



Audubon CONNECTICUT

July 2008

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Save the Date!

What: **Organic Lawn & Turf Workshop for Professionals**

When: Thursday, August 7th, 2008

Where: Greenwich Center, Kiernan Hall

Time: 8:30 am - 11:30 am

More Information: [See below](#) or contact Christy Pennoyer at 203-869-5272 x225

What: **New Haven Migration Festival: See Great Winged Migration Over New Haven**

When: Sunday, September 21st, 2008

Where: Lighthouse Point Park

Time: 8:00 am to 2:30 pm

More Information: Look for details in upcoming newsletters!

What: **Invasive Plant Symposium**

When: Wednesday, October 1, 2008

Where: Uconn Storrs

Time: 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

More Information: <http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/>

What: **Annual Connecticut Forest Conservation and Forestry Research Forum**

When: Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Where: Uconn Storrs, Rome Ballroom

Time: 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

More Information: [Look for details in upcoming newsletters!](#)

Summertime Science

One of the National Audubon Society's signature initiatives is the Christmas Bird Count, an annual event since 1900. Each December, in Greenwich and across the country, hundreds of volunteers fan out across designated count circles for a day of fun and friendly competition, as they search for as many different bird species as they can find. The information collected by these Citizen Scientists helps professional researchers to monitor winter bird populations, establish long-term trend data, and learn more about wild birds and their habitats.

This summer, Audubon Greenwich is hosting a series of "Summertime Science" counts of birds, butterflies, and, for the first time, dragonflies and damselflies. The goal of these counts is similar to that of the Christmas Bird Count-provide Audubon naturalists and professional scientists with important information about the distribution and number of breeding birds and insect populations.

Anyone can become a Citizen Scientist for the day. All it takes is a willingness to learn some simple count techniques, a little patience, and a desire to have some fun while helping Audubon learn more about the birds and insects that call Greenwich home. To get started, join Audubon staff on Saturday, July 12th and Saturday, July 26th, to count butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies (please see our website at <http://greenwich.audubon.org> for more information).

Then, join us at the end of August and throughout the Fall for the raptor migration. Each Autumn, thousands of broad-winged hawks and 16 other species of hawks, eagles, and vultures migrate southwest over the hilltop at the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch at Audubon Greenwich, which is one of the hundreds of official hawk watch locations nationwide. From August through November, dozens of volunteers assist Audubon staff to identify and count migrating raptors making their way south for the winter. New volunteers are always welcome, and experienced hawk watchers, as well as Audubon staff, will be on hand to help you get started.

Through Citizen Science efforts such as these, Audubon Greenwich's volunteers make a real difference in helping researchers learn more about birds and other wildlife, and the habitats upon which they depend. So join us at Audubon Greenwich this summer for a summertime of science!

[More Information](#)

Small Grants Awarded to Help Protect IBAs

Audubon Connecticut was pleased to initiate a new funding source for IBAs this year, the IBA Conservation Plan Implementation Matching Grants Program, which was made possible through a generous gift from the Jeniam Foundation and state board member Emily McKay. The program's purpose is to provide funding support for local stakeholder groups to implement recommendations in our completed and draft IBA conservation plans.

Six local groups were able to gather the matching support to apply for awards ranging from \$1000 to \$5000. This year's program funds were nearly equal to the sum of the requests and all the projects were worthwhile, so we decided to fund all seven proposals (the Hartford Audubon Society received two awards).

Here we highlight two exceptional projects that we were very pleased to be able to support. First, the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge will be using funds to buy supplies to create new nesting boxes for the



federally-endangered Roseate Tern (photo on right) and to re-establish the productivity grid on Falkner Island . This project will have a direct impact on the island's Roseate Tern population and will also allow the McKinney staff and interns to obtain robust productivity estimates for the Common Tern population, a state species of special concern.



Photo by AJ Hand

Second, the Town of Greenwich will be using funds to inventory the flora of Great Captain's Island and establish permanent plots for monitoring in future years. The results from this project will be used to evaluate the long-term stability of the nesting vegetation for the heron rookery, which will in turn inform future management decisions.

We hope that this program will expand in each subsequent year to additional IBAs and stakeholder groups, especially over the next two years as waves of new conservation plans are completed. Also, we hope that this program will eventually be a source of funding for conservation plans themselves, allowing stakeholder groups to take the lead in all aspects of conservation planning.

Complete list of projects:

- Hartford Audubon Society, \$4,500 to construct an observation platform at Station 43 and \$1,100 to support IBA related outreach at Northwest Park as part of their centennial celebration, matched by \$4,500 of cash and \$1,100 of cash and in-kind contributions respectively.
- Town of Guilford, \$1,000 to support land acquisition at a non-IBA site that is important to Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Matched directly by \$2,000, but indirectly by several hundred thousand dollars from various partners.
- Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary Group, \$2,000 to construct a bird and butterfly garden in the new Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary, matched by \$2,000 of in-kind services.
- Town of Greenwich, \$5,000 towards the Great Captains Island Vegetation Survey, matched by \$5,000 of cash and in-kind contributions, see above for more details.
- Stewart B. McKinney NWR, \$5,000 to support the Falkner Island Tern Project, matched by \$7,000+ of cash contributions, see above for more details.
- Connecticut Butterfly Association, \$1,500 to install an irrigation system for the bird and butterfly gardens at Lighthouse Point Park , matched by \$5,920 of cash and in-kind contributions.

[More Information](#)

Citizen Science Monitoring Project

The University of Connecticut and Audubon Connecticut are working together to develop a citizen science monitoring project for salt marsh birds, placing a special focus on Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows, Audubon Connecticut's highest priority species. This species is unique in that it is one of only two birds in the world (the Seaside Sparrow being the other) that nests exclusively in salt marshes, a habitat that is seriously threatened by rising sea-levels. Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows are important indicators of salt marsh health, however, they do not receive adequate coverage under existing monitoring protocols because their secretive nature and quiet, infrequent singing style make them difficult to detect.

Fortunately, we are not as limited by this lack of data as other states. In fact, we probably have more data on the occurrence and breeding biology of this species in Connecticut than any other location in the world because of ongoing research by the University of Connecticut . In spite of this, we are lacking data for certain areas, e.g., we still know very little of this species' occurrence in the state's smaller and privately owned marshes. Moreover, estimating population trends requires long-term data for the state's most important marshes. These knowledge gaps were the motivation for our monitoring project, which is the first citizen science monitoring protocol to be focused primarily on Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

This spring and summer was planned as a pilot period, so we focused our efforts on a single site -- Hammonasset Beach State Park , a global IBA for Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows. We received invaluable assistance from Menunkatuck Audubon Society, Friends of Hammonasset, and nine local birders who generously volunteered their time to do multiple surveys over the 2-month breeding season. We kicked off the project by holding a training and information session at the park, and doing the first round of surveys with the volunteers. Before the season ends, we will meet up with the volunteers to do the final survey together.

Next year, our primary goal will be to work with other states so that they can adopt our protocol. Outside of Connecticut , data on Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow occurrence are severely lacking, and data on population trends are virtually non-existent. We hope that our project will be the first step towards filling in these data gaps and implementing a range-wide monitoring scheme.

[More Information](#)

Log Your Bird Sightings on eBird!

eBird (<http://www.ebird.org>), is an on-line citizen science ornithological database that is a joint project of Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It allows anyone to log in and enter their sightings of grassland birds and will provide a map of those grassland bird sightings to the DEP.

We are encouraging birders to log any sightings of state-listed grassland birds into eBird. Simply having the records captured will be helpful in identifying key spots for grassland birds in Connecticut. I also recommend that people take advantage of this tool to log any significant ornithological records or nesting occurrences of species of conservation concern (please feel free to contact me for such a list).

To participate, simply log on to eBird at <http://www.ebird.org> If you aren't already registered, you will have to answer a few simple questions and choose a user name and password to be registered as a user. In addition to providing data to this larger effort, you will have the beginnings of an online database of your own bird sightings. There are mapping tools to help locate the spot where your observation occurred and then you simply estimate the numbers of each bird species you observe and enter that information into the checklist.

The following birds have been chosen as the target species:

- a.. Upland Sandpiper (Endangered; photo on right)
- a.. American Kestrel (Threatened)
- b.. Horned Lark (Endangered)
- c.. Vesper Sparrow (Endangered)
- d.. Savannah Sparrow (Special Concern)
- e.. Grasshopper Sparrow (Endangered)
- f.. Bobolink (Special Concern), and
- g.. Eastern Meadowlark (Special Concern)



It is not necessary for volunteer birders to have computer access. Grassland bird sightings can be recorded on paper. Include which grassland bird species were seen, how many, where in the state the birds were seen (be as specific as possible) and the date and time of the sightings. Volunteer birders should mail their grassland bird sightings (including their name and contact information) to: Milan Bull, Connecticut Audubon Society, 2325 Burr St., Fairfield, CT 06824

For more information, contact Milan Bull, (203) 259-6305, ext. 111, mbull@ctaudubon.org, or Patrick Comins, (203) 264-5098, ext. 305, pcomins@audubon.org

Thank you!

[More Information](#)

IBA Conservation Planning Update

Great Captains Island - The draft IBA Conservation Plan for Great Captains Island was presented to the Greenwich Conservation Commission. We are awaiting their comments and approval to move forward to the public review phase and will release a public draft as soon as we address any concerns the Commission may have with the current draft.

Naugatuck State Forest - Buzz Devine has been selected to develop an IBA Conservation Plan for Naugatuck State Forest. His team will be working with the DEP Wildlife and Forestry Divisions, the Naugatuck Valley Audubon Society and other stakeholders to develop the first IBA Conservation Plan to cover a State Forest in Connecticut. Mr. Devine has long-standing ties to the Connecticut birding community and was the co-author of "The Connecticut Birding Guide" with Dr. Dwight Smith.

[More Information](#)

Audubon Flies Up to Capitol Hill to Tell Congress that Bird Populations are in Decline

On July 10th, Audubon's Chief Scientist Tom Bancroft testified before the House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans at a hearing entitled "Going, Going, Gone? An Assessment of the Global Decline in Bird Populations." Ornithologists have documented that many common bird populations have undergone noticeable population declines over the past forty years, including birds like the Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Pintail Duck, and Little Blue Heron. This downward trend raises serious concerns regarding the health of bird populations in general and the health of the ecosystems in which birds live. Audubon testified about scientific research and data on these bird population declines and their causes, drawing from Audubon's State of the Birds reports.

Audubon Public Policy Wants to Hear From You!

During the summer months, when the State General Assembly is adjourned and Congress is headed toward its month-long August recess, Audubon's Public Policy Committee gets to work crafting our legislative agenda for the upcoming year. The Policy Committee is composed of state board members Julie Belaga (chair), Russ Brenneman (vice-chair), Jane-Kerin Moffat, Kate Shanley, David Leff, Elizabeth Champlin Geske and Suzanne Botta Sullivan. These members consult with Audubon's Science Committee to identify priority issues for the next legislative season in Hartford and in DC.

This summer, Audubon will be considering 2009 state legislation to improve the protections offered by the Connecticut Endangered Species Act. We will once again be engaged in efforts to improve funding for DEP, one of the most under-funded state environmental agencies in New England, and seeking to establish a state fund to match federal funding from the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act.

On the federal level, we will be advocating for funding of the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Acts, and seeking Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations to help bring Long Beach West in Stratford and Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport into the U.S. Fish and Wildlife National Refuge System.

As part of the process of defining our agenda for 2009, we would like to know what you think. Please send us your thoughts about what you would like to see

Audubon doing during the next legislative session. We would love to hear from you about:

- . Important environmental issues or problems in your town
- . State issues that you are interested in
- . Federal issues that you interested in
- . State issues you think Audubon should pursue
- . Federal issues you think Audubon should pursue
- . Things you think Audubon can do to keep you more informed or help you be more involved in public policy issues that affect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats

Please send your suggestions and comments to Sandy Breslin at sbreslin@audubon.org or call (203) 264-5098 x307.

[Click Here to view our 2008 Legislative Agenda](#)

Get Involved!

Help Save a Precious Piece of Connecticut's Coastline!

The Town of Stratford is currently considering the sale of Long Beach West to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. Such a sale would permanently protect this critical ecological, educational, and recreational site.

If you are a Stratford resident, please join Audubon CT , the Trust for Public Land, CT Audubon Society, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Save the Sound and others in supporting permanent protection of this unique area. Here's what you can do to help:

1. Come to Town Hall on July 24 at 6 p.m.! The Town Council is holding a public hearing on this issue. Based in part on public input, the Council will vote at a subsequent meeting whether or not to approve the sale. It is very important that you voice your support! There is a small, but very vocal opposition that does not want to see the sale proceed. This group was successful in blocking a similar sale years ago. Sign up begins at 3 p.m. with public comment starting at 6:00 p.m.
2. Attend a public information session to answer any questions you may have about this project. These sessions are scheduled for: July 15th - 7-9 PM at Stratford High School and July 22nd - 7-9 PM at Birdseye Municipal Complex, Rm. 110.
3. Contact your Town Council member and urge her/him to support this historic sale. We especially need people to contact the following members: Michael Henrick, Michael Julian, Thomas Moore, Alvin O'Neal, and Amy Wanamaker.

The message is simple:

"Please support the permanent protection of Long Beach West by approving its sale to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."

To find your Town Council member, click here: <http://stratfordct.qscend.com/content/1296/398/487.aspx>

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. Please forward this message to your lists and friends!

Sandy Breslin sbreslin@audubon.org
Patrick Comins pcomins@audubon.org
(203) 264-5098

[Click here to view more information on this project](#)

Take Action to Save Migratory Birds!

When Audubon's Chief Scientist, Thomas Bancroft Ph.D., testified July 10th before a hearing of the House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Ocean about the alarming trends in global bird populations (see *Audubon Flies Up to Capitol Hill to Tell Congress that Bird Populations are in Decline*), he concluded by calling on Congress to support **reauthorization of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act**.

Since its inception in 2002, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (HR 5756) has provided millions of dollars for vital conservation efforts, including monitoring efforts, habitat restoration, education, and other projects in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. **But many essential conservation projects remain unfunded.** Neotropical migrants face increasing threats-habitat loss, invasive species, disease, and a changing climate. Here in Connecticut, we are seeing declines in Wood Thrush and Blue-winged Warbler, and are concerned about maintaining our healthy population of globally-vulnerable Cerulean Warblers.

Please **add your voice to Tom's by contacting your U.S. Representative** and urging them to cosponsor the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (HR 5756), which will reauthorize this vital program with increased funding!

To read Tom Bancroft's testimony: <http://www.audubon.org/news/CBID.html>

To take action on this issue, go to National Audubon's web site: <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/nmbca>

For more information, contact Sandy Breslin at (203) 264-5098 x307 or at sbreslin@audubon.org

To Contact Your Representative:

Email: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> for the Democrats
<http://www.house.gov/shays/contact/index.htm> for Congressman Shays

Phone: **Congressman Joe Courtney (D-2)** (202) 225-2076 or in CT at (860) 886-0139
Congresswoman Rosa De Lauro (D-3) (202) 225-3661 or in CT at (203) 562-3718
Congressman Christopher Shays (R-4) (202) 225-5541 or in CT at (203) 579-5870
Congressman Christopher Murphy (D-5) (202) 225-4476 or in CT at (860) 223-8412

Don't forget to mention that:

- . You are an Audubon Connecticut member
- . You are a constituent
- . You care about protecting the world's migratory birds
- . You urge support for HR 5756 (Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

. You thank your U.S. Rep for supporting birds, wildlife and the environment!

Audubon at Home In Greenwich

On August 7th, Audubon Greenwich is hosting another Organic Lawn & Turf Workshop by Chip Osborne, expert consultant and speaker on the topic. This 3-hour presentation will be for lawn and landscape professionals.

If you would like to offer your landscaper the opportunity to learn how to maintain a beautiful lawn without using any chemicals, this is your chance. Pass the word along to lawn and landscape companies and encourage them to attend.

Our demonstration organic lawn in front of the building looks terrific and is a testament to the fact that it is possible to have a lush green lawn without chemicals.

[More Information](#)

Tip of the Month

As we get into those hot dry months, remember it is best to water your lawn only once a week deeply (enough to fill a tuna can). This encourages deep root growth and makes a stronger sturdier plant.

[More ways to go organic](#)

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For more information on Audubon Connecticut and any of our programs go to www.audubonct.org or e-mail ct@audubon.org