



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 24, No. 9

May, 2008

In this edition:

- an introduction to the **program for this month**, and **sneak preview of next year**,
- field trip reports and the **REVISED field trip schedule** for the remainder of the club year,
- **last call** for people to go to the **Connecticut Lakes** in June,
- the **Annual General Meeting** announcement and some election campaigning,
- a precise and strategic **ATLAS reminder** from Mary Alice,
- an opportunity to help with a **bird monitoring project** in our local area,
- and a number of other snippets. Hope you find some of it useful!

Tuesday and Thursday Bird Walks

Please note that the Tuesday and Thursday bird walks in May, which have previously been held at Wildwood Cemetery, will henceforth be on the Amherst Rail Trail, beginning at the Station Road parking lot. please see the new FT schedule (enclosed).

PROGRAMS

Monday, May 12 at 7:30 PM

Rob Williams speaks about Avian Endemism in Peru

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

The ruggedness of the Andes mountains in northern Peru has conspired with two opposing oceanic currents and the climate generated by the Amazon basin to produce an incredible complexity of habitats. These have been relatively stable since the mid Miocene, during which time a complex and diverse fauna and flora have evolved. This talk will explore the origins and complexity of this diversity, focusing on the bird species (1300+) of the region, many of which are found nowhere else on earth. We will discuss the conservation status of these habitats and species and review new initiatives in their conservation.

Rob Williams is a conservation ecologist, photographer, author and birding tour guide. Having studied zoology at the University of Wales at Cardiff, he moved on to the University of East Anglia for his doctorate where he went on to spend two years wandering around the coniferous forests of northern England at night while studying the elusive Long-eared Owl. Finding the lack of tropical forests in England frustrating, he has spent most of the rest of his life in South America.

In 1999 Dr. Williams established a foothold for the Wildlife Conservation Society in Ecuador before moving on to work for BirdLife International. He then founded the Bosques Sin Fronteras (Forests without Borders) movement and become its first international coordinator. In 2003 he began helping a local Peruvian community in their efforts to establish the 34,000 hectare Chaparri Ecological Reserve, where he has also coordinated reintroduction of the critically-threatened White-winged Guan. Since December 2005, Dr. Williams has been working for the Frankfurt Zoological Society coordinating a large-scale Andes-Amazon rainforest conservation project. He continues to do field research and current studies include: White-winged Guans, Spectacled Bears, Andean Condors, Pampas and Andean Cats and a new species of Porcupine.

Rob has published over 25 scientific papers and four books: "*A Guide to Bird-watching in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands*", "*Treasures of the Forgotten Forests*", "*Birds of the Clouds*" and "*A Guide to the Wildlife of Chaparri*". A birder from age 3, he has led more than 30 birding trips to 14 countries. He is married to Anahi, a very tolerant and understanding Peruvian photographer, and they have two sons, Alec and Oliver.

Next Month

June 9, 2008. Bruce Beehler. A Lost World in Western New Guinea.

As part of his visit in June, Bruce will be happy to sign copies of his book, which will also be for sale at the meeting. Here is an excerpt from the publicity materials for the volume.

“Perhaps it is not possible to experience all the mysterious sounds, the unfamiliar smells, and the spectacular sights of a tropical rainforest without ever visiting one. But this exhilarating and honest book comes wondrously close to taking the reader on such a journey.

Drawing on his experiences in Papua New Guinea, India, Madagascar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Panama, and the Ivory Coast, Beehler describes the surprises—both pleasant and unpleasant—of doing science and conservation in the field. He explains the role that rainforests play in the lives of indigenous peoples and the crucial importance of understanding local cultures, customs, and politics. The author concludes with simple but tough solutions for maintaining rainforest health, expressing fervent hope that his great-grandchildren and others may one day also hear the rainforest whisper its secrets.”

“Lost Worlds: Adventures in the Tropical Rainforest.” Yale University Press. March 31, 2008. Hard Cover \$28. More information on the book, and video excerpts from Bruce’s visit to Foja, New Guinea at <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=9780300122282>

IMPORTANT

If you will **NOT** be at the May meeting, but would like to buy a copy of “Lost Worlds” at the June meeting, please notify Mary Alice Wilson before May 12.

mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu; phone 548 9078

Programs for Next Year (Provisional)

September 8, 2008	David Spector	Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Bird Literature.
October 20, 2008	Chan Robbins	Wintering with the Neotropical Migrants.
November 10, 2008	Norman Smith	From Snowy Owls to Saw-whet Owls.
December 8, 2008	HBC Members’ Meeting—Club Memories	
January 12, 2009	Don Kroodsma	to be determined
February 9, 2009	Mark Lynch/Sheila Carroll	Birds and Art
March 9, 2009	Scott Weidensaul	Return to Wild America.
April 13, 2009	John Van de Graaff	to be determined.
May 11, 2009	Susan Smith	Chickadee Research.
June 8, 2009	Kenn Kaufman	Wings of the Imagination: Why We Need Birds.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

April 12. Look Park with Betsy Higgins

Naturally, since it was the morning of the Look Park bird walk, 5:30AM brought thunder and pouring rain. Nevertheless, Sue Emerson and I donned our rain gear and set out for our meeting place. Happily, by 7AM, the rain had stopped. We had a nice walk through the park, along the Arch St. path up to the dam and over to the Water St. bridge. We found a pair of Common Mergansers making themselves at home on the river, one Red-tailed Hawk in the woods, and a Kingfisher flying high in the fog. A charming pair of Ruby-crowned Kinglets and the uneven drum of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker added to our 31 species. Our Louisiana Waterthrush did not make an appearance, but we’ll be patient and hope to see them in a week or so.

Betsy Higgins

April 13. No Waterthrush Found at Ashley Reservoir by Mike Locher et al.

Catchy title, eh? And it works because, unfortunately, we didn't see or hear a single waterthrush when the HBC went on its annual trip to the reservoirs. On the other hand, we did see and hear **Palm Warblers, Pine Warblers** (many), Brown Creepers, Eastern Phoebes, and a host of other birds.

The day started with bright sun, and we quickly found the warblers, brown creepers, a pair of Wood Ducks, and four species of woodpecker (including Pileated) near the Elks Lodge. The sky had darkened by the time we made it down to the reservoir, where we saw Ring-necked Ducks, Mallards, Canada Geese, and a few Common Loons. We later saw Tree and Barn Swallows dipping over the water, and a pair of **Pied-billed Grebes** swimming near the shore. We even got a little rain just as we saw a pair of House Wrens and looked at the blooming hepatica. As the rain stopped, a Broad-winged Hawk flew over us and a lone Hermit Thrush watched us from the side of the path.

In all, we saw about 39 species and innumerable signs that spring had finally arrived.

Mike Locher

Coming Trips

Attached is the revised Winter-Spring Summer Field Trip Schedule. It is Green. Please discard the old salmon-colored version published in September. Thank you.

Westover Trip Sign Up (required by May 17)

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.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

There are still spaces on the Connecticut Lakes trip in June and time is running out to sign up. Don't delay!

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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Hampshire Bird Club Incorporated, at which elections for next year's officers and board members is held, will be at the start of the regular club meeting on May 12, 2008. All members are encouraged to attend the meeting and to participate in the election.

From the Nominating Committee

The HBC Nominating Committee (Bill Benner, Betsy Higgins, Elissa Rubinstein) has brought forward a slate of nominees for HBC officers and board members for the 2008-2009 25th anniversary year. The nominees are listed below. Those asterisked* are new to the board, serving again after an absence, or will change roles next year.

President: Scott Sumner*

Vice President/Program Chair: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson

Communications Secretary: Elissa Rubinstein

Members-at-Large: David Gross*, Mike Locher, Dennis McKenna, Lisa Rock, Jaap van Heerden, Joe Wicinski*

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS MADE SIMPLE

1. Get your new safe dates, change in code definitions, improved checklists.

From Mass Audubon (state list):

<http://www.massaudubon.org/birdatlas/bba2/methods/checklists.php>

From Hampshire Bird Club (local list):

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org/happening/BBA2/index.html>

You can also get this list sorted by safe date from the HBC website.

2. Download new, easy-to-use block maps.

From BBA Explorer (click on MA2007 at the top)

http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bba/index.cfm?fa=explore.ProjectHome&BBA_ID=MA2007

3. Review birds seen in 2007 on your block.

Get from BBA Explorer (address #2, click on Results at top)

Use a colored pencil to mark on your checklist so you can plan more efficiently

4. Block parties.

If you have ONE MORNING to help in an unassigned block, speak up. You can (a) join an organized group and go out together, OR (b) take a geographic section of a block and do it entirely on your own time, OR (c) some other strategy - the possibilities are infinite, but the blocks finite (9). Come to the HBC meeting, or contact mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu if you can help out.

Mary Alice Wilson

***“Birds of North America”*: discount rate for HBC/Atlas birders**

BNA (Birds of North America) was originally a series of monographs available at vast expense. Recently Cornell put them on line and they are being updated regularly. It is a great source of information about species ID, but especially about behavior, distribution, habitat, etc. You can view sample species by going to <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/>

Typically, the service is expensive, but as a club and atlas group, we can each can get a reduced subscription rate of \$32/year. If you are interested, you just have to let me know. Within a few days I will be able to give you a “code” that will allow you to subscribe on line (or maybe by phone) and pay only \$32.

Mary Alice Wilson

LIBRARY

The HBC Library is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. Now that Henry has found his odds-and-ends box, things have returned to normal after a rocky couple of months!

