



## 113<sup>TH</sup> Christmas Bird Count Results December 20, 2009

Despite a snowstorm that dumped at least 8 inches of snow the night and early morning before the count, 60 dedicated observers continued the long standing tradition of counting birds on a single day in December.

Birders armed with binoculars and spotting scopes scoured Greenwich, Stamford, Darien and parts of Westchester County counting all birds seen or heard. Nocturnal owling efforts were hampered by the heavy snow, resulting in low numbers of Great-horned and Screech Owls. However, participants were able to get started around 7 am while roads were being plowed and managed to tally an above average 117 species and 46,747 individual birds.

While braving the wintry conditions, the counters had many interesting and notable sightings including an Iceland Gull at Byram Park, Eurasian Wigeon at Meads Point, and an Osprey in Westchester. It also appeared that some birds were lingering in the North and decided it was time to head south on count day. Large flocks of Canada Geese were seen overhead mixed with some Snow Geese, resulting in high



Bufflehead

counts of those species. Large flocks of Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds were also seen. Other high counts were Bufflehead, Northern Gannet, both Black and Turkey Vultures (of which 60 Turkey Vultures and three Blacks were found feeding on a deer carcass in northern Greenwich), Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, American Robin, American Pipit, and Dark-eyed Junco.

*Many thanks go to our faithful field observers for making the count a success and to our kitchen volunteers for the great food provided at the Annual Bird Count Compilation Dinner.*

### 2009 High Bird Counts

- Bufflehead
- Northern Gannet
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Merlin
- Peregrine Falcon
- American Robin
- American Pipit
- Dark-eyed Junco

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY • SATURDAY, MAY 8

# MONITORING AND MANAGING RAPTOR POPULATIONS

## A Scientific Conference

*Forging a Collaboration of Professional & Volunteer Conservationists*

Join birders and experts from across the hemisphere for a collaborative conference to identify raptor management priorities and opportunities to engage 'citizen scientists' in these strategies.

*All day starting at 9:30 am. See website for conference details and registration.*

**Morning Bird Walk: 6:30-8:00 am**

*RSVP to x221. Meet in the main parking lot.*

**Annual Bird Breakfast: 8:00-9:30 am**

*RSVP required. \$8 per person. Call store at x221.*



# Audubon GREENWICH

The Mission of Audubon Greenwich is to motivate people to conserve, restore, and enjoy nature, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, through education, land stewardship, science, and public policy advocacy.

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### AUDUBON GREENWICH

613 Riversville Road,  
Greenwich, CT 06831  
203.869.5272 • <http://greenwich.audubon.org>  
Sanctuary Open: seven days a week,  
dawn to dusk  
Center Open: Monday-Saturday, 9 am-5 pm  
Sunday 12-5 pm  
Please note: Store closed on Mondays  
Admission: Members: FREE  
Non-members: Adults \$3.00  
Children/Seniors: \$1.50

## Love nature and want to teach others?

### Be a "Teacher Naturalist" at Audubon Greenwich

Throughout the year, school and scout groups come to study nature and learn science while hiking Audubon trails. *Will you be their next guide?*

Join spring training sessions, shadow classes, and soon you will be on the trails sharing your knowledge and passion for nature with young people.



Audubon Greenwich TN shows a nest box to students

### 'TN' TRAINING SCHEDULE

- March 16 - Seasonal Changes
- March 17 - Freshwater Ecology
- March 23 - Plants and Partners
- March 24 - Insect Lives

Times: 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Call Ted Gilman at x230 for more information and to sign up.

