



“The Mattabesec Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, is committed to environmental leadership and education for the benefit of the community and the earth’s biodiversity.”

Special Field Trip to Traprock Ridges

Dr. Peter M. LeTourneau recently published *The Traprock Landscapes of New England: Environment, History, and Culture* with fantastic photographs by Robert Pagini. This book tells the story of the hard rock ridges that form the backbone that runs through the center of our state, their geology, ecology, and human history beginning 200 million years ago to the present crisis to preserve the rocks and the unique plants and animals that exist only in the crags and talus of this ancient place. Beautifully illustrated with Bob Pagini’s photos, you have an intimate portrait of this place of solitude and majesty that lies only a short distance from some of the most densely populated areas in the country.

On April 29, 2017, Mattabesec with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA) and the Jonah Center for Earth and Art are fortunate to be able to offer a special trip with Peter and Bob to many of the sites discussed in the book. We will meet at CFPA at 16 Meriden Road (Route 66) in Middlefield at 9 a.m. and end @2 p.m. Bring lunch. We will carpool to:

- stop 1:** Black Pond state boat launch, Middlefield
- stop 2:** Giuffrida Park, Meriden
- stop 3:** East Peak, West Peak

There is no fee, but please email Alison Guinness at wjguinness@snet.net to register so that we have an idea of the number of participants. 🌿



Photo—Robert Pagini



North view of the Cat Hole pass, in Meriden.

Inside:

Field Trip Report

Upcoming Field Trips

Members’ Corner

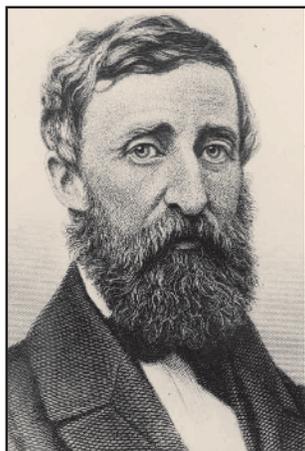
Gypsy Moths

Annual Meeting Notice

A Fawn’s Tale

Back:

Members’ Corner



Upcoming Program: An Evening with Henry David Thoreau

Save the Date!—September 28!

This year is the bicentennial of Henry David Thoreau’s birth, and to celebrate, Mattabesec Audubon Society and the Rockfall Foundation are co-sponsoring a program, “An Evening with Henry David Thoreau”, with Thoreau impersonator Richard Smith, a historian and staff mem-

ber of the Thoreau Society in Concord, MA. The program is scheduled to be held on Thursday, September 28 at 7:00 pm at the deKoven House in Middletown. Additional details will be forthcoming in our next issue of *Wingbeat*. 🌿

Luella Landis, MAS Vice President

Field Trip Report

Let's Go A-Ducking, March 18, 2017

Like a wolf with frosty fangs late winter bit into the surprised landscape. With a hardy, cold growl it chided the February Spring peepers and quacking Wood frogs for their impertinence.

Inland ponds were coated with chain mail. Open pools of water during the day became mostly silent sheets of stainless steel by morning. Nevertheless, thin ribbons of liquid did exist and gave surcease to a group of Ringneck ducks, Canada geese and Mute swans on Black Pond in Meriden.

A river speckled with ice floes: that was the dark Connecticut off of Haddam meadows. While a mature Bald eagle glided imperiously overhead, ducks and geese blithely paddled about. Wood ducks, Common and Hooded mergansers, the usual Mallards, all enjoyed a day with glazed skies and frosted shoreline. In a nearby marsh a Swamp sparrow dug at a small hole in the ice. Buona fortuna, my chilled friend!

Salmon river cove—a silver saucer with a thin ribbon of ink flowing into it—the tributary Moodus river. There Black ducks, Mergansers, Green teal, Mallards, and Wood ducks all made do and were “pleased with what they got” on the mudflats at low tide. A Bald eagle on the wing; one in the foreground in the mud; two dancing about a fish in the flats a distance off; then skimming over the water, a fifth.

