



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

Volume 19, No. 6

February, 2003

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, February 10**, Dave Stemple will speak on “**The Sounds of Some Scottish Birds.**” The program will feature about thirty species of birds, along with a number of photographs, including some by Jason Stemple. Dave will discuss the structure of some song-delivery systems, along with regional dialects.

Growing up in West Virginia, Dave became interested in birds over fifty years ago. After achieving a Masters in mathematics, he went to work for IBM in 1960 on something he had not heard of at the time: computers. During forty years in software development, research, and teaching, Dave became Chair of Computer Science at UMass, Amherst. After retiring from this position, he now spends a lot of time recording birds in Latin America and Scotland. He and his wife Jane Yolen have a house in St Andrews, Scotland. He has written a children's book on the Wild Turkey, entitled *High Ridge Gobbler*, available in paperback from Boyds Mills.

In conjunction with his presentation to the club, we will have ten (10) copies of a book by Dave Stemple for sale and signing at the meeting. It is entitled, “**High Ridge Gobbler: A Story of the American Wild Turkey**” (Boyd’s Mills Press, \$10.95, paperback). This is suitable for readers aged 8-10, but no doubt has appeal for any who remain young at heart. The story, as might be imagined, is about the life cycle of the turkey, with an emphasis on biological accuracy and a minimum of anthropomorphism.

Our friends at **Atticus Books** in Amherst are helping us to bring this book to you.

Coming Programs

March 10: Paul Baisich savors *Shade Grown Coffee*

April 7: Tom Litwin about the *Harriman Expedition*

May 12: Kenn Kaufmann muses on “*Migration from the Bird’s Point of View*”

June 9: Geoff LeBaron sails to the *Galapagos*

The Jocotoco Foundation

If you were intrigued by the Jocotoco Foundation, as described by Robert Ridgely in January, the address to write for further information or to contribute is:

Jocotoco Foundation

1407 Finntown Road, Waldoboro, ME 04572

Phone (207) 832-7852.

Information about Fundacion Jocotoco is also on the web at www.fjocotoco.org

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On what can only be described as a 'good old fashioned' winter's day, Shirley Hillborn, Marcia Merithew, Sue Emerson, and new member Enid Welch set out for **Turners Falls** on **Saturday, January 18** to see if they could get a view of the Red-headed Woodpecker that had been reported around the local Rod and Gun Club. Despite our valiant (some would say foolhardy) efforts to locate this bird when the temperature was one degree, and the wind chill at minus ten degrees, the woodpecker had more sense than we did and stayed out of both the wind and our sight. Our efforts were not in vain and we were able to still our shaking hands and chattering teeth long enough to focus our frosted binoculars on one Golden-crowned Kinglet at the R & G club, five Common Goldeneyes, seven Canada Geese, and a Northern Mockingbird that we found in and around the open waters of the canal. We had no sightings of winter finches.

Sue Emerson



Geoff LeBaron and nine others traveled to coastal **Rhode Island** on **Saturday, January 26**. Despite this being the warmest day for several weeks, we found conditions in Westerly to be decidedly brisk, with the bay near Napatree Point completely frozen over. We decided to push on rather than risk life and limb. In a more sheltered part of Westerly we came upon a beautiful adult Coopers Hawk surveying the frigid seaside, as well as a single Ruddy Duck jammed into a small area of open water with several swans and a bunch of Canada Geese. Nearby junipers provided starvation fare for numerous Robins, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and several Cedar Waxwings. In a deserted seaside carpark we found two Ipswich Sparrows, and several stunning Snow Buntings in amongst a large group of Horned Larks. We spent some time amidst the thickets of Ninigret Park in pursuit of a Western Tanager but, aside from two Hermit Thrushes, the thickets were quiet. There were, however, not one but two Red-headed Woodpeckers in an oak thicket by a pond.

A Tufted Duck had been reported in Wakefield, but we found most of the long pool wherein it had been sighted to be frozen. However, after a creative detour through the local school and cemetery, we finally got a nice view of open water, with a beautiful group of Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, and some Lesser Scaup. For the day as a whole, we noted unusually large numbers of Common Loons close inshore, and a rare total of three male Northern Harriers. Highlights of the late afternoon at Sachuest Point included two male Northern Harriers along with one female, good numbers of Harlequin Ducks, and simultaneous views of all three Scoters. There are few birds more beautiful than a male Surf Scoter at close range, in the glow of the dying sun.

