



THE CHICKADEE

Newsletter of the New Haven Bird Club

February 2021

2021 CALENDAR

(See inside for details)

Wednesday, February 3, 8–11 a.m. **First Wednesday Walk: Hammonasset State Park, Madison**

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Saturday, February 6, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. **The Fifth Annual Mega Bowl of Birding**

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Thursday, February 11, 7 p.m. **Dr. Sean Williams—Redpoll Identification and Biology**

Saturday, February 27, 8–11 a.m. **Sparrows and Speculaas, White Memorial Foundation**

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Saturday, February 27, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. **Sachuest Point NWR and Rhode Island Coast** (Snow date – Sunday, February 28)

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Cancelled

Wednesday, March 3, 8–11 a.m. **First Wednesday Walk: Stratford Shore & Great Meadows**

Thursday, March 11, 7 p.m. **Kevin Powers—Shearwaters**

Saturday, March 13, 8–11 a.m. **Edgewood Park, New Haven**
Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Saturday, April 3, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. **The Richard English Memorial Field Trip: Lighthouse Point to the Richard English Refuge**

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Wednesday, April 7, 8–11 a.m. **First Wednesday Walk: CT Audubon Coastal Center, Milford**

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Thursday, April 8, 7 p.m. **Maureen Heidtmann—Bats: Their Lives and Lore**

Saturday, April 24, 8–11 a.m. **Birding by Ear, Southbury**
Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

Sunday, April 25, 8 a.m. to noon **West Rock Ridge State Park: New Haven, Hamden, and Woodbridge**
Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

NOTE: Please check the NHBC website and newsletter periodically for updated information on all programs. **Scheduled events may need to be changed or canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic,** and new trips may be added during the year.
www.newhavenbirdclub.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The coldest weeks of winter are on us now, intensified by some strong arctic winds. This morning, as I stood at the kitchen window with a cup of coffee, powerful gusts from the northwest blew over our recycling bin, and I had to throw on a coat and cap and run outside to catch the cat food tins and paper and cartons and cardboard blowing off down the street.

But despite the weather, birding goes on.

Intrepid NHBC members are out there completing a Big January or walking multiple one-hour winter bird surveys in atlas blocks where until now there have been few or no submitted observations. And our club continues its schedule of bird walks, though limiting them to ten or fewer participants and requiring Covid safety precautions for masking and physical distancing. Some very popular ones are coming in February and March.

Even at home things are happening. After uprighting the recycling bin and running down the escaping recyclables, I glanced at the Northern Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and Song Sparrows foraging under the feeders. A smaller bird with its back to me but with streaked sides and a very prominent wing bar caught my eye. I ran for the binoculars and camera -- a female Common Redpoll! A first in our suburban backyard. (At least a first in the backyard for me. Lori tells me the same bird has been appearing for the past three or four days.)

Club members watching their feeders as part of Pete Vitali's winter feederwatch group have also observed unexpected and exciting birds in their yards -- Baltimore Oriole, Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and White-crowned Sparrow, among others -- while also documenting the rises and drops in populations of more common species. (See Pete's summary elsewhere in this edition of the Chickadee.)

So, despite the cold, there's plenty of birding to do.

Watch for upcoming announcements for the Fifth Annual Mega Bowl of Birding, bird walks on the Rhode Island shore and at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield, and our February indoor meeting, featuring Dr. Sean Williams on -- yay! redpolls and their irruptions. And of course, a glance at the entries on CT Birds (<http://birding.aba.org/maillist/CT01>) regularly turns up notices of uncommon and rare birds being found all over the state.

Whatever you choose, I hope you'll continue to bird safely and will continue to join us, outdoors and in. Happy winter birding.

--DeWitt Allen

NEW HAVEN BIRD CLUB – 2020-2021

OFFICERS

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<i>Secretary</i>	Alan Malina Alm5565@msn.com	203-248-5754

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<i>Webmaster</i>	Patrick Leahy ptjleahy@yahoo.com	203-393-2427
<i>Yearbook Editor</i>	Christine Howe clhowe2@yahoo.com	203-389-1175

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

<i>The BIG SIT!</i>	Craig Repasz crepasz@hotmail.com	203-230-1697
<i>Birds in Words</i>	Kris Johnson kriswaxwing99@gmail.com	203-288-3087
<i>Christmas Bird Count</i>	Chris Loscalzo closcalz@optonline.net	203-389-6508
<i>Hawk Watch</i>	Steve Mayo scmayo999@gmail.com	203-551-1707
<i>Lighthouse Point</i>	John Triana jtriana1@sbcglobal.net	203-758-7203
<i>Historian</i>	Stacy Hanks flybirdhanks@gmail.com	203-283-3898
<i>Summer Bird Count</i>	Steve Mayo scmayo999@gmail.com	203-551-1707
<i>Winter Feeder Survey</i>	Peter Vitali vitgoo39@gmail.com	203-288-0621

New Haven Bird Club Website:
www.newhavenbirdclub.org

Notes from the Board

The next board meeting will be virtual on Thursday, February 25 at 7 PM.

Deadline for submissions to the April *Chickadee* is March 26. Send to Newsletter Editor, Donna Batsford, at donnabatsford@gmail.com.

Members who are not currently receiving club emails but would like to, should contact the Membership Chair at membership@newhavenbirdclub.org.

NHBC Objectives: To make available to members and the general public opportunities for recreation, education, and appreciation in the area of birding and to encourage the conservation of natural resources in New Haven and surrounding areas.

Welcome New Members

Fred and Patti Sendroff
Hamden

Javier Gonzalez Rivero
New Haven

Sophie Duncan
New Haven

Ellen Lukens
Middletown

Gina Reichert
Milford

Vanessa Mickan
New Haven

Amy Brownstein
West Haven

Stephen Hamm
New Haven

Francis Commercon
New Haven

Angelica Kaner
Cheshire

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)

Let's not take anything for granted. In late December there was an unprecedented rollback of bird protections through the stripping away of critical protections in the Migratory Bird Protection Act. The MBTA has been solid Federal legislation since first passed in 1918. Now, when bird populations are at serious risk from long-term declines and climate change, we need to call on the new Congress and Interior Department leadership to reinstate the MBTA in full.

