

# MENUNKATUCK July 2002

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

## *A Very Gneiss Day*

# *Weather Cooperates for Seventh Annual Workshop for Educators*

We have been very lucky. It doesn't seem to matter what Saturday in May Menunkatuck Audubon chooses for our educators' workshops - the weather has always been perfect for what we have planned. Four years ago it rained the night before our

'Amphibians of Spring' workshop, clearing to a damp, humid morning. Optimum conditions if you're searching for salamanders and frogs. Our bird, insect and intertidal workshops all happened to fall on gloriously bright, warm, sunny days that held the promise of summer days to come.

This year's workshop was held on May 4, a clear and bright Saturday, though a bit windy. It wasn't a great day for bird or insect watching, but quite nice if you're studying the geology of Connecticut. After all, the rocks weren't going anywhere.

Over shade-grown coffee, bagels, muffins and fresh fruit, Ralph Lewis, Connecticut's State Geologist, led our fourteen participants through the history of Connecticut's geology

with a morning slide presentation and discussion. Little geology facts we learned included such tidbits as - 1) the reason the lands north of Hartford are so flat is due to the area once being a huge lakebed. 2) The beautiful stone we know as pink



**Ralph Lewis, State Geologist, shows workshop participants geological map of Connecticut.**

Stony Creek granite isn't actually a granite anymore. Granites are igneous rock, but our local "granites" have been metamorphosed into, yes, metamorphic rock. They are really granite-gneiss (nice). 3) Different rock types erode at different rates, causing some to remain elevated. This is known as "differential erosion." 4) The tops of our trap rock ridges are drier and hotter than the surrounding lands. They can support plant and animal  
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# Gas Pipeline Plans Are Stalled

## MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

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MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY  
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It has been almost 1 year since Islander East submitted an application to construct a natural gas pipeline that would rip through North Haven, North Branford, Branford go into and across Long Island Sound. Although Islander East got a running start, the grassroots opposition that coalesced over the past 10 months is making itself, heard, known, and most important creating an impact.

The original Preliminary Determination, granted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) based solely on economic factors was rescinded and a decision based upon a full Environmental Impact Statement was called for. This was victory number 1.

The FERC completed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in early spring and has been receiving comments and corrections since. Although we will not know the outcome of the comments received, we do know that the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the US Environmental Protection Agency have both torn the DEIS apart. Both have stated firmly that the FERC has no business approving an application that has not begun to address concerns raised regarding the environmental destruction that will

take place if this permit is granted. While the Connecticut DEP has no authority over the FERC, the US EPA does. Their demand for more information will slow the Islander East application down tremendously. Victory number 2.

Finally, a few months ago legislation was drafted calling for a yearlong moratorium on all "Cross Sound" proposals. Although this legislation does not include the Cross Sound Cable in New Haven, it does include the Islander East pipeline through Branford. This piece of legislation was created with little hope of passage, perhaps only a glimmer... Yet, through an act of sheer will by Connecticut citizens combined with pressure from various grassroots non-profit organizations, local legislators, and the Attorney General's office the legislation was passed unanimously and signed by the Governor. Although this legislation cannot prevent the FERC from moving forward with the Islander East application, it seems unlikely the FERC will bowl over such a strong collective statement from a state. Victory number 3.

No doubt this battle will go on for quite some time, but we will keep fighting this pipeline and savor one victory at a time.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" ~ Margaret Mead

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.

## September, October Meetings Scheduled

Speakers for the September and October meetings have been scheduled.

Frank Mantlik, birder and photographer from Stratford, will return in September to present a timely program entitled *Birding Block Island in Autumn*.

In October, Dr. Robert Askins from Connecticut College will do a *Comparison of the Natural History of Japan and New England*.

