



“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.”

Upcoming Field Trips: Winter/Spring 2023–2024

December 17, 2024

49th Annual Salmon River Christmas Bird Count

Full information is on page 2. Count Circle Feeder Watcher .pdf form (to fill-in and email or to print and send) is on page 3.

February 16-19, 2024

Great Backyard Bird Count

See page 10 for information.

March 16, 2024, (Saturday 8 a.m.)

“Let’s Go a-Ducking”

A 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 (has supplied flock of Coots in past). Then to Broad Brook Reservoir, Cheshire. Dress for the (usually) raw and chilling weather. Meet at 8:00 a.m., Cromwell Stop & Shop plaza parking lot, on the side by Mattress Firm. Call Larry Cyrulik for more information at 342-4785 or 635-1880.



Happy birders on 2021 Count.

TBD April, 2024 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

Wildflower Walk

Discover early-blooming wildflowers in the fractured basalt trails of Giuffrida Park, Meriden. A different assortment of flower species is seen each year, depending on recent temperatures and weather. Meet at 8:00 a.m., Cromwell Stop & Shop plaza parking lot, on the side by Mattress Firm. Call Larry Cyrulik for



Bloodroot

more information at 342-4785 or 635-1880.

For a preview, choose the Wildflowers link from Field Trips page on our website at www.audubon-mas.org



Wood Duck

—Elena Coffey

Inside:

49th Annual Salmon River Christmas Count info, Feeder Watch form, Teams Map

Bluebird Box Project Update & Photos

Nature photos from George Landis

Field Trip Report

Backyard Bird Count 2024

Flyer (to Post info about our Christmas Count)



—George Landis

Bobcat Program Report

On November 2, 2023, Mattabesek Audubon and the Cromwell Belden Public Library co-sponsored a program on bobcats. The program was held at the library, with 30 people attending. Paul Colburn, Master Wildlife Conservationist, was the presenter. He gave a Power Point presentation, and passed around a bobcat pelt, a replica jaw, and a replica paw. This was followed by a Q & A session.

Mr. Colburn gives programs on various natural history topics. For further information, please Google Paul Colburn MWC. Many thanks to the library, as well as to John Hall and the Jonah Center for their help in publicizing this informative and educational program.

Luella Landis, MAS Vice President



The 49th Annual MAS Salmon River Christmas Bird Count Sunday, December 17, 2023

The Mattabesek Audubon Society will hold its 49th Annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 17th. The count circle you see here is a 15-mile diameter with the Salmon River Covered Bridge in Colchester as its epicenter. Our count is part of The National Audubon Society's Annual Christmas Bird Count which started in 1900, with 25 teams and 27 participants, in North America and has grown to 2600 teams, over 80,000 observers, and involves 28 countries! The NAS Christmas Count takes place every year from December 14 through January 5. The data obtained helps researchers to identify the overall health and condition of bird populations and informs strategies to protect birds and their habitats for generations to come.

Anyone can participate on count day. We have 11 captains who cover their part of the count circle. Some teams have several members, and some teams only have 1 person! As you imagine, this puts our count's longevity in jeopardy. It also underestimates the true number of