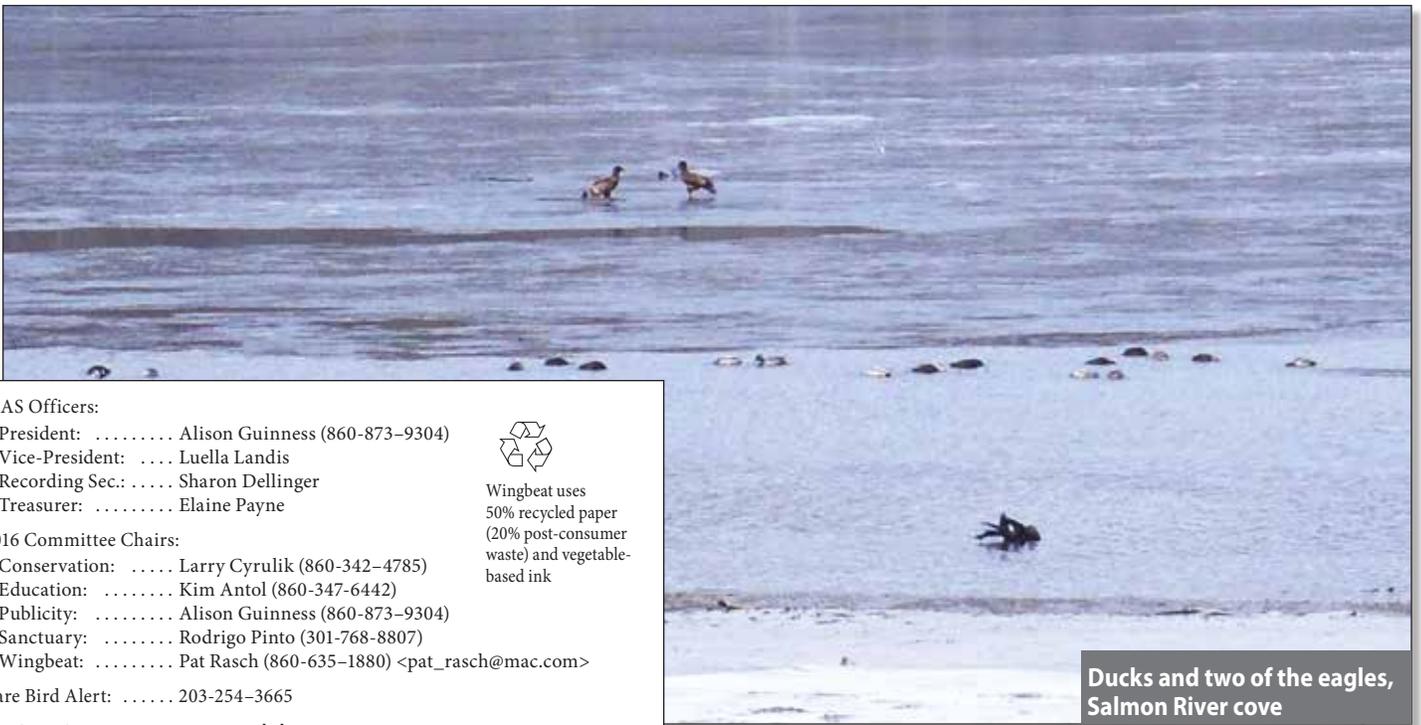


Black Pond, Middlefield, early morning, mostly iced over
Below, birders scan Connecticut River for ducks at Haddam Meadows



All immature, proud and inscrutable, all determined to survive.

Three delighted participants. 29 species of birds, 7 ducks, 6 Bald eagles.  LC



Ducks and two of the eagles,
Salmon River cove

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Rare Bird Alert: 203-254-3665

On the web: www.audubon-mas.org



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Upcoming Field Trips: Spring / Summer 2017

April 22 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

Wildflower Walk in the Park

Discover early-blooming wildflowers with Larry Cyrulik among the fractured basalt of Giuffrida Park, Meriden. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Cromwell Stop & Shop plaza parking lot on the side by Mattress Firm. Call Larry Cyrulik for more information at 342-4785 or 635-1880. For a preview of what we may see, choose the Wildflowers link from Field Trips page on our website at www.audubon-mas.org

April 29 (Saturday 9 a.m.)

Traprock Ridges – Special Field Trip

Meet at Connecticut Forest and Park Association, 16 Meriden Road (Route 66) in Middlefield at 9 a.m. Trip ends at 2 p.m. and will be led by Dr. Peter M. LeTourneau and Robert Pagini. Bring lunch. We will carpool to Black Pond state boat launch, Middlefield; Giuffrida Park, Meriden; East Peak and West Peak. Please email Alison Guinness at wjguinness@snet.net to register. Details on page 1.

