

MENUNKATUCK May 2003

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

Island Rookeries Disturbed by Irresponsible Visitors in 2002

Every spring, the Wildlife Division tries to spread several important messages about people's interactions with wildlife, and include] respecting nesting areas used by shorebirds and waterbirds along the Connecticut coastline. We realize it is difficult to get the message out to everybody. But, as hard as we try to spread the word, each year we document several instances of people harming wildlife, usually unintentionally. Either out of a desire to help or just general curiosity, people often, by their very actions, end up hurting wildlife.

Maybe the yearly warnings, reminders and signs telling people what they should or should not do when they encounter wildlife is not enough. People tend to learn best by example and experience. Therefore, the intent of this article is to go beyond the "do's and do not's" and explain what happens when people disregard warnings and/or do not use common sense.

Duck Island, just off the coast of Westbrook, is

a special place during summer. It is special not simply because it is a quaint little island in Long Island Sound, but because it serves as a summer home to several members of the heron family, such as great and snowy egrets. It is here that these birds build nests and raise their young. Duck Island is so important to these long-legged wading birds that it was recently designated a Connecticut Natural Area Preserve. For several years, the DEP Wildlife Division has worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to cooperatively protect the nesting colony. The interior portion of the island is closed for the season and fenced off from the beach. Nesting area closure (Continued on page 4.)



Great Egret. Photo by Dennis Riordan

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MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Branford Biodiversity Day Is a Community Effort

As you know, Menunkatuck Audubon is planning its third Biodiversity Day, to be held September 12 and 13, in the town of Branford. We will once again invite biologists, naturalists, teachers and their students to participate in this exciting 24-hour biological survey of an entire town.

In addition to the survey volunteers, Menunkatuck will rely on the help and cooperation of other volunteers within the town of Branford. We look forward to working closely with

the Branford Land Trust and others to create site lists and town maps for the survey teams. Additionally, volunteers will be needed to act as guides to lead teams to various sites within Branford.

If you, or someone you know, would like the opportunity to spend the day guiding a team to survey sites during this town-wide bioblitz, please contact Cindi Kobak, Biodiversity Committee chairperson, at 203-457-1699 or biodiversity@menunkatuck.org



Harley Stoleson, member of the CT Valley Micological Society, identifies fubngi at the Guilford Biodiversity Day in 2001. Photo by Dennis Riordan.

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.

Moths at May Meeting

At the May meeting of Menunkatuck Audubon, author/naturalist John Himmelman will present a slide/lecture based on his newly published book *Discovering Moths*. John is one of the foremost experts on these understudied beauties. Copies of his exquisitely written book will be available at the meeting with a book signing to follow.

In June, expert birder/photographer Frank Gallo will take us *Birding Southeast Arizona and the Grand Canyon*. Don't miss this journey through one of North America's premier birding destinations.

Firedance

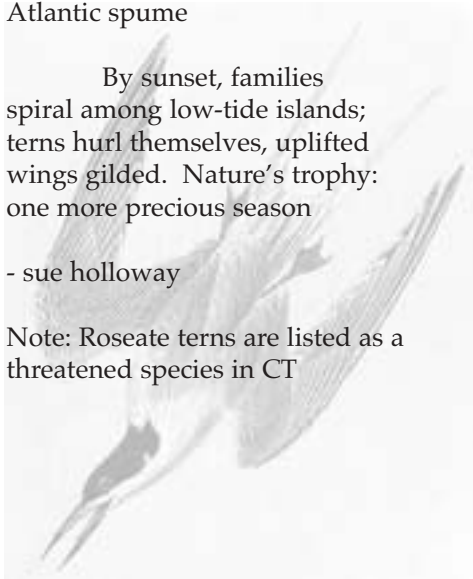
On migration's odyssey, in constant motion, terns swirl, sweep, dive. Blush breasts, long split tails, black caps swoop, hover, twirl

Hours pass, but still they swarm, following a glinting under sea's fluid skin, plunging, cloaking feathers in Atlantic spume

By sunset, families spiral among low-tide islands; terns hurl themselves, uplifted wings gilded. Nature's trophy: one more precious season

- sue holloway

Note: Roseate terns are listed as a threatened species in CT



2003 Calendar

May 10, 2003

Birdathon

May 14, 2003

Discovering Moths

John Himmelman

June 11, 2003

Birding Southeast Arizona and the Grand Canyon

Frank Gallo

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.