--Deborah Johnson
NHBC Conservation Chair

Indoor Programs

We cannot predict how the future course of the coronavirus pandemic will affect our schedule of events. Our first priority is protecting the health and well-being of our members and the general public, and it may become necessary to adjust or cancel some events. The recommendations and policies of local, state, and national health authorities will guide all decisions about our schedule. Please check the NHBC website and newsletter for updated information before planning to attend any event.

Indoor programs start in September and are held on the second Thursday of the month. There are no indoor programs in June, July, or August.

Indoor Meetings will be virtual. We will send an email invitation to join the meeting. The meeting link will be sent to the NHBC email list.

Remember to check the Club's website for updated information on all programs: www.newhavenbirdclub.org.

Inclement weather or other emergency may cancel a meeting. Cancellation notices will be sent via the club email and will be posted on the club website, www.newhavenbirdclub.org, and online on CTBirds. Also check TV channels WTNH (New Haven) and WFSB (Hartford).

Thursday, February 11, 7 p.m. – Dr. Sean Williams Redpoll Identification and Biology

Variation in seed availability in the boreal forest drives the abundance of redpolls in New England winters. In some years, redpolls "irrupt" into southern New England, allowing for unique opportunities to study them. In this talk, we will explore the biology of their annual cycle and the conditions that lead to irruption events. In addition, we will learn about the identification of four taxa that occur in North America: nominate and Greenland Common Redpolls, and Coues' and Greenland Hoary Redpolls. Dr. Williams is Visiting Assistant Professor of Behavior, Ecology, and Ornithology at College of the Holy Cross, Secretary of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, and the holder of several Massachusetts bird count records.

Thursday, March 11, 7 p.m. – Kevin Powers Shearwaters

Kevin Powers, steward at Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary in Massachusetts, will provide an update on

shearwater migration and research on coastal birds.

Thursday, April 8, 7 p.m. – Maureen Heidtmann Bats: Their Lives and Lore

Join us for an evening with Maureen Heidtmann, Master Wildlife Conservationist, for an overview of bats of the world with an emphasis on our local species. She will cover the persisting myths and misconceptions about these fascinating creatures, the many roles bats play to ensure a healthy planet, and the perils bats face in their struggle for survival. She also will bring some of her furry flying friends with her! Maureen Heidtmann has been working with bats for more than 25 years. She is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator and a Certified Wildlife Conservationist with the State of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. She has been presenting programs, chiefly about bats, for many years. She recently has been written about in *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine and in several newspapers for rescuing and raising an endangered species, the Eastern Small-Footed Bat, the first of its kind to be seen in Connecticut since 1940.

For More Birds in Your Life: Pollinator Recommendations for 2021

Now is the time to make plans for the upcoming growing season, and here are some pollinator-friendly suggestions to increase the presence of birds in your personal and community habitats.

- 1) Eliminate pesticide use.
- 2) Plant native—flowers, grasses, trees, shrubs.
- 3) Collect native seeds from your garden and share them.
- 4) Plan for continual blooms, fruits & seeds—spring, summer, fall and winter.
- 5) Leave leaf litter, stems & twigs to provide over-wintering habitat and food sources for birds.
- 6) Learn about invasives and how to root them out.
- 7) Identify the non-natives, even if not invasive, and find out what native species could replace them.
- 8) Be part of the local H2H Pollinator Pathway as presented at our December meeting: Pollinator-Pathway.org.

--Deborah Johnson
NHBC Conservation Chair

Trails and Greenway Funding Via Vanity License Plates: Write To Support HB 5429

Most people don't realize when they get a "Connecticut Greenways" vanity license plate their payment is not actually supporting the construction or maintenance of trails/greenways in Connecticut. Legislation introduced by Rep. Roland Lemar, HB 5429, a.k.a. the "bike bill," would change that by creating a special "commemorative account" for trails and greenways funding, and dedicate Greenways plate fees for that purpose. The virtual public hearing on this legislation was held January 26, but it is not too late to write in support of the bill. The "Preserve Long Island Sound" license plate in use since 2009 is the model for the Greenway Commemorative Account in HB 5429. Please write or call the office of Rep. Roland Lemar, Transportation Chair: 552 Chapel St., New Haven 06511; 203-903-5003; @rolandlemar.

--Deborah Johnson
NHBC Conservation Chair

Outdoor Programs

Birders of all levels are welcome on all field trips, and every effort is made to help beginners. If you are new to birding or have any special needs, please be sure to let the leader know at the start of the field trip. More details, if required, and/or updates on these trips will be given at the indoor meetings and in the newsletter. Watch for emails sent by the Club. You can also check the Club's website: www.newhavenbirdclub.org for updated trip information and a Google Map link to the meeting place.

The New Haven Bird Club needs to take precautions to make our Outdoor Trips safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. The walking format of our events will make social distancing exceedingly difficult with a large group of people. We will limit the group size to ten or fewer.

All trips must conform to the following:

- No carpooling to or during the trip. People who live together can share a ride.
- Masks are required at all times.
- Social distancing will be followed. (The wingspan of a bald eagle.)
- Group size will be capped at ten people or less.
- Preregistration for the trip will be required.
- Trip participants must follow State quarantining guidelines with regard to recent travel and the health status of members in their household.

A trip may be canceled at the discretion of the Trip Leader; they also need to protect themselves and their family members.