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

The library contains birding resources in various media, including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and overseas, natural histories, periodicals and videos. 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, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at (413) 549 3722.

CONSERVATION

Birding with a Purpose: Help Local Land Conservation!!

We received this letter from the Weirs of Shutesbury:

“We are new members of the Hampshire Bird Club. We were reading your newsletters and found an interesting article about how the Bird Club assisted a Hadley couple in counting birds on their property. This helped them document the conservation value of their land and qualify for state assistance to keep it open. We are in the same boat!

We live on a family farm situated at the southwest corner of Shutesbury. The farm has 140 acres in Pelham, 40 acres in Amherst, and 160 acres in Shutesbury. For the past three years we have received a grant from MA Wildlife to restore the agricultural fields to become open grassland. We have been very successful with woodcock and bluebirds and for the first time in about 40 years we had a whip-poor-will land in our back yard last summer. An Eastern Meadowlark visited our fields briefly in the late summer.

*For the past two years we have counted resident and migrating birds present on the farm on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. This year, we are hoping some members of the Hampshire Bird Club will be willing to volunteer to help in our annual count. The count is encouraged by MA Wildlife as a way to have citizen scientists document changes over time that our activities create to encourage grassland and shrub land birds to establish. MA Wildlife allows us to count the volunteer hours that people spend on this small project toward meeting the required 25% dollar match that we must generate in order to receive our grant. So your assistance will be doubly appreciated. This year, we will be doing the count on May 25, between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. Please contact us if you can help. **Kevin Weir and Cynthia Banfield-Weir**; 259-0018; addisoncro@aol.com”*

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Slide Show: Birds of the American West: *John Van de Graaff*

Thursday, May 8, 2008, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

This is Rotten! Composting for the Home Garden: *Hans Leo*

Saturday, May 10, 2008, 10 a.m. to noon

Alpine Wildflowers of the Presidentials: *Pete Westover and Ted Watt*

Wednesday, May 28, 2008, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Tour of the Smith College Rock Garden: *Pete Westover and Lisa Rock*

Thursday, May 29, 2008, 10 a.m. or 6 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.

Now You See It.....

“*Woodpecker*”, a feature-length film about the celebrated **Ivory-Billed Woodpecker**, held its New England premiere screening on Saturday, April 26th at the Independent Film Festival of Boston. It was received with critical acclaim. Keep an eye out for it at your local independent theater!!

The Firefly Project

The Museum of Science in Boston is joining with researchers from Tufts University and Fitchburg State College to learn the status of fireflies in Massachusetts. Fireflies, everyone’s favorite summer insect, have been disappearing from much of their range. Now, a new citizen science project, hosted by the Museum, hopes to gather enough data from across the state to enable firefly researchers to get a true picture of the State’s firefly population and, if they are disappearing, what are the causes and what can be done to preserve these fascinating insects.

The Firefly Project seeks to enlist people across the state to log on to the website to report the occurrence of fireflies in their back yard throughout the summer, as well as record information about their particular habitat. The goals of this project are twofold. The first is scientific. The more data collected by citizen scientists, the more valuable it is to firefly researchers. The second is educational. The site will contain a lot of information about the natural history of fireflies as well as environmental factors within our control that may affect their populations.

As with any citizen science project, its strength is in numbers. The more people who participate, the more valuable the study. For more info, log on to <http://www.mos.org/firefly>. Thank you!

Don Salvatore, Museum of Science, Boston.

Backyard Birds

17 Strong St., Northampton (near Eastside Grill). Phone 586 3155

Your local source for birding and bird-feeding supplies, including feeders, optics, gifts, written and audio-materials. Ten percent discount for members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

Rumors of my Demise.....

Biodiversity on our planet has been, during human history at least, ratcheting inexorably in the wrong direction. For those of us who love "life" (literally), this is perhaps the greatest tragedy we deal with each day. So it is nice when, occasionally, a species thought to be extinct shows up large as life.

Beck's Petrel was thought to have become extinct in the 1920's. Recently, however, Hadoram Shirihai, an Israeli ornithologist, returned from an expedition to the Bismarck Archipelago northeast of Papua New Guinea, with photographs of at least thirty living individuals, and a freshly dead specimen found at sea. The evidence has been ratified by ornithologists from the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and by Birdlife International. One for nature!

Reference: Regan McTarsney, Associated Press. Reported in the Daily Hampshire Gazette and spotted by my mother-in-law!

A Word from One of the Candidates

"Hi, I'm Scott Sumner.

Firstly, you might be asking what is so special about me. Well, we gave a "Big Oil" man a chance in Washington, and now it's time for a "Home Heating Oil" man to have another shot at the top job at HBC. Now, we've all heard the remarks about the previous president and I want to disassociate myself from the cheap puns so unwisely employed by some of those in my campaign. I also want to disavow that line about it being "time for change, and the Sumner the better."

