



2023 CWA Holiday Newsletter



Funny how certain situations make you stop and think, or rather “reflect” on past experiences. Little did I expect to have one of these moments, while emptying my garage shop vac this past weekend! Everyone knows that the pace of life speeds up during the holidays. Not to mention, events come fast and furious between the seasons. I feel as if; this time of year (between Columbus day and New Years) I... never... stop... I am simply just jumping from one thing to the next. As strange as it sounds, my vacuum forced me to stop for a moment and look at all the events over the last few months - all put together into one bin.

I still don't know why I had it in my head that it was “time” to empty the shop vac and put on a new filter (other than the millions of pine needles now strewn about the house from putting up the Christmas tree). But, as the contents poured out into my garbage can, a smile came to my face as I noticed “what” was in the bin from this past fall.

Amongst the dirt and dust that fell out, there were dried-up fish scales, beach sand, and pumpkin seeds. Probably all obtained within hours of each other from when my kids were carving their Halloween pumpkins after a great day of Black fishing in October. Likewise, pieces of cardboard and pen caps were in the mix after finally emptying out the Truck of the boxes, bins, and setup from our Fall Fundraising Dinner. Leaves and acorns were next to fall out of the receptacle having been cleaned up in the garage while putting away summer items and taking out the gear and decoys for opening day.

But then, the best of all, floated out of the bin and on top of the remaining dust: the many fluffy and colorful plucked duck feathers from a variety of mornings in leaky chest waders. (I could vacuum my garage for a month straight and there will still be some feathers blowing around.) Instantly there was a remembrance of some great times this fall with friends and family, all trapped in that plastic bin.... I can't complain: there is meat in the freezer and some great memories were made! I hope you all have been

able to get out outdoors and enjoy the last few months. Hopefully the cold winds come soon and shift our current weather pattern where I can get another couple chances of “making memories” amongst the “snow” before the season closes.

All of the Amazon boxes will soon be broken down and the Christmas tinsel will be cleaned up. Fall will be long over, Santa will be coming down the chimney and before you know it, the New Year will be right around the corner. I am looking forward to things to come. But, I am going to take my time in the garage to clean up the rest of the loose feathers still getting blown around.

For this newsletter, I'd like to highlight some upcoming CWA changes to events for 2024 as well as do a recap on our recent dinner and Benelli raffle. It has been a great year getting things in place and building up the CWA. We had some awesome feedback from the dinner attendees (which included many new faces) and the board met to discuss items we can work on for next time. As always, I cannot thank our board, volunteers, and supporters enough for what they do for the CWA, we could not keep this group going without your help.

Have a wonderful holiday season and Happy New Year - Don't forget to purchase your 2024 Hunting License, Hip, and 30th Anniversary CT Duck Stamp for those of you continuing to hunt through January!

Stay safe on the water, clean up your spent shells, and take a kid outdoors!

Tom M. Lewoc Jr.

Connecticut



Waterfowl Association

Fall Fundraising Dinner Recap



(auctioneer Tom Rielly during our October banquet)

On October 29th this past fall, we held our annual CWA fundraising dinner at the Elks club in Westbrook, CT. From setup to breakdown we had a great time talking with new and old attendees while having a great dinner with some awesome auction and raffle items throughout the afternoon. Not to mention there were some NEW fun games such as our "PlinkO" board (image below) to liven things up.



All in all, we had over 94 people come to the event and support the mission of the CWA. The best part is that there were MANY new faces amongst the crowd and looking around, there seemed to be a great number of families in attendance! I can't thank everyone enough for the time and energy exerted into putting this event together as well as running the games/ticket/merchandise sales throughout the day.



(Board members Joe LaPorta and Mike Gregonis selling game tickets)

One great component of the day is the chance to chat with many members and supporters of the CWA. This includes many of the spouses and relatives attending the dinner with their family and friends. The feedback we received was GREAT to help us plan for future events as well as "what" to look for in terms of items for our auctions and raffles. Hands down, the one common theme we heard throughout the day (and following the event) was the need to diversify the types of items in our raffles! Looking around there was a great mix of die-hard waterfowl hunters who loved being able to win decoys as well as some high end hunting gear. However, many mentioned the need for more outdoors items such as fishing/camping gear, dog items, as well as something the rest of the family could use. Our board members heard everyone loud and clear and will be looking at more opportunities for more firearms, camping items, and other gear related items for those who also hunt: big game, upland birds and turkeys. (I know a number of our spouses also put a bug into our ears for more items for the ladies attending the event.) Don't worry, we are still a waterfowl hunting group to our core and will still have plenty of waterfowl gear, collectibles, and decoys!!



