



IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN CONNECTICUT



GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION OF IBAs

In an effort to further the conservation of birds and their habitats in Connecticut, the National Audubon Society is seeking information on sites that may qualify as Important Bird Areas in Connecticut. The primary goals of the IBA Program are to:

1. **Identify and designate** key sites for birds
2. **Establish priorities** for land managers
3. **Activate public participation** in bird conservation efforts
4. **Provide public education** and outreach opportunities.

DEFINITION:

An Important Bird Area is a site that provides essential habitat to one or more species of Connecticut's breeding and non-breeding birds. They are generally discrete sites that support one or more high-priority species, large concentrations of birds, exceptional habitat, and/or have substantial research value. Such sites may be protected or unprotected, public or private, and any size amenable to conservation efforts.

BACKGROUND:

Important Bird Areas have no legal land-use implications, are broadly applicable, and generally work as just one piece of the conservation puzzle. Even in states where many sites have been nominated, they should not be viewed as the only sites important to birds, or as the only sites in the state needing protection. They are voluntary means of attaining local conservation by building and mobilizing networks of birders, conservation professionals, and community members; stewardship by stakeholders being a fundamental component of the IBA Program. IBAs can attract funding and can affect land-use planning at the local level. The IBA Program promotes awareness of bird species and their habitats and a complete inventory of IBAs allows for more efficient conservation of target avian resources.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES:

- A. Sites already designated as conservation areas, such as National Wildlife Refuges, Wildlife Management Areas, Nature Conservancy Preserves and Audubon Centers, may be nominated, as well as other, unprotected sites. Whether or not a site meets one or more of the criteria should be the sole basis for identification as an IBA.
- B. Substantial evidence that sites meet one or more of the following criteria is required. Collection of target species distribution, abundance and breeding data at proposed sites is encouraged. "Target species" may vary depending on which species are present at a site and the geographic level at which a site is being considered
- C. Sites that meet criteria and are approved by the IBA Technical Committee will be recognized internally by Audubon. Permission to publically recognize an IBA will be obtained from private landowners (unless the site is split into several small parcels with different landowners) and when an IBA is owned by the Municipal, State, Federal government.
- D. Sites are selected in part to **utilize potential partnerships**, e.g. sites on the public/private land interface.
- E. Sites will be scattered widely across the state but should include sites near urban centers, selected to **encourage public access** and considered "demonstration" or "illustrative" sites to **emphasize educational opportunity**.
- F. Sites may change continually because locations that best illustrate important phenomena can come and go.
- G. Review of sites submitted for consideration will take into account the likelihood of continued use and habitat suitability of the site, including any potential effects that selection may have on increased visitation and resultant disturbance by visitors.
- H. | Sites need to meet only *one* of the Criteria to qualify as an IBA, though many will meet more than one.



CRITERIA FOR SITE SELECTION

1 Sites important to species of global concern.

Description: Sites that regularly support significant breeding or non-breeding densities of one or more of the following species listed as vulnerable or near threatened on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List. Applies primarily to breeding or wintering sites, though regular migratory areas may be considered if known to be of exceptional importance. The site should be one of regular and/or recent occurrence in the last ~10 years. Thresholds will vary and may include the 3-5 sites in the states with the highest regularly occurring numbers.

Vulnerable

- Horned Grebe
Long-tailed Duck
Cerulean Warbler
Saltmarsh Sparrow
Rusty Blackbird

Near Threatened

- Black Scoter
Common Eider
Piping Plover
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Semipalmated Sandpiper

- Red Knot
Black Rail
Chimney Swift
Wood Thrush
Golden-winged Warbler

Note: Species that are of global concern are often also species of continental or state concern. They are listed just once as species of global concern.

2 Sites important to species of continental or regional concern.

Description: Sites that regularly support significant breeding or non-breeding densities of the following species of Conservation Concern on the National Audubon Society Watchlist or identified as Continental or Regional Priorities by Partners in Flight. Thresholds will vary, but may include sites with 25 or more breeding pairs, 1% or more of the seasonal state population (if known), or the 3-5 sites in the state with the highest regularly occurring numbers. May also include sites with significant complement of species.

- American Black Duck, Peregrine Falcon, Clapper Rail, American Golden-plover, American Oystercatcher, Upland Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Sanderling, White-rumped Sandpiper, American Woodcock, Roseate Tern, Least Tern, Black Skimmer, Black-billed Cuckoo, Short-eared Owl, Whip-poor-will, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Veery, Gray Catbird, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Canada Warbler, Ovenbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Towhee, Nelson's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Finch

Note: Also species that are of continental concern are often also species of state concern. They are listed just once as continental concern species.

3 Sites important to endangered, threatened, or species of special concern in Connecticut.

Description: Sites that regularly support significant breeding or non-breeding densities of one or more of the following species listed as endangered, threatened, or special concern in the state of Connecticut. Applies primarily to breeding or wintering sites, though regular migratory areas may be considered if known to be of exceptional importance. The site should be one of regular and/or recent occurrence in the last ~10 years. Thresholds will vary and may include sites with 1% of the state population (if known) in a season, or the 3-5 sites in the states with the highest regularly occurring numbers.

Endangered

- Pied-billed Grebe
American Bittern
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Northern Harrier
Common Moorhen
King Rail
Long-eared Owl

Barn Owl

- Common Nighthawk
Red-headed Woodpecker
Horned Lark
Yellow-breasted Chat
Grasshopper Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow

Threatened

- Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Least Bittern
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Goshawk
Bald Eagle
Eastern Meadowlark

Special Concern

- Common Loon
Little Blue Heron
Yellow-crowned Night Heron
Glossy Ibis
Broad-winged Hawk
American Kestrel
Common Tern
Northern Saw-Whet Owl

Purple Martin

- Alder Flycatcher
Brown Thrasher
Northern Parula
Savannah Sparrow

4 Sites where significant numbers of birds concentrate for breeding, during migration, or in winter.

Description: Sites that consistently support significant numbers of one or more species in the breeding or non-breeding seasons, including migration. Significant numbers are not easily defined. The following guidelines are suggested to provide some logical thresholds for site selection. Except where indicated, numerical estimates should be based on a short period of time, e.g. one-time counts such as daily surveys -- not on cumulative totals. Introduced, feral, and nuisance species (Mute Swan, resident Canada Goose, Monk Parakeet, American Crow, European Starling, etc.) should not be counted.

(4a) Waterfowl: The site regularly supports 500 or more waterfowl in winter and/or 1,000 or more waterfowl in migration (staging).

(4b) Gulls and Terns: The site regularly supports 100 or more terns or 500 or more gulls in a season.

(4c) Shorebirds: The site regularly supports 500 or more shorebirds (over a short period) at any time of the year.

(4d) Wading Birds: The site regularly supports 25 or more breeding pairs of wading birds or 100 or more individuals feeding or in migration.

(4e) Raptors: The site is a “bottleneck” or migration corridors for >5,000 migratory raptors (seasonal total).

(4f) Landbirds: The site is an important migratory stopover or seasonal concentration site for migratory landbirds. Sites may qualify on the basis of exceptionally high numbers of birds during migration, high densities of breeding species as shown from point counts or other surveys; or as “migrant traps” relative to the surrounding areas. Strong consideration will be given to areas with consistently high overall species diversity or diversity within a particular group (e.g., warblers).

(4g) Single-species Concentrations: The site regularly supports significant concentrations of a “congregatory” species but may not meet the thresholds above. Such sites should support a higher proportion of a species statewide population (>1%, if known) than other similar areas.

5 Sites that contain rare or unique habitat within the state/region or an exceptional representative of a natural habitat, and that hold important species or species assemblages largely restricted to a distinctive habitat type.

Description: Sites with habitats that are rare or unique in the state, or are exceptional examples (large and intact) of the habitats that should support, or could be managed to support, the full complement of bird species dependent on that habitat type. Examples in Connecticut might include grasslands (Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow, etc.), saltmarsh (Seaside and Sharp-tailed Sparrows, rails, etc.), and mature forest (Cerulean Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, etc.). Consideration will also be given to sites with exceptionally high species and habitat diversity, and some attempt will be made to distribute representative sites throughout the state.

6 Sites important for long-term research and/or monitoring projects that contribute substantially to ornithology, bird conservation, and/or education.

Description: These are generally sites with a distinguished record and/or unique potential for long-term research and monitoring, or exceptional educational value. Such sites may occur in urban, suburban, rural, or other settings. Evidence should be cited showing the area’s value, such as publications of research conducted at the site.

National IBA Criteria

IBAs may be significant at different geographical scales – state, national, continental, or global. Sites that appear to meet the criteria at these other scales will be forwarded to the American Bird Conservancy for review. The following thresholds for national Important Bird Areas can be used to identify sites with particularly high potential as Connecticut IBAs:

Sites that support:

- **>10,000 waterfowl** over a short period (not a whole season);
- **>20,000 shorebirds**, or 5% of flyway population over a short period (not a whole season);
- **>10,000 raptors** over a season;
- **>2,500 wading birds** (e.g. herons) over a short period;
- **>1% of the national, continental, or flyway population** of a congregatory species.