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Natural Surroundings

WYNDHAM LAND TRUST, INC. • SINCE 1975

Conserving the Natural Resources of Northeastern Connecticut

FALL 2007
Volume 4
Number 1



Our Most Recent Acquisition

Our 101 acre Duck Marsh Preserve was acquired in 1994. At that time there were plans for 10 house lots on what we now call "The Knoll". This is the place where we now have an observation platform for the benefit of the interested public. This is the place where *Andy Rzeznikiewicz* conducts the annual CAS nighthawk watch each August. This is the place where one may obtain splendid views of migrating Northern Harriers in both spring and fall. This is the place where one can look down into the surrounding wetlands and sooner or later see just about any of the ducks to be expected on the fresh waters of Connecticut. A spotting scope is recommended. (Note: There were some lots planned with frontage on Wrights Crossing Road also!)



Muskrat

Interesting and important records abound. Examples are American Bittern on several occasions, Common Moorhen for one season, Pied-billed Grebe for three consecutive years and on one occasion accompanied by young, Glossy Ibis on several occasions and for a three week period in 2006, and once briefly, in 2006 a female Red-necked Phalarope! A pair of Blue-winged Teal nested successfully in 2003. A recent DEP marshland bird survey found nesting by Virginia and Sora Rails and a possible nesting by American Bittern. Very recently Andy Rzeznikiewicz obtained a photographic record of an immature Golden Eagle feeding on a deer carcass. Mammal sightings include muskrat, beaver, otter, bobcat and of course white tailed deer.

Our Duck Marsh Preserve had everything! Well NOT QUITE everything. It lacked the 44 acres lying in the angle formed by Holmes Road and Wrights Crossing Road and owned by David Loos. We are happy to report that these acres are now owned by WLT!

Thank you Dave Loos. Doing business with you was a pleasure. Thank you too, all who helped, *the Bafflin Foundation, the DEP's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program and the Town of Pomfret.* Our Duck Marsh Preserve is now comprised of 146.1 acres, one parking area, two observation platforms, two blinds and associated trails. It offers exceptional opportunities for observing a great variety of wildlife.

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Photo by Dick Booth

WLT Receives Award

On June 1 the Connecticut Greenways Council presented the Wyndham Land Trust with its Special Achievement Award: *"In recognition of Dedication to the Development of Greenways."* The presentation was made at ceremonies held on the grounds of the DEP's Marine Facilities Center in Old Lyme. The site was beautiful the weather was splendid and a most enjoyable time was had by all. The Wyndham Land Trust is most grateful and expresses its sincere thanks to all concerned.

EARTH DAY 2007

Earth Day can be celebrated in various ways. David Lavallo, steward of our 34 acre Tillinghast Preserve in Plainfield arranged for the help of six neighborhood families in removing trash from the preserve entrance and environs. The Tillinghast Preserve lies at the end of Sugar Brook Road and is adjacent to the brook, to the unpaved road and to DEP's Sugar Brook Field Trial Area which lies at the road's end. An Ospreys nest is visible atop a transmission line support as one approaches. The area is secluded, very beautiful, and unfortunately attractive to those who would rid themselves of unwanted matter by irregular means. The weather was splendid and the company congenial.

Good company can make even an unpleasant and tedious task enjoyable. IT DID!

THANK YOU DAVID. THANK YOU ALL, and THANK YOU friends for the final removal of the collected rubbish.



On Video!!

As many of our readers know Andy Rzeznikiewicz has compiled some impressive footage of various scavengers feeding on road-kill deer carcasses placed so as to trigger a camera when visitors arrive. Coyotes and bobcats are frequent and conspicuous visitors and even a Barred Owl has been recorded. That the technique works well diurnally as well as nocturnally is attested by footage recording Red-tailed Hawks.



