



“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.”



AUDUBON MEMBERS’ CORNER

from Luella D. Landis, Board Member

The Pied-Billed Grebe – Submarine Bird

There are 22 species of grebes in the world, seven of which can be found in North America. But only one, the pied-billed, breeds in Connecticut. The pied-billed is a small, stocky grebe of shallow fresh-water wetlands. It measures about 12 to 15 inches in length, with a wingspan of 18 to 24 inches. The adult plumage is an unmarked, drab gray/brown color punctuated by a white puffy cotton ball back end.

Grebes will escape danger by diving or slowly sinking under the surface like a submarine. This remarkable behavior is made possible by their unique ability to control their buoyancy. Their body feathers grow in such a way as to trap air against the body. By adjusting the feathers, grebes have the ability to trap or release air pockets, giving them the ability to lower themselves in the water quickly and inconspicuously. The birds can sometimes be seen swimming along with only their head sticking out of the water.

Nests are built over shallow water in vegetation bordering open water. The nest platform is constructed with floating vegetation anchored to nearby



Pied-billed Grebe

vegetation, such as cattail reeds. The water depth is shallow, but it must be deep enough to allow for escape from predators. With few recent breeding records, the pied-billed grebe is listed as endangered in Connecticut.

Connecticut Wildlife September /October 2014
www.ct.gov/deep/WildlifeMagazine

Who’s Calling?

Birds are calling. Bird calls are innate and don’t need to be learned. A call is a brief note or a few brief notes that convey immediate information and get an instantaneous response, such as an alarm or contact call.

Some birds, such as song birds, also have a song. Songs need to be learned and may have slight

variations, such as our dialects. A song is a vocal display in which one or more sounds are repeated. It is used for communication, establishing territory and attracting a mate.

Massachusetts Wildlife, Vol XLX No 1,2000
www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw

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Upcoming Field Trips: Summer / Fall 2015


August 15 (Saturday 8:00 a.m.)

Shore Birds Canoe Trip

Bring canoe or kayak, lunch, and supplies for a day on the water. Wear water-shoes. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Wesleyan's Lawn Avenue / High Street parking lot, Middletown. Call Larry Cyrulik for details 342-4785.

October 10 (Saturday 8:00 a.m.)

Sparrow Crawl

Join Larry Cyrulik in visiting an old field on Long Hill Road, Middletown Nature Gardens (off Randolph Road), and Guida Farm nature preserve, 5 species of sparrows may be noted, as well as other fall migrants. Meet at the parking lot at the corner of Lawn Ave. and High St. Call Larry for info 342-4785 or 635-1880. 

Field Trip Reports

Wildflower Walk, April 18, 2015

Youth's a thing will not endure...

Shakespeare

In spite of the frosts of February and the blanketing silence of snow and ice that capped the reservoir, Spring came gently to the trap rock ridges. The sun blushed like an embarrassed debutante through the imperious white pines looking down at three botanists and a ballerina-ingenuie (far removed from the times she clung to her father's arms impatiently swinging her tiny pink rubber boots!) as they maneuvered the root-gnarled footpath.

Heads craned upwards to catch a glimpse of the returning Pine warblers tripping through the shaggy boughs of the evergreens. A glance along the needle-strewn forest floor, however, made clear that the scheduling of the field trip date a trifle later than usual was still not enough to overcome Father Winter's extended visit.

A vast carpet of Dog-tooth violets crowded the dance floor, spotted green fronds touching "cheek to cheek". But none were seen flowering. The Trillium, as well, bent and nodded swollen buds, but that was all.

The four ambled on, pleased with the April ambience and absence of the usual cold wind that often blew over the still icy waters of the reservoir. The young ballerina, already able to look into her mother's eyes without lifting her head, fondled her electronics with practised teenage insouciance.

The talus slope loomed. Ah, at last the Dutchman's britches

proudly displayed their yellow and white pantaloons to everyone's delight. Someone noticed the Bloodroot coyly exposing their petals behind a scalloped fan of basal leaves. Ramps, a gourmet's delectable treasure, like lime-colored tongues burst through the decayed oak leaves covering the talus rubble.



Dutchman's Britches

Maintenance work to facilitate water runoff towards the reservoir heavily impacted the edges of the pathway. Blue cohosh, Rue anemone, Hepatica, and Trillium struggled to greet the sun through the smothering wood chips and rubble cast upon them. Clusters of Spring beauty bravely waved their long thin leaves, yet were flowerless. The determined Round leaved Hepatica, however, proudly blossomed forth purple and white petals.

