



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Amherst, Massachusetts
25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Volume 25, No. 9
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www.hampshirebirdclub.org

In this edition,

- **Program** information,
- the slate of hapless **board** conscripts for next year,
- **field trip reports** (mercifully free of my own contributions) and **coming trips**,
- the absolute last call for **Monhegan** and announcing the **Peterson Shorebirding** extravaganza,
- **Atlas** exhortations, and the **HBC History**,
- a **prestigious potluck**,
- **Hitchcock** programs and kudos for the **Athol Bird and Nature Center**.

I hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, May 11 at 7:30 PM

Susan Smith shares **Thoughts from a Long-Term Study of Local Chickadees**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Susan will tell us about her 30-year study of a single local population of Black-capped Chickadees. She has looked at long-term trends in South Hadley's birds, with each chickadee in her study population individually color banded--she has followed each chickadee's life history over time. We'll learn about how our birds have been doing over the past decades, and hear of the effects of many factors influencing their success. Things such as habitat change, predators, and diseases, plus larger issues including the potential effects of global climate change, all influence the birds we know and love in our backyards.

Coming Programs

June 8, 2009. Kenn Kaufman. *Wings of the Imagination; Why We Need Birds.*

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The HBC Nominating Committee (Bill Benner, Mary Alice Wilson and Dave Gross) is happy to announce the slate of candidates for the 2009-2010 HBC board including both officers and at-large members. The election of the new board will be held at the HBC annual meeting on May 11, 2009. The nominees are:

Officers

Scott Sumner, President
Geoff LeBaron, Vice President/Program
Chair
Janice Jorgensen, Treasurer
Sue Emerson, Membership Secretary
Elissa Rubinstein, Communications Secretary

At-large members

Mike Locher
Jan Ortiz
Larry Therrien
Jaap van Heerden
Joe Wicinski

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Look Park

Naturally, since it was **Saturday, April 11**, and my Look Park bird walk was scheduled, the temperature was 42 degrees and the forecast called for rain! Nevertheless, and in spite of the weather, three hardy birders joined me in my search for early migrants. Marcia Merithew, Kate Parsons, Rachel Greenwood and I found a grand total of 27 species, including an immature Bald Eagle, 2 Pine Warblers, 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 2 Common Mergansers, 2 Wood Ducks, Phoebes galore, and a Coopers Hawk eating an unidentified bird. The river was raging, the water was crashing over the dam, the rain held off, and we had a nice walk.

Betsy Higgins



Once Again, No Waterthrush found at Ashley Reservoir!

Easter, April 12, dawned with bright sun and 35° temperatures, and four hearty souls tacked against a stiff breeze as we left the Elks Lodge parking lot and headed down toward the water. By the time we made it to the reservoirs, we had found several of our target species, including good looks at Palm Warblers and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Pine Warblers were singing out of view high in the pines. We scared a pair of Wood Ducks from a pond near the lodge, and that was to be our best look at that species.

The reservoirs were notably devoid of waterfowl. During the entire morning we saw a single Ring-necked Duck, four Mallards, perhaps two dozen Canada Geese, and a few Common Mergansers. We later saw Tree Swallows dipping over the water, and there may have been other swallow species intermixed, but the breeze brought tears to my eyes* and made identification difficult.

In the middle of the walk we heard a Ruffed Grouse, and later found a single Golden-crowned Kinglet as we vainly sought the mythical waterthrush. An Osprey flew over, as did several Turkey Vultures.

In all, we saw about 35 species and a few signs that spring was finally arriving.

Mike Locher

*I just hope everyone in the club now realizes the depths of sacrifice that are required of our field trip leaders Ed.



Woodcocks.

On **Sunday, April 12**, three birders left the parking lot at Wentworth Farm Conservation Area in Amherst, intent on hearing, and perhaps seeing, an American Woodcock. I had had good luck there two of the previous three nights, but the conditions were windy, and I was unsure what to expect from the woodcocks.

On our hike to the first field, we found a Northern Mockingbird, a Song Sparrow, several Eastern Bluebirds, a pair of Belted Kingfishers, several Northern Rough-winged Swallows, and at least one pair of Wood Ducks. Finally, just as it became too dark to see anything, we heard the first faint *peint* of a woodcock off in the distance. When he took to the air, the breeze held him nearly motionless high over us for several seconds, and we all got a look at him.

On the way back to our cars we stopped at a second field where we heard more vocalizations and saw the woodcock careen past us at the end of his flight. I heard one final woodcock (making three in all) near the parking lot as we ended the evening.

Mike Locher.

Since Mike's eyes apparently neglected to water on this trip, I can give my tiny violin a rest. Ed.

Coming Trips

Friday, May 8. South Quabbin Park. Half day Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) birds the southern end of the reservoir for vireos, warblers, and whatever else shows up. Meet at the Quabbin Visitor's Center parking lot at 8:00 a.m. (E)

Saturday, May 9. Spring Migration in the East 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, since participation is limited. (M)

Sunday, May 10. Connecticut River to Mt. Sugarloaf. Half day. Dave Mako explores the fields and hills around Mt. Sugarloaf looking for migrants and a few local specialties, including Common Ravens, Peregrine Falcons, and Worm-eating Warblers. Call Dave (413-665-2999) for meeting time and place. (M)

Saturday, May 16. 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)

Friday, May 22 – Monday, May 25. 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 numbers and variety of 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 23. 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)

Wednesday, June 3. Mt. Greylock – Birds and Butterflies. All day. Tom Gagnon hikes around the highest peak in Massachusetts looking for birds and butterflies. Meet at Mt. Greylock State Reservation Headquarters building at 8:00 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) with any questions. (M)

Saturday, June 6. 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)

Suggestions for Fall Field Trips

We want to make sure that our field trip program remains vibrant and fresh. This means we need new leaders and new destinations to add to the "old reliable" trips and leaders who have served us so well for so long. We need innovators!!

Our field trip chair, Mike Locher, is, even now, turning his fertile imagination to the Fall Field Trip Schedule. If you have suggestions for field trips between September 1 and December 31, especially if you are willing to lead them, please contact Mike: fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org. or 413 585 5864.

OVERNIGHT and SPECIAL FIELD TRIPS

Monhegan Island: Memorial Day Weekend (May 22-25), 2009

Sandhill Crane, White-winged Dove, Prothonotary Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, Pacific Loon, Black Tern. One or two of these birds would be great on any spring birding trip in the north-east. Last year's Monhegan trip had ALL OF THEM!!

Monhegan is amazing, unequalled, unforgettable, and there are still one or two spots left for this year.

Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is a legendary migrant trap. 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 or to register, contact Betsy Higgins (hignik@comcast.net; 586 7585) or Andrew Magee (andrewfimagee@gmail.com; 586 1509).

Shorebirding Workshop and Field Trip with Wayne Peterson

You can participate in either or both the indoor session and/or the field trip.

Shorebirding Workshop ("classroom session")

- **Wednesday, August 12**, from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. at the **Hitchcock Center**. Pre-registration details to follow. Workshop will be free for HBC and Hitchcock members, \$5 for others.

Field Trip to South Beach (Chatham on Cape Cod, MA) (Whole Day)

- **Saturday, August 15**. The trip (limited to 20 people) will begin from **Outermost Harbor Marine** in Chatham, MA at 8:30 a.m. Those car-pooling from the valley will meet at **Northampton Bowling Alley, at 5:00 a.m.** Pickups along 91S or the pike by arrangement with David.
- The trip involves a short boat ride, then several miles of walking over sand and mud, and likely wading in knee-deep water. Disembarking and re-embarking from the boat at the beach requires wading in water up to thigh-height sometimes. We need to be prepared for high sun-exposure, and carry water and food for the day.
- Because we have an outside leader making time for us, it is very important that we fill the trip. Hence, **pre-registration is required**, including a non-refundable trip fee of **\$20**, which covers the cost of the boat trip to South Beach from Chatham.

