

MENUNKATUCK February 1997

THE NEWSLETTER OF MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY, A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

President's Message

Menunkatuck Audubon Society is a 100% volunteer - driven organization. Our Officers and Board of Directors give generously of their time and are the soul of Menunkatuck. Each individual brings a different perspective to the table but what we all share is an interest in the natural world. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of four departing Board members.

David Tesin, of Branford, served as our Treasurer for six years. Faced with a job that many might find difficult and/or tedious, Dave consistently handled the task in a competent and professional manner. A belated thanks to Dave who rotated off the Board last Spring.

Clinton resident, **Charlie Rafford** has served on the Board since 1989 and his contributions as the Conservation and Wildlife chair have been and continue to be invaluable to our organization. Charlie and his wife Shirley are "doers," contributing countless hours of

their time constructing, installing, and maintaining dozens of nesting boxes and platforms at Hammonasset State Park. It is safe to say that Menunkatuck's Hammonasset Project would never gotten off the ground without the knowledge, skill, and commitment of the Raffords. They will continue to make recommendations to the Board on habitat enhancement and special projects at Hammonasset.

As our Recording Secretary since 1992, **Roberta Silbert** has been much more than just a chronicler of our Board minutes. If a worthwhile idea was proposed yet not acted upon, Roberta would slip it into the next month's minutes just in case we had forgotten. Always enthusiastic and organized, Roberta was an invaluable asset to the numerous committees she served on. Her level-headedness and articulate manner will be sorely missed. The Guilford resident will continue to help out with special projects in the future.

(Continued on page 6.)

INSIDE...

Amphibian Monitoring
Page 2

Calendar of Events
Page 3

Announcements
Page 4

House Finch Disease
Page 6

Membership Form
Page 7

Amphibian Monitoring Program Needs Volunteers

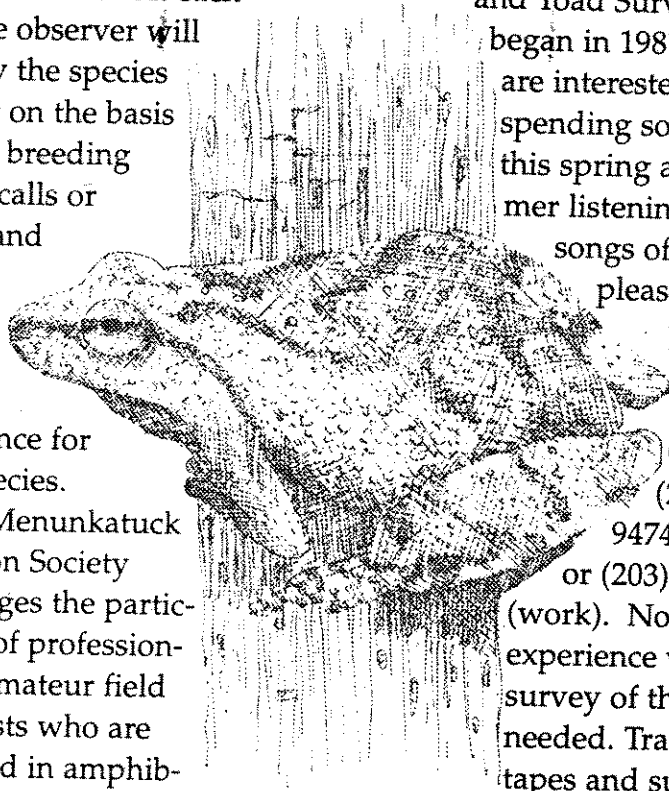
The North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP) needs volunteers to help determine the current status of calling anurans (frogs and toads) in Connecticut. Frogs and toads, like many other aquatic organisms are sensitive to changes in water quality and adjacent land use practices, and their populations serve as an index to environmental quality. The goal of NAAMP is to design a network of calling-amphibian surveys in North America, creating a statistically defensible means of detecting population changes and/or change in geographic distributions in calling anurans. These surveys will provide early warning of declines in population size, help separate chronic changes from natural fluctuations, and contribute toward defining the environmental stressors that affect amphibian populations.

