



Fenwick

Bird Nest Enhancement/Monitoring Project Fall 2018 Status Report

Hello Birding Fenwickians!

The **2018 nesting season** is complete! Most Osprey have left the area and are headed south, some as far as northern South America. It is a hazardous trip with many obstacles to overcome and avoid, including long passages over open water. We wish them well and look forward to their return in mid-March.

Connecticut Audubon just completed the survey, cleaning, and storage of the Purple Martin houses. Over the next few weeks, the Osprey nests and platforms will be inspected for hazardous debris and repairs will be done as needed.

Other off-season projects in the works include the addition of two new Osprey platforms and replacement of the locking bolts for the martin houses.

Osprey Data

We had a wonderfully successful Osprey season, illustrated by the 28.5% increase in fledgling numbers. The two non-performing nest from last year, Hastings and Webster II, did well, likely a result of young pairs gaining experience, cooperative weather, and a continuing abundance of Atlantic Menhaden (a.k.a. Bunker), a species whose status is directly related to the successes of Osprey in our area. Almost all of the fish seen being carried by Osprey over the borough are of this species, which has thrived and greatly increased since new menhaden harvest quotas were instituted in 2013.

These harvest quotas are often up for review, so keep an eye on this issue. As reported by Seafood-source.com last November, “The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission voted to allow for a

Osprey Nest Name	'16 Fledged	'17 Fledged	'18 Fledged
West End	0	1	1
Hepburn	3	3	3
Neely	3	3	3
Staniford	1	1	3
Sequassen	4	3	3
Hastings	0	0	1
Webster I	3	3	2
Webster II	X	0	2
Total Fledged	14	14	18



Osprey Nation

Osprey Nation is Connecticut Audubon Society’s citizen science partnership, launched in the summer of 2014, to monitor the health of our state’s Ospreys. The goal of the project is to create a long-term record of data that will give the conservation community a better understanding of the health of Connecticut’s Osprey population.

The goal of Osprey Nation is to create a long-term record of data that will give the conservation community a better understanding of the health of Connecticut’s Osprey population. The following table shows the numbers, year by year.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Stewards	100	146	224	287	314*
Nests	414	515	606	680	777*
Nests with Data	174	322	420	540	603*
Active Nests	210	250	337	394	450*
Fledglings		356	490	607	622*

* As of September 4, 2018. Note that the 2018 data are preliminary. We present them here to give you an idea of how the Osprey population and the Osprey Nation program is progressing. We will be updating the numbers throughout the season, and will provide final numbers and an analysis in our seasonal report, which we typically publish several months after the Ospreys leave for the winter.

“modest” increase in the harvest of what some call the most important fish in the sea.

The measure, which passed on the last day of a two-day meeting of the commission’s Atlantic Menhaden Management Board in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, means the total allowable catch for Atlantic menhaden will be set at 216,000 metric tons for both the 2018 and 2019 seasons. It also calls for the creation of a monitoring program to determine limits for future seasons.

Most menhaden caught aren’t processed for direct consumption. Instead, the fish is coveted for the omega-3 fats it contains. It’s used to create products ranging from fish oil dietary supplements to animal feed to lipstick. It’s also considered a major food source for predators in the marine ecosystem.

Robert Ballou, the council’s board chairman, noted that the measure went against most of the public comments the ASMFC received. However, he said the decision balances the fish’s role in the ecosystem with the needs of stakeholders.”

Purple Martin Data

Unfortunately, the very aggressive House Sparrow, an introduced species from Europe and Africa that competes for space in the martin houses, has taken a huge toll this year. Surveying the houses at the end of the season has revealed a significant mortality for the martin, likely due to attacks by House Sparrow and perhaps to a lesser degree, weather. Twenty (20) dead adults and young were found. A more proactive approach will be needed for next season, including the trapping and removal of House Sparrows.

The martin house survey notes an encouraging increase in the number of nests (23%), but with the serious later season territorial attacks by House Sparrow, the net result is likely fewer fledglings.

Nest Boxes

The Tree Swallow and wren boxes have all been cleaned out of old nest materials, and all except for one were used and greatly appreciated by their occupants. These boxes are left out during the winter, since they often are used as nighttime shelter by many species, including Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, and more. Southern Flying Squirrel, a nocturnal species, uses these boxes as daytime resting spots.



© Dick Daniels

<u>Martin House Name</u>	<u>'16 Nests</u>	<u>'17 Nests</u>	<u>'18 Nests</u>
1. Riggio	3	1	0
2. Walton	3	3	7
3. Ryder Course	0	0	Removed
4. Keeney	0	2	2
5. 34 Pettipaug	0	0	0
6. Bulkeley	0	1	3
7. 29 Pettipaug	X	0	0
8. First Fairway	0	0	Removed
9. Agawam	0	0	Removed
10. Second Fairway West	3	3	3
11. Second Fairway East	3	3	4
12. Neely	3	2	3
13. Davis	3	3	1
14. Fourth Fairway	0	1	4
15. Gay	3	5	4
16. Webster	5	6	6
17. Patterson	0	0	0
Total Nests:	26	30	37



© dfaulder



© T. Inoue

Rare Birds in the Area

You may have heard by now that back in August there was a **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** in Essex. It was quite the buzz in the birding community and if accepted by the Avian Records of Committee of Connecticut as a wild bird, it will be the first state record. This species is well outside its normal range. If confirmed, it will be the third new species for the state in the last two months, along with the Little Egret found in Stonington and the Roseate Spoonbill in Milford.

This large, goose-like duck with a long neck, short tail, chestnut breast, black belly, long bright pink legs, and a gray face with a strong white eye ring, surely looks like it has been put together by committee. It looks like a cartoon bird. In flight, it has a noticeable hunched-back appearance and a broad white wing stripe. Male and female are similar. Young birds are a dull version of the adult with a mottled black belly. This species eats mostly plant materials, including grasses and aquatic plants, by dabbling in shallow waters like it was doing in Essex. Eating agricultural crops is where we generally see them on our trips to Texas in the spring. They may on occasion eat insects and snails.

Conservation Status: The North American population has been increasing and expanding its range for the last 50 years, likely the result of people providing nest boxes and perhaps global climate change. There have been a number of records for this species in surrounding states this summer. It was bound to happen for Connecticut.

Birds of Note in the Borough

With the migration at full throttle, the movement of songbirds, hawks, falcons, and waterfowl is a special time along the lower Connecticut River. In just the last few days, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, many gulls, large numbers of Yellow-rumped Warber, Eastern Phoebe, and more have been sighted. The cone crop in Canada is poor this year, so you should expect larger than normal numbers for the northern finch species including the magnificent **Evening Grosbeak**. Keep those feeders full. Give me a call if you need advice on feeders and feed. And keep an eye out for Snowy Owl!

Please feel free to email any **sightings** you think significant or would like to share.

Enjoy your wonderful bird garden!

Cheers,

Andy

Cover image courtesy of Andrew Griswold.



© The Cornell Lab or Ornithology



© The Cornell Lab or Ornithology



© Cephas

Andrew Griswold

Director of EcoTravel
Connecticut Audubon Society
PO Box 903 (30 Plains Road)
Essex, CT 06426 USA
860-767-0660
agriswold@ctaudubon.org
www.ctaudubon.org

