

My atlas notebook from July 3 this year has a terse entry on one of the weather-beaten pages: "Otters w E Kingbird." That morning, I was sitting quietly on an old stone wall on the shores of a beaver marsh in the Hiram H Fox WMA in Worthington, sure that the Great-crested Flycatcher I had heard ten minutes ago would give me a sign of breeding activity, or that the Northern Flicker hanging around would betray a nest full of begging young. But if there were avian nuptials or child-rearing in progress that morning, they were proceeding clandestinely, and I had breakfast on my mind as I prepared to leave. Then a commotion amongst the branches of a fallen tree in the water made me sit down and watch some more.

Eventually, a family of otters moved out into open water and hunted their leisurely, sinuous way across the pond in front of me. It was so quiet, I could hear little barks and other cries which I assume helped the family stay in contact. As the otters moved into a sun-dappled clearing in the marsh, they were suddenly beset from above by what must have seemed like a feathered whirlwind. The leading otter ducked under in alarm as, silhouetted in the morning light, a pair of Eastern Kingbirds, descended upon the intruder and began flailing furiously at its head with their wings and beaks. This, no doubt, in defense of a nest, and notwithstanding the fact that otters cannot climb trees. The other otters, perhaps amused, detoured patiently around this assault scene, as the offending otter beat a hasty retreat, leaving the kingbirds to re-order their rumpled plumages and inflamed tempers. Quiet returned, with no sign of what had transpired. Atlasing is hard work, and often frustrating, but by standing still in quiet places, we may brush against a thread of nature's web, and feel the tremulous joy of life itself beneath our fingers.

Many of us have completed another year of participation in the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas, and are perhaps looking forward to some recreational birding. Perhaps we had our nature's web moment while resting in the veggie patch or hammocking by a breezy lake, or waiting for AAA to find the right rest area. In any case, the shorebird migration is in full swing, the nighthawks are on their way, and the hawks are waiting in the wings. Time for HBC to swing back into action!

This is our 25th anniversary, and in honor of that milestone we hope to bring our usual high quality monthly programs to the valley, along with some big names to provide a celebratory flourish. Plans are already afoot for a big sit, an HBC "club read", some monumental field trips, and more. There is more information on the pages that follow. Memberships are the financial engine that makes all our endeavours possible. Please renew yours as soon as possible or join us for the first time. Here we go!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE BY SEPTEMBER 30!

Send yours in via the attached membership form, which may also be turned in at the September meeting

Here's the rest of your "to-do" list for this month:

don't forget the **Release** form, also appended to this newsletter ,
sign up for the **Rare Bird Alert (RBA)** if you wish. (form included),
plan your **September field trips** (Fall Field Trip Schedule included)

(Program information is on the next page)

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, September 8 at 7:30 PM

David Spector muses on **Ralph Ellison's Invisible Bird Literature**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

David Spector is a past president of the Hitchcock Center in Amherst and has been a member of the Hampshire Bird Club since its first meeting. He teaches biology at Central Connecticut State College. More importantly, Dave has a restless mind and eclectic interests in science and literature. He finds connections within the art, literature, and scientific study of birds that bring ornithology to vivid life. This with a dry and

penetrating sense of humor that spares few but maligns none. He is also the progenitor of the loudest recorded owl calls ever heard on the Christmas Count.

PROGRAMS SCHEDULED

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	n/a	HBC Members' Meeting—Club Remembrances
January 12, 2009	Don Kroodsma	to be announced
February 9, 2009	Mark Lynch/Sheila Carroll	Boids and Ahrt
March 9, 2009	Scott Weidensaul	Return to Wild America.
April 13, 2009	John Van de Graaff	to be announced
May 11, 2009	Susan Smith	Chickadee Research.
June 8, 2009	Kenn Kaufman	Wings of the Imagination; Why we need birds.

HBC NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE

The club offers an on-line (or “electronic”) version of the newsletter, as an alternative to the “hard copy” delivered via USPS.

“How does that work?”

The newsletter is posted on the HBC website. Participants receive an email notification, whereupon they can visit www.hampshirebirdclub.org to view and/or download the newsletter from the website at their leisure. You need to give us an email address on the membership form in order to get the on-line version.

“What’s the point?”

