

THE CT AUDUBON'S FAIRFIELD REGION
FIELD NOTES

FROM SNOW TO SONGBIRDS:
SIGNS OF SPRING IN THE FAIRFIELD REGION



Eastern Phoebe- Richard Stone

March is already showing signs of change- the snow is beginning to melt, the days are getting longer, and the sounds of songbirds are filling the air. We loved seeing the many visitors who walked, hiked, and snowshoed our sanctuary trails, making the most of this year's heavy snows. After the long winter, we are ready to welcome spring and encourage you to visit and enjoy the budding red maples, sprouting skunk cabbage in the wetlands, and catch a glimpse of wood frogs emerging from their winter freeze.

As we look towards spring, now is a good time to prepare your yard for early-migrating birds returning to Connecticut. With a little preparation, your outdoor spaces can become a safe stopover for these early arrivals. We offer simple tips below, and programs throughout the spring that help guide you through this process.



Pileated Woodpecker- Michael G. Audette

**BIRD OF THE YEAR:
PILEATED WOODPECKER**



**2026 ENVIRONMENTAL
SERIES @ FTC. MARCH 14.**



Raccoon by David Cox

**REFLECTIONS FROM
BIRDCRAFT**

Fairfield Nature Center

2325 BURR ST. FAIRFIELD, CT



Red-Winged Blackbird - Michael G. Audette

Early Migration: Why March Matters

Early migration is triggered by increasing daylight, not just temperature. As days lengthen, hormonal changes prompt birds to move north toward breeding grounds.

The Fairfield Region's protected lands provide critical stopover sites where birds can rest and refuel. Native plant communities offer insects, seeds, and shelter when birds need them most after long journeys. Even small habitat patches can make a meaningful difference during migration.

Among the earliest migrants to return are Red-winged Blackbirds, whose unmistakable *conk-la-ree!* calls ring out across marshes and wet meadows. American Woodcocks, Tree Swallows, Eastern Phoebes, Killdeer, and American Robins all return early because they winter relatively close by in the U.S. and can better handle the fluctuating temperatures of early New England spring.

Wood Frog Watch

The next couple of weeks are the perfect time to walk the Larsen Sanctuary to hear Wood Frog calls. The Wood Frog is one of nature's most remarkable survivors. These small frogs are famous for their incredible ability to freeze solid during the winter and thaw back to life in early spring.

As the first amphibians to emerge each year, their duck-like quacking calls are often one of the earliest signs that spring has arrived in New England. Keep an ear out near vernal pools in the Larsen Sanctuary to hear them announce the season!



Wood Frog

Bird of the Year: the Pileated Woodpecker

The Pileated Woodpecker has been voted the CT Audubon's Bird of the Year. This resident species can be seen year-round in our area. Easily spotted, they are large, crow-sized woodpeckers with a prominent red crest, white neck stripe, and a mostly black body.

Look (and listen) for Pileated Woodpeckers as they whack at dead trees and fallen logs in search of their main food source, carpenter ants, leaving unique rectangular holes in the wood. The nest holes offer crucial shelter to many species, including swifts, owls, ducks, bats, and pine martens.



Pileated Woodpecker - Michael G. Audette



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: Art and Nature

By Matthew Wilson, Birdcraft Museum Curator

As I write this, Birdcraft is emerging from beneath a record blanket of snow. We received about 56 inches of snowfall this winter, more than the previous three winters combined*. The pond is still covered in a thin layer of ice, but the trails are mostly melted and muddy, and the first snowdrops have just emerged; their white buds are still tightly closed and upright and have not yet begun nodding back down towards the ground.

It is in periods of transition, like the one we are in now, that Birdcraft unveils the great diversity and complexity that exists even in so small a sanctuary. The emergence of the sanctuary's perennial plant life from winter dormancy is a process so vigorous and rapid that every day reveals something new. As I anticipate the great diversity of bird species that will visit Birdcraft during spring migration, I would be remiss to ignore the spring ephemerals and the green-up that precedes the visitation of the birds. Frankly, in an age overburdened with electronic devices all simultaneously clamoring for our attention, I find it both a relief and a necessity to unplug and pay attention to what's happening on the ground at my feet, especially at this time of year, in the quiet explosion of life that is spring in New England. To celebrate this spring, I plan to keep a sketchbook to record my observations of nature at Birdcraft. I invite you and your friends to join me. I'll be hosting an informal, self-directed get-together at the **Birdcraft Museum on Saturday mornings at 10:00 AM**. Bring your own sketchbook, pens or pencils, grab a folding chair from the museum, and join me in the sanctuary to spend an hour (or more, or less) observing and drawing nature. This quiet, mindful observation is really the whole point of the exercise, but besides that, I believe keeping a nature journal gives a deeper appreciation and understanding of the cycles of nature as they happen around us. If you've never drawn before, now is a great time to start.



Snowdrops at Birdcraft

My own drawing skills are modest, but I'll share some tips if you ask. Next winter, we'll put together an exhibition of our favorite sketches and reminisce about spring.

The first group will meet on Saturday, March 14, at 10:00 AM. For more information, visit the Birdcraft Programs and Events page on our website.

**National Weather Services NOWData - NOAA Online Weather Data, Bridgeport Area, December 2025-February 2026. Retrieved 3/5/2026.*

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

Spring migration, which occurs in our area from April through May, is one of the most exciting times of the year for bird lovers! Here are a few simple tips to prepare your yard to welcome returning migrants and traveling songbirds:

- 1. Clean & Refresh Feeders-** Clean feeders with a diluted bleach solution (1:9 ratio), rinse well, and let dry. Refill with fresh seed — black oil sunflower seed is a great choice. Offer suet or high-energy foods for birds refueling after long flights.
- 2. Provide Fresh Water-** Clean birdbaths and refill with fresh water daily. Add a shallow dish or stones for smaller birds to perch safely.
- 3. Plant Native Species-** Native trees, shrubs, and flowers provide essential insects, berries, and nectar. Planting in layers (trees + shrubs + groundcover) offers shelter and protection. Good native choices include Flowering Dogwood and Serviceberry trees, Highbush Blueberry shrubs, and groundcovers such as Mayapple and Bloodroot.
- 4. Leave the Leaves (For Now!)** Many insects overwinter in leaf litter and stems, and migrating birds rely on those insects for protein. Wait until temperatures are consistently warm before major yard clean-up.
- 5. Add Shelter-** Install or clean out nest boxes before breeding season begins.
- 6. Skip the Chemicals-** Avoid pesticides and herbicides — they reduce the insect populations that birds depend on and can harm wildlife.

Sign up for our programs to learn more: ctaudubon.org/programs-and-events/



Tree Swallows- B. Bennett

Environmental Film Series at FTC



Lights, Camera, and Conservation



We are delighted to partner once again with Fairfield Theatre Company for another season of FREE environmental film screenings for our community. These powerful documentaries shine a light on the urgent challenges facing our planet—from wildlife and habitats to climate, water, and the future of our shared natural world. Join us for inspiring stories, meaningful post-show conversation, and a deeper connection to the environment we all call home. [Click Here For Tickets.](#)



MARCH 15
4PM DOORS, 4:30 PM FILM
PANEL TO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW



MAY 3
4PM DOORS, 4:30 PM FILM
PANEL TO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW