

THE CT AUDUBON'S FAIRFIELD REGION

FIELD NOTES

SUMMER EDITION: COMMUNITY SCIENCE MAKING WAVES



Diving Osprey by Doug Van Tornhout

"Nature is not a place to visit; it is home." – Gary Snyder

Summer has a way of bringing people together. Longer days and warmer weather invite us to enjoy our local beaches, parks, and open spaces—natural treasures that enrich our community and connect us to the outdoors.

Protecting these special places is essential to ensuring they remain healthy and vibrant for future generations. Every action, no matter how small, can make a difference. Whether it's reducing waste, planting native species, or carpooling, we all have the power to lessen our environmental impact to care for the places we love.

At the Connecticut Audubon Society's Fairfield Region, we believe conservation begins with community. Through community science projects, volunteers of all ages can collect valuable observations of birds, plants, insects, and other wildlife that contribute to real scientific research. Together, we can deepen our understanding of the natural world while helping to protect it for generations to come.



PROJECT LIMULUS
2026



THE LEGACY OF
BIRDBANDING



NATURE EXPLORER
PROGRAM

Fairfield Nature Center

2325 BURR ST. FAIRFIELD, CT

A Continued Partnership for Project Limulus

By Courtney Radosavljevic, Marketing Manager



For the second consecutive year, Sacred Heart University partnered with the Connecticut Audubon Society to lead Project Limulus at Stratford Point. This community science research program monitors the American horseshoe crab in Long Island Sound.

Often referred to as "living fossils," horseshoe crabs have changed remarkably little since their ancestors first appeared more than 250 million years ago during the Triassic Period. Their resilience has allowed them to survive multiple mass extinction events, making them one of Earth's oldest surviving species.

The Atlantic horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*), native to the eastern coasts of North and Central America, is deeply woven into the health of our coastal ecosystems. As a keystone species, horseshoe crabs play an essential role in supporting wildlife and maintaining ecological balance. Their nutrient-rich eggs are a critical food source for migratory shorebirds during their long journeys, their hard exoskeletons serve as habitat for a variety of marine organisms, and their unique blue blood is used to produce Limulus Amebocyte Lysate (LAL). This substance helps ensure the safety of vaccines, injectable medications, and medical devices by detecting bacterial contamination.



Despite their remarkable history, horseshoe crab populations have declined in parts of their range due to a combination of human impacts and environmental changes. Habitat loss, overharvesting, reduced spawning success, biomedical bleeding, and climate change all pose challenges to the species' long-term survival.

Through Project Limulus, students, researchers, and community volunteers work together to tag and monitor horseshoe crabs along Connecticut's shoreline. The data collected through these long-term surveys allow researchers to monitor spawning activity and better understand the health of Long

Island Sound's coastal ecosystems. This data is critical for informing conservation strategies and management decisions that protect horseshoe crabs, the habitats they depend on, and the many species that rely on them.

By continuing this partnership, Sacred Heart University and the Connecticut Audubon Society are not only advancing important scientific research but also inspiring the next generation of conservationists through hands-on community science and environmental stewardship.



If you find a horseshoe crab with a white disc tag in NY, CT, RI, or MA, call 1-888-LIMULUS. You can also enter the information at the [USFWS website](https://www.usfws.gov/projectlimulus) or email info@projectlimulus.org.

Birdcraft Museum & Sanctuary

314 UNQUOWA RD. FAIRFIELD, CT

A Legacy of Bird Banding: More Than 25 Years of Community Science

By Matthew Wilson, Birdcraft Museum Curator

If you visit the trails of Birdcraft Sanctuary early in the morning in the spring or fall, you might catch a glimpse of a dedicated group of volunteers moving quietly through the trees. They are bird banders, and their meticulous, early morning ritual has been performed here since the late 1970s. These trained volunteers, under the expertise and federal license of master bird bander Judy Richardson, carefully open the delicate mist nets that run beside the sanctuary trails. For a few hours each morning, they intercept birds, gently remove them from the nets, and transport them to the on-site banding lab to gather data that contributes to our understanding of the massive, multi-continent migration of birds.

