



## The Survey

“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.”

Of course, life is about competition; competition between nations; states; groups; and individuals. Likewise there is competition within pursuits and between pursuers of these pursuits.

It was a glorious “Birdathon day”, and all of the various chapters of the Birdwatching Society spread out within their prescribed territories... and beat hell out of the swamps, fields, and woodlands until every blessed, feathered denizen residing there (minding its own business) was flushed out and rigidly checked off and added to “the list.”

It was late afternoon. The clouds streamed across the vernal sky in great, benign clumps like school children with their healthy pink cheeks puffed out. Gulliby and Schlago stood on a rutted path adjacent to Dead Man’s Swamp trying to decide on a strategy.

Gulliby was demurring.

“Schlago, I’m tired. We’ve been at this game since three a.m. Don’t you think we’ve had enough?”

Gulliby was a tall, spindly man with a long narrow



face. Plunked right down the middle of his visage was a prominent nose like a shelf of granite that ended in a bristly mustache, abbreviated and square like that of a push broom. The men at work would sometimes call Gulliby “Flutesnoot” behind his back and Gulliby did not like that at all. When he was excited, Gulliby wagged his head from side to side and wriggled his arms like caterpillars traversing hot asphalt.

Schlago pondered a moment. He was a short, squat, heavily built man with dark features, a nose flattened by college wrestling matches, and a bald pate. Schlago’s deep brown eyebrows melded together at the bridge of his nose and they trembled when his emotions rose. His emotions rose.

“Gulliby!” Schlago erupted, pulling an unlit pipe from his blubbery lips. “Are we gonna let them downstate sandworms mop us up again without a fight? Like we don’t know our business, those clam-breaths. Them with their estuaries and salt-marshes and such. Palm trees growing in winter even. Sure, anybody can get 250 species with those conditions. But look at what we deal with: shrub-scrubs at the edge of highways and K-Mart shopping plazas!”

Gulliby wagged his head. “But who really cares? We’ve had a good day. Check your list.”

“Well, I must say, no thanks to you.” Schlago thrust his pipe in front of Gulliby’s face.

Gulliby began to wriggle his arms. “What do you mean, Schlago? That I’m not as fit a birder as you?”

“Precisely, if you want the truth.”

Gulliby was electrified. “Oh, yeah? Remember that

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### Earth Day: 45th Anniversary Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Volunteer. Go to a festival. Install solar panels on your roof. Organize an event in your community. Change a habit. Help launch a community garden. Communicate your priorities to your elected representatives. Do something nice for the Earth, have fun, and make a difference.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**MAS Annual Meeting** will have a vote on changes to the by-laws. Meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2015, at 7:30 p.m. in deKoven House. Revised chapter by-Laws are posted on MAS website: [www.audubon-mas.org](http://www.audubon-mas.org)

Please support Middletown’s acquisition of the Pierce property.

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# Upcoming Field Trips: Spring / Summer 2015

May 2 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

## David Titus Memorial Warbler Walk

Meet at 8:00 a.m. 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.

Saturday, May 23, 2015

## Migrants of Machimoodus State Park

Machimoodus Park has some wide open areas that allow for excellent views of spring migrants. Prairie Warblers, Blue-winged Warblers, plentiful Indigo Buntings and Orchard Orioles, and a good mix of

other species are likely. On the way back, we may check for Hooded Warblers at nearby Hurd Park. Meet at the Brownstone Intermediate School parking lot at 7:00 AM, or look for us at Machimoodus Park parking lot at about 7:30 AM. Leader: Larry Nichols cell: 860-304-5240 or email lvn600@hotmail.com

June 6 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

## Canoe Trip Selden Island

Bring canoe or kayak, lunch, and supplies for a day on the water. Wear water-shoes. (The shore bottom can be muddy.) Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Wesleyan's Lawn Avenue / High Street parking lot, Middletown. Call Larry Cyrulik for details 342-4785 or 635-1880. 🐾

## Field Trip Reports

### Eagle watch: January 17, 2015

*Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky...*

Shakespeare

It was time to get down to business; the last several days my energy had lagged and I barely felt like puffing out my blue and silver lips. Hadn't you ever experienced that momentary ennui before a stern and necessary task?

So I rose from my hardened throne of absolute zero and gave forth from my idle lungs a great and numbing exhalation...needles of frost...a sobering slap to the face of the earth, leaving a crystal imprint thereon.

