

The Habitat

A newsletter of the Connecticut Association of
Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc.

Winter/Spring 2018 volume 30 number 1



CACIWC's 40th Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference: Preparations for a Changing Climate

The CACIWC Board of Directors extends their appreciation to the many members and guests who were able to attend our 40th Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference. The conference was held on Saturday, November 18, 2017 at a new venue, the Radisson Hotel Cromwell. This expansive facility provide a fresh new setting for our conference with its twelve workshops and extensive display areas. The CACIWC Board of Directors and its Annual Meeting Committee worked throughout 2017 to bring attendees a wide variety of informative workshops and exhibitors, while coordinating with our venue to provide you with a new display and refreshment layout.

Keynote Speaker Panel

At our 40th CACIWC Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference, CACIWC was proud to host an exciting panel discussion during our new format early morning plenary session. Our 2017 keynote speakers were



Keynote speaker Robert Dubrow, MD, PhD
Photo credit: Brenda Cataldo

serves as Faculty Director, Yale Climate Change and Health Initiative. David Skelly, PhD, Frank R. Oastler Professor of Ecology, Yale School of Forestry and

Environmental Studies also serves as the Director, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History. Both keynote speakers discussed their latest research in support of our conference theme: Preparations for a Changing Climate: Impacts on Connecticut Habitats and Populations. We continue to receive your positive feedback on these two extremely informative presentations.



Keynote Speaker David Skelly, PhD
Photo credit: Brenda Cataldo

uniquely qualified to discuss the ongoing impact of climate change on Connecticut habitats and populations. Robert Dubrow, MD, PhD, Professor of Epidemiology (Environmental Health)| Yale School of Public Health and

understanding coyotes, wetlands law and regulation updates, revised stormwater management permits, tackling invasive plants, changing migratory bird populations, reviewing subdivision applications, understanding aquifer protection, and approaches to protecting and conserving land.

One workshop, entitled "Changing Migratory Bird Populations in Connecticut" was provided by Min T. Huang, PhD, Migratory Bird Program Leader, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). In his workshop Dr. Huang emphasized how populations of many migratory song birds, game birds and resident game birds are being closely studied in Connecticut and surrounding regions. he pointed out how some populations are in serious decline as a result of fragmented or lost habitats, climate changes and other factors, while other populations are

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CACIWC News

The year was 1977. While US President Jimmy Carter is serving his first year in office, Connecticut Governor Ella Grasso was finishing her third. The first Star Wars movie was breaking all box office records. Parties honoring Queen Elizabeth II silver jubilee were occurring throughout the United Kingdom. Thousands mourned the death of Elvis at the age of 42, as the public health community celebrated the global eradication of smallpox. As "Saturday Night Live" entered its second season, the movie "Saturday Night Fever" was released. NASA was busy test flying the first US space shuttle "Enterprise" and launching the Voyager 1 space probe to begin its long exploration of our solar system.

Only seven years past the first Earth Day, public interest in various conservation and environmental issues was continuing to grow in Connecticut and throughout the nation. Our organization itself was growing. Only three years after reorganizing from the Connecticut Association of Conservation Commissions (CACC) to the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC), President Tom ODell decided the time was right to organize our first Annual Meeting and bring our expanding membership together for updates and discussions.

Many administrations, "Star Wars" movies, and environmental movements have come and gone since that first CACIWC Annual Meeting. Our annual meeting expanded to a day-long environmental conference providing numerous workshops and networking opportunities to our members. Our membership has been very productive, working to survey local habitats, preserve important open space and wetland systems, while educating local residents on important conservation issues.

Fast forwarding to November 2017, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip were getting ready to celebrate their 70th Wedding Anniversary, "Saturday Night Live" had gained a new relevancy, and CACIWC members were making plans to attend our 40th Annual

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CACIWC 2017 Annual Recognition Award Recipient

CACIWC provided a special recognition to long-term leader of a CACIWC member commission by honoring the late **Alexandra “Sandy” Breslin** with our 2017 “Lifetime Achievement Award” for her many decades of service to the Bethany Inland Wetlands Commission along with her tireless advocacy work for conservation as one of the lead environmental champions in Connecticut.

Sandy Breslin first joined the Bethany Inland Wetlands Commission as an alternate member in January 1994 and became a regular member in July 1997. Sandy became vice chair in October of 2003 and chair in October of 2011, serving in that position until her passing on May 31, 2017.

