



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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**March, 2004**

The news of this month was probably the large group of gulls at a composting facility on Burt's Pit Road in Northampton. These birds attracted statewide attention in February when our own Andrew Magee spotted an immature **Thayer's Gull** amongst them. Notwithstanding the dubious status of this species, there is no doubt that the gaggle of birders lined up along the fence for much of the third week in February were doing what birders enjoy most: enjoying the thrill of the question. Irrespective of this one bird, it is worth remembering that such a congregation of Iceland Gulls has not been seen together in the valley in recent memory. This, along with the occasional appearance of a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** and a **Glaucous Gull** made the group a treat to be sure.

## **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.*

### **Monday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m.: Dave King on Research into Wintering Golden-cheeked Warblers in Mexico and Central America.**

Dave received his bachelors in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University, and a Masters and Ph.D. in Natural Resources Conservation and Organismic and Evolutionary Biology from UMASS. Dave's research has been focused on the relationship between birds and their habitats, particularly in relation to management activities such as silviculture, road building and powerline rights of way. He was a research associate with the Smithsonian in a "former life", investigating the winter ecology and conservation of neotropical and Australasian birds. This work included a study of wintering Golden-cheeked Warblers during 1996-1999. David's talk will include a discussion of the winter ecology of migrants in general, a description of his experiences working in Mexico and Central America, and the results of his research on the Golden-cheeked Warbler.

Currently Dave is studying shrubland bird communities in Massachusetts pitch pine-scrub oak communities, and the effects of agroforestry on biodiversity in Nicaragua.

### **Coming Up**

**April 19, 2004.** Peter Alden. Invasive Plants of New England, Impacts on Bird Populations.

**May 10, 2004.** Jan Ortiz. Baffin Island.

**June 14, 2004.** Harvey Allen et al. The Gambia Experience

Please note that Don Kroodsma's talk on "Birding By Bike" has been postponed until next program year.

## FIELD TRIPS

### Reports

**Harvey's** mid-week trip on **Wednesday, February 18** proved to be clear and very windy. (The weather, that is, not the birders). At the airport we watched Horned Larks, and checked the river for white-winged gulls without success. At the now-infamous gull site on Burt's Pit Road in Northampton we had excellent views of numerous **Iceland Gulls** of all ages, along with a lifetime supply of Herring- and Greater Black-backed Gulls and Starlings. The hardy folk went back to the river (just beyond the airport) and saw a **Glaucous Gull**.



**February 28** dawned surprising balmy for **Geoff LeBaron's** trip to **Plum Island** and environs. When our large group finally got to Newburyport, we spent some time examining a rather lack-luster group of ducks and gulls from the Joppa Flats. We then scoped scattered Red-necked- and Horned Grebes (interspersed with a Red-throated Loon, and assorted sea ducks) from the beach at the base of the island. With the exception of these, a nice female Northern Harrier, and a few Goldeneye in the saltmarsh, the northern end of the island proved to be, in Geoff's words, "spectacularly birdless." Not to be disappointed, we traveled to Emerson's rocks, where Chris Yerlig's alert eyes picked up an adult **Northern Shrike** near the State Park parking lot. Around the rocks there were Common Eider, a very coy female Barrow's Goldeneye, and all three Scoters in various plumages (ranging from ambiguous to downright inscrutable).

We stopped in Joppa Park along the harbor-front to chase down a group of waxwings (all Cedar, as it turned out), and to scope the long line of Common Goldeneye and Bufflehead feeding along the edge of the tidal rip in the harbor. While doing this, we got a great view of a **Rough-legged Hawk** hunting on the far side of the Merrimack. His bird showed up again when we pulled in to Cashman Park, where we had unparalleled views of superb **Long-tailed Ducks**, Greater Scaup, and a male **Barrow's Goldeneye**, all at close range. Our last stop on the Newburyport side was the swing bridge, recently rebuilt and now passable, where there were some immature Bald Eagles, as well as Great Cormorants with grizzled throats and spectacular white flank patches, heralding the onset of their breeding season.

Toward late afternoon, we crossed the river to Salisbury. The State Park and jetty were (again) devoid of interesting birds, but that all changed as we devoured the last of Geoff's Garlic and Herb Corn Chips near the boat launch. Right on cue, a **Short-eared Owl** loped out of the pines and began hunting across the saltmarsh and dunes on all sides of us. A second bird did the same thing, and the two of them performed their stiff-armed dance with the dusk until it was too dark to see. Our last bird of the day was one of these owls circumscribing a huge, brave loop out over the river against the lights of Salisbury, before returning to some part of the dark, anonymous saltmarsh.

