

Menunkatuck Audubon Summary of Activities 2003 - 2004

This has been a busy and exciting year for Menunkatuck Audubon. From education programs and field walks to advocating for the land we love and what we believe to be right, Menunkatuck Board members and volunteers can be seen hard at work through-out the chapter area and all year long. Menunkatuck continues to collaborate with our long-standing friends in the environmental community. Additionally, we are reaching out to other groups and organizations within our chapter area and beyond. Menunkatuck is blessed with active board members and volunteers.

Two thousand five promises to be another great year of interesting speakers with beautiful presentations, exciting field trips and a continuing effort to educate for, and advocate on behalf of, our environment.

Below is a brief description of each of Menunkatuck's 2003 -2004 activities. The width and breadth of the projects and programs, the dedication of board members and volunteers, and the particulars of each accomplishment fill me with a great sense of pride and joy. We hope you will feel the same way as you see what Menunkatuck has accomplished during 2003 - 2004.

Meeting goals set for 2003 – 2004

The italicized items below were goals outlined in our 2002 – 2003

annual report.

“Menunkatuck will continue last year's full calendar of field walks.” – In addition to growing the number of field walks by two, MAS added a full day trip.

“Menunkatuck will continue to fight the over-development of Griswold as well as the proposed pipeline.”

– Menunkatuck once again provided testimony to the Madison Planning and Zoning commission.

“Menunkatuck will create and show the Branford Biodiversity Day slide show.” – As described below, the program was created and shown. The program is now “in the can” and readily available for additional showings.

Goals for 2004-2005 include:

- Recruit 1-2 new board members
- Participate in the New Haven Hawk Festival
- Create an e-mail list for field walks and/or activist list
- Expand use of Internet calendars to promote MAS programs and activities
- Assist Branford Trail (work with Whitewood school)
- Build an extremely large sand barrel to be home to bank swallows in the chapter area
- Conduct a workshop on invasive plants

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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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(Continued from page 1.)

- Create a second Biodiversity slide program, "How to organize a Biodiversity Day"
- Develop a long-term plan to systematically increase membership.

Education and Outreach

The **Annual Birdathon** was held May 8, 2004. The day was a wonderful success. Groups were led throughout the chapter area. Menunkatuck and New Haven Bird Club participated together and a total of 185 species were counted. This serves as a fundraiser for Menunkatuck.

Menunkatuck participated in **Connecticut Audubon's Eagle Festival** in February. A group of board members and other volunteers manned the Chester Ferry Dock, one of the designated sites along the Connecticut River with binoculars and scopes. When the public came to the site, Menunkatuck volunteers pointed out the location of eagles and other birds in the area. Board members and other Menunkatuck volunteers manned the site Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

General Public Meetings are held monthly, the second Wednesday of each month. Menunkatuck does not hold general public meetings during July and August.

A **Branford Biodiversity Day** program was hosted by the Branford Land Trust. Menunkatuck presented a preliminary program on its findings during the Branford Land Trust's annual "Blackstone Library Lecture Series." The program highlighted the diversity of flora and fauna in Branford as well as the

work of the volunteers.

Board member John Picard has been working with Jeffery Middle School's art class to create a **trail walk guide**. The students will do the illustrations for the map and Menunkatuck will provide the text.

In addition to listing programs in our newsletter. Menunkatuck has been posting programs on the **Connecticut Environmental Leader List Serve**.

Field Programs

This has been another great year of field programs for Menunkatuck, thanks to the leadership of Vice-president and trip leader, Bill Yule, as well as other trip leaders, John Picard, Dorothy Holabird, Dennis Riordan, and Suzanne Botta. From 2001-2002, two field walks were held. From 2002-2003 Menunkatuck organized eight field programs and finally, in this most recent year, 2003 – 2004, Menunkatuck ran ten field programs:

- **Tour of the Bird Collection at the Peabody Museum** – January 17 and 24, 2004 – led by Kristof Zyskowski, Collections Manager organized by Board Member Dennis Riordan

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Photo by Joanne Volage

Visit Menunkatuck's web site: www.menunkatuck.org

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.

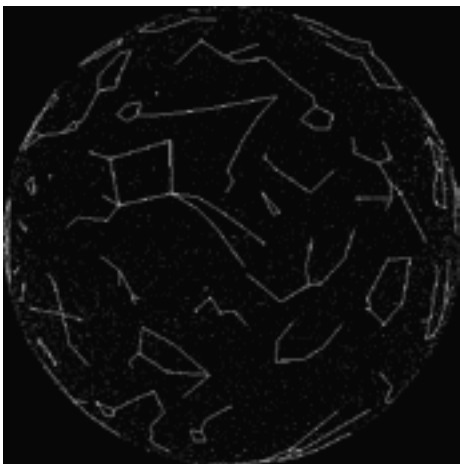
African Wildlife Will Be Topic in November

Director of Connecticut Audubon's Fairfield Center and veteran tour leader Milan Bull will present a slide show of the east African wildlife paradise in the *Wildlife of Tanzania*. A veteran of more than a dozen trips to Kenya and Tanzania, Mily led his most recent trip to Tanzania for CAS in June, 2004.



