

Nesting Season Good for Piping Plovers, Poor for Least Terns

The 2001 nesting season was a good one for the state and federally threatened piping plover. However, the state threatened least tern population did not fare as well as there was a marked decrease in productivity.

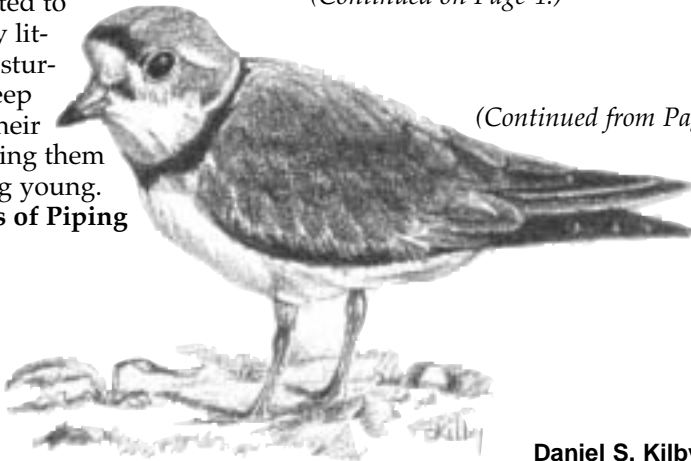
Piping plovers and least terns nest together on sandy beaches along the Connecticut coastline, but only a limited number of sites are available due to current shoreline development and recreational use. Every nesting season, the DEP Wildlife Division places fencing at plover and tern nesting areas to help protect the birds from predation and human-caused disturbance that decrease productivity. Piping plover nests are individually fenced, while entire nesting areas of least terns are roped off and posted with informational signs. Shorebird nesting success is greatly affected by predators, such as raccoons, gulls and domestic cats, that are attracted to beach areas by litter. Human disturbances also keep the birds off their nests, preventing them from attending young.

More Pairs of Piping Plovers

Thirty-two pairs of piping plovers nested along the Connecticut coastline during the 2001 nesting season, 10 pairs more than last year. The number of young that fledged (reached flying stage) remained the same as 2000 at 41. The consistent number of piping plover chicks fledged since 1986 is very encouraging and reflects the success of aggressive management by the Wildlife Division.

Each spring, attempts are made to locate and erect protective fencing around all piping plover nests. Thanks are extended to the two research assistants that worked on the project this field season: Robin Lemieux and Scott Johnson. Their positions were funded through federal aid from Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and the Connecticut Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-Off Fund. *(Continued on Page 4.)*

(Continued from Page 1.)



Daniel S. Kilby

INSIDE...

Calendar
Page 3

Biodiversity 2002
Page 6

New Members
Page 7

Membership Form
Page 7

Griswold Airport Development Plans Continue To Be Reviewed

MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

is a chapter of National Audubon Society. The newsletter is published bi-monthly by Menunkatuck Audubon Society.

Mailing address:

MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY
PO BOX 214
GUILFORD, CT 06437

President:.....SuZanne Botta

Vice-President:

Treasurer:.....Connie Mortensen

Secretary:Catherine Ferguson

Directors:Dan Cinotti, Cindi Kobak, Dennis Riordan

Program:.....Jerry Connolly
Wildlife/

Conservation:..Bill Yule

Audubon Council

DelegateSuZanne Botta

Connecticut Amphibian

Monitoring:Gary Cline

Publicity:Barbara Nugent

Education:.....Cindi Kobak

.....Dotty Young

<education@menunkatuck.org>

Membership:.....Dennis Riordan

<membership@menunkatuck.org>

Town Reps

East Haven:Mary Quinlan

Guilford:.....Linda Anderson

Newsletter:.....Dennis Riordan

.....(387-2167)

Webmaster:.....Brad Garber

The next step in a New York developer's efforts to build up to 250 condos on Madison's Griswold Airport is expected to begin in February. When Madison's Planning and Zoning Commission receives the site plan application from Leyland Development it will begin a long review process of the many details. Individuals and groups who are concerned about the environmental impacts of this massive project can influence the outcome and help to reduce the adverse effects on the frag-

ile adjoining marshes that are a part of the Natural Area Preserve at Hammonasset State Park. Anyone who wants to help in this effort by attending meetings and writing letters can receive e-mail notices regarding the application by sending their name and e-mail address to Airport, Menunkatuck Audubon Society, PO Box 214, Guilford, CT 06437 or e-mail airport@menunkatuck.org. Your help can be valuable!

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 e-mail address.

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.

Maritime Britain Featured in February

Mike DiGiorgio and Kate Davis led a Connecticut Audubon field trip to Britain last year. The focus of the trip was the maritime birds and they will share their experiences with us at the February 13 meeting.

Chris Elphick is one of the co-editors of *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. Whereas Sibley's first book, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, is a field guide, the new book is designed to enhance the birding experience and to enrich the popular study of North American birds. It combines more than 795 of Sibley's full-color illustrations with authoritative text by 48 expert birders and biologists showing us how birds live and what they do. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing.

Bill Burt is a naturalist, photographer and writer who has spent the last 16 years chasing down the most elusive North American birds. The results of his passion were published in articles in *Audubon* and *Smithsonian* and finally last October in the book *Rare and Elusive Birds of North America*. Bill will describe his travels and show some of the photographs that he took. Copies of Bill's book will be available for purchase and Bill will be signing them.

2001-2002 Calendar

February 13, 2002

Exploring Maritime Britain Mike DiGiorgio and Kate Davis

March 13, 2002

The Making of the New Sibley Guide to Bird Behavior Chris Elphick

May 4 2002

Educators' Workshop – The Geology of Connecticut

May 8, 2002

Rare and Elusive Birds of North America Bill Burt

May 11, 2002

Birdathon

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.



Saturday Morning Birding at Hammonasset

Saturdays, beginning April 13

7:45 a.m.

Leader: Jerry Connolly

Meet at the Audubon Shop, Madison

Every Saturday morning through June 29, Jerry will lead birders through Hammonasset to see returning sea birds, shore birds, birds of prey, and song birds. There is a \$2.00 fee. For complete details call The Audubon Shop at 203-245-9056.

Plovers, Terns

Fewer Pairs of Least Terns

The number of least tern pairs nesting in Connecticut has declined steadily and dramatically over the last few years. In 1998, 447 pairs nested in the state. That number dropped to 335 pairs in 1999, 239 pairs in 2000, down to approximately 175 pairs in 2001. Although the number of young terns (26) that fledged (reached flying stage) remained the same as in 2000, that number is very poor. The productivity level is well below the 0.5 fledglings per pair needed to maintain a stable population in Connecticut. Due to the flight patterns of least terns, individual nest fencing is not an effective technique for protecting least tern nests. Consequently, beach walkers, anglers and dogs often disturb the nesting birds.

Written
by Julie
Victoria,
Nonharvested
Wildlife Program
Biologist

Reprinted from *Connecticut Wildlife*, November/December, 2001

The Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-Off Fund is a fund that was created in 1993 by the legislature to allow Connecticut state income taxpayers to voluntarily donate portions of their tax refund to support efforts aimed at helping Connecticut's endangered species, natural area preserves and watchable wildlife.

