



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 24, No. 8

April, 2008

In this edition:

- a rare **editorial**,
- **program information** for this month (on page 2) and the rest of the club year,
- **field trip reports** and the coming schedule, including **some changes**,
- yet more encouragement to sign up for **Monhegan** and **Connecticut Lakes**,
- **atlas** exhortations from Mary Alice,
- **election information** (no, not the machinations of Washington, but of our own Board),
- **anniversary field trips** to Panama, Greater Yellowstone, and northern Maine
- news of a **miracle from New Jersey**, and some other general interest stories from the world of birds.

I hope you find some of it useful!

Owing to the euro-centric nature of the world, Easter in Australia comes in the autumn. Of course, the oddity of this only became apparent to me when I moved overseas. Easter and spring are inextricably intertwined in our northern minds. The Christian symbolism of death and renewal are mirrored by the obvious and exultant renewal that is taking place as the days lengthen and winter relinquishes its grip on the land. Curiously, though the seasons are reversed in South Australia, the same kind of parallel existed, only it was from the suffocating heat of summer that the people and landscape found respite. My chief memory of Easter was watching the parched earth by the front gate of the farm where, miraculously, the easter lilies would push their purple buds through earth dampened by the first autumn rains. It was, just as here, a time of hope, renewal, and relief.

For us in the Pioneer Valley, Easter (on a historically early date) was heralded this year by the geese. For the middle two weeks in March, geese spread through the morning sky like lines of wave foam on a beach. The rest of the waterfowl snuck in more surreptitiously, and tended to their needs in the creases and backwaters of the landscape, content to be far less noticed. On Easter Saturday (March 22), a gaggle of us were watching the now familiar congregation of geese off Meadow Street in Amherst. A nice collection of Snow Geese had arrived earlier in the morning to join hordes of Canada Geese in the wet cornfield, and more Canada Geese trickled in just as fast as it was possible to pick through the assembled multitudes on the ground. Hampshire Bird Club was there on our annual spring tour of the valley, as was Scott Sumner and the Hitchcock class. For some it was perhaps the first time they had tried to examine every one of two thousand different birds, looking for the one which did not fit. Others of us visualized Bob Bieda, or some other personal exemplar of persistence, in a vain attempt to maintain concentration upon the shifting tapestry of chin-strapped throats and dun breasts in the field. Having already found the orange tips and toes of the two Greater White fronted Geese in the flock, most of us were just going through the motions when a bird materialized in a fleeting gap in the parade. It was, of course, sitting on the mud, as inconspicuous as a goose can be, yet immediate discordant with its neighbors. The breast was dark! Moments later, the bird stretched innocently in the warming rays of the sun, revealing a white face with a dark eye line. A rare Barnacle Goose!

Perhaps this bird found its way here across the Atlantic, or perhaps it has escaped from some domestic setting. Perhaps MARC will declare it "listable", and perhaps not. Perhaps from Greenland, perhaps from Green Bay. – it matters little. For me, Easter always brings us something beautiful, whether it is lilies by the farm gate, or a goose in a muddy field, and that is enough to be going on with.

PROGRAMS

Monday, April 14, at 7:30 PM

Chris Elphick speaks about **Sharp-tailed Sparrows**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Chris Elphick is a conservation biologist, working primarily on birds, in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut. He grew up in England and began birding when he was big enough to hold a pair of binoculars. His research focuses on the conservation ecology of birds, especially in agricultural settings and wetlands. Along with David Sibley and Barny Dunning he edited the *Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* and wrote the syndicated newspaper column *Sibley on Birds*. He is also a co-author of the recently published *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada*. He will talk about his lab group's ongoing research on the ecology, behaviour and conservation of saltmarsh-nesting sparrows.

Coming Up

May 12, 2008. **Rob Williams**. Avian Endemism in Peru

June 9, 2008. **Bruce Beehler**. Foja, New Guinea Expeditions

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Connecticut Valley Waterfowl. March 22, 2008

Mike Locher deputized for Al Richards. Also partaking were Juliana Vanderwielen, Joan Dupre, Chris Ellison, and David Peake-Jones. The night had been cold, and we grumbled our way down out of the cars at Hadley Cove in rather raw conditions, to find the small amount of open water skinned over with ice. It was relatively birdless. We proceeded to the Honeypot to find an eagle dutifully on the new Bald Eagle nest. From here we drove to the southern end of Lake Warner to find some Canada Geese, Mallards, and Hooded Mergansers eking out a living in a little patch of open water. From Comins Road in North Amherst, we perused a cluster of Killdeer on the banks of a spring mud-puddle, and watched as Canada- and **Snow Geese** flooded in to join the multitudes across the way off Meadow Street. Bluebirds flirting photogenically on a farm fence, and singing House Finches provided tantalizing glimpses of what is to come.

