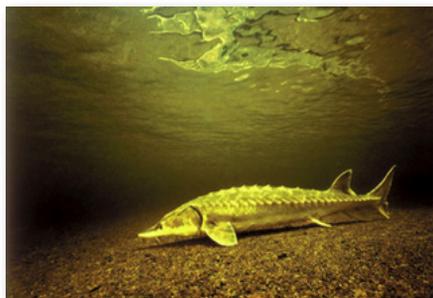




# The Flyway

*Newsletter of the Potapaug Chapter  
National Audubon Society*

## Shortnose Sturgeon Found Above Connecticut River Dam



In August, 2017 a fisherman had quite a surprise when he caught a relic from the age of dinosaurs. He was casting downstream of the Vernon Dam in Vermont on the Connecticut River and reeled in not a walleye

or bass but, instead, a relic from the age of dinosaurs: an adult-sized shortnose sturgeon.

This sturgeon, which was released alive, is the first documented report of a shortnose sturgeon in the Connecticut River upstream of the Turners Falls Dam in Massachusetts. Sturgeon researchers at the USGS Conte Anadromous Fish Lab confirmed that this was indeed a shortnose sturgeon.

This sturgeon, caught by an angler in the upper Connecticut River, August 2017, was released alive.

It has been widely accepted that the range of Connecticut River shortnose sturgeon was from the mouth of the river at Long Island Sound to the Turners Falls Dam. After word of this catch got around, there were other sturgeon sightings, but none upstream of the Vernon Dam has been verified.

There are several theories as to how this sturgeon came to be upstream of the Turners Falls Dam, but no one knows for sure. No matter where they occur, shortnose sturgeon are endangered. That means that keeping any of these fish is prohibited. Signs are posted along the river to remind anglers that any sturgeon should be immediately released; they provide handling and reporting tips for your and the fish's safety.

Learn more from speaker Tom Savoy who will enlighten us on:

**Thursday, March 7 at 7pm  
Old Lyme Town Hall.**

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/surprise-catch-first-shortnose-sturgeon-documented-above-dam-connecticut-river>



## The Atlatl Predates the Bow and Arrow

Native Americans used atlatls to hunt with before the advent of the bow and arrow. Atlatls enabled hunters to throw the dart faster and farther than by hand alone. The atlatl is a weapon designed to hurl a 5- to 8- foot spear distances that would pale the heaves of an NFL quarterback.



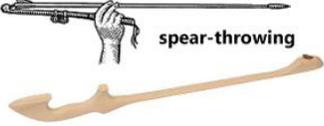
Atlatl expert Gary Nolf will teach us the history and the

different designs of this ancient weapon. A retired school administrator and educator, Gary Nolf is a self-taught archaeologist. He will display Native American artifacts and demonstrate the use of several of them, particularly the atlatl. As the first president and long-standing member of the Friends of the Office of Archaeology, he volunteers to provide education about local Native American

traditions. All ages are welcome. Co-sponsored by the Essex Land Trust.

Please note that this program will be held at the Essex Town Hall, NOT the Old Lyme Town Hall.

**The Archaeology Road Show**  
With Gary Nolf - An Atlatl demonstration



**Thursday  
February 7th  
7:00 P.M.  
at the Essex  
Town Hall  
29 West Ave.,  
Essex**

**April 4: Sam Fried - Birding Alaska  
May 2: Paul Colburn - Bobcats  
June 6: Barbara Hawes - Opossums**



## Will Drones Affect Birds?

As the rise of drones is increasingly inevitable, obvious questions come up about how their presence will affect birds.

In June, the U.S. National Park Service banned recreational drones in all of its national parks, largely to protect wildlife. Worst offenders included one that crashed into Yellowstone's pristine Grand Prismatic hot springs in August, leaving behind remnants that officials fear may block the spring's flow; a hovering drone that agitated a group of big horn sheep in Zion National Park in May; and a drone that a man steered into off-limits habitat for nesting mew gulls in Denali National Park

Videos online already reveal a pattern of amateur videographers driving birds away with clumsily steered recreational drones, something that could cause problems during nesting time or in some sensitive habitats

Drones have enormous conservation impact, too. Instead of climbing trees and disturbing nesting birds, a quadcopter can be used to investigate treetop habitats more covertly. Unmanned aircraft equipped with infrared sensors count and monitor Sandhill Cranes and Greater Sage-Grouse from a safe distance. Drones can also crime-bust by tracking poaching from above.

Whether birds will receive special protections when more of these vehicles are in the skies, is something that will likely evolve with the law. For now at least, the filmic evidence reveals that when it comes to fighting off 55 pound drones, birds still have the upper hand—or wing, beak, and talon.

Excerpted from:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-will-drones-affect-birds>

### Here's how to keep squirrels off you suet:

(photo of pieplat defende)

It's cheap - it's simple - it works!

Use a wire coat hanger to fashion a long hook to hang in a space they will not be able to jump to.

Eat a store-bought pie and save the metal plate.

Cut a hole in the center of the plate.

Fit the pate over the wire hook.

Hang the suet feeder from the hook, under the pie plate.

Reminder: If you do **not** want to receive *The Flyway* and other notices, please call Harry (860-767-9763).

## Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Potapaug Audubon has some of the best birders around and Potapaug has been a part of the Christmas Bird Count for over



30 years. The "Old Lyme-Saybrook" count covers the towns that surround the mouth of the Connecticut River. Along the shoreline, we cover areas from Madison up to and including Old Lyme, and going north we cover parts of Killingworth, Ches-

ter, Haddam, East Haddam and Lyme, plus towns in the middle: Clinton, Westbrook, Old Saybrook, Deep River and Essex.

There is a pot luck supper at starting at 5:00 pm (in Essex) where participants congregate to compile their results.

Year #119 Results Counts

Completed: 1369

Birds Counted: 32,158,216



## Land Trusts 13th Annual Photo Contest



Each year, six land trusts in the lower Connecticut River Valley region (East Haddam, Essex, Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Salem), dedicated to the preservation of open space and natural resources, join together to host an amateur photography contest. The purpose is to engage photographers to capture our

region's natural beauty and to share their work with the public. We encourage photographers to find and celebrate the hidden treasures in their own backyards, to visit land trust properties to observe conservation at work, and to recognize the vital contribution that land trusts make to our communities.

The goal is to encourage photographers of all ages to capture unique views, interesting sights, and the intriguing culture found in each of the sponsoring towns.

Go to: <https://www.landtrustphotocontest.org>

Photo: Honorable Mention ~ Plants 2011 © Cheryl Philopena

## The Preserve: Its History And An Update:



Protected in spring 2015 after many years of conservation efforts, The Preserve is a 963-acre forest located in the towns of Old Saybrook, Essex and Westbrook. It was recognized as the largest remaining unprotected coastal forest between Boston

and New York before its acquisition for conservation. Situated between Long Island Sound and the mouth of the Connecticut River, it is part of a relatively intact forest block of more than 6,000 acres and protects the drinking water supply for 2 towns. Seventy acres in Essex are owned and managed by the Essex Land Trust, with the majority of the remaining acreage jointly owned by the State of Connecticut and the Town of Old Saybrook. The property is managed as part of the State forest system and open to the public for passive recreation. A management plan, including recreational opportunities, is currently being developed. Check <https://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?A=2716&Q=570164> for up-to-date information on access, hiking trails, and parking.

### Why Stay on Marked Trails?

During these wet months, boots, bike tires, horses' hooves, and canine paws leave their marks, from large to small. (Also true in dry months.) When those marks are off-trail, they may disturb young roots as well as the emerging microbial partners that form a partnership with trees and plants. (See below.) Soil compression limits oxygen in the soil, which is critical to plant growth and forest regeneration. Compaction can lead to erosion, which is also bad for forests.



Take The Preserve online survey: <https://www.oldsaybrookct.gov/home/urgent-alerts/preserve-recreational-use-survey>

### The Preserve Work Party Saturday, March 16, 1-4PM:

Remove Invasive Weeds Near Pequot Bog.

Meet at the parking lot across from 241 Ingham Hill Road, Old Saybrook. This is a continuation of barberry and honeysuckle reduction that began in 2016. Bring gloves, clippers, weed whackers, handsaws. Don't have tools or work gloves? No problem. We have some to share. Ages 12 and older welcome. Rain date: Sunday, March 17, 1-4



## Horizon Wings' ATKA



In early January, a standing-room-only crowd at Essex Town Hall attended Mary-Beth Kaeser's presentation of Atka, the Bald Eagle. Atka is a two-year-old male that came to Horizon Wings from Washington state where it was found with an injured right wing, which prevented its release.

Mary-Beth explained that Bald Eagles are the largest raptors nesting in Connecticut. Males weigh up to 10 lbs. and females up to 12 lbs. with wingspans between six and seven feet. An adult Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus Leucocephalus*) is easily identified by its large size and dark body with the distinct white head and tail. Young Bald Eagles look much different than the adults. In their first two years, young eagles are dark brown with white mottling and lack the white head and tail. They are sometimes mistaken for Golden Eagles, which are rare in Connecticut. Young Bald Eagles begin to get the white head and tail in their third and fourth year, becoming completely white when they turn five years old.

Bald Eagles were extirpated from Connecticut in the 1950s due largely to the pesticide DDT. Nesting Bald Eagles returned to Connecticut in 1992 and have been increasing in numbers ever

since. As of 2018 there are 55 known nesting pairs in the state. Bald Eagles build very large nests, usually near a body of water. They prey mainly on fish but will also take a wide variety of prey, including mammals and birds and will also scavenge on carrion.

Horizon Wings, formed in 2001, is a non-profit Wildlife Rehabilitation Center specializing in Birds of Prey. All of its funding is provided by educational programs and donations. Horizon Wings has several raptors that cannot be released back into the wild due to their injuries, and are kept at its center with a special permit.

For sound, go to: [https://www.horizonwings.org/\\_sounds/baldea](https://www.horizonwings.org/_sounds/baldea)

Here are some interesting internet sites:

Australia Surfing Swans: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsiqdl6vsGQ>

Maine Audubon Camp - Rapture Rapture: <https://vimeo.com/249578435>

Osprey Rescue: <https://www.facebook.com/2025563457460653/videos/2163818073947073>

Nat Geo: <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/03/how-trump-is-changing-science-environment>

Visit our website: [potapaugaudubon.org](http://potapaugaudubon.org)



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## Thawing Out!

*We need your help = Please consider joining our board*

### 2018 Potapaug Audubon

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YES, I want to join my local Audubon chapter and the National Audubon Society at the annual rate of \$20.

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Make check payable to National Audubon Society. Dues include \$10 for AUDUBON Magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks from receipt of payment to receive your first issue.

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