



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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May, 2012.

Oh, g'day! I'm taking a moment from filling out my Secret Service application to bring you some news from the bird club. Plus a bit of self indulgence on page 1. Those who do not want to enable my literary fantasies may want to skip to page 2.

May 3 dawned damp and cool, as had the previous few days. I had vowed to get up early and go out before work in search of migrants. As it turned out, I got up moderately early and got to Arcadia just before I was due at work, but we need not dwell on such details.

I was surprised to find the area around the Arcadia education center rather quiet. In fact, as I did a quick circuit of the meadow, the trees and understory were devoid of anything except some residents, and a single Black and White Warbler who obviously hadn't got the memo. So it was with some rather uncharitable mutterings that I stomped off through the orchard and along the shore of the marsh, both of which were also entirely free of any avian interest. I remembered that, sometimes, the birding can be good at the Iron Bridge, where the Mill River flows into the Oxbow. As I approached, the silence gave way to the sound of birds. As I drew nearer, the volume of their voices grew, but it was not the discrete singing we typically listen for at this time of year, nor the muted chips and call notes of fall or evening. I can only describe it as a sort of conversational hubbub, like humans might make at a charity auction. It turned out I was hearing hundreds of Yellow-rumped Warblers, their rather weak trills rolling together to make an exhilarating tribute to migration. As I emerged at the bridge, it was as if I were treading water in a sea of birdsong. The trees along the southern shore of the Oxbow were literally crawling with birds!

We all know that the migration is patchy. We talk about hitting a "pocket" or a "wave" of songbirds as we are out birding, and we all know these can be here one moment, and gone the next. But how could one whole section of the sanctuary be entirely devoid of warblers, and this part so alive with them? My guess is that these birds, foraging after an extended night-flight, are those that encountered the Oxbow, surely not a large enough body of water to give them pause during a high-altitude flight, but certainly not good foraging habitat for tired birds trying to refuel. Hence, they became concentrated along the shore. Or p'raps they liked the bugs in silver maples! Truth is, I have no idea why these multitudes were where they were. In birding, as in life, joy is most often found where not all is known.

We are in the last two months of the club year, and we are at the height of the spring migration. Every day brings new arrivals and friends we haven't seen since last year. I hope you can find a way to be part of it! There's a whole bunch of stuff in this month's newsletter that might help.

I hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, May 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Brett Whitney explores **Brazil and Peru: New Birds in Old Places**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

The vast Amazon basin harbors the highest diversity of birds on Earth, and it appears that the age of discovery is far from over! Learn how ornithologist and tour guide Bret Whitney combines his knowledge of bird sounds and the lay of the land with NASA technology to sleuth out ancient avian hideaways in Amazonian Brazil and Peru. Bret has discovered and described several species of birds new to science and is working on several more.

Bret Whitney must be at least half Brazilian by now. It all began when he was born, birding in the wild Midwest, mostly in Indiana, where he was narrowly overlooked by his high school baseball team but did, in fact, graduate from Earlham College. He is known for his ability to identify birds by their calls and songs, which has led to his discovering multiple species new to science. Bret is one of the founders of *Field Guides Incorporated* (www.fieldguides.com), a Research Associate at the Museum of Natural Science at Louisiana State University, an Associate of the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell, 2004 recipient of the American Birding Association's Ludlow Griscom award, and an eternal optimist about everything except Ivory-billed Woodpeckers!

COMING PROGRAMS

June 11. John Van de Graaff. Peregrinations II: Six Years More.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Ashley Ponds. Sunday, April 15, 2012.

Harvey Allen, Sue Emerson, Henry Klatz, Mike Locher, Maryanne McKim, Caitlin McKinnell, and David Peake-Jones accompanied **Mike Locher** for a stroll through the pine-clothed environs of these attractive reservoirs in Holyoke. Right out of the gate at the Elks we had a nice smattering of birds singing, including Pine Warbler, though we would not glimpse one till later in the day. The water was empty of birds bar some Canada Geese, Mallards, a few pairs of Wood Ducks, and a lone Hooded Merganser. When we chanced to look up, it was often to find hawks in migration. Though the numbers were not huge, we did find a **Broad-winged Hawk**, several **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, a **Coopers Hawk**, an **Osprey** (perhaps more than one), and a **Northern Harrier**.