In the morning when the sun arose and uselessly pried itself above the horizon, I stood and was satisfied with my work. Entire rivers shone brightly like stainless steel and were just as hard. The trees swayed and cracked like gun reports. But the earth was brown and squeezed of moisture like some tawdry sponge. It needed some embellishment. I would deal with that later.

And there were the six, huddled against my breath, picking their way up a hill called Mt. Tom. One of them even had the temerity to eschew a hat, or any semblance of protection worth mentioning. I have ways of dealing with such.

They rose their binoculars to their faces occasionally and pointed to things in the trees. Then they trudged on. It seemed to me that it was not a stroll they were taking but a determined march up to Calvary.

When they had reached the top of the hill, the six gazed at Salmon Cove somewhat subdued. If one could have reached down and scooped the gilded saucer out of its declivity one could have tossed it like a discus.

But there was a tiny string of open water emanating from the Moodus River. The group spied some waterfowl, probably geese—no great gods with hoary heads and seven-foot wingspans were noted. Too bad. Was it anything I was responsible for?

I watched as the determined troopers shuffled down slope, noting what they called “woodpeckers” along the way, and came to a gathering point with picnic tables. I chuckled coldly at the thought of “picnics.”

The group decided to abscond to a viewing spot beside the Moodus River. Did they appreciate how I gave freedom to that lone sliver of running water? I would deal with that later, too.

When the group arrived by the Moodus, the waterfowl came into clearer focus: Canada geese, Black duck, Common merganser, Hooded merganser, and Mallards. The birds appeared resigned to my handiwork and I would further test them.

A local landowner stopped by and conversed with the six. He showed them a video on his cell phone (that's what he called it) of immature eagles feeding on the duck carcasses he had throw on the ice. But no eagles appeared on this day of deep azure blue and white sky frost.

The party broke up then. But two decided to peruse the river by what they referred to as the Chester Ferry. I was a step ahead of them. I had scraped my fingernails along the banks of the river and spat sheets of ice all the way across to this Gillette Castle, on the opposite channel.

But then I had a moment of weakness. Although my heart is rigid, it is not without pity, and so, to the delight of the last two venturers, an eagle rose above their heads, materializing

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#### MAS Officers:

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

#### 2014 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](http://www.audubon-mas.org)



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50% recycled paper  
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waste) and vegetable-  
based ink

## The Survey *continued from first page*

Loon you called out flying up river? That little spec just to the left of that jet plane?”

“So?”

“So, turned out it was a Cormorant,” Gulliby retorted triumphantly.

Schlago put his pipe in his mouth and clenched down on it so hard that the bowl stood up and nearly poked his eye out. “Look, Flutesnoot, I mean Gulliby, I know a Loon when I see one. I know a Loon even when I don’t see one, understand? Now, we’re wasting time. On a good day we should get 130 species out of this Dead Man’s Swamp. And I’m thinking there’s Rails in there, too.”

“130 species?” Gulliby asked sceptically. “That’s over a couple seasons, maybe.”

“No, that’s what amateurs like you think, Gulliby.” Schlago knitted his brows impatiently. “Listen, I can hear fifteen birds right now, without turning around to look at them.” If you could hear with that proboscis of yours, Flutesnoot, you’d do just fine, Schlago thought.

“I know plenty, too,” Gulliby insisted. “I’m on the Board, remember?”

“Board?” shouted Schlago disparagingly. “Phooey!” He took his pipe out of his mouth, spit vehemently on his finger, letting the drool slip to the ground with a shake, and gave forth with an inscrutable oath: “Sacagawea!”

Gulliby wagged his head and leaned forward. “What the...?”

Schlago lost patience. “All right, this is what we’ll do. I’ll go ’round the cattails counter clockwise, while you go clockwise over by those dead maples. Poke around and flush them out my way. I’ll count mine and yours, too. And don’t just send me Starlings and Grackles.”

Gulliby frowned and twitched his push broom mustache. Resignedly he began to squish his way towards some dead

trees and a clump of Phragmites. Schlago soon disappeared along a rutted path towards the cattails.

Gulliby paused a moment. A flock of Red-wing blackbirds clung to the skeletal arms of a swamp maple like black notes on a staff. “Keer-ker-ee!”

Gulliby brooded a bit. ‘I hope a goose lands on Schlago’s saucer-head and lays an egg on it,’ he thought ruefully. The self appointed hot shot.