Saturday Morning Birding at Hammonasset

Saturdays, beginning April 12, 7:50 A.M.

Leader: Jerry Connolly

Meet at the Audubon Shop, Madison

Every Saturday morning through June 28, Jerry will lead birders through Hammonasset to see returning song birds, shore birds, waders, and birds of prey. There is a \$4.00 fee. For complete details call The Audubon Shop at 203-245-9056.

Birdwalk at East Rock Park

Sunday, May 18, 7:30 A.M.

Leader: Jerry Connolly

Meet at Eli Whitney Museum, Whitney Ave., New Haven. See dozens of warblers, tanagers, orioles, and other songsters at this hot spot for neotropical migrants. Call The Audubon Shop for details.

Eighth Annual Educator Workshop Is May 17

Menunkatuck's eighth annual Educator Workshop will take place May 17th, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in North Guilford. Chris Sullivan, from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Project SEARCH, will present a workshop on stream monitoring.

Streams and rivers play an important role in our local environment and are essential habitat for many creatures that live in Connecticut. Numerous schools across the state currently monitor their local streams

for biological, chemical and physical elements. Participants in this workshop will be armed with the skills to begin a basic stream-monitoring program in their area.

This hands-on workshop will involve a morning session discussing land use, followed by a trip to a high quality stream to collect a sampling of benthic (bottom-dwelling) macroinvertebrates and to test for temperature and dissolved oxygen. After lunch we will spend the afternoon using taxonomic keys and micro-

scopes to identify the invertebrates collected. The identity of these organisms provides a cheap and effective way to monitor the long-term health of a waterway.

Teachers of grades 6 through 12 and nature center staff are invited to join us as we explore stream water quality. For more information, or to register for this workshop, contact Cindi Kobak, Education chairperson, at 203-457-1699, or <education@menunkatuck.org>.

Island Rookeries Disturbed

(Continued from page 1.)

signs and a large educational sign explain to visitors why the island is closed and why it is important.

For several years, the birds and island visitors have shared Duck Island without incident. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. During the 2002 nesting season, the birds had returned as usual and began the task of building nests and laying eggs. Early in the nesting season, human visitors to the island decided it was an ideal spot to build a bonfire. The bonfire was built outside the fence; ironically, right in front of the educational sign detailing the importance of the island to herons and egrets. The resulting smoke and disturbance caused the majority of great and snowy egrets, glossy ibis, little blue herons and others to abandon the rookery entirely. A handful of birds did eventually return to try again, only to be confronted a month later with people off-loading cookout supplies, grills and their canine companions from their boat. The end result for the birds of Duck Island? A lack of common sense and a blatant disregard for this Natural Area turned

a peaceful nesting site into a place unfit for raising young birds. Only time will tell if the birds that abandoned Duck Island abandoned it forever.

Heron and egret rookeries on Charles Island in Milford and Duck Island in Westbrook have received a tremendous amount of human disturbance during the 2002 nesting season. To prevent total abandonment of these rookeries by the birds, both islands [were] completely closed to the public until September 9 [2002].

Hopefully, by describing actual examples, we can spread the word and prevent future incidents. You can also help by contacting the Wildlife Division or the TIP hotline (1-800-842-HELP) to report any violations or

concerns.

Condensed from an article in the July / August 2002 issue of DEP's *Connecticut Wildlife*.

Menunkatuck Audubon asks its members to help spread the word this spring and summer while out on the waters of Long Island Sound. Happy (responsible) birding!



Great Egret chicks. Photo by Dennis Riordan

Menunkatuck Audubon Field Trips Spring 2003

Spring Bird Walks I
Warblers and Neotropical Migrants
May 3 – 8:00 A.M.
East Rock Park, New Haven

East Rock Park is one of the premier spots in New England to see the “butterflies of the bird world,” wood warblers. It is possible to see as many as twenty different species of warblers in a single morning here. John Picard is your leader. Call for info: (860) 669-3115.

Birdathon
May 10

All Menunkatuck Audubon members will receive a mailing describing this important birding and fund-raising activity. Stay tuned for updates on our most important bird watching event of the year.