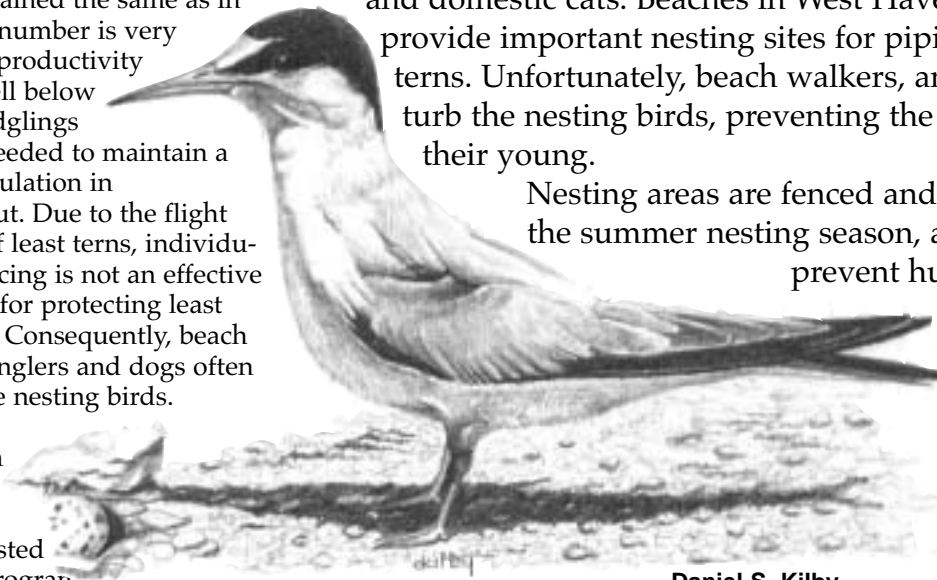
West Haven Volunteers Needed

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division is looking for volunteers to assist in educating the public about threatened nesting shorebirds.

State threatened least terns and state and federally threatened piping plovers nest together on sandy beaches along our coastline, but are losing suitable nesting sites due to shoreline development and recreation. When the birds find a beach that meets their needs they still run the risk of predation by gulls, raccoons and domestic cats. Beaches in West Haven, Milford and Stratford provide important nesting sites for piping plovers and least terns. Unfortunately, beach walkers, anglers and dogs often disturb the nesting birds, preventing the birds from tending to their young.

Nesting areas are fenced and signs are posted during the summer nesting season, and volunteers help to prevent human disturbances by

educating beachgoers in the area. If you would like to help, contact Julie Victoria at Franklin Wildlife Management Area, 391 Route 32, North Franklin, CT 06254, 860-642-7239.



Daniel S. Kilby

Menunkatuck Audubon Society Annual Meeting

Wednesday, April 10

—Elections—

President - SuZanne Botta

Vice-President - Dan Cinotti

Treasurer - Connie Mortensen

Secretary - Catherine Ferguson

Directors - Henry Ferris, Dorothy Holabird, Cindi Kobak, Dennis Riordan, Bill Yule

AUDUBON &
CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

ANNOUNCING THE 5TH ANNUAL
GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



**WE INVITE
YOU TO
JOIN US**

FEBRUARY 15-18, 2002

- All ages and skill levels welcome
- Help scientists define the status of winter birds
- Join backyard birders from Nome to Key West
- Become a Citizen Scientist
- Spread the word



PARTICIPATE BY VISITING
<http://www.birdsource.org>



AUDUBON CONTACT:
Matthew McKown • mmckown@audubon.org

CORNELL CONTACT:
Brian Mingle • cornellbirds@cornell.edu

Biodiversity 2002

Know your natural neighbors



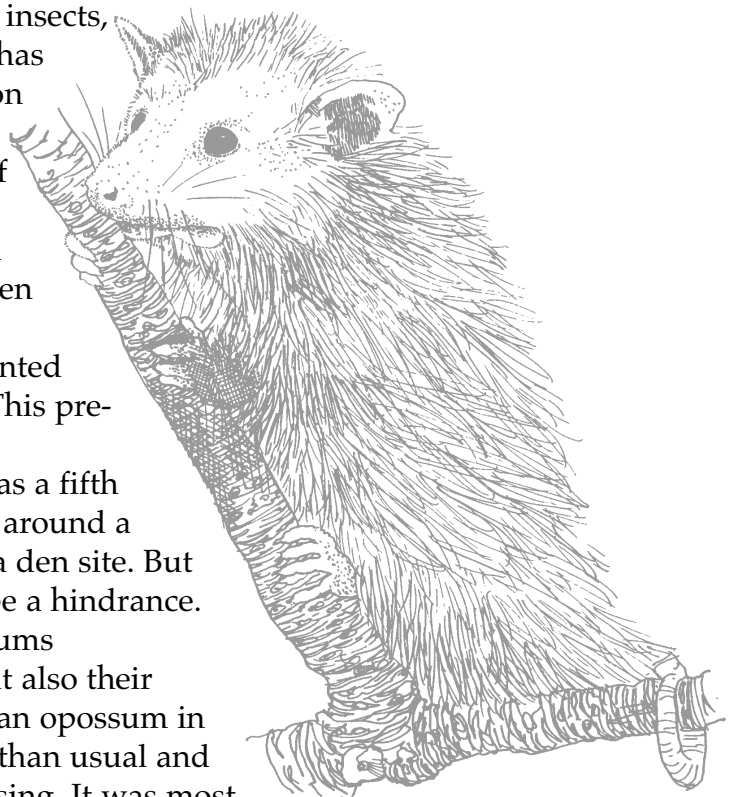
Though the Virginia opossum (*Didelphus virginianus*) may spend several days at a time holed up in a den during these cold winter months, it does not truly hibernate. (True hibernation allows an animal to remain inactive, in a torpor. Its breathing rate slows, its temperature drops and it does not eat.) Since the opossum remains active, it must eventually emerge from its den to search for food to sustain itself.