By establishing at least 14 routes in Connecticut, anuran population trends within the state can be determined. Over the next few years, a statewide system of permanent survey routes will be developed to monitor populations over the long term. Each route will consist of ten wetland sites which

will be visited three times annually—in early spring, late spring, and summer—by a volunteer observer. At each site, the observer will identify the species present on the basis of their breeding season calls or songs, and make a simple estimate of abundance for each species.

The Menunkatuck Audubon Society encourages the participation of professional and amateur field naturalists who are interested in amphibians and the conservation of

species diversity. This cooperative survey is modeled after the very successful Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey, which began in 1981. If you are interested in spending some time this spring and summer listening to the songs of the night, please contact your local coordinator, Gary Cline at (203) 387-9474 (home), or (203) 785-5934 (work). No previous experience with a survey of this kind is needed. Training tapes and survey routes will be provided.



Rare Bird Alerts
Taped messages on
recently sighted birds in our
area
254-3665

***Amphibians of Spring
Will be Topic at March
Meeting***

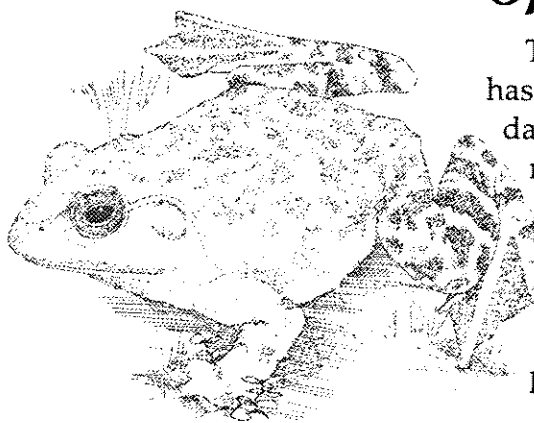
Tom Tynning will discuss "Amphibians of Spring" at the March 12 meeting of Menunkatuck Audubon.

Tom is a professional field naturalist and writer. He is Master Naturalist with the education department at Massachusetts Audubon. He teaches graduate level courses on Amphibian biology and ornithology among others. Tom is author of the acclaimed Stokes Nature Series book "A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles."

Noble Proctor returns for "Birding for Beginners" on April 9. Noble always draws a huge crowd. Come early to get a seat.

All meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. and are open to the public. Refreshments are served.

The Guilford Community Center is on Route 77, half a block from the Guilford Green.



1997 Calendar

<i>Amphibians of Spring</i>	March 12, 1997	Tom Tynning
<i>Birding for Beginners</i>	April 9, 1997	Noble Proctor
<i>Ninth Birdathon</i>	May 10, 1997	
<i>Primitive Technologies in Prehistoric Connecticut</i>	May 14, 1997	Phil Miller
<i>Teachers Workshop: Small Creatures in School and Schoolyard</i>	May 17, 1997	Ted Gilman
<i>I've Got Moths on My Face</i>	June 11, 1997	John Himmelman
Indoor meetings are at the Guilford Community Center and begin at 7:30 P.M.		

Officers and Directors Are Nominated

The Nominating Committee has presented its slate of candidates for election at the April meeting. They are:

- President - Jerry Connolly
- Vice-president - Henry Ferris
- Treasurer - Brad Garber
- Recording Secretary -

Corresponding Secretary - Cindi Kobak

Directors - Gary Cline, Pauline Garber, Tony Ingersoll, Nancy O'Neil, Dennis Riordan, Susan Stoddard.

Announcements

Menunkatuck Audubon's Board of Directors is currently looking for **new board members** to fill a few vacant slots. Those of us who actively serve on the board are hoping that there are people out there among our loyal membership who would be willing to increase their involvement in our organization. Can you attend a monthly evening meeting? Would you be interested in sitting on one of our committees (Birdathon, Education, Program, Newsletter, Publicity, Scholarship, Membership) or creating one of your own? Is there a talent you can share with us (creative thinking, writing, organizational skills, computer knowledge, etc.) or a passion for a specific cause? We need you!

