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Samuel Gilliland Jr., Greenwich  Benjamin Williams, Pomfret Center

Executive Director: Patrick Comins

OUR LOCATIONS

CENTER AT POMFRET
218 Day Road, Pomfret Center

ROGER TORY PETERSON
ESTUARY CENTER
PO Box 62, Old Lyme

CENTER AT GLASTONBURY
1361 Main Street, Glastonbury

BIRDCRAFT
314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield

COASTAL CENTER
AT MILFORD POINT
1 Milford Point Road, Milford

CENTER AT FAIRFIELD
2325 Burr Street, Fairfield

ECOTRAVEL
PO Box 903
30 Plains Road, Essex

DEER POND FARM
Wakeman Hill Road, Sherman
Dear Friends

I began my conservation career at the Connecticut Audubon Society, and I remember well my first days in the field. I was 30 and had been birding for only a few years, but Miley Bull thought my skills were good enough so he hired me to survey birds at the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

I remember the cold and heat, mosquitoes, poison ivy, greenbrier. But I also remember the thousands of Sanderlings and Semipalmated Sandpipers, the waves of fall migrant warblers on September mornings, and the screaming hordes of Common Terns defending their colonies and that of Roseate Terns. I remember thinking: If this helps conserve these birds, I want to do more of it.

That was 20 years ago. Those first months were among the most influential of my career as a conservationist. It started me on a path of 20 years of being on the front lines of bird conservation in Connecticut and New England, eventually leading to my return and an opportunity to lead this organization. Opportunities I would not have had if not for those formative years. Connecticut Audubon’s Birdcraft Sanctuary was the first private songbird sanctuary in the country. It has always strived to provide first-rate conservation education. Inspiring people to conserve nature was the abiding philosophy of Mabel Osgood Wright, our founder.

Our society has always tried to make a mark on individual conservationists.

That’s the theme of this 2017 Annual Report. We’ve highlighted five conservation leaders who were influenced by Connecticut Audubon; and five young women scientists who spent the summer of 2017 doing important fieldwork and data collection for us – young women whom we expect will go on to be conservation leaders in their own right.

These 10 aren’t alone of course. Miley Bull got his start at Connecticut Audubon fresh out of the University of Connecticut; 45 years later he is our senior director of science and conservation and has been a major influence on conservation in Connecticut for all of that time. D.G. Warner, our treasurer – a conservationist of a different sort, who makes sure we have the financial resources to do our work – first became involved in Connecticut Audubon as a young boy. Board member Michael Aurelia also got his start as a boy, going to meetings at Birdcraft with his grandmother.

One doesn’t need to be a professional conservationist to make a difference for birds and other wildlife. That is what being a member means. Supporting conservation through volunteer time, donations, advocacy efforts, membership.

Caring for birds and wildlife is what we are about and we would not be able to do any of our work without your help and support. Connecticut Audubon has been inspiring people to conserve nature since 1898. Next year will be our 120th anniversary. Thanks to you, our members, we are poised to continue for at least another 120 years!

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Comins  
Executive Director
I N F L U E N C E R S

One measure of success is how we influence people who influence others. Here are five people who were influenced by the Connecticut Audubon Society and then made their marks in conservation; and five who spent the summer of 2017 doing conservation science work for us and who we suspect will be the next generation of influencers.

Bill Labich, Senior Conservationist, Highstead

Clearing brush at the H. Smith Richardson Wildlife Preserve was brutal work: hot, sweaty, and filled with prickers and bugs. And yet, Bill Labich remembers this part of his Connecticut Audubon Society internship fondly more than two decades years later. Sort of.

“I can picture myself. I’m in the thick of that and I’m thinking, get me out of here,” he said with with a laugh. “I don’t remember thinking, someday I’m going looking at back at this and think, that’s how I learned to work really hard and not quit. But that’s what I’m thinking now.”

The greater lesson, however, was that a big job takes teamwork. It’s an idea that Labich, a senior conservationist at Highstead Foundation in Redding, applies daily. At Highstead, he works on behalf of the Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative, which has the ambitious goal of conserving 70 percent of New England as forest.

That will take the cooperation of a vast network of property owners, conservation groups, and government agencies. It’s Labich’s role to bring them together. That drive to collaborate began with his time at Connecticut Audubon.

“My love of organizing people started then,” he said. “That was the foundation for the rest of my career.”

