

# About American Oystercatchers

The American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) is a large, distinctive shorebird of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. It is a resident bird from Maryland south. In New Jersey, Long Island, and southern New England it is a migrant that nests on beach dunes and barrier islands like Falkner Island. Overall, its population is stable, although Connecticut DEEP lists the American Oystercatcher as Threatened. Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report lists it as Climate Endangered.

American Oystercatchers nest on the ground with a clutch of two to four eggs. The eggs are incubated by both the male and female. After 24-28 days the eggs hatch. Like most shorebirds the chicks can leave the nest shortly after hatching. For about five weeks both parents will feed and brood them as they grow and develop their flight feathers.

American Oystercatchers eat clams, mussels, marine worms, and other creatures of the intertidal zone. For shellfish they will stick their bills between the shells and cut the body out if there is an opening to get started or smash the shell on a rock if there is not an opening.

Where they breed on Connecticut's beaches the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds erects fencing around the dunes to deter human disturbance. Volunteers also monitor the nests several times a week to check on the condition of the birds. They also record threats to habitat and nesting success. For 2017 the Alliance reported that a record high number of 63 pairs of American Oystercatchers nested in Connecticut and they produced 63 fledglings.



Menunkatuck Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society serving the towns of Orange, West Haven, New Haven, Woodbridge, East Haven, Branford, North Branford, Guilford, and Madison.

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Adult American Oystercatcher  
Photo: AAfCW



Adult American Oystercatcher  
Photo: AAfCW



American Oystercatchers – newly hatched chick, chick pipping egg, and unhatched egg. Falkner Island. Photo: Deanna Broderick



Juvenile and Adult American Oystercatchers  
Photo: AAfCW