May 6 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

David Titus Memorial Warbler Walk

Meet at River Highlands State Park parking lot, Field Road, Cromwell. We'll look for neo-tropical migrants—warblers: Pines, Blue-wings, Ovenbirds, and more—and often surprises. Call Larry Cyrulik 342-4785 or 635-1880 for information.



Giuffrida Park offers some unusual wildflowers and fauna. Each year we see a different variety, depending on timing of the Spring thaw. Left: endangered Yellow Corydalis, found only at the top of traprock ridges; Top: Early Saxifrage, found in cracks in the basalt rocks on the forest path; Right: Falcate Orangetip butterfly found only at tops of traprock ridges, feeding on the Rock Cress that grows there.

June 3 (Saturday 8 a.m.)

Canoe Trip—Mussel Identification

Launching from Haddam Meadows State Park, we will look for mussels along the Connecticut River. Bring canoe or kayak, lunch, and supplies for a day on the water. Wear water-shoes. Meet in the parking lot at the corner of Lawn Ave. and High St., Middletown. Call Larry Cyrulik for details 342-4785 or 635-1880. 

Nine (of 12) mussel species found in the lower Connecticut River and/or its tributaries

<p>Alewife Floater in mud, dark shell covering, inflated shape, no teeth, slightly thick/thin, often large</p> 	<p>Eastern Lampmussel in sand, slightly inflated, thick teeth, rays, pink nacre inside</p> 	<p>Tidewater Mucket in sand/silt, light brown, inflated, thick teeth, rose to apricot nacre inside</p> 
<p>Eastern Elliptio in silt / sand, laterally compressed, thick teeth, young may have stripes, rough</p> 	<p>Eastern Pearlshell in cobble, fast water only, dark covering, banana shape, "shot" dents in nacre</p> 	<p>Triangle Floater in sand, round, black covering, inflated, very thick/thin anterior/posterior, heavy teeth</p> 
<p>Eastern Floater in silt / sand, fragile shell, green to brown, untoothed</p> 	<p>Eastern Pond Mussel in mud/silt, posterior end pointed, dark covering</p> 	<p>Yellow Lampmussel in sand, very pale lemon-yellow, inflated, thick teeth, endangered species, rare</p> 



Submitted by Alberta Mirer

Extreme Birds: The World's Most Extraordinary and Bizarre Birds

by Dominic Couzens

Sword Billed-Hummingbird – Longest Bill:

Found in the Andean forests in South America, its bill is almost as long as its body (males 5.5" length with 4 inch bill /females 5.125" length with 4.5 to 4.75 inch bills). Its bill is perfectly shaped to match the particular blooms from which it drinks. Of course this adaptation comes with a price. The bird must always perch and fly with its bill held up at a steep angle, otherwise it would become unbalanced.

Hooded Pitohui (New Guinea) – Most Poisonous:

That's right, a poisonous bird. The toxin in the pitohui's plumage is the same neurotoxin found on the skin of poisonous frogs in South America. It's unlikely that a predator would be killed by the bird's toxin, but the toxin is unpleasant enough that predators will leave the bird alone. 🌿

National Wildlife Federation, October / November 2009

More Member's Corner on page 4

Gypsy Moth Outbreak News

Last year, eastern Connecticut witnessed the continuation of an outbreak of the gypsy moth. In 1989, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station scientists discovered that the entomopathogenic fungus *Entomophaga maimaiga* was killing the caterpillars. Since then, that fungus has been the most important agent suppressing gypsy moth activity. Without a wet spring to release the fungus to slow the advance of these moths, 2017 may be the worst.

Healthy trees can generally withstand one or two partial or one complete defoliation (greater than 50%). Trees will re-grow leaves before the end of summer, however, some branches may die back. Gypsy moth caterpillars also drop leaf fragments and frass while feeding, leaving a mess on decks, patios, furniture, cars, and driveways. The shed hairs from the caterpillars can be irritating to people's skin.



Gypsy moth laying egg mass

Egg masses may be found on many kinds of surface, including trees, fence posts, brick walls, lawn furniture, cars, rocks, and firewood. Eggs overwinter and larvae hatch in spring, during late April through early May.

