

Connecticut IBAs Announced

Habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats facing populations of birds and other wildlife, at home and abroad. The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a worldwide response to this challenge.



The aim of the IBA Program is to identify and conserve key sites for birds. An Important Bird Area is a place that provides essential habitat for one or more species of bird, whether in breeding season, winter, or during migration.

In Connecticut, 33 sites have been identified as IBAs and eight additional sites are under review. The identified IBAs have been placed into three categories based upon when they will be ready to be announced.

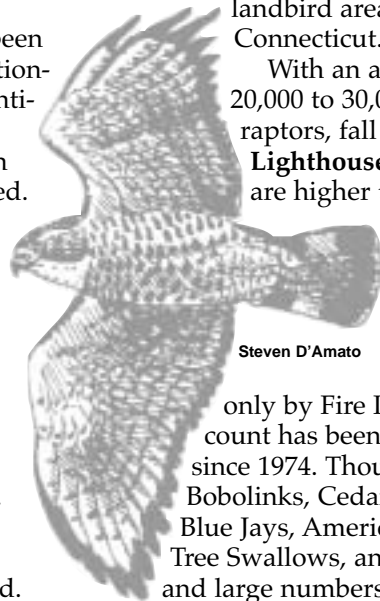
The first eight sites were announced in November. They are all coastal sites that are relatively straightforward regarding boundary, land ownership, and data questions. They are:

1. East Rock Park, New Haven.
2. Greenwich Point Park and nearby islands, Greenwich.
3. Great Captains Island, Greenwich.
4. Cove Island Park, Stamford.
5. Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven.
6. Audubon Center in Greenwich

(including Quaker Ridge), Greenwich.

7. Falkner Island unit of Stewart B. McKinney NWR, offshore of Guilford.
8. Salt Meadow Unit of Stewart B. McKinney NWR Westbrook.

The mixed deciduous forest habitat of the **East Rock Park** serves as an important stopover area for many species of migratory songbirds. Over 200 species of birds have been recorded in the park. On a good day in the spring over 20 species of warblers are easily recorded within the park. Due to the urban setting and geography of the park it is an important island of habitat in the urban environment, and is one of the most important spring landbird areas in Connecticut.



Steven D'Amato

With an average of 20,000 to 30,000 migrating raptors, fall counts at **Lighthouse Point Park** are higher than at any reporting site northeast of Cape May. Merlin counts are exceeded only by Fire Island. The count has been continuous since 1974. Thousands of Bobolinks, Cedar Waxwings, Blue Jays, American Robins, Tree Swallows, and icterids, and large numbers of many other species pass Lighthouse

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MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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GUILFORD, CT 06437

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IBAs

(Continued from page 1.)
Point each fall. Great numbers stop for rest, protection and foraging.

Falkner Island is one of the "crown jewels" of Connecticut bird habitats. Since the 1960's, Falkner Island has been the site of the largest Common and Roseate Tern colony in Connecticut. It currently supports over 95% of the nesting Common Terns in Connecticut and is the site of the fourth-largest Roseate Tern colony in Northeastern North America (5% of the population), and is the only nesting location for this federally-endangered species in the state. The island has been the site of the Falkner Island

Tern Project (FITP) since 1978, and is part of the Cooperative Long-term Roseate Tern Metapopulation Project.

In addition to the island's importance to these two species in Connecticut, it is important to several other groups of birds. Several pairs of American Black Ducks nest on the island along with as many as 2 pairs of American Oystercatchers. Being over 3 miles from the nearest land, the island serves as an important stop-over area for many species of migratory landbirds. To be on the island on a good migration morning is a magical experience. FITP staff has been banding migrant landbirds since 1978. 113 species of landbirds have been banded on the island since that time. Expanding coverage of the island to include early and late migration periods could add significant information to the migration patterns of landbirds

in Connecticut. Likewise the island serves as roosting and foraging habitat for several species of shorebirds, and may be the largest wintering area for Purple Sandpipers in Connecticut. The island may meet the 500 shore-



Karen L. Allaben-Confer
New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation

bird threshold as well. Waterfowl usage of the waters surrounding the island is a subject that warrants more study. The waters surrounding the island may be important areas for scoter spp., Long-tailed Ducks, and Atlantic Brant. The island would make a good site for a "sea-watch" in Connecticut.

