

THE CT AUDUBON'S FAIRFIELD REGION

FIELD NOTES

MAY IS MIGRATION MAGIC MONTH!

CELEBRATE WITH OUR PROGRAMS, EVENTS, BIRD WALKS & MORE!



Yellow-throated Warbler courtesy of Stefan Martin

May is peak spring migration in Connecticut, with mid-May being the height of the season as millions of birds and nearly 200 species pass through our state. Located along the Atlantic Flyway, our local shorelines and green spaces serve as rest and refueling stops for many birds, creating high concentrations in southern Connecticut. Birds usually begin to migrate 30 to 45 minutes after sunset, with the greatest number in flight two to three hours later. You can track the latest migration statistics using Cornell Lab's Migration Dashboard at birdcast.org.

In honor of this great migration, the Connecticut Audubon Society hosts a month-long festival called Migration Magic, celebrating the wonder of bird migration with a variety of activities for all ages. Join a bird walk, enroll in a class, or simply hike the trails with your binoculars in hand.



Winter wren courtesy of Matthew Bell

PROTECTING BIRDS
ON THE MOVE



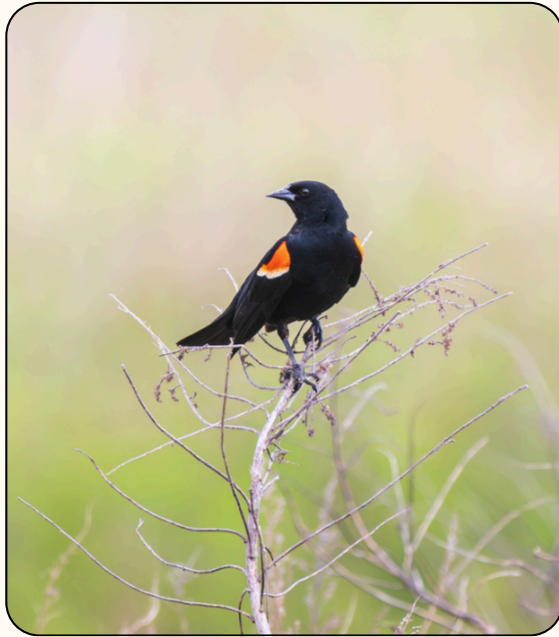
SPRING EXHIBIT
AT BIRDCRAFT



KEEP BABY BIRDS
SAFE

Keep Migration Magical

The Hidden Journey of Migrating Songbirds



Red-winged black bird courtesy of David Butt

Early to mid-May marks the peak of songbird migration in Connecticut, as warblers, vireos, and orioles return in brilliant breeding plumage. These birds often arrive in “waves,” taking advantage of favorable weather conditions as they continue their remarkable journeys north.

Did you know that most songbirds migrate at night? Traveling under cooler temperatures and calmer air, they navigate by the moon and stars while avoiding daytime predators. At dawn, they land to rest and refuel—perfectly timed with the rise in insect activity.

But this extraordinary journey is not without its challenges. Each year, an estimated one billion birds are lost due to exhaustion, starvation, predation and window collisions.

The destruction of critical stopover habitats—such as wetlands and forests—through ongoing development deprives birds of the places they need to rest and refuel. Increasingly severe weather events, driven by climate change, add further risk along their migration routes. Yet one of the most significant and preventable threats is artificial light at night. Excessive lighting can disorient migrating birds, drawing them off course and increasing the likelihood of fatal collisions with homes and buildings. Fortunately, community engagement is making a difference. In 2023, Ned Lamont signed Connecticut’s Lights Out law, requiring state buildings to reduce non-essential lighting between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. during peak spring and fall migration periods—an important step toward protecting these vulnerable travelers.

Make Nighttime Matter - 11 pm- 6 am Small actions make a BIG Impact

- Turn off or dim non-essential outdoor lights.
- Direct spotlights downward.
- Switch blue-violet lights to warmer colored bulbs.
- Turn off non-essential interior lighting, especially on upper floors.
- **Make windows bird-friendly** by adhering stickers, decals, or tape to avoid collisions. Visit our centers to see our recent installations of feather-friendly decals.



Visit DarkSky.org and LightsOutCT.org to learn more!

Fairfield Nature Center

2325 BURR ST. FAIRFIELD, CT

Through Leo's Lens: A Young Birder's Journey in Nature Photography



Meet **Leo Kurtz**! A Fairfield native and student at Woods Middle School, Leo has combined his love of birding and photography to capture stunning images of the natural world. Recently, Leo completed his Mitzvah project by creating and selling greeting cards featuring his nature photography to family and friends. Leo then generously donated all proceeds to the Connecticut Audubon Society Fairfield Region in honor of the cherished memories he made at the Fairfield Nature Center growing up. Leo's connection to nature began almost from birth. As a newborn, he visited the Larsen Sanctuary tucked into a baby carrier on walks with his mother. His parents fostered that early curiosity, spending countless days exploring the Sanctuary boardwalks, searching for salamanders,

enjoying lunch beside Farm Pond, and building forts during summer camp adventures. Birdwatching visits with his grandmother, "Muma," in New York's Hudson Valley — along with trips to the Fairfield Center's original aviary — sparked Leo's fascination with birds and photography. That passion truly took flight in third grade when Leo received his first manual camera. Guided by a close family friend, he learned how to master aperture, ISO, and shutter speed to bring wildlife moments to life through his lens.



Since then, his love of photography and birding has inspired adventures far beyond Fairfield. While he still enjoys photographing native birds locally and shorebirds at Milford Point, some of his most memorable images have been captured during travels to New York's Minnewaska State Park Preserve, California, and Iceland. One of Leo's most inspiring adventures took place in Madera Canyon, a renowned "sky island" habitat in the Santa Rita Mountains of southern Arizona. There, he photographed remarkable species, including Rivoli's hummingbirds, Broad-billed hummingbirds, Blue Grosbeaks, Screech Owls, and even a magnificent California Condor at the Grand Canyon. Every photograph carries a story and a memory — from scaling cliffs and crossing footbridges in Iceland to catch a glimpse of an Atlantic Puffin colony, to



quiet moments spent observing wildlife with family. For Leo, photography is about more than capturing beautiful images. It is about adventure, discovery, and deepening his connection to both nature and the people he loves. This summer, Leo will continue his journey with trips to the Galápagos Islands and Ecuador, where he hopes to discover new species, create new memories, and continue growing as both a photographer and naturalist.

Birdcraft Museum & Sanctuary

314 UNQUOWA RD. FAIRFIELD, CT

Fairfield 100 Years Ago: The Hand-Colored Lantern Slides of Mabel Osgood Wright

By Matthew Wilson, Birdcraft Museum Curator

Finally, spring! The mayapples that grow in the sanctuary have pushed up through last year's leaf litter and unfurled their umbrella-like foliage. The painted turtles are out sunning themselves among the cattails, and the Osprey are again bringing their fish to their usual snag, which I can see from the window of the museum. Just last week, the bird banding team recorded their first Black-and-white Warbler of the year, a female.

Changes are happening inside the museum as well. A new exhibit, Fairfield 100 Years Ago: The Hand-Colored Lantern Slides of Mabel Osgood Wright, opened on May 1. It features a selection of

photographs taken by our founder, Mabel Osgood Wright (1859-1934), in and around Fairfield. Wright was an avid conservationist, making the preservation of New England's wildlife and countryside her life's work. Her original, hand-colored lantern slides (glass plates with transparent images that were projected against a wall or screen

by machine called a magic lantern) reveal how much Fairfield has changed from the rural, pastoral landscape it was in her day. The hand-coloring gives a dreamy, ethereal quality to the images, which feature some of Wright's favorite subjects: the shoreline, flower gardens, and the people of Fairfield.

Thank you to the Fairfield Museum and History Center, who hold Wright's original lantern slides and provided the scans for this exhibit.

The exhibit will be on display in the museum through July.



Mabel Osgood Wright, "Fairfield Beach Club"

Photo courtesy of The Fairfield Museum and History Center



BIRDCRAFT FEATURED PROGRAM

NATURE SKETCHING- EVERY SATURDAY, 10 AM- 11 AM

This open-air art hour is free and open to all, regardless of experience or age. Bring your own sketchbook, pens/pencils, and grab a folding chair from the museum. Select a spot in the Sanctuary to sketch the beauty of nature.

If you are new to sketching and need some help, please ask museum curator Matthew Wilson for tips on getting started.

At the end of the year, we'll select our favorite sketches and exhibit them in the museum.

Museum open Tues., Thurs., & Sat. from 10am - 3pm.

Trails open year-round from dawn to dusk.

Fairfield Flocks Together

What to do if you find a baby bird?

Assess the Situation-

- If it is a **Fledgling** (feathered, hopping): **Leave it alone.** Fledgling is a natural phase of learning to fly, and the parents are likely nearby.
- If it is a **Nestling** (bare or fluffy, no feathers): **Gently return it to the nest** or cavity if you can find it. Parents will not reject it if touched by humans—this is a myth.

If the Bird is Injured-

- Look for obvious wounds, bleeding, broken wings or limbs, visible parasites (maggots, flies), weakness, or inability to fly away when approached, far from food or a nest, it may need help.
- **Call Wildlife in Crisis - 203-544-9913.** Leave a message, and they will return your call.

DO NOT BRING IT TO THE AUDUBON. We are not a rehabber.



Fledgling American Robin

Photo courtesy of Pat Kavanagh via Birdshare.

Spotted on the Trails



Photo Courtesy of Jim Cortina

This vibrant Spicebush Swallowtail Caterpillar was found in the Larsen Sanctuary. These masters of disguise are known for their dramatic transformation from a "bird dropping" mimic to a "snake" impersonator. They live in folded leaf shelters on host plants like spicebush and sassafras, camouflaging themselves from hungry birds. They change from brown to bright green before forming a chrysalis and emerging as black-and-blue butterflies. See if you can spot them in your yard!

Celebrating our Community Partners

The Connecticut Audubon Society is a nonprofit organization that relies on the generosity of the public and the support of community partners to further our mission. Our partnerships with local organizations help us protect birds, wildlife, and the natural spaces we all cherish through conservation projects, educational programs, and community events. We are grateful to Eagle Scout Troop 88 for restoring our front entrance sign and to The National Charity League for supporting our annual Egg Hunt.

