

# Natural History Notes

By Ted Gilman, Education Specialist

The special silence of a winter woodland suddenly broken by the lively calls and energetic activity of a mixed flock of black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice, and white-breasted nuthatches, as they search continually for their next meal of hidden insects or seeds; the subtle blend of blue-gray, orange, pink, and tan of little bluestem grass, highlighted by late afternoon sun, against a white blanket of January snow; the sparkling stars of Orion the Hunter and Sirius the dog star marching across the nighttime sky; the annual wonder of tiny winter stoneflies, newly emerged from the Byram River, crawling about on snow and tree trunks in the midst of winter cold; the aquamarine tint of ice frozen in mid-fall from the spillway at Mead Lake dam; a bluejay, almost transformed into a sphere, as it fluffs its plumage to maximum effect on a cold winter morning; a red



great-horned owl

fox, curled up in a sunny spot on the snow, with its dense bushy tail drawn across its nose, as shelter from the cold; songbirds, suddenly caught in frozen stances about our backyards and birdfeeders, trying to escape detection by a hunting Cooper's or Sharp-shinned hawk; tiny paired footprints and trailing tail marks in the snow, showing the nighttime foraging adventures of a white-footed mouse in search of acorns, hickory nuts or rosehips of multiflora rose; dry flowerheads of Queen Anne's Lace, Yarrow, Goldenrod, and Mullein gradually shedding their seeds in preparation for the return of spring's warmth and growth of another generation of meadow flowers; the deep hooting calls of courting great-horned owls on a January evening giving notice of another year's cycle of life beginning once again.....

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**Audubon GREENWICH**

613 Riversville Road  
Greenwich, CT 06831

**Christmas Bird Count**  
Sunday, December 17, 2006

**Sign up for future versions of our e-newsletter!**

Email: [jcordulack@audubon.org](mailto:jcordulack@audubon.org) with "subscribe to e-letter" in the subject line

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**Audubon GREENWICH**

*In Flight*

## 2006 Christmas Bird Count

By Gary Palmer and Brian O'Toole, co-compilers

**CALLING ALL BIRDERS!** We need your help on Sunday December 17 to count the birds in our area. This annual event was started in our area in 1911 when four local birders ventured forth so we have a long history of doing this. These counts are held nationwide and are a valuable tool in monitoring bird populations. Comparing current to past results some of the declines we see locally and in New England are American Black Duck, Northern Bobwhite, American Kestrel, American Crow, Evening Grosbeak, etc. Recent years others have increased such as Black Vulture, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, etc. The reasons are many such as global warming, habitat change, etc. and in the Case of American Crow West Nile Virus has played a big role.

Here on the Stamford/Greenwich count we annually tally about 25,000 to 30,000 individuals and average about 112 species. It is a great time for all from beginners to the most experienced birders to get out on a crisp winter day and join in on the fun. Last year we tallied 26,566 individuals and an above average 120 species. Some of the highlights were record numbers of Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Gray Catbird to name just a few. Good finds were six Black Vultures, three Common Ravens a first for our count and a Baltimore Oriole.

To view all of our results go to [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) and the to Birds & Science to Citizens Science and the Christmas Bird Count and click on Current years results, Then take option A and find State (Ct) and then go to Greenwich/Stamford and make a table. You can do this for any count anywhere and by going to Historical Results you can view any prior years.

You can join in a field party for the day by calling either Ted Gilman or Brian O'Toole at (203)869-5272 or Gary Palmer at (203)661-4897.

**If you prefer to watch at home just refer to the Backyard and Feeder Checklist included in this newsletter.**



barn owl

Photo: Diana Collins

## A Word about this Newsletter

Many of you know, Audubon is constantly trying to reflect our values and conservation goals in everything we do. We have decided to limit the use of paper to convey our messages and mail out a printed version to only those members who indicate a preference for it. This change is possible because many of us now use e-communications regularly and we can create a more robust version of our newsletter in the electronic realm, while also maintaining a paper version which will detail the monthly programs and major events such as the Christmas Bird Count.

By using less paper we can help slow the consumption of vital bird habitat like the Boreal Forest and use your donations to expand programs rather than recycle bins.

Please help by subscribing to our e-version of the newsletter. You will be helping the world's birds and forests, saving us money and ensuring you get the most information about our programs delivered to you in a timely manner. The first e-version of our newsletter will be our spring edition.

