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Connecticut Wildlife

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BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES • WILDLIFE DIVISION



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From the Director

I was a fortunate son, blessed to have a father who had such a vital relationship with a single plot of land. It is impossible to remember him without at the same time thinking of the 110 acres of family land in Woodstock where he lived his entire life. From the time he could walk, this land was his source of adventure, sustenance, imagination and dreams. It remained that until the day he died this past January.

It is very remarkable in these days of rapid transit and global travel that one person should wander so little and yet see so much. Life's lessons are acted out in those fields, swamps and woodlands everyday and he was an avid student of natural events. He appreciated the simplicity of life and the complexity of nature and, to the best of his ability, he passed his knowledge on to my brothers and I.

Generations of wildlife that depended upon his land stewardship never paid a cent for the upkeep, but the relationship he had with them was priceless. Mink tracks on the frozen brook, a mother killdeer feigning a broken wing, tom turkeys gobbling from their morning roost, those were the sights and sounds that paid their rent. During the appropriate season, if things went well, a few of those tenants ended up on the family table – perhaps another way of paying the rent. However, there was always reverence for the lives of wildlife and a spiritual gratitude for those taken for food. The rules were quite simple: take only what you need, use all of what you take, and leave more than enough to carry on.

Aldo Leopold wrote that conservation is a state of harmony between man and the land. That being the case, my father was likely the purest practicing conservationist that I will ever meet. His world was 110 acres in which he was the only human inhabitant, scattered with landmarks with names known only to a select few. Poplar knoll, the spruces, second swamp, first bridge, the ice pond, the gorge, the initial tree, the three-cornered lot and others, each with its own story and history. He was as much a part of this natural community as the stream, the soil, the plants and animals. He was, it seemed, from another time.

More than 50 years ago Leopold warned that our economic and educational systems were moving us further away from, rather than toward, an intense consciousness of the land. He observed that the greatest threat to a land ethic is the people's separation from natural processes by "many middlemen and innumerable physical gadgets." Sadly, and perhaps unavoidably, that situation has progressively worsened. Therefore, I am ever grateful to my father for raising us to recognize where our winter heat and daily nutrition comes from. And, that we are inevitably linked with the land.

Dale W. May

Cover:

Celebrate the presence of migratory birds, like the scarlet tanager, in Connecticut by attending an International Migratory Bird Day Event. To learn more about International Migratory Bird Day, see articles on pages 5-7.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

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The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for wildlife management and research programs, habitat acquisition, wildlife management area development and hunter education programs. It places an excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. Articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies are depicted with the logo of the Wildlife Restoration Program.



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CARA Reintroduced in the 107th Congress

Bill to provide funding for wildlife conservation and restoration programs

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), representing all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, has made its top priority for the last several years to expand the source of reliable and adequate funding for state fish and wildlife programs. The existing funds have traditionally focused on game and sportfish due to the user-pay, user-benefit philosophy derived from their sources (excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment). However, more than 85 percent of America's fish and wildlife species have no such dedicated funding. Consequently, hundreds of species have gone unnoticed until they reach critically low numbers and require emergency treatment under the federal Endangered Species Act. Enhanced state wildlife funding will help states prevent species from becoming endangered at far less cost and without the social and economic disruption associated with listing. It is estimated that the need is around \$1 billion a year.

CARA

In response to this need, state wildlife funding was a focal point of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). CARA is landmark bipartisan legislation that was introduced in the 106th Congress last year. It is considered the most important conservation funding legislation in decades. Last year's measure passed the House by a 315-102 vote in May. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee cleared a slightly different version of the bill in July, but it never made it to the floor for a vote.

With a new year and new Congress (107th), CARA was recently reintroduced. The bill is essentially the same as the previous one but with several differences. Again numbered H.R. 701, the bill would direct \$3.1 billion per year from outer continental shelf (OCS) oil and gas receipts to a variety of conservation programs. The amount is an increase from last year's \$2.8 billion per year figure.

Funding for Wildlife

H.R. 701 would provide \$350 million for wildlife conservation and

restoration. This money would be allocated to state fish and wildlife agencies to be used for wildlife conservation and related recreation and education programs. With this new funding, the Connecticut Wildlife Division, like other state wildlife agencies, would be able to initiate projects for species that haven't usually been funded in the past. Currently, most Division projects concentrate on game species and threatened and endangered species. New projects would focus on some



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A planned Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail will give people the opportunity to view a variety of birds, maybe even the saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow.

wildlife populations which could be in danger of becoming threatened or endangered if action is not taken soon.

continued on next page

CT to Receive Funding for Wildlife Conservation, Education and Recreation Projects

The U.S. Congress included in their final spending bill a new \$50 million appropriation to state fish and wildlife agencies for wildlife conservation and related recreation and education programs. The funding is part of the 2001 Commerce, Justice, and State Departments (CJS) appropriations measure that was passed by Congress and then signed by President Clinton in December 2000. This new grant program is a result of efforts of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and others in seeking passage of one of the titles of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (also known as CARA).

The CJS bill will be administered as a subaccount of the existing Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program. Funds will be directly allocated to the states in 2001 via a formula based on land area and population. It provides priority funding for projects concerning species that haven't usually been funded. Although the appropriation is only for one year, the distribution formula and priorities in the bill will serve as a foundation for future funding.

Connecticut will receive approximately \$485,000 for wildlife conservation and related recreation and education projects. The State is required to provide a 25 percent match to the allotment. Examples of new projects that may be initiated due to this funding include:

- Establishment of viewing platforms and blinds at state wildlife management areas;
- Initiation of a Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat Study along Connecticut's river corridors;
- Development of a Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail; and
- Development of a "Master Conservationist" Program.

Future articles in *Connecticut Wildlife* will keep readers advised of the new projects.

Other Conservation Funding

The bill would also fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at its authorized \$900 million level. Dedicated funds would be available for both state and federal programs within the LWCF while protecting the rights of private property owners. Coastal states would get \$1 billion for shoreline conservation (there would be no incentives for any new oil and gas development). H.R. 701 would earmark \$125 million for the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Pro-

gram; \$150 million (an increase of \$50 million from last year) to fully fund the Historic Preservation Fund at its authorized level; \$200 million for federal and Indian lands restoration; and \$50 million for endangered and threatened species recovery (this decrease of \$100 million from last year's bill was supported by state fish and wildlife agencies). Another \$350 million would bolster payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) and refuge revenue sharing (an increase of \$150 million). And new from last year's version, the National Maritime Heritage Act would be funded with \$10 million.

H.R. 701 does not provide funding for agriculture programs included in the legislation proposed in the 106th Congress. The House Agriculture Committee is gearing up for a reauthorization of the 1996 Farm Bill and is reviewing many conservation programs in the 107th Congress. The new version of CARA also clarifies protection of Social Security and Medicare funding language that was added last year.

Look for updates on the progress of this important legislation in future issues of *Connecticut Wildlife*.

Jim Fowler Promotes CT's Wildlife Tax Check-off Program

Jim Fowler, one of the world's best-known naturalists, encouraged state citizens to support wildlife by checking the box on their state income tax form and donating to the Connecticut Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund. Mr. Fowler, a Connecticut resident, appeared in television and radio spots on several local stations to let citizens know how contributions to the Fund support a wide variety of wildlife education, conservation and restoration projects. Jim Fowler is the perfect spokesperson for the Connecticut Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund, as he is intimately involved in a nationwide conservation education program through his role as Executive Director of Mutual of Omaha's Wildlife Heritage Center. Mr. Fowler has also presented information about wildlife and wilderness to the American public on television for over 30 years. He first appeared with Marlin Perkins as co-host and later became host of Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* and also host of Mutual of Omaha's *Spirit of Adventure*. *Wild Kingdom* currently airs on a growing network of PBS stations.

The Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund was created by the Connecticut General Assembly to support efforts aimed at helping Connecticut endangered and threatened species, natural area preserves and watchable wildlife. The Fund supports projects by providing dollars when matching funds are needed or when other funding sources are unavailable.

Connecticut taxpayers have donated over \$540,000 since the Tax Check-off Program began in 1994. Last tax season, over 11,000 individuals donated all or part of their refund to the Connecticut Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund, with contributions totalling \$74,307. Tax-deductible donations to the Fund have financed projects that have increased the DEP's knowledge and understanding of uncommon species in Connecticut, such as the bog turtle, herons and egrets, tree-roosting bats, the banded sunfish, the banded bog skimmer dragonfly, the northern bog violet and the white-fringed orchid. The DEP uses the resulting information to protect these species and manage their habitats. To date, funding has been provided for 75 projects.

Most recently, the Connecticut Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund provided monies to:

- Perform a botanical study of the 347 state-listed plant species;
- Develop endangered species data management;
- Conduct an invertebrate survey at Matianuck Natural Area Preserve;
- Conduct a study on the abundance and distribution of the New England cottontail in Connecticut;
- Inventory the birds using habitats at Higganum Natural Area Preserve; and

- Develop a website on and illustrations of dragonflies and damselflies.

Individuals not expecting a refund on their state income tax return but who wish to contribute to the Fund can send their contributions to the Endangered Species/Wildlife Fund, DEP Bureau of Administration-Financial Management, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Contributions to the Fund are deductible on federal tax returns.



J. BLACKBURN

International Migratory Bird Day 2001 -- Saturday, May 12

Set on the second Saturday in May, International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is an invitation to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation.

Like any day of recognition, IMBD exists to focus attention on a valuable resource -- the nearly 350 species of migratory birds that travel between nesting habitats in North America and their non-breeding grounds in South and Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean.

Why Have It?

Migratory birds are some of the most beautiful, observable and remarkable wildlife that share our world. Many species that birders see right in their backyards, such as the Baltimore oriole, indigo bunting, wood thrush and red-eyed vireo are migratory birds. Migratory birds are also an important economic resource, controlling insect pests and generating billions in recreational dollars.

Unfortunately, research has shown that many migratory bird species are in decline, facing a growing number of threats on their migration routes and in both their summer and winter habitats. Habitat loss is the biggest threat. Other threats include forest fragmentation in their breeding areas, deforestation in the tropics, depredation by feral cats, nest predation by cowbirds and pesticides.

Many people do not realize that most migratory birds spend the majority of their lives in Latin America. Except for a few short months spent here on the breeding grounds, these birds are primarily residents of the tropics. Habitat loss in the tropics is a major factor contributing to migratory bird declines. In Central America alone, nearly one million acres of native forest are lost

each year to development and agriculture. Most Caribbean islands have already lost their forest cover. Clearly, continued losses of habitat in the tropics will threaten the survival of migratory birds and the fantastic diversity of life found in the tropics.

This year IMBD falls on May 12. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to celebrate in any way that fosters appreciation and support for migratory birds. Educators are encouraged to fit IMBD into their science, social studies or other curriculum. In addition to being a day

to foster appreciation, IMBD is also a call to action.

Each year, IMBD attempts to draw attention to a particular issue or topic. The 2001 theme is helping people make the "Coffee Connection." (See article on pages 6-7.)

To learn more about IMBD, to find out about nearby IMBD events or to obtain materials for celebrating this important day, visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's web site at <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html> or call 1-703-358-2318.



P. J. FUSCO

Take part in a International Migratory Bird Day Event!

Attend an IMBD Event at Sessions Woods WMA

Each International Migratory Bird Day, several hundred thousand people across the country gather at schools, nature centers, town squares and in the outdoors to learn more about wild birds, take action to conserve birds and their habitats and simply have fun.

The Wildlife Division will be holding an IMBD event on May 12, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting with a 6:30 a.m. Early Morning Bird Walk for birders. Bird Banding Demonstrations will be held throughout the morning and an introduction to birdwatching for children and their parents, Birdwatching for Kids, will begin at 9:00 a.m. At the Birdhouse Workshop, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, participants can learn about building nest boxes and will construct a bluebird house. (Bring a hammer and screw driver; a donation of \$4.00 to the Friends of Sessions Woods is requested to cover the cost of the nest box materials.) Preregistration is required for all activities except the Bird Banding Demonstration. Space is limited on the bird walks, so please call early. To preregister (no later than May 11), call (860) 675-8130, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Coffee's Connection to Birds

Coffee, a shade-loving plant that evolved in the forests of Africa, has been a major economic, political and cultural force in the Americas since it was imported beginning in the 1700s. More than two-thirds of the current world coffee production is exported from Latin America and the Caribbean. It is primarily grown by families on small farms. Coffee is the third most common import in the United States, behind oil and steel, respectively. The United States consumes about one-third of the world's coffee.

tions support over 150 species of birds; a greater number than is found in other agricultural habitats, and exceeded only in undisturbed tropical forest. Even in very disturbed areas, coffee plantations support good populations of migratory birds and other species that prefer or are restricted to forest habitats, such as redstarts, black-throated green warblers, yellow-throated and solitary vireos and residents, including parrots, trogons and toucans. In addition to birds, snakes, insects, native plants

comes at the cost of higher chemical inputs, soils lost to erosion, shorter coffee plant life, increased water pollution and, in many cases, lower quality beans and coffee.

The "full sun" farms produce more coffee beans, but at a terrible cost to the environment. Mexico loses a million acres of forest every year. An equal amount is destroyed annually in Central America. Coffee plantations account for over seven million acres of land in this region and are an important alternative to native forests.

At least half of the coffee in Central America has already been converted to full-sun and is now of no more value to birds and other wildlife than a banana plantation or barren cattle pasture. Many farmers with shaded farms are under tremendous economic pressure to either convert to full sun or sell the farm to developers.

What You Can Do

The challenge faced by those concerned about the fate of migratory birds is to help farmers stay in the shade coffee business. One way is to increase the demand for shade-grown, organic coffee. How can you do that?

● *Buy Shade-grown coffee*

It may be possible to find shade-grown coffee and coffee beans at local markets, specialty shops, health food stores or coffee shops. If the product is marked "Mexican organic," it has probably been grown under bird-friendly conditions. If your

favorite shop does not carry shade-grown coffee, ask the management to look into selling the product.

● *Order by mail or over the Internet*

An increasing number of coffee companies are specializing in high-quality organic coffees that are also shade-grown.

● *Become informed*

Gather information about the coffee-migratory bird connection and spread the news. A good place to start is the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center,

Coffee Is for the Birds

So, what does coffee have to do with birds? On traditional coffee plantations, coffee shrubs are grown under a canopy of trees, the layers and diversity of which offer shelter and food for migratory birds. In many parts of the neotropics, shade-grown coffee farms are the only forest-like habitat remaining. In eastern Chiapas, Mexico, biologists from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center found that traditionally-managed coffee and cacao (chocolate) planta-

and many other species are much more abundant in shade plantations.

