



Hartford Audubon Society

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Summer 2026



Cattle Egret (photo by Bill Asteriades)

Editor's Note

I hope everyone is enjoying the warm weather! As always, I welcome your feedback and suggestions for new content at william.bugden@gordon.edu.

Thanks,
Will Bugden

President's Message

As summer unfolds across Connecticut, our fields, forests, wetlands, and backyards are alive with birds raising young and preparing for the journeys that lie ahead. It is a season that reminds us that nature is always changing and that there is always room for new discoveries and new perspectives.

This summer, I'd like to reflect on something that is just as important to the future of wildlife conservation as the birds themselves: making birding welcoming and accessible to everyone.

Birding has an incredible way of bringing people together. Whether you're identifying your first American Robin from your front porch, photographing Piping Plovers along the shore, or simply enjoying the songs outside your window, every observation and every person adds value to our shared community.

For many people, however, spending time outdoors has not always felt equally welcoming or accessible. Physical barriers, financial limitations, cultural differences, transportation challenges, and past experiences can all affect who feels comfortable participating in birding and conservation. If we hope to protect birds and the habitats that they depend on, we must also cultivate a community where people from all backgrounds, ages, abilities, and experiences feel that they belong.

Inclusivity doesn't require grand gestures. It begins with small, thoughtful actions: greeting someone new on a field trip, explaining an unfamiliar birding term without assuming prior knowledge, offering encouragement to beginners, considering accessibility when planning events, and recognizing that there are many different ways to enjoy birds and nature. A seasoned birder and a first-time participant have just as much to contribute to the joy of observing the natural world.

The Hartford Audubon Society has long been strengthened by volunteers, members, and partners who generously share their time and knowledge. As our club continues to grow, I hope we remain committed to creating opportunities that invite new voices into our community and inspire the next generation of bird enthusiasts and conservationists.

This summer, I encourage each of us to extend an invitation to a neighbor, friend, child, coworker, or family member to join you for a walk or simply pause to watch the birds outside. You never know where that first encounter with nature may lead.

Thank you for your continued support of the Hartford Audubon Society and for everything you do to help protect birds, preserve habitats, and build a welcoming community for all who share a love of the natural world.

Happy birding,
Chris Wilcox, President
Hartford Audubon Society



White-Eyed Vireo (photo by Bill Asteriades)

Annual Meeting & Banquet **Contest and Award Winners**

Congratulations to the Winners below!

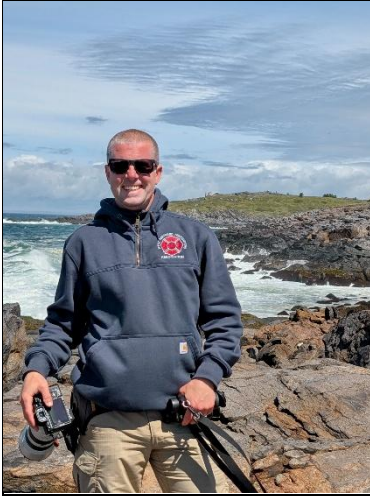
Big January Winners:

- i. Most – Connor Hogan with 102
- ii. Teen – Jacob Gransinger, age 16, 67 species (wow!)
- iii. The Golden Grebe Award – went to Maggie Peretto for sighting a Harlequin Duck

President's Award – Ann Thomas

The Member of the Year Award – Alison Wilcox for outstanding service to the organization

Meet Your Officers and Board Members



Chris Wilcox, President: Chris is a long-time resident of Simsbury and like many others he found birding during covid as a way to get outside and relax. He is an avid wildlife photographer and loves to travel with his wife Alison. His favorite birds are the Belted Kingfisher and Blackburnian Warbler.



Audrey Staropoli, Vice President: Audrey is a long-time resident of West Hartford whose obsession with birds was sparked a few years ago when she spotted a Belted Kingfisher for the first time at local park. When she's not out hiking with her dog or looking for birds, she's probably inside because it's raining too hard. Audrey joined the Board in 2024, and is looking forward to getting more of our members involved.



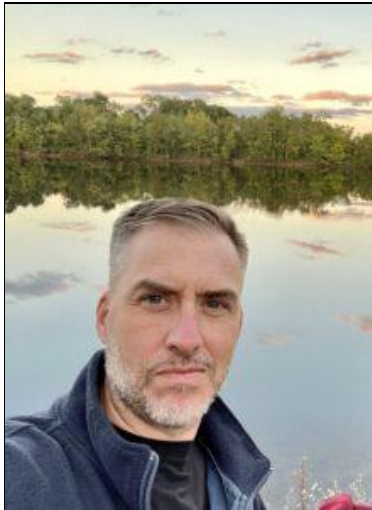
Lisa Lukawicz, Secretary: Lisa's dad was responsible for instilling her love of nature, and especially of birds. Growing up in Wolcott, CT, her parents' house was bordered by farmland and had a tremendous variety of birds. As Lisa approached retirement in 2018, she looked forward to devoting her time to birding. Lisa hopes to instill a love of nature in her three-year-old step-granddaughter, Avery. Avery has her own pair of binoculars and can already distinguish quite a few birds at Lisa's feeder.



Donna Summers, Treasurer: Donna was introduced to birding when her mom taught her the song of the house wrens at a young age. She learned to identify birds by sight and song, while helping her mom with the HAS Spring Census as a teen. Since then, she has volunteered with a variety of bird-related citizen science projects, including a Breeding Bird Atlas and HAS counts. In recent years, she has enjoyed sharing her love of birdwatching with young families in the field and teaching them about the birding world. Donna loves giving back to her birding community and is happy to be serving HAS as its current Treasurer.



Erin Mahoney, Board Member: Erin developed a passion for birding during the pandemic, an interest that quickly grew into bird photography and birding travel. She has volunteered as an Osprey Nation Steward with the Connecticut Audubon Society and is passionate about conservation and connecting others to the joy of birds. In addition to birding, Erin is an Alzheimer's advocate. She serves as a Congressional Ambassador and member of the Public Policy Committee for the Connecticut Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, where she contributes to state and federal advocacy efforts. Professionally, Erin works in healthcare, managing relationships with medical practices and supporting quality improvement initiatives.



Bill Kelly, Board Member: Bill Kelly lives in Farmington with his wife Laura. They have 3 children – unfortunately only two of them are birders. Bill is a high school math teacher in Bristol. He started birding during the pandemic when he had more time to notice birds at his feeder. His spark bird was the Rose Breasted Grosbeak. His favorite birding memories are trips to Cape May and Cape Ann with his daughter Tilly, his trip to Arizona last month with his son Joey, and a family birding trip to El Yunque rainforest in Puerto Rico.



Martin Kaehrle, Board Member: Martin grew up in West Hartford, before attending Northwestern University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he is currently a PhD student studying information science. Martin joined HAS in 2020 and volunteers as the club's archivist. He is also the web administrator for the Connecticut Bird Atlas. In the northeast, two of his favorite birding destinations are Block Island, RI, and Suffolk County, NY. He enjoys getting covered in mud to photograph shorebirds.



Vickie Margiott, Board Member: Vickie Margiott is UCONN graduate who then worked at Hamilton Standard providing Systems Engineering for the Space Suit. She and her husband Paul live in South Windsor and have two married children. Vicky is a grandma as of 2023 and is enjoying every minute of it. Actively seeking out birds began for her in Cape May with Pete Dunne led walks, and expanded in retirement with more trips and adventures. Her favorite bird is an American Avocet.



Doug Murray, Board Member: Doug grew up in an extended family north of the Adirondacks where the winters are hard. His grandparents, parents and siblings all fed the birds to get them through the winters, and he continues the family tradition. Doug is a retired environmental scientist and loves getting out hiking and canoeing. He is a CTDEEP certified Master Wildlife Conservationist and also volunteers with the environmental committee of the Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy.



Al Gatti, Ex-Officio President: Al spent over 35 years in the healthcare insurance industry, including time as a CFO involved with strategic planning. Al also served for 10 years as COO at a Connecticut estates and trusts law firm. His community engagement activities include 8 years on the Board of Connecticut Alzheimer's Association, with time spent as Chair of the Board and Treasurer. He also volunteered as a crew leader for 10 years with Habitat for Humanity, serving one Saturday every month.

Welcome New Members

Wendie diCorcia

Bloomfield

Adam Swift

New Britain

Corey Williams & Tim, Sophia, and

Owen Johnson

South Windsor

Kellie De Capua

East Hartford

Jo Brown

South Windsor

Brianne Roach

Burlington

Katherine Molnar

Winsted

Dana Muller & Wayne Johnson

West Hartford

Lorri Chadwick

Burlington

Alice Russo

Danbury

Cynthia Smith

New Britain

Jonathan Prestley

Beau Doherty

Portland

Beth Grant

Broad Brook

Brittany and Matt Innarelli

Windsor Locks

Randy and Ellen Below

Cheshire

Christie Hannum

New Haven

Margaret Bahre

Avon

Elizabeth Rex

Lyme

David Phillips

West Hartford

Tracey Weiss

West Hartford

Carmen Melo

West Hartford

Thomas Gorecki

West Hartford

Patricia M Donoghue

West Hartford

West Hartford
Virginia and Bob Vocelli
West Hartford
Julie Peck
Bloomfield
Martha Horton
Bloomfield
Marilyn Kowalski
West Hartford

Philip Brunquell
Glastonbury
April Campbell, Alexandra Sciaky,
and Deirdre Weaver
Avon
John Sherman
West Hartford



Great Egret (photo by Sam Fried)

HARTFORD SUMMER BIRD COUNT

SUMMARY

JUNE 13-14, 2026

The Hartford Summer Bird Count (SBC) was held on June 13th-14th under ideal weather conditions, marking the first time in 15 years that we completed the entire count without rain. Mornings started off cool and clear with light winds from the south, and while afternoon temperatures did reach the upper 80s, it was great to be out on both mornings.

61 participants fanned out over our 15 mile diameter circle in 39 parties, 8 fewer parties than last year. Those 39 parties, however, spent 29 more hours in the field than in 2025, no doubt due to the improvement over last year's rainy weather. Total species tallied was 112, three more than last year, and somewhat of a surprise in that 8 species seen in 2025 were not found this year. These included Mute Swan, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser, Great Egret, American Woodcock, American Herring Gull, Least Flycatcher and Chestnut-sided Warbler. The mute swans were particularly vexing as they had been at Batterson Pond all spring. On the other hand, eleven species that did not appear last year found their way onto this year's Count. These included a Ruddy Duck and a late Dark-eyed Junco that was recorded singing in South Windsor, single Sharp-shinned Hawks in Hartford and South Windsor, a Merlin observed harassing an Osprey near Hartford's Riverside Park, a Ring-billed Gull and a Hermit Thrush in Bloomfield, Great Horned Owl, Acadian Flycatcher and White-eyed Vireo in Glastonbury, a Hooded Warbler in Avon and a Yellow-rumped Warbler in East Hartford! Other rarities included Brown Thrashers in West Hartford and Bloomfield, two White-throated Sparrows in East Hartford, found on our Count for the second consecutive year (last year in Manchester), a pair of American Kestrels, a single Least Bittern and a Virginia Rail in Glastonbury. Several warblers of note included the aforementioned Hooded and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Worm-eating in Avon, Bloomfield, Glastonbury and Manchester, and Black-and-white in South Windsor and Manchester. The Purple Martin colony in Glastonbury continues to hang on in an old martin house on Ferry Road with 8 birds reported. A single Alder Flycatcher report came from East Hartford. The total number of individual birds reported was 12,615, a mere 383 or (3%) more than were recorded the previous year.

In terms of numbers, American Robin again led the way with 1395 individuals. Rounding out the top five were European Starling (996), Red-winged Blackbird (816), House Sparrow (620), and Gray Catbird (538). The catbird beat out Common Grackle (526) for the second consecutive year, this time by twelve birds! It can be difficult to compare numbers of birds from one year to the next, especially when weather is a factor as it was in 2025. In spite of concerns about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), waterfowl numbers showed a moderately significant increase for Canada Goose (40%), and a small decline for Mallard (-6%). Only Wood Duck registered a substantial decline in numbers (-26%). Double-crested Cormorant declined precipitously at (-62%), while both Great Blue and Green Herons held at last year's numbers. Clear skies are better for soaring

raptors than cloudy, rainy ones, so a (32%) increase in Red-tailed Hawks comes as no surprise. How about an (85%) increase in Ospreys that seemed to be everywhere along the Connecticut River with multiple nests observed. Bald Eagles increased slightly at (15%), while surprisingly, Red-shouldered Hawks declined (-25%). Woodpeckers were a mixed bag with increased numbers for Red-bellied (12%) Downy (44%) and Hairy Woodpeckers (13%), and declines for Northern Flicker (-17%) and Pileated (-17%). The three expected vireo species showed moderate gains, while several flycatchers including Willow (-35%), Great Crested (-31%), and Eastern Kingbird (-32%) showed significant declines. Swallows made significant gains, particularly Bank Swallow with the appearance of a new nesting area that led to an enormous (943%) increase over the previous year. Both Purple Martin and Cliff Swallows maintained their numbers on their established nesting grounds, although there are concerns about the structural integrity of the current martin nest box. Chickadee and titmice numbers did not change significantly, while White-breasted Nuthatch increased by (59%). It is well-known that Carolina Wrens do not fare well in harsh winters, so a decrease of (-34%) was not at all surprising. Warblers were a mixed bag. Ovenbirds increased a whopping (129%), and Common Yellowthroat, Pine and Prairie Warblers showed modest gains. All other warblers declined. Could this have something to do with fragmentation of woodlands? One might suspect so, except that Worm-eating Warblers increased from 1 to 5. It is more likely that gaps in woodland coverage are likely to influence warbler totals. Another impressive increase was seen in Indigo Bunting at (109%), while Bobolinks increased (71%). We might like to think that we're doing better at conserving brushland and open field habitats, but perhaps we should wait a few years before we get too excited about that. Such trends, upward or downward, take more than a single year to develop. Finally, House Sparrow declined by (-26%), but perhaps we just don't care to bird as heavily in urban areas?

This is the Hartford Summer Bird Count's 36th year, and whereas we might not garner the species totals found on those counts that take place along Connecticut's coast, there are plenty of birds to be found in our part of the state.

The Summer Bird Count is an important survey, providing information on the status of breeding bird populations. Thank you to the area captains and all participants who donated their time to participate in the Count this year. Results of ours and the other seven Connecticut SBCs will be published in an upcoming edition of *The Connecticut Warbler*, the quarterly journal of the Connecticut Ornithological Association. A full accounting of the species found on the Hartford Count is available by e-mailing me at jaybrd49@aol.com

I hope that many of you will be able to participate in our 2026 Christmas Bird Count, the longest running of all "citizen science" surveys. The Christmas Count will take place on Sunday, December 20, 2026. Save the date!

Jay Kaplan, Compiler
Hartford Summer Bird Count



Eastern Meadowlark (photo by Will Bugden)

HARTFORD AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD NOTES March - May

by Jamie Meyers

March was significantly wetter than usual, which might not have been good news to snow haters after the heavier snows of the previous couple months, but temperatures were also well above average during that month so practically no March precipitation came in the form of snow. April continued that pattern, leading to some fairly early migration, much to the consternation of spring census participants. May wound up a touch chillier and drier than usual.

