

## *Four IBAs in Menunkatuck area*

# Additional IBAs announced by Audubon Connecticut

On August 15, 2002, Audubon Connecticut announced an additional seven Important Bird Areas scattered throughout Connecticut. Thanks to the efforts of Linda Vanderveer in New York, and the tremendous appeal of the IBA Program there was significant press coverage of the event. Coverage included, a front-page story in the *Danbury News-Times*, a blurb in the *Hartford Courant*, a story in the *New London Day*, and a live interview on WTIC AM. Stories are still to come in the *New Haven Register*, the *Journal Inquirer*, the *New Haven Advocate*, the *Waterbury Republican*, the *Litchfield County Times* and the *West Haven News*.

Additionally, a feature article on Connecticut's IBA program may be upcoming in the *New Haven Register*, and a major article on grassland birds, in which Audubon is featured prominently, ran in *Northeast Magazine*, the *Hartford Courant's* Sunday magazine.

The designation links the sites to more than 1,400 others in the United States, plus international sites identified by Bird Life International, a global organization dedicated to bird conservation. Getting this status puts the world on notice that the designated sites are especially valuable environmentally.

"Our goal is to raise awareness, to build coalitions and awareness," said Patrick Comins, director of bird conservation for Audubon

Connecticut, who has his office at Bent of the River.

Important Bird Areas are sites that provide habitat essential for the breeding, feeding, wintering or migration of one or more species of birds. IBAs may be large or small and either publicly or privately owned, and share characteristics such as high bird diversity, threatened or endangered species, or the presence of unusually large numbers of birds. To be designated an IBA, a site is nominated and then evaluated by a Technical Committee composed of the state's top ornithologists who assess its statewide significance for birds. Land managers, scientists, and the general public may nominate sites. The designation offers the land no legal protection. But it does bolster its value within the environmental community.

Important Bird Areas in Connecticut (IBAs in the Menunkatuck Chapter are in **bold**) include:

- Audubon Center in Greenwich (including Quaker Ridge), Greenwich
- Bent of the River Sanctuary, Southbury
- Connecticut College Arboretum, Waterford and New London
- Cove Island Park, Stamford
- **East Rock Park, New Haven**
- **Falkner Island unit of Stewart B. McKinney NWR, offshore of Guilford**

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## *Branford osprey chicks banded*

### **MENUNKATUCK AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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

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#### **Town Reps**

**East Haven:** .....Mary Quinlan  
**Guilford:**.....Linda Anderson  
**Newsletter:** .....Dennis Riordan  
.....(387-2167)  
**Webmaster:**.....Brad Garber

Volunteers from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, aided by Branford Land Trust members, banded 12 osprey chicks from six platforms in Branford on July 5. This date was about the last before the chicks left their nests. The birds were well developed but for their wings which were still too weak to sustain the birds in flight.

The bands, containing a serial number and a toll free telephone number for the USFWS are of thin aluminum and are fitted loosely to one leg of the bird.

The young ospreys spend several years in their southern habitat before returning north. The USFWS people did not tell us whether the returning

birds end up in the area from which they came.

Ospreys, fish eating hawks, are increasing along the Connecticut coastline after being almost made extinct by the extensive use of DDT for agricultural purposes. Ariel spraying with DDT was banned in the US, and the ospreys returned.

The Branford Land Trust has invited Julie Victoria of DEP to designate locations for more platforms on tidal marsh it owns and that owned by others in Branford. The platforms will be erected in the fall.

Submitted by Peter Borgemeister,  
Branford Land Trust

**Sarah Hughes shows off a butterfly found during the July 13 Butterfly and Dragonfly field trip at Bauer Park in Madison.  
Photo by SuZanne Botta**

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.

## September, October meetings scheduled

Speakers for the September and October meetings have been scheduled.

Frank Mantlik, birder and photographer from Stratford, will return in September to present a timely program entitled *Birding Block Island in Autumn*.

In October, Dr. Robert Askins from Connecticut College will do a *Comparison of the Natural History of Japan and New England*.

## IBAs announced

(Continued from page 1.)