However, in recent years, new ways of growing coffee have been promoted. A growing number of farmers, as well as large landholders and agribusinesses, have converted shade-grown coffee farms to sun or "technified" operations. This requires the removal of all shade trees, ultimately eliminating bird and wildlife habitat. Although sun-grown coffee produces a higher initial yield, it



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The American redstart is a migratory breeder in Connecticut. It is most commonly found in forested and shrubby habitats in the eastern and northwestern parts of the state.

National Zoological Park, Washington, DC 20008 (<http://www.nat zoo.si.edu/smbc>) or the Rainforest Alliance, 65 Bleecker Street, New York, NY 10012; (212) 677-1900 (canopy@ra.org).

This article was compiled from materials published by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and the Rainforest Alliance.

Shade vs. Sun

Shade-grown Coffee

- Migratory birds and many resident birds find sanctuary in the forest canopy of traditional coffee plantations.
- Shade trees protect the plants from rain and sun, help maintain soil quality and aid in natural pest control, thanks to birds.
- Traditional coffee plantations help conserve watersheds, leading to higher water quality and quantity for local populations.
- Shade-grown coffee is cultivated in specific ways that help protect biodiversity.
- Shade coffee plants can produce crops of beans for up to 50 years.

Sun-grown Coffee

- 90% fewer bird species are found in sun-grown coffee areas compared with shade-grown coffee areas.
- Requires chemical fertilizers and pesticides and year-round labor, placing financial demands on the growers.
- Leads to greater soil erosion and higher amounts of toxic runoff endangering both wildlife and people.
- Sun coffee plants produce crops of beans for only 10 to 15 years.



P. J. FUSCO

After raising its young in the deciduous forests of Connecticut, the yellow-throated vireo migrates south to possibly spend the winter in a shade-grown coffee farm in Central or South America.

Neotropical migratory birds that migrate through or breed in Connecticut, which are also commonly found in shade-grown coffee farms:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ruby-throated hummingbird | <i>Archilochus colubris</i> |
| Yellow-bellied flycatcher | <i>Empidonax flaviventris</i> |
| Swainson's thrush | <i>Catharus ustulatus</i> |
| Wood thrush | <i>Hylocichla mustelina</i> |
| Solitary vireo | <i>Vireo solitarius</i> |
| Yellow-throated vireo | <i>V. flavifrons</i> |
| Warbling vireo | <i>V. gilvus</i> |
| Philadelphia vireo | <i>V. philadelphicus</i> |
| Red-eyed vireo | <i>V. olivaceus</i> |
| Tennessee warbler | <i>Vermivora peregrina</i> |
| Nashville warbler | <i>V. ruficapilla</i> |
| Northern parula | <i>Parula americana</i> |
| Yellow warbler | <i>Dendroica petechia</i> |
| Cape May warbler | <i>D. tigrina</i> |
| Black-throated blue warbler | <i>D. caerulescens</i> |
| Black-throated green warbler | <i>D. virens</i> |
| Blackburnian warbler | <i>D. fusca</i> |
| Black-and-white warbler | <i>Mniotilta varia</i> |
| American redstart | <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i> |
| Ovenbird | <i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i> |
| Wilson's warbler | <i>Wilsonia pusilla</i> |
| Summer tanager | <i>Piranga rubra</i> |
| Rose-breasted grosbeak | <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i> |
| Indigo bunting | <i>Passerina cyanea</i> |
| Baltimore oriole | <i>Icterus galbula</i> |

Partners In Flight

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is the hallmark outreach event for Partners in Flight (PIF) -- a unique, diverse consortium of individuals and groups who share a vision of healthy bird populations. Partners in this consortium include government agencies, conservation organizations, private businesses, academic institutions, chambers of commerce and everyday citizens.

The 1993 creation of IMBD can be credited to a PIF member, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, and the principal responsibility for its national coordination currently rests with two other partners, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Migratory Bird Management. In the decade it has existed, PIF has successfully developed research programs and management strategies to further bird conservation, in addition to promoting outreach and education via IMBD and other activities.



Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Area Provides Many Outdoor Opportunities

Written by Paul Rothbart, Supervising Wildlife Biologist

P.J.FUSCO



The Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Area hosts both national and regional field dog trial championships, in addition to 30 annual events, drawing from 3,000 to 5,000 participants. Competitors travel from as far as Canada, Ohio and the Carolinas. The property has truly developed into the premiere field trial area in New England and most of the East Coast.

As the Wildlife Division acknowledges the appointment of Tom Mercier as the new President of the Flaherty Field Trial Club Association, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the history of the Flaherty area, management projects that have been undertaken and what the future holds. The Division has a long and productive history of cooperation with the association and looks forward to working with Tom to continue in enhancing the site for field trials and wildlife resource values.

History

The Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Area comprises 433 acres located in the town of East Windsor. The property was specifically acquired to provide the public with an area to hold competitive field dog trials. The relationship between man and dog goes back a long way. Although the primary role of dogs today is to provide companionship, field trial dogs continue to perform the work and

sporting roles that they were bred for. Today's avid field trial sportsmen and women hold competitions in which dogs are put through the paces, including the ability to point and hold a point, obey commands and retrieve birds. The sport of field trialing combines the love of the working dog, the outdoors and hunting.

Originally, Flaherty Field Trial Area was commonly known as "Pelton's Pasture" after the name of its original owners, Baynard O. Pelton and his family. Records reveal that the original field trial club to use the tract was the Associated Connecticut Club, as early as the 1930s. Commencing in 1942, the Connecticut Board of Fisheries and Game leased the area from the Peltons on an annual basis for a nominal fee. The relationship continued until 1947 when the Pelton family transferred ownership of the 261-acre tract to the Board of Fisheries and Game for "one dollar and other considerations."

The New England Futurity field trial event staged its first running at Flaherty in 1942. In 1957, a "Field Trial Management Committee" was formed with Truman Cowles elected as chairman. This group provided a means of communication between the field trial constituents and the state land management agency. Under Truman's leadership, a clubhouse was constructed, habitat management of the grounds began and a formal agreement conferring official status to the Field Trial Club Association was cooperatively developed and signed with the State. In 1966, the area was renamed the "Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Area." This dedication reflected the lifelong passion that Dr. Flaherty had for the sport of field trialing and the specific role he had in the acquisition and early management of the site.

Field Trials and Other Uses

In 1971, a reorganization of state agencies was initiated and the Board of Fisheries and Game became part of the Department of Environmental Protection. Under Truman Cowles' continued leadership of the Flaherty Field Trial Association, and that of subsequent Presidents Richard Garini, Dr. James Moreau, Bob Fleury and Rich Murphy, a cooperative and productive partnership has developed between the Association and the DEP. Presently, the Association consists of 20 clubs, with a total of over 500 members. The field trial area hosts both national and regional championships, in addition to 30 annual events, drawing from 3,000 to 5,000 participants. Competitors travel from as far as Canada, Ohio and the Carolinas. The property has truly developed into the premiere field trial area in New England and most of the East Coast.

During sanctioned field trial events, the Flaherty Field Trail Area is closed to all public use activities subject to DEP Regulation 26-16-2(b). Outside of those limited closures, the property is used for a wide variety of outdoor activities, including small game hunting, hiking, birdwatching, jogging, cross-country skiing, horse-back riding, nature photography, picnicking and wild berry and nut picking. It also serves as one of four areas in the state that are available to the public for the training of hunting dogs.

Special Features

Although the recreational values of the Flaherty Field Trial Area are so important, it is really the open space and wildlife habitat that make this relatively large parcel so unique and valuable. The Flaherty property consists of a variety of habitat types, including mixed hardwoods, conifers, riparian corridors, agricultural fields and open fields/grasslands. The outstanding natural resource feature is the extensive early successional stage habitat which encompasses over 250 acres. Such field/grassland habitats are rapidly declining in Connecticut due to forest succession, intensified agricultural practices, residential and commercial development and the absence of fire from the landscape. Associated with this type of habitat loss has been the decline in early successional stage species, such as the savannah sparrow, eastern meadowlark, horned lark, bobolink and grasshopper sparrow.

Managing the Area

The Wildlife Division's Habitat Management Program is actively working to improve the field/grassland habitats for the benefit of declining wildlife species, as well as to enhance and maintain high-quality field trial conditions. In cooperation with various partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and the Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Association, field enhancement operations have been conducted on over 300 acres during the past three years. As a follow-up procedure to

these enhancement projects, census points have been established to monitor potential benefits to targeted bird species using the property.

When evaluating any parcel of land for wildlife resource values, a set of management objectives must be established based upon some predetermined set of criteria. Such factors may include:

- Size of the parcel
- Cover types present
- Surrounding land use patterns
- Surrounding wildlife habitats/travel corridors (i.e., Connecticut River)
- Physical characteristics (i.e., terrain, soils and rockiness, which determine the practicality of certain potential enhancement/maintenance needs)
- Other properties potentially providing similar opportunities
- Historical records pertaining to the purpose for acquisition

After considering these factors, the key step is to determine what are the most critical state or regional wildlife needs that can be addressed on a particular management area. Based on the Flaherty Field Trial Area's proximity to the Connecticut River corridor, its relatively large size and extensive early successional stage

habitat and because it was acquired as a field trial area, the Wildlife Division has established the following goals and objectives for the area:

- Maintain the area as a premiere quality field trial site.
- Continue to maintain and enhance early successional stage habitat for declining populations of grassland songbirds.
- Maintain and encourage multiple-use recreational activities which are compatible with field trials, grassland songbird management and existing land use patterns.
- Establish buffers from development and expand existing habitat through the DEP's land acquisition program.

The Wildlife Division encourages all outdoor enthusiasts to visit the Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trail Area, as well as any of the more than 90 wildlife management areas located throughout the state. All who enjoy the tremendous variety of open space still remaining in Connecticut owe people, like the "old time field trialers" (John E. Flaherty, John Tattersall, Truman Cowles, Rich Garini and others) that had a vision and appreciated the value of extensive open land, a debt of gratitude for playing an active role in assuring that wildlife and people still have places to roam and enjoy.



Today's avid field trial sportsmen and women hold competitions in which dogs are put through the paces, including the ability to point and hold a point, obey commands and retrieve birds.

P.J.FUSCO

Welcome to the Nightlife

Written by Paul Fusco, Public Awareness Program

As dusk settles on a warm summer evening near the Connecticut shoreline, large birds are seen flying out from nearby trees. With broad wings silhouetted against the sky, each bird glides down lower and lower, finally landing in the shallow, receding water of a tidal marsh. Under the cover of darkness each bird will be hunting for prey. Slowly it will stalk, until its victim is within reach. Then, with blinding speed, it lunges forward in an attack, grabbing the unsuspecting victim from the water.

These largely nocturnal wading birds are night herons. Two species occur in Connecticut, the black-crowned night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) and the yellow-crowned night-heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*). Each is a stocky, medium-sized heron with a heavy bill and short legs. The yellow-crowned night-heron has a more stout bill and longer legs than the black-crowned. Adults of both species have striking plumage and large scarlet-red eyes. In juvenile plumage these species appear very similar and correct identification can be tricky.



The black-crowned night-heron is a fairly common resident of the coastal wetlands in our state.

Night-herons are secretive inhabitants of salt marshes and freshwater wetlands. In Connecticut they are found mainly along the coast.

Black-crowned Night-Heron

The black-crowned night-heron is a fairly common, wide ranging species. The species occurs from southern Canada to southern South America, and is also found in Europe, Asia and Africa.

In Connecticut black-crowned night-herons are locally common along the coast, with higher densities west of New Haven. They were formerly more common at inland locations, but have declined over the years, mainly because of the loss of open wetland habitat for foraging. Both human development and forest regeneration along water courses have had a negative impact on the inland population.

Black-crowned night-herons nest in colonies, or rookeries, along with other species of herons, egrets and ibis. Their flimsy, loosely built nests are usually placed high in a small tree, just below the canopy. These rookeries can be small or very large, sometimes holding hundreds of nesting birds and representing eight different species.

Each black-crowned nest usually contains three to five pale blue-green eggs that hatch after about 26 days; the young fledge 42 days later.



Sporting its long breeding plumes, the yellow-crowned night-heron is one of the more dazzling birds found in Connecticut's coastal wetlands.

Flight Identification

Separating the two night-herons in flight can easily be done by noting how far the legs extend beyond the tail. In the black-crowned (right) the legs barely extend past the tail, while in the yellow-crowned the legs extend well beyond the tail.



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P. J. FUSCO (3)

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Their diet is mostly fish, amphibians, insects and small mammals, although they will also take young of other bird species. In night-time raids, black-crowned night-herons have been implicated in robbing chicks from the nests of terns in Connecticut, including the state threatened least tern and the federally endangered roseate tern.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

With long, wispy breeding plumes trailing from the back of its head, the magnificent adult plumage of the yellow-crowned night-heron has given it the Latin name of *Nyctanassa violacea*, which translates to “violet queen of the night.”

Having a much more limited distribution than its black-crowned relative, the yellow-crowned night-heron can be found from the central United States south to northern South America. The heart of its range in the United States centers on the dense river bottom swamps of the south. Along the Atlantic Coast, the yellow-crowned reaches the northern limit of its breeding range in southern New England. In Connecticut, it is listed as a state species of special concern.

This night-heron prefers to nest in smaller groups than the black-crowned, mostly in associations of a few pairs or single pairs, although some have also been documented in the larger rookeries with other herons and egrets.

Yellow-crowned night herons eat mainly crustaceans, such as fiddler crabs and crayfish. They will also feed on fish, amphibians, small mammals and birds. This species does not seem to pose the same threat as the black-crowned does at sensitive tern nesting colonies in Connecticut.

Rookeries

Some of Connecticut’s offshore islands are inhabited by nesting colonies of night-herons, other herons, egrets and ibis during April through August. Each species in these noisy rookeries has its own habitat preference for its nest location. Snowy egrets and little blue herons prefer the dense shrubby layer, great egrets use the upper canopy of the biggest trees and black-crowned night-herons can be found in the tall, spindly trees. All raise their young in close proximity to one another.

Most of these species, including night-herons, have a nesting season in excess of three months, from the time of egg laying to the fledging of young. During this long period, their nests and young are susceptible to disturbance and predation.

Rookeries typically have such a high concentration of nesting birds that they are highly vulnerable to catastrophic losses. Human disturbance can have a devastating effect during any part of the nesting cycle. It is for this reason that the Wildlife Division restricts access to some of Connecticut’s offshore islands during the summer months.

Conservation

The conservation of night-herons in Connecticut centers around protecting wetland foraging areas and maintaining disturbance-free nesting sites. While both night-heron species frequently live in close proximity to human activity, their sensitive nesting and feeding areas still need to be protected.

Identifying the Juveniles

At first look, the juveniles of both night-heron species appear indistinguishable. A closer look reveals differences that are noticeable and reliable. First, note the longer legs of the yellow-crowned (below). When standing upright its wing tips and tail are well above the ground. Next, the lower mandible of the black-crowned (above) is mostly yellow in color, compared to the all dark (or almost all dark) lower bill of the juvenile yellow-crowned. The more stout bill of the yellow-crowned is also apparent.

Both species have light speckling on the back and wings. The speckle marks are finer on the yellow-crowned than on the black-crowned, but this can be variable and on a single bird it may be difficult to make an identification based on this alone.



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Assessing Deer Management at Bluff Point, 2001

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program

Since 1996, the DEP has been managing the deer population at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve, in Groton, to reduce a severely overpopulated deer herd and maintain it at a level that is in balance with the habitat. Bluff Point is a 1.25-square mile peninsula into Long Island Sound, which was designated a coastal reserve in 1975 to protect its unique plant and animal communities. Before 1996, the deer herd was estimated at 284 deer, or 227 deer per square mile.

At this high density, many deer were dying annually from a lack of food and plant communities were being overbrowsed. Deer herd reduction efforts were conducted in January of 1996, 1997, 2000 and 2001.

The goal of the deer management program is to reduce the Bluff Point deer herd to 25 deer and maintain the population at that level. Deer were removed in three of the last five years. In November 2000, the deer population

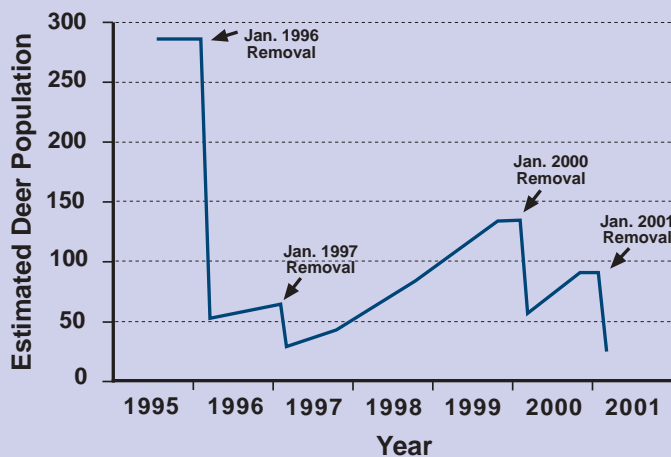
was estimated at 88 deer. Between January 8 to 18, 2001, 63 deer were removed by DEP staff in eight days. Biological data were collected from all deer removed to assess changes in deer health.

Since 1996, biological data collected from deer removed at Bluff Point have indicated significant improvements in deer health

as the herd has been reduced. Sex ratios have shifted from three does for every one buck in 1996 to 1.5 does for every one buck in 2001. Half of all females removed in 2001 were adults. Since 1996, average body weights have increased from 71 to 96 pounds for yearling males and from 109 to 149 pounds for adult bucks. Reproductive rates have increased from 0.3 to 0.93 fawns per yearling doe and from 1.09 to 1.44 fawns per adult doe. An assessment is expected to be completed this fall that summarizes all biological data collected at Bluff Point in 2001. This report will also compare all data collected since 1996.

Deer management at Bluff Point has resulted in improvement in deer herd health, wildlife habitat quality and ecosystem stability. Approximately 2,600 pounds of boneless venison were donated to Connecticut food charities as a result of the 2001 deer removal at Bluff Point. The "Hunters for the Hungry Program," in cooperation with the Groton Sportsmens Club, coordinated the preparation, processing and distribution of the venison at no cost to the DEP. Continual monitoring of the deer population and periodic herd reduction efforts will ensure balance between the Bluff Point deer herd and native plant communities.

Bluff Point Deer Reduction Project 1996-2001



National Wildlife Week Nature in Your Neighborhood

Every year since 1938, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has celebrated National Wildlife Week with a different theme to highlight environmental issues affecting people and wildlife. The theme for the 2001 National Wildlife Week (April 16-22) is "Nature in Your Neighborhood."

National Wildlife Week Fun Book: Educational activity guides contain fun, hands-on activities designed to introduce students to the wildlife that might live in their neighborhood. From building an insect trap to exploring a nearby pond, the National Wildlife Week Fun Book is loaded with interactive ideas that are easy to incorporate into teachers' lesson plans. Activity guides are available online in both English and Spanish at no cost to teachers. Teachers can access the guides through the National Wildlife Federation's web site (www.nwf.org).

Educators can also contact NWF to request their free National Wildlife Week poster and an activity guide by sending email to wildlife@nwf.org or calling 1-703-438-6000.



American robin

Long Island Sound Fund Finances Projects at Milford Point

Written by Kate Hughes, DEP Office of Long Island Sound Programs

Are you looking for an interesting place to go to see wildlife in its natural habitat? If you've never been to Milford Point, located along the central Connecticut shoreline, you're in for a treat. Milford Point is a barrier beach which is bounded by Long Island Sound to the south and by an 840-acre salt marsh (the Charles E. Wheeler Wildlife Management Area) and the Housatonic River to the north. Milford Point is the home of the Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center, a family-oriented environmental education facility, a portion of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge and the Wheeler Wildlife Management Area.

The Long Island Sound Fund (LIS Fund), which is supported by the sale of *Preserve the Sound* license plates, by proceeds from the People's Bank *Preserve the Sound* credit card and individual donations, has awarded a number of grants to support public access, education and research efforts at Milford Point. The Fund has provided monies for a laboratory at the Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center which makes it an ideal location for researchers to study the adjacent marsh and intertidal habitats and the wildlife that they attract. In addition, the LIS Fund awarded a grant for construction of an observation platform adjacent to the marsh from which visitors may view birds and other wildlife. The platform features interpretive educational signs about the marsh and the birds that use this productive habitat for foraging, nesting and cover.

A boardwalk across a dune and a viewing platform on the beach offer visitors spectacular views of the Sound and the nearby intertidal flats



Milford Point has been identified as critical migratory shorebird habitat along Connecticut's coast. Observers can witness shorebirds, like the greater yellowlegs, feeding in the tidal marsh.

upon which birds can be seen foraging for food. The Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center recently received funding from the LIS Fund to construct two educational signs at the viewing platform. The newly-installed signs provide important natural history information on the piping plover and least tern, two threatened shorebirds which can often be seen from the platform during spring and summer. The interpretive signs were produced cooperatively with the Wildlife Division.

In addition to the healthy marsh complex, Milford Point also features significant beach, dune and intertidal areas which are critical habitats for migratory coastal birds. Dr. Carmela Cuomo of Yale University's Department of Geology and Geophysics is currently conducting a detailed sampling study of benthic organisms (organisms which live on or in the bottom sediments of a waterbody) and their relationship to migratory shorebird foraging activities. This study was

funded, in part, by the LIS Fund. The information which Dr. Cuomo's study will provide will complement another LIS Fund shorebird study being conducted by Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Researchers at Manomet are conducting an assessment of critical migratory shorebird habitats along Connecticut's coast, including Milford Point.

For more information about activities and educational programs at the Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center, call (203) 877-0668. For more information about the Long Island Sound Fund or a complete list of funded projects, please contact the Long Island Sound Fund Coordinator, Kate Hughes, at (860) 424-3034, or visit the DEP website at <http://dep.state.ct.us/olispl/licplate/licplate.htm>. To find out how to order a Long Island Sound license plate, call 1-800-CT-SOUND.

Take the Wildlife Challenge

New contest tests your knowledge of wildlife in Connecticut

NEW!

Do you want to find out how much you know about wildlife? If so, you should take the Wildlife Challenge! This new contest will appear in each issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*. All you need to do is guess which animal is described in the challenge and enter into a drawing to win a free wildlife poster. Clearly print your answer on a postcard, along with your name, address and phone number and send it to: CT Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013, **Attn: Wildlife Challenge**. The answer

and winner will be printed in the next issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*.

Official Rules: Only one postcard will be accepted per household, per challenge. Postcards for this issue's contest must be postmarked by April 15, 2001. Only one winner will be chosen for each challenge. Each winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by the postmarked deadline.

Wildlife Challenge

Primarily a loner, this forest animal tends to move slowly and not travel very far. Evidence of its presence includes debarked trees, small holes and discarded browse along the ground and pellet-like scat. This animal is attracted to salt, with tool handles, tires and outdoor privies all at risk of being chewed. Generally, though it prefers to eat buds, acorns, clover and other vegetation.

Midwinter Waterfowl Survey Results

Written by Paul Merola, Waterfowl Program Biologist

Staff from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) conducted the annual Midwinter Waterfowl Survey in Connecticut during early January, 2001. The survey is part of an annual, nationwide waterfowl census coordinated by the USFWS. In Connecticut, the survey is conducted from a low-flying plane and the areas surveyed include the coast, major rivers and selected lakes. Results of the waterfowl tallies indicate the relative abundance of different species and provide an index to long-term wintering population trends.

Weather Affected Results

Severe cold weather and snow preceded the survey, causing inland waters, as well as most of the Connecticut River and tidal marshes, to freeze. This deep freezing probably caused many waterfowl to migrate out of the state for more southern areas. The lower than average waterfowl counts for this year's survey were probably a result of the weather.

Counts Lower Than Last Year

The mallard count was much lower than last year and below average. The



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black duck count was less than last year and the previous five-year average. The winter population of black ducks in Connecticut has experienced a long-term decline. The diving duck counts generally decreased, with the exception of the bufflehead

count. The scaup count was the second lowest since the survey began and well below the previous five-year average. The scaup count in Connecticut can be very variable. However, the number of scaup wintering from Massachusetts to Long Island has undergone a serious long-term decline. The canvasback count was also unusually low. The goldeneye, bufflehead and merganser counts were at average levels. The Canada goose and mute swan counts were below the previous five-year average.

Connecticut Midwinter Waterfowl Survey* Results for Major Species, 1996-2001

Species	2001	2000	5-Year Average
Mallard	300	1,000	800
Black Duck	2,300	3,000	2,600
Scaup	900	1,500	5,600
Canvasback	0	1,500	1,500
Common Goldeneye	300	400	400
Bufflehead	400	100	300
Merganser	1,200	1,500	1,000
Canada Goose	1,700	2,600	3,800
Mute Swan	1,100	1,000	1,200

*Count rounded to the nearest hundred

Successful Deer Hunt Conducted in Residential Community

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program Biologist

Mumford Cove is a residential community in Groton that has been challenged by a growing deer population. The deer population in Mumford Cove had averaged about 36 deer (106 deer per square mile). In 1997, residents in the community voted to accept a proposal by the Humane Society of the United States to initiate an experimental immunocontraception (birth control) study at no cost to the community. The primary purpose of the study was to test the effectiveness of different immunocontraceptive vaccines designed to prevent pregnancies in female deer. After three years of testing different vaccines, one of three vaccines was effective, but would not be approved by the FDA for management purposes. The remaining two vaccines likely would have been approved by the FDA, but through testing, proved to be ineffective.

The community-appointed committee investigated different options for managing the local deer herd. After reviewing all available options, the committee recommended and the community voted 2:1 in support of implementing a controlled deer hunt in the fall of 2000.

A hunt was designed to swiftly reduce the local deer herd using both shotgun and archery deer hunters. The Mumford Cove Wildlife Management Committee selected 58 hunters who passed a shooting proficiency test and

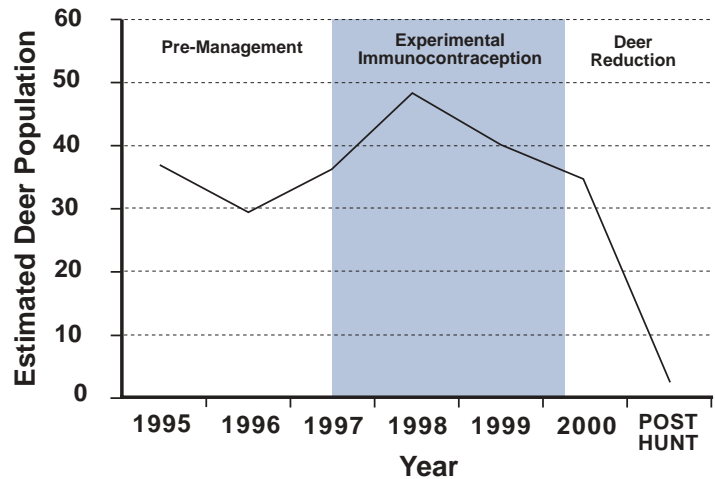
an interview. To maximize the number of shotgun hunters, written waivers to allow the discharge of a firearm within 500 feet of houses were obtained from 39 households. Bowhunters hunted in areas within 500 feet of houses where written waivers were not obtained. Hunting occurred on Mondays and Tuesdays during the three-week shotgun season. Hunting occurred from elevated tree stands and hunters were distributed at a rate of one hunter every two acres.

In six hunting days, 27 deer were harvested. Hunting mortality, combined with natural mortality and the dispersal of males, resulted in the local deer herd being reduced from about 33 deer (about 97 deer per square mile) to two deer (about 6 deer per square mile). Most deer removed were adults (67%) and most adults were females (78%). The removal of adult females has the greatest impact on reducing deer population growth. The

age composition of the Mumford Cove deer herd was skewed towards older-aged deer, with 66 percent of the adults between 5.5 and 9.5 years old. An older-aged deer population typically is a result of high fawn dispersal and mortality.

No hunting accidents occurred and no deer were wounded and wandered into the residential community. A public opinion survey will be initiated next summer to assess residents' perceptions of the controlled hunt and to document effects of population reduction on deer damage to landscape plantings in Mumford Cove.

Mumford Cove Deer Population



Staff Notes

The Wildlife Division recently welcomed two new staff members. Heather Overturf, Program Assistant at the Franklin Wildlife office, is actually not new to the Wildlife Division. She previously worked for the Division for five years, helping with various programs at the Sessions Woods, Franklin and Hartford offices. She left in 1995 to begin raising a family. Heather decided to return to the Wildlife Division recently and the staff is pleased to have her back.

Geoffrey Krukar was recently hired to fill a new Wildlife Technician position with the Nonharvested Wildlife Program. This position is long overdue, as many Nonharvested Wildlife Program projects could not be completed or even started due to a lack of personnel. In the upcoming months, Geoff will be busy conducting bat hibernacula surveys and various bird surveys (colonial waterbirds, grassland birds, wetland call-back, etc.). Geoff also plans to get the *Windows to Wildlife* project up and

running again soon. The project, which involves the development of bird feeding and wildlife viewing stations at nursing homes throughout the state, has been on hold for a few years due to a lack of manpower. Another important project to be undertaken by Geoff will focus on kestrels, barn owls and other raptors that nest in Connecticut.

Alternatives to Invasive Alien Plantings

Written by Peter Picone, Urban Wildlife Program Biologist

The leaf peeping during the fall of 2000 was better than expected. You couldn't miss the bright orange-red color of the sugar maples as you drove around Connecticut. However, you may have noticed an increasing number of trees with green leaves still attached to the branches. Increasingly in the suburbs, you can find patches of non-native trees that have escaped cultivation. One non-native tree that is becoming more and more common is the Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*). Norway maple and its numerous cultivars were imported for use as shade trees. Unfortunately, as landowners and landscapers have increasingly planted this tree, it has

spread and now is displacing native trees and shrubs around suburban and urban development.

One might ask, "What harm can this cause to the environment?" As the Norway maple continues to propagate and displace native plants, the plant communities begin to change and, in some cases, more valuable native trees and shrubs are displaced. Wildlife have co-evolved with the native plant communities. The plants are key components of the habitat that wildlife depend upon. As non-native invasives become dominant, they alter the local environment. Norway maple is only one example of

Why are non-native invasive plants used?

- Easy to find; readily available at local stores
- Familiarity
- Aesthetics
- Buyers are unaware of ecological issues surrounding their use
- Vigorous growers; easy to propagate

an invasive non-native. There are dozens of others which can be found invading our fields, wetlands and forests.

There are native alternatives to invasives that can be planted instead. For example, the sugar maple (*Acer*

Native Alternatives for Non-native Invasive Plants

Native alternatives for: Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Red Maple (*A. rubrum*): good yard and street tree; nice red fall color; good spring food source for wildlife

Sugar Maple (*A. saccharum*): street tree (best if planted away from curbside because it is sensitive to road salt); brilliant orange-red color in fall; good fall food source for wildlife

Silver Maple (*A. saccharinum*): tends to get too large for a street tree, but suitable for bigger spaces; good spring food source for wildlife

Native alternatives for: Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

For wildlife habitat/food value (winter food persistence):

Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*): berry persistence

Red chokeberry (*A. arbutifolia*): berry persistence

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*): regular variety and shorter cultivars; berry persistence; female shrub has berries; berries provide winter color

Inkberry (*I. glabra*)

Mapleleaf Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*): berry persistence

Highbush Cranberry Viburnum (*V. trilobum*): berry persistence

Pasture Rose (*Rosa carolina*): berry persistence

Virginia Rose (*R. virginiana*): berry persistence

Swamp Rose (*R. palustris*): berry persistence; wetter sites

Native alternatives for: winged euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*)

For fall leaf color:

Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*): orange-red fall leaf color; good wildlife summer food value

Red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*): "brilliantissima" variety; wildlife fall and winter food value

Dwarf sumac (*Rhus copallina*): bright fall color; persistent winter berries

Native alternatives for: Privet (*Ligustrum spp.*)

Informal hedges or natural borders:

Gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)

Arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum recognitum*)

Red twig dogwood (*C. sericea*)

Silky dogwood (*C. amomum*)

Speckled alder (*Alnus rugosa*):

grows in wet/moist sites
Semi-formal or manicured hedges:

American holly: (*Ilex opaca*)

Non-native, non-invasive alternatives for: Privet:

Semi-formal or manicured hedges:

Meserve holly: many types and hybrids available

Hawthornes: (*Craetagus spp.*)

Native alternatives for: Japanese honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera japonica*)

Trumpet honeysuckle vine (*L. sempervirens* and *L. x heckrottii* variety also)

Virginia creeper vine (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*): persistent berries

Native alternatives for: autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

For wildlife habitat enhancement/food value:

Arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum recognitum*): fall wildlife food

Nannyberry viburnum (*V. lentago*): fall wildlife food



Silky dogwood

Highbush cranberry viburnum (*V. trilobum*): berry persistence

Gray dogwood: (*Cornus racemosa*): fall wildlife food

Red twig dogwood (*C. sericea*): fall wildlife food

Silky dogwood (*C. amomum*): fall wildlife food

Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*): berry persistence

Red chokeberry (*A. arbutifolia*): berry persistence

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*): female; regular variety and shorter cultivars; berry persistence

Shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*): summer berries; several cultivars and species are available

Common elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)

Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*): winter persistent berries; tolerant of dry sites



Pasture rose

saccharum), red maple (*A. rubrum*) or silver maple (*A. saccharinum*) are good alternative natives for Norway maples. The sugar maple has a long history of use as an ornamental tree. As a matter of fact, Millanes Nursery in Cromwell has developed a dwarf variety of the sugar maple. The valuable seeds of the sugar maple ripen in the fall and are gathered by chipmunks and squirrels. The red and silver maples produce their seeds in the spring.

Before running out to the local nursery and buying an invasive non-native plant, please consider native alternatives. If you are interested in planting native trees and shrubs for wildlife in your yard and need to locate sources, the Wildlife Division's Sessions Woods office has published a listing of registered nurseries that carry native trees and shrubs. The publication, which is entitled the *CT Native Tree and Shrub Availability List*, can also be found in the wildlife section of the DEP's website at <http://dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/wildlife>.



This yellow-rumped warbler feeds on the fruit of a northern bayberry at the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington.

Backyard Habitat Certification Project

Connecticut residents who are interested in creating a habitat for wildlife in their backyards can learn more by participating in the Urban Wildlife Program's Backyard Habitat Certification Project. This project provides information on managing backyard habitats and, most importantly, recognizes the efforts of those who follow through and provide a place for wildlife on their property. Participants in the Backyard Habitat Certification Project will receive a notebook with seven habitat management fact sheets, a list of additional Wildlife Division publications and a 28-page, color booklet, "Enhancing Your Backyard Habitat for Wildlife." Once participants satisfy all the project requirements and submit a completed application, they will receive a personalized certificate suitable for framing. Those interested in participating in the project and receiving the information packet should send a check or money order for \$15.00, payable to the DEP Urban Wildlife Program, to Sessions Woods WMA, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

Preliminary Assessment of 2000 Deer Hunting Seasons

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program

A preliminary look at harvest data from the 2000 deer hunting seasons indicates that hunters were very successful this year at putting some venison on the kitchen table. In 1995, hunters took a record harvest of 13,740 deer. From 1996 to 1999, harvest totals ranged from just over 10,000, to just under 12,000. The preliminary harvest totals for the 2000 deer hunting season is about 13,300 deer. The biggest increase in harvest (29%) occurred during the firearms deer hunting seasons. A conservative tally indicated that harvest of antlerless deer, using the replacement antlerless tag program, increased by at least 44 percent. The replacement tag program encourages hunters to take

antlerless deer in towns located in Fairfield County and along the shoreline where deer densities are high.

The 2000 harvest is approaching the record deer harvest experienced in 1995. During the 1995 hunting seasons, deer were more visible to hunters because the scarcity of acorns in the forest and the presence of some snow cover forced deer to travel more in search in food. Hunting conditions in 2000 were similar to 1995; there was some snow cover on the ground and few acorns on the forest floor. Over the past seven years, data collected from hunter surveys indicated a strong correlation between acorn abundance and hunter success rates.

Years with abundant acorns result in lower hunter success rates and years with poor acorn crops result in higher hunter success rates.

The number of reported deer/vehicle accidents peaked in 2000 at just over 3,000. The reported number of deer-related accidents only represents a portion of all those that actually occur each year. An estimated 5,000 to 8,000 deer were likely hit by motorists on Connecticut roads and highways this past year. A comprehensive report summarizing all deer harvest data, changes in management activities and research highlights will be available from the Wildlife Division in September.

Results for the 2000 Fall Turkey Seasons

Written by Michael Gregonis, Deer/Turkey Program

Fall hunters once again stalked Connecticut woodlands with bow and gun to harvest the sharp-eyed wild turkey. Although more permits were issued in 2000 than in 1999, the harvest was lower for both the firearms and archery seasons. The decreases in harvest may be attributed to a cold and wet spring, which decreased wild turkey poult survival. Therefore, less young birds were available for fall turkey hunters to harvest.

The 13-day fall firearms season resulted in a reported harvest of 190 birds, representing a 34 percent decrease from the 1999 total of 290 birds. Overall, 2,376 firearms permits were issued and

141 hunters took at least one turkey for a six percent success rate. Private land hunters (1,914) harvested 180 birds, whereas state land hunters harvested 10 birds. Hunters reported harvesting at least one bird from 66 of 169 Connecticut towns. Woodstock and Mansfield recorded the highest harvest of 12 and seven birds respectively. In addition, turkey management zone 5 (40 birds) and zone 1 (23 birds) reported the highest zonal harvest. Of the 190 birds taken, 86 were males and 104 were females; 67 percent were adults.

During the fall archery season, 2,145 permits were issued and 41 birds were harvested (a 36% decrease from the 64

birds harvested in 1999). At least one bird was harvested by 34 hunters; therefore, the statewide success rate was 1.6 percent. Wild turkeys were taken from 30 towns, with Lyme (4) and Wilton (3) reporting the highest harvest. Turkey management zone 9 (8 birds) and zone 11 (8 birds) recorded the highest harvest. Of the 41 birds taken by archers, there were 23 males and 18 females; 63 percent were adults.

Although fall hunting opportunities abound, there exists a relatively small group of dedicated hunters who enjoy the challenge of hunting Connecticut's largest game bird during autumn.

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- April 14 **Grassland Birds in Connecticut**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 9:30 a.m. What are the grassland birds? Where do they live? What is being done in Connecticut to encourage their survival? What can we do to encourage them locally? Jenny Dickson, Wildlife Division biologist, will present answers to these and other questions on grassland birds. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- April 16-22 National Wildlife Week (see page 12 for details).
- April 21 **Clearcut - Forest Management at Sessions Woods**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 1:30 p.m. Join DEP Forester David Irvin for a field walk and discussion of clearcutting as a forest and wildlife habitat management technique. Learn how clearcutting fits into the forest management plan for Sessions Woods and other state-owned forest areas. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- April 22 Earth Day.
- May 2-22 **Spring Turkey Hunting Season** (see the 2001 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide or visit the DEP website <http://dep.state.ct.us> for more information).
- May 4 **Teacher workshop: Neotropical Migratory Birds**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Participants will learn about Connecticut's migratory birds and discover ways to teach about them in the classroom. For information and to obtain a preregistration packet, call Laura Rogers-Castro at (860) 675-8130.
- May 12 **International Migratory Bird Day** event, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- **Early Morning Bird Walk** at 6:30 a.m.
- **Bird Banding Demonstration** throughout the morning.
- **Birdwatching for Kids**, starting at 9:00 a.m.; an introduction for kids and their parents.
- **Bird House Workshop**, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Bring a hammer and screwdriver to construct a bluebird house. Includes a slide presentation on bird housing, size, placement and habitat by Wildlife Division biologist Jenny Dickson. A donation of \$4.00 to the Friends of Sessions Woods will cover the cost of materials for the bluebird house.
- June 30 **Dragonfly Walk**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, starting at 9:30 a.m. Join Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro in a search for dragonflies and damselflies in the forest and marshland of Sessions Woods. Identification and natural history will be discussed. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- July 10 **Teacher workshop: Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats for Teachers of Grades 5-8**, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Participants will explore the diversity of wildlife habitats in Connecticut, learn how to teach about biodiversity and discover activities to use in the schoolyard. For more information and to obtain a preregistration packet, call Laura Rogers-Castro at (860) 675-8130.
- July 26 **Teacher workshop: "Wildlife in Your Connecticut Backyard" & "Woodland Wildlife" Outreach Kits**, at Franklin Wildlife Management Area, in North Franklin, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Participants will be introduced to the Wildlife Division's educational kits available for loan. They will also learn about common Connecticut wildlife through the kits' slide shows and printed materials. There will be an opportunity to conduct activities for use in the classroom by using wildlife-related props. For more information and to obtain a preregistration packet, call Laura Rogers-Castro at (860) 675-8130.

Just for Kids

Birdwatching

Want a hobby that's challenging, needs little equipment and is a lot of fun? Try birdwatching! A little patience and a good field guide is all you need for this activity.

When you see a bird, take a good look and ask yourself....

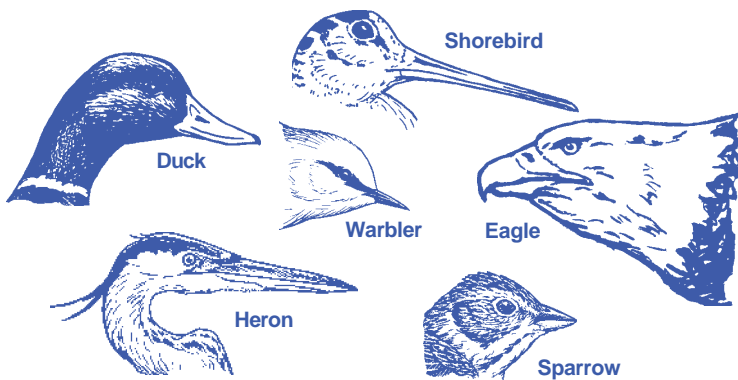
Is the bird bigger, smaller or the same size as a robin?

What color is it?

Does it have any unusual markings?

Then take a peek at its beak!

Birds have different beaks, depending on what they eat. Insect-eaters have pointed bills, while seed-eaters have heavy, thick bills for cracking seeds. Meat-eaters have strong, hooked bills for tearing flesh.



Make a Life List

Birdwatchers often keep a record of all the birds they have seen throughout his/her life. This is called a "Life List." Try it yourself! Be sure to include the date and place that you see each bird. Connecticut has over 300 birds that can be seen throughout the year. How many can you see?



There it goes.....

If your bird flies away, watch it fly!

Does it soar?

Constantly flap?

Make a dive?

Are its wings pointed?

Bigfoot?

No, not the big, hairy monster from the north. Look at the bird's feet!

Waders have long toes.

Climbers have two toes in front and two toes in back for holding onto tree trunks.

Perchers have three toes in front and one in the back to hang onto branches.

Swimmers have webbed feet.

Graspers have sharp, curved claws, called talons, for tearing flesh.

All this information will help you identify your bird!

Take a look in a field guide, a special book with pictures and information about birds, and try to figure out which bird you have seen. These guides are helpful because they also include maps showing where the birds are normally found.

Connecticut Wildlife

The official bimonthly publication of the
DEP Wildlife Division

Don't miss out . . . Get Connecticut Wildlife for yourself or for a friend! Mail this form, along with a check or money order for a minimum contribution (payable to *Gift to Wildlife*) to: Gift to Wildlife, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

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Woodworking for Wildlife

Homes for Birds & Mammals

The Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Program is offering a revised second edition of this popular book for **\$10.00**. Now published with color photographs and an easy-to-use spiral binding, it is the perfect resource for anyone wishing to build homes for wildlife.

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Mail completed coupon with a check or money order (\$10.00 per copy) to CT DEP Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

TIP

 Turn In Poachers

TO REPORT A WILDLIFE VIOLATION

CALL 1-800-842-HELP

24 HOURS -
TOLL FREE

REWARDS OFFERED AFTER ARREST
ALL CALLS CONFIDENTIAL

For more information on TIP, call Conservation Law Enforcement at 424-3012

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Bureau of Natural Resources / Wildlife Division
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
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