Waterfowl and their allies provided some new and continued highlights. The Enfield Harlequin Duck continued through at least March 9, along with at least one Barrow's Goldeneye (m.ob). As many as 6 Redheads were present there through May 4, usually

seen from Barnes Boat Launch (m.ob). 4 Redheads were present in the area of the Glastonbury and Rocky Hill Meadows from March 8 – 20 (m.ob). Still 4 other Redheads graced Paderewski Park in Plainville from March 9 – 18 (LL et al.). A Greater White-fronted Goose was at Meadowwood in Simsbury on March 10 (DBi, SG). Other northbound movers that same day included 2 Sandhill Cranes in Simsbury (JMa) and another Sandhill Crane in Glastonbury (AD). Short-eared Owls were likely on the move the next week. One was reported from Nod Brook WMA on March 19 (DJ). Another was noted from Glastonbury Meadows the following day (AD). A Glaucous Gull and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers found refuge at Wethersfield Cove on March 19 (LL). A Canvasback from Glastonbury Meadows on March 29 was a good find (AD).

Shorebirds have a protracted migration window during spring. A few Wilson's Snipes at Vibert Road in South Windsor were typically on time (PD). An Upland Sandpiper, much rarer in our area now, was at Glastonbury Meadows on April 24 (AD). The shorebird find of the period, maybe the year, was a Wilson's Phalarope from Rocky Hill Meadows on May 18 (PP). Unfortunately, the bird was initially misidentified and then word of its presence was slower than it could have been, depriving many of the opportunity to see a species that has not occurred in Hartford County in a generation.

Happily, the county's first chasable Summer Tanager was not subject to those unhappy circumstances. First found on May 7, the bird remained into the following day, prompting dozens of birders to make the trek to Tunxis Mead Park in Farmington to enjoy this rare beauty (WK, JKe et al.). Passerine reports were generally too numerous for this space, but it's worth noting the presence of a Grasshopper Sparrow from Tulmeadow Farm in Simsbury, not a traditional nesting location. First reported on May 1st, as many as two continued well into July, thanks to the farm staff there delaying cutting the field where the bird was (JKa et al.). One hopes they were successful! Good hopes too for a Grasshopper Sparrow found on May 17 at Roberts Field in Bristol, which may be getting a bit too overgrown for this species (JS).

Waders and the like made a splash in the area as well. A nice adult plumaged Little Blue Heron was at Nod Brook WMA in Avon on May 15 (BT et al.). That same day, 8 Glossy Ibises were at Longo Pond in Glastonbury (AP) and a couple were at Station 43 in South Windsor (m.ob). Other Little Blue Herons were at Glastonbury Meadows on April 15 and May 11 (both AD). A Western Cattle Egret was at Portland Fairgrounds along with a Glossy Ibis on May 6 (BA).

We close with a few miscellaneous goodies. 2 Red-necked Grebes were at Nepaug Reservoir in Canton on May 2, marking a good census tick (JKa, JMe et al.). A Vesper Sparrow was at Tulmeadow Farm on April 20 (CH, JKa). Another was at Suffield WMA on April 25 (PD). A single Red Crossbill was noted from Hartland on April 9 (AS, RS). A Dunlin at Glastonbury Meadows on April 13 was a good find (AD). May 17 seemed to be a good day for migration, with many excellent reports. Perhaps the best from that day was a Gray-cheeked Thrush from Cedar Hill Cemetery (PD). A Northern Yellow Warbler nearly two weeks early on April 17 from Poquonock was emblematic of the early

movement noted on the intro (PD). Conversely, a White-throated Sparrow from Greenstone Hollow in East Granby on May 25 was quite late.

Observers/reporters: Bill Asteraides (BA), Debbie Bishop (DB), Andrew Dasinger (AD), Paul Desjardins (PD), Sue Gowan (SG), Connor Hogan (CH), Jay Kaplan (JKa), Dennis Johnston (DJ), Lisa Lukawicz (LL), John Marion (JMa), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Annette Pasek (AP), Petros Paul (PP), Russ Smiley (RS), Audrey Staropoli (AS), Jack Swatt (JS), Brian Toal (BT), Sara Zagorski

Please send reports to Jamie Meyers, 4 Sexton Hollow Road, Canton, CT 06019 or e mail them to me at sunnycbird@gmail.com. While I review some statewide rare bird reports to augment these notes, the best way to ensure your sightings are recorded and attributed correctly are to send them directly to me. I do not comb through eBird!

HARTFORD AUDUBON SOCIETY Spring Census Report

by Bill Asteriades and Doug Beach

Introduction

Hartford Audubon Society's Annual Spring Census has been a beloved tradition for more than one hundred years. For twenty-three days, beginning on the last Saturday in April, members of

HAS comb the wetlands, fields, and forests in the Greater Hartford area, looking for as many species of birds as they can see or hear.

A precursor of this event occurred in 1916 and was described in the May 19, 1916 edition of The Hartford Courant: "Members of the Hartford Bird Study Club will group themselves for field meetings tomorrow under the following leaders for (a) competition by towns . . ."

By 1919, a bona fide census had been established. It lasted for one week and yielded 105 species. By 1937 the census had expanded to 16 days and produced 175 species.

1950 was a banner year, as described in The Courant:

The Hartford Bird Study Club announced Tuesday night that a record total of 202 species was tallied during the club's annual spring bird census. About 50 of the organization's 200 members were on hand at Center Church House to talk over their best season of bird counting, which officially ended May 21. The 202 varieties spotted in Hartford, 12 nearby towns and along the shore, topped the previous record, 188, reached last year.

This shows the level of interest that the Spring Census generated back in the day. The fact that 25% of our club's members met two days after the census ended to discuss their findings, shows how popular it was.

Why We Do This

There is nothing scientific about the Annual Spring Census. Unlike the Christmas Bird Count or the Summer Bird Count, participants make note only of the species observed and not the number of individuals seen or heard. Trends, however, can certainly be recognized over the long run, such as the precipitous decline of the Bobolink. Questions and hypotheses can be formulated based on observations made in the field. Why, for example, have these birds not been seen over the last two seasons in the Bobolink field on Terry's Plain Road in Simsbury? Is it because populations are continuing to decline worldwide, or is it because the field itself is changing, with a noticeable invasion of ferns, poison ivy, and other woody plant materials? Or is it a combination of both?

For some, the Spring Census stokes the urge to compete with birders in other towns. And besides, it's a lot of fun. As Jamie Meyers eloquently stated, "Finding things to enjoy in life is important, and I'm sure that a lot more birds have been found and documented because of this activity. If not for the Annual Spring Census, I surely would not have been driving around Canton in the pouring rain in 2006 when I found a Red Phalarope!"

This Year's Census

The 2026 Spring Census was conducted from Saturday, April 25 through Sunday, May 17. As with last year, several days preceding the census were unusually warm, causing many trees to leaf out early. Conditions changed quickly, however, as a prolonged period of very cool temperatures overtook the period. Jay Kaplan noted that the weather kept migrating passerines to the south of us almost until the end of the period. However, on the last weekend, favorable conditions returned, and on May 17 Jay spotted an amazing 101 species in Canton!

As HAS member Connor Hogan wryly observed, "Winter left early this year, and spring came late!"

In 2026 we were delighted to welcome the Town of Berlin, their first year participating in the census. We also welcomed Farmington, which last participated in 2011, and East Granby, which last participated in 2021.

Ironically, both Farmington and East Granby produced two of the more remarkable birds of this year's census: a Summer Tanager found by Bill Kelly in Farmington, and a pair of Ruffed Grouse found by Patrice Favreau in East Granby!

A special shout-out goes to the Town of Portland, which last participated in 2013. Portland's First Selectman, Michael Pelton, and their census captain, Beau Doherty, organized a gathering at a restaurant for all of the participants and their significant others.

The purpose of the meeting was for the birders to get to know each other and for the First Selectman to issue certificates to the participants. Now that is the kind of enthusiasm we like to see! Portland, by the way, finished with a robust 132 species, including Pied-billed Grebe, Purple Martin, Acadian Flycatcher, Glossy Ibis, Peregrine Falcon, and Western Cattle Egret!

Results of the 2026 Spring Census

- Altogether, 19 towns participated this year; up from 15 in 2025. This increase was the result of the club's encouraging more members to be involved. Next year we expect Somers to participate, and we welcome other towns to join us.
- Participants in 2026 encountered a cumulative 177 species, down from the 188 species that were seen last year. We assume that the decrease was due to the adverse weather conditions that persisted throughout most of the census period.
- Glastonbury led all towns with 156 species. This marks the 20th consecutive year that Glastonbury achieved this honor.
- The following are the totals for the nineteen towns that participated this year: Glastonbury with 156 species; Simsbury with 137; Portland with 132; Canton with 130; Granby with 129; Avon with 124; Windsor with 116; Manchester with 115; Farmington with 112; Bloomfield with 111; West Hartford with 105; Suffield with 104; Enfield with 98; East Hartford with 97; Wethersfield with 88; South Windsor with 85; Newington with 83; Berlin with 75; and East Granby with 62.

Rarities Observed During the Census

AVON: Little Blue Heron

CANTON: Red-necked Grebe

EAST GRANBY: Ruffed Grouse

FARMINGTON: Summer Tanager

GLASTONBURY: Little Blue Heron; Glossy Ibis;

Eastern Meadowlark; Horned Lark; Purple

Martin; White-eyed Vireo

GRANBY: White-eyed Vireo

PORTLAND: Western Cattle Egret; Glossy Ibis; Purple Martin

SOUTH WINDSOR: Glossy Ibis

SUFFIELD: Upland Sandpiper

Additional Uncommon Sightings

(Sighted in Three or Fewer Towns)

AVON: Ring-necked Duck

CANTON: Common Loon; Red-breasted Merganser; Ring-necked Duck; Bufflehead; Ruddy Duck;

EAST HARTFORD: Green-winged Teal

ENFIELD: Bufflehead; Great Black-backed Gull

GLASTONBURY: Sora; Semi-palmated Plover; American Black Duck; Least Bittern; Blue-winged Teal; Green-winged Teal; Merlin; Marsh Wren; Olive-sided Flycatcher; American Pipit

GRANBY: Pied-billed Grebe; Common Loon; Ring-necked Duck; Alder Flycatcher

MANCHESTER: Great Black-backed Gull

PORTLAND: Pied-billed Grebe; Peregrine Falcon; Acadian Fly-catcher

SIMSBURY: Sora; American Bittern; Green-winged Teal; Merlin; Marsh Wren; Gray-cheeked Thrush

SOUTH WINDSOR: Sora; Least Bittern; American Black Duck

SUFFIELD: Peregrine Falcon

WETHERSFIELD: Gray-cheeked Thrush

WINDSOR: Blue-winged Teal

Comparing 2026 With the Historical Averages

We acknowledge that the Spring Census is not a scientific study and is not conducted under stringent guidelines. Therefore, we can only hypothesize as to the nature of a single year's results rather than draw definitive conclusions from them.

Was the decline in Herring Gulls (56% below average) the continuation of a trend caused by the closing of local dumpsites?

On the other hand, why was there such a significant and welcome increase in the number of Orchard Orioles, Tennessee Warblers, and Bay-breasted Warblers? Have their populations significantly increased, or did weather conditions align with the migration and cause a fallout to occur?

Why was there such a noticeable increase in the sightings of Black Vultures (+200%), Common Ravens (+89%), and Fish Crows(+66%)? We do know that Black Vultures and Fish Crows are moving northward, presumably because of the warming climate, and it seems that ravens are undergoing an expansion of their range in several parts of the continent.

Below are two lists of species, the 2026 observations of which were substantially above or below the historical average.(Historical average is defined as the average number of towns in which a species was seen from 1998 through 2025.)

Significantly Above/Below Historical Average

Species	# of towns observed in '26	% of towns observed in '26	change vs. 1998-2025 data
- Black Vulture	13	68 %	+ 200 %
- Rusty Blackbird	7	37 %	+ 139 %
- Bay-breast. Warb.	11	58 %	+ 115 %
- Tennessee Warb.	12	63 %	+ 115 %
- Common Raven	18	95%	+ 89 %
- Purple Finch	14	74 %	+ 78 %
- Orchard Oriole	18	95 %	+ 76 %
- Fish Crow	17	89 %	+ 66 %
- Cape May Warb.	5	26 %	+ 52 %
- Winter Wren	7	37 %	+ 48 %
- Bald Eagle	16	84 %	+ 47 %
- DC Cormorant	18	95 %	+ 44 %
- Red-should. Hawk	16	84%	+44 %
- Am. Black Duck	2	11 %	- 66 %
- Am. Herr. Gull	4	21 %	- 56 %
- Gr. Bl-bk. Gull	2	11 %	- 56 %
- Wh-cr. Sparrow	5	26 %	- 46 %
- Am. Woodcock	5	26 %	- 39 %
- Com. Nighthawk	5	26 %	- 32 %
- Bobolink	8	42 %	- 31 %
- Wilson's Snipe	4	21 %	- 25 %
- Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	42 %	- 23 %
- Cliff Swallow	4	21 %	- 23 %

We wish to thank HAS Archivist Martin Kaehrle for his invaluable help in researching the history of our club's Annual Spring Census.

Essay



Bobolink (photo by Joan Heffernan)

Grassland Management

By Abby Wolcott

These are trying times for those of us who love birds and wild places. One of my coping mechanisms is to go back to my childhood in my head when I, along with a bunch of my brothers and some neighbor kids, had free range of fields and swamps. One of our favorite destinations was a pond at the edge of my grandparents' property. To get there we needed to trudge through a big field where we looked for the patches of wild strawberries that we knew well. We saw red winged blackbirds take flight and would try and mark the spot so we could seek out their nests. More often than not, the nest would remain concealed. But, there was always something to see. We could count on woodchucks, not shy in the least, as they stood on their hind legs on their mounds surveying their territory while we passed through the fields. We loved them and tried not to twist our ankles in any of their entrance holes to their burrows. Our stick legs were sturdier than we thought, and we always arrived in one piece at the pond. The snapping turtles and bull frogs seemed to await our visit as they poked their noses up through the duck weed and thrummed from the banks, luring us. We remained at the pond for the afternoon, venturing further and further into the muck.

Several decades later, the pond still calls my name and is part of preserved land in Suffield. And the meadow that we passed through on our little legs still exists. Over the past five years, the fields have been managed with cooperation between local farmers and the board of the Suffield Land Conservancy following rigid mowing and non-mowing schedules. The organization was trying to entice more grassland birds to make these fields their home. Like many of my HAS friends, I would frequent this area with my binoculars, especially when it was time for the annual bird census.

And, low and behold, last week as I visited the pond, I heard the call of the bobolink and spotted the male posted up on a stiff grassy patch. My heart sang to see the majestic bird in his black and yellow attire singing and giving me hope. The stewards of this parcel of land had accomplished their mission. and I was lucky enough to be a witness. I was glad to take this as a win and to pass on my sighting to those that had restrained themselves over the years when it came to mowing and haying. The bobolinks' arrival was the reward for a group effort.

And of course, I had Mary Oliver's words about bobolinks circulating in my head. In her poem *The Flare*, penned to comfort, she wrote "What will open the dark fields of your mind?... Only a long lovely field of bobolinks." So, one by one, these grassland birds were comforting me, helping me to pause from my hand-wringing. Lifting my heavy heart and giving me a glimmer of hope for wild things in these trying times.

Poetry Corner



Lincoln's Sparrow (photo by Doug Beach)

We Made It!