Secretary Bird from <www.birdingafrica.net>

Join Branford author/astronomer Bob Crelin for *Astronomy 101*, an introduction to the heavens. As a follow-up to his presentation on light pollution last June, this program will illustrate what we can see of the heavens when the lights are low.



Sky map for December 10, 2004, 9 p.m., New Haven, CT from <www.wunderground.com/sky/ShowSky.asp?>

2004 Calendar

	November 10, 2004	
Wildlife of Tanzania		Milan Bull
	December 8, 2004	
Astronomy 101		Bob Crelin
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.		

**Give a Gift Membership to National Audubon
Help Menunkatuck Audubon**

If you are looking for a holiday gift, make it a membership in National Audubon. If you use our form, Menunkatuck receives the full \$20.

Please enter a gift membership in the National Audubon Society and in the local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and membership card to the address below.
 Gift Membership for: My check for \$20 is enclosed.

Name: _____ My Name _____ :
 Address: _____ Address _____ :
 City: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ ZIP: _____ 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

Winter Field Trips

Late Fall Migrants – Early Winter Birds

Sunday, November 14, 2004 -- 8 A.M.

Hammonasset Beach State Park

Search for late fall migrants and early winter species including owls, horned larks, longspurs, ducks, raptors, etc. Meet at the park entrance at 8 A.M.. Dress warmly for this half-day trip. For further information, contact Gina Nichol at 203-453-6723 or e-mail sunrisebirding@aol.com.

Winter Birds

Sunday, December 12, 2004 -- 9 A.M.

Lower Connecticut River

Join us to explore areas around Old Saybrook and Old Lyme in search of

Peabody Museum, New Haven

Kristof Zyskowski, ornithology collection manager at Peabody Museum, will take us behind the scenes to view the bird collection of skins, eggs, nests, and mounted birds. The Peabody collection includes about 70% of the world's species. There is a limit of ten people per session and pre-registration is required; call Dennis Riordan 203-387-2167. Park behind the museum in the lot off Whitney Avenue; meet at the entrance to the right of the new addition as you look at the museum from the parking lot. The collection is kept at 59°F; dress warmly.

Birding the Rhode Island Shoreline

**Saturday, January 22, 2005 –
7 A.M. - 6 P.M.**

This all day trip will take us to Sa-riest Point, Beavertail State Park, Istom Pond and Moonstone Beach in Rhode Island. We will search for wintering grebes, loons, scoters, scaup, purple sandpipers, harlequin ducks (a Sachuest specialty), gannets, hawks, owls and any rarities that are around. Dress warmly and bring lunch. Meet at 7 A.M. at the I-95 Exit 59 commuter lot to carpool. For further information, contact Gina Nichol at 203-453-6723 or e-mail sunrisebirding@aol.com.

New Haven Harbor Tour

Sunday, February 6, 2005 – 8:30 A.M.

New Haven Harbor to Milford

We will begin at the information booth at Long Wharf and work westward toward Milford with stops at Sandy Point, St. John's by the Sea, Oyster River and Milford Point. Meet at Long Wharf information booth at 8:30 A.M. For further information, contact Gina Nichol at 203-453-6723 or e-mail sunrisebirding@aol.com.

Connecticut River Eagle Festival February 13-14

Chester Ferry Dock

Once again, Menunkatuck will provide spotting scopes at one of the prime eagle viewing sites during Connecticut Audubon's major winter event. Other activities will take place in Essex. For full Festival information call 1-800-714-7201 or visit <www.ctaudubon.org>.

Seals and other Winter Wildlife

Sunday, March 6, 2005 -- 8 A.M.

Hammonasset Beach State Park

Search for wintering birds as well as harbor seals and other wildlife. Meet at the park entrance at 8 A.M. Dress warmly for this half-day trip. For further information, contact Gina Nichol at 203-453-6723 or e-mail



Artist: Steven D'Amato

ing lot in Old Saybrook at 9:30 A.M. Dress warmly for this half day trip. For further information, contact Gina Nichol at 203-453-6723 or e-mail sunrisebirding@aol.com.

Duck/Eagle Hop

Saturday, January 8, 2005 – 10 A.M.

Lower Connecticut River

Bill Yule will lead a trip along the Connecticut River from Old Saybrook north in search of wintering ducks and eagles. Meet at Dock and Dine in Old Saybrook. For more info call Bill 203-457-1326 weekdays between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M.

The Bird Collection

Saturday, January 15, 2005 – 10 A.M.

Saturday, January 29, 2005 – 10 A.M.



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- **Eagle-Duck Hop** – January 25, 2004 – led by Bill Yule
- **Maritime Aquarium** – March 27, 2004 – The field trip included a Winter Creature Cruise (with one of the best seal haul out days of the season – over 40 seals spotted), a behind the scenes tour and an IMAX show. The trip quickly filled to capacity as we were restricted by the space on the boat. Additionally, many of us made the journey using the train and the remaining car-pooled.
- **Dance of the Timberdoodle** (Woodcock), Westbrook Salt Meadow Unit – March 21, 2004 – led by Bill Yule
- **Butterflies of Bluff Head** – April 2004 – led by Bill Yule
- **Butterflies and Dragonflies of Bauer Park** – June 13, 2004 – led by Bill Yule and Cindi Kobak



Photo by Dennis Riordan

- **Spring Warbler Migration East Rock** – May 15, 2004 – led by Bill Yule
- **Paddling the East River** – June 2004 – led by Suzanne Botta
- **Exploring the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary via the Anne Conover Trail** – July 18, 2004 – led by Suzanne Botta.

Jerry Connolly (Speaker Coordinator) of the Audubon Shop leads **Saturday morning bird walks**.

During the months of January and February he also leads **eagle-sighting trips** along the Connecticut River.

The **Annual Scholarship** of \$500 was awarded to a graduating senior in our chapter area who plans to study marine biology.

Know Your Natural Neighbors are natural history articles written by Cindi Kobak and printed weekly in several local papers including: *The Sound* (Branford), *The Source* (Madison and Killingworth), *The Guilford Courier*, the *East Haven Courier* and the *North Haven Courier*. Selected articles of Know Your Natural Neighbors also appear in our newsletter.

Biodiversity Day

Branford Biodiversity Day was held September 12-13, 2003 and was a fantastic success. Over 80 biologists, naturalists, educators and their students participated in this 24-hour biological survey of the Town of Branford. A total of 1,723 species were documented, in spite of cloudy, cool weather.

After many months of collecting and compiling the survey data, the resulting publication was printed and distributed in July, 2004 to participants, donors, Branford's town commissions, schools and libraries.

Advocacy

Griswold Over-Development

– Henry Ferris continues to work diligently on this project. Menunkatuck again provided testimony to the town planning and zoning regarding the economic value of birders and other eco-tourist. Unfortunately, the town planning and zoning has recently approved the development proposal – however, we will continue to fight to protect the properties abutting Hammonasset.

Islander East Natural Gas Pipeline – Suzanne Botta once again provided written and oral testimony on behalf of Menunkatuck regarding the impact to wetland, birds, biodiversity, marine mammals, and erosion

concerns in potentially impacted wetlands (inland and coastal). The most recent testimony was to the Federal Secretary of Commerce during the hearings in New Haven.

Supporting the Protection of Open Space – At the request of a Branford Conservation Commissioner, Menunkatuck developed and delivered to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection a letter of support for grant funding for the Bender property in Branford.

Newsletter

The **newsletter** is printed six times per year. In addition to informing our members (as well as gratis recipients) about Menunkatuck's activities and events (advocacy, education, workshops, general meetings, etc.), we include **BioBits ~ Know Your Natural Neighbors**, information on generally local flora and fauna. We also include relevant upcoming events and announcements in our chapter area, i.e. Land Trust walks, DEP and National Audubon calls for volunteers.

Board member, Dennis Riordan, has successfully overhauled the Menunkatuck **web site**. During the web site overhaul standardized e-mail addresses were created all for board members.

Conservation

Connecticut Amphibian Monitoring Project – Board member, John Picard, is currently organizing volunteers to monitor amphibians in a pre-specified area. This is part of a statewide monitoring program run through the DEP and West Hartford Science Center.

Menunkatuck volunteers continue to provide conservation services in the chapter region. These services include:

- Cleaning out tree swallow nest boxes at Hammonasset State Park
- Answering questions regarding wildlife

Biodiversity 2004

Know your natural neighbors



WINTER BIRD FEEDERS

So, one of your favorite pastimes during the winter months is to feed the birds. You love the variety of species, from chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers to cardinals, finches and sparrows. You are observant of the different methods each species uses to collect and eat the seed and suet you offer. And your handy bird field guide is kept within reach for the identification of any new avian visitors. Watching birds through a kitchen window on a cold winter morn is an easy and rewarding hobby and you affectionately and possessively refer to these feathered guests as yours.

