

## *Menunkatuck Audubon Summary of Activities 2001-2002*

### Preface

This year for the first time, the last edition of the newsletter is partially devoted to a review of all the activities of Menunkatuck during 2002. The board of directors and the newsletter staff hope that this report to our members will provide you with a better understanding of Menunkatuck's many and diverse activities, and perhaps spark your interest in participating in one or more of the fascinating endeavors that your Audubon Society is involved in. We also hope that you will continue to support these important efforts with your generous contributions to the Annual Appeal and the Birdathon.

### Education

The Annual **Birdathon** was held May 11, 2002. The day was a wonderful success. Several groups were led throughout the chapter area. Menunkatuck and New Haven Bird Club participated together and a total of 185 species were counted. MAS Vice-president Bill Yule, and Board members Cindi Kobak and Dorothy Holabird participated in the Birdathon, walking the Trolley Trail in Guilford and spotting 76 species.

We plan to collaborate with the New Haven Bird Club again next year on this spring fundraising event.

Menunkatuck is proud to announce that we will assemble a team in conjunction with the New Haven Bird Club to participate in the 2002 **New Haven County Christmas Bird Count**.

Menunkatuck participated in the **Great Backyard Bird Count**, sponsored by Audubon and Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, in February. This four-day event invited backyard birders to participate in "citizen science" as they helped scientists define the status of our winter birds. Menunkatuck publicized the event in local newspapers and included the phone number of a chapter contact person who submitted data for people that did not have online capabilities.

Menunkatuck participated in **CT Audubon's Eagle Festival** in February. A group of board members and other volunteers manned one of the designated sites along the Connecticut River with binoculars and scopes. The volunteers pointed out to visitors the location of eagles and other birds in the area.

**General Public Meetings** were held the second Wednesday of each month, September through June.

The **Seventh Annual Workshop for Educators**, *Connecticut's Landscape, Our Geologic Heritage*, was (Continued on page 4.)

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# Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 14

## 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  
PO BOX 214  
GUILFORD, CT 06437

**President:**.....SuZanne Botta  
**Vice-President:** .....Bill Yule  
**Treasurer:**.....Connie Mortensen  
**Secretary:** .....Catherine Ferguson

**Directors:** .....Henry Ferris,  
Dorothy Holabird,  
Cindi Kobak, John  
Picard, Dennis  
Riordan

**Program:**.....Jerry Connolly

### Wildlife/

**Conservation:**..Bill Yule

### Audubon Council

**Delegate** .....SuZanne Botta

### Connecticut Amphibian

**Monitoring:** .....John Picard

**Publicity:** .....Barbara Nugent

**Education:**.....Cindi Kobak  
.....Dotty Young  
<education@menunkatuck.org>

**Membership:**.....Dennis Riordan  
<membership@menunkatuck.org>

**Newsletter:** .....Dennis Riordan  
.....(387-2167)  
<newsletter@menunkatuck.org>

**Webmaster:**.....Brad Garber

Menunkatuck Audubon Society in cooperation with the New Haven Bird Club invites any member who may be interested in participating in this year's Christmas Bird Count to join in this holiday bird watching tradition.

What is it? Up until the turn of the century, people commonly engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt": They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered quarry won. On Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, called for an end to the slaughter. He suggested that, rather than shooting birds, people count them instead. So began the Christmas Bird Count. Twenty-seven birders held twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts that day. Today, more than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. They spend a day in the field within a prescribed area (called a "count circle") and count all the birds seen that day in that area. The results are tabulated and a statistical "snapshot" of the relative state of the winter bird population across the county is obtained. A big part of the Christmas Bird Count is meeting old and new friends, establishing partnerships and plain old comradeship.

Who can participate? Any member of Menunkatuck Audubon can participate. MAS encourages all birders and newcomers, experienced, intermediate or beginner in ability, to join in this celebrated tradition. All you have to do is grab your binoculars and be willing to set aside all or part of December 14 to spend outside watching and counting.

What do I do? If you want to be part of this year's Christmas Bird Count you can call the MAS/CBC Coordinator, Bill Yule at (203) 457-1326 for details, or leave a message with Jerry Connolly at The Audubon Shop at 245-9056. You can also email Bill at <droberts03@snet.net>.

This year we will participate as guests of the New Haven Bird Club and individuals will be assigned to a team from the NHBC to do a section of the greater New Haven circle. The New Haven Bird Club has a long and distinguished history in both the Christmas Bird Count and bird conservation in general. Some of the finest birders in the country are NHBC members and it is a privilege to join them this year for the CBC. I hope you decide to join in.

Bill Yule

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.

## November Program to Feature Native Planting

The November meeting of MAS will feature Denise Ciastko, owner of The Natural Attraction Project, Inc., a native New England plant nursery located in Killingworth Ct. In her program, *Gone Native – Planting for Life*, she will discuss how native plants can promote biodiversity and land stewardship, provide food and shelter for native wildlife, be hardy and withstand cold and heat, do not need harmful pesticides and fertilizers, and promote clean water.

