



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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November, 2008

In this edition:

- our **program** introduction for this month and the **coming programs**,
- **trip reports** and the **coming trips**,
- last chance to sign **up for Yellowstone next summer**,
- **the Christmas Count**,
- **Hitchcock Programs**, and
- some **miscellaneous items** which may be of interest.

I hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, November 10 at 7:30 PM

Norman Smith: From Snowy Owls to Saw-Whet Owls

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Since 1981, Norman Smith has spent countless days and nights, in every imaginable weather condition, observing, capturing, banding and color marking Snowy Owls at Logan International Airport. Data has been collected on roosting, hunting and behavior while on their wintering grounds. Most recently satellite transmitters have been attached to owls to learn more about their movements. Find out what has been learned to date, what questions remain and how this project developed to include research on Saw-whet Owls.

Norman Smith is a self-taught naturalist who has worked for the Massachusetts Audubon Society since 1974. His current position is Director of Blue Hills Trailside Museum and Chickatawbut Hill Education Center in Milton, Massachusetts.

Norman has studied birds of prey for over 30 years, including rehabilitating the injured and successfully fostering over 800 orphaned hawk and owl chicks into adoptive nests. His ongoing long-term projects include trapping and banding migrating hawks and owls in the Blue Hills Reservation, banding nestling hawks and owls, and doing research on snowy owls and other raptors wintering at Boston's Logan International Airport. He has also traveled to Alaska to study snowy owls in their native tundra habitat. His research work has been published in *National Geographic*, *National Wildlife*, *Ranger Rick*, *Yankee*, *Massachusetts Wildlife*, *Bird Observer*, *Birding*, *Sanctuary*, *Geo*, *Nature*, *Grolier Encyclopedia*, *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere* and *Owls of the World*.

His mission is to use the information gathered from his research to stimulate a passion in everyone he meets to help us better understand, appreciate and care for this world in which we live.

COMING PROGRAMS

December 8, 2008.

HBC Members' Meeting—Club Remembrances

January 12, 2009.

Don Kroodsm

Book II, or more birdsong, or...

February 9, 2009

Mark Lynch/Sheila Carroll

Boids and Ahrt

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Quabbin (Prescott Peninsula): October 5, 2008.

Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien rescheduled this trip following postponement due to rain and wind on the originally scheduled day. October 5th started cool with a few clouds but ended sunny and pleasant. Fifteen club members met at the Pelham overlook at dawn where a pair of Common Ravens called back and forth. The next stop was at Gate 22 with a trip down to the water. The road down held nice groups of warblers and sparrows including a couple **Nashville Warblers** among the six species of warblers. In addition we managed to hear a **Winter Wren** and view a **Swainson's Thrush**. At the Reservoir we had a Common Loon and a distant Bald Eagle. We then traveled to Gate 20 for our trip down Prescott Peninsula. At one of our first stops we had beautiful looks at a low flying **Peregrine Falcon**, the first of three for the day. The migration of raptors was much in evidence as we had a total of ten raptor species. Several areas turned up some nice varieties of migrants including eleven species of warbler including **Tennessee**, Chestnut Sided, and Northern Parula. We also had **Scarlet Tanager**, **Philadelphia Vireo**, **Lincoln's Sparrow** and additional Winter Wrens plus several Wild Turkeys and Ruffed Grouse with one grouse drumming. In total, we found 66 species of birds. Although we missed any large mammals, we did find a total of **35 Little Brown Bats** roosting in their usual spot at the observatory.

Larry Therrien

Coastal Rhode Island. October 25, 2008.

Geoff LeBaron, Trudy Tynan, Bob Bieda, and Chris Ellison visited now well-trodden club haunts along the shore of our "petite southern neighbor." At Misquamicut and Watch Hill, thousands of Double-crested Cormorants milling about made an interesting spectacle, and there was a group of handsome Greater Yellowlegs at the Weekapaug Breachway. The group adjourned (rather unusually) to Point Judith to take advantage of the strong south-easterly winds. Numerous **Northern Gannets** plied the windswept waters offshore, indulging themselves in a couple of neat feeding frenzies while we watched, and a possible jaeger taunted us at about "twice the limit of conjecture."