BIO BITS

Mainly nocturnal, the opossum will wander through an area at night and feed on almost anything it finds: plants, fruit, insects, snakes, frogs, small mammals and carrion. It has adapted well to human habitations, feasting on our household garbage and the carrion we provide in the form of roadkill. At this time of year it is not uncommon to turn on a porch light in the evening and discover an opossum under your bird feeders as it feasts on the fallen seed.

An opossum is easily recognized by its pointed white face, gray coat and rat-like naked tail. This prehensile tail serves it well; it can wrap around branches as the opossum climbs trees, acting as a fifth appendage. The opossum can also coil its tail around a bunch of leaves to carry this nest material to a den site. But in the dead of winter the opossum's tail can be a hindrance.

Frostbite is a common occurrence in opossums during severe winters. Not only their tails, but also their naked ears are at risk. You may have noticed an opossum in your neighborhood that looked a little odder than usual and realized parts of its ears and/or tail were missing. It was most likely a victim of frostbite.

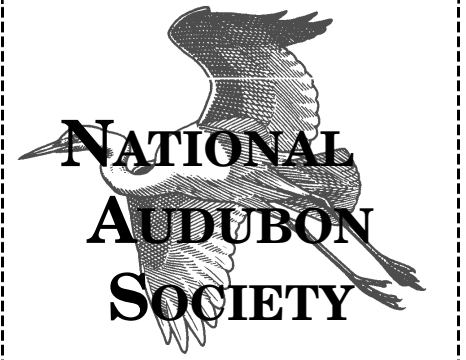


Seventh Educators' Workshop Planned

Menunkatuck's seventh annual Educators' Workshop will take place May 4th, from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Ralph Lewis, State Geologist, will present a program on the geology of Connecticut. A slide presentation and question and answer period will be followed by a field trip that includes a hike through Chatfield Hollow State Park in Killingworth. The day

will end with a visit to the glacial moraines at Hammonasset State Park in Madison.

Teachers of all grade levels and nature center staff are invited to join us as we explore our local geology. For more information, or to register for the workshop, contact Cindi Kobak, Education Chairperson, at 203-457-1699.



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

KNOW YOUR NATURAL NEIGHBORS HAS MOVED!

Residents of Branford, Guilford and Madison will no longer find Menunkatuck Audubon's KNOW YOUR NATURAL NEIGHBORS in the *Branford Review* or the *Shore Line Times*.

Beginning in February you can find our weekly natural history articles in *The Sound* (Branford), *The Guilford Courier*, and *The Source* (Madison). Look for us there!

Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Ms Patricia Hawkins, Joan

Jenkins - Branford Land Trust

Guilford: Gail O'Leary

New Haven: John C. Corr

West Haven: Alison Perlini

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

Menunkatuck on the Web:
www.menunkatuck.org

LOCAL CHAPTER

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

D63/7XCH

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437

Non-Profit Org
US POSTAGE
PAID
Guilford, CT
Permit No. 22

MENUNKATUCK

February **2002**



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

NEXT MEETING

**MIKE DIGIORGIO AND
KATE DAVIS
EXPLORING MARITIME
BRITAIN**

*Wednesday, February 13, 2002
7:00 PM
Guilford Community Center
Route 77
Guilford*

*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: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Mail to:
Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437