## HUMMINGBIRDS: Feathered Gems

Sunday, March 14 at 3:30 pm • Kiernan Hall Nature Arts Gallery

With more than 330 species known in the Americas, hummingbirds are the second largest family of birds after flycatchers. These tiny aeronautic marvels have the ability to hover, fly backward, migrate long distances, and survive in habitats that range from tropical jungles to the forests of the Andes Mountains. Come learn all about the amazing adaptations and the fascinating life histories of these glittering gems when Gina Nichol, owner of Sunrise Birding LLC and former Audubon staffer shares photographs of hummingbirds from the United States, Central and South America. She will also share tips for attracting local hummingbirds to your garden. *Suggested donation: \$5. No RSVP required.*



Fiery-throated hummingbird

### Sunrise Birding, LLC Birding & Wildlife Tours

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PO Box 274, Cos Cob, CT 06807  
(203)453-6724 [gina@sunrisebirding.com](mailto:gina@sunrisebirding.com)  
[www.sunrisebirding.com](http://www.sunrisebirding.com)

# Grants Support Audubon's Education Efforts

by Karen Dixon, Center Director

To fulfill our mission of conserving wildlife and connecting people to nature, we depend on the support of hundreds of members, volunteers, and donors. Two recent grants will help us introduce even more schoolchildren to conservation, particularly those who may not have the chance to participate in field trips or enjoy the hands-on nature education that we offer at Audubon Greenwich.



The Greenwich Alliance for Education awarded Audubon Greenwich a \$9,000 grant to partner with the Hamilton Avenue School to provide a Saturday Morning Enrichment Academy to a group of students. Hamilton Avenue and Audubon Greenwich educators will teach math, science, and English/reading to students in need of extra time in the classroom. The final Saturday morning

session will be a special field trip to Audubon Greenwich to reinforce each of the science concepts covered throughout the program. The goal is that by the end of the program, students will understand that they do not have to travel past their own community to discover amazing things in nature – they can look in their backyards, neighborhoods, and schoolyards. This will help students to make connections between academics and the real world, and to further develop an appreciation for the natural world and their local community.



**HORIZON**  
FOUNDATION, INC.

In addition, Audubon Greenwich received \$10,000 from the Horizon Foundation to support our nature education programs, and to increase



**Students learning about Long Island Sound during a field trip to the beach at Greenwich Point.**

access to our programs by schools with limited field trip budgets. Our grant will allow us to provide 16 school programs free of charge, including transportation and other costs, to area schools such as Julian Curtiss, New Lebanon, and Hamilton Avenue.

*The Greenwich Alliance for Education mobilizes community resources to provide opportunities and services that foster educational success for all Greenwich Public School students.*

*The Horizon Foundation supports qualified non-profit organizations that affect positive change for children, the adults who work with them, and for those concerned with improving the communities in which they live.*

**Many thanks to the Greenwich Alliance for Education & the Horizon Foundation for supporting our education initiatives!**

## Audubon Environmental Leadership Dinner *Toasting Connecticut's Great Environmental Leaders*



**Thursday, April 29, 2010**

**The Belle Haven Club in Greenwich**

A fundraising event to benefit Audubon's Long Island Sound education and conservation programs.

*Learn more about this event and Audubon Connecticut's conservation initiatives at [www.audubonct.org](http://www.audubonct.org) or contact John Hannan at 203-869-5272 x234.*

# AUDUBON GREENWICH NATURE PROGRAM CALENDAR

## S P R I N G 2 0 1 0

### Saturday, March 6

#### Mead Lake Hike 2:00-3:45 pm

Come explore the shores, inflows and spillway of Mead Lake for animal tracks, stories of animal life, history of the lake and the surrounding landscape. *Ages: 7 & up. RSVP to Store at x22.*

### Saturday, March 13

#### Bird House Workshop 2:00-3:30 pm

Bird houses are a fun way to observe wildlife in our backyards. Come learn the secrets to attracting birds when Ted Gilman explains best practices for nest boxes and wildlife-friendly landscaping. *Ages: 5 & up. RSVP required to purchase & construct your own bluebird nest box after the program. RSVP to Store at x221.*

### Sunday, March 14:

#### Hummingbirds: Feathered Gems 3:30-4:30 pm

Gina Nichol, former Audubon staff member, illustrates the amazing adaptations of these glittering gems and describes their fascinating life histories. With vivid photographs of hummingbirds who live throughout the Americas, Gina will describe how these birds survive in habitats that range from tropical forests to the forests of the Andes Mountains. Tips for attracting hummingbirds will also be discussed. *No RSVP required. \$5 per person.*

