



“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.”

Special Trip: Sign Up to Visit Plum Island

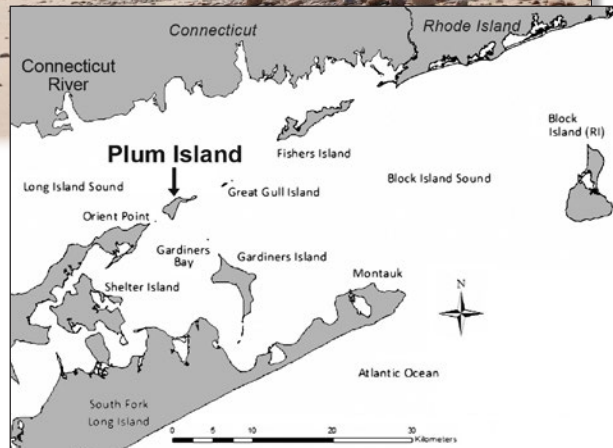
Mattabesek Audubon is sponsoring a trip to Plum Island on **Tuesday, August 23**.

Plum Island is located just off the eastern tip of Long Island. The island has been the site of military installations from the earliest days of the country and a USDA research area since the 1950s. Congress voted to relocate the research facility and sell the island.

Visits require a security check of all attendees as well as US citizenship. The trip is free and leaves from Harbor One in Old Saybrook. If interested in participating, please contact Alison Guinness at 860-873-9304 by June 1. Check the MAS web site www.audubon-mas.org for updates on the schedule.



Plum Island photos by Alison Guinness



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MAS Represented at Environmental Open House

An Environmental Open House was held at the Wallingford Public Library on February 27th, in which local environmental and conservation organizations were allowed an opportunity to present their missions, goals, and literature to the public. At this well-attended event, MAS was represented by Alberta Mirer, Rob Mirer, and Luella Landis.

Interest was shown in birding, MAS field trips, and in the Carlson Sanctuary. In addition to presenting information about MAS, the volunteers enjoyed learning about the other groups which were represented at the Open House.

Luella Landis, MAS Vice President



L/R: Luella Landis, Rob Mirer, Alberta Mirer

AUDUBON MEMBERS' CORNER

(Feel free to send us contributions to this column)



Submitted by Alberta Mirer, Board Member

Be a Piping Plover / Least Tern Volunteer

Anyone who wishes to become a USFWS piping plover/ least tern volunteer monitor, please contact the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Water Birds at

www.ctwaterbirds.blogspot.com. The Wildlife Division will be ready to use all of the tools, data, and manpower available to effectively manage imperiled shorebird populations in Connecticut.

Submitted by Alison Guinness, MAS President

Connecticut Celebrates 150 Years of Natural Resource Conservation

Connecticut has often been on the cutting edge of environmental legislation and conservation. As early as 1648, the colonial government passed a law prohibiting the hunting of deer, recognizing the importance of our natural resources as various parts of them disappeared like the turkey by 1813 and the beaver by 1842, not to mention the forests. With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, almost every waterway was dammed for power, making it impossible for anadromous fish to swim upstream and spawn, thus reducing the once incredibly bountiful shad and salmon populations. Consequently, the first official conservation agency in the state was the Fisheries Commission, established in 1866.



In those following 150 years, the Fisheries Commission expanded to the Board of Fisheries and Game with the

addition of game wardens to enforce the regulations. Wildlife missing from the environment were re-introduced; others were protected and managed. In 1971, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection was established, which became the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection in 2011. The Wildlife Division oversees a vast array of challenges, including climate change, endangered and invasive species, and habitat loss and degradation – all this with little funding and a constantly declining staff. There are many volunteer opportunities to assist in this effort.

For more on the celebration, visit: http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&Q=572708&deepNav_GID=1641#Events

Dryer Sheet and Substitutes

Tired of paying for expensive dryer sheets? Wondering what toxic chemicals are in them? Want to reduce your waste stream? I became concerned when I read *This Is What You Just Put in Your Mouth?* by Patrick Di Justo. It includes other things that you don't put in your mouth – like dryer sheets. There are alternatives. I knew about

dryer balls that soften and fluff and reduce drying time. I bought two, but it didn't seem to be enough for a large load, so I threw in a tennis ball the cats had for a toy. The other problem is static. I found a solution online using balls made of aluminum foil. It's working pretty well, but it's still in the experimental phase.

