

CONNECTICUT COASTAL BIRDING TRAIL

Want to see wildlife habitat better protected in Connecticut? We need more political clout. Want to see more and better amenities for birders and barriers to keep people off sensitive habitat? We need more money. Want to help make some of this happen, as it has in Texas, Florida, Minnesota, Virginia and other states? Now there is a way. Join the effort to develop the Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail. Visit our website for more details. www.ctbirdingtrails.org

The travel and tourist industry in Connecticut is largely unaware of the number of people who travel up to four hours by auto for two or three days of birding, primarily from urban areas. This is a significant business opportunity. In many other states, development of auto routes connecting good birding sites that can tolerate more visitors has won the enthusiastic support of these businessmen. This has led to strong political and financial support from them for protecting the key ingredient in ecotourism, wildlife habitat. Birders and birds are the beneficiaries.

Creating trails has also resulted in better amenities, such as observation platforms and blinds, and in sensitive habitat protection, such as fencing to keep people out of nesting and foraging areas. Some businesses, tourist agencies and chambers of commerce have adopted sites and helped improve them, often in partnership with local birding organizations. Non-birders, lured to explore them by publicity about the trails, have also developed greater appreciation of the value of habitat protection and have increased support for public funding. State wildlife agencies have won bigger budgets to study and manage habitat, and more funds have been provided to protect additional habitat.

We can make this happen in Connecticut, starting now. Jenny Dickson, of the CT DEP Wildlife Division has won a federal grant to launch the Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail. The initial response from representatives of the travel and tourism industry has been favorable, but they want to see specifics. Where are good birding sites suitable for listing on the trail? Might some commercial properties along our shoreline or nearby inland, currently closed to birders, offer attractive site opportunities? What additional amenities might make candidate sites better for birders and better for the birds?

How can you help? Anyone can nominate a site for the trail by visiting our website and filling out a nomination form, including suggested enhancements and exclusions. You may also sign up to receive progress reports on trail development. Birding organizations along the shoreline may wish to oversee all sites in their region of interest, to ensure thorough coverage and proper attention to safeguards for wildlife. They may also wish to link their websites to our trail website. Individuals or organizations may offer their expertise to local businesses seeking evaluation of nearby sites. Many more ideas about helping will be created by participants and shared with all.

Connecticut has much wildlife habitat to offer for viewing, and we can make it even better, for ourselves, our visitors and our birds. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to help make birdwatching better known and appreciated and to win the support of influential citizens on behalf of wildlife habitat. Please join us! Start by visiting our website. www.ctbirdingtrails.org