### Saturday, March 20

#### Audubon Greenwich Hike 10:00 am-12:00 pm

Join John Calendrelli, a Sierra Club hiking guide, for a special walk through Audubon's forests, fields, and riparian areas. This hike will be an ideal way to search for the early signs of spring and learn more about this biologically rich site. *All ages. No charge. RSVP required. Call John Calendrelli to sign up at 860-236-4405.*

### Woodcock Watch 6:45-7:45 pm

Witness one of the rites of spring as we watch and listen to the crepuscular calls and aerial performance of these woodland sandpiper relatives. *Ages: 6 & up. RSVP to Store at x221.*

### Sunday, March 21

#### All about the Hog Island Camp in Maine 2:30-3:30 pm

Hog Island is a 330-acre wildlife sanctuary in Muscongus Bay and is frequented by Blackburnian warblers, flying squirrels, harbor seals, and Atlantic puffins. Join "Puffin Pete" Salmansohn from "Project Puffin" and Ted Gilman to learn about this magical island on the Maine coast. Ted and Pete will share photos and answer questions about why this opportunity is not to be missed! *All ages. No charge. RSVP to Store at x221.*



Camp Accommodations

### Tuesday, March 23

#### AIR: Safe Caulks, Paints, Fabrics and Cabinetry

#### 7:00-9:00 pm

A chemical-free home & work space is important to our health. Learn about safe choices, how to avoid unsafe products for remodeling or new buildings, and about the safest products from experts who use them daily. *Teens are free. \$10/adult. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

### Thursday, March 25

#### Chip Osborn's Organic Lawn Care 8:30-11:30 am

An ideal class for professional landscapers who want to maintain lawns without dangerous and costly lawn care chemicals. Ample time for questions after the course. \$20 per person. *This class will qualify for NYDEC, CTDEP, and NOFA education credit. RSVP required. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

### ORGANIC SUNDAY

#### Sunday, March 28

**Organic Land Care Workshop 1:45-3:15 pm**  
An ideal program for homeowners seeking to learn organic lawn and landscape care. This workshop is by John Tycz and offered by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of CT. Q&A time included. *No Charge or RSVP required.*

Followed by:  
**MOVIE: 'A Chemical Reaction' 3:30-5:00 pm**  
This award-winning film by safelawns.org founder Paul Tukey is a documentary about Quebec's successful fight to ban common lawn chemicals. *\$7 per person. RSVP required. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

*These events are co-sponsored by CT NOFA.  
Learn more about Organic Land Care at [www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net).*

### Saturday, April 3

#### Early Spring Mead Lake Hike 2:00-3:45 pm

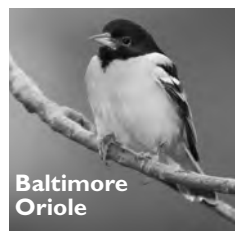
Join us as we circle Mead Lake at the time of spring thaw to seek out colorful tree buds, early flowers and any early emerging turtles, frogs, snakes, and insects, and returning wetland and water birds. *Ages 5 & up. RSVP to Store at x221.*

### Saturday, April 10

#### Workshop: Bird Watching Basics

#### 9:30 am-12:00 pm

An introduction to ornithology and the tools/skills used in bird study. Enjoy a walk, learn how to use binoculars, guides, and other resources that make birding so much fun. *Ideal for adults & interested youth. \$12/adult. No charge for youth. RSVP required. Call Ted at x230.*



Baltimore Oriole

### Vernal Pool Survey Hike 2:00-4:00 pm

Hike the Old Pasture Trail to examine vernal pools in search of evidence of breeding wood frogs, spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp. *Ages 7 & up. RSVP to Store at x221.*

### Saturday, April 17

#### Migration & Early Spring Migrants 9:30am-12:00 pm

Learn about migration, recent bird research, and the many early spring migrants in our area. *Ideal for adults & interested youth. \$12/adult. No charge for youth. RSVP required. Call Ted at x230.*

### Volunteer Day: Spring Cleanup 11:00 am-2:00 pm

Join the Audubon staff as we shake off the winter doldrums and get our trails and sanctuaries ready for spring. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes. Tools and work gloves will be provided. *RSVP required. Call Store at x221. Heavy rain cancels.*

