

## *Residential Pesticide Use Soars*

You just heard that pesticides are being broadcast in your neighborhood. Do you: a) turn off your radio or television; b) get the kids and pets inside and seal the windows; or c) go on doing whatever you'd been doing because that stuff kills bugs, not people? For the past few years around Long Island Sound this has not been a casual question, as fears of insect-borne diseases have resulted in massive pesticide sprayings to control mosquitoes. These highly visible incidents of pesticide use are only a small fraction of the total volume of pesticides used in our landscapes and the more people seek to learn about pesticides and their effects, the more questions are raised.

Pesticides may target insects (insecticides), plants (herbicides), fungi (fungicides), bacteria (bactericides or disinfectants), even rodents (rodenticides), or basically any organism that humans don't want in a specific area. People who worry about pesticides in the environment tend to assume most of these chemicals are being used in agriculture or on recreational areas like golf courses. In fact, research has shown that, on an acre by acre basis, the average homeowner uses up to TEN TIMES the amount of pesticides as these other landowners.

Go into any hardware or gardening supply store and you will be confronted with shelves filled with different products to eliminate ants and termites from the home, grubs or dande-

lions from the lawn and so on. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that over SEVENTY MILLION POUNDS of pesticides are applied to residential landscapes every year. While nearly fifty different pesticide formulas are commonly used on residential properties, a handful (the herbicides 2,4-D and MCPP and insecticides diazinon and chloropyrifos) make up the bulk of the pesticides used. Perhaps not surprisingly, these are the pesticides that regularly show up in water samples from urban and suburban streams.

Pesticide products are registered by the EPA, but such registration is NOT a consumer product safety program. In fact, the EPA has listed 90-95% of the active ingredients in its registered pesticides as "possible" or "probable" carcinogens. Studies all over the world are linking pesticide exposure to cancers like brain cancer, leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Many of these products were registered before 1978 when Congress strengthened pesticide testing requirements, so they have not been tested for environmental impacts, neurotoxicity or hormone disruption. What testing is done examines the active ingredients individually and does not take into account exposure to multiple pesticides. Exposure guidelines also assume those exposed are healthy young adult males who would be less susceptible to toxic

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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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## Pesticides

*(Continued from Page 1.)*

effects than small children or the elderly.

While quite a few pesticides have been banned from all uses (DDT, etc.), products like diazinon, which was banned for use on golf courses and sod farms after massive bird mortalities, are still available for use by untrained homeowners. Unfortunately, just deciding not to use pesticides will not protect you from pesticide exposure. Pesticides do not tend to stay where they are applied and studying pesticide "loss" keeps many researchers busy. Pesticides applied as a spray are subject to "drift" where 2-25% of the material blows away from the spray site. Once pesticides are on the ground, a sudden rainstorm can cause "runoff," washing the pesticide into a nearby stream or wetland, or "leaching" of the pesticide into the groundwater where it can cause well water contamination. A study of pesticide contamination of residential well water in Connecticut found that 11% of the wells had detectable levels of pesticides. One well contained five different pesticides and that homeowner was using organic gardening practices. A California study found that if as few as

2% of homeowners in a watershed used diazinon in lawn care, toxic concentrations were found in the streams.

One final idea to consider is that the heavy use of pesticides (and fertilizers) to create perfect lawns only started after WWII, and is an example of a socially accepted practice that needs to be reconsidered. As Michael Surgan, Ph.D., Chief Environmental Scientist for the New York State Attorney General put it, "If you buy the notion that we have to accept a certain amount of risk from pesticides to safeguard the food supply [or prevent the spread of disease], that's one thing. But with lawns, people are applying carcinogens simply for the sake of aesthetics. That's got to change."

Written by Heather M. Crawford  
Coastal Resources Educator  
Connecticut Sea Grant Extension  
Program



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.

**Monarch Butterflies  
Are Subject of Next  
Meeting**

The April 12 meeting will have Charles Remington discussing the 1999 migration of Monarch Butterflies through Connecticut. Professor Remington is Professor Emeritus of Biology and Professor Emeritus and Lecturer in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University. He is chair of the University Natural Preserves Committee and curator emeritus of entomology at the Peabody Museum. Professor Remington serves as director for both the New Haven Land Trust and the New Haven Ecology Project and is a member of the Connecticut Butterfly Atlas Project Steering Committee.

On May 10, Karen Hannon from the Branford River Raptor Center and Hope Douglas of Wind Over Wings, Inc. will present a program of Live Birds of Prey.

The decline of bird species in a wide range of North American habitats—forests, prairies, shrublands, mountain regions, marshes, and deserts—has inspired two decades of intense scientific study of bird ecology and conservation. Robert A. Askins, professor of zoology and chair of the zoology department at Connecticut College has written a new book, *Restoring North America's Birds, Lessons from Landscape Ecology*, illustrated by Julie Zickefoose, that pulls together recent research on bird species and habitats to show how basic ecological principles apply in seemingly different situations. On June 7, Bob will address some of these issues as they relate specifically to New England.

All meetings are at the Nathanael Greene Community Center on Route 77 in Guilford and begin at 7:30 p.m.

# 2000 Calendar

**April 12, 2000**

*Connecticut Migration of Monarch Butterflies – 1999* *Prof. Charles Remington*

**May 10, 2000**

*Live Birds of Prey* *Karen Hannon and Hope Douglas*

**Saturday, May 13, 2000**

*Twelfth Annual Birdathon*

**June 14, 2000**

*Conservation of Open Country Birds in New England Habitat* *Bob 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.**

## Ospreys Return to Connecticut in March

March is the month that ospreys return to Connecticut from and begin their nesting activity. 1999 was a great year for nesting ospreys in Connecticut with 162 active nests (nests containing eggs) reported. The total number of young fledged (reached flying stage) was 315, exceeding the 201 fledged last year and even the record 243 fledged in 1997! Over 200 osprey nesting platforms along Connecticut's coast are monitored regularly by DEP Wildlife Division biologists and many volunteers.



## Field Trips are Scheduled Through October

### Saturday Morning Birding at Hammonasset

Saturdays, starting April 15  
7:50 a.m.

Leader: Jerry Connolly

Meet at the Audubon Shop, Madison  
Every Saturday morning through June, Jerry will lead birders through Hammonasset to see returning sea birds, shore birds, birds of prey, and song birds. There is a \$2.00 fee.

### Hammonasset Evening Birding

Wednesday, April 19, 2000  
6:00 p.m.

Leader: Charlie Rafford

Meet at the Nature Center at Hammonasset State Park

This evening bird walk will present an opportunity to view early migrants as well as lingering land and water birds.

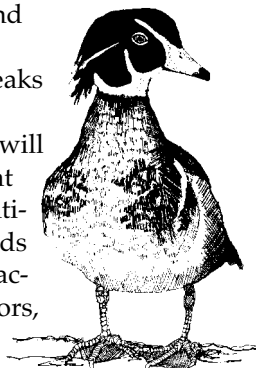
### Branford Supply Pond-Birding for Beginners

Saturday, May 6, 2000  
7:30AM-9:00AM

Leader-Dan Cinotti

Meet at Branford Supply Pond

This bird walk for beginners sponsored by the Menunkatuck Audubon Society will be an easy hike around the upper pond. Participants will have a chance to see many of the spring migrant and resident species as we explore various habitats on the hike. Species likely to be encountered are Wood Ducks, swallows, orioles, thrushes, towhees, phoebes, warblers, woodpeckers and with luck Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Scarlet Tanagers. Time will be taken to point out how to identify particular birds (structural characteristics, behaviors, and some



calls). Bring a bird guide and wear comfortable walking shoes.

### Hammonasset Evening Birding

Wednesday, May 10, 2000  
6:00 p.m.

Leader: Charlie Rafford

Meet at the Nature Center at Hammonasset State Park

This evening bird walk will present an opportunity to view many migrant birds.

### Beginners Birdwalk at Hammonasset for Menunkatuck Birdathon

Saturday May 13  
7:50 a.m.

Leader: Jerry Connolly

Meet at the Audubon Shop, Madison  
Today's Saturday morning bird walk is for beginners to benefit the Menunkatuck Birdathon. Participants will see returning sea birds, shore birds, birds of prey, and song birds. A donation to Menunkatuck is requested.

### Herp Walk

Saturday, May 20, 2000  
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Meet at the commuter parking lot in Madison off Exit 61.

Leader Chuck Annicelli

Limit it to about 20 people. There will be some hiking in rocky areas and maybe wet areas also. We will look for Reptiles and Amphibians. We will also hit a small vernal pond.

### Firetower Nature Walk, Killingworth

Saturday, June 3, 2000  
8:30 AM to 12 PM

Leader: John Himmelman  
(860)663-3225

Meet at the commuter lot at the Routes 80/81 traffic circle in Killingworth.

This walk will bring us through a variety of habitats, mostly in Cockaponsett State Forest; riverine, marsh, vernal pool, coniferous and deciduous forest, and will pass over

one of the highest areas that close to the coast from Canada to Mexico. Attention will be paid to the wildflowers, ferns, amphibians, butterflies, birds and anything else that strikes our interest. Some areas may be difficult for some people, but we'll be movin' slow! Bring drink. Cancelled if raining.

### Wild Mushroom Walk, Timberlands, Guilford

Saturday, October 7, 2000  
10am - 1pm

Leader: Bill Yule (203) 457-1326

Meet at the Archery Range parking lot on Route 80 in North Guilford.