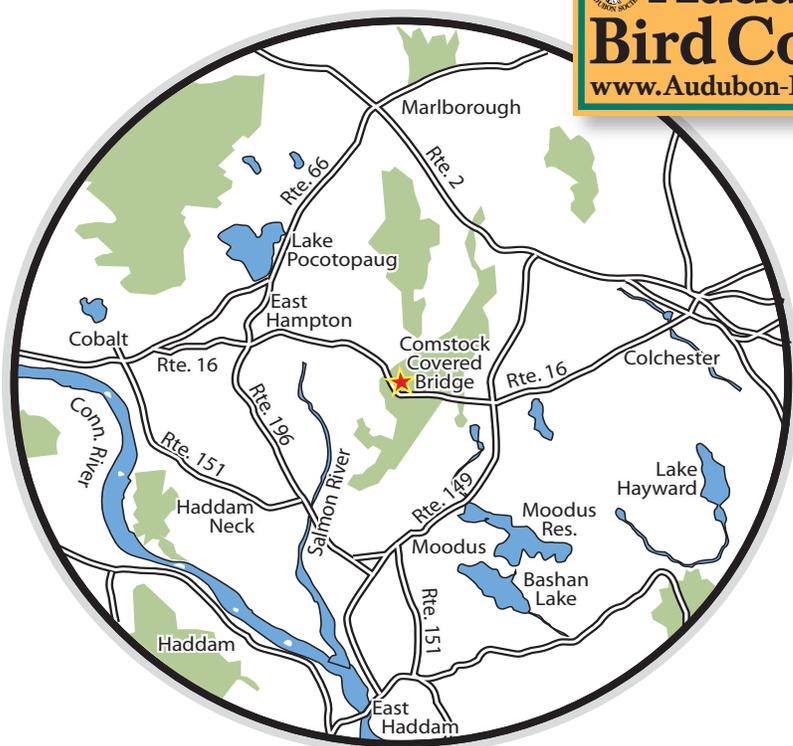
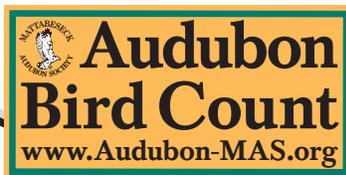
birds that are present. The pandemic seems to have lit a fire under some folks and there appears to be more interest in birdwatching, and nature in general. We hope something will spark you to join us this year!

If braving the weather doesn't interest you, we also need volunteers to watch their bird feeders on the day of the count. If your home lies within our 15-mile diameter count circle, please send us your species and bird count so your backyard birds are counted in our final tally numbers.

I encourage anyone with a social media account to spread the word about the Christmas Bird Count. You can head to National Audubon Society's page to read about the fascinating history of this annual event and see great pictures from around the country, and world.

Doreen Jezek, co-compiler, and I are open to any suggestions you have that will help us keep this most important, and longest running, citizen science project alive and well in the years to come.

Feel free to reach out any time:
rsdell@comcast.com or dajezek@gmail.com
Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Dellinger, co-compiler Salmon River



Mattabesek Audubon Society Count Circle

State Parks/Forests Scale of Miles 0 1 2

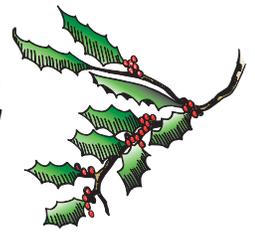
After a long Count day, we will meet at Farrell's Restaurant in Portland, starting at 4:30 p.m., for dinner and to report some count results and any unusual sightings from the day. 🌿

- Please keep bird lists in *taxonomical* order.
- Bird species lists for printing (.pdf, .xls – Excel) are available at the bottom of the Christmas Count page on www.audubon-mas.org/pages/christmasct
- Please provide details for any rare, strange, or unusual bird—a photo is always good. (Link to rare bird form is also on website Count page.)
- Feeder count list is on the facing page of *Wingbeat* (and also linked from the website Count page.)

Note: printable/postable flyer about our Christmas Count is on last page of this issue.

SALMON RIVER COUNT CIRCLE FEEDER WATCHER FORM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2023



Thank you for agreeing to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count. As a member of the Count Circle feeder watcher team, you will be making an important contribution to the overall census. On count day, you should try to identify all birds that visit your yard (including flyovers) and report them to us. Please be sure to have accurately identified the birds that you report. If you are not sure, supplying us with as many descriptions of the bird as you are able would be helpful (such as size as compared to common birds, colors, behavior).

Report the maximum number of individual birds of each species seen at any one time during the day. For example, if you see five juncos at 8:00 AM, ten at noon and then three more at 3:00 PM, report ten juncos as your total.

The species list below is designed to assist you in reporting the birds that you see. You may send this completed form to us at **930 Middletown Road, Colchester, CT 06415**, or email to rsdell@comcast.net

Thank you again for your participation and Happy Holidays!

SPECIES AND TOTALS

<p>_____ Canada Goose</p> <p>_____ Mallard</p> <p>_____ Red-tailed Hawk</p> <p>_____ Sharp-shinned Hawk</p> <p>_____ Cooper's Hawk</p> <p>_____ Wild Turkey</p> <p>_____ Rock Dove</p> <p>_____ Mourning Dove</p> <p>_____ Red-bellied Woodpecker</p> <p>_____ Downy Woodpecker</p> <p>_____ Hairy Woodpecker</p> <p>_____ Northern Flicker</p> <p>_____ Blue Jay</p> <p>_____ American Crow</p> <p>_____ Black-capped Chickadee</p> <p>_____ Tufted Titmouse</p> <p>_____ Red-breasted Nuthatch</p> <p>_____ White-breasted Nuthatch</p> <p>_____ Carolina Wren</p>	<p>_____ European Starling</p> <p>_____ Northern Mockingbird</p> <p>_____ Northern Cardinal</p> <p>_____ American Tree Sparrow</p> <p>_____ Fox Sparrow</p> <p>_____ Song Sparrow</p> <p>_____ White-throated Sparrow</p> <p>_____ Dark-eyed Junco</p> <p>_____ Red-winged Blackbird</p> <p>_____ Common Grackle</p> <p>_____ House Finch</p> <p>_____ Purple Finch</p> <p>_____ Pine Siskin</p> <p>_____ American Goldfinch</p> <p>_____ House Sparrow</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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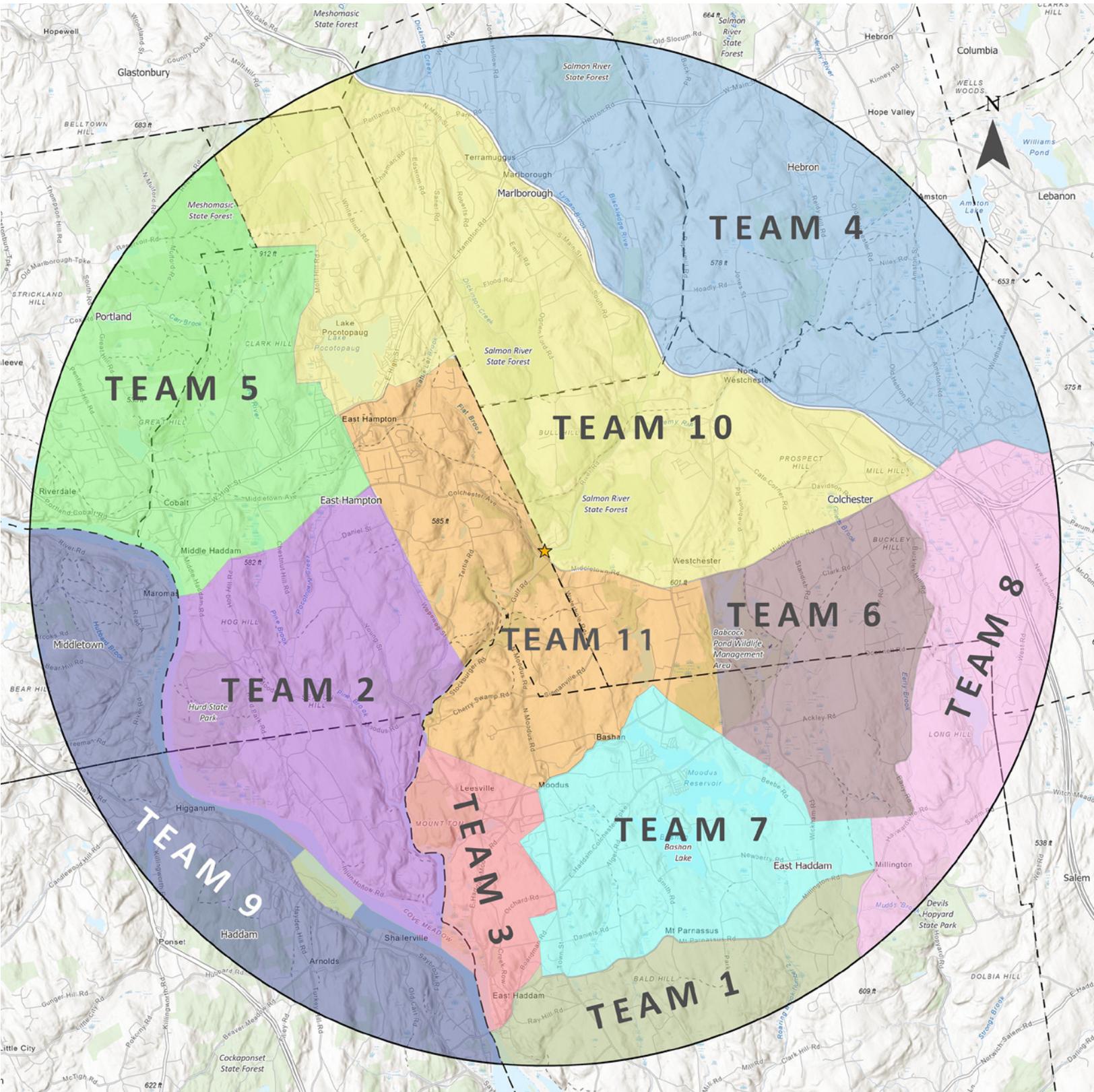
Participant(s) _____