We are all volunteers; your only pay will be our member-

ship's deep appreciation for all your hard work, and the satisfaction of knowing that you're an important part of an environmental organization that focuses on our local communities. If you have ever entertained the idea of becoming more involved with Menunkatuck Audubon, now is the perfect time. Join us.

Please contact Jerry Connolly at 245-9056. or Cindi Kobak at 457-1699.

Menunkatuck Audubon's Education Committee is now accepting applications for our **Audubon Ecology Workshop scholarship**. This week-long summer workshop offers total immersion in the major natural habitats and ecosystems of New England. The Ecology Workshop is situated on Audubon's beautiful 510-acre

nature sanctuary in Greenwich and includes field study of deciduous and hemlock forests, meadows, lakes, streams, and ponds. Field trips include a day exploring beach, intertidal and marine ecosystems on Long Island Sound. Any local teacher interested in attending this workshop can apply for a \$500 scholarship toward the \$600 fee by contacting Cindi Kobak at 457-1699.

Menunkatuck Audubon's Education Committee has scheduled its **Second Annual Workshop for Educators**, "Small Creatures in School and Schoolyard," on Saturday, May 17, from 8:30 A.M. to noon. The presenter Ted Gilman, naturalist and environmental education specialist at the Audubon Center in Greenwich.

Participants will search for small creatures in and on the school building and in surrounding lawns, weeds, shrubs, trees, and leaf litter. Taxonomy, adaptations, life histories, habitat needs, activity ideas, and resources for studying these creatures will be discussed.

The workshop fee is \$30. Call Cindi Kobak (457-1699) for more information

Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society Welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Amy Triche, L Shambrom, Mr-Mrs David Serra

Fair Haven: Mr-Mrs Carmine Astoria

Guilford: Chris Valuso, Dylan

Clough, L Kim Beckett, Peter Cain, Roger Barnes

Madison: Cathy Aultman, Helen-Maunel Libenson, Roland & Grance Sloan

New Haven: Alan Bean, Judith Lenz-Magoveny, Judith Malamut, Mrs Kathryn Planz

COA ANNOUNCES THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

The thirteenth annual meeting of the Connecticut Ornithological Association will be held on Saturday, March 29th at Middlesex Community-Technical College in Middletown.

This year's program will feature the impact of Long Island Sound on Connecticut's bird life. Speakers will focus on the unique birds and birding habitats found along the Connecticut coast. In addition to eight different speakers, the day will also include a brief business meeting, the presentation of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award, the COA Marketplace, a bird identification quiz and the opportunity to meet and discuss pertinent birding issues with birders from around Connecticut and beyond.

You may preregister for the meeting at a cost of \$10.00. Preregistration must be received no later than March 14th. Registration will also be taken at the door from 8:00-9:00 a.m. at a cost of \$12.00/person.

Additional information is available by calling Fran D'Amico at (203) 284-6129 (days) or (203) 237-2734 (evenings) or Mark Szantyr (860) 429-4038.

Timberlands Hikes Are Scheduled

The Guilford Conservation Commission is planning a series of nature hikes in the 600 acre, town-owned forest known as Timberlands. The purpose of these hikes is to increase public awareness of the recreational and educational opportunities available in this beautiful tract of undeveloped forest. The theme of these hikes is that large parcels of uninterrupted forestlands have important non-commercial values that are vital to the healthy functioning of the communities' physical environment.

Each hike will have a natu-

ral history theme that correlates to significant seasonal events marking the yearly cycles of nature. In addition each hike will explain various aspects of the Timberlands Forest Management Plan. The excellent trail system that crisscrosses Timberlands will give us access to a variety of landscapes that will be explored with the aid of local naturalists, foresters and members of the Conservation Commission. The Timberlands hike coordinator is MAS member Bill Yule (203-457-1326) of the Conservation Commission.

Timberlands Hike Schedule

April 19-11:00 AM-Early spring wildflowers, wetland plants and vernal pools. Meet at North Guilford Archery Range, Route 80, North Guilford.

May 3-11:00 AM-The peak of spring woodland wildflowers and the flowers of trees. Meeting location to be announced.

June 14-11:00 AM-The songs of the birds that breed in the forest. Also ferns and mosses. Meeting location to be announced.

All hikes are free and open to the public. The walks will be leisurely paced and will last 2 to 2 1/2 hours each. These hikes are "walk and talk" strolls in the woods and are appropriate for people of all ages. Dogs must be leashed for all walks. Dogs cannot participate in the June 14 breeding bird-song hike. The Guilford Conservation Commission encourages all area residents to take advantage of this opportunity to get to know your local forest and welcomes all to the Timberlands!

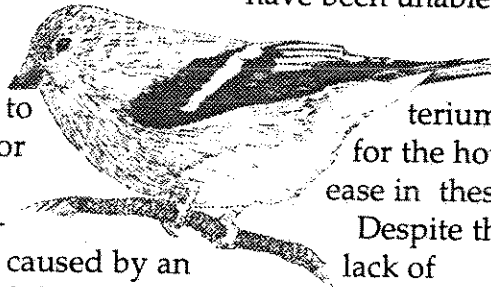
Please be tick aware! Wear long pants and light colored clothing. Exact locations and times for each hike will be announced in the Shoreline Times.

House Finch Disease Continues to Impact Connecticut Songbirds

In September 1995, Connecticut residents began noticing house finches with swollen and crusty, runny eyes. Many of these sick birds were seen lingering at bird feeders and bird baths.

Vision problems made it difficult for affected birds to get enough food or to escape predators. The conjunctivitis like illness, caused by an infectious bacterial disease, spread throughout the state and reduced many local house finch populations.

Unfortunately, this disease continues to affect house finches across Connecticut and has increased in finch populations across the country. Researchers have recently identified the same bacterium in goldfinches and a downy woodpecker that exhibited similar symptoms.



Similar symptoms have been noted in a cardinal, a Lincoln's sparrow, and a starling here in Connecticut, but researchers at the Northeast Research Center for Wildlife diseases in Storrs have been unable to confirm the presence of the bacterium responsible for the house finch disease in these cases.

Despite the lack of effective treatment for this disease, there has been very little cross over of the disease from sick house finches to other songbirds. Continued research of disease and its expansion in the United States, will help us gain the knowledge needed

to effectively deal with the problem.

For more information on participating in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology House Finch Disease Survey, contact the lab at 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

By Jenny Dickson
Reprinted from *Connecticut Wildlife*, January/February, 1997

How Can I Help?

You can help track the spread of this disease in Connecticut. If you see a bird exhibiting conjunctivitis-like symptoms, let the DEP know the following information:

- species
- sex
- date and location seen
- number of birds affected
- does it involve both eyes or only one?
- do the eyes appear swollen or are they crusty and hard to see?

This information can be supplied by phone or in writing to the DEP Sessions Woods Office.

President's Message

(Continued from page 1.)

Susan Yurkus first joined the Board in 1991. She has served on many committees, often graciously hosting them in her own home. Her work on our annual Birdathons was always outstanding. Susan was involved with the planning, publicity, and tracking of all funds raised. Her birding team

with former Menunkatuck President Dori Sosensky was the only one to bird the nearly 24 hours straight in each Birdathon! Susan will soon be moving from Guilford to Martha's Vineyard.

A heartfelt Thank You to each of you for the years of commitment you have brought to Menunkatuck Audubon Society.

Menunkatuck is looking for new Board members. You don't have to be an expert birder or a master naturalist to join. All you need is an interest in the natural world. If you would like to simply sit in on a meeting to check it out, give me a call at 243-9056 and we will accommodate you.

-Jerry

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437

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February **1997**



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

NEXT MEETING: TOM TYNING AMPHIBIANS OF SPRING

*Wednesday, March 12, 1997
7:30 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.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

ZIP _____

Mail to:

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437