To register you may either:

- speak with David Peake-Jones at the May or June HBC meetings (you should pay the trip fee by check at these times), or
- email or call David beginning May 12; newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org, 529 9541. If you choose this option, David will give you details of how to pay.

25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Potluck with Kenn Kaufman

In the tradition of years past, we will hold a potluck dinner to cap off our 25th Anniversary year activities. We will meet and eat at the **Immanuel Lutheran Church** starting at **6 PM on June 8**, just prior to our June meeting. Kenn Kaufman, our speaker for the evening, will join us for dinner. If you want to attend the dinner, you need to sign up to bring a dish (main, side or salad). A sign-up sheet will be available at the May meeting. You can also contact Dave Gross (dgross@hampshirebirdclub.org or 253-2897) to sign up to bring something. We need to have a firm head count for the event, thus, you must sign up by June 1. We will provide utensils, plates, drinks and dessert. Come and join us and see if Kenn likes your tuna hot dish.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Birding By Ear: *John Green*

Saturdays, April 18, May 16, and/or June 13, 2009, 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Quigong: Spring Flow: *Rema Boscov*

Sundays, May 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31, 2009, 9 to 10:15 a.m.

Old Growth Forest Excursions: *Bob Leverett*

Trip 1: Saturday, May 9, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Trip 2: Saturday, May 30, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Birding 101: *Ted Watt*

Sunday, May 10, 2009, 7 to 10 a.m.

The Art and Technique of Landscape Photography: *Michael Zide*

Thursday, May 28, 2009, 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Fort River Festival: *at Groff Park, Amherst*

Saturday, May 30, 2009

10 a.m.: Paddle from Kiwanis on Stanley Street to Groff Park (first 50 participants)

Noon to 4 p.m.: Festivities at Groff Park, rain or shine.

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

Wednesday, June 3, 2009, 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 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.

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!

ATLAS

Woodcocks, owls, siskins, ravens, and hawks, oh my!

When is a block finished?

20-hour card complete

at least 70 species recorded (total from everyone who enters data)

at least 70% PRobable or COnfirmed - or 50% COnfirmed - again by everyone

Status of 143 blocks in Hampshire and Franklin Counties (4/28/09)

73 blocks are “finished” (see criteria above - you can still add data, of course).

20 blocks have 20 hours done, have someone adding species, PRs+COs.

12 blocks have 20 hours done, NEED SOMEONE to add species, PR+CO.

26 blocks have someone finishing the 20 hours.

12 blocks have someone beginning the 20 hours this year.

What can I do to help?

If you already have blocks assigned, enjoy (and ask for help if you need it).

If you have not yet done the atlas or are a lapsed-atlaser, offer to help on the not-quite finished blocks or to survey for specific species.

Contact mwilson@umass.k12.net

Athol Bird and Nature Club Wins Prestigious Prize!

The **Athol Bird & Nature Club** was awarded the **Farnsworth Prize for Excellence in Environmental Leadership** this year by the board of advisors of the **Entrust Fund of Gloucester**. In making the award, a representative of the trust commented:

“The Athol Bird & Nature Club has no peer within New England for its achievements in advancing the protection of the environment through education and collaboration. The dedication and hard work of its members to a common goal of understanding the nature of the Millers River and New England is the sweat equity that has led this club to such a high level of achievement. It cannot be overstated as to the effectiveness of this club.”

Receiving the prize were ABNC president **David Small**, club founder and treasurer **Robert Coyle**, and members of the club’s board of directors.

The Athol Bird and Nature Club is an active group of people sharing an appreciation of nature’s many forms. The club manages the Millers River Environmental Center and maintains a natural history collection there, holds meetings featuring members or outside speakers, organizes field trips all over southern New England, offers intensive workshops and institutes on specific natural history topics, and organizes regional biological inventories, including biodiversity surveys, bird counts, and butterfly and dragonfly records.

CONGRATULATIONS ABNC!!

