



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

Volume 19, No. 7

March, 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: Monday, March 10.

Our humble publication is made possible only with the judicious use of a (legal) stimulant. This remarkable substance is produced by infusing the dried and ground berries of a tropical plant in hot water. For many of us, crystallized sugar and a certain dairy product complete an utterly indispensable beverage. Like most things of great value to people in the industrialized world, mass-production of this commodity now both sustains people of the regions able to produce it, and threatens their ecological and cultural integrity. On **Monday, March 10**, **Paul Baicich** will examine the implications of shade-grown coffee. His talk is entitled “*A Shade-Grown Coffee Future: Birds, Agriculture and People.*”

Our guest, Paul J. Baicich, [b. 1948; pronounced "Base-Itch"] has been a birder since his early 'teens in NYC. He was won over to the beauty and wonder of birds through his backyard experiences and his outdoor interests. It is a passion that has never left him. He graduated from the City College of New York (B.A. Political Science) in 1971 and got a Masters from Georgetown University (Latin American Studies) in 1978. Mr. Baicich then spent 13 years doing manual labor for a now-defunct international airline.

Paul has worked for the American Birding Association since the early 1990s. He organized their conferences and conventions from 1991 through 1995, edited 14 of their "ABA Birdfinding Guides," and edited *Birding* magazine for almost 5 years. Paul is now the ABA's Director of Conservation and Public Policy. With Colin J. O. Harrison, he wrote *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds* (Academic, 1997) and has also served as a leader and co-leader for multiple birding trips to Alaska (Attu, the Pribilofs, Nome, and Gambell).

Americans drink over a third of the world's coffee, two-thirds of which is grown by our neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean. When we realize how birds and coffee are interrelated, we can actually intervene to make things better for resident birds and neotropical migrants that survive (or even thrive) on coffee plantations. Paul will cover some fascinating background research in the field, current sun-versus shade issues in coffee, the state of the coffee industry, and the unique positive role that birders can play in the grand mix of sustainable agriculture, consumer concerns, and inter-American bird conservation.

Previous Programs

Those who would like to follow up on **Dave Stemple's** presentation on **Scottish Birds** may like to visit his website at www.cs.umass.edu/~stemple. He has a report on Ouzel dialects complete with sonograms, and also sonograms of Black Grouse, Red Grouse and Capercaillie. Dave also confesses to being a fan of “Boiled Lead.” Details at the site!

Coming Programs

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*

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

There can be little in birding to rival a mild winter day at a place like Plum Island. Something about the dearth of other birds, the clean light, and the bleak landscape seems to add an air of magic and majesty to the solitary birds of prey who find winter refuge from the arctic in our gentle clime. With this in mind, Geoff LeBaron and ten others sampled the late winter fare of **Newburyport and environs** on a balmy **Saturday, March 1**.

We began at Birdwatchers Supply and Gift, in pursuit of a reported **Clay-colored Sparrow**. Just as our patience neared its end, a pale, furtive little bird quietly materialized apologetically in the center of a Burning Bush (in name only – it was not actually alight, and there were no commandments to be seen anywhere). We were quickly able to confirm a buffy supercilium, dark mustache, and a flecked lateral throat stripe. This was indeed our sparrow, and before returning to some shrubby obscurity, it provided us with a good show. The tide marsh next to Plum Island was strewn with the wreckage of the winter icepack in various stages of disintegration. Locating any Snowy Owls was going to require painstaking scoping. With this in mind, we were idling slowly along the road, eyes fixed fruitlessly on the vast, glaring expanse of the marsh, when the lead car flushed a bird from a pole right at the roadside. In an instant, we beheld a lanky, warm-colored bird of prey with a huge facial disc, which loped off across the dunes. We watched it for a minute or so on this occasion, then had it circle breathtakingly close to the group over one of the boardwalks to the beach. For some, this was their first **Short-eared Owl**. I suspect that, for most, it was by far the best-ever encounter. Further down the island, Geoff spotted a dark shape sitting in suspiciously spindly tree branches near the dike. Our first **Rough-legged Hawk** eventually took off, revealing striking dark wrist patches, and a pale throat. Its place was immediately taken on the same branches, by another Rough-legged Hawk. What a bonus! With assistance from other birders, we found both an immature and an adult male **Snowy Owl**.

Up the Merrimack at the (currently closed) “Chain Bridge” near Salisbury Point, we watched at least six Bald Eagles hanging around the swollen and ice-strewn river, which also provided a refuge for many Great Cormorants (one sporting striking white-tipped feathers encircling the neck, exceedingly rare in North American birds). These cormorants were coming up with many absurdly large catfish, which suffered a protracted, laborious, but ultimately final descent into their innards. Amidst numerous Common Goldeneyes, Curtis alertly found (at great range) a female **Barrow’s Goldeneye** with a pale orange bill and abruptly sloping forehead.

Across the river mouth at Salisbury Beach State Park, a rising cold breeze finally reminded us of the true season. Lots of Common Eider, Red-breasted Mergansers and Common Loons flirted with the breakers, and one **Red-necked Grebe** trolled along the sheltered shoreline of the river channel. After this reporter left, the rest of the group witnessed four Short-eared Owls at dusk on the island. An embarrassment of riches!!

David Peake-Jones

Coming Trips

Wednesday, March 12. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will see what he can turn up. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin’s Farms. Call Harvey for more information.

Saturday, March 22. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Al (413-665-2761) will look for migrating ducks and geese. Call for information.

Wednesday, April 9. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will look for ducks and anything else worth seeing. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin’s Farms. Call Harvey for more information.

There is still room on the Monhegan trip! Don't Miss Out!!

Monhegan Island, Maine. May 23 to May 26 (Memorial Day weekend), 2003.

The island lies at the end of a 12-mile ferry ride from Port Clyde, on the central Maine coast. This is a legendary birding location, and the club has witnessed both some spectacular fallouts and startling rarities, especially in conjunction with certain weather patterns.

A hardy group of lobster fishers and artists lives in the village of Monhegan, clustered around a small marsh which is the only source of fresh water on the island. We will join the locals in relying entirely on our own legs to bird through the village, 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, we can are free to explore the mysteries of the Enchanted Forest, or the spectacular cliffside trails independently.

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

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)

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

Q: Who is larger: Mrs Bigger or Mrs. Bigger's baby?

A: The baby's a little Bigger.

POSITIONS FILLED

Mike Locher has courageously volunteered to take charge of the monthly chair repatriation program. Rumor has it that an anguished member of the Board browbeat him into it to avoid having to read another overblown newsletter item. Perhaps he just wanted to be known as the “Chair Chair.” Regardless of the reasons, Mike will be looking for volunteers after each meeting to replace the chairs. The theory is that he will do the brain work while the rest of employ our biceps, triceps, quadriceps and any other ‘ceps over which we still have conscious control in the restoration of harmonious chair distribution. Thanks in advance.

POSITIONS VACANT

Sally Venman needs an assistant to coordinate the provision of **refreshments** at meetings. The successful applicant will bear the official title of Assistant Refreshment Chair. An interest in Scotch Shortbread and Date Slice (my favs) are strongly recommended, but the main duty is to motivate and coordinate our members to contribute munchies for meetings. Please call Sally Venman (413 549 1098; sgvenman@attbi.com) if you are interested.

Sue Fletcher will be stepping down as the proprietor of the **HBC Boutique** after years of service. The boutique offers a range of HBC paraphernalia, including sweat- and T- shirts, patches, local checklists, and field guide supplements. These items provide a nice way to declare our affiliation, and to advertise ourselves throughout the world. Sue has tirelessly promoted the collection at meetings, and seen to the ordering of items from our suppliers. For those who have been eyeing this glamorous post with envy, now is the time to step forward. The position could be filled by a team rather than one person. Word is we are looking at a line of “Ripped” field clothing, and perhaps even the HBC “Check!” logo to counter Nike’s “Swish.” Contact Sue (413 253 2102; scfletch@aol.com) if interested.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is charged with the weighty task of recruiting members to replace those on the Board who will depart at the end of the current term. The committee needs to present a slate of nominations to the membership at the April meeting, in preparation for a vote at the Annual General Meeting in May. If you, or someone you know has/have an interest in serving on the Board, please contact one of the committee:

Scott Sumner (413 253 5983; ssurner@aol.com)

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

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

Aircraft Maintenance Problems and Solutions

Never let it be said that ground crews and engineers lack a sense of humor. Here are some actual logged maintenance complaints and problems, known as "squawks," submitted by QANTAS pilots and the solution recorded by maintenance engineers. Quantas, incidentally is the only international airline never to have had a fatal crash. “P” is the problem logged by the pilot. “S” is the solution as recorded by the engineers

P: “*Dead bugs on windshield.*”

S: “Live bugs on backorder.”

P: “*Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200-fpm descent.*”

S: “Cannot reproduce problem on ground.”

CONSERVATION

Environmental Alert Network

The Environmental Alert Network is comprised of Massachusetts Audubon members and citizens who participate in the Society's advocacy efforts. Members of the network write and call legislators to encourage them to support policies that protect the state's natural resources. In this time of limited resources, birds and birding habitats need protection more than ever. To join the network contact:

Massachusetts Audubon Society
 Legislative Affairs
 6 Beacon Street, Suite 1025
 Boston MA 02108
 Phone: 617-523-8448; email: beaconhill@massaudubon.org

*If you are interested in conservation, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. **Anne Lombard** is our **Conservation Chair**. Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or aslombard@attbi.com*

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.

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Arcadia Ecological Management Conference

Saturday, March 8; 9:00 AM to noon. Free.

Touring Hidden Habitats: Rutland Brook Wildlife Sanctuary (Petersham, MA)

Saturday, March 15; 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Natural History of Vernal Pools: Joan Milam, Conservation Educator

Friday, March 21; 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Touring Hidden Habitats: Ponemah Bog Wildlife Sanctuary, Amherst, MA

Saturday, March 22; 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

*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*

HITCHCOCK CENTER

ENERGY AND USING THE SUN: *Deb Habib, Chris Mason.*

Sunday, March 9, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

WALTZING WITH BEARS: The Black Bear in Massachusetts

Jim Cardoza & Bill Byrne, MassWildlife (Held at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary)

Wednesday, March 12, 7:00 p.m. Fee

SPRING BIRDING CLASS: *Scott Surner, Hampshire Bird Club*

Classroom Sessions(8): Wednesdays, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

March 26, April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, May 7, 14

Field Trips(10): Saturdays, 7:00 - Noon

March 29 - June 7 (except May 24)

ADOPT A VERNAL POOL: *Jennifer Wiest, Teacher/Naturalist*

Wednesdays, March 12, 19, 26, 10:00 a.m. – Noon

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE GRANITE LANDSCAPE: *Tom Wessels*

Tuesday, April 1, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

SLIDES OF SWITZERLAND: *Marion Gorham and Al Shane, Senior World Travelers*

Wednesday, March 19, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, contact the Hitchcock Center, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

Rambling.....

(relegated to the rear of the newsletter because it really doesn't relate to anything at all)

As we celebrate the discovery of the structure of DNA fifty years ago, a chunk of technology called the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe has provided for a similar quantum leap in the field of astronomy. By recording the pattern of microwaves left over from events at the very beginning of the known universe, the probe has revealed that the universe is 13.7 billion years old. It is composed of 4% "ordinary" matter (stuff you can see, hear, smell, touch or taste), 23% "cold, dark matter", and 73% "dark energy". We cannot directly observe either of the last two things. Most shockingly, we now know for certain that the gravity exerted by all the matter in the universe is not enough to halt the rapid expansion it is currently experiencing. The WMAP data tell us that there will be no "big crunch." Instead, the universe will keep on expanding indefinitely, dispersing its matter and energy over an increasingly vast volume. Ultimately the result will be a cold, dark void, with essentially infinite distances between tiny specks of matter.

I mention this rather depressing discovery mostly because it so totally violates my intuition about things. Everything else in the universe I am familiar with, from weather to geology, to biology, is in some way cyclical. Things come into being, exist, then are destroyed, creating the raw materials for the process to repeat. It seems profoundly unfair that we only get one universe to play around in. I also mention it because trying to visualize "dark matter" and "dark energy" is roughly akin to what some of we birders have been going through every migration season since we started. Such birds as the Connecticut Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Yellow Rail are alleged to exist, but remain purely theoretical for most. It is as if they exist only in some alternate universe, into which only a few of us get a chance glimpse.

I hope, one day, to understand "dark matter" and "dark energy," and for at least one glimpse into that marvelous universe of mythical birds in the coming season.

MISCELLANEOUS

Butterflies Anyone?

The **Massachusetts Butterfly Club** will be holding one of their **Butterfly Institutes** at the **Hitchcock Center** in Amherst this Spring. It will consist of 5 classes (3 Thursday and 2 Tuesday evenings) and 5 field trips (3 Sunday and 2 Saturday). This five-week course is designed for both the beginner and advanced butterflyer and will feature presentations by some of the areas knowledgeable experts.

Cost of the Institute is: \$60.00 or \$55.00 if you are a member of the Hitchcock Center. *For more information please contact Tom Gagnon at 413-584-6353; tombwhawk@aol.com or see Tom at any HBC program.*

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!

More Aircraft Maintenance Conversations (see p. 4)

P: *"Evidence of leak on right main landing gear."*

S: "Evidence removed."

P: *"DME volume unbelievably loud."*

S: "DME volume set to more believable level."

P: *"IFF inoperative."*

S: "IFF always inoperative in OFF mode."

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

David Peake-Jones

Editor

(413) 529 9541; davidpj@the-spa.com