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!) 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.

Photo by Dick Booth
New Records and Sightings of Particular Interest ~ Philadelphia Vireo

A new “Trust Bird” was recorded on September 5, 2007 when a group of 15 vireos was seen flying near the Duck Marsh. The group was identified as Philadelphia Vireos on WLT’s Wright Preserve. Two more were seen in a mixed flock of migrants in one of the observation log books on September 9th.

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 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 bird was seen in 1842 by John Cusin when describing a specimen he had collected near Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Vireo breeds in Canada and along the northern portions of the United States from Michigan to Maine where it frequents streamside alders and early successional woodlands. It winters in Central America.

DUNLUIN

This sandpiper is a “fairly common coastal migrant” in Connecticut but is very rare, especially in spring. Adults in breeding plumage are easily recognized by a black belly and bright buffy uppertars. 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 23, 2007 the Little Blue Heron became another new “Trust Bird” when it was twice recorded. The first one was in 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 immense 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 northwesterly wind blew out of a cloudy sky.

Phalaropes are small sandpiper-like shore birds with lobed toes. The group (15 or more) is unusual in that the female is larger and more brightly colored than the male, plays the lead role in courtship and leaves next 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 during storms with strong easterly winds” here in Connecticut.

GROSSY Ibis

Three Grossy Ibises were seen at WLT’s Duck Marsh Preserve in Pomfret on Sunday afternoon April 16, 2006. The species was recorded again at the same place on Easter Sunday and again on April 29. These handsome long legged waders generally appear quite dark, even black. Grossy Ibises are white in the morning and brown in the afternoon. Unlike herons ibises fly with the neck extended. The Grossy 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 tropical and warm temperate areas and is a species of special concern in Connecticut.


THE PRESERVE THAT GREW AND GREW

In 2001 WLT received 15 acres at the intersection of Little Pond Road and Rt. 173 in Woodstock through the kindness of Cy and Rebecca Harvey. The abutting 12 acres came in 2005, thanks to Bill and Helen Heft. The remaining 23 acres were acquired that same year and as a result the entire 40 acres bounded by the Little River, Rt. 173, 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 Wyndham 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 Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor work began on the boardwalk which now spans its way for 300 feet into the Little River Greenway Preserve thus allowing visitors to view this interesting and quite beautiful riverine wetland, dry shoal and without the encumbrance of vegetative tangles.

The Bookwurm’s Apple

A tear at home, in the Woods – by Julie Zicklefoose, 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 chronic her observations and adventures on the eighty acres of forest and field surrounding the house 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 roof too far.”

A modest viewing platform with benches encourages the visitor to “set a spell.” Delpha Very, former Woodstock First Lady at Tyrone Farm, has arranged for everyone’s comfort and enjoyment. The boardwalk could not have been built without the Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor. Again, we thank you all.

On Video!!

As many of our readers know Andy Zeranski 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 technique works well diurnally as well as nocturnally is attested by footage recording Red-tailed Hawks.