Time spent watching your feeders _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Teams Map – Salmon River Christmas Bird Count



Team Areas

- | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|
| Team 1 | Team 5 | Team 9 |
| Team 2 | Team 6 | Team 10 |
| Team 3 | Team 7 | Team 11 |
| Team 4 | Team 8 | |

- Town Boundaries
- CT DEEP Property
- CBC Area (15-mile Diameter Circle)
- Comstock Bridge

Bluebird Nesting Box Project

In the fall of 2022, Mattabesec Audubon Society (MAS) received a donation of Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes from the Middlesex Land Trust. The Board decided to erect these boxes in time for nesting in the spring of 2024, marking our chapter's 50th anniversary year. I was put in contact with Beth Lander Morris, a Brownie Troop Leader in Marlborough, who thought this would be a great project for her 2nd grade girls. On November 5th I met with Brownie Troop #61097 at the Marlborough Congregational Church to talk with them about our Eastern Bluebird nesting box project. I showed them 2 short You Tube videos about Eastern Bluebirds that explained why a nesting box is so important to this species, and a second video that showed an inside look at activity within the nesting box, from nest building to fledging. Honestly, I wasn't quite sure that I held their attention, and I was a little worried my message didn't come through as loud, and clear, as I wanted. Each of the girls were given a box to decorate with Sharpie Paint Pens. Once the painting was done, we traveled to a field at their school and erected 2 of the boxes on their school property. After seeing what many of the girls wrote on the boxes, I realized my message WAS heard: "you will be safe here", "welcome birds", "I love birds", were some of the sayings written on the boxes.

The MAS Board has had many discussions about how we can ensure the mission of National Audubon Society, "to protect nature for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and people—through education, science, stewardship, and advocacy." Working with younger humans is certainly one way to support this mission! Be sure to keep your eyes out as you drive about in your towns. The remainder of the boxes will be put up at various properties within our chapter before a hard freeze takes hold.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the efforts of so



many for this project. My husband, Roy, who knew when I took this project on that he would be taking this project on, too. Ken Godwin, the Bluebird enthusiast from Florida, who decided to build the houses when he visited CT and saw discarded fencing by the roadside that he just couldn't let go to waste. Chantal Foster, from Middlesex Land Trust, who kindly offered and delivered these boxes to us. Elena Coffey and Annyta Vizard who helped me put a fresh coat of paint on the boxes to spruce them up a bit. Debbie Evans who worked with East Haddam schools to coordinate replacing the older nesting boxes on their school properties. And last, but not least, Brownie Troop 61097, who rose to the occasion to give local Eastern Bluebirds a new and safe home. It takes a village! 🌿