(Joe Alix and Dieter Bromkamp manning the ticket sales)

Moving forward, we also heard from a number of members that the current date/time of the dinner does not work well for those that hunt and fish out of State. Even though the CT migratory season is closed in late October, many individuals take advantage of the weekends to fish or go out of State for hunting opportunities over the border in New York, northern New England, and out west. Thus, the board took all of this information and discussed moving the dinner back to the late winter/early spring to allow for more individuals to attend without interfering with other seasons going on.



Thus, for 2024 we are going to forgo the annual fall fundraising dinner to begin collecting items and planning for the event to take place in late winter/spring 2025! Stay Tuned for more information as we solidify the event.

Benelli Winner

Congratulations to our Benelli Super Black Eagle III Raffle winner: Mike Olzacki!

Mike's winning ticket was drawn at our annual dinner after the close of the tickets sales. Thank you to all supporters of this raffle who purchased a ticket, as well as to Benelli USA for their amazing donation for the event! This was our featured item at our Dinner with only 100 tickets being sold.



(Board members Joe LaPorta and Tom Lewoc with Mike)

Supporters

This has been a great year for the CWA in terms of events and growth! I wanted to take a moment to thank some of our wonderful supporters of the CWA for donating items for both the raffle and auctions this past year!

Benelli USA - [Benelli](#)

Carl Weston - 860-982-2408 - carlscustomcalls@gmail.com

Justin Leonhardt - www.justinleonhardtoutdoorguide.com Milford, CT

Migrate Outdoors - <https://www.migrate-outdoors.com/>

Muller Chokes - <https://mullerchokes.com/>

Myrcene Ale Co. Old Saybrook, CT - <https://www.myrceneale.com/>

Warren Speh (our FFL) M&B Sports, North Stonington, CT -(860) 536-6640

I would also like to recognize some amazing CT artists who also donated items for the CWA:

Bivenne Harvey Staiger - <https://bivennefineart.com>

Carolyn Childs - <https://www.instagram.com/art.b.l.i.s.s/>

James Prosek - <https://www.jamesprosek.com/about>

Finally, I would like to enormously thank - our local carvers - many of whom are also CWA members and artists in multiple mediums. They have gone above and beyond to support the CWA as well as the heritage of waterfowling in CT. Their work is known around the world and we are honored to have their support!

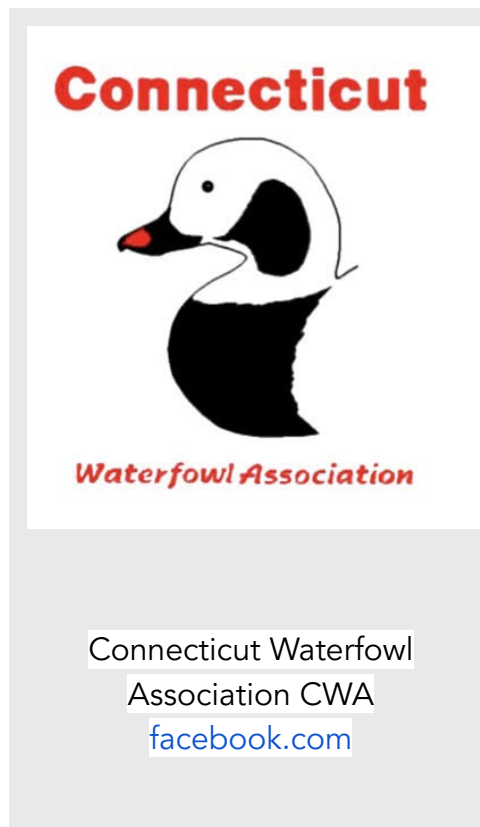
Clint Chase
Rich Chmiel
Bill Embacher
Keith Mueller
Chet Reneson
Pete Revicki
Hank Sprouse

All members meeting

Save the Date! On January 21st, 2024 @ 2:30 p.m. we will be holding our annual “all members meeting” at Cabelas in East Hartford, CT. This is a chance to meet the board members as well as have a part in the goings-on for the CWA. All current members and interested individuals are encouraged to attend with your ideas for the future of the CWA. We are always looking for input on CWA events, possible conservation projects, communication, and how we can better contribute to our mission.

Updated CWA Facebook/Instagram

In the current life and times, the pace of technology changes so rapidly and social media seems to be a great means of communicating to the membership (and hunting public) what is going on with our events. Along those lines, we have created a new Facebook/Instagram account for a “public” audience and not just the limited members of the CWA. For those of you currently on the “private” account, please take a moment to join/follow our new CWA public page. Over the next few weeks we will be phasing out the private account and communicating via the new page. For those of you that haven’t joined either yet, please take a look at the link below and follow! Both the instagram and facebook feeds will be updated with content in 2024 moving on!



Letter of Support - Bride Brook

Connecticut



Waterfowlers
Association

The Connecticut Waterfowlers Association
29 Bower Hill Road
Oxford, CT 06478
www.ctwaterfowlers.org

November 4th, 2023

NOAA Restoration Center
NOAA Fisheries (F/HC3)
1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14853
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Letter in Support of the Application *Bride Brook Estuary Transformation: Restoring Ecosystems and Building Resilience at Rocky Neck State Park*

Dear NOAA Restoration Center,

On behalf of the Connecticut Waterfowl Association, I am pleased to support the application submitted by The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut (TNC) under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's 2023 Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants to restore the Bride Brook estuary and improve and enhance coastal access at Rocky Neck State Park, East Lyme, CT.

TNC is collaborating with project partners – including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation – to assess the system at the estuary-scale, which will inform and enable transformational, resilient restoration activities. Restoring the brook and marsh ecosystem at Rocky Neck State Park is an environmental imperative. This project will facilitate the persistence of these crucial habitats in the face of climate change and increase people's access to and amplify the benefits from their public coastal natural resources.

The mission of the **Connecticut Waterfowlers Association (CWA)** is to conserve wetlands for the benefit of waterfowl and other wildlife species. This includes both coastal and inland wetlands in the State of CT. The Bride Brook Estuary is a perfect example of a location in which the conservation and preservation of a wetland area can indirectly affect 100's of species in the water, on the land, and flying through our skies. We far too often see areas along the coast where acidification of the soil, deposits of silt, and the increasing take over of invasive plants (like Phragmites) upset the delicate balance of a marsh ecosystem. This project aims to improve upon the quality of the wetlands in the area while, still providing residents of the State, exposure to the outdoors. From the standpoint of waterfowl, the improved estuary would serve the breeding resident waterfowl in the spring as well as the migrating birds on the Atlantic Flyway throughout the fall and winter. We see nothing but benefit for both the residents of CT as well as the fish and wildlife with this project moving forward..

Thank you for this opportunity to support *Bride Brook Estuary Transformation: Restoring Ecosystems and Building Resilience at Rocky Neck State Park*. If I can provide any additional information, please feel free to contact me at (203) 415-1559 or our association email address: ctwaterfowlers@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Tom M. Lewoc Jr.
President
CT Waterfowlers Association

CT Junior Duck Stamp Contest

As many of our long term members know; the CWA plays a major role every year in running the annual CT Junior Duck Stamp Contest. With that being said we are always trying to reach every Connecticut Public and Private School Art Teacher to let them know about the program and how to get involved. For those of you new to the contest, the State of CT decided to forego the use of a professional's artwork as its annual image on the CT Migratory Bird Stamp [to now feature the artwork of a CT Student \(K-12\)](#). Throughout the years, the sale of the stamp has helped CT raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for conservation initiatives within the state while also promoting the Arts and Conservation for the students of CT!

Not every submission has to be perfect! Awards are given to the winners for each of the four age groupings (grades K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12) so even kindergarten and elementary-aged students have a place in this contest! Entry guidelines for work are based on the [Federal Junior Contest](#). PLEASE help boost the student submissions or at least help spread the word about the program to your friends and colleagues!! We are trying to reach EVERY school and art program in Connecticut! Last year we had over 120 pieces of student artwork amongst the four age groups submitted to the CT Junior Duck Stamp Contest. We are hoping to increase the number of submissions even more!

Check out the [CT DEEP Migratory Bird Conservation \(Duck\) Stamp Site](#) which highlights the history of the contest, last year's winner, and the previous artwork featured on the stamps over the years.

Guidelines for CT student entries follow the [Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest](#) in terms of image size, allowable mediums (no digital art at this time), as well as allowable species featured on the artwork. If you or anyone you have passed along the information to, have any other questions: please reach out to Chris Samor (csamor16@att.net) or myself (lewoc09@gmail.com) for more information.

Please note: All work must be postmarked by March 15th, 2024, and have a completed [entry form](#). For students in grades 7-12, a [reference sheet](#) must also be included to verify the authenticity of the student's work.