One of the highlights of the day was the inaugural journey of the "Golden Age Corolla." Appropriately golden in color, and piloted by one unnamed past-president, the four occupants of this vehicle possessed an average of one (1.0) Golden Age NWR pass each ("for reasons that we won't go into"), and single-handedly got the entire group onto the island. The aforesaid past president would like it known, by way of a retort, that the newsletter editor broke one of the roadside paling fences with the gargantuan weight of his posterior, but this is mere rumor and character assassination.

## Coming Trips

**Wednesday, March 17. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley.** Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:30 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, March 20. Connecticut River Waterfowl.** Half day. David Peake-Jones (529 9541) will follow the river looking for migrating waterfowl. Call David to register. (E)

**\*Sunday, March 28. Woodcocks.** Early evening. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will look for American Woodcocks, and then maybe some Screech Owls on the way home. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at Mitch's Marina on Route 47 in Hadley. (E)

### Monhegan Island: May 28 – 31

There has been considerable interest in the trip but spaces remain, awaiting the payment of deposits. You can still get in on the action if you are willing to pony up soon! Please contact David Peake-Jones ([davidpj@the-spa.com](mailto:davidpj@the-spa.com); 529 9541) if you are interested.

## ARE YOU A PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBER?

A Nominating Committee is appointed each year at this time to arrange nominations for any required replacements to the HBC Board, which will be elected at the May meeting. **Mary Alice Wilson** has agreed to serve on the committee this year. She will be joined by two Board members in due course. If you are interested in serving on the Board, or know of someone who has expressed an interest, please contact Mary Alice. ([mwilson@k12phast.umass.edu](mailto:mwilson@k12phast.umass.edu); (413) 548 9078)

## 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.net](mailto:aslombard@comcast.net)*

## HAMMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB EVENING AT WFCR

Once again HBC members can spend an evening answering phones at WFCR during their fund drive in March. We will be taking calls at the station (in the studio with the on-air hosts) on Saturday, March 6, from 6-9 PM. It's easy (training is provided). It's fun (sometimes there is live music in the studio and you get to see radio behind-the-scenes). Dinner is provided; all you need to do is bring yourself (and friend if you wish) and answer pledge calls as they come in. If you'd like to join the fun, sign up by calling or emailing Dave Gross at 253-2897 or [dgross@biochem.umass.edu](mailto:dgross@biochem.umass.edu).

*Date: Saturday, March 6*

*Time: 6-9 p.m.*

*Location: WFCR studios, Hampshire House, UMass campus*

## **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY MOVES IN CYBERSPACE!**

While our long-suffering Membership Secretary, Sue Emerson, still resides on West Street in Hadley, her email address has changed. She now has the following, somewhat racy address of: [spe33@hotmail.com](mailto:spe33@hotmail.com). Please do not get any ideas, (unless those include remembering to send her your own email or postal address changes, and any other changes to the membership information you sent us at the beginning of the year. This includes your preference for how to receive the newsletter).

## **Birding for Everybody! An Invitation**

Birds can be found almost everywhere. Birders are simply people who get to know birds by sight, sound and knowledge of behavior. Have you ever thought about trying birding but were discouraged because of a disability, age or lack of experience? Be assured that NOTHING need prevent you from participating in America's most popular outdoor recreational activity!

Have you wondered about birds you have seen in our area's many and varied natural habitats? Perhaps you want to attract them closer to your home. Either way, this is the meeting for you!

We will explore tools and techniques that can make birding accessible to anyone who is willing to learn. Please bring along like-minded friends. Share your experiences with beginners and experts alike. We will be setting up times in the field to practice our skills. This meeting is free and open to the public.

Our inaugural meeting will be held on:

**Sunday, March 21, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm**

The venue is:

**Millers River Environmental Center  
100 Main Street  
Athol, MA 01331  
(978)-248-9491**

**Hope to see you there.!**

## **HITCHCOCK CENTER**

**SWEATSHOPS NO MORE:** Lydia Long Verité, Robert Pollin, PERI Center at UMass  
Sunday, March 14, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m

**THE HEAT IS ON!:** Ross Gelbspan, Scientist and Author  
Sunday, April 4, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

### **FARMLAND PRESERVATION IN THE VALLEY: Who Benefits?**

Bob Rakoff, Hampshire College

Tuesday, March 9, 7:00 p.m.

Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, call 256-6006.

(continued→)

### Hitchcock Programs (continued)

#### LAND PROTECTION IN THE VALLEY -Now or Never... Forever?

Bob Wilber, Mass Audubon

Wednesday, March 24, 7:00 p.m.

Held at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton, call 584-3009.

#### BIRDS OF PREY: Tom Ricardi, MA Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Center

Saturday, March 20, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

#### SPRING BIRDING CLASS

Scott Sumner, Birder

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

March 3, 31, April 7, 14, 28, May 5, 12, 19

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

March 6, March 28 - June 5 (except May 29)

#### ADOPT A VERNAL POOL

Jennifer Wiest, Teacher/Naturalist

Wednesdays, March 17 & 24, 10:00 a.m. - Noon; Saturday, March 27, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

#### SALAMANDER TUNNEL MAINTENANCE DAY

Sunday, March 7, 1:00 p.m. - until we're done

*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).*

### ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Sap Moon Snowshoe Trek: Aimee Galinas

Saturday, March 6: 7:00 – 10:00 PM

Ecological Management Conference

Saturday, March 6: 9:00 AM – NOON

Snowshoe into Spring at Windsor Jambs (At Windsor State Forest)

Saturday, March 20: 9:00 AM - NOON

*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 at the number below. To register for programs contact Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone (413) 584-3009.*

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Midwinter Eagle Survey Results

from Mass Wildlife

Mass Wildlife staff and volunteer eagle spotters braved high winds and frigid temperatures during the annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey, recording an early tally of 61 Bald Eagles wintering in Massachusetts on January 9, 2004. From the Berkshires to Cape Cod, eagle watchers were out in force looking for the national bird along the coast and at larger inland water bodies.

Quabbin Reservoir and the Connecticut River have been two of the focal points of the survey in this state. Thanks to helicopter flight time donated by long-standing eagle project sponsor National Grid, Wildlife Biologist Dave Fuller and Western District Supervisor Tom Keefe were able to get eye-to-eye with the regal birds.

“You simply can’t conduct a thorough survey at Quabbin and along the Connecticut River without the chopper,” observes French.

“National Grid has been an outstanding partner in bald eagle restoration since 1982. We appreciate their interest and commitment to the program in Massachusetts.”

Thirty nine Bald Eagles (14 adults and 26 juveniles) were counted at Quabbin. Six eagles (5 adults and 1 juvenile) were observed along the Connecticut River. Elsewhere, ground crews counted one juvenile bird on the Westfield River in Russell, eight birds along the Merrimack River (5 adults and 3 juveniles), four adults and two juveniles at Assawompsett Pond in Lakeville, and one (adult) at Great Herring Pond in Plymouth. Four Black Vultures were also reported by spotters in Sheffield. Additional reports continue to come in and a final survey figure will be available in February. Last year a total of 50 Bald Eagles were reported statewide.

### Woman Sees Birds

Northampton, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>

Montague woman, Micky McKinley, while doing errands in Northampton, witnessed several noteworthy events. First, at the intersection of Flynn and King Streets, she saw 2 Red-tailed Hawks circling over the Honda dealer, the very place she bought the Honda that she was driving at the time. Next she turned onto King Street and proceeded north to the intersection with Bridge Street. While waiting at the red light she caught sight of a mature Bald Eagle with a fish in its talons flying directly overhead. A second mature eagle followed it. Finally, she turned left onto Bridge Street and after about 2 blocks she witnessed a Turkey Vulture soaring nearby.

Unnamed birding officials were at a loss to explain the events.

Micky McKinley ([Lycopod@crocker.com](mailto:Lycopod@crocker.com)), published without addition or alteration  
(An unnamed editor is at a loss to explain the existential appeal of this article)

### Welcome, New Members

**Owen Cook & Beth Bone:** New Salem, MA

**Janet & Robert Bissell:** Northampton, MA

**Shirley Smigel:** New Britain, Ct.

**Ann Hazzard:** Pelham, Ma.

**Bruce & Anne MacLachlan:** Williamsburg, Ma.

That’s it for this month.

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