



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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With the Christmas Count now in the books, it's worth reflecting on this most tangible reflection of citizen-science at work. Counting can be a frustrating and sometimes apparently arbitrary process, especially for unusual or scarce species. We did not, for example, hear either of the two known pairs of Great Horned Owls on the campus at Hampshire College. How should one feel about the demise of the Green Heron the day after the count? Just how many of those umpteen thousand crows and starlings were double-counted?

Despite all these things, I can't think of an aspect of birding that is more personally rewarding. Data is data. Zero is as important as twenty. Having reduced my feet to a pair of bloody stumps through the frozen fields of the western flank of the Holyoke Range, I can now say with certainty that there were at least three Golden-crowned Kinglets along that four-mile stretch. These brave, tiny creatures eking out a living in the frozen woods, and coming to investigate a strange intruder in their territory are irrevocably recorded in the annals of the Christmas count. Not to mention that a G-cK at ten feet is worth the price of participating in the Christmas Count on its own. I felt blessed to have seen them and those three little hatch marks in my crumpled notebook are worth a thousand blisters. I hope you all feel the same.

PROGRAMS

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.

This Month

Monday, January 10 at 7:30 PM

Mark Lynch and Sheila Carroll with "Birds of the Blackstone National Corridor"

Mark Lynch is an ecological monitor, teacher and trip-leader for the Broad Meadow Brook Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary in Worcester. He and **Sheila Carroll** are currently organizing systematic surveys of water birds and nighthawks in the Blackstone National Corridor and developing an annotated species list for this unique National Park. Mr. Lynch is the book review editor for the journal "*Bird Observer*," and a founding member of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. He was a regional editor and contributor to the new "*Bird Finding Guide To Western Massachusetts*." Mark is a long time (32+ years) teacher and docent at the Worcester Art Museum. He hosts a weekly interview program of arts and sciences: "*Inquiry*", on WICN (90.5FM), which is webcast around the world.

Coming Programs

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"

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Four people joined **Harvey Allen** for his **monthly sweep of the valley** on December 8th during which we discovered 25 species. Our first stop was the famous yard in Leverett where a juvenile **Red-headed Woodpecker** has made regular appearances. When we arrived a Wild Turkey had usurped the woodpecker's favorite feeder, but, after the turkey was chased away, the woodpecker made its appearance. We had very close looks at this handsome bird. Next stop was the canal in Turner's Falls. There was a nice view of a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** with its bright yellow bill. We also saw two **Northern Pintail**, an **American Widgeon**, and several Common Goldeneye. On the Gill side and at Barton's Cove we found Ring-necked Ducks and a Greater Scaup amongst a raft of Canada Geese. A formation of five common mergansers flying by was a fitting end to our outing.

Elissa Rubenstein

Coming Trips

Please see the attached "Winter-Late Summer Field Trip Schedule"

CHRISTMAS COUNT

Another Christmas Count is in the bag. I hope all the rest of you who stomped around all day on some very frozen ground found it as rewarding as I did. Despite what seemed to be a rather drab winter for birds leading up to the count, there was a goodly tally of unusual species, and a lot of high counts.

Special thanks to Jan Ortiz who was responsible for the weather this year. The last folks leaving the compilation could have used another snow-free hour of driving, but that was probably asking too much. Thanks also to the Hitchcock Center for hosting the potluck and compilation, to Scott Sumner, John Green and David Gross for the compilation, and to everyone for getting their forms and rare bird reports in so quickly.

Unusual Species Recorded This Year

Species	Number
Green Heron	1
Greater White-fronted Goose	2
Snow Goose	2
Northern Pintail	a few
Ring-necked Duck	5
Bufflehead (first time on count)	1
Red-breasted Merganser	2
Merlin	3
Peregrine Falcon	4
Long-eared Owl	3
Western Kingbird (count week only)	1
Gray Catbird	1
Brown Thrasher (count week only)	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Vesper Sparrow	1

(Christmas Count continues over→)

High Counts

The species in this table were recorded more frequently this year than in any previous year. Some have already been referred to under “Unusual Species.”**

Species	High Count (this year)	Previous High Count
Great Blue Heron	11	9
Hooded Merganser	30	28
Red-tailed Hawk	124	113
Eastern Screech Owl	79	60
Red-bellied Woodpecker	91	84
Downy Woodpecker	452	362
Pileated Woodpecker	26	23
Tufted Titmouse	633	583
White-breasted Nuthatch	478	391
Carolina Wren	83	36
American Robin	2926	2727
Northern Cardinal	649	528
Long-eared Owl	3	Less than 3
Bufflehead**	1	zero

Potluck Heroes!

Thank you to everyone who worked to make the annual Pot-Luck Compilation Supper such a success. **Sue Emerson, Sally Hills and Helga Beatty** coordinated the set-up and take-down. The list of food and drink contributors looks like this:

Anne Lombard, David Gross, Sally Hills, David Norton, Bruce Hart & Ilene Goldstein, Bill Bennet & Joe Wicinski, Merry Cushing, Tom Gagnon & Bruce Callahan, Sue Emerson, Shirley Hilborn, Helga Beatty, Elizabeth McAnulty, Janet Bissell, Scott Surner, Dennis McKenna, Ann Kearns & Mary Hockner, Dave Mako, Elissa Rubinstein, Bob Zimmerman, Kim Iwanoto & Dave Hastings, Jan Howard, Peg Army & Janice Doppler, Marcia Merithew, Lisa Rock & Pete Westover, Chris Ellison, Elaine Pourinski, and Mary Alice Wilson.

Sue describes herself as the ad hoc coordinator, and says:

“In 2005, we hope to see an even greater turn-out for the compilation supper. The Pot-Luck will really ‘take wing and fly’.”

Thank you all so much!!!!

** I debated about whether to put the Bufflehead in both tables, since this was the first time it has ever been recorded on the Christmas count and it is a mathematical truism that a bird occurring for the first time will also be recorded in greater numbers than ever before.

If I knew the first thing about mathematics, I would know that mathematicians have a more “mathy” term for a truism. This is rather ironic, since mathematicians are always harping on and on about how their discipline explores the absolute, dispassionate reality (i.e. truth) of the universe, yet they eschew the word “truism.” Mathematicians might also be saying that it is ironic that a man in whom the Australian education system invested considerable amounts of time and effort, not least in the area of numeracy, would choose to use his position as the editor of a two-bit foreign bird club newsletter to launch a petty diatribe against the mathematical profession. To this I would reply that:

- 1) once they started talking about matrices and differential calculus and imaginary numbers, math became a terrifying and deeply disempowering experience for me. This is part of the revenge process, and
- 2) I have no idea whether anyone actually reads this thing and am forced to resort to various forms of inflammatory behavior in an effort to get my first “letter to the editor.” So there!

Some Notes on the Count

Sadly, the Green Heron, which was in bad shape when counted on December 19, was found dead the next morning.

The Greater White-fronted Goose was seen by two teams in the morning. It was heading south near the front of a cohort of Canadas, apparently having to work double-time to stay in line. Observers said it was “yelling” rather than honking (perhaps for obvious reasons). This long-suffering bird was seen in the afternoon in (presumably) the same flock of Canada’s, heading in the opposite direction.

One group found 36 individual Eastern Screech Owls and another recorded 26.

Confused By all This Information About the CBC?

The official account of the count will be presented at the January 10 meeting, and will be mailed to any participants who are unable to make that meeting. A notebook with all the Northampton CBC counts since 1934 is located in the HBC library at the Hitchcock Center. The data are also available on-line (www.audubon.org/bird/cbc).

MANOMET WEIGHS IN ON BIRD DECLINE

In case you needed any more evidence, Manomet Observatory here in Massachusetts recently weighed in on the subject of long-term changes in bird populations. Manomet has been banding migratory birds in coastal Massachusetts for thirty two years. In “32 Years of Changes in Passerine Numbers During Spring and Fall Migration in Coastal Massachusetts” (*Wilson Bulletin (Vol. 116, No. 1)*), published earlier this year, they find, as have other sources, a preponderance of species in decline. Amongst species wintering in North America and in deep trouble are Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Brown Thrasher. The authors of the study, Trevor Lloyd-Evans and Jonathon L. Atwood, attribute these declines primarily to habitat degradation on this continent.

They also corroborate the deteriorating fortunes of neo-tropical migrants, including Wood Thrush, American Redstart, Bay-breasted Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Veery, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Last Flycatcher, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. These declines are more obviously attributed to the destruction of tropical rainforest.

(Source: Manomet Observatory website: www.manomet.org/naturereport)

BOREAL BIRDS: A NEW ON-LINE RESOURCE

The **Boreal Songbird Initiative** is a coalition of groups who have recently begun drawing attention to the value and tenuous future of the vast boreal woods of North America. You can visit their Website at www.borealbirds.org.

The initiative publishes an on-line guide to the birds of the boreal woods. This is available via a link at the address above, or directly via at www.borealbirds.org/boreal_species_sub-home.html This reference gives accounts of the life histories of boreal birds, adding greatly to the accounts in field guides by documenting both breeding and non-breeding behavior, distribution, and habitat.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

MARINE FISHERIES: *Francis Juanes, Oceanography Professor at UMass*
Sunday, January 16, 1 - 3 p.m.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PANAMA: *Ariana Wohl*
Thursday, January 20, 7 p.m.