Egg masses should be destroyed before hatching. Scraped-off egg masses should be drowned in a container of soapy water. Alternatively, egg masses may be soaked with mineral oil or soy oil, or with insecticidal soap. There are other methods of removal with barrier bands, as well as spraying with *Bacillus thuringiensis* and other insecticides. However these insecticides may also kill other moth and butterfly larvae.

Anthony Irving has a very informative article in the winter issue of the Lyme Land Trust newsletter at <http://www.lymelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/LymeLand-Trust-NLWinterWEB2017.pdf> It contains helpful information on removing egg masses and making traps. 🌿

Annual Meeting May 17

Mattabeseck Audubon will hold our Annual Meeting on May 17, 2017 at 7 p.m. at the DeKoven House to elect new members to the Board of Directors. If you would like to serve, please contact Nominating Chairperson Luella Landis at GWLA620@yahoo.com.

A Fawn's Tale: How I was rescued from a predicament

I am older and wiser now and my vocabulary is so much better. But let's begin at the beginning.

I was birthed in a wooded ravine needled with Eastern red cedar, Black-birch, Oak and Shadbush. A small brook that dried up in the heat of summer flowed past with the last of spring's misty rainfalls. The Rue anemone and Hepatica had already bloomed and faded.

I emerged from the constrictions in a fountain of liquid and lay exhausted and confused in a pile of brown oak leaves. Flies immediately swarmed around my placenta, that The Mother assiduously lapped up. Then she proceeded to lick my sticky, wet face and flanks. I was soon cleansed and eager to be fed.

It took some time, but I wobbled to my tiny hooves. I was amazed at the spindly, slender legs, little realizing how much importance and distinction they would lend me later on.

Contented, having fed, I lay back down to rest. I began to lick my chest and noticed these wonderful spots, a coat that blended into the surroundings. And I later surmised that I had no scent, while The Mother smelled very distinctly and comforting. I could detect her presence even with my large brown eyes closed.

The Mother soon wandered off to feed. I was assumed to lie low, tuck my chin into my awkwardly folded legs and not move. And I was obedient.

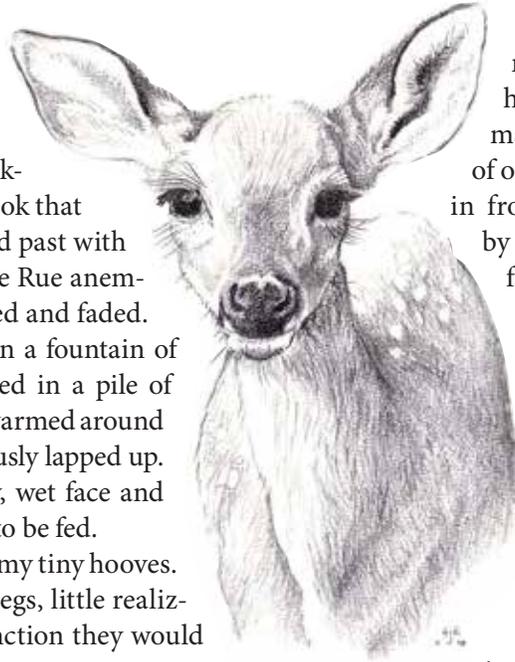
Thus followed days, weeks of a similar routine. But there came a time once, after The Mother had gone foraging, that I became curious of my surroundings. Gazing about, I stumbled to my knees and stood up. I felt like a god.

The day was fair, and all around me blue-green vegetation beckoned. I climbed a small hill and came to a clearing.

At first all was well and I became more confident. I stepped forward. Then I began to hear loud, disturbing noises: air rushed violently, followed by a series of pops, whizzes and grinding sounds. My bravado began to fade.

I wobbled forward again, unsure of myself. Unbeknownst to me, I had been born near a complex mosaic of industrialization in a place called the Maromas. Large stacks emitted something called exhaust or steam vapor. Things named machinery created the cacophony: moving objects that smelled and rolled about. Tall unfathomable colossals (buildings, I later understood) grunted and groaned within.

And all around milled these creatures I called "Two-legs." They frightened me with their inexhaustible movement. They seemed rough and uncompromising; their work demanded that of them. But I was to find later that they were also gracious.