### Healthier Foods, Healthier Families 2:00-3:30 pm

Did you know that roughly 70% of antibiotics in the U.S. are given to animals? Or that there are now more overweight people in the world than starving people? Join Chef and Health Counselor Rachel Khanna to learn how to choose healthier foods and explore some of the myths surrounding our food supply. *Suggested donation: \$10. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

### Tuesday, April 20

#### WATER: Ways to Reduce Use and Harvest Water

#### 7:00-9:00 pm

Before the 'well runs dry' come learn about the many ways to collect water and reduce use in our homes. Topics will include efficient garden irrigation, rain barrels and storage, and also explore practical rain harvesting systems for our region. *Teens are free. \$10/adult. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

### Friday, April 23

#### 'Tapped': A Movie About Bottled Water 7:00-9:00 pm

This film is an unflinching examination of the bottled water business and a timely behind-the-scenes look into the unregulated and unseen world of the industry. From the plastic production to the ocean in which so many of these bottles end up, this documentary trails the path of the water industry and communities where the water is drawn from. *\$10/person. Space limited. RSVP required. Call Jeff at x239.*

### Saturday, April 24

#### Local Wildflower Walk 10:00-11:30am

Hike and search for early spring wildflowers. Learn their life histories, ecological niches and insect pollination partners. *Ages 5 & up. RSVP to Store at x221.*

### Springtime Night Hike 8:00-9:30pm

Join a night hike to our pond, woods, fields and lake in search of frogs, owls, insects, and scan the moon's disk for birds migrating at night. *Ages 7 & up. RSVP required. Call Ted at x230.*

### Sunday, April 25

#### Birding Planet Earth:

#### Phoebe Snetsinger's Adventures 1:30-2:15 pm

Olivia Gentile, author of *Life List: A Woman's Quest for the World's Most Amazing Birds*, a new biography of one of the world's most storied birders, discusses how Phoebe became an intrepid, globetrotter and record setter who saw more than 8000 species of birds in her lifetime while amassing a breadth of ornithological knowledge to rival any professional's. *All ages. \$5/adult. Kids are free.*

### Composting 202: Beyond The Pile 2:30-3:30 pm

Gwendolyn Bounds, an author and journalist from the Wall Street Journal, will discuss many ways to create compost without an outdoor compost pile. Since investigating this topic as a journalist, she has experimented with several methods and had great success turning her spoils into soils. She will review several methods including worm bins, the "Nature Mill" automatic model, a bokashi-based method and the "e-composter." *All ages. \$5/adult. Kids are free.*

### SPRING MIGRATION BIRD WALKS

#### Wednesday & Saturday Mornings at 7 am

Rise and shine for this annual tradition. Bring binoculars. Some loaner binoculars may be available. *No charge or RSVP required.*

#### Wednesday: April 7, 14, 21, 28 / May 5, 12, 19, 26

7:00-8:30 am. Fairchild Garden.

Meet in parking area on North Porchuck Road.

#### Saturday: April 3, 10, 17, 24 / May 1, 15, 22

7:00-8:45 am. Audubon Greenwich.

Meet in main parking area on Riversville Road.

### Saturday, May 1

#### Workshop: Birding By Ear 9:30 am-12:00 pm

Indoor discussion of how and why birds vocalize, introduction to useful bird sound recordings, and outdoor walk to practice Birding By Ear skills. *Ideal for adults & interested youth. \$12/adult. No charge for youth. RSVP required. Call Ted at x230.*

### Tree ID and Natural History 2:00-3:30 pm

Would you like to be able to identify trees and shrubs and understand their integral role in local ecology? Join Ted Gilman for an insightful session about identification and how wildlife depend on woody plants. *Ages 8 & up. RSVP to Store at x221.*

### Sunday, May 2

#### 'Victory Gardens' & Nutrient Testing 2:00-3:30 pm

A special presentation by Vonne Whittleton, an organic vegetable garden designer, and Jennifer Boyd, a Physician Assistant and wellness specialist. They will teach how to establish a 'victory garden' and discuss why organic vegetables tend to be richer in nutrients when compared to non-organic varieties. Topics will include elements for a successful garden, soil testing, Brix testing, sustainability planning, medicinal plants, and botanical Lyme disease prevention. *\$5/adult. Kids are free. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*



### Saturday, May 8

#### International Migratory Bird Day

*Check website and page 1 of newsletter for details.*

### THE SCIENCE OF WATER

#### Wednesday, May 12 • 6:30-8:00 pm

Dr. Bernard Sweeney from the Stroud Water Research Center will discuss freshwater research, how our streams and rivers function as a whole, and the complex web of life that inhabits them. Only through knowing how healthy streams and rivers work, and what happens when they become polluted, can we determine how to protect and preserve this vital resource. Participants will leave with a fresh perspective on how to protect, preserve, and restore watersheds everywhere, including our local area. *No Charge or RSVP required.*

### Saturday, May 15

#### Workshop: Wood Warblers & Neotropical Migrants

#### 9:30 am-12:00 pm

Introductory talk and walk to learn characteristics, adaptations, and behaviors of these colorful springtime migrants, as well as identification tips, and resources for continued study. *Ideal for adults & interested youth. \$12/adult. No charge for youth. RSVP required. Call Ted at x230.*

### The Healing Power of Whole Foods 2:00-3:30 pm

Whole foods are powerful. Learn how food can directly impact your health, detoxify, increase energy and boost your immune system with Gina Paterno Villalobos a.k.a. The Organic Coach. Q&A session at end on how to eat for different health conditions. *\$5/adult. Kids are free. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

### Tuesday, May 18

#### EARTH: All about 'Green Roofs' 7:00-9:00 pm

This program will feature a panel of experts with experience installing live plant materials on roofs and show examples of green roof projects suitable for existing and new homes and buildings in the region. *Teens are free. \$10/adult. RSVP to Jeff at x239.*

### Saturday, May 22

#### Workshop: Birds in their Habitats 9:30 am-12:00 pm

Learn how particular bird species depend on specific habitats and how this relates to the 'Audubon at Home' and 'Important Bird Area' programs. Ideal for adults and interested youth. *\$12/adult. No charge for youth. RSVP required. Call Ted at x230.*

### Family Pond Exploration 2:30-4:00 pm

Bring your family to discover the amazing variety of insects, amphibians and other organisms which call our Indian Spring Pond home. *All ages. RSVP to Store at x221.*

Programs suitable for all ages unless otherwise indicated. Register by calling 203-869-5272. Audubon Greenwich, 613 Riversville Road. <http://greenwich.audubon.org>. Programs: \$3/adult members; \$5/adult non-members; \$1.50/member children and seniors; \$3/non-member children and seniors.

**STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH AUDUBON PROGRAMS! Send a blank email to: [AudubonGreenwichNews-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AudubonGreenwichNews-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) for weekly program reminders.**

# Who Has A Life List With 8,674 Bird Species? Phoebe Snetsinger – that's who!

by Jeff Cordulack, Events and Communications Manager

Phoebe Snetsinger spent the first half of her adulthood raising children outside St. Louis and the second half making hundreds of expeditions to remote, rugged corners of all seven continents.

Phoebe wasn't meant to be a housewife. She was the daughter of advertising mogul Leo Burnett and was raised with more opportunity and drive than most women of her time. She dreamed of being a scientist but, like many of her peers, she fell prey to the societal expectations of the 1950s and put her ambitions aside to devote herself full-time to her family.

At age 49, when her children were nearly grown, she was told she had cancer and less than a year to live. Facing death, she decided to fulfill her dream of finding and studying the birds of the world. In pursuit of this dream, she climbed mountains, bushwhacked through jungles, and navigated war zones, all in the name of beholding the world's rarest and most spectacular birds.

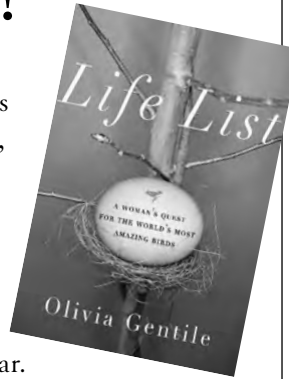
Seventeen years later, after seeing

8,674 of the world's 10,223 bird species, her quest ended tragically at the age of 68, when she died in a van accident while on a trip to Madagascar.