In December, Madison resident and master carver Don McKinlay will demonstrate *How to Carve Birds*. Don is world-renowned as a bird carver.

Sam Fried returns in January to tell us about his trip *Birding Panama*. For a preview of Sam's talk, see "Bountiful Birding" in the September/October issue of *WildBird*.



Photo: Jerry Bauer, NPS

# 2002-2003 Calendar

November 13, 2002  
*Gone Native – Planting for Life* Denise Ciastko

December 11, 2002  
*How to Carve Birds* Don McKinlay

December 14, 2002  
*Christmas Bird Count*

January 8, 2003  
*Birding Panama* Sam Fried

February 15-16, 2003  
*Connecticut River Eagle Festival*

May 10, 2003  
*Birdathon*

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.

## Audubon Shop Grand Opening on Saturday, November 9

The Audubon Shop will have the grand opening of the new store on Saturday, November 9. The day will begin with Jerry Connolly leading a birdwalk at Hammonasset from 8:00 A.M. to 10:30 A.M. From noon until 1:00 P.M. *Wind Over Wings* will present *Live Birds of Prey* with Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Saw Whet Owl, and Eurasian Eagle Owl. Children's wildlife book authors John Himmelman and Frank Gallo will close out the day signing books from 1:00 P.M. until 4:00 P.M. The Audubon Shop is located at 907 Boston Post Road in Madison.

## Summary of Activities

(Continued from page 1.)

held on a gorgeous May 4, 2002. The fourteen participants included teachers and environmental educators from Branford, Guilford, Madison, New Haven and North Branford. State Geologist, Ralph Lewis, led the workshop. After a morning slide presentation and discussion, we spent the afternoon exploring geologic features at Chatfield Hollow State Park and Hammonasset Beach State Park.

Two **Field Walks** were held during the summer:

Bill Yule and Cindi Kobak co-led a Dragonfly and Butterfly walk Saturday July 12 in Bauer Park, Madison. There was a great mix of adults and children discovering the rich diversity of butterflies and dragonflies in the park.

Bill Yule, former officer of the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society, and lichen expert Carol Lemmon, State Entomologist, co-led a walk on Mushrooms and Lichens on August 10. Bill, Carol and an enthusiastic group of naturalist explored the fascinating world of fungi and lichen in the Guilford Town Forest known as "Timberlands."

Bill and John Picard have begun to assemble an itinerary of field trips for 2003 that will be announced during the winter.

Jerry Connolly has been and will continue leading Saturday morning **bird walks**. During the months of January and February he also led **eagle-sighting trips** along the Connecticut River.

The **Annual Scholarship** was awarded to two graduating seniors in our chapter area who plan to study life sciences or other environmental fields. One award was for \$500 and another was for \$200.

**Know Your Natural Neighbors**, a weekly natural history piece written by Cindi Kobak, appears in several local papers, including *The Sound* (Branford), *The Guilford Courier*, and *The Source* (Madison).

SuZanne Botta presented three environmental education programs for Menunkatuck in the spring of 2002. *Leaves*, an education program at the Children's Building in New Haven, attracted 45 participants ranging in age from 3-11. *Watersheds and the Farmington River* was presented to approximately 30 attendees of the Farmington Rotary Club. SuZanne and the CT Project SEARCH Coordinator set up a table at the Melissa Jones Elementary School Science Night. They showed how freshwater macroinvertebrates (dragonfly and mayfly nymphs and larvae) are used to determine the water quality of local streams. It was a busy evening and the table received over 50 visitors.

Project SEARCH is a science curriculum enrichment program of the West Hartford Science Center and CT DEP. Additionally, SuZanne completed the CT DEP Master Wildlife Conservationist Certification. This course focuses on wildlife issues in Connecticut. It enables her to better answer questions regarding falconry, wildlife rehabilitation, nuisance wildlife, etc.

### Biodiversity Initiative

The 2001 **Guilford Biodiversity Day** publication was completed and sent out in the summer of 2002. (Please see box on page 5 for a breakdown of the species documented.)

A slide presentation of the Guilford Biodiversity Day is in the process of being assembled by Bill Yule. A special meeting will be scheduled for the slide show.

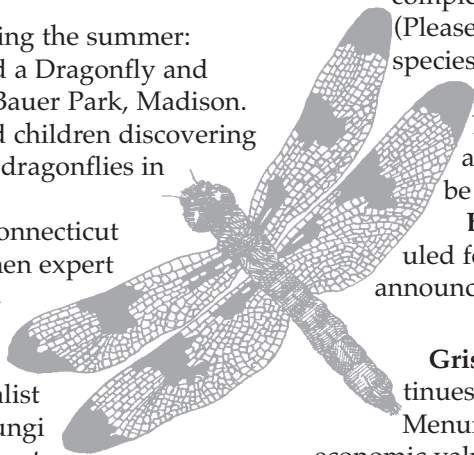
**Branford Biodiversity Day** has been scheduled for September 12 and 13, 2003. Details will be announced in future newsletters.

### Advocacy

**Griswold Over-Development:** Henry Ferris continues to work diligently on this project. Menunkatuck provided testimony regarding the economic value of birders and other eco-tourists.

After five nights of hearings by the Madison Planning and Zoning Commission, the applicant (the Leyland Corporation) withdrew its latest application for 192 housing units on the 32 acre airport site. Opposition was strong from the Department of Environmental Protection, The Committee to Stop Griswold Over-Development, five environmental intervenors, including Menunkatuck and the Audubon Council of Connecticut, and numerous Madison residents who spoke eloquently in opposition. Fully 85% of those speaking were opposed to this obscene use of a property that threatened the priceless natural resources at Hammonasset State Park, the Hammonasset River, and Long Island Sound itself. In the meantime, the lawsuit filed by Stop Griswold Over-Development against the original zone change was granted legal standing by the court. A final decision is anticipated in a few months.

It is expected, however, that Leyland will return in a month or two with another application. They will probably drop a few housing units and attempt to defuse DEP opposition by promising a 100-ft. setback from the natural resources. This would be insufficient to buffer the negative impact of so many buildings. Leyland will again meet strong opposition to their declared strategy of wearing down their opponents. Menunkatuck, the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, Save the Sound Inc., and the Audubon Council are all expected to intervene again under Connecticut's Environmental Protection Act. In addition, the Attorney General of Connecticut has assured



us that he intends to oppose this development project to the end. Once again, we are counting on the public to help us fight this damaging proposal that would forever change the face of the beautiful Hammonasset River Estuary that we all love. Contributions to Stop Griswold Over-Development at PO Box 1298, Madison, Ct 06443 will help pay for the ongoing lawsuit, as well as expert witnesses at the next hearing.

**Islander East Natural Gas Pipeline:** SuZanne Botta has been and continues to work closely with CT Stop the Pipeline to prevent Islander East from constructing a natural gas pipeline that would go through the chapter area and across Long Island Sound. Menunkatuck has provided testimony on the impact to wetland, birds, biodiversity, marine mammals, and erosion concerns in potentially impacted wetlands (inland and costal). Menunkatuck has intervenor status with the CT Siting Council.

In mid-October the CT Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a very strong letter that denied Islander East a federal coastal zone consistency determination. This is a requirement for receipt of two federal permits that the state DEP oversees, as well as a requirement for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit. In response Islander East has withdrawn its application. It is fairly safe to assume, that Islander East will submit a modified application, but today we can all rejoice in our victory!

**Non-Profit Advocacy Workshop:** SuZanne Botta attended a workshop presented by the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters and Alliance for Justice. The workshop, Rules of the Game, provided information regarding what non-profit organizations can and cannot do in terms of advocacy. The workshop was extremely informative. Menunkatuck's advocacy issues will not affect our 501(c)3 status.

## Newsletter

The newsletter is printed 6 times per year.

## Conservation

**IBA:** Cindi Kobak assisted Guilford's Town Environmental Planner, Leslie Kane, and past board member, Dan Cinotti, in gathering information to nominate the East and West River Salt Marsh Complex in Guilford for Important Bird Area status with National Audubon. The nomination has been submitted and we are currently awaiting news of its acceptance.

**New Boat Launch:** The town of Madison Economic Development Commission and the Trust for Public Land is potentially going to build a non-motorized boat launch off Route 1 along the East River (extremely close to the Guilford Salt Marsh property). Nothing has been proposed at this time, currently they are looking at funding and feasibility. We are keeping in contact with the Trust for Public Land regarding this project.

**Branford Fish Ladder Project:** This project is in the early planning stages and we are keeping in contact with the Branford River Project and Branford Land Trust regarding this project and will assist when needed.

**Bauer Park, Madison:** The town is considering converting this large open space (mix of woodland and fields) into baseball fields. We are keeping up-to-date and up-dating our members as needed.

**Connecticut Amphibian Monitoring Project:** One of our new board members, John Picard, is currently receiving training on organizing volunteers to monitor amphibians in a pre-specified area. This is part of a state-wide monitoring program run through the DEP and West Hartford Science Center.

