the nest several



Killdeer occupying nest, Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison, CT (Atlas Block 98F Clinton), April 20, 2018 (Gilles Carter photo).

weeks later. At East Rock on May 21, I found a pair of Eastern Phoebes nesting under the Covered Bridge near Whitney Avenue and the Eli Whitney Museum. The Phoebes were very busy fly catching on the Mill River, and I observed them bringing insect food back to the nest under the bridge. They built their nest on the top of the electric cables, so the nest was very well protected. At the nearby Regional Water Authority Recreational Space/Connecticut Land Trust on May 26, I located an Orchard Oriole nest by observed the adult birds flying into the same maple tree, then spotting the nest at the top of the tree. I watched the adults bringing insects and worms to the nest. I was expecting Orchard Orioles to nest here this year, as they had two nests in the same area the year before.

“A Baltimore Oriole nest was pointed out to me in mid-June at East Rock by a fellow-birder. I located another three Baltimore Oriole nests there by watching and filming adult birds gathering nesting material, and I filmed one pair building a new nest. I observed and filmed the male bringing material and passing it to the female, who wove the newly acquired strands of grass into the nest. Interestingly, one pair reused a nest from a year prior. One nest was in the woods at about 25

feet. One was hanging a few feet away from the Eli Whitney Museum, overhanging the Mill River. Two of the nests were located across the street in the Regional Water Authority park, including the nest that was reused. I photographed and filmed the fledglings as they climbed out of the nest for the first time.

“On June 17 at the Regional Water Authority park opposite East Rock, I listened to Warbling Vireos vocalizing, and I found two nests nearby. I photographed and filmed the two nests, including adults feeding young. Sadly, at least one of the fledglings did not survive and appeared to be caught in nesting material. On July 28, I went out into the muck at Sandy Point, West Haven [Atlas Block 95F New Haven], specifically looking for rails. (Be careful and prudent, for if you sink past your knees you are in serious trouble). I was rewarded by capturing on video both Clapper Rail parents, who were catching and feeding fiddler crabs to their chicks - a successful clutch of ten.” Gilles Carter’s field work for the breeding bird component of the Connecticut Bird Atlas adds important information to the breeding evidence collected by atlas block adopters and others in the areas of the state where he birds and captures photos and video of bird behavior.

Arthur Shippee writes, “My most interesting confirmation was the growth of the upper Lake Whitney heronry [Atlas Block 95B New Haven]. I first noticed a nest being built April 14th, 2016 (eBird Checklist S28945596), and the number has grown each year, up to at least 7 nests this year. Confirmation itself is pretty easy, since the chicks are big and stay put for quite a while. I was also glad to confirm a Northern Mockingbird (eBird Checklist S46434723) in the Whitneyville Cemetery, since I think these are undercounted birds. Paul Koker writes, “I was birding along a path in a local land trust property [Atlas Block 46A Kent] when I observed two Veerys exhibiting agitated behavior. They were quite close, and as I took a few pictures I noticed food in the beak of one bird. Thinking there might be a nest or recently fledged young nearby, I moved along. The path was a straight line in and out and I observed the same behavior on the return.”

John Schwarz shares the following observation of nesting terns along Long Island Sound: “My house in Westbrook is on the shore within a short walking distance of Menunketesuck Island [Atlas Block 99E Essex]. On August 10, 2012 I photographed the Least Tern colony there. At the time there were quite a few Least Terns there. The nesting area was cordoned off, but the birds would still aggressively dive bomb anyone who even approached. The last time I checked there was three or four years ago, and the terns weren’t there anymore. I believe the Island is now off limits to all human traffic. I also used to see Least Terns all the time from my deck, but I haven’t noted any for the past three summers. American Oystercatchers also breed there. I once counted 29 of them together on the sand bar behind my house.” Atlaser Micky Komara has birded Menunketesuck Island Flats and Menunketesuck River/Grove Beach Point frequently since 2014. Micky confirms that numbers of Least and Common terns have fallen off precipitously in the past five years. Possible causes of nesting abandonment include predation and harassment by crows or Great Black-backed Gulls, human/dog disturbance, and channeling out of the land by surging seawater. Collecting negative evidence is important to our understanding of current breeding bird distributions.

When birding River Road and Macedonia State Forest in Kent on May 9, 2018 with Greg Hanisek and Bill Banks, Bruce Finnan photographed a pair of American Redstarts building a nest. They also confirmed the breeding of Wood Duck when they saw a hen Wood Duck entering a cavity in a Sycamore tree at the end of the road, assigning Confirmed (Occupied Nest) to this behavior.