The ballerina became less taciturn and distracted when she spied frogs in the littoral shallows of the reservoir. A newt was seen hovering. This aroused her genuine interest. The child returned and momentarily defeated the tyranny of puberty.

A rising trail, difficult but rewarding; at the top stretched gatherings of undefiled Hepatica and Rue anemone. A lone Dog-tooth violet exposed its yellow, bell-shaped flower.

Though there was more potential than actual in the field and the contrast between age and youth left one tinged with a glimmer of sorrowful nostalgia, the anticipation of fulfillment conquered all.

Dave Titus Memorial Warbler Walk, May 2, 2015

Who's that treading upon my back?

Lament of the railroad ties

After meeting at River Highlands State Park, three observers, cautiously looking and listening for the first waves of neotropical migrants to alight in the trees above their heads, stepped out onto the nearby railroad right of way. Oaks, black birch, and maple stood on one side of the tracks; scrub-shrub such

Continued on next page

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from Luella D. Landis, Board Member

We're Not Just for the Birds

Starting in 2015, fishing and hunting licenses and permits have been reduced by 50% for 16 and 17 year-old Connecticut residents. Also, this summer anyone can obtain a free one-day fishing license pass for Sun June 21st

and Sat Aug 15th when anyone can fish in Conn. without having to possess a fishing license. All rules and regulations remain in effect. To obtain the pass and licenses use the DEEP online licensing system, (www.ct.gov/deep/sportsmenlicensing)

Thank you, Talia!

A big THANK YOU is extended to Talia Staiger of Cromwell for her four years of creating beautiful posters to publicize many of our MAS events. These special posters were displayed at the Cromwell Belden Public Library. An excellent student, Talia graduated from Mercy High School in May, and is

planning to attend Uconn in the fall, majoring in physiology and neurobiology, with a minor in neuroscience. She enjoys running, and would like to participate on the university's track team. Best wishes to you, Talia, as you move on to a new chapter in your life!

From Alberta Mirer, Board Member

The Ruffed Grouse

The ruffed grouse is a medium-sized, fowl-like game bird best known for its courtship displays and thunderous takeoffs. This non-migratory, native Connecticut bird spends its entire life within a small area. It can be found in diverse forest habitat that contains a mixture of tree age classes and forest openings. Abandoned farmland that is in the process of reverting back to forestland provides excellent grouse habitat. However, as these young forests mature, their value to grouse decreases. Important grouse habitat will continue to decline without the help of forest management practices to create early successional habitat.

Connecticut Wildlife July/ August 2014

For information on DEEP's Ruffed Grouse Project go to www.ct.gov/deep



Ruffed Grouse

Field Trip Reports *Continued*

as honeysuckle grew on the other.

Walk a few yards...stop and listen. Walk ahead...listen, scan the trees with binoculars. In this manner avian species began to accumulate in the note book.

Besides the usual year 'round residents (chickadees, cardinals, titmice, etc.), there were migrants: chipping sparrow, phoebe, catbird, blue gray gnatcatcher. An ungainly flyer propelled its grey outline over the horizon; a great blue heron, probably winging forth from the rookery across the river in the Wangunk Meadows.

A vireo alighted on a shrub. A brief cameo, but enough of a profile to allow a check of the field guide: Philadelphia.

Listening, listening, listening. A period of silence; the

bright, welcoming May light caroming off the green leaves of the white oak trees. To think of winter frosts and a silence of a different sort!

Then the bright orange breast of an Oriole was seen. With repeated cascading calls it foraged in the crowns of trees.



Baltimore Oriole

Continued on next page

Field Trip Reports *Continued*

It was decided to continue along the rail line until the great sand plain came into view in hopes of seeing Blue wing and Yellow warblers.

Disappointed in that endeavor, the group made a slow retreat back through River Highland Park, on the gravel bluffs above the river. Black and white warblers, Yellow rumps, Warbling vireos, and Pine warblers were discovered.

Sunlight dripped through the flowering oak trees like melted butter. The spring air warmed the nostrils. In a few days, a vigorous Southern wind and summer-like temperatures would guide the majority of neotropical birds into the area, and an illusion of timelessness would reign in Nature once more.