*(Continued on page 7.)*

### **Breakdown Of Species Numbers Found in Guilford on Biodiversity Day 2001**

MONERA -	12	Angiosperms -	
Blue/green algae	12	Woody & Herbaceous	743
PROTISTA -	125	ANIMALS -	904
One-celled Organisms	125	Invertebrates -	695
LICHENS and FUNGI -	315	Insects	559
Lichens	35	Other	136
Fungi	280	Vertebrates -	209
PLANTS -	877	Fishes	39
Mosses and Liverworts	62	Amphibians	15
Ferns & Allies	39	Reptiles	9
Gymnosperms - Conifers	33	Birds	123
		Mammals	23
		TOTAL SPECIES	2233

# Biodiversity 2002

## Know your natural neighbors



### *Fallen Leaves – Nature’s Fertilizer*

Have you ever stopped to consider what will become of this autumn’s fallen leaves? They have formed a colorful carpet beneath the trees and it would appear that their usefulness has long passed. But given the chance, this leaf litter will decompose, returning nutrients back to the soil and nourishing the very same trees from which it fell.

#### **BIO BITS**

Leaf litter can’t decompose on its own. It gets help from a whole community of bacteria, protozoa, fungi and animals that live in the soil and feed on dead plant and animal matter. Mushrooms, slime molds, mites, springtails, millipedes, isopods, slugs and earthworms are but a few of these helpers. They are the decomposers – the clean-up squad, the ultimate recyclers.

Check out leaf litter that has been allowed to accumulate for many years. You will notice that below this year’s dry fallen leaves is a layer of moist leaves. In this layer some leaves have been skeletonized, eaten by microorganisms until only the stem and veins remain. Further down, the decomposing leaves are darker, maybe a bit slimy, maybe covered with strands of white fungal growth. Below this layer the leaves have decomposed to the point where they are no longer recognizable. This is the humus layer, the transition between the organic matter (fallen leaves) and the inorganic matter (soil). Minerals such as calcium, potassium, nitrogen, phosphorus, magnesium and other critical elements are recycled into the soil from the organic litter. Natural, self-sustaining fertilizer!

If possible let those beautiful leaves lie where they fall; they protect bare soil from the eroding action of heavy rains. Another idea – heap shredded leaves on gardens as a mulch and natural fertilizer.



Submitted by Cindi Kobak

## Summary of Activities

(Continued from page 5.)

### Hammonasset Bird Blind

Materials donated by Menunkatuck have been used to construct a second bird blind at Hammonasset at the restored marsh east of Middle Beach. Tree Swallow nest boxes continue to be monitored and nesting data is being kept by volunteer Charlie Rafford.

The Willards Island habitat management plan continues as a work in progress as habitat changes are monitored and assessed on an on-going basis.

## Menunkatuck welcomes new members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

**Branford:** Diane Bennet, Joyce Chase, Mr-Mrs Richard Johnson, William Macchia, Linda Meyer, Cynthia Wilson, D Wood

**Guilford:** Stanley Altman, Ashcroft Family, Ronald Goldfarb, Martha Harris, Jane White Lewis, Janet Poss, Wendy Sabol, Norma Shulins, Ms Jennifer A Trombley, Brian-Debra Vitelli, Elliot Wilcox, Karen Williams,

Mrs F B Yates

**Killingworth:** Ron-Lynne Scarpa

**Madison:** Ruth Kurler, Ann Johnson, Owen O'Neil, Gita Roess, Kim D Wilson

**New Haven:** Jim Ayers, Karen Baker, Thomas Campbell, Scott Dewell, P Holt, Richard-Jane Levin, Kathy Johnson, Jennifer Molnar, David Frederick Swensen, Shirley Varmette

**Tucson, AZ:** Dean M Benson

**West Haven:** Bernieda Conlan, Cynthia Holt, Olga Marra

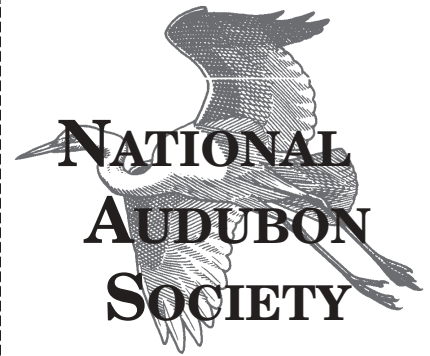
## The Board

We have three new board members:

Bill Yule, Vice President; Dorothy Holabird; John Picard

Henry Ferris remains on the board, focusing on and keeping the board and our members up-to-date on the Griswold Airport Development.

Dan Cinotti stepped down from the board although he continues to play a role on Menunkatuck's conservation efforts.



### 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

Connecticut  
Rare Bird Alerts  
(203)254-3665  
(860)599-5195

Menunkatuck on the Web:

[www.menunkatuck.org](http://www.menunkatuck.org)

Menunkatuck Audubon Society  
PO Box 214  
Guilford, CT 06437

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**MENUNKATUCK**

November **2002**



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# **NEXT MEETING**

## **DENISE CIASTKO GONE NATIVE – PLANTING FOR LIFE**

*Wednesday, November 13, 2002*

*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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City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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