Atlas Blocks with Exceptional Coverage in 2018

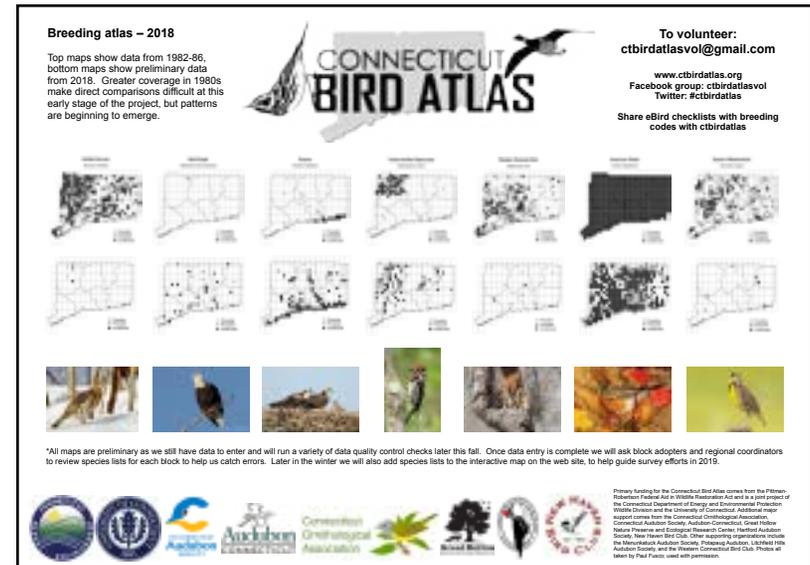
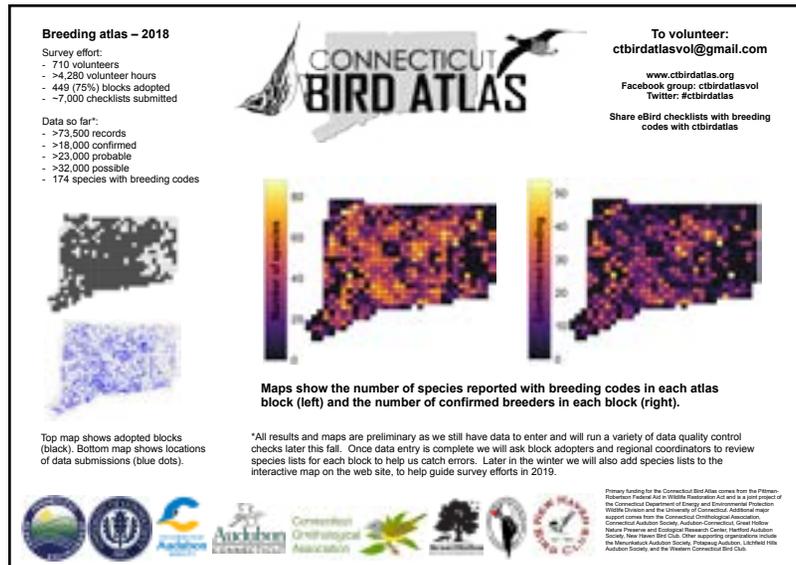
Many volunteers have devoted significant hours in the field collecting breeding data. The Atlas Project Team has determined that Greg Hanisek has submitted the greatest number of field reports in this first year, from his four Waterbury blocks and two Naugatuck blocks and throughout the state - truly an impressive investment in time and expertise. The

following table lists some of the atlas blocks that reflect great progress in collecting breeding evidence in 2018. A number of volunteers may be contributing to the species totals in each atlas block in addition to the identified block adopters. Some of these blocks already have a documented species richness that exceeds that recorded during the five years of the first Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas. The regional coordinators are listed in parentheses after each listed region, and the Lead (block adopter) is listed after each species rich atlas block.

