



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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March, 2002

The Red-winged Blackbirds, Turkey Vultures, and grackles have returned, probably wondering why they ever bothered to leave. For birders, it's time to brush up on the waterfowl, and start in on the warbler tapes again. As Shawn Smolen Morton puts together the Fall Field Trip schedule, he welcomes your suggestions for new trips, and the Nominating Committee would like to know about prospective Board members for the coming year.

If this odd winter is wearing a little thin, we can take wry inspiration from my compatriot, Stephen Bradbury, who won Australia's first gold medal in the Winter Olympics. Mr. Bradbury progressed to the final of the 1000m short-track skating, by virtue of the fact that most of the competitors in his semi-final fell down. In the final, all the other competitors fell over one another on the last lap, allowing Stephen to coast sheepishly from last place to win.

As a strategy, staying in last place is bound to succeed eventually, just as a monkey is bound to type *Hamlet*, given enough time. It has the advantage of being very energy-efficient, and the significant disadvantage of being almost never successful. In birding, also, our best efforts may yield nothing. It is worth remembering that simply being out there is sometimes enough.

PROGRAMS

All programs are held at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St. in Amherst. Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.

Monday, March 11. Laurie Sanders with "*Nature On Radio: Is There Really That Much to Talk About?*" Laurie is the host of Field Notes, a weekly natural history series heard on WFCR 88.5 FM and Connecticut Public Radio. This month, she will describe some of the special natural areas, organisms, and people she has profiled on the radio show over the last two and a half years. She will also replay several episodes of the show, with accompanying slides.

Laurie is an educator with UMass Extension's Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Program, where she works on a variety of watershed-related issues. In the past, she has worked in the wetlands program for the MA Department of Environmental Protection, and as a botanist for the US Forest Service in Vermont. From 1994 to 1998, she produced more than 35 short natural history videos with WGBY/Channel 57. Working with her husband, Laurie has found dozens of new locations for rare species in Massachusetts and Connecticut - from plants and tiger beetles to dragonflies, damselflies, reptiles and amphibians. She grew up near a wonderful marsh and swamp in Cheshire, CT, where her passion for the natural world began. She now lives in Westhampton, MA with her husband and young daughter. Laurie will be happy to autograph your FM receiver.

Coming Programs

April 8: Andrew Farnsworth on Radar Ornithology

May 13: Jeff Podos elaborates on Galapagos Finches

June 10: Marta Hersek introduces Ovenbirds

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **February 2**, **Scott Sumner's** trip to **Maine** found two Snowy Owls, a Peregrine Falcon, a Northern Harrier, a Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Towhee, Gray Catbird, Carolina Wren, about 20 Harlequin Ducks, Razorbill, Black Guillemot and about 60 Purple Sandpipers.

Rumor has it that the **Plymouth-Falmouth** group on **February 9** saw Long-eared Owls roosting, as well as Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers hunting in shifts, amongst other things.

Harvey's mid-week group on **February 13** went first to Chicopee Falls. The Chicopee River was mostly frozen, but from the local boat launch, the group could see the Bald Eagle nest, with the bird in attendance. There were quite a few ducks on the Connecticut River. For the day, they had 22 species.

Coming Trips

March

2. Plum Island. Whole Day. Geoff LeBaron will lead this **NEW TRIP** to the island for late winter species. In addition to the usual wintering birds, Geoff will have an eye out for Rough-legged Hawk, Barrow's Goldeneye, Little Gull, Common Black-headed Gull, Glaucous Gull, and Snowy Owl. Dress warmly and pack a lunch. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for further details and registration.

13. Midweek half-day in the Connecticut River Valley. Meet Harvey Allen at 7:30 AM across the street from the Atkins Farms, on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Heavy snow or rain will cancel this trip. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

23. Waterfowl migration along the Connecticut River. Half day. Ducks and geese should be on the move and Al Richards will be right behind them. Call Al (413-665-2761) for the details of time and place.

April

6. David Spector will lead a **NEW TRIP** for the club, in search of **American Woodcock and owls.** Depending on his early reconnaissance, David will choose a location in the valley, probably east of the river. The trip is most likely to begin at 6:00 PM. Flashlights are a good idea. Very warm clothing and footwear are more important. Call David (413-323-4885) in advance for the exact time and place to meet. Call early, registration may be limited.

Top Ten Events To Look For At The Next Winter Olympics

- 1) Ice Yoga.
- 2) Nude Luge: Bobsled to Luge to Skeleton? What the heck, let's just go down that slide like nature intended.
- 3) Nascar on Ice.
- 4) Monster-truck ski-jumping.
- 5) Really extreme ice-fishing, dude.
- 6) Media mogul skiing.
- 7) Sander Truck Demolition Derby.
- 8) Really short-track skating
- 9) Most creatively meaningless physical act that can be performed in cargo pants.
- 10) William Tell Biathlon: kids, apples, crossbows and really tired skiers. WOW!!

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Monhegan Island, Maine. May 24 to May 27 (Memorial Day weekend), 2002

After fifteen annual trips, this is still one of the flagship events run by the club and represents a unique kind of birding trip. The island lies at the end of a 12-mile ferry ride from Port Clyde, on the central Maine coast. Spectacular fallouts and startling rarities are possible, especially in conjunction with certain weather patterns. We, like the local lobster fishers and artists, will rely on our own legs to bird through the village of Monhegan and along the hiking trails which criss-cross the island. We will stay in rustic accommodations at the fabled Trailing Yew, which offers us two prepared meals a day as part of their bargain-priced service.

This trip forces us to slow down and be patient. There is no jumping in and out of cars here. We wrap ourselves in the quiet of the island, poke around along the trails for whatever may lurk amongst the apple and spruce trees, and anticipate what each new morning may bring in. There is time to learn new species, or just soak up known ones. When the birding is quiet, participants are free to explore the mysteries of the Enchanted Forest, or the spectacular cliffside trails.

For further information, and/or to register, please contact one of the leaders:

David Peake-Jones; (413) 529 9541; davidpj@the-spa.com, or Andrew Magee: (413) 369 9920

Connecticut Lakes, New Hampshire. June 14 – June 16, 2002.

These lakes lie in the extreme northeastern corner of New Hampshire, just south of the Canadian border. They are the headwaters of the Connecticut River. This is not the first time HBC has visited the area, but the trip has not gone for some years. This is your chance to get into a whole new region, with a whole new suite of birds. There are good opportunities to see breeding boreal species such as Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Black-backed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker and winnowing Common Snipe. I have a funny feeling that moose and butterflies may work their way into this equation somehow, too. The group will depart the valley early on Friday, June 14 and return late on Sunday, June 16.

At the time of writing, the potential exists for a small number of spots to open up on this trip. Please contact one of the leaders if you want to be on the waiting list:

Harvey Allen: (413) 253 7963, or Tom Gagnon: (413) 584 6353; tombwhawk@aol.com

Contributors Wanted!!

When a leader's not engaged in his employment (his employment)

When the small brown jobs have all been soundly taught (soundly taught)

He loves to lie a-basking in the sunshine (in the sunshine)

Far from his mind is any trip report (trip report)

(Gilbert & Sullivan, almost)

Field trip leaders have a ton of things to do in preparation for a trip, and the trips themselves can be arduous. The last thing they want to do when the trip is over is sit down and dash off a trip report for the newsletter. Fortunately, there is help available. I refer, of course, to YOU, the bright-eyed and enthusiastic participant. By writing a report, you give us a record for posterity, and help to promote interest in future trips. There is nothing to it. Just keep a record of the good birds you saw, any hilarious thrills and spills, and send it in.

The editor will send leaders a reminder prior to the next edition of the newsletter, which they can pass along to you. You can file your report with me (the editor) via email, hand-delivery at meetings, USPS or by phone (messages are OK). My contact details are at the end of the newsletter. I promise to acknowledge you, or keep your identity secret, as you prefer. I will edit all contributions as necessary. Make a trip leader happy when next you venture out!

dpj

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

*The Nominating Committee is now in session and has the job of developing a slate of prospective Board members for the upcoming club year. This officially begins after the Annual General Meeting on May 13. The committee consists of **Jim Marcum, Sally Venman, and Jan Ortiz**. If you have an interest in serving on the Board, or want to *dob** somebody in, please contact one of them.*

* *dob* (Anglo-Australian colloq.): to volunteer another with or without his/her consent.

CONSERVATION Environmental Bond Bill

The Conservation Committee draws your attention to the Environmental Bond Bill, currently before the state legislature. This Bill funds the conservation of bird habitats in the state, as well as things like the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. Funding for these programs runs out in July. Given the current budgetary situation, conservation funding is particularly at risk. If you are concerned with the future of natural habitats in Massachusetts, consider writing your legislators, encouraging them to support the bill. Phone calls or emails are the next-best things.

Reaching Your Legislator.