A side trip to observe an eagle's nest on Gildersleeve Island rewarded viewers with the sight of an adult on its towering stick abode. This nest had failed last year. But the sighting gave hope for the upcoming season.

3 participants; 40 species; 3 warbler species

Canoe Trip Selden Island, June 6, 2015

A grey sunrise. Sky the color of sweating copper pipes. The drizzle gradually subsided leaving a pleasant atmosphere, heavy and silent.

The camouflaged canoe with its brown, shiny teak-stained gunnels slid comfortably into the water and converged with the lowering tide. Across the river, the ferry squatted with its motors idling, mechanical nostrils flared, preparing itself



Musk turtle found in Salmon River

for the burdens upon its back and the effort demanded of its sinews.

The canoe glided past a Coast Guard channel marker buried under the nesting material of an Osprey, who chirped loudly as this foreign object skated by. The restless river heaved against the pebbled shore. Green ash formed a lime-colored phalanx above the high water mark.

The entrance to Selden Creek creates a calming influence on the tossing waters of the open river. Tussock sedge and cattail rise up from the shallow edges of the creek. A mud flat came into view. Sword-like fronds of yellow flag rose on either side of the curving channel. A small cove bulging outward from the creek was punctuated with water chestnut glistening on the surface, spreading like an insidious cancer.

Paddles thrusting the static water aside, the canoeists rounded a bend where, behind thickets of multiflora and barberry, sinuous vines of concord grape convoluted through the black birch trees. Yellow warblers repeated their "sweet, sweet, sweet" songs and flickered like golden sparks from bough to bough.

Exploring secretive inlets and fresh water tidal pools, elliptical and alewife floaters (mussels) were found embedded in mud the consistency of toothpaste. An inordinate amount of empty shells suggest winter kill-off, where the organisms were prevented from burying themselves deep enough to escape the severity of the season's frost.

Mid-day, the canoeists hovered like a leaf in one of those numerous veins branching off of the main channel. Tussock sedge bristled all around. The flow of water rose around the canoe like liquid respiration. Rushes and pickerelweed gently waved with the incoming tide. Yellow-billed cuckoos refrained: kuc-kuc-kuc-keow-kuc! The sky emitted sunlight through the marbled clouds. An emerald sheen reflected from the foliage. Dragonflies hovered above the translucent surface of the water, and minnows schooled, exploded into disparate planes, and then reformed.

The canoeists meditated on all of this, and somehow, if only as observers, played their part on the stage of life. 🐾

LC

Wildlife Action Plan

Time is running out! The DEEP's Wildlife Action Plan will be finalized by October. It's main goal is to keep common species common. Everyone is encouraged to read the plan and provide input. 🐾

Via e-mail: deep.wildlifeactionplan@ct.gov
website: www.ct.gov/deep/wildlifeactionplan

Mark Your Calendar

This year's Salmon River Christmas Bird Count will be Sunday, December 20, 2015. Please note the late date. Because the count period begins on Dec. 15, the first Sunday is the 20th. More details will be in the next *Wingbeat*. 🐾

Help Control This Invasive: Fanwort (*Cabomba*)

Please be on the lookout for any pieces of this nasty invader. Please check your boat, nets, and other equipment after use in any fresh water-body and remove and carefully dispose of any fragments of water weeds. (See bottom of this page.) Never dump aquarium plants or water into our natural waterbodies. Fanwort spreads extensively and very quickly, choking out native vegetation and hindering use of waterways.

Fanwort currently covers a large area towards the apex of a cove on the Connecticut River in Cromwell. It has tripled its area in the past few years. It is difficult to remove by hand, because it is a fragile plant that is spread by small fragments.

Excerpted from University of Maine website: Bulletin #2522,
Fanwort, *Cabomba*

Fanwort is a highly competitive, densely growing, submerged aquatic plant. Upon introduction into a new water body it progressively colonizes near shore areas, where it crowds out native plants and may hinder recreational activities. In relatively shallow lakes and ponds, fanwort can colonize the entire water body. Dense infestations of fanwort can alter species relationships, affect fish habitat, and impede swimming and boating. Dense infestations can degrade aesthetic and scenic quality, directly influencing tourism and real estate values. Like many invasive aquatic plants, fanwort can reproduce from small fragments. In late summer fanwort stems become brittle, and plants tend to break apart, creating opportunities for spread. As with other invasive aquatic plants, fanwort is extremely difficult to remove once it becomes established.

