



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

Volume 19, No. 3

November, 2002

On the back is the latest version of the HBC Directory, listing all Officers of our bird club.

Electronic newsletter recipients: Please take this opportunity to download the ABA Code of Birding Ethics from the homepage. Thank you!

Finally, at the risk of underselling our numerous field trip reporters, I ask you to make a point of reading Leslie Breger's account of the Cape May trip. You will see why!

PROGRAMS

This Month

On Monday, November 18, Bob Askins speaks about **"Conservation of Birds of Open Habitats in New England."**

Robert Askins is Professor of Zoology at Connecticut College, where he teaches courses in ecology, animal behavior and ornithology. His research focuses on the ecology and conservation of migratory birds in both their northern breeding areas and tropical wintering areas. Dr Atkins has analyzed the habitat requirements of forest birds that nest in deciduous forests in New England and Japan, and of songbirds that spend the winter in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He has also studied Blue-winged Warblers and other species that are restricted to early successional habitats.

Bob has published scientific papers in numerous journals including *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Wetlands*, *Ecology*, *Current Ornithology*, *Studies in Avian Biology*, and *Journal of the Yamashina Institute of Ornithology*. In 2000 he published "Restoring North America's Birds; Lessons from Landscape Ecology", a book on the ecology and conservation of North American birds. A second edition of this book was published this year and he is currently working on a Japanese edition.

Forests have been the focus of most conservation efforts in the northeastern United States. Less attention has been directed at open habitats, but these habitats have a disproportionate number of declining and endangered species. In New England many of the bird species that have shown persistent, long-term decreases in abundance are associated with grasslands and shrublands. These include Upland Sandpiper, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Blue-winged Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. These species primarily nest in farmland and old fields, so they have declined as most of the farmland in New England has been abandoned and replaced with forest. Is this a conservation problem or a "return to normal" in a historically forested landscape? Where did these species live before people cleared the forest for farming? How can we sustain their populations as open habitats continue to disappear? All of these issues will be addressed in his presentation.

Bob will have copies of his recent publication: *"Restoring North America's Birds; Lessons from Landscape Ecology"* (Yale University Press, 2000) for sale (\$18 paperback) and signing at the meeting. Please feel free to bring any copies you already have for his signature.

Coming Up

December 9: Members Meeting

January 13: Robert S. Ridgely on the *Jocotoco Foundation*

February 10: Dave Stemple speaks on *Scottish Bird Song*

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **October 5**, Geoff LeBaron led twelve folks on a **leisurely and local** exploration of the **Connecticut Valley**. Tantalized by at least one report of a Connecticut Warbler from the sandpit in Hadley, we started there. The depths of the excavation were “dearthy”, but as we made our way along the perimeter of the sand pit, we ran into a couple of flocks of late migrants, including Blue-headed- and Red-eyed Vireo, and some nice warblers. The highlight of these was a Cape May Warbler, which almost warrants a rare bird alert in these troubled times.

Six species of woodpeckers lurked in the turning foliage, including a **Red-headed Woodpecker** spotted by Anne Lombard, and confirmed by a few lucky others. It showed itself briefly, and then vanished. Later in the day, in the east meadows, a Peregrine Falcon dashed by, without disturbing numerous American Pipits, and a Lapland Longspur. Still later, in the west meadows, the die-hards spotted a probable “Traills” empidonax flycatcher, and a late Eastern Wood Peewee.

Geoff LeBaron



Harvey Allen focused his **Mid-week Sweep of the Connecticut Valley (October 9)** on the sparrows in the west meadows. The group found the usual suspects including cooperative Swamp and Savannah Sparrows. In the east meadows, Horned Larks and American Pipits offered themselves up for study, as well.

