



# THE MEADOW VIEW

*Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.  
Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield, Connecticut*

Volume XX



Winter, 2006



Photo by Jim Woodworth

## WINTER WALKS IN THE GREAT MEADOWS

Great Meadows Conservation Trust (GMCT) is joining forces with Connecticut Audubon Society Center at Glastonbury (CAS/G) to cosponsor this year's Winter Walks. Enjoy the winter scenery and camaraderie of fellow walkers for the annual inspection of GMCT properties in the Connecticut River flood plain. Some of the parcels are too wet to walk on until the ground freezes.

Dress for the weather and ground conditions. Conditions may revise or cancel. Call CAS/G (860-633-8402) for up-to-date information. They are free and open to the public.

Sat., Jan. 14, 2006, 10 am - noon.

Join Larry Lunden, Land Management Chair of GMCT to visit our Glastonbury Meadows parcels. Meet at the CAS/G, 1361 Main St. Glastonbury.

Sun., Jan. 22, 2006, 2 pm- 3 pm.

Jim Woodworth, President of the GMCT, will lead this inspection of the Eleanor B. Wolf parcel in Wethersfield. Meet on Hartford Avenue opposite Jordan Lane, Wethersfield.

Sat., Jan 28, 2006, 10 am - 1 pm.

Jim Woodworth will again be the leader as we look at our Hockanum Meadows parcels in East Hartford. Meet at Hockanum Park on High Street, East Hartford.

Sun., Feb 5, 2006, 2 pm - 3

It will be Larry Lunden as leader again as we inspect our Methodist Church parcel in Rocky Hill. Meet at Ferry Park next to the ferry landing on Route 160, Rocky Hill.

Sat., Feb 11, 2006, 10 am - 11 am.

Jim Woodworth will lead the group to check on our Wood parcel in Wethersfield. Meet on Middletown Avenue south of Maple Street, Wethersfield.

## HABITAT RESTORATION BEGINS

GMCT received a WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program) grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture to restore meadow habitat on our Wolf Parcel and DeMille Easement in Wethersfield. The Trust has contracted with All Habitat Services, a Madison company specializing in wetland habitat management, to remove shrubs and trees.

The first phase of work of their work to restore the meadow habitat and the historic landscape of the north side of the Wethersfield Cove began as fall flood waters receded in mid-December. Controlling woody shrubs and early succession forest growth on the lower meadow area of the parcels is the first step. Larger trees will be controlled with approved herbicides and left standing as snags for wildlife habitat. Brush is being piled, providing habitat for wildlife, while smaller branches will be left to contribute to biomass.

The second stage for All Habitat Services will be controlling the stands of invasive Japanese Knotweed on the upper meadow area. This is scheduled for spring and summer,

The WHIP grant will reimburse 75% of the cost of the work, up to \$21,000 over a period of 12 years. The Trust wishes to thank Bill Holmes and Ann Kuckro for their generous contributions toward 25% matching funds that the Trust must raise for this first phase.

Neighborhood and GMCT members are contributing manual labor—Roland LeClerc with his brushhog equipped tractor and Jim Arnold with his chain saw, along with Trust volunteers began efforts to control woody shrubs on the upper meadow area. They also cut many of the larger trees in the lower meadow. Volunteer work and contributions will continue to be needed to supplement WHIP grant funds to complete the project and maintain the meadow habitat and historic scene.



All Habitat Services biologist Stephen Living grinds through woody shrubs in his Argo Avenger. The tracked vehicle's low impact and amphibious capabilities were tested as the ice and snow thawed and the water rose. (Photo by Jim Woodworth)



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Tufted titmouse

Photo by Duffy

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Duffy Schade

Volunteers participating in National Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count who covered the Great Meadows came home with long lists. Of the total of 89 species found in Hartford County on the day of the count, December 17, 2005, 61 of them showed up in the Rocky Hill and Wethersfield meadows and 53 in Glastonbury's.

The recent cold snap broke and the sun shone most of that Saturday, a fine day to be outdoors. GMCT members Mary Carter, Ken Etheridge and Jim Woodworth were among those who covered west of the river. I participated in Glastonbury, but not in the meadows.

In Rocky Hill/Wethersfield, the team spotted six eagles, some of them immature, and two northern harriers and a peregrine falcon. There were some big flocks, one of about 550 grackles. One Iceland gull was among over 530 ring-billed gulls. Some 72 horned larks were spotted in both meadows, along with one snow bunting. A lonely killdeer was hanging out at Ferry Park. Many tree, song and white-throated sparrows were in evidence, but only two Savannahs this year. Two catbirds (plus one and a hermit thrush in Glastonbury) were unexpected sightings, as they usually have flown south with their kin by now.

Across the river, members of the Glastonbury

team saw even more raptors, adding 2 sharp-shinned and a red-shouldered hawk, an American Kestrel and a merlin to the species seen west of the river. They saw 7 kinds of sparrows, including over 700 tree, 370 song, 35 Savannah, six rare white-crowned and two swamp sparrows. Among the numerous American crows, the repeated nasal caw of a fish crow was heard.

That over 75% of the species spotted in Hartford County were seen in the Great Meadows points out the value of this floodplain habitat. Just like human beings, birds need food, shelter and water. With the river running by it, plus the diversity of plant life and land use, a wide variety of birds and mammals find what they need there. Parts of the meadows are forested, parts are agricultural fields and others are grown up in wild flowers and thickets of shrubs and vines. After farmers have completed their harvest, geese, crows and others glean the remaining crops. Songbirds bring the untilled places to life as they find berries and seeds among the weeds. Hawks pick off some of the unlucky birds and rodents for their dining pleasure. Eagles find fish in the river and streams. Grapes, Virginia creeper, poison ivy (and, yes, even the incredibly invasive bittersweet) vines provide both food and shelter.

Winter is a time when the wildlife that inhabits the meadows becomes particularly evident. A snow cover becomes a bulletin board showing the activity of unseen creatures. Places that are inaccessible in other seasons because of mud, standing water or flora as high as an elephant's eye are open to exploration when the ground is frozen and plants have died back. A winter walk in the Great Meadow is an experience to treasure. Come join some of our members and friends for one, or more of them this season.

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### CREDITS

Thanks to Mary Carter, Andrew Dasinger, Larry Lunden and Jim Woodworth for their contributions.

Duffy Schade, Editor