Ernie Harris

*It would be too busy
at the sanctuary to
enjoy birding.*

*So we drove to the WMA
and walked the grassy path.*

*Light rain, blueberry
picking woman,
very few birds.*

*So- "Onward!"- we'll drive
a forest road labeled
'Poor Condition'.*

*I have never driven such
a rocky, rut strewn,
deeply puddled route.*

*All in an attempt to do
some wet birding.*

(WMA = Wildlife Management Area)

Source: Still, by ErnieHarris

The Crest's Poetry Corner will feature bird and nature- related work by Connecticut poets. To submit your own poetry or suggest a local poet, email Gabrielle Bugden at gvonp27@gmail.com.

Field Trip Reports



Wood Stork (photo by Will Bugden)

Lower Greenwoods, Barkhamsted

May 5

Trip Leaders: Cathy Delasco

Ten of us met up for the walk. We saw around 30 species and heard another 6 or 7 and confirmed them with Merlin.

Auer Farm

May 6

Trip Leader: Jack Halibozek

Six birders enjoyed what turned out to be a fairly nice morning despite the threat of rain. Migrants were few and mostly the early varieties you might expect. Our list includes only birds that were seen by a least one member. There were a few species that Merlin heard, including Parula warbler and gnatcatcher, which i didn't count.

The highlight of the day was good looks at a pair of orchard orioles appropriately hanging out below the new orchard. Other good looks were of RB Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole and Cedae Waxwing.

Thanks to everyone for coming out today. Hope you enjoyed it.



Indigo Bunting (photo by Will Bugden)

Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve

May 7

Trip Leader: John Weeks

Two HAS members joined me to tour the Granby Land Trust's Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve. The day began rather chilly for this time of year (46 F), with blustery northwest winds, yet mercifully was mostly sunny. While many birds were identified by ear, we enjoyed excellent views of two red-shouldered hawks, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, veery, black-throated blue warbler, American redstart and yellow warbler, among others, as well as an entertaining "moonwalk" on the ground by an ovenbird. The list totaled 44 species, including 12 warblers.

Machimoodus State Park

May 10

Trip Leader: Rob Mirer

Our field trip to Machimoodus State Park on Mother's Day attracted 10 participants. We set a new record of 59 species (we added 4 more to the enclosed list).

Highlight of the day: 3 Blue-winged Warblers in a skirmish swarmed around us just a few feet away and kept at it for several minutes.

Manchester Laurel Marsh

May 13

Trip Leader: Maggie Peretto

Under light rain three of us had a fun time studying bird behavior. Ended up with 40 species including a Black-Bill Cuckoo, four Least Sandpipers, a Great Egret and a number of singing Yellow Warblers and Orioles. Also, a beautiful patch of Spanish Blue Bells.

Penwood State Park

May 16

Trip Leader: Paul Cianfaglione

On May 16th, seven birders gathered at Penwood State Park in Bloomfield for a three-hour leisurely bird walk in search of migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes and flycatchers. It was a picture-perfect day with temperatures topping out in the mid-sixties with very light winds.

Our trip started in the parking lot, meandering two-miles down a paved path to a picnic area, and then returning back.

Despite the challenges associated with birding in forests with very tall trees, our group saw or heard 17 species of wood warblers, including multiple singing Tennessee Warblers. We also had great looks at Wood Thrush and a very cooperative Swainson's Thrush. A Great Crested Flycatcher foraging at eye-level provided another special moment.

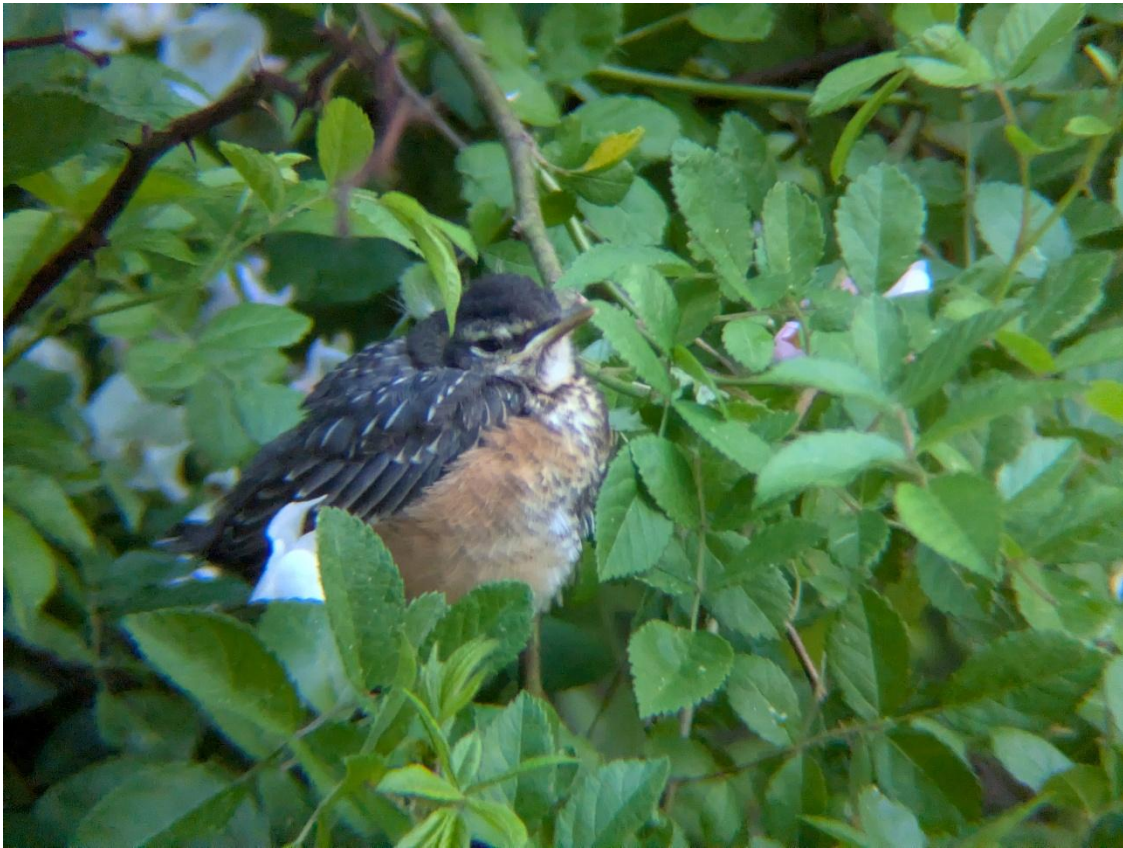
The trip concluded with a total of 60 bird species.