Mary Alice Wilson



On **Sunday, October 13**, Bob Bieda and Shawn Smolen-Morton led a group of 8 participants to the outer **Cape of Cod** (“poor man’s Cape May”). Just as the leaders had planned eight months earlier, the first Nor’easter of the season hussled up the coast the night before the trip and delivered a smorgasbord of pelagic birds for the group. Off First Encounter Beach, a steady stream of Northern Gannets, in various plumages, pressed their way back to the ocean, often diving along the way. As the tide receded, gulls and terns (Common and Forster’s) assembled to roost on the exposed flats with a variety of shorebirds: Black-bellied Plover, Semi-palmated Plover, Sanderling, Long-billed Dowitcher, both Yellowlegs, and Dunlin. A few distant **Atlantic Puffins** tantalized the group, but only a couple of lucky souls observed one individual well. Much more compliant were a pair of **Pomarine Jaegers** and a lone **Parasitic Jaeger**.

By contrast, with the deep-water denizens plying the wave tops, we might have found more land-birds in our back yards. Corn Hill, often a magnet for uncommon and rare migrants, failed to produce even modest results. So, with heavy hearts, the group turned back to the ocean off Race Point, where the pelagic birding continued to reward diligent searching. After some discussion and lengthy observation, the group was able to identify several **Leach’s Storm-Petrels** among the dozen or so storm-petrels, trickling by the point in singles and occasionally even triples. A light morph **Northern Fulmar** treated the group to good, medium range views and **Greater Shearwaters** were observed with regularity, as they worked the waves southward. Although the group had hoped for more than 70 species, all were in agreement that the pelagic birding made up for the lack of ticks on the trip list.

Shawn Smolen Morton



Cape May. October 11-14. 2002. (Lead by Scott Sumner and Dan Ziomek).

Birds, Dinners, Architecture by **Leslie Breger!**

This was the first trip I went on sponsored by the Bird Club, so I don’t have any point of comparison, but I will say that it was absolutely FANTASTIC!

Over→

Our trip began early on a rainy Friday morning. By 11:00 a.m. most of the group had arrived at Forsyth National Wildlife Refuge (“Brigantine”). The sheer number of shore birds and water birds was absolutely

overwhelming! Highlights for me personally were my first close-up and extended looks at a Caspian Tern and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Another bird I particularly enjoyed seeing that day was a (regretably distant) Common Moorhen. Within a half-hour of our arrival, Snow Geese started flying in and landing. They were spectacular! We arrived at the West Cape Motel late that afternoon, and met for dinner at a pub-type place, which accommodated our large group very nicely!

Day Two started at a beach called Avalon. We were able to watch Sanderlings, Royal-, and Caspian Terns up close, along with a magnificent flotilla of Brown Pelicans. Later, at Stone Harbor, we saw a large flock of American Oystercatchers in flight and on the ground. Ruddy Turnstones foraged amongst the rocks and two Marbled Godwits stood further out on a sandbar. The big debate concerned whether there were a couple of Western Sandpipers mixed in with a flock of Semi-palmated Sandpipers. They were sleeping much of the time, so looking at their bills required some patience. The consensus was that there were 3 or 4 amongst the flock. At the nearby Wetlands Institute, we were treated to a larger variety of marsh birds, ducks, and shorebirds, including a Little Blue Heron, Black-bellied Plovers, and a Short-billed Dowitcher. Two odd birds were in the marsh, and let me tell you that for quite a while we could not figure out what those two birds were! (Scott enjoyed our confusion immensely. They were actually Starlings!).

After our beginners luck of the previous night, we encountered the real Cape May Columbus Day eating scene on his evening. Finding a two-hour wait at the Lobster Pot, we opted for the take-out window and the covered deck, only to find ourselves liberally moistened by sideways rain. I have to say that we were all still VERY happy to be there.