**Stop your paper newsletter version and start an email subscription to Audubon Greenwich's In-Flight newsletter.**

**SIGN UP NOW WITH A SIMPLE EMAIL.** Send an e-mail to: [jcordulack@audubon.org](mailto:jcordulack@audubon.org) with "subscribe to e-letter" in the subject line.

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# AUDUBON GREENWICH NATURE PROGRAM CALENDAR

## W I N T E R 2 0 0 6 - 2 0 0 7

### D E C E M B E R

#### Saturday, December 2

**Trees in Winter – How to tell them apart? 1:00-2:30 pm**  
Now that the leaves have fallen, naturalists will take a closer look at trees and teach visitors how to identify them by their buds, bark, fruit, and winter silhouettes. We will learn how to use a basic key to help us sort trees and then take a walk to find out how people and wildlife use them. Ages 5 and up.



Audubon Center in winter

#### Saturday, December 9

**Family Bird Watch and Walk 1:00-2:30 pm**  
Join us for an introduction to common winter birds. We'll begin indoors learning about local birds and watching them at our bird feeders. After we will take a short walk outdoors to see what the birds are up to in Audubon's fields and forests. Bring binoculars and field guides, if you have them, or borrow them from us. Ages 5 and up.

#### GREENWICH POINT BIRD WALKS December 3 • January 7 • February 4

On Sundays from 9:00 to 11:00 am

Join the local birders for a walk along the shoreline and in the coastal woodlands of Greenwich Point. Bring binoculars and field guides. Meet at the second concession stand. For more information call Brian O'Toole at 203-869-5272. Ages 8 and up.

#### Sunday, December 10

**FIELD TRIP: Cove Island Park's IBA (Stamford)  
9:00-11:00 am**

Prepare for the Christmas Bird count on Sunday, December 17 during a visit to a key part of the Greenwich/Stamford Bird Count Circle. Join the Quaker Ridge Bird Club in looking for wintering ducks, gulls and land birds. We will meet just before 9 AM at the gate to Cove Island Park's Bird Sanctuary. After visiting the Sanctuary, the group will head over to the Holly Pond area. RSVP to Brian O'Toole.

#### Sunday, December 17

**FIELD TRIP: Annual Christmas Bird Count  
7:00 am-5:00 pm (Owling occurs pre-dawn)**  
Bird count teams will be outdoors counting birds in several different towns in our 15-mile Christmas count circle. You can also count at home – call us for a Bird Count Data Sheet to be a part of this great citizen science program. To join a count team or get a form for a home-based count, contact Ted Gilman or Brian O'Toole at 203-869-5272. RSVP required.

#### Sunday, December 17

**Christmas Count Compilation Meeting  
Starting at 5:00 pm**  
Join Audubon Greenwich in an annual tradition as birders and guests meet in Kiernan Hall to tally up reports of bird observations for all bird count teams. To RSVP or volunteer with the Bird Count Potluck Dinner Committee, please contact Brian O'Toole at 203-869-5272.

### J A N U A R Y

#### Saturday, January 6

**New Year Hike at Fairchild Garden 1:00-2:30 pm**  
Start the New Year off with a great fresh-air hike as we search for winter birds, animal foods, and wildlife tracks and patterns in the snow.

#### Saturday, January 13

**FIELD TRIP: Edith Read Sanctuary Coastal  
Birding Trip 9:00 am-12:00 pm**  
In search of winter visitors, Ted Gilman and other hardy birders will set off to walk the beach and inland trails of this rarely visited sanctuary located behind Rye Playland. Please RSVP.

#### Saturday, January 13

**Great-horned Owl Search 4:30-5:30 pm**  
Come and visit a nearby Audubon site as we head to Audubon Lane a.k.a. Hemlock Gorge Trail for a twilight (sunset 4:48 pm) walk. We will look and listen for resident Great-horned owls and try to attract other owls by imitating their calls. Wear warm clothes and bring a flashlight. Ages 8 and up. Please RSVP.

#### Saturday, January 20

**Insects on the Snow 1:00-2:30 pm**  
While not as obvious in winter, insects are alive and active during every season. Search the winter landscape with Audubon naturalists as we look for birds, animal tracks, winter stoneflies, 'snow fleas' and a variety of plant galls (strange growths caused by insects living inside). All ages.

#### Saturday January 27

**Winter Seeds & Weeds 1:00-2:30 pm**  
Take a closer look at the seeds in winter weeds and search for the sparrows, juncos and other birds that eat them. All ages. Call the store to sign up at 203-869-5272.