A complete directory of State Representatives and Senators by district and town is available at www.state.ma.us/legis/citytown.htm. You can email these representatives direct from the site, by clicking on their names. Some local legislators are listed below. All postal addresses are room numbers at:

State House
Boston MA 02133

Representatives

Nancy Flavin: 2nd Hampshire (**Hadley, Easthampton**). Room 254, State House
Phone (617) 722 2380

Stephen Kulik: First Franklin (**Deerfield**). Room 279, State House
Phone (617) 722 2210

John F. Merrigan: 2nd Franklin (**Greenfield**). Room 36, State House
Phone (617) 722 2470

Thomas M. Petrolati: 7th Hampden (**Precincts A, C: Belchertown**). Rm 478, State House
Phone (617) 722 2180

Reed V. Hillman: 1st Hampden (**Precinct B: Belchertown**). Room 156, State House
Phone (617) 722 2356

Ellen Story: 3rd Hampshire (**Amherst**). Room 167, State House
Phone (617) 722 2692

Senators

Stephen Brewer (Belchertown). Room 216, State House: Phone (617) 722 1540

Michael Knapik (Easthampton). Room 421, State House: Phone (617) 1415

Stanley C. Rosenberg (Amherst, Northampton, Greenfield, Hadley, Deerfield).
Room 320, State House. Phone (617) 722 1532

If you are interested in conservation of birds and birding habitat, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. Anne Lombard is our conservation chair. She often coordinates breeding-bird surveys, and is usually involved in various cutting-edge conservation issues. Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or annelombard@mediaone.net

LIBRARY

Our new librarian, Henry Lappen, is organizing the HBC library at Hitchcock Center into categories including:

Field Guides	Bird Finding Guides (East and West)
Foreign Field and Bird Finding Guides	Natural and Life Histories
Miscellaneous (including humor)	Videos, Cassettes, LPs and CD ROMs
and <i>Birding</i> magazine.	

Library hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Don't forget you can view the catalog on our website at <http://hampshirebirdclub.org>. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

Hampshire Bird Club Evening at WFCR

Do you enjoy Laurie Sanders' *Field Notes* on WFCR? You can help the radio station by joining a group of 6-8 volunteers from HBC to answer phones during the upcoming pledge drive. We will be taking calls at the station (in the studio with the on-air hosts) on Saturday, March 9, from 6-10 PM. You'll be trained, and then take pledges from callers. It's easy. It's fun. Food and beverages are provided; all you need to do is bring yourself (and friend if you wish). If you'd like to join the fun, sign up by calling or emailing Dave Gross at 253-2897 or dgross@biochem.umass.edu.

Date: Saturday, March 9

Time: 6-10 p.m.

Location: WFCR studios, Hampshire House, UMass campus.

Word Warping

Hipatitis: terminal coolness

Dopeler effect: the tendency of even the stupidest idea to seem smarter when it comes at you really fast.

MORE GOOD STUFF

Hitchcock Center

Salamander Tunnel Maintenance Day – Jennifer Wiest

Sunday, March 3 from noon – 3 p.m.

Reading the Forested Landscape - Tom Wessels, Ecologist, Author and Professor

Saturday, March 30, 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

River Days - Exploring the Connecticut River from Source to Sea

Michael Tougias, Naturalist and Author

Tuesday, April 2, 7:00 p.m.

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.

Irony, Anyone?

Prosecutorial staff in Westfield may be excused for checking their seats with particular care in the near future. According to NBC on February 18, a new courthouse opened in town this month, after a long delay. Seems that, though the bricks and mortar have been in place for some time, the state's budget woes meant that the new building could not be furnished. Stepping into the breach to provide refurbished furniture from other sources were vocational students and, (you guessed it), *our local prison population!!* The irony was apparently lost on the announcer. She didn't even crack a smirk!

Arcadia

Winter Crows: Patti Steinman, Educational Coordinator

Saturday, March 2: 3:00 – 6:00 pm

Natural History of Vernal Pools: Patti Steinman, Educational Coordinator

Thursday, March 28: 7:00 pm

The Night for Salamanders: Dan Schell, Mt. Tom Citizens Advisory Committee

Date: To be determined by weather, meet at 6:00 pm. Please register, and become part of a telephone tree to be notified at short notice when the program will take place.

Ecological Management Conference: March 9: 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm

This annual gathering is a chance to learn about the latest ecological management and research projects at the sanctuary, including grassland restoration, non-invasive plant control, and studies of many plants and animals.

Berkshire Sanctuaries are sponsoring **Spring Migration on the Great Plains**, a tour encompassing the prairie wetlands of Kansas and Nebraska, focusing on such enthralling migrants as Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese, and Greater White-fronted Geese. Tour leaders are Rene Laubach and Bob Prescott. The tour runs from March 30 through April 7, 2002. Call (413) 637 0320 for a more detailed itinerary.

*For more details, and to register for programs at Arcadia, contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton, MA 01027. Telephone (413) 584-3009.*

Local and Live

The **Rattlesnake Gutter Trust** invites you to attend a program entitled “**Birds of Prey,**” presented by local raptor expert **Julie Grow-Collier**, assisted by **Jim Parks**.

Time: Sunday, April 7, 2002, 2:00 PM

Place: Leverett Elementary School Gymnasium, 85 Montague Road, Leverett.

There will be a small admission charge.

Julie Collier grew up in Leverett, attending Leverett and Amherst schools. She is a licensed raptor rehabilitator who gives presentations at schools and functions in the New England area. Live hawks, falcons, an eagle and owls are brought out of their cages, described and displayed, accompanied by a lively, loving, humorous narrative, with a Native American flavor. This program is very popular with both children and adults.

The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust is a local land trust, working to preserve natural habitat in the Amherst-Leverett area. Their Annual Meeting will be held in the cafeteria, prior to the program. Refreshments will wind up the evening. Visitors are most welcome.

If you would like to know more about the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, please call Annette Gibavic at (413) 548 9082, or write to them at P.O. Box 195, Leverett, MA 01054.

Field Notes

What are you usually doing at 7:30 on a Monday morning? Before you provide more information than anyone could possibly want, let me tell you that you could be listening to **Field Notes**. This decidedly local natural history digest is hosted by Laurie Sanders, who lives in Westhampton, and roams all over the region with notebook and tape-recorder in hand.

Laurie knows virtually every ecological researcher and natural historian in the area, and consults with them to explore a wide-range of topics, from katydid behavior to glacial geology. She has chronicled Tom Gagnon’s role in the singular life history of “Ruffie”, interviewed Bob Bieda and Harvey Allen during their recent concurrent “Big Year,” and recently went owling with Dave Small.

*For those interested in past episodes, there are dozens of topics covered in the “Field Notes” section of WFCR’s website: www.wfcr.org. **Field Notes** airs at 7:30 am on Monday mornings, on WFCR, 88.5 FM radio.*

Backyard Birds

Still there (Strong St., Northampton), still got the goods (books, feeders, audio guides, gifts, etc.) and **still 10% off for HBC members**.

Hawk Watching in the New Millennium.

Holyoke Community College, Holyoke MA

Saturday, March 9, 2002, from 8 am to 5 pm

Northeast Hawk Watch presents this, the seventh annual Hawk Migration Conference. The program includes ten presentations on local and international hawk watching, including raptor identification, hawk migrations in Malaysia and Nepal, forest management for raptors, and data sharing over the Internet.

For a registration form, please visit <http://battaly.com/nehw/conference>. Alternatively, contact David Peake-Jones (413) 529 9541, davidpj@the-spa.com, or write John Weeks, 41 Plymouth Lane, Westfield, MA 01085.

Pretty Feather Never Won Fair Lady

You have worn out your copy of Peterson's *Birding By Ear*, and a family member deliberately disabled the cassette player in the Camry during that last family road trip. On a good day, you can tell a Swamp Sparrow from a Chippy at 200 yards. Enough already!! It is now time to ponder the deeper meaning of birdsong. "**Why Do Some Birds Learn To Sing?**" is the title of a lecture by **Don Kroodsma** at **Amherst College (Merrill 4)** on **Monday, March 25 at 3:30 pm**. Don is a noted authority on this subject, and long-time club member.

Intoxication: euphoria at getting a refund from the IRS which lasts only until you realize it was your money on the first place.

Club Members in Print

In the February, 2002 edition of *Bird Observer* (published here in Mass.), there is a preview of the long-awaited bird finding guide to western Massachusetts. **Andrew Magee** drew the illustrations for Mark Taylor's article on "Birding in Northfield." In the same edition, **Geoff LeBaron** documents the first known nesting of White-winged Crossbills in Massachusetts.

Please notify the editor if you, or any member of the club, should be recognized in the newsletter. I will need some reasonable excuse, such as those described above.

Thanks, dpj

Welcome New Members

David and Katheryn Chevalier: Phone (413) 843 8171; chepar50@hotmail.com

Jim Lafley: Phone (413) 323 5892; tkdfly@aol.com

Catherine Youngen Phone (413) 843 8171

Nancy Steeper Phone: (413) 665 2884; steeper@rcn.com.

Changes

Sally Venman's new email address is sgvenman@attbi.com

Email Address Changing???

If your email address is changing, please notify Sue Emerson at wle33@aol.com a week or so ahead of time. It is important for the newsletter reminder. Thank you.

Does anyone actually read this thing?? In the February edition, we announced that the trip had a good chance of seeing **Black-headed Woodpecker**. Alert club members have deluged Tom and Harvey with reservations, no doubt realizing that this species, if found, would be new to science. With regret, I must announce that the more likely bird is the Black-backed Woodpecker, which is rather more common. I didn't get a single irate call!

Until next time, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones

Editor

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