As we made our way around the reservoir, we compared and tried to contrast the dozens of trilling songbirds, seeking to pick the Chipping Sparrows from the Pine Warblers. By the end of the walk we were pretty darn good at it. Hopefully the birds are too! Adding some variety to the constant chipping were the calls of a few Yellow-rumped Warblers, and the ethereal spring-specialties: Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Brown Creepers. Around the back of the reservoir we found a fly-over Barn Swallow, a Swamp Sparrow in a puddle, a Rough-winged Swallow eyeing the drain pipes at the outflow, a Great Horned Owl being mobbed by crows, a Palm Warbler or two bobbing and weaving and, finally, the peevish song of a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, which proved to be the first of many.

(continues on page 3)

Ashley Ponds (continued)

Following a series of unmistakable strident whistles, we walked along the train tracks for a while in search of a Louisiana Warbler. For a time, it seemed the increasing heat of the day, and the roar of the nearby ATV crowd might thwart the effort, but, just when all seemed lost, we got great looks at a singing male up close, and, in fact, observed the bird chasing another male. Finally, on the way back to our cars, we found a **Hermit Thrush** to complete the target list for the day.

Reptile-wise, it was an interesting walk. We found a knot of nesting water snakes at the outflow, and came across the largest aggregation of Painted Turtles any of us had ever seen near the alternate entrance. Basking space was apparently at such a premium, we saw one Painted Turtle riding on the back of a massive Alligator Snapping Turtle as it cruised menacingly through the shallows!

David Peake-Jones



Look Park. Sunday, April 28.

Sue Emerson, Jeff Traft, Hank and Shirley Atwood, Nidhin Joseph, Carol Gabranski, Caitlin McKinnell, Anne Lombard, Bruce Hart, Ilene Goldstein, and Mary Lou Splain were hoping to accompany Betsy Higgins on her annual loop around the park. Betsy having been detained by the arrival of a grand-daughter in San Diego, David Peake-Jones made a gallant but ultimately pale attempt to match her extraordinary ear in the leadership role.

We assembled in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on a chilly but clear morning. After listening to our first Chipping Sparrows of the day, we set off into the park. Once inside, we made the traditional circuit, commencing with the first of many Yellow-rumped Warblers. Above the little pond right inside the entrance we found the first of two young Red-tails, impersonating Red-shouldered Hawks. About a quarter of the way around, we finally found a **Pine Warbler** to contrast with the multitudes of Chipping Sparrows. Further around the circle, we managed to find a quiet **Black-and White Warbler**, watched Hairy Woodpeckers carrying food in and out of a nesting cavity, were treated to a **Palm Warbler** teetering in a little bush, and tried in vain to locate a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** singing ventriloqually from, well, we will never know where! We did eventually track one down a little further along.

Branching off the main track we made a detour in the far corner of the park along the banks of the Mill River. A Bald Eagle sailed improbably upstream at eye level toward the distant dam, and by following a series of clear, sweet notes, we eventually had best-ever views of two **Louisiana Waterthrushes** foraging along the far bank. Back on the main circuit, rising wind and late-morning heat made birds tough to come by, but did not prevent us from finding another singing Louisiana, nor did they stop us rampaging through a stand of garlic mustard in a frenzy of community-minded invasive control. We wrapped up the morning, content with some hard-won finds and a fine day with good company.

David Peake-Jones

Out of the Mouths of Babes

After my slightly embarrassing episode with the word “racquet” in the last edition, I went searching for other examples of folks who got it wrong. Hereafter are a few actual test responses from English primary (grade) school students.

“Crabs and creatures like them all belong to a family of crushed asians.”

ANOTHER WORD FROM MISS MANNERS

As the field trip season ramps up, our field trip leaders need your help. At the best of times, there are plenty of things that can take the gloss off a day of birding. These might include inclement weather, the State Police, a recalcitrant spouse, or the newsletter editor hovering at the back of the group documenting the dearth of birds. Notwithstanding these vagaries of fate, we can all do our part to make sure trips go as smoothly as possible. Here are a few items adapted from the HBC Field Trip Guidelines....

- 1) PLEASE CONTACT THE TRIP LEADER SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE THE TRIP. Calling the night before really puts the leader on the spot. We need to do better on this one. If you aren't sure, register early and cancel later.
- 2) Please share costs with courtesy. We recommend a cost of \$0.50 cents per mile plus tolls and parking to be shared equally among the driver and all passengers, but the rate for your vehicle is entirely up to the driver and passengers. Please agree on a mileage rate or flat contribution BEFORE the trip leaves to avoid misunderstandings. Please bring cash or checks and be prepared to reimburse the driver at the time of the trip.
- 3) While birding, please stay close to the group unless you have some specific reason to separate, and inform the leader if you are doing so. This reduces delays and distractions for the entire group.