#### Sunday, January 28

**All About Owls 12:30-2:00 pm**  
Have you ever wondered what the smallest owl in North America is or what owls eat? Come to the Audubon Center and learn about the natural history and anatomy of these amazing raptors. We will listen to their calls, take a close look at a variety of specimens, and view a small slide show before dissecting owl pellets. Ages 7 and up. For more information, contact Lindsey at 203-869-5272 x235.



Catkin

#### Sunday, February 4

**BIRD TALK: "Three Decades of Rare Birds In Connecticut" with Frank Mantlik 3:30-5:00 pm**  
After birdwatchers become proficient at identifying common birds, many find that they want to search for more rare or unusual species. Join Mr. Mantlik as he discusses how and why people go about these endeavors and recounts many noteworthy "finds" from his thirty years of birding in Connecticut. This presentation will also discuss the advent of the internet and cell phones, and how they have facilitated the hobby of following rare sightings and adding new bird species to "life lists." No charge. All welcome at this event supported by the Quaker Ridge Bird Club.

#### Sunday, February 11

**Deer Hike on Old Pasture Trail 12:00-2:00 pm**  
Explore one of the less-traveled trails at Audubon Greenwich in search of white-tailed deer. We will look for antler rubbings and other signs of the behavior of this abundant species. Dress warm and wear hiking boots for a two-mile hike beyond Mead Lake and along Old Pasture Trail. Ages 8 and up. To sign-up up, contact James at 203-869-5272.

#### Saturday, February 17

**Family Bird Count & Walk 1:00-2:30 pm**  
Help find, identify, and count our local wintering birds. Learn to use a home computer to enter our reports for the nationwide bird count this holiday weekend. Ages 5 and up.

#### February 16-19

##### The Great Backyard Bird Count

Call Ted Gilman at the Audubon Greenwich Center to learn more about this national bird counting event. Or, visit our website: [www.audubon.org/gbbc](http://www.audubon.org/gbbc) to learn more.

#### Saturday, February 24

**Animal Tracks and Traces 1:00-2:30 pm**  
Learn how to be a detective and read footprints and other clues & stories left behind in the snow, mud or other area where squirrels, mice, coyotes, deer and birds are active. Please RSVP.

#### WINTERTIME MOVIE & STORY SERIES On Sundays from 2:00-3:00 pm

Come on out for double the fun when the Audubon Society shows educational nature videos and shares short nature stories with children of all ages. Videos will run for 30 minutes each, followed by approximately 30 minutes of storytelling with an Audubon naturalist. All movies are included with visitor fees and free for Audubon members. Please RSVP for Storytime session by calling the nature gift shop at 203-869-5272.

Jan. 28: "Eagle Adventures" plus Nature Stories  
Feb. 4: "Wolf Adventures" plus Nature Stories  
Feb. 11: "Puffin Adventures" plus Nature Stories  
Feb. 18: "Bat Adventures" plus Nature Stories  
Feb. 29: "Whale Adventures" plus Nature Stories

For extra fun in the winter, bring warm clothes and plan a short walk before or afterwards in the nearby meadows, woodlands and apple orchard.

### F E B R U A R Y

#### Sunday, February 4

**Animal Skull Lesson 12:30-1:30 pm**  
This indoor program will teach young aspiring naturalists how to identify a variety of skulls from local species. After learning a few techniques, visitors will apply their new skills and examine skulls at various stations. Ages 8 and up. Sign up with James at 203-869-5272.

#### WINTER VACATION DAY CAMP February 20-22 9:30 am-2:30 pm

Experience wintertime in a whole new way during February vacation. Campers can spend one, two or all three days at Audubon taking snowy hikes, playing games, and making great nature crafts. For campers in K-5th grade. To register, contact Camp Director Lindsey DeVito at 203-869-5272 x235.

Programs are suitable for all ages unless otherwise indicated. Please register by calling 203-869-5272. Programs start at the Kimberlin Nature Center at Audubon Greenwich, 613 Riversville Rd. Program fees: \$3/adult members; \$5/adult non-members; \$1.50/member children and seniors; \$3/non-member children and seniors; no charge to Teacher Naturalists as part of their ongoing training.

Audubon Greenwich • 613 Riversville Road • Greenwich, CT 06831 • 203-869-5272 • [greenwich.center.audubon.org](http://greenwich.center.audubon.org)