Addison Bog and Woodlands

May 17

Trip Leaders: Laura and Bob Bengtson

9 people participated in the HAS Bird Walk at Addison Bog and Woodlands with most birders new to this location. It was a beautiful sunny morning, 65 deg F warming to 75 deg F, with light winds. The walk strolled by salmon brook, obtained views of power line cuts, meandered through the woods on paved path and side trails. It was a good day identifying 50 species of birds, 37 by sight and an additional 13 by ear. Excellent views were enjoyed of the Northern Yellow Warblers, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Bluebirds, Baltimore Orioles, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Goldfinches, Eastern Wood-Pee-wee, Veery, Gray Catbirds, Common Raven, Blue Jays, Turkey Vultures, American Crow, Red-eyed Vireos, and a circling flyover by Wood Ducks among many other birds seen.



American Robin (photo by Will Bugden)

Cedar Hill Cemetery

May 20

Trip Leader: Paul Cianfaglione

On May 20th, twelve birders gathered at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford for a three-hour leisurely bird walk in search of migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes and flycatchers. Temperatures were abnormally warm for early morning, to such a degree that butterfly movement was as noticeable as the birds!

We focused our search for birdlife around the cemetery's first pond, and the fields and woodlands just beyond it.

Highlights of our trip included nice views of Orchard Oriole, Blackpoll and Magnolia Warbler, as well as brief looks at Wood and Swainson's Thrush.

Heard but not seen were Northern Waterthrush, Canada and Cape May Warblers.

We ended our trip with close up observations of a pair of Red-eyed Vireo and the unexpected discovery of a Warbling Vireo on its newly constructed nest.

The trip concluded with a total of 50 bird species.

Bloomfield Reservoir #3

June 6

Trip Leader: Chris Fisher

We had 16 participants and the weather was ideal with sunshine, light breeze and temperatures in the 70's. Altogether we saw or heard 37 species. Highlights included seeing lots of Bobolinks, a target bird for this walk, several Willow Flycatchers who posed nicely, a dramatic flyby of a Pileated Woodpecker who flew low over the road right in front of us, several good looks at Common Yellowthroat including a female and great looks at a Prairie Warbler in the power cut at the end of the road. We also saw two active Great Blue Heron nests, one with a chick visible. Here is the list of all the birds seen, quite a few with good looks in the scope by many participants.

Station 43 Wetland

June 6

Trip Leader: Paul Cianfaglione

On June 6th, seven birders gathered at Station 43 in South Windsor for a bird walk focusing on wetland nesting species. Weather was cool, overcast and slightly breezy, creating little to no mosquito activity.

The main focus of the trip was positioned around the Station 43 marsh itself where we discovered nesting Red-winged Blackbirds, singing Swamp Sparrows and Marsh Wrens, and the ever-present Willow Flycatcher. Other wetland denizens included Wood Ducks and a trio of Green Heron.

Our most exciting encounter of the morning was a close-up view of a Virginia Rail standing on a log preening itself.

Birdwatchers also spotted three Bald Eagles over the Connecticut River, a pair of Eastern Kingbirds, and a Baltimore Oriole building a nest right above the observation platform.

The trip concluded with a total of 50 bird species.



Bobolink (photo by Will Bugden)

Upcoming Events

The events list is being compiled and will be available soon on the website and in the new Members Handbook.

Keep an eye on the HAS calendar for more upcoming events by clicking the button below!

HAS Events Calendar



Wood Storks in Biplane Formation
(photo by Sam Fried)

Do you have a photo to add to the Crest's blooper reel? Send your photos (funny or otherwise) to william.bugden@gordon.edu

SUBMIT YOUR TRIP REPORTS

Field trip leaders: please email your reports to

Sandi Jones at frogcop@gmail.com

Mona Cavallero at mcavallero1@comcast.net

THANK YOU FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS!

Please send newsletter submissions for the

Fall issue by October 3

E-mail them to Will Bugden at

william.bugden@gordon.edu



Hartford
Audubon
Society