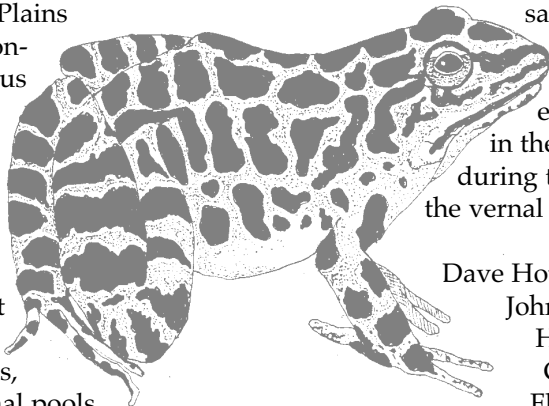


Connecticut Amphibian Monitoring Project Reports First Year Success

Thanks to members of Menunkatuck Audubon Chapter, many other committed environmentalists throughout the state, and Hank Gruner of the Connecticut Science Center, the first year for the Connecticut Amphibian Monitoring Project got off to a great start. Menunkatuck Audubon Society played a vital role by adopting the critical Podunk Plains quadrant and conducting numerous surveys of the amphibian population throughout the year. Within this quadrant is a diverse habitat of wooded swamps, streams, ponds, and vernal pools in which we found eleven different species of amphibians. In the heart of the Podunk Plains quadrant is Cockaponsett State Forest where one can find most of the preferred amphibian habitats. And, thanks to the Madison Land Trust and the trails it has established and maintains, surveying was combined with many pleasant woodland hikes.

The 1998 survey season began early in March with the insistent choruses of **wood frogs** near Hog Pond

and the Madison Lakes. This chorus was soon overwhelmed by the calls of the **spring peepers**. Then one wet March evening the astounding mass migration of hundreds of **spotted salamanders** to their vernal pools to breed was witnessed by surveyors Jerry Connolly, Bruce Reiber, Cindi and Bill Kobak. The success of the nighttime rendezvous of the spotted salamanders was evidenced by the numerous egg masses found in the vernal pools during the surveys of the vernal pools a few weeks later by Dave Houston, Jill Fisher, John and Liz Himmelman, and Cindi Kobak.



Flowing through the Cockaponsett State Forest is a delightful stream in which were found many **dusky** and **two-lined salamanders**, and an occasional **pick-erel** or **green frog** throughout the spring, summer, and fall by John Himmelman, Chuck Annicelli, Bill Yule, and other intrepid volunteers. **Red-backed salamanders** and **American toads** were found beside and under the leaves, logs, and stones surrounding the wetlands.

(Continued on page 6)

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MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Mailing address:

MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 214
GUILFORD, CT 06437

President:.....Henry Ferris
.....(245-4397)

Vice-President: .. Dorothy Holabird

Recording

Secretary:(vacant)

Treasurer:.....Brad Garber

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Joann Barbour, Dan Cinotti,
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Connecticut Amphibian

MonitoringGary Cline

Publicity:Barbara Nugent

Education:.....Cindi Kobak
.....Dorothy Holabird
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Town Reps

Branford:.....Lisa Santacrose

East Haven:Mary Quinlan

Guilford:.....Linda Anderson

Madison:.....Dave Houston

Newsletter:Dennis Riordan
.....(387-2167)

Webmaster:.....Brad Garber

E-mail:

.....menunkatuckas@snet.net

Ospreys Have Another Successful Breeding Season

According to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division, 1998 was another record-breaking year for breeding ospreys in the state. One hundred forty-one active nests were recorded, with 203 young fledged. In Menunkatuck's chapter area (New Haven to Madison) there were 46 young fledged from 26 active nests.

Both adult and young ospreys migrate to their wintering grounds in South America, Mexico and the southern U.S. after the nesting season. The adults return to our area in the spring to nest, while the young stay in their wintering grounds for two or three years until they reach sexual maturity. The increase in active nests this past year (141, compared to 131 in 1997) may be a reflection of the increase in breeding-age ospreys returning to our state.

