



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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## September, 2004

I am sure that, as a good newsletter editor, I should be editorializing the Red-footed Falcon, or some such magnificent vagrant. However, I choose instead to welcome you to the 2004 club year with a far simpler tale of summer birding. Club stalwart Betsy Higgins and I went, for no particularly good reason, (except that it was a favorite childhood haunt of hers), to Hammonasset Beach State Park on the Connecticut shore in early July. A hot, still, beachcomber-laden day was looming as we arrived, and despite the lateness of the hour, decided to try for rails in one of the anonymous saltmarsh tidal channels. Imagine our delight, when we spotted a Clapper Rail, then another, foraging at the waterline. The birds were surprisingly tolerant of our presence, and almost frantically hunting Fiddler Crabs from the plentiful supply in the muddy channel. Eventually, as we forced our normally list-driven minds to focus on the unfolding natural history in front of us, we began to discern a pattern in the activity, which seemed to center on a large clump of reeds. With a little more patience, we eventually saw the first of a pair of tiny, jet-black chicks taking some of its first exploratory steps out of the reedy haven. The parents fed the chicks for at least half an hour as we watched, carefully holding the crabs, while the chicks dismembered and consumed them. We left the family to its activity, and moved on to more mundane things. What a treat! I hope your summer has been good, too. I have relegated this rambling to 10 font to frustrate our older members, and because there are, amazingly, more important things that need to be covered!

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE BY SEPTEMBER 30!**

**Send yours in via the enclosed membership form, which may also be turned in at the September meeting.**

Also in this edition:

**The HBC Rare Bird Alert form**

**The Fall Field Trip Schedule**

**Coming Programs**

**AND MORE!**

So please read on. It makes me feel better.

## **PROGRAMS**

*Programs are held at Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst.*

**Monday, September 13 at 7:30 PM**

**Shawn Carey and Migration Productions** present "**Birding: A Multi-Media Visual Experience,**" featuring photographs and video of some of North America's most beautiful birds from many locations including Massachusetts, Florida, Pennsylvania, Maine and Arizona.

Shawn Carey moved for his home in Erie, Pennsylvania to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1986 and started watching birds in 1988. Shawn began to combine his interests in birding and photography in 1991. In 1994 he and his partner Jim Grady started Migration Productions as a way to present their multi-image slide presentations to a live audience. Migration Productions has been presenting programs to birding organizations ever since. In 1997, Shawn started teaching bird photography workshops (Fundamentals of Bird Photography) for Massachusetts Audubon.

Shawn is on the Advisory Board of the Mass Audubon Visual Arts Center and is the President of Eastern Mass Hawk Watch. He serves on the Board of Brookline Bird Club.

Shawn is also a co-owner of UltraSonics Recording Studio in Somerville Massachusetts, and a bass player for a band of the same name. He is the operations manager at AVFX in Boston.

(see page 2 for the coming schedule) →

## Coming Programs

2004

**September 13. Shawn Carey:** "Birding: A Multi-media Visual Experience"

**October 18. David Sibley.** "Birders and Conservation: A Broader View"

**November 8. Don Kroodsma.** "Bird By Bird By Bike"

**December 13. Member's Meeting.** (Members Slide Show)

2005

**January 10. Mark Lynch and Sheila Carroll.** "Birds of the Blackstone National Corridor"

**February 14. Daniel J. Klem.** "Glass: A Bird Conservation Issue"

**March 14. Margaret Rubega.** "Eating at the Interface of Water and Land"

**April 11. Geoff LeBaron.** "From Kamchatka to Katmai: An Incredible Journey"

**May 9. Susan Roney Drennan.** "Pacific Albatross Biology and Conservation"

**June 13. Frank Gill.** Topic To Be Decided

## HBC NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE!

The club offers on-line versions of the newsletters (after this one), as an alternative to the "hard copy."

### "How does that work?"

The newsletter is posted on the HBC website. Participants receive an email notification, whereupon they can view and/or download the newsletter from the website at their leisure. You need to give us an email address in order to get the on-line newsletter reminder.

### "What's the point?"

You can archive our publication electronically, without accumulating paper files. You reduce postage costs for HBC, which keeps dues down for all of us.

### "What are the computer/software requirements?"

The newsletter will be posted on the Website in PDF format. This means you will need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader software (version 5.0 or later) on your system. If you do not have it already, this software is available FREE via a link at the club Website.

### How do I sign up?

Please sign up in the upper right hand corner of the **Membership Form** and make sure you include your email address.

### "What if I encounter technical difficulties?"

Most users last year had no difficulty. In the event that you find the system does not work for you, a simple communication with the Membership Secretary will get you back on the "Hard Copy" mailing list.

### I signed up last year. Do I need to sign up again?

We ask all members to decide each year how they want to receive the newsletter. Regardless of how you got the newsletter last year, please make your choice of how to receive the newsletter this year on this year's membership form.

## FIELD TRIPS

### Reports

#### Monhegan. Island

Sixteen birders including **Andrew Magee** and **David Peake-Jones** braved the new exit numbers on I-95 in Maine, and embarked for Monhegan under clear skies. Recent bad weather had brought large numbers of migrants to the island, but we had great birding weather all weekend, including good winds overnight which brought fresh birds onto the island. As usual, the intimate trails of the village provided unequalled opportunities to work on birding skills, and to get wonderful looks at most species. Highlights, in no particular order, included a secretive Sora calling each morning in the marsh, whose inscrutable depths also disgorged a bevy of **Blue-winged Teal** one morning. Several Common Nighthawks skittered over the same marsh in the evenings, and a Belted Kingfisher made a brief appearance. This year was a warbler bonanza. We tallied 22 species, including **Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Cape May, Bay-breasted,** and **Mourning Warbler**, in addition to **Louisiana Waterthrush**. There were huge numbers of flycatchers around, many of which sat exhausted on the

swim beach or the roads in town. Amongst these were (for me) unprecedented numbers of **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**. While walking near the base of cemetery hill, Shirley Smigel happened to glance into a roadside tree, and found her gaze being returned by the unique red-rimmed eye of a **Black-billed Cuckoo**, which cooperated very nicely for the rest of the group as well. Our trip to Eastern Egg Rock on Sunday morning, though rough, yielded wonderful looks at a **Razorbill** (which buzzed the boat several times) and a very few Puffins, as well as Purple, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, lots of Common, Roseate and Arctic Terns, and a Bonaparte's Gull. This was one of the best weekends on Monhegan in recent memory. We hope there will be many more to come.

dpj

### Connecticut Lakes

The trip, led by **Scott Sumner** and **Tom Gagnon**, took place over the weekend of **June 18-20**. The group found approximately 72 species in the north woods. These included Common Loons, Wilson, Snipe, Osprey, and Bald Eagle. Local intelligence resulted in the group waiting expectantly for almost half an hour for the return of a nesting **Black-backed Woodpecker**. She eventually obliged, giving the group great looks at her and a nestling. There were four **Olive-sided Flycatchers**, and three **Gray Jays**. Common Ravens and Cliff Swallows were nesting conveniently next to the ice-cream stand. Both Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were evident, along with 15 species of warblers, and one Lincoln's Sparrow. Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches frequented local feeders.

**Moose** were not as visible as in some past years, but two bulls made an appearance, to the delight of the group.  
Scott Sumner

### New South Beach. Mk 1

We postponed the first of two annual trips to New South Beach to avoid an abysmal tidal situation on the originally scheduled date. Thus a small band set out on **July 31** across the Chatham Strait, in the capable hands of Outermost Harbor Marine, and under the dubious leadership of **David Peake-Jones**. We alighted at the extreme southern end of New South Beach several hours before high tide, hoping to find birds concentrating near the high water mark by the incoming waters. Perhaps due to the generally disastrous shorebird breeding season, we found surprisingly few birds on the beach, and certainly not the swirling shoals one hopes for in this season. We were well into the day before coming across a few **Red Knot** sleeping at the waters edge. It is hard not to draw dire inferences from their scarcity, given recent events in Delaware Bay. However, all the expected players turned out to be present somewhere, along with some unusual species. Shortly after coming ashore we found two **Common Eiders**, decidedly out of season. A couple of **Forster's Terns** flew by, along with several **Roseates** (distinguished in flight by call and obvious pallor), but incredibly found only one or two immature Roseate Terns sitting amongst the hordes of Common Terns on the beach. Late in the day, we got very close to several **Least Terns** resting pettily on the sand.