Leila Kouakou, Mount Holyoke College, Class of 2018

Leila, an environmental studies major concentrating in natural history, spent much of June, July and August in a canoe, studying the underwater plants that are a key to the ecology of the lower Connecticut River and its coves: “This internship has challenged me in so many ways — emotionally, physically, mentally.”
Karl Wagener, Executive Director, Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality

Karl Wagener sees firsthand how passionate people in Connecticut are about the environment.

He’s the executive director of the Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality, a state agency best known for producing an annual report on the condition of the state’s environment and recommending actions to improve it.

But the agency also investigates reports of environmental violations from the public, which puts Karl in contact with citizen environmentalists. It’s something he first experienced as the director of the Connecticut Audubon Society’s Hartford office in the 1980s.

When he arrived in Connecticut for that first career-track conservation job, the state was “somewhat in the dark ages,” for wildlife conservation, he said. There was no regulation of non-game wildlife. Birds had legal protections at least, but there were no programs to actively safeguard vulnerable species like Piping Plovers, herons, or egrets.

Even the state Endangered Species Act, which Connecticut Audubon would push for, was years away. Wagener lobbied for some of the protections we see today. “Our policy was always very well researched and people respected that,” he said. “That was a very valuable lesson.”

That experience of working on behalf of caring citizens shaped his career. “Having advocated directly for members of Connecticut Audubon, it’s still in my mind that people care greatly,” he said. “It’s never left me.”

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Helena Ives, University of Connecticut, Class of 2018

Lena spent the summer of 2017 working on our behalf for the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds. She and her colleagues helped protect the Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers and other vulnerable birds that nest on Connecticut’s beaches. “We’re helping people reassociate with nature and redefine how they fit in the ecosystem,” she said.
**I N F L U E N C E R S**

**Rob Klee, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection**

As a middle schooler, Rob Klee spent so much time at the Connecticut Audubon Center at Fairfield, they started finding things for him to do. In between filling bird feeders and cleaning out cages, he got to know the animal care staff and see their work. That’s when it hit him: “You could actually do this for a living.”

For a kid who loved riding his bike to the Center and exploring the trails, it was a revelation: he could turn his interest into a career. That led him to study geology and environmental science. Later, he moved into environmental law. Today, he’s the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

One of his goals is to make sure that all Connecticut children have that same opportunity to experience the natural world. That might be unstructured time outside for younger kids or more formal learning opportunities for teens. Klee knows how these activities can inspire learning – and maybe even future leaders in conversation.

“It’s essential,” he said. “Giving that exposure at the right time and with the right person can spark an interest that can be lifelong.”

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**Genevieve Nuttall, University of Connecticut, Master’s Student**

Genevieve, who is working on a master’s in conservation biology and biodiversity at the University of Connecticut, coordinated our Osprey Nation program in 2016 and 2017. It’s not a small task. The number of volunteer stewards she managed rose from 224 in ‘16 to 287 in ‘17.

“Most of them are so excited,” she said. “They act like it’s their own kids being born.”
Ann Taylor, Executive Director, New Pond Farm

In her 12 years at Connecticut Audubon, Ann Taylor went from being a new college graduate to the head of the our animal care program. She helped found a statewide network of wildlife rehabilitators and developed a handbook for professionals in the field. But her proudest accomplishments were educational initiatives - school partnerships and a manual for teachers. When she had the opportunity to lead a new environmental education center - New Pond Farm, in Redding - she knew she was ready.

“The skills that I needed to take the next step in my career were very generously provided to me at Connecticut Audubon,” she said. “It gave me such a strong base for environmental education.”

That was over 30 years ago. Today, Taylor is still the executive director of New Pond Farm, a working farm and nature center that reaches 5,000 children annually. Reflecting on her career, Taylor sees a direct path from her time at Connecticut Audubon.

“My years at Connecticut Audubon were so filled with joy and learning and developing my passion for nature and the natural world,” she said. “It’s hard to imagine a better experience.”

Melina Giantomidis, University of New Haven, Class of 2018

Melina spent the summer of 2017 monitoring birds such as Piping Plovers and American Oystercatchers as an Audubon Important Bird Area Coastal Ranger at the Coastal Center. The job called for daily interaction with visitors.

“We’re educating them how to coexist with other species,” she said. “We can coexist in a way that’s positive.”
Haley canoed the lower Connecticut River in the summer of 2017, working with Leila Kouakou.

“I’m really interested in wetlands ecosystems and I would like to do my own research in the future,” she told an interviewer from her college website. “This is getting me the kind of experience I need to be able to get a job like that.”