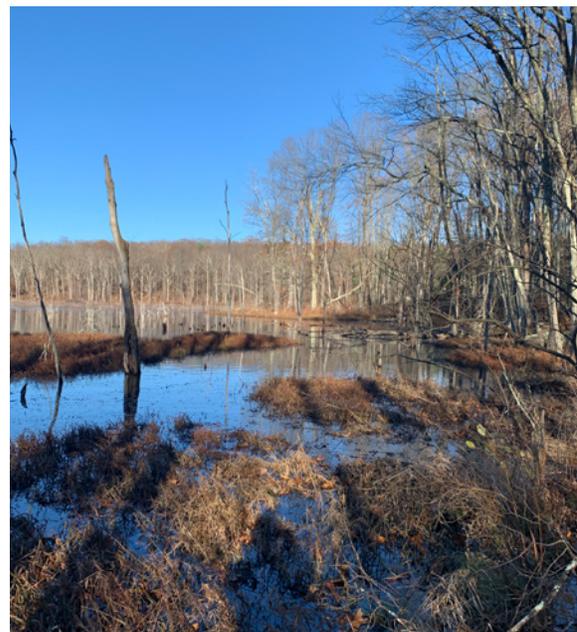
Sharon Dellinger, Secretary MAS

(More photos next page)





MAS members put up 4 boxes at Nathan Hale Middle School with Debbie Evans. Members also put up a box at the Helen Carlson Sanctuary, and boxes at East Haddam Historical Society (in back near the solar panel), at Ballek's Nursery, and at Sacred Heart on the Lake.



Many thanks to George Landis for sending us these images



Cardinal in the Rose Hips



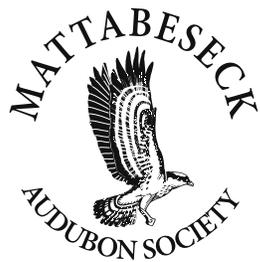
Golden-crowned Kinglet



Lesser Yellow Legs

MAS Officers:	2023 Committee Chairs:
President: Alison Guinness	Conservation: Larry Cyrulik
Vice-President: Luella Landis	Publicity: Alison Guinness
Recording Sec.: Sharon Dellinger	Sanctuary: Rodrigo Pinto
Treasurer: Elaine Payne	
Wingbeat: Pat Rasch <pat_rasch@mac.com>	
Rare Bird Alert: 203-254-3665	
On the web: www.audubon-mas.org	

The deadline for items to be included in the Spring issue is January 26, 2023. *Issues are now delivered via an emailed link only.* To receive a link to upcoming issues, please send your email address to <pat_rasch@comcast.net>, with **WINGBEAT** as the message title. Issues may also be downloaded from our website home page. Please send any items to be included in upcoming issues to Pat Rasch, 24 Elm Road, Cromwell, CT 06416, or email to <pat_rasch@comcast.net> The Board of Directors meets 7:00 p.m. on third Wednesday of each month at deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown.



deKoven House
 27 Washington Street
 Middletown, Connecticut 06457
www.audubon-mas.org
 Non-Profit Organization

Field Trip Report

Sparrow Crawl, October 7, 2023

He opened the journal and tried to recollect. The weather forecasters predicted rain that weekend. But in the journal it was written: early morning; temperate 65 degrees Fahrenheit; cloudy, slight mist; no rain.

There were just the two standing in the stone dust parking lot beside the soccer field where beans and peppers once grew and gazing downward into a declivity overgrown with multiflora rose, Russian olive, cottonwood and red maple trees, assorted tall grasses, little bluestem and various pioneer species of shrub-scrub.

