



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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December, 2003

This month, all members of the HBC are receiving a 'hard copy' of the current **Membership Directory** via the USPS. For obvious reasons, the club does not post the directory on the Web. When you receive your directory, please remember it contains confidential information, and must not be shared with anyone outside the club for any purpose!! Our advertising space is short this month, but please remember **Backyard Birds** for your holiday gift list. Thank you, and compliments of the season!

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.

This Month

On **Monday, December 8**, we hold the annual **Members Meeting**. Perhaps the most important item on the agenda is the Christmas count. Time is allocated for team leaders to meet with their respective teams and plan the count. If you haven't yet found a group for the count, please see the "Christmas Counts" section below.

There is also a program, of sorts. The featured speaker is you! This is a chance for us to kick back and share natural history experiences from the entire season through slides and (brief) narratives. Birding tales are, of course, most relevant, but any adventures in the natural world are probably of interest to others in the club. We ask that you plan to present no more than twenty slides per person, since there may be many others who wish to present! Hope to see you there!

Coming Up

January 12, 2004. Sam Fried. Kansas: Shorebirds and Prairie Chickens.

February 9, 2004. Don Kroodsmma. Bird by Bike.

March 8, 2004. Dave King. Golden-cheeked Warblers Wintering in Mexico.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

If you have not yet made arrangements to take part this year, it is not too late! Simply contact one of the two coordinators listed below, and they will try to find a spot for you!

The **Northampton Christmas Count** (in its 70th year) will be held on **Sunday, December 14**. Contact Jan Ortiz (413) 549-1768 jtortiz@aol.com or Mary Alice Wilson (413) 548-9078 mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu.

The **Quabbin Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 27**. Contact Scott Sumner (413) 253-5999 ssurner@aol.com.

For complete details of Christmas counts in Massachusetts, please refer to the November edition.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On the weekend of **October 10-13**, HBC braved the New Jersey Turnpike to visit **Cape May with Scott Sumner and Danny Ziomek**. Brigantine (the Forsyth National Wildlife Refuge) was fuller than usual with water, but slightly disappointing with respect to the birds on offer. However, with over 500 **Northern Pintail** and several hundred **Snow Geese**, most of the complaining was muted. At Cape May itself, there was no shortage of excitement. Two cold fronts moved through in the course of the weekend, creating the conditions known to strand large numbers of migrants at the tip of the peninsula. On both occasions there were spectacular numbers of songbirds and hawks at Higbee Beach. The group estimated over 4000 Yellow-rumped Warblers, with a smattering of other warblers, including **Connecticut-**, **Tennessee-**, and **Prairie-**. Also trying to retreat back up the Cape after a night of migrational excess were at least 100 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and 600 **Northern Flickers**. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks patrolled the fields and hedgerows looking for the unwary and exhausted. At the hawkwatch, the group found over 50 **Osprey**, several **Bald Eagles**, 20 **Northern Harriers**, 20 **Merlins** and 9 **Peregrine Falcons** amongst the signature myriads of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. Stone Harbor has experienced both rampant development and sanding-in over recent years, and as a result is often described as a site of declining significance for both migratory shorebirds and birders. Nevertheless, the group found 20 species of shorebirds, including a **Long-billed Curlew**, 10 **Marbled Godwits**, and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull**. Some miscellaneous fun things indicative of the southerly clime included **Brown Pelican**, **Caspian Tern**, **Black Skimmer**, **Clay-colored Sparrow** and **Dickcissel**. The group found a total of **145 species** for the trip.

Scott Sumner, as told to DPJ



On Wednesday, **November 12**, **Harvey Allen** led folks on the monthly sweep of the **Connecticut River Valley**. It was a cool, cloudy day blessed with the usual, but no less welcome, winter residents on the trails. On East Hadley Road, **Horned Larks** played their high jinks over the dying fields, and **Wilson's Snipe** swirled magically overhead, seeming to disappear completely as soon as they alighted on *terra firma*.

Mary Alice Wilson insists that this report not be attributed to her, but have you noticed how quickly she has abandoned the "Common" in "Snipe", and switched to the new name? Huh?

Unattributed



Tom Gagnon and companions birded the eastern side of the **Quabbin** on **November 23**. A Bald eagle overhead during the dawn rendezvous boded well. The reservoir was as smooth as a mill pond, allowing unparalleled views of the birds encountered, including 30 **Common Loons**, 18 **Horned Grebes**, 131 **Green-winged Teal**, 55 **Hooded Mergansers**, 7 **Fox Sparrows** (not on the water), and 2 **Evening Grosbeaks** (also decidedly dry-ish). As the sun set on a weary set of birders, 2 harriers, assorted loons, grebes and ducks combined with the landscape to bring a fitting close to ONE OF THE BEST BIRDING DAYS EVER!

That Wilson woman again, with help from Massbird



On **November 28**, with the worst of the tryptophan fully metabolized, and those late evening Thanksgiving drinks only a dull throbbing memory, a rag-tag group of five sallied eastward on the annual **Turkey Trot** to **Cape Ann**, under the expert tutelage of **Al Richards** and **Bob Bieda**. Undeterred by the morning drizzle, unpromising forecast, and preponderance of tails amongst the loose change in the Newburyport McDonalds, we proceeded to the shore at Rye, New Hampshire, in pursuit of four Cave Swallows reported the previous day. The wrack-line, which had sustained them only twenty-four hours earlier, was devoid of all but a few Purple Sandpipers, and the eaves of the ticky-tacky coastal cottages yielded nothing but the promise of those recent nomads. The fog rolling inexorably in from the ocean allowed us some fleeting glimpses of a Bonaparte's Gull and a Black-legged Kittiwake, and a good look at a Red-throated Loon. Chris from California was able to add the Long-tailed Ducks bobbing about in the waves at Hampton Beach to his life list. (*continued over* →)

Turkey Trot (continued)

By the time we reached the pines of Salisbury Beach, they were completely shrouded in mist, and utterly devoid of birds. Just to make us realize everything is relative, when we got to Plum Island, it was misty and raining steadily. This didn't bother a large group of Dunlin near the bridge. Panning across a huge group of Black Ducks and Mallards at the Salt Pannes, we were rewarded by.....Black Ducks and Mallards! A pair of Gadwall just managed to increase the diversity of the pannes to three species. Further down the island, though frustrated by the absence of Snowy Owls, we found two Snow Buntings perched improbably on the peak of a maintenance shed. Under the eaves of the shed opposite, but decidedly exposed to the elements, and presumably neither happy nor well, was a rather torpid looking bat. From the tower at Hellcat we could see Snow Geese, several dozen Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, a pair of Lesser Scaup, and a Great Blue Heron. Facing a short afternoon, we adjourned to Rockport, stopping alongside the Joppa Airport to watch a very beautiful, pale **Rough-legged Hawk**. At Cathedral Rocks we were able to show Chris Harlequin Ducks cavorting in the froth, and got a fleeting glimpse of Red-necked Grebe. Several Gannets were amongst the roiling cloud of gulls accosting a local fishing boat. Down the street at Andrew's Point, we were able to get nice looks at both Surf-, and White-winged Scoters, and Harlequins. The daily species total is hereby suppressed in the interests of our pride. Still better than College football!!!

DPJ

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) as early as possible. The Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864, mlocher@yahoo.com) is always looking for new trip ideas and leaders. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.30 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the September newsletter or on the Website).

Wednesday, December 10. Connecticut River Valley. Half day. Harvey Allen prepares participants for the Christmas Bird Count by seeking out our seasonal residents. Meet at 8:30 a.m. across the street from Atkins Farm, at the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

Sunday, December 14. Northampton Christmas Count.

Saturday, December 27. Quabbin Christmas Count.

Please see the January edition for the Winter-Summer Field Trip schedule.

CHRISTMAS COUNT POTLUCK

The bird club would welcome volunteers to bring a dish, hot or cold, salad or dessert to the "pot luck" dinner. Also needed are several willing folks who would help set up the room at 3:30 pm and someone else to help take the room apart about six pm. Please contact Sue Emerson 584-6736, wle33@aol.com or Helga Batty 253-2410 hibeatty@aol.com

Editors Note: I don't know how many times this has to be said, but without the potluck it is going to be a long, cold day with no prospect of relief. How we gonna fall asleep through the compilation with no food in our bellies? It just doesn't bear thinking about. Please help Sue and Helga out. **PLEASE!, PLEASE!!**

PLEASE!!!

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**. She is looking for ideas on how we can contribute to the conservation of species in our area. Contact her at **(413) 586 7509**, or **aslombard@attbi.com***

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

FALL BIRDING TRIPS

Scott Sumner, Bird Class Instructor

Saturday, Dec. 6, 5:30 a.m. - dusk; Cape Ann winter residents. Fee.

SIMPLE GIFTMAKING SAMPLER

A Hitchcock Center and Fiber Arts Center Collaboration

Sunday, Dec. 7, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Fee.

PUTTING VALUES INTO ACTION

Rowan Sherwood and Jim Merkel, Global Living Project

Sunday, Dec. 14, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Fee.

FISHER AND PORCUPINE

Alan Emond, Naturalist, Farmer, Tracker

Sunday, Dec. 21, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Includes field walk to look for porcupine and fisher sign. Fee.

*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**.*

MISCELLANEOUS

Not Just For Eatin'

In November, the National Wild Turkey Federation celebrated the 30th anniversary of wild turkey restoration efforts in Massachusetts. Lest we forget, the species was essentially extirpated in New England as a result of land clearance, and did not significantly recover even when the landscape became reforested. In 1973, 37 wild birds trapped in upstate New York were released in the Berkshires through the efforts of Jim Cardoza, who is still active in MassWildlife. Releases continued throughout the state till 1996. Needless to say, with the annual fall population estimated at 18-20, 000 birds, and with these stately birds seen regularly in our backyards, the species appears to be doing well.

Welcome New Members

Hope to see you on Monday night, or in the field sometime soon!

Barbara Alfange: Leverett, MA

David Hastings and Kim Iwamoto: Belchertown, MA

Linda Lloyd: Gilbertville, MA

That's it for this month! DPJ