

Take Flight! Workshop Is a Hit

Bauer Park in Madison was the setting for an educators workshop on September 25th entitled "Take Flight!" presented by Florence McBride, Partners in Science Specialist with the Hamden Public Schools. Twenty-one teachers and park and nature center educators participated in the workshop, co-sponsored by Bauer Park and Menunkatuck Audubon.

This day-long workshop focused on learning teaching techniques for bird study and related nature study for grades K-6, beginning with indoor classroom use of the program's vast packet of educational materials. Then participants headed outdoors (after a brief, but powerful thunderstorm) to practice various observation techniques. Flo had placed two-dimensional life-sized color models of common bird species around the property. Placed in their proper habitat, these



Flo demonstrates bird rubbings lesson.

models allowed participants to study their size, shape, plumage and habitat requirements. Later, participants were able to test their observation skills on real-life raptors that were moving through the area. Several ospreys soared overhead, as well as a red-tailed hawk and turkey vultures. We were treated to extended looks at three or four kestrels that had taken up temporary residence in the back meadow, flying down from the tops of fruit trees to catch insects in the open field. A Cooper's hawk stirred things up when it landed in a large deciduous tree at the edge of the field, occasionally flying out to chase the kestrels.

Study of bird vocalizations was also stressed and materials included two cassette tapes of bird sounds, one of spring songs and one of fall/winter

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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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“Poor Man’s Salmon” Indicate LIS Quality

During colonial times, Connecticut's rivers teemed with great numbers of anadromous fish, including Atlantic salmon, American shad, and striped bass. Shad became known as “Poor Man's Salmon” because most people saw no reason to eat such a bony creature except for the poor colonists who could not afford the more expensive bass and salmon.

Fish species that migrate up rivers to spawn, hatch in fresh water, and live their adult lives in salt water are called anadromous. American shad, along with their close cousin, the river herring, are considered important indicator species for the Long Island Sound ecosystem because they provide information on the health of both the salt water and fresh water portions of the LIS watershed.

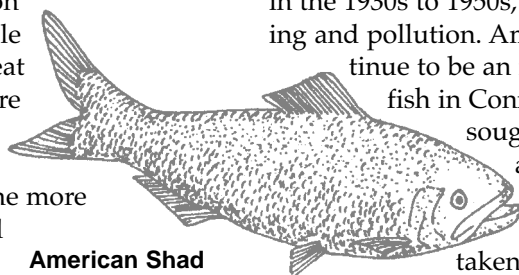
The DEP conducts trawl surveys, and works with volunteers who count these fish species as they pass through fish-ways, to determine population size. This information helps DEP keep tabs on the health of the LIS estuary, marine resources dependent on shad and herring, and accessibility of spawning streams. Based on this information, DEP undertakes management actions to help restore or maintain healthy fish populations and habitat

dep.state.ct.us/whatsap/press/1999/

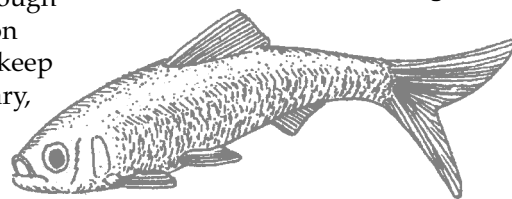
ps0528a.htm>.

Both the river herring and American shad experienced population declines from the 1750s to 1900 due to damming of rivers, and again in the 1930s to 1950s, due to over-fishing and pollution. American shad continue to be an important sport fish in Connecticut, highly sought for their fresh and smoked flesh. River herring are also taken by recreational anglers, but more importantly serve as a primary source of food for such-predators as bluefish, weakfish, and striped bass, as well as osprey, eagles, and other bird and animal predators.

For more information on American shad and river herring contact Steve Gephard, DEP Bureau of Natural Resources, at (860) 434-6043, by e-mail at steve.gephard@po.state.ct.us, or visit the DEP website at dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/fishing/fisherie.htm>.



American Shad



River Herring

Story and clip art from DEP's *Sound Outlook*.