They began “pish-pishing” trying to rouse any avians up from their hideaways and autumnal somnolence. A palm warbler accommodated the birders, beating its tail like a metronome and flashing its yellow underside like a semaphore. A song sparrow arose, immediately diving back into the understory. A ruby-crowned kinglet was more cooperative exposing itself unabashedly.

They walked along the edge of a thick wooden fence and came up to a towering mugwort-covered gravel mound “pish-pishing” and listening. A Carolina wren sounded a treble-note. Commonly, blue jays, crows, cardinals and catbirds were observed. They had come to find sparrows and when they turned the corner of the mugwort mound they found them: song, white throat and Savannah. The birds scattered hither and thither, enlivening the dried goldenrod, leaving the perennials throbbing as they jettisoned themselves from one stem to another.

Standing on another elevated gravel perch and looking over a mini forest of shrub-scrub was rewarded with a fleeting glance at a female yellow throat warbler.

Circling back to the parking lot, recalling how just moments before quietude and the pursuit of feathered spirits reigned, suddenly, as if conjured up from below the earth, a phalanx of automobiles arrived and spilled out shouting children and excited parents mobilized with sports equipment, folding chairs, coolers, etc. animating the soccer field. Wistfully, as he now appraised the journal and reflected, he had wished them wiser and more thoughtful, their enthusiasm redirected towards those secretive, vulnerable birds flocking amongst the goldenrod.

The journal pointed to the next stop: the Nature Garden. The mists became more clinging and the ink on the journal’s pages became more fluid, trailing streaks like teardrops. Following a cinder-covered path and listening carefully a debate ensued and judgement final: it was a red shouldered hawk, not a bluejay imitator.

From a red maple copse adjacent to the path came the abrupt chirps of a white breasted nuthatch, the pin-pong



Nature Gardens path, borders now infested with Mile-a-Minute.

call of a downy woodpecker and the whinny of a red shafted flicker.

In the interior portion of the Nature garden were white flowered dogwoods laden with red, fat-rich berries and eastern red cedars also bearing copious hard, round pellets and they attracted American robins by the dozen.

The pages of the journal now began to crinkle as raindrops developed out of the mists that became so fulsome that they could no longer hold their ethereal bodies together.

The lugubrious path followed entanglements of invasive mile-a-minute vines, a convolution of assassins. The native vegetative population would moan pitifully if it could.

On to the last destination.

The rain splattered the automobile as it rolled slowly over the gravel drive leading into the Durham meadows. Sitting on a pole as regal as any bird of prey symbolized on the walls of an Egyptian pharaoh’s tomb was an American kestrel. They were given a fleeting glance and then a vacuum ensued, as the kestrel hurriedly disappeared across the fields.

Fortuitously, the sky seemed to have vented itself as the two alighted from the car. The print on the journal page regained its clarity; it denoted that the rain had stopped though the air was still thick with humidity.

Around the backside of a rustling hedgerow a path was mown and following it was rewarded by the sight of a flurry of sparrow activity. Maddeningly, they perched atop the swards of goldenrod and joe-pye weed and then dove into the adjacent brush and silky dogwood.

Crawling almost on hands and knees to chase down a flicker of movement beside a watery depression revealed the presence of a swamp sparrow.

