

Lynde Point Land Trust
Bird Nest Enhancement/Monitoring Project
2021 End of Season Report

Hello Birding Fenwickians!

The **2021 Nesting Season** has come to an end. Purple Martins are returning to southern wintering grounds and all but a few Osprey have departed the borough. It has been a successful season for both of these species, despite the many perils presented. Expansion of housing options for both species is planned.

Purple Martin and Osprey Status

Purple Martin

Houses from the 13 locations in the borough continue to show a trend of increasing nest and fledgling numbers, witnessed over the six years of monitoring. With a total of 70 nests recorded for this year, the calculated number of fledglings is 194 versus the 2020 fledgling calculation of 118. This is a wonderfully healthy trend. Accuracy of calculations was confirmed by verifying the total number of eggs minus the abandoned eggs, damaged eggs, and deceased young. The fledge rate per nest multiplier used in 2020 was 2.5 per nest built. In 2021, the results were higher with 2.8 fledglings per nest. The relocation of many House Sparrows has clearly been a help.

Purple Martin is a colonial nesting species, meaning that it nests as group in close proximity to each other (apartment houses). As a result, one can place multiple houses at each site. This is the plan for one of the more successful sub-colonies, the Webster House, which has preformed consistently since 2016, as you can see in the data table (right).



PURPLE MARTIN-MALE

Image by VJ Anderson

Martin Nests	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21
1. Riggio	3	1	0	3	0	3
2. Walton	3	3	7	5	7	6
3. Keeney	0	2	2	7	6	5
4. 34 Pettipaug	0	0	0	1	4	5
5. Bulkeley	0	1	3	4	0	6
6. 2nd Fairway West	3	3	3	4	2	5
7. 2nd Fairway East	3	3	4	5	5	7
8. Neely	3	2	3	3	2	3
9. Davis	3	3	1	0	5	7
10. Fourth Fairway	0	1	4	1	4	6
11. Gay	3	5	4	1	5	5
12. Webster	5	6	6	7	7	7
13. Patterson	0	0	0	1	0	5
Total Nests:	26	30	37	42	47	70



Courtesy of Swamy HKM.

Osprey Fledged	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21 Fledged
1. West End	0	1	1	2	2	1
2. Hepburn	3	3	3	1	0	2
3. Neely	3	3	3	2	3	3
4. Staniford	1	1	3	0	2	2
5. Schmitt	NA	NA	NA	0	0	0
6. Sequassen	4	3	3	0	1	2
7. Hastings	0	0	1	3	3	2
8. Webster I	3	3	2	2	1	2
9. Webster II	NA	0	2	0	1	2
Totals	14	14	18	10	13	16

Osprey

This years 22 hatchlings resulted in an estimated 16 fledglings, the second highest fledgling count for the borough since 2016 (and likely before).

A new Osprey platform is planned for installation at the west end of the new dune. It is hoped that this platform will encourage the birds to stop nesting efforts on nearby chimneys. The borough has lost two birds due to lightning rod impalements.

For much of the summer, there appeared to be numerous unassociated Osprey on the fringes, perching near nests but not actively tending to any eggs or young. At the Neely Nest, one afternoon, there were seven different Osprey perched on the nest rim. These non-breeding nest assistants have been well documented with other raptor species (i.e. Harris's Hawk), but as far as I can find, not with Osprey. One would need to spend significantly more time observing to see what exactly is going on. Perhaps a good project for a young PhD candidate?

Nest Boxes

The Tree Swallow and wren boxes are being used consistently each year. Tree Swallows eat in excess of 2,000 mosquitoes each day, so they are helpful neighbors in addition to being entertaining and beautiful to view. If you have not yet witnessed the massing of swallows that happens each September on Goose Island in Old Lyme, do not miss it next year. It is spectacular! And watch for swallows "playing" with white feathers, while on the wing. These are typically Mute Swan feathers that will be used to line their nests.