Menunkatuck on the Web:
www.audubon.org/chapter/ct/mas/

Menunkatuck Welcomes New Members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society
welcomes the following new
members:

Branford: Katherine Blossom, Roger
Kelsey, Barbara Neal, Gerald M
Walthall

East Haven: Alice Ellison

Guilford: L Kim Beckett, Tom
Martin, Grayce Wolf

Madison: Matt Duffy

New Haven: Ann Azevedo, Blair A
Pogue

West Haven: Jo Ann Formichella, Ms
Catherine A Iaccarin, Frank Lewis Jr,
Louise Porto

1999 Calendar

December 8, 1999

The Art of Painting Birds

Michael DiGiorgio

January 12, 2000

*Clean Waters—Starting in
Your House and Yard*

Heather Crawford

February 9, 2000

Live Bats of Connecticut

Geraldine Griswold

Saturday, May 13, 2000

Twelfth Annual Birdathon

**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.

Eagle Watches on The Connecticut River

Menunkatuck
Audubon Society
Program Chair and
former president Jerry
Connolly is conducting
eagle watches on the
Connecticut river on Saturdays
from January 8 through February 26.

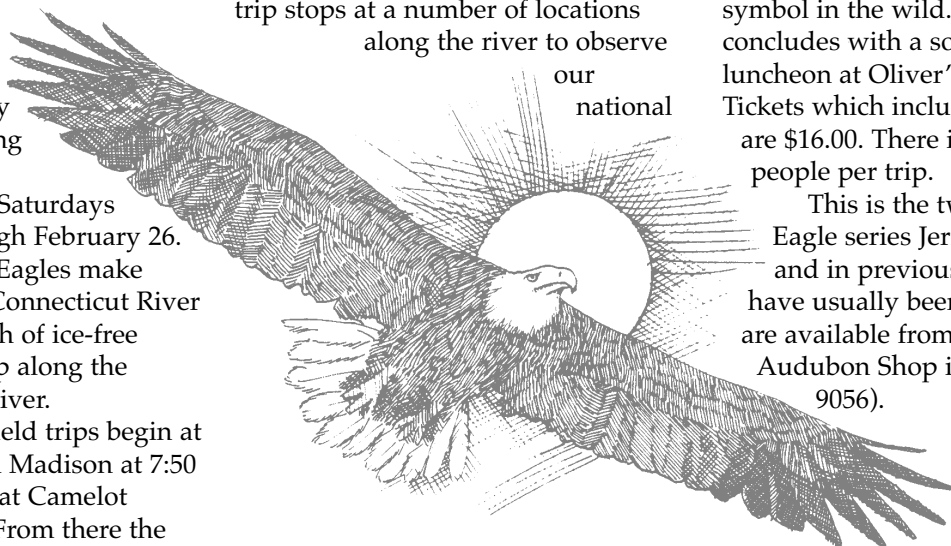
Each winter Bald Eagles make
their way down the Connecticut River
from Canada in search of ice-free
fishing. They wind up along the
southern part of the river.

The eagle watch field trips begin at
the Audubon Shop in Madison at 7:50
a.m. with a first stop at Camelot
Cruises in Haddam. From there the

trip stops at a number of locations
along the river to observe
our
national

symbol in the wild. The trip
concludes with a soup and sandwich
luncheon at Oliver's Tavern in Essex.
Tickets which include the luncheon
are \$16.00. There is a limit of 35
people per trip.

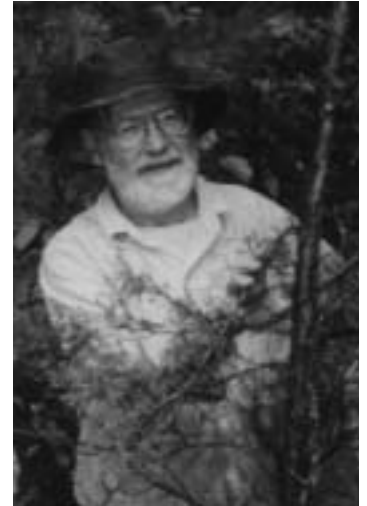
This is the twelfth annual
Eagle series Jerry has conducted
and in previous seasons the trips
have usually been sold out. Tickets
are available from Jerry at the
Audubon Shop in Madison (245-
9056).