Fanwort is a submerged aquatic plant that produces emergent flowers, and sometimes small floating leaves. It is a perennial, growing from short rhizomes with fibrous roots. Stems may grow up to thirty feet in length. Submerged leaves are one to two inches across, with petioles opposite on the stem. Leaves are finely dissected into thin, flat segments that give each leaf the appearance of an ornate fan—an attractive pattern that has made fanwort a popular aquarium plant. Floating leaves are smaller and are not dissected though they are sometimes split at the tip. Flowers are white, with three sepals and three petals, and are typically about a half-inch wide. Flowers are solitary, each on separate stems arising from the axils of the floating leaves. Fanwort may be found in ponds, lakes and quiet streams.

Fanwort is native to South America and some southern areas of North America. It is an aggressive species in northern and southern areas of the U.S. It has been widely used in the aquarium trade for a number of years, which has probably been the source of some local infestations as well as infestations in places as far away as Australia.

Prevention and Control: The best way to control this species, or any aquatic invader, is to prevent it from being



Fanwort (*Cabomba*) in Cromwell, Connecticut, 2014 (also image below)

introduced in the first place. Anyone engaged in water activities should be aware of the potential for the spread of invasive plants and take steps to prevent their introduction. Your actions can make a difference. Simple things you can do include inspecting boats, motors and trailers at the boat ramp before launching, and again after the boat has been hauled out. Prevent plant material from getting into bait buckets and live wells, and from getting tangled up in anchor ropes or fishing gear. Plants cleaned from boats and gear should be disposed of in a trash receptacle, or away from water on dry land.

Once established, invasive aquatic plants are extremely difficult to eradicate. Control has been attempted with water level manipulations, mechanical control and herbicides. In most cases, plants have survived attempts at control. Biological controls for invasive aquatics are still being researched and may help limit growth of some species in the future. 🌊

References

- Crow, G.E. and C.B. Hellquist. *Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Northeastern North America*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000.
- Gleason, H.A. and A. Cronquist. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada, Second Edition*. New York: New York Botanical Garden, 1991.
- Commonwealth of Australia and National Weeds Strategy Executive Committee. *Weeds of National Significance, Cabomba (Cabomba caroliniana), Strategic Plan, 2001*.



Thunderstorm

Morning. Grey-yellowish light, thick as custard.
Grey clouds suffusing; the sun like an orange
yolk of an egg.

A child playing by the old chicken coup.
Cap guns rattle; the smell of burning powder;
The leather holster holding the pistols at
the hips.

Suddenly a breeze uplifting the leaves
Of the mulberry tree abbreviated with
purple fruit.

Something in the distance is rolling boulders.
The yellow light fades as a black shade is drawn
Along the jagged horizon.

A door slams shut somewhere in the house.
Shush-shush-shush, the elm tree moans.

Black ants crawling on its flaky trunk
Busy themselves, unconcerned.

A sharp crescendo, like steel plates colliding,
Then heavy, leaden droplets of rain.

Run! Run! Run!

The porch, with its thick, voluminous couch,
achieved;

Safely sinking into the cushioned depths.

The elm swaying, shedding leaves

Rough and hairy; twigs and branchlets.

The black cat, Perondi, slowly

Slinks into the darkness below the porch,

Where broken lumber, pipes and spiders lie.

Flickering light as from a poorly wired lamp
dazzles the eyes.

A roar follows as if someone has tripped on a
rug and fallen.

A cold breath exhales the rain straight across
the porch

Dampening the sanctuary of the couch,

Driving the wide-eyed one inside.

Rivulets becoming cascades, becoming torrents

Tumble down the street.

Rain careens off the gutter-less roof;

Forming craters in the coal cinder lined
pathway below.

The elm sways and resists,

Its flanks perspiring volumes of moisture.

Then, a gradual thinning of the firmament,

The sky smoothing out like a sheet of tin foil.

The rain drops thinning to vapor,

The vapor arising from the black asphalt.

Jagged clouds rush by

Trying to keep pace with the receding storm.

A robin chirps from the hedge.

The fresh smell of leafy exhalations.

"Come to the window!", someone shouts.

There, in the east, a rainbow,

An arcing, colored ribbon

Fading, like the maelstrom,

Into the murky subconscious. 🌧️

LC

The deadline for items to be included in the Fall/Winter Issue is September 26, 2015. We expect subscribers to receive their copies about October 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.

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