

MENUNKATUCK July 2003

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

Eighth Annual Workshop a Day of Nets and Networking

It was a bit disheartening to wake to clouds and a 43-degree temperature on the morning of Menunkatuck's eighth annual educator's workshop, "Monitoring Water Quality in Your Local Streams." I guess I wouldn't be wearing sneakers and shorts into the stream as I had planned. So, knee-high Muck boots were packed along with a couple extra layers of clothing.

Seven participants joined Chris Sullivan, Project SEARCH environmental scientist, and his assistant, Menunkatuck's president, SuZanne Botta, as they led us through the fascinating world of monitoring stream water quality on May 17th. Interestingly, we did not attract the target high school teachers, but rather, environmental educators and members of area Conservation, Inland Wetland and Planning & Zoning Commissions. The workshop turned into a marvelous opportunity for these like-minded individuals to network and enjoy a day together in the field.

Meeting at the Shoreline Outdoor Education Center in North Guilford, we made introductions over shade-grown coffee, organic juice and fresh muffins. Chris (Sully) then took this

intrepid group to Branch Brook, a beautiful, unspoiled stream in North Guilford. Donned in polar fleece and footwear ranging from waders to sneakers, we hiked about thirty feet upstream from the road to begin our evaluation of the stream.

Sully handed out Non-point Source Pollution Potential Data Sheets that are used to assess the
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Susan Campbell and Susannah Graedel test water for dissolved oxygen.

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West Haven Offers Numerous Birding Opportunities

MENUNKATUCK

AUDUBON SOCIETY

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West Haven is known for its beaches and boardwalk, and the many seafood restaurants along its shoreline. But its birds? Few but the most avid birders are aware of the city's excellent opportunities for bird watching. Even long-term city residents find little noteworthy about the city's feathered inhabitants, except for perhaps the very visible Monk Parakeet colonies along Ocean Avenue.

So what is so unique about West Haven in regard to birds? For starters, the city's Sandy Point is a significant nesting location for the federally-threatened Piping Plover; approximately a dozen have returned for the season, and several nests have already been spotted thanks to volunteers assisting the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This sandy area protruding out into New Haven Harbor is also one of the most important Least Tern and mainland Common Tern colonies in the state.

Bird watchers might also get to enjoy the endangered Roseate Tern, Red Knots, Black Skimmers, Oystercatchers and Ruddy Turnstones, as well, if their timing is right. The tidal marsh houses a small nesting colony of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows, and is visited by Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in migration.

Across town near the Milford bor-

der, the city's Oyster River offers another set of birding attractions. Oyster River's specialty are the Bonaparte's Gulls which can be seen in March and April, along with inter-mixed European rarities like the Little Gull and Black-headed Gull. A Ross' gull, one of the rarest birds in North America, was once spotted there! Other rare winter visitors include the Lesser Black-Backed Gull, Iceland Gull and Glaucous Gull.

As if that were not enough to deserve West Haven's presence on any birding map, a rare Eurasian Widgeon winters near St. John's by the Sea Church just west of the city's Bradley Point.

Because of the important habitat it provides to threatened and endangered birds, Sandy Point has been designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society; Oyster River is likely to receive similar recognition. Both locations have been listed by the nascent Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail, which aims to identify areas that provide easy accessibility to good birding.

To promote awareness of these great bird viewing opportunities in West Haven, a group of local business professionals and birders has recently

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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.

Birdathon Records 184 Species

With the invaluable help of the New Haven Bird Club the 2003 Birdathon recorded 184 species.

So far, donations have amounted to \$1900. If you want to support the Birdathon, please mail your donation to:

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437

2003 Calendar

Next Meeting
Wednesday, September 10

July Field Trip

Paddling the East River ~ Exploring the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary
Sat. July 12, 8 a.m. – Noon
Bring Your Own Boat

The Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary is located in Guilford, Connecticut along the East River, a tidal river that drains into Long Island Sound. These wetlands support specialized salt marsh vegetation and animal life. The East River is the perfect place for a paddle and exploration of the transition throughout an estuary (where fresh and saltwater meet). From the water we will have a unique perspective of life in the salt marsh. We will launch from the State Boat Launch on Neck Road in Guilford just prior to high tide and progress inland with the tide..

There are several occupied Osprey platforms along the river and bird activity is bound to be plentiful. As the tide wanes, exposing the riverbank, we will gain a new perspective of the salt marsh ecology. One of the most wonderful paddling spots in the state; this is a trip not to be missed.