But I want you all to know that I am for change. My running mate, Al Richards, is too. He scrounges around under the drive-thru windows at McDonalds looking for it and I really think we see better birds when he says the omens are good. Change helps me believe my wallet contains more wealth than it actually does, and that, I now realize, is what I am supposed to make you believe about this economy, so again, I am eminently qualified. In closing, what I really want to ask the people of HBC is this:

When the phone rings at three o'clock in the afternoon, and it's a Sandhill Crane in Leverett, who do you want to answer the phone? I'll tell you right now, I'll be out birding. Leave a message!"

This message is presented by the Sumner for Change Political Action Committee. Scott Sumner had nothing to do with it, and was probably railroaded into the presidency in the first place. We had him sign something while he was preoccupied with the Barnacle Goose. It's not his fault.

Welcome New Members!

Janet Polvino	South Hadley
Judith Davidov	Leverett
Nancy Goodman & Mike Kotarba	Hadley
Cindy White	Belchertown
Hany Aziz	West Springfield
Dan Williams	Leverett

That's all till next month.

Until then, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule, 2008. Version 2
Amended April 27, 2008

Please register with the field 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 \$0.40 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, while an (A) indicates that the trip is accessible. Please check all information with the trip leaders.*
 (E)

MAY

On the first three **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** in May, we will offer guided walks on the Rail Trail (E/A) in Amherst from 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. Meet in the parking area off Station Road.

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)

Saturday, May 10. Spring Migration in the Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon guides birders through the Quabbin woods in search of its migrants. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well ahead of time for meeting information and to register. (M)

Sunday, May 11. Mt. Auburn Cemetery. All day. David Peake-Jones goes to Boston's most historic cemetery, which is also one of the Eastern Massachusetts' birding hotspots, to see what happens to fly in. The numbers and variety beggar the imagination. Call David (413-529-9541) for meeting information. (E)

Additional Trip

Friday, May 16. Hike to the top of Mt. Holyoke on the road. Meet in the parking lot at the main gate at 7:30 a.m. A leisurely walk to the top, looking for spring warblers and wild flowers. Rain could cancel. Call leader the evening before if weather is questionable. Tom Gagnon 584-6353

Saturday, May 17. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron heads to our southern neighbor in warm weather to track down migrants and other seasonal specialties. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for meeting information and further details. (E)

Friday, May 23 – Monday, May 26. Monhegan Island. Overnight trip. Betsy Higgins leads the Hampshire Bird Club's annual pilgrimage to Monhegan Island. Not only is the island charming, but the migrating birds can be astonishing. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) to register. (E/M)

Saturday, May 24. Poor Man's Monhegan. All day. Bob Bieda takes birders to Plum Island. Past trips have found Wilson's Phalaropes, Piping Plovers, Seaside Sparrows, Orchard Orioles, and Evening Grosbeaks. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register and get meeting information. (E)

Saturday, May 31. Tyringham Cobble and Tyringham Valley. Half day. Ed Neumuth leads this new trip into a beautiful part of the Berkshires looking for migrants and local specialties. Call Ed (413-623-0186 or 413-884-4961) for meeting information. (E)

Saturday, May 31. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Pending permission, Bob Bieda will lead his annual trip into New England's premier grassland habitat, looking for Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register and check on the date and time for meeting. (E/A)

JUNE

Saturday, June 14. Hammonasset Beach State Park, CT. All day. Betsy Higgins goes to the coast of Connecticut to find sparrows, rails, and other seaside denizens. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) for meeting time and place as the date approaches. (E)

Sunday, June 15. West Quabbin ramble. Half day. Dave Gross offers a trip from Pelham into the Quabbin and will be birding and hiking through blooming Mountain Laurel. Contact David (413-253-2897) for further details. (M)

Saturday, June 21. October Mt. State Forest. Half day. Ed Neumuth goes where no HBC trip leader has gone before (at least, in recent memory). Recent work in the area has provided excellent habitat for Mourning Warblers. Call Ed (413-623-0186 or 413-884-4961) for meeting information. (E)

Friday, June 20 - Sunday, June 22. Connecticut Lakes, NH. Overnight trip. David Peake-Jones and Mike Locher head to the boreal forests of northern New Hampshire. Migrants, boreal specialties, and moose abound. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Contact David (413-529-9541) or Mike (413-585-5864) to register. (M)

JULY

Rescheduled

Saturday, August 2. New South Beach, I. All day. David Peake-Jones goes looking for early migrating shorebirds, especially Red Knots. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (M)

AUGUST

Rescheduled

Saturday, August 30. New South Beach, II. All day. Bob Bieda leads birders in their quest for late shorebird migrants, including Curlew Sandpipers and Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (M)