Located in Westbrook, **Salt Meadow Unit** serves as the visitors center and headquarters of the Stewart B. McKinney NWR. The area is one of the most important fall migratory stopover areas for Neotropical migrant landbirds in Connecticut providing important habitat for several species of migrant songbirds. At least 29 species of warblers have been recorded in fall migration. The nesting population of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows (tied

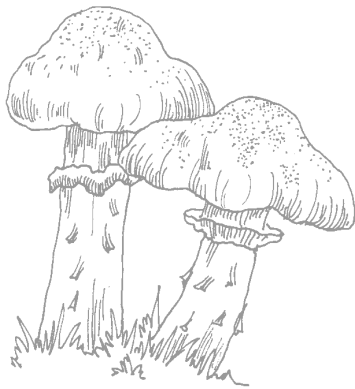
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Menunkatuck Audubon Society is committed to work locally to preserve our natural ecosystems for the benefit of people and the earth's biodiversity. Through education and conservation activities within our communities, we raise public awareness of environmental issues and connections to the natural world.

Learn About Mushrooms at December Meeting

In December, Bill Yule will provide us with an *Introduction to the Ecology of Wild Mushrooms*.

January will feature the return of Sam Fried discussing a unique island off the northern coast of South America in *Bonaire: A Quiet Paradise*.



2001-2002 Calendar

December 12, 2001

***Introduction to the Ecology of
Wild Mushrooms***

Bill Yule

January 9, 2002

Bonaire: A Quiet Paradise

Sam Fried

Indoor meetings are at the Nathanael Greene Community Center and begin at 7:30 P.M.

**Directions to the Nathanael Greene Community Center:
I-95 to exit 58 in Guilford. South on Route 77 for 8/10 miles.
The Community Center is on the right between Route 1 and
the Guilford Green.**

Refreshments are served.

Stop Griswold Over- Development

To support a suit against the Madison Planning and Zoning Commission and Leyland Development Corporation to overturn the Commission's decision to permit up to 250 dwelling units on the Griswold Airport property, send your

contribution to

Stop Griswold Over-

Development

PO Box 1298

Madison, CT 06443

Please include your name,
address, town, state, zip,
phone

number and email address.

Support Menunkatuck Audubon Society

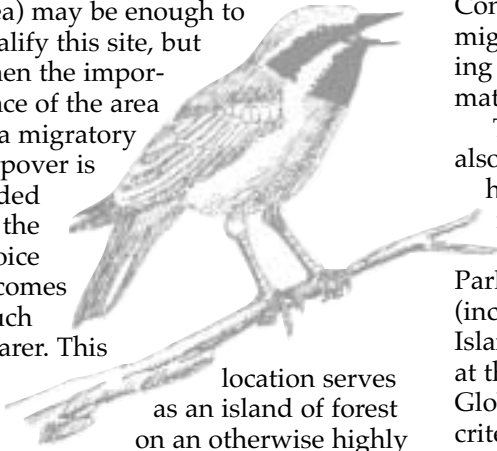
**Send your contribution to the
annual appeal today.**

**PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437**

IBAs

(Continued from page 2.)

with Piping Plover as highest conservation priority species by PIF in our area) may be enough to qualify this site, but when the importance of the area as a migratory stopover is added in, the choice becomes much clearer. This



Steven D'Amato

location serves as an island of forest on an otherwise highly developed coastline.

There are also several other high conservation priority species that nest on the property. The marsh provides foraging habitat for long-legged wading birds in the nesting, migration, migra-

tion and dispersal seasons. Habitat types of relatively unfragmented coastal forest, scrubland and high salt-marsh are extremely rare in Connecticut. To catch the landbird migration on the right autumn morning is a wonderful experience matched by few areas in the state.

