

Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail Raises Questions

The Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail (CTCBT) project has begun in earnest, currently 30 sites have been nominated. But what is this project, and how will it effect our favorite viewing spots, both the well known and the quieter spots – besides, do we even have enough variety of birds to make a CT trail a worthwhile venture? There are many questions and some concerns. Here I hope to address the most frequently heard questions.

What is the point? The concept behind the CTCBT is to promote eco-tourism along the I-95 corridor. Productive wildlife habitat with attractive aesthetic features represents a financially valuable resource for the local community. Visitors will come, if shown the way, and they will spend significant money for lodging, food, admissions, guide-books, special equipment and memorabilia, especially in spring and fall. Ideal nominations are those of sites easily accessible from I-95 and close to local centers or businesses. The benefit to local environmental issues and groups... At any time, one could look around and see a number of struggles between environmental groups and developers; it's on going and unrelenting. For better or worse decision makers expect to hear from environmental advocates deriding projects. The idea behind the CTCBT is that as local businesses begin benefiting from eco-tourism, they too

shall begin advocating for the open spaces that have been bringing them additional business.

Will my favorite spot become over-run with New Yorkers on weekend jaunts? A group trained by the CT DEP and the consulting firm assisting with the project will review nominated spots. In order to be listed as a site, the location must qualify. It must be easily accessible from I-95, there must be adequate parking, and sensitive locations will be kept off the list.

Do we have an adequate variety of birds to support such a venture? There are only a few hundred thousand avid birdwatchers in the U.S., but surveys show that 70 million Americans have discovered casual birdwatching as a way to escape urban isolation from nature. Over 40 million of them drive several times per year to view natural habitats with birds and other wildlife, but they need help to find such places. Urban and suburban dwellers in search of wildlife habitat will drive up to five hours from home, typically in groups of two or three for a three-day, two night visit. We in CT are in the path of the Atlantic Flyway, a major bird migration route. Avid birdwatchers and the more active casual birdwatchers also visit in winter to see birds escaping
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MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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GUILFORD, CT 06437

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Connecticut Birding Trail

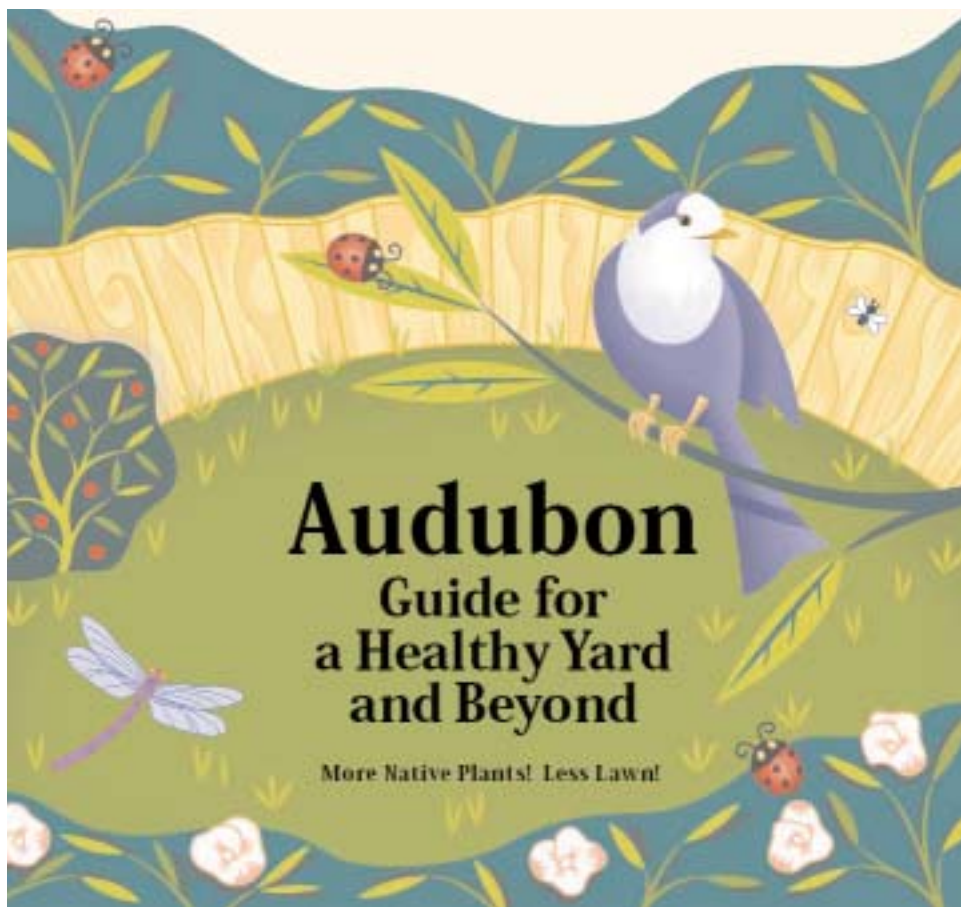
(Continued from Page 1.)

Northern New England and Canada. The number of such visitors choosing to come to Connecticut could be dramatically increased if we show them good places to visit and market to their special needs.

Menunkatuck will be nominating

several sites in the chapter area. If you would like to become involved in the nomination process contact: SuZanne Botta. For additional information and to see what sites have already been nominated visit <www.ctbirdtrails.org>.

Frank Haviland and SuZanne Botta



Guide for a Healthy Yard charts are available from
Cindi Kobak
Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437

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.

Heather Crawford at February Meeting

Heather Crawford, Coastal Resources Educator for the CT Sea Grant Extension Program, will present a program on *Biodiversity and Rain Water* at the February 12 meeting. One of Heather's areas of research is rain gardens, shallow basins planted with moisture-loving plants with roof or driveway runoff directed into them so the water will filter into the ground rather than running off the property into the nearest storm drain or water body, creating new habitat areas and preventing water pollution problems.

Heather has presented several of Menunkatuck's Educator Workshops.



2003 Calendar

February 12, 2003

Biodiversity and Rain Water

Heather Crawford

February 15-16, 2003

Connecticut River Eagle Festival

May 10, 2003

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.

Menunkatuck Will Provide Education Programs for School, Youth Groups

Menunkatuck, in an effort to promote environmental stewardship through education, will provide two upcoming programs to school age children. First, SuZanne Botta will lead a Scout Troop from Hamden on an eagle walk in Kettletown State Park. The group will discuss the natural history of eagles, habitat requirements, and hopefully with the cooperation of the eagles, how to age these striking raptors. Later in the

afternoon, SuZanne will work with a smaller group, assisting them in obtaining their Bird Study Merit Badge.

Later in the spring SuZanne and Bill Yule will run a Water Systems program as a special activity for the Our Lady of Mercy School eighth grade class. These students will gain a broad understanding of how land-

use effects water quality through a variety of hands-on activities.

Menunkatuck will continue to offer environmental education programs within the chapter area and beyond. Curious? Interested in a program for your group, troop, or class? All programs are customized to meet the needs of the group. Curriculum and activity possibilities range from wildlife and birding programs to wetlands, water quality. For more information contact SuZanne Botta (203)315.4816.



Great Backyard Bird Count



Presidents' Day Weekend February 14-17

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Now that winter has gripped much of the continent, what are our birds doing? Bird populations are dynamic, they are constantly in flux. We want to take a snapshot of North American bird populations and YOU can help us. Everyone's contribution is important. It doesn't matter whether you identify, count, and report the 5 species coming to your backyard feeder or the 75 species you see during a day's outing to a wildlife refuge. Your data can help us answer many questions:

- How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations?
- Where are the WINTER finches and other irruptive species?
- Will late winter movements of many SONGBIRD and waterfowl species be as far north as they were last year?

The data that you collect will be combined with Christmas Bird Count and Project FeederWatch data to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more important and meaningful. So as we see patterns, discover new questions and insights, we'll update you. And we'll ask for your help again.

Everything including the Kitchen Sink and You!

The mission of the ReCONNstruction Center is to promote environmental and social sustainability by salvaging building materials for reuse. The vision of this newly formed organization is a non-profit retail warehouse located in the greater Hartford area. It will accept donations of unwanted building materials from a variety of sources and sell them at affordable prices to the public, including organizations that serve disadvantaged people.

In addition to supporting the local economy, these materials (e.g., plumbing fixtures, tiles, lumber) will be kept out of landfills and waste incinerators. Challenges ahead include securing start-up funding and identifying a site. Most importantly, the Center needs volunteers from the community as well as those from the building trades to serve on its Board of Directors. If you are up to the challenge of helping this vision become a reality, please contact the DEP Recycling and Source Reduction Program at (860) 424-3130 or kathy.alexander@po.state.ct.us.

Menunkatuck Audubon Field Trips Winter-Spring 2003

Connecticut River Eagle Festival February 15-16 Essex

This year, once again, Menunkatuck volunteers will be at sites along the river to help people spot and identify eagles. The "Eagle Festival" has become one of the biggest



public events of the lower Connecticut River Valley and thousands of people converge on the town of Essex and the surrounding area to celebrate our National symbol, the Bald Eagle. If you would like to help out at a viewing site call Bill Yule. (203) 457-1326 or Cindi Kobak (203) 457-1699.

Timberdoodle Courtship Display March 23 – 6:00 PM

McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Salt Meadow Unit Westbrook

The courtship display of the American Woodcock (sometimes called the Timberdoodle) is one of the most spectacular mating rituals of all North American birds. Males perform an intricate aerial ballet all the while making a series of whistles and wing whirring sounds. We will have to limit this trip to 12 people. For more info call Bill Yule. (203) 457-1326.



Butterflies and Wildflowers April 19 – 10:00 AM Bluff Head, Guilford

The traprock ridge known as Bluff Head holds a population of uncommon butterflies and a unique community of spring wildflowers. This moderately strenuous hike up the Blue Trail to the ridgetop will explore this unusual habitat. Bill Yule is the trip leader.

Spring Bird Walks I Warblers and Neotropical Migrants May 3 – 8:00 AM

East Rock Park, New Haven

East Rock Park is one of the premier spots in New England to see the "butterflies of the bird world," wood warblers. It is possible to see as many as twenty different species of warblers in a single morning here. John Picard is your leader. Call for info: (860) 669-3115.

Birdathon May 10

All Menunkatuck Audubon members will receive a mailing describing this important Birding and fund-raising activity. Stay tuned for updates on our most important bird watching event of the year.



Spring Bird Walks II Peak of Migration Walk May 24 – 8:00 AM

Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison

More quality birding for warblers, songbirds and shorebirds during the high point of migration at one of the most productive bird watching sites in Connecticut. Call John Picard for info: (860) 669-3115.

Additional walks for June-September will be announced in a future Newsletter.

Biodiversity 2003

Know your natural neighbors



Winter Birds Love Poison Ivy

Leaves of three, let it be! This little rhyme reminds us to watch out for poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) while walking along trails and gardening in our yards during the summer and fall. But we need to be aware of this poisonous plant even during the winter and spring, when its leafless branches, vines and

BIO BITS rootlets, if touched, can cause painful itching and blistering skin in humans. While suffering through the aftermath of a poison ivy encounter, one might wonder if there exist any redeeming qualities to this plant.

That being said, let's look at poison ivy from the perspective of a hungry Black-capped Chickadee or Downy Woodpecker in the middle of a wintry cold spell. Migrating birds have spent the autumn months gorging themselves on the fruits of dogwood, Virginia creeper, spicebush and other high-fat berries. The fruits of other plant species that persist into the winter months are usually a lesser quality food, containing a lower percentage of fats, or lipids. Passed up during migration, these fruits now become valuable foods to birds struggling to survive the extremes of winter.

Poison ivy's small, round, white fruits are out there, waiting for a famished bird to pluck them from their stems. In addition to the Chickadee and Downy Woodpecker, about 50 other bird species, including the Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, American Robin, and Eastern Bluebird, will all partake of this offering. Poison ivy redeems itself.

Photo by Cindi Kobak



Branford Biodiversity Day to be Held in 2003

We're doing it one more time! Menunkatuck Audubon is planning its third Biodiversity Day, to be held September 12 and 13, in the town of Branford. We will once again invite biologists, naturalists, teachers and their students to participate in this exciting 24-hour biological survey of an entire town.

Our headquarters will be set up at the charming Killam's Point Conference Center overlooking beau-

tiful Long Island Sound, where meals and bunks will be provided for participants.

If you, or someone you know, is a biologist and/or naturalist and would like the opportunity to contribute your expertise to this town-wide bioblitz, please contact Cindi Kobak, Biodiversity Committee chairperson, at 203-457-1699 or bilcinkob@msn.com.

Menunkatuck welcomes new members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Carl - Lorraine Gebhardt, Catherine Shebell

East Haven: Gerald Shulman

Guilford: Marie - Warren Andiman, Nichole Fortin, T Genera, Stephen R Kops, Mr-Mrs Donald Malia, Linda McJunkin, Lori Smith, Kevin Smith

Madison: Virginia Carver, Susan Schneiter, Mrs Marcella Davidson, William March, Carol Robinson, Sharon - Gary Tracey

New Haven: Wilkins Lang

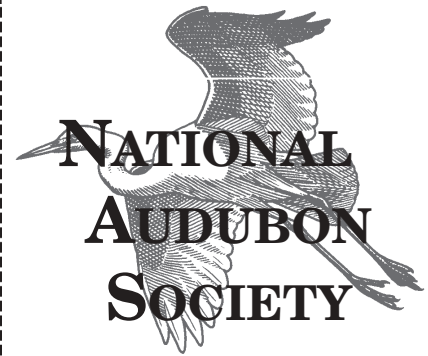
West Haven: Mr Raymond F Heenie, Ann and Art Yost

Westbrook: Laura e Anderson

Tucson, AZ: Jean M Benson

**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

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NEXT MEETING

HEATHER CRAWFORD BIODIVERSITY AND RAINWATER

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

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