Pete Marra, Director, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center

Pete Marra had hoped the research he did as an undergrad intern on Chimon Island would save the birds there. But the gulls and herons that nested on the tiny isle near Norwalk in the mid 1980s deserted the place, an example of a missed opportunity for human intervention.

“It was the first of many lessons in my life that drove home the science that we really need to manage wildlife and nature and use our best science to protect it,” said Marra, now head of the Smithsonian’s Migratory Bird Center in Washington D.C.

That lesson sums up his organization’s very mission: studying why bird populations decline “before the situation becomes desperate.”

Formative as those summers with Connecticut Audubon were, Marra said he wouldn’t have gotten there had he not spent so many hours at Audubon centers as a boy, including Birdcraft Sanctuary in Fairfield. In fact, it so influenced him, he pushed for the new bird exhibit at the National Zoo to resemble the bird-in-hand experience he’d had at Connecticut Audubon.

“To me, that’s how you catch people”, he said. “That’s what flipped my switch and I’ve never forgotten it.”

Haley Rivers, Mount Holyoke College, Class of 2019

Haley canoed the lower Connecticut River in the summer of 2017, working with Leila Kouakou.
Dave Engelman
Volunteer Benchmark Awards

Louise Crocco

You’ll always get a smile and welcoming greeting from Louise at the Milford Point Coastal Center. Since its inception nearly 22 years ago, Lou has been more than its ambassador. She has handled every responsibility, from payroll to paper towels with a can-do attitude. Lou’s devotion to Connecticut Audubon and its mission, and her respect and passion for the environment and conservation, is unmatched.

Dan Miller

Dan has spent the past nine years volunteering roughly 4,620 hours at the Center at Glastonbury. He treats his work at the center like a paid position, helping to organize the volunteer database and update the website. He cares about our success and does what it takes to help behind-the-scenes operations run smoothly. He has great ideas, is organized, and his institutional knowledge has helped tremendously.

Richard Telford

Over the last six years, Richard has worked tirelessly on behalf of our Trail Wood Sanctuary and the legacy of Edwin Way Teale. He wrote a 10-year revitalization plan for the sanctuary as part of his master’s thesis. He founded and has run Trail Wood’s artist-in-residence program, which is in its fifth season, and has given numerous lectures. A scholar and author, Richard is currently at work on a biography of Teale, thanks to a sabbatical from Woodstock Academy.

D.G. Warner

D.G joined our Board of Directors in 2007 and served through this year, as vice chairman, treasurer, and chairman of the Investment and Finance committees. He also served for more than a decade on the organization’s Fairfield Board of Governors. These positions require daily diligence. It has paid off in recent progress toward financial sustainability. D.G. brought an outstanding ability to visualize trends and explain them in easily understandable terms.
Citizen Science

The volunteers of Osprey Nation continued to collect data on the success of Connecticut’s resurgent Osprey population. Now in its fourth year, Osprey Nation’s 287 volunteer stewards mapped 680 nests; 394 of those were known to be active and they produced 636 nestlings in 2017, 607 of which fledged. Each of those numbers have risen each year. Data about the birds can provide critical information about numerous environmental concerns.

We participated, along with partners Audubon Connecticut and the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, in the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds. The Alliance uses a network of almost 200 volunteers, supervised by full-time and seasonal staff, to monitor and protect vulnerable beach-nesting birds such as federally endangered Roseate Terns, federally threatened Piping Plovers, and Least Terns, Common Terns, and American Oystercatchers.
Advocacy

Our Connecticut State of the Birds 2016 report, titled “Gains, Losses, and the Prospect of Extinction,” reviewed 10 years of bird data. It concluded that while a handful of species have done well, many Connecticut birds are suffering slow, steady population declines caused by the loss of their nesting areas. The report attracted wide media attention, including in the Connecticut Post, New Haven Register, Hartford Courant, and local TV stations.

We were influential in persuading the Federal Railroad Administration to abandon a proposal to build a high-speed rail line under the Connecticut River Estuary and Old Lyme. Our critique pointed out that the environmental review failed to analyze the rail line’s effect on four rare species, including Atlantic and short-nosed sturgeon.

Conservation

We opened the 835-acre Deer Pond Farm, a major new center and preserve in western Connecticut. The property was a bequest from the estate of Kathryn D. Wriston. It sits in the highlands along the Connecticut-New York border. About 620 of its 835 acres are upland forest; 125 acres are forested wetlands, and 59 acres are meadow. The land will be conserved and managed to protect its biodiversity. The public is welcome for guided walks and tours.