Region	Block No.	Block Name	Lead Birder	Confirmed Spp.	Probable Spp.	Possible Spp.	Total Spp.
1 North West (RC Buzz Devine)	17A	South Canaan	Nick Bonomo	50	25	19	94
	3E	South Sandisfield	Chris Loscalzo	39	19	26	84
	17B	South Canaan	Nick Bonomo	41	23	17	81
	33C	West Torrington	Buzz Devine	33	22	21	76
	36A	Avon	Deb Bishop	24	28	21	73
2 North Central (RC Sara Zagorski)	24E	Ellington	Patrice Favreau	45	12	9	66
	22F	Windsor Locks	Joseph Wojtanowski	40	16	9	65
	66B	Meriden	Eric Myskowski	25	21	19	65
	65A	Southington	Jack Swatt	18	25	22	65
	36B	Avon	Zellene Sandler	23	22	19	64
	38B	Manchester	Patrice Favreau	34	21	9	64
3 North East (RC Steve Morytko)	40D	South Coventry	Chris Elphick	51	14	23	88
	40F	South Coventry	Chris Elphick	48	21	11	80
	43A	Danielson	Andy Rzeznikiewicz	43	20	17	80
	28B	Putnam	Mary Sharkey	23	39	18	80
	28D	Putnam	Mary Sharkey	21	32	22	75
	41F	Spring Hill	Phil Rusch	42	20	10	72
	41C	Spring Hill	Steve Rogers	41	24	7	72
4 West Central (RC Ken Elkins)	77B	Newtown	Ken Elkins	56	19	11	86
	46A	Kent	Paul Koker	47	10	27	84
	31E	Elsworth	Laurie Doss	40	8	30	78
	48B	Litchfield	Debbie Martin	22	35	14	71
5 Lower CT River (RC Melissa Baston)	53F	Glastonbury	Bill Asteriades	51	19	13	83
	53C	Glastonbury	Bill Asteriades	54	11	11	76
	68A	Middle Haddam	Nancy Hammond	24	22	30	76
	53A	Glastonbury	Andrew Dasinger	32	26	17	75
	54A	Marlborough	Andrew Dasinger	37	13	24	74
	99B	Essex	Pam Reeser	36	27	11	74
	100A	Old Lyme	John Gaskell	26	24	23	73
	99E	Essex	Chris Loscalzo	39	15	18	72
6 South East (RC Dave Provencher)	56B	Willimantic	Phil Rusch	59	19	6	84
	87B	Uncasville	Dave Provencher	61	16	1	78
	103A	Mystic	Glenn Williams	29	13	23	65
	58B	Plainfield	Aaron Bourque	26	20	18	64
	87E	Uncasville	Robert Askins	18	22	24	64
7 South West	108A	Westport	Jeremy Nance	43	15	20	78

Next Component of The Connecticut Bird Atlas

We birders move now from a focus on breeding birds to wintering birds, with the winter season divided into two periods,



November-December and January-February. The Atlas Team has posted all the winter survey web site pages at <ctbirdatlas.org>, with the following introductory information. “The primary goals of the winter surveys are to obtain a complete list of all birds that occur in each block and an understanding of how abundance varies across the state. This will require both identifying as many species as possible, and conducting standardized counts to estimate relative abundance.”

The first year of collecting data on breeding birds in Connecticut is completed, and we have made good progress. Two more years in the field await us as we seek to gather as much information about breeding species in each atlas block as we reasonably can. Blocks that have not yet been surveyed require a major investment in time, with remaining open blocks being taken up and block busting parties being scheduled. In 2019, blocks that already have had at least twenty hours of field time should be left in favor of field observers seeking breeding evidence in blocks currently with no reports. Come back to your block after you have given sufficient time to an open or previously ignored block. The results of the first CT BBA indicate many partial blocks (bordering adjacent states

or Long Island Sound) or full blocks that have considerable species richness, yet to be surveyed.

At the Volunteer Appreciation Event held at Hammonasset Beach State Park on October 7, many of us gathered to enjoy refreshments and view posters of the 2018 breeding atlas, posters showing selected species maps (e.g., Bald Eagle, Osprey, Eastern Screech-Owl) from the 1980s and from 2018, as well as survey effort and submitted data. Our 710 volunteers in the Connecticut Bird Atlas logged more than 4,400 hours in the field, drove or walked more than 19,000 miles, and submitted more than 7,000 checklists. More than 73,500 records of breeding birds have been sent in to the database for 174 species with breeding codes, with 18,000 confirmed breeding reports, 23,000 probable breeding reports, and 32,000 possible breeding reports. What a great start to this multi-year effort! Congratulations to all, and here’s to the field time that awaits us.

Acknowledgements

I’ve relied on the generous sharing of information about the first year of breeding bird survey work by project leaders



*Great Blue Heron carrying nest material, Konold's Pond, Woodbridge, CT, May 5, 2018, (Robin Ladouceur photo).
Atlas Block 95A New Haven*

Chris Elphick, Morgan Tingley, and Min Huang. Their leadership of the Connecticut Bird Atlas is exemplary and certainly will result in full achievement of project goals. Thanks also go to atlas volunteers who offered accounts of their breeding bird observations in the field and the excellent photographers who contributed photos depicting various evidences of breeding behavior.