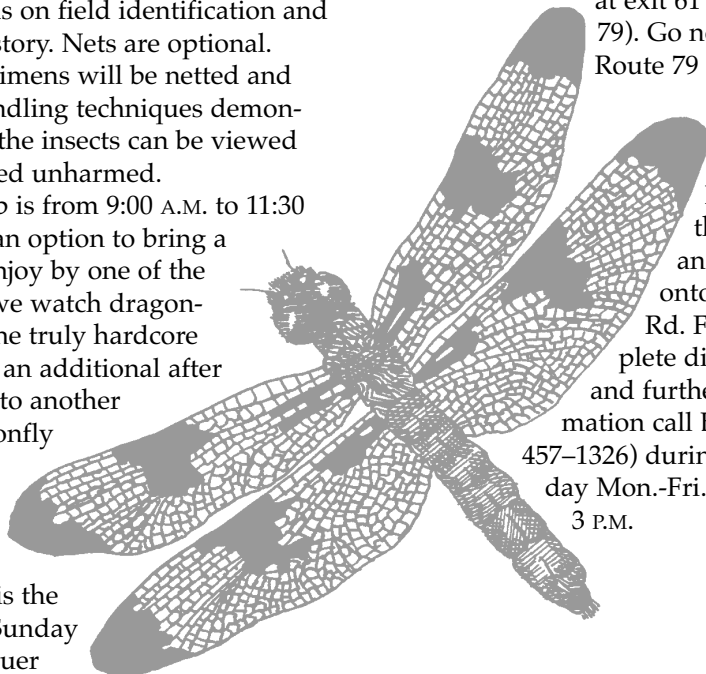
## Two Summer Field Trips Are Scheduled

### Butterflies and Dragonflies

Explore the rolling meadows and farm ponds of Bauer Park in Madison with Bill Yule and Cindi Kobak as we search for butterflies and dragonflies on July 13. This trip is for beginners, families and children of all ages as well as more advanced naturalists. No special equipment needed but binoculars are strongly suggested. The emphasis is on field identification and natural history. Nets are optional. Some specimens will be netted and proper handling techniques demonstrated so the insects can be viewed and released unharmed.

The trip is from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. with an option to bring a lunch to enjoy by one of the ponds as we watch dragonflies. For the truly hardcore enthusiast an additional after lunch trip to another local dragonfly hotspot is planned for the afternoon.

Rain date is the next day, Sunday July 14. Bauer



# 2002-2003 Calendar

September 11, 2002

*Birding Block Island in Autumn*

Frank Mantlik

October 9, 2002

*Comparison of the Natural History of Japan and New England*

Robert Askins

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.

Park is located on Copse Rd. in Madison a short distance off route 95 at exit 61 (Route 79). Go north on Route 79 and take the first left, Hunters Ridge to the end and right onto Copse Rd. For complete directions and further information call Bill (203 457-1326) during the day Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 3 P.M.

### Mushrooms and Lichens

On August 10 at the Timberland Town Forest in Guilford, join Carol Lemmon and Bill Yule for a hike through wooded trails and along a forest brook as we discover the "Rotten World Of Fungi" in a search for mushrooms and lichens. This casual two and a half hour hike is open to all people regardless of experience and no special equipment is needed. Carol is also an expert botanist and the State Entomologist so we may stray into other areas of natural history as we explore this woodland. The hike starts at 9:00 A.M. Bring-your-own-lunch option after the hike at parking area to discuss the mushrooms we collect. Meet at the North Guilford Archery Range on route 80 right across from Maple Hills Rd. Call Bill for directions and details. No rain date.

## Workshop

*(Continued from Page 1.)*

species from more southerly climes. Conversely, the talus slopes below the ridges are cooler and can support life found in more northerly regions. These are very special microhabitats.

A quick walk outside onto the grounds of Melissa Jones Elementary School in North Guilford revealed conglomerate, igneous and metamorphic rock. Ralph discovered a rather plain rock, about twelve inches in diameter that was easily overlooked by the rest of us. As he turned the rock over we could see why it was so special. The underside bore the markings of a rock that had been scraped across other rocks many, many years ago. A glacier had dragged this rock and deposited it here!

We proceeded to Chatfield Hollow State Park in Killingworth to view



**Group hikes rock formations at Chatfield Hollow State Park in Killingworth.**

(and climb) the rock formations and enjoy lunch. We then visited the glacial moraine at Meigs Point at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. Ralph continued to tutor us as we stood on the observation platform and viewed Falkner Island. As we walked among the moraine

boulders deposited by a glacier so long ago, Ralph quizzed us on each rock's identity. Was it a conglomerate, an igneous or a metamorphic rock? Was it sedimentary? Basalt, granite, gneiss or something else?

We ended the day with a better understanding of Connecticut's geologic past and how it shaped our state. All in all, it was a very gneiss day.



**Lisa Herrmann, member of the Guilford Conservation Commission, and Susannah Graedel from Bauer Park (Madison), examine various rocks on Melissa Jones Elementary School property.**



**Day ends at Hammonasset State Park's glacial moraine as participants identify various boulders (including pink granite gneiss used in breakwater).**

## *Pomarine Jaeger Is Highlight of Birdathon*

A Pomarine Jaeger was the top bird spotted during the fourteenth annual Birdathon. As evening descended at Willard's Island, Dori Sosensky scanned the skies for a last look. Just then a Pomarine Jaeger flew overhead, giving her and her teammates a first-hand look. Pomarine jaegers are rare in Connecticut, usually spending their lives at sea, but here one was giving Dori's team bird number 155 for the day and helping the Birdathon reach a total of 184.

Dori submitted a report on the Jaeger sighting and if it is accepted by the Avian Record Committee of Connecticut, the sighting will be only the second record for the state.

Other notable birds were Barn Owl, American Widgeon, and Ring-necked Duck, which have been recorded infrequently on Birdathon day. For the first time two birds were not seen: Green Heron and Brown Thrasher.

Thanks are due to the New Haven Bird Club for their participation in the Birdathon.

Contributions may still be made by sending a check to Menunkatuck Audubon Society, PO Box 214, Guilford, CT 06437.

The fifteenth Birdathon will be on Saturday, May 10, 2003.



### **Ride the Carousel**

**Friday, August 2, is Menunkatuck Audubon Day at Lenny and Joe's Fishtail Carousel.**

**All proceeds from the \$1.00 ride will go to support Menunkatuck Audubon Society.**

**Treat yourself to a meal!**

**Treat the kids to a ride!**

**And help Menunkatuck all at once!**

**The Flying Horse Carousel is at Lenny and Joe's Fishtail Restaurant, 86 Boston Post Road, Madison, just past Hammonasset, and is open from noon to 8:30 p.m.**

**See you there!**

# Biodiversity 2002

## Know your natural neighbors



### Trilling Treefrogs

When someone mentions treefrogs, do you picture the brightly colored tropical rainforest variety? Would it surprise you to learn that we have treefrogs right here in our local woodlands? We do.

#### **BIO BITS**

The gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) is native to the northeastern United States. Distinguishing characteristics, if you are lucky enough to find a gray treefrog, are the large toe disks that help it to climb vertical surfaces, and the small white rectangular spot beneath each eye. Hidden on the under-

sides of the hind legs is a surprising flash of orange color. The adult's grayish body is roughly textured and blends in perfectly with tree bark. While resting, it tucks its two front feet under its chin and flattens itself against the bark or other surface. It is believed that in this position the treefrog is not only well camouflaged, but also casts no shadow, allowing it to conceal itself from predators, like birds and snakes.

Though our treefrogs may not advertise themselves with screaming neon patterns of color, they do reveal themselves vocally. That loud trilling you hear somewhere up in the trees may not be a red-bellied woodpecker after all, but a male gray treefrog. Be content to know that it is a treefrog; chances are slim that you will ever locate it.

Encounters with gray treefrogs are usually unexpected and quite special. Some people have found trilling adults in spring on the pool covers of aboveground pools where rainwater has collected. These treefrogs climbed the sides of the pool to mate and lay eggs. On a humid summer night you may detect one on the outside of a window, attracted to the insects attracted to the light. The startling discovery of many tiny bright green treefroglets in your lawn and garden in the summer is an unforgettable experience and indicates that a wetland nearby supports a breeding population. Enjoy your chance encounters with gray treefrogs – many people have yet to see one.



Photo: Cindi Kobak

## Branford Vernal Pool Inventory Completed

The Branford Conservation Commission solicited the services of Noble Proctor to take an inventory of all the Vernal Pools in Branford. Currently, the state of Connecticut has no formal definition of a vernal pool, but for the most part vernal pools are described as:

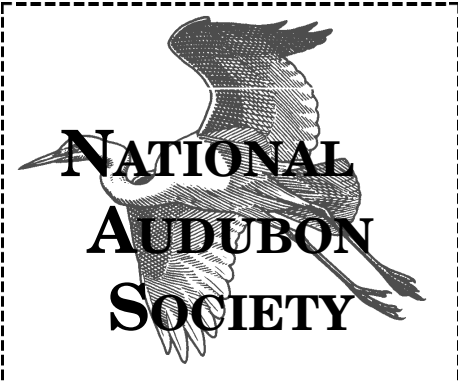
- Temporary water bodies (pools) appearing in late winter/early spring and drying-up by June/July
- Supports species that can live nowhere else, other wise known as obligate species, i.e. Fairy Shrimp
- Are successful (meaning they do support wildlife including tad-



poles and salamanders)  
 • Lack inlets or outlets  
 • Do not support fish

The inventory was done over the course of several months and each site was visited twice. Noble inventoried a total of 55 Vernal Pools in the town of Branford!!! Additional wildlife observations included: 12 pair of nesting Pileated Woodpeckers and a Mink.

The Branford Land Trust and the Conservation Commission will sponsor a slide show presented by Noble about the Branford Vernal Pools in the fall.



### 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

## Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

**Branford:** Dr-Mrs Robert N Adamson, Jay Ardolino, Richard Huie, Meg Kilgore, Catherine M Joyce, David Peck

**East Haven:** Vera Lewis, Melissa Pinney

**Guilford:** Mr Mrs Ray Bauer, Shavaun Bennett, Arne Bugely, Joan Capon, Britta Chambers, Philip Germain, Judith Goodrich, Margaret Moench, Marjorie Olsen, Kari Paro,

Robert Russo, Emily Shannon, Marian Sole

**Madison:** Susan Clark, Gerald Kirwin, Malcolm Macgruer, Robert Schumann, Chandler Williams, Mrs Marcella Davidson, R F Schumann

**New Haven:** Kenneth Adriani, Debbie Agnone, H Brightwell, David Carter, Alan Forman, Gwynne A Holcomb, Clarice Pollack, Sidney Skolnick, Richard English, Mary S Winder

**West Haven:** Edward Brett, Caryn Converse, James Donnelly, Daniel Guarino, Dorothy Oneil

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

**Menunkatuck on the Web:**  
[www.menunkatuck.org](http://www.menunkatuck.org)

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July **2002**



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## **NEXT MEETING**

### **FRANK MANTLIK BIRDING BLOCK ISLAND IN AUTUMN**

*Wednesday, September 11, 2002  
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.

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