Making our way around the corner onto Meadow Street, we stopped and began scoping the large and growing congregation of Canada- and Snow-Geese. The editorial provides a florid account of our locating a **Barnacle Goose**. Fortunately, Scott's birding class were at the location at the same time, so all of us were able to enjoy this wonderful bird at the same time. Al Richards, defying doctors orders, somehow got himself out to see it too. After watching the geese for a time, and marveling at the apparently disembodied heads of Northern Pintail cruising along at stubble height behind them (the ducks were actually in a low point of the field, so that only their heads were visible to us) we moved on to Barton's Cove. From the Rod and Gun Club we could see a nice collection of Common Mergansers, sprinkled with Common Goldeneye and Ring-necked Ducks. Chris alone managed to catch a glimpse of a male **Northern Harrier** high above the cove. From the cove proper, we could see more Mergansers and Ring-necked Ducks.

The Power Canal played host to a large group of Geese, with two more **Greater White-fronted Geese** amongst them, and an immature **Iceland Gull**, along with a nice collection of Common Goldeneye. Finally we made our way south to Great Pond, where Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Wood Ducks, and Hooded Mergansers picked their way through the swamp. From Cow Path Road at the southern end of the pond, we could see more of the same at close range, and a Great Blue Heron.

David Peake-Jones

Field Trips Rescheduled.

Due to tides:

New South Beach 1 with David Peake-Jones **rescheduled to Saturday, August 1.**

New South Beach 2 with Bob Bieda **rescheduled to Saturday, August 30.**

Updated field trip schedules are posted on the web and will be issued in hard copy.

Sign Up for Westover

The Westover Air Force Base Field trip is scheduled for Saturday, May 31. We are required to give the base a list of participants prior to the trip. Please remember to contact Bob Bieda at least two weeks in advance (by May 17) in order to participate.

Coming Trips

***Saturday, April 12. More Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for migrants, starting around Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Street in Northampton. (E)

***Sunday, April 13. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) hopes to find Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and other early migrants. Meet in the Friendly's parking lot, near the Holiday Inn, close to Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. (E)

***Sunday, April 13. Woodcocks.** Evening. Mary Alice Wilson (413-548-9078, or mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu) invites you to come listen to Leverett Woodcocks and other sounds of a spring evening. The listening will commence at 7:30 p.m., with the location to be determined (by the woodcocks). Contact Mary Alice Wilson for directions. (E)

On the first three **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** in May, we will offer guided walks at the Amherst Rail Trail (E/A) from 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. Meet in the rail trail parking lot off Station Road. Look to the newsletter for leaders and more details as the time approaches.

Friday, May 9. South Quabbin Park. Half day (until about 1 o'clock). Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) birds the southern end of the reservoir. Meet at the Quabbin Visitor's Center parking lot at 7:00 a.m. (E)

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS

What better way to spend your economic stimulus rebate than by going on one or both of these outings to unusual locations in good company?

Monhegan Island

Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26), 2008

As we go to press, eight (8) places remain on this, the club's flagship overnight field trip!

You can see the spring migration almost anywhere, but if you have ever wanted to steep yourself in the glorious warblers of May, while losing yourself in the gentle rhythms of an idyllic island, Monhegan is for you.

During the spring, migrant songbirds moving northward up the Atlantic seaboard are sometimes pushed out over the ocean by storms, and have to fight their way back toward the safety of land. Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is often a haven for exhausted birds to recuperate before resuming the perilous journey northward. We will arrive on the island on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, without vehicles, and immerse ourselves in the gentle rhythms of island life. We'll find migrant songbirds throughout the tiny village of Monhegan, sheltering in the numerous apple trees, sometimes picking

through the sea wrack on the town beach for sand fleas, or even hiding in the lobster pots piled almost everywhere. Each day will bring fresh migrants to the island, and a storm could even produce one of the fallouts of birding legend. When the birding slows down, we can venture off on any of the island's numerous walking trails to Lobster Cove, the stupendous seaward cliffs, the Seal Rocks (aptly named), or the Enchanted Forest.

We'll stay at the rustic Trailing Yew, which will lay on breakfast and dinner each day, including a local lobster dinner. This is the perfect opportunity to slow down, REALLY learn the birds, and remember what life *should* be about. This trip is open only to members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Registration is by deposit. For further details, including an estimation of costs, contact **Betsy Higgins** (hignik@comcast.net; 586 4948) or **Andrew Magee** (586 1509).

Connecticut Lakes, New Hampshire. Friday, June 20 – Sunday June 22, 2007.

Our ever-popular trip to the "Great North Woods."

Less than a mile south of the Canadian border in extreme northern New Hampshire, our beloved Connecticut River begins as a stream one can almost literally step over at Fourth Connecticut Lake. From here, the river flows through the progressively larger Third, Second, and First Connecticut Lakes, and Lake Francis, before hurrying through Pittsburg, New Hampshire, and on to points south. The streams, lakes, swamps and spruce woods of the Connecticut Lakes are superbly scenic, and provide the closest large tract of boreal forest for us in New England. We will stay in comfortable cabins at Powderhorn Lodge, and make our way daily along Rt 3 (part of which is aptly nicknamed Moose Alley) and adjacent logging roads to visit the various habitats which make up the lakes experience.

There should be great opportunities to observe nesting warblers, including Bay-breasted and Blackpoll, perhaps even the rare Cape May Warbler. Winter finches like Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin should be around, along with boreal specialties such as Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Olive-sided Flycatcher and White-winged Crossbill. If we are really lucky, we might come across jewels like the Spruce Grouse or Black-backed Woodpecker.

Please contact **David Peake-Jones** (413 529 9541; davidpj@the-spa.com), or **Mike Locher** (413 585 5864, mlocher@yahoo.com) for further information or to sign up.

25th ANNIVERSARY FIELD TRIPS IN 2009

To celebrate the Hampshire Bird Club's 25th anniversary, we are offering some exciting and exotic trips. Here are three trips to mark on your calendars:

1) **Panama** – the HBC is planning to go to Panama in the late winter or spring of 2009, using a professional guide or company to lead the trip. The trip is still in the planning stage. For information, email Mike Locher at fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org.

2) **Northern Maine** – In late June of 2009, Geoff LeBaron will lead a 5-day trip to far northern Maine to look for boreal species and other local specialties. Contact Geoff for details. (This trip will replace CT lakes trip for the year.)

3) **Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons** – In late July 2009, Tom Gagnon will lead a 10-day trip through two great western parks. The trip will look for more than birds; be prepared to look at mammals, butterflies, wildflowers, and almost anything else that lives out there. Contact Tom for information.

LIBRARY

A Plaintive Appeal from the Librarian

I am missing a cigar box filled with (no, not those smelly things) but an assortment of library things including the rubber stamp, library cards etc. I haven't seen them since the February meeting. If anyone picked them up then or has info as to their whereabouts, please let me know. Thanks.

Henry Lappen, Librarian
library@hampshirebirdclub.org

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The HBC Nominating Committee (Bill Benner, Betsy Higgins, Elissa Rubinstein) is working on nominations for the HBC Board for the June 2008-May 2009 fiscal year. The slate will be announced in next month's newsletter, so if you are interested in serving on the board or have suggestions for a club member who you think would be interested, please contact one of the committee members soon.

MASSACHUSETTS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS 2

(by the numbers AND the web)

If you like numbers:

Atlasers: in Franklin and Hampshire Counties = 95 (that's amazing)
65 Primary (20-hours on a block)
30 additional Supporting Atlasers working with teams

Blocks in Franklin and Hampshire Counties = 143
8 (VIII) blocks not yet assigned - do it alone or with friends, just do it.
(Bernardston 1, 3, 7; Chester 1; East Lee 10; Greenfield 4; Rowe 6, 11).

Species recorded somewhere in the two Counties in 2007
Franklin County = 151
Hampshire County = 156
(Confirmed breeding species somewhere in the 2 counties = 129)

Number of observations recorded in the two counties in 2007 = 7,460

If you like the web:

ALL the changes in safe dates etc. will be on the web by April 16.
<http://www.massaudubon.org/birdatlas/bba2/methods/index.php>

Local information including a new list with ONLY local birds and other good stuff will go on line by April 16th:
<http://hampshirebirdclub.org> (click on Breeding Bird Atlas)

And finally, the word.....

A bird carries straw...
Ah! Another chases it!
Is it Prob. or Conf?

