



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

Volume 20, No. 2

## October, 2003

October is growing thin, and November's coming home. We have entered the magical, bittersweet twilight of the growing season. The countryside is ablaze with the emblems of failing photosynthesis, and the migratory birds of the Americas are flooding into the funnel of Central America to escape the lean months in North America. If you haven't been out much yet, you may already have missed most of the warblers, but the weedy fields are now filled with sparrows of every hue, and the snow geese are making their way overhead to the mid-Atlantic coast. The swirling kettles of fair-weather broadwings have gone, but in their place, the patient watcher might catch a glimpse of some solitary Golden Eagle, Goshawk, or Peregrine bulling its way through the bleak air of approaching winter.

It is also not too late to establish your place as a contributing member in the Hampshire Bird Club. Please help us continue to offer the fine selection of programs and field trips, which have always been our trademark. Included in this edition are the Hampshire Bird Club *Field Trip Policy*, and the American Birding Association's *Guide to Birding Ethics*. **Please proceed beyond this page to the second one, if for no reason other than to read about this month's program.**

### A NOTE TO ON-LINE NEWSLETTER RECIPIENTS

There are all kinds of goodies enclosed with this edition. They are the following:

- 1) **The HBC Field Trip Policy**
- 2) **The ABA "Principles of Birding Ethics"**

You may link Field Trips section of the HBC Homepage. On the other hand, as a proficient user of information technology, you may wish to leave them dormant on the Website, knowing that, with the touch of a button, you may bring them up whenever you need them!

*And now, dear reader, comes the first tangible benefit of your decision to get the on-line version of this newsletter.* The editor neglected to include the **HBC Field Trip Guidelines** with the paper edition. Our hard copy readership will have to scrape by for another month without this document but, by the wonder of the Web, it is available to you!! You guessed it! It's in the Field Trip section of the Homepage.

### Email Address Changing?

I will be sending each on-line newsletter recipient a monthly email to notify you when the newsletter is up on the Website. Please notify the Membership Secretary (Sue Emerson; [wle33@aol.com](mailto:wle33@aol.com), 584 6736) if your email address is changing! Thank you!

## PROGRAMS

### This Month

**Monday, October 20 at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst: 7:30 PM**  
**Tom Litwin recounts The Harriman Expedition Revisited**

One day in March 1899, Edward H. Harriman strode briskly into the office of C. Hart Merriam, chief of the U.S. Biological Survey. Without appointment or introduction, Harriman outlined a grand plan for an expedition along the coast of Alaska. Remarkably, within less than three months, the two men were ready to embark on an ambitious voyage of scientific discovery from Alaska's panhandle to the Bering Strait. The expedition became famous even before it departed. A crowd of onlookers cheered the departure of the vessel *George W. Elder* from Seattle on May 31, 1899. Newspapers all over the world featured the story on their front pages.

One hundred twenty-six passengers and crew traveled with Harriman and Merriam. The expedition boasted John Burroughs (the best selling nature writer of the day), and John Muir, the much-admired father of the American conservation movement. With them traveled an eminent assembly of nature artists, geologists, botanists, foresters and zoologists.

The expedition returned with over one hundred trunks of specimens, more than 5000 photographs and colored illustrations, and thirteen volumes of data that took twelve years to compile. The voyage produced a few, major new scientific discoveries - a previously unknown fiord and glacier, for example - but its value as an assessment and survey of an Alaskan environment in flux is unparalleled. Among the biological specimens collected were 8000 insects, 344 of which had been previously unknown to scientists. The collections included thousands of shellfish, birds and small mammals, and even a small number of large mammal specimens. This natural history treasure trove, much of it now at the Smithsonian Institution, retains great research value.

The expedition took place when Alaska's patina of pure coastal wilderness was beginning to tarnish from heavy use of its natural resources. In many instances, the expeditioners observed and catalogued the flora and fauna of a pristine, idealized wonderland. Yet the signs of civilization and progress were difficult to ignore. The Harriman Expedition chronicled an Alaska on the cusp of inevitable - and, in some instances, devastating - change to the environment. It provided a benchmark by which we can assess 100-years of change along the Alaskan Coast.

