

THE CT AUDUBON'S FAIRFIELD REGION
FIELD NOTES

CELEBRATE WITH NATURE



Greens Farms Garden Club held its annual wreath-making event at the Nature Center. All creations are beautifully displayed at not-for-profit organizations and train stations in Fairfield, Southport, and Westport to bring joy to the community.

As we reflect on an inspiring year in the Fairfield Region, our hearts are filled with gratitude and hope. Each bird's song echoing through the sanctuary, every child's awe along the trail, and every volunteer's dedicated efforts are a testament to the power of nature.

Thanks to your generosity, our sanctuaries — from the Fairfield Nature Center to the historic Birdcraft Museum — are thriving like never before. Your support has strengthened habitats, expanded our educational programs, and deepened our community connections in ways that will leave a lasting impact for years to come.

In this issue, we celebrate recent bright spots and shine a light on those who have made these achievements possible.



KINDNESS IN
ACTION



FRIENDS OF THE
FLOCK



SIGNS OF LIFE
AT BIRDCRAFT

Fairfield Nature Center

2325 BURR ST. FAIRFIELD, CT

Donor Spotlight



Blue Wisdom by Karen Kent

Thank you to our longtime Audubon supporter, Karen Kent, for donating her mixed media painting, *Blue Wisdom*, which now welcomes visitors into our lobby.

Karen is a local resident, yoga teacher and artist who finds solace in visiting the Nature Center. Her painting journey began eight years ago after an owl struck her driver's-side window during a road trip in the Berkshires. Sadly, the owl did not survive, and Karen chose to honor its passing by picking up a paintbrush.

That moment marked a creative turning point—shifting her focus from interior design to a more spontaneous, expressive medium. Since then, Karen has created more than 30 owl paintings, along with landscapes, animal studies and other portraits, each infused with vibrant color and emotion.

You can view more of Karen's creations at karenkent.com

Holiday Market

The Nature Center welcomed a lively crowd of holiday customers shopping more than 20 local vendors last Saturday. Our artisans stayed true to our mission by offering nature-themed, eco-friendly goods, including handcrafted wood items, antique treasures, upcycled clothing, and holistic products.

We are incredibly grateful to the hundreds of people who set up shop, attended the market, and chose to purchase their gifts supporting local small businesses. A portion of all proceeds helps fund programs and animal care costs here at the Nature Center.



The Nature Store

Help us grow kindness this season! Give the gift of nature by purchasing a tag from our Giving Tree. Each ornament offers support for an essential need, including food and care for our educational animals, transportation for underserved schools, and purchasing new classroom equipment. It's a great stocking stuffer!

Nature Store and Birds of Prey Compound open Mon.- Sat. from 10am - 3pm.
Trails open year-round from dawn to dusk.



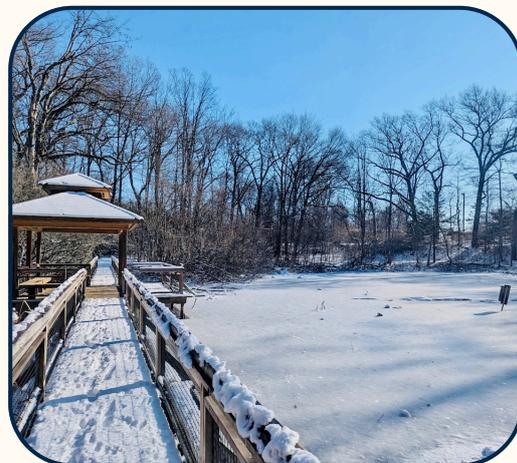
Birdcraft Museum & Sanctuary

314 UNQUOWA RD. FAIRFIELD, CT

Reflections from Birdcraft

By Matthew Wilson, Birdcraft Museum Curator

The pond is my favorite spot in Birdcraft Sanctuary. Since the museum opened last year, I've been able to visit this small pond a few times a week. I remember a very misty morning watching Tree Swallows dive and wheel over the water, chasing insects. On another day, I was startled by a sudden movement in my peripheral vision: a Black-crowned Night Heron launched itself up out of the cattails. It flew over my head and glided across the width of the pond in one low, slow swoop, landing in the branches of a tree across the water.



I love the huge pink flowers of the Swamp Rose Mallow and the long, strange-looking seed pods that fall from the Catalpa tree. I like to count the heads of the Eastern Painted Turtles that sun themselves on the fallen log in the middle of the pond.

Possibly the best part of being a repeat visitor is watching the sanctuary change as the seasons change. During the first bursts of spring, the greenery around the pond emerges so quickly and spectacularly that my visit on a Thursday reveals a noticeable increase in growth since the previous Tuesday. Spring migration brings variety, color and song. In summer birds nest and turtles bask. Then the fall migration comes and goes before the sanctuary quiets down for winter.

Sometime this past summer, the pond went dry. 2024 had been a dry year, the water level was lower than I'd ever seen it and by August of this year, the pond held no standing water at all. Where the water had been was now a mudflat, criss-crossed by raccoon tracks. I saw one turtle laboriously traversing the blue stone patio in front of the museum, probably looking for water. A bird bander mentioned that this fall migration had been a quiet one and speculated that the lack of water in the pond might have made the sanctuary less appealing to birds. September and October saw little rain and no accumulation in the pond.



As I write this, it's a foul December day -- dark, rainy and cold. And I am grateful for the terrible weather, because of the rain it brings. A skim of water began to show during a wet November and is now a few inches deep in places. The edge of the pond is still twenty feet shy of where it was when the pond was full, but the pond has water in it again. I hope for more days like today, and for a snowy winter, so that in spring, the pond will be a place for turtles and birds again.

Museum open Tues., Thurs., & Sat. from 10am - 3pm.
Trails open year-round from dawn to dusk.

Fairfield Flocks Together

COMMUNITY CORNER



Backyard & Beyond with Stefan

Meet our Conservation Manager, Stefan Martin. For the past eight years, Stefan has led habitat restoration projects and enhancements for The CT Audubon Society's 22 sanctuary properties, with a focus on increasing biodiversity. Stefan brings a depth of environmental and birding knowledge from a wide variety of experiences to support our sanctuary management team.

Winter can be a challenging time for birds, as natural food sources become scarce and cold temperatures demand extra energy. Birds need calories to stay warm. Providing the right food rich in protein and healthy fats can make a real difference. Suet cakes are an excellent winter choice, as they are rich in fats and oils that help birds maintain body heat. Choose the right feeder placement near shrubs or trees so birds can quickly take cover from predators and wind. Be consistent with feeding since birds learn to rely on dependable food sources, especially during extended cold spells.

Unfrozen water is just as important as food in winter. A shallow birdbath with a heater or frequent water changes give birds a vital drinking and bathing source when ponds and streams freeze. Bird bath de-icers are a great solution if you don't have a heated bird bath. You can pick up these two items at our Nature Store along with additional bird-friendly gifts for the season.



2026 Bird of the Year

Click here to vote for The CT Audubon Society's
2026 Bird of the Year!

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-tailed Hawk, Tree Swallow, Great Blue Heron, and Pileated Woodpecker are all seen throughout Connecticut and regularly spotted at our centers and sanctuaries—now you get to decide which one will take the spotlight.

The winning bird will be celebrated all year long with featured stories, special programs, and sightings from across our sanctuaries.

Voting is open from Sunday, December 14, through Sunday, December 21.