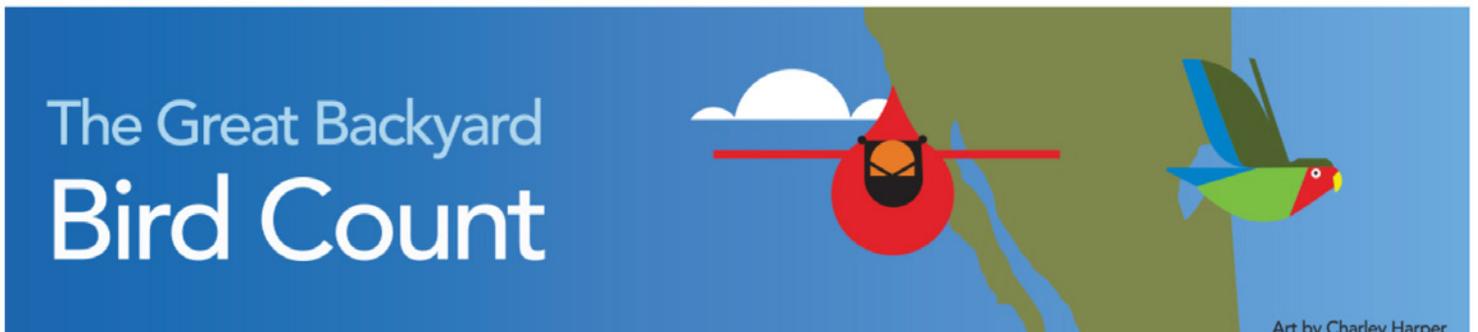
Returning to the open path, walking just a little farther, little farther still. Then, as brief as a ray of light through rapidly closing cloud cover came the sight of an immature white-crowned sparrow; it was written in large letters there on the journal's page.

Telling of a burst into flight of a flock of red wing black-birds it seemed the journal finally unburdened itself of all its secrets.



The old "Bee Tree" — not much left.

There were 25 species tallied with five of them sparrows and two satisfied and not really damp participants. 🌿



February 16-19, 2024

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19, 2024, when the world comes together for the love of birds.

You can go to www.birdcount.org to watch observations roll in from around the world. Each submitted checklist becomes a glowing light on a bird sightings world map on the website. You tap or click the map image to see Merlin and eBird submissions during the Great Backyard Bird Count on Saturday, February 19, 2024. Yellow dots indicate a checklist submission, which revert to a white dot in the background.

The Great Backyard Bird Count uses eBird, one of the world's largest nature databases. eBird stores more than 100 million bird sightings contributed each year and is used by professionals for science and conservation.

New to the Great Backyard Bird Count or to using eBird? Explore the How to Participate on options for entering your bird lists.

If you already use eBird or Merlin keep doing what you are doing! All entries over the 4-days count towards GBBC.

How to Participate

Step 1: Decide where you will watch birds.

Step 2: Watch birds for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days, February 17-20, 2023.

Step 3: Count all the birds you see or hear within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings:

- If you are a beginning bird admirer and new to the count, try using the Merlin Bird ID app.
- If you have participated in the count previously, try eBird Mobile app or enter your bird list on the eBird website (desktop/laptop).
- If you are participating as a group, see instructions on website for Group Counting. 🌿

Bird Lovers —



The Mattabesek Audubon Society invites you to participate on **Sunday, December 17th** in our **49th Annual Salmon River Christmas Bird Count**

Our Count is part of National Audubon Society's Annual Christmas Bird Count, which started in 1900 with 25 teams and 27 participants in North America and has grown to 2600 teams, over 80,000 observers, and involves 28 countries! The NAS Christmas Count takes place every year from Dec. 14 through Jan. 5. The data obtained helps researchers to identify the overall health and condition of bird populations and informs strategies to protect birds and their habitats for generations to come.

Join a team — several teams are short on birders. Or, if you live within the circle (15-mile diam. centered on Comstock Bridge), become one of our feeder watchers.

You don't need to be an expert birder, although we'd be very delighted to recruit some. Feel free to reach out any time: Sharon Dellinger: rsdell@comcast.net or Doreen Jezek: dajezek@gmail.com



www.audubon-mas.org

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|------------|------------------------------------|
| Team Areas | Town Boundaries |
| Team 1 | CT DEEP Property |
| Team 2 | CBC Area (15-mile Diameter Circle) |
| Team 3 | Comstock Bridge |
| Team 4 | |
| Team 5 | |
| Team 6 | |
| Team 7 | |
| Team 8 | |
| Team 9 | |
| Team 10 | |
| Team 11 | |

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

Created: December, 2021
Author: Riley Doherty, Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed

