

## *Six State-owned Sites Named Important Bird Areas*

Audubon Connecticut announced six new Important Bird Areas (IBAs) located in nine towns along the coast of Connecticut. All of the sites include state property under the management of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

In addition to being popular destinations for birders, these sites are also some of the most critical bird habitats in the state, serving a variety of functions for the conservation of birds in Connecticut and even North America as a whole. Several of the locations serve as critical rest stops for thousands of migratory shorebirds on their long annual journeys to and from nesting grounds in the Arctic to tropical wintering grounds. Some are nesting areas for birds of global conservation concern, such as Piping Plover and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, both listed as globally vulnerable by BirdLife International. Still others provide nesting and feeding areas for state-threatened herons and egrets, thus helping to preserve the avian diversity of our state.

Important Bird Areas help put Connecticut's role in the conservation of birds into a global perspective.

These sites also highlight the importance of public lands and the effectiveness of the conservation partnerships that exist in Connecticut. Many entities, from

state and federal agencies and municipalities to a wide variety of nonprofit conservation organizations are all working together to help ensure that these most important places remain special long into the future. By recognizing these sites as IBAs, Audubon Connecticut hopes to facilitate additional cooperation between the various landowners and conservation groups and to increase local stewardship of the sites and the birds that use them.

Three of the newly named IBA sites are in the Menunkatuck chapter area:

**The East and West River Marsh Complex** in Guilford and Madison has a variety of landowners, including the Town of Guilford, the  
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# 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  
PO Box 214  
GUILFORD, CT 06437

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Dorothy Holabird,  
Cindi Kobak, John  
Picard, Dennis  
Riordan

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**Wildlife/**

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**Scholarship:** .....Connie Mortensen

**Membership:** .....Dennis Riordan

**Newsletter:** .....Dennis Riordan

.....(387-2167)

**Webmaster:**.....Dennis Riordan

## Hawk Fest 2004 Lighthouse Point Park IBA, New Haven September 18, 8 A.M. to 2 P.M.

Time	Activity
8 A.M -ongoing	Hawk Watching (mid-field area)
8 A.M -9:30 A.M	Bird Walk
8 A.M - 10:45 A.M	COA Hawk and Birds in flight ID workshop
9 A.M - 10:15 A.M	Children's bird walk with Flo McBride
9 A.M -12 NOON	Canoe Rides on Morris Creek
9 A.M -1 P.M.	Open House at the Ranger Station (featuring Long Island Sound Creatures and Hawk specimens from UCONN's Natural History Museum).
9:30 A.M -10:45 A.M	Bird Walk
9:00 A.M -11:45 A.M	Tours of the historic lighthouse.
9:00 A.M -12:00 NOON	Monarch butterfly banding demonstration
11:00 A.M -1:30 P.M.	Ride the historic carousel.
11:00 A.M -12 NOON	Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk
1:00 pm-2:00 P.M.	Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk
12:15 -1:15 P.M.	Live Raptor Show presented by "Wind over Wings"

Please park in the paved parking lots and walk to the mid-field pavilion. Information booths, events and walks are located there. This event is sponsored by the New Haven Parks Department, New Haven Bird Club, Menunkatuck Audubon Society, New Haven Land Trust, Audubon Connecticut, Northeast Hawkwatch, the Connecticut Ornithological Association and the Connecticut Butterfly Association.

**Artist: Steven D'Amato**



One of John Picard's bluebird boxes had four normal-size eggs and one dwarf egg.  
Photo by John Picard

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.

## Wildlife Plates Available

Connecticut has become the 42nd state to offer a license plate where a portion of proceeds are used to fund wildlife programs. Thirty-five dollars from the sale of each wildlife plate will be deposited into the Wildlife Conservation Fund to benefit species in need of conservation. In addition, \$10 of each \$15 plate renewal will be deposited into the fund. Two choices are available, the bald eagle and the bobcat.

Bald eagles, while still an endangered species in Connecticut, are making a comeback due to improvements in the quality of the environment and active management. Bobcats are a symbol of all that is wild in Connecticut. Solitary and secretive, these seldom seen predators are a vital remnant of our natural heritage. Check <http://www.dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife/geninfo/licplate.htm> for an application form.



# 2004 Calendar

September 8, 2004

*Wood Warblers of Connecticut*

*Jay Kaplan*

October 13, 2004

*Bats of Connecticut*

*Jenny Dickson*

**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 Audubon Day at the Magical Charity Carousel Lenny and Joe's Madison Fish Tale Restaurant Friday, July 23**

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.

## ***IBAs Announced***

*(Continued from page 1.)*

Guilford Land Trust, the Connecticut DEP, and numerous private landowners, and supports significant nesting populations of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and other marsh-nesting birds.

**Hammonasset Beach State Park** in Madison and Clinton is owned by the Connecticut DEP. The diverse habitats of the park make it an important migratory stopover and wintering area for hundreds of species of birds while also supporting significant nesting populations of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and other marsh-nesting birds.