Your field trip leaders thank you, in anticipation....

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of Hampshire Bird Club Inc. will take place on Monday, May 14, 2012 at 7:30 p.m. The venue will be the Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA. The AGM will occur immediately prior to the scheduled HBC program for the month.

The primary purpose of the AGM is to elect a Board for the 2012-2013 club year. The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate for next year:

President: Scott Surner

Vice-President/Program Chair: Geoff Lebaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson

Communications Secretary: Donna Rickerby

Members-at-Large:

Bruce Hart

Mike Locher

Jan Ortiz

David Peake-Jones

Jaap van Heerden

Josh Rose

Further nominations will be accepted from the floor.

HBC would like to express our gratitude to our departing Communications Secretary, **Elissa Rubinstein**. Elissa has diligently recorded the minutes of countless Board meetings over a number of years, and has communicated with various individuals and organizations on our behalf with clarity and diplomacy. She always seems able to steer the Board back towards its proper course with gentleness and quiet wit. We will miss you Elissa!

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Families and Falconry

Saturday, June 9, 10 – 11:30 am at New England Falconry on River Drive, Hadley, MA.

This club program directed towards young people will give each participant the unique opportunity to learn about the art of falconry, the special adaptations of raptors, and the need for their conservation as well as to experience the thrill of a free-flying trained Harris Hawk landing on their gloved hand.

The group size will be limited. In keeping with the goals of the Education Committee, priority on sign up will be given to those 5 – 18 yrs. old. (Chris will allow participants as young as five years of age but he must be the one supporting the child's arm as the hawk is flying to the glove.)

Chris Davis, Master Falconer, has been a licensed falconer since 1979. He is the first Master Falconer permitted in this country to offer hands on falconry education. Chris received a Masters Degree in Resource Management and conducts research on threatened species for Federal and State wildlife agencies.

Donations will be gratefully accepted to help cover the cost of the program.

To sign-up contact Jan Ortiz at jtortiz@aol.com, or 413-549-1768.

Hampshire Bird Club Scholarships

The Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee will accept requests from young people ages 12 to 18 years old for monetary donations to aid them in attending a birding or natural history camp or conference.

To be considered for aid, applicants must fill out an application form supplied by the Committee. It must be submitted at least 8 weeks prior to the start of the camp or conference.

Subject to the review and approval of a majority of the Committee, the Committee may grant the applicant what they consider an appropriate amount drawn from the Education Committee funds.

LIBRARY

The HBC Library is located at the **Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.**

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

The library contains birding resources in various media, including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and overseas, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Our librarian, **Henry Lappen**, is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at library@hampshirebirdclub.org or (413) 549 3722.

Out of the Mouths of Babes

“A mosque is a sort of church. The main difference is that its roof is doomed.”

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Chilean Patagonia: Rivers In Peril and Power: *Brian Reid*

Tuesday, May 8, 7-8:30 p.m. Donation requested.

Biothon 2012

Any 24-hr period during May 11–13 or May 18–20

Names & Categories: An Introduction to the Classification of Life: *David Spector*

Thursday, May 17, 7-8:30 p.m. Fee.

Spring Wildflowers at High Ledges: *Connie Parks*

Co-sponsored with Arcadia. Saturday, May 19; 9 a.m.-noon. Fee.

Native Wildflowers of The Valley: *Nancy Goodman*

Saturday, June 2: Station Road, Amherst, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Fee.

Two (2) walks later in the season.

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

BROAD BROOK COALITION PROGRAMS

Experience the Dawn Chorus Crescendo: *Frank Bowry*

Saturday, May 12, 4 a.m.. FLCA Moose Lodge entrance.

Contact Bruce hart: bhart2000@aol.com for possible second start time at 7 AM.Saturday, June 2. 7-9 a.m. or 10 a.m.

Annual Cleanup

Saturday, May 12, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.. FLCA North Farms Road entrance.

Contact Bruce Hart at 584 4176.

Breeding Birds – Varied Habitats: *Andrew Finch Magee*

Saturday, June 2, 7-9 a.m. or 10 a.m. FLCA North Farms Road entrance.

Shrubland Habitats and Native Plants: *Bob Zimmermann*

Saturday, June 2, 9 a.m. – 12 noon. Contact Bob Zimmermann at 585 0405.