Coming Trips

Saturday, February 8. Plymouth and Falmouth. All day. Join Shawn Smolen-Morton and Al Richards in this trip to southeastern Massachusetts. Past highlights have included Yellow-breasted Chat, Redhead, Rough-legged Hawk, and both Long- and Short-eared Owls. Dress warmly. Call Shawn (413-863-4569) or Al (413-665-2761) for the time and place to meet.

Sunday, February 9. Maine's southern shore. All day. Scott Sumner (413-253-5983) sweeps the frigid northland for wintering seabirds and other fowl. Dress for cold weather and pack a lunch. Call Scott for departure information.

Wednesday, February 12. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will seek out early migrants and other seasonal specialties. Meet on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farms, at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, March 1. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron (413-268-9281) will seek out late winter specialties like Rough-legged Hawks, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Glaucous Gulls, and Snowy Owls. Dress warmly. Call Geoff for information as the date approaches.

Monhegan Island

Don't forget to sign up for the annual Monhegan Island Memorial Day Weekend trip, the hallmark of HBC field trips since the club's beginnings.

The annual club trip to this fabled migrant trap (and generally remarkable place), led by **Andrew Magee** and **David Peake-Jones** is scheduled for **Friday, May 23 to Monday, May 26**. We will meet at Port Clyde, Maine (carpools generally available from the valley), boat to the island, and stay in rustic accommodations at the Trailing Yew. The island in May usually hosts a wide variety of migrant songbirds. An optional trip to Eastern Egg Rock allows for looks at puffins, various terns and even the odd alcid or pelagic species.

If you have never been on this trip (our first was in 1984) you should know that birds (and they are plentiful) are just one part of the Monhegan experience. Take an island eleven miles off the mainland. Take wildflowers and ocean and blue skies and night skies filled with starlight, not city light. Take hiking and sitting on rocks looking east over the ocean looking for whales. If the weather does not cooperate there is the comfort of warm fireplaces and lots of books. Add good food, good company, lots of laughs and skilled leaders to show you around and help you identify the many birds you will see and you have a better idea of what's in store.

The cost will be in the vicinity of \$280, which includes transportation from Port Clyde, lodging, breakfasts and dinners on the island. Add to this the optional trip to Eastern Egg Rock (\$12.50), tips for the island staff, lunches, snacks, an optional lobster dinner on the island plus shared mileage costs if you carpool, and you have a rough idea of the total cost. A \$50.00 deposit is needed to save a spot.

Contact **David** at (413) 529 9541, davidpj@the-spa.com or **Andrew** at (413) 586 1509 as soon as possible for more information. Register with David.

Too Much of A Good Thing

National news media this month described a bout of decidedly atypical behavior on the part of some birds at the San Francisco Zoo. The zoo has long had an exhibit of Magellanic Penguins, native to the southernmost coasts of South America. The captive penguins are described by their keeper as typically rather sedentary, spending most of their time standing about out of the water.

However, upon the recent introduction of six new penguins from another zoo, the entire group, apparently at the instigation of the newcomers, have begun swimming almost constantly around and around the enclosure. Many do not even leave the water to eat, prompting the keeper to quip that she has to dangle fish in the water as they go past, "kinda like a drive thru". Zoo officials and others have speculated that this is simply a form of peer-induced mass hysteria. In the wild, they migrate several thousand miles along the coastline each season.

Top Ten Alternative Explanations for the Crazy Swimming:

1. Penguin triathlon. Just wait for the bike and running legs.
2. Penguin cardiologist recommended eating more fish and aquasize.
3. Pheromone mix-up.
4. Pool about to be used as a photo shoot for "The Bachelorette"
5. Getting a run-up for a flying leap over the fence.
6. Finally noticed the high incidence of "fish breath".
7. Avoiding being accused of peeing in the pool.
8. Charity swim-a-thon to benefit the victims of the Spanish oil spill.
9. Really sick of kids with rubber fish.
10. "Got... to.... get... out... of...this.. stupid.. tux!!"

CHAIRING CROSSROAD

(title is a pun on the famous London street, for those few of you who are not anglophiles).

Our post-meeting chair replacement program is, indeed, at a crossroads. In order to fully explain this to you, I first need to delve a little into the life of one of HBC's most unsung heroes. I refer, of course, to Bill Wilson, spouse of our most peripatetic president, Mary Alice Wilson. Prior to each HBC program that I can remember, Bill has been seen quietly setting up those frustrating metal folding chairs for the posterior comfort of the soon-to-arrive HBC faithful. So far so good. There are usually a few other souls to help out, and the process generally proceeds smoothly.

Bill is a marvelous cook, makes the most wonderful wooden furniture, is relatively low-maintenance and is generally quite useful in the Wilson household. Mary Alice assures me she would like to keep him around, in reasonable working order, and in good spirits....

.....which is why the events which follow each HBC program are of concern. Bill has two very able hands, but also two not-so-able knees, and is "not the cheerleading sort", so it is not quite fair that the lions-share of putting the chairs back should fall to him as often as it does. In the interests of harmony at the Wilson place, and fair play in general, please read the appeal below, and respond if you can. Thank you.

HELP WANTED: Chair Replacement Coordinators

Hampshire Bird Club needs two or three solid citizens to take charge of returning the chairs to their appointed places following programs at the Immanuel Lutheran Church. This entails the evening-by-evening recruitment of volunteers to help put the chairs away, and coordination of their efforts. The successful applicants will be reasonably regular attendees at the programs, though with several incumbents, attendance at every program is not required.

Qualifications

- A basic understanding of chair allocation patterns in the ILC environment is required. This involves rudimentary mathematical ability (counting up to about fifty usually suffices), and the ability to distinguish between the sanctuary, choir-loft and church hall (present newsletter editor need not apply). Coordinators will also need to determine the geographical origins of the chairs used at each meeting from one of those who set them up (usually Mary Alice Wilson). Some experience in this field is helpful, but for the right applicant, extensive on-the-job training in the communication patterns of the president is available.
- Given the importance of leading by example, and the variable morale of volunteers, the ability to lift and move at least one folding chair at a time is important. Interpersonal skills such as, negotiating, pleading, ingratiating, bribery, and storming out in a huff (in that order) will be needed in the recruitment of volunteers.
- Ability to drive the infamous chair rack is helpful. Previous experience with tractor-trailers or stretch limousines will be considered.

Remuneration varies between zero and nothing at all, but you will have the have a good feeling, and yet more leverage when you front up at the Pearly Gates. Applications to Mary Alice Wilson: (413) 548 9078; mwilson@k12.phast.umass.edu as soon as possible.

HELP WANTED (Part 2): Boutique Proprietor

HBC is looking for an individual or team of folks willing to serve as proprietor of the HBC Boutique. It's fun and it really helps out the club. For more information contact Sue Fletcher (352-2102).

LIBRARY

Bill Clinton has one. George Bush Snr. has one. Ummm...the President before that has one. Some day, even G.W. will have one. More to the point, we have one!

A substantial library, that is. It is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. **Henry Lappen** maintains a collection of birding resources including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos.

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 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*

HITCHCOCK CENTER PROGRAMS

Foot Loose in Britain. (Rebecca Reid and Michael Dover, Travelers Off the Beaten Path)
Wednesday, February 5, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

Winter Vacation Camp. (Hitchcock Center Staff)
Budding Young Naturalists (Ages 6-8); Nature Designed It First (Ages 9-11)
February 17-21; 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Fee.

Cleaner, Greener Transportation, (Paul Lipke of Sustainable Step New England, Mark Skinner of Pioneer Valley Biodiesel Cooperative).
Sunday, February 9, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Fee.

Pets, Pets, Photo Ops and Pot Roasts: Managing for the Contested Meanings of Wildlife in Contemporary American Society. (Robert Muth, Associate Professor at UMass)
Wednesday, February 12, 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Building, Hadley. Free.

Deer and Moose in Massachusetts: Bambi and Bullwinkle Meet Suburbia. (Bill Woytek, MassWildlife Deer and Moose Project Leader)
Wednesday, February 26, 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Northfield Mountain Rec. and Environment Center.

