



Audubon CONNECTICUT

Welcome to the first edition of the Audubon Connecticut monthly E-Newsletter. Here you will find updates from across the state and various ways to stay connected and involved. If you would like to unsubscribe from this newsletter please e-mail ct@audubon.org to be removed.

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Letter from the Executive Director

We are pleased to initiate the Audubon Connecticut E-News, a low-carbon communication vehicle to keep you informed of our activities and accomplishments. We welcome your thoughts and comments about E-News and we are eager to widen its distribution. So forward this along to a friend (or two!).

The Audubon CT team has a busy summer and fall ahead. Important work is ongoing with our Long Island Sound Campaign, Important Bird Area Program, and bird conservation efforts at our centers and sanctuaries. We are looking for volunteers to assist these efforts, so do not hesitate to give us a call if you have an interest and the time!

Greenwich Update

As we move from the bright days of Spring to the heat of Summer, the staff of Audubon Greenwich have been hard at work doing what we do best: introducing children to the wonders of nature. Throughout the spring, hundreds of local schoolchildren, the Greenwich Boys and Girls Club, and many Boys and Girl Scout troops have explored our sanctuaries and enthusiastically delved into Insect Lives, Plants and Their Partners, Freshwater Ecology, Pond Study, Reptiles and Amphibians, and (of course!) Birds. Thanks to word-of-mouth about our Scout programs and James Flynn, our wonderful Scout Coordinator, we are working with more Scout troops than ever this year. We are also delighted to continue our special partnerships with the Greenwich Boys and Girls Club and the Hamilton

Avenue School.

This spring we hosted two important events: International Migratory Bird Day and a meeting of the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. In the early morning hours of May 10th, birders of all ages fanned out across Fairchild Garden and the main sanctuary in search of spring migrants making their way north to breed and nest. On May 17th, we welcomed another flock- Audubon staff and Board members from across the county, many of whom were visiting Audubon Greenwich for the first time. Our facility and grounds looked their best, thanks to the tireless efforts of John Fairty, Facility Manager, and all the staff, interns, and volunteers who pitched in.

Also tireless is our Science Intern Brian Bielfelt. This season, Brian has developed and is implementing a comprehensive invasive species control program for the fields and thickets around the Center. We are removing invasive plants such as Multiflora Rose, Porcelain Berry, and Border Privet, and replacing them with native plants such as Highbush Blueberry, Raspberry, and Shadbush on which birds and insects thrive. Brian and his team of volunteers have already put in over 200 hours of time to this project, and it is only the beginning of our long-term battle against invasives.

We have a busy summer ahead of us. Summer Camp begins on June 30th when we welcome our first batch of campers to a summer of nature exploration, conservation, and fun. In addition to camp, our summer calendar is full of events, including Citizen Science bird, butterfly, and dragonfly counts, night hikes, the honey harvest, and family pond exploration days. And though it seems far in the future, before we know it the 2008 hawk watch season will begin on August 20th, followed by our annual Hawk Watch festival the weekend of September 13-14th.

[More Information](#)

Sharon Update

Audubon Sharon consists of the Miles Wildlife Sanctuary and the Sharon Audubon Center together protecting almost 2,700 acres of habitat in Sharon Connecticut. Looking back on Spring we remember days full of school children learning about soil, birds, maple syrup and pond invertebrates. We remember a banner year for maple syrup production with long days (and nights) boiling sap to produce over 110 gallons of syrup. Some new non-releasable education animals became part of our live animal education program including a black vulture (seen in photo on right), merlin, red-shouldered hawk, tarantula and an education beehive. Two education interns were hired to help implement programs and begin their careers in environmental education and two bird research interns were hired and trained to implement our seven bird banding/research stations located throughout Litchfield County and eastern Dutchess County. Summer camp registrations poured in and Spring Break programs rounded out the season.

As summer approaches we look forward to fun-filled days of summer camp where children discover the wonders of nature with their Audubon leaders and where their Audubon leaders learn from their students. We look forward to helping people who care enough to rescue injured or orphaned birds by providing treatment to their charges through our wildlife rehabilitation program and releasing the birds back into the wild. We look forward to presenting myriad live hawk and owl programs and live reptile programs to camps, festivals and organizations throughout the tri-state region. Our hummingbird and butterfly garden will be in full bloom attracting many colorful pollinators and educating visitors on what they can plant in their backyards to attract and assist wildlife. By late June, fledgling American Kestrels from 10 kestrel nesting boxes installed and monitored by Audubon scientists in Sharon will have been banded in an effort to strengthen the population of these state-listed birds in northwest Connecticut. By early August, our bird research interns and their volunteer supervisor will have banded and measured hundreds of songbirds contributing to nation-wide monitoring efforts to track the breeding status of neotropical migratory songbirds. And, by August 11th, the 41st Annual Sharon Audubon Festival, to be held August 9-10, 2008 will be history. Considered to be the culmination of Audubon Sharon's yearly activities the Sharon Audubon Festival brings in expert naturalists, speakers, entertainers, and exhibitors from around the tri-state area to share their love and knowledge of nature with approximately 1,200 participants. Truly a collaborative event, the Festival is run by staff, over 100 volunteers and a national youth volunteer organization called the Landmark Volunteers meeting Audubon's mission of engaging people of all ages in nature and conservation.



[More Information](#)

Bent of the River Update

Great news! Leslie Kane of Guilford will be joining the team at Bent of the River as its new Center Director. Leslie comes to us from Guilford, where she has worked since 2001 as its environmental planner, inland wetlands administrator, tree warden, and GIS administrator. Prior to that, Leslie was the tidelands watershed coordinator and director of Connecticut River projects for the UConn Cooperative Extension System, and she served as coordinator of the Land Conservation Coalition of CT and Land Trust Service Bureau for The Nature Conservancy. Leslie is very highly regarded in the Connecticut arena of environmental professionals. She brings to Audubon a wealth of knowledge and experience that is certain to advance our education and conservation mission at the Bent. Please join us in welcoming Leslie to Audubon!

Development Update

More than 350 people streamed into Audubon's Dancing with Nature Gala Awards Dinner at the Belle Haven Club in Greenwich. A sold out crowd came to honor our two awardees David Ogilvy, with the Audubon Connecticut Lifetime Conservation Achievement Award, and Robert Schumann, with the Audubon Connecticut Environmental Leadership.

David Ogilvy is a life-long resident of Greenwich, CT with deep roots in the community. A leader in open space protection within the Greenwich community, David has served as President of The Greenwich Land Trust and a member of the First Selectman's Land Acquisition Committee.

David will be remembered always for his key involvement in protecting Treetops and the Pomerance-Tuchman properties, two critically important open spaces that he helped preserve in Greenwich. The Treetops acquisition preserved 110 acres of critical Mianus River Watershed lands while adding to the Mianus Greenway so that this unique and ecologically valuable habitat could be enjoyed by future generations. In a similar vein, David played a key role in ensuring that the 118-acre tract of pristine woodland adjoining the Montgomery., now known as the Pomerance-Tuchman Preserve, was permanently preserved.

These efforts, as well as so many other excellent land preservation activities that David has been involved in, merit Audubon Connecticut awarding him our 2008 Lifetime Conservation Achievement Award.

Robert Ford Schumann is a resident of Madison, CT. A birder from childhood, Bob has always appreciated nature. This love of nature, and a willingness to do what is needed to protect it, led him to serve for many years on the Board of The National Audubon Society. Coupling his knowledge of media with his interest in nature, Bob gave great guidance to Audubon in designing and setting up our film and television programs. Bob currently serves on the Board of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and on the Advisory Board of Audubon NY.

Over the years Bob has lent support to many Audubon programs, including our Long Island Sound program, our national policy work, and the programs of our Connecticut, New York, and Florida field operations. His Foundation supports many of the key environmental organizations and causes that are making our world a healthier and better place for humans and wildlife.

Bob's long-standing dedication to the environment makes him deserving of the Audubon Connecticut Environmental Leadership Award.

Our committee included recognizable names like Matt Kolk, Adria de Haume, Icy & L. Scott Frantz, Charlotte Frieze & Peter Jones, Rebecca Kirhoffer, Cynthia & Dan W. Lufkin, Anne Ogilvy, Carrie & Chris Shumway, and Henrik & Louise Vanderlip. Also in the audience were former Congressman Tom Downey, New York State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Chair & daughter of Laurence Rockefeller, Lucy Waletzky, former Deputy Commissioner for the CT DEP, David Leff, and CEOs of major corporations such as Ray Dalio, Marko Sonnenberg, John Holten, and National Audubon Society's John Flicker.

In addition to honoring our awardees, people came because they believe in Audubon's mission, particularly our Long Island Sound Campaign.

That night we raised more than \$760,000 for our Long Island Sound policy, conservation, and education. This is the most raised in a single night for any one Audubon program in Connecticut, breaking the previous record set when Dan W. Lufkin was honored. Hats off to everyone who supported this incredible event, especially Fairfield County Home magazine, our media sponsor.

Science Update

We are pleased to announce Chris Field as the new Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program Coordinator for Audubon Connecticut. Mr. Field graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2007 with a Masters of Science, Biodiversity and Conservation Biology and most recently worked at Yale University as was a research assistant in their west Nile virus ecology and epidemiology lab. He studied Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows as part of his graduate work at UCONN and had previously worked as an intern in the IBA program in 2005 and has served as principle author of two IBA conservation plans and remained active as a volunteer with the program since 2005.

Mr. Field will bring new technical skills to the IBA Program, being an expert in geospatial analysis and database management. "Having a staff person 100% focused on the IBA Program will allow us to give this program the attention it deserves," said Thomas R. Baptist, vice president and Executive Director of Audubon Connecticut. "Having someone with Chris' technical skills and knowledge of the habitats and conservation needs of Connecticut 's birds will really take the IBA Program to the next level."

As a first task, Mr. Field is organizing geographic data for the state's IBAs in a centralized database, to allow better mapping of key areas for birds in the state, and to tie habitat and bird data directly to the maps. Over the next year he will be finalizing the 12 IBA conservation plans that are in progress and getting started on three new plans. Chris will also organize and support Site Support Groups at each IBA, administering a small grants program to implement conservation plans. Funding for this position was provided by the generosity of the Fairfield County Community Foundation, the Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation, the Benjamin Olewine III family and Emily McKay, with additional support for computer equipment by the Jeniam Foundation.

About the IBA Program:

The Important Bird Areas Program is an international effort that draws on science-based criteria and grassroots-level participation to identify and conserve a network of key habitats for birds. An IBA is a site that provides essential habitat to one or more bird species during some portion of the year, including breeding season, migration, and winter. An IBA may be on private or public land, may be currently protected or not, and may range in size from a few to thousands of acres. The recognition of an IBA does not confer any legal or regulatory status, and is entirely voluntary, requiring landowner permission in Connecticut. There are currently 26 publicly recognized IBAs in Connecticut , including two globally-significant IBAs for Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

[More Information](#)

Policy Update

Congressman Chris Murphy Visits Bent of the River



In advance of Earth Day 2008, Congressman Chris Murphy toured the Audubon Center at Bent of the River in Southbury this past April. Remembering his own early efforts on behalf of the environment, Congressman Murphy pictured here (right) during a bird walk along the one-mile



section of the Pomperaug River owned by Audubon and accompanied by Southbury resident, Bert Boyson (left), and Audubon Connecticut executive director, Tom Baptist (center), recounted working as a high school student to help to clean up a stretch of the Connecticut River and called it a formative experience in his life.

During his visit, Congressman Murphy, who is co-chair of the Congressional Land Conservation Caucus, met with representatives of the Southbury Board of Selectmen, Southbury Land Trust, Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition, which is housed at the Center, and Audubon members and staff to discuss federal efforts to address global warming, extend the tax credit for easement donations, enhance the capacity of local conservation organizations, and secure improved funding for federal land conservation programs such as the Forest Legacy Program.

The Audubon Center at Bent of the River comprises a 700-acre wildlife sanctuary with more than a mile of frontage along the Pomperaug River and 15 miles of hiking trails through floodplain, forested ridge, and old-field habitat, as well as an historic home and barns. The Center is recognized as an Audubon Important Bird Area because it provides critical habitat for bird species that rely on early successional or shrub habitat for their survival such as Blue-winged and Prairie Warblers.

The Center offers educational programs and volunteer opportunities to students and adults in the Greater Southbury area, and from as far away as Bridgeport , New Haven , Waterbury , Litchfield, and Danbury . The Center specializes in programming for middle and high school students, and runs an active summer camp for younger children, as well as programs for adults and seniors.

The mission of the Audubon Center at Bent of the River is to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats through education, research, advocacy, land conservation and management. The Center is one of three nature education facilities owned and managed by Audubon Connecticut , the state organization of the National Audubon Society, and is part of Audubon's network of education centers, wildlife sanctuaries, and local volunteer Chapters working to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

Sharon Legislative Forum a Success

On April 26th, more than 75 people participated in Audubon Sharon's 3rd Annual Environmental Legislative Forum held at the Sharon Town Hall. Audubon Sharon, Housatonic Valley Association, Sharon Land Trust and Sharon Woman's Club sponsored the event. The forum was moderated by Sandy Breslin, Director of Governmental Affairs for Audubon Connecticut and featured State Senator Andrew Roraback, State Representative Roberta Willis, and U.S. Congressman Chris Murphy, along with Elaine LaBella, director of land protection for Housatonic Valley Association.

The forum gave lawmakers an opportunity to talk about key environmental legislation they are working on at the state and national level, and gave audience members the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns. Discussion covered a wide range of topics including the need for more funding for the CT DEP and open space protection, ATVs, tax incentives for conservation easements, tax exempt status for Connecticut land trusts, energy conservation, inland wetlands, invasive species and farmland preservation. The thought-provoking discussion enabled these legislators to hear firsthand what issues are important to our community.

Thanks go to the wonderful group of partners who helped make the Forum such a success, especially the members of the Sharon Woman's Club who provided a gorgeous array of food served using biodegradable cups, plates and recycled napkins that generated almost no waste.

Thanks are also due to U.S. Congressman Chris Murphy, State Senator Andrew Roraback, and State Representative Roberta Willis their work on behalf of birds, other wildlife and their habitats, and for taking time out of their busy schedules to join us. Plans are already underway for next year's event!

Capitol Update: 2008 State Session Ends While Congress Gets Busy!

The 2008 Connecticut General Assembly ended at midnight May 7th without the usual fanfare. The Session had started out in February with the promise of a \$236 million state budget surplus, but ended with filibusters and squabbles over how best to address an estimated \$80 million budget deficit that threatens to grow even larger. In the last weeks of the Session, concerns about declining revenues and a projected budget deficit led to an agreement by the Governor and legislative leaders not to make any changes to the \$18.4 billion budget approved last year for FY 2009, which begins July 1, 2008. This decision left many bills in limbo, especially ones requiring new spending. The final few days of the Session were spent considering minor legislation and honoring retiring lawmakers. By the last night, tensions were running so high that the Governor's traditional post-session address to the joint chambers - - a normally congenial ritual with Senate members crowding onto the floor of the House - - was canceled.



Since Connecticut adopted a two-year budget in 1993, it has been biennial in name only with extensive changes to the next year's tax and spending package being made each year rather than every other year as intended. After adopting a two-year budget for FY 08-09 last year, Governor Rell kicked off the legislative session in February of this year by announcing her proposed changes to the FY09 budget that starts July 1, 2008. In late March, the Appropriations and Finance Committees weighted in, releasing their proposed budget adjustments. Just a few weeks later, however, all these budget proposals were called into question when income tax and other revenue projections indicated that the previously expected modest state surplus for the year would instead be a deficit. In the face of this information, legislators and the Governor opted to take "no action" on the budget.

As of this writing, it is still unclear whether the legislature and Governor will attempt to negotiate a revised bond package for the next year. A Special Session planned for June 11th to vote on extending the increase in the local real estate conveyance tax is not expected to consider any environmental legislation.

As always, Audubon Connecticut's legislative priorities focus on those issues that protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats, in particular funding, land conservation, wildlife diversity, and Long Island Sound.

[More Information](#)

Get Involved!

Here are some steps you can take to help protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats

1. Join Audubon Connecticut's online network of wildlife advocates at AudubonActCT-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and check out our web site at www.audubonct.org
2. Combat Global Warming! Reduce your carbon emissions and your electric bill by installing compact fluorescent or LED light bulbs in place of incandescent bulbs. Learn about other steps you can take at: <http://www.audubon.org/globalWarming/BePartSolution.php>.
3. Join the Public Policy Committee at your local center. Our collective voices are the most powerful we have to catalyze action by elected officials!

Audubon at Home In Greenwich

Audubon Greenwich has stepped up its Audubon At Home programs. A **demonstration organic lawn** in front of the Center building shows visitors that it is perfectly possible to have a lush green lawn without using any chemicals. Since August, 2007, this lawn has been undergoing a series of organic inputs and treatments (compost tea, aeration, overseeding, organic fertilizers), transforming it into a beautiful thick green turf.

A **demonstration native garden** has been installed at the Intern House. Our objective is to encourage people to put natives in their gardens. Native plants are naturally hardy because they belong in this region and can survive without pesticides. They are also good for birds and beneficial insects and pollinators. This pretty little garden shows that native perennials can be as lovely and colorful as exotic ornamentals.

A **resource and information table** sits in the front lobby. The display includes Information about organic lawn and garden care, native plants, environmental and health effects of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, organic gardening products, etc.

Since September, 2007, Audubon Greenwich has hosted 5 **workshops on organic lawns and gardens** targeting different audiences - homeowners, garden clubs, schools maintenance staff, lawn professionals, and golf club superintendents. Chip Osborne, nationally recognized expert on organic lawns and turf has done 5 presentations on successful management of lawns and turf without using chemicals. The 5 workshops have attracted a total of nearly 400 attendees.

[More Information](#)

Tip of the Month

Stop using pesticides and fertilizers in your yard today! There are many green ways to keep your lawn looking beautiful and green and your flowers blooming without harming the environment. Start by leaving grass clippings on your lawn to supply the soil with the nitrogen it needs to thrive.

[More ways to go chemical-free](#)

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