



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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PROGRAMS

Monday, June 9 at Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst: 7:30 pm

Geoff LeBaron travels to the **Galapagos Islands.**

Geoff LeBaron is our current program director. This month, we convinced Geoff to add himself to the distinguished group who have addressed us this year.

Geoff graduated from the University of Miami, Florida, and completed a Masters degree in Zoology at the University of Rhode Island. He spent five years on the staff at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and currently works as the Christmas Bird Count Director for the National Audubon Society. In addition, he has conducted ornithological field work for the state Audubon societies of both New Hampshire and Rhode Island. He led whale- and seabird-watching trips on Stellwagen Bank for three seasons, and has logged thousands of hours surveying marine mammals from the air along the eastern coast of the United States. Geoff has led birding trips and natural history tours all over the world. Anyone who has enjoyed his company will attest to his remarkable teaching and leadership skills, restless intellect, and deep understanding of natural history. What finer speaker to delve into one of the world's biological treasures: the Galapagos Islands.

Bathed in cold water, but on the Equator 600 miles west of South America, the Galapagos Islands rightfully deserve their earlier name of the "Enchanted Isles." Both geology and biology in the raw, the Galapagos are one of Nature's best classrooms for the study of wildlife. Many species found nowhere else on Earth are readily accessible to both snorkelers and hikers, and the government of Ecuador has had the foresight to include both the islands and their surrounding marine ecosystems in a protected National Park. With no natural land-based mammalian predators, birds and other wildlife have no fear of humans, and seabirds often nest right in trails. Wildlife has the right of way there; humans are the controlled visitors. Join us for a brief taste of the wonders these fascinating islands have to offer.

Coming Programs

This is the provisional schedule for next year, still in the formative stages.

September 8, 2003. Deb DeRosier: Three-Wattled Bellbirds in Costa Rica.

October 20, 2003. Tom Litwin: "The Harriman Expedition Revisited."

November 10, 2003. Kathleen "Betty" Anderson: "Ten Thousand Years in Sixty Minutes: New England's Changing Avifauna."

December 8, 2003. Members' Meeting.

January 12, 2004. Sam Fried on birding in Kansas

February 9, 2004. Jan Ortiz: "Baffin Island."

March 8, 2004. Dave King on a topic to be announced.

April 19, 2004. Peter Alden: "Invasive Alien Plants of New England and their Impacts on Birds."

May 10, 2004. To Be Announced.

June 14, 2004. To Be Announced.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Saturday, May 10 proved to be one of the most delightful days of the Spring, befitting **Tom Gagnon's** annual trip to the east side of the **Quabbin** reservoir. As we assembled at headquarters, a variety of warblers crept through the trees along the water's edge. At the spillway, we had an early Blackpoll Warbler, great looks at Gnatcatchers, Black-and White, and several other species of warblers. Proceeding up the hill toward the orchard, we had wonderful morning-sun looks at Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, and yet more warblers, including a Cerulean, which sang cooly from a distance before appearing miraculously before our group, and a couple of English twitchers who had traveled half a world to see it. As the day progressed, we found twenty-one species of warblers, White-crowned Sparrows, Rough-winged Swallows, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and lots of Least Flycatchers. Quabbin also lived up to its reputation as one of the best places in Western Massachusetts to find Yellow-throated Vireo. In the final analysis, 92 species passed before our glasses before we set sail for home.



Despite a pessimistic forecast several days before the trip, **Saturday, May 17** dawned overcast and breezy but dry for the trip to **Mt Auburn** cemetery in Watertown. Our group of eleven began shortly after 7 AM and within moments of starting out on the Indian Ridge trail; we were enveloped in the peace and beauty of the cemetery. Song rang or whispered amidst the freshness of new foliage, and the timeless monuments to people who no longer have to commute to hear it. During the morning we had precious looks at a great selection of birds. Amongst the best were intimate encounters with Blackburnian, Wilson's, late Palm, and fourteen other species of warblers. Nashville Warblers were abundant. Northern Rough-winged Swallows flitted over Halcyon Lake, a Hermit Thrush finally bared its boldly speckled breast and red tail near the cemetery tower, and several Swainson's thrushes peered wide-eyed at us from amidst the gravestones. At Willow Pond, a Northern Waterthrush flirted cooly with the group as it crept along the edge of the pond. Towards the end of the morning, we finally tracked a perplexing, high-pitched song to its origin in the thrumming body of a Bay-breasted Warbler. We found another sporting in a birch tree, only feet away, which ended up being about the last bird of the visit.

