

**Bald Eagles  
Of  
Connecticut Report**



**Compiled By The Bald Eagle Study Group  
Of Connecticut  
2011**

**Photo By Ed Nash**

*The Bald Eagle Study Group  
Would Like To Dedicate This Years Issue  
Of The Report  
To Our Dear Friend Robert Kirby  
Whom We Lost Suddenly In February 2012*



*L. M. Logasso*



Photo by Lisa Legasse

On January 1, 2011 the winter Bald Eagles consistently began using the Enfield rapids area of the Connecticut River at 2602 accumulated degree days. This stat has become a pretty good predictor of the winter migrant's arrival. The 32 year average is 2630. The Connecticut River at Enfield has year round Bald Eagles but determining the residents from the winter arrivals that come from the north and north east is fairly simple: there are more eagles, there are more interactions, and there are different plumages and different leg bands. Five to six eagles per day was a common winter number. The season had record snowfall totals but average temperatures- 5116 degree days by winter's end on March 21 (normal is 5147). By that date at least 11 pairs were already sitting on eggs and the ground was still covered in snow.



Photo by Lisa Legasse

## Nesting 2011

Twenty four Bald Eagle territories were recorded in 2011. Twenty one of those twenty four were active nests. Eighteen of those twenty-one nests were successful. All of those totals are records for the state. The thirty chicks from the eighteen nests is one fewer than the 2009 record of thirty-one. Three nests were successful for the first time: Windsor Locks, Lisbon, and Broad Brook Reservoir (Cheshire). Four new alternate nests were successfully used: Goodspeed #3, Hartford- Brainard #2, Bridgewater #2 and Nepaug #4. One new territory was established at Bradway Pond. Two nests had three chicks bringing Connecticut's three chick total to nine since 1992. Only five chicks were leg banded from four nests.

No new tree species were used for nest support this year. The Windsor Locks nest is in a large cottonwood, the Broad Brook nest was in a white pine (the nest blew down long after fledge during hurricane Irene) and the Lisbon tree species is undetermined. Bridgewater #2 was a short distance move to a large white pine. Nepaug #4 was a short move to a rather small red oak. That nest still affords the adults a canopy tree-like view because it is on a steep hillside facing the water. Goodspeed #3 was a move of fifty yards north and Hartford – Brainard #2 was a move of a half mile south, both on the Connecticut River – neither tree has been identified as to species. The Saville nest is in a dead white pine. The Bradway Pond nest is in a large white pine with an old Connecticut D.E.E.P. badge nailed to its trunk. However, the location of this nest is curious. Both adults there are young – they have a small amount of white mottling in the plumage and both still have dark markings in the yellow beak. The flood control pond is only 45 acres and the north and east sides have houses. The nest was built only seventy feet from a house under construction.

Some of the nesting adults have color leg bands, but the unique code is known for only one. Connecticut (black-white) leg band 7 over Y is on one of the adults at the Groton nest. It was found weak and on the ground in April, taken to rehab, nourished for three days, and released at the recovery spot. It immediately flew to the nest. Band 7 over Y was a nestling, determined to be a male, 22 miles away at the Goodspeed nest in 2005. The female

at the Windsor Locks nest has a blue left leg band – probably New York, and the male has a black left leg band – probably Connecticut. The huge size deference between this pair makes sexing relatively simple, the female being the much bigger of the two. One adult at Nepaug also has a blue leg band, probably New York.

Since the Bald Eagle is still listed on the Connecticut statutes as a threatened species, the southern part of the Windsor Locks canal towpath was closed by the D.E.E.P shortly after the normal seasonal opening date of March 31. Cyclists and pedestrians could only use the northern 2 miles of the towpath and then turn around at the Stony Brook aquaduct. It was opened entirely on July 1 when the chicks fledged. The nest is on the western bank of the Connecticut River on the strip of wooded land paralleling the towpath.

There were concerns last year about the poor nest production following a late winter start of 23 territories. Only 12 nests produced chicks – six failed and 5 never started. Of the six failures of 2010, nests at the Hartford Dump, Hartford –Brainard, Nepaug and Middletown were successful this year. Saville and Suffield failed both years. Of the 5 pairs that didn't lay eggs in 2010, only Lisbon was productive this year. Bantam Lake, East Windsor, North Haven and Southbury were non-starts both years. From the above information and from Figure 1, the Connecticut Bald Eagle nesting population obviously continues to expand. Most are concentrated in the center of the state on the Connecticut River watershed. Is the reason for this geographic imbalance an observer bias because most of the eagle watchers are also in the central part of the state? Or, is it an eagle bias because they started nesting there in the early "90's" and the offspring are familiar with the topography? However, the Quinnipiac, Housatonic and Thames watershed are getting territories slowly.

The dates in Figure 1 are best guesses based on eagle behaviors at the nest or by back-dating from measurements taken on banding day. The "first hatch" is the "incubating date" plus 35 days. The "fledge date" is the hatch date plus 77 days. Therefore, two bits of data from figure 1 need explaining. The incubating date and hatch date at the Hartford-Dump nest are more than 35 days apart because the chick measurements taken on banding day indicated a first egg failure or first chick mortality. Eagle chicks are 2, 3 or 4 days apart in age. Insufficient chick measurements were taken at Bridgewater #2, so precise backdating couldn't be done there to calculate the incubating and hatch dates. Also, fledging of all the chicks at every nest can't be confirmed – late chick mortality could occur. Although all of the incubating dates are not exactly known in Figure 1, why did the earliest 9 successful nests produce only 12? It will be interesting to see how many nests survived the heavy, wet snowstorm of October 29th-30th. Six to twenty inches brought down thousands of limbs and trees and caused 800,000 power outages throughout the state.

## Bald Eagle Nests 2011

Figure 1

Nest	Chicks	Incubating	First Hatch	Banding	Fledge
Nott Island	1	15-Feb	22-Mar	Unsafe Tree	7-Jun
Goodspeed #3	2	20-Feb	27-Mar		12-Jun
Lieutenant River #2	3	26-Feb	2-Apr	No Land Owner Permission	18-Jun
Nepaug #4	1	Late Feb.	Early April	Unclimbable	June
Wethersfield- Rocky Hill #3	2	4-Mar	8-Apr	Unsafe Tree	24-Jun
Bridgewater #2	2	Early March	April	3-Jun	Late June
Windsor Locks	2	11-Mar	15-Apr		1-Jul
Lake Gaillard	3	11-Mar	15-Apr	Too Many Rules	1-Jul
Barkhamsted #1	2	13-Mar	17-Apr	Climber Unavailable	3-Jul
Hemlock Reservoir	1	14-Mar	18-Apr	11-May	4-Jul
Groton Reservoir	2	Mid March	April		Early July
Middletown #4	1	22-Mar	26-Apr	2-Jun	12-Jul
Hartford - Dump	1	22-Mar	2-May	31-May	12-Jul
Hartford - Brainard #2	2	March	April		July
Seymour	1	March	April	Unsafe Tree	July
Colebrook	1	March	April	Unsafe Tree	July
Lisbon	2	March	April		July
Broad Brook Reservoir	1	March	April		July
Suffield #3	0	11-Mar	Failed in Egg or Chick stage		
Cromwell	0	13-Mar	Failed in Egg or Chick stage		
Saville	0	14-Mar	Failed in Egg or Chick stage		
21 Total	30	February 15 to Late March	March 22 to Late April	May 11 to June 3	June 7 to Late July

Bradway Pond: Territory Only – 2 Adults present – Nest Built  
Bantam Lake: Territory Only – 3 Adults present – Sticks placed randomly  
East Windsor #3: Territory Only – 2 Adults present at existing nest

**The following were removed from the nest count:**

Southbury: No Activity, successful once in 2001, nest gone  
Ellington: No Activity, never successful, nest and tree gone  
North Haven: No Activity, successful once in 2008, nest gone

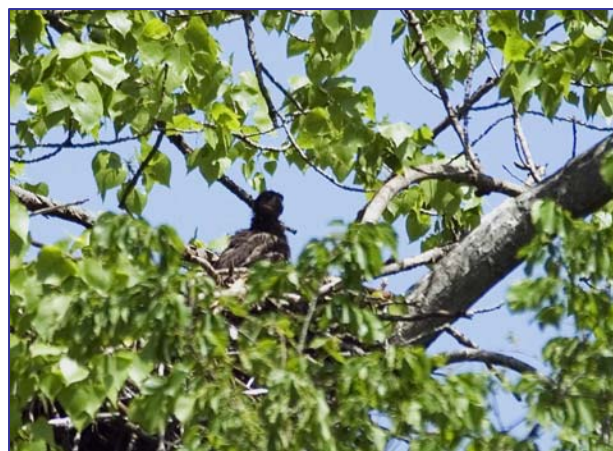


Photo By Lisa Legasse

## CONNECTICUT NESTING SUCCESS COMPARED TO MASSACHUSETTS

Figure 2 below shows a nearly constant increase in Bald Eagle production for both states in the first decade of the 2000's. Massachusetts had early advantages with a seven year hacking program in the 1980's (release of 41 foreign import chicks) and a 3 year head start in post D.D.T eagle nests – 1989 to 1992. Now the mathematics is remarkably even ( Davis, Hopkins).