But just then he heard an unmistakable clicking sound. There it was again. It sounded like two pebbles knocking together: click, click...click, click, click...click, click. Gulliby held his breath. Anything moving? There, there, he thought. On the edge of that tussock sedge. He fumbled his binoculars. He grabbed at his guide book, which he kept on hand only for insurance sake, of course. Gone now, but that’s what it was. A Yellow rail.

Glowing, Gulliby started his way back to where he last saw Schlago, bursting with pride. But Schlago was no where to be seen. Hmm, thought Gulliby, he’s still trying to dig out a pigeon or two. Gulliby chuckled, thinking of his prized Yellow rail. I’ll just wait awhile.

The minutes passed. A half hour. No Schlago.

Should I holler? thought Gulliby. The devil take it, let him wallow around out there. I’m heading in.

When Gulliby got back to where they parked their cars, he noticed right away that Schlago’s vehicle was gone.

Hmm, Gulliby thought. Didn’t even have the courtesy to meet back up with me, the pug-dog.

Then he noticed a piece of paper placed under one of his windshield wipers. It read:

Gulliby,  
Had enough of this surveying!  
Fell in...Soaked...No birds.  
Schlago 🐼

L.C.

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## Field Trip Reports *Continued*

from who knows where, and pirouetted silently in the ethereal razor sharp heaven. And as quickly as it came, it disappeared.

I left them smiling, but I furrowed my silver brow. I would never again allow a lapse in my unbending task—to silence the earth with ice and snow.

6 participants; 19 species; 1 eagle.

### Let’s Go a-Ducking: March 14, 2015

Although the duck trip was canceled due to inclement weather and the realization that viewing spots were very limited because of the lingering winter, scouting ventures turned up some interesting specimens.

In Old Lyme, by the DEP Marine Headquarters, a boardwalk stretches beside the shore of the Connecticut River, goes under the RR bridge, and ends with a good view of the salt marshes above Great Island.

One could see rafts of Greater scaup, diving Red-breasted mergansers, Mallards, and Red-throated loons in the river just above the bridge. Overlooking the marsh, slices of open water among the thick sheets of ice harbored Hooded merganser and Pintails.

A quick jaunt over to Hatchett Point and a stroll along the arctic beach front towards Griswold Point turned up more loons, both Red-throated and Common, as well as Canada geese, Red-breasted mergs, Brant, and one optimistic Killdeer.

Back inland, the Connecticut River had opened up a bit. Ring-necks, Mallards, Common mergs, Hooded mergs, and Wood ducks were noted off of the shoreline in Cromwell.

When the ponds are released, finally, in late March or Early April, the viewing will be superb. 🐼

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# Mattabeseck Audubon Needs YOUR Help

**We need you.** There is always a need for new volunteer leaders in any organization, but the past couple of years have brought losses to our board that have created even greater challenges. Joanne Luppi's death and Marcy Klattenberg's retirement to the Cape have left big holes. Now George Zepko, who prepares the *Wingbeat* for mailing, is retiring.

It is very important to our organization that you receive the newsletter. The job requires **only a few hours** of your time **4 times a year** – in Jan., Apr., Sept., and Oct. Labels are printed from the National Audubon web site, brought to a board meeting, where the board applies them to the *Wingbeat*. They are counted for the postage tabulation. Then, they are taken to the Middletown Post Office for mailing, where they are turned over to the staff in charge of bulk mailing.

**We're always looking for new board members as well.**

Please contact us (# / e-mail / slow mail) and let us know if you'd like to help. 🐦



## AUDUBON MEMBERS' CORNER

*From Alberta Mirer, Board Member*

### **Help needed to protect shore-bird populations in Connecticut**

Connecticut beaches provide important nesting habitat for the threatened Piping Plover, Least Tern, and American Oystercatcher. These species arrive here from late March through early May and lay camouflaged eggs in small scrapes in the sand. Disturbance by beachgoers can have a real impact on their breeding success. Eggs and chicks may get stepped on, or adult birds may leave the young unattended. Dogs, even when leashed, will cause the birds to take even longer to return to nests. Trash attracts predators, reducing the survival of eggs and chicks.

To become a USFWS Piping Plover/ Least Tern volunteer monitor, contact the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds at [ctwaterbirds@gmail.com](mailto:ctwaterbirds@gmail.com). More information about shore bird monitoring program is available on the Audubon Alliance website at [www.ctwaterbirds.blogspot.com](http://www.ctwaterbirds.blogspot.com) 🐦

The deadline for items to be included in the Summer/Fall Issue is June 26, 2015. 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>](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.

Non-Profit Organization  
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