By then, she had seen more bird species than anyone else in history and helped pave the way for other women in the male-dominated realm of field biology.

Outside the birding world, Phoebe's phenomenal story has been all but lost - until now. With her biography, *Life List: A Woman's Quest for the World's Most Amazing Birds* by journalist Olivia Gentile, Phoebe Snetsinger takes her rightful place in history, alongside such icons as Amelia Earhart, Margaret Mead, and Jane Goodall.

Join on Sunday, April 25 at 1:30 pm for an exciting presentation by Olivia Gentile. She will share her experiences writing about Phoebe Snetsinger and her birding adventures.



## BIRDING ON THE COAST OF MAINE WITH NYC AUDUBON

Saturday, May 29–Saturday, June 5, 2010

Discover puffins, moose, shorebirds, and more with our native guide. Visit Mohegan Island, where seeing 25-30 warbler species in a day is not uncommon. Includes double occupancy lodging, most meals, van transportation within Maine (airfare not included). \$1,500 (\$350 single room supplement), [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) or call 212.691.7483 for more information.



## Nature Store News

Help support Audubon by shopping at the Nature Store. Your purchases support our mission and programs.

### Nature Store Hours:

Sunday: 12 pm - 5 pm • Monday: closed

Tuesday - Saturday: 9am - 5pm

Thank you for shopping at Audubon Greenwich!

### Weekend Volunteers Wanted:

Duties include greeting visitors, answering phones, selling goods and collecting admission. No experience needed. Friendly demeanor and good customer service skills required.

Contact Brian O'Toole at x221 to learn more.

## AUDUBON SUMMER DAY CAMP

One-week sessions from June 28 through August 13, 2010



### Does your child love bugs, tadpoles, or birds?

Audubon's 295-acre sanctuary is an ideal location to explore nature through hikes, art, games, and much more! Children ages 5 to 15 will learn about the world around them through hands-on investigation and exploration.

Camp themes vary from week to week and include:

- Creepy Crawlies
- Audubon Ecology Adventures
- Backwoods Explorers
- Aquatic Adventures
- Scales & Tails
- Aquatic Adventures
- Twilight Investigations

Camp Hours: 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Price: \$315 for members; \$350 for non-members.

Complete details and registration forms available at [greenwich.audubon.org](http://greenwich.audubon.org).

Teens 14 & up can volunteer. Please call James Flynn at x224 for information.

# Calling All Scout Leaders:

## Planning your next adventure just got a bit easier...

Audubon Greenwich has a newly designed Scouting brochure with a broad selection of Boy or Girl Scout trips for all ages. From Tiger, Wolf, and Bear Cub scouts to Webelos, Daisy, Brownie, and Junior Girl Scouts, all our programs include hands-on activities and hikes in the great outdoors. These memorable trips are designed to meet all or most of the requirements for earning scout pins and badges and are also affordable, too (only \$8 per scout). Most scout programs are scheduled after-school but weekend programs can also be arranged, depending on staff availability. Once you pick a program theme, call James Flynn at 203-869-5272 x224 and he can schedule a date that works for you and your scouting group.



**Audubon's Naturalists host scout programs throughout the year.**

*For a copy of the new brochure, stop by the Center or simply visit our website to learn more.*



Greenwich's Audubon At Home events make going green easier than ever. When you come to our lecture programs and movie screenings, you can ask experts your questions and find new ways to bring Audubon's conservation spirit home.

