



"The Mattabesek 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."

## Upcoming Field Trips: Winter/Spring 2017

November 4 and 11, 2017 (Saturday 7:00 p.m.)

### Owl Prowl

Trips meet at Stop and Shop parking lot in Middletown at 7:00 p.m., and caravan through Middletown, ending in Middlefield. Dress warmly, bring a flashlight, and have gas in your car, or carpool—no gas stations along the route. If we are lucky we can hear screech owls answering our calls—and we may possibly see one or two—and maybe some other larger species, such as a Great Horned.

Please put Owl Prowl in subject line of emails.  
<joseph.mor@sbcglobal.net> 635-2786

December 17, 2017

### 42nd Annual MAS Salmon River Christmas Bird Count

(See following pages for details.)



February 16–19, 2018 (Friday–Monday)

### 20th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

This annual four-day event has watchers counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are across the continent. About 160,000 participants submit observations online, creating an instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations recorded. Anyone can participate—as little as 15 minutes on one day, or for as long as you like each day. Enter your list(s) online at [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org). For more info: [www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/)

## Totality 2017

**I**N EARLY APRIL, a friend told me that there was going to be a total solar eclipse this year and that it would be seen in the US. She said she was thinking of going, and I told her to keep me posted. I might want to join her. Shortly after, the National Park Service sent out an extensive email newsletter about the eclipse, how they were preparing for all the folks who would be visiting all the parks in its path, how they were going to hand out millions of special viewing glasses for free to all the visitors. "Wow," I thought. "This is going to be a big deal." Then, I looked on the site to see the path of totality and learned that it was going to pass from "sea to shining sea" from Oregon to South Carolina.

I began to seriously consider being part of this incredible event, but where to go. At first, I thought southern Illinois would be good. It's a very interesting area, but as time went by, the temperature in the Midwest began to soar. It was 104 degrees one day. If we did any camping or other sightseeing, we'd melt. I reconsidered and looked east nearer the mountains. Eastern Tennessee might be a better choice. Totality would pass directly over Athens, and that became my target site.

My friend who originally told me about the eclipse wasn't sure they were going and were aiming for the

*Continued on page 2*

## Migration

The migration is  
Unequivocal:  
When summoned, there's no time  
To be philosophical;  
But brace yourself  
For the voyage,  
(Five thousand miles or more).  
Do not count the mileage  
As you fly,  
For that would sear the breast,  
But capitulate to the magnetic field  
That leads you to your quest.

From marsh, from fields and plains,  
From boreal forests and tundra barren,  
From every quarter, the multitudes  
Stir like rabbits from their warren.

So, *Buona Fortuna*, my friends,  
From one who wistfully stays behind,  
And bittersweet remembrances,  
Should fortune prove unkind.

LC

*Inside:*

Members' Corner

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Christmas Count info / Tally sheet

*Back:*

Report Thoreau Program

## AUDUBON MEMBERS' CORNER

(Feel free to send us contributions to this column)



Submitted by Alberta Mirer

### The Migratory Feats of the Bar-Tailed Godwit

The bar-tailed godwit is a comparatively large shore bird. Females can weigh more than a pound. They have long upswept bills, which they use to probe the mud for invertebrates. After nesting on the Alaskan tundra, both young and adults gather in huge flocks along the coast. A couple of weeks before leaving, each godwit gorges on clams and worms, so much so that its dermis bulges with the highest fat content recorded in birds. At the same time, some of the bird's internal organs shrivel up. By the time a godwit takes off, it is little more than brains, fat and flight muscle.

Then they are ready for the longest, nonstop flight of any bird – an 8 day, 7,300 mile trek from Alaska across the length of the Pacific Ocean to New Zealand and Australia. They wait for storms of a particular strength to pass, and then use the tailwinds to help sling them south.

In the spring, when the birds are ready to fly north, a nonstop flight is no longer practical because they need extra energy to breed once they reach their nesting grounds. Flying across 22 countries, they make a few stops to feed before they get to the Russian and Alaskan Arctic regions. Many of the wetlands where they refuel are drying up, or being drained. The most crucial of these are found in the Yellow Sea region of China and South Korea, where some 600 million people have their own needs and priorities.

Under the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, which was created in 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the bar-tailed godwit of high concern. Protecting the species throughout its entire range will require an international effort. We need to do more to win the hearts and minds of people who live wherever the godwits fly.