Steve Broker
Cheshire, CT

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

March 1 through May 31, 2018

By Greg Hanisek and Frank Mantlik

The season offered birds in numbers and variety – and many birders to enjoy the spectacle, as the list at the end attests. Early March brought three major nor'easters in less than two weeks, but as the weather turned more seasonable, the new arrivals and interesting finds accumulated. Of special note were some extraordinary high counts of migrating shorebirds and a series of good warbler fall outs. Perhaps the best occurred May 21 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, where Bay-breasted Warblers appeared in numbers unmatched in any birders' memories. In the period of May 15-18 warbler numbers ranged up to 24 species at several locations.

Following is a list of first arrival dates for regular spring migrants. (Note the use of the most recently updated taxonomic order):

Blue-winged Teal – March 25 in Chester (GH et al.) and Litchfield (MDo); Northern Gannet - March 9 in Westport (TG); Yellow-billed Cuckoo – May 4 in Mansfield (NR); Black-billed Cuckoo – May 6 in Darien (DA); Common Nighthawk – May 9 in Barkhamsted (DRo); Eastern Whip-poor-Will – April 28 in Litchfield (GS); Chimney Swift – April 23 in Granby (JWe) and Clinton (MA); Ruby-throated Hum-

mingbird – April 22 in Salem (P&CT); American Oystercatcher – March 6 in Waterford (CSt); Piping Plover – March 15 in Milford (EP); Whimbrel – May 19 in Madison (NB, DRt); Red Knot – May 20 in West Haven (MSt); Least Sandpiper – April 17 in Madison (TA); Pectoral Sandpiper – April 16 in Madison (EHs); Semipalmated Sandpiper – April 28 in Madison (AGr); Short-billed Dowitcher – April 29 in Madison (CP) and Stratford (FM); Solitary Sandpiper – April 14 in Simsbury (RB), Willet – April 14 in Milford (SSt); Lesser Yellowlegs – March 27 in Madison (RG); Snowy

Egret – March 18 in Guilford (CL, MV); Little Blue Heron – March 30 in Madison (DRt); Tricolored Heron – April 16 in Stratford (FM); Green Heron – April 13 in Plymouth (GH); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron - March 25 in Stratford (MPe); Glossy Ibis – March 28 in Dayville (MSz); Osprey – March 6 in Bozrah (DMA);

Eastern Wood-Pewee – May 4 in East Hampton (DCi); Yellow-bellied Flycatcher – May 14 in Manchester (DFu); Eastern Phoebe – March 9 in Westport (TG); Great Crested Flycatcher – April 28 in Easton (JNa); Eastern Kingbird – April 24 in Greenwich (SB); Yellow-throated Vireo – April 26 in Mansfield (MHu); Blue-headed Vireo – April 14 in Norfolk (TG); Warbling Vireo – April 26 in Simsbury (DBh); Red-eyed Vireo – April 20 in Ledyard (DPr); Northern Rough-winged Swallow – March 30 in Westport (PL); Purple Martin – April 8 in Kent (LD); Tree Swallow – March 10 in Old Saybrook (JR); Bank Swallow – April 18 in Hartford (PDe) and Barkhamsted (DRo); Barn Swallow – March 31 in Westport (TG); Cliff Swallow – April 14 in Barkhamsted

(DRo). House Wren - April 18 in Madison (JCa); Veery – April 28 in Milford (SSp); Swainson's Thrush – May 4 in Milford (JSw); Wood Thrush – April 28 in Milford (SSp) and Killingly (BPe); Grasshopper Sparrow – May 2 in Bristol (GH); Vesper Sparrow – April 14 in Southbury (AB); Saltmarsh Sparrow – May 3 in Stonington (WH); Bobolink – May 2 in Redding (KR); Eastern Meadowlark – March 12 in Mansfield (AP).; Orchard Oriole – April 28 in Hamden (WB); Baltimore Oriole – April 27 in Bridgeport (BAh);

Ovenbird – April 27 at four locations; Worm-eating Warbler – May 1 in East Hampton (BAs) and New Haven (GH); Louisiana Waterthrush – April 1 in Woodbridge (CL, MV); Northern Waterthrush - April 22 at 3 locations; Black-and-White Warbler – April 20 in Madison (EL); Tennessee Warbler – May 3 in Goshen (RB); Nashville Warbler – May 2 in Barkhamsted (DRo); Common Yellowthroat – April 21 in Greenwich (MWa); American Redstart – April 22 in Hamden (JBo); Cape May Warbler – May 2 in Redding (NO); Cerulean Warbler –