- Great Captain's Island, Greenwich
- Greenwich Point Park and nearby islands, Greenwich
- **Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven**
- Mamacoke Island and adjacent coves, Waterford
- Salt Meadow Unit of Stewart B. McKinney NWR, Westbrook.
- **Sandy Point, West Haven**
- Station 43, South Windsor
- The Nature Conservancy's Devil's Den Preserve, Weston, Redding
- White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield, Morris

## Audubon Council will meet in Guilford

Approximately four times a year, the Audubon Council of Connecticut meets somewhere in Connecticut. The Council is comprised of a representative from each of the Audubon chapters and Bird Clubs in the state. Additional representatives include individuals working for National Audubon in Connecticut such as the Deputy Director, Carolyn Hughs, and Director of Bird Conservation

# 2002-2003 Calendar

**September 11, 2002**

*Birding Block Island in Autumn*

*Frank Mantlik*

**October 9, 2002**

*Comparison of the Natural History of Japan and New England*

*Robert Askins*

**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.**

Patrick Comins. These meetings are held so all the chapters have an opportunity to catch-up with each other and National Audubon, brainstorm and set a course of action regarding issues of major concern. Recently the Council has given Stop Griswold Airport Over-development its support. The ACC ensures Audubon with all its chapters and sanctuaries remains a strong coalition dedicated to conservation, education, and sound public policy.

The next Council meeting will be held in Guilford so that, after the meeting, Audubon leaders from around the state can explore the Guilford Salt Marsh Sanctuary which will boast 14 new interpretive signs.

## *Connecticut Birding Trail being planned*

Audubon Connecticut is looking for submissions of locations to be included in the Connecticut Birding Trail. Modeled on successful birding trails in such states as Texas and Florida, plans are for the Connecticut Birding Trail to use I-95 as its main corridor. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has provided a grant for the project. As part of the project, Audubon and its consultant will work with the Connecticut Tourism Industry to promote eco-tourism along the Birding Trail and give support by providing promotions of the Birding Trail as well as tangible items such as port-o-potties at designated locations.

## ***Henry Ferris proposes State acquire Griswold Airport Proposal made to save Airport property from development***

Henry Ferris, former president of Menunkatuck Audubon and current member of the Board of Directors has proposed that the State of Connecticut save the Griswold Airport property from development. Excerpts of his letter to the Land Acquisitions Department follow:

Aug. 20, 2002  
Mr. Charles Reed  
Land Acquisitions Dept.  
Dept. of Environmental Protection  
Hartford, Ct. 06106-5127

Dear Mr. Reed,

Madison's Griswold Airport, at present a very lightly used airstrip, has been the subject of controversy for many years. However, recent zoning applications calling for intensive development of the site have focused attention anew on the considerable potential for damage to Hammonasset Beach State Park posed by such development. What follows is a proposal to address that ongoing threat.

The airport is a 42-acre parcel directly adjacent to the Natural Area Preserve of Hammonasset Beach State Park. Of this, 32 acres are uplands and 10 are classified as tidal wetlands. The property has a common boundary with 400 acres of tidal salt marsh at the Natural Area Preserve, and 456 feet of frontage on the Hammonasset River. Hammonasset Beach State Park is one of the most visited birding areas in the State, and has been selected as one of Audubon's Important Bird Areas in Connecticut. As is widely known, Hammonasset is the crown jewel in the State Park system. Besides its vast use by the beach going public, it is used by countless thousands of visitors for other recreational, scientific and educational purposes. It is also, arguably, the most important site in the State for scientific and environmental education. The now virtually undeveloped Griswold Airport site functions as an important buffer zone to the fragile salt marshes and, by extension, to the Hammonasset River and Long Island Sound itself. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has said the following about this area. "The intertidal mud flats at the mouth of the Hammonasset River are one of the largest and most exemplary natural wetland areas of this type in the State, and are important feeding areas for many shorebirds. The nearshore waters and sediments of this complex contain large concentrations of American oyster and are important spawning and nursery areas for winter flounder; this area is also significant for its high diversity of marine fishes. The rivers have important anadromous fish runs of sea-run brown trout, alewife, blueback herring, American shad, white perch and sea lamprey." The preservation of the existing biological integrity of this unique ecosystem is of vital importance to the State of Connecticut.

At least since 1988, the DEP has recognized the serious problems that potential development of the airport property pose for the nearby coastal marshes and their associated habitats. In her letter of July 13, 1988 to Madison First Selectman Horvath, Margaret Beauharnois states "Redevelopment of the airport property is significantly constrained by the location and nature of coastal resources on and adjacent to the site." She further states that "...redevelopment of the airport should be carefully planned so that the level of intensity of development on site is not substantially increased." Since then, there have been two applications for zoning amendments and two for special permits, all calling for extensive development projects that threatened the natural resources. In spite of these warnings, both zoning amendments were approved, and in 1997, in spite of DEP's strong advice to the contrary the Madison Planning & Zoning Commission approved a Special exception Permit and CAM Permit for an industrial use where the buildings were located entirely in the coastal flood hazard area. Purely by chance, this project was never built. These occurrences are a dramatic demonstration of the risk to vital natural areas when the Planning and Zoning Commission administers the provisions of the Coastal Area Management Act. This responsibility is often taken lightly.

Most recently, the airport site has been the subject of a Special Exception Permit application by Leyland Development LLC to build 192 housing units on the 32 upland acres immediately adjacent to the 400 acres of Natural Area Preserve. In the face of negative assessments of its application from the DEP, the Kings Mark ERT and numerous others, the developer has withdrawn its current application. However, Leyland states it intends to return with a modified version. Even if Leyland does not come back, proposals from other developers will surely follow. The lure of large profits from the development of near shoreline property is so great that the airport site will always remain the target for large building projects.

In the past, the State has declined opportunities to purchase the airport property.

The main reason given was the lack of an easy direct connection with Hammonasset Beach State Park. This rationale now seems highly outdated. It has become clear that the real value of the airport lies in its undeveloped condition as a protective buffer to the salt marshes and estuary at the Park, and the other natural resources in the area. It is precisely the development of the airport itself that threatens these resources. In his testimony at the recent Planning and Zoning hearings on the Leyland application, Dr. Richard Orson, Certified Senior Ecologist and Professional Wetland Scientist, stated that due to continuing rising sea levels, the outer edge of the marsh system is eroding landward and is transgressing towards the airport at a relatively fast rate. Once it reaches the development site, the advancing habitat will be stopped from moving any further. This means that, "the outer edge of the

marsh system will continue to erode landward while the upper border nearest the development will be stalled. The result will be a reduction in wetland area and a diminishing of the habitat as the leading edge continues to transgress and the upper border remains in place." Only if left undeveloped, can the airport continue to absorb the advancing border of the marsh habitat.

Also on a positive note, National Audubon has pointed out that the upland portions of the airport have enormous potential value as grasslands. Coastal grasslands are rare in Connecticut. If properly managed, the airport could provide significant breeding grounds for several bird species, including some of State special concern and some that are now being displaced by development elsewhere in the State. The purchase of the Griswold Airport is not really about money or old policies. It is about protecting these natural resources while there is still the chance to do so. It is also a rare opportunity to not only enhance and protect an irreplaceable salt marsh habitat of enormous value to the public, but also to create a new and badly needed ecosystem on the upland area of the airport itself.

In December 2000, The National Audubon Society and the Menunkatuck Audubon Society jointly filed an application with the DEP calling for the State purchase of the Griswold Airport under Connecticut's Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program (attached). In response, on February 15, 2001 Margaret Welch of the Office of Long Island Sound Programs wrote a memo to Elizabeth Varhue of the Land Acquisition Dept. (attached) in which she strongly recommended acquisition of the Griswold Airport for numerous reasons. Among these are:

(a) the capacity of the site to buffer the adjacent Natural Area Preserve; (b) the site would serve several important coastal management purposes; (c) the site would protect sensitive coastal resources and the site would provide increased public access to tidal and coastal waters; and finally, (d) the site could provide future uses as coastal grasslands. It would now seem time to move on this important matter while there is a lull in the battle.

Leyland Development LLC currently holds a purchase option on the property. However, its chances of actually building the project have dimmed considerably. The DEP (OLISP) and the ERT have recommended conditions that will be difficult for Leyland to meet and still retain its original concept of a "Traditional Neighborhood Development," a concept that Leyland seems to view largely as highly dense housing. In addition, the Attorney General has declared his intention to take legal action if the Planning and Zoning Commission approves even a modified version. There is also an action in court by SGOD, a local citizen's group that is appealing the original zoning amendment approved in August 2001. This action appears very promising. Further still, there were several parties who intervened in Leyland's application under Connecticut's Environmental Protection Act, including the Connecticut Fund for the Environment whose own expert witness—a former, long serving DEP OLISP Coastal Program's Division Manager—further verified the great need to protect these crucial natural resources from such development. Five additional parties intervened as well, including Save The Sound Inc. These interveners would also be expected to participate in legal action against a zoning approval of a modified application by Leyland. All this may persuade Leyland to favor some agreement leading to a release of their purchase option. The option price is reputed to be between 2.5 and 3.5 million dollars, with a monthly option fee of \$3,500 dollars. Indeed, now is probably the ideal time for the State to step in and acquire this property, which will otherwise remain a permanent source of future worry and frustration to all who are concerned with the protection of the tidal wetlands, the Hammonasset River Estuary, and Long Island Sound.

Clearly the ideal solution to permanently removing the threat that development of this site poses to our natural resources is to purchase the entire airport property as an open space buffer. However, there may be other less costly, alternatives that could accomplish the goal of protecting these resources. The 42 acre airport site shares roughly 2800 feet of common boundary with the Natural Area Preserve. If we assume that a 300 foot buffer around all adjoining wetlands would be adequate to their protection then this would result in about 20 acres of upland plus the 10 acres of tidal wetlands on the site, or a total of about 30 acres that would need to be purchased, rather than the full 42 acre property.

If necessary, the State could at least partially offset the cost of purchase by selling the 3 lots now owned by the State of Connecticut that lie along the south side of Rte. 1 immediately adjacent to the airport. ...

Taken together, these approximately 10 acres of State owned land are contiguous to, or just across Rte. 1 from, existing commercial uses... They currently perform no environmental function other than as grassy strips alongside Rte.1. None are contiguous to Hammonasset Beach State Park. The Town of Madison is always receptive to enhancing its tax base and would undoubtedly cooperate in rezoning these lots to commercial uses, thus greatly enhancing their sale value by the State to an entity wishing to further develop the area commercially. There has been considerable recent commercial development in this area. These State owned lots could also be joined to the approximately 10 remaining upland acres of the airport to create a parcel of approximately 20 acres of commercially available land. ...

The important thing to bear in mind is that the Griswold Airport, because of its geographical location, is a potential dagger pointed at the heart of the Natural Area Preserve, the Hammonasset River, and Long Island Sound. The airport will remain a threat to the biological integrity of these irreplaceable natural resources until it is preserved forever as a vital part of our natural heritage.

The ideas and concerns expressed in this letter are shared by a number of other organizations. These include: the Connecticut Fund for The Environment, The Trust for Public Land, Save The Sound Inc., National Audubon Society, Ct. and Stop Griswold Over-Development. Some of these were environmental intervenors in the recent zoning application. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this important matter with you.

Sincerely,  
Henry Ferris

# Biodiversity 2002

## Know your natural neighbors



### Asian Longhorned Beetle pose serious threat

Well, maybe this should be “Know your *unnatural* neighbors.”

#### BIO BITS

The Asian Longhorned Beetle is a serious threat to trees in New England. It has been found in New York City, Long Island, and Chicago. This insect kills trees. Maple trees are its favorite host. Almost 7,000 trees have been cut down in the infested areas to eradicate it.

The beetle is easy to recognize. It is large (.75 to 1.5 in. long), shiny black beetle with white spots and very long black and white banded antennae. Adults can be seen from late spring to fall depending on the climate. Females chew through the bark down to the cambium/phloem interface with the xylem, and then turn around and inject an egg (one egg per oviposition niche or site) into the tree, creating a visible oviposition scar on the surface of the tree. Eggs sites are oval or round wounds in the bark (up to 0.5 inch diameter). The early stages of the larvae feed between the xylem and the phloem, the later stages feed only on the xylem. Mature larvae reach 2.0 inches in length. The larvae then enter the pupal stage. The pupae are 1.25 inches long. The adults later emerge and bore their way out of the tree.

Eradication of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) from the United States is the goal of the US Department of Agriculture and other cooperating state organizations where this exotic pest has been found infesting trees.

Several research projects have been initiated to improve survey and detection methods that enhance the chance of successful eradication. Should eradication prove unfeasible however, management strategies are also being investigated. In addition, the potential impact of ALB on the American landscape is being evaluated, including the specific host range of this exotic pest in the U. S.

For more information visit the source of this article and the photos: [www.uvm.edu/albeetle](http://www.uvm.edu/albeetle).



Female



Male

**If You See This Beetle Call: (203) 974-8474**



The "Rotten World Of Fungi" field trip on August led to this specimen in the Timberland Town Forest in Guilford. Photo by John Himmelman.

## Menunkatuck welcomes new members

Menunkatuck Audubon Society welcomes the following new members:

**Branford:** Cynthia Epps, Betty Nicholson, Rita Peck, Carol Raye

**Clinton:** John Picard

**Guilford:** Virginia Johnson

**Madison:** William Farrell, Constance Proulx, Judith Reiber, George Stirling

Jr, Max Weyl

**New Haven:** Anna Bartow, Nancy Ciarleglio, Regina Coleman, Laura Cricco, Ward Davenny, Sue Finn,

Karel Koenig, Celia Kolbin, Everett Morris, Elio Pratesi, Andrew Spodnik,

Barbara Whelan

**West Haven:** Marilyn Molloy



### 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)

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September **2002**



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## **NEXT MEETING**

### **FRANK MANTLIK BIRDING BLOCK ISLAND IN AUTUMN**

*Wednesday, September 11, 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.

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