*National Wildlife Federation December/ January 2009*

#### MAS Officers:

President: ..... Alison Guinness (860-873-9304)  
Vice-President: .... Luella Landis  
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Rare Bird Alert: ..... 203-254-3665

On the web: ..... [www.audubon-mas.org](http://www.audubon-mas.org)



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based ink

## Totality 2017 *Continued from front page*

Carolinas. So, I asked my friend Barb to join me. She was thrilled. I looked online for a place to stay. By that time, there were no rooms anywhere in the vicinity of Athens, including Etowah also in the path and an official NASA site. The nearest was Knoxville, about an hour from Athens by I-40. I'd been to Knoxville for the World's Fair back in 1982. So, I made reservations and ordered the special glasses – just in case.

It took 2 days to get to Knoxville. On I-81 in Virginia, we saw a car from Connecticut with signs saying "Eclipse or Bust." An accident stalled traffic to a stop, and we found ourselves next to that car! A young man from New Haven was heading for Kentucky to meet friends to view the eclipse. As we got within 100 miles of the eclipse path, there were lots of signs on the highway saying "No parking for eclipse." We wondered how effective they would be.

On Aug. 19th, the day of the eclipse, we got up early – in the dark – and went south to Athens. We arrived @ 7:30 a.m., among the first to arrive at the Regional Park. The sign at the entrance flashed "Welcome to Totality." This is a large recreation center with playing fields and trails. We picked out a parking spot that would be shaded as the sun moved west with a place to put the chairs we brought. It would be a long time before the eclipse started about 1:30 p.m. and another hour until totality.

Cars trickled in. One from Ontario parked near us. Before I had a chance to speak to them, they were gone somewhere across the big open field. We never saw them again that day. Like many, they probably brought a canopy, chairs, and a picnic. Folks from Texas parked next to us, and we enjoyed the whole day with them. Not long after, Harvey flooded their home in Houston. The eclipse connected us to folks from all over. Telescopes sprang up all around. Occasionally, a drone passed overhead taking video. As the park filled, people walked around wearing various eclipse T-shirts, the only thing I hadn't thought to get ahead of this momentous event.

The folks from Athens set up food booths. You could buy shirts, cups, posters, and the official video of the eclipse. I met a woman from town walking around the park who chatted with everyone, welcoming us to her town. It was joyous!

As the day progressed, it became quite hot. No one was stirring. The cicadas were deafening; I'd never heard them so loud.

On the way here, I told Barb we should have brought *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to read the chapter about the eclipse. I suggested she look for it on her phone. So, as we waited, Barb read Mark Twain's tale. I wondered what he'd think about all this.

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# The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual MAS Salmon River Christmas Bird Count Sunday, December 17, 2017



For 118 years, the National Audubon Society has been surveying bird populations at Christmas time. This will be the 43<sup>rd</sup> year MAS has been part of this effort.

There is no fee for participating. Stats and stories will be available online for this and previous years.

MAS team captains will distribute magnetic signs for our cars (and arm-bands for walkers) to identify ourselves as Audubon Bird Counters. Our teams and their captains will scour the countryside in our 15-mile diameter circle centered on the Old Comstock Bridge on the Salmon River (see map) to tally our feathered

friends, who invariably provide us with some surprises.

We encourage any and all newcomers, experienced birders or not, to participate in this oldest citizen-led science project in the world. Contact Sharon Dellinger <jrsdell@comcast.net>

Any amount of time spent in the field or observing a feeder in the circle is appreciated. Send Sharon Dellinger an email and put CBC in the subject line.

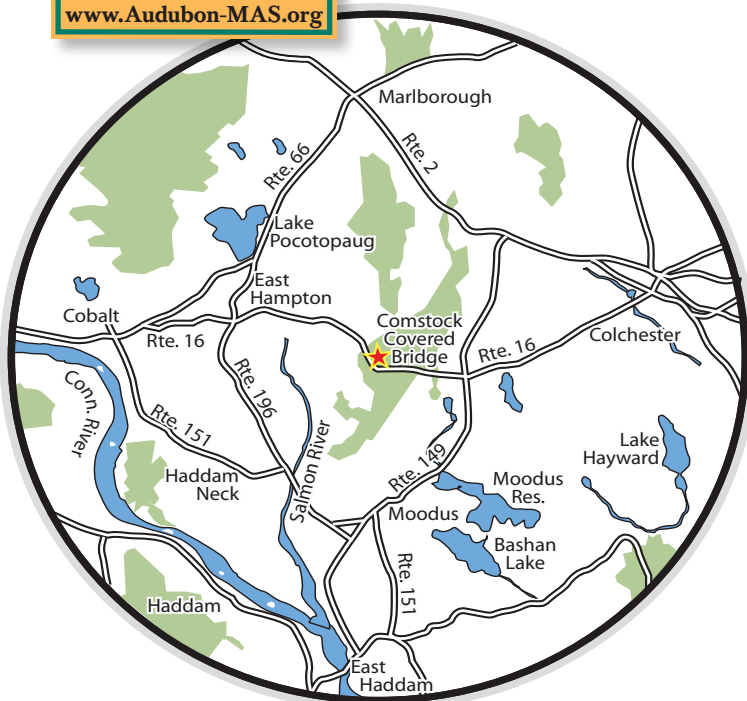
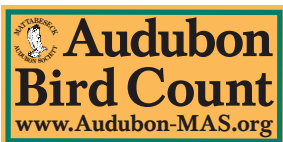
- Please keep bird lists in *taxonomical* order.
- A blank list form is available on [www.audubon-mas.org](http://www.audubon-mas.org).
- Please provide details for any rare, strange, or unusual bird—a photo is always good.
- Those of you who have feeders within the circle are urged to use the form on the reverse side to report birds that come to your feeder. Feeder watchers not only contribute to the total bird tally; they have almost always tallied birds that those of us in the field have not found.