Spring Bird Walks II
Peak of Migration Walk
May 24 – 8:00 A.M.
Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison

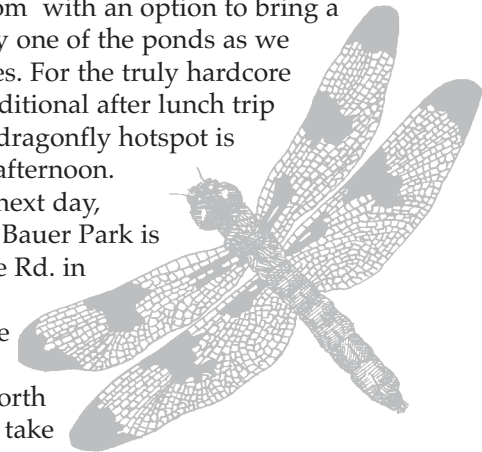
More quality birding for warblers, songbirds and shorebirds during the high point of migration at one of the most productive bird watching sites in Connecticut. Call John Picard for info: (860) 669-3115.



Butterflies and Dragonflies
June 14 – 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M.
Bauer Park, Madison

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. This trip is for beginners, families and children of all ages as well as more advanced naturalists. No special equipment is 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 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 June 15. Bauer 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, Hunter’s Trail 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.



Biodiversity 2003

Know your natural neighbors



Black Fly Season

May is a glorious time of year. Spring is in full swing with its colorful blooms, fragrant scents and melodic bird-song. But anyone who hikes near a surging stream can tell you it is also the season of the pesky black fly.

BIO BITS

There are over 1,500 species of black fly worldwide, with about 150 species found in North America. The black fly family, *Simuliidae* is in the order *Diptera*, the true flies. These stocky little flies are between one-eighth- and one-quarter-inch in length. Most accounts refer to them as being humpbacked in appearance. But what you are most likely to remember about them is their annoying habit of swarming about your head as you travel beside

flowing water or as you sweat while digging soil in your garden.

Black fly females lay their eggs in swift flowing streams and rivers, either at the edge of the water or directly onto its surface. Black fly young require these highly oxygenated waters to survive. The hatching larvae attach themselves en masse to submerged rocks and branches by means of hooks or suckers at the tips of their abdomens. (What appears to be an immersed mat of moss may actually be a mass of black fly larvae.) Though anchored to one spot, they are able to feed by filtering tiny organic particles, such as bacteria and diatoms, through their feathery mouthparts as the food drifts past. Once ready to pupate, the larvae will form cocoons and complete their metamorphosis to adult flies while still underwater. In late spring and early summer the adult black flies will emerge – and that's when our troubles begin.

Male black flies feed only on nectar, and while the females will also sip flower nectar we know them best when they create those painful welts on our skin as they suck our blood. Both mammals and birds are fair game to a female black fly.

Thankfully, our local black fly population is fairly small and the season is short, so we should consider ourselves lucky. Regions to the north of us where mountain streams produce prodigious numbers of these flies have an unofficial "black fly season," a time best spent indoors. And many a New Hampshire car carries a bumper sticker paying tribute to this very successful insect – it proclaims the black fly New Hampshire's state bird.



Texas A&M University Research & Extension
Service WWW Server

Menunkatuck Birdathon

Menunkatuck Audubon Society and the New Haven Bird Club invite you to join us on Saturday, May 10, 2003, for the fifteenth MAS annual Birdathon.

To support the 2003 Birdathon, please mail your pledge or donation to:

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
PO Box 214
Guilford, CT 06437

To participate in Birdathon, email your May 10 bird list by May 15 to dholabird@snet.net

Your support is greatly appreciated.



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: J B Aldrich, Michael Bergeron, Kenneth Olson, Esther Otten

Clinton: Beverly Strom Bluth

Guilford: Sharon H Barrett, Palmer Eleanor Epler, Gary Lachanch, Mr-Mrs Charles Palmer

New Haven: George Ljafferis, Mrs Albert J Solnit

West Haven: Andrew Knapp

Connecticut Rare Bird Alerts (203)254-3665

Menunkatuck on the Web:

www.menunkatuck.org

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Guilford, CT 06437

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MENUNKATUCK

May **2003**



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NEXT MEETING

JOHN HIMMELMAN DISCOVERING MOTHS

*Wednesday, May 14, 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: _____

Mail to:
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