

# Getting to Know Our Avian Neighbors

NRCA Student: Matteo Onofrio<sup>1</sup>  
Community Partner: Joanne Chvisuk<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Lyman Hall High School; <sup>2</sup>Peter's Rock Assoc.

## PROJECT MOTIVATION & GOALS

The objective of this project is to educate people about what they see and hear while hiking Connecticut's trails. Specifically, my project is focused on making the public familiar with our avian neighbors. Most people know what a cardinal or robin looks like, but there are many other bird species (280 CT species, to be exact) that are unfamiliar to most people. It is important that people become familiar with birds because there are some that are declining in population size. I want to also raise awareness for the more rare kinds in CT. Certain plants or animals depend on birds to clean up their habitat and spread seeds.

Through information kiosks that I established at Peter's Rock in North Haven, CT (see park photos below), it was my goal to make the general public more familiar to the sounds and appearance of Connecticut's birds before or after they hit the trails.



## BUILDING THE KIOSK

### Bird Information

- I researched the migratory pattern of birds in CT and made a list of the most common summer and year-round birds that inhabit suburban forest areas.
- I compiled basic information on the individual families.
- Then I assembled panels for specific bird species using photographs and natural history information (see section *KIOSK PANELS*).
- All of the panels were assembled together and printed on a 3' by 6' professional poster that was mounted on the kiosk.

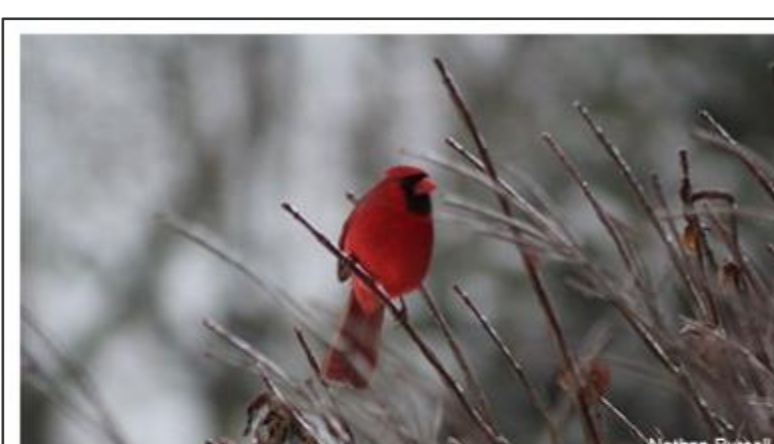
### The Build

- The kiosk is mounted on the side of a storage shed at the entrance so people can see it before they begin their hike (see kiosk construction photos below).
- The base is pressure treated wood, a little bigger than 3' by 6' with a pressure treated wood trim and a Plexiglas window.
- I then laminated the informational poster and inserted it into the kiosk frame.
- A roof was also installed to extend the longevity of the informational panels.
- The kiosk was installed on Feb 26th 2017.



## KIOSK PANELS

The panels below are examples of those installed in the kiosk. The birds selected for the panels are present at Peter's Rock during summer migration or year-round. Each panel gives a short description of a family group with species photos.



Northern Cardinal  
(*Cardinalis cardinalis*)



American Goldfinch  
(*Spinus tristis*)

-Finches, like the Cardinal and Goldfinch are medium sized songbirds that eat primarily on nuts and seeds. Their broad beaks are built to break hard nutshells.



House Sparrow  
(*Passer domesticus*)



Song Sparrow  
(*Melospiza melodia*)

-Sparrows are small birds that eat mainly insects. They can weave through trees with ease and are prey items for many small birds of prey.



Mourning Dove  
(*Zenaidura macroura*)



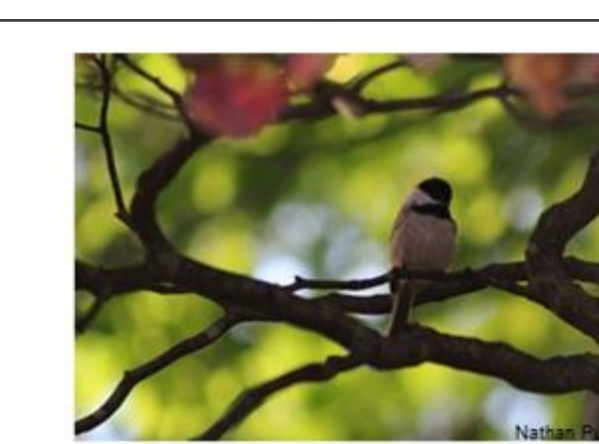
Rock Dove/Pigeon  
(*Columba livia*)

-Doves are one of the most common birds around these areas. Mourning doves are found in suburban forested areas while Rock doves (Pigeons) are found more in cities since buildings are like artificial cliff faces, where they naturally live.



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird  
(*Archilochus colubris*)

-Hummingbirds are very small and common around hummingbird feeders. They are seen during the summer when they migrate east and over the Atlantic. They can hover in place to feed on nectar and even fly backwards if they need to.



Black-Capped Chickadee  
(*Poecile atricapillus*)



Tufted Titmouse  
(*Baeolophus bicolor*)

-Chickadees and Titmice, though they stay year round, they are the most common winter birds. They are small and common at feeders, and are often heard while hiking.



Cedar Waxwing  
(*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

-Cedar waxwing are small birds that reside in CT all year. Know by a high pitched "Seeee" sound they make they are easily distinguished from other birds.



Wild Turkey  
(*Meleagris gallopavo*)

-Turkeys are large gamebirds that often travel on the ground, usually a female with poults or a male with a harem. They are foragers and will peck through the leaf litter to find seeds or insects to eat.



Black Vulture  
(*Bombycilla cedrorum*)



Turkey Vulture  
(*Cathartes aura*)

-Vultures are large scavenging birds. With large wings they soar high and smell for carcasses. Their heads are bare so they can reach and pick out scraps without getting very messy.



Gray Catbird  
(*Dumetella carolinensis*)



Northern Mockingbird  
(*Mimus polyglottos*)

-Mockingbirds are medium sized birds that are known to sometimes mimic another bird's calls. Not all do however.



Wood Thrush  
(*Hylocichla mustelina*)



Eastern Bluebird  
(*Sialia sialis*)



American Robin  
(*Turdus migratorius*)

-Thrushes are medium sized songbirds that live in wooded areas. Their long pointed beaks help them catch insects and worms. Some of the most common thrushes are the Wood thrush, American robin, and Eastern bluebird.



Red-Tailed Hawk  
(*Buteo jamaicensis*)



Red-Shouldered Hawk  
(*Buteo lineatus*)

-Vultures are large scavenging birds. With large wings they soar high and smell for carcasses. Their heads are bare so they can reach and pick out scraps without getting very messy.



American Kestrel  
(*Falco sparverius*)



Peregrine Falcon  
(*Falco peregrinus*)

-Falcons are small raptors that are built for speed. With long tails and pointed wings they can be seen soaring overhead or chasing down dove species.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Joanne Chvisuk for being my community partner. I would also like to thank Mrs. Emily Picard for guiding me along this process. And I would like to thank the Peter's Rock Assoc. for letting me do this project and helping to fund it. With this project complete, I have now acquired more knowledge about the taxonomy of birds and field ornithology.