I proceeded ahead, for I had forgotten my way back to the ravine. I crossed some hard, black, smoothed-out material that made my hooves slip. I came up to the side of one these colossals. There was a little space in front of an enormous ribbed wall (called by the "two-legs" a cell door). Trembling, I froze there not knowing what to do.

Soon a rolling machine stopped suddenly and a "two-legs" got out and stood before me. The warm sun, the azure-white sky, the warbling birds, the brook in my birth ravine; none of them mattered now. Fear and grey-ness loomed.

The "two-legs" put a hand on his head and took off a cap. Replacing it, he seemed to come to a decision. Approaching me gently, he took me in his arms and

fondled me to his chest.

A shock passed through me. I lay still in the "two-legs" grasp. My captor marched me around a corner and then entered one of the colossals calling to other "two-legs" as he did so.

They came out of the corners to gaze at me. I didn't struggle. I gradually began to feel less tense, though not completely comfortable. What would become of me?

The "two-legs" talked excitedly and pointed. Some smiled knowingly. I dared to look around. The insides of the colossal were inscrutable. Huge, cold cylinders stood upright, and long round pipes and tubes inched above and along the walls. A sudden loud hiss of an air release from some compressor startled me. I couldn't control myself; I soiled the shirt of the "two-legs" holding me.

Loud but not threatening noises came from the other "two-legs." This was laughter. They seemed pleased with one another. Then having displayed me long enough the "two-legs" walked me outside and strolled towards a wooded area in back of the colossal. He placed me gently down next to a tree, stepped a distance away and waited.

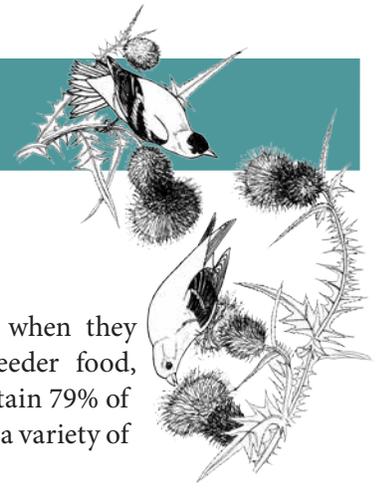
Soon I heard a rustling in the understory. Tripping along, smelling and sensing, came The Mother, who found me lying there, far from the ravine where she had left me. If she was agitated she didn't show it. The Mother simply sniffed me from head to hoof. "So, you've had your first encounter," she may well have mused.

Then the sky returned to me in all its golden azure. And the future then was not as important to me as the present. 🍃

LC

AUDUBON MEMBERS' CORNER

(Feel free to send us contributions to this column)



Submitted by Alberta Mirer

To Feed or Not To Feed

To stay healthy, birds must consume a mix of fats, proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins and minerals to fuel a metabolism that can require up to a whopping 10,000 calories a day (equivalent to a human consuming 155,000 calories). A bird's inner furnace burns especially hot during flight, and the breeding season, and on the coldest days, which means the animals must make highly efficient choices about what they eat.

Even though feeders offer an abundance of food, evolutionary pressures encourage birds to continuously sample a wide variety of foods because any bird that becomes dependent on a single patch or type of food will perish if it runs out. This means you don't have to worry that birds will become overly dependent on your feeder. A study of black-capped

chickadees found that even when they have access to unlimited feeder food, these voracious seedeaters obtain 79% of their daily energy needs from a variety of wild sources.

Research has shown that birds choose seeds that are easily handled and digested; emphasizing that for birds, eating is not only about nutrition, but about consuming a lot of food very quickly while avoiding predators. Whichever seeds you buy, evidence shows that backyard feeding helps birds growth rates, survival rates, breeding success and clutch sizes. Putting out high-quality seeds, bought as fresh as possible and stored in a dry clean place, seems to offer seed-eating birds the best of all worlds. 

National Wildlife Federation, October / November 2009

The deadline for items to be included in the Summer/Fall Issue is June 26, 2017. We expect subscribers to receive their copies about July 20. Please send items to Pat Rasch, 24 Elm Road, Cromwell, CT 06416, or email to <pat_rasch@comcast.net>

The Board of Directors will meet at 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown.

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