Golden Eagle

What must be the ultimate image recorded so far appeared on film exposed at WLT's Duck Marsh Preserve in February 2007. There was a bird, a very large black bird. It looked like a Golden Eagle and when it turned its head exposing the nape to view, YES, it was indeed a Golden Eagle! Thank you Andy for a great record.

Note: Zeranski and Baptist report the Golden Eagle as "rare but regular in winter" in Connecticut. See Connecticut Birds by Joseph D. Zeranski and Thomas R. Baptist, University Press of New England, 1990.



The Windham Land Trust will have office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the Old Town House in Pomfret. Our phone number is 963-2090.

wyndhamlandtrust@sbcglobal.net

New Records and Sightings of Particular Interest ~ Philadelphia Vireo

A new "Trust Bird" was recorded on September 5, 2007 when the CAS Tuesday morning bird walk led by Andy Rzeznikiewicz encountered two Philadelphia Vireos on WLT's Wright Preserve. Two more were seen in a mixed flock of migrants at the Bosworth Preserve on September 9th.

If you wish to see a Philadelphia Vireo do not go to Philadelphia! The name was applied in 1842 by John Cassin when describing a specimen he had collected near Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Vireo breeds in Canada and along the most northerly portions of the United States from Michigan to Maine where it frequents streamside alders and early successional woodlands. It winters in Central America.

DUNLIN

This sandpiper is "a fairly common coastal migrant" in Connecticut but is rare inland, especially in spring. Adults in breeding plumage are easily recognized by a black belly and bright rufous upperparts. The Dunlin became a new "Trust Bird" in May of this year when reported at the Duck Marsh by the weekly CAS Tuesday morning bird walk.

The last two recorded sightings were on May 16th and 19th.

LITTLE BLUE HERON

Our Duck Marsh Preserve has been host to Great Blue Herons, Green Herons and to both Great and Snowy Egrets. On May 22, 2007 the Little Blue Heron became another new "Trust Bird" when it was twice recorded in one of the observation blind logs. The species is extending its range northward and has been recorded as nesting at both Norwalk and Stonington. It is described as being uncommon along the coast and rare inland and is listed as a Species of Special Concern here in Connecticut. Unlike other herons immature Little Blues are white.

RED NECKED PHALAROPE

A single female Red-necked Phalarope was observed for about 3/4 of an hour late on the afternoon of May 15, 2006 at the Duck Marsh Preserve. A brisk northeasterly wind blew out of a cloudy sky.

Phalaropes are small sandpiper-like shore birds with lobed toes. The group (three spp.) is unusual in that the female is larger and more brightly colored than the male, plays the lead role in courtship and leaves



Glossy Ibis

nest construction, incubation and care of the young to her mate of which there may be several. Swimming movements are typically quick and erratic. A feeding individual may rotate rapidly in a complete circle; the resulting vortex carrying the bird's tiny food items within range of its beak. The individual reported here was

seen to do this twice! The Red-necked Phalarope is a circumpolar breeder in the Arctic and sub-Arctic and winters at sea, chiefly in the Southern Hemisphere. It is described as being rare to casual and "most often reported after storms with strong easterly winds" here in Connecticut.

GLOSSY IBIS

Three Glossy Ibises were seen at WLT's Duck Marsh Preserve in Pomfret on Sunday afternoon April 16, 2006. The species was recorded again on seven separate occasions ending on April 29. These handsome long legged waders generally appear quite dark, even black when seen at a distance. Close up and in good light their glossy, purplish to chestnut plumage shows to good advantage. The bill is long, prominent and curved downward. Unlike herons ibises fly with the neck extended. The Glossy Ibis has been extending its range northward along the Atlantic coast. It was first recorded nesting at Norwalk in 1971 and at Mystic in 1984. It has a world wide distribution in tropic and warm temperate areas and is a species of special concern in Connecticut.

Interested readers might wish to see *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut*, Louis R. Bevier, ed. State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut Bull. 113, 1994. *Connecticut Birds* by Joseph D. Zeranski and Thomas R. Baptist, University Press of New England, 1990. *Shorebirds of North America* by Dennis Paulson, Princeton University Press, 2005 and *Neotropical Migratory Birds* by Richard M. DeGraaf and John H. Rappole, Comstock, 1995.