At the previously unvisited Sodco turf farms in North Kingstown, there was a large flock of **American Pipits** and many distant birds of prey. At Ninigret, there was a Myrtle Warbler convention, with a Sharp-shinned Hawk waiting to dine on one of the attendees while at Firehouse Pond in Charlestown we found lots of **Green-winged Teal** and a **Northern Pintail**. At the parking lot close to Charlestown Breachway, we had astonishing looks at four **Snow Buntings**, including an impossibly perfect fresh-winter-plumage male. In the surf there were four **Red-throated Loons** and on the breakwater, an **Iceland Gull**.

At Trustom Pond and Moonstone Beach there was a nice selection of land birds in the thickets and, amongst the hordes of cormorants on the pond, a male **Ruddy Duck** bravely choosing breeding plumage to buck the local trend. The day ended with a reprise of our time at Point Judith, made memorable, not by anything new bird-wise, but by the departure of the sun, always a fitting end to a day of birding.

Geoff LeBaron

Outer Cape Cod. October 11- 12

Eight members of Hampshire Bird Club led by **Scott Surner** birded outer Cape Cod over a weekend. We also ventured offshore on a Dolphin Fleet whale watch. We finished with 102 species. Really big highlights included **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Rough-legged Hawk** and the **Broad-billed Hummingbird** in Dennis. Other birds of note included Blue-winged Teal, Cory's Shearwater, Greater Shearwater, Black-crowned Night-heron, Bonaparte's Gull, Tennessee Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin.

We birded in Provincetown-Beach Forest, Herring Cove & Whale Watch, Truro-High Head/Eastham-Fort Hill/Coast Guard Beach/Marsh, Dennis & Marstons Mills.

COMING TRIPS

***Saturday, November 8. Berkshire Lakes: Migrating Waterfowl.** All day. Al Richards goes to the lakes and ponds of western Massachusetts to find ducks and other migrating waterfowl. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register and get meeting details. (E)

Sunday, November 23. East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon goes to the east side of the reservoir to see what he can find. You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to go on this trip. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well in advance to register, because participation is limited, and to get meeting information. (M)

Friday, November 28. Cape Ann: Turkey Trot. All day. Al Richards helps you work off those third helpings by birding along the east coast. Expect sea ducks, Purple Sandpipers, a few alcids, and a cool breeze. Bring snacks and warm clothing. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register and get meeting information.

LAST CHANCE!!!

**Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Trip to Wyoming and Montana
Tuesday, July 21 to Friday, July 31, 2009
Co Leaders: Tom Gagnon and Scott Sumner
Limit of 20 Hampshire Bird Club members on this trip.**

Registration closes mid-November.

This will not be just a birding field trip. We will be looking at big game mammals, wild flowers (should be at their peak), butterflies and photo options, and visiting 2 or 3 small museums. In fact, we may take time for anything that tweaks our interest. The cost should be approximately \$2,000 PLUS to cover 10 nights of motels (double occupancy) airfare, car rental, gas, leadership fee, club insurance, and a couple of incidentals such as a float trip on the Snake River, and an evening at the theater. Airfare is the hardest to estimate and we have to keep that in mind. We will need to make motel reservations by mid November so we will need a deposit by the end of October to reserve our motels early. Motels fill up VERY EARLY in Jackson. We will be renting cars, four people per car so everyone has their own door to get in and out. We will need to have two drivers per car.

To register for this trip, please call Tom Gagnon, (584 6353). If I am not home, please leave your name and telephone number. Tom Gagnon.

LIBRARY

The HBC Library is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.

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.

CHRISTMAS COUNT: December 14, 2008

Tired of birding with the valley in full leaf? Do you long to bird when you will be mercifully untroubled by Nature's little carbon fixers. Well folks, you are hereby invited to contribute to the noble cause of citizen science in a season when the bare bones of our happy little valley are laid bare, along with the birds which call this halcyon place their home.

Every December, we get together to count all the birds in a circle of radius five miles around the Northampton GPO. The count circle is divided up into smaller areas, each counted by an experienced leader or leaders, with assistants. Groups plan who will participate, for how long, and how to divide up the count area. To take part, all you really need is a willingness to cope with the vagaries of December birding, and a willingness to count everything in a scientific manner. The coordinators can hook you up with a team that needs members in your area. The count culminates in a pot luck and compilation session during which those still standing come together to exult/commiserate and pool results. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose is palpable and rarely equaled in birding! And you won't feel the blisters till your feet actually thaw, usually only a matter of a few days!

Helpers Wanted

Let Sue Emerson (spe33@hotmail.com, 584-6736) know if you can help out by

- doing set-up at the church (2 PM)
- bringing food to the potluck (4:30)
- helping with the clean-up while the compilation is going on (6-7 PM)

New Participants

Please contact Mary Alice Wilson (mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu, 548-9078) or Jan Ortiz (jtortiz@aol.com, 549-1768).

Northampton Christmas Count Bullets

- **Date:** December 14, 2008
- **Information packets for Team Leaders:** handed out at the HBC meeting on December 8, mailed to those not present.
- **Potluck Set-Up:** Immanuel Lutheran Church, 2 PM
- **Potluck Supper:** Immanuel Lutheran Church, 4:30 PM
- **Compilation of Results:** Immanuel Lutheran Church, 6-7 PM

DECEMBER MEETING SLIDE SHOW

The **December** meeting traditionally has been one with lots of conversation, cookies and our own slides. This year we want to encourage members to bring slides that highlight HBC memories – trips from years past, pictures with members from years ago, and the like. Of course, we also welcome current birding slides as well. As in past years, please limit your show to 10 or fewer slides.

Please send an email confirmation about your slide presentation to either Jaap van Heerden (jvanheerden@hampshirebirdclub.org) or Geoff LeBaron (programs@hampshirebirdclub.org) by 6 PM on Dec. 7. We need to know the format of your slides (35 mm or digital) and, if digital, whether the images are in Powerpoint format or just stand-alone images. If you bring digital images, please have them on a memory stick or CD-ROM disk.

FLORENCE SAVINGS BANK GRANT PROGRAM

Florence Savings Bank customers can vote for a nonprofit organization to share in \$50,000 to be donated by the bank. The Hampshire Bird Club and the Hitchcock Center for the Environment are both eligible non-profit institutions. Last year only 68 votes were needed to qualify for a grant. If you are an FSB customer, we suggest that you take the time to vote for your favorite non-profit. And we know which one that is, right?

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Autumn on Cape Cod: A Photographic Excursion. *John Green and Mark Haffey*
Friday, November 7 to Sunday, November 9

Evergreens Waiting for Snow. *Ted Watt*
Sunday, November 9, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Simple Gift Making.
Saturday, December 6, 10 a.m. to noon

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.

Boreal Bliss

A conservation decision earlier this year will have long-lasting implications for neo-tropical migrant birds.

Five million Dark-eyed Juncoes, four million Magnolia Warblers, three million Palm Warblers, and two million Tennessee Warblers, not to mention their countless descendants and millions of birds of other species, got a huge and largely unheralded ticket to the future in early July of this year. On July 14, premier Dalton McGuinty pledged to designate about 55 million acres of boreal forest in Ontario, Canada for permanent conservation, and to require sustainable use plans for almost all the remainder of the boreal ecosystem in that province.

The region to be protected is the size of the United Kingdom. Keeping it ecologically intact is a huge undertaking which, provided the commitment is kept, is arguably the most significant contributions to the conservation of neotropical migratory birds in recent history. Jeff Wells of the Boreal Songbird Initiative speculated that the celebratory response to this announcement may come next summer when the voices of three million Swainson's Thrushes will "*emanate into the sky on a June morning, from the areathat will be protected.*" What greater serenade is required?

You can read a story from the Toronto Star at www.thestar.com/article/460305.

A Spectacle of Wings: Photographs by Rosalie Winard

Much heralded photographic portraits of birds in the wild.

from September 9 – December 14, 2008 at Mt. Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley.

Admission to the exhibition is free. Donation suggested.

For more information, visit www.mtholyoke.edu/go/artmuseum or call 413-538-3185

Location, Location, Location!!

How come some male warblers seem to continue singing, long after they have successfully bred? Dr Kroodsma would tell us that this singing is vital to the acquisition of song by young warblers. It seems that, in at least one species, these songs are also the cue that second-year birds use to find breeding habitat.

It has often been assumed that returning second year warblers somehow measure the suitability of the available habitats. Nick Rodenhouse, studying Black-throated Blue Warblers in the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in New Hampshire, played taped songs of successful males in various habitats after the breeding season had ended. These included habitats such as clear-cuts, which normally do not support B-t Blues, and bear not even a superficial resemblance to suitable habitat. Next season, even the least suitable habitats attracted numerous prospecting B-t Blues, whereas control plots did not.

The conclusion is that, for this species at least, warblers simply prospect for territories in areas where their predecessors have been successful, and it seems that this simple strategy is the most reliable way to find a place to breed.

Source: Baker, B. "Tuned In" Boston Globe, July 21, 2008.

Welcome New Members!

Kevin Bourinot	West Boylston, MA
Judith Espinola & Susan Perry	South Hadley
Martin Espinola	Florence
Stephen Severin	Amherst
Mary Lou & James Splain	Easthampton
Don Taylor	Amherst
Cailin Xu	Amherst
Paul & Victoria Wildman	South Hadley
Charlotte, Paul, Lily & Luc Vesel	Florence

THANK YOU!

I would like to thank **Sue Emerson** and **Sally Hills** for their help with compiling the October edition of the newsletter.

David Peake-Jones

Backyard Birds (on Strong St. in Northampton) offers a wide range of birding books, audio resources, gifts, feeders, and other paraphernalia. They also offer a 10% discount to Hampshire Bird Club Members. Remember, when you shop locally, your money stays here!

I will leave you in the skillful hands of Trudy Tynan, who has put together the second chapter of an HBC history!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB HISTORY

CHAPTER TWO: Bylaws and the Dead Bird Sheet: 1985-1989

By Trudy Tynan

Dear Friends:

It happened again! I woke up this morning and discovered that it is THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST! No one warned me, no one even suggested to me that summer days were in fact nearing an end. The shock of this realization was quickly followed by the booming voice of reality (sounded amazingly like Scott) saying "Write the Bird Club letter!" So I guess I will put aside my bathing suit, trash novel and wine cooler (for the moment) and get on with it.

Thus, Sally Venman began her **August 1986** newsletter delightfully dunning us for the \$7 dues. She went on to point out that "last year was a good one" with programs by Seth Kellog, Tom Tynning, Scott Sumner, James Cardoza, Bob Humphrey, Ed Ochowski and Tom Army. Field trips included the annual jaunts to Monhegan (cost \$150) and the Connecticut Lakes, plus day trips to Plum Island, Quabbin, and the South Shore. The club also teamed up with the Allen Bird Club for its first pelagic trip on a 55-foot fishing boat out of Lynn called the "Gusty Gale II." Members also headed to Greenfield to see a European Goldfinch and carpooled to Concord for a Fieldfare, both of which were announced on the Voice of the Hampshire Bird Club. HBC is the only bird club in Massachusetts to have its own recorded telephone bulletin board.

1986-87 started fast with programs by Mark Lynch on "Birds of Eastern Australia," John Green on "The Gannets of Bonaventure," Frank Mantlik on "A Year in the Life of a Birder." Susan Smith of Mount Holyoke College returned with a follow up on her chickadee research, Curtice Griffen of the UMass Dept. of Forestry and Wildlife spoke on "Breeding Strategies of the Galapagos and Hawaiian Hawks," Nat Drake of the Organization for Tropical Studies on "Costa Rica," and former Loon Ranger George Flores on "Amazonian Peru."

In addition to what have now become traditional field trips, Allen Richards led his first "Poor Man's Monhegan" jaunt to Plum Island in May. Officers, all of whom were re-elected for the 1987-88 year, were Scott Sumner, president; Jim Marcum, vice president; Sally Venman, secretary; Natalie Drake, treasurer, and board members Tom Army, Jan Ortiz, Marny Price, Marge Tauer, Jan Tolhurst and Jeff Zeyr.

1987-88 saw the club adopt formal by-laws (on Feb. 8, 1988) and become incorporated as a non-profit in Massachusetts. This after more than six months work by a committee headed by Jim Marcum. The bylaws still define us: ***The first purpose of the HBC is to help its members enjoy birding. The second purpose is to educate its members and others about birds and bird watching.*** In May, the nominating committee presented its first slate of officers under the bylaws and immediately suggested an amendment increasing the size of the board to 10. *In preparing this slate, the nominating committee realized that it had a real problem: too many enthusiastic and able people,* Sally noted. The club also began a project, headed by Jan Ortiz, to install bird feeders and provide informational slide shows at local nursing homes and drew up a feeder checklist of 29 birds.

