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Connecticut Wildlife

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BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES • WILDLIFE DIVISION



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From the Director

With more than 90% of the state's land in private ownership, one cannot overstate the importance of the private landowner in maintaining Connecticut's biodiversity. While the DEP's ambitious land acquisition program is helping to protect some important habitats throughout the state, the agency will never have the financial resources to purchase all, or even a significant portion, of the land necessary to maintain viable populations of Connecticut's native plants and animals. Therefore, it is imperative that we maintain and reward private landowners who are good stewards of our natural resources as part of a long term conservation biology strategy.

The greatest threats to Connecticut's wildlife are habitat destruction and fragmentation resulting from high land prices and intense development pressure. Conservation organizations, land trusts, sportsmen's clubs, corporations and individuals are holding hundreds of thousands of acres of land in an undeveloped state. However, a relatively small percentage of this land is permanently preserved open space. The most significant thing that we as an agency can do to promote the protection and management of these lands is to: (1) provide stewardship incentive programs and (2) deliver the technical assistance to implement those programs. While current resources severely limit our ability to coordinate private lands management, Congress is considering language to reauthorize the "Farm Bill" with provisions that could address these critical needs.

The original Farm Bill was developed in the 1930s in response to the Depression and Dust Bowl. Since then, the Bill (which is actually an accumulation of many diverse acts) has been reauthorized continuously in multi-year segments. Increasingly since the 1980s, the reauthorizations have emphasized conservation initiatives. While the vast bulk of funding continues to be tailored to the expansive, commodity-based agricultural systems of the Midwest, the 1996-2001 Farm Bill included several programs that benefited forest and wildlife habitats. This is particularly significant in the heavily forested Northeast, because farming methods and wildlife habitat needs in our region differ from those in other parts of the country. Attempts are being made to modify the Farm Bill during its 2002 reauthorization to substantially increase funding levels of several successful conservation programs providing incentives to landowners interested in retaining their land and improving it for wildlife.

The Farm Bill is an extremely diverse and complex piece of federal legislation. Conservationists should watch the development of the reauthorized bill closely because it has the potential to offer tremendous opportunities to enhance the management of our natural resources by increasing funding for programs such as WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program), Forest Legacy and Farmland Protection, Forest Stewardship and Stewardship Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program and several others, along with the technical assistance to coordinate and administer them.

--Dale W. May

Cover:

The sharp-shinned hawk (nesting population only) is listed as an endangered species in Connecticut. To learn more about threatened and endangered species, see the Just for Kids feature on page 19.

Photo courtesy of Paul J. Fusco

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The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program was initiated by sportsmen and conservationists to provide states with funding for wildlife management and research programs, habitat acquisition, wildlife management area development and hunter education programs. Each issue of Connecticut Wildlife contains articles reporting on Wildlife Division projects funded entirely or in part with federal aid monies.



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Counting Colonial Waterbirds Along CT's Coastline

Written by Julie Victoria, Nonharvested Wildlife Program Biologist

Every three years since 1977, offshore islands and rocks along the Connecticut coast, from Greenwich to Stonington, have been surveyed by biologists and volunteers for the presence of nesting colonial waterbirds. Birds like herring gulls, great black-backed gulls, snowy egrets, great egrets, double-crested cormorants, black-crowned night-herons, yellow-crowned night-herons, little blue herons, green-backed herons, glossy ibis and common terns are the focus of the survey. However, numbers of other shorebird species are included as well.

The objectives of the Colonial Waterbird Survey are to document changes in the numbers of species and total nesting pairs and to try to determine what factors may be causing a species to decline in a certain area. Because waterbirds form dense colonies during the nesting season in just a few areas along the coastline, the whole colony is more vulnerable to being affected by a single disturbance. If a colony is disturbed, the birds may move from one site to another. The accurate assessment of these important waterbird populations is necessary because of the effect that increasing pressures of recreational uses and development have on these species.

Biologists from the DEP Wildlife Division, along with members of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Connecticut Audubon Society and various volunteers, completed the seventh Colonial Waterbird Survey this past June. During the survey, 78 sites were checked and 18 species of waterbirds were censused at nesting colonies located primarily on barrier beaches and coastal marshes and islands. The large size of many waterbird colonies makes it difficult to accurately count all breeding pairs, so typically, population numbers are estimated. Field censuses were conducted on foot or by boat.

The number of breeding pairs of double-crested cormorants has shown a steady increase since this species was first detected breeding in Connecticut in 1982. The number of common terns has been increasing since the survey was first conducted in

1977, while the herring gull population has been decreasing over the years. The number of pairs of great egrets, glossy ibis, snowy egrets and black-crowned night-herons was less than the number documented during the last survey in 1998. Trends such as these will be used to evaluate the long-term health of waterbird populations in Long Island Sound.

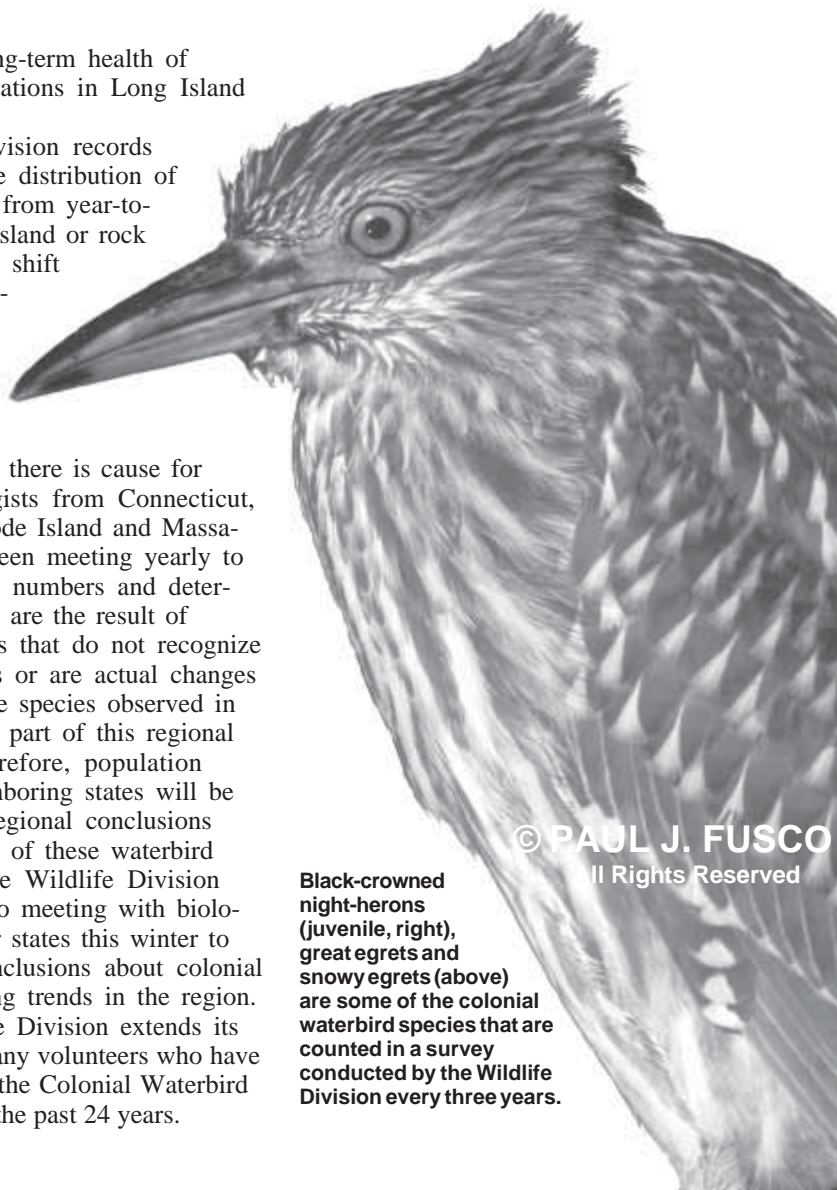
Wildlife Division records indicate that the distribution of the birds shifts from year-to-year from one island or rock to another. This shift may occur naturally, but if a decline in several species occurs over a period of years, there is cause for concern. Biologists from Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have been meeting yearly to compare survey numbers and determine if changes are the result of shifting colonies that do not recognize state boundaries or are actual changes in numbers. The species observed in Connecticut are part of this regional population; therefore, population trends for neighboring states will be used to draw regional conclusions about the status of these waterbird populations. The Wildlife Division looks forward to meeting with biologists from other states this winter to make some conclusions about colonial waterbird nesting trends in the region.