May 2 in Lyme (DRt) and Ashford (ALe); Northern Parula – April 14 in Wallingford (JR) and Mansfield (MWt); Magnolia Warbler – April 24 in Wilton (SMi); Bay-breasted Warbler – May 3 in Woodbury (CWo); Blackburnian Warbler – May 2 in Litchfield (MDo); Yellow Warbler – April 20 in Madison (JHa); Chestnut-sided Warbler - May 2 in Litchfield (MDo) and Greenwich (RM); Blackpoll Warbler – May 2 in Westport (JT); Black-throated Blue Warbler – April 30 in West Hartford (JOL); Prairie Warbler – April 24 in Stamford (AW); Black-throated Green Warbler – April 18 in Granby (JWo); Canada Warbler – May 3 in Stamford (PDU); Wilson's Warbler – May 3 in West Hartford (RS); Scarlet Tanager – April 18 in Greenwich (EM); Rose-breasted Grosbeak – April 20 in East Haddam (AGu); Indigo Bunting – April 22 in North Haven (xD fide FM).

Among reports of five **Greater White-fronted Geese**, three were at Great Pond in Simsbury March 23-25 (DK, JMe). **Tundra Swans** made one of their infrequent glancing blows when 20 flew over Gorham I. in Westport on

March 29 (PL). Three were at Burying Hill Beach in Westport on April 3 (TG). A hybrid **American X Eurasian Wigeon** was an interesting find March 3 at Cove Island Park in Stamford (DA, JL). A late American Wigeon lingered to May 15 at Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme (DPr). The season's two **Eurasian Wigeon** were at Warehouse Pond in Stratford March 12-17 (JOs et al.) and at Shell Beach in Guilford May 6-17 (SSa et al.). Two **King Eiders**, a female and an immature male, were off Waterford on May 16 (NB). An inland **Barrow's Goldeneye** visited Lake Zoar in Southbury on April 8 (RN). A wintering bird continued to at least March 25 in the Tuxis Island area of Madison (HS). A Horned Grebe at Long Beach in Stratford on May 31 continued into the summer season (FM).

A Common Nighthawk was very early April 26 in Seymour (DS). This species has a history of very rare early appearances, sometimes by as much as a month, in the Northeast. (See a typical arrival date in the list at the beginning of the column.) An adult male Rufus Hum-



Bruce Finnan photo

This Wilson's Plover, present April 29-30 at Milford Point, afforded many birders a chance to add this species to their state lists.

mingbird was reported by a single observer of April 23 in New London (RBo). **Sandhill Cranes** continued their presence in northern Litchfield County with two in Colebrook on April 4 (RB et al.), followed by reports in the Colebrook-Norfolk area to at least April 14 (RS et al.). Other singles were in Wallingford on April 18 (ALv), in Simsbury on April 28 (CWa), at Wethersfield Cove on May 12 (TD), in Suffield May 16 (JWe) and in Salem May 29 (BPo). Of special interest were reports of up to six May 13-20 at Glastonbury Meadows (DJ, ADa). Both Virginia

Rail and Sora were found April 23 at Little Pond in Litchfield (TG).

An American Oystercatcher was unseasonable March 6 in Waterford (CSt). An American Golden-Plover, uncommon in spring, was at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) April 14-24 (MKo, m.ob.). The bird of the season was a **Wilson's Plover** present April 29-30 at Milford Point (CWe m.ob.). It was the state's first since 2007. A migrant Upland Sandpiper was a good find May 9 at HBSP (JCl). The species apparently was a breeding



Franklin Nejame photo

A major flight of Whimbrels offered an unusual opportunity to see large flocks of this often solitary migrant, including this flock of 32 of May 23 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison.

season holdout at the damaged Rentschler Field area in East Haven starting with two on May 13 (SZ et al.). An extraordinary flight of Whimbrels on May 23 produced counts of up of 32 at HBSP (FN) and up to 31 at Milford Point (TM, SU, AKo). The season's only Stilt Sandpiper was at HBSP May 3-11 (JF, CH et al.). An excellent high count of 131 Short-billed Dowitchers May 20 at Milford Point (SSp) was topped the next day by an amazing 450 at Sandy Point in West

Haven (JHr). A high count of 33 Wilson's Snipe were at a farm in Newtown on April 13 (PDu). Two phalarope species for the season consisted of a **Wilson's Phalarope** May 16 in Sharon (ZA) and a **Red-necked Phalarope** May 28 at Portland Fairgrounds (JSh et al.). A Razorbill was still present April 22 in Waterford (DPr).

A Bonaparte's Gull was inland April 13 at Crystal Lake in Ellington (JMe). Single **Black-headed Gulls** visited

Seaside Park in Bridgeport on March 12 (JOs) and Long Beach in Stratford on March 26 (FM). Single **Little Gull** sightings April 5-10 ranged from Southport Beach to Oyster River in West Haven (SMr, NB et al.). Two Laughing Gulls were far up the Connecticut River May 20 in Glastonbury (ADa). A good season for Iceland Gulls included at least eight in Westport on April 16 (JT). The highlight of a COA gull workshop April 7 in Stratford was an **Iceland "Thayer's" Gull**, recently reduced from full species to subspecies status (SMr, NB et al.) It was present to at least April 30 in the Stratford-Milford area (FM, PSw, m.ob.). The first report of Caspian Tern was early on March 31 in West Haven (MWA). A good count of four Black Terns was made May 17 at Short Beach Park in Stratford (CF). Cockenoe Island in Westport produced first arrival dates for two tern species, Roseate Tern, a rare and restricted breeder, on May 3, and Forster's Tern, uncommon in spring, on May 24 (both TG). The first two Black Skimmers were off East Haven on May 14 (NB), with a high of eight

on May 23 at Milford Point (FM et al.).

Two **American White Pelicans** were exciting flybys April 1 at Shippan Point in Stamford (AC). April 23 was a good day for American Bitterns with two each at Little Pond in Litchfield (TG) and Mudge Pond in Sharon (ZA). In an unusually good season for Cattle Egrets, one on April 29 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (JA) was followed by two in Salem on May 3 (DBi et al.). Then on May 6-8 there were two in Guilford (NB); three on May 6 in South Glastonbury (MPa) and one at Silver Sands State Park in Milford that was said to have been present for two weeks (DCr). One on May 16 at HBSP rounded out the event (LR). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron made an unexpected inland visit April 10-11 to a yard in Watertown (PSc). Even farther inland, one visited the Marvelwood School in Kent on May 28 (LD). A Glossy Ibis was also far inland in Sharon on May 17 (AKe). A **White-faced Ibis** present April 16-18 at HBSP (MKo et al.) was probably the same one seen in Clinton and other parts of Madison April

18 through May 20 (MPe et al.). One was at Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme on May 12 (SK).

A **Mississippi Kite** first reported on April 24 in Glastonbury (BAS) was seen sporadically at various places there and in nearby towns through May 16 (DFu et al.). However, no evidence of nesting or a pair was found. On May 21 one bird returned to a former nesting site in West Simsbury and began working on an old nest, but it was last seen May 24 (fide JK). On May 26 two flying high over Orange were judged to be overshooting migrants (NB). The only reports of Golden Eagles were singles March 3 in Portland (SW, JSh) and March 15 in Westport (TG). A Broad-winged Hawk made a rare early appearance March 28 in Stratford (FM). A nice flight of 157 was noted on April 24 at Johnnycake Mountain in Burlington (HS). Single Snowy Owls were reported from at least six locations, primarily Stratford/Milford and HBSP, with the latest May 11 at Cockenoe Island in Westport (TG). Short-eared Owls were reported from five locations, with a late one

April 15 at Long Beach in Stratford (VH).

A Red-headed Woodpecker was seen periodically throughout the season in Kent (LD) and one was in Madison on May 6 (JNo). The first of eight reports of Olive-sided Flycatcher came from Cheshire on May 13 (CU). The following list of first arrival dates for Empidonax flycatchers falls in line with the expected order of appearance: Least Flycatcher – May 2 in Waterbury (GH); Acadian Flycatcher – May 6 in North Stonington (KT); Willow Flycatcher – May 11 in Glastonbury (ADe); and Alder Flycatcher – May 16 in Berlin (MKr). A very early Blue-gray Gnatcatcher arrived April 5 at Mondo Ponds in Milford (MWA, FN). A Gray-cheeked Thrush was very early May 1 in Litchfield (BDv). One of the season's top finds was a **Varied Thrush** March 19-24 at Great Pond in Simsbury (DBe et al.). It was the first since 2013. A Lapland Longspur was still at HBSP on April 14-20 (ALi).

A Seaside Sparrow was an early arrival April 14 at HBSP (JHa). **Clay-colored**



Chris S. Wood photo

Bay-breasted Warblers, often sparse during spring migration, staged a historic flight in mid- to late May.

Sparrows were reported May 4 at Bent of the River Audubon in Southbury (BR); May 8-10 at HBSP (JSh et al.), May 11 at Trout Brook Valley (FM et al.) and in a Sterling yard May 27 (BDi). A White-crowned Sparrow with pale lores was at Cove Island on April 11-19 (MDa). There were four Yellow-breasted Chats for the season, all in May. A Boat-tailed Grackle was away from its usual location April 22 at Veteran's Park in Norwalk (NB).

The only report of Golden-winged Warbler, now a seasonal rarity, was from

Bennett's Pond in Ridgefield on May 4 (AW). The season produced one **Prothonotary Warbler**, May 14 at Selleck's Woods in Darien (LO). Orange-crowned Warblers were found in Westport on April 17 (TG); banded at Birdcraft Sanctuary in Fairfield on April 24 (DMo et al.); observed at Great Hollow Park in New Fairfield on April 28 (MHa), and at East Rock Park in New Haven on May 21 (JOs). The first of about 20 Mourning Warblers was in Kent on May 12 (PH). **Kentucky Warblers** were found May 18 at East Rock Park (JOs, m.ob.) and Bluff Point

(DPe et al.). The East Rock bird was seen through May 26. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was a good find April 14 at Greenwich Audubon (CE). It was seen through at least April 21. The season unfolded as an unusually good one for that southern species, with another found April 21 at the Racebrook Tract in Orange (CL) and singles on April 23 at Rosa Hartman Park in Stamford (BI) and at White Memorial in Litchfield (BB). One, and possibly two, were singing along the Shepaug River in Warren on May 27 (CSz). Hooded Warblers appeared early at two locations on April 17 – at Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven (MN) and at HBSP (AV).

Male **Summer Tanagers** were reported May 5 at Bluff Point State Park in Groton (DFi), May 7 in Ashford (JBa) and May 16 at Sherwood Island (TG). A female was banded at Birdcraft Sanctuary on May 10 (fide PCo). The first of six **Blue Grosbeaks** was found April 20 at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield (BDi). The others were on May 2 at Sherwood Island (JBI); on May 3 in Wallingford (TB); on May 5

in both Fairfield (AKi) and Sherwood Island (PSw); and May 13-18 at East Rock Park (HW et al.). The season's only **Dickcissel** was in Stratford May 18 (NB).

Observers – Zachary Adams, Brian Ahern-Wilson (BAh), Morgan Allen, Dave Alpeter, Tim Antanaitis, Bill Asteriades (BAS), Joe Attwater, Aaron Balogh, Bill Banks, Tom Baptist, Jack Barclay (JBa), William Batsford, Doug Beach (DBe), Steven Beal, Ray Belding (RBe), David Bingham (DBi), Deb Bishop (DBh), Jay Boll (JBI), Nick Bonomo, Robert Bowman (RBo), James Boyer (JBo), Joseph Cala (JCl), Jim Carr (JCa), Paul Cashman (PCa), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Diana Cirillo (DCr), Dan Cimbaro (DCi), Al Collins, Patrick Comins (PCo), Melissa David (MDa), Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Alex Delehanty (ADe), Barb DeRienzo (BDe), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDv), Bob Dixon (BDi), Emily Donohue, Thomas Dorazio, Laurie Doss, Mike Doyle (MDo), Patrick Dugan (PDU), Cynthia Ehlinger, Jack Faller, Dawn Fine (DFi), Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, David Funke (DFu), Frank



Birdcraft photo
This female Summer Tanager was banded May 10 at Birdcraft Sanctuary in Fairfield.

Gallo, Robert Gerard, Tina Green, Aidan Griffiths (AGr), Edward Grzeda, Alison Guinness (AGu), Ed Hae-sche (EHs), Jack Halibozek (JHl), John Hannan (JHa), Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris (EHa), Julie Hart (JHr), Megan Hart (MHa), Valerie Heemstra, Philip Henson, William Hobbs, Chris Howe, Melissa Hunt (MHu), Brenda Inskeep, Denise Jernigan, Jay Kaplan, Aidan Kiley (AKi), Ann Kehmna (AKe), Scott Knecht, Acadia Kocher (AKo), Micky Komara (MKo), Michael Krampitz (MKr), Dave Kucia, Eric

Larson, Arlene Laviana (ALv), Ann Lewis (ALe), Alex Lin-Moore (ALi), James Leone, Chris Loscalzo, Preston Lust, Ryan MacLean, Charles Makarewich, Dennis Main (DMA), Frank Mantlik, John Marshall (JMa), Stefan Martin (SMr), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Emily McMillon, Sean Milnes (SMi), Darlene Moore (DMo), Tom Murray, Jeremy Nance (JNa), Russ Naylor, Franklin Nejame, Monica Nichols, James Nordgren (JNo), Neil O'Hara, Jeffrey Olmstead (JOl), Linda Olsen, John Oshlick (JOs), Mary Packard (MPa), Dylan



Linda Olsen photo
This Prothonotary Warbler on May 14 at Selleck's Woods in Darien was unique for the season.