- The Green Homes & Building Series (March 23, April 20, May 18)
- A Chemical Reaction: A Movie About Lawn Chemicals (March 28)
- Organic Land Care Workshop for Homeowners (March 28)
- Healthier Foods, Healthier Families (April 17)
- Tapped: A Movie About Bottled Water (April 23)
- Home Composting Made Easy (April 25)
- The Science of Water - With Dr. Sweeney (May 12)
- The Healing Power of Whole Foods (May 15)

*All the event details are in the Nature Program Calendar. To stay up-to-date with new programs visit our website or add yourself to our special events email list. To sign up for emails contact Jeff Cordulack, the Events & Communications Manager, at 203-869-5272 x239 or email at [jcordulack@audubon.org](mailto:jcordulack@audubon.org).*



# Audubon CONNECTICUT Bird-A-Thon May 15th, 2010

On average, 100 species are spotted for this annual fundraiser. Make a pledge for each species seen to directly support the Audubon conservation mission.

*To join the count or make your pledge, please contact Tiffany Witmer at 203-869-5272 x231.*



**The American Robin is the official state bird of Connecticut**

## Personal Vegetable Gardens BY Vonne's Victory Gardens



[www.vonnesvictorygardens.com](http://www.vonnesvictorygardens.com)  
203-227-1876

SPRING 2010

# Natural History Notes

By *Ted Gilman, Education Specialist*

A mixed flock of red-winged blackbirds and grackles, perched in a leafless treetop, all faced into the warming south wind, like so many weather vanes, alerting the world that spring is on its way; the upward surge of life-giving sap, rising from the roots to nourish and expand tiny leaves and flowers which had been lying ready for a new spring within tight buds all through the cold and windy winter storms; melting winter snows creating sparkling trickles of water which seep downhill to join into streams and in turn into rivers to swell the water into spring flood; a drake wood duck, in all his springtime splendor, slowly cruising across the shallow north end of Mead Lake as ice thaws and open waters resume for another season of growth; red and silver maple buds and flowers swelling in the tree-tops above wetlands, attended by bees and early-emerging flies fulfilling their roles as early spring pollinators ; a bright, red-breasted robin, crouched on a lawn, with head tilted for a closer look, poised to seize its first earthworm of the early spring; a painted turtle raising its snout above the water, on a sunny April day, to take its first breath of air since entering hibernation back in October; a chipmunk gnawing at a shed white-tailed deer antler, gaining essential calcium for the bones of the new generation of chipmunks growing within her; gray squirrels eating elm buds and flowers as their first fresh vegetation of spring; a sluggish garter snake taking its first sunbath on a cool, but sunny April day; a family using flashlights to peer through an early April nighttime rainstorm to seek out the first spotted salamanders returning to their ancestral breeding pond; beetle grubs slowly digging back up through the soil, from beneath the frostline, to renew their feeding on shallow plant



roots; lakeside alder shrubs holding out their tiny deep magenta female catkins into the April sunshine in position for the wind to bring pollen from the long, yellow male catkins hanging on nearby alders; delicate, nickel-sized spots of sky blue flitting along a woodland trail as spring azure butterflies make their first showing for the spring; neotropical songbirds making their death-defying flights across the Gulf of Mexico from Yucatan to the US gulf coast to return to our summer land of long days and abundant insects for raising their hungry broods of young; the ringing song of a Louisiana waterthrush announcing its return from the tropics to claim a stretch of the insect-rich Byram River, which will be its home for the coming breeding season; the graceful, green curl of a fern fiddlehead slowly unwinding to spread its leaf blade to the life-giving sunlight and, in turn, provide shelter for a nesting veery within its shade; tiny caterpillars feasting on their own just-emptied egg shells as their first meal before launching their brief careers as leaf-chewers before their amazing transformations into moths and butterflies; sunfish entering the shallows of Mead Lake to swish out their bowl-shaped nests in the lake bottom to shelter their eggs and future fry for the next generation of surface smacking hunters; tiny praying mantids emerging with scores of brothers and sisters from the walnut-sized egg mass which sheltered them throughout the cold, windy winter months; a massive female snapping turtle hauling herself up onto the unfamiliar land to find just the right spot of sunny, well-drained soil, where she can deposit her dozens of round eggs so that they might slowly incubate in the warm summer sun.....

 **Audubon** GREENWICH  
613 Riversville Road  
Greenwich, CT 06831

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## SAVE THE DATES

**Environmental Leadership Dinner:**  
April 29

**Raptor Conservation Conference:**  
May 8

**Green Homes & Buildings:**  
March 23, April 20, May 18