**Quinnipiac River Tidal Marsh Wildlife Management Area** in North Haven, New Haven, and Hamden is owned and managed by the Connecticut DEP and provides nesting habitat for many species of state-listed marsh birds.

The East and West River Marsh Complex and Hammonasset Beach State Park are considered to be of Global Significance to birds, primarily because of nesting populations of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, a species of global conservation concern that has significant populations in Connecticut. This small and secretive brown bird has been classified as globally 'Vulnerable' by BirdLife International, the global conservation organization charged with identification, monitoring and protection of globally threatened bird species. Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows are 'Vulnerable' because of their limited nesting range and exacting habitat requirements. The entire global nesting range of this species is found only in a thin strip of tidal marsh along the eastern seaboard from Maine to Virginia. This sparrow requires tidal marshes dominated by a specific type of marsh grass to successfully nest and raise offspring. This habitat is

sufficiently rare that the entire world range for this species is smaller than the entire land area of Connecticut. Connecticut lies in the heart of the nesting range for this species and because of this, some of our marshes contain very high densities of this species in nesting season, as documented by research conducted by the University of Connecticut.

Also named as IBAs were:

**Menunketesuck and Duck Islands** and surrounding tidal flats in Westbrook are owned by the Connecticut DEP and a private landowner and are a key foraging area for migratory shorebirds and terns; they also support nesting by several species of state-listed birds.

**Charles Island, Silver Sands State Park, and Walnut Beach** in Milford, owned by the Connecticut DEP and the City of Milford, these sites support significant populations of nesting herons and egrets and provide wintering habitat for several species of

hawks and owls.

**Milford Point/Wheeler Marsh/Mouth of the Housatonic River** in Milford and Stratford is owned by 3 different entities. The Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge maintains Milford Point as one of its refuge units, the Connecticut DEP owns and manages the Wheeler Marsh Wildlife Management Area, and the Town of Stratford owns Short Beach, which is included within the boundary. Additionally, the Connecticut Audubon Society operates the Coastal Center at Milford Point, which provides information and educational programs. The area is perhaps the most important rest stop for migratory shorebirds in the state and supports nesting by the globally vulnerable Piping Plover.

For more information on the IBA Program, please see:  
<<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html>>



**Janthina Nielson, Guilford High School graduating senior, is presented with Menunkatuck Audubon Society's \$500 scholarship by Suzanne Botta. will be studying at Eastern Connecticut State University.**

**Photo by Dennis Riordan**

## Field Trips

**Anne Conover Nature Trail  
Exploring the Guilford Salt Meadow  
Sanctuary  
Sunday, July 18 8 A.M. - 10:00**

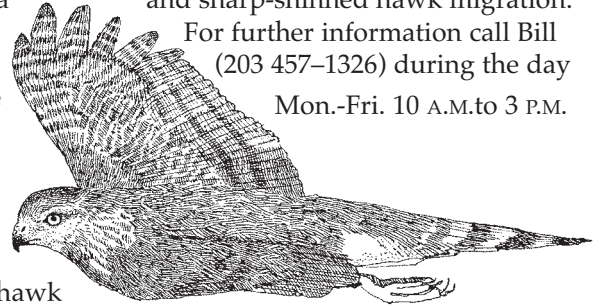
The Anne Conover Nature Trail at the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary is located off Clapboard Hill Road in Guilford. This one-mile trail passes through an upland grass meadow and a hardwood forest and gives views of the East River salt marsh. Saltmarsh sharp-tailed and seaside sparrows

nest in the Sanctuary. Both birds are high conservation priorities in southern New England. For further information contact Suzanne Botta (203) 315-4816.

**Hawk Watch at Lighthouse  
Park  
Saturday, September 25  
8 A.M. – 12 NOON**

Lighthouse Park in New Haven is one of the premier hawk

watch sites. Join Bill Yule and other Menunkatuck members at what is typically the height of the broadwing and sharp-shinned hawk migration. For further information call Bill (203 457-1326) during the day Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 3 P.M.



## Branford Biodiversity Day Species Total 1722

The publication of the results of the Biodiversity Day survey in Branford will be ready soon. In the meantime, we thought our members might like to see a breakdown of the number of species documented during that 24-hour period in September 2003.

Copies of the publication will be sent to Biodiversity Day participants and donors, as well as Branford's town commissions, schools and libraries. Other interested individuals may request a copy by contacting Cindi Kobak, Menunkatuck Audubon Biodiversity Day Publication, PO Box 214, Guilford, CT 06437.

### BREAKDOWN OF SPECIES NUMBERS

MONERA -		5
PROTISTA -		89
LICHENS and FUNGI -		169
Lichens	30	
Fungi	139	
PLANTS -		782
Mosses and Liverworts	55	
Ferns & Allies	35	
Gymnosperms – Conifers	9	
Angiosperms – Woody & Herbaceous	683	
ANIMALS -		677
Invertebrates	488	
Insects	377	
Other	112	
Vertebrates	189	
Fishes	28	
Amphibians	12	
Reptiles	12	
Birds	117	
Mammals	20	
TOTAL SPECIES		1722

# Biodiversity 2004

## Know your natural neighbors



### Noisy Willets of the Salt Marsh

While visiting our coastal salt marshes this summer, you may find it hard to believe that the willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) is listed as a species of special concern in Connecticut. Its cries of *kyaah yah* and *will will WILLET* fill the air as it takes flight over the marsh. Though this large member of the sandpiper family is doing well in selected large salt marshes along our shores, it remains a localized breeder, and the continued loss of shoreline habitat will undoubtedly threaten its ability to expand its range in the state.