#### **The Harriman Alaska Expedition Retraced.**

On July 22, 2001 over two dozen scientists, artists, and writers left Prince Rupert, British Columbia on the Harriman Expedition Retraced. The *Clipper Odyssey* followed the itinerary of E. H. Harriman's lavishly-outfitted *George W. Elder*, sailing through the Inside Passage, the Gulf of Alaska, the Aleutian Archipelago, and northward through the Bering Sea. Four weeks later, on August 20, the travelers made their final stop in Nome.

**Tom Litwin** directed the "Harriman Retraced Expedition" in 2001. He is the director of the Clark Science Center at Smith College in Northampton, MA and the founding director of the Smith College Science and Policy Program. His research interests include the relationships between bird populations and ecosystem health.

### Coming Up

**November 10, 2003. Kathleen Betty Anderson.** New England's Changing Avifauna.

**December 8, 2003. Members Meeting.**

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

## FIELD TRIPS

### Reports

On an overcast, dank **Saturday, September 13**, Hampshire Bird Club walked beyond the end of Hockanum Road into the **East Meadows** in search of Fall Warblers. Despite tantalizing glimpses of the odd uncooperative warbler, we had a generally disappointing day. As we returned, somewhat dispirited, to the cars, some of the group caught varying glimpses of a graceful bird silhouetted against a gloomy, backlit understorey. A composite identification compiled by three different observers indicated that this was a **Connecticut Warbler**. Our exploration of the weedy edges of the pumpkin field of Hockanum failed to turn up anything other than a pair of enormous and terrifying dogs unleashed thoughtfully by a local canine owner. This trip epitomized Fall birding: character building, but soul-destroying!



**Harvey's mid-week group** on **September 17** began at Mitch's Marina, hoping for some good warblers. In keeping with the general tenor of this year, they had very little. However, with sun and northerly winds in the offing, the group headed for the Mountain House on Mt. Holyoke in search of hawks. The birds were slow in getting-going, but an immature Red-tailed Hawk harassed an adult, (apparently for food) at close range for over half an hour. It was not until 10:30 that the first Broad-winged Hawk hove into view on an early thermal. In the one and a half hours till noon, over three hundred broad-wings passed exhilaratingly overhead. (From nearby Mt Tom, with a broader view, over 1000 birds were tallied for the day).



**Harvey's mid-week group** on **October 8** stayed in Hadley searching for sparrows. A **Lincoln's** obliged. Other highlights included a **Woodcock** flushed at close range, an **Indigo Bunting**, and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, which responded to a Barred Owl call in the uplands.



On **Sunday, October 5**, Hampshire Bird Club ventured once more into the mysterious and forbidden realm of **Prescott Peninsula**, on the western shore of the Quabbin, under the tutelage of **Tom Gagnon**. Next to a misty beaver pond, only yards inside the gate, we encountered a knot of warblers and vireos making their way through the backlit pines. While watching them, we noticed an otter making its sinuous way through a shallow reach of the marsh just upstream. A little further in we found two more otters, (much closer this time), hunting fish in a pristine pond. At an abandoned orchard we found a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** playing tag with a group of sassy Blue Jays, and **Purple Finches** feasting on heavily-coned White Pines. A **Scarlet Tanager**, **Blackpoll Warbler** and **Pileated Woodpecker** made their appearance as we serenaded the resident **Red-breasted Nuthatches** by an overgrown field.

A **Swamp Sparrow** peered at us from reddening blueberry foliage next to the sunlit expanse of Allen's Pond. At Egypt Cove we saw a distant **Bald Eagle**, migrating monarchs and accipiters, and a superb **Peregrine Falcon**, along with an **American Lady** (butterfly) sunning itself by the shore. Tom was interrupted before his graphic description of the rare **Dog Stinkhorn** fungus could offend any tender ears. Further into the patchwork of fields and old logging tracts, we came across a phalanx of **Eastern Towhees** shwinking away in a field of re-growing White Birch, punctuated by the flashes of late **Nashville and Magnolia Warblers**. Later, we stood amidst the trampled grass of a veritable moose highway, watching startled **Green-winged Teal** leaving (yet another) pristine pond.

Over lunch, those who did not succumb to the soporific sun and breeze took a look at a **Big Brown Bat** roosting under the eaves of the university research station.

In mid afternoon, as we approached the tip of the peninsula, the Gagnon Pontiac Vibe suddenly ceased to function with no warning. In the ensuing huddle of would-be mechanics, the (very) quiet voice of Andrea Wolf suggested we might want to check the fuses. This advice went unheard, and eventually we faced the prospect of leaving the Vibe to a night or two in Prescott and the nightmare of finding a tow. Fortunately, the idea of checking the fuses arose again (independently of it's first incarnation) and, lo and behold, a simple replacement

brought the car back to life. One of our last forays away from the roads was to an area of old borrow pits and poor sandy soils. Here Tom counted over four hundred **Nodding Ladies Tresses** (orchids).

### Coming Trips

**Saturday, October 18. Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, Vermont.** All day. Al Richards leads a group to southern Lake Champlain, looking for one or two Ross's Geese among thousands of Snow Geese, and searching out other seasonal specialties. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register.

**Sunday, November 2. Berkshire Lakes. All day.** Tom Gagnon leads his annual trip to the lakes and ponds of the Berkshires looking for migrating waterfowl. Bring snacks, warm clothing, and a lunch. Meet Tom at the Super Stop and Shop on King St. (Routes 5 and 10) in Northampton at 6:15 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register or for further information.

**Wednesday, November 12. Connecticut River Valley.** Half day. Harvey Allen will seek out migrants on his monthly sweep. Meet at 8 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, November 23. East Quabbin.** All day. Tom Gagnon ventures to the far side of the reservoir on this annual late fall trip. Bring snacks, warm clothes, and a lunch. The trip will be limited to 15 participants. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to reserve a place and make arrangements for meeting.

### Great Things Take Time!

The club commissioned **Andrew Magee** (long-time birder and wildlife artist) to throw together two **caricatures** of retiring Board members **Jan Ortiz and Scott Sumner**. However, those who have seen Andrew's art are aware that he simply cannot throw-together anything. In place of the intended sketches, Andrew is seeing to the birth of two new master works in the field of caricature. In spite of several all-nighters on Andrew's part, the two works were incomplete at the time of the September meeting. Jan and Scott were allowed brief glimpses of them, as reassurance of good faith, before they were whisked off for completion and framing. Good people of HBC, please rest assured that the completed works will well-and-truly blend with the best of the art in the Ortiz and Sumner households, and will be worth the wait! The framed articles will be on-show at the October meeting.

### The Christmas Count Needs You!

Now that you know the difference between a Fox Sparrow and one of those maddeningly-reddish Song Sparrows (or not!), here is an opportunity to contribute to one of the longest-running databases in ornithology. Birders all over the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands contribute to an annual census of birds in their local areas, the results of which are collated internationally. Last year's Northampton count recorded historical high numbers of Mute Swan, Cooper's Hawk, and Peregrine Falcon. In 2001 we recorded the first ever Nashville Warbler on a Northampton Christmas count. This is perhaps the most communal birding activity. The Northampton and Quabbin circles are divided up into smaller areas, each counted by an experienced leader or leaders, with assistants. Groups plan who will participate, for how long, and how to divide up the count area. To take part, all you really need is a willingness to cope with the vagaries of December birding, and the resolve to count everything in a scientific manner. The coordinators can hook you up with a team that needs members in your area. Both local counts culminate in a compilation session during which those still standing come together to pool results. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose is palpable and rarely equaled in birding!

### Mark These Dates!

**Northampton Count:** Sunday, December 14.

**Quabbin Count:** To Be Announced.

For further information, watch coming newsletters, or contact Jan Ortiz (413 549 1768; [jortiz@aol.com](mailto:jortiz@aol.com), Northampton Count) and Scott Sumner (413 253 5999; [ssurner@aol.com](mailto:ssurner@aol.com), Quabbin Count)

### **Christmas Count 2: The Potluck!**

Those who truly understand life understand that the whole Christmas Count thing is merely a flimsy excuse for the Potluck! Why else send a bunch of normally-sedentary folks out stomping all over the landscape in the dead of winter, if not to develop an appetite for the best comestibles the bird club can dish up!

We need volunteers to prepare the traditional repast! Regardless of whether you plan to count, those who do will be eternally grateful for whatever you can offer. Please watch the newsletters if you want to contribute food or drink!

### **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. Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or [aslombard@comcast.com](mailto:aslombard@comcast.com)*

### **Breeding Terns in Massachusetts**

Following a serious oil spill in Buzzards Bay on April 27 this year, you may well have been concerned about the impact on the ecology of the region. From MassWildlife comes welcome news that, at least with respect to the terns breeding in coastal Massachusetts, the short-term effects appear to have been slight. For the state, a total of 16, 087 pairs of Common Terns nested this year, which represents a modern high and up 17% from last year. Roseate Terns, whose breeding numbers decreased sharply last year, returned to around 2001 breeding levels with 1, 715 pairs. Least Terns remain the species of most concern in the state, with breeding pairs declining 8% to 2, 562 pairs this year, down from 3, 420 pairs in 2001. Five pairs of Arctic Terns nested in the state this year (unchanged from 2002), and Black Skimmers returned to the state's breeding list after a year of absence (seven breeding pairs were documented).

### **Broad Brook Coalition Annual Meeting**

Date: **Sunday, November 2, 2003**

Place: **Browsing Room, Neilson Library, Smith College**

Time: **6:00 PM:** Conversation and Refreshments

**6:30 PM:** Business Meeting

**7:00 PM:** Special Presentation:

This year's featured speaker is **Tom Ricardi**, retired Environmental Police Major for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and founder of the Raptor Rehabilitation Center in Conway, Massachusetts. Tom has been instrumental in efforts to rehabilitate and release back into the wild injured eagles, hawks, owls, falcons, vultures and other raptors. He has also been a driving force in the captive breeding and population restoration of Bald Eagles, Barn Owls and other Birds of Prey. Tom will talk about these remarkable conservation successes, as well as bring in live raptors that are unable to be released to the wild, in what is sure to be an outstanding program. Don't miss this!!!! We're making it early in the evening so you can bring the kids.

A linguistics professor, addressing his class said, "There are numerous cultures in which a double negative is used to denote the positive. It is also common for a negative and a positive to be used in tandem to emphasize the negative. However, in no culture does a double positive connote a negative!"  
 After an exquisite pause, a sarcastic response came from the back, "Yeah, right!"

### **Habitat Conservation in Massachusetts**

An important program titled "**Our Land: Going, Going, Gone**" will be presented by the **Springfield Naturalist Club** at 7:30pm on Wednesday, October 15th in the Fine Arts Museum Auditorium at the Quadrangle in Springfield. **Bob Wilber**, Director of Land Protection for Mass Audubon will show how crucial wildlife habitat in the Commonwealth can be conserved.

### **Preserving Open Space In Northampton**

Northampton residents may want to attend a public forum on **Wednesday, October 22, 2003** entitled "**Northampton 2020: Paradise Lost?**" The forum takes place at **JFK Middle School**, Bridge Road, Florence, **7:00-8:30 PM**, and is free and open to all. Sponsors include the Conservation Alliance of Northampton, the Northampton Conservation Commission, Broad Brook Coalition, Friends of Sawmill Hills, the Wildlife Subcommittee of the Conservation Commission, the Paradise City Forum and the Leeds Civic Association.