Unfortunately, there were several reports of osprey chicks becoming entangled in monofilament fishing line and other trash items. Adult ospreys are well known to be trash collectors when they add nest-

ing materials to their nesting platform. In one case, a chick that was old enough to fly became entangled in monofilament fishing line in Westbrook and was seen on the nest struggling to free itself. Another chick in New Haven was also entangled. A wildlife rehabilitator freed these chicks, but found the remains of a second chick in the New Haven nest that was completely entangled in the fishing line. In an Old Lyme nest, a

live chick was found entangled in Mylar balloons and

strings next to its dead sibling.

The surviving

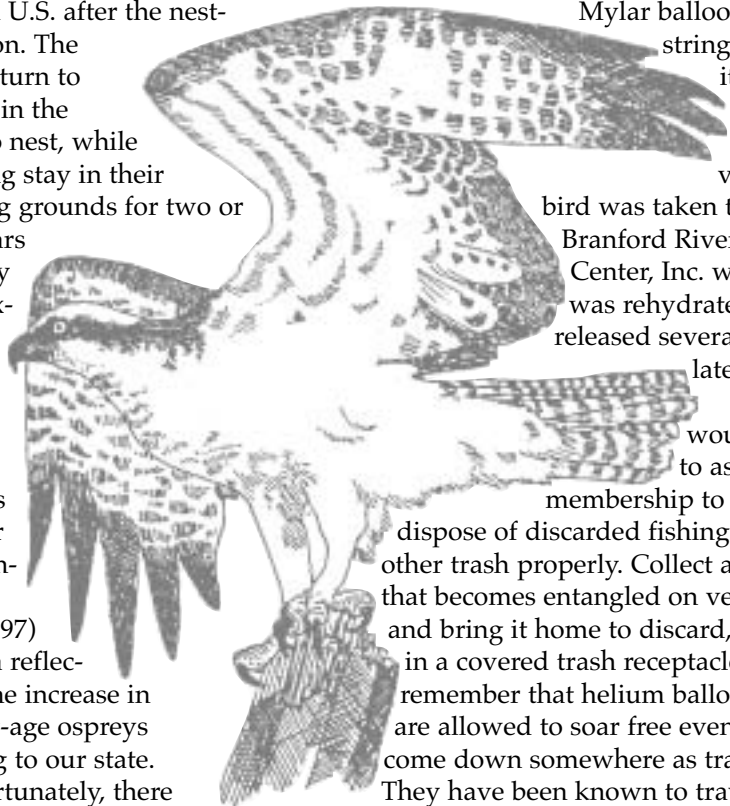
bird was taken to the Branford River Raptor Center, Inc. where it was rehydrated and released several days later.

We would like to ask our

membership to please

dispose of discarded fishing line and other trash properly. Collect any line that becomes entangled on vegetation and bring it home to discard, or place in a covered trash receptacle. Also remember that helium balloons that are allowed to soar free eventually come down somewhere as trash.

They have been known to travel hundreds of miles before falling to earth (or sea) and have killed many species of wildlife, including sea turtles and ospreys. Please share this knowledge with others.

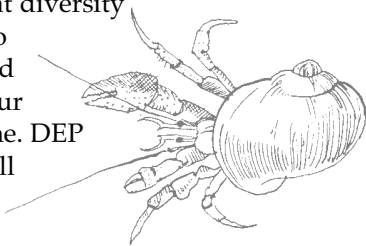


Menunkatuck on the Web:

www.audubon.org/chapter/ct/mas/index.html

Educators' Workshop Scheduled for May 1

Menunkatuck Audubon's Fourth Annual Educators Workshop, "Salt Marsh & Long Island Sound Field Study" will be presented on May 1, 1999, in collaboration with Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection. This day-long workshop will focus on the biodiversity of our local salt marshes and Long Island Sound. We invite teachers and nature center staff to join us as we explore the various habitats and the great diversity of life to be found along our shoreline. DEP Staff will take small groups through four areas of field study: Birds, Botany, Salt Marsh Soils, and Shoreline/Intertidal Zones. The workshop will run from 8:30A.M. to 3:30P.M. \$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.



1999 Calendar

March 10, 1999

*Flora, Fauna, and Fungi:
Biodiversity in Your Backyard*

Peter Alden

April 14, 1999

Denali

Sam Fried

May 1, 1999

Teachers' Workshop at Hammonasset

May 15, 1999

Birdathon

September 26, 1999

"Take Flight!" Teachers' Workshop

Flo McBride

Indoor meetings are at the Guilford Community Center and begin at 7:30 P.M.

The Guilford Community Center is on Route 77 between Route 1 and the Guilford Green.

Refreshments are served.

SAVE ON YOUR TAXES!



Use your state income tax refund to help save Connecticut's wildlife and plants. Their future is on the line – the "Endangered Species/Wildlife" Fund line on your tax return. Just check the box to make a donation and show your support. Your gift is deductible from next year's federal income tax.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

<http://dep.state.ct.us>

Biodiversity 2000

Introducing Our 'Know your natural neighbors' Logo

Menunkatuck Audubon is pleased to present a new logo that we will be using in conjunction with our Biodiversity Initiative. Local wildlife artist, Michael DiGiorgio, with input from our Biodiversity Committee, designed this beautiful logo just in time to be included in this newsletter.

While it depicts only a few of the thousands of species in our area, we hope it will remind people of the diversity of life here, in our local towns. We encourage everyone to get outdoors with field guides in hand and get to "know your natural neighbors."



Blue Jays, Beech Trees, Black Bears, and Beech Bark Disease – A Complex Relationship

The lives of many forest inhabitants are intertwined – sometimes in fascinating and unexpected ways. Consider how blue jays, beech trees, bears, and a complex disease of beeches are interconnected. Blue jays, like their nutcracker cousins, gather seeds from trees and cache them for winter use. Nutcrackers focus on pines; the jays on oaks and

BIO BITS

beech. Jays extract up to a dozen beech nuts from the tree-top burrs, hold them in their expandable throats, and fly, often several miles, to where they roost, nest, or

breed. Frequently, these places support conifers. Dropping to the ground, the birds disgorge the nuts and then proceed to hide them beneath the litter, singly, in different spots several yards from the pile. Conifer trees, rocks, and other winter-visible features serve as memory cues or beacons to help relocate the cached seed. Nuts that escape being retrieved are ideally situated to germinate and eventually become trees. Often groups of beech trees are a family, having come from the same parent tree.



By this means, blue jays introduce, reintroduce, or redistribute groups of beech seed with such genetically determined traits as form, growth rate, and susceptibility or resistance to insects and disease.

Beech bark disease is a lethal or disfiguring disease of beech caused by the combined actions of a tiny scale insect and bark-killing fungi. The insect and one of the fungi were accidentally introduced to Halifax, N.S. before 1890. In northern New England, New York, and the Maritimes where the disease is most severe, groups of disease resistant trees occasionally occur. Genetic studies reveal that trees in groups are families and distribution patterns suggest that they were "planted" by blue jays. Thus, these birds influenced the structure of the beech forests and determined the patterns of resistance or susceptibility.

Beech bark disease reduces tree vigor and nut production. Beech nuts are highly desired – in some northern areas critical – for wildlife. For example, unless they gorge on fat- and protein-rich nuts before denning, female black bears cannot bear young. In some northern regions of Maine, the normal two-year seeding cycle has entrained the reproductive cycle of bears. Beech bark disease has affected this relationship and black bears will often travel long distances to where groups of disease-free trees are seeding – groups of trees that owe their origin to the activity of winter-savvy blue jays. It's a complex world.

Submitted by David Houston

Three Field Trips Are Scheduled

Three more field trips have been scheduled in conjunction with MAS's Biodiversity 2000 project. The field trips will highlight the interconnect- edness of life on earth.

Mica Ledges

April 17, 1999

Leader: David Houston

Fee: none

Limit: 45, reservation required. Call Connie Mortensen at 488-7533 for reservation and meeting place.

Co-sponsored by MAS and the Madison Land Conservation Trust, this trip will hike some new trails in north Madison covering the natural history of Mica Ledges with David and other naturalists.

Firetower Road, Killingworth

May 8, 1999

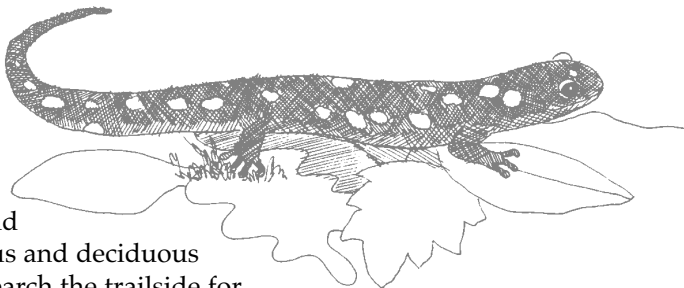
8 A.M. - noonish

Leader: John Himmelman

Fee: none

Meet at 8 a.m. at Commuter Lot at Route 80/81 Traffic Circle in Killingworth.

This trail winds through a variety of habitats in Cockaponsett State Forest; marsh, riverine, valley stream, and upland coniferous and deciduous forest. We will search the trailside for butterflies, ferns and wildflowers, the vernal pools for amphibians, and the trees for birds. At one point we will end up at the highest point this close to the coast from Canada to Mexico. Sections of the trail may be difficult for some, although we take it all pretty slow. Bring water and a snack. Wear comfortable hiking shoes. If you need more info, contact John at (860) 663-3225.



Field Trips

Saturday, April 17, 1999

Mica Ledges, Madison

David Houston

Saturday, May 8, 1999

Cockaponsett S. F., Killingworth

John Himmelman

June, 1999

*Bauer Park, Madison
Breeding Bird Survey*

Jerry Connolly

Breeding Bird Survey Bauer Park, Madison

June, 1999

Leader: Jerry Connolly

Fee: none

Jerry Connolly will conduct a breeding bird survey of the Bauer Property in Madison during early June. Details are still being worked out and will be announced in the May Newsletter.

Bulletin Board – Nature Observations/Oddities

Members, share your outdoor experiences at each Menunkatuck meeting by bringing in photographic or pictorial observations/oddities and put them on our new bulletin board.

Birdathon Saturday, May 15, 1999

DEP Investigates Malformed Frogs

For the past three years, researchers have been finding high numbers of deformed frogs across the northern United States, including Connecticut. The most common malformations consist of extra, partial or missing limbs, split limbs and missing eyes. Frogs in Connecticut have been found with missing limbs and eyes, undeveloped lower jaws and under-developed feet.

You may be wondering what is causing these deformities. To date, there are no concrete answers because not enough data has been collected to develop any conclusions. However, several theories have been proposed and involve the following factors:

- Natural Occurrence - Because of a frog's biology, where significant changes occur from the larval stage to the adult stage, abnormalities do occur with a small percentage (1% or less) of the population. As a clarification, these are actual deformities and not the loss of limbs due to injuries or predation, which can be confused as a malformation.
- Ultraviolet light - Some people speculate that an increase in ultraviolet radiation (UV-B), resulting from depletion of the ozone layer, may be affecting developing eggs or converting chemicals in the frogs' environment from a non-toxic to a toxic form.
- Chemical Contamination - A build up of heavy metals or pesticides at some breeding sites may be affecting egg or tadpole development.
- Parasites - Some naturally occurring parasites can cause malformations in frogs.

There is also a theory that the abnormalities are caused by a combination of all or some of the above mentioned factors.

Since August 1997, DEP

researchers have been investigating frog malformations at a pond in Sterling. Malformations were first reported from this pond by a local youth who was fascinated by frogs. The investigation in Sterling includes catching and examining frogs, testing water and sediment from the pond and looking at the fish species which are present. During the summer of 1998, high school students from around the state helped capture frogs from the pond in Sterling, which were then examined for malformations and released back into the pond. The students were participating in the Summer SEARCH Program, which is open to any high school student in Connecticut who is interested in assisting with scientific field research.

To determine how widespread frog deformities are in Connecticut, DEP researchers are also sampling frogs at 15 randomly selected sites from around the state. The results from this statewide survey should be available in the near future.

Connecticut residents have been asked to help provide information by reporting any malformed frogs to the

DEP. Anyone who finds a malformed frog is asked to photograph the frog and write down the species (if known), the types of deformities observed and the location where the frog was found, and report these findings to: Dawn McKay, DEP Natural Resources Center, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127, (860) 424-3540, or send e-mail to: dawn.mckay@po.state.ct.us. After information on any deformed frogs is gathered, the DEP is asking that all frogs be released where they were found.

From DEP's *Connecticut Wildlife*
November/December, 1998

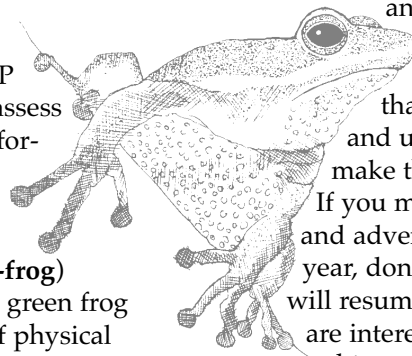
Species of Special Concern

It is no longer legal to collect Northern Leopard Frogs or Eastern Box Turtles. Both of these species have been experiencing long-term population declines which may be accelerated by their collection. Appreciate them in the wild, but leave them where you find them. Please respect these species' rights to live and breed in their natural habitat.

CAMP

(Continued from Page 1.)

Culminating our surveys this year, Dawn McKay and Heather Fried from the Connecticut DEP enlisted our aid to assess the frequency of deformities in the green frogs of our area. Of the fifty green frogs (and one **bull-frog**) examined, only one green frog had any evidence of physical deformity, that being a discoloration of one eye. None of the frogs that were captured (and subsequently



released) had any missing limbs or toes. All in all, the results for the first year of the survey indicate a diverse and healthy amphibian population in MAS's Podunk quadrant. My thanks to all those, named and unnamed, who helped make these surveys a success. If you missed out on the fun and adventure of discovery this year, don't worry, the surveys will resume again in March. If you are interested in participating this year, call Gary Cline at 387-9474.

Submitted by Gary Cline

Connecticut Rare Bird Alerts

(203)254-3665
(860)599-5195

Volunteer Opportunity

Are you interested in birds? Would you like to learn more? You can share your interest with senior citizens as part of the new Senior Series outreach program at the Peabody Museum. The Museum will provide the training, then you will give 2 to 4 hours of your time per month presenting programs to senior citizens in New Haven. Interested? Please call Sally Lanzi at 432-3731. Training begins in early April.

Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcome the following new members:

Branford: Dennis Herzog, Lisa Huck, Teresa Patrick, James A Paul, Barbara Rovsek

East Haven: Frances B Palmer, Ralph Amodel, Frances Firment, J Johnston, Mrs F B Vantek

Guilford: Eric G Anderson, Robin Charney, Nan Defilippo, J Drews, Ronald S Duman, Carol Hills, Barbara Krasner, Doris McGriff, Todd Page, Mrs Carol L Peters, Laura J Ress, Virginia Schulz, Joseph Viviani

Madison: William Ammon, Donna Barthe, Peter Clark, Nora Dixon, Andree Duggan, Mrs Marybeth Frosco, Jay-Mary A Gunther, M MacGruer, Dale Peterson, Louis Tresselt, Judith Wiley

New Haven: Dr-Mrs W P Batsford, Diane Bell, Ms Deborah M Ferguson, Dr Jay Gates, Jonathon Gillette, Karen Goldsmith, Ellie Greenberg, Carl Laccarino, Aimlee Laderman, Aimee Light, Katherine A Martindale, Paul E Pozzi, Joseph D Saccio, Mr Eugene M Waith, Paul Wiley



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

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
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Guilford, CT 06437

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MENUNKATUCK

March **1999**



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

NEXT MEETING

PETER ALDEN FLORA, FAUNA AND FUNGI: BIODIVERSITY IN YOUR BACKYARD

*Wednesday, March 10, 1999
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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Mail to:
Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437