That’s all we have room for this month. I leave you in the capable hands of our resident historian, Trudy Tynan.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB HISTORY

CHAPTER Eight: We Atlas the Breeders: 2006-2008

By Trudy Tynan

It is one of the ironies of birding that, as we dust off rusty senses after the lethargy of summer, in preparation for the excitement of fall migration, we have to start with the shorebirds. Putting oneself on a mudflat in Chatham in late August with a bunch of sandpipers molting into winter plumage is like asking the Patriots to play the Superbowl in the first week of training camp.—David Peake Jones

Fall 2006 saw President Dave Gross and all the officers and board members reelected to another term,

Laurie Sanders, host of *Field Notes*, a weekly natural history series heard on WFCR and Connecticut Public Radio, opened the year's programs with birding in Costa Rica, followed by Reuben Yosef, author and director the International Birding and Research Center in Eilat, Israel, and Greg Budney, curator of the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Vice President Geoff LeBaron, who has been the Christmas Bird Count Director for the National Audubon Society since 1987, spoke on some recent trends, Elijah Goodwin, a doctoral student at UMass, described his research into song learning strategies in blackbirds and Wayne Petersen of Mass Audubon spoke on the society's Important Bird Areas Program. Sam Fried, past president of Hartford Audubon Society, took us birding on the Yukon's Dempster Highway. Paul Sievert, of the Massachusetts Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at UMass, described his research on the short-tailed albatross, and Joan Walsh, coordinator of Breeding Bird Atlas 2 for Mass Audubon, previewed the second statewide survey of the status of Massachusetts' breeding birds. The first atlas was undertaken in 1974.

The HBC, under Mary Alice Wilson's able leadership, assumed responsibility for Hampshire and Franklin counties in Breeding Bird Atlas 2. Within weeks, she had 89 blocks assigned and 87 folks, most of them HBC members, working as primary and secondary atlasers.

On Nov. 1, Mass Audubon dropped the toll-free phone number for the Voice of Audubon. All four recorded reports from throughout the state continue to be accessible through (781) 259-8805 and transcripts are available on the Web and printed in five western Mass newspapers and the Boston Globe.

The second annual Hitchcock Trivia Night at the Harp in Amherst featured a number of contestants from the ranks of HBC with a self-described "nameless team hastily assembled at the bar," including Ira Band, Patti Steinman from Arcadia, HBC Newsletter Editor David Peake-Jones and Jim Laffley, trumping the "Oldies but Goodies," featuring HBC Newsletter Editor Emeritus Sally Venman, husband Bill Venman, Bob Wilce and Joanne Parker, for first place.

The February issue of Bird Observer magazine was devoted to birding in western Massachusetts and featured articles by Seth Kellogg and Jim Smith on regional rarities; Scott Sumner on the White-tailed Hawk, Mark Taylor and Hector Galbraith on the Northfield Sod Farm. The HBC's Trudy Tynan helped put together the issue

In March, the club sadly noted the death of John Lynes at 97. The retired Smith College professor, who donated his Westhampton farm to Mass Audubon following the death of his wife, Marion, kept an almost daily list of area birds for more than 50 years. Despite unseasonably warm weather, participants in the annual Monhegan Island trip on Memorial Day tallied 120 species, nine more than the Allen Bird Club had counted a few days earlier. And the annual Westover Air Reserve Base trip in June tallied 10 Upland Sandpipers, including a pair with a newly hatched chick.

David Gross returned for another term as president in **2005**, joined by Vice President and Program Chair Geoff LeBaron, Treasurer Janice Jorgenson, and Membership Secretary Sue Emerson. Elissa Rubenstein took over as communications secretary. Bruce Callaghan, Mike Locher, Dennis McKenna, Jaap van Heerden, Lisa Rock, and Scott Sumner served on the board.

Documentary producer Larry Hott opened the year's programs with the making of Florentine Films documentary on John James Audubon for PBS, followed by photographer John Van de Graaff on "Birds Across Europe", and Beth Goethal on the Conte Refuge.

In January, Don Kroodsma returned with "More Fun with Bird Song," followed by member Ed Neumuth on his stint as a seabird volunteer on Palmyra Atoll, and the National Audubon Society's Scott Hecker on coastal waterbird conservation. Chris Elphick of UConn described his research on Sharp-tailed Sparrows, and Rob William, who currently coordinates the Frankfurt Zoological Society's rainforest conservation project in Peru spoke on the birds of the Andes-Amazon wilderness. In June, Conservation International's Bruce Beehler, recently returned from New Guinea spoke on the Foja expedition that discovered dozens of species new to science.

The 25th Anniversary Committee, chaired by Shirley Hammerschmith, began its celebration planning by surveying members as to their wishes. By January the committee already had contributions of \$1,333 and plans for a book discussion group on Scott Weidensaul's *A Return to Wild America* and Weidensaul lined up as a speaker for the March 2009 meeting.

The Northampton Christmas Bird Count was moved up a day to Dec. 15 because of a threatened blizzard, which did blow in as predicted on Dec. 16. The massive winter finch eruption was in evidence, and despite the 8-to-12 inches of snow already on the ground HBC observers, gently chased into the cold by coordinator Mary Alice Wilson, tallied 160 Pine Grosbeaks, along with a count-high 2,194 Cedar Waxwings. It wasn't just finches. The snow-blown crew also counted a surprising new high of 22 very chilly Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The previous high for sapsuckers was three in 2001.

David Spector, clearly stuck inside with too much time on his hands, filed this report:

A Dozen Not-So-Common Redpolls on the Northampton CBC, 15 Dec. 2007

*With red caps and streaks
And triangular beaks,
Some had pink on breast
But not all, not the rest;
Paler than siskins,
Feeding on catkins,
They were a dozen cute finches,
Not big, in length just a few inches,
That found a dozen slender perches
On just one, not a dozen white birches*

*None, alas, so frosty,
No rumps so streak-free
As to suggest Hoary--
A dozen Commoners they be,*

*But not so common to me,
Living from redpoll view southerly,
Delighted to see
Every few years
These charming dears.*

*Well, my compilers and editors worthy,
There's my write up in few words pithy. I know
details are weak,
From tail end to beak--
No tarsal scutellation noted,
No rictal bristles counted,
Just impressions of a quick, happy view;
I hope that they'll pass, I hope that they'll do.*

And Mary Alice patiently replied in kind:

Coordinator's Response

*There once was a redpoll description
That met every Rare Bird restriction.
The words they did rhyme,
It was snail mailed in time:
Your report is accepted as written*

The snow had stopped by the time the Quabbin count was held on Dec. 29. Observers tallied 70 species and compiler Scott Sumner reported new highs of 154 Pine Grosbeaks and 22 Red-bellied Woodpeckers along with 413 Common Redpolls, a Hoary Redpoll and 115 Evening Grosbeaks.

In February, the club participated in the Amherst Winterfest by leading bird walks at the Cherry Hill Golf Course and helped the Amherst Conservation Dept. with bluebird box maintenance. In the spring HBC members helped clear the trail to the bird blind on the Rail Trail.

The club, which for years had been collecting Christmas Bird Count data on the Barstow farm in Hadley with the family's permission, agreed to provide that data to the Barstows when they, like other hard-pressed dairy farmers sought help from the state legislature. They hoped to show the lawmakers the importance of open land and the additional benefits it can provide wildlife and we had the data. *"It worked!"* Sally Barstow wrote in a letter to the club. *"We wanted you to know that it's your support and support of folks like you that did the trick!"*

Similarly, the club received a request from members Kevin Weir and Cynthia Banfield-Weir to help with the annual census of birds on their farm in Shutesbury, Pelham and Amherst so they could qualify for a state conservation grant to do work needed to encourage grassland and shrub land birds.

Mary Alice's year-end update on Breeding Bird Atlas 2 showed just how busy the HBC atlasers had been.

She reported 95 volunteers had started or completed surveying 143 blocks of about nine square miles each in Franklin and Hampshire counties. Only eight blocks in the two counties were still awaiting assignment and atlasers.

With at least a year to go in the count, 151 species had been reported in Franklin County and 156 species had been reported in Hampshire County. Already, 129 species had been confirmed to be breeding within the two counties. All told, the volunteers recorded 7,460 observations during the spring of 2007.