



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

Volume 20, No. 10

June, 2004

“What makes the desert beautiful is that somewhere it hides a well.” So spoke the Little Prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s classic of the same name. My friend Betsy Higgins and I recently dragged our leaden legs up Mt Holyoke before the gate opened in search of both Worm-eating- and Cerulean Warblers. It was a dank, foggy, and buggy morning. There were few birds evident, except a host of Redstarts nagging us with their myriad of “Could that be.....?” variations on whatever they are supposed to sing. We got to the hairpins close to the top, and were trying to locate a possible Cerulean singing in deep foliage, when a carload of birders (Swiss, it turned out), drove by. Within minutes they were excitedly pointing and gesticulating at what we assume was a Cerulean warbler in the upper parking lot. Our bird never showed, but Betsy did see a warbler building a nest among the anonymous limbs of an oak some distance from the road. We caught the barest glimpse of the male from the parking lot, before we returned to the hairpin section to look some more at the nest. In the mist and poor light, we could make out only the most basic field marks of the warbler busily flying to and from the nest and some distant source of building material, which seemed to be lichen. Still uncertain, we walked back to the bottom of the hill with vague plans to research the nest and/or come back in better conditions. Betsy did the former, and I did the latter. It turns out that the Cerulean Warbler does indeed build a cup nest including lichens along the limb of a tree, and when viewed in better light later the same day, our bird was conclusively a female Cerulean Warbler. *What makes the woods beautiful is that somewhere they hide a nest.*

While we are still in the exciting throes of May this publication comes to you for the last time in the current birding year. After the craziness of Spring we (and our long-suffering families) need time and space to pursue other activities for a while, or to take our birding interests to far-flung locations. You are therefore encouraged to enjoy the lazy days of summer in whatever birding or non-birding pursuit suits your fancy, with reading material which should absolutely NOT include the HBC newsletter. However, don’t forget that some great trips take place through the summer.

Please note that the trip to Westover Air Force Base, originally scheduled for June 19 has been rescheduled to June 12. See “Coming Trips” for details.

PROGRAMS

This Month

Monday, June 14

Harvey Allen et al. with “The Gambia Experience”

Harvey has been characteristically self-effacing when encouraged to provide either biographical information, or the slightest idea of what he is going to talk about. So we must revel in the anticipation of a mystery. Rest assured that Gambia is one of the lesser-known birding locations in the world, and we are guaranteed a unique view of its avian wonders through Harvey’s eyes.

Coming Programs

Program Schedule (Provisional): Fall 2004-Summer 2005.

September 13, 2004. Shawn Carey: "Birding - A Multi-media Visual Experience"
October 18, 2004. David Sibley: "Birders and Conservation: A Broader View"
November 8, 2004. Don Kroodsma: "Bird By Bird By Bike"
December 13, 2004. Member's Meeting: (Members Slide Show)
January 10, 2005. To Be Announced
February 14, 2005. Daniel J. Klem: "Glass: A Bird Conservation Issue"
March 14, 2005. To Be Announced
April 11, 2005. To Be Announced
May 9, 2005. Susan Roney Drennan. "Pacific Albatross Biology and Conservation"
June 13, 2005. Frank Gill. Topic To Be Decided

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **Saturday, April 10**, **Bob Bieda** and a group visited **Ashley Reservoir** hoping to find the first avian harbingers of spring. Bob reports that the birding was fairly quiet, but they did get excellent looks at Pine Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and managed to find two of the first Tree Swallows to return.



On **Saturday, May 1**, **Shirley Hillborn and Marcia Merithew** led a most successful joint HBC-Mass Audubon trip to **Graves Farm** in Williamsburg. From the new parking lot in the upper reaches of the farm we wandered down the road through woods ringing with newly arrived Ovenbirds on territory, Wood Thrush, and a very vocal **Winter Wren** deep in the hemlocks. In the beaver swamp we eventually located an emphatic **Louisiana Waterthrush** singing from the top of a dead tree ("SWEEP, SWEEP, SWEEP, jumble"). A second waterthrush began singing from trees overhead. After much umming, aahing and poring over Sibley we concluded that the three-tiered song of this bird ("SWEEP, SWEEP, SWEEP, Sweep, Sweep, Sweep, sweep sweep sweep") identified it as a **Northern Waterthrush**.

We stopped briefly to admire the **Cliff Swallows** nesting under the eaves of the barn, and move further on up the road. Shirley and Elaine had a brief encounter with a **Dickcissel**, but it vanished without allowing anyone else a look. Wandering through the orchard we listened to a distant **Field Sparrow**, watched a gorgeous Common Yellowthroat, at least one Baltimore Oriole, and a Northern Rough-winged Swallow.

As the briskness of morning graded toward the heat of noon, the group filtered back toward the cars. A lone Bobolink was seen and heard singing atop a pine tree in the meadow. Several of us wandered into the woods on the new Graves trail system, where we found Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and more waterthrushes.



Trip Reports (continued).....

Highlights of the HBC trip to **Quabbin Reservoir** with **Tom Gagnon** on **Saturday, May 8** included 17 species of warblers. A **Cerulean Warbler** was heard but not seen in its customary habitat. There were **8 Common Loons, 22 Baltimore Orioles, 6 Yellow-throated Vireos, 6 Least Flycatchers, 3 Scarlet Tanagers, 5 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and 1 Swainson's Thrush**. Betsy Higgins also reports 7 species of butterflies and 4 species of mammals. Presumably these include a **Bobcat** seen on the way to Quabbin in the morning!

Betsy Higgins

Betsy also says:

“Please correct me if I spelled anything wwrong. You would not believe how bad I spell and you would not believe how many times I have to delete things when I am typing! Don't put this part in the newsletter!!!!!!”

Sorry Betsy. It would have been better not to have said anything. I include this loving jibe only because I have to hit the “Backspace” button about a thousand times in the course of hunting and pecking my way through each newsletter.

Editor



On **Saturday, May 15, David Peake-Jones** led a group to **Mt Auburn Cemetery** in Watertown, MA. The day began on the cool side, but rapidly became warm and breezy. The cemetery, as always was a beautiful place to be. There is nothing quite like approaching Longfellow's grave with a **Blackburnian Warbler** singing above it! There were, inevitably, warblers around, but the day was rather quiet by Mount Auburn standards. We tallied fifteen species. The undoubted highlights were **Bay-breasted Warblers**, whose abbreviated “Tee-ee, Tee-see, Tee-sees greeted us almost as soon as we left the cars.

Near Halcyon Pond, we paused in a heavily wooded area, to investigate a bright little song tailing rather abruptly off at the end. This proved to be a gorgeous **Wilson's Warbler**, sporting in an ornamental maple. Amidst various other birds in this very densely-foliated tree were a Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, and one monotonous high-pitcher which just did not quite fit. One or two of us caught lucky glimpses of this bird, which turned out to be a male **Cape May Warbler**. This species is distressingly hard to find in any season these days.

As usual for the cemetery at this date, the default thrush was **Swainson's**, which gave us good opportunities to see its blank-faced looks among the gravestones. Some alert birders had found an **Orchard Oriole** energetically building a nest in the trailing boughs of a weeping willow at Willow Pond.

We headed home via the Concord unit of Great Meadows NWR. This year, the **Marsh Wrens** were back nesting cheek-by-jowl along the dike after an inexplicable absence last year. Their energetic displays were a great highlight, as was the knot of Water Snakes we found alongside the trail. Sixty six species represents a very mediocre day for mid-May, but a slow day at Mt Auburn is better than a good day almost anywhere else.



Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. 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).

Saturday, June 12. Westover AFB: Grassland birds. Half day. Bob Bieda (413-527-2623) will lead this annual trip into one of New England's premier grasslands looking for Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. Call to check on the status of the trip, and to register. (E)

Note that this trip has been rescheduled from June 19

Wednesday, June 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 6:00 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

Saturday, July 24. New South Beach, I. All day. David Peake-Jones (413-529-9541) will look for early shorebird migrants. Be prepared for wet conditions and a long walk, and bring a lunch. Call to register. (M)

Saturday, August 21. 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. (M)

Announcing Cape May, 2004

Friday, October 8 – Monday, October 11

The club will again travel to Cape May, New Jersey over the Columbus Day weekend. In the fall, countless migrating raptors and song birds are funneled to the tip of the Cape, earning it the justified reputation of one of the east coast's premier birding hotspots. This trip usually fills fast, so contact Scott Sumner (253 5983; ssurner@aol.com) for further details and/or to reserve a space.

CONSERVATION

Connecticut River: Source To Sea

Birding Trail Maps. Other places have them. We all use them when we travel. Now it is our turn. A four-state group is working to develop a series of maps along the Connecticut River, Source to Sea. Work is already finished on one of the Vermont-New Hampshire Sections and is beginning of other pieces. And now, finally, Massachusetts is getting organized. Please help by nominating an appropriate site. Nomination forms are available on the Hampshire Bird Club website (www.hampshirebirdclub.org). They will also be available at the next HBC meeting. You can request a nomination form from the Berkshire Pioneer Resource Conservation and Development Council: 433 West Street, Suite 5, Amherst, MA 01002-2917.

SET-UP CZAR NEEDED

Qualifications? Available at 4:30 on the Mondays of most HBC meetings; a car that can hold a 6-foot projection screen (if you can put skis in your car the screen will fit); and a small amount of space to store the screen, projector and two small bags of related paraphernalia between meetings. Rewards? Get to work with a great crew; meet the speaker; and be really, really useful to the club.

Please contact Mary Alice Wilson: (548 9078; mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu) or any member of the Board.

THE COMMISSARY

Club stalwart Sally Venman, fresh from her self-deprecating introduction for Jan Ortiz at the May meeting, recently sent me the following missive regarding refreshments at meetings: “After 30 years of being there with HBC responsibility of one kind or another, I need a break.” (The nerve of the woman). She continues: “As far as I know, Helga and Joanne will continue on the committee calling for volunteers and helping to set up when I am in need of help but we may need more volunteers and someone willing to keep the goodies and make sure the supplies are in readiness. Could you please make a strong plea for help in the next newsletter, David?”

Well there you have it. When a rugged individual like Sally is reduced to pleading like this, the rest of us should respond. Not sure I would come to meetings at all if there were not delicious inducements to do so. *If you can help in this area, please contact Sally (549 1098; sgvenman@comcast.net), Helga Beatty (253 2410; HiBeatty@aol.com), or Joanne Parker (549 7446; parkrjm@yahoo.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. There are no Saturday hours in the summer. 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 the meeting on June 14, given a few days notice! Call him at (413) 549 3722.

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: 2004-2005

At the **Annual General Meeting** of the **Hampshire Bird Club, Incorporated**, on **Monday, May 10, 2004**, the following were elected by the membership.

President: Dennis McKenna
Vice President (Program Chair): Geoff LeBaron
Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson
Communications Secretary: Jan Howard
Treasurer: David Gross
Members-at-Large: Betsy Higgins
 Marcia Merithew
 Mike Locher
 Bob Zimmermann
 Elissa Rubenstein
 Jaap van Heerden

MISCELLANEOUS

Red Knot in Peril

As mentioned in the April edition, the Red Knot (*Callidris canutus rufa*) is in extreme danger due to declining availability of horseshoe crab eggs in its Atlantic flyway refueling site: the Delaware Bay. For an update on some promising recent developments, and the push for federal listing of this species, you may go to www.njaudubon.org/Conservation/HScrabalert.html.

Appropriate to the current situation comes an extraordinary discovery about Knot longevity this past week. A Red Knot banded in Lagoa do Peixe (southern Brazil) in 1984 was photographed by Patrick and Doris Leahy while conducting shorebird surveys in coastal Florida. Brian Harrington of the Manomet Bird Observatory was able to assign a minimum age of 21 years to the bird. This represents the oldest Red Knot on record. One can reasonably assume that this bird has travelled over 400,000 miles in migration during its lifetime. For further details, visit www.manomet.org/naturereport/

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!

Welcome New Members

Valerie Miller: Hopkinton, MA

That's it till next year!

Until September, talk softly and carry a big scope! David Peake-Jones

Editor

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