Submitted by Alberta Mirer, Board Member

We're Not Just for the Birds — We're for the Environment Too:

MAS Officers:

President: Alison Guinness (860-873-9304)
Vice-President: Luella Landis
Recording Sec.: Kathy Chase (860-349-3588)
Treasurer: Elaine Payne

2016 Committee Chairs:

Conservation: Larry Cyrulik (860-342-4785)
Education: Kim Antol (860-347-6442)
Publicity: Alison Guinness (860-873-9304)
Sanctuary: Alison Guinness (860-873-9304)
Wingbeat: Pat Rasch (860-635-1880) <pat_rasch@mac.com>

Rare Bird Alert: 203-254-3665

On the web: www.audubon-mas.org



Wingbeat uses 50% recycled paper (20% post-consumer waste) and vegetable-based ink

Be on the Lookout for Discarded Tires: Improperly stored or discarded scrap tires are not only unsightly, but also can be unhealthy when they provide habitat for mosquitoes and other pests. Mosquitoes can be found in almost any natural and artificial still-water environment. Tire casings readily mimic natural tree cavities, providing an effective incubator for mosquito larvae.

Conn's two exotic mosquitoes,



Mosquito wrigglers (larvae)

Member's Corner continued on page 4

Upcoming Field Trips: Spring / Summer 2016

April 23 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

Wildflower Walk

Discover early-blooming wildflowers with Larry Cyrulik among the fractured basalt of Giuffrida Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Cromwell Stop & Shop plaza parking lot on the side by Sleepy's. 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



Yellow Corydalis

June 4 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

Canoe Trip

Five Areas of Special Concern of the Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge lie within a 2.5 mile area (Cromwell, Portland, Middletown) on the Connecticut River.

Bring canoe or kayak, lunch, and supplies for a day on the water. Wear water-shoes. (The shoreline bottom can be muddy.) Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the town's canoe launch area at the very end of River Road, Cromwell. Call Larry Cyrulik for details 342-4785 or 635-1880.

May 7 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

David Titus Memorial Warbler Walk

Meet at River Highlands State Park parking lot, Field Road, Cromwell. This has been a premier spot for neo-tropical migrants—warblers: Pines, Blue-wings, Ovenbirds, and more—and often surprises. Call Larry Cyrulik 342-4785 or 635-1880 for information.




Pine Warbler

August 23 (Tuesday)

SIGNUP BY JUNE 1

Visit Plum Island

Visits to Plum Island require a security check of all attendees and US citizenship. The trip is free and leaves from Harbor One in Old Saybrook. Please contact Alison Guinness at 860-873-9304 by June 1. See *Wingbeat* front page for more details. Updates will be posted on MAS web site www.audubon-mas.org. 

Field Trip Reports

Eagle Walk: January 9, 2016

*... Black-eyed Ulysses,
being an astute and eagle-hearted man,
A heavily loined, lumbering man with a bird's eye
And a bird's unrest...*

Frederic Prokosch

Brown, snowless, desiccated earth; well-drained and droughty gravel, like tobacco stained teeth; withered bunch grasses gathered underneath the skeletal Black locust trees; fields of rigid, mummified stalks of goldenrod, like upright whips: that is what greeted the two observers as they climbed Mt Tom to catch a glimpse of ...*"the sharp, mean eyes of a bird..."* Prokosch.

Winter slumbered; it breathed languorously, its half-hearted exhalations just managed to cast over Salmon river cove a glimmering, uneven shell of ice. Large sections of open water supported a white bedspread of Mute swans. The hills on either side of the cove rose up from the shoreline in grey, bristling, soldier-like formation.

From the peak of Mt. Tom, the ice-free Connecticut river could be seen, as black and sinuous as a rat snake. The oak trees stood silently, expectantly, all around the observers, occasionally groomed by a Downy or Red-headed woodpecker. Movement on the limbs of the understory trees;

droplets of slate and orange color, undulating: Bluebirds.

Standing firm above the cove, searching, ever searching. What were those two avian statues standing on a flow of ice near the shore? Ah, the white heads and tails, the marked ebony profile of eagles. Their interest on the ice suddenly waning, first one then the other,

Like magical shadows dancing in the pellucid atmosphere, they took flight

And hovered, then wheeled effortlessly out of sight.


2 observers; 2 eagles noted, 25 species total

LC

Let's Go A-Ducking: March 19, 2016

Duck species and duck numbers were uncharacteristically sparse at Meriden's Research Parkway ponds, but we did get Mallard, Green wing teal, Black duck, Ring neck duck, and Bufflehead there. Tree swallows were already swooping over the ponds there too.

There were no coots at North Farms Reservoir this year. We were able to pick up a Common merganser on the Connecticut River, and a Pintail near the parking area at Portland Fair Grounds. A trip to the end of the trail at Cromwell Meadows added Wood Ducks.

2 observers; 8 duck species, 30 species total 

Pat Rasch



the Asian bush mosquito and Asian tiger mosquito, were most likely imported into the US in shipments of tires and quickly expanded their range by means of the used tire trade.

Scrap tires should be disposed of promptly and properly through a licensed tire hauler. At a minimum, tires should be stored under cover, or stacked and covered with plywood or other flat cover to prevent rainwater from entering (if covered with a tarp, make sure that doesn't collect rainwater as well).

Although not readily apparent, discarded tires play a role in public health as a source of mosquitoes, and their importation and interstate movement can have significant impacts on the health, ecology, and economy of our state and country. For more information:

Conn Mosquito Management Program:
www.ct.gov/mosquito

American Mosquito Control Association:
www.mosquito.org

Northeastern Mosquito Control Association:
www.nmca.org

National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov

Connecticut Wildlife March / April 2015
www.ct.gov/deep

Submitted by Alberta Mirer, Board Member

More Females Do It Than Don't

Recent research suggests that the idea that female birds in general do not sing reflects where ornithologists live and work more than what birds actually do. Most research on bird song has been done in North America and Europe, where you see brightly colored males, and they are singing. Birds in more tropical climes, where the majority of songbird species live, are different. In the Tropics most females sing just as long and loud as males and many of them also are just as colorful—so much so it can be difficult for scientists to determine the gender of songbirds without catching them. By comparing oriole species in North America with their southern kin, researchers have discovered significant differences.

For example, in Maryland the genders are distinct. Female orioles are dull, green-brown and generally don't sing. Males are brilliant orange and black and definitely do sing. In the Puerto Rican species, females look just like males, both are colorful and they sing, often in duets, with one bird beginning and his or her mate following.

So, what explains these differences? In Maryland, the birds are present only during the spring and summer

breeding season, after which they migrate to Latin America for the winter. They need to secure territories, attract mates, reproduce, rear their young and migrate south before fall arrives—meaning males must quickly grab females' attention and fend off competitors with bright colors and vibrant songs.


In Puerto Rico, where orioles breed year-round, the competition instead is for resources such as food. Both males and females engage in this competition, and both employ color and song to advertise their prowess. Gender roles on the island are more equal, with females often defending males as well as the pair's territory.

Of the 1,141 species the researchers analyzed—representing 32 songbird families living on every part of the planet, 71% have females that sing, far more than expected. It's likely that females sang in the first songbird species to evolve roughly 60 million years ago. This research has thrown out the window a long-held assumption that evolution has favored singing by males alone.

National Wildlife December / January 2016

Submitted by Luella D. Landis, MAS Vice President

Henry David Thoreau — written May 20, 1853 in his *Journal*, vol. 6.

Saw a tanager in Sleepy Hollow. It most takes the eye of any bird. You here have the red-wing reversed—the deepest scarlet of the red-wing spread over the whole body—not on the wing coverts merely while the wings are black. It flies through the green foliage as if it would ignite the leaves. 

The Flood Plain in Spring

*For winter's rains and ruins are over
And all the seasons of snows and sins...
Swinburne*

On the cusp of a freshet, chocolate waters swirl imperceptively as if stirred by an invisible spoon. Mergansers, finding no surcease in the rapidly deepening channel, take nervous flight. The maples gaze down at their submerging feet and surmise: the river is bankful...sure to rise. Stream beds carved through the flood plain like deep, brown, muddy veins swell with the tea-colored blood of the river.

The interior marshes lie like the moist palms of opened hands; the rising water spills between the fingers of upland separating them. Soon, one becomes all: bristling ash, maple and buttonbush awash in an ocean of slowly moving blackened water.

A patient experienced nanny, the flood plain reaches out moistened arms and embraces its exuberant charge, holding the rapidly embroiling freshet close to its breast in a cycle repeated for millennium, (what hydrologists have labeled "valley storage").

The floodway channel furiously churns; helplessly, debris is ejected out into the slower moving water of the plain. There the crimson-red buds of maples flash in the sunlight like the ruby rings of sylvan royalty.

Muskrats doze in the crotch of trees; a snake, inconvenienced, wriggles towards a clump of dogwood; Blue birds, unconcerned, flit amidst the understory like slate-orange notes on a musical score.

Gradual lessening of velocity. Blackened trunks of trees exposed. After the deluge, the smell of the mud and fetid pools of water. In the marsh and open plain, the inquisitive carp have miscalculated and over-stayed their welcome, lowered water-levels blocking their escape. A Bald eagle perched high in a sycamore casually preens its feathers and extends its deadly crooked feet. The Herons, high above the turmoil,



repair their stick nurseries. The muskrats return to the sedge.

The black mud dries into cinnamon-colored dust penetrated by the fuzzy unfurling heads of ostrich fern. The swollen spicebush burst into yellow flame and the sycamores exude a respiration like the aroma of freshly washed laundry hung out on the line. The sky wipes away the pallor from its face with pink and rose-hued hands. The flood plain softly stretches as if newly born and prepares for a baptism of verdure. 🌿

LC

Mattabesek Participating in Feet to the Fire

Saturday, May 7, Noon–5 p.m.; Harbor Park, Middletown

Feet to the Fire is a major undertaking of Wesleyan University to examine critical environmental issues through multiple lenses, from science to art.

Mattabesek will be participating in the Riverfront Encounter on May 7 from noon till 5 p.m. at Harbor Park beside the Connecticut River in Middletown. The festival includes exhibits, music, Plein Air painters, and lots of fun activities for kids.

Come visit our table to make a bird feeder, learn about

the birds in our area or the beavers living at the Helen Carlson Sanctuary. Admission is free and food is available for purchase at the event.

Anyone wishing to help, please call Alison Guinness at 860-873-9304 or email at wjguinness@snet.net. 🌿



Why Should We Care About Garlic Mustard?

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is an aggressive alien invader and is difficult to control once established. If left unchecked, it will quickly dominate a woodland understory; its seeds remain viable in the ground for more than 5 years. The biennial plant is *allelopathic* (it emits chemicals that prevent the growth of other (native) plants). It also inhibits mycorrhizal activity, the fungi-root associations critical for nutrient and water uptake in native plants.

CONTROL:

- It's best initially to **pull during flowering, before the plants produce seed.**
- Pull at the base of the plant—remove the entire root.
- Pulled garlic mustard material will still complete flowering and set seed—do not leave it on the ground! Bag and dispose of pulled plants as garbage (not compost!).
- Mowing garlic mustard is not an effective control because mowed plants will still flower and set seed. Especially, do not mow when seed pods are present (May–September).



Garlic mustard starts as a tiny plant that looks like a violet. But it has a long taproot, and remains green through the winter. It sets seed in its second year. (Surprisingly, it's edible.)



- Revisit pulled sites as often as possible to re-pull plants that sprout from left-behind root fragments. This is especially important later in the spring as seeds develop. 🌿

From: <http://newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org>

The deadline for items to be included in the Summer / Fall Issue is June 26, 2016. We expect subscribers to receive their copies about July 20. Please send items to Pat Rasch, 24 Elm Road, Cromwell, CT 06416, or email to <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.

Non-Profit Organization
Middletown, Connecticut 06457
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deKoven House



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