Upland Grass Areas Are Enlarged as Part of Biodiversity Project at Willard's Island, Hammonasset State Park



Denise and Hank Trufan, David Houston, and Dick Regan take a break while clearing one of the areas where red-cedars were removed to help re-establish grassland habitation at Willard's Island at Hammonasset State Park. This is one of three areas cleared in October by MAS, the Friends of Hammonasset, and students from Daniel Hand High School and the Shoreline CDS School.



MAS Wildlife Chair David Houston planned and organized the project to clear areas of Willard's Island of the red-cedars that had encroached on the grass areas. It is hoped that the greater diversity of habitat will result in an increase in the number of small mammals on the island. Students from John Gaskell's ecology classes at Daniel Hand high School will be setting small mammal traps to document the population changes.



Piles of red-cedars removed from the cleared areas await chipping by the DEP. An area of about 3/4 acre was cleared of the cedars.

Take Flight! Workshop Is Held at Bauer Park



Flo McBride conducted the Take Flight! Workshop on the grounds of Bauer Park, Madison. Twenty-one teachers and park and nature center educators participated in the workshop, co-sponsored by Bauer Park and Menunkatuck Audubon.

Bird vocalizations were studied in the workshop. Participants practiced listening to birds on the Bauer Park grounds.

(Continued from Page 1.)

calls of common birds. Participants left the workshop with enough educational materials to incorporate bird and nature study into all areas of their classroom curriculum.

We thank Flo for presenting a wonderful workshop with truly excellent materials. And thanks to Bauer Park, particularly Susannah Graedel, for hosting this special day. Look for other educational programs offered by Bauer Park in future newsletters.



Menunkatuck Audubon Society
conducts workshops for
educators on a regular basis. If
you would like information on
the next workshop write
Cindi Kobak at MAS,
PO Box 214, Guilford, CT 06437,
or call her at 457-1699.

Biodiversity 2000

Know your natural neighbors



Worms Will Never Taste Quite the Same

It may take just a scent, while passing by a restaurant, to jog a memory of a meal gone bad. Many people, after eating something that makes them ill, refuse to consume that food again. Some birds apparently feel the same way about eating insects that have been exposed to insecticides.

A new study examines how insecticides influence birds. A study, conducted by Lowell K.

Nicolaus and Hansoo Lee of Northern Illinois University in

BIO BITS

DeKalb, Illinois, and published in the August edition of *Ecological Applications*, found that Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) will consistently avoid mealworms

(*Tenebrio* sp.) which have been injected with sub-lethal doses of the insecticide parathion, after only a single exposure. Parathion is an organophosphate, one of the most widely used classes of insecticide in both industrialized and developing nations.

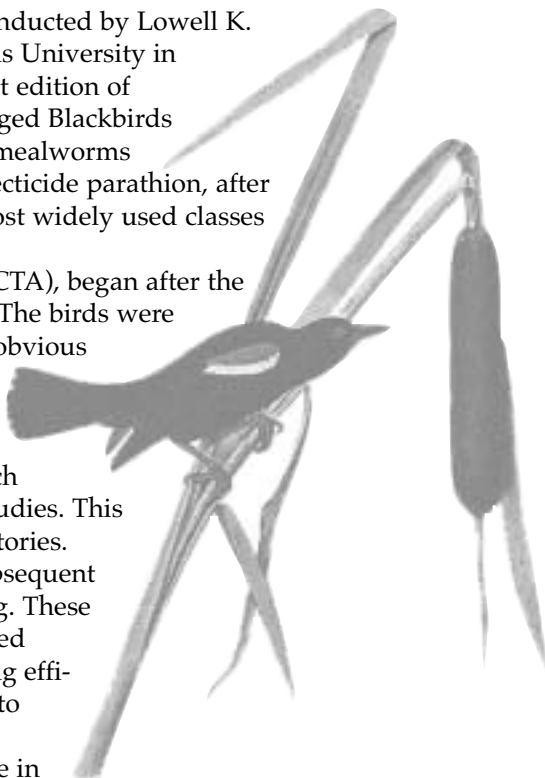
This avoidance of toxic prey, known as conditioned taste aversion (CTA), began after the blackbirds were exposed to the contaminated worms for only one day. The birds were exposed to extremely low levels of parathion, levels too low to induce obvious illness. This suggests the possibility of a widespread, undetected exposure to these insecticides and a loss of important food sources for birds and their nestlings.