Bring lunch.

Join us as we stroll along the woodland trails of the Timberlands town open space in search of wild mushrooms. Bill will discuss the natural history of our local fungi, as well as any interesting flora and fauna we may find along the way. Walk ends at the archery range picnic area where we will have lunch.

## Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

**East Haven:** Margery Mills, J Travaglino

**Guilford:** Alison L Andrew, Joan Bernstein, Toni Davenport, Ms Jane White Lewis, Della Sekora, Briant Wolfe

**Madison:** Lisa Harding, Klaas Van Heel, Candy-Mike Laragy

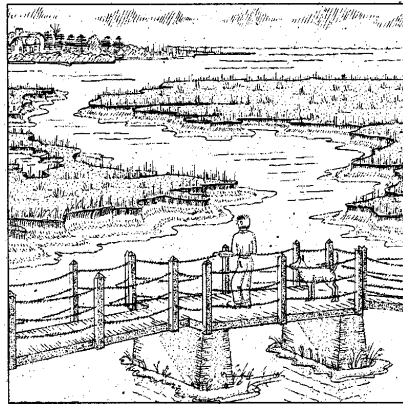
**New Haven:** Bella Vista Sr Center, Kimberly Jannarone

**West Haven:** Jeanette E Brooks, John Keeney, Ms Alma Bertini Laffert, Daniel J Mulherin

## Putting Your LIS Plate Money to Work: Abandoned Trolley Track Becomes Footbridge to Coastal Area

Imagine yourself walking along a footbridge, leaning over the rope railings, looking at the water rushing beneath you and exclaiming in amazement at the breathtaking scenery. Are you in some exotic locale? In fact, you are enjoying a new public access area in Branford. The Long Island Sound Fund provided a \$25,000 grant to the Town of Branford to construct a 480 foot long by 4 foot wide footbridge in the footprint of an abandoned historic trolley track to enhance the site's coastal public access. The bridge extends a popular existing nature walk along the abandoned trolley line, and provides a stunning view of a tidal marsh, Branford Harbor, and the Thimble Islands.

Visitors to the Branford Trolley



Track Footbridge can expect to see numerous shorebirds in the tidal estuary, feeding in the marsh or wading in the shallow waters of the tidal creek. This marsh area also provides habitat for many fish, mammals and invertebrates and is an ideal location for a weekend hike. The trail is approximately 1 mile long, extending into a beautiful forested area.

Crossing a tidal marsh and creek in the Stony Creek area of Branford, the footbridge connects Juniper Point and Pleasant Point.

For information on ordering a Long Island Sound license plate, call 1-800-CT-SOUND.

From DEP's *Sound Outlook*,  
February 2000

## Educators Workshop Scheduled for May 6th

Menunkatuck Audubon's Fifth Annual Educators Workshop, "The Flowering Forest: Plant Biology in Eastern Woodlands," will be presented by Bill Yule on Saturday, May 6, 2000. We invite teachers and nature center staff to join us as we explore a forest in North Guilford. This day-long workshop will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Our focus will be on our local forests, including the many spring ephemeral wildflowers that occur at the foot of a talus slope. We will examine the various components of the mixed forest and the various stages of flowering among the species of deciduous trees. We will also examine how the interactions change among the wildflowers, trees and shrubs as we pass through different micro-habitats and exposures. Our last stop will be at a stream to see the dramatic changes that occur when the forest edge meets a continuous water source.

\$40.00 fee includes coffee, tea, juice, muffins and bagels in morning. Bring a bag lunch. For more information, or to receive a registration form, call Cindi Kobak at 457-1699.



## Volunteers Needed for MAS Board

Menunkatuck Audubon Society needs you to become a member of the Board of Directors. We particularly need directors from East Haven, New Haven, and West Haven.

If you are interested, call Henry Ferris  
245-4397

# Biodiversity 2000

## Know your natural neighbors



### *Flying Ants and the Birds That Love Them*

Everyone knows what an ant looks like. And most people know that ants (Family Formicidae) live in colonies, usually made up of a single queen and her workers. But did you know that these workers are the queen's offspring and are all sterile females?

The queen ant begins a colony by laying eggs in a protected place, like under a log. She tends to her first brood of eggs, then feeds them her saliva when they hatch into larvae, and protects them as they pupate into adult ants. This first brood will then tend to the queen and her future offspring, leaving the nest colony to forage for food for both the queen and the developing young.

Essentially, the queen ant becomes an egg-laying machine. Over time the colony grows in size as the adult worker population increases. Worker ants can live for almost six years and the queen up to fifteen years.

In spring or summer the queen will lay eggs that develop into fertile male and female ants. And these ants have wings! They leave the colony en masse, taking flight to mate in mid-air. This is called the "nuptial flight." If you happen upon one of these flights, stop what you're doing and take the opportunity to sit back and watch the show.

These winged ants emerge from their nest colony, which may be underground, or in a dead tree, or perhaps in an old woodpile. They walk about, searching for just the right spot from which to take flight. Then, single file, they follow one another to this point of no return, be it the tip of a branch or a log on top of the woodpile. It seems that the ant at the front of the line hesitates just a bit, and those behind it begin to crowd too close. "What's the hold up?" Suddenly, the first ant takes flight and the others follow, destined to mate on the wing. (The females, future queens, will store enough sperm from this one encounter to last the rest of their lives. They will drop to the ground, their wings will fall off and they will begin their own colonies. The male ants, having served their purpose, will die shortly after mating.)

While this mass of flying ants is swarming it attracts a variety of hungry opportunists. Dragonflies, the ultimate aerial insect predators, snatch the ants in mid-air. Franklin's Gulls, Common Nighthawks, swallows and swifts have all been known to feast on flying ants.

Last May my husband and I observed a mass of flying insects in our side yard. At first we thought they were mayflies emerging from our wetlands, but on closer inspection we realized they were ants. We tracked them to their point of emergence, an old rotting woodpile at the edge of our neighbor's yard. Since we knew that this spectacle wouldn't last forever, we postponed our weekend chores to sit on the lawn and watch.

As the ants took flight we were able to see them climb higher and higher in the sky against a backdrop of passing clouds. Large dragonflies appeared, cruising at several levels, from rooftop height to far above the treetops. And then the birds came. Soaring over the treetops were Chimney Swifts, Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows. As they ate the ants on the wing we wondered where the heck they had come from. Who rang the dinner bell?

Movement in the woods near the woodpile caught our attention. Several Yellow-rumped Warblers were perched  
(Please see *Flying Ants* on Page 7.)

### **Flying Ants**

*(Continued from Page 6.)*

on branches above the woodpile. They had discovered an easy meal and were hawking the flying ants in mid-air as the insects became airborne. (A Black-and-white Warbler was attracted to all the activity, but we never saw it consume any ants.)

It was our resident male Bluebird, however, that had the best seat at this feast. While the female Bluebird incubated eggs in a nestbox in our yard, her mate stood on the top of the woodpile and gorged himself on the emerging ants before they could take flight!

This incredible flurry of activity was over in twenty minutes. In that time, a colony of ants dispersed to create new colonies, and several species of insects and birds took advantage of that dispersal. It was fascinating to observe the various feeding methods of the birds and how they were able to take advantage of all levels of the ants' emergence. Ants, even those with wings, are clearly an important food source for many species of birds.

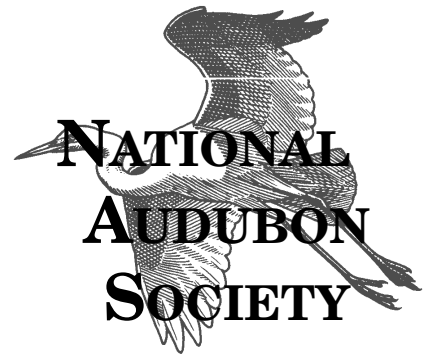
Submitted by Cindi Kobak

### **Connecticut Butterfly Association Announces Schoolyard Butterfly Habitat**

The Connecticut Butterfly Association is offering a free service to schools within Connecticut. CBA will advise schools on the planning, sourcing, planting and maintenance of schoolyard butterfly habitats. Their goal is to create wildlife corridors for butterflies by creating suitable habitat within schoolyards. Ruth Mohr, CBA's Education Chairperson, is a retired educator and has first-hand experience with planting a successful schoolyard butterfly habitat. She has also developed a curriculum to be taught around butterflies.

If you are a parent or teacher interested in this wonderful offer, please contact CBA member Christine Cook at 203-268-3218.

The Connecticut Butterfly Association is a non-profit organization that promotes awareness and appreciation of butterflies and moths. If you are interested in becoming a member, send inquiries to PO Box 9004, New Haven, CT 06532-0004.



#### 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.
- As a senior citizen or a student, I am eligible to join for only \$15.

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  
 Chapter Membership Data Center  
 P.O. Box 51005  
 Boulder CO 80323-1005

#### LOCAL CHAPTER

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

D63/7XCH

## **Connecticut Rare Bird Alerts**

**(203)254-3665**

**(860)599-5195**

**Menunkatuck on the Web:**

**[www.audubon.org/chapter/ct/mas/](http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ct/mas/)**

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# MENUNKATUCK

March **2000**



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## **NEXT MEETING**

### **CHARLES REMINGTON MONARCH BUTTERFLY MIGRATION**

*Wednesday, April 12, 2000  
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: \_\_\_\_\_

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