

## **CONNECTICUT COASTAL BIRDING TRAIL**

### **November 1, 2002 Update**

On Tuesday and Thursday of this week, as many of you know from viewing our website, we held public meetings hosted by the regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVB's) along the Connecticut coast. They were very successful! We are off to a great start.

Our featured speaker was Ted Eubanks, President of Fermata, the consulting firm that is helping us develop the Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail. Ted invented the trail concept and developed the first example, The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. His company is now involved in similar trail development in over 20 other states, including most of those trails described in the feature article of the current issue of Audubon Magazine.

At each meeting, Ted did a masterful job of explaining the ongoing demographic shifts that are creating an ever-growing demand for wildlife viewing tourism, and how that makes well-protected wildlife habitat a very valuable commodity to the local community. This creates an opportunity for state wildlife agencies, birding clubs, nature centers and others to join with local travel and tourism businesses to protect wildlife habitat and to develop plans for non-intrusive wildlife observation.

When many more people learn to appreciate wildlife habitat, and that habitat is perceived as having significant economic value, it will be much easier to win support for its preservation and protection. This has already been shown to be successful in many other states. Now it is Connecticut's turn!

Site nominations are arriving, birding clubs are connecting with businesses and CVB's and much creativity is getting unleashed. This is terrific. If you know a likely site, please nominate it. If you need some help deciding whether it is a good site, check the [Guidelines for Site Nominations](#) link on our website. If you need some technical advice, contact a local birding club. We will post links to their websites soon.

I have heard that our trail project was written up in *The New London Day* and mentioned on the radio. A New York Times reporter was at the meeting in Old Saybrook and is talking with CVB folks in New Haven and Norwalk before writing his story. If you have access to a publication that might tell our story, please copy the Newsletter Article available in our Publications and Handouts section of the website. You have our permission (and encouragement!) to use it.

After we have collected site nominations and selected those that seem suitable, we will need to develop many driving loops to connect them.

Each loop should have a theme, telling part of the story of how the natural environment shaped the way people and birds took advantage of the place.

After we have defined those people themes; mills, ship building, shipping, oystering, fishing, rock quarrying, etc., and the people who pursued them, we can then select bird species whose local presence depends upon the same environmental factors that led people to find those ways to make a living.

That way we can show folks an interesting bird species, explain how the bird interacts successfully with the local environment, tie that to the way people also learned to interact successfully with that environment, and tie that to the local cultural and historical sites. If the story is interesting enough, we can draw many active, experiential tourists to visit, stay a while and return for more. Most will stop at museums, galleries, shops , etc. that have connections to the story during their visit, as well as eat and sleep. People who spend money while visiting wildlife habitat make those places have significant economic value to the community.

What are the distinctive stories and theme elements to be told about your tourism district? Please help us identify them. Send your suggestions to the CVB in your area using the links on our website ([ctbirdingtrails.org](http://ctbirdingtrails.org)).

Thanks for your interest in this project. We welcome your assistance and support. Please keep checking our website for more news and the growing list of nominated sites. These e-mails may be infrequent, so you will learn most developments sooner by looking at the website for news.

Frank Haviland  
Connecticut Coastal Birding Trail