There were about 15 **Hudsonian Godwit** present, some of which deigned to wake up long enough to display their beautiful two-toned, upswept bills briefly before returning to slumbering anonymity.

The undoubted highlight of the trip (for most) was a (probably second Summer) **Sabine's Gull** consorting with a flock of Laughing Gulls. The bird had a slightly incomplete gray hood, and deep gray mantle. Even at rest, translucent windows were visible at the tips of the primaries. The bill lacked a conspicuous yellow tip, but the imaginative observer could make out slight paleness there. When the bird lifted off briefly, the full glory of its three-toned upper wing pattern was clear, and striking alongside the mundane Laughing Gulls. The primaries form a dark wedge at the outer edge of the wing, the secondaries form a second, pure-white wedge in the center of the wing, and the covert feathers establish a gray triangle across the wing bases and back. This was definitely new in the north-east for all of us, and entirely new to most. What a treat.

dpj

### Coming Trips (Please see the attached Fall Field Trip Schedule)

## **www.hampshirebirdclub.org**

The HBC web gremlins have been working over the summer to add some features to our HBC web site. First up, the old web address is defunct. Please change your bookmarks to **www.hampshirebirdclub.org** if you want to find the web site easily.

Second, all **club officers and activities** chairs can be reached via email that ends in @hampshirebirdclub.org. For example, to ask a question of the president, mail goes to president@hampshirebirdclub.org. All of these new addresses are listed on the “about” link at the HBC web site. A **directory of commonly-contacted club members** is attached, at the end of the Fall Field Trip Schedule.

Third, a new, interactive feature has been added: a **club bulletin board**. There are sections about the Rare Bird Alert, local birds seen that don't quite merit the full-blown RBA, and information about upcoming (and past) field trips. Anyone is welcome to post sightings, links or other items on the bulletin board. As always, the HBC web site has information about upcoming programs, postings of current and past newsletters, and useful links to other birding sites. If you have comments or suggestions about the web site, please send them to **webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org** (who else?).

### **WHERE ARE THE BIRDS?**

For those who want the latest on birds being seen in the valley and beyond, there are two options. The **Voice of Audubon** maintains a report on birds being seen statewide. Call **1-888-224-6444** for a synopsis of interesting birds being seen, organized by region. **Seth Kellogg** maintains the report for Western Massachusetts. He tries to create a comprehensive picture of what is being seen in the region, meaning all reports are welcome. Seth asks that you include the numbers of birds seen in your reports, not just the species list. He can be reached by email at [skhawk@comcast.net](mailto:skhawk@comcast.net). Alternatively, you may call him at **(413) 569 3335**, or leave a message in the Western Mass. section of The Voice.

For hard-core chasers, the **Rare Bird Alert** is an email/phone tree run by HBC. Please see the cautions on the RBA form (enclosed) if you are considering being part of it.

### **Longmeadow Sandbar: Access Restrictions**

The board of the Stebbins Refuge in Longmeadow, Mass., would like to inform the birding community that the Longmeadow Police Department has determined that Willy's Island - the island and sandbar in the Connecticut River just upstream of the refuge – is private property belonging to the homes on the riverfront. The purpose of this is to enable them to police parties that are being held on the island, but the effect is to make it illegal for anyone to be on the island without the permission of the adjacent landowner. We do not anticipate major problems for the occasional, lone birder but any group planning a trip that might involve wading out to the island should contact the Longmeadow Police Department at 413-567-3311, or one of the riverfront landowners, in advance.

Note that the dirt parking lot and river observation point on West Road are conservation land and remain publicly accessible, however, parking is no longer permitted on this parcel. Please park on West Road and walk in.

Thank you for your cooperation.  
George Kingston  
Board, Fannie Stebbins Refuge, Longmeadow

That's all we have room for this month.  
Until next time, talk softly and carry a big scope!

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