We adjourned to the Concord Section of the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, anticipating close encounters with the signature Marsh Wrens of the sanctuary. Extraordinarily, there was not a Marsh Wren to be heard, owing perhaps to the extremely high water levels. After schooling ourselves to the subtle variations between flying Barn-, Bank-, Tree-, and Cliff Swallows, the last of our seventy-five species was a Sora tiptoeing through its territory in the cattails, apparently oblivious to us, several feet away.

David Peake-Jones



As I write this, a soft, steady rain is falling. Were it not that the trees outside are big and deciduous, rather than small and sprucey, and that my tapwater is clear rather than amber, I might easily think I was still on a small, mossy island off the coast of Maine. Well prepared for the predicted wet, 22 of us arrived in light rain on **Friday, May 23**, for the annual **Monhegan Island** trip. The rain did not lift (in fact, it was often heavier), till late Sunday morning. When the low had arrived days earlier, few species and individuals were trapped by the conditions. Those who remained were down and hidden, songless, frantically looking for food, and unresponsive both to pishing and tapes. Repressed and suppressed!

Despite this, we remained relentlessly cheerful, and found an amazing amount, considering the conditions, though the numbers through Sunday night were well below my previous lows for the past five years. Some of

us found relief in an evening of bird i.d. charades. Can you imagine what a pair of black leotards combined with an awakening cat would be? Or a stereotypical rough-rural character combined with a bird hauling itself ashore on legs situated way too far back on its body? Answers at reports's end.

By Sunday night, partial clearing augered possible change, if only more birds were pent up south of us, ready to come in overnight. Lo and behold, at daybreak, only hours before the ferry back to Reality, the obvious arrival area near Lobster Cove was hot! At least 16 new species had arrived. One apple tree had ten warblers in it, plus, at various times, A Philadelphia Vireo (rare in Spring migration), and an Arcadian Flycatcher. Some other pleasures of the weekend included two Black and White Warblers in a flower bed (one banded), a male Bay-breasted Warbler, a couple of Cape May Warblers, a few Swainson's Thrushes, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, an Iceland Gull, and Razorbills passing close inshore after the nor'-easter. Sadly, an apparently sick Gray Seal spent the better part of a day at Swim beach before vanishing. Some of us braved the rain to go to Eastern Egg Rock. En route we had a great look at a Sooty Shearwater plus the puffins. The total trip count eventually reached 109 species. (Editor's note: this surpasses, for the first time in recent memory, the tally of Poor Man's Monhegan, mainly 'cos they didn't go this year).

On top of all this birding, we had most gracious wait staff at the Trailing Yew and great food. Most of all, it was the truly cheerful and convivial spirit of our entire group that made one helluva difference. We worked hard, it paid off, we were rewarded! Bird charade answers: Black-legged Kittiwake and Red-necked Grebe. 'Nuff said.

Andrew Magee

Coming Trips

Saturday, August 2. New South Beach, I. All day. David Peake-Jones (413-529-9541) will look for early shorebird migrants. Be prepared for a surf landing and a long walk over wet sand. Bring a lunch and plenty of water. Call **before July 20** to register.

Saturday, August 23. New South Beach, II (The Original). All day. Bob Bieda (413-527-2623) and Al Richards (413-665-2761) will hike the beach looking for late shorebird migrants. Last year we saw a Curlew Sandpiper and both Marbled- and Hudsonian Godwits. Dress for cool wet weather, and bring food. Be prepared to walk long distances in wet sand. Call to register.