Three of the Connecticut IBAs may also qualify as globally important habitats, in addition to being important for the diversity of the state's birds. Lighthouse Point Park, Audubon Center in Greenwich (including Quaker Ridge) and Falkner Island. Like the Important Bird Areas at the state level, candidates for Global IBA status must meet certain criteria that demonstrate the site's significance to birds, and must serve bird populations on a worldwide scale.

Audubon launched an IBA initiative in the United States in 1995 and in 2000 became the official U.S. Partner Designate of BirdLife

International, serving as the national repository for IBA information, nominations, and site designation.

Currently Audubon has 35 active state-based IBA programs with over 1200 sites identified, encompassing more than 5 million acres of habitat. To learn more about Audubon IBA activities go to <www.audubon.org/bird/iba>.

The other IBAs in Connecticut will be announced in two later rounds. Round 2 sites require some additional information such as mapping and/or boundary issues and landowner identification. These will be announced in a second round next year. Round 3 sites are more complex and may require extensive mapping and analysis work to determine the boundaries and extent of the IBAs, or sites with multiple owners. These sites will be announced when all of the needed advance work has been completed.

Griswold Airport Development Is Under Review

The Griswold Airport property is the focus of ongoing concern following the Madison Planning and Zoning Commission's approval of an exemption to zoning regulations that would permit the Leyland Development to build a 250-unit housing complex at the airport. Stop Griswold Over-Development has filed an application with the PZC for repeal of the approval. SGOD has enlisted the assistance of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment. CFE, a statewide environmental advocacy group, is calling on the PZC to reject the proposed high-density housing development on 45 acres adjacent to Hammonasset State Park.

Dan Lorimier, outreach coordinator at CFE, expressed concern that the massive would be bad for the Town, and may threaten the health of swimmers and wildlife alike.

"A site right next to one of Connecticut's three state parks for

swimming in Long Island Sound is no place to experiment with far greater densities. We all know of septic systems that have failed over time with far fewer units per acre. To endanger Hammonasset State Park's future so that one company can maximize their profits while developing the Griswold Airport is sheer folly," Lorimier said.

Protecting the Hammonasset's ecological health is endangered. "It's difficult to know how Leyland can develop the low flood prone areas of the site without bulldozing thousands of cubic yards of fill within a few feet from one of the region's best nature preserves. Developers simply cannot prevent soil from washing into wetland areas during heavy rains. They cannot prevent long-term damage to this area from runoff from this development," Lorimier added.

The proposed project is simply too much, too dense, too big. "Approval of this project opens the door to a devel-

opment which is too risky to the Town and the environment," he concluded.

In a related development, Hammonasset State Park has been nominated for inclusion as an Important Bird Area. Also, Patrick Comins, director of bird conservation for Audubon Connecticut has nominated the airport property for inclusion in the Stewart B. McKinney NWR. "The habitat of the airport, if left undeveloped and managed, has great potential as upland coastal grassland habitat, with potential to support nesting Savannah Sparrows (state special concern), Horned Lark (state threatened) and possibly other declining grassland nesting birds. It would also serve as a valuable stopover habitat for many species of migratory birds," Comins said. Using moneys from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (derived primarily from offshore oil leases), the acquisition would require specific congressional legislation.

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ANNOUNCING THE 5TH ANNUAL
GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



**WE INVITE
YOU TO
JOIN**

FEBRUARY

- All ages and skill levels
- Help scientists define
- Join backyard birders
- Become a Citizen Scientist
- Spread the word

Biodiversity 2001

Know your natural neighbors



Calcium Craving Blue Jays vs. Homeowners

Blue jays. Love them or hate them, you have to admit that these boisterous, brazen corvids are smarter than the average bird. And apparently some of these mischievous backyard visitors have discovered a unique way to satiate their cravings for calcium. They eat house paint. No, really.

BIO BITS

Most of us are aware that songbirds require additional calcium during the breeding season for egg laying. They will readily accept crushed eggshells offered by humans during the spring and summer months. But blue jays seem to require more calcium, almost twice as much as other species. And they seem to seek it out all year long, even in the winter months.

A participant in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch [See page 7.] discovered blue jays chipping the paint off her house last winter. After contacting the experts at Audubon and Cornell she tried offering the blue jays oyster shells, sand, dirt and other trace minerals as substitutes for the house paint. The only thing that worked was eggshells. As long as she provided plenty of eggshells on a daily basis the birds left her house alone.

Intrigued by this paint-eating behavior in blue jays, Cornell asked other FeederWatchers if they had experienced this same phenomenon. Several had – three from New Hampshire, one from Wisconsin and one from Pennsylvania. When Massachusetts Audubon and the Audubon Society of New Hampshire became involved and posed the question to their membership the results were startling. In these two states there were hundreds of incidents of blue jays eating light-colored paint from people's houses and garages. (So far, no reports of this behavior have been recorded in Connecticut.)

Paint contains limestone, or calcium carbonate, which is used as an extender pigment. Like eggshells, it is a source of calcium. But why is it attractive to the jays only in the northeast and only during the winter months? One theory is that snow cover prevents the birds from consuming grit and soil, which can contain calcium and other minerals. And in the northeast we seem to have calcium-poor soils anyway. Add to that the impact of acid rain, which leaches calcium from soils, and you have the perfect mix of circumstances that would oblige the jays to look for alternatives.

If, by chance, you have blue jays in your yard with a hankering for house paint, Cornell wants to hear from you. Help their scientists document regional trends by contacting them at 607-254-2427 or feederwatch@cornell.edu.

If, by chance, you would like to provide your backyards birds with calcium, please remember to protect the birds from Salmonella by boiling the eggshells for 10 minutes or by baking them at 250 degrees F for 20 minutes. Crush the shells into small pieces. Then sit back and watch the show. I began offering eggshells in late October and immediately had a flock of five blue jays visit daily at about 7am to stuff their faces. A male cardinal took a few little pieces one day, and a titmouse came two days later, grabbed a piece of eggshell and promptly wedged it in the bark of a tulip tree nearby for later consumption. A white-breasted nuthatch flew off with a piece a few days later. While the other bird species clearly don't have the same appetite for the eggshells that the blue jays have, they are willing to supplement their diets, even in the winter. Indulge them.

Submitted by Cindi Kobak

Project FeederWatch Seeks Volunteers

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the highest numbers of each species they see at their feeders from November through April. The longest running of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen-science projects, FeederWatch helps scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in partnership with the National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, and Canadian Nature Federation.

Anyone with an interest in birdscan participate. FeederWatch is conducted by

people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. For more information, go to <birds.cornell.edu/pfw>.



Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Mrs. Helen Herget, Diana Shoaf

East Haven: Jerry Bebyn

Guilford: Nan DeFilippo

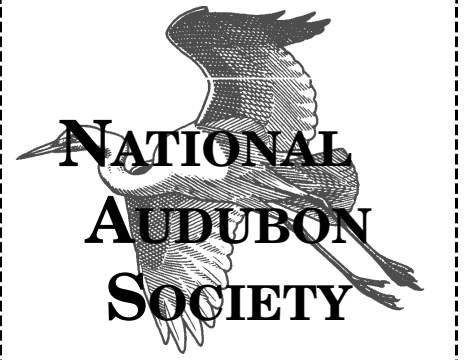
Madison: Heidi H. Campbell, Ms Karin Peterson

New Haven: Lonnie T Snyder

**Connecticut
Rare Bird Alerts**
(203)254-3665
(860)599-5195

Menunkatuck on the Web:

www.menunkatuck.org



Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

Please make all checks payable to the National Audubon Society.

Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society
700 Broadway
New York, NY 10003

LOCAL CHAPTER

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

D63/7XCH

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MENUNKATUCK

December **2001**



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NEXT MEETING

INTRODUCTION TO THE ECOLOGY OF WILD MUSHROOMS

*Wednesday, December 12, 2001
7:00 PM
Memorial Town Hall
The Green
Madison*

*Are you on our mailing list?
If not, send in this form with \$10.00 to cover
costs to be sure that you are informed about
our activities.*

Please add me to your mailing list.
Enclosed is \$10.00 to cover the costs of the
newsletter for one year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

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