**NOTE:** From 5:00 p.m. on, we will congregate at **Farrell's Restaurant** on Route 66 in Portland for fellowship and the excitement of the tally. Every year has produced a few spectacular sightings—either for the count day or the count week—and sometimes unusual numbers of species.

Anyone wishing to participate please contact Sharon Dellinger who will be coordinating this year's count

<jrsdell@comcast.net>

Please type "CBC" in the subject line. 



**Mattabesek Audubon Society Count Circle**

 State Parks/  
Forests

Scale of Miles 0 1 2



# Backyard Bird Count

Sunday, December 17, 2017

Open to anyone within the count circle:

Please tally all bird visitors (the highest number at any given time of each species — do not add birds cumulatively during the day) to your backyard feeder, and mail this form to:



**Sharon Dellinger, 930 Middletown Rd, Colchester, CT 06415**

**<jrsdell@comcast.net>**

\_\_\_\_\_ Mourning Dove

\_\_\_\_\_ Brown-headed Cowbird

\_\_\_\_\_ Yellow-shafted Flicker

\_\_\_\_\_ Cardinal

\_\_\_\_\_ Red-bellied Woodpecker

\_\_\_\_\_ House Finch

\_\_\_\_\_ Hairy Woodpecker

\_\_\_\_\_ Goldfinch

\_\_\_\_\_ Downy Woodpecker

\_\_\_\_\_ Slate-colored Junco

\_\_\_\_\_ Blue Jay

\_\_\_\_\_ Tree Sparrow

\_\_\_\_\_ Crow

\_\_\_\_\_ White-throated Sparrow

\_\_\_\_\_ Black-capped Chickadee

\_\_\_\_\_ Fox Sparrow

\_\_\_\_\_ Tufted Titmouse

\_\_\_\_\_ Song Sparrow

\_\_\_\_\_ White-breasted Nuthatch

**Others**

\_\_\_\_\_ Red-breasted Nuthatch

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Mockingbird

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Starling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ House Sparrow

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Red-wing Blackbird

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Purple Grackle

\_\_\_\_\_

HOURS AND MINUTES WATCHING YOUR FEEDER: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

# Field Trip Reports

## Shore Birds By Canoe, August 19, 2017

Imagine a dream, a dream more vital than the reality of wakefulness, wherein the sun spears the trembling waters of the estuary with lances of eye-piercing light and the vessel carrying you adrift pushes forward with ethereal anticipation.

The shouts of fisher-folk along the walkway and the clatter of passing rail cars over the spiderweb architecture of the tarnished silver bridge cannot waken you from your somnambulant reverie.

The tide licks the chocolate banks of the marshes. The vessel rises and falls with the singing waves. You become the wave; you form the crests; your eyelids flutter; expressions of energy rise along your spine.

The granite schist and gneiss outcrops appear and recede like the heads of whales. The sloshing waters laugh at your passing. Then, as if put there by some invisible fingers playing at marionettes you land on a windward lip of sand. The sand becomes animated as only granules can do in a dream: Least sandpipers dance by the restless waters edge in a pas de deux with Semipalmated and Black bellied plovers. An orange Monarch butterfly flutters about the unopened salt marsh goldenrod, while a Least tern, itself an imagined form of white-winged lepidopteran, replicates the patterned flight over the open waters of the estuary.

Imprints in the sand. Looking back you see your heel marks; looking forward, imagining those yet to be made. And the tide swirls lower, exposing the canvas. And the tide swirls higher, flushing the canvas clean.

A Spotted sandpiper see-sawing beside the jetsam: you become the bird with stern and perceptive eye. The bird becomes you and opens its beak inquisitively. But then you




both fly away. What's left are human heel prints. You gaze around unrequited.

Rounding Great Island, and the shifting, shining surface of the sea. The green water pulses purposefully beneath the vessel. The barrier island is exposed like a beige eyebrow above a green eye with curled green lashes. Mud flats are revealed; gnarled roots of phragmites; black submerged marsh peat gradually uncovered glistens in the sun flaring its nostrils, gratefully inhaling the pellucid atmosphere.

The gulls gather. The Osprey clings pridefully to its nest. The wind exhales forcefully over the waves running its fingers over the barrier beach. Looking landward, a string of clouds that look like heads of cauliflower punctuates the horizon.

Then navigating the sinuous tidal creeks; they writhe around you like watersnakes. They tease you with shallows and mudflats. The vessel stalls, pushes forward, stalls.

The Willets burst away loudly, shouting staccato, plaintive gospels to the air. The Great egrets stand mutely like stalks of marsh elder, while the Snowy egrets step about with golden toes after their frenetic prey.

Your sonorous breathing becomes more shallow and rapid. You toss, and tossing brings you forth from the deep like a fish being pulled upward by an unseen hand. The dream fades into reality and you must suffice with fractured memories. 

**2 participants 10 shorebird species**

LC

## A Place Called Hope, September 24, 2017

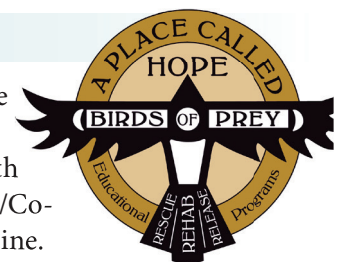
On Sunday, September 24th, several members of MAS and their families attended a field trip to A Place Called Hope (APCH), a raptor rehabilitation facility in Killingworth. It was an unusually warm day with bright sun and temperatures in the high eighties.

Christine Cummings, President and Co-Founder, escorted us through the aviaries providing us with up close views of their resident Bald Eagle, Vultures, Owls, Hawks, Crows, and Falcons (not to mention various waterfowl and Mourning Doves). We were able to hear the unique, and sometimes heartbreaking, stories that brought each bird into their care. Although the main goals of APCH are to rehabilitate and release, many of the birds that we saw had sustained injuries that have made release impossible. It was bittersweet to meet Loki, APCH's resident, not so Common,

Raven, who is non-releasable due to human imprinting. We all enjoyed seeing her flirt with Todd Secki, Secretary/Treasurer/Co-Founder, and husband of Christine.

The vast majority of the residents live there due to human interference, both intentional (gunshot wounds), and unintentional (motor vehicle strikes, fishing line, balloons). We all learned a great deal from Christine, who shared her vast knowledge, without reservation. It was clear, early into our visit, that Connecticut is lucky to claim APCH as one of our treasures. I encourage anyone reading this to learn more about this amazing place online at: [aplacecalledhoperaptors.com](http://aplacecalledhoperaptors.com)

Sharon Dellinger, MAS Recording Secretary



# Totality 2017

Continued from page 2

Then, at 1:30, it started. Everyone donned their glasses and moved to view the unfolding disappearance of the sun. Every few minutes, we would look to see how much the moon had moved to obscure our precious star that meant all things to our planet.

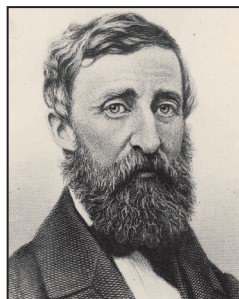
Our friend from Texas showed us how the shadows changed to ever thinner and thinner crescents on the ground. As darkness enveloped us, the cicadas went stunningly quiet.

When the eclipse reached totality, the whole park erupted in cheers and clapping. All around, people cried. The park lights went on. A bizarre, orangy light surrounded us. It reminded me of a night in the full moon, but the light wasn't white. It glowed. In about a minute and a half, totality was over, and the moon began its slow revelation of the sun. It was awesome!

The next total eclipse of the sun will be April 8, 2024 with totality following a path along the Canadian border. I'm already planning. 🦋

*Alison Guinness, MAS President*

## An Evening with Henry David Thoreau



To a crowd of about 65 attendees at the deKoven House, Henry David Thoreau, as portrayed by Richard Smith, spent the evening of September 28, 2017 reading portions from his essay, *Walking*, followed by a lively question and answer session, first as Thoreau in 1855, and then as Richard Smith in 2017. This program, held to honor the 200th birthday of Thoreau, was sponsored by MAS and the Rockfall Foundation, with assistance from the Jonah Center for Earth and Art. Thanks to our sponsors and attendees! 🦋

*Luella Landis, MAS Vice President*

The deadline for items to be included in the Winter/Spring Issue is December 26, 2017. We expect subscribers to receive their copies about January 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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