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## **CENTER AT POMFRET**

# **2026 VOLUNTEER NATURALIST** **TRAINING PROGRAM**

### **Program Purpose:**

To train a corps of volunteers to support our facilities as well as providing stewards for northeastern Connecticut.

**Meeting Time:** Tuesdays, March 24 – May 26, 8 a.m. to noon

**Meeting Place:** Grassland Bird Conservation Center, 218 Day Road, Pomfret

**Training Cost:** \$200 members, \$258 nonmembers (includes membership)

**Post Training Expectation:** In exchange for a heavily discounted training cost, trained volunteers are expected to contribute a minimum of 40 volunteer hours to the organization.

### **Tues., March 24: Intro: Connecticut Audubon Society & Northeast Sanctuaries**

After an introduction to the organization - our mission, our facilities, and our sanctuaries in northeastern Connecticut. Short hikes on the sanctuary will break up the morning. Instructor, Sarah Heminway, CAS Director, Northeast Region

### **Tues., March 31: Nature's Revolutionaries, Climate Change and Action Steps**

What and who is a naturalist and why do we need many more? **Part 1** of this session will provide a history of naturalists who made critical discoveries about how nature works and why we should conserve it. **Part 2** will provide an overview of the most crucial tool for nature today - iNaturalist - and how anyone can become a better naturalist and support conservation by using it. Instructor - Steve Lewis, Chair, Greater Hartford Sierra Club

### **Tues April 7: The Impacts of Light Pollution**

Two compelling presentations with a sanctuary walk in between.

Wonders and Perils of Bird Migration: Explore the awe-inspiring phenomenon of bird migration. Gain insight into behaviors, routes and challenges faced by migrating birds.

Light pollution Effects on Birds, Wildlife and Human Health: Because our state is located along the Atlantic Flyway, many birds use our shorelines and green spaces to rest and refuel during their trip. Artificial light emitted by our homes, buildings, streetlights, bridges, and other structures can confuse and disorient birds. Understand the issue and learn ways to mitigate the damage. Instructor Craig Repasz, Chair & Co-Founder, Lights Out Connecticut and accomplished birder.

### **Tues., April 14: Mammals of Northeastern Connecticut**

Our sanctuary and the surrounding landscape support a diverse array of mammal species, ranging in size from mouse to moose. Learn how to identify mammals, their natural histories, and the niches they occupy in our region's ecosystems. Current wildlife studies and ways to improve coexistence between mammals, habitats, and people. Instructor, Dale May, retired, CT DEEP Wildlife Biologist

### **Tues., April 21: Wildflowers of Spring**

Learning about local wildflowers, the major families and their characteristics to start, we will then move outside to see what is blooming and how to identify using a key. Instructor: Pamela Hine, Professor Emeritus, Connecticut College, Botanist

### **Tues., April 28: Birds of Northeastern Connecticut**

Our mission is birds and their habitats. Indoor presentation on bird identification, native birds and their habitats followed by bird walk on the Bafflin Sanctuary. Will learn to identify common species based on field marks, songs, calls, and habitat. Instructor: Andy Rzeznikiewicz, CT Audubon Sanctuary Manager

### **Tues., May 5: Amphibians and Reptiles**

Key evolutionary and physiological differences between amphibians and reptiles will be reviewed. Major groups will be defined and then focus on the Connecticut species from both groups. Several live specimens may be available for discussion followed by a field excursion to find as many species as possible. Instructor: Susan Z. Herrick, Ph.D., University of Connecticut, Herpetologist

### **Tues., May 12: Tree I.D. Basics**

An introduction to trees in the region, you will work with specimens and keys to practice identification both in the classroom and on the sanctuary. Includes tree identification of both native and non-native species. Instructor: Syd Blodgett, Forester

### **Tues., May 19: How to Know the Insects**

Insects are some of our smallest neighbors that play some of the largest roles in our local ecology. Learn the basics of insect biology, ecology, and identification through a crash course in the major insect orders. We will explore the interesting lives of the six-legged, the habitats they call home, the threats they face, and the ways you can help them help us. In-class lessons will be followed by an immersive Insect Walk through the sanctuary that will be sure to bring you closer to their world.

Instructor: Kyle Rossner, UConn Grad Student, Wagner Lab, Dept of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology.

### **Tues. May 26: Becoming A Backyard Naturalist**

Steve Lewis, the chair of the Greater Hartford Sierra Club, presents a talk on being a Backyard Naturalist. His yard has become a model - a focus on native plants and biodiversity. Steve will cover the importance of Doug Tallamy's work on the urgency of planting more native plants in our yards to support biodiversity and to identify and remove the top ten invasive plants in Connecticut. He will cover available habitat certifications, mobile apps to help with plant, bird, and insect identification, and how you can contribute to citizen-science in the process. The Pollinator Pathway initiative, No-Mow May, transforming lawns into meadows, and demonstrating how water features can enhance your backyard experience will also be covered.

### **Have we piqued your interest?**

Go to our website: [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org) Center at Pomfret page for application form. Complete form and send with payment to: Connecticut Audubon Society P.O. Box 11 Pomfret Center, CT 06259.

**What to bring to class:** Bring your enthusiasm for the outdoors, snacks, a water bottle and wear comfortable walking shoes and clothes appropriate for the day's weather. Most days we will spend at least a portion of the class outside.