We began work on the creation of 10 acres of new shrubland habitat the the organization’s 233-acre Morgan R. Chaney Sanctuary in Montville. The project will provide nesting habitat for a half-dozen or more species of birds that are among the fastest-declining in New England.
Education

Science in Nature, our award-winning outdoor science education program, passed two milestones: 63,000 students have now completed Science in Nature since its start, in 2012; and 500 teachers have been trained to bring the program’s principles back to their schools, vastly increasing its reach.

EcoTravel

EcoTravel successfully offered 42 programs and took 1,085 Connecticut Audubon members on trips near and far. These included cruises on the Connecticut River to view Bald Eagles, Ospreys, and Tree Swallows; short birding trips to Rhode Island and Long Island; and journeys to Ireland, Italy, Texas, and Peru.
**YEAR IN NUMBERS**

**Science in Nature**

School children taught in 2016-17: 10,800  
School children taught since 2012: 63,000  
Connecticut School districts participating: 75%  
Teachers trained: 500

**EcoTravel**

Eagle cruises and Swallow Spectacular Cruises: 5  
Eagle and Swallow cruise passengers: 750  
Day trips: 24  
Day trip travelers: 68  
International journeys: 10  
International travelers: 81  
Domestic overnights: 8  
Domestic overnight travelers: 68

**The Centers**

Bird walks & other outings: 264  
Participants: 2,606  
Lectures: 71  
Lecture attendance: 6,055  
Summer camps: 1,434 campers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUE</th>
<th>Gains and Other Support</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>TOTAL April 30, 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL April 30, 2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and bequests</td>
<td>$570,113</td>
<td>$3,854,838</td>
<td>$10,822,393</td>
<td>$15,247,344</td>
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<td>Nature store sales</td>
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<td>Membership dues</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>196,933</td>
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<td>Educational programs</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>705,508</td>
<td>717,832</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation programs</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,628</td>
<td>44,547</td>
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<td>Eco-travel programs</td>
<td>443,597</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>443,597</td>
<td>340,337</td>
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<td>Special Events</td>
<td>159,969</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>159,969</td>
<td>192,977</td>
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<td>Insurance proceeds</td>
<td>94,676</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>94,676</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>59,332</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>59,332</td>
<td>112,229</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Endowment income:

- Investment income (net of fees) | 35,066 | 90,371 | (9,984) | 115,453 | 199,368 |
- Realized gain on securities | 179,467 | 178,254 | 8,580 | 366,301 | (15,808) |
- Unrealized gain (loss) on securities | (834) | 3,355 | 436,937 | 439,458 | (380,116) |

Net assets released from restriction: -
Satisfaction of restrictions:

- Primary programs | 595,770 | (282,431) | (313,339) | - | - |
- Capital expenditures | 186,146 | (186,146) | - | - | - |

Total | $3,469,088 | $3,658,241 | $10,944,587 | $18,071,916 | $2,499,710 |
## EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>TOTAL April 30, 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL April 30, 2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education program</td>
<td>$2,497,887</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>$2,497,887</td>
<td>$1,973,539</td>
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<td>Sanctuary program</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>96,258</td>
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<td>Conservation and advocacy program</td>
<td>185,853</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>185,853</td>
<td>202,953</td>
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<td>Membership services</td>
<td>229,693</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>228,935</td>
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<td>Total program expenses</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>3,200,909</td>
<td>2,501,685</td>
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<td>Management and general</td>
<td>402,561</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>402,561</td>
<td>601,620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising and development</td>
<td>242,772</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>242,772</td>
<td>274,991</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,846,242</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,846,242</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,378,296</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in net assets</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(377,154)</td>
<td>3,658,241</td>
<td>10,944,587</td>
<td>14,225,674</td>
<td>(878,586)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Net assets at beginning of year              | $9,102,333   | $347,712                | $13,478,680            | $22,928,725          | $23,807,309          |

| Net assets at end of year                    | $8,725,179   | $4,005,953              | $24,423,267            | $37,154,399          | $22,928,723          |

*Based on audited financial statements*
We are grateful to all of you who have helped us achieve our goals through your membership and generous financial support, those listed below and those whom we did not have the space to include. This list reflects giving from May 1, 2016, through April 30, 2017. We apologize for any errors and encourage you to contact our Development Office at 203 259-0416 x402 or akerin@ctaudubon.org.

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