Laurie MacIvor, a UMass grad student, opened the year's programs with a review of "Piping Plover Recovery in Massachusetts," followed by UMass professor Don Kroodsma on "Your Check List _ Is it for Real? or What is a Species Anyway," Eleanor Ellis and Olympia LeBeau on "Starting Bluebird Trails," Tim Armstrong, another UMass grad student, on "Birds and Mammals of Kenya," Mark Lynch and Sheila Carrol on "Birds of England and Scotland," Carolyn Boardman of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on "Hérons in Western Massachusetts," and David Spector on "Sweet, Sweet, Sweet, Sweeter than Sweet: The Life and Songs of the Yellow Warbler."

May was especially busy as the club sponsored 10 field trips, including six Warbler Walks in Wildwood Cemetery in Amherst, and the annual Monhegan Island jaunt. The club also made a winter excursion to the Moran Wildlife Management Area in Windsor and a June tour of Mt. Greylock. We participated in the Winter Raptor Survey and the
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Christmas Bird Count, or as Sally put it: *Start training your body NOW to face the rigors of the winter owl search; the numbness of the trudge through open fields at dawn listening for "chips" from birds much too smart to be wasting energy on bi-peds with binocular eyes in 20 degree weather; and, of course, the real intellectual challenge of accurate tabulation of thousands of starlings coming in for evening roost.*

1988-89 saw passage of the bylaw amendment increasing the board members to five (on Sept. 23, 1988) and formal adoption of our logo, designed by Chris Page, featuring a pileated woodpecker, which was immediately made into decals. The club donated seven bird feeders to the Hitchcock Center, with thanks for continuing to host our meetings, and the Amherst Conservation Commission requested the club's help in locating raptor nests and ponds used by waterfowl and wading birds. The number of area nursing homes involved in the club's feeder and slideshow project rose to seven.

The fat membership packet included Rare Bird Alert phone numbers across the U.S. and Canada, the club's Field Trip Policy, information on birding courses at the Hitchcock Center, the HBC Feeder Checklist and the famous Dead Bird Sheet. For years, new HBC recruits wondered how they had managed to live without the DBS, which opened enticingly: ***Does anybody have a use for this dead bird? Yes!*** And went on to explain: *Dead birds are used in scientific collections for research and teaching purposes. The best way to preserve a dead bird until its final preparation as a specimen is to put it in a well-closed plastic bag and freeze it. Write down the date the bird was found, the location, the collector and circumstances of collection. It is illegal to keep dead or live birds without appropriate permits and it is illegal to shoot migrant birds without a permit.*

Roger Everett, photographer and author of *Wading and Shorebirds*, opened the year's program with "Birds of Cape Cod," followed by Cindy Staicer, a UMass grad student conducting in the first long term study of Adelaide's Warbler, on "Resident and Migrant Warblers of Puerto Rico," Scott Sumner on "Newfoundland – Land of Cod Tongue and Ptarmigan," Mark Lynch and Sheila Carrol on "The Northern Territory of Australia" where the top field hazard was the crocodile, and Ted Levin, photographer and author of *Backtracking: the Way of a Naturalist*, on "Life in the Arid Lands" based on his assignment in the South Dakota prairie for *National Geographic*. Clif Read, who accompanied Peter Alden on one of the first birding trips up the Gambia River, spoke on "Senegal and Gambia," and Rebecca Field, of the Mass. Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, gave a presentation on "Birds, Biologists, Blizzards and Bears: Avian Studies on Northern Coast of Alaska," which included preliminary results of her study on the impacts of oil exploration on the North Slope.

In May, the club teamed up with Manomet Observatory and Hampshire College to cosponsor a presentation by Trevor Lloyd-Evans of Manomet at Hampshire College on songbird migration and the impact of forestry on population declines. Lloyd-Evans speech was one of the rare times the club has charged to hear a speaker with a \$3 cost for members and \$4 for the general public.

New field trips included a weekend trip to Cape May, N.J., led by David Spector and Todd Highsmith a trip to Woodstock, Vt., and the Raptor Rehabilitation Center led by Jan Ortiz, while Jim Marcum headed to Salem, Conn., in search of Hooded, Cerulean and Worm-eating Warblers.

Jim Marcum took over as president of the club, Jan Ortiz became vice president, Sally Venman continued as secretary, Allan Richards became treasurer and Magda Becher, Bob Bieda and David Spector were elected to the board.