On Day Three we went to some of the more famous Cape May spots. At Higbee Beach, despite rain, we found a few Warblers, including Wilson's, Black and White, Palm, Pine, BTB, and Northern Parula. At the hawk-watching platform in Cape May Point State Park, we encountered Pete Dunne, leading a group right in front of us. I was impressed! Parasitic Jaegers pestered the Laughing Gulls, and a Peregrine Falcon perched and hunted all day, right near the platform. At nearby Hidden Valley we got a fantastic close-up and extended look at a Clay-colored Sparrow. This was a major treat for many of us. We ended the day by looking at a group of Black Skimmers right on the public beach in downtown Cape May. What beautiful birds! After a pre-dinner planning session, and Italian cuisine, Dan Ziomek gave us a walking tour of the downtown of Cape May. He talked about the history, and showed us some of the spectacular architecture. We all appreciated this immensely.

Day Four involved birding in the morning, lunch, and then departure at noon. We began at Higbee Beach right at daybreak. Scott and Dan had a feeling that there would be many birds moving because the rain had stopped. Boy, were they correct! I have never seen so many Yellow-rumps, Palms, and Northern Flickers in my life! There were thousands! You didn't have to move to the birds at all. You could simply stake out a spot and just watch as the birds poured out of the sky, landed for a few seconds in the trees in front of you, and then continued on their way. What an experience! Scott and Dan did a great job organizing and taking care of everyone on the trip. They thought everything through, and respected and listened to our needs. They deserve a big thank you!

Butterflies by *Tom Gagnon*

We had 16 species of butterflies that I tried to point out to the birders on the trip. Most were gracious enough to at least look at them! Believe it or not, I think most of those on the trip can now identify a Common Buckeye when they see one! Of course, I know I was really pushing it to the limit when I found a Red-banded Hairstreak on the FAR side of a parking lot and asked the group to join me in looking at it. This butterfly (the size of my thumb nail) was a LIFER for me and for the rest of the group, I assume. I hope I managed to convey some of the reasons why I get so excited about the beauty of butterflies.

Coming Trips

Wednesday, November 13. Morning Sweep of the Connecticut River Valley. Half day. On his monthly, mid-week trip Harvey Allen plans to search for waterfowl and whatever else migration has deposited in the valley. Meet Harvey at 8 AM across the street from the Atkins Farms, on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

Sunday, November 24. Tom Gagnon will lead birders on an annual all-day trip to the **East Quabbin** area. Bring a lunch, snacks and warm clothing. The trip will be limited to 15 participants. You need to call Tom at (413) 584-6353 to reserve a place and to make arrangements for meeting.

Friday, November 29. Turkey Trot: Cape Ann. All Day. Al Richards will lead this annual trip to the north shore in search of wintering sea ducks, including Harlequin Duck, Purple Sandpipers, alcids like Thick-billed Murre and Razorbills, and perhaps a Snowy Owl. This is an all-day trip, so bring snacks, lunch and plenty of warm clothing. Call Al at (413) 665-2761 to register.

Wednesday, December 11. Morning Sweep of the Connecticut River Valley. Half day. This month's sweep usually serves as a warm-up for the Christmas Bird Count. Meet Harvey at 8:30AM across the street from the Atkins Farms, on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Rain or shine, snow or sleet, ready or not, it's time for the 102nd National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count! Take this opportunity to contribute to the longest-running database in ornithology! Join more than 50,000 volunteers in the US, Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands as they take to the field to count birds! You don't have to be an expert and you don't have to devote the entire day to this effort. You can also contribute from the warmth and comfort of your own home by being a feeder watcher. Everyone is welcome!

Some of the HBC December meeting is devoted to allowing area leaders and volunteers to get together and begin planning their efforts for the Northampton count. For most, the day starts at dawn, but for the die-hards, the owling can start at midnight. There is typically a compilation of results which commences in the late afternoon.

The **Northampton Christmas Count** (in its 69th year) will be held on **Sunday, December 15**. For information contact Jan Ortiz (413) 549-1768 jtortiz@aol.com or Mary Alice Wilson (413) 548-9078 mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu. A potluck supper will be held at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst the evening of the count. If you cannot participate in the field but would like to help by preparing food that would also be appreciated.

The **Quabbin Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 28**. Contact Scott Surner (413) 253-5999 ssurner@aol.com.

The **Springfield Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 14**. Contact George Kingston (413) 525 6742

The **Athol Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 14**. Contact David Small (978) 249 2094 dhsml@gis.net.

For the **Greenfield Count**, contact Mark Fairbrother at (413) 367-2695

RARE BIRD ALERT

The Rare Bird Alert (email and phone) is up and running!

Email folk: if you have not received a "testing the 2002-2003" message, contact Mary Alice Wilson (mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu).

Phone folk: if you have not received a copy of the phone tree, contact Mary Alice (413 548-9078).

Editors Note: If you heard about the Cassin's Kingbird and the Lark Sparrow, everything is probably as it should be!

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. **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. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. **Henry Lappen** is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

CONSERVATION

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. S Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or aslombard@attbi.com

The common cricket chirrups loudly, for long periods, to attract a mate. How is it that the animal can tolerate such protracted loud noise at such close range without damaging it's own auditory organs? It turns out that the neurological impulses which generate the sound originate in an area of the cricket brain called the *central pattern generator*. When the cricket "decides" to sing, two impulses are generated simultaneously. One goes to the stridulating muscles, which generate the sound. The other impulse goes to the auditory organs, and makes them less sensitive to incoming sound. The damping ceases as soon as the cricket stops calling. Thus, the cricket protects itself from the consequences of its own racket but remains receptive to other sounds. ("*Living on Earth*," NPR, 10/5/2002)

Finally, the resilience of talk show hosts is explained!

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Cape Ann Birding: *Scott Surner, Bird Class Instructor*

Saturday, Dec. 7; 5:30 a.m. – dusk. Rain date: Sunday, Dec. 8. Fee, reg. required.

Winter Tree I.D.: *Brayton Wilson, Emeritus Professor of Forestry, UMASS*

Saturdays, November 16, 23; 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Quabbin: A History and Explorer's Guide: *Mike Tougias, Naturalist and Author*

Wednesday, Dec.18; 7:00-8:30 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.

MASS AUDUBON

Arcadia

Big Trees at Arcadia: Bob Leverett, old growth forest expert.

Saturday, November 9, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Fee and registration required.

Shade Grown Coffee and Birds: Wayne Peterson, MAS ornithologist.

Thursday, November 14, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Fee and registration required.

Arcadia Solstice Celebration

Saturday, December 21 at 6:00 p.m.

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



Berkshire Sanctuaries Natural History Tours

Natural History of Belize and Tikal, Guatemala.

Rene Laubach and Bob Prescott: January 18-26, 2003

Birding Big Bend and the Davis Mountains of West Texas.

Rene Laubach and Simon Geary: April 19-27, 2003

Birding Southeastern Arizona.

Rene Laubach and Simon Geary: May 3-11, 2003

*For details of the Berkshire Sanctuaries Natural History Tours, contact **Berkshire Sanctuaries**: 472 West Mountain Road, Lenox, MA 01240-2037. Telephone (413) 637 0320, or berkshires@massaudubon.org.*

In Memorium

Bart Hendricks, dean of Berkshire birding, died in September. Many HBC members knew him and used his books on birds of the Berkshires. The Hoffman Bird Club is planning to establish a scholarship fund in his name. For more information contact Noreen Mole (smole@berkshire.rr.com).

MISCELLANEOUS

Welcome, New Members!

Janet Gallenstein: 413 527 0368, janetgallenstein@hotmail.com

Malcolm Meltzer: 413 549 6447

Chris Yerling: 413 259 1605, cyhoopoe@aol.com

Publicity Chair

I believe we have failed to acknowledge, in this forum, a change in the small band of selfless individuals who keep the club running. Marion Gorham has trumpeted HBC events in the local media for several years. She has made sure that HBC events are accessible to the general public. In so doing, she has helped us bring birds and birding to a wide audience in Western Massachusetts. This noble task will now be performed by **Jan Ortiz**. Jan is a quiet, very unassuming member of the club. Alert readers will note the similarity between her name, and that of a past-president, board member, bird class instructor, current Rare Bird Alert committee member, and current custodian of the Audubon Voice of Western Massachusetts. Any such resemblance is, of course, purely coincidental. Thank you Marion, and welcome, Jan!

Backyard Birds

17 Strong St., Northampton (near Eastside Grill). Phone 586 3155

Your local source for birding and bird-feeding supplies, including feeders, optics, gifts, written and audio-materials. Backyard Birds offers a ten percent discount for Hampshire Bird Club Members. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

Book Signing

Calvin Simonds will read and sign copies of his new publication: *Private Lives of Garden Birds*, at *Atticus Amherst Bookshop*, (Main Street, near the Town Hall), on **Saturday, November 9 at 2:00 p.m.**

Simonds is the pen name of a writer, naturalist, and professor of ethology (the science of studying nature from the point of view of the creatures who live in it). He is the author of *The Weather Wise Gardener* (with Phebe Leighton) and the *New American Landscape Gardener*. His articles have appeared in *Horticulture*, *Country Journal*, and *Harvard Magazine*, among other publications. Simonds lives and observes birds on his farm in Massachusetts.

If nothing else, don't you just have to know who this bloke really is?

True Value

A new (dare I say "fledgling"?) science attempts to assign monetary value to aspects of the natural environment. By making intangible values into tangible ones, say its practitioners, conservationists will be able to compete on a more equal footing with industry and private developers, for land. As an example, a mid-western think tank recently valued Lake Michigan at 3-5 billion dollars, based on the amounts of money abutting land owners would pay to preserve it.

The same organization calculated that each landowner along the lake-shore valued Bald Eagles at \$17.70 each. (Source: *The Environment Show*, NPR, 7/10/01)

"I don't know what else to add." (ed.)

On the reverse is the latest HBC Directory.

That's it for this month. Till next time, walk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor
(413) 529 9541; davidpj@the-spa.com

HBC Directory November, 2002

President: Mary Alice Wilson: (413) 548 9078; mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu

VP/Program Chair: Geoff LeBaron; (413) 268 9281; glebaron@attbi.com

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson; (413) 584 6736; wle33@aol.com

Communications Secretary: Jan Howard; (413) 542 2721; jlhoward@amherst.edu

Treasurer: David Gross; (413) 253 2897; dgross@chemserv.chem.umass.edu

Board Members

Sally Hills: (413) 549 5550; shills44@aol.com

Mike Locher: (413) 585 5864; mlocher@yahoo.com

Dennis McKenna: (413) 256 8439; dennismckenna@aol.com

Jan Ortiz: (413) 549 1768; jtortiz@aol.com

Sally Venman: (413) 549 1098; sgvenman@attbi.com

Bob Zimmermann: (413) 585 0405; zimmermann@biochem.umass.edu

Field Trip Chair: Mike Locher: (413) 585 5864; mlocher@yahoo.com

Conservation Chair: Anne Lombard: (413) 586 7589; annelombard@attbi.com

Boutique Proprietor: Sue Fletcher: (413) 253 2102; scfletch@aol.com

Librarian: Henry Lappen: (413) 549 3722

Publicity Chair: Jan Ortiz: (413) 549 1768; jtortiz@aol.com

Webmaster: Merry Cushing: (413) 253 5266; cushing@oit.umass.edu

Newsletter Editor: David Peake-Jones: (413) 529 9541; davidpj@the-spa.com

Refreshments: Sally Venman: (413) 549 1098; sgvenman@attbi.com

Rare Bird Alert: Bob Bieda: (413) 527 2623; lbieda@massed.net
Geoff LeBaron: (413) 268 9281; glebaron@attbi.com
Jan Ortiz: (413) 549 1768; jtortiz@aol.com
Scott Sumner: (413) 253 5999 (work); ssurner@aol.com