*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.*

MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON

Losing Ground/Saving Ground: Mass Audubon's New Land Protection Strategy

Across the Commonwealth, unprecedented rates of land conversion are resulting in accelerated habitat fragmentation and loss. In much of the state, the "window of opportunity" to make a meaningful difference in the conserved landscape is closing rapidly. In order to best meet this challenge and most effectively advance its mission of protecting the nature of Massachusetts, Mass Audubon has recently adopted an updated, science-based framework to guide its future land protection efforts. The foundation of this plan is the creation of a Geographic Information System data layer that will serve as a guide to enable the organization to be more focused, selective and proactive in its land protection work. This presentation will include a review of the strategy adopted, outline key steps in its implementation, and highlight new directions designed to increase the effectiveness of our statewide land protection efforts. Come learn more about how Mass Audubon is working to Protect the Nature of Massachusetts.

Dates:

Arcadia Sanctuary, Easthampton, Feb. 25th, 7:30 PM
 Pleasant Valley Sanctuary, Lenox March 25, 7:30 PM
 Wachusett Meadow Sanctuary, May 22, 7:30 PM

For more information or directions contact land@massaudubon.org

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Eagles at Quabbin: Dale Monette, (Daniel Schell, and Patti Steinman)
 Saturday, February 8 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Pre-registration required, fee.

Tracking: Relearning an Ancient Art: (John McCarter, Paul Rezendes Nature Program)
 Saturday February 15 from 9:45 AM to 3:00 PM.

Land Protection Workshop. (Bob Wilber, Mass. Audubon Director of Land Protection)
 Tuesday, February 25, 7:00 PM (Snow Date Thursday, Feb. 27). Free.

Arcadia Ecological Management Conference
 Saturday, March 8, 9:00 AM to noon. Free.

*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 NATURAL HISTORY TOURS

Birding Southeastern Arizona: Rene Laubach and Simon Geary
 May 3-11, 2003. Pre-registration required, space limited.

Puffins and Peatlands: Exploring the Upper Coast of Maine. Gail Howe and Laura Tate Beltran
 June 20-23, 2003. Pre-registration required, fee, space limited.

*For further details and/or to register for **Berkshire Natural History Tours**, and other Mass Audubon programs to the west of us, contact the **Berkshire Sanctuaries** at 472 West Mountain Rd., Lenox MA 01240. Phone (413) 637 0499; berkshires@massaudubon.org*

MISCELLANEOUS

Bird Records Needed: Bull Hill Road, Sunderland.

Owners of the gravel pit between Bull Hill Road and Route 116 in Sunderland plan to expand their operation. Dottie case will be making a submission to the State Natural Heritage Division concerning this matter. She would be grateful for any species records you may have for the area, particularly of **Grasshopper Sparrow** and **Vesper Sparrow**. Any records of Black Rat Snake would also be helpful. Dottie will need to know the date, precise location, nesting data (if applicable), and is particularly interested in records predating 1995.

Contact **Dottie Case**

Phone (413 665 2941) or write to her at **100 Bull Hill Road, Sunderland 01375**.

Connecticut River Eagle Festival: February 15-16.

Connecticut Audubon Society presents this festival for the fourth time. The program is centered in Essex, Connecticut. There are eagle-viewing boat tours, live birds of prey, Native American dancers, lectures and exhibits, children's nature programs, musical entertainment, and an environmental marketplace.

You can get on the event mailing list by calling 1-800-714-7201, or visit ctaudubon.org

Photographic Contest

Robert Floyd Photo Gallery of Southampton, Ma. is conducting it's Second Annual Photo Contest. "Nature in the Pioneer Valley" is this year's theme. Twelve hundred dollars in cash prizes will be awarded to the top three entrants in the advanced and novice categories. Honorable mentions will be awarded to two entrants in each category consisting of merchant awards. Photo equipment will be awarded to the winning entrant in the 18 and under category. Contestants must reside in the pioneer valley.

Deadline for entries is the first week in February, 2003. To submit work, entry guidelines must be followed. They are available by calling the gallery at 413-529-2635 or e-mailing your street/post address to rfphoto@mailstation.com or by sending a SASE to the gallery.

Robert Floyd Photo Gallery
2 East Street, Box 662
Southampton, Massachusetts 01073
413-529-2635

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. Ten percent discount for members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

That is all for now.

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

David Peake-Jones

Editor

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