

VOLUME NO. 7 ISSUE 4

The Norman Bird Flyer

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Fall 1986

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

In the spring of 1981 a project was initiated in Rhode Island under the co-sponsorship of the R.I. Natural Heritage Program, R.I. Ornithological Club, and the Audubon Society of R.I., to study the distributions of all breeding birds in the state. Now in its final year of data collection, the Breeding Bird Atlas will serve as the state's first documentation of our nesting avifauna. The completed atlas will be a compilation of maps depicting the range of each species recorded as nesting in the past five years.

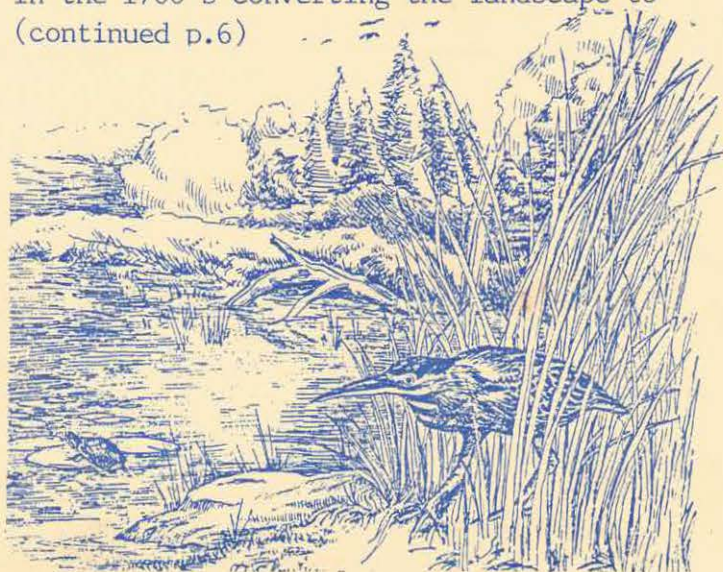
These maps can be analyzed with other factors, including land-use patterns, vegetation types, microclimate, etc, to give insight into why particular species nest where they do and how the changing Rhode Island landscape will affect future distributions. Also a clearer picture of which species are rarer nesters will provide input for guiding development as well as planning for protection and management of critical sites.

The atlas project began by dividing the state into 165 sample blocks, each approximately nine square miles in size. Volunteer atlasers combed the countryside developing lists of breeding birds for each individual block. Based on established criteria, over 150 species have been confirmed as nesters during the study period, with an additional 20 species found in suitable habitat to suggest possible nesting. During the project 4 species were added to the state's list breeding avifauna -- Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and the introduced Monk Parakeet. The concerted efforts of over 50 volunteers also produced encouraging results with the confirmation of several species not recorded nesting in recent years. Among these are Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Upland Sandpiper, Pileated Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Dark-eyed Junco, and White-throated Sparrow.

Unfortunately, the data indicates declines as well as gains. Some birds, including American Bittern, Roseate Tern, and Vesper Sparrow have markedly decreased not only in Rhode Island but elsewhere in the east, and others are limited to only one or two sites, examples being Cliff Swallow and Yellow-breasted Chat.

The reasons behind the ups and downs of bird populations are as variable as the species themselves. The Great Blue Heron has increased in the Northeast apparently in response to new habitats created by a burgeoning beaver population. The Northern Mockingbird continues to become more common in the region, especially in suburban areas, where ornamental plantings of berry-producing shrubs are favored. In contrast, a factor contributing to the decline of the Roseate Tern is a substantial increase in gulls which compete with terns for nesting sites.

Although some influences are not directly related to man the ultimate factor determining the diversity of the avifauna is our use, or misuse of the land. Historically, changes in habitat have occurred constantly, from the deforestation period in the 1700's converting the landscape to
(continued p.6)





October 4 & 5
10 am to 5pm

Volunteer positions are now available for every facet of the Harvest Fair. Your help is needed for specific jobs on the day of the Fair or with preparations in the coming weeks. Please fill out and send in the form below or call the Sanctuary today at 846-2577 if you can help. A few hours of your time can make a big difference. Here's how you can help:

- * Staff an entrance gate
- * Tend a ticket booth
- * Direct Traffic
- * Direct a children's game
- * Help with food service
- * Help set-up and clean-up
- * Donate home-made jams, baked goods, honey or garden produce to our Country Store.

Come and enjoy the fun and excitement of an authentic Country Celebration! The time is now upon us when the grounds of the Norman Bird Sanctuary will be the setting of the 12th Annual Harvest Fair.

The Fair this year promises to uphold a strong tradition of inventiveness, talent and fun. Here's what we have planned.

- * Over 40 crafts people selling handmade wares
- * Country Store
- * Handicraft and Garden Contest
- * Petting Zoo
- * A variety of music including:
 - The Navy Show Band
 - Folk and Children's music by Katzberg and Snyder
 - Bluegrass, Rhythm & Blues
- * Story Teller - Len Cabral
- * Carnival Games
- * Hay Rides
- * and of course, plenty of great food!

| | | |
|------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Admission to the | \$2.50 | Adults |
| Fair | \$.50 | Children 3-13 |
| | | Children under 3 free |

Saturday night will feature our traditional Lamb Roast Dinner at 7 pm. Tickets for the dinner and dance are \$15.00 each, and are available at the Sanctuary office.

COUNT ME IN!

_____ I will volunteer to help at yhe Fair on: (circle one or more)
Saturday a.m. Saturday p.m. Sunday a.m. Sunday p.m.

_____ I will help with site preparations before the Fair.

_____ I will donate _____ to the Country Store.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____

Public Programs

AN INTRODUCTION TO HERBS AND NATURAL HEALING

Saturday, September 13,
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Through the ages wild herbs have been used for their nutritional and healing properties. Join herbalist, Hap Morgan and learn about the historic uses of herbs, useful herb identification, herbal preparations and remedies. This program will include a slide presentation, a short walk outside and a workshop in which you will prepare herbal salves, linaments and tea formulas.

Fee: \$20.00 (NBS Members \$15.00)
Pre-registration is required



WILD MUSHROOM WALK

Sunday, October 12 1:00 p.m.

Autumn is usually the best season to go mushroom hunting. Spend part of the afternoon with Jan Goodland searching the meadows and woodland paths of the Sanctuary for wild and edible mushrooms.

Fee: \$3.00 (NBS Members \$1.00)
Pre-registration is required

FALL FOLIAGE WALK

Saturday, October 18 1:00 p.m.

Autumn is the most popular time for hiking the trails of the Sanctuary. The splash of colors that cover the area during this season make it a wonderful experience. Lisa Pritchard will guide this walk through the refuge and explain some of the mysteries of Autumn.

Fee: \$3.00 (NBS Members \$1.00)
Pre-registration is required

ATTRACTING WINTER BIRDS TO YOUR BACKYARD

Sunday, November 9, 2:00 p.m.

Winter birdfeeding is an enjoyable way to begin learning about our local bird species. Join Larry Taft for a slide presentation on ways in which you can attract the greatest variety of birds to your backyard. Included will be displays and information on do-it-yourself feeders, what birds eat in the wild, and bird feeding projects for children. All of the major types of bird feeders and seed will be available for purchase at very reasonable prices on this day and throughout the winter. By purchasing your seed and feeders at the Sanctuary store you support the programs and projects of the Sanctuary.

No charge.

Holiday Crafts

GRAPE VINE WREATH MAKING

Saturday, November 15.

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Woven strands of grapevine, decorated with dried wildflowers produces a naturally attractive autumn wreath. Lisa Pritchard will provide the materials and instruction for each participant to create and uniquely decorate his or her own wreath. Bring clippers.

Limit 15 participants

Fee: \$8.00 (\$6.00 N.B.S. Members)

Pre-registration is required.



HOLIDAY WREATH MAKING

Sunday, December 7,
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Holiday wreaths can look fresh and green throughout the season with a special design that makes use of the water retention capabilities of sphagnum moss. Chris Callahan will teach this technique. Please bring ample amounts of greens, clippers, and gloves. Other materials will be provided.

Fee: \$12.00 (\$10.00 NBS members)

Limit 15 participants.

Pre-registration is required by Monday, November 25.

Children's Programs

EXPLORER'S CLUB



For Adventurous Explorers in grades 5 - 7.
Wednesday afternoons 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Based on our Summer Challenge Summer Camp, Explorer's Club offers four action-packed afternoons of personal challenge and outdoor adventure skills.

- 10/15 Initiatives
- 10/22 Adventure Course
- 10/29 Rockclimbing
- 11/ 5 Map and Compass skills

Fee: \$24.00 (\$20.00 NBS members)
Limit 10 participants.
Pre-registration is required

Look for our Spring series when we take an in-depth look at the natural world.

CHILDREN'S NATURE CLUB

Saturday mornings, 9:30 - 12:30

Based on our Nature Day Camp program, Nature Club offers a school year Saturday morning alternative for your child. Nature Club is a place where children can safely explore the natural world under the guidance of a knowledgeable and enthusiastic instructor. Children can follow their curiosity, learn by doing, and have fun at the same time.

SESSION A

- 10/11 Animal adaptations
- 10/18 Fall Changes in the Pond
- 10/25 No Nature Club
- 11/1 Nature's Harvest: Nuts and Seeds
- 11/8 Fall Adventure

SESSION B

- 11/15 Pioneers
- 11/22 Native Americans
- 11/29 Life at the Seashore
- 12/5 Changing Seasons
- 12/13 Christmas with Nature

Nature Club is for children in grades K - 4.

Fee: Session A \$28.00 (\$24.00 members)
Session B \$35.00 (\$30.00 members)

Limit: 20 children per session.
Pre-registration is required.

PRE-SCHOOL NATURE HOURS

Wednesday afternoons, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

This fall series of parent-child nature programs is being offered for parents with young children, ages 3 - 5, to explore the wonders of nature together. Observe the changes of the fall season, and learn how plants and animals prepare for winter. The sessions will include observations of native plants and animals, crafts, stories and song designed to nurture positive feelings toward the natural world.

OCTOBER SERIES

- 8 Colors in Nature
- 15 Spiders
- 22 Owls
- 29 Nuts and Seeds

NOVEMBER SERIES

- 5 Rabbits
- 12 Life at the Seashore
- 19 Gray Squirrels
- 26 For the Birds

Fee: \$8.00 for each series (\$6.00 members)
Limit 10 children per session
Pre-registration is required.

OLD FASHIONED HALLOWEEN

Friday, October 31,

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Stop by the Sanctuary Halloween night for traditional games, haunted house and costume parade. If you are brave enough, come along on a guided tour of the Sanctuary woods at night and learn about the superstitions that surround nocturnal animals and other things that go bump in the night. Costumes are required. Refreshments will be served.

Fee: \$4.00 (NBS Members \$2.00)

NATURAL HOLIDAY CRAFTS FOR CHILDREN

Saturday, December 20, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Children can experience the joy of making holiday gifts and decorations from natural materials. They will create decorative sachets filled with fragrant bayberry or cedar, grapevine wreaths, and a special ornamental bird feeder, to decorate a tree outside your home.

Fee: \$5.00 (\$4.00 NBS Members)
Limit 30 children
Pre-registration is required



NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY

* BIRD SEED SALE *

Stock up now for the long winter ahead. Feed the birds and help support programs at your Sanctuary at the same time. Get high quality wild bird food at competitive prices. To order:

- (1) Fill out coupon below and mail it with payment to the Norman Bird Sanctuary, 583 Third Beach Road, Middletown, R.I. 02840. Orders must be received by October 18th. Make checks payable to Norman Bird Sanctuary.
- (2) Pick up your seed November 8th or 9th from 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary Barn.

Don't miss the free slide presentation on attracting winter birds to your backyard. You can join in the program on November 9th at 2:00 p.m., and pick up your seed at the same time!

Bird seed in small and large quantities as well as bird feeders, guide books, and selected other items are now available in the Sanctuary Store. Come for a visit!

BIRD SEED ORDER FORM

Name _____ Telephone Number _____

Address _____

Sanctuary Member _____ Non Member _____ Please send Membership information _____

| QUANTITY | TYPE OF SEED | PRICE PER BAG | AMOUNT |
|----------|--|----------------|----------|
| | | (TAX INCLUDED) | |
| _____ | Black Oil Sunflower Seeds - 20 lb bag | \$9.48 | \$ _____ |
| _____ | Black Oil Sunflower Seeds - 50 lb bag | 18.51 | _____ |
| _____ | Black Oil/ Striped Sunflower Mix - 20 lb bag | 9.48 | _____ |
| _____ | Black Oil/Striped Sunflower Mix - 50 lb bag | 18.51 | _____ |
| _____ | Hulled Sunflower Seeds ("Sunflower Chips")- 20lb bag | 11.85 | _____ |
| _____ | Hulled Sunflower Seeds - 40lb bag | 21.59 | _____ |
| _____ | "Bird Snack" high quality mixed seed 20lb bag | 7.08 | _____ |
| _____ | "Bird Snack" high quality mixed seed 50lb bag | 15.75 | _____ |
| _____ | Thistle - 10lb bag | 11.65 | _____ |
| _____ | Suet/ Seed Cakes - 110z square | 1.49 | _____ |

Total \$ _____

(Breeding Bird Atlas Cont.)

agriculture, to a subsequent reforestation following the abandonment of farms. Birds responded to these changes with individual populations fluctuating given the availability of particular habitats. However, unlike the past alterations today's land use decisions have more permanent ramifications. Once a woodland is cut for a housing subdivision, a farm transformed into a shopping mall, or a wetland filled for an office park there is no turning back. The multiplying demands of an increasing human population dictates that habitats will be lost to development. The planning of this development based on available natural resource data, including the breeding bird atlas, will determine what species persist and how common they will be in the future.

This fact is most certainly apparent on Aquidneck Island. With increasing fervor large tracts of viable wildlife habitat are being overwhelmed by urban and suburban sprawl. Although some areas are retained as token parcels of open space, many of these fragmented habitats do not satisfy the minimum size requirements of certain species. The Barn Owl, a known nester in Middletown at the only site in the state outside of Block Island, may already be doomed as extensive fields once used as feeding areas are consumed for house lots. Other species which may follow the Barn Owl's demise include Bobolink, Eastern Meadow-lark, and Savannah Sparrow. The decline and elimination of some species will be offset by an increase in commoner species able to tolerate man-altered environments and whose habitat requirements are satisfied by smaller units. Birds fitting this category include American Robin, Grey Catbird, House Finch, European Starling, Song Sparrow, and other familiar species.

One of the best indicators of the stability and health of the natural environment is the diversity of its components. The Breeding Bird Atlas is one piece of baseline data documenting the diversity of one of the easiest studied groups- the birds. When the Atlas is repeated 20 or 30 years from now, the changes in distributions of many species will be apparent. Some birds will have retreated to the western edge of the state where the largest tracts of open space will remain. An unknown number will not be recorded at all. What we do with our land in the interim will dictate what those actual numbers will be.

Writer, atlaser Rick Enser is the Coordinator of the R.I. Natural Heritage Program. He will be monitoring hawk migration from Breton Point starting the 27th of September. Anyone is welcomed to join in. Call the Sanctuary at 846-2577

Bird Walks

The Sanctuary offers a free guided bird walk every Sunday at 8:00 a.m. (weather permitting). Please join us as we hike along the sanctuary trails and the rocky shore of the Sakonnet River, to observe Fall migration. Walks last from 1-2 hours and are open to all levels. Bring binoculars if possible.

The Norman Bird Flyer is published quarterly by the Norman Bird Sanctuary, a non-profit nature preserve established under the will of Mabel Norman Cerio.
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Education Coordinator: Lisa Pritchard.
Norman Bird Sanctuary, 583 Third Beach Road, Middletown, Rhode Island 02840. Telephone (401) 846-2577



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