The Wildlife Division extends its thanks to the many volunteers who have helped conduct the Colonial Waterbird Surveys during the past 24 years.



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P.J.FUSCO(2)



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Black-crowned night-herons (juvenile, right), great egrets and snowy egrets (above) are some of the colonial waterbird species that are counted in a survey conducted by the Wildlife Division every three years.

Waterfowl Hunter Water Survival Tips

Why do some waterfowl hunters lose their lives by drowning? Drownings occur because the victim made the wrong decision, did not realize the dangers of boating in rough, cold water, was not properly prepared, had the wrong equipment or failed to wear a life-jacket, also known as a personal floatation device (PFD).

Small boats are extremely unstable. Often the victim of a small boat accident didn't realize just how unstable his craft was. Add to this, cold, rough water, and the chances for survival for the sportsman fallen overboard are very slim. Cold water kills--even those in excellent condition who know how to swim.

Four main causes of water deaths are:

- Hypothermia - the rapid loss of body heat in cold water.
- "Dry" drowning - constriction of the throat, and the resulting suffocation, due to a sudden inrush of cold water.
- "Wet" drowning - the displacement of air in the lungs by water.
- Massive heart attacks in older, out-of-shape, nonswimmers in cold water.

Most boating fatalities are the result of capsizing or falls overboard and they usually occur in small, open boats on small inland bodies of water. A little knowledge, a good lookout, common sense and courtesy could prevent many accidents. Approximately 90 percent of

the fatalities are the result of drowning. The vast majority of those who die in boating accidents were not wearing a PFD. Most accidents, capsizings, falls overboard and collisions are a sudden, unexpected occurrence. Victims have little, if any, warning ahead of time to prepare for it. A PFD could save a person's life, but it will be of little use if it is not worn.

Capsizing

In a small boat, the weight of the passengers is greater than the weight of the boat. Therefore, the movements of passengers have great effects on the stability of the boat. Do not exceed the capacity of the boat. Load the boat evenly fore and aft and side to side, and keep the weight low. An overloaded or overpowered boat is less stable and more likely to capsize. Should the boat capsize, grab a PFD if you're not wearing one. Do not try to swim to shore; instead, stay with the boat until help arrives. The shore is usually farther away than it looks and most boats have floatation. It is easier to spot an overturned boat in the water than a swimmer. Only leave the safety of the boat as a last resort and after carefully assessing the situation.

Falls Overboard

Do not stand up in a small boat. This is dangerous, making a fall overboard

more likely. If you need to change position in the boat, hold on to both sides and keep your weight low.

In the event of a person falling overboard, follow these procedures:

- Steer the engine away from the person overboard. Toss the person a lifesaving device, even if he or she can swim. Use whatever device is nearest. Time is essential.
- If underway, slow the boat, keeping the person in view. Other persons aboard should act as lookouts and point at the person in the water. In darkness, direct the best possible light source on the victim.
- Try to approach the person from downwind or into waves. Always use common sense and good judgment. Consider existing conditions, such as water temperature, physical condition and ability of the victim. Also, assess what other help is available.
- In the event the victim is injured and someone aboard is capable, a rescuer may put on a PFD with a safety line attached and enter the water to assist the person needing help.
- Assist the person in boarding the boat. It is difficult to climb into a boat from the water. If a person is hurt or cold, he may require help.
- Depending on the size and construction of the boat, the person should normally be brought in over the stern.
- Always stop the motor when alongside someone in the water.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a condition in which the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. This causes a dangerous reduction of the body's inner temperature. Hypothermia results from exposure to wind and wetness. A victim of hypothermia will start to shiver violently. This may give way to muscle spasms and even loss of the use of arms and legs. Confusion and "drunken" behavior also indicate that a person may be hypothermic.

To protect yourself from hypothermia, avoid the conditions that cause it. Dress warmly and stay dry. Wear a hat. Put on rain gear before it rains and wear a wool jacket. Wool traps body heat even when wet. Know the effects which



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Waterfowl hunters need to take special precautions to avoid water and boating accidents while hunting.

wind has on cold weather. It may be 40 degrees F outside with the sun shining, but a 10 mph wind lowers the windchill temperature to 28 degrees F.

How long can one survive in cold water? Survival in cold water depends on many factors. The temperature of the water is only one. Others include body size, fat and activity in the water, to name a few. When a person falls into cold water, there are ways to increase the chances of survival. Don't discard clothing as it helps to trap the body's heat and do not move around unnecessarily. By swimming or treading water, a person will cool about 35 percent faster than when remaining still. An "average"

person, wearing light clothing and a PFD, may survive two-and-a-half to three hours in 50 degrees F water by remaining still. This survival time can be increased considerably by getting as far out of the water as possible and covering the head. Getting into or onto the boat or anything else that floats can be a real lifesaver.

Boating Education

People who operate boats that are required to be registered, documented or numbered must obtain a Safe Boating Certificate. In order to meet the requirements for a certificate, an individual must have successfully completed an

approved basic boating course or received a passing grade on an equivalency examination administered by the DEP. To find out what boating education courses are available near you, call the DEP Boating Division at (860) 434-8638 or log on to the DEP's website at <http://dep.state.ct.us>. You may also contact the Boating Division or access the DEP's website to get a copy of the current Connecticut Boater's Guide. The guide is a handbook of boating laws and regulations, registration information and guidelines for safe operation.

This article was compiled from information published in the Connecticut Boater's Guide.

Nesting Season Good for Piping Plovers, Poor for Least Terns

Written by Julie Victoria, Nonharvested Wildlife Program Biologist

The 2001 nesting season was a good one for the state and federally threatened piping plover. However, the state threatened least tern population did not fare as well as there was a marked decrease in productivity.

Piping plovers and least terns nest together on sandy beaches along the Connecticut coastline, but only a limited number of sites are available due to current shoreline development and recreational use. Every nesting season, the DEP Wildlife Division places fencing at plover and tern nesting areas to help protect the birds from predation and human-caused disturbance that decrease productivity. Piping plover nests are individually fenced, while entire nesting areas of least terns are roped off and posted with informational signs. Shorebird nesting success is greatly affected by predators, such as raccoons, gulls and domestic cats, that are attracted to beach areas by litter. Human disturbances also keep the birds off their nests, preventing them from attending young.

More Pairs of Piping Plovers

Thirty-two pairs of piping plovers nested along the Connecticut coastline during the 2001 nesting season, 10 pairs more than last year. The number of young that fledged (reached flying stage) remained the same as 2000 at 41. The consistent number of piping plover chicks fledged since 1986 is very encouraging and reflects the success of

aggressive management by the Wildlife Division.

Each spring, attempts are made to locate and erect protective fencing around all piping plover nests. Thanks are extended to the two research assistants that worked on the project this field season: Robin Lemieux and Scott Johnson. Their positions were funded through federal aid from Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and the Connecticut Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-Off Fund.

Fewer Pairs of Least Terns

The number of least tern pairs nesting in Connecticut has declined steadily and dramatically over the last few years. In 1998, 447 pairs nested in the state. That number dropped to 335 pairs in 1999, 239 pairs in 2001, down to approximately 175 pairs in 2001. Although the number of young terns (26) that fledged (reached flying stage) remained the same as in 2000, that number is very poor. The productivity level is well below the 0.5 fledglings per pair needed to maintain a stable population in Connecticut. Due to the flight patterns of least terns, individual nest

fencing is not an effective technique for protecting least tern nests. Consequently, beach walkers, anglers and dogs often disturb the nesting birds.

Volunteers Needed

The Wildlife Division appreciates the cooperation of beach visitors who respected the fenced and posted areas during the summer nesting season. Volunteers are being sought to assist next summer with public education efforts at several shorebird nesting beaches in West Haven, Stratford and Milford. For more information, contact Julie Victoria, at Franklin Wildlife Management Area, 391 Route 32, North Franklin, CT 06254, (860) 642-7239.



A male piping plover initiates a threatening posture directed at a second male in a dispute over territory.

P. J. FUSCO

A Community's Opinion About Deer Hunting

Written by Howard Kilpatrick, Deer/Turkey Program Biologist

A special hunt was implemented in the Mumford Cove community last year (2000) to reduce the local deer population. The decision was made by the community after experimenting with immunocontraception (birth control) as a deer management tool. An intensive and highly coordinated firearms-archery deer hunt conducted in the community in the fall of 2000 reduced the local deer herd by 92 percent in only six days of hunting.

To assess the community's perception about the hunt and to measure how effective the hunt was at address-

ing community concerns about deer hunting and the size of the deer population, the DEP Wildlife Division surveyed residents before and after the deer hunt. Mail questionnaires were sent to all residents in the community in 1999 and 2001. Residents who did not respond to the first mailing were sent a follow-up letter and then contacted by phone. Ninety percent of residents returned surveys in 1999 and 97 percent returned surveys in 2001.

Of those that returned the survey, 98 percent believed the hunt successfully reduced the deer population.

Before the hunt (1999), 93 percent of residents experienced deer damage to landscape plantings and 18 residents were diagnosed by a physician with Lyme disease. After the hunt, only 61 percent of the residents experienced some deer damage and most of these considered the damage to be less than before the hunt. As of August 2001, only three residents in the community were diagnosed by a physician with Lyme disease.

Before the hunt, 33 percent of residents indicated that they did not support hunting in their community as a deer management tool. After the hunt, almost half of those residents who initially did not support hunting in their community now do support hunting as a deer management tool. Residents changed their opinion and viewed hunting more positively because they experienced a safe and effective hunt, which resulted in an immediate and significant reduction in the deer population. This experience indicates that hunt programs can be designed to swiftly and effectively reduce deer populations in residential areas while accommodating needs and concerns of residents.

P.J.RUSCO



Under the cover of darkness, a group of deer heads into a backyard in a Mumford Cove community.

Peregrine Born in CT in the News Again

In the September/October 2000 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*, there was a story about a female peregrine falcon, which had been born in Connecticut in 1997, that ended up being rescued from inside a steam plant in Maine. After being successfully rehabilitated and returned to the wild near Mount Kineo in Maine last summer, this particular falcon has been spotted again. This past

summer she went to New Hampshire, found a mate and nested on a cliff ledge on Rattlesnake Mountain in Rumney. She and her mate produced four young; two fledged and two were found dead near the nest. New Hampshire biologists have collected the two dead chicks, which will be tested to determine the cause of death.

It is encouraging to know that the peregrine survived her ordeal in Maine and was able to successfully reproduce this year. The Division hopes she continues to be productive and provide new peregrines to the New England population. Stay tuned, she may be in the news again.

Shepaug Bald Eagle Observation Area Open for 17th Season

Written by Julie Victoria, Nonharvested Wildlife Program Biologist



Make reservations to view wintering bald eagles.

Call 1-800-368-8954, starting December 4, 2001.

Reservations may be made from Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Winter is the best time to view the spectacular bald eagle in Connecticut. Make reservations to see wintering eagles at the Shepaug Bald Eagle Observation Area.

Bald eagle viewing season is upon us and one of the best places in Connecticut to go see wintering eagles is the Shepaug Bald Eagle Observation Area, in Southbury.

The Shepaug Observation Area will be open to the public for its 17th consecutive winter season starting Wednesday, December 26, 2001, as announced by Northeast Generation Services, the project operators. The observation area will be open three days a week--**by advance reservation only**--on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, from December 26, 2001 through March 20, 2002.

All individuals and groups wishing to visit the site must make a reservation for a particular date, as there will be a limited number of visitors allowed per open day. Individuals and groups arriving at the site without reservations will not be admitted.

Starting December 4, 2001, reservations may be made from Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, by calling 1-800-368-8954. The reservation system has proven to be very effective in providing a quality educational experience for the general public, while ensuring the welfare of wintering eagles.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are also being sought to help at the Observation Area when it is open to the public. Volunteer duties range from assisting with information dissemination, helping people to and from the shelter, pointing out the location of eagles or coordinating parking. No previous experience is required, but knowing how to dress for cold weather is a must. Prospective volunteers can contact Catherine Urbain of the Connecticut Audubon Society, at 203-878-7440. Volunteers must attend a mandatory workshop scheduled for December 1, 2001.

Wanted: Volunteers for the Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

The DEP Wildlife Division is planning for the Annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey, which is targeted for January 11-12, 2002. The survey provides a unique source of long-term baseline data on eagles, as well as a framework for assessing long-term trends on a continental scale. Unlike nesting surveys, the midwinter survey provides information on both breeding and nonbreeding segments of the population at a potentially limiting time of year. There also is an opportunity to monitor modifications or threats to habitat at important wintering areas.

Throughout the nation, counts of wintering bald eagles increased an estimated 1.9 percent per year from 1986 to 2000, with the biggest increases in the northeastern United States. More detailed

results can be seen at the U. S. Geological Survey website, <http://srfs.usgs.gov/midwinte.htm>.

So that Connecticut may continue cooperating in this national survey, the Wildlife Division is looking for volunteers who are interested in counting eagles on the survey date. No eagle viewing experience is necessary. Knowing how to dress for the cold weather is a must and access to open water areas is a plus. It is a statewide survey and volunteers will be assigned a convenient area. Interested individuals should contact Wildlife Division biologist Julie Victoria, at (860) 642-7239, and provide their name and mailing address.

West Nile Virus/Mosquito Management Program Update

The State of Connecticut Mosquito Management Program spent this past summer and fall monitoring the presence of West Nile virus (WNV) in the state. This involved the collection of mosquitoes and dead birds that were tested for WNV. Infection in domestic animals, particularly horses, and in humans was also monitored. Weekly press releases and other information were distributed to the media and the public to keep them informed about virus activity and personal protection measures.

As of the end of October, despite isolations in mosquitoes, birds and horses and five human cases of WNV, the State of Connecticut did not spray pesticides to kill adult mosquitoes. Instead, residents were urged to protect themselves against mosquito bites and to reduce mosquito breeding areas around their homes.

Record low temperatures early in October helped decrease mosquito activity. However, Connecticut residents were warned not to let their guard down against mosquitoes. Hikers, hunters and others engaged in outdoor activities were encouraged to continue to avoid mosquito bites. The State continued to recommend against spraying to kill adult mosquitoes at that time due to reduced number of mosquitoes, cooler evening temperatures and lower risk of human infection.

Mosquito Testing

The 2001 mosquito trapping and testing portion of the Mosquito Management Program began on June 11 at 91 trap sites statewide. Mosquito trapping was conducted daily from June 11 through October 26. Traps were set and attended by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station staff every 10 days on a regular rotation.

Two trap types were used at all trapping stations: a CO₂-baited CDC Light Trap, designed to trap host-seeking adult female mosquitoes (all species); and a Gravid Mosquito Trap, designed to trap previously blood-fed adult female mosquitoes (principally *Culex* species).

The first mosquitoes to test positive for WNV were collected on July 7 in Stamford, while the first isolation of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) came from mosquitoes (bird-biting) collected on July 17 in North Stonington.

As of October 17, a total of 123,270 mosquitoes had been tested, with 37 isolations of WNV and nine isolations of EEE. In early October, EEE was confirmed from a single, human-feeding mosquito trapped in the town of Stratford.

The Mosquito Management Program is an interagency program consisting of the Department of Environmental Protection, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Department of Public Health, Department of Agriculture and the University of Connecticut Department of Pathobiology and Veterinary Science.

Wild Bird Surveillance

The bird surveillance effort, coordinated by the Department of Public Health, began on May 7, 2001, and continued through October 26. This effort includes the reporting of dead bird sightings and the testing of some wild birds for WNV infection. The first bird to test positive for WNV was a crow collected on May 23 in Milford. The first and only bird to test positive for EEE was a crow collected in Essex on July 25. As of October 17, a total of 1,010 birds had been tested for WNV. Of these, 410 tested positive.

Infection in Horses

The same mosquitoes that can transmit WNV to a person can also transmit the virus to a horse. Horses with West Nile infection pose no threat to people or other horses as the virus can only be spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. A sick horse should be evaluated by a veterinarian

to rule out other possible diseases, such as rabies.

As of October, eight horses had tested positive for WNV. Five of the horses recovered and three either died or were euthanized. The infected horses were from the towns of West Granby, Stonington, Glastonbury, East Haddam, Somers and Lebanon. In 2000, seven Connecticut horses were confirmed with the infection; four recovered and three were euthanized.

As of October 16, there had been 125 confirmed horse cases in the United States. The cases were in the following states: Connecticut, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Virginia, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York and Pennsylvania. One dog in Georgia also tested positive for WNV but was recovering.

Infection in Humans

The total number of presumptive cases of persons hospitalized with WNV infection in Connecticut as of October was six. An elderly resident of East Haven, who developed neurologic symptoms in late September, passed away in mid-October. Confirmatory tests are being performed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Colorado. Of the other five cases, four have been released from the hospital and the other remains hospitalized.

Three of the six persons tested positive for WNV on screening tests in late August or early September. One person is a resident of Fairfield, another a resident of West Haven and the third person was a tourist who vacationed in Staten Island, New York, and Norwalk, Connecticut, before becoming ill. The Fairfield and Norwalk cases were most likely exposed to infected mosquitoes sometime in early August. Both patients, who are in their 60's, became ill early in the third week of August and were hospitalized several days later. The West Haven resident, who is older than 70 years of age, became ill during the last few days of August and was admitted to the hospital several days later with meningoencephalitis. This patient was hospitalized in critical condition. The likely date of

exposure for this patient was sometime during the last two weeks of August. While the Norwalk visitor may have been infected during a stay in Staten Island prior to coming to Connecticut, the other two persons were clearly infected with WNV in Connecticut. Both spent substantial time outdoors most days in their yards. At least one did not routinely use mosquito repellent.

In mid-September, two more persons tested positive for WNV after being hospitalized with meningitis or encephalitis. Of these two more recent cases, one was a Bridgeport resident who is in the 30 to 39 year age range and the second was a North Haven resident who is over 75 years of age. Both became ill in the first week of September and were most likely exposed to infected mosquitoes around their homes sometime in late August or early September, the peak time of WNV risk.

The human cases are reminders that WNV can cause serious illness. While WNV did not reach a level sufficient to cause an outbreak in any given town, Connecticut has experienced more intense WNV activity this year than last.

When bitten by an infected mosquito, most people will easily fight off the infection, and will only have mild symptoms, such as headache and fever, or none at all. These people are

not infectious, and are **not** going to develop the disease of West Nile fever or encephalitis in the future. The finding of a person with asymptomatic infection is also not unexpected. It is believed that 50-300 persons get infected with West Nile virus for every person who gets a severe infection that requires hospitalization. As of October 16, 34 human cases of West Nile virus encephalitis have been reported in the United States: Connecticut (6), Florida (9), Georgia (1), Maryland (6), New Jersey (6) and New York (6).

Stay tuned to *Connecticut Wildlife* and the DEP website (<http://dep.state.ct.us>) for further updates and information on mosquitoes and WNV.



For reasons that are unknown, a high percentage of crows that become infected with WNV develop severe infection, become ill and die. Most birds and humans develop few, if any, symptoms, and only a small percentage develop severe life-threatening infection.

P. J. FUSCO

Wildlife Holiday Gift Ideas

Give a gift of nature this holiday season to friends and family

Connecticut Wildlife Magazine

News flash: *Connecticut Wildlife* is going color! Color photographs will be added to several pages in the magazine starting with the January/February 2002 issue. So, now is the perfect time to order gift subscriptions for one, two or three years. Use the order form on the back page of this issue. Gift cards will be sent to all gift recipients.

Woodworking for Wildlife

(\$10.00) This revised second edition has color photographs and an easy-to-use spiral binding. The book is a perfect resource for anyone wishing to build homes for wildlife. Send orders and make checks payable to: CT DEP Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box

1550, Burlington, CT 06013. Proceeds from the sale of this book help fund projects for Connecticut's nonharvested wildlife species.

Migratory Bird Conservation Stamps and Prints

Full-color art prints and stamps of the 2001 and some earlier editions of Connecticut Duck Stamps are available at local art dealers. The 2001 stamp depicts a small flock of buffleheads flying across the oyster beds offshore from New Haven. Painted by premier wildlife artist, Rob Leslie, the background displays a detailed rendering of one of the boats in Connecticut's renowned oyster fleet. The proceeds from the sale of stamps, prints and other

Duck Stamp memorabilia can only be used to finance wetland habitat restoration and enhancement projects in Connecticut.

DEP Store Selections

The DEP Store offers hundreds of environmental and Connecticut-related items, including gifts that will thrill the outdoor enthusiasts on your holiday shopping list. To view the most popular items and to shop on-line, visit the Store on the DEP's website, dep.state.ct.us. To request a copy of the current DEP Store Catalog, call (860) 424-3555 or (860) 424-3692, or send an email request to depstore@ct.freei.net.

Irruptions of Color

Written by Paul Fusco, Public Awareness Program

Those who feed birds during the fall probably recognize the appearance of the junco and white-throated sparrow as a sign that the cold season is on its way. These members of the finch family move into our region in good numbers for the winter, remaining in the relative comfort of our backyards, feeding on the seeds of sunflower, thistle and white millet.

The cold weather of late fall and winter sometimes will also bring large “irruptions” of some other finches into Connecticut from as far away as northern or western Canada. These are known as winter finches, and their appearance here is erratic from year to year. When they come, they will be hungry and many will end up at backyard feeders alongside our regular backyard visitors, feasting on the available seeds. Winter finches may show up in large flocks and stay for

weeks or for just a few hours. Flocks of evening grosbeaks that stay for long periods have been known to test the seed budgets of backyard bird feeding enthusiasts with their voracious appetite for sunflower seeds.

Irruptions

Periodic irruptions bring winter finches into our region every few years in search of food. Typically, these irruptions happen when there is a shortage in one or more of their normal foods, and can be intensified if the food shortage coincides with bird populations that are at a peak. Some years many species may be affected, while other years only a few species will be on the move. For

example, crossbills are affected by a bad conifer seed production year, or redpolls by a birch catkin failure. When the conditions are right for irruptions to occur, great numbers of these birds are forced to move far south of their normal winter range, wandering over large areas before settling in for the season once they find a reliable food source.

The down side to these irruptions is that many of these birds do not find a food source and end up succumbing to starvation or the harshness of winter. Typically, these northern birds are out of their element when they end up in our suburban neighborhoods. When using backyard feeders they must gain new skills at avoiding such predators as free-roaming housecats, which these birds, in all probability, had not been exposed to in their normal range.



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The male purple finch has a “dipped in wine” appearance.

Colorful Plumage

The colorful plumages of some of the winter finches contrast nicely with the dull colors of winter to brighten even the darkest days of December. Appearing at first glance, like an overgrown goldfinch, the male evening grosbeak is spectacular in its brilliant golden yellow plumage. Male white-winged crossbills and pine grosbeaks each wear a bright pinkish-red color, while, by late winter, male common redpolls sport a stunning deep pink breast to go with a bright red forehead patch. With colors like these, winter finches are a welcome addition to many backyard bird feeders.

Winter Finch Species

Purple finch: The raspberry-red color of the male purple finch has been likened to a bird that has been dipped in red wine.

The purple finch has a breeding range that stretches from the northeastern United States across southern Canada. In winter, they can be found irregularly as far south as the southern states. An uncommon nester in Connecticut, the purple finch is a fairly common fall migrant. Traveling in flocks, purple finches tend to move through into December, with some remaining for the winter. As with most of the winter finches, coniferous forests are their preferred habitat.

Red crossbill: Moving closer, in undulating flight, a small flock of stubby looking birds lands in the top of a pine tree. Their loud chattering calls slowly quiet as each clambers parrot-like about the branches, attracted to the cones. Deep within the tough pine cones are seeds that red crossbills extract with ease using their unique bills.



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The unique bill of the crossbill allows it to dig deep into cones to retrieve the seeds from within.

Considered to be uncommon to rare winter visitors, red crossbills are sporadic in their wanderings. They are strictly associated with conifer trees that have a supply of seed-bearing cones and, in winter, their search for this type of food source sometimes takes them into Connecticut and points farther south. Red crossbills have been known to breed in the middle of winter if the supply of cone seeds is plentiful.

White-winged crossbill: Also found in close association with conifer trees, and sometimes with their red cousins, white-winged crossbills are rare and irregular winter visitors to Connecticut. Their white wing bars readily distinguish them from red crossbills.

Both crossbills normally breed across the very northern U.S. and southern Canada. The range of the white-winged crossbill is slightly more northerly than the red. In most winters they do not move far from their breeding range. In years of failed cone seed crops, they are erratic nomads, and flocks can occur in the southern states.

Common redpoll: Redpolls are birds of the far north, being most common where the vast northern conifers and muskeg meet willow scrub and tundra in northern Canada and Alaska. They are pale little birds with brownish streaking, a red forehead patch and black chin. Males have a pinkish breast and rump. Their twangy, rattling call announces their presence.

Redpolls can usually be found close to the ground, foraging in weedy fields and brushy areas during irruption winters when they may invade Connecticut in large numbers. They are particularly fond of alder, willow and birch seeds, and winter flocks can sometimes be observed perching high in birch trees as they feed on the catkins.

The closely related hoary redpoll is sometimes found mixed in with flocks of common redpolls. It has a much paler appearance and can be difficult to identify. Along with siskins, redpolls are known to be able to survive colder temperatures in winter than any other songbirds.



Evening grosbeaks are fond of persistent winter fruits, including crabapples.

Pine siskin: This heavily streaked finch has patches of yellow in its wings and at the base of its tail. It is similar in size and behavior to the American goldfinch, with which it can sometimes be found. Siskins are erratic, sometimes fairly common winter migrants in Connecticut. They are also rare nesters in the northwest hills. Their breeding range extends from the very northern U. S. across much of southern Canada.

Favored winter food sources include seeds from alder, birch, pine, spruce and maple. Siskins will also eat seeds from various weeds, including thistle.

Evening grosbeak: This big, yellow, chunky finch has a huge pale bill that it uses to feed on the seeds of conifers and maple trees. While they favor northern coniferous and northern hardwood forests, evening grosbeaks may also be found in and around fruit trees that have persistent fruits, such as apple or cherry. Being highly gregarious, evening grosbeaks sometimes form large flocks.

In Connecticut, the evening grosbeak is more common during migration than in the middle of winter. It has been documented as a very rare and local nester in our state.

Evening grosbeaks are relatively new to the eastern part of North

America, having expanded from their western mountain range, east across the northern U. S. and southern Canada, all the way to New England since the late 1800s. They are thought to have been drawn east by the planting of box elder, which provided them with a readily available preferred food source.

Pine grosbeak: Fairly common in the coniferous forests of southern Canada and the Rocky Mountains, up into Alaska, the pine grosbeak is a rare visitor to Connecticut. Large irruption flights of this species into the state have occurred, although very infrequently.

The diet of the pine grosbeak includes fruit and the seeds from conifers, maples, birches and weeds. They will readily accept sunflower seeds at backyard feeders.

Feeders

In irruption years, many winter finches will rely on the seed provided in backyard bird feeders. Sunflower, white millet and thistle are the best seeds to offer and will attract most of the winter finches. So, keep an eye out this winter for these colorful, chattering birds. Flocks may suddenly appear at your backyard feeders, and then, just as quickly, bolt away in a burst of wings and characteristic undulating flight.

Explore a Wildlife Management Area: *Messerschmidt Pond*

Compiled by Greg Kuhr, Research Assistant

Messerschmidt Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 421-acre state-owned property located in the towns of Deep River, Westbrook and Essex. It was purchased by the state in 1982 with funds provided by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program and the Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Program (see sidebar). The property was originally part of the Deep River Manufacturing Company. The area contains a 77-acre pond surrounded by mixed hardwood forest. Other habitats include old fields, hardwood swamp, the Falls River, a scenic Norway spruce stand and vernal pools. Wildlife use in the area includes migratory waterfowl, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, beavers and other furbearers.

Messerschmidt WMA is managed by the DEP Wildlife Division in cooperation with the Forestry Division to maintain a diversity of cover types, including old fields, sapling-pole forest and mature sawtimber forest. A variety of management activities are conducted in the area to maintain forest health and diversity. Some examples of recent management include pine



plantings to diversify hardwood stands and patch clear-cutting to provide more edge habitat and canopy openings.

The area is open to fishing (large-mouth bass, chain pickerel, yellow perch and sunfish), and has access for both car-top boaters (no gas motors allowed) and shoreline fishermen. Falls River is stocked with brook trout in the spring. Hunting opportunities include waterfowl, small game, turkey (firearms and archery) and archery deer. Access to Messerschmidt WMA is located on Route 145 (see map).

For more information, contact the Wildlife Division at the DEP's Eastern District Headquarters, 209 Hebron Road, Marlborough, CT 06447; 860-295-9523.

Directions: From Interstate 95, take exit 64 (Horse Hill Road) and head north approximately 3 miles to a parking lot/launch on the right. From Route 9, take exit 6 (Rt. 148); head west on Rt. 148 to the intersection with Rt. 145. Turn left onto Rt. 145 and proceed south to the intersection with Rt. 80. Turn left (remain on Rt. 145) and follow south for approximately 1.5 miles; the parking lot/launch will be on the left.

Sportsmen and Anglers Supporting Fish and Wildlife

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program (also known as the Pittman-Robertson Act), established in 1937, places an excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. The money collected from this program is distributed to state wildlife agencies to help restore and manage wildlife and their habitat, and to educate hunters in safe, ethical hunting practices.

The Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Program (also known as the Dingell-Johnson Act), established in 1950, collects an excise tax on fishing equipment. Dedicated funding from this program is also distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies to restore and improve America's fishery resources.

By participating in hunting and fishing activities, sportsmen and anglers have helped fund the management of fish and wildlife populations and the purchase of important fish and wildlife habitats.

P. J. FUSCO



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Migratory waterfowl, like the American wigeon, can be seen along the Falls River, which runs through Messerschmidt Pond WMA.

What Is a Wildlife Management Area?

The mission of the DEP Wildlife Division is to maintain stable, healthy and diverse wildlife populations on all suitable habitat across the state of Connecticut in numbers compatible with habitat carrying capacity and existing land use practices. Acquiring and managing wildlife management areas (WMAs) is one mechanism for accomplishing this goal. WMAs are areas of land and water having unique or outstanding wildlife qualities that are managed primarily for the conservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and to provide opportunities for fish and wildlife-based recreation.

The Wildlife Division is responsible for managing 88 WMAs statewide, totaling over 25,000 acres. Over 7,500 acres have been acquired through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program, a federal program that collects an excise tax on sporting arms, handguns, ammunition and archery equipment and distributes the money to state wildlife agencies to support wildlife restoration (land acquisition, management and research) and hunter education programs. WMAs range in size from one acre to 2,200 acres and include a variety of habitats, such as grasslands, old fields, forests, coastal salt marshes, freshwater marshes and riparian zones.

The Division's Habitat Management Program is responsible for developing management plans that identify the

natural resource values of WMAs and objectives for maintaining or enhancing those values. Connecticut is currently dominated by maturing hardwood forests (60% of the landscape), with a diminishing component of early-successional stage habitats. Old fields, grasslands and agricultural habitats are rapidly declining due to forest succession, loss of farmland, intensified farming practices, residential and commercial development and the absence of fire in the landscape. Associated with the disappearance of these habitats is a decline in once common wildlife, such as the bobolink, meadowlark, blue-winged warbler, rufous-sided towhee, chestnut-side warbler, New England cottontail and American woodcock. A variety of techniques are used to restore or enhance these habitats on WMAs, including tractor/brush mowing, prescribed burning, herbiciding, administration of brontosaurus contracts (heavy drum-type mower/mulching machine), grassland plantings and administration of agricultural license agreements.

Silvicultural (the care and cultivation of forest trees) practices also may be implemented to create a varied age structure and diversity of tree species. Wetland habitats also are enhanced on WMAs through the maintenance of water control structures, invasive plant control, pothole creation and the

installation of wood duck nest boxes. Routine maintenance responsibilities on WMAs include boundary and sign posting and the repair and maintenance of parking lots, gates, interior road systems and wildlife viewing areas.

WMAs are open to the public year-round for hiking, wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting and trapping (consult the Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide for season dates, regulations and permit information). Motorized vehicles are prohibited; however, handicapped hunters may obtain a special permit from the DEP to use an ATV while hunting. Camping is also prohibited, except at Sessions Woods WMA in Burlington. Groups that use the Sessions Woods camping area must obtain a special permit and be using the site for educational purposes. Nod Brook and Pease Brook Wildlife Management Areas are designated as Dog Training Areas where hunting dogs may be trained with the use of live birds. Game birds may not be shot on these areas except during the regulated hunting season. Handicapped accessible hunting trails are available at Roraback, Sessions Woods, Kollar, Babcock Pond and Bear Hill WMAs.

For more information, contact the Wildlife Division at the DEP's Eastern District Headquarters, 860-295-9523 (Eastern CT), or the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area office, 860-675-8130 (Western CT).

P.J.FUSCO



Tracking Trends in Woodcock Populations

Written by Peter Good, Supervising Wildlife Biologist

Male woodcock attempt to entice females to breed by performing a courtship ritual that is always exciting to observe. During spring, at dusk and dawn, male woodcock fly to their "singing area," which is a forest opening or field with short vegetation and good visibility. They then start their distinctive repetitive call, commonly described as "peenting." After about a minute of peenting, the male will fly in a spiral pattern up to a height of 200 feet or more. It then descends in a zigzag motion toward the ground while emitting a series of warbling notes accompanied by the whistling sound created by air rushing through its outer primary wing feathers. The male returns to the same spot on the ground and resumes peenting.

This courtship display is repeated many times both at dawn and dusk when light conditions are just right. The best time to observe this phenomenon is when the temperature is above 50 degrees F and there is little or no wind.

Biologists take advantage of this unique courtship ritual by using it as a method to survey breeding woodcock populations. The surveys are conducted at dusk in spring along random routes located throughout the woodcock's breeding range. State and Canadian biologists record the number of woodcock heard peenting on each of 10 stops located along a 3.6-mile long route.

There are approximately 1,200 routes in the United States and Canada but only about three-quarters of these are surveyed each year. Routes that have no woodcock recorded for two consecutive years are only re-surveyed every five years. Connecticut has 11 designated routes and usually four or five are surveyed each year. Results from the surveys of all states and Canadian provinces are combined to create an index of the woodcock's breeding population.

Biologists have been tracking regional breeding populations of woodcock by this technique since

1968. During that time there has been a steady decline in both the Eastern Region's and Central Region's index. The decline in the breeding population index is mirrored by a decline in woodcock harvest indices during the same period. The major reason for the declines is thought to be the loss and degradation of habitat on the woodcock's breeding and wintering ranges.

Woodcock, like many upland game species, require an early successional stage forest habitat type interspersed with open areas. Wildlife agencies throughout the woodcock's range have been interested in reversing the decline of woodcock habitat by encouraging conservation and management practices. As most lands are in private ownership, the successful implementation of a wide-scale habitat improvement program is a daunting task.

Your Questions Answered???

What is a group of turkeys called? Is it anything different than flock? -- Judy Davies, Lyme

When I first read this question, I thought it would be easy to answer. In all of the Wildlife Division's publications and writings about turkeys, we always refer to a group of turkeys as a flock. However, I figured that before I sat down to answer this question, I'd better do some research. So, I searched the Internet to find out what different groups of animals were called. It turned out to be an interesting experience.

Through my research, I discovered that a group of turkeys is really called a *rafter* or *gang*. In my entire career of wildlife biology, I had never seen the word "rafter" used to refer to turkeys. But, as I searched more web sites, I found that "rafter" was the most commonly accepted term. Now that I've learned something new, "rafter of turkeys" may appear in future issues of

Connecticut Wildlife. However, the use of "flock" to describe a group of turkeys is not incorrect as the word is used to describe a group of birds in general, such as a flock of geese. However, a group of geese on the ground can be called a "gaggle" and a group in flight is a "skein." A group of ducks in flight is called a "flock" while it is a "raft" when on the water.

Web sites that I visited during my search for the answer included: www.npwrc.usgs.gov/help/faq/animals/names (USGS Northern Prairie Research Center), www.dnr.state.mn.us (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources), www.uselessknowledge.com, www.rzu2u.com, www.enchantedlearning.com and www.sonic.net. These web sites contained some interesting group names for all kinds of animals:
army of caterpillars
bale of turtles

business of flies
cast or kettle of hawks
congregation of plovers
labor of moles
murder of crows
murmuration of starlings
parliament of owls
prickle of porcupines
skulk of foxes

Check out some of these web sites if you want to learn a little wildlife trivia.
Kathy Herz, Editor

Do you have a wildlife question you'd like to have answered?

Please send it to:

Your Questions Answered
DEP - Wildlife Division
P.O. Box 1550
Burlington, CT 06013

Email:
katherine.herz@po.state.ct.us

Would You Like to Be a Master Wildlife Conservationist?

Written by Laura Rogers-Castro, Public Awareness Program

The Wildlife Division is initiating an exciting new program in February 2002, funded by a federal grant through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (see the July/August 2001 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*). The Master Wildlife Conservationist Program is an adult education program designed to develop a volunteer corps capable of providing education, outreach and service for state agencies, environmental organizations, libraries, schools and the public.

Participants receive 40 hours of intensive classroom and field training and have one year, following completion of the training and examination, to provide 40 hours of volunteer service. To maintain certification in the program, a minimum of eight hours of advanced training and 20 hours of volunteer service each year must be completed.

Program Structure

The program begins with a 12-week training period introducing participants to the Master Wildlife Conservationist Program, the Connecticut Department of

Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Wildlife Division, followed by lessons in interpretation, Connecticut's landscape, wildlife conservation and wildlife management issues. DEP biologists, educators and other professional staff will conduct the lessons. There will be opportunities for field excursions in addition to the lectures and discussion.

Upon completion of the initial training period, a schedule of elective courses will be distributed and participants will be able to enroll in several special interest classes to complete their certification requirements. Elective coursework opportunities will primarily include lessons on the natural history of Connecticut's flora and fauna.

Volunteer Rewards

In addition to receiving wildlife-based training from skilled professionals and a program guidebook with valuable reference materials, certified active volunteers will receive an identification card, Master Wildlife Conservation Program volunteer patch, subscription to *Connecticut Wildlife*, invitations to

volunteer events and the use of wildlife-related materials and equipment.

Goals and Objectives

It is expected that a Master Wildlife Conservationist Program will (1) provide high-quality volunteers with the knowledge necessary to educate others; (2) increase the public's opportunity to obtain natural resource education; (3) increase the public's knowledge and appreciation of wildlife issues and natural resource management; (4) use trained volunteers to work with communities on enhancing habitat and (5) gain public support that can lead to preserving and enhancing natural resources.

Additional Information

This program is expected to generate a lot of interest. Therefore, space may be limited. A background in natural resources, education and/or interpretation is preferred but not necessary. To obtain more information or to indicate your interest in the program, contact Laura Rogers-Castro, at (860) 675-8130 (laura.rogers-castro@po.state.ct.us).

Interesting Wildlife Observations -- Six-legged Sexton Seen

Walking the trails during lunch at Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington, my coworkers and I were surprised when we looked down and saw a *dead* mole moving! On closer examination, we noticed two carrion beetles "carrying" the mole. Returning to the office, I searched my insect books to find out more on carrion beetles. Our beetle was under three-quarters of an inch long, had orange-red crossbars on its elytra (wing covers) and yellowish hairs on its pronotum (part of the middle of its body). Knowing that one type of carrion beetle, the American burying beetle, is on the federal endangered species list, my interest was peaked.

We returned to the site with the Wildlife Division photographer and witnessed more activity at the mole. The beetles were searching the immediate area to find a place to bury the mole. Carrion beetles, also called sexton beetles, dig underneath a discovered dead animal and in doing so, bury the



Six-legged Sexton

animal. Under the ground, the female will either dig a small tunnel near the animal to lay her eggs or it will lay the eggs on the carcass. When the larvae emerge from the eggs, the parents feed and tend to the young. Later the larvae move closer to the carcass and will feed themselves. Further research into this phenomenon revealed that males usually find a carcass based on smell and then attract a mate. Both the male and the female had been seen at the mole.

Do you have an interesting wildlife observation to report to the Wildlife Division?

Please send it (and any photos you may have) to:

Wildlife Observations
DEP - Wildlife Division
P.O. Box 1550
Burlington, CT 06013

Email:
katherine.herz@po.state.ct.us

(submitted photos will be returned at your request)

Our beetle turned out to be a different, more common species (*Nicrophorus tomentosus*) than the American burying beetle (*N. americanus*). But it still was an interesting find!

Submitted by Laura Rogers-Castro, Natural Resource Educator, DEP Wildlife Division



WCRP Project Updates

The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) funding received by the DEP Wildlife Division has allowed many new conservation projects to be undertaken. A comprehensive list of the planned projects was featured in the July/August 2001 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*. As these projects move forward, you can learn more about them through the "Field Notes" feature of *Connecticut Wildlife*.

Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat Survey: Planning is underway for this exciting project that will involve point-count surveys of birds along the Housatonic, Naugatuck and Thames River corridors. Volunteers will be needed for this project in both the spring and fall of 2002. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Sessions Woods office (860-675-8130).

Grassland Bird Studies: Data analyses and current sighting information were reviewed this past fall to help identify information gaps and survey needs for the spring field season.

New England Cottontail Study: The distribution of cottontail rabbits is

currently being assessed through collection of road-killed rabbits (see article in the September/October 2001 issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*). Live-trapping of rabbits will begin in late October or early November to provide additional distribution information and to allow rabbits to be fitted with tiny radio collars. Their movements will be studied in an effort to gain information on their home range size and habitat use.

The Division is still encouraging people to collect cottontail specimens by all legal available means. The Wildlife Division should be contacted for pickup or delivery instructions, at the Franklin office, 860-642-7239 (eastern CT) or the Sessions Woods office, 860-675-8130 (western CT).

Coastal Birding Trail: The framework for this project is currently being established. Assistance is being provided by people who helped create the Great Texas Birding Trail, the Virginia Coastal Birding Trail and many other birding trails nationwide.

Black Bear Research: Work is underway to collect additional information on Connecticut's black bear population. After the bears begin hibernation, the project will take a brief pause until bear activity resumes next spring.

Wildlife Habitat Enhancements at Urban Schools and Parks: Guidelines are being created for evaluation of program participants. Invitations for participation will soon be distributed to urban schools and parks statewide.

Town Planning Workshops: The planning process is underway for these resource management workshops.

Many other planned projects have been moving forward. To meet the challenges of short-term funding and staff limitations, contracts with experts

outside the Wildlife Division are one way that some projects are being undertaken. -- *Jenny Dickson, Wildlife Biologist*

WHAMM Projects

The Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management (WHAMM) Program completed several projects during the 2001 field season.

Camp Harkness in Waterford: (completed in June 2001) Four acres of wetland habitat were restored at a freshwater stream crossing that will serve as a demonstration project for a stream in a barnyard situation with horses. The project was funded by the DEP, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Tuttle Point Marsh in Guilford: (completed in July 2001) This salt marsh restoration project through a dune area reestablished the flow of salt water in and out of the marsh. Five acres of habitat were restored. The project was funded by the DEP WHAMM Program fund.

Wilson Cove Marsh in Norwalk: (completed in June 2001) This 10-acre salt marsh restoration project required an old culvert to be removed and replaced with an open channel to allow salt water to flow in and out of the marsh. The project was funded by 319 funds from the federal Environmental Protection Agency that were received by the DEP and the City of Norwalk.

Halliday Avenue Project in Suffield: (completed in July 2001) This project involved the installation of three dike systems to reestablish open water and marsh habitat in a grassy hay field to restore 75 acres of wetland habitat. The project was funded by the DEP, USFWS and NRCS.

Higginum Meadows Habitat Restoration Project: (completed in October 2001) Four one-half acre ponds were constructed as part of this wetland enhancement project. The project was funded by the DEP, USFWS and the Connecticut Duck Stamp Program. Ten acres of habitat were enhanced.

Lower Connecticut River Project in the Great Island Complex Marshes: The WHAMM Program began this large

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Wildlife Division biologist Paul Rego (left) and Resource Assistant J. T. Stokowski place an ear tag on a bear as part of a WCRP-funded black bear research project.

restoration project in Old Lyme in early September and work is expected to continue until sometime in January or February 2002. Work involves the plugging of ditches and the installation of ponds and pannes in the 300-acre marsh complex.

The WHAMM Program also completed two drainage projects, one for the Town of Fairfield in Pine Creek and another for the City of Stamford in Sleepy Hollow Park. These projects were funded by the two towns. -- *Paul Capotosto, Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program*

Eagle Scout Projects at Sessions Woods

Four Eagle Scout projects have been completed recently at the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington. These projects are part of the requirements for a young man to become an Eagle Scout and they are completed as a service to the community at little or no cost to the taxpayer.

Stephen Giblin from Bristol coordinated the staining of the gazebo in front of the Conservation Education Center and the spreading of wood chips on the trails to the waterfall and the fire tower. The trail enhancement project involved a half mile of trail that was covered by 30 cubic yards of wood chips. Scouts and leaders of Troop 9, led by Stephen, contributed 295 hours of labor to complete this project.

Andrew Stetson, also from Bristol, led Troop 29 in designing and constructing a new trail side demonstration along the Deer Sign Trail. Andrew and his troop, using donated materials, set up a demonstration on how an electric fence can keep bears from destroying bee hives.

Nicholas Manseau refurbished the fire tower near the Beaver Pond Trail as his project. Troop 29 of Bristol, under Nick's direction, replaced all of the steps and landings in the tower, repainted portions of the tower as needed and designed, constructed and installed sign platforms for the top of the tower. In addition, Nick carefully created a profile of the landscape east of the tower to assist viewers in identifying locations seen from the tower.

Kevin Lachapelle led Troop 425 of Burlington in constructing and installing three different stream improvement structures on a branch of Negro Hill Brook. These structures, with the cooperation of the DEP Fisheries Division, will become demonstration sites along the Tree Identification Trail at Sessions Woods. The log and stone structures demonstrate bank erosion protection, road crossing improvement and fish spawning area enhancement.

These Eagle Scouts have made a major contribution to Sessions Woods. They follow 19 other Eagle Scouts in completing such projects at the site. Six other scouts are currently working on Eagle projects for Sessions Woods. The Wildlife Division extends its thanks to the Eagle Scouts and the Boy Scout troop members who made these projects possible. Thanks also to the Boy Scouts of America for developing the leadership skills in young men and giving them the encouragement to serve their communities. -- *Steve Jackson, Wildlife Biologist*

Friends of Sessions Woods Receives Grant

On February 1, 2001, the Friends of Sessions Woods received federal nonprofit status 501 (c) 3 from the Internal Revenue Service. This status has placed the volunteer group in a position to receive grants and tax deductible donations.

The Friends of Sessions Woods has applied for and received a \$9,900 grant through the generosity of the Burlington Fund and the James R. Parker Trust. This grant, received in July 2001, was administered through the Hartford Foundation for Giving. The funds will be used to purchase educational equipment and to publish educational materials for use on the trails at Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area. Binoculars, spotting scopes, microscopes, compasses and wildlife mounts will be purchased. "The Birds of Sessions Woods" checklist and a compass course guide will be published. These items will be used by the volunteers and staff of Sessions Woods to enhance the wildlife education efforts of the Conservation Education Center.

The Friends of Sessions Woods is currently assisting in the development of a water garden demonstration and an expansion of the butterfly garden demonstration by providing needed hardware and planting materials. These demonstrations are located near the Conservation Education Center. -- *Steve Jackson, Wildlife Biologist*

Bull Moose in Hartford

Over a two-week period in late September, the DEP received numerous reports of a young bull moose wandering into Connecticut. The bull was first sighted along the Massachusetts/Connecticut state line. Over the next two weeks, reports continued to come in to the DEP as the moose made its way from Tolland to Vernon, South Windsor and eventually Hartford. On October 7, the young bull was seen in Riverside Park in downtown Hartford. Riverside Park is surrounded by Interstates 91 and 84, Jennings Road and the Connecticut River. Because of public safety concerns, the DEP Tranquilization Team was activated to attempt to capture the bull moose and relocate it to upstate New York.

The DEP Tranquilization Team consists of personnel from the DEP's Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions trained to safely capture moose and black bears that pose a potential health or safety risk to the public. After effectively securing the area, the moose was darted with a special drug mixture. Within seven minutes after it was hit with the dart, the moose was completely sedated. The team quickly moved to transport the moose to a trailer where it was cooled down with ice to prevent overheating. After a radio-collar was attached to the moose, a reversal agent was administered to the moose to counteract the effects of the immobilization drugs. Around 11:00 PM that night, the young bull was successfully released in the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. New York Department of Environmental Conservation biologists plan to monitor the movements of the relocated moose using radiotelemetry. -- *Howard Kilpatrick, Wildlife Biologist*

Take the Wildlife Challenge!

November/December Wildlife Challenge

Guess which animal is described in the challenge and enter into a drawing to win a free wildlife poster. Clearly print your answer on a postcard, along with your name, address and phone number and send it to: CT Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013, **Attn: Wildlife Challenge**. The answer and winner will be printed in the next issue of *Connecticut Wildlife*. **Official Rules:** Only one postcard will be accepted per household, per challenge. Postcards for this issue's contest must be postmarked by December 31, 2001. Only one winner will be chosen for each challenge. Each winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by the postmarked deadline.

Congratulations go to Francesca Testa who was chosen as the winner of the September/October challenge. Francesca gave the correct answer of "great egret." She chose the Bats of the Eastern United States poster for her prize. Thanks to all readers who sent in postcards with answers to the Challenge. Please keep trying!

This issue's wildlife challenge is probably familiar to anyone who enjoys hiking in the woods. This animal is active during the day where it can sometimes be seen eating nuts or seeds. Its diet also includes mushrooms, berries, insects, earthworms and, occasionally, small birds, eggs, frogs and snakes. It seldom climbs trees and is more commonly found near its burrow under a stump or in a stone wall. Found from Canada, south through the eastern United States, this wildlife challenge is quite common. Can you name this animal?

Wildlife Calendar Reminders

- Nov. 20 **Decorative Products from the Forest**, from 7:00 PM-9:00 PM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington. This workshop will focus on decorative items available from the forests of Connecticut. Speakers will address floral greens, twig furniture and basketry with native materials. The workshop is sponsored by the DEP, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Soil Conservation District and King's Mark. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- Dec. 1 Beaver trapping season opens.
- Dec. 5-18 Deer muzzleloader season.
- Dec. 11 **Natural Forest Remedies**, from 7:00 PM-9:00 PM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington. This workshop will focus on medicinal items available from the forests of Connecticut. Speakers will address ginseng and goldseal farming, witch hazel and sassafras. The workshop is sponsored by the DEP, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Soil Conservation District and King's Mark. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- Dec. 17 2002 Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide available at town clerks' and Wildlife Division offices. The guide can also be accessed at the DEP's website, at <http://dep.state.ct.us>.
- Dec. 19-31 Second part of the fall turkey bowhunting season on state and private lands.
- Dec. 26 Shepaug Bald Eagle Viewing Area opens for the 2001-2002 eagle viewing season (see page 7 for information on how to make reservations).
- January Donate to the Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-off Fund on your 2001 CT Income Tax form.
- Spring turkey hunting and state land deer lottery applications available at town clerks' and Wildlife Division offices.
- Black bear cubs born in the winter den weigh about one-half pound.
- The beaver breeding season lasts from mid-January to mid-March.
- Jan. 11-12 Volunteers needed for the Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey (see sidebar on page 7).
- Jan. 12 Winter Tracking and Animal Signs, starting at 9:30 AM, at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center, in Burlington. Many birds migrate south, some mammals hibernate and several other wildlife species remain active during winter. DEP wildlife biologists Steve Jackson and Paul Rego will lead a walk through the woodlands of Sessions Woods in search of evidence of wildlife. Snow is desirable; therefore, dress for the occasion. Call (860) 675-8130 to preregister.
- Jan. 15-Feb. 15 Special late Canada goose season in the south zone only. For more details, see the 2001-2002 Migratory Bird Hunting Guide, available at town clerks' and DEP offices. The guide can also be found on the DEP website at <http://dep.state.ct.us>.

"Give a Gift to Wildlife" this holiday season by donating to the Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Fund and help finance projects to conserve bluebirds, bats, ospreys, least terns and other nongame and endangered wildlife. Send tax-deductible donations to the DEP Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013.

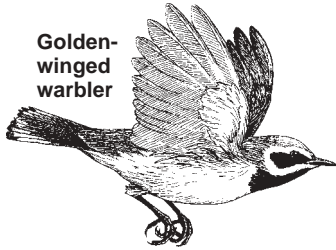
Just for Kids

Endangered Species

Almost 600 plants and animals are found on Connecticut's Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species List. Most are endangered because they have lost their habitat. Others are in trouble because of pollution, illegal trade or competition from nonnative (not from Connecticut) animals or plants.

What does endangered mean?

Endangered means that there are no more than 5 places in the state where the plant or animal is found.

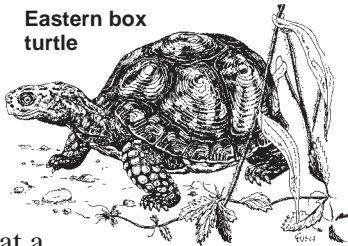


Golden-winged warbler



Puritan tiger beetle

Threatened means a plant or animal is found in no more than 9 places.



Eastern box turtle

Special concern means there isn't very much habitat for the plant or animal in the state. It can also mean that a plant or animal was once found here in Connecticut but isn't anymore (extirpated).

What can you do to help endangered species?

Protect natural habitats.

Do not disturb areas with endangered species.

Learn more and teach others about endangered species.

Every Species Counts

Match the number to the animal group to find out how many of each are found on the list.

A. Mammals	54
B. Birds	124
C. Reptiles	7
D. Amphibians	6
E. Fish	12
F. Insects	11

Answers: _____

A. 12, B. 54, C. 11, D. 7, E. 6, F. 124

Take a wild guess and fill in the blanks with the name of these Connecticut endangered species.

1. The largest animal on Connecticut's endangered species list is the _____.
2. The _____ spends most of its life underground.
3. The _____ is considered world's fastest bird.
4. The _____ lives in only a few places in the world and one of these is Connecticut.
5. The _____ is an orchid on Connecticut's endangered species list.

Answers: _____

1. leatherback sea turtle, 2. eastern spadefoot toad, 3. peregrine falcon, 4. Puritan tiger beetle, 5. showy lady's slipper

Connecticut Wildlife

The official bimonthly publication of the
DEP Wildlife Division

Don't miss out . . . Get Connecticut Wildlife for yourself or for a friend! Mail this form, along with a check or money order for a minimum contribution (payable to *Gift to Wildlife*) to: Gift to Wildlife, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

1 Year (\$6.00) 2 Years (\$11.00) 3 Years (\$16.00)

Help fund critical programs for the state's nonharvested and endangered species by contributing to the Gift to Wildlife fund, which is supported solely by voluntary contributions. Please include a tax-deductible donation with your order for Connecticut Wildlife. Connecticut's Nonharvested Wildlife Program needs your help!

My additional contribution for Connecticut's Nonharvested Wildlife:

\$5.00 \$10.00 \$25.00 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

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Zip _____ Tel. _____

Gift card to read: _____

Change of Address: Advance notice of an address change will assure all issues are delivered correctly.

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Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
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Woodworking for Wildlife

Homes for Birds & Mammals

The Wildlife Division's Nonharvested Wildlife Program is offering a revised second edition of this popular book for **\$10.00**. Now published with color photographs and an easy-to-use spiral binding, it is the perfect resource for anyone wishing to build homes for wildlife.

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Mail completed coupon with a check or money order (\$10.00 per copy) to CT DEP Nonharvested Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 1550, Burlington, CT 06013-1550.

TIP

 Turn
In
Poachers

TO REPORT A WILDLIFE VIOLATION

CALL 1-800-842-HELP

24 HOURS -
TOLL FREE

REWARDS OFFERED AFTER ARREST
ALL CALLS CONFIDENTIAL

For more information on TIP, call Conservation Law Enforcement at 424-3012

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION