

Explore Connecticut's Wildlife

at Sessions Woods



Visit Sessions Woods

What is Sessions Woods?

Sessions Woods is a wildlife management area located on Route 69 in Burlington, Connecticut. Wildlife management areas are unique natural areas managed by wildlife biologists to provide habitat for wildlife. Sessions Woods consists of over 700 acres of habitat, including forests, fields, streams, and a beaver marsh. Educational programs and displays in the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center and at outdoor demonstration sites throughout the property introduce visitors to wildlife and natural resources management. A visit to Sessions Woods will provide a hands-on look at wildlife habitat in Connecticut.

Why visit Sessions Woods?

- *Sessions Woods allows visitors the opportunity to learn about Connecticut's wildlife from professionals working firsthand with wildlife.*
- *The exhibit area at Sessions Woods provides information on "real life" wildlife issues.*
- *The wide gravel trails at Sessions Woods provide a perfect introduction to the outdoors!*

How does a field trip to Sessions Woods meet Connecticut's Science Standards?

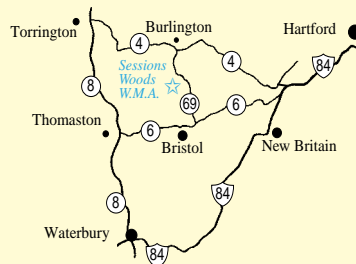
- *Participants will observe several habitat types, learn about wildlife needs in these ecosystems and discover how human activities and natural events change the environment.*
- *Participants will learn about the scientific tools, equipment and techniques wildlife biologists use to collect data on wildlife in Connecticut.*
- *Participants will discover the diversity of Connecticut's wildlife and learn ways to conserve wildlife populations for future generations.*

What types of programs are available at Sessions Woods?

- *Interpretive walks*
- *Wildlife presentations*
- *Guided tours of the exhibit area*



Route 69, Burlington, CT
For more information, call
(860) 675-8130



Learn About Connecticut's Wildlife

- Exhibit Area
- Self-guided hiking trails
- Demonstrations of wildlife management techniques
- Beaver marsh, waterfall observation tower

Sportsmen were instrumental in the DEP Wildlife Division's acquisition of the Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area through Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act funds. The exhibits, trails and educational programs at Sessions Woods show citizens how to have a positive impact on Connecticut's wildlife and other natural resources.

For more information regarding educational programs at Sessions Woods contact:

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Explore Connecticut's Wildlife

About This Book

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State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental
Protection

Bureau of Natural Resources
Wildlife Division

www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife



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Table of Contents

Habitats.....	1
The Oak and Hickory Forest	2
Wildlife Management Areas	3
Meet the Wild Turkey	4
Eastern Wild Turkey Coloring Page	5
Snags are Super!	6
Fisher	7
Be Bear Aware	8
Black Bear Coloring Page	9
Furbearer Fun Activity Page	10
Beaver Marsh	11
Nature's Engineers	12
Canada Goose	13
Batty About Bats	14
Ruby-throated Hummingbird Coloring Page	15
Wood Ducks	16
Wood Duck Coloring Page	17
Fields	18
Ways of Woodcock	19
Blue-winged Warbler Coloring Page	20
On the Bluebird Trail	21
Spiders	22
Terrific Turtles	23
Mosquitoes	24
Riparian Areas	25
Vernal Pools	26
Habitat Survey Activity Page	27
A Career as a Wildlife Biologist	28
Endangered Species	29
Snow Tracking	30
Nest Boxes	31
Sessions Woods Habitat Hunt	32
Birdwatching	34
Why Do People Hunt	35
Key to Coloring Pages	36

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Habitats

Every living thing needs a home, or habitat, that provides food, water, shelter and space. Habitats come in different shapes and sizes. In Connecticut, there are forests, fields, wetlands, coastlands and other kinds of habitats.



Forest

Over half of Connecticut is forested. Trees, shrubs, wildflowers, ferns and fungi are some of the plants found here. The plants are food and shelter for different animals, like songbirds, wild turkey, deer, squirrel, bear, box turtle and red-backed salamander.

Field

Many different types of plants and wildflowers that need lots of sunlight to grow are found in fields. These plants are a source of food for insects and other animals, such as rabbits, woodchucks and voles. The animals that feed on plants are also food for predators like hawks, coyotes and foxes.

Wetland

There are many wetlands in Connecticut, such as ponds, lakes, marshes and swamps. Beavers, otter, turtles, frogs, insects, ducks and other birds live in wetlands.

Coast

Connecticut has over 98 miles of coastline made up of salt marsh and sandy and rocky beaches. The coast is home to crabs, fish, shorebirds, osprey and more.

Traprock Ridge

In the center of Connecticut and into Massachusetts lies a special habitat called a traprock ridge. This ridge slopes on the east and rises sharply on the west and has several plants and animals found nowhere else in the state. Some areas on the ridge are sunny and dry while others are shady and cool, providing different places for animals to live.

Try Doing a Habitat Survey!

Visit a habitat and draw a map of the area. Then look for animals and animal signs (nests, feathers, droppings, etc.) and mark where you find them on the map.

Did you find more animals in one spot?

Which animals did you find the most of?

Does your habitat have enough food, water and shelter for animals?



The Oak and Hickory Forest

Over half of Connecticut is forest habitat. When the settlers arrived in the 1600s, the forest was mostly chestnut and white pine trees. Chestnuts were used as food by both animals and people. Pine trees were used by animals for food and cover. During the next 200 years, Connecticut's forests were cleared for agriculture, timber and firewood. By 1800, there was little forest habitat and few forest animals.

Today, some of the forest has grown back and many of the trees are less than 100 years old. Chestnut trees are no longer found because they have been killed by a disease, but oak and hickory trees are very common.



Unscramble the names of other animals that eat mast

1. MIKNPCUH
2. HUCNTTHA
3. WROC
4. HWEIT-ODOTEF USEOM
5. REGUSO

Answers on bottom right

Mast for a Meal

Wildlife biologists call hard fruit from trees mast. Acorns are one of the most important types of mast found in forests. Squirrels, blue jays, black bears, wild turkeys and white-tailed deer are just a few of the animals that rely on acorns for food.

Oaks, Oaks and More Oaks!

There are about 10 different kinds of oak trees in Connecticut. White, red and chestnut oak are some of the most common. Post, chinkapin and bur oaks are the least common.

Answers to Quiz:

1. chipmunk; 2. nutcracker; 3. crow; 4. white-footed mouse; 5. grouse

Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)

What Is a WMA?

Land that is managed for wildlife. In other words, land that is taken care of to create good wildlife habitat.

Management Menu

Burning
Mowing
Planting
Seeding
Mulching
Cutting
Adding nest boxes
Buying land
and more!

What can you do at a WMA?

Hike
Birdwatch
Hunt
Fish
and more!



Take a Wild Guess!

How many WMAs do you think are found in Connecticut?

The answer is more than 90!

What is the biggest WMA?

Roraback in Harwinton

Which WMA is home to a Conservation Education Center?

Sessions Woods WMA in Burlington

Wildlife Challenge!

How many WMAs have you visited?

Here are some more for you to try:

Visit Goshen WMA if you like meadows and old fields!

Try Babcock Pond WMA in Colchester for canoeing.

Bird watching is great at Wheeler WMA at Milford Point.

Learn about wildlife on the trails at Sessions Woods WMA.

Maps of Connecticut's Wildlife Management Areas are available on the Wildlife Division's website: www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife

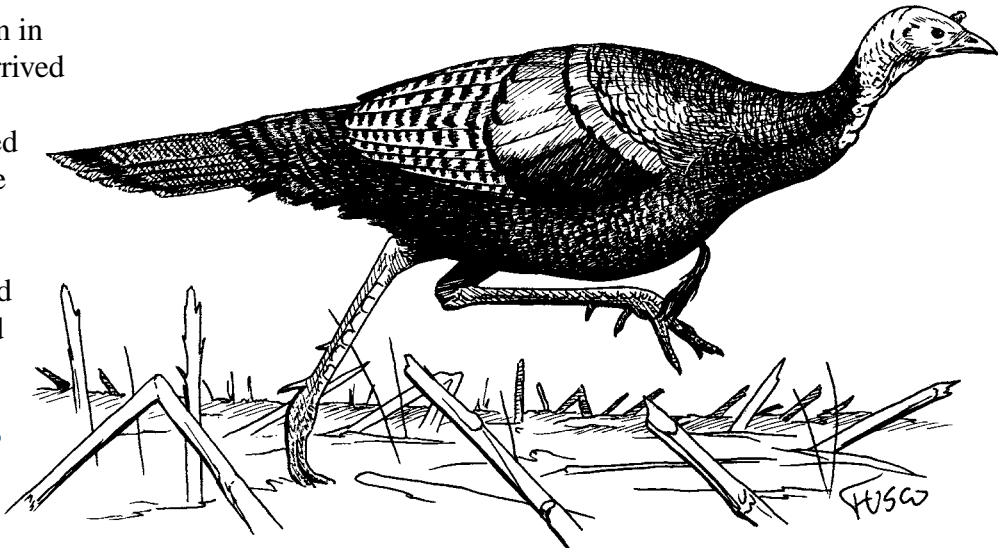
Meet the Wild Turkey

Although wild turkeys were common in Connecticut when the first settlers arrived and are common today, this was not always the case. Turkeys disappeared from the state by the early 1800s due to clearing of their forest habitat, over hunting (there were no laws to protect them like there are today) and several bad winters when it was hard to find food.

Why do we see turkeys today?

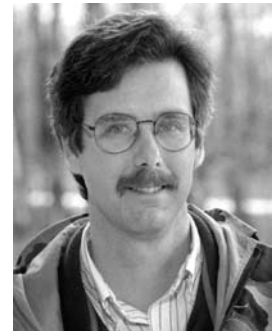
Connecticut's forests grew back and wildlife biologists and sportsmen began looking for ways to bring the turkey back to Connecticut.

In 1975, 22 wild turkeys from New York were live-captured (using a large net carried over the birds by 3 small rockets) and then released in the northwest corner of Connecticut. As the population grew, others were captured and moved to other towns. To pay for this project, Connecticut received money from a program called the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. By paying a special tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, sportsmen provide money for wildlife projects like turkey restoration.



Adult male turkeys are called toms. Male turkeys have beards on their chest and spurs on their legs.

Interview with our Turkey Biologist, Mike Gregonis



CT W: What does a turkey biologist do?

Mike: A wild turkey biologist keeps track of the number of turkeys in the forest, teaches people about turkeys and conducts research to learn more about these birds. To become a turkey biologist, I needed at least four years of college education studying plants and animals.

CT W: Where do turkeys live?

Mike: Wild turkeys mainly live in the forest, spending their days feeding on acorns, berries and other fruit and roosting in trees at night. Their habitat also includes pastures, cornfields and hayfields where they feed on seeds and insects.

CT W: Why do turkeys gobble?

Mike: Only male turkeys gobble and they do so because they want to attract hens. Males will also gobble at loud noises such as thunder, owl hoots, coyote howls or crow calls; however, no one is sure why they do this.

CT W: Can turkeys fly?

Mike: Wild turkeys are good fliers and can fly as fast as 55 miles per hour. In fact, poults or young turkeys can make their first flights when they are about eight to 10 days old.

Unscramble the Words Below:

1. Forests, pastures, cornfields and hayfields make up a wild turkey's B A T I T A H.
2. Young turkeys are called U T O L S P.
3. A tom turkey has S R U P S on its legs and a D E R B A on its breast.
4. Turkeys eat primarily R N A O C S, F R T I U S and S N S I T C E.
5. Adult male turkeys are called T S M O and adult female turkeys are called S E H N.

Answers to Quiz:

1. habitat, 2. poults, 3. spurs, beards, 4. acorns, fruits, insects, 5. toms, hens

Eastern Wild Turkey

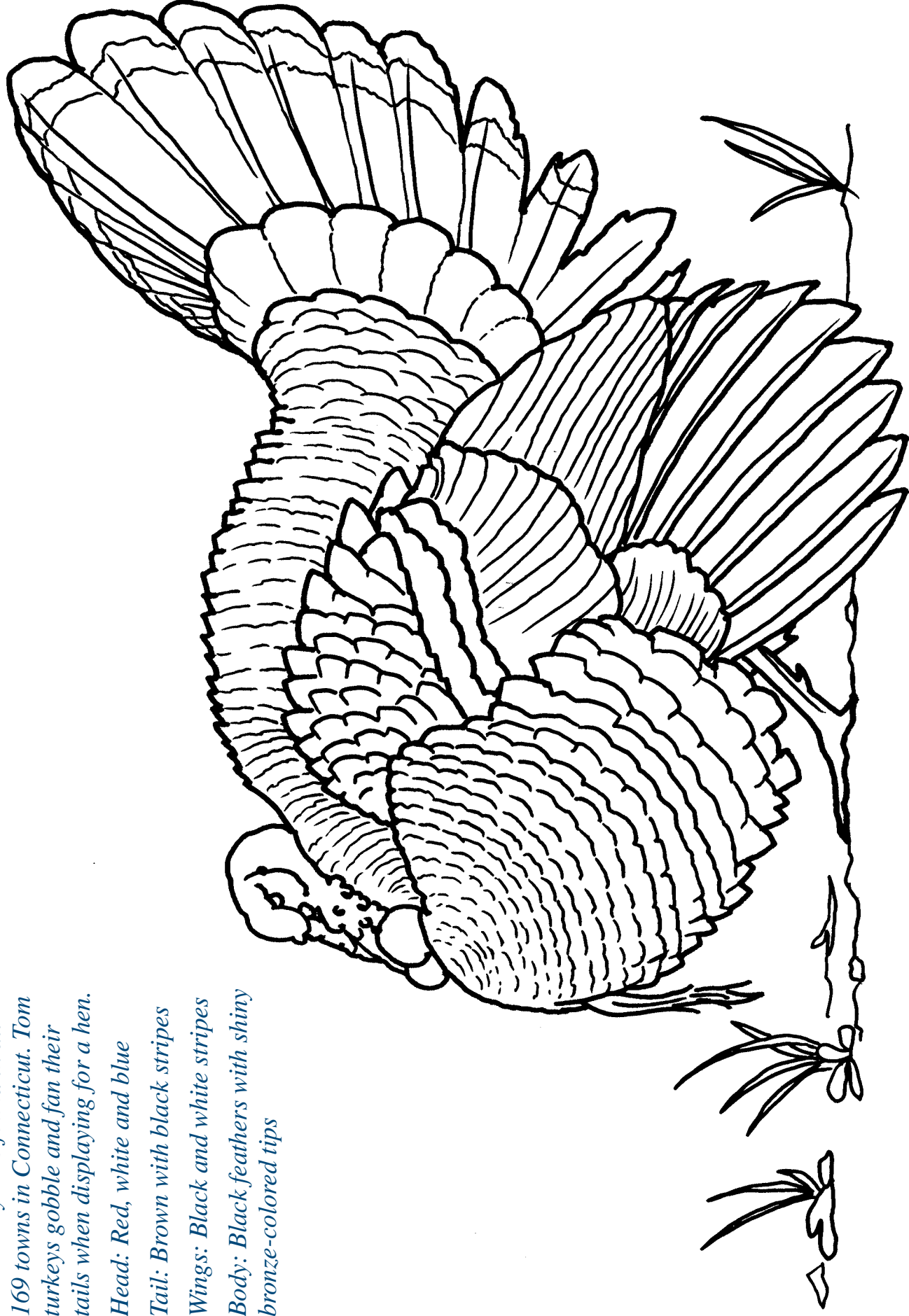
Wild turkeys are found in all 169 towns in Connecticut. Tom turkeys gobble and fan their tails when displaying for a hen.

Head: Red, white and blue

Tail: Brown with black stripes

Wings: Black and white stripes

Body: Black feathers with shiny bronze-colored tips



Snags Are Super!

Snags are dead trees that are still standing. They may be dead, but they are not dull! Snags are used by over 100 different animals for perching, foraging, nesting, hiding and denning.

These Cavities Are Good!

Many animals use cavities, or holes, in trees for nesting. Flying squirrels, tree squirrels, woodpeckers, chickadees, wood ducks and hooded mergansers are examples of animals that nest in snag cavities.

Dynamite Dens

Dens provide cover and sometimes a place to have young. Standing, broken off and large hollow trees are perfect dens for raccoons, fishers and sometimes, black bears.

Perfect Perches

Birds, such as bluebirds and flycatchers, may perch on a branch of a snag while looking for insects to eat. American kestrels use perches when eyeing a field for grasshoppers.

Fit for Foraging

Snags provide food, such as ants and beetles, for foraging woodpeckers.

They also provide a perfect place for squirrels and mice to store nuts.

Hidden Cover

Loose bark on a snag provides cover for bats, butterflies, moths, beetles, and treefrogs.



Tell Others About Snags!

Design a poster to educate others about the benefits of snags. See if your local nature center will post it on their bulletin board.

The wildlife will certainly appreciate it!

Fisher

The fisher is a large member of the weasel family. It has a long, slender body, short legs and a long, bushy tail and is usually dark brown to nearly black in color.

Fisher Facts

- Fishers lived in Connecticut when the settlers arrived.
- As the land was cleared, fishers disappeared from the state by the 1900s.
- Fishers moved back into eastern Connecticut from populations in Massachusetts.
- In 1988, the DEP Wildlife Division purchased live-trapped fishers from New Hampshire and Vermont trappers to help restore the population in northwestern Connecticut.

Now, fishers are found in forests throughout Connecticut and can be trapped by licensed trappers in the fall.

Fishers and Forests

Fishers are forest animals. They almost always den in tree hollows. They hunt by zig-zagging through the forest.



Food for Fishers

Fishers do not eat fish! They are famous for being one of a few animals that eat porcupines! In Connecticut, wildlife biologists have found that fishers primarily eat squirrels and other small animals. Fruit, beechnuts and dead animals also are eaten.

The Weasel Family: Match the Family Member to Its Description

1. *Striped Skunk*

A. This animal is not found in Connecticut, but is found in pine forests in the north. It is smaller than a fisher.

2. *River Otter*

B. This animal is easily recognized! It is known for making holes in lawns when digging for grubs.

3. *Mink*

C. Water is a must for this animal! A “playful” mammal, it eats fish, amphibians, crayfish and other animals.

4. *Marten*

D. Usually found near water, this animal is known for its fur. It is a very capable hunter.

Answers to Quiz:

1B, 2C, 3D, 4A

Be Bear Aware!

Did you know that black bears live in Connecticut? When people think of “bears,” they often think of big, scary, wild animals that would attack for no reason. This is certainly not true when it comes to black bears. In fact, these bears tend to be shy and afraid of people.

What would you do if you saw a black bear?

Don't try to get close to the bear.

Make noise and wave your arms.

Back away slowly.

Do not climb a tree. If possible, go to a car or building.

Bears that are cornered may “bluff charge” and stop before making contact.



Look at those teeth!

Bears are omnivores, meaning they eat a wide variety of food, including plants, fruits, nuts, berries, insects, carrion and occasionally small mammals.

Keep it Clean!

Black bears are attracted to bird feeders, garbage, dirty grills and pet food.

Bird feeders should be removed from late March through November. Trash should be stored in the garage until pick-up. Grills should be cleaned after each use. Pets should be fed inside.

How much do you know about bears?

Fill in the blanks.

1. Adult black bears usually weigh from 110 to _____ pounds.
2. They are _____ to _____ feet long.
3. Black bears are usually black but can be _____ or cinnamon in color.
4. They live in _____ habitats.



Black bear skull

Answers to Quiz:

1. 300; 2. five to six; 3. brown; 4. forested

Black Bear

Black bears are found in woodland habitats throughout much of North America. They are the smallest North American bear but can weigh several hundred pounds.

Body: Black, occasionally brown

Muzzle: Tan



Furbearer Fun!

Furbearers are mammals traditionally used by humans for their fur. Search outside for these clues that relate to a furbearer's life.

- Find a tree with a cavity (fishers den in tree cavities)
- Find a beech tree (bear claw marks may be seen!)
- Find a raccoon or opossum track
- Find an acorn (bears eat these)
- Look for the trail pattern of a fox (tracks in a straight line)
- Find a gray squirrel (fisher eat these!)
- Find a vole hole (weasels eat voles!)
- Find something a beaver might eat
- Find something a coyote might eat (just about anything!)
- Find some berries. Who might eat these (fox, raccoon, etc.)?
- Find an insect. Who might eat these (many animals)?



Beaver Marsh

Beavers create marshes by cutting down trees with their strong teeth. They build dams where small streams once flowed. Beavers cut down trees to reach food (leaves, twigs and bark) and for building dams. They like to construct their dams in slow-moving streams and work to stop the flowing water.

At first, the beaver's handiwork causes flooding and trees soon die, creating open areas and the right setting for aquatic plants to grow. Trees that die in the flooded area provide nesting habitat for colonies of great blue herons and, later, nesting cavities for tree swallows, wood ducks and woodpeckers. Shrubs grow along the edge of a beaver marsh and provide thickets for nesting red-winged blackbirds, least bitterns, mallards and rails. Many reptiles and amphibians bask among the plants and eat the many insects in the marsh.

Beaver marshes are dynamic habitats because they undergo change. Beavers eventually leave the marsh in search of better food and the dam is no longer maintained. Water slowly trickles out and the pond begins to return to brook and meadow. Usually, a meadow forms about 15 years after a beaver has left the marsh. The "beaver meadow" is now good habitat for other types of wildlife.



Nature's Engineers

Beavers are large rodents with strong teeth that are used to cut down trees. They are famous for building dams. Beaver dams turn streams into marshes, providing places to live for the beavers and other animals, such as wood ducks and river otters.

Not All Beaver Floods Are Good

Connecticut has lots of beavers. Sometimes, beavers flood areas which shouldn't be flooded (such as roads or farmer's fields). When this happens, the beavers may be trapped during the trapping season or pipes may be put in the dam to let the water out. Towns have people that make decisions on what to do when flooding occurs on public land.



P.J. FUSCO

Did You Know?

The Native Americans and early settlers traded beaver skins, or pelts, as money. The pelts were shipped to Europe where they were turned into felt and made into hats.

Today, beaver pelts are used to make coats, hats, gloves, rugs and blankets.

Livable Lodges

Most beavers live in lodges that they make out of sticks and mud. Inside, there is a dry area for shelter and a place to have young. Several underwater entrances lead to the lodge.

Made for the Water

Unscramble the words below and learn how beavers are adapted to live in the water. (Answers to right).

bbeedw hind feet

orofertaw fur

ddlape-shaped tail

Answers to Quiz:

webbed, waterproof, paddle

Canada Goose

What large bird is brown on its back, white on its belly and has a white cheek patch?

Some like it hot! (Or at least warm!)

Connecticut has resident Canada geese that stay all year long. They nest and spend the winter in Connecticut. Other geese are migratory and nest in Alaska and northern Canada and spend the winter in the southern states. Some of these geese migrate through Connecticut in fall and spring. If Connecticut's winter is mild, some of the migrant geese will stay all winter long.

Watch where you're walking!

Sometimes Canada geese are a nuisance in parks, golf courses, ballfields and lawns. Too many geese leave too many droppings! High grass and low fences may keep geese out. Frightening geese with loud noises, scarecrows, flying balloons or dogs sometimes works, too. Hunting, where it is allowed, can help solve some goose problems.



Honk, honk, honk!

When Canada geese migrate, their loud honking can be heard from miles away. The geese fly together in large, V-shapes in the sky. As the birds fly, little air currents are made around the wings and body. Flying in a "V" helps the birds gain lift from each other and they use less energy on their flight.

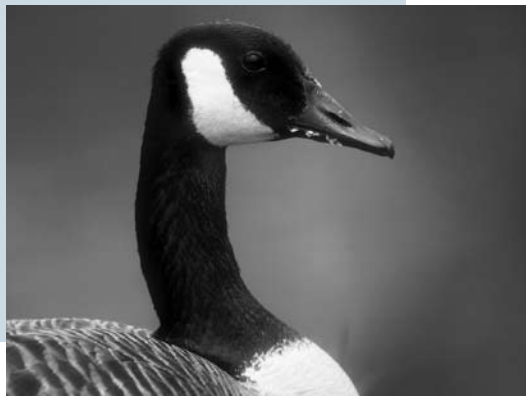
It's not "Canadian"

When you are talking about more than one goose say, "**Canada** geese" not "**Canadian** geese." Many people make this mistake. Let your English teacher know!

What does a Canada goose eat?

Unscramble the words below to find out.

1. *teawr nslpta*
2. *desse*
3. *rlvoce*
4. *ragisn*
5. *sgsar*



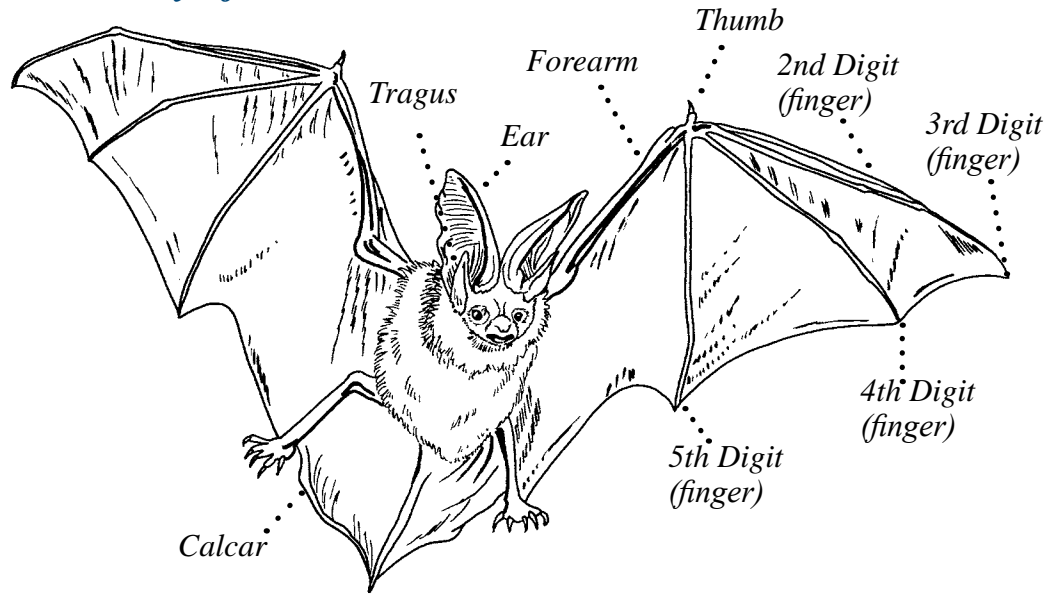
Answers to Quiz:

1. water plants, 2. seeds, 3. clover, 4. grains, 5. grass

Batty About Bats

Bats are flying mammals that navigate by sound (echolocation). They emit sounds which bounce back as echoes. An echo can tell a bat where an insect or any other object is located.

Anatomy of a Bat



Bats belong to the scientific order Chiroptera, which means “hand-wing.” This illustration shows the bat’s wing, which is actually a web of skin stretched between the “fingers” of its hands.

Bat Buffet

What do bats eat?

Many eat insects. Some bat species in other countries eat fruit or nectar and even fish. Vampire bats, a small group that lives in Central and South America, feed on animal blood.

What do Connecticut bats eat? Insects.

What do all young bats eat? Like all mammals, young bats feed on their mother’s milk.

Bat and Moth Game

Ever play “Marco-Polo” in the swimming pool? This game is very similar but is played on land. One person is the bat and another is the moth. Both must stand in a circle made by the other players. The bat is blindfolded. The moth must say “moth” every time the bat says “bat.” The object of the game is for the bat to rely only on sound and tag the moth.

Beneficial Bats

- Bats are important predators of night-flying insects.
- Many tropical bats pollinate plants and help spread seeds.
- Bat droppings, or guano, can be used as fertilizer.

True or False

Bats are blind.

Bats get into your hair.

All bats have rabies.

Answers to Quiz:

All are False. And, all are some of the greatest myths about bats. Most bats can see well, but rely more on sound than sight. Because a bat can find something as small as a tiny insect, it can certainly detect something as large as your hair and avoid it. Like all mammals, bats can get rabies, but only a few do. Unlike many other mammals, bats with rabies seldom become aggressive.

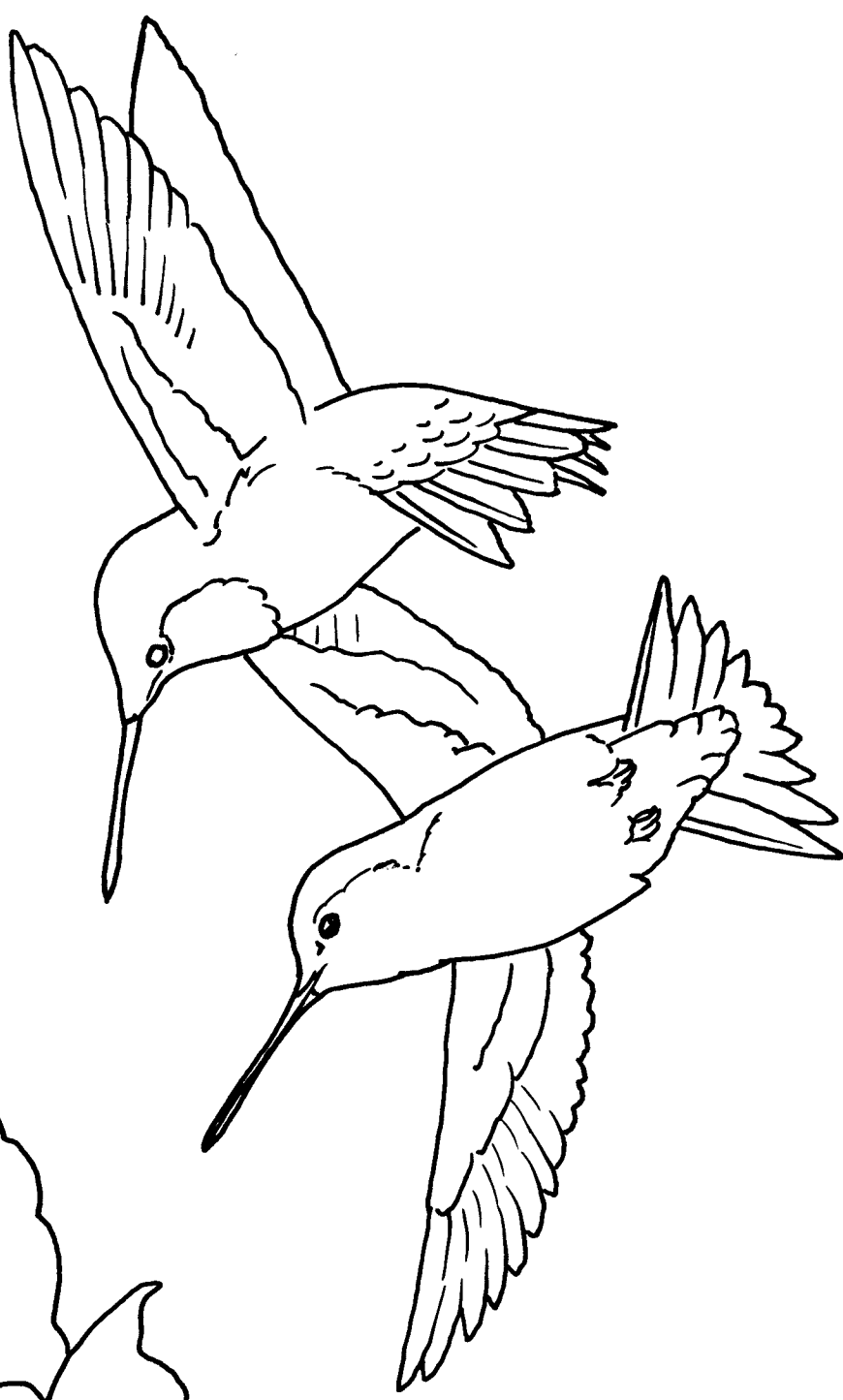
Ruby-Throated Hummingbird



The ruby-throated hummingbird is Connecticut's smallest bird.

Body: Metallic green back, side and top of tail; white underside

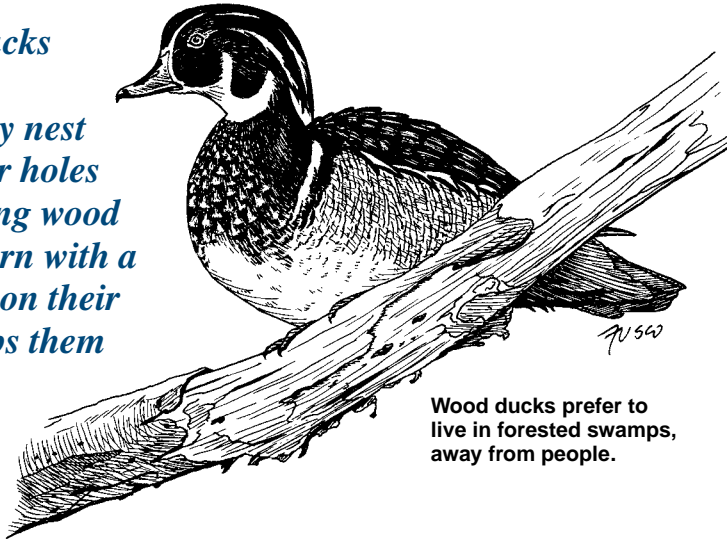
Throat of male: Red



Wood Ducks

A Duck that Nests in Trees?

Yes, wood ducks nest in trees. Actually, they nest in cavities, or holes in trees. Young wood ducks are born with a special claw on their feet that helps them climb up out of their tree hole nests.



Wood ducks prefer to live in forested swamps, away from people.

Numbers Game

1. How many wood duck nest boxes are cared for each year by the Wildlife Division and volunteers?
2. How many months of the year are wood ducks found in Connecticut?
3. How much does a wood duck weigh?
4. How big is a wood duck?

Prettiest Duck Award

Male wood ducks are very impressive. Their feathers are green, purple, bronze and white and they have bright, red eyes. Female wood ducks, or hens, are mostly gray and light brown, with a white, teardrop-shaped eye ring.

Twelve Brothers and Sisters?

A wood duck hen usually lays 12 eggs. Although all may hatch, not all will survive to adulthood. Many predators, including snapping turtles, bullfrogs and bass will eat young wood ducks. It is not uncommon to see less young with the hen wood duck as days go by.

Nest Boxes Help Wood Ducks

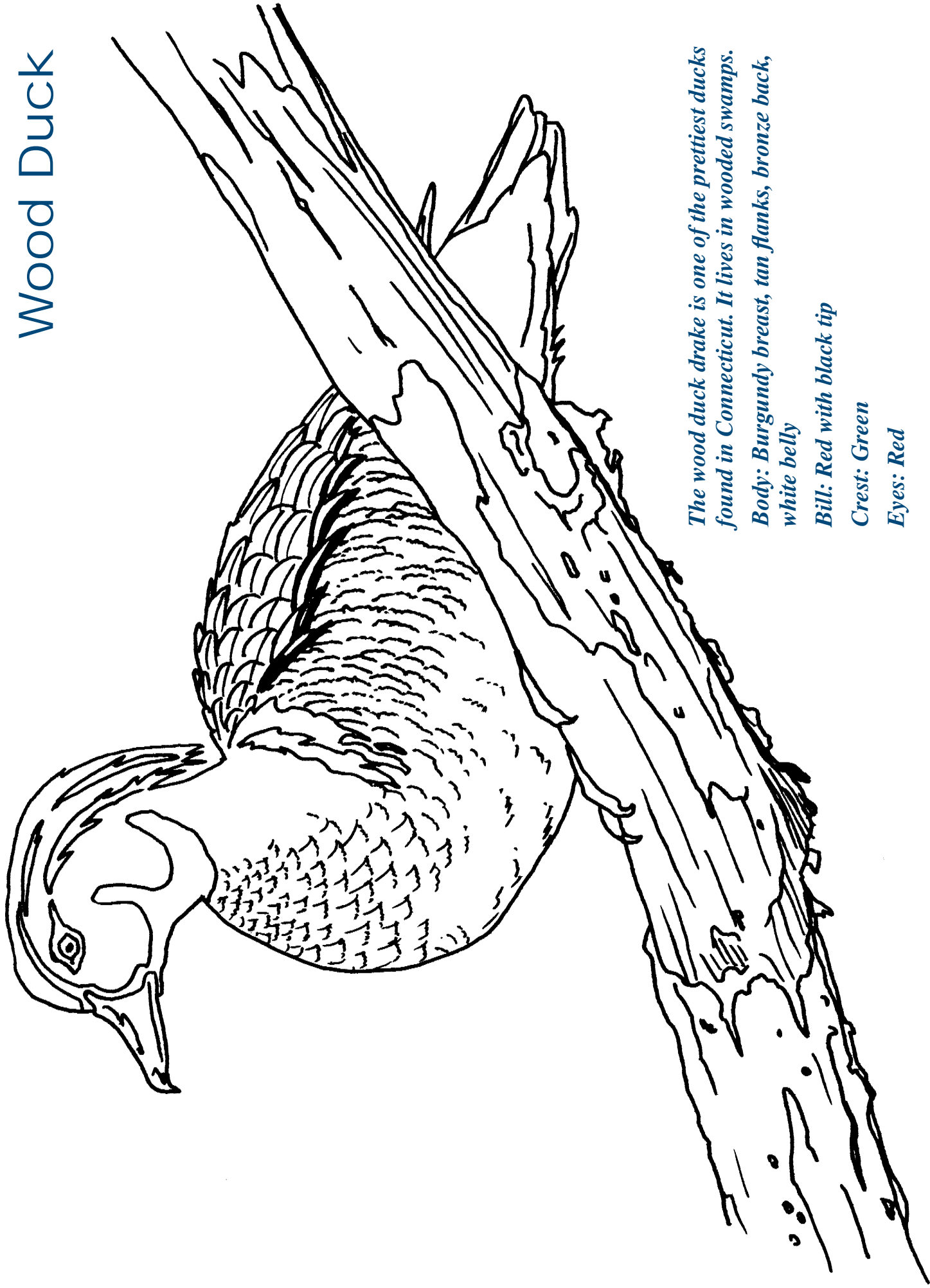
In the early 1900s, wood ducks were in danger of becoming extinct due to loss of their wetland habitat, market shooting (the birds were shot and sold to eat) and long hunting seasons. Later, through protection, carefully regulated hunting seasons and the construction of nest boxes, wood ducks have come back!



Answers to Numbers Game:

1. 1,000; 2. 9 months, from March to November; 3. 1.5 pounds; 4. 15 to 21 inches

Wood Duck



The wood duck drake is one of the prettiest ducks found in Connecticut. It lives in wooded swamps.

Body: Burgundy breast, tan flanks, bronze back, white belly

Bill: Red with black tip

Crest: Green

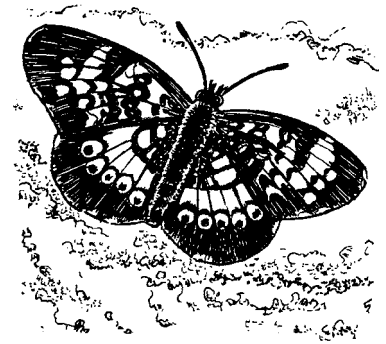
Eyes: Red

Fields

Fields are important habitats for wildlife. A field needs to be mowed or burned every few years to prevent trees from growing in the habitat.

The plants in a field are usually both native and non-native. Native plants are those that were in Connecticut when the settlers arrived about 400 years ago. Non-native plants are those that have been introduced from other countries or regions and are often fast-growing and invasive (or “take the place of other plants”).

Several mammals, reptiles, amphibians, spiders, insects and birds use fields as their habitat. Voles are probably the most common mammal found, but cottontail rabbits, red fox and white-tailed deer also use field habitats. Garter snakes and pickerel frogs (especially if near water) are among the reptiles and amphibians found in a field. Large orbweb weaving spiders and various types of butterflies, grasshoppers, beetles, bees and bugs all use fields for habitat. Birds use fields, also, to nest, feed and mate.



Connecticut’s fields are not as big or common as they used to be during the agricultural period in the early 1800s. Some birds are not as common today as they once were 200 years ago because they need large meadows and fields for nesting. Luckily, landowners and wildlife biologists are working to create more fields for Connecticut’s wildlife.

Red foxes are commonly seen hunting for small mammals in field habitats.



Ways of Woodcocks

What Is a Woodcock?

A plump bird with a body about the size of a dove.

Where in the Wild Are Woodcocks?

Woodcocks use many types of habitats during their life. They need open areas for their mating dance, young forests for nesting, and moist areas for finding worms.



Worms for Woodcocks

A woodcock has a long, probing beak for finding worms. Woodcocks eat mostly worms, but they may also eat seeds, slugs and several kinds of insects.

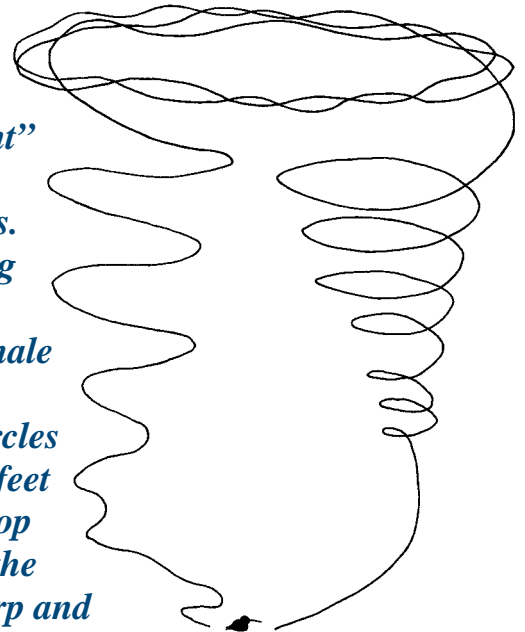
Fact or Fiction

- 1) Woodcocks are shorebirds.
- 2) Another name for a woodcock is "timber-doodle."
- 3) Loss of habitat is not good for woodcocks and other animals.
- 4) It is legal to hunt woodcocks.

Sky Dancer

Woodcocks have an amazing way to attract a mate. From an open spot on the ground,

the male makes a nasally "peent" sound every 3 to 4 seconds. After peenting for about a minute, the male starts flying upward in circles to about 300 feet high. At the top of his flight, the male will chirp and warble and then zig-zag to the ground, chirping as he returns to the same spot from where he started.



Answers to Fact or Fiction:

They are all facts!

Blue-winged Warbler

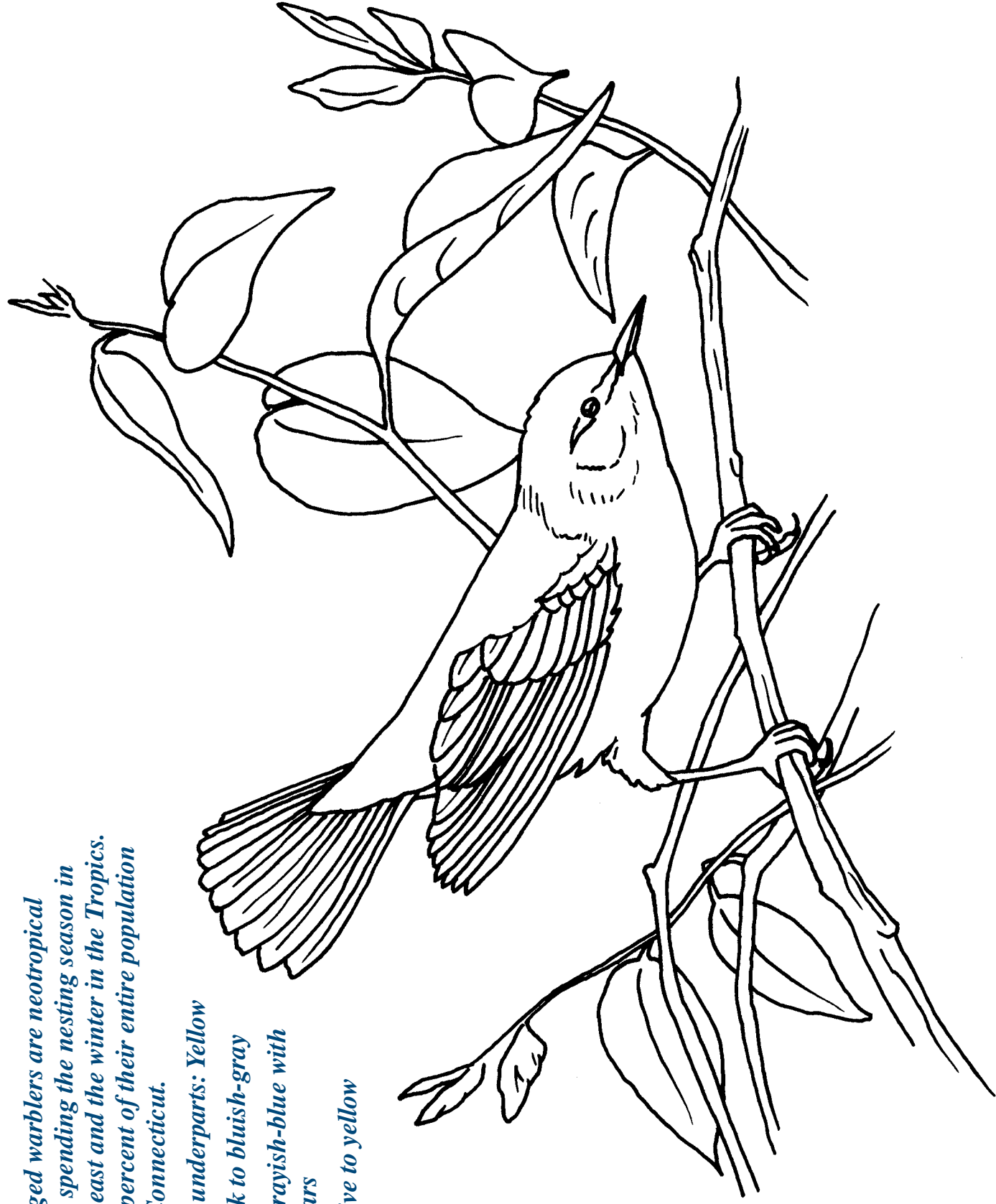
Blue-winged warblers are neotropical migrants, spending the nesting season in the Northeast and the winter in the Tropics. Thirteen percent of their entire population nests in Connecticut.

Face and underparts: Yellow

Tail: black to bluish-gray

Wings: Grayish-blue with 2 white bars

Back: Olive to yellow



On the Bluebird Trail

Eastern bluebirds are more common today than they were 20 years ago. Bluebirds nest in cavities (holes in trees) which became less common when land was cleared for development during the late 1800s through the 1980s. There also was more competition for cavities by European starlings and house sparrows, two birds not originally from Connecticut. Pesticide use also affected bluebirds.



Sky on his back and earth below....

The male eastern bluebird has a blue back and rusty-colored chest. Females are less blue than the males. Henry David Thoreau, a famous writer, thought the bluebird wore the sky on his back and the earth on his breast.

Nifty Nest Boxes

People can help bluebirds by making nest boxes, avoiding pesticide use and planting favorite bluebird foods, such as dogwood and shadbush. If you would like to make a nest box, call the Wildlife Division (860-675-8130) or visit the DEP website (www.ct.gov/dep) for plans.

Watching and Listening for Bluebirds

Bluebirds are easy to spot. The males have a beautiful call that sounds like “tru-al-ly” and both males and females can usually be seen perched on a wire, tree branch or post. They will fly down to the ground to catch an insect and then quickly fly back to the perch. This type of behavior is common to bluebirds.

Habitat Hunt

Bluebirds live in orchards, parks, farmlands and meadows with low plants and a few trees. Sometimes this habitat is hard to find in Connecticut where there are many forests.

Bugs and Berries

Bluebirds eat insects and spiders in spring and summer and fruits, like berries, in fall and winter.

Spiders

There are over 30,000 different kinds of spiders. Close to 500 are found in Connecticut. Many use webs to catch their food, while others ambush their prey. Almost all are harmless to people and most help us by eating insects.

Did you know.....?

Wolf spiders carry their young (spiderlings) on their backs.

It only takes an orbweb weaver 45 minutes to spin its web.

Spiderlings can “balloon” (float in the air on lines of silk) to move from one place to another.

Many birds depend on spider silk to “glue” their nests together.

Not all spiders have venom glands.

Tarantulas are not found in Connecticut.

Harvestmen (daddy-long-legs) are not spiders and do not make silk.



Paralyzed Prey

A spider’s venom is used to paralyze or kill its prey. Most spiders’ fangs are not strong enough to break through human skin. The black widow’s venom could make you very sick, but this spider is uncommon in Connecticut.

What makes a spider a spider?

Spiders are not insects!

Spiders have 2 body parts and 8 legs.

Insects have 3 body parts and 6 legs.

Spiders usually have 8 eyes. Scientists can identify many spiders from the size and arrangement of their eyes.

Spiders also have fangs, which they use to inject venom into their prey.

Sensational Silk!

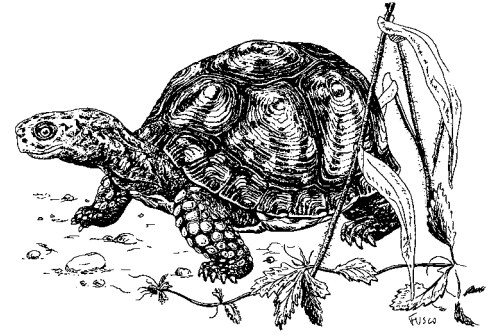
Spiders make liquid silk from special glands in their abdomen. The silk leaves the spider’s body from spinnerets located at the tip of the abdomen. Different types of silk help spiders make webs, egg cases, protective “retreats” and more. Pound for pound, silk is stronger than steel. Researchers are studying silk for use in bullet-proof vests. Now, that’s strong!!

Try this at home:

Go out at night to look for spider eyes. Take a flashlight, hold it on your forehead and shine it 10 feet from you on the ground. Look for sparkling green eyes among the plants. These are the emerald eyes of wolf spiders.

Terrific Turtles

Everyone likes turtles. Connecticut has 12 different types of turtles, counting the four sea turtles that feed in our coastal waters. Here's a look at a few of our native turtles.



Please don't trouble the turtles!

Turtles are best kept in the wild. It takes years for a turtle to become an adult and, once it does, it needs to mate to make more turtles! When turtles are in captivity, they can lose the ability to get food on their own, become ill easily and are unable to be returned to the wild.

Rare Bog Turtles

Connecticut's smallest and rarest turtle is the bog turtle. This secretive turtle lives in wet meadows and wetlands called bogs, only in the northwestern part of the state. Bogs are not very common in Connecticut. The bog turtle is also rare because it has been over-collected for the pet trade. This turtle can be recognized by the orange patch on each side of the head.

Box Turtles

Box turtles are becoming less common in Connecticut because many have been collected as pets or are killed when they cross roads. In Connecticut, box turtles can no longer be taken from the wild to be kept as a pet.

Box turtles are land turtles. They have a unique bottom shell with a "hinge" that lets the turtle close its shell like a box.

Take the Turtle Test

Match the description to the turtles.

1. I live in ponds and can often be seen basking in the sun on a floating log.
2. I am found in salt marshes and some people like to eat me in soup!
3. I am the largest turtle in North America.
4. I have yellow spots on my back.
5. When I am disturbed, I make a strong odor.

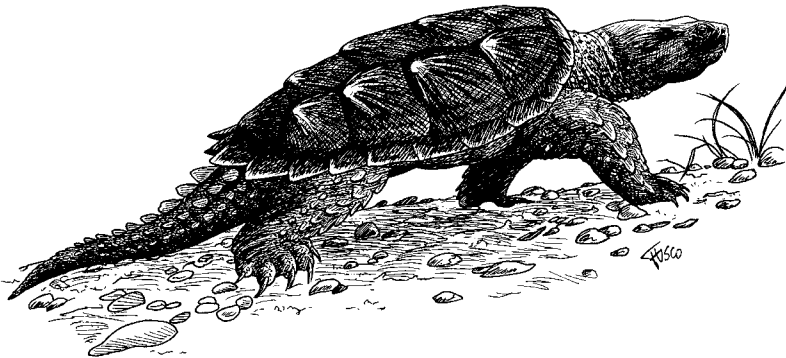
musk turtle

leatherback sea turtle

painted turtle

diamondback terrapin

spotted turtle



Snapping Turtles

Snapping turtles get their name from their large, strong jaws and their habit of snapping to defend themselves. They often snap more when they are out of water than in water. These turtles have a small bottom shell which does not offer very much protection compared to other turtles. Snapping turtles live in ponds, rivers, beaver marshes, bogs and other wet habitats.

Answers to Quiz:

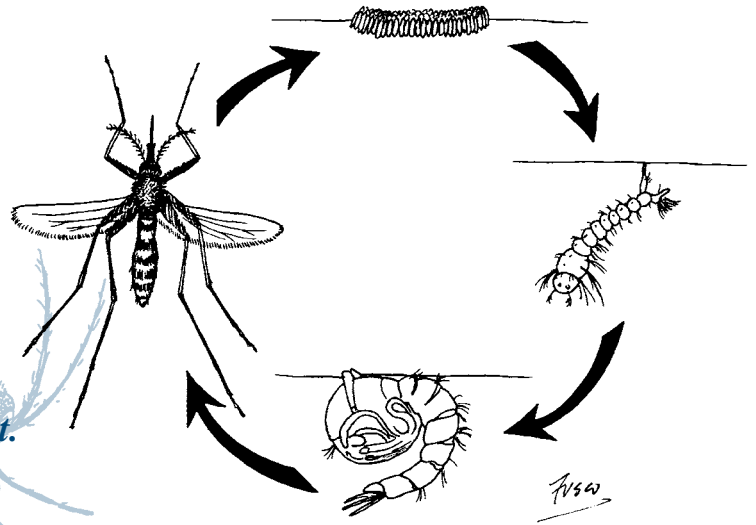
1. painted turtle; 2. diamondback terrapin; 3. leatherback sea turtle; 4. spotted turtle; 5. musk turtle

Mosquitoes

What good are mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes are members of the food chain and are eaten by many fish, birds and bats.

Mosquitoes are pollinators like bees and butterflies. While traveling to a flower for nectar, mosquitoes pick up pollen, which is then brought to the next flower that they visit.



Mosquitoes begin their life as eggs deposited in or near water. Eggs deposited near water hatch when flooded by rain or high tides. The eggs develop into larvae (wrigglers) and then into pupae (tumblers). Finally, the adults emerge and begin the cycle again.

True or False

Not all mosquitoes bite humans.

Only female mosquitoes draw blood.

Both male and female mosquitoes feed on the nectar of plants.

Male mosquitoes are attracted to sounds the females make with their wings.

Some mosquitoes have been found in water three times as salty as seawater.

Mosquitoes and Disease

Some mosquitoes can carry germs that cause diseases in humans and other animals. The germ is passed to the animal through the mosquito's bite. Canine heartworm, which affects dogs and occasionally cats, is carried by mosquitoes, while malaria (most common in the tropics), Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV) are diseases that affect humans. In summer, people in Connecticut become concerned about mosquitoes carrying EEE and WNV. Usually, these viruses are found in birds and bird-biting mosquitoes that live in or near wetland habitats. The chance of people getting one of these viruses is very small.

Mosquitoes everywhere!

Worldwide, there are about 2,500 to 3,000 different kinds (species) of mosquitoes. Several new species are identified by scientists each year. In the United States, there are close to 200 species and, in Connecticut, 49. The tropics have the greatest number of different species and the Arctic has the greatest concentration.

Try this at home:

Take a cup and scoop up some water from a small pond. Look closely and you may see wrigglers or tumblers moving in the water. Many mosquitoes grow in calm water. Tires, birdbaths and kiddie pools are all places mosquitoes breed.

If you don't want any extra mosquitoes in your yard, be sure to throw away any trash that can collect water and serve as a temporary pool for mosquitoes!

Answers to Quiz:

All are true.

Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are the trees, shrubs and plants that are found along the edge of streams, rivers, lakes and ponds. These areas are great habitats for many different types of wildlife and also provide a place where floodwaters can go. Several of the plants that grow along riparian areas have long roots to help anchor them in the wet soil.



Riparian areas provide cover for wildlife that visit waterways for food. Bald eagles and belted kingfishers use trees along the edge of waterways to perch until ready to catch fish in the water. Other birds, like Louisiana and Northern waterthrushes and great blue herons, can be seen along the edge of a stream eating their food as well. Waterthrushes eat insects while great blue herons eat fish, frogs and crayfish.

Riparian areas also are nesting places for wildlife. Dens and cavities in large, older trees along rivers provide nest sites for all kinds of animals from swallows to wood ducks. Many other birds nest among the branches of shrubs and trees in riparian areas.



Riparian areas are “travel corridors.” River otters, raccoons, foxes and coyotes use riparian areas to travel from one spot to another.

Vernal Pools:

Now You See Them, Now You Don't

What is a vernal pool?

A low spot in a forest, meadow or other habitat that fills with water and dries out in a few months.

How big is a vernal pool?

Vernal pools can be very big or very small. Some could fit in your living room while others are as large as a football field.

Why are they important?

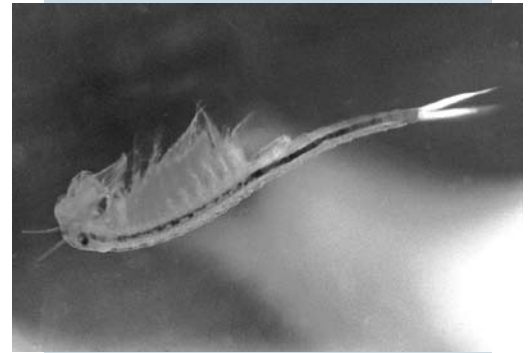
Several salamanders and frogs lay their eggs in vernal pools. Because these pools dry up, fish do not live in them and eat the eggs. Vernal pools are also home to many different types of insects.

I Didn't Know Frogs Quack

Not all frogs quack, but there is one called the wood frog that does. Wood frogs are brown, about two and one-half inches long, and have a raccoon-like mask. In the spring, they migrate to vernal pools. The males will sing to the females to get them to mate. The male's song sounds just like a quacking duck.

Salamanders by the Hundreds!

If you know the location of a vernal pool, you can watch for the annual salamander migration. On the first warm, rainy night in late March, visit the pool and you may see spotted salamanders making their way to the water to lay their eggs. Salamander eggs look like globs of jelly and are usually attached in one large ball to twigs under the water. Each ball is about the size of a tennis ball and can have up to 250 eggs in it. Later, you can visit the pond again to see the salamander larvae growing in each egg. After one or two months, the larvae will hatch and remain in the pool until they become young salamanders.



Fairies Live in Vernal Pools!

These fairies are actually fairy shrimp. They are beautiful little animals with feather-like legs. They feed by straining microscopic plant- and animal-like material from the water. Fairy shrimp are eaten by many of the other animals found in the pool.



Habitat Survey

Visit a natural area and see if it is good habitat for wildlife. If your habitat scores close to 100, then it may be great for wildlife!

1) Describe your habitat: _____

2) List the food types in your habitat:

Score 2 points for each kind _____

3) Is there any water here or nearby? _____ Yes _____ No

Describe the type(s) of water: _____

Score 20 points if yes _____

4) List any sources of shelter?

Score 4 points for each _____

5) How many different kinds of birds do you see or hear in this habitat? _____

Score 4 points for each _____

6) Do you see any other animals or animal signs? _____ Yes _____ No

Describe them: _____

Score 5 points for each _____

TOTAL POINTS _____

7) How could you improve this habitat? _____

A Career as a Wildlife Biologist

Would you like to become a wildlife biologist when you grow up?

If you like the outdoors, wild animals, ecology, math, computers and working with people, then maybe wildlife biology is the career for you!

Why ecology?

Well, wildlife biologists need to understand how animals interact with their environment. For example, it is important to know where animals live, what they eat and how they move from one place to another.

Math & computers?

Wildlife biologists spend a lot of time on the job conducting research to learn more about wild animals. Research often involves measurements, calculations and record-keeping with charts and graphs. Computers, of course, help biologists analyze the results of the research.

Figure this out:

If a bear eats 80 pounds of food in 10 days, how much does it eat each day?

If 60 pounds of a bear's diet is plants, nuts and berries and 20 pounds of its diet is insects and other animals, what percentage of the whole diet is a vegetarian diet?

Answers to Quiz:

8 pounds each day (80 divided by 10); 75% of its diet is a vegetarian diet (60 divided by 80, multiplied by 100)



Wildlife biologists must be ready and able to handle wild animals in both wild and captive situations. For example, Wildlife Division biologist Paul Rego is careful as he releases an agitated bobcat that was hit by a car and kept in captivity until it was determined that the bobcat did not have any injuries.

People? Probably one of the least known aspects of the job is how much time is spent answering questions from the public and media and helping people learn to live close to, or coexist, with wild animals.

Still sound like a good career?

Then start learning all you can about wildlife....spend more time outside; join a bird club; use a computer to research animals you would like to learn more about. And get good grades in school!

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 non-native (not from Connecticut) animals or plants.

What does endangered mean?

In Connecticut, endangered means that there are no more than 5 places in the state where the plant or animal is found.



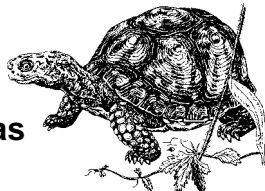
Golden-winged warbler

In Connecticut, threatened means a plant or animal is found in no more than 9 places.



Puritan tiger beetle

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).



Eastern box turtle

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 Connecticut's list.

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

Answers to Quiz:

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.

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

Answers to Quiz:

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

Snow Tracking

Have you ever seen a track in the snow and wondered who made it? By looking at a track's shape, size and trail pattern, you can figure out which animal was around before you were!

The First Clue

Is the track . . .

dog-like?

(oval with claw marks)
coyote, red fox,
gray fox, dog

COYOTE



cat-like?

(round and no claw marks)

bobcat, cat

BOBCAT



with big, back feet; little front feet?

rodents, rabbits

RABBIT



different?

skunk, weasels

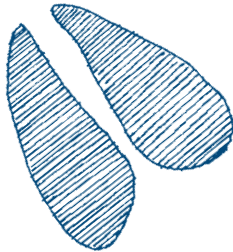
SKUNK



heart-shaped?

deer, moose

DEER



hand-like?

raccoon, opossum

OPOSSUM



More Clues

Does the trail of tracks . . . end at a tree?

squirrel?

follow a straight path?

fox or coyote?

show no pattern at all?

skunk?

Clues to Close the Case

Knowing about habitats helps!

3-inch, dog-like tracks in a field?

COYOTE

hand-like tracks by a stream?

RACCOON

2-inch, cat-like tracks in rocky woods?

BOBCAT

Solve this Mystery:

While walking in a field one day, you see dog-like tracks following a straight path. Walking a little further, you notice the tracks of an animal that has two small feet and two large feet. The dog-like tracks follow the other tracks for a while until they lead to a thick, brush pile. Then, you only see dog-like tracks leaving the brush pile. What do you think happened?

Answer to Mystery:

A coyote was walking in the field where it smelled a rabbit's trail. It followed the rabbit's trail, hoping to make a meal of it, but the rabbit escaped by entering a small hole in the brush.

Nest Boxes

Scarce Snags

Snags (standing dead trees) have cavities (holes), sometimes made by animals, that provide nest sites and shelter for wildlife. When snags are not common, a simple solution to help wildlife may be to put up a nest box.

The Right Rules!

#1 Make the entry hole the *right* size.

By correctly sizing the entry hole on a nest box, you can keep out larger, unwanted animals.

#2 Place the box in the *right* location.

It is important to place a box in the correct habitat and at the proper height.

#3 Attract the *right* animal.

Discourage invasive birds, like starlings and house sparrows, from nesting in bluebird nest boxes.



Predator Protection!

After placing a nest box in the correct habitat, be sure to protect it from predators, such as raccoons. How do you do this? Place a piece of sheet metal around the pole or tree where the nest box is attached to make it too slippery to climb.

What animals use nest boxes?

Woodpeckers

Squirrels

Owls

Bluebirds

Wood Ducks

and more!

Building a Nest Box

Here are some measurements for a screech owl nest box:

Floor size: 8 inches x 8 inches

Entrance hole: 3 inches in diameter

Entrance above floor: 9 to 12 inches

Make the box 12 to 15 inches deep

Place the box 10 to 30 feet above the ground in a wooded location.

(Get some help for this one!)

Sessions Woods Habitat Hunt

Forest habitat

1. Approximately 60 percent of Connecticut is covered with forest. Look around at the Sessions Woods forest. Are the trees mostly deciduous (shed their leaves each fall) or coniferous (shed their leaves or needles less regularly)?

Both types of trees provide cover for wildlife. However, coniferous trees are especially useful as cover and for warmth during winter.

2. Try to find an oak tree by looking for this leaf.



Oak trees produce acorns -- a very important food source for wildlife. Acorns and other hard fruits are called "mast" by wildlife biologists. In addition to bluejays, wild turkeys and white-tailed deer, what other common animal eats acorns?

3. Read the trail signs to find the name of a shrub in the forest that provides food for wildlife. Write the name of this plant in the space provided below.
4. What is the special name given to a tree which contains a hole or cavity that provides shelter and a nesting site for wildlife?
5. Animals need water in order to survive. Which sources below would provide water for the animals living at Sessions Woods?
spring vernal pool stream beaver marsh pond
6. Although mammal predators, such as coyotes and foxes, live at Sessions Woods, you are unlikely to see them. Have you seen any 8-legged predators though? What were they?
7. Sit quietly for 5 minutes and listen for bird songs. How many different songs did you hear?

If you heard a song that sounded like, "teach'er, teach'er, TEACH'ER," then you heard the ovenbird. The ovenbird makes a nest on the forest floor. This bird is a type of neotropical migrant -- meaning it spends the warm months in the north and then migrates to the tropics to spend the winter. Some neotropical migrants are in trouble because they are losing habitat as rainforests are cleared in the tropics. Sometimes their summer habitat here is destroyed as well.

Beaver marsh habitat

8. Beavers have created changes in the landscape for thousands of years. By felling trees and building dams along streams, beavers flood the area and create a marsh. Beaver marshes provide the perfect living quarters for a variety of wildlife.
What happens to the trees in a beaver marsh?

Dead, standing trees are called "snags" and can provide nesting places for tree swallows, wood ducks and woodpeckers. Do you see any birds on the branches of the "snag?"

9. Shrubs grow along the edge of the marsh providing food and shelter for many animals. Which of the animals listed below might use the shrubs for food or shelter?

red-winged blackbirds skunks raccoons mallards black bears

10. Pondweeds and waterlilies provide food for muskrats, deer and beaver. They are also a good place to spot insects. Do you see any insects?

11. Which 3 birds would most likely use **this** beaver marsh?

wood duck kingfisher red-winged blackbird osprey

Vernal pool habitat

12. A vernal pool is a temporary pool of water which fills with spring rains and usually dries up by the end of summer.

Which animals lay their eggs in vernal pools? Circle your answers.

spring peepers spotted salamanders wood frogs wood ducks

13. Do these animals lay jelly-like masses of eggs or hard-shelled eggs?

14. Do you think fish can survive in a vernal pool?

15. If this pool dries up by the end of summer, certain types of evidence will be left behind to indicate that there was once water here. These include water-stained leaves, dried mud and snail or fingernail clam shells. Has the pool dried up?

Some water may remain in the pool through the fall months if it has been an unusually wet summer.

Birdwatching

Want a hobby that's challenging, needs little equipment and is a lot of fun? Try birdwatching! A little patience and a good field guide is all you need for this activity.

When you see a bird, take a good look and ask yourself . . .

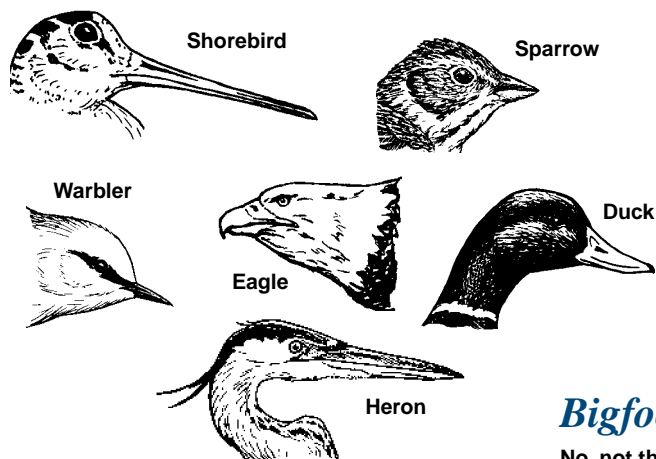
Is the bird bigger, smaller or the same size as a robin?

What color is it?

Does it have any unusual markings?

Then take a peek at its beak!

Birds have different beaks, depending on what they eat. Insect-eaters have pointed bills, while seed-eaters have heavy, thick bills for cracking seeds. Meat-eaters have strong, hooked bills for tearing flesh.



Make a Life List

Birdwatchers often keep a record of all the birds they have seen throughout their lives. This is called a "Life List." Try it yourself! Be sure to include the date and place that you see each bird. Connecticut has over 300 birds that can be seen throughout the year. How many have you seen?

There it goes . . .

If your bird flies away, watch it fly!

Does it soar?

Constantly flap?

Make a dive?

Are its wings pointed?

Bigfoot?

No, not the big, hairy monster from the north. Look at the bird's feet!

Waders have long toes.

Climbers have two toes in front and two toes in back for holding onto tree trunks.

Perchers have three toes in front and one in the back to hang onto branches.

Swimmers have webbed feet.

Graspers have sharp, curved claws, called talons, for tearing flesh.

All this information will help you identify your bird!

Take a look in a field guide, a special book with pictures and information about birds, and try to figure out which bird you have seen. These guides are helpful because they also include maps showing where the birds are normally found.

Why Do People Hunt?

It's a Tradition!

Does someone in your family hunt? Many hunters have been taught by their parents who were taught by their parents! Hunting is a tradition that is passed down from one generation to the next. If you know someone who hunts, ask them why they like hunting.

To Hunt or Not to Hunt?

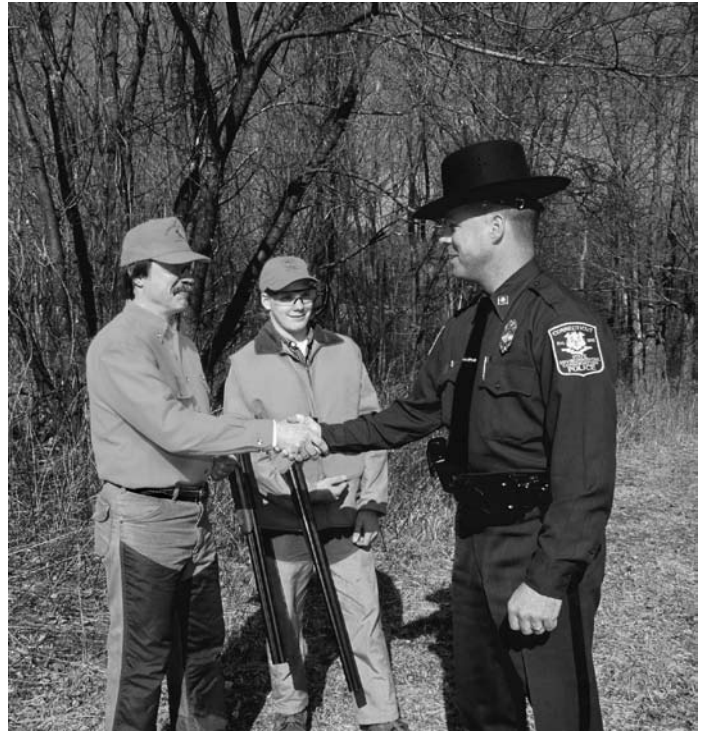
Hunting is a choice. It is also a privilege. Hunting is not for everyone. But for those who choose to hunt, it is a rewarding experience when rules are followed and safety is kept in mind.

Hunting Takes Place Outdoors!

People hunt because they like to be outdoors. Hunters often awake early and are outdoors and ready to go by sunrise. Early risers get to observe wildlife in the field. Hunters tell stories of seeing bobcats, foxes catching their prey and even bears! Hunters love being outside!

Hunting Gives Us Food!

Venison, or deer meat, can be made into sausages, steaks or stew. Wild turkeys and geese can be served for a holiday dinner.



All hunters must take and pass a course and test before they can get a hunting license. Hunters are taught to be respectful and ethical outdoorsmen. Visit www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife to find more about hunting classes.

Hunting Laws

A long time ago, there were no laws protecting wildlife. People would hunt during all times of the year. In the early 1900s, something had to be done to protect wildlife. Laws were passed that allowed hunting at certain times of the year. Hunting seasons are designed to allow people to hunt when animal populations are too high for the available habitat.

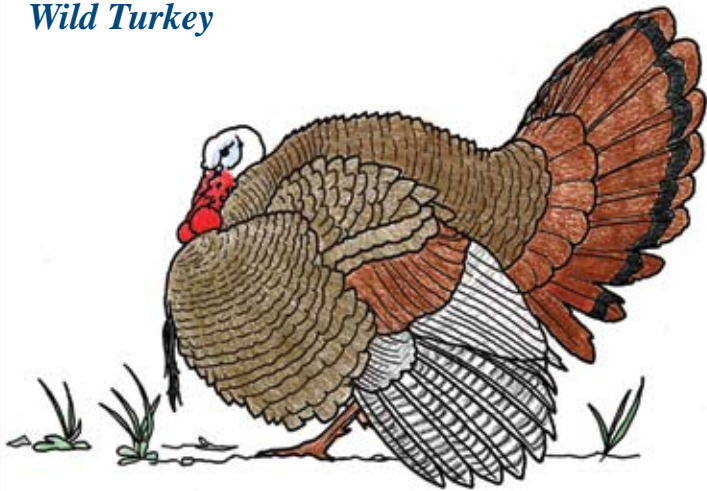
Hunters Help Biologists!

What's the best way to tell the age of a deer? Is it by looking at the antlers? body size? hair color? or teeth?

The answer is teeth! When a hunter brings a deer to a check station, biologists look at the deer's jaw and can tell approximately how old it is by checking the number and quality of the teeth.

Key to Coloring Pages

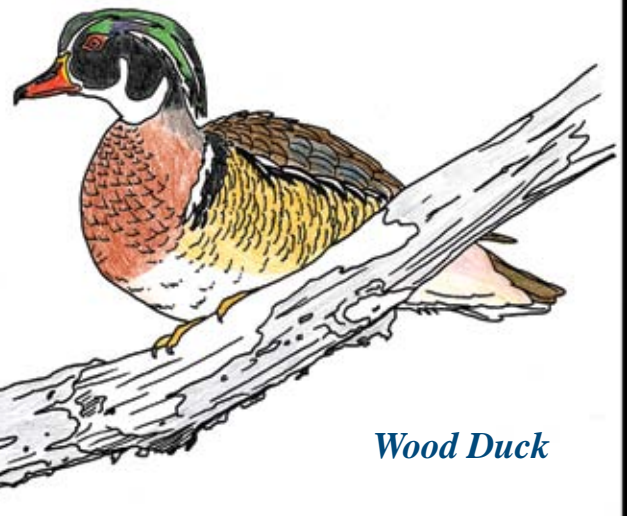
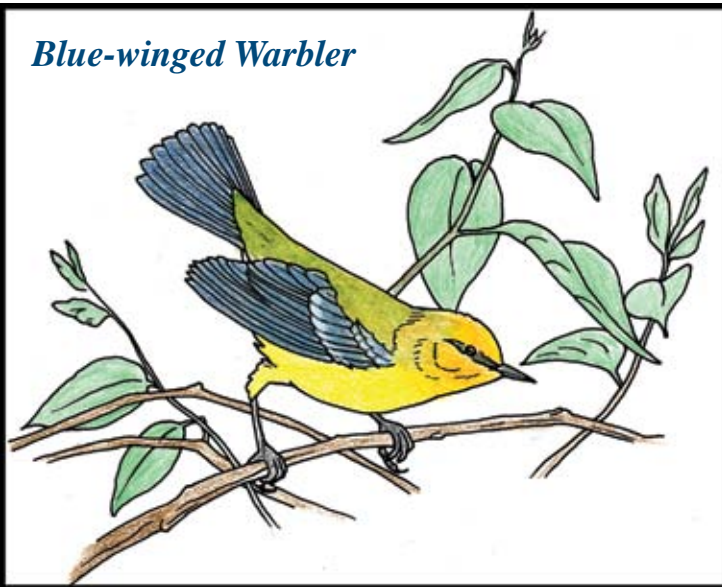
Wild Turkey



Black Bear

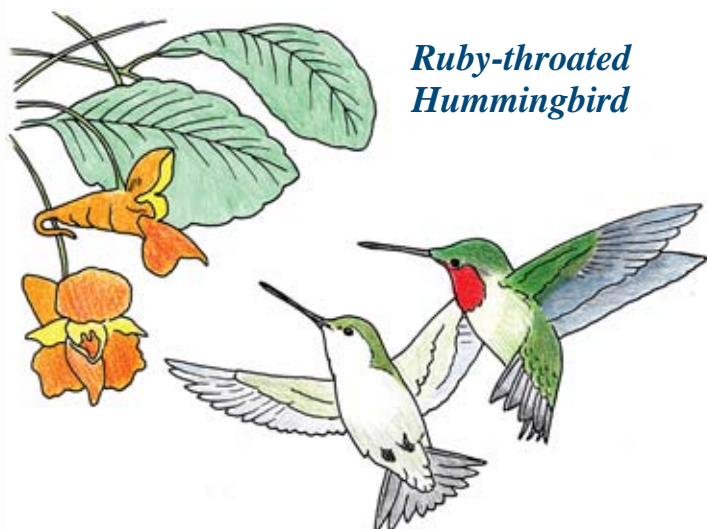


Blue-winged Warbler



Wood Duck

Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Here are some examples to use for the coloring pages.

To learn more about Friends of Sessions Woods, visit www.fosw.org
To learn more about Connecticut's wildlife, visit www.ct.gov/dep/wildlife



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Bureau of Natural Resources
Wildlife Division
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Region 5
Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program
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Animals of Sessions Woods

A quiet and observant visitor to Sessions Woods may see many of these animals.

Tips to Seeing Wildlife:

Look Carefully.

Many species blend into their surroundings.

Be Quiet.

Most animals don't like noise.

Keep your Distance.

Wild animals will flee if they feel threatened by close approach.



The red-tailed hawk is the most common raptor seen throughout the year in Connecticut.



The hummingbird clearwing moth seen hovering at flowers is often mistakenly identified as a hummingbird!



A green frog's call sounds like a bango string being plucked. This frog is common in ponds.



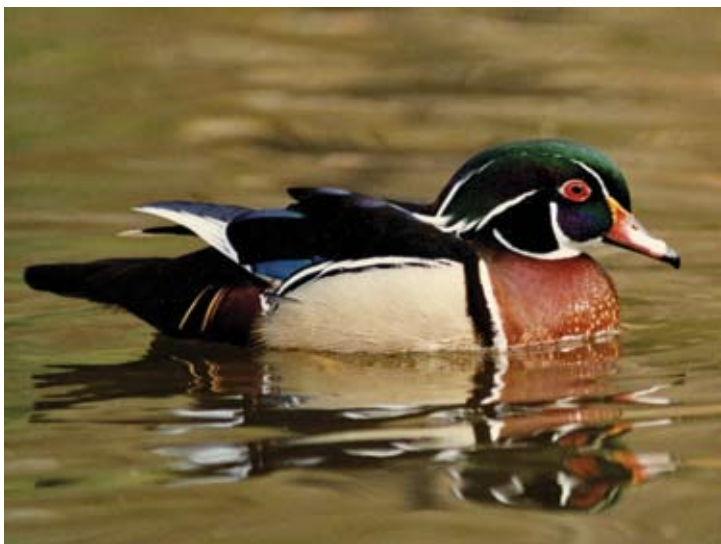
The pretty yellow warbler eats insects and is usually found in shrub thickets near water.



The eastern chipmunk eats many different types of food, including insects, fungi, birds and eggs.



The pickerel frog is an amphibian found in wet meadows.



The wood duck nests in tree cavities or nest boxes in wooded swamps.



The gray squirrel is a common forest inhabitant.



The northern water snake is a non-venomous reptile.



The call of a male eastern towhee sounds like “drink your tea.” Listen for this call in brushy fields and at the forest edge.



The tree swallow soars above water catching insects on the wing. It can be seen perched on branches near water.



Eastern coyotes are opportunistic and can live almost anywhere and eat almost anything.



Painted turtles bask in the sun to warm their body temperature and harden their shell.



The beautiful scarlet tanager is a bird of the forest. It migrates south to tropical areas for the winter.



The chipping sparrow is a common bird living easily in areas near people.



Beavers are famous for their dam-making abilities and creating their own habitat.



The white-tailed deer is a beautiful animal relying on forests and fields for its vegetarian diet.



Monarch butterflies are migratory and spend the winter in central Mexico.



The great blue heron is a large bird usually seen at the water's edge fishing for its food.



The ovenbird's, "teacher, TEACHER" call is commonly heard in forests throughout Connecticut.