THE BOARD

At the Annual General Meeting on May 12, the following Board was elected to guide the club through the next year:

President: Dennis McKenna
Program Chair and Vice President: Geoff LeBaron
Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson
Corresponding Secretary: Jan Howard
Treasurer: David Gross

At-Large members:

Lisa Bertoldi
Betsy Higgins
Mike Locher
Marcia Merithew
Leslie Scott
Bob Zimmermann

No, I'm The Oldest!!

In the April issue, we reported that an albatross on Midway Island had become the oldest known wild bird, achieving a documented age of (at least) 51 years. Herman Staengle has graciously pointed out that: *"As far as the longevity of wild birds is concerned, there is one account of a female Royal Albatross, affectionately called Grandma, from the Taiaroa Head colony (Dunedin, NZ) who raised her last chick at age 62."*

Readers who are interested in exploring this further may go to <http://www.albatross.org.nz/colony.htm>

Thank you, Herman!

Yard Work

My yard is a place of quiet contemplation. This is not because I have successfully cultivated a harmonious landscape with beds of sand raked daily in concentric patterns, between tinkling fountains and meticulously clipped bonsai trees. Nor is it because I have pursued, zombie-like, the various levels of lawn care enlightenment extolled on TV.

The contemplative state I so often find in the back lot occurs, quite simply, because I am woefully out of shape. To re-do a bed, or fix the edging around the peonies necessitates several shifts of rather pitiful scrabbling at the ground, interspersed with periods when I must pause to allow the hammering in my chest to subside, and for the rasping of my breath to stop scaring the neighbor children.

One of these peaceful interludes in late April was rudely interrupted by a commotion amongst a row of young trees I have along the northern edge of the yard. There was a frantic exodus of the resident Robins and several Starlings, amid furious and apparently distressed cries of what I think was one of the House Sparrows. As I turned ponderously to investigate, a large Sharp-shinned Hawk burst into view, talons outstretched, grasping for the sparrow, which desperately flew in a tight circle around one of the spruces to keep the tree between it and the pursuer. The two were backlit by the setting sun in one of those tableau's we create in our minds to make crises more comprehensible. The hawk, having missed, landed awkwardly on the ground, and peered with what seemed an imperious sense of entitlement at the tree between it and the sparrow. The tiny bird, incongruously, remained entirely motionless on the other side of the tree, its life depending entirely on three feet of Blue Spruce foliage. Time, as they say, stood still.

Driven perhaps by the terrifying proximity of the predator, the sparrow then made a dash across the yard to an arbor vitae in a hedgerow. The Sharpie, closing fast, simply crashed into the shrub by the same route. The hawk spilled out of the greenery and stooped to strike at something beneath her feet. In a moment, she vanished, clutching her meal, leaving me with my absurdly impractical new flower bed, the dying light in the yard, and with silence. No doubt most of the birds previously in the yard had vacated it, and no doubt birds fall instinctively mute at such a time, but for us all to be quiet for a bit seemed more an act of reverence than of good sense.

I walked to the hedgerow, expecting some kind of carnage. Feathers at the very least, and perhaps more. Initially, I was shocked to see nothing at all, and it was only after getting down on hands and knees amid last years fragrant needles, that I found what seemed to be the only sign of the events: a single drop of blood, still and perfect on a blade of grass. I don't even know whose it was.

It seems to me Nature holds her most terrifying and intimate moments away from us, as though we have abrogated the right to witness them. I think we earn a brief glimpse when we submit to the indignity of muddy knees, when we drift off to wonder about worm castings, when we forget what we were supposed to be doing, when we forget who we are supposed to be.

David Peake-Jones

Quabbin for the Joy of It

Noted local photographer **Les Campbell** will be presenting “**Quabbin for the Joy of It**” on **July 26 at 7:30 P.M.** at the **1794 Meeting House in New Salem, MA**. Les presented a similar program for the HBC some years ago, and many members commented that they would like to see it again. To get to the Meeting House from Amherst, take Route 202 to New Salem, turn east at the flashing light by the New Salem General Store, and go 0.4 miles. The price of admission is \$8/\$6.