Denis Superczynski, Senior Planner for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, is the featured speaker. Mr. Superczynski will outline some of the history of open space preservation in Northampton. He will also detail how the city will be affected if future residential development is allowed to reach its maximum capacity under current zoning regulations.

This is the first in a series of forums that will provide venues for citizens to get involved in shaping the future of Northampton. The second forum, on Wednesday, November 19, will highlight the Community Preservation Act.

## **HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS**

**Growing Sustainable Forests:** Scott Maslansky, Director of North Quabbin Woods Project  
**Sunday, Nov. 9, 1:00 -3:00 PM**

**Fall Birding Trips:** Scott Sumner, Bird Class Instructor

Though the class is underway, you may register for, and participate in, the individual trips listed below.

Members: \$25 per trip. Non-members: \$35 per trip. [Register](#)

**Saturday, Sept. 13:** 7 AM – noon. Birds of Prey & Other Migrants

**Saturday, Oct. 4:** 7 AM – noon. Sparrows and Late Warblers

**Saturday, Oct. 18:** 7 AM – noon. Quabbin Waterfowl

**Saturday, Nov. 8:** 6 AM. – 3PM. Berkshire Lakes Waterfowl.

**Wildlife Tracking Reflections:** Mark Elbroch, Naturalist & Author of "*Bird Track and Sign and Mammal Tracks and Sign: A Guide to North American Species.*"

**Tuesday, Oct. 28,** 7:00-9:00 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](http://www.hitchcockcenter.org).*

**Where Are They Now?**

Periodically, members drift to parts unknown without leaving a forwarding address. We'd like to at least make sure we do not lose them by accident. If you can provide an address for any of the following, please contact Sue Emerson (Membership Secretary: [wle33@aol.com](mailto:wle33@aol.com); (413) 584 6736). Thanks!

**Deandra Gordon**, formerly of McIntosh Drive, Amherst.  
**Jonathon Gottsche and Shelley Parker**, formerly of Jacksonville, Florida

## ARCADIA PROGRAMS

**October 18:** 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
**Parker River/Plum Island Birding.** Fee.

**October 18:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
**Fungi of Fall Forests.** Fee.

**October 26:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
**Autumn at High Ledges** (held at High Ledges Wildlife Sanctuary). Fee

**November 2:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
**Understanding and Mapping Natural Communities.** Fee

**November 8:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
**West Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary** (held at West Mountain). Fee

**November 9:** 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
**Reading the Forested Landscape.** Fee

*For more details of these, and other programs go to [www.massaudubon.org](http://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**.*

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Bird Prints For Sale

Erstwhile club member Deborah Reiter has donated a series of beautifully framed bird prints by Arthur Singer to the club. These are approximately 8" x 11" and depict Northern Mockingbird, Cardinal, Bluebirds (Mountain and Eastern), American Robin, Eastern Meadowlark, Baltimore Oriole, and several game species including Ring-necked Pheasant. The club is offering these for sale at \$25 each. Proceeds will go to the purchase of books for the library. They will be at the October meeting for those who think they may be interested.

### New Members This Year: *WELCOME!*

**Barbara Alfange**, Hadley  
**Jonathon Brooks**, Greenfield  
**Barbara Drollette**, Whately  
**Linda Harris**, Hadley  
**Julie Johnson**, Amherst  
**Peg Malia**, Belchertown  
**Elizabeth Rock**, Hadley  
**John Van de Graff and Marylee Bomboy**, Northampton

**Susan Benoit**, Indian Orchard  
**Sylvia Cuomo**, Amherst  
**Janice Gifford**, Pelham  
**Margaret Holbrook**, Amherst  
**David Mako**, South Deerfield  
**Caitlin Robinson**, Amherst  
**Larry Therrien**, Florence

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

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