

Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary Interpretive Trail Is Coming

The Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary is a 200 acre National Audubon property bordering the East River in Guilford. The sanctuary was established in 1963 the efforts of Ann Conover, who had the foresight to preserve the marshes and the bordering uplands along the tidal river as it flows to Long Island Sound.

The land was purchased through the efforts of Ann and a dedicated group including George Goss, Madeline Moses, Charlie Fenner, Fred Hill II and Audubon staff who led a fundraising effort in the late 50's and early 60's to preserve this property. (Our own Menunkatuck Chapter originated as an outgrowth of National Audubon's management of this Sanctuary.)

As you drive Route 95 from Madison to Guilford and cross the East River, look north. The salt marshes and bordering uplands you see are the National Audubon's Salt Meadow Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary contains a wonderful diversity of habitat types ranging from open field, shrub and forested areas to a small fresh water pond, freshwater stream/wetland complex,

and a lush *Spartina* marsh through which the East River meanders south-eastward to Long Island Sound. Because the marsh is a mixture of freshwater and saltwater, its nutrient-rich habitat is indispensable for many aquatic and terrestrial species. Clapper rails, sharp-tailed sparrows, and seaside sparrows spend their entire life-cycles within this habitat. During spring and fall, the marsh teems with waterfowl and shorebirds—some wintering or nesting in the area, others stopping off during migration.



Since 1963 the Sanctuary has been available for only limited access. During the past year, Fred Hill III, the warden of the Sanctuary, with the assistance of Carolyn Hughes, from the NAS Connecticut office wrote and obtained a grant from DEP's Long Island Sound Program to lay out and design an educational trail with an emphasis on habitats.

Edward Henry, an artist from National Audubon, is working with local experts in designing a series of 14 interpretive signs to be placed at (Continued on Page 4.)

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MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Menunkatuck Needs Volunteers for Eagle Festival

Menunkatuck Audubon Society will be participating in Connecticut Audubon Society's Second Annual Connecticut River Eagle Festival on February 17 and 18. The center of activity will be at the Essex Steamboat Dock and the Connecticut River Museum, with speakers, displays, and eagle viewing optics supplied by Swarovski Optik. There will also be seven Eagle Viewing Locations along the Connecticut River north of Essex that the public can travel to and look for eagles. There will be people on hand to point out the eagles and answer questions.

Menunkatuck has agreed to host the viewing site at Parker Point in Chester. Last year over a dozen different eagles were seen from Parker Point, including great looks at an immature Golden Eagle, which was visible for almost two hours.

We need members to volunteer to help staff the site. The sites are open from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. and shifts of two to four hours would be scheduled.

If you would like to participate, call Henry Ferris at 245-4397. Volunteers will be given an "eagle training course" shortly before the event.

Do you know where your cat is right now?



Each year, thousands of cats die on the roads or are injured in fights outdoors, and hundreds of millions of birds and small mammals are killed by free-roaming cats. Cats live happier, healthier, longer lives indoors.



For more information:
www.abcbirds.org

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.

Frank Gallo to Speak at January Meeting

Frank Gallo of the New Caanan Nature Center will return to Guilford on January 10, to present a program on his recent trip to Africa. Entitled *Southern Africa: Expect the Unexpected*, the slide/talk will undoubtedly feature Frank's unique insights and humor.

John Himmelman will present *Salamander Rain: Connecticut Amphibians and Their Calls Through the Seasons* at the February 14 meeting.

Indoor meetings are held at the Guilford Community Center on the second Wednesday of each month from September through June. Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. Refreshments are served. Children are always welcome.

Connecticut River Eagle Watches Scheduled

Saturday Morning Eagle Watches
Saturdays, January 13 and 27, and February 3, 10, and 24
7:45 A.M.

Leader: Jerry Connolly
Meet at the Audubon Shop, Madison
See Bald Eagles from a variety of locations along the Connecticut River. There is a limit of 35 and pre-registration is required. The price is \$17 and includes soup and sandwich lunch at Oliver's Tavern in Essex. For complete details call The Audubon Shop at 203-245-9056.



2001 Calendar

January 10, 2001

*Southern Africa:
Expect the Unexpected*

Frank Gallo

February 14, 2001

*Salamander Rain:
Connecticut Amphibians and Their Calls*

John Himmelman

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.

Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Ms Barbara H Johnson, Patricia Kamins Kay, Gerlinde H Kehlerbad, Barbara K Kinder, Gernot Reiners, John Yeager, Alison Barr Zyla
Durham: Dawn Sanford
Guilford: Danielle Berhel, Pamela M Besse, Mr-Mrs Chris Flora, Robert O Newman, William Peters, Joanne Sullivan

Madison: Edwin Matesky, Ms Marjorie Pauk

New Haven: Andrea Asard, Lorraine Engstrom, Michaud Francis II, Matt Hamby, Henry S Harrison, George H Jacobson, Mr-Mrs Steve Joy, Francis M Lobo, Mrs Edward M Noye, Albert San Siuci, Joseph Glass Special
West Haven: Mr Louis Donofrio, Cynthia Holt, Sharon Mancini, West Haven Garden Club

Connecticut Audubon Society
Connecticut River Eagle Festival
February 17 & 18, 2001
Essex, Connecticut

Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary Interpretive Trail Is Coming

(Continued from Page 1.)

key points along the trail. In addition, rights of way are being laid out by Fred Hill through the courtesy of Scott Conover.

The trail and Sanctuary will be open to the public in September of 2001. We will then be able to hike the new interpretive trail, learn about various habitats and enjoy the lovely salt marsh vistas, thanks to Ann Conover and others who had the foresight to protect this precious area.

If you wish to learn more about this property you can contact the grant coordinators, Lisette Henry of NAS (203-869-5272) or Fred Hill III (203-453-8060).

Submitted by Dan Cinotti



From Clapboard Hill Road, the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary can be seen along the East River



A portion of the 200 acres is upland grasslands.



A trail meanders through the woodlands bordering the marsh.

Photos by
Dan Cinotti
and
George Lemieux



From the trail, there are numerous views of the marsh.



The Spartina grow lush in the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary.

Biodiversity 2000

Know your natural neighbors



Debate Continues Over Origin of Birds

The feathers are flying over a recent report in *Science*. A team of scientists led by John Ruben of Oregon State University reported their observations on the fossil remains of *Longisquama insignis* a small reptile that lived in Central Asia some 220 million years ago. Discovered in the late 1960's by Alexander Sharov, the lone *Longisquama* specimen was banished to a drawer in a Moscow institution. In the 1990's, it came to the attention of American scientists when it became part of a traveling Russian dinosaur exhibit.

BIO BITS Ruben and his colleagues noted six to eight pair of appendages, which resembled feathers; there was a central vane with a hollow shaft reminiscent of feathers on modern birds.

These findings were not convincing to some scientists. The prevailing theory is that birds evolved from the theropod dinosaur *Archaeopteryx*. The 145 million-year old fossils of *Archaeopteryx* shared many anatomical features with birds. Critics of the current report think there is little evidence that the appendages on *Longisquama* are feathers and find no other structures that link this non-theropod reptile to the branch of dinosaurs that are likely to have given rise to birds.

Ruben feels that they have good evidence and, off the record, suggests that *Longisquama* is an ideal bird ancestor. The authors hypothesize that "the combination of shared, specialized morphological characters of avian feathers and the pinnate integumentary appendages of *Longisquama* were unlikely to have evolved more than once." *Longisquama* pre-dates

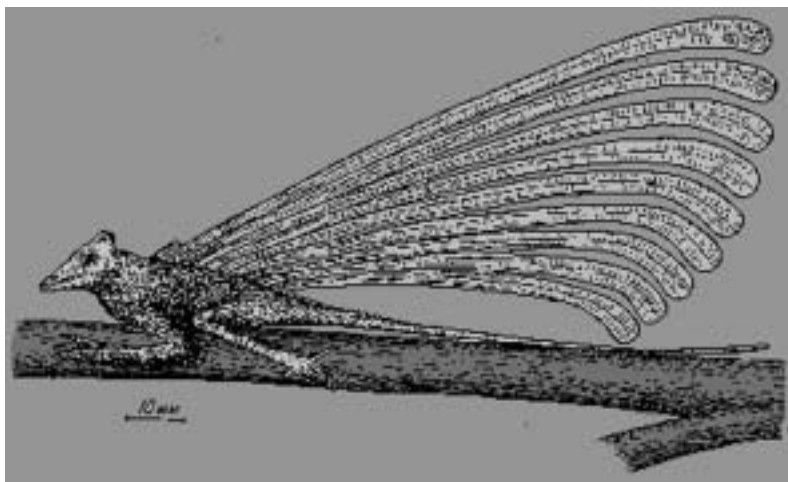
Archaeopteryx by 75 million years and may provide new insight into the evolution of modern birds.

(References: *Science*, June 2000, p2124 and p2202.

See also <www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Galaxy/8152/longisquama.html>,

<www.ento.vt.edu/~sharov/reptiles/reptiles.html>, and <www.mathematical.com/dinolongi.html>.)

Submitted by Pauline Garber



Longisquama insignis
picture courtesy of Alexei Sharov

Audubon Exhibition in Philadelphia

John James Audubon, the great 19th century artist-naturalist best known for his realistic paintings of birds, was also a master portrayer of animals. Now, in the first exhibition of its kind, The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia celebrates the mastery of Audubon's mammals in *John James Audubon in the West: The Last Expedition*, on view through January 28, 2001.

John James Audubon in the West is the first exhibit to focus in depth on the artist's

highly important, but lesser known, work as a recorder of animals for his three-volume imperial folio publication on mammals

called *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*. The exhibit features nearly 150 original oils, watercolors, drawings and lithographs by the self-taught artist.

The exhibit traces Audubon's expedition of 1843 up the Missouri River to record all the mammals he could find. Besides his 10-gauge shotgun and his silver snuffbox, on view are numerous

bird and mammal study skins that Audubon used as models for the project. These are among more than 200 of Audubon's bird and mammal skins that are now cared for by the Academy. Some of Audubon's skins are "type" specimens, that is, specimens used as the basis for the first scientific description of a newly discovered species. Among those featured in the exhibit is the Carolina Parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*), which went extinct in 1918.

The Academy of Natural Sciences is located at 19th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway on Logan Circle. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday

through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. The museum is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$8.50 for ages 13 and older, \$7.75 for senior citizens and military personnel, \$7.50 for children 3-12, and free to Academy Members and children under 3. For 24-hour information, call (215) 299-1000.



Swift Fox



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
 ATTN: K. Totaro

Key Code: 7CAP1

LOCAL CHAPTER

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

D63/7XCH

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 Rare Bird Alerts**
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MENUNKATUCK

January **2001**



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NEXT MEETING

FRANK GALLO

SOUTHERN AFRICA:

EXPECT THE

UNEXPECTED

Wednesday, January 10, 2001

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 for one year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Mail to:

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

PO Box 214

Guilford, CT 06437