BIO BITS

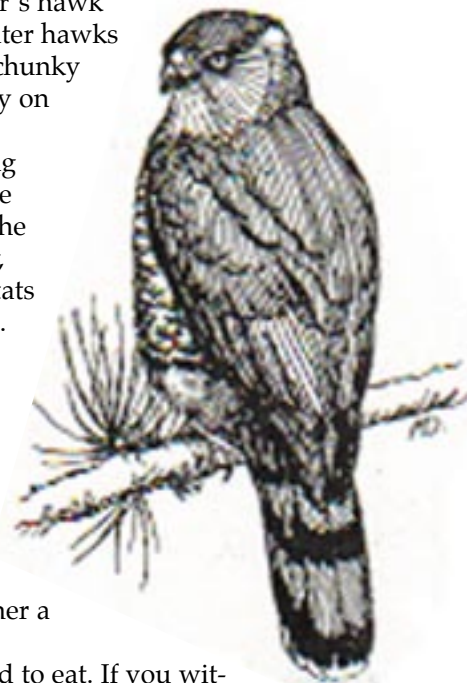
Anyone who feeds birds near woodland edges may also be providing bird food of another sort. The sudden appearance of a hawk bursting onto the scene in pursuit of the fleeing songbirds is both a disturbing and an exhilarating experience.

Typically, the hawk that just buzzed through your yard would be a Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) or a sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*). These accipiter hawks are built for speed and maneuverability among forest vegetation. Unlike the chunky red-tailed hawk that feeds mainly on rodents, these slim hawks feed primarily on other birds.

Like many other predators, these hawks suffered the wrath of humans long before laws were written to protect them. Hawks were frequently shot in large numbers as they migrated south in the fall. Then DDT took its toll, thinning the hawks' eggshells and thereby compromising their ability to reproduce. Today, though both species are known to breed in the state, loss of dense forest habitats in our area will probably prevent these birds from becoming common nesters. The Cooper's hawk (pictured) is listed as a threatened species in Connecticut and the sharp-shinned hawk is listed as endangered.

You are most likely to see Coops and sharpies during fall migration (mid-September to early November) or as winter visitors to your feeders, though it may not always be clear which species you are seeing. Similar in appearance, the Cooper's hawk is the larger of the two species. And like most hawks, the females are quite a bit larger than the males. So, if you have a crow-sized hawk it is probably a female Cooper's. If the hawk is robin-sized, probably a male sharp-shinned. Those confusing in-between ones may be either a male Cooper's or a female sharp-shinned.

Winter survival depends on a creature's ability to sustain itself. We all need to eat. If you witness a hawk preying on a songbird at your feeder you have been privy to an event that normally takes place every day in the hidden corners of the forest. Celebrate the wonder of life.



Submitted by Cindi Kobak
Illustration by Mike DiGiorgio

Saturday Morning Eagle Watches

Saturdays, January 15, 22, and 29, and
February 5, 12, and 19

7:45 A.M.

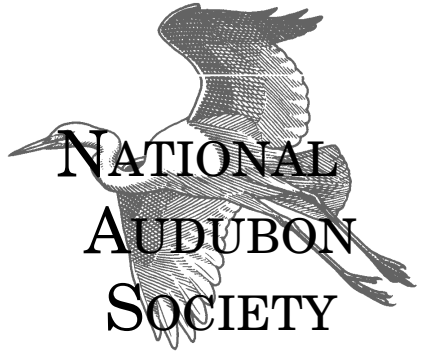


Leader: Jerry Connolly

Meet at the Audubon Shop, Madison

See Bald Eagles from a variety of locations along the Connecticut River. There is a limit of 35 and pre-registration is required. The price is \$20 and includes soup and sandwich lunch at Oliver's Tavern in Essex.

For complete details call
The Audubon Shop at 203-245-9056.



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

Menunkatuck welcomes new members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

Branford: Todd Sperry

Guilford: Raymond Dudley, Paul Hughes Whitney Morse, William Palmer, Marilyn Roth

New Haven: Irene Adamsl, Joan Lubi, Marilyn Molloy, Theresa Russo, Janice Scholl

West Haven: Mrs V Elias, Randi Finney, Joan P Howel

Connecticut
Rare Bird Alerts
(203)254-3665

LOCAL CHAPTER

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

D63/7XCH

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Guilford, CT 06437

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MENUNKATUCK

November
2004



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NEXT MEETING

MILAN BULL
WILDLIFE OF TANZANIA

Wednesday, November 10, 2004
7:30 PM
Guilford Community Center

State: _____ ZIP: _____

*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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City: _____

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