**Figure 2**

### Territorial Pairs

YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
CT.	4	8	7	8	10	10	15	17	20	23	122
MA.	12	13	14	18	20	24	25	26	27	30	209
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>331</b>

### Successful Nests

YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
CT.	2	4	6	4	8	6	10	13	17	12	82
MASS.	5	8	8	12	12	16	22	22	21	16	142
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>224</b>

### Fledglings

YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
CT.	3	7	10	7	14	12	15	21	31	23	143
MASS.	10	15	13	16	23	33	32	33	37	27	239
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>382</b>

Two widely accepted standards that determine a stable Bald Eagle population are 0.7 young per nest and 0.5 nests per territory (Sprunt ). Massachusetts has had 1.14 young per territory, Connecticut 1.17. Massachusetts has had 1.68 young per successful nest, Connecticut 1.74. Massachusetts has had 0.68 successful nests per territory, Connecticut 0.67.

The raw numbers in figure 2 are slanted in favor of Massachusetts but that is just a matter of size. Massachusetts is 8,257 square miles and Connecticut is only 5,009 square miles – 61% as big. When that is factored in, the ratios are again remarkably similar. Connecticut's 122 territories are 58% of the Massachusetts' total of 209. Connecticut's 82 successful nests are 58% of the Massachusetts' total of 142. Connecticut's 143 chicks are 60% of Massachusetts' total of 239.

The only glitch in figure 2 happened in 2010. Both states started with a record number of territories, 53, but both states then had a significant drop in production – only 28 successful nests and only 50 fledglings. Last years eagle report tentatively blamed the Connecticut decline on the heavy rains of March 29th to March 31st. That speculation still seems valid.

## LEG BANDS

The leg band codes below are from Connecticut or Massachusetts and were obtained from injured eagles, dead eagles, digital photographs or through a telescope. Since 1992, Connecticut has used a black band with a white code. Most are on the left leg. The code can be 3 alpha-numerics read horizontally, or 2 alpha-numerics read one atop the other, except 1992 – each chick had a 2 letter horizontal code. At least one Connecticut leg band in the past was recovered with the black completely eroded down to the bare aluminum and the indented code filled with a stain, so the band appeared as a negative, white – dark instead of the original black – white.

Since 1989, Massachusetts has used a gold band with black alpha-numerics. In 2007 and 2008 as that series was running out they also used the new orange – white bands. They have used the orange bands ever since. It is a dark orange with letter over letter or letter over digit. The orange bands can appear red. With age, the white code can appear yellow. The color band is on the left leg and the 9 digit federal band is on the right. The leg band codes are not made public when they are used. This is not an exercise in paranoia or arrogance but an attempt at accuracy. Observing a questionable code from a digital photo or through a telescope can be influenced if the code reader is holding a handful of possible answers. The encountered code should go backward to the information – a known code should not help interpret a fuzzy image. The following data, along with band encounters from the past, confirmed that Connecticut (and Massachusetts) eagles are year round short distance wanderers and not migrants. Several people contributed the follow-up details. Tom Ricardi Jr., the northeast agent of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supplied the necropsy information. Tom French and Bill Davis of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife provided the banding details on the Massachusetts eagles. Min Huang of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection provided the Bird banding Lab. (Laurel, Md.) data. Julie Victoria of the Connecticut D.E.E.P provided information on the Connecticut bands. In addition to black – white Connecticut band Y over 7 described above, 9 more eagles have encounter data.

Black – White Connecticut band 7 over Z was listed in last years report. The eagle was found dead in the Connecticut River in Windsor and recovered by Ed Nash in April 2010. At that point the cause of death was unknown. The necropsy results revealed that it died from Carbofuran poisoning – a banned pesticide. A Windsor farmer laced hot dogs with the chemical to kill coyotes on his property. He killed a dog and sickened another. He was arrested and prosecuted for that deed. The path of the poison to the dead eagle is easy speculation but impossible to prove. Authorities were contemplating the arrest of the seller of the chemical. Eagle 7 over Z was banded as a nestling in Cromwell on May 20, 2005.

Gold – Black Massachusetts band WNO was also listed last year. The eagle was also found dead on the Connecticut River in Windsor. It was recovered by Dean Anglace in September, 2010. The cause of death was unknown. The recent necropsy results showed a #6 lead shotgun pellet in an air sac – but this was not the cause of death. No cause could be found. Lead pellets within the flesh of birds are usually quickly encapsulated and rendered inert and harmless. However, if birds ingest lead it quickly causes lead poisoning as it is broken down in the gizzard, enters the digestive system, and then the blood stream.