After graduating from Amity Regional High School in Woodbridge; Sandy attended Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, Cornell University in New York, and then entered Yale University where she obtained her BA in 1983 and a Master’s degree, ABD.

In addition to her work with the Bethany Inland Wetlands Commission, she worked closely with many state-wide land use and environmental groups including the Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Audubon Society, Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds (AAfCW) and the Connecticut Fund for the Environment - Save the Sound. She served as the Co-Chair of the Policy and Advocacy Committee on the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, as well as a long-term member of its Steering Committee.

Other projects pursued by Sandy included activities to preserve Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, The Preserve, and efforts to expand the Stewart B. McKinney and Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife

Refuge Areas. She was a strong advocate for preserving Long Island Sound and Connecticut’s sensitive coastline.

Although Sandy conducted most of work quietly, without regard for personal attention, she was recognized far and wide for her efforts. The US Department of the Interior honored her with an Environmental Achievement Award. She also received a Coastal America Award for conservation teamwork at Long Beach West and a Teaming with Wildlife Member Achievement Award for her work establishing a State of Connecticut Conservation License Plate. Nowhere was her long-standing and tireless efforts to advocate for environmental conservation more appreciated than in her own town of Bethany, which proudly proclaimed March 25, 2006 as “Sandy Breslin Day.”

We again extend our most sincere condolences to Sandy’s family and the Bethany Inland Wetlands Commission. We know that Sandy’s service will continue to not only honor her colleagues in Bethany but will continue to inspire environmentalists throughout Connecticut! 🍁

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The Connecticut Bird Atlas Project

by Min T. Huang, PhD, Migratory Bird Program Leader, Connecticut
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

The First CT Breeding Bird Atlas was completed in 1986. It summarized the distribution of 175 confirmed species of breeding birds in Connecticut. In the intervening 30 or so years, many changes have occurred on the local, regional, and global landscape, and with our climate. Recent survey work by the Wildlife Division and analysis of other existing breeding bird survey work has indicated that historic breeding distributions have contracted for some species such as forest interior birds and distributions and abundance of many other species are known to have changed, some for the good, others for the bad. As we are experiencing climate change, undoubtedly many other distributional changes have occurred since the early 1980s, when data for the initial Breeding Bird Atlas were collected. If we are to efficiently and effectively utilize our dwindling financial resources to conserve this beautiful resource, we must have a contemporary understanding of just where our birds are and how many there may be. This not only involves our breeding birds, but also needs to take into account the birds that winter here in our state and those species that are reliant upon Connecticut's habitats as they head south for the winter, and then again, when they head back north in the spring.

The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division and the University of Connecticut are leading an effort to conduct an extensive CT Bird Atlas. This multi-faceted project will not only focus on breeding birds, but also wintering birds and, should enough financial resources become available, migrating birds. This project will utilize the best existing science and draw upon all of our conservation partners. When completed, the CT Bird Atlas project will provide:

- Contemporary data on bird distributions throughout the year to **better** inform land use decisions by federal, state, and municipal government, land trusts, Audubon
- A better understanding of the habitat needs and associations of species of "Greatest Conservation Need"
- Development of environmental metrics that can be used to monitor health of the environment
- Galvanize the conservation community to come together and work towards a common and shared goal

- Develop the basis for predicting the effects of future development and climate change on individual species
- More efficient and informed conservation planning

This project is going to take five years to complete and similar to other Atlas projects, will rely to a large extent, on volunteer birders to collect data. We will also be employing seasonal technicians to assist us in collecting more in depth survey data that most volunteers may not be willing to help collect. We will begin collecting field data in the spring of 2018 and that effort will continue, in all seasons, through 2020.

This Project will better inform us as to critical habitat we should be prioritizing for protection. As we all know, habitat acquisition is largely an opportunistic endeavor. However, having a defensible prioritization enables Agencies and NGO's to better work together to protect the landscape.

Now.....how are we going to accomplish all of this?

Breeding Birds

We will be investigating the distribution of our breeding bird assemblage by duplicating the initial Breeding Bird Atlas techniques employed in the First Atlas. This enables us to directly compare occurrence of breeding species and their distributions between the two efforts. This involves determining presence or absence of birds during the breeding season within set blocks across the state. There are 596 blocks in the state. Each of these is approximately seven square miles in size. The process for this aspect of the project is to assign specific blocks to surveyors. Volunteer surveyors can go to the CT Bird Atlas website at www.ctbirdatlas.org and sign up to survey a particular block or multiple blocks. These requests will go to one of eight Regional Coordinators.

Once assigned a block by the Regional Coordinator, surveyors then go into their assigned block(s) and survey birds! For the CT Bird Atlas, we are asking that 20 hours across the course of three years, be spent surveying in each assigned block. For the breeding season this will encompass the months from throughout the April through July. Ideally, the block is surveyed across the entire

atlas, continued on page 5

atlas, continued from page 4

breeding period, as many species don't all breed at the same time. All habitats within the block should be surveyed. All bird species observed are tallied, as well as specific behavioral cues that are used by us to determine whether the species is confirmed breeding in that particular block, suspected, or just passing through. Behavioral cues include the presence of singing males for instance, territorial defense, witnessing the carrying of nesting material, or fledglings. This is the traditional breeding bird atlas project.

For efficient and effective conservation planning, however, it isn't good enough to just know that a species is breeding or not breeding. You need to know in a relative sense, how many are breeding, what habitat features make one area better than another, and how might this change over time? Thus, this Project will also strive to develop abundance estimates for many of our breeding species. In many instances and for most non-harvested species, these will constitute the first statewide population estimates for these species!! Abundance estimates are critical in our understanding of how birds are keying in on habitat features across the landscape. Knowledge of abundance and habitat association enables us to better prioritize where we need to focus conservation efforts if we want

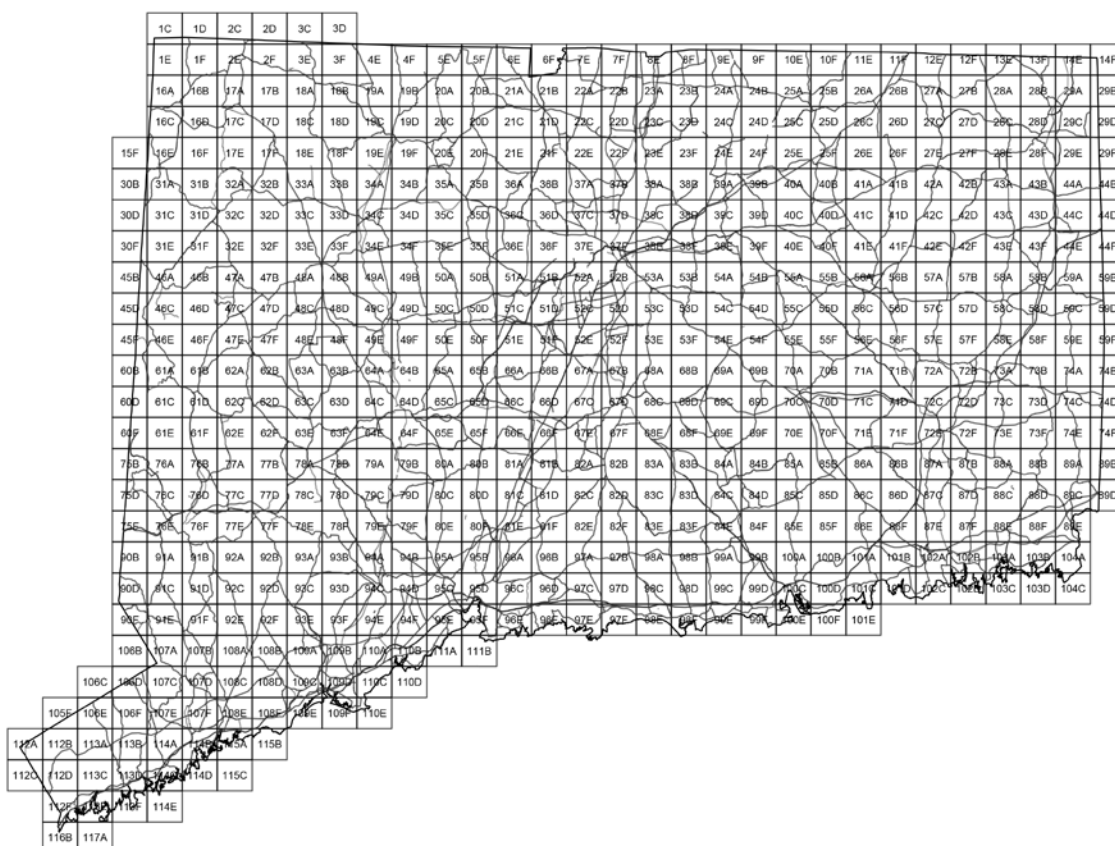


Example of a block showing the block name, boundary, main roads, and CT DEEP property.

to recover particular species. This kind of in-depth knowledge also allows us to develop indices that we can use to help predict future breeding bird distributions as the landscape changes.

We have developed predictive maps for each of the breeding species from the 1986 Atlas. These predictive maps are fairly good for some species, not so good for others. As we collect the contemporary data over the next three years, and use these new data in these

atlas, continued on page 14



Protecting Public Lands

by Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Taking Action NOW to Protect Your Public Lands

State Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and other state-owned public lands are valuable to you and everyone in Connecticut for so many reasons:

- *Attracting People:* Public lands, like Hammonasset Beach State Park or Talcott Mountain State Park, draw tourists, increase home values, and both attract and keep businesses in the state;
- *Fostering Health:* Public lands like Airline Trail State Park provide places for the public to recreate, exercise, experience the outdoors, and lead healthier lives.
- *Generating Revenues:* 134 State Parks and Forests attract 8-9 million visitors, generate over \$1 billion for state and local coffers, and support over 9,000 private sector jobs every year.
- *Harboring Wildlife:* Public lands like Sessions Woods Wildlife Management Area both provide habitats for wildlife and experts who help the public learn about the wildlife around them;
- *Preserving History:* Public lands like Harkness Memorial State Park showcase and protect unique cultural resources for public enjoyment;
- *Protecting Water Quality:* State Forests, like Peoples State Forest, were acquired to protect water quality and to demonstrate sustainable land management practices; and
- *Providing Inspiration:* Many in Connecticut cannot afford to travel to the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Parks. Public lands provide our local places for awe and inspiration.

Considering the tremendous value public lands provide to you, why are your public lands so vulnerable to being sold, traded, or given away by the General Assembly every year?!

The Council on Environmental Quality stated this ongoing challenge well in the introduction to its seminal 2014 report, *Preserved But Maybe Not – the Impermanence of State Conservation Lands*,

“When Connecticut residents visit a beautiful state park or wildlife area they often are contented by the knowledge that the land is set aside for forests, wildlife and all people for all time.

Except usually it isn’t.

Recent proposals to exchange or convey state parks, forests and wildlife areas totaling hundreds of acres have highlighted weaknesses in the protections granted to Connecticut’s conservation lands. These weaknesses could result in the sudden “unpreservation” and subsequent development of those lands. Such dramatic occurrences can and should be avoided in order to secure the sustainability of Connecticut’s impressive and valuable network of conservation lands.”

The mechanism used in the Connecticut General Assembly for the annual threat to public lands is the Conveyance Act which is formed under the jurisdiction of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee. Every year, the GAE Committee holds a public hearing on bill, this year Senate Bill 502, with many proposed conveyances in it. CFPA and others have provided testimony expressing concerns about various conveyance proposals over time, and often the worst proposals are either withdrawn or improved by the Committee based upon public input. However, near the end of the Legislative session, the bill can be amended with new proposals that never received public input. In 2016, there were seven new sections added to the Conveyance Act with no public hearing, and in 2017, there were five new sections added and 4 sections modified through an amendment to the Conveyance Act adopted just one day before the end of the legislative session.

The opportunity to provide meaningful public input on public lands before they are conveyed is not being well served under the current process. And the time for reforming this process is now, especially as the potential sale or use of public lands is being considered amongst many suggestions to help balance the State budget or add to the assets of state pension funds.

What can you do about it?

To remedy the ongoing threat to state-owned public lands through the Conveyance Act, CFPA and over 130 conservation organizations statewide are advocating for Senate Joint Resolution 35 (SJ 35), “Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to

protecting, continued on page 7

protecting, continued from page 6



Protect Real Property Held or Controlled by the State.” This Resolution would place a referendum question on the statewide ballot to allow all Connecticut voters to decide whether to amend the state constitution by adding two important safeguards for your public lands:

- 1) A public hearing must be held before the General Assembly could require any state-owned public lands could be sold, swapped, or given away; and
- 2) For lands held on behalf of the public by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection or the Department of Agriculture, the General Assembly must approve any conveyance with at least a 2/3rds majority vote in both chambers.

We hope that you will get involved and contact your State Legislators to help get SJ 35 over the finish line and on the ballot this November. If you need some extra motivation, just think of your favorite place or places on state-owned public land, and imagine those places being given away without you having an opportunity to weigh-in. Also, keep in mind that you are a public landowner who should always have a voice in decisions made on the future of your public lands.

For more information, you can visit the website of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) at www.ctwoodlands.org or join CFPA's e-mail list to hear of public policy developments as well as outdoor events and educational opportunities. You can also contact me anytime via ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org.

Eric Hammerling has been the Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) since May, 2008. CFPA is the oldest nonprofit conservation organization in Connecticut (established in 1895) and has long advocated for protected and well-managed parks, forests, open spaces, and trails for current and future generations to enjoy. 🍁




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Fueling Local Conservation with Student Power

by Chet Arnold, Director, UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR)

The Natural Resources Conservation Academy (NRCA) is a family of UConn programs that focus on using geospatial technology and conservation science to connect high school students, teachers, and conservation volunteers to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and in the process also bolster local conservation efforts. The NRCA is a partnership between a number of UConn entities (see below), including CLEAR. The NRCA actually consists of three related programs, two of which may be of interest to CACIWC members who are looking for assistance with conservation projects. The NRCA is always looking for local conservationists to participate in these two programs!

The foundational NRCA program, the Conservation Ambassadors Program (CAP), is now entering its seventh year. High school students from around the state come to the UConn main campus for an intensive week-long

“field experience” in which they are familiarized with a wide range of natural resource management topics having to do with water, forests, soil, wildlife, and geospatial technology. The students then are required to complete a conservation project in their community over the next 9 months, in collaboration with a local partner organization. The range of projects and their quality are amazing, from bird surveys to invasive species management to water quality studies. CACIWC members interesting in partnering with a student should check out the website at: <http://nrca.uconn.edu/students/index.htm> or contact Program Coordinator Abby Beissinger at abby.beissinger@uconn.edu (860-486-5239).

Last year the NRCA added a second, closely related program that throws conservation volunteers like CACIWC members directly into the mix! The Conservation Training Partnership pairs local conservation volunteers with high school students for a two-day program that goes over basic conservation science while also focusing on specific smart phone mapping applications useful to local conservation work. The teams are then charged with conducting conservation projects in their community. The first two CTP workshops were held in the summer of 2017, but for the next four years starting this spring, workshops will be conducted four times a year in varying geographic locations across the state. The 2017 workshops created 15 teams of learners made up of 15 adults and 17 teens ranging in age from 14 to 73 years old and representing 25 towns. You can check out their just-completed projects, and apply for the program, at <http://nrca.uconn.edu/students-adults/index.htm> or contact Program Coordinator Dr. Laura Cisneros at laura.cisneros@uconn.edu (860-486-4917).

The NRCA is a partnership of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, CLEAR, the Center for Environmental Science and Engineering (CESE), and the Neag School of Education. Information on all three NRCA programs can be found at nrca.uconn.edu. 🍁

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As of March 29, 2018, the following Town Commissions have supported CACIWC through membership for the 2017-2018 fiscal year (July 1, 2017 to June 30 2018). THANK YOU! If you do not see your name of this list, please encourage your commission to join. If we are in error we apologize. Let us know by emailing fournijs@gmail.com. Member commissions receive a copy of *The Habitat* for each commissioner and staff if dues are paid.

CC = Conservation Commission
CC/IWC = Combined Commission
Z/IWL = Combined Zoning/IWL
CL=Conservation Lake Commission

IW = Inland Wetlands Commissions (SUS) = Sustaining level of Support
IWA =Inland Wetlands Agency NROS = Natural Resources and Open Space Commission
EPC=Environmental Protection Comm. EC = Environmental Commission
CE=Conservation and Environmental Commission

Ashford	CC	Goshen	IW	Prospect	CC
Ashford	IWWC	Granby	CC	Prospect	IW
Bethany	CC (SUS)	Granby	IWWC	Redding	CC/IWC (SUS)
Bethany	IW (SUS)	Greenwich	CC (SUS)	Ridgefield	CC
Bethel	IW	Greenwich	IWA (SUS)	Ridgefield	P&Z/IW
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Bethlehem	IW	Groton	IWA	Roxbury	IWWC
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Burlington	IWWC	Killingworth	IWWC	Sprague	IWWC (SUS)
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Canton	CC	Ledyard	IWWC	Suffield	CC
Canton	IWWA	Lisbonl	CC	Thomaston	IWWC
Chaplin	CC	Litchfield	IW	Thompson	CC
Chaplin	IWWC	Lyme	IWC/CC	Thompson	IWC
Cheshire	IWWC	Madison	IW	Tolland	CC
Cheshire	EC	Mansfield	CC	Tolland	IW
Chester	CC	Middlebury	CC	Trumbull	IWWC
Cheste	IWWCA	Milford	CC	Vernon	CC
Clinton	CC	Milford	IW	Vernon	IW
Clinton	IW	New Canaan	CC	Wallingford	CC
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Ellington	CC	Plainville	IWWC	Woodbury	IW
Essex	CC	Pomfret	CC		
Essex	IWWC	Pomfret	IWWC		
Fairfield	CC/IWC (SUS)	Portland	1WWC (SUS)		
Farmington	CC/IWC (SUS)	Portland	CC (SUS)		
Glastonbury	CC/IWWC (SUS)	Preston	CC		
Goshen	CC	Preston	IWWC		

Become a FrogWatch USA™ Volunteer

What is FrogWatch USA™?

- A frog and toad volunteer monitoring program with over ten years of data.
- An opportunity for individuals and families to deepen their community involvement while collecting and reporting information about wetlands and frog and toad populations in the United States.
- A nationwide program where participants learn and practice science and develop a closer relationship with the natural environment.

Frogs and toads are important - and in trouble!

Frogs and toads are both predators and prey in aquatic and terrestrial food webs. They directly benefit humans by eating insects that can be pests and transmit diseases.

Frogs and toads are sensitive to changes in their environment and are indicators of problems that can affect human health.

Many previously abundant populations have experienced dramatic population declines - in the United States and around the world. It is essential that we understand the scope, scale, and cause of these declines.

Anyone can volunteer and WE NEED YOU!

You do not have to be a frog or toad expert to make an important contribution! You need an interest in learning about frogs and toads, the commitment to learn and identify their distinct calls, and the ability to make several evening visits to a local wetland.

You can be directly involved in gathering information that may help stop the decline of these important and treasured animals.

Get Involved! Contact FrogWatch USA™ to Learn More! Go to www.frogwatchusa.org or e-mail: frogwatch@aza.org.

SAVE THE DATE

2018 Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference

now is scheduled for
Saturday, November 17, 2018

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conference, continued from page 1

improving. This workshop reviewed annual population studies that the DEEP conducts. Dr. Huang also discussed how local commissioners and staff can help with some of these studies including volunteering with the Connecticut Bird Atlas project, a large statewide endeavor that will rely heavily upon citizen science



Photo credit: Brenda Cataldo

to collect data (see article in this issue of *The Habitat*).

Our new conference venue hosted a revised layout of informative displays in an arrangement adjacent to our workshops that

promoted open discussion opportunities among our members and other conference attendees. The initial responses from our conference surveys revealed an appreciation for the networking opportunity provided by these adjacent display and break areas.

Many attendees were excited to witness an unusual workshop in the main ballroom following lunch. Marc Langley, Owner of Airborne Works demonstrated the unique perspective an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or drone can provide.

The use of drones for environmental monitoring in the U.S. is expected to grow due to the 2016 FAA part 107

Rule. Drones are a new tool to enhance existing tools used for environmental studies. They have the potential to revolutionize environmental applications when used

at the right scale and for the right purpose. The workshop nicely demonstrated the value of drones for environmental monitoring, particularly for highly detailed coverage of a relatively small areas.

We again thank the conference attendees and all those responsible for organizing our 40th Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference. The CACIWC Board of Directors has already begun a detailed review of the evaluations forms submitted by participants of

this conference. In addition to informing us of their opinions of the educational sessions, the participants also provided valuable suggestions for workshop topics for next year's conference. To allow all of our members the opportunity to submit ideas for workshop topics and other suggestions, the CACIWC Annual Meeting Committee has decided to again maintain the AnnualMtg@caciwc.org email throughout the year. Please keep forwarding your

suggestions to us. The board of directors extends its most sincere appreciation to our 2017 conference sponsors and



Photo credit: Brenda Cataldo



Photo credit: Brenda Cataldo



Photo credit: Rod Parlee

looks forward to seeing all of you at our 2018 Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference, now scheduled for Saturday, November 17, 2018, when we will return to the Radisson Hotel Cromwell. 🍂

Meeting and Environmental Conference. CACIWC board and Annual Meeting Committee members were working closely with our new venue and our contractors to ensure that every important detail was addressed.

As the article and photos in the issue of *The Habitat* illustrate, the 40th Annual Meeting was a great success. Our attendance numbers were the largest in many years, and we received numerous complements on our speakers, workshops, displays, networking opportunities and our new venue choice.

A few weeks after our conference on November 28, 2017, a NASA team completed a successful thruster test of the Voyager 1 spacecraft, hoping to extend its long mission from Earth into interstellar space through at least 2025. With the help of our hard working board and committee volunteers, we also hope to continue to provide you, our dedicated members, with informative and enjoyable annual meetings for many years to come.

In other news:

1. The CACIWC Annual Meeting Committee has been reviewing the many comments and suggestions submitted on the survey distributed at our 40th Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference on Saturday, November 18, 2017 at a new venue, the Radisson Hotel Cromwell. If you did not have an opportunity to complete the 2017 meeting survey, please contact us with your comments and suggestions for our next conference at AnnualMtg@caciwc.org.

2. We are specifically requesting suggestions for workshop topics and speakers that you would like us to recruit for our 41st Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference, which we have already scheduled for Saturday, November 17, 2018. We are also pleased to announce that, based on your positive feedback, we are returning to Radisson Hotel Cromwell for our 2018 conference. Please contact us with at AnnualMtg@caciwc.org with all of your suggestions. Watch for additional conference news in upcoming issues of *The Habitat* and on our www.caciwc.org website.

3. The Board of Directors appreciated the large number of commissions who renewed their CACIWC membership prior to our annual meeting. For those who have not yet done so, it is not too late to send in your 2017-18 membership dues. A copy of the current renewal form and additional information can still be found on our website: www.caciwc.org. Would you or your company like to provide additional support to CACIWC?

The website also provides a description of additional individual and business membership categories. Please consider making an additional contribution to support our planned CACIWC education and outreach efforts.

4. The new officers and members of the Board of Directors are beginning the first full year of their two-year term following the elections that took place at our 2017 annual meeting. Although we were able to fill a number of vacancies during 2017, several CACIWC board vacancies remain unfilled (please see the list in this issue of *The Habitat* and on www.caciwc.org). Please submit your name to us at board@caciwc.org if you are interested in serving as the Windham County representative, one of the vacant alternate county representatives, or as one of the alternate at large representative positions.

5. Would you like to contribute to CACIWC activities and initiatives, but find your schedule just too filled to join the board? We are seeking volunteers to help us plan our education and outreach efforts, select new goals and objectives for our updated strategic plan, or participate in the review of Connecticut environmental legislative initiatives in cooperation with other state partner environmental and land use organizations. Let us know of your interest areas by emailing us at board@caciwc.org.

6. We thank everyone who recently provided us with updated email addresses and other contact information to help us expand our ability to communicate with member commissions and staff. Our Membership Coordinator and Database Manager, Janice Fournier, and your regional board representatives will be in touch with you to confirm contact information and discuss ideas for workshop and speaker suggestions and other topics of interest to you. We continue to seek new topics for articles to be published in *The Habitat* along with additional feedback from our members, which you can email to us directly at TheHabitat@caciwc.org.

We look forward to a productive year in support of all of you, the dedicated members and staff of Connecticut's conservation and inland wetlands commissions. Please do not hesitate to contact us at board@caciwc.org if you have questions or comments on any of the above items or have suggestions for your board of directors.

We thank our members for all of your ongoing efforts and wish you a safe, healthy and productive 2018!

Alan J. Siniscalchi, President 🍀

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models, these predictive maps will become much better. These maps will also enable us, eventually, to predict into the future what areas of the state might be important for different species. This is critical towards effective conservation planning.

Wintering Birds

As we all know, most of our birds are migratory. We need to be able to conserve habitat for the entirety of the life cycle-breeding, migration, and wintering. Thus, this Project will also focus attention on wintering birds and their habitat needs and associations. Our approach towards wintering bird assemblages and distribution will be similar to the block survey approach we will use for the breeding bird component. The wintering period will be broken down into two periods. The early winter period will encompass November and December. This survey period will coincide with existing Christmas Bird Counts and will target early arriving species. The later winter period will run from January through February and enable us to document different suites of birds. Similar to the breeding aspect of the Atlas, we will want 20 hours of survey time across the three year

data collection period, split evenly across the early winter period and late winter period.

Migrating Birds

The last component and likely most difficult of the Atlas Project is the migration piece. This also happens to be the component that is not yet fully funded. The approach that makes the most sense for assessing the importance of our habitats for migrating birds and what birds those may be is to utilize existing migratory stopover data and take advantage of contemporary radar data. These, in conjunction with on the ground surveys should allow us to identify critical habitat on our landscape for migrating species. These are the type of data that will require much rigorous analysis, and that is where the funding is needed. To truly complete this component properly we need to hire a post-doctoral fellow who can devote two years of time to completing this task.

Let's Get Started!

As we gear up for the kickoff of data collection in the spring of 2018 we would like to re-iterate that this much
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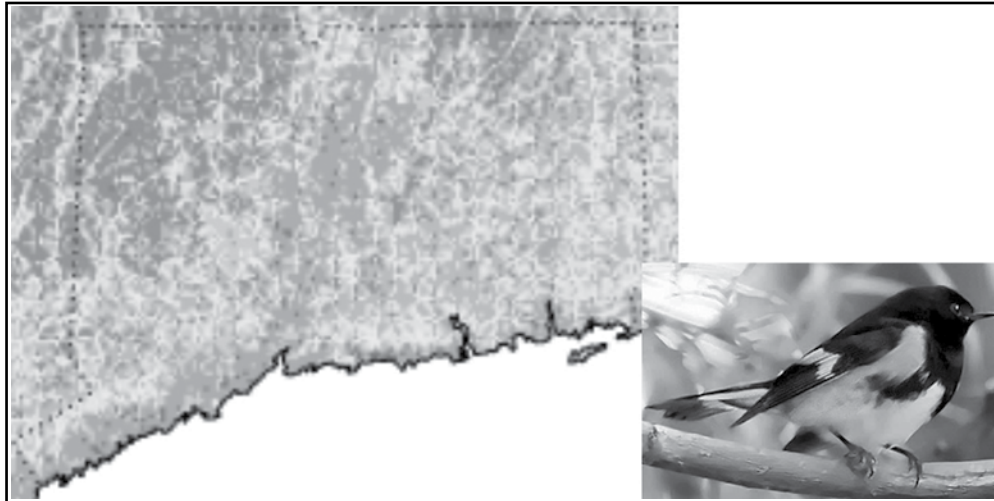
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needed project isn't a CT DEEP and UConn project.

This collectively is our project. This work will benefit all of us who care deeply about birds in this state. The DEEP and U-Conn are merely initiating and guiding the project. For this project to succeed and guide our bird conservation efforts into the future in a truly objective



Preliminary predictive map of American redstart breeding distribution. Darker colors indicate higher probability of distribution.

and scientific manner, we all need to embrace, adopt, and take this on as our project.

First and foremost, this project will require an extensive and committed volunteer birding effort. Much of this effort will be focused on taking ownership and responsibility for surveying one or more of the 596 blocks across the state. This is no small task, but, serves as the solid foundation upon which everything that this project strives to accomplish will be built upon. We have a co-

ordinator, the current President of the New Haven Birding Club and Conservation Chair for the CT Ornithological Association, Craig Repasz, who will be taking on the huge task of coordinating the volunteer survey effort. In addition to Craig, there are eight Regional Coordinators who will be responsible for coordinating the on the ground survey work in their respective Regions.

If you want to be a part of this this great Project, please visit our website, www.ctbirdatlas.org or email Craig directly at: ctbirdatlasvol@gmail.com.

What will be the end product?

Our hope is that once this Project is completed, that our website will be the clearinghouse for all bird related information in the state. We envision having all of the data available to everyone in an easy to use format so that informed decisions regarding land use and conservation

actions with birds and habitat in mind can be made at all scales and by all those who are interested in the environment (land trusts, conservation commissions, CT DEEP, etc).

The Atlas Project is a huge undertaking that will require considerable help from the birders of Connecticut. The knowledge gains, however, will be tremendous. Again, we will be asked to go birding. It will be a great time to be a birder in Connecticut! 🌿



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SAVE THE DATE!

CACIWC is pleased to announce that our
2018 Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference

now is scheduled for **Saturday, November 17, 2018**
when we will return to the:

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100 Berlin Road
Cromwell, CT 06416
(860) 635-2000

We hope to see you there!