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE: GRAY FOX IN OUR MIDST: *Mark Elbroch*
Friday, January 21, 7 p.m., Slides and Talk
Saturday, January 22, 9:45 a.m. - 3 p.m., Tracking in the Field

TREE KANGAROO CONSERVATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH: *Lisa Dabeck, Rhode Island Zoological Society*
Wednesday, February 2, 7 p.m.

WINTER TREE AND SHRUB ID: *Brayton Wilson, UMass Professor Emeritus*
Saturdays, February 5 & 12, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

RETURN OF LARGE MAMMALS: *Nick & Valerie Wisniewski, Walnut Hill Tracking*
Monday, February 7, 7 p.m.

USING SCIENCE TO SHAPE PUBLIC POLICY *Joseph Larson, UMass*
Tuesday, January 25, 7 p.m.
Held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Hadley

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.

HUNTERS STEP UP

A Pittsfield man was convicted on November 4 in federal court for the fatal shooting of a Bald Eagle in Cheshire, Massachusetts just over a year ago. The conviction followed investigations by Massachusetts Environmental Police and USFWS, and rested heavily on the testimony of fellow hunters who witnessed the incident.

(Source: MassWildlife News)

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**. She is looking for ideas on how we can contribute to the conservation of species in our area. Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or aslombard@comcast.net*

HBC Directory September, 2004

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC.
(Partial) WINTER-SPRING-SUMMER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE, 2005

This first part of the Field trip Schedule is attached to the January On-line Newsletter. The Field Trip Committee is in the process of modifying the first-published schedule to eliminate a scheduling conflict. The part of the schedule produced here is correct. We will make sure you get the rest of the schedule when the corrections have been made. Apologies for the inconvenience.

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), 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" (September newsletter or on the Website).

Some trips have been marked with an asterisk (), which indicates that they are good trips for beginning birders. All trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give a rough indication of the pace and/or terrain. However, check all information with the trip leaders.*

JANUARY

Saturday, January 8. North Shore: Cape Ann to Plum Island. All day. Bob Bieda will lead intrepid birders to the coast to look for Eared Grebes, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, and much more. Dress for cold weather. For meeting information call Bob at 413-527-2623. (E)

Saturday, January 15. Winter finches. Three quarters of a day. Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) will lead birders looking for winter finches in Western Massachusetts. Meet at the Hitchcock Center at 8:00 a.m. (E)

Wednesday, January 19. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. In the midweek series, Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will show birders some of his favorite birding locations around the area. Meet at 8:00 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, January 22. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron (413-268-9281) will head to the hot-spots of Rhode Island. Dress for cold weather. Meet at the Northampton Bowl at 6:45 a.m. (E)

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 5. South Coast: Plymouth and Falmouth. All day. Al Richards leads this annual trip to Southeastern Massachusetts. Past highlights have included Yellow-breasted Chat, Redhead Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, and both Long- and Short-eared Owls. Dress warmly. Call Al (413-665-2761) for the time and place to meet. (E)

Wednesday, February 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 8:00 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)

MARCH

Saturday, March 5. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron (413-268-9281) will seek out late winter specialties like Rough-legged Hawks, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Glaucous Gulls, and Snowy Owls. Dress warmly. Meet at the Northampton Bowl at 6:45 a.m. (E)

MARCH (continued)

Wednesday, March 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. 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 19. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will scour the river and neighboring ponds from Hadley to Turner's Falls for migrating ducks and geese. Expect scenic detours. Call for details as the date approaches. (E)

APRIL

***Sunday, April 3. Woodcocks.** Early evening. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will look for displaying American Woodcocks, and then try to call out some owls on the way home. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at Mitch's Marina on Route 47 in Hadley. (E)

Saturday, April 16. Ashley Reservoir: early warblers. Half day. Bob Bieda (413-527-2623) will beat the bushes for Pine and Palm Warblers, Broad-winged Hawks, Ospreys, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Route 91 at 7 a.m. Call to register. (E)

Wednesday, April 20. 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, April 23. More migrants.** Half day beginner's trip. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for waterthrushes, in addition to other warblers and neotropical migrants. She'll start at Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Road in Northampton. Call for further details. (E)

Saturday, April 30. Graves Farm. Half day. Anne Lombard (413-586-7509) and Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) will guide birders through Graves Farm, looking for migrants and local specialties. Meet at the Hitchcock center at 6:30 a.m. (E)

(Partial Schedule Ends)