Black – White Connecticut band 8 over M was on an adult eagle on the Connecticut River in Enfield in January, 2011. It was put on one of 2 chicks at the Barkhamsted #1 nest on June 9, 2005. (Observed by Bill Mersey)

Orange – White Massachusetts band B over 0 (zero) was in Enfield on the Connecticut River on February 18, 2011 and into early March. It was put on a chick from a nest on 4th Island on the Connecticut River in Deerfield in the spring of 2008, If was one of 2 chicks. (Observed by Bob Michaud)

Orange – White Massachusetts band A over H was in Enfield on the Connecticut River on March 4, 2011 and several days thereafter. It was put on a nestling on the Merrimack River on June 7, 2007, also with a federal band 0609-48194. (Observed by Bob Michaud)

*Eagles A over H and B over 0 (zero) were frequently seen together. They had very similar plumage but are a year apart in age. The beak color in the photographs was a better indication of age. The 2007 eagle (A over H) had more yellow on the beak. The 2008 eagle (B over 0) had a darker beak.*

Gold – Black Massachusetts band WN2 was put on one of two chicks from the Sandisfield nest on May 19, 2004. The eagle was found dead on March 28, 2011 at latitude 41 degrees, 40 minutes; longitude 72 degrees, 40 minutes; approximately the Avon, Connecticut quadrangle map. (Bird Banding Lab)

Black – White Connecticut band 9 over A was put on one of two East Windsor chicks on May 14, 2007. It was a “sight record” on May 1, 2011 from southeast New Hampshire, approximately at latitude 42 degrees, 50 minutes; longitude 71 degrees, 20 minutes (Bird Banding Lab).

Black – White Connecticut band E over 1, a Lieutenant River nestling banded May 13, 2009. It was killed by a motor vehicle on June 8, 2011 in Connecticut at the same latitude and longitude as the banding, 41 degrees, 20 minutes lat., 72 degrees, 10 minutes long. (Bird Banding Lab)

Black – White Connecticut band P over 2 was photographed from East Hartford on the Connecticut River in early August, 2011. It is this years Hartford – Dump nestling, banded on May 31, 2011 at the age of 29 days. The chick jumped from the nest as an adult was bringing in a fish. The chick crashed to the ground. We searched under the nest, but were unable to find it. Within three days, the chick was able to work its way back up into the nest and it fledged the following week. The fledge of the bird was a lesson in gravity, not aerodynamics.

### **Thanks**

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To Ed Nash again for his cover design

### **Congratulations**

To Julie Victoria on her July 1st Retirement. Thanks for 32 years of service with the Connecticut D.E.E.P and a big thanks for 30 years of cooperating with a rag tag collection of Bald Eagle volunteers. Julie creatively balanced politics, policies, science, and personalities. She was the watchful mother of 187 eagle chicks born in Connecticut from 1992 to 2011.

### **Acknowledgements**

To Ken Ethridge for his ever more detailed Bald Eagle presentation to the Hartland Land Trust on September 26, 2011.

Access Granby Land Trust for the video  
[www.gctv16.org](http://www.gctv16.org) and click on Hartford Land Trust.  
Contact Ken at [KEE134@AOL.COM](mailto:KEE134@AOL.COM)

To Jenney Dickson of the Connecticut D.E.E.P, She will do the banding in 2012.



## ROSTER 2011

Sheldon Baker	Mike McNulty
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## Condolences

*To the Friends and Family of Charles Shebell.*

*Charlie died January 6<sup>th</sup> at the age of 94 in Gill, Massachusetts. In the late 1980's and early 1990's before Connecticut had Bald Eagle nests some of the Bald Eagle Study Group would travel to Massachusetts to study their nesting pairs. Charlie and his son Doug would always welcome us to the Gill boat launch to view the Tarness Falls nest and bring us up to date on pertinent nest activity. Then, every year he would deliver our annual Connecticut eagle report to the Tarness Falls Nature Center.*

*Charlie was a waist gunner with his twin brother on a B-17 in World War II. He was in the 357<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force flying out of East Anglia in England. He earned a Purple Heart for his efforts.*

*L. M. Legasse*

**Bald Eagles**  
**Of The Upper Farmington River Valley**



**Report Number 33**

**2011**

## Farmington River Report

### AREA

The area covered in this study is the upper Farmington River, North of the Farmington town line, this includes Lake McDonough, Nepaug, Barkhamsted, Colebrook Reservoir, the state hatchery, and Punch Brook.

### METHOD

Again, the main effort of the study was devoted to observing the Bald Eagles nesting activities. We were able to read the color bands on most of the eagles.

### OBSERVATIONS

The study group observed in the area for 45 days and Bald Eagles were seen on 41 of those days. Other observers reported eagles on 12 days. A summary of the observations is included at the end of this report.

### FOOD

There were no reports of winter kills on the ice.

### NESTING

The pair of eagles at the original Barkhamsted nest fledged two chicks as did the Nepaug pair. The Colebrook pair fledged a single chick. The new nest at Barkhamsted failed after eggs had been laid. This pair still frequents the area, and indication they will probably use this nest in the coming year.

### INDIVIDUALS

Along with four breeding pairs of adults in the area, the immatures frequenting the area bodes well for the population.

## Farmington River Report Key

EAGLES		LOCATIONS		OBSERVERS	
<b>A =</b>	Adult	<b>BR =</b>	Barkhamsted Res.	<b>DH =</b>	D. Hopkins
<b>I =</b>	Immature	<b>CR =</b>	Colebrook Res.	<b>JK =</b>	J. Kaplan
<b>F =</b>	Fledgling	<b>FR =</b>	Farmington River	<b>KN =</b>	K. Nicoletti
<b>N =</b>	Nestling	<b>NR =</b>	Nepaug Res.	<b>DR =</b>	D. Rosgen
		<b>LM =</b>	Lake McDonough	<b>JS =</b>	J. Schwartz
		<b>PB =</b>	Punch Brook	<b>KS =</b>	K. Sutton
		<b>H =</b>	Hatchery	<b>SS =</b>	S. Sutton

## Observations

Date	Eagles	Location	Observer	Observation Hours
1-Jan	1 I	FR	JK	
2-Jan	1A, 1I	FR	JK	
5-Jan	1A	FR	JK	
8-Jan	2I	FR	JK	
	2I	FR	KS	
	0	BR	DH	3.25
9-Jan	1A	FR	JK	
26-Jan	1I	PB, H	SS	
8-Feb	1A	PB	SS	
12-Feb	0	BR	DH	2
17-Feb	1I	PB	SS	
19-Feb	1A, 1I	BR	DH	1
23-Feb	2A	PB, NR	SS	
26-Feb	2A	BR	DH	3.25
	5A, 1I	NR, PB, BR	SS	
27-Feb	2A, 1I	BR	DH	1.25
1-Mar	2A	NR	SS	
	2A	BR	DH	1.5
5-Mar	2A	BR	DH	2.5
6-Mar	2A	BR	DH	0.5
9-Mar	3A, 1I	BR, LM	DR	
12-Mar	2a, 1I	BR	DH	1.5
13-Mar	1A	BR	DH	2
14-Mar	2A	BR	DH	1.25
20-Mar	3A	BR, LM	DR	
26-Mar	2A	BR	DH	2.25
27-Mar	1A, 2I	BR	DR	

**Observations Cont.**

Date	Eagles	Location	Observer	Observation Hours
30-Mar	3A	BR, NR	SS	
	2A	BR	DR	
2-Apr	1A	NR	SS	
5-Apr	3A	BR	DH	2.75
8-Apr	1A	BR	SS	
9-Apr	1A, 1I	NR	JS	
	2A	NR	SS	
10-Apr	5A	BR, LM, FR, NR	DH, KN	10
14-Apr	1A	NR	SS	
16-Jun	2A	BR	DH	3.5
17-Apr	4A	BR	DH	3
	2A	NR	SS	
	1A	BR	DR	
19-Apr	3A	BR, CR	DH	3
21-Apr	1A	NR	SS	
26-Apr	2a, 1N	NR	SS	
27-Apr	1A	BR	KN	
30-Apr	1A, 2I, 2N	BR	DH	3
7-May	3A, 1I, 1N	NR, FR, LM, BR	DH, KN	9.5
21-May	2A, 2N	BR	DH	2.75
6-Jun	2A, 1I, 2N	BR	KN, DH, KS, SS	8
14-Jun	2A, 1N	CR	DH, KN	1
25-Jun	2A, 2N	BR	DH, KN	7
2-Jul	1A, 2N	BR	DH	1.5
9-Jul	0	BR	DH, KN	2
13-Jul	2A, 2N	BR	DH	1.5
17-Jul	2A, 2N	BR	DH, KN	5
24-Jul	2A, 2F	BR	DH, KN	7
16-Oct	1A, 1I	BR	DR	
19-Nov	1I	BR	DH	3.5
10-Dec	0	BR	DH	1.5
14-Dec	2A	BR	DR	
17-Dec	1A	BR	DH	1.5

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