***Broad Brook Coalition (BBC)** is a non-profit, all-volunteer community organization dedicated to the preservation of open space and the promotion of affordable housing. Amongst other things, the coalition manages the 646-acre **Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA)** in Northampton where most programs are held. For details of this and other programs, and all you could want to know about BBC, please visit www.broadbrookcoalition.org.*

Out of the Mouths of Babes

“Then Joan of Arc met her end. She was burned as a steak.”

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Early Morning Birding: *Guest Leaders.*

Monday - Friday, May 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. 6:30 – 8:00 am

Saturdays, May 12 and 26. 7:00 – 8:30 am

At Graves Farm. Saturday, May 12. 7:00 – 8:30 am

At Laughing Brook. Saturday, May 19. 7:8:30 am.

Spring Wildflowers at Marion Sherman Lynes Sanctuary: *Connie Parks and Janet Bissell.*

Wednesday, May 9. 9:00 am – 12 noon.

Birding By Canoe: *David McLain*

Friday, May 11. 6 – 8 am.

Quabbin Park Bird Walk: *John Green*

Saturday, May 19. 7 – 10 am.

Spring Wildflowers at High Ledges: *Connie Parks*

Saturday, May 19. 9 am – 12 noon.

*All programs require a fee unless otherwise stated. For more details of these and other programs go to www.massaudubon.org (select "Sanctuaries", then "Choose a Sanctuary: Arcadia") or call the sanctuary at the number below. To register for programs contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone (413) 584-3009.*

ATHOL BIRD AND NATURE CENTER PROGRAMS

Friday Mornings with Earle. (Birding). Free.

Friday, May 11, 8:45 a.m.

Friday, May 18, 8:45 a.m.

Friday, May 25, 8:45 a.m.

"Early Bird" Birding with Jeff (Johnstone). Free.

Sunday, May 13, 7 a.m.

Aquatic Invasives: Paula Packard (Quabbin). Wednesday, May 9, 7 – 9 p.m. Free.

7th Annual Plant Sale. Saturday, May 19, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Bearsden: Round Top and Sheep Rock (Hike). *Dan Bolton.*

Saturday, May 12, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Free.

Reception, Book Signing & Moths. *Seabrooke Leckie.*

Saturday, May 12, 7 p.m, - late night.

Birds of Athol. Free.

Joan and Larry Duprey. Saturday, May 19, 7 a.m.

Jeff Johnstone. Sunday, May 20, 7 a.m.

For more details, including meeting places, go to www.millersriver.net or call (978) 248 9491. Unless otherwise noted, indoor programs meet at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol.

SAVE BIRDS WITH WINDOW TAPE

A new, translucent adhesive tape, which tests show can significantly reduce bird collisions with glass windows and doors, is now available to the public. Birds can't see glass and don't understand the architectural cues, such as window frames, mullions, and handles, that alert people to the hazard. Experts estimate that up to one billion birds may die each year from resulting collisions. Unlike some sources of bird mortality that predominantly kill weaker individuals, there is no distinction among victims of glass. Because glass is equally dangerous for strong, healthy, breeding adults, it can have a particularly serious impact on populations. Studies have shown that even small windows can be dangerous to birds that are accustomed to flying through gaps between trees and shrubs.

The American Bird Conservancy is marketing a clear tape which is reflective in the ultraviolet (UV) spectrum, but essentially transparent in the “visible” spectrum. Birds, like many other animals, can detect UV light, and, provided the tape has been properly applied, will avoid windows treated with it. To learn more about ABC Bird Tape, go to: www.abcbirdtape.org. ABC has produced a video that demonstrates how to install the bird tape.

How the Brits Deal with Pigeons...

A few weeks ago I was in London and we were walking in the Kensington area of the city. We passed a beautiful new glass and steel high rise building with an expensive car display show room and nice landscaping in front of it, covered by a curved glass roof. A young man with a Harris Hawk walked around in front of it and of course I had to chat with him. It turns out he is hired with his hawk to keep the pigeon population under control around buildings and he has several contracts. Perhaps this is also happening in our cities, but I am not aware of it.

Helga Beatty.

Backyard Birds (on Strong St. in Northampton) offers a wide range of birding books, audio resources, gifts, feeders, and other paraphernalia. They also offer a 10% discount to Hampshire Bird Club Members. Remember, when you shop locally, your money stays here!

That's it for this month. Stop reading and get out birding!
Until next month, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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Out of the Mouths of Babes

(One more from the field of mathematics)

“If it is less than 90 degrees it is a cute angel.”