Note! See "On Video" which appears nearby for one more exciting record.

THE PRESERVE THAT GREW AND GREW

In 2001 WLT received 15 acres at the intersection of Little Pond Road and Rt. 171 in Woodstock through the kindness of **Cy and Rebecca Harvey**. The abutting 12 acres came in 2005 thanks to **Bill Neumann and family**. The remaining 13 acres were acquired that same year and as a result the entire 40 acres bounded by the Little River, Rt. 171, and Little Pond Road became protected in perpetuity. In the meantime, beginning in 2002, talks had been progressing between the Woodstock Conservation Commission, DEP, the Town of Putnam, and the Windham Land Trust relative to Greenway Status for the entire Little River and its environs. Such status was awarded by the Connecticut Greenways Council in June of 2006.

Thanks to a generous grant (2006) from the **Quinnebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor** work began on the boardwalk which now snakes its way for 300 feet into the Little River Greenway Preserve thus allowing visitors to view this interesting and quite beautiful riverine wetland, dry shod and without the encumbrance of vegetative tangles.



Photo by Dick Booth

A modest viewing platform with benches encourages the visitor to "set a spell". Delpha Very, former Woodstock First Selectman, did the honors at the ribbon cutting ceremony held June 23rd. The weather was splendid and the festivities were enjoyed by all. We hope that the boardwalk will encourage use of the site for educational purposes and for passive recreation by the interested public.

The project has involved the labor, generosity, enthusiasm and talents of many people. It is a pleasure to thank **Chace Building Supply, Sign Design by Chace, Crabtree and Evelyn, Hearthside Woodworking, Desmaris & Sons Excavation, Killingly Fence, and Page's Tree Service**. **Jean Pillo** was of enormous help in many ways. The elected officials, employees and commissioners of the Town of Woodstock made every visit to the Town Hall productive and a distinct pleasure. The boardwalk could not have been built without the Quinnebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor. Again, we thank you all.

The Bookworm's Apple

LETTERS FROM EDEN

A *Year at Home, in the Woods* – by Julie Zickefoose, is a work of art, the art of brush and pen and the art of a well turned phrase. It was made possible by a heart that cares, an eye that sees, and a hand most skillful. The author loves life, life in all its forms and



manifestations and is not the least bit reluctant to demonstrate that happy fact by appropriate action should occasion arise. See for example the last chapter, "Catching Paul." The thirty one chapters are arranged in groups by season, average six pages each, including Julie's beautiful and very numerous illustrations and chronicle her observations

and adventures on the eighty acres of forest and field surrounding the home she and her family have created in southeastern Ohio.

One is tempted to wonder: Is Eden a place or is it a state of mind? In any case it is not necessary to seek "the world's white roof tree."

In search of adventure although one may do so if one wishes. There are truly marvelous things quite close to home. If I were limited to one final adjective to describe this wonderful book I would say "REFRESHING", refreshing in all its parts!

About the author: Julie Zickefoose came to Connecticut from Virginia via Harvard where she studied both Biology and Art. Her job was to develop a piping plover conservation program for the Nature Conservancy's Connecticut Chapter. That she did, and very well. She has published extensively in Bird Watchers Digest and provided at least seventeen of its cover paintings. She has also appeared on National Public Radio's All Things Considered and at conservation related events too numerous to mention. She and her husband William Thompson, III and their two children Phoebe and Liam live on an eighty acre nature preserve surrounding the home they have created in southeastern Ohio.

NOTE: Letters From Eden by Julie Zickefoose, Houghton Mifflin, 2006 is available through local book stores. It will also be the book raffle prize at our annual pot luck supper scheduled for November 8th at Tyrone Farm. Raffle tickets are \$5 as usual.

RAB