



# Mattabesek Audubon Society

A Chapter of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY



# Wingbeat

Winter/Spring 2019

Volume 45 • Number 4

## Upcoming Field Trips: Winter/Spring 2019



“The Mattabesek Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, is committed to environmental leadership and education for the benefit of the community and the earth’s biodiversity.”

February 2, 2019 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

### Eagles at Machimoodus Park

Join Larry Cyrulik for a winter trip through the woods to the cliff above Salmon River Cove. In past years, Bald Eagles have swooped over close enough for birders to hear the beats of their wings. Dress warmly (especially shoes or boots). Meet at the parking lot at the corner of Lawn Ave. and High St., Middletown. Call Larry for info 342-4785 or 635-1880.

February 15–18, 2019 (Friday–Monday)

### 21st Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

This annual four-day event has watchers counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are across the continent. About 160,000 participants submit observations online, creating an instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations recorded. Anyone can participate—as little as 15 minutes on one day, or for as long as you like each day. Enter your list(s) online at [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org). For more info: [www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/)

April 20, 2018 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

### Wildflower Walk

Discover early-blooming wildflowers with Larry Cyrulik among the fractured basalt of Giuffrida Park. Each year finds a different assortment of flower species, depending on the recent weather. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Cromwell Stop & Shop plaza parking lot on the side by Mattress Firm. Call Larry Cyrulik for more information at 342-4785 or 635-1880. For a preview of what we may see, choose the Wildflowers link from Field Trips page on our website at [www.audubon-mas.org](http://www.audubon-mas.org)



Pale Corydalis

Inside:



Ring-necked duck



Buffleheads

March 16 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

### “Let’s Go a-Ducking”

This replication of Dave Titus’s favorite duck migration trip will start at Bishops Ponds, Research Parkway (off East Main Street) in Meriden, then will take Barnes Road to North Farms Reservoir (the reservoir has supplied a good view of a flock of Coots in past). If time allows, we will back-track to Cromwell Meadows. Dress for the weather—it’s usually raw and chilling. Meet at the parking lot at the corner of Lawn Ave. and High St., Middletown. Call Larry Cyrulik for info 342-4785 or 635-1880.

### Mattabesek Collecting Email Addresses

We wish to build an email list of our members. We are requesting that members send an email to the address below. (Email addresses will not be shared with any other entity.)

Please send us an email and include your preferred email address within the body of the email. Send to: [pat\\_rasch@mac.com](mailto:pat_rasch@mac.com), with EMAIL LIST in subject line.

# Field Trip Reports



## 44th Annual Salmon River Christmas Bird Count, December 16, 2018

The 44th annual Mattabesock Salmon River Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 16th, 2018. Over 25 participants braved the rain to identify and count birds. The small waterbodies were covered with ice, which reduced the number of waterfowl observed on ponds. As of the print date of this edition of Wingbeat, the tentative total number of bird species observed was 68. This number could increase

as feeder counts are received and tallied in.

Please consider joining one of the teams next year. We are confident that any newcomers will be welcomed with open arms. All levels of birding expertise are welcome. Please contact, Sharon Dellinger, [rsdell@comcast.net](mailto:rsdell@comcast.net) or Doreen Jezek, [dajezek@gmail.com](mailto:dajezek@gmail.com) for more information. You've got a year to get ready!  
*Sharon Dellinger, MAS Recording Secretary*

## Owl Prowls, November 2 and 10, 2018

Two trips were scheduled. Sadly, the first trip was rained out. On the second trip several people attempted to locate any type of owl at very usual and dependable locations. NOTHING! Then, at the last stop (Middlefield, where Coginchaug River

goes under Miller Rd) and just as we were about to call it quits, a Barred Owl called from the woods maybe 60 feet from us. It called for a while and then moved further in the woods. A first for MAS Owl prowls.  
*Joe Morin*

## Sparrow Crawl, October 13, 2018

....And mountains flash in the rose-white dusk, their shoulders black with rains... Conrad Aiken

### 0820 Long Hill Road; former vegetable field

Standing tentatively with shoulders hunched against the persistent mists...below, the field dripping like faucets, shaped like a huge catcher's mitt sprouting mugwort, goldenrod, assorted other forbs, and shrub-scrub such as russian olive, crab-apple, dogwood, multiflora rose. The thickness of the vaporous air swirling with pearl-like droplets descending from the firmament absorbed the birders' "pishing", a call to alert the birds hiding in the undergrowth.

Flanking a large bristling mound of gravel, some movement was detected and the recording of species began: white-throated, chipping and song sparrows. They dodged between clumps of mugwort bent with rain.

At the center of the depression a ruby-crowned kinglet, a swamp sparrow and palm warblers with warm yellow underparts flickering like semaphores spread out before the birders' advance. The bare head of one of the observers glistened and thighs became saturated as they thread through clumps of goldenrod. The chase made one disregard the overcast skies, the outpouring of autumnal tears.

Several more song sparrows and a savannah sparrow were detected: the compiler's wet pencil scratched laboriously over the page.

### 0930 The Nature Garden; Randolph Road

Subdued, black wet paths led past red maple woodland pockmarked with pools of water. Alarmed mallards rose as one in a staccato burst of feathered wings and a parting cry: Yack, yack! Stubborn mists cloaked the observers as they peered into the jagged edges of eastern red cedars, or glanced upwards over the tops of dogwoods and oak trees. A turn into a field revealed skies ashen as the inanimate faces of monuments, but scant avians.

Then a path through a red maple grove gave a surprise: On a single tree, positioned like ornaments, were a black-throated blue warbler, a phoebe, a veery, and a house wren.

Out into the open once again. The saturated atmosphere continued to bathe the stoic and self-composed bronze little blue stem in a coating of rain.

### 1100 Durham Meadows

Two vantage points: one beside a diminutive pond surrounded by tall cattails, their heads burst and seeds dispersed. The wet undergrowth intimidated any further advance, but several hawks were tallied in the distance copse of trees. The second reconnoiter placed the observers in a muddy open expanse, part mown and grass-like, part roiled furrows of sedge and canary grass with a mottled hedge row surrounding the whole.

The party picked their way over the soft earth, pooled with water. The horse-neighing whistles of a tape-recorded screech owl had a transformational effect: the birds began to emerge in droves from underneath the sheaves of vegetation and began perching on branches of the silky dogwood—before diving out of sight once more.

There was a white-crowned sparrow, its back turned to the observers but its bright head-dress stunningly visible. Purple

*Continued on next page*

#### MAS Officers:

President: ..... Alison Guinness (860-873-9304)  
Vice-President: .... Luella Landis  
Recording Sec.: ..... Sharon Dellinger  
Treasurer: ..... Elaine Payne

#### 2017 Committee Chairs:

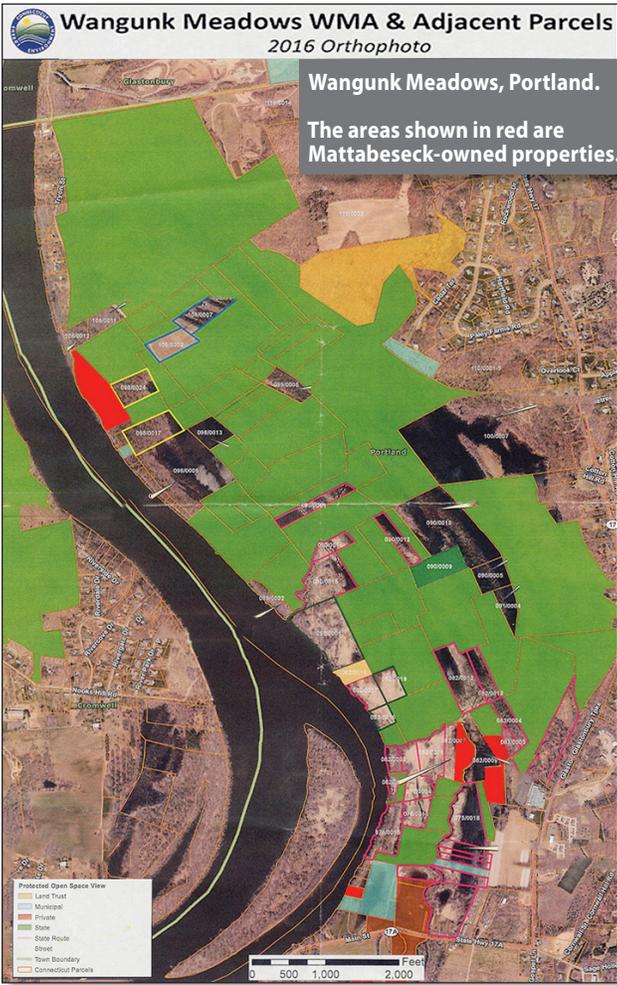
Conservation: ..... Larry Cyrulik (860-342-4785)  
Education: ..... Kim Antol (860-347-6442)  
Publicity: ..... Alison Guinness (860-873-9304)  
Sanctuary: ..... Rodrigo Pinto (301-768-8807)  
Wingbeat: ..... Pat Rasch (860-635-1880) <pat\_rasch@mac.com>

Rare Bird Alert: ..... 203-254-3665

On the web: ..... [www.audubon-mas.org](http://www.audubon-mas.org)



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# Conservation Committee Update

Several Board members met with biologists and land acquisition officials of the state of Connecticut DEEP to discuss the current status and future of the Portland Wangunk Meadows, an Important Bird Area. Over the years the Wangunk Meadows has been beset with unauthorized off-road vehicle traffic, dumping and other illegal uses. Numerous parcels of land have been exchanged from one owner to another but the amount of parcels protected for conservation has remained static. DEEP officials reaffirmed their goal to expand the size of the Wangunk Meadows Wildlife Refuge. They asked committee members to help accelerate the process by researching the title deeds, addresses etc. of prospective owners willing to sell their properties, and to partner with the DEEP in buying parcels to add to the Refuge.

The meeting concluded with the phrase “Time and tide waits for no one.”  LC



## Winter Dreaming

While we were dreaming snow fell upon us  
 And etched bronze leaves with a fringe of white,  
 And kissed the lawn with cold opaque lips  
 That rippled and buried the garden out of sight.

The neighbors grasped machines and cleared their drives,  
 While we, backs bent, took shovels to the walk.  
 By noon the wind arose and cut like knives;  
 It lifted and blew the snow like powdered chalk.

Inside the kitchen bowls of soup were lain;  
 The steam arose like smoke from chimney peaks;  
 The sun shone brightly through the window pane;  
 The blood glowed crimson upon your cheeks.

You asked, How long before the robins sing?  
 I thought of you, first flower of spring. 

## Field Trip Reports *continued*

finches alighted in the distant scrub. Casting eyes in a panoramic 360 degree arc, the accipiter species were noted as sharp shins; a northern harrier teetered over the fields in hunting mode; now uncommon, a kestrel alighted on a red maple.

Then a speck was noticed at the crown of another maple: it rose suddenly and became almost indiscernible, but follow it, follow! Don't lose concentration! The speck turned back in the sky; it dove into the low grassy expanse. And it flashed the yellow breast of a meadowlark, once so numerous, now a gem to behold.

The clouds coiled grayly on top of one another but they finally ceased their lachrymose offering. There was satisfaction all around.

3 participants | 6 sparrow species | 33 species total 



Meadow Lark (10/13/18)

Photos by Dan Cimbaro

LC

LC - December 2018

# AUDUBON MEMBERS' CORNER

(Feel free to send us contributions to this column)



Submitted by Alberta Mirer

## Without Birds the World's Forests Would Be Lost

For the first time, scientists have quantified on a global scale the role birds play in controlling populations of caterpillars, aphids and other potentially destructive plant-eating insects. Recent research by a team of international zoologists finds that the planet's roughly 6,000 insectivorous bird species eat a whopping 400 to 500 million tons of prey annually –the equivalent of about 20 quadrillion individual bugs. 75% of those predations occur in forested areas. This information is crucial to understanding the importance of birds to the world's ecosystems. 

*National Wildlife* December 2018 –January 2019



Photo by Sharon Dellinger

**Nov. 4, 2018: Board members visited the Carlson Sanctuary to view the new sign installation. While checking one of the boardwalks, a Winter Wren was spotted poking around in the brush.**

The deadline for items to be included in the Spring/Summer issue is March 26, 2019. We expect subscribers to receive their copies about April 20. Please send items to Pat Rasch, 24 Elm Road, Cromwell, CT 06416, or email to <[pat\\_rasch@comcast.net](mailto:pat_rasch@comcast.net)>

The Board of Directors will meet at 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown.

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