



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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I think the story of this month was Saturday, May 28. Following an unusually wet and cold April and May, which seemed to delay migration by several weeks for some species, and a nor'easter in the previous week which apparently found a large number of Red-necked- and Red Phalaropes in a vulnerable migratory state, the night of Friday, May 27 seems to have been the zenith of a compressed migratory pattern this year, which saw rarely equaled numbers of many species all moving at the same time. Monhegan Island saw the most frenetic day of birding in recent memory.

Not to be outdone, Bob Bieda's group not only found a Eurasian Collared Dove on Plum Island, but they were the first birders to find it! If accepted by the MARC, it will be a new state record for Massachusetts. A red-letter day for Western Mass birders indeed!! The magnitude of this experience can perhaps best be gauged by the fact that I received not one, but TWO trip reports for Poor Man's Monhegan, sections of each of which are in the Trip Reports section.

As tired birds settle into breeding territories all over North America, exclaiming the avian equivalent of "Thank goodness that's over with," members of HBC may find themselves similarly lauding their temporary respite from the florid prose of this publication and settling into more legitimate summer entertainment such as reruns of "The Bachelor" and "Fear Factor: the Culinary Edition." As you will see below, programs resume on September 12, shortly before which time you will receive your annual reminder to renew. Enjoy the summer, and we will see you back in September.

PROGRAMS

This Month

Monday, June 13 at 7:30 PM

Frank Gill speaks about "The Power of Citizen Science"

Citizen science generally, and birding in particular, have been primary forces in the growth of modern conservation movements in North America and Europe. Three simple words define citizen science as a force for conservation – count, own, and act. Effective conservation requires countable units, usually acres or species. The average citizen also tends to take ownership of what he or she counts and then acts to benefit these species or to stop/reverse observed declines. Beyond pressing conservation issues, birders advance the foundations of ornithology.

Birders are the preeminent citizen scientists. The 102 year-old Christmas Bird Count is now the largest and oldest citizen science project in the world, engaging 60,000 citizen scientists annually with a steady 10% growth rate. Ever increasing numbers of people participated in local conservation of the birds they counted. Looking ahead, the sheer volume of observations contributed daily combined with modern analytical tools will allow us to track bird populations in real time as a conservation radar with unprecedented power of timely public participation.

This Month's Speaker

An eminent authority on birds and conservation, Frank Gill recently retired as National Audubon Society's Chief Scientist. He continues part-time with Audubon as its Senior Ornithologist.

Frank came to Audubon after 25 years at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. While there, he transformed the academy's ornithological department into one of the nation's leading centers of ornithology, including Visual Resources for Ornithology (VIREO) and the Center for Neotropical Ornithology. His published works include his acclaimed textbook, *Ornithology* (W.H. Freeman, 1989 and 1994) and numerous scientific monographs, reviews and popular articles. His research programs included pioneering field studies of hybridization by Blue-winged- and Golden-winged Warblers, flower feeding energetics of sunbirds and hermit hummingbirds, and phylogeny through DNA of the chickadees of the world. For his outstanding contributions to ornithology, Frank received the William Brewster Medal of the AOU.

A recent past President of the American Ornithologist's Union, Frank Gill's conservation initiatives include leadership roles at the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, American Birding Association and National Audubon, where he championed the Important Bird Areas initiative, Citizen Science, and the latest search for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in Cuba. He directed the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project and was Executive Director and Editor of their recently completed encyclopedic work. He is co-chair of the International Ornithological Congress' Committee on English names of the birds of the world.

Frank Gill has a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Michigan (1969). He lives in Rushland, PA and summers in the Adirondacks with his wife Sally Conyne and two dogs Merlin and Raven. Sally and Frank are avid birders, hunters, and novice fly fishermen. Expeditions to remote corners of South America are some of their favorite diversions.

Coming Programs

The program schedule for 2006 is being honed to perfection by Geoff LeBaron. Calendar 2005 has been finalized, and here it is!

September 12, 2005. Don Kroodisma introduces his book "The Singing Life of Birds."

October 17, 2005. Andrea Jones: Namibia.

November 14, 2005: Blair Nikula: Antarctic Seabirds.

December 12, 2005: Members Meeting (Slide Show).

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Despite intermittent rain and an unrelenting cold wind, the **May 7th Hardwick** trip proved a reasonably productive outing for its two participants, with leader **Chris Ellison** and David Peake-Jones focusing their attention upon Brook Road and immediately adjacent terrain.

Upon disembarking from vehicles at the southern tip of Brook Road, concentrated listening quickly produced Black-and-White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Red-winged Blackbirds struggling mightily against buffeting winds. Scrutinizing a modestly sized beaver pond situated immediately east of their starting point yielded first rate-views of a Spotted Sandpiper, David's first sighting of this species this year. Through the mist we managed to make out retreating Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. Investigation of second growth woodland interspersed with open pasture produced Yellow-rumped Warbler, an elusive Field Sparrow, a Song Sparrow, and the plaintive calls of an Eastern Phoebe. The interior of a dense swamp and its borders revealed few birds but abundant Lycopodium, Marsh Marigold, Red Trillium, and Reindeer Moss. A Ruffed Grouse drummed vigorously. As we trudged further east, a Yellow Warbler vocalized strongly, its lemon-hued wings

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at last flicking away over the surrounding willow, barberry, and multiflora rose tangles. A myriad of deceptive vocalizations emanating from a dense pocket of White Pine proved eventually to belong to a Ruby-crowned Kinglet foraging with a small band of Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice.

Looping westward back to the roadway while pushing steadily into a pocket of juniper yielded fine views of Palm Warbler, White-throated Sparrow and a lone Northern Flicker. An American Robin engaged in a peculiarly supplicatory courtship display never before observed by either observer proved an absorbing subject. Travels further north on Brook Road revealed a splendidly camouflaged Ovenbird skulking along a low stone wall, closely followed by a more ebullient individual establishing territory. Black-throated Green Warblers danced enticingly amongst the slender upper branches of a stand of birch on the east side of the roadway. A possible Magnolia Warbler in a hemlock failed to be any more definitive than that.

Veering sharply west away from the river into steep deciduous woodland allowed the addition of Black-throated Blue Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo to the morning's tally. Persistence finally brought us looks at a singing Louisiana Waterthrush. Chris was rewarded for his greater endurance by great looks at Northern Parula, American Redstart, and Hairy Woodpecker at the end of the morning.

Chris Ellison



A Black-crowned Night Heron flying over the HBC convoy headed through Watertown toward **Mt. Auburn** cemetery augured well for **Saturday, May 14**. Once inside the cemetery, we enjoyed a reprieve from the promised rain, and steady birding with extended song under overcast skies. A spectacular immature male **Orchard Oriole** tested the song-recognition of the group and found it adequate to the task at the end of the Indian Ridge trail.

Many species which had hitherto been absent from the migration in Western Massachusetts turned up reassuringly amongst the fabled landscaping of the cemetery. We found seventeen species of warblers. A major highlight occurred when we heard an unmistakable "Kowp, Kowp, Kowp" from the top of a maple tree. The dense foliage at first refused to give up its secrets, but a judicious response to the call eventually induced a Yellow-billed Cuckoo to betray its whereabouts. We later followed a **Black-billed Cuckoo** as it led several birding groups on a merry and somewhat frustrating dance though a wooded section of the cemetery. Amongst a number of Scarlet Tanagers, we eventually found a mottled orange individual with an over-sized bill lurking in a mixed flock of songbirds at the Dell, which satisfied us that it was a **Summer Tanager**. There were just enough birds to keep us interested, but rarities remained elusive. By the time we reached Willow Pond in the early afternoon our impending capitulation was compensated by a **Northern Waterthrush**, which skulked along the shoreline. As always at Mt. Auburn, we enjoyed birds in a spectacular setting, affording superb visibility and unequalled birding aesthetics.

A few of the diehards, in search of a good place to round out subsequent trips visited Bolton Flats near Devens on the way home. Though touted in the eastern Mass. birding guide as an excellent aquatic habitat, access proved very disappointing, and not really worth the visit, especially during the afternoon. We did find a Green Heron to pad the list to a respectable 75 species for the day.

David Peake-Jones



The goal of the trip to **Leverett** on **May 22**, led by **Mary Alice Wilson**, was to introduce folks to good Leverett birding spots. We didn't make it to all of them, but highlights included a chorus of Chestnut-sided-and Prairie Warblers, Indigo Bunting and Common Yellowthroat. We found young ravens trying to drown out the song of a Winter Wren (Rattlesnake Gutter), a Brown Creeper visiting its nest (Hemenway), a Blackburnian Warbler causing a traffic jam (Cave Hill corner), displaying Bobolink and a hidden Field Sparrow (East Leverett Meadow), yelling Great-Crested Flycatcher (4-H Forest) and newly arrived orioles and catbirds everywhere.

Mary Alice Wilson

Memorial Day weekend, 2005 turned out to be one of the best in recent memory for anyone birding almost anywhere in the northeast. Nowhere was this better illustrated than on **Monhegan Island**. Twenty HBC members, led by **Andrew Magee** and **David Peake-Jones** embarked for the legendary isle with the usual sense of anticipation, sharpened by the nor'easter of the previous week, with its reports of Red-necked Phalaropes on suburban lawns in the eastern part of Massachusetts. During the ride out, we encountered unusual numbers of Wilson's Storm Petrels dabbling over the calm seas, which, along with Bonaparte's Gulls, a Northern Gannet, and at least one suspiciously phalaropy shorebird exiting quickly from the path of the boat, seemed to signal something special in the air. Our enthusiasm was tempered by a dreary forecast, predicting rain on all three days. There was a strange sense of anticlimax as we wandered through the silent village on our way to the Trailing Yew. Was this to be another one of those disappointing years when the weather and the birds simply did not combine as we would wish? A singing Virginia Rail and a **Marsh Wren** helped to assuage the uneasiness just a little as we retired to bed.

Saturday morning proved our enthusiasm justified. From the moment the sun rose, the spruces and apple trees of the island were alive with birds, creating an electric atmosphere where almost anything seemed possible. The day became a blur of birds. Individual sightings dissolved into a wonderful pageant of warblers. Always, the special birds seemed just a slight movement of the binoculars away. Empidonax Flycatchers abounded. Initially, it seemed we might hear nothing but the "Che-bek" of Least Flycatchers, but as the weekend wore on, Willow, Alder, and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** made themselves known. An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** waited until the last morning to reveal itself. Several **Philadelphia Vireos** flashed their tantalizing gray lores and barely yellow breasts to, it seemed, each field group in turn. Just enough to be convincing, but not enough to be taken for granted. Swainson's Thrushes abounded, but not to the complete exclusion of the other expected thrush species, including the Veery, Hermit, Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's and Wood Thrush. One group had four of these species together in one view by the Mooring Chain. Twenty-three species of warblers eventually materialized out of the flitting multitudes. The rarest of these included the **Cape May, Orange-crowned, Mourning, Tennessee, and Bay-breasted Warblers**. Conspicuously abundant were Magnolia-, and Blackpoll Warblers, plus Northern Parula and American Redstart, all typically dominant warblers on this trip, joined this year by a startling number of Canada-, and Wilson's Warblers. Tired birds on Commercial Beach provided close encounters with a number of species, including spectacular **Blackburnian-** and **Bay-breasted Warblers**. Scarlet Tanagers and Baltimore Orioles provided frequent splashes of exuberant song and color.

Lincoln's Sparrows abounded on Friday and Saturday as never before in my memory, joined at various times by White-crowned Sparrows. Pine Siskins and **Red-winged Crossbills** crossed paths with us just often enough on their peripatetic meanderings for general satisfaction, and several Indigo Buntings dazzled even the hard core of our group with their porcelain brilliance. Purple Martins, **Black-billed Cuckoo** (found in the same tree as one of last year's birds), Eastern Towhee, a rare village Golden-crowned Kinglet, **Dicksissel and Red-bellied Woodpecker** were too secretive for most of us. The trip to Eastern Egg Rock was calm, and replete with the usual suspects, including Atlantic Puffins, Purple Sandpipers, various terns, and even more Wilson's Storm Petrels.

A raft of twenty or so **Red-necked Phalaropes** close to the boat on the return voyage to the mainland provided a fitting point of emphasis for one of the most wonderful Monhegan trips in recent memory. What makes our trip list of 128 species particularly unique is that it contains (except for Dicksissel and Red-necked Phalarope) not a single accidental, vagrant, or particularly rare species for the island. The trip found perhaps the most complete representation of northeastern migrant songbirds of any trip in recent memory.

David Peake-Jones



My apologies to Tom Gagnon. The report on the Quabbin trip on May 8 has been lost in the overwhelming work load of this month. Rest assured it was a wonderful trip. Ed.

Bob Bieda led six others on a trip to **Plum Island** and vicinity on **May 28**. It was the kind of day birders dream of from start to finish. All morning the trees and bushes were filled with so many warblers and flycatchers that it was often hard to know where to look. The group saw just over 100 species including eleven warblers species and seven flycatchers, Saltmarsh Sharp tailed-and Lincoln's Sparrows. We saw Wilson's Phalaropes and a few straggling Red Phalaropes in breeding plumage that were remnants of the thousands blown ashore all along the north shore after the recent passage of a three-day Nor'easter. During a brief break from birding to view the storm damage to the beach on Plum Island, we saw the remnants of a fin whale that had been buried on the beach nine years ago that was uncovered by erosion during the storm. It still smelled really bad. The highlight of the trip occurred at the end of the day when we followed up on a tip about the possible location of a Red-necked Phalarope. The bird was no longer there so our dream of a three-phalarope day was not realized. However, it was one of those times when you don't get what you hoped for, but you get something else special instead. While scanning for the phalarope, Dave Mako heard an unusual song and Bob Bieda identified the vocalizing bird - a **Eurasian Collared-Dove!** A report of the observation has been filed with the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee and, if accepted, it will be the first record of this bird in the state!

Janice Doppler

Bob Bieda adds:

"When we arrived on the island there were birds everywhere. Warblers, vireos and flycatchers by the hundreds. Comments like "my best day EVER", "just like the old days", "I haven't seen birds like this in years" were heard from groups of birders we met all day. I think of Wilson Warbler as an early season migrant and Blackpoll as late season. We had dozens of both. We saw hundreds of Redstarts and good numbers of all the regulars. In addition we had three or four Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and a few Least, Willow and Alder. Early and late season vireos and three Swainson's Thrushes were seen. We got these numbers without ever getting to the Hellcat where, in the past, was the only place we got numbers of warblers. I've been waiting a long time to write a report like this and it's not April 1st."

Bob Bieda

PASSING THE TORCH

The following officers were elected to the Board of Hampshire Bird Club Incorporated for 2005-2006 at the Annual General Meeting on May 9, 2005.

President: David Gross

Program Chair/Vice President: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Corresponding Secretary: Marcia Merithew

Membership Secretary: Susan Emerson

At-large Board members:

Betsy Higgins

Jaap Van Heerden

Elissa Rubinstein

Mike Locher

Bob Zimmermann

Dennis McKenna

HBC LIBRARY: Need Summer Reading?

The Hampshire Bird Club Library has some new books! Check them out, literally and figuratively!

"*A Field Guide to Dragonflies & Damselflies of Mass.*" by Nikula, Loose & Burns

"*Sibley's Birding Basics*" by Guess Who

"*Warblers of Europe, Asia & N. Africa*" by Kevin Baker
 "*Sparrows & Buntings*" by Byers, Curson & Olsson
 "*Nightjars*" by Cleers & Nurney

"*The Wind Birds*" by Peter Matthiessen
 "*The Wind Masters*" by Pete Dunne
 "*The Big Year*" by Mark Obmascik

"*Birds of Grand Tetons N.P. & Surrounding Lands*" by WY Bert Raynes
 "*Birds of Zion N.P. & Vicinity*" by Roland Wauer
 "*A Birders' Guide to the Bahama Islands*", by Anthony White
 "*Birds of Kenya*" by ?

We are also missing a few books. Anybody have a lead on these?

"*The Black Capped Chickadee*" by Susan Smith and
 "*Birds of the Carolinas*" by Potter, Parnell & Teulings

As usual call Henry to bring a book to meetings for you, or help yourself down at the Hitchcock Center. .
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.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

WOOD AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE

Paul Catanzaro; Shane Bajnoci; Susan Campbell; Scott Maslansky.

BREEDING BIRD WALK: John Green, Naturalist
 Sunday, June 12, 7 - 10 a.m.

MONARCH CATERPILLAR RESEARCH PROJECT: Jennifer Wiest
 Saturday, June 11, 1 - 3 p.m.

LITTLE DRAWINGS, BIG MEMORIES: Rema Boscov, Artist and Writer
 Saturdays, June 11 & 18, 10 a.m. – noon

PRINCIPLES OF PLANT ECOLOGY: Julie Richburg, Ecologist
 Saturdays, July 23, August 6 & 13, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
 Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

FERNS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY; Ted Watt, Hitchcock Center Naturalist
 Wednesday Class, July 6, 7 - 8:30 p.m.; Sunday Field Trip, July 10, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
 Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

NATIVE FERNS PROPAGATION WORKSHOP: Leslie Duthle
 Saturday, July 9, 9 a.m. - noon
 Held at Nasami Farm in Whately.

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.

Fitzgerald Lake Trail Improvement Day.

Saturday, June 11, 9:00 AM – 12:00 NOON

North Farms Road entrance.

The Broad Brook Coalition, which manages Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, is asking interested folk to come out Saturday morning and help to improve the trails in our conservation area. Please bring gloves and tools for trail work.

Help for Blue-wings at Arcadia

Arcadia Sanctuary is seeking approval from the Northampton Conservation Commission for an important stage of its long-term plan to promote habitat diversity in the West Meadows. Visitors to the Ibis Pool and Trolley Line/Ned's Ditch areas will be familiar with areas of abandoned farmland lying adjacent to the Mill River, to the northwest of the Ibis Pool, and north of the trolley line. These old-field areas have been regrowing for approximately twelve years, and are rapidly being transformed from early successional shrublands into dense stands of maple, cottonwood and yellow birch. Sanctuary staff believe that these areas are now becoming progressively less suitable for species such as Blue-winged Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and Willow Flycatcher, which have nested there in recent years.

Mass Audubon has applied for a grant to cut approximately half this regrowth back this year, restoring an earlier successional habitat. Pending future grant applications, the remainder of the parcel will be cut in 2008. In the long term, the idea is to maintain a mosaic of these early successional shrublands, benefiting several bird species whose overall breeding success in New England is tenuous and declining.

Some Good News for Peregrines

Amidst news of high peregrine nestling mortality this season from Springfield and Holyoke, **Jaap Van Heerden** and **Gina Martel** were fortunate to be able to observe the banding of three Peregrine Falcon chicks on the roof of the W.E.B. Dubois Library at UMass. The banding was done by personnel from MassWildlife on Tuesday morning, May 31, 2005.

The chicks, one male and two females, appear to be 2-3 weeks old. After some frantic initial swoops, the adult falcons settled in and the male looked on from a tall antenna, while the female stayed close to the nest box. After banding these birds, the team moved on to Mount Sugarloaf, where two more chicks were banded.

Welcome New Members

These folks are paid up through September 2006!

Mary L. Hamilton: Florence

Louis J. Musante: Ashfield

Juliana Vanderwielen: South Hadley

Steve Funderburk & Kathi Bangert: Amherst

That's all for this year. Until September, walk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

(413) 529 9541