

Gaetano, Carolyn

From: Stephen Spector <charsjs@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Sunday, March 15, 2015 10:44 AM
To: GAETestimony
Subject: Fw: Silver Sands State Park

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----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Stephen Spector <charsjs@sbcglobal.net>
To: "mayor@ci.milford.ct.us" <mayor@ci.milford.ct.us>
Sent: Sunday, March 15, 2015 10:28 AM
Subject: Silver Sands State Park

15 March 2015

Mayor Blake:

We understand that the city of Milford, our town, is contemplating changes to Silver Sands State Park that would involve the creation of new parking areas, most to be reserved for Milford residents. From our perspective, as dedicated Milford bird and butterfly watchers who treasure Silver Sands's natural gifts, such changes would be detrimental.

Since the park opened it has become increasingly an important natural site while many of Milford's natural areas have been diminished. Much of Silver Sands's importance lies not just in its clearly significant marshes and beaches, but in the habitat of brush and weedy borders of paths and roadways. For example, the borders on both sides of old Nettleton Avenue host many nesting birds, including warblers, flycatchers, orioles, and sparrows; the area between what birders call Nettleton pond (an important shorebird migration resting stop that needs a protective screen of thickets) is important for Killdeer, herons, egrets, and ducks; the area near the Nettleton Creek outlet and the boardwalk is crucial for many butterflies, including one of Connecticut's few colonies of the Little Yellow butterfly; the areas around the old service road are the home of breeding Woodcock and crucial for rare birds like the Long-eared Owl.

The areas next to the old service road host many birds and are in one of the state's premier sites for sparrows (which is why the overflow summer parking areas should never be paved or graveled). You probably are aware that the Connecticut Ornithological Association recognizes Silver Sands as one of Connecticut's best bird areas by holding sparrow workshops at Silver Sands on a regular basis. Each fall thousands of sparrows of up to nineteen species (including Vesper, Grasshopper, Clay-colored, White-crowned, Lincoln's and Lapland Longspur) come through to rest and feed, and sometimes the park holds up to 5,000 sparrows per day. These birds rely on the shrubs, weeds, small trees, and grasses (and their attendant insects, etc) that thrive at the edges of the existing roads and paths. Other grassland birds, once abundant in Connecticut but now in serious decline, like the Eastern Meadowlark and the Bobolink, also rely on Silver Sands' fields and thickets.

While we understand your concern for us Milford citizens' access to the state park, we must oppose any impingement on its fragile, and increasingly important, natural assets. Let's carefully preserve the habitats that Silver Sands possesses and work to enhance, not diminish, them.

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