All the work in this study was done among free-ranging birds, which allowed the researchers to avoid many of the artificialities of captive studies. This was possible because birds in the study were in separate breeding territories.

The benefits of avoiding toxic foods include reducing the risk of subsequent poisoning of adults, and also of adults feeding toxic prey to their young. These results suggest the possibility, however, of CTA playing a role in reported declines of insect-eating birds populations. CTA could limit both feeding efficiency and breeding success in birds that must exploit many resources to flourish.

CTA could also have widespread agricultural implications. A decline in bird predation on insects might have economic consequences if crops were damaged by rising insect populations. The largest effects of this prey avoidance might be felt in developing nations, where insecticide application is heavy, and its use is much less regulated, than in industrialized nations. The majority of bird diversity is also found in these areas.

From the Ecological Society of America, <<http://esa.sdsc.edu>>



Biodiversity Day Plans Take Shape

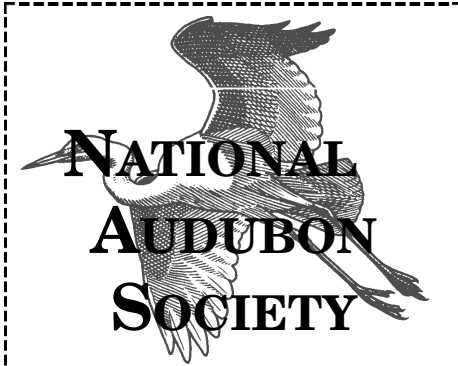
The Biodiversity Day committee reports that plans are beginning to take shape.

Although our chapter area covers six cities and towns we feel that to gain meaningful data from this project our focus should be on one town only. We will invite our state's biological scientists and naturalists to participate in an intense 24-hour biological inventory of Madison from 5pm September 8th to 5pm September 9th, 2000. Based on other "Biodiversity Days" held across the country, we can conceivably document close to 2000 species within that timespan. A lab with microscopes will be set up for those that require it for species identification. Checklists will be provided for each team and a master checklist will be posted at the Bauer Park headquarters at midday for teams to list what they have seen and to help determine what has yet to be documented. A summary report of the compiled biological data will be published after the event and distributed to all participants. It will also be sent to Madison's town management and planning commissions, its environmental organizations, and its education facilities (including the

public library). A copy will be sent to the State of Connecticut's Natural Diversity Data Base and any other state agencies that would find the data useful. Programs highlighting the event, the resulting biodiversity database, and its usefulness will be offered to the public and town officials.

The documentation of thousands of species in Madison will elicit surprise and awe, reminding people that we share this planet, including our backyards, with many other life forms. We hope that the publication of the biological inventory will empower the citizens of Madison with the data required to protect vital natural habitats in their town. The town planners, land trust and the citizens of Madison will be armed with the necessary information to implement sound open space policies to protect the biodiversity of Madison. Madison can serve as a model for other towns in our chapter area that are struggling with overdevelopment issues.

Members interested in helping with the project can call Cindi Kobak at 457-1699 or Dennis Riordan at 387-2167.



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

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Connecticut

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(860)599-5195

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MENUNKATUCK

November **1999**



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NEXT MEETING

MICHAEL DIGIORGIO

THE ART OF PAINTING

BIRDS

Wednesday, December 8, 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 for one year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

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