Pedro (DPe), Bob Pelkey (BPe), Maggie Peretto (MPe), Andrea Perko, Chris Petherick, Barbara Pokorny (BPo), Dave Provencher (DPp), Ewa Prusak, Noah Reid, Laurie Reynolds, Katie Rice, Jason Rieger, Dave Rosgen (DRo), Dan Rottino (DRt), Barbara Rzasas, Phyllis Schaar (PSc), Sol Satin (SSa), Jannie Shapiro (JSh), Russ Smiley, Donnarose Smith, Mark Scott (MSc), Glenn Somogie, Steve Spector (SSp), Charles Stebbins (CSt), Howie Sternberg, Stephanie Stewart (SSt), Maria Stockmal (MSt), Jack

Swatt (JSw), Paul Swigart (PSw), Mark Szantyr (MSz), Carrie Szwed (CSz), Chris Tamborra, Pat Tamborra, Jory Teltser, Keith Tomlinson, Severin Uebbing, Christopher Unsworth, Marianne Vahey, Anthony Vicciarelli, Chris Walz (CWa), Mike Warner (MWA), Mackenzie Watkins (MWT), John Weeks (JWe), Chandler Wiegand (CWe), Alan Welby, Hugh Whelan, Stuart Winqvist, Joe Wojtanowski (JWo), Paul Wolter, Chris Wood (CWo), Sara Zagorski.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Nick Bonomo

Anyone who has spent time studying shorebirds knows that dowitcher identification can be fraught with difficulty. Here in Connecticut, Long-billed Dowitcher is a scarce bird, so we are presented with few opportunities to study that species. In this photo we are shown an adult dowitcher in breeding plumage – we know this because we have a bird that has a rich orange color throughout its entire underparts. Juvenile dowitchers of both species, in comparison, show at best a buffy coloration to the breast only.

Since adult Short-billed Dowitchers are common southbound migrants in Connecticut, we know that the eastern subspecies *griseus* shows an orangey wash across the breast, but has a whitish belly and vent. So this bird would stand out as



something different than our standard Short-billed. But is it a Long-billed?

We also have to consider the prairie subspecies of Short-billed Dowitcher, *hendersoni*, which is much like Long-billed in underpart coloration. It also shows rich orange underparts that often include all of the breast, belly, and vent. This *hendersoni* subspecies occurs regularly here in small numbers during southbound migration, which means it is more common in Connecticut than Long-billed is.

Our photograph shows a bird taking flight with wings raised, which obscures most of the upper aspect of the bird. No problem, though. There is still plenty here to work with.

Taking a close look at the breast sides, we see short dark bars against the orange background, which is typical of adult Long-billed. A *hendersoni* Short-billed Dowitcher would be stippled there, so we would see dots instead of bars. To confirm our identification as Long-billed Dowitcher, we take advantage of the underwing view. Note that the underwing is heavily barred *except* for the most proximal lesser coverts (the leading edge of the underwing that is closest to the body). This small but obvious white patch does not exist on a Short-billed Dowitcher because the underwing coverts are uniformly barred on that species.

As a supporting field mark, you can see that that the tail barring shows black bands that are thicker than white bands, which is a pro-Long-billed feature. However the pattern of tail barring in dowitchers seems rather variable and is something on which I rarely rely in the field; there are certainly better features as noted above. Also of note, this bird has a rather long bill, though be warned that bill length is variable, overlaps between species, and is difficult to judge in the field, so it can only be used sometimes as a supporting characteristic.

Dowitchers often call while in flight, and knowing their calls would eliminate any uncertainty in the field. Long-billeds give a sharp, high-pitched “peep,” while Short-billeds give

a lower, more liquid “tew-tew-tew” that is often given in a quick series.

Terry Shaw photographed this adult Long-billed Dowitcher on Aug. 10, 2018 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison.



Photo Challenge No. 103

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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**The Connecticut Bird Atlas: Preliminary Results
of the First Year of the Breeding Bird Component
(2018)**

Stephen P. Brooker121
Connecticut Field Notes
Greg Hanisek and Frank Mantlik151
Photo Challenge
Nick Bonomo162

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