PURPLE MARTIN

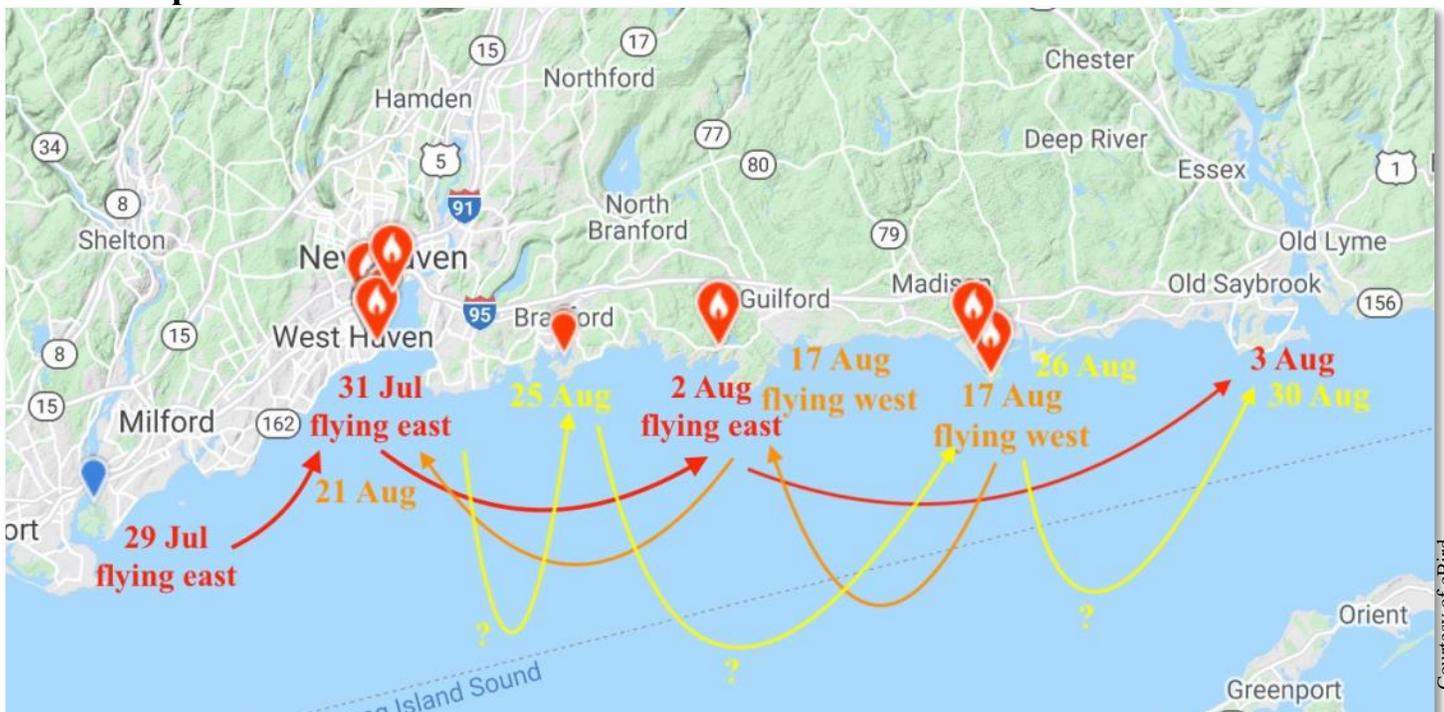
Image by VJ Andersen



TREE SWALLOW

Image by Rhododendrites

Roseate Spoonbill - Track of 2021 Bird



Courtesy of eBird.

Birds in the Borough

Certainly the highlight of the summer was the appearance of a well-known southern species, the Roseate Spoonbill, found first in West Haven on July 29, then in South Cove on August 3, and then in Hepburn's Pond on August 30. This is only the second state record for this species, the first being in Milford in September of 2018. This individual was a young bird, likely having been helped north by a weather system or two.

Noted in a Shoreline Times article, Christopher Elphick, a biologist at UConn's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, said that while large wading birds such as spoonbills are known to wander northward after their winter breeding season, sightings this far north remain a rarity.

"There are quite a few spoonbills around in the (Northeast) this year, but I think it is premature to be suggesting that the range is shifting into the region," Elphick said in an email, "though northward range shifts are clearly happening with a lot of other species."

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

"The Roseate Spoonbill is one of six species of spoonbills in the world and the only one found in the Americas. The other five spoonbills occur in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Australia.

Roseate Spoonbills get their pink coloration from the foods they eat. Crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates contain pigments called carotenoids that help turn their feathers pink.

Roseate Spoonbills forage in shallow waters typically less than five inches deep. They sweep their partly opened spoon-shaped bill through the water, feeling and looking for crustaceans such as shrimp, prawns, aquatic insects, and fish. Once they feel the prey on their bill they snap it closed, often swallowing the item whole.

NORMAL RANGE OF THE ROSEATE SPOONBILL

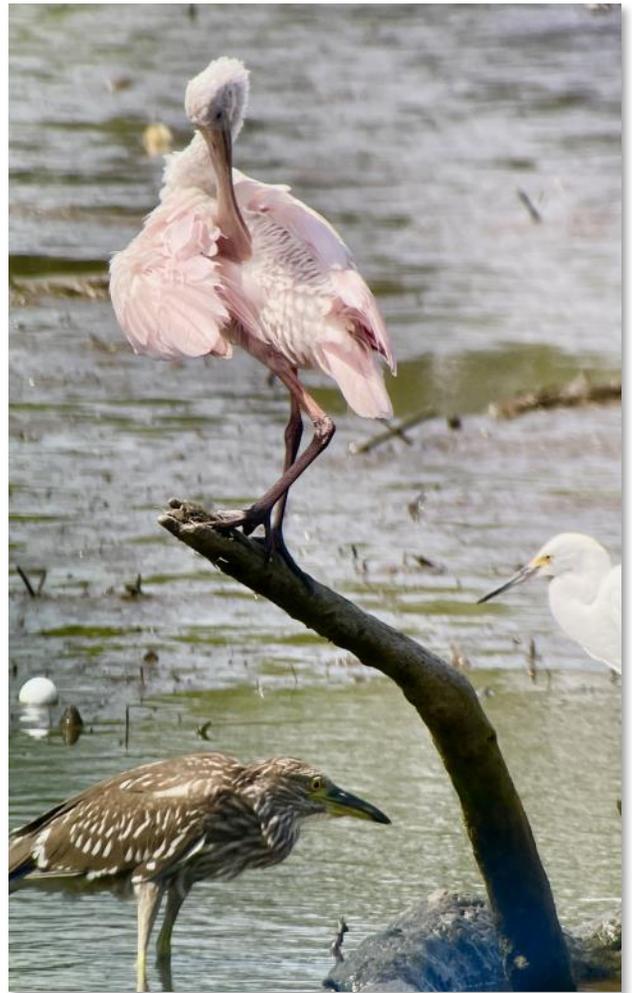


Image by Patrick Comins



Image by Andrew Griswold

Image by Rich Stone



Richard Stone

JUVENILE PEREGRINE FALCON

Image by Brendan Fogarty



ADULT PEREGRINE FALCON

Image by Tom Koerner



SNOWY OWL

The oldest recorded Roseate Spoonbill was at least 15 years, 10 months old when it was recaptured and rereleased during a scientific study in Florida.

Roseate Spoonbills nest and forage in areas that can be difficult to reach, so obtaining an accurate estimate of their population is difficult. The best available estimates come from the North American Breeding Bird Survey and Partners in Flight. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey their populations increased by nearly 6.5% between 1966 and 2015. Partners in Flight estimates the global breeding population at 120,000 individuals. The species rates a 10 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score, which means it is not on the Partners in Flight Watch List and is a species of low conservation concern. In Florida, much of their nesting habitat occurs in protected areas including the Everglades National Park and national wildlife refuges, but their foraging areas are not always under protection and can be affected by changes in water management that increase salinity and affect food availability. Nesting spoonbills are also vulnerable to human disturbance from boating and other recreation activities that can result in nest abandonment.”

You never know what might show up in Fenwick!

Keep an Eye Out

Fall and winter are often the best months of birding in the borough. Many duck species migrate to the area from northern climes in search of food and less harsh weather conditions. Particularly in the latter part of September and first part of October, one can expect to see pretty good numbers of raptors, including the fastest animal in the world, the Peregrine Falcon, in a dive recorded at over 200 miles per hour. About 50% of the birds coming through at this time of year are “hatch year birds,” meaning young birds that have recently fledged and are now out on their own. Maybe a Snowy Owl this year?

Enjoy your wonderful bird garden!

Cheers,

Andy

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