

Fenwick

Bird Nest Enhancement/Monitoring Project
Spring 2018 Status Report

Hello Birding Fenwickians!

Hooray! The **2018 nesting season** is just around the corner. Birds are already headed north, some perhaps making their way from as far south as Ecuador and Peru. There are many hazards ahead for them, so we must wish them luck for a safe return to Fenwick beginning as soon as ten days from now. Expect to see the first Osprey on or about March 15.

Sandy Sanstrom and I will, over the next few weeks, once again inspect all platforms and nests to assure that they are in good shape and free of hazardous materials. A proposal for new or replacement Osprey platforms, and relocation or mothballing of some martin houses, has been sent to the Lynde Point Land Trust for their consideration. The management of platforms and houses is an ongoing project requiring hands-on participation to assure proper stewardship. Additionally, there is significant funding required to maintain and augment platforms and houses, so please lend support to the land trust. If you would like to sponsor a platform, it would be gratefully accepted.

As part of the Connecticut Audubon Society's Osprey Nation conservation project, I will once again be reporting on most of the borough nests. Liz Plonka and Jack Gayne are stewards for the West End Nest and will be entering data onto Osprey Nation's interactive website. If you would like to take over monitoring of one or more of the Fenwick Osprey nests, please let me know. Happy to share!

Osprey Data

We are anticipating a year of increased fledging as the three younger Osprey pairs (West End, Hastings, and Webster II) gain experience with successful nesting procedures. There are many hazards out there for

<u>Osprey Nest Name</u>	<u>'16 Fledged</u>	<u>'17 Fledged</u>	<u>'18 Nests</u>
West End	0	1	
Hepburn	3	3	
Neely	3	3	
Staniford	1	1	
Sequassen	4	3	
Hastings	0	0	
Webster I	3	3	
Webster II	X	0	
Total Fledged	14	14	TBD



Image courtesy of Bill Canosa.

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 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 Osprey Nation report, written by 2017 Osprey Nation coordinator Genevieve Nuttall, shows that the number of Osprey nests and baby Osprey in Connecticut reached record high numbers in 2017, indicating that there is ample food in local waterways to sustain these fish-eating raptors.

Here are the numbers over the four years of Osprey Nation:

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Stewards	100	146	224	287
Nests	414	515	606	680
Nests with Data	174	322	420	540
Active Nests	210	250	337	394
Fledglings	No data	356	490	607



Image courtesy of Bill Canosa.

young birds in the nest, including predators like the Great Horned Owls that nest and live in The Grove. And if walking the beach, be sure to pick up any monofilament fishing line, fish nets, plastic bags, and anything that might be a nesting hazard. Adult Osprey are always looking for things that look like they would be good nesting materials, but they do not always make good decisions. It will be fun to see what the adults from the Hepburn Nest use this year (the borough's most prolific junk collectors).

Purple Martin Data

The martins will arrive a few weeks after the Osprey, first with their “scouts” and a week or so later the main part of the colony. Fenwick has a growing martin colony that we hope will soon return to numbers that once graced the shores of the borough.

According to Dr. Joe Smith, a martin expert, “Purple martins are a bird of the people. Throughout most of their range, martins are completely dependent on human-created nesting structures. Even beyond the nesting season, purple martins commonly establish roost sites in and around human-created structures. It’s not clear when martins made the switch from natural nesting cavities to human-constructed purple martin houses. Many writers suggest that Native Americans built purple martin houses and that the switch to human-made housing was underway before the arrival of Europeans in North America. Although this is entirely plausible, there isn’t much evidence that Native Americans are responsible for the bird’s transition from natural to human-made nest sites. Early American ornithologists did mention seeing Native American-built gourd houses.”

Let’s keep up the good work!

Nest Boxes

The Tree Swallow and House Wren boxes were left out over the winter to provide roost sites for numerous bird species including Downey Woodpecker and Black-capped Chickadee. Southern Flying Squirrels are known to use the boxes for winter housing, a nocturnal squirrel species.

Birds of Note

Early in in the winter season, a **Snowy Owl** was reported perched along the beach south of Lynde Point Light. This has been another year where we are witnessing a significant push to the south of young “snowies.”

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



Image courtesy of Andrew Griswold.

These “irruption years” are due to a number of factors, one likely being lemming (the owl’s main food source) population explosions that result in highly productive nesting seasons for the owls. Most of the birds that make it to Connecticut are young birds, “birds-of-the-year.”

Right now there are large numbers of visiting wintering waterfowl beginning to stage-up for their push to the north including many **Surf Scoter**, mostly in the mouth of the river. There are three scoter species that winter in the area, including Surf, White-winged, and Black Scoters. All nest to our north in the Canadian Maritimes and up into the Arctic.

In addition to the ducks, two loon species are frequently seen around Fenwick, both in the river and Long Island Sound. The **Common Loon** may at times be the less common of the two, allowing the **Red-throated Loon** to take that title. In the coming weeks, loon plumages will begin to take on an increasingly bolder pattern. If you are lucky enough to get a good look at an alternate (breeding) plumaged individual, particularly the Red-throated Loon, you are in for real a treat.

A **Red-tailed Hawk** was seen recently hunting the grassy berm along Sequassen, taking advantage of the assistance of the mowing machine that was flushing-out the many mice that undoubtedly inhabit the area. I’m not sure the operator of the mower was aware he had a companion watching over him.

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

Enjoy your wonderful bird garden!

Cheers,

Andy

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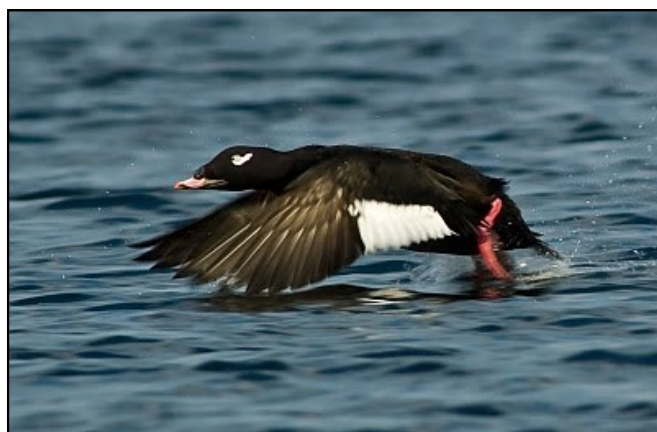
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Scoters courtesy of Lloyd Spitalnik.



Red-throated Loon courtesy of NHIPTV.

Cover Image courtesy of Andrew Griswold.