The East River is an easy paddle, but participants should feel comfortable with their own paddling abilities. At high tide the Amtrak line is passable, but those prone to claustrophobia may feel uncomfortable; there is a second launching point upriver of the Amtrak line, off Route 1, but parking is limited. Rain and/or heavy winds postpone, to Saturday July 26, same time and place. PFDs (Personal Flotation Devices) are required. Binoculars, water, a snack, insect repellent and a wide brimmed hat are strongly recommended. Menunkatuck will not provide boats. However, if you need to rent a boat we will happily provide you will information on local rentals.

Directions: I-95 Exit 59, to Goose Lane. Take Route 1 East (North). Follow Route. 1 over the East River (you will cross into Madison). Turn Right onto Neck Road. At the stop sign continue. on Neck Road by turning right. Follow Neck Road to the state boat launch (approximately two miles). This is a residential area and becomes a gravel road – please drive slowly. Arrive at 8 a.m. For further information contact SuZanne Botta (203) 315-4816 For more information about the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary visit: <http://www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/guilford/index.html>

Eighth Annual Workshop

(Continued from page 1.)

land use within 500 feet upstream and 500 feet on each side of a waterway. Calculating the percentage of forested buffer zone versus the percentage of impervious surface (roads, parking lots, sidewalks, etc.) helps to determine the potential for non-point source pollution. Non-point source pollution is pollution caused by runoff of road salt and sand, pesticide and fertilizer runoff from farm fields or lawns, soil erosion from deforestation or development, among other things. These sources of pollution do not have an obvious point of origin (like an outflow pipe from a factory) and are, therefore, more difficult to regulate. Thankfully, aside from flowing under a narrow country road, Branch Brook had no signs of being impacted by non-point source pollution.

Ovenbirds and worm-eating warblers sang from the wooded slopes above the stream as we paired up to test the waters for dissolved oxygen. Each team had its own test kit and carefully followed Sully's instructions

for collecting a water sample and then adding the specific chemicals that would magically reveal the level of dissolved oxygen within this flowing stream. Thirty minutes later we knew that the stream contained healthy levels of dissolved oxygen.

While we were busy with our tests a wonderful thing happened. The sun came out. The chilly morning had transformed into a glorious day – and what better way to spend it than with an enthusiastic group of people along a riffling stream surrounded by forest and birdsong?

It was time to bring out the nets and see what macroinvertebrates we could find. These are mainly the larval stages of insects, such as flies, beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies that develop in the stream before emerging as adults. They can tell you a lot about the health of a river or stream. Each net brought up dozens and dozens of



Susan Campbell, Jim Barry, John Picard and Carol Altieri identify macroinvertebrate samples in lab.



John Picard, Jim McDougal and Chris Sullivan check the net for creatures.

creatures that we collected to bring back to our temporary lab set up at the Shoreline Outdoor Education Center.

Using macroinvertebrate identification keys, we sat at microscopes to key out the insects. It was slow going at first, but with

Sully and SuZanne's help we struggled through, gained confidence and keyed out our specimens to the family level. Many families of caddisfly, mayfly and stonefly have a zero tolerance to pollution; we found several of them at Branch Brook.

We were fortunate to be able to visit Branch Brook so that participants could experience the thrill of sampling such a wide variety of creatures. This is what a healthy stream should look like. The ongoing monitoring of such waterways can help prevent their degradation by alerting us to potential pollution problems in the future.

Submitted by Cindi Kobak
Photos by Cindi Kobak

West Haven Birding

(Continued from page 2.)

banded together under the moniker of the West Haven Coastal Habitat and Bird Trail Alliance. Active parties include local birders, economic development officials, members of the Chamber of Commerce, the Bayer Corporation, the University of New Haven, and representatives from the CT Coastal Birding Trail and Audubon Connecticut.

What unites these diverse entities is a belief that greater awareness of

the special birds calling West Haven home (or passing through it on migration) will lead to tourism-related economic development and improved habitat conservation. The accessibility of the city's birding areas to the interstate is seen as a plus, as the group works to encourage casual birders to visit on their way to the casinos and other Connecticut or New England attractions.

Proposed short-term activities of the alliance include: development of a conservation plan, installation of interpretative signage, creation of brochures and a web site detailing the

bird watching areas and local amenities, facilitation of birding-related environmental education activities, and promotion of West Haven birding areas in local and regional tourism materials.

The West Haven Coastal Habitat and Bird Trail Alliance is still in the early stages, and its members are eager for participation and input, especially from the area's birders. If you'd like to know more about the group, or have ideas to share, please contact Mike Lengle at 203-488-5024 or mikelengle@hotmail.com.

Submitted by Mike Lengle

Menunkatuck Audubon Day at the Magical Charity Carousel Lenny and Joe's Madison Fish Tale Restaurant Friday, July 25

MAS will be the recipient of all the proceeds of ride money collected on this date. The Carousel is a 20-foot diameter stationary, 10 rider, all wooden, handmade carousel. It is operated by an electric motor. The Carousel is a real "flying horse" type of carousel. The animals are attached from sweeps on the top, and swing and fly through the air! The menagerie animals include: Frog, Giraffe, Lion, Horse, Cat, Seal, Orca and a Double Lobster Chariot. Riders can enjoy trying to "Catch the Brass Ring" from one of the two ring catching devices. The rings are grabbed from the mouth of a colorful fish. Small lights accent the carousel and a CD player provides traditional merry go round music.

All of the animals were hand carved by Bill Dentzel. They were made of Basswood, using traditional hollow box construction. Each animal was a unique Dentzel design! Donna Wolcott, a local professional Carousel painter and restorer, designed & painted all of the carousel animals. Each year, during the off season, she retouches the paint on the animals. While the physical installation of the Carousel was taking place, a school and community oriented scenic panel painting extravaganza was also in progress. It involved many adult, school groups & children volunteers. They painted the scenic panels and rounding boards!

Biodiversity 2003

Know your natural neighbors



The Magnificent Ebony Jewelwing

The ebony jewelwing (*Calopteryx maculata*) is a large damselfly of shaded streamsid es. Your first impression when you spot its jet-black wings fluttering lazily through sun-dappled vegetation is that a dark butterfly has crossed your path. As it lands on a branch or leaf, the ebony jewelwing's form takes shape and you can behold it for what it truly is – a magnificent damselfly. There is no doubt why the genus was given the name *Calopteryx*, which means "beautiful wing."

BIO BITS

This two-inch long damselfly is found in the eastern two-thirds of the United States, usually seen from June to August in our area. It belongs to the family known as broad-winged damselflies, which have broad, colored wings. They normally hold their wings closed over their backs while they perch horizontally, though a quick opening and closing of the wings is sometimes used to signal their location to other jewelwings.

Depending on the light, the male's gorgeous iridescent body can appear green or blue. His wings are a solid black. The female is no less lovely, with a greenish-bronze body and smoky-brown wings. Tiny white squares (stigmas) are quite apparent on the upper tips of her wings.

A jewelwing that flits out from and then returns to a perch along a small stream is busy feeding. You may not see the flying insects it is capturing and eating, for they can be as small as gnats. But a good feeding perch will be used for hours or days, and a territory of six to ten feet along the stream will be defended from other damselflies.

The flapping of forewings and hindwings simultaneously causes the laid-back fluttering flight of the ebony jewelwing. But when males are courting females, the flight pattern changes; the wings are flapped alternately, and more quickly. This, and a territory along a stretch of stream with plenty of aquatic vegetation, will attract a female to a male.

The female requires plant material just below the water's surface in which to lay her 600 or so eggs. She dips just the tip of her abdomen underwater and inserts her ovipositor into a plant's stem or leaf to deposit her eggs. The male remains in the vicinity to guard her, chasing off rival males.

Their nymphal offspring will grow and develop in the aquatic environment of the stream, feeding on insect larvae and other invertebrates below the water's surface. Early next summer they will leave the water, their exoskeletons will split down the back and beautiful-winged damselflies will emerge to take flight like magical woodland fairies.



Photo by James L. Lasswell, Dept. of Entomology, TAES Stephenville, TX
<http://stephenville.tamu.edu/~fmitchel/damselfly/image/cm_f2x.jpg>

Submitted by Cindi Kobak



David Sibley signs his latest book for Mike DiGiorgio at Menunkatuck's May 14 meeting. Over 120 people attended this evening. Photo by Cindi Kobak.

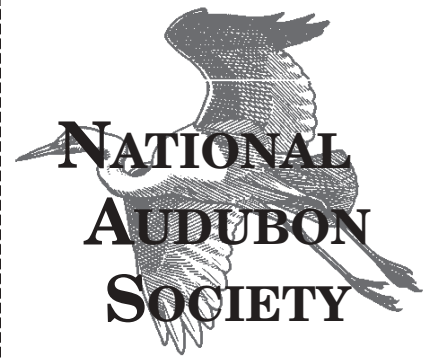
Menunkatuck welcomes new members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Gary Ciarleglio, Rev G R Laedlein, Nora Vetran

Madison: Natalie Tenney, Ken Todd
New Haven: Michael Betz, Scott Hedges, Monty Shepardsen, Michelle Underwood

**Connecticut
Rare Bird Alerts
(203)254-3665**



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

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Guilford, CT 06437

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MENUNKATUCK

July **2003**



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NEXT MEETING

*Wednesday, September 10, 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: _____

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