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!

Thank You From the Food Chair

Sally Venman raises a rousing cheer of thanks to all of you who have baked, bought and brought the cookies, dips, fruit, cheese, candy – all the wonderful edibles that have added so much to the pleasure of attending bird club meetings.

Next year, in order to make birder's tummies even happier, Sally will be joined by **Helga Beattie** and **Joanne Parker**. Together, this trio will strive to make the HBC the best-fed bird club in the State, if not the nation.

Thank You to Everyone Else

At the conclusion of the club year, it seems appropriate to attempt the Herculean task of appreciating those who have made the whole thing run for the last nine months. In no particular order, these folks include the Board, so ably led by Mary Alice Wilson, and also including Geoff LeBaron, David Gross, Sue Emerson, Jan Howard, Sally Hills, Mike Locher, Dennis McKenna, Jan Ortiz, Sally Venman, and Bob Zimmerman.

In addition, there are the various chairs, including Mike Locher, Anne Lombard, our retiring boutique proprietor Sue Fletcher, Henry Lappen, Jan Ortiz, Merry Cushing, and Sally Venman.

Finally, we must recognize the efforts of our sterling group of field trip leaders including Bob Bieda, Al Richards, Harvey Allen, Geoff LeBaron, Geoff LeBaron, Scott Surner, Danny Ziomek, Tom Gagnon, Shirley Hillorn, Shawn Smolen-Morton, Betsy Higgins, Andrew Magee, and David Peake-Jones.

People folded newsletters, moved chairs, wrote trip reports, and generally contributed in a myriad of ways both large and small. Here's to another successful year next year. Around late August, assuming I can rouse myself from the muggies of late summer, you may find another edition of this publication in the mailbox, or lurking on the Website. By that time, we will be ready to say goodbye to the birds of summer and begin again. Until then, I wish you all happy birding.

Reminder: By-Laws Changes

Proposed changes to the By-Laws were distributed with the May edition. These will be presented to the membership for a vote prior to the program (June 9; 7:30 PM at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Amherst).

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

David Peake-Jones

Editor

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There is also a STOP PRESS section with some last minute stuff on the next page!! →→

STOP PRESS

(literally)

The Guide is Here!!

The often –promised new **Bird-Finding Guide to Western Massachusetts** will be on sale at the June meeting for \$30. There will be a book signing at the **Hitchcock Center** on **Thursday, June 19 from 7:00 – 8:30 PM**, where it will also be on sale.

Arcadia Birdathon

Many of us participated in the Arcadia birdathon this year. The Arcadia Team finished fourth in terms of numbers of species (109) out of twenty or so teams from throughout the state. Arcadia alone raised over **\$1300** for the **Grasslands Restoration Project** in the west meadows.

Connecticut River Birding Trail

A series of maps showing birding locations along the river valley (source to sea) is being published. New Hampshire/Vermont is already done. Connecticut is in preparation. A contingent of birders in Massachusetts is organizing and will begin work on the Mass section this summer. If you would like to be part of the early discussion, please contact Harvey Allen (253 7963), Anne Lombard (586 7589; aslombard@attbi.com), or Mary Alice Wilson (548 9078; mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu)

Winged Migration

A ground-breaking film called “**Winged Migration**” by Jacques Perrin is attracting international attention. It is fair to say that, if you are reading this, it is a **MUST-SEE**. The film-makers used cutting edge cinematographic techniques to capture birds in migration. The film will *definitely* be showing in **Pittsfield (The Little Cinema)** from **July 11 through July 17**. Screenings nightly at 8:00 PM; Monday matinee at 2 PM.

Phone (413) 443 7171, or www.berkshireremuseum.org

I have an unconfirmed report that it may show at Pleasant Street Theater, Northampton. sometime late in June.

You can find out more about the film, and preview it at sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/index_flash.html, or from a multitude of related sites, available from your friendly neighborhood search engine.

Harriman Expedition Revisited

The film of the Harriman Expedition Revisited (subject of our program in October), will show on **WGBY** television on **June 11, at 8PM**.