Haiku by Lula Field, of Athol Bird and Nature Club

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

How to Attract Butterflies and Hummingbirds to Your Garden (with NEWFS): *Bill Benner & Ted Watt*

Evening classes: Tuesdays, April 8 and 15, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Hitchcock Center

Saturday Field Trips, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Birding By Ear: *John Green*

Saturdays, April 19, May 17, and June 14, 6:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Early Spring Wildflowers: *Ted Watt*

Saturday, April 19, 2008, 10 a.m. to noon. At Chapel Falls Preserve, Ashfield.

Ridebuzz: Building A Community-Driven Rideshare Network in the Pioneer Valley: *Jeff Brown*

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Nature Drawing for the Complete Non-Artist: *Elizabeth Farnsworth*

Sunday, April 27, 2008, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Quigong (Chi Kung): *Rema Boscov*

Sundays, April 27 to June 1, 2008, 8:30 to 9:45 a.m.

Connecting Urban People to the Environment: *Nuestras Raices staff*

Tuesday, April 8, 2008, 7 p.m. at Holyoke Heritage State Park, Holyoke, Massachusetts

The Singing Lives of Birds: *Don Kroodsma*

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, 6:30 p.m. at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton.

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.

Hope for the Red Knot

Never too late for a miracle!

Eastern populations of the Red Knot have declined by 80% in the past ten years, and the species hangs on the brink of extinction. By some estimates, the current numbers are below 20,000 birds, prompting speculation that the species may have already passed the point of no-return. **Nevertheless, the New Jersey Senate approved legislation on March 18 to ban horseshoe-crab harvesting in Delaware Bay, and the legislation was signed by Governor Corzine on March 25.**

The moratorium will remain in effect until Red Knot numbers reach the numbers outlined in the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan of May 2001. This is 240,000 birds. By some estimates, the current numbers are below 20,000 birds. The bill also requires evidence of an adequate egg supply before the ban is lifted. We can now pray that the population is still healthy enough to recover.

You can read more at www.njaudubon.org/Conservation/HScrabalert.html

The Environmental Bond Bill.

“The Environmental Bond Bill is the single most important environmental bill to be considered by the Legislature (in 2008)”. (Coalition for the Environmental Bond, www.envirobond.org)

The “bond bill,” now technically known as H4561, (meaning it is currently under consideration in the House of Representatives), is the first comprehensive environmental funding legislation in Massachusetts since a previous bond in 2002. Funds from that legislation, and various funding “patches” have been either completely or virtually exhausted by the departments and agencies responsible for environmental quality in this state. The Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture declared the bill to be “emergency legislation” when it presented H4561 to the House of Representatives on February 14.

The Coalition for the Environmental Bond goes on to say,

“Projects funded through the Environmental Bond directly affect communities across the state by protecting natural areas, safeguarding water quality, restoring rivers and streams, providing for dam removal, supporting working farms, building our economy and improving our quality of life.

The Environmental Bond is the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's long-term investment in its environment. It provides investments over the next five years for local and statewide projects that protect critical natural areas and wetlands, maintain our parks, beaches and bike paths, offer municipal aid, and more.”

The scope of the bill is too wide to cover here, but here is a brief sample of some of the clauses that might be of interest to us as birders.

2000-7013 funds the LAND program, whereby municipalities acquire conservation land (\$36 M),

2000-7016 funds the Conservation partnership Grant Program, which assists non-profits such as land trusts in acquiring land to be conserved (\$7 M),

2300-7010 funds conservation land acquisition by the Department of Fish and Game (\$73 M),

2300-7013 funds activity under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (\$10 M),

2300-7014 includes funds for management of upland areas, including invasive species control (\$8 M),

2300-7017 funds the Comprehensive Conservation Strategy, which includes, amongst other things, the Coastal Waterbird Program (\$11.4 M)

2500-7012 funds the establishment of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions in the state (\$67 ¾ M)

You can read the text of the bond bill at www.envirobond.org (the Coalition’s website), or directly from mass.gov at www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/185/ht04pdf/ht04561.pdf.

Please consider contacting your legislators about this important legislation!

HBC Volunteers Wanted!

Assistance is needed to accompany birders with disabilities during 2 hour outings in the spring and fall. The outings will happen on Saturday mornings 10am-noon at a variety of locations. Offer your birding expertise and a helping hand as needed for mostly beginning birders. ***If you are interested in this continuation of Project Inspire, contact Marcy at 545-5758.***

That’s all for this month

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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