Birdcraft sits directly along the Atlantic Flyway, making it a crucial stopover site for an astonishing variety of migratory species. One hundred and twenty-six species of birds have been documented by the banders at Birdcraft, in more than 45,000 individual records. Many of these birds fly thousands of miles from Central and South America, often traveling through the night. When they drop down into the sanctuary, they are looking for a safe place to rest and refuel on insects and berries before continuing.

Inside the lab, every bird receives a brief, careful health checkup. The bird is then released with a bright, uniquely numbered aluminum leg band issued by the federal Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL). The band number, along with the bird's species, sex, and health condition, is sent back to the BBL. Researchers and government agencies pull records from the BBL to track broad population trends, map shifting migration pathways and timelines, and pinpoint critical habitats that require protection. Every migration season, the banders host public open houses. If you

have never come to see them in action, you should. It is a rare opportunity to see a brilliant warbler, a catbird, a kinglet, or a thrush up close, and to learn more about the birds themselves. The nets are currently down for the summer because the banders do not want to disturb resident birds while they are nesting, incubating eggs, or feeding fragile nestlings. Once the nesting season concludes and the colder air of autumn triggers the journey back south, the nets will rise once more. I hope you will join us this fall for a banding open house at Birdcraft. Keep watch on our events calendar for dates.



Photo by Harraden Sandee circa 2012

Museum open Thurs. Sat. & Sun., from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Trails open year-round from dawn to dusk.

Fairfield Flocks Together

Become a Summer Nature Explorer!

Celebrate summer with Pequot Library and the Fairfield Region as we launch our collaborative Summer Nature Explorer Program—a free scavenger hunt for all ages to discover the birds of Fairfield while exploring the town's beautiful parks and open spaces.

Begin your adventure at Pequot Library, where John James Audubon's iconic Birds of America folio is on display in the Reading Room. Each week, a new page is unveiled, revealing one of Audubon's stunning watercolor illustrations of a native bird species.

Then, check out a Nature Explorer Backpack and field guide to continue your journey. Visit specific places throughout Fairfield to search for the birds featured in the folio and observe them in their natural habitats. Along the way, you'll build your bird identification skills while learning more about the wildlife that calls Fairfield home. Discover local wildlife, explore new places, and experience the beauty of Fairfield's natural landscapes all summer long. Join us and see how many birds you can find!



TIPS TO CARE FOR MATURE TREES

A little care today keeps our trees healthy for generations to come.

Healthy trees,
healthy communities

1 WATER DURING DROUGHTS



Water deeply at the drip line during dry periods.

2 PROTECT THE ROOT ZONE



Avoid driving, parking, or storing heavy equipment beneath the canopy.

3 MULCH PROPERLY



Apply 2–4" of mulch and keep it away from the trunk.

4 AVOID DAMAGING THE TRUNK



Keep mowers and trimmers away from the trunk. Use a mulch ring.

5 PRUNE WISELY



Remove dead, damaged, or diseased branches. Hire an arborist for large limbs.

6 WATCH FOR SIGNS OF STRESS



Look for dead branches, thinning leaves, mushrooms, cracks, or discoloration.

7 PROTECT TREES DURING CONSTRUCTION



Install barriers around the root zone and avoid digging or altering soil.

8 LEAVE FALLEN LEAVES



Leaves return nutrients to the soil and provide habitat for wildlife.

9 PLANT THE RIGHT PLANTS NEARBY



Native plants support pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.

10 HAVE TREES INSPECTED REGULARLY



A certified arborist can identify problems early and keep trees healthy.

Why It Matters


Store carbon


Cool neighborhoods


Reduce stormwater runoff & erosion


Provide food & shelter


Support hundreds of species

 THE CONNECTICUT
Audubon
SOCIETY
Fairfield Region