



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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December, 2005

PROGRAMS

Monday, December 12 at 7:30 PM

Members Meeting

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.

Perhaps the most important item on the agenda is the Christmas count. Time is allocated for team leaders to meet with their respective teams and plan the count. If you haven't yet found a group for the count, please see "Christmas Count" later in this edition.

There is also a program, of sorts. The featured speaker is you! This is a chance for us to kick back and share natural history experiences from the entire season through slides and (brief) narratives. Birding tales are, of course, most relevant, but any adventures in the natural world are probably of interest to others in the club. We ask that you plan to present no more than twenty slides per person, since there may be many others who wish to present! Hope to see you there!

Coming Up

January 9, 2006. Nancy Weiss. The ABC/Bird Conservation Alliance

February 13, 2006. Gregor Yanega. Hummingbird Bills

March 13, 2006. David Spector. Birds and Books

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Harvey's Mid-Week Sweep of the Pioneer Valley

On **Wednesday, November 16**, a small group went to Ludlow Reservoir under the guidance of **Harvey Allen**. Now as the illustrious editor of this rag has so gallantly requested (begged) for trip reports, so as to encourage attendance on club field trips, I should gallantly share with you how fabulous this walk was, what with 70 degree sunshine, and hundreds of species at close range, especially the Ivory Billed Wood- . . .

But alas honesty (and contrariness with those with funny accents) force me to cease this glorification of a mediocre event. In reality, only four of us braved the weather, which actually turned out not too bad - warm 50s, and only a few quick rain squalls. We didn't see much at all -except the **150 Ruddy Ducks**. Oh, and the 2 Red Breasted Mergs, and 9 **Hoodies**. And, oh yeah, a Loon, 2 **Pied Billed Grebes**, and a Kingfisher. And, I almost forgot, a Surf Scoter. The woods were quiet though: only a few Blue Jays and Chickadees.

Thanks Harvey!

Henry Lappen

Just when I thought I had a field trip report submitted by a member without an ulterior motive. . . . Henry reminds us to check out the new titles in the HBC Library, including the *Florida Bird Finding Guide*. A seasonally appropriate plug for the library as well! Henry may believe I have not noticed the thinly veiled reference to those of us from the antipodes in his piece above. As reward (or retribution, depending on your viewpoint) for this, I have allowed his report to appear in this august journal unedited!!

Turkey Trot to Cape Ann.

Battling toxic levels of tryptophan in our laboring bloodstreams, a band of devote birders under the leadership of **Al Richards** and **Bob Bieda** took off for the coasts of **Cape Ann/Plum Island** on **November 25**. The enigmatic Shawn Smolen-Morton, becoming something of a living legend by virtue of his comparative scarcity on trips these days, joined us after one of his trademark all-night marking sessions, and was (predictably) relegated to driving one of the cars. Shawn kept up a constant stream of carping and generally insurgent behavior for most of the day. This seems designed to promote his campaign to be the youngest recognized birding curmudgeon in HBC history.

We managed to avoid periods of balmy weather immediately preceding and following the trip and found ourselves opening the car doors at Salisbury Beach in about 17 degree weather, with a brisk wind whipping off the Merrimack estuary. Despite this, a perky Hermit Thrush greeted us, along with a cheery assortment of winter residents. A **Northern Gannet** flew by over the frigid expanse of ocean, and a **Northern Pintail** was the rather improbable leader of a small gaggle of geese that flew overhead. Six **Snow Buntings** attested to the bitter cold as they eked out a living along the narrow strips of grass peeking through the decaying parking lot near the beach.

A typical cast of winter sea ducks fell prey to our scopes from the boat ramp along the Joppa Flats shorefront. Buffleheads, Long-tailed Ducks, Black Ducks, and Mallards formed the majority of the assembled multitudes, with a sprinkling of delicate **Bonaparte's Gulls**.

Snow-free Plum Island was a drab brown, and almost exquisitely bird-free, save a **Great Blue Heron** bearing witness to the generally mild late fall. At Emerson Rocks we beheld an interesting assortment of ducks, including all three scoters, **Red-necked Grebe**, Horned Grebe, and both loons. A group of **Green-winged Teal** started up out of the marsh in response to some unknown threat.

Moving on to Cape Anne in the vanishing late afternoon, we enjoyed a tantalizing smattering of distant pelagic birds skimming along the shimmering horizon, before a **Razorbill** deigned to go sputtering by at close range. We had nice looks at Black Guillemots, and a surprisingly sedentary **Black-legged Kittiwake** bobbing demurely in the waves, apparently quite oblivious to the indecent proximity of the shore. In the blessed quiet of late afternoon, we could hear the quaint contact peeps of a lovely group of Purple Sandpipers on the rocks beneath us at Andrew's Point. Our last stop of the day was at Cathedral Ledges for gorgeous **Harlequin Ducks**. With our intestines finally free of the ravages of turkey sandwiches, we compiled the very pleasing day's results over fish and chips at one of the local eateries.

David Peake-Jones

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.40 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the October newsletter or on the website).

Trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give an indication of the pace and/or terrain, but check all information with the trip leaders. An asterisk () denotes a trip that is particularly good for beginners.*

***Saturday, December 10. Owling in the Valley.** Evening. Mike Locher will go out in search of our most common local owl species (Screech, Barred, Great Horned, and possibly Saw-whet). Dress so that you can stand still for long periods in cold weather. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for meeting place and time. (E)

Mike Locher, not merely a field trip leader, but the Field trip Chair, is at this moment laboring away to get the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule prepared. Let him know if you want to lead a trip this coming year at 585 5864, or fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org

FIELD TRIP FORUM: Monday, December 12 at 6:30 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church

In the hour immediately preceding the December program, Mike Locher will meet with any and all interested members to discuss new ideas for our field trip program. We are looking for new ideas ranging from the leisurely and local to more ambitious ideas for overnight trips. We are especially interested if you are able to lead or otherwise assist in organizing trips you want to see on the program.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The **Northampton Christmas Count** (in its 71st year) will be held on **Sunday, December 18**. Contact Jan Ortiz (413) 549-1768 jtortiz@aol.com or Mary Alice Wilson (413) 548-9078 mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu.

The **Quabbin Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 31**. Contact Scott Sumner (413) 253-5999 ssurner@aol.com.

Food Donations Needed for Christmas Bird Count “Pot Luck” Meal !!

We are in need of food (hot or cold dishes) for the Christmas Count Potluck. The potluck starts at 4:30 PM before the 6:00 PM compilation. After a rigorous day (and in some cases night) in the field, there is no better way to cap-off a successful bird count than by partaking in a good, hot meal. Your help is needed in order to make this an evening to be remembered! y!!

Please contact Sue Emerson (413/584-6736; membership@hampshirebirdclub.org.com) before December 12 and tell us what you will be bringing. We are seeking hot or cold main dishes, salads, deserts and snack foods (This is an ideal way to test that new recipe you have always been wanting to try-out). Sue will give you drop-off details.

Thank you, on behalf of all the Christmas Count faithful!

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Public Reading – Writing with Nature Series: Tammis Coffin

Thursday, December 8, 6-8 pm

Introduction to Winter Birds: Sue Cloutier

Saturday, December 10: 10 am

Writing by the River Series: Tammis Coffin

Saturdays, December 10 and 17: NOON to 2 pm. Pre-registration requested

Bird Friendly Tree Decorations: Center Staff

Friday, December 23: 1 pm

Wildlife Track and Sign: Susan Russo and Sue Clouthier

Wednesday, December 28: 11 am (family program)

Wildlife’s Winter Survival Strategies: Susan Russo and Sue Clouthier

Wednesday, December 28: 1 pm. (family program)

*Great Falls Discovery Center is located at 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA
Open Fridays and Saturdays from 10AM to 4 PM*

Phone (413) 683 32212

LIBRARY

Bill Clinton has one. George Bush Snr. has one. Ummm...the President before that has one. Now that he is a two-term president, perhaps W. will have two. More to the point, we have one!

A substantial library, that is. It is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. **Henry Lappen** maintains a collection of birding resources including field- and bird-finding-guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos. **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 is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

HITCHCOCK CENTER PROGRAMS

WHAT POWERS YOUR CAR? A PANEL DISCUSSION ON VEGETABLE OIL FUEL IN THE VALLEY:
David Biddle, Mark Bucciarelli, Bruce Davidson, Susanne Hale, Les Patlove, Julie Rypysc
Sunday, December 11, 1 - 3 p.m

GREEN STENTOR CAVORT OFF THE BIKE PATH: *Lynn Margulis*
Thursday, December 8, 7 p.m.

CONNECTING TO PLACE THROUGH NATURAL PHOTOGRAPHY: *John Green*
Monday, December 19, 7 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.

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

SNOWSHOEING THE WINTER WOODS (Family Program): *Aimee Gelinis*
Sunday, December 18, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

SOLSTICE CELEBRATION: *Wednesday, December 21, 5:30 –8:30 p.m.*
Please bring a nonperishable food item to donate to the Food Bank.

*For more details of these and other programs go to 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**.*

Refreshments for December Program

Sally Hills does not formally line up refreshments for the December program, but she asked me to reassure you all that anyone is free to bring any snack tasty snack or beverage they please. I think this is code for **"Will people PLEASE bring food and drink to the December Meeting??"**

The HBC membership directory is included with this newsletter. Please use it privately to safeguard the security of our members. That's it for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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