You can archive our publication electronically, without accumulating paper files. You reduce postage costs for HBC, which keeps dues down for all of us.

What if I encounter technical difficulties?

Most users last year had no difficulty. In the event that you find the system does not work for you, a simple communication with the Membership Secretary will get you back on the “Hard Copy” mailing list.

What are the computer/software requirements?

The newsletter will be posted on the Website in PDF format. This means you will need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader software (version 5.0 or later) on your system. If you do not have it already, this software is available FREE via a link at the club Website

How do I sign up?

Sign up in the upper right hand corner of the Membership Form.

I signed up last year. Do I need to sign up again?

We ask all members to decide each year how they want to receive the newsletter. Regardless of how you got the newsletter last year, please make your choice of how to receive the newsletter this year on this year’s membership form.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Monhegan Island. May 23-26 (Memorial Day Weekend), 2008

The word that best describes our trip this year is “sweet.” Sweet our assemblage consisting of about 2/3 repeating participants (Betsy and Isabel Higgins, Shirley Smigel, Bruce Hart, Ilene Goldstein, Ed Olmstead, Lou Peugh, Marcia Merithew and myself), and 1/3 new visitors (Nancy Goodman and Mike Kotarba, Judith Davidoff, and Donna Rickerby). Sweet our conviviality, solicitousness and appreciation (yes, and sweet the leadership cooperation between Betsy and me). Sweet the weather (sunny and cool, even with a few quick, early squalls). Sweet the boat rides (including perfect visibility for the trip to Eastern Egg Rock: the sea was like a large quiet lake). And yes, sweet the birds, even more in the array of wowie-zowees than in the near-record 120 species seen.

For the sake of brevity, I will mention just the highlights. Before we reached the island, many of us had a good look at **Sooty Shearwater** going by. On the island, my third bird was a **Sandhill Crane**, seen in perfect profile on a high horizon line at some distance. With Bruce's telescope we could all see its red forehead, golden eye, and the sky through its prominent nostrils: then it flew right over us. My fifth species was a **White-winged Dove** flying by, which perched moments later, allowing us all to see it well, and some of us to hear it calling. My sixth bird on the island, spotted by Betsy Higgins, turned out to be an **Orange-crowned Warbler**. Later, after I had given myself up as "Prothonotary-cursed", we all had a great look at a **Prothonotary Warbler**.

Marcia, Donna and a few others had a good look at a **Summer Tanager**. Betsy and I found a classic, eensy, trim beauty of a spring **Clay-colored Sparrow**. On the puffin trip, I called a full-summer plumaged **Pacific Loon**, which was also seen by Betsy. The self-same Betsy then found a summer-plumaged, black **Black Tern** sitting on Eastern Egg Rock, which we all saw, and which was a new bird for the boat captain. Sol Satin, club member but independent *bon vivant*, had previously seen this bird in flight. Also on the puffin trip we saw a lotta puffin (? plural for puffins), **Arctic Terns**, **Roseate Terns**, and Laughing Gulls, all giving rather graphic evidence of their current interest in breeding.

What a funny place. We saw a Clay-colored Sparrow before we saw our first Chipping Sparrow, no thrushes, save perhaps for one Veery, almost no *Empidonax* flycatchers. And, a tiny alas, Shirley and Isabel missed a Yellow-headed Blackbird at a feeder by just few minutes: a bird none of us ever did see.

The island spread its wings and we all fell under its spell.....

Andrew Magee

COMING FIELD TRIPS

(Please see the Fall Field Trip Schedule enclosed)

A Spectacle of Wings: Photographs by Rosalie Winard

Much heralded photographic portraits of birds in the wild.

at Mt. Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley

from September 9 – December 14, 2008

featuring

"An Itinerant Photographer of the Wetlands"

(an opening lecture by the artist, with a reception and book-signing to follow)

on Thursday, October 16, 5:00 PM

at Gamble Auditorium, Lower Lake Road, South Hadley MA

Admission to both lecture and exhibition is free. Donation suggested.

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

25TH ANNIVERSARY

RAFFLE RAFFLE RAFFLE RAFFLE RAFFLE RAFFLE

To raise money toward our anniversary year, the HBC will be conducting a raffle. The prize, donated by an HBC member, is a **rare print after John James Audubon by J. T. Bowen: Townsend's Cormorant, Plate 418 from *Birds of America***. This hand colored lithograph, circa 1845, was part of a series by James Bowen who received permission from Audubon to reproduce his engravings in lithography in a smaller size than the original series. A representative from Christie's has valued this print at \$500.

Raffle tickets will be on sale for \$10 each at our Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. meetings. The print will be available for viewing at each of these meetings. The drawing will take place at our December 8th members' meeting. If you would like to purchase tickets at other times or have any questions, please contact Betsy Higgins at 586-7585.

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

As always, the HBC web site has information about upcoming programs, postings of current and past newsletters, and useful links to other birding sites.

All **club officers and activities** chairs can be reached via email that ends in @hampshirebirdclub.org. For example, to ask a question of the president, mail goes to president@hampshirebirdclub.org. All of these new addresses are listed on the "about" link at the HBC web site.

If you have comments or suggestions about the web site, please send them to **webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org** (who else?).

SAVE THE DATE!

The 75th **Northampton Christmas Count** will be on **Sunday, December 14**. Fine weather has been ordered.

25TH ANNIVERSARY

"Club Read": Scott Weidensaul's *Return to Wild America*.

Fifty years after Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher's classic birding adventure, *Wild America*, Scott Weidensaul revisited their route and investigated the status of birds and habitats around the U.S.

We will hold three discussions over the course of several months (or more, depending on member interest) on different sections of this book to focus on a specific conservation issue and share members' experiences. This is a wonderful opportunity to prepare for Weidensaul's visit to the HBC in March! If you have any questions, call Anne Lombard (586-7509) or Elissa Rubinstein (549-5078).

****Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the September meeting****

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

Date received:	Payment: __ cash, __ check, \$ _____	Release Form signed?	Newsletter Choice?	Data entered:
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For administrative purposes only

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM: 2008-2009

Please note that contact information may be shared with other members of the club, unless you request otherwise below.

Name(s):	Please select ONE of the two options below to receive the newsletter:
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Address:	
City:	
State:	ZIP:
Home Phone(s):	
Work Phone(s):	
E-mail(s)	

I will download the newsletter from the HBC Website (club will send monthly reminders)

Send me the newsletter via US mail

Please check any activities listed below in which you would like to participate:

Occasionally provide refreshments

Conservation Committee

Field Trip Committee

Lead field trips

Share information on birding locations

Other (describe)

Please mark this box only if you would like to **EXCLUDE** your name and contact information from the club membership list (distributed **ONLY** to members). Thank you.

25th ANNIVERSARY CONTRIBUTION: Tax deductible

2008-2009 will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Hampshire Bird Club. Please consider an additional donation to support special programs and activities in celebration of this milestone.

\$

Please choose a level of membership from the options below. **All membership contributions are tax deductible.**

MEMBERSHIP - REGULAR: Tax deductible

Individual @ \$18.00

\$
\$

Family @ \$30.00

MEMBERSHIP – SUPPORTING: Tax deductible

Downy Woodpecker @ \$40.00

Northern Flicker @ \$60.00

Red-bellied Woodpecker @ \$100.00

Pileated Woodpecker @ \$250.00 or more

\$
\$
\$
\$

Please make checks payable to the **Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.** and send (with this form) to:
Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. P.O. Box 716, Amherst, MA 01004-0716.

RELEASE FORM: 2008-2009

Please complete the release form below if you intend to go on field trips or think you might participate in the future. We need members to share responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others during field trips. The signed release will be filed with the club secretary. For family memberships, all participating members should sign.

RELEASE OF ALL DEMANDS - HOLD HARMLESS

I hereby acknowledge that as a participant in field trips with the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC) I may be exposed to significant risks. These may include, but are not limited to, vehicular travel over land and water, foot travel over difficult terrain, and hazardous weather conditions. I may also encounter poisonous plants, dangerous wildlife, and/or disease-carrying insects. In the event of injury, I understand that I may face considerable delays in reaching professional medical help.

I fully accept these risks and agree to hold the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc., its officers, directors, volunteers, employees, and agents free from any and all liability for injuries and/or loss which I may incur, directly or indirectly, while on field trips run by HBC during the 2008-2009 membership year.

EXECUTED freely and voluntarily this day:.....,,
(month) (day) (year)

.....
(Signatures of all participating family members)

Please print names:

HBC Rare Bird Alert: Where Are the Birds Today?

All of us are interested in knowing what birds are in our area each day. We do this by:

- birding
- talking with other birders
- calling the Voice of Audubon or reading "The Voice" in the newspaper
- checking the Web
- joining the Rare Bird Alert (for those interested in unusual species)

To check The Voice of Audubon:

Call toll free **1-781 259 8805**

Follow the directions (press 2 to listen to Seth Kellogg, the Western Mass voice). Seth updates The Voice once a week - more often when necessary - so check regularly. (Thanks to Trudy Tynan, the transcript also appears weekly in most of our local papers.)

To share local sightings with other valley birders via email:

You may wish to join the Allen Bird Club "Bird News of Western Massachusetts" network. To join, email Seth Kellogg at skhawk@comcast.net

To check various sources on the web:

Go to the HBC website: www.hampshirebirdclub.org. From the **Related Links** section on the Home Page, you can go to **the Voice** and/or to **Massbird**

To join the HBC Rare Bird Alert (RBA).

This operates by email ONLY. You will need at least one active email address. Fill in the form below and return (perhaps with your membership form) **by Monday, October 15**. You may turn the form in at the September/October meetings, if you like.



Date: _____

Rare Bird Alert (RBA) Form: 2008-2009

Name(s): _____

You may provide as many email addresses as you like (within reason, please). Participants automatically receive all RBA announcements.

email address/es (1) _____

(2) _____

Return to HBC, P.O. Box 716, Amherst, MA 01004-0716 or turn in at the September/October meeting.

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Fall Field Trip Schedule, 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 50¢ per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (September newsletter or on the Website).

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

SEPTEMBER

***Saturday, September 13. East Meadows: Migrating Warblers.** Morning. Harvey Allen looks for fall migrants (including the elusive Connecticut Warbler) in Northampton's East Meadows. Meet at the public parking lot between Route 9 and the Fairgrounds at 7 a.m. This trip is co-sponsored by the Valley Land Fund. Call Harvey at 413-253-7963 to register or for information. (E)

***Sunday, September 14. Hadley/Amherst: Migrants.** Half day. Scott Sumner searches the area around Hadley and Amherst for warblers, vireos, and other fall migrants. This trip will begin at 7 a.m.; call Scott (413-256-5438) to find out where to meet. (E)

***Tuesday, September 16. Mount Tom: Hawk Migration.** Half day. Tom Gagnon goes hawk watching at Goat's Peak, at the Mt. Tom State Reservation. Meet at 8:45 a.m. at the old park headquarters, and expect a 20 minute walk to the tower. In the event of rain, the outing will be postponed until Wednesday, September 17. Call Tom (413-584-6353) for information and to register. (E)

Saturday, September 27. Quabbin: Fall Migrants. All day. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien lead this annual trip to the Quabbin to see southbound birds, late season flowers, butterflies, and mammals. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well in advance to register, because participation is limited, and to get meeting information. (M)

OCTOBER

Saturday - Sunday, October 11 – October 12. Cape Cod. Two days. Join Scott Sumner to find shearwaters, jaegers, shorebirds, and migrating landbirds from Chatham to Provincetown on Cape Cod. Participants will need to make their own lodging reservations. This trip is limited to twelve participants, so call Scott (413-256-5438) soon to reserve your space and get further information. (M)

***Saturday, October 18. Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area: Snow Geese.** All day. Al Richards will lead birders to the annual spectacle of thousands of Snow Geese (and a Ross's Goose or two, with any luck) fueling up for their migration, then explore the shore of Lake Champlain. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register and get meeting information. (E)

NOVEMBER

***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. (E)

DECEMBER

***Sunday, December 13. Feast-or-Famine Winter Birding.** Half day. Mike Locher goes west to the almost-boreal habitat around Moran Wildlife Management Area to look for Northern Shrikes, Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, crossbills, and other northern species. Meet at Michael's parking area at the Mountain Farms Mall on Route 9 in Hadley at 7:30 a.m. Call Mike (413-585-5864) to register or get further information. (E)