#### BIO BITS

Historically, the willet was probably fairly common along Connecticut's once plentiful and healthy salt marshes. But in the late 1800s, the adult birds were hunted and their eggs collected for human consumption. Consequently, the species was extirpated from the Northeast. No breeding willets were again recorded in the state until 1976, over one hundred years later. Then in 1992, when Connecticut first enacted its endangered and threatened species list, the willet was listed as threatened in the state. Thanks to this protection, willet populations have increased in New England and in 1998 the species was downlisted to a species of special concern.

In the East, the willet is found from Nova Scotia to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. There is also a western population. This fairly nondescript sandpiper is grayish brown with a long, sturdy gray bill. At 14 to 17 inches long and with a wingspan of 24 to 30 inches, it resembles a greater yellow legs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), except its legs are not yellow, but gray. But once the willet takes flight there is no mistaking it for another bird. A bold black and white wing pattern and a white rump identify this species.

The scientific species name, *semipalmatus*, refers to the willet's partially webbed feet, which allow it to swim, though it prefers to wade or walk along mudflats, salt marshes, tidal creeks and beaches in search of its food. It will probe for marine worms, aquatic insects, small fish, crustaceans and mollusks in shallow waters, or in mud or sand substrates.

Our local populations of willet breed in salt marshes, on high ground to avoid submersion from the tides. A nest can be a simple depression in the salt marsh grasses, lined with dried grasses. The female lays four olive-green eggs splotched with dark brown, the perfect coloration and pattern to hide among this sea of grass. Both parents will incubate the eggs that hatch sometime in June. Their precocial young, born with downy feathers and eyes open, are ready to leave the nest almost immediately. Willets are noisiest when protecting a nest or their offspring. Get too close and the adults will fly up, sound the alarm and scold you until you depart the area. Please respect their wishes and always, always keep pets on leashes when walking near salt marshes, beaches and other coastal habitats.



Photo by Dennis Riordan

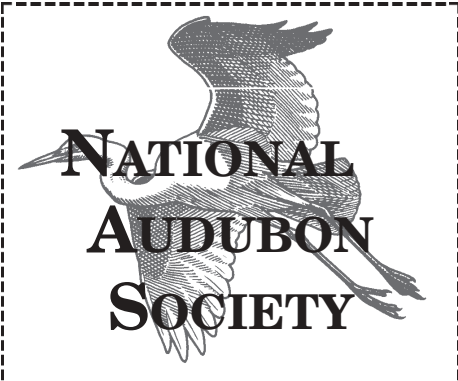
Submitted by Cindi Kobak

## Help Menunkatuck Save Money

One of the most significant recurring costs to Menunkatuck is the printing and mailing of the Newsletter. One alternative is to produce an electronic color version of each issue, in addition to the black and white version for mailing. The electronic version would be available to MAS members with access to an online computer. It would be sent to them as a pdf (portable document format) file attached to an e-mail - pdf files can be read by both PCs and Macs, providing they have Acrobat Reader installed. This software can be downloaded free of charge. Members can then save the newsletter on their computer and print a copy if required.

Developing an electronic version has a number of advantages to members and the club. First, it would be available to members before the mailed version. It would be forwarded on the day it is sent to Royal Printing. Second, the quality would gradually improve with the addition of color photos. Third, it is hoped that members who opt for the electronic version will decide they can do without the mailed version, so saving the club postage and production costs. Members who decide they are interested in the electronic version, would be given a three-issue trial, starting with the September issue, when they would receive both versions, after which they would be asked to decide which version they want.

If you are interested in receiving the electronic version for this trial period (September, November and January issues), please let me have your e-mail address as soon as possible. This will enable me to send you the electronic version of this issue, so you can see the improvement over the mailed version and to ensure that you can access the pdf file. E-mail me at <menunkatuckas@snet.net>. Dennis Riordan



### 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:** Robert T Harrington, Ms Teresa M Patrick, Maribeth Schwarts  
**Guilford:** Donald - Sharon Baechler, Chris Balestracci, Philippe Campus, Bernice D Johnson, David Leake, Alice Loomis, Richard - Janet

Sandella, Joseph Schmitt, Nancy Thompson, Sheila Watson, Charles West

**Madison:** Norma Shulins  
**New Haven:** Susan Bianconi - Robert Voght  
**West Haven:** Clifton - Linda Burris, Lynn A Jones

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

Menunkatuck Audubon Society  
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July **2004**



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**NEXT MEETING**  
**JAY KAPLAN**  
**WOOD WARBLERS OF**  
**CONNECTICUT**

*Wednesday, September 8, 2004*  
*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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