Preregistration – In order to control group size, all trips will require preregistration. This change contrasts with our Club's previous policy but will be needed to maintain safety during the pandemic. As Outdoor Program Chair, Craig Repasz will handle the preregistration. A link to the event sign-up will be sent to the NHBC email group before each trip. There will be a wait list. Craig will make sure that a few individuals do not dominate the registration process, limiting the opportunities of others. ***Expect an email via the NHBC email group for each trip with a link to preregister.***

Multiple Groups – A trip may also be broken up into multiple groups with each led by a co-trip leader, possibly with each group following different departure times. These details will be disclosed for each trip separately.

Future Changes – There is no telling what the future will bring. We may go into another shutdown or the situation may improve. We will continue to monitor the situation; future adjustments and changes may be needed to protect Club members' safety.

Please contact Craig Repasz if you have any questions or concerns, 203-230-1697 or crepasz@hotmail.com.

NHBC Conservation and Education Activities

The NHBC routinely works to preserve and restore bird populations and their habitats and to provide opportunities for learning about birds, their habitats, where to see them, and how to help ensure their future. The NHBC provides information and displays at multiple events throughout the year. The Club also is building a presence in local public schools and camps to encourage children to embrace birding.

First Wednesday Walk: Hammonasset State Park, Madison Wednesday, February 3, 8–11 a.m.

Enjoy a mid-week field trip to Hammonasset Beach State Park, one of the state's best birding locations in any season of the year. We will look for sea ducks, grassland species, and rarities. Meet outside the park at the Shoreline Greenway Trail parking lot on Boston Post Road. Directions: Take Exit 62 off I-95. At the end of the connector (traffic light), go left onto Boston Post Road. The parking lot is the first right, a short distance away. Leader: Greg Hanisek, ctgregh@yahoo.com. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

The Fifth Annual Mega Bowl of Birding Saturday, February 6, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Mega Bowl is a fun, free, and friendly activity that celebrates birds, birders, and birding! Participants go birding alone or in small groups in any one Connecticut county of their choice, trying to observe as many different species as they can. Birders are awarded points for each species observed, with a

range of 1 point for the most common species to 5 or 7 points for the rarest species. The person or team that accumulates the most points in each county will win a prize, and the person or team that accumulates the most points in New Haven County will have its name inscribed on the Mega Bowl Trophy. All New Haven Bird Club members are invited and encouraged to participate in this fun event. Sign up for the Mega Bowl by Friday, February 5. There is no fee for entry. Your participation will promote birding in the state and generate donations to deserving conservation organizations in Connecticut. And, it's fun! Organizer: Chris Loscalzo, 203-389-6508, or closcalz@optonline.net. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

Sparrows and Speculaas, White Memorial Foundation Saturday, February 27, 8–11 a.m.

White Memorial Foundation is a 4,000 acre nature preserve. The diverse mixture of habitats includes mature deciduous and evergreen forests, as well as fields of tall grass, weeds, and shrubs that are managed for various stages of succession. As

one of the best birding sites in the state and an Important Bird Area, White Memorial Foundation has approximately 35 miles of woodland roads, trails, and boardwalks. We should observe a variety of sparrows, woodpeckers, possibly winter finches and more. Bantam lake is famous for a wide variety of ducks during migration and winter. After birding we will warm up at the Dutch Epicure with homemade baked goods including a variety of Dutch specialties, and Dutch cheeses. Meet in the public parking lot at White Memorial Foundation, 80 Whitehall Road, Litchfield. Leaders: Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, 203-233-0535 or cfolsom-okeefe@audubon.org; Craig Repasz, 203-745-6683 or crepasz@hotmail.com. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

Sachuest Point NWR and Rhode Island Coast
Saturday, February 27, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Snow date – Sunday, February 28, 2021)

This all-day trip includes stops at Sachuest Point NWR, Beavertail State Park, Moonstone Beach, Trustum Pond, and other great birding sites on the Rhode Island coast. We will see lots of sea ducks including all three scoter species, Common Eider, and Harlequin Duck. We'll look for birds of prey, including Rough-legged Hawk and several owl species. We'll also be on the lookout for alcids and rare gulls. Dress warmly—it's likely to be cold and windy on the coast. The walk is a bit strenuous. Bring lunch and a scope, if you have one. Meet at the commuter lot, Exit 57 off I-95, or contact the leader for the planned first stop in Rhode Island. Leader: Chris Loscalzo, 203-389-6508 or closcalz@optonline.net. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

Cancelled

First Wednesday Walk: Stratford Shore & Great Meadows
Wednesday, March 3, 8–11 a.m.

Edgewood Park, New Haven
Saturday, March 13, 8–11 a.m.

Join Bill Batsford for a late winter walk at this urban park with varied habitat including woodlands, fields, streams, and ponds. Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Brown Creeper are all possible. We will make a side trip to Evergreen Cemetery if the Bald Eagles are again nesting there. The walking is easy and flat and includes one dirt path through a wooded area. Total distance is approximately 2.5 miles. Meet at the Edgewood Park parking lot next to the tennis courts. The entrance is off West Rock Avenue, just south of Whalley Avenue, New Haven. Leader: Bill Batsford, 203-494-4325 or william.batsford@yale.edu. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

The Richard English Memorial Field Trip: Lighthouse Point to the Richard English Refuge
Saturday, April 3, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

We first bird the New Haven harbor shore for gulls, loons, ducks, and early-returning shorebirds. We then proceed to the Richard English Bird Sanctuary at the Deer Lake Scout Camp in Killingworth. We then proceed to Hammonasset Beach State Park. This is an all-day trip but feel free to join for the first part of the trip. Bring lunch and dress warmly. Meet at the Hawk Watch parking lot, Lighthouse Point Park, 2 Lighthouse Road, New Haven. Leader: Mike Horn, 203-288-1891 or

mhorn@att.net.

Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.

First Wednesday Walk: CT Audubon Coastal Center, Milford
Wednesday, April 7, 8–11 a.m.

Enjoy an early spring trip to one of the best local birding spots. We look out into the marsh and along the shore for waterfowl, shorebirds, waders, and raptors. Meet at the CT Audubon Coastal Center parking lot, 1 Milford Point Road, Milford. Leader: Jalna Jaeger, 203-246-0885 or jalnabird@gmail.com. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

Birding by Ear, Southbury
Saturday, April 24, 8–11 a.m.

Bird song can be wonderfully confusing and terrifyingly daunting for beginners. Join us for a seminar presentation in the Barn at Audubon Connecticut's Bent of the River Wildlife Sanctuary to begin learning bird song. After the presentation we will practice our new skills with a bird walk through a prime birding location along the Pomperaug River. More than 100 species of birds have been observed in a single day at the Bent; I'm willing to bet that more than 75% of those were heard. On the walk we will listen for birds and use our newfound skills to locate some of our favorite feathered friends. Meet at Bent of the River Wildlife Sanctuary, 185 East Flat Hill Road, Southbury, CT. Take Exit 14 off of Route 84. Go north on Route 172, then turn left onto East Flat Hill Road (church on corner). Continue to sanctuary entrance on left. Leader: Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, 203-233-0535 or cfolsom-okeefe@audubon.org. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

West Rock Ridge State Park: New Haven, Hamden, and Woodbridge
Sunday, April 25, 8 a.m. to noon

We focus on just two breeding species for this trip to West Rock Ridge State Park: Peregrine Falcon and Common Raven. A pair of Peregrine Falcons selected West Rock as their home base in 1999, thereby becoming one of the first breeding pairs in Connecticut in the post-DDT era. Since then, eight different females and eight different males (tiercels) have occupied the ridge in a collage of combinations. We observe their cliff site from an appropriate distance with the expectation of seeing flying, perching, preening, feeding, agonistic interactions with the nearby nesting ravens, and incubation of eggs. Common Ravens were confirmed as breeders at West Rock in 2002 and have nested here annually since then, producing 4 to 5 young in most years. We observe them from unusually close range as they soar, perch, bring in cached food, fight with the peregrines, and attend young in the cliff nest. Bring binoculars, cameras, and two extra layers of clothing (really!). The wind and cold at cliff top often bear no relation to conditions 450 feet below in the West River valley. We have automobile access to Baldwin Drive along the ridge top. Easy walking on Baldwin Drive from our cars and a 20 yard trail to the observation point. Stay back from the cliff edge! Meet at the gated entrance to West Rock Ridge State Park on Wintergreen Street, Hamden/New Haven border. Leader: Steve Broker, 203-747-6843 or stephenpaulbroker@gmail.com. *Follow all Covid precautions. Preregistration required.*

Trip Reports

First Wednesday Walk: Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison

On December 2, 2020, nine participants braved the elements for the NHBC First Wednesday Walk at Hammonasset Beach State Park where 28 species were observed.

Seven duck species were tallied, most notably Common Eider. Eleven individuals of this formally rare (in Long Island Sound) sea duck were present near the jetty at Meig's Point. On the jetty itself, one Peregrine Falcon flew in, perched for a minute for scope views before taking flight.

Eighteen Hooded Mergansers were present at Chase's Pond (aka "Swan Pond"), while an equal number of Buffleheads were spotted at the mouth of the Hammonasset River.

In the park's eastern-most marsh, one perched third year Bald Eagle was scoped, as well as one Northern Harrier actively hunting.

Seen from the Cedar Island Viewing Platform were Red-breasted Merganser, Surf Scoter, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Dunlin, and one Purple Sandpiper.

The Willard's Island trail was pretty quiet with a couple of Carolina Wrens, Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee (12), Tufted Titmouse (2), Song Sparrow (4), and one Yellow-rumped Warbler noted.

There were two flocks of Horned Larks found on this day, one group of 16 in the west end grasses, and 35 individuals in the Nature Center parking lot. We picked out one Lapland Longspur feeding with the latter flock.

A fun day was had by all. Birding during a pandemic is good for the soul!

--Jerry Connolly

Surveying New Haven's Area K for the Christmas Bird Count

Connecticut birders best know Morris Creek at Lighthouse Point Park, where it empties into Long Island Sound. Late nineteenth century maps show that Morris Creek and its associated marshes used to extend farther north than the present location of Interstate-95, where today one can see a small tank farm behind a North Frontage Road shopping complex. The December 12 trip to Ora Avenue/Proto Drive/Morris Creek Marshes introduced some NHBC birders to the Morris Creek environs directly south of Tweed-New Haven Airport. In fact, Tweed-New Haven Airport was constructed in marshland with material dredged from New Haven Harbor.

The name Ora has passed into history, replaced by Proto Drive in the 1980s when the phase one development of the East Haven Industrial Park got underway. Don't look for Ora on recent maps; Proto will get you there from East Haven's Coe Avenue. Ora used to connect with Uriah Street by bridge across Morris Creek, a bridge that was removed well before 1980. In its place one could see illegally dumped automobiles sticking out of the creek. The environmental indignities have not waned since, as forty years of birding along the thin strip of road have seen major league illegal dumping of demolition and tires, as well as drag races, rabbit hunting, and paint ball wars. Also, the

grassy fields of yesterday have given way to commercial developments, including a large lumberyard and acres of fenced-in storage for dozens and dozens of semi-truck trailers. Let's not forget the capped landfill nearby, now supporting a small solar panel farm.

What an environmental disaster - and yet Ora Avenue (a name I will not let go) continues to be extraordinarily rich in avian biodiversity. These marshes continue to produce rarities for the New Haven Christmas Bird Count, and that's why we go to this most messed up of field sites visited by NHBC trip leaders. Since Tony Bledsoe, David Sibley, and I birded Area K in the early 1980s, Ora Avenue and the Morris Creek Marshes have produced American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Sora, Marsh Wren, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, Rough-legged Hawk, Long-eared Owl, Common Redpoll, and sundry other rarities for the CTNH count (in late October and November 2007, the state's only Common Ground-Dove was found here at a feeding station set up for the CBC).

We ten birders stalked the road and bordering upland and marsh on December 12 in preparation for the 2020 New Haven CBC. We recorded 26 bird species. Best birding experiences were the four Marsh Wrens that allowed us excellent study of field marks and behavior; two Hermit Thrushes; the fly-over juvenile Bald Eagle and the harrier; the catbird and the two Fox Sparrows. Most importantly, we saw first-hand the resilience of our beloved avian friends as they continue to find suitable early winter habitat in a sea of human degradation.

Coda: a week later, the December 19, 2020 New Haven Christmas Bird Count benefited from a Merlin, 3 Marsh Wrens, a Lincoln's Sparrow, 33 Common Redpolls, big numbers of blackbirds, grackles, and cowbirds, and our only American Woodcock in count week, all from Ora/Proto/Morris Creek.

-- Steve Broker

First Wednesday Walk: Sherwood Island State Park, Westport

Any time of year is a good time to bird this location. Due to the varied habitats, the park offers the possibility of starting the new year with seeing and hearing many different species from waterfowl to sparrows to raptors. Due to Covid restrictions, all walks are limited to ten participants plus the leader. The down side is some people miss a walk, but the up side is a smaller group allows for more interaction with individuals and sharing of information.

For January, the weather conditions were average with a temperature of 37 degrees, partly cloudy skies, and a NNW 16 mph wind. We managed to tally 44 species in just over 3 hours and covered about a third of the park including scoping Long Island Sound for ducks, grebes, and loons, checking the Mill Pond, spruce grove area, and the feeders at the model airplane field. Numbers of most species were lower than expected, probably due to the wind. Highlights included the "old reliable" Lesser Black-backed Gull on east beach, two flyover Bald Eagles, a Black-crowned Night-heron roosting in cedars on the Mill Pond, and at least 4 Field Sparrows hiding from the wind in some thickets. Click on the eBird checklist (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S78774406>) for the entire list and photos from the walk. Thank you to all the participants who made it such an enjoyable outing!

--Tina Green

121st Annual New Haven Christmas Bird Count Summary

The participants in this year's New Haven Christmas Bird Count faced many challenges. The most serious one was conducting the annual survey during a global pandemic. COVID-19 prompted us to modify the way in which we conducted our surveys: we eschewed carpooling and maintained safe social distancing while birding. And, we had to replace our traditional (and scrumptious) compilation dinner with a virtual meeting. Additional challenges included dealing with a foot of freshly fallen snow and subfreezing temperatures on the day of the count. Despite these challenges, we had a very successful census. We had a higher than usual number of participants, as we welcomed a great number of new birders to our ranks, and we saw a great variety and number of birds. The most remarkable was a Northern Parula, a first-time ever observation for our 121 year-old census, observed at the water treatment plant in Branford. The bird was there for over a month (and continues to be seen there as of this writing) and demonstrates how productive these water/sewage treatment sites are for finding out-of-season insectivores. A review of our data reveals trends in populations of species in late fall/early winter in our local area over time. Species that are on the upswing in our area include: Common Eider, Black Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Barred Owl, and Carolina Wren. Sadly, there are more species that are showing a downward trend over time. These include: Mute Swan, American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Monk Parakeet, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird. Documenting these trends is made possible by our collective determination to conduct the census in a thorough and similar way every year. The success of our count can be attributed in large part to the experience, dedication and expertise of our Area Captains and their assistants. Thank you to all who participated in this year's challenging and memorable New Haven Christmas Bird Count.

The species observed were (with rarities in boldface): Brant, 809; Canada Goose, 4185; **Cackling Goose, 1**; Mute Swan, 68; Wood Duck, 24; Gadwall, 82; American Wigeon, 83; American Black Duck, 313; Mallard, 799; Northern Shoveler, 5; Northern Pintail, CW (Count Week); American Green-winged Teal, 17; Canvasback, 2; Ring-necked Duck, 184; Greater Scaup, 914; Lesser Scaup, 46; Common Eider, 9; Surf Scoter, 30; White-winged Scoter, 12; Black Scoter, 3; Long-tailed Duck, 437; Bufflehead, 335; Common Goldeneye, 333; Hooded Merganser, 246; Common Merganser, 126; Red-breasted Merganser, 131; Ruddy Duck, 10; Wild Turkey, 49; Red-throated Loon, 26; Common Loon, 36; Horned Grebe, 62; Double-crested Cormorant, 1; Great Cormorant, 4; Great Blue Heron, 30; Black Vulture, 38; Turkey Vulture, 43; Bald Eagle, 37; Northern Harrier, 11; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 6; Cooper's Hawk, 32; Red-shouldered Hawk, 36; Red-tailed Hawk, 108; Rough-legged Hawk, CW; American Kestrel, 1; Merlin, 10; Peregrine Falcon, 5; Clapper Rail, 1; American Coot, 7; Black-bellied Plover, 1; Killdeer, CW; American Oystercatcher, 1; Ruddy Turnstone, 2; Sanderling, 53; Purple Sandpiper, 7; Dunlin, 6; American Woodcock, CW; Ring-billed Gull, 2028; Herring Gull, 2607; Iceland Gull, 1; **Glaucous Gull, 1**; Great

Black-backed Gull, 54; Rock Pigeon, 824; Mourning Dove, 763; Monk Parakeet, 12; Screech Owl, 5; Great Horned Owl, 5; Barred Owl, 8; Belted Kingfisher, 20; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 116; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 22; Downy Woodpecker, 216; Hairy Woodpecker, 44; Northern Flicker, 45; Pileated Woodpecker, 11; Blue Jay, 412; American Crow, 925; Fish Crow, 237; crow, sp., 175; Common Raven, 25; Horned Lark, 117; Black-capped Chickadee, 507; Tufted Titmouse, 298; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 182; Brown Creeper, 4; Carolina Wren, 206; Winter Wren, 10; Marsh Wren, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 9; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 5; Eastern Bluebird, 37; Hermit Thrush, 11; American Robin, 271; Gray Catbird, 11; Northern Mockingbird, 112; Brown Thrasher, 1; European Starling, 5137; American Pipit, 12; Cedar Waxwing, 37; **Northern Parula, 1**; Yellow-rumped Warbler, 3; Palm Warbler 1; Pine Warbler, 1; **Ovenbird, 1**; Eastern Towhee, 7; American Tree Sparrow, 67; Chipping Sparrow, 5; Field Sparrow, 24; Vesper Sparrow, 6; Savannah Sparrow, 200; Fox Sparrow, 17; Song Sparrow, 627; **Lincoln's Sparrow, 1**; Swamp Sparrow, 24; White-throated Sparrow, 758; White-crowned Sparrow, 5; Dark-eyed Junco, 1027; Lapland Longspur, 1; Snow Bunting, 1; Northern Cardinal, 324; Red-winged Blackbird, 1799; Eastern Meadowlark, 8; Rusty Blackbird, 19; Common Grackle, 2282; Brown-headed Cowbird, 329; **Baltimore Oriole, 1**; Purple Finch, 2; House Finch, 314; **Common Redpoll, 33**; Pine Siskin, 10; American Goldfinch, 273; House Sparrow, 1300. Total: 127 species on count day, four more during count week.

The 89 participants were (with new NH CBC participants in boldface): Dewitt Allen, Ralph Amodei, Toby Appel, Christin Arnini, Mark Aronson, Phil Asprelli, Bill Batsford, **Courtney Bauknecht**, Larry Bausher, Stephen Broker, Lauren Brown, Dana Campbell, Michael Carpenter, Nancy Clark, **Glen Cummings**, John Deming, **Sophie Duncan**, John Farley, Michael Ferrari, Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe, Frank Gallo, Andrew Gullberg, Ed Haesche, Stacy Hanks, **Sharon Hirsch**, Michael Horn, Christine Howe, James Hunter, Nord Isacson, **Tina Isacson**, Lynn James, Deborah Johnson, Kris Johnson, **Leslie Johnson**, Lynn Jones, **Emily Keating**, Tom Kelly, Tom Kenefick, Acadia Kocher, Albert Laguna, Bernice Lattanzi, Pat Leahy, Carol Lemmon, Gary Lemmon, Cody Limber, Alex Lin-Moore, Chris Loscalzo, Alan Molina, Frank Mantlik, Gail Martino, Steve Mayo, Flo McBride, Pat McCreless, **John McEachern**, Jeff Meyer, Linda Meyer, Judy Moore, Gina Nichol, Michael O'Brien, John Oshlick, Phil Pivawer, Bev Prosen, Frank Ragusa, Nancy Ragusa, **Cate Rauch**, **Dave Rauch**, **Pam Reeser**, Brendan Reilly, Laurie Reynolds, Brian Roach, Lee Schlesinger, Abby Sesselberg, Arthur Shippee, Jim Sirch, Paul Smith, Nancy Specht, Charla Spector, Steve Spector, Howie Sternberg, Maria Stockmal, John Triana, Severin Eubbing, Marianne Vahey, Lisa Wahle, Chris Woerner, **David Woolery**, **Andrew Wormser**, and George Zepko. My sincere apologies if I missed anyone.

--Chris Loscalzo,
NH CBC Compiler

Plum Island Off the Auction Block

Conservationists have won the more than decade-long fight to stop the federal government's sale of Plum Island, the Long Island Sound home of a government research facility 10 miles from Connecticut shores that, through years of security and isolation, has also become a pristine wildlife haven for the birds, seals, fish and other wildlife that frequent it. The measure ending the controversial plan to sell the island to the highest bidder was led by Connecticut and New York Congressional Delegates and was among the many items stuffed into the massive omnibus spending bill, signed at the end of December. Many decisions remain on the future use of the island; hopefully it will pass to the State of NY, where local officials are on board with plans to preserve its ecosystems. More information:

<https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-news-plum-island-conservation-bill-20201222-mvxnv2cod5etbjhpl4bkt7p3ty-story.html>

More Good News for L.I. Sound:

Also in late December Congressional leaders approved 30.4 million dollars for the 2022 Fiscal Year for the restoration and management of Long Island Sound through the National Estuary Program.

--Deborah Johnson
NHBC Conservation Chair

The CT Blue Plan for Long Island Sound

The plan as submitted to the General Assembly has been interrupted because of Covid, but early in January things are moving again. The Blue Plan will serve as a tool to foster good decisions about proposed developments, including those that could impact seabirds and shorebirds. Detailed information about the plan and its progress can be followed at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/LIS-Blue-Plan/Long-Island-Sound-Blue-Plan-Home#>. The Blue Plan Map Viewer: "One of the most valuable portions of the Blue Plan's bird section is a map that defines Ecologically Significant Areas. It identifies several near-shore sections from the western to the central Sound, and a large area across the waterway between the eastern Connecticut coast and the North Fork of Long Island as those that are the most important for vulnerable species such as Common, Least, and Roseate Tern, Saltmarsh Sparrow, and American Oystercatcher." The DEEP site above includes the Map Viewer.

--Deborah Johnson
NHBC Conservation Chair

Forage Fish & Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act

Tiny Fish Play a Big Role in the Ocean Ecosystem – and we should protect them accordingly! Tiny fish species, known as forage fish, serve as prey for larger fish, marine mammals, and seabirds. Unfortunately, not all forage fish are managed with their ecological role in mind.

The reauthorization of the MSA is on hold for now because of other responsibilities during COVID, but the Forage Fish Coalition continues its work to learn more and provide the science for legislation that will protect fish, and thereby provide the essential nutrient-rich diets for our sea- and shore-birds.



Illustration generously provided by Patrick J. Lynch

Resources for learning more about forage fish:
<http://fishbase.org/search.php> for diets of fish. Smaller herring and menhaden eat different things than adults.

<http://asmfc.org> – gives life history of different fish species.

--Deborah Johnson

NHBC Winter Feeder Report 2020-2021 - End of Week 10

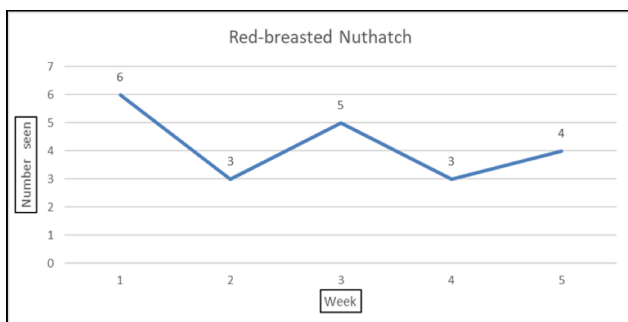
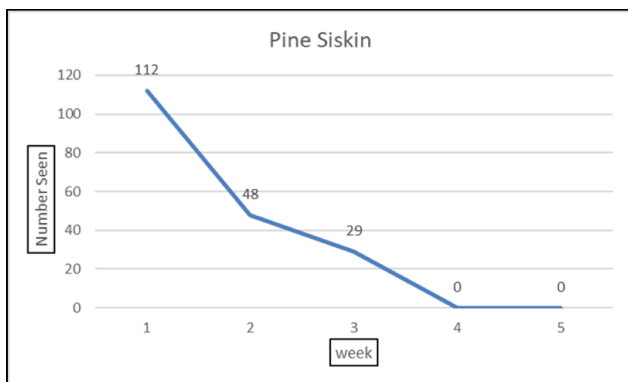
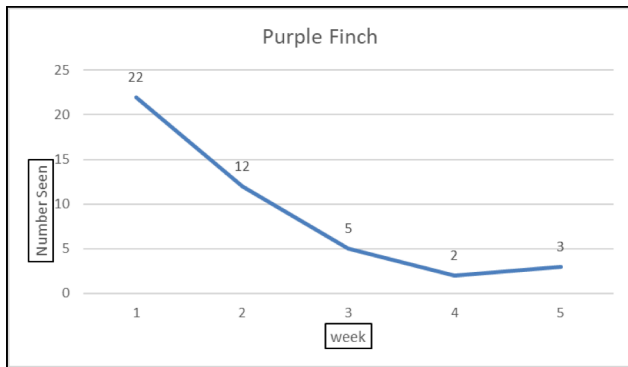


This year we have had to put up with Covid-19 and a lot of us had to work from home. Therefore, I thought the number of species seen and their count would be higher than the last two years.

We started the survey with unstable weather, hot one day and cold the next. We had temperatures in the 60s and temperatures way below freezing, (10 to 14F°).

This is an irruption year or so says an article from the Courier & Press, a Southern Indiana periodical. Looks like we caught the end of it when we started the Survey. Initially, there were high counts for Pine Siskins and Purple Finches but they fell off in weeks 4 and 5. Last year we had 0 Purple Finches, Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches.

The Graphs below are the first 5 weeks of this year.



New to the Uncommon List is Rose-breasted Grosbeak (week 1), seen by Amy Hopkins. In the first 3 weeks between 250 and 400 Common Grackles were reported. Black Bears were a problem in week 1 (Tim Rodgers) and week 2 (Alan Malina) in that they took down the surveyor's feeders. Purple Finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen mainly in weeks 1 to 3 but some surveyors had them in all 5 weeks.

This year we started with 19 surveyors reporting, 5 via Postal Mail and 14 via email. We are located all over New Haven County with one surveyor in Fairfield County and three in Middlesex County.

We have finished the weeks 6 thru 10 (most of December and early January) of the survey, and we had Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches and Pine Siskins during this period of time. The species of interest this year (2021) has been the Common Redpoll and the Hoary Redpoll. Nancy Morand of Durham reported a Common Redpoll in week 8. Another bird of interest this year was the Snowy Owl but none were reported.

This year a constant theme has been the low number of species seen after the snowstorm in week 7. This year there were 2 peaks, the first was in week 3 and the second in week 7. For some species week 7 was the greater peak, for others week 3. So far this year American Goldfinch and Black-capped Chickadee peaked in week 3 and Dark-eyed Junco and Northern Cardinal peaked in week 7 as can be seen on the graphs. White-throated Sparrow had 2 major peaks, one in week 3 and a larger one in week 7. After week 7 the number of birds counted in all species dropped.

This year we have approximately the same number of surveyors as the previous two years with the majority having been reporting for the last 6 years or more. So why do we have such low numbers after week 7 this year? Was it the weather? The temperature ranged from a high of 60 ° F to a low of 10 ° F (Average 35.7 ° F) with snow, ice storm, and rain. Since we have been battling Covid-19 and more people are home, are many more people feeding the birds in our neighborhoods so that they do not come to our feeders at the time of day we normally would see them?

Some data from the sheets for weeks 6 through 10:

Common Species:

We had 22/22 or 100% of the common species. American Crow, American Robin, and Brown-headed Cowbird were seen by 5 or fewer surveyors while the rest of the species had 10 or more surveyors see them.

Semi-Common Species:

Surprisingly, we had 11/12 or 92% of the semi-common species seen. Not seen was the Sharp-shinned Hawk. Northern Flicker was seen by 12 surveyors. Purple Finches were seen by 3 surveyors; 2 surveyors saw Northern Mockingbird and Rock Doves. 3 surveyors also saw Wild Turkey and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Fox Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow were seen by 4 surveyors, and 5 surveyors counted Eastern Blue Bird, Red-tailed Hawk, and Red-winged Blackbird.

Uncommon Species List:

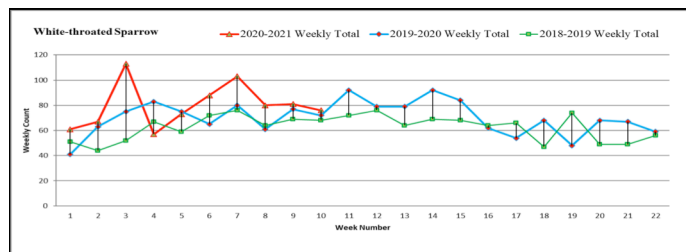
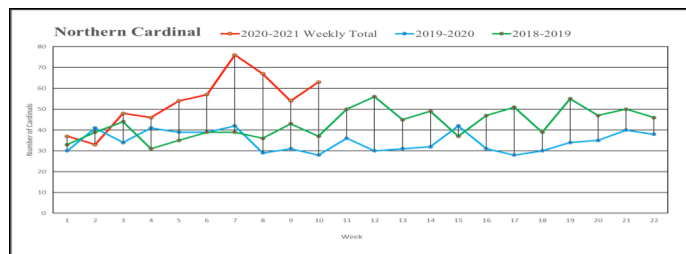
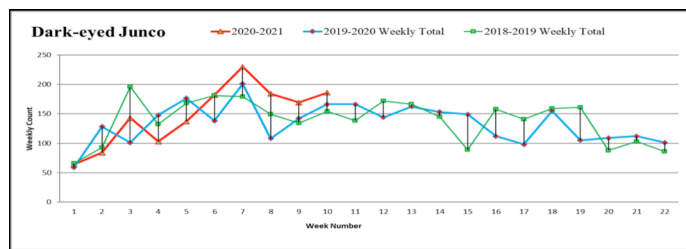
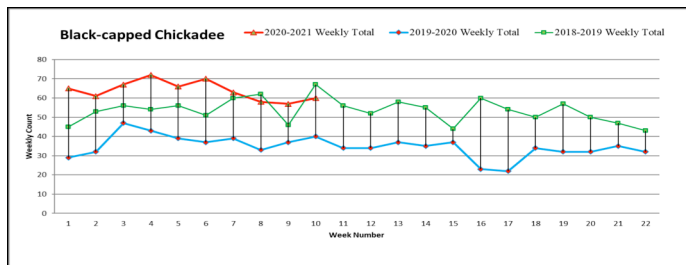
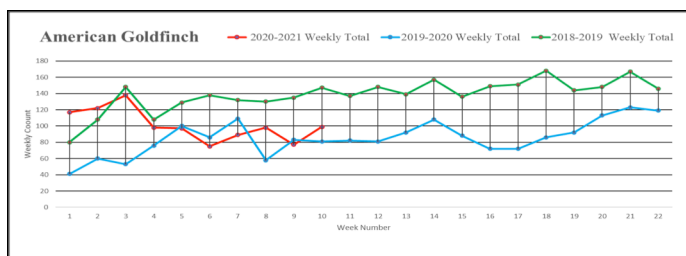
We had 13/42 species (30%) during these five weeks. Species seen were: Baltimore Oriole (Ed Sprowson), Brown Creeper (Laurie Reynolds), Common Red-poll (Nancy Morand), Pileated Woodpecker (Laurie Reynolds), Pine Siskin (Pam Reeser), Raven (Martha Asarisi), Red-breasted Nuthatch (Deborah Johnson, Philip Pivawer), Red-shouldered Hawk (Dean Rupp, Martha Asarisi, Pam Reeser), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (Pam Reeser), Savannah Sparrow (Pam Reeser), Turkey Vulture (Martha Asarisi), and White-crowned Sparrow (Ed Sprowson).

Waterfowl List:

Only Mallards were seen during these 5 weeks: **Mallard** (Nancy Morand).

Animal List:

13 for 26 (50%) from the **Animal** list were seen: Gray Squirrel, Chipmunk, Black Squirrel, Feral Cat, Mole, Opossum, Rabbit, Raccoon, Red Fox, Red Squirrel, Skunk, Vole and White-tail Deer.



--Pete Vitali
Chairman: NHBC Winter Feeder Survey

BE SURE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.newhavenbirdclub.org

There are Google Map links for the meeting places of trips.



NEW HAVEN BIRD CLUB
P.O. BOX 9004
NEW HAVEN, CT 06532-0004

Newsletter February 2021

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Membership Levels (check appropriate category):

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☐ Family - \$20
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Additional gift to support NHBC programs: \$ _____

Make check payable to New Haven Bird Club and send to:

New Haven Bird Club,
PO Box 9004
New Haven CT 06532-0004

You can also join or renew membership at the NHBC website with credit card or PayPal.

The NHBC membership year is from July 1 to June 30. New members joining between January 1 and June 30 are given full membership for the rest of the current year and for the whole next membership year.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

New Haven Bird Club is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. All dues and donations are fully tax deductible. If you work for a company that gives matching grants, please take advantage of the offer. It's free and helps NHBC's program budget.

The Club welcomes everyone irrespective of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin.

If your address, phone or email change, please notify us at our website under "Join, Update Information Online."

Alternatively, email the update to the Membership Chair (membership@newhavenbirdclub.org), or send changes by mail to: New Haven Bird Club, PO Box 9004, New Haven CT 06532-0004.

NHBC does not release its membership list or email addresses to other organizations.

The NHBC website, www.newhavenbirdclub.org, offers information about the Club, its programs, and other Club and member news. If you have any questions about the Club, you can send an email to: ask.nhbc@gmail.com.

The New Haven Bird Club is on Facebook. Please like the page "New Haven Bird Club." You can upload your photos, discuss Club events, and post your recent sightings.

CTBirds is an open discussion email list provided by the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) to discuss birds and birding in the state. To subscribe, go to: lists.ctbirding.org/mailman/listinfo/ctbirds_lists.ctbirding.org