

# Old Saybrook Conservation Circular

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## The Amazing Purple Martin

### Fun Facts:

- They are 7-8 inches long and are the largest swallow type bird in North America
- They are the only swallow to have a dark colored breast
- Males are dark black with iridescent feathers that will vibrate in different colors of blue and purple depending on the light
- They catch their food on the wing – mainly beetles, flies and other insects that fly high up
- They drink by flying low over water and dipping their bills to scoop up the water
- They nest in colonies and will migrate as far south as South America for the winter
- In eastern US they primarily nest only in specially structured multi-nesting housing such as a large birdhouse with multiple nesting compartments or a series of hollowed gourds set in a grouping
- Purple Martins have lots of predators such as raccoons and snakes and other birds. The European Starlings and English Sparrows will take over their nesting sites and will invade existing nests to break the eggs and kill the babies and even the parent bird if they trap them inside the nest



These birds are such fun to watch as they perform their acrobatics all day long hunting for food. The male birds will perch and sing a pretty song in the mornings. For more information go to: [www.purplemartin.org](http://www.purplemartin.org) or [www.thespruce.com/how-to-attract-purple-martins](http://www.thespruce.com/how-to-attract-purple-martins). For blueprints and How-To videos to build purple martin homes go to: <https://www.housesumo.com/purple-martin-house-plans/> or <https://www.bing.com/>

## What is a Fish Ladder?



“A fish ladder, also known as a fishway, fish pass or fish steps, is a structure on or around artificial and natural barriers (such as dams, locks and waterfalls) to facilitate diadromous and catadromous fishes’ natural migration.[1] Most fishways enable fish to pass around the barriers by swimming and leaping up a series of relatively low steps (hence the term ladder) into the waters on the other side.” From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.



Old Saybrook has three fish ladder systems. One is located at Chalker Mill Pond – connecting it to Long Island Sound via Oyster River. The second is located on Fishing Brook that connects Crystal Lake at Town Park to Oyster River and then on to Long Island Sound. The third fish ladder is connecting Ingham Hill Pond to Oyster River and then on to Long Island Sound. For us, these fish ladders provide access for fish such as the baby American Eel (aka glass eels) that were born in the Sargasso Sea to migrate to our

fresh water estuaries to mature. Other species such as alewives use the fish ladders to allow them to migrate to spring spawning grounds. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection monitors many of the fish ladders every spring to obtain fish counts and build statistics that will help with future management of key fish species.

### Can You Identify Each of These Ducks?

(Help: Answer on back page)



Photo by Tom Gezo



Photo by Tom Gezo



Photo by Tom Gezo



Photo by Tom Gezo



Photo by Irving Esty

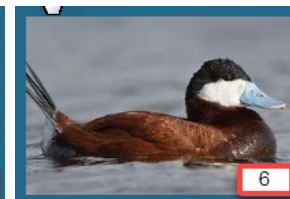


Photo by Susan Esty

**Vocabulary:** Diadromous fish- are fish that migrate between bodies of fresh water and salt water. Alewives, Shad and Salmon are species of diadromous fish that migrate to Connecticut's fresh waters to spawn.



# Plastic Bags and Plastic Film



Most of us know what plastic bags are, we see them every day. They are the ‘free’ bags supplied by many businesses to package customer purchases; they are the rolls of bags we purchase to collect our household, business and yard trash. Plastic bags are used by manufacturers to hold materials for shipping or storage and are what we use to store our food or to package our lunches for work or school. Plastic bags permeate all levels of our society.

Plastic films are very similar to plastic bags - it is thin and comes in sheets or rolls. Many films we use are heat sensitive (shrink wrap) – so they are used to help package meats at the butcher shop, to package vegetables and to package merchandise. It is used to secure loads on trucks or trains for transport, it is used to protect new automobiles from scratches or even to winterize our boats. Just like plastic bags, plastic film permeates all levels of our society.

Plastic bags and film are amazing products that have revolutionized modern civilization. But it comes with a hefty price tag. Because the reuse life expectancy of a plastic bag is very limited and used plastic film even more limited, these items are thought of as single use products and are thrown away. Unfortunately these items pose a very real health threat to our environment and to us. Our society as a whole has been lax in how we handle and dispose of these items and not all recycling centers accept these items for recycle – forcing businesses and private citizens to add them to their ‘trash’. For recycling centers – the plastic bags and film must be clean and dry for the recycling process to work. Keeping them clean and dry is the key and in most cases – very difficult for the end user to ensure. Some businesses offer to recycle these items, but they are not well publicized and the receptacles are usually not clearly identified.

Due to their light weight, plastic bags and film is easily caught in the wind and sent for miles and land just about anywhere including our waterways and oceans. We see them caught on tree branches, or tumbling across our landscapes. Once this thin plastic is exposed to sunlight, weather or salt water, they start to disintegrate into tiny non-degradable particles that are infiltrating all levels of our environment and even into our food chain. Recent studies have shown that organisms living in the deepest ocean trenches are now also showing signs of plastic pollution.

In Old Saybrook, our current waste transfer station does not accept plastic bags or plastic film for recycling. But if you were to take a trip there, you would see that many residents are still disposing of these items into the recycling containers. Plastic bags filled with recycling items are tossed into the bins – the contents may be recyclable, but the bags that they are held in are not. This takes manpower to sort those items from the main recycling stream – and the cost is passed on to the town. It is vital that each and every one of us becomes conscious of how we handle our plastic items. The best way to help control the pollution, is Refuse to use, Reuse whenever possible, Reduce the amount of plastic you do use, and Recycle what you can no longer reuse.



- In the North Pacific Ocean, there is 6 times more plastic debris than there is plankton.
- Recycling 1 ton of plastic saves about 1,000 to 2,000 gallons of gasoline. One ton of plastic = 25,000 plastic bottles!
- The production of plastic uses around 8% of the world’s oil production. That’s about 9,546,000 barrels of oil per year!
- 90% of the trash floating in our oceans is made of plastic, around 46,000 pieces per square mile.

Always bring reusable shopping bags wherever you stop to shop – the gas station, the grocery or pet store, the pharmacy or even large department stores. Consider ways you can reduce the amount of plastic film used in the kitchen such as using waxed paper or aluminum foil to store foods. It is amazing how much you can reduce with just these two actions. To find where you can recycle your plastic film and plastic single use bags in your area, go to the following website and search for recycle locations: [www.plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org)

**RECYCLE** empty, clean & dry plastic bags & wraps at store drop-offs

**NOT in Curbside Recycling**

Air Pillows

Bread Bags

Case Wrap

Product Wrap

Shrinkwrap

Dry Cleaning Bags

Plastic Shipping Envelopes

Product Overwrap

Retail Bags

Produce Bags

Also look for any packaging with this How2Recycle label

Recycle if Clean & Dry

Store Drop-off

**PLASTIC WRAP**

how2recycle.info

**NO Six Pack Rings • Prewashed Salad Bags • Bottles • Packing Peanuts**

**Key:** Air Pillows, Bread Bags, Case Wrap, Product Wrap, Newspaper Bags, Dry Cleaning Bags, Plastic Shipping Envelopes, Product Overwrap, Retail Bags, Produce Bags

Plastic Film Recycling  
[PlasticFilmRecycling.org/Drop-Off](http://PlasticFilmRecycling.org/Drop-Off)

### Duck Quiz Answers

- #1 – Black Scooter
- #2 – Bufflehead
- #3 – Hooded Merganser
- #4 – Red Breasted Merganser
- #5 – Canvas Back
- #6 – Ruddy Duck

### Conservation Commission Members

- Richard Esty, Chair
- Christine Picklo, Vice Chair
- Kelly Hartshorn, Secretary
- Donna Leake
- Larry Ritzhaupt
- Glenda Sohl
- Tomas Gezo
- Kaley Sperling, Student Rep.

Follow us on our new Facebook page and tell us how you refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle at: